

THE RESOURCEFUL TEACHER Series

Peter Grundy
Hania Bociek
Kevin Parker

ENGLISH through ART

100 activities to develop language skills



With CD-ROM



Level: Intermediate upwards

Time: 30 minutes

Materials: This activity is a memory game, so you will need to find an image that has lots of detail

Suggested images: [21] *The Family of Henry VIII: An Allegory of the Tudor Succession*, [28] *Ceyx and Alcyone*, [44] *Still Life with a Snake, Frogs, Tortoise and Lizard*

Language focus: Language for identifying elements within a scene, *Wh-* questions

Indicative language: *There are ten people in the picture; There's a castle in the background; What colour is the woman's dress?*

Aim: To give learners practice in describing visual scenes and identifying parts of an image.

Preparation: For this activity, the class divides into four groups: for each group you will need a reproduction of the same picture. Three groups will try to prove they are the 'owners' of a stolen painting, while one group will act as 'detectives' and decide who the painting belongs to. You will therefore need a separate space outside the classroom where the detectives can interview each group in turn: this could be an empty classroom or corridor.

in class

1. Tell the class to imagine that they had a painting, but that it was stolen. The painting has now been found by the police.
2. Divide the class into four groups. Explain that three groups are going to claim the painting as their own and must memorise as much as possible of it. A fourth group will act as the police and decide which group should have the painting.
3. Each group is given a copy of the picture: they have 2 minutes to look at it. The three groups must identify and remember as much detail as possible. Tell them they can speak and use dictionaries, but they can't write anything down. The fourth group (the police) must think of questions to ask, again without writing anything down.
4. Now for the interviews: who can remember the most? The police group leaves the room and interviews each of the three groups in turn for 3 minutes each (you can ask learners to do some quiet revision before and after their interviews). When this is finished, the police return and announce who are the rightful owners.

1.11

Detail: Stolen!

(Luke Meddings)

5. Elicit from the whole class as many details from the picture as possible, noting these on the board and fine-tuning language as required.

Follow-up

For homework, ask the students to write down a description of the painting from memory.

2.14

Questions and answer: Answer and question

(Peter Grundy and Kevin Parker)

- Level:** Elementary upwards
- Time:** 25–30 minutes
- Materials:** 1 reproduction for every 2 students
- Suggested images:** [3] *Birds in a Garden*, [21] *The Family of Henry VIII: An Allegory of the Tudor Succession*
- Language focus:** Questions and answers
- Indicative language:** *Thursday* → *What day is it?* *At Christmas* → *When are they going to eat the duck?*
- Aims:** To encourage students to look carefully at the content of a painting and work out the creative questions and answers that the content might provoke.
- Preparation:** Prepare 1 reproduction with plenty of content for every 2 students.

in class

1. Ask the students to work in pairs or groups of 3. Give each pair or group a painting and explain that they need to think up five questions and answers based on the painting. They should bear in mind that they will be passing the painting and the answers to another group, who will then have to try and guess the original questions.
2. When the groups have their questions and answers, they should write the five answers on a sheet of paper and exchange their painting and the answers with another group, who then try to supply the questions.
3. Allow time for the groups to come together and discuss the answers, the questions and the painting that provoked them.

Variation

You can also use sequences of paintings or of photographs as a stimulus. If you choose a sequence that's likely to prompt a wide range of questions and answers, it can work well to give all the students the same sequence.

3.2

Family trees

(Emma Riordan)

Level: Elementary upwards

Time: 30 minutes

Materials: Portraits of interesting-looking people

Language focus: Vocabulary for speaking about family, third person singular and third person plural in the present tense, modal verbs of probability (for more advanced learners)

Indicative language: *This is the mother. She has two sons. They live in her house. They don't get along with each other very well.*

Aims: To reinforce and practise using family vocabulary.

Preparation: Prepare between 5 and 10 portraits of individual figures for each group of 4. The groups can work with different sets or with the same set.

in class

1. Divide the class into groups of 4 and distribute the portraits to each group. Each group should create a family tree using the portraits they have been given. They should arrange the portraits in a way that will give a visual impression of the members' relationships to each other.
2. The groups should discuss their 'family' and try to be as specific as possible in their descriptions. They can, for instance, decide on a family name, give names to the individual characters, decide where the family lives, how well the different members get on with each other, what jobs they do, etc.
3. When they've created their family tree, the students should introduce their family to the rest of the class. The class can ask the group for further information or clarification.

Variation

For higher levels you could also ask the students to describe the personal relationships within the family, and whether there are any arguments, scandals, tragedies, etc. in the family. With higher level learners, you can also use the activity to work on modal auxiliaries (e.g., *That can't be the mother. She is too young. That must be the sister.*).

Comments

This activity is a good way of reinforcing and expanding vocabulary and structures relating to the family and family relationships. The activity provokes more creative work if the images provided are varied and strange. They don't need to relate to each other in terms of era or style. As the activity involves the interpretation of portraits, it demonstrates the assumptions we make about people based on their appearance.

5.7

Painting for a partner

(Hania Bociek)

Level: Advanced

Time: 25–35 minutes

Materials: As many reproductions of different styles of picture as you can bring to class; blu-tack

Language focus: Language of speculation and justification, (compound) adjectives of character

Indicative language: *I think you'd like this painting because it's very modern and full of bright colours, and there's no real meaning to it I think; I think you'd like it because you always like colours like this, you're always cheerful and you don't like to dwell on problems for too long.*

Aim: To enable students to practise describing/justifying perceived links between another person's taste and art they might appreciate.

Preparation: Display the pictures around the classroom or, in a computer classroom, open the CD-ROM.

in class

1. Explain to the students that they have been lucky enough to win a lot of money in a competition, but that there's a condition: they have to spend the money on a painting that they are going to give to someone they know.
2. Ask the students to pair up with someone they think they know fairly well. They should think about their partner and decide what kind of things they like and what kind of art might appeal to them. It often helps if they make notes at this stage.
3. Ask the students to circulate and look at carefully at the paintings (or to browse in the CD-ROM) and choose the painting they would like to give their partner.
4. The students then take their partner to the painting they've chosen and explain why they've chosen it. Their partner should react, indicating whether the choice was a good one or not. You can provide model language at this stage if you wish.
5. In plenary feedback, the students discuss how accurate they were in choosing a painting for their partner.

Variation

The pairs could look at the pictures together and ask each other *Would you like this one?* Each time both students should give reasons why they would or wouldn't like to be given the picture. Plenary feedback would then establish which painting would make the most popular gift.