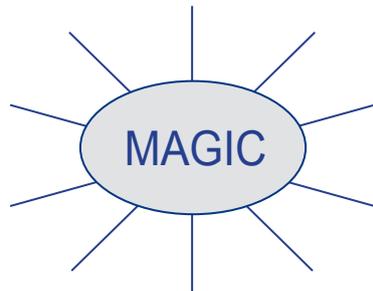


## The magicians trying to change the world

### Level 2 • Upper intermediate

#### 1 Warmer

- a. Complete the diagram with ten things that you associate with magic.



- b. Compare your answers in small groups.

#### 2 Key words

Match the key words with the definitions. Then find them in the article to read them in context. The section numbers are given to help you.

exploited    razzmatazz    ornate    props    deception    spot    status

- a lot of lively and noisy activity that is intended to be impressive and exciting \_\_\_\_\_ (intro)
- used a situation so that you get benefit from it \_\_\_\_\_ (intro)
- notice something \_\_\_\_\_ (intro)
- the act of tricking someone \_\_\_\_\_ (intro)
- decorated with complicated patterns or shapes \_\_\_\_\_ (section 1)
- objects used on stage or during a performance \_\_\_\_\_ (section 1)
- the legal position of a person, country etc \_\_\_\_\_ (section 1)

dexterity    consultation    master    coordination    graduate    funding    poised

- money that a charity needs, usually from donations or grants, to keep going \_\_\_\_\_ (section 1)
- behaving in a controlled and calm way, even in difficult situations \_\_\_\_\_ (section 2)
- someone who has a degree from a university \_\_\_\_\_ (section 2)
- great skill in using your hands or your mind \_\_\_\_\_ (section 2)
- the ability to control the movements of different parts of your body so that they work well together \_\_\_\_\_ (section 2)
- learn something thoroughly so that you know it or can do it very well \_\_\_\_\_ (section 2)
- a meeting with an expert or a professional person to get advice or discuss a problem, especially a meeting with a doctor \_\_\_\_\_ (section 3)

## The magicians trying to change the world

### Level 2 • Upper intermediate

#### The magicians trying to change the world – one card trick at a time

Claire Armitstead

9 September, 2019

With its razzmatazz, secrecy and trickery, being a magician is not something most associate with a social conscience. Good magicians have always understood and exploited the psychological blind spots of their audience. In 1876, a magician known as Professor Hoffmann wrote a book for boys, *Modern Magic*, which explained how classic tricks were performed. “He believed young people should learn to perform magic because it would be useful in their professional lives,” one present-day magician, Will Houstoun, tells me. “Magic teaches you to stand in front of a room and talk, problem-solve and spot deception.”

Today, the practical applications of magic are being used by a new generation to conjure up a better world.

#### 1 The ‘magic humanitarian’

Jamie Balfour-Paul

Balfour-Paul, whose stage name is Jamie Jibberish, is a former charity worker who performs magic to children in refugee camps in the Middle East and Africa. He travels with little except an ornate wooden box he bought years ago in Egypt. “I try to put everything into that box, and I choose props that are familiar – newspapers, bottles, ropes,” he says. “But in Lebanon, where I am based, if you don’t have a rabbit, you can just go home.” At one point, he had three rabbits hopping around his Beirut flat because they kept growing too big to fit into a hat.

He has set up a charity called Magic for Smiles. “Being in a community where your parents don’t have any status and there’s no room to play is very stressful. Entertainment brings happiness to the children, but magic also helps with concentration, creativity and interaction. Funding is a problem, and it’s quite a lonely life; just me and my rabbits driving around. But it’s worth it to see the children’s faces light up.”

#### 2 The student magician

Cat Lee

“At 19, I couldn’t cook or pour a drink and I’d never eaten with a knife and fork,” says Cat Lee. She is now a poised 22-year-old law graduate

with cerebral palsy. The turning point in her life came when she went to a summer camp for young people with hemiplegia, a condition that means one side of the body can’t move. The camps are run by Breathe Arts Health Research, a charity set up more than a decade ago by a group of magicians who believed the dexterity used in magic tricks could be used to help young people.

They discovered that some children could make life-changing progress in coordination – and confidence – in just a fortnight. Its co-founder, David Owen, demonstrates a trick – the mystery of the jumping coins – in which money appears to jump from one place to another. Repeating it in slow motion, he shows how it involves a series of ten hand movements. “It’s a professional-level piece of magic that some children master and others don’t, but for all of them, magic builds skills that most of us take for granted,” he says.

Cat was one of their successes. She left the ten-day course capable of building an independent life and is now a mentor, encouraging younger children at the camps. She doesn’t do magic tricks herself but uses the props to exercise her hands. She says the performance skills she learned helped her to overcome her physical difficulties and the resulting psychological ones. She gets tears in her eyes as she talks about the camp’s positive effect on her life. “Now I am who I am, and I can never thank them enough.”

#### 3 The medical magician and the surgeon

Will Houstoun and Roger Kneebone

“As a student, I saw medicine as a science. As a surgeon, I saw it as a skill. As a GP, I saw it much more as a performance, and as a patient, I see it as all three,” says Professor Roger Kneebone.

Kneebone runs a master’s course in surgical education at Imperial College, London, and the man with him is Will Houstoun, one of the UK’s leading close-up magicians. In 2014, they started working together to investigate the similarities between magic and surgery.

“First, I was looking at dexterity, as both magic and surgery involve sleight of hand,” says Kneebone, “but most of a surgeon’s time isn’t spent in the operating theatre.”

There is a separation between a magic trick and the techniques used to make it work. “If you want

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someone to look at an object, look at it. If you want them to look at you, look at them," Houstoun says.

A medical consultation is a complicated process in which a surgeon has to listen to a patient while, at the same time, making judgements and taking clinical notes. The ability to create a connection is

as important in medicine as it is in a magic show, they explain. For the patient, it's the difference between feeling heard and safe, or just being another statistic, Kneebone says.

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### 3 Comprehension check

Complete the table using information from the article.

name	works with ...	works in ...	profession / studied to be / used to work as ...	now works as ...	How is magic important to their work or life?
Jamie Balfour-Paul					
Cat Lee					
Roger Kneebone					

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#### 4 Useful phrases

Underline these phrases in the article. Then match them with their meanings.

- |                             |  |
|-----------------------------|--|
| 1. psychological blind spot | a. when people look really happy   |
| 2. conjure up               | b. clever and quick use of your hands, especially when performing a magic trick                    |
| 3. faces light up           | c. a time when an important change takes place in a situation, especially one that makes it better |
| 4. turning point            | d. an area that your mind does not understand well   |
| 5. take for granted         | e. fail to appreciate something, especially as a result of overfamiliarity                         |
| 6. sleight of hand          | f. create or achieve something difficult or unexpected, as if by magic                             |

Now ask and answer these questions in pairs.

1. What do many people take for granted?
2. What was a big turning point in your life or career?
3. On what occasions would you hope to see children's faces light up?
4. What would you love to be able to conjure up?

#### 5 Discussion

- Have you ever been to a magic show?
- Do you know any magic tricks?
- Do you know anyone who can perform magic tricks? Give more details.

#### 6 Webquest

- a. Find out more about the two organizations in the article, Magic for Smiles and Breathe Arts Health Research.
  - Watch any videos you come across on their websites.
  - Which of the two charities would you prefer to donate money to? Give reasons for your answer.
- b. Find a video that shows how to do simple magic tricks. Choose one trick and learn it so that you can perform it in your next lesson or during a future class party or celebration.

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#### KEY

#### 2 Key words

1. razzmatazz
2. exploited
3. spot
4. deception
5. ornate
6. props
7. status
8. funding
9. poised
10. graduate
11. dexterity
12. coordination
13. master
14. consultation

#### 4 Useful phrases

1. d
2. f
3. a
4. c
5. e
6. b

#### 3 Comprehension check

name	works with ...	works in ...	profession / studied to be / used to work as ...	now works as ...	How is magic important to their work or life?
Jamie Balfour-Paul	children in refugee camps	the Middle East and Africa	charity worker	a magician / entertainer called Jamie Jibberish	brings happiness to the children; helps them to concentrate, be creative and interact with others
Cat Lee	children with hemiplegia	camps run by the charity Breathe Arts Health Research	studied law	a mentor at the camps	taught her how to overcome her physical (and resulting psychological) difficulties
Roger Kneebone	Will Houstoun (a close-up magician)	Imperial College, London	medical doctor and surgeon	a lecturer on a master's course in surgical education (and perhaps also still a surgeon)	investigates the parallels between surgery and magic