

The islands: notes for teachers

Aim: The aim of this exercise is to help students describe maps.

Objectives

The exercise helps students:

- to read a Key related to a map
- to understand maps
- to write simple sentences about a map
- to juggle several sets of information and text simultaneously
- to develop their psychometric skills
- to see patterns

The exercise may be used with a range of levels and several times with the same class.

Materials

The material consists of:

- three exercises on maps and Keys
- A Key for the first two exercises.

Methodology

Exercise 1

- Divide the students into pairs and give them each a copy of the map page of Exercise 1. Give the students a limited time to use the Key to interpret the maps 1-6 and make sentences if they can.
- Ask them not to write the sentences down. The amount of time you give them will depend on the level of the class. With lower level students, you may want to go through the vocabulary in the Key and make sure they understand it.
- Then as a whole class, check the sentences orally with the students. Again ask them to try not to write anything down. Tell them they will have a chance to do so shortly.
- Give the students in pairs the jumbled parts of sentences in the second page of Exercise 1 and ask them to put the parts together to make sentences relating to the maps. The sentences are not difficult to create, but the process may take some time, as the students will have to deal with the map, the Key, the text and assembling the text. You may want to make this part of the process open-ended, or if you are confident about the level of the class, set a time limit.

- Note that the oval shapes relate to the start of the sentences. You may want to point this out or see how many pick it up.
- Check the answers with the whole class and ask if there are other words they might want to use.
- You may also want to give the students the Key on a piece of paper or on an OHP and ask them to check themselves. This further helps them to cross reference and deal with blocks of information and checking.
- Point out that all of the sentences begin with the subject, but they could also begin with adverbial phrases of time/place, e.g. *In 2003* etc. Ask them to give you examples.

Extension to Exercise 1

- When you are confident the students have understood everything, ask them to work in pairs testing each other orally.
- Student A can ask Student B to describe, say, map 5. Tell them to do ask for the description in any sequence so that it does not become predictable.
- Then ask them to switch asking/describing.
- When you see that they are becoming faster, ask them to stop and ask a student to ask someone in the class to describe a particular map. Make sure they put the name at the end – then the whole class will listen!!

Exercise 2

- Repeat the same process as in Exercise 1. Please note that the maps and therefore the text are more complex.
- Note that there are two versions of the sentences. Version 2 is more difficult, because the students have to identify where the words have to be inserted. This helps them focus on the grammar of the sentence.

Extension to Exercises 1 and 2

- You may wish not to give the students any text and just have them in groups give you their own interpretation of the maps in writing. With more advanced students, you could give them the maps in Exercises 1 and 2 together, and ask them to write sentences under a specific time limit.

Exercise 3 – free practice

- You can use this exercise in many different ways.
- For example, photocopy or print lots of copies of the maps. Give the students the map and the Key to study for a few minutes. Note that the items on the Key are 'lettered' A- J.
- Describe a map as an example using one or more of the items in the Key for each map.

- Ask the students to write the appropriate letter on the appropriate map in the appropriate place. Note the islands are numbered and each has a name. Use the name rather than the number.
- Check with the whole class
- Then dictate as many as you like.
- Tell them not to let their partner see their answer.
- When you feel you have done enough, ask the students to check with a partner what they have.
- Now ask the class to use the Key to describe the maps to you. Note that they will have to interpret the letters using the Key, further developing their ability to juggle information.

Extension to Exercise 3

- Put the students into pairs or groups and ask them to dictate to each other as above.
- Or ask them to write the letters on the maps and give them to another group/pair to interpret.
- Or ask them in groups to decide which letters to put where and then as a group write their own sentences in class or for homework.
- Or put as many of the items as you want, or can, into one map and ask them to write a continuous text.

Time

- If the class is of a high level, you may want to limit the time for the exercise to mimic the extraction and organisation of information in the students' heads in the exam. Use a stop-watch and point out that you are going to stick to the time limit strictly. Over a period of using exercises for exam practice you can gradually decrease the time allowed. Note: intersperse this with exercises without time limits.