

Seeing the invisible

Level: Intermediate +

Time: 90 minutes +

Summary: This lesson is about private detectives: what they do, who might employ them and for what reasons. In this lesson, students:

1. discuss the role of private detectives;
2. study a text about a real private detective;
3. read a profile of a private detective and, then, write a similar profile for a classmate;
4. conduct some research on private detectives in their area and discuss their findings.

Materials: One copy of the worksheet per student

Group size: Any

Note: This lesson plan is for both pre-experience and in-work business students based on an original article first published in *Business Spotlight* issue 2/2016. This is a shortened version.

Warmer

This short task introduces the topic of private detectives, what they do, who might employ them and for what reasons.

Key words

Divide the students into two groups. Group A should find key words 1 to 10 and group B should find key words 11 to 20. When they have done this, they should share their answers with the other students. After you have checked the answers, they should read the article and notice how the words are used in context. Note that the definitions for the words are given in the order the words appear in the article.

Key:

Group A:

1. *ungodly hour*
2. *hot lead*
3. *cheating*
4. *case*
5. *dark forces*
6. *intimidated*

7. *bully*
8. *mundane*
9. *surveillance*
10. *scam*

Group B:

11. *rates*
12. *unscrupulous*
13. *marital betrayal*
14. *estate*
15. *intelligence*
16. *seduce*
17. *solicitor*
18. *honeypot*
19. *fidelity*
20. *fraud*

Understanding the article

In pairs, students answer and discuss the questions. See if they can do this without looking back at the article.

Key:

1. *Yes, he does. He thrives on fighting 'dark forces'.*
2. *trapping cheating husbands or wives*
3. *He has built a large international network of people to assist him: other private investigators and experts on IT, forensics, law and public relations. He also works with honeypot agents.*
4. *the introduction of new technology*
5. *a good smartphone, hidden cameras, recorders and trackers for cars and people*

Idiomatic and metaphorical expressions

This task can be done in pairs or threes. Students complete the expressions with missing words from the article. Then, they should find the expressions in the article to see how they are used in context and discuss their meanings. Finally, they should use some or all of the expressions in sentences of their own.

Key:

1. *dagger – involving mystery and secrets*
2. *fiction – when it is not clear what is real and what is not real*
3. *of it – completely involved in a situation*
4. *on the – based on; using*
5. *thrill – the excitement you feel when trying to find something*
6. *bread – the part of a job that provides you with the money you need to live on*
7. *keep – watch someone carefully to see what they do*
8. *sleeves – prepare yourself for hard work*

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Profiles

Students read the profile of the private detective. They then talk to a partner, asking questions about their own job. They should then write a similar profile for their partner, based on their answers.



EXTENSION:

Turn this task into a 'detective game' in which students interview each other but do not use their partner's real name when writing up their profile – they can make up a name for themselves, like Michael Jones did. If possible, the profiles should be typed up and printed using the same format so that there is no chance of students recognizing each other's handwriting. Pin the profiles to the wall, allowing the students time to read other students' profiles, before guessing who each profile belongs to.

Discussion

Students discuss the questions in groups and provide feedback to the whole class.

Research

This task can be done in groups or set as homework. Students then discuss their findings.

Related topics on onestopenglish

The following fun detective game could be used at the beginning of the lesson as a warmer.

www.onestopenglish.com/community/lesson-share/extras/gaps-and-guessing/gaps-and-guessing-detective-game/145269.article

Follow the link below for audio serializations of Sherlock Holmes stories (intermediate level), with accompanying listening activities and transcripts.

www.onestopenglish.com/skills/listening/serialized-macmillan-readers/sherlock-the-norwood-builder-and-other-stories/

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1 Warmer

Why might individuals or businesses hire a private detective?

2 Key words

Read the definitions and find the key words in the article.

Group A

1. a time of day when it is very early or very late, and not reasonable to speak to or see someone (two words, para 1)

2. very useful information that may help someone to solve a problem or to find out the truth about something, especially a crime (two words, para 1)

3. sexually involved with someone who is not your husband, wife or partner (para 1)

4. a crime or mystery that needs to be solved (para 2)

5. the evil elements of society (two words, para 5)

6. feeling nervous or frightened of someone or something (para 5)

7. someone who frightens or hurts someone who is smaller or weaker than they are (para 5)

8. ordinary and not interesting or exciting, especially because it happens too regularly (para 7)

9. the process of carefully watching a person or place that may be involved in a criminal activity (para 7)

10. a dishonest plan, especially for getting money (para 8)

Group B

11. a type of tax (para 8)

12. willing to do things that are unfair, dishonest or illegal (para 9)

13. doing something bad and so losing your husband's or wife's trust (two words, para 9)

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- 14. a very large area of land that belongs to one person, usually with a very big house on it (para 10)

- 15. information collected about the secret plans and activities of a foreign government, enemy, etc (para 10)

- 16. persuade someone to have sex with you (para 12)

- 17. in the UK, a lawyer who gives legal advice, writes legal contracts and represents people in the lower courts of law (para 12)

- 18. tricking someone into revealing secret information or behaving in an illegal or immoral way (para 13)

- 19. the attitude or behaviour of someone who has sex only with their husband, wife or partner (para 13)

- 20. the crime of obtaining money from someone by tricking them (para 20)

3 Understanding the article

Answer the questions about the article.

- 1. Does Michael Jones enjoy his work?

- 2. What does his main work consist of?

- 3. Who does he work with?

- 4. What is the biggest change that he has seen in the industry in the last 20 years?

- 5. What equipment does he need for his work?

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by Vicki Sussens



Whether it's insurance fraud, a possible affair or a mysterious death, a private detective can help to solve the case. Vicki Sussens reports on the life of a modern-day Sherlock Holmes.

- 1 My telephone rings in the middle of the night. "You called?" asks a man with a British accent. It's "Michael Jones", a private detective I'd tried to phone for an interview earlier that day. Why did he return the call at such an ungodly hour? The answer, as I find out later, is that my call could have been a hot lead in a murder case or simply a call from a client whose cheating partner has not come home.
- 2 The next day (at a more reasonable hour), Jones talks to me about his work. "I know this sounds wild ..." is how he repeatedly introduces his stories. Right now, he has a particularly dramatic case to do with hundreds of millions of missing euros, a mysterious death and shadowy people in the Middle East, Asia and North America. Cloak and dagger indeed.
- 3 I ask him whether his life is in danger. "Only if I handle things incorrectly," he says. "You need to protect yourself physically but, also, know how to keep your communications secure." Later, I discover that the recording of our interview, made with an app on my laptop, has frozen. Just bad luck? The lines between fiction and reality blur when you are dealing with a private eye.
- 4 So what made this mysterious man – whose real name is not Michael Jones – decide to become a Sherlock Holmes? Has he realized a little boy's dream? Not really, he says. He did not play detective games with any more passion than other little boys. Nor did he have a particular love of detective novels or TV crime series. "I am just who I am," he says. "When you are in this job and you are in the thick of it, you are like a James Bond."
- 5 Jones thrives on fighting what he calls "dark forces". "I have always been a protective sort of person," he explains. "And I am not intimidated easily." One of his key early experiences was with the school bully, who was not only older than him but an excellent boxer. "After he tried to beat me up, I told him he was a fool and laughed at him," he says. "In the end, the bully asked the school for protection against me."

Jones is so boyishly proud of his work that once he starts talking, I can't stop him. And as a lover of TV crime series, I don't want him to stop. But surely, he cannot give information about his cases to a member of the media, can he? "I can tell you things but, in fact, I am telling you nothing," he says mysteriously, later explaining that I wouldn't be able to identify his cases on the basis of what he tells me.

His cases range from the thrilling to the mundane. The day before we spoke, after waiting for information on the missing euros case, he went out to do surveillance work for a client. "Sitting for hours in a car can be boring," he says. "Nothing much happens but I enjoy that, too." Is it the thrill of the hunt? He thinks for a moment. "No, it's not like hunting. You're helping someone out of situations they cannot ordinarily handle, which is a good feeling."

For example, he is currently helping a couple find their teenage daughter, who went missing on holiday in Morocco. At the same time, he is working on a case involving an insurance scam. And he is investigating a firm claiming to help small businesses save money on rates, while taking the money themselves. But Jones's main work is the bread and butter of any private detective: trapping cheating husbands or wives.

He sympathizes with women or men who have unscrupulous partners. However, he has learnt not to get too personally involved in his cases. Once, he informed a woman that her husband was in a flat with a woman believed to be his girlfriend. She insisted on accompanying Jones to the flat. When they discovered the two together, she became hysterical. "It ended up in a physical fight between my client and her husband, with the police being called." Experiences like this taught him never to underestimate the emotions involved in a marital betrayal – and to make sure he does not take clients with him on surveillance missions.

Over the past 20 years, he has worked in many security areas. One early job involved running the security for a large estate owned by someone who had celebrities as visitors. His training has been largely on the job, he says. He is now able to set up entire security operations, including all the security systems. He is trained in running civilian intelligence operations (such as the missing euros case), too, and has occasionally

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assisted the government in intelligence missions. He also sends others on missions, which he explains as: "You are sent somewhere to get a specific job done and then you leave."

11 Over the years, Jones has built a large international network of people to assist him in complicated cases. They include other private investigators, as well as experts in areas outside his field, such as information technology, forensics, law and public relations.

12 Public relations can be very effective. One of his current cases involves a doctor wrongly accused of trying to seduce a patient. "He had a poor solicitor and lost the case, which had a lot of publicity," Jones explains. "As a result, he lost his life: his wife, his home, his patients and his reputation." Jones found that the woman had, in fact, accused the doctor because he had refused her attempt to seduce him. Jones now has a top solicitor on the case and will soon be working with PR people to re-establish the man's reputation.

13 Jones also works with honeytrap agents – people hired to get to know a person under observation and to extract information from them. Yes, just like in James Bond. But the agents are not always blonde and beautiful. "Agents are trained for a variety of situations and sometimes, their only role is to change a behaviour or determine what a person's intentions are," Jones says. They are often used by people wanting to test the fidelity of their partners.

14 One of the biggest changes Jones has seen in the industry has been the introduction of new technology. "Twenty years ago, a private detective with a smartphone would have been regarded as a superspy," he explains. "There were no phones then with GPS, cameras, email or internet."

15 Technology has also helped him to increase his business. He does all his marketing online, getting clients from around the world. For example, a woman in Afghanistan recently employed Jones to keep tabs on her husband, who was on a business trip to Russia. "She was not only able to find me but could also make online payments," Jones explains. "So the internet is a bonus for me."

So what technology must he have? "A good smartphone, hidden cameras, recorders and trackers for cars and people," he says. But he describes the civilian market for spy equipment as "a joke". "I was recently looking for a hidden camera and found a pen that looked really good. But the photo quality was terrible," he recalls.

Today, artificial intelligence, in particular, algorithm software, can produce complex psychological profiles of people. And technological innovation is enabling electronic spying. Isn't this a threat to the private detective industry? Jones thinks not. "The technology benefits us hugely. However, you still have to roll up your sleeves and get to work."

He says private detective work is not only about intelligence gathering but, also, about making sense of that intelligence. "You need to be able to interpret situations and then be quick-witted – especially when things don't go as planned." In other words, good old-fashioned Sherlock Holmes detective work is as important as ever. And that means being able to see things others can't – as Holmes himself says in *The Hound of the Baskervilles*: "The world is full of obvious things which nobody ... ever observes."

Years of experience have also shown Jones that people have patterns of behaviour. By piecing together information about people, it is possible to predict behaviour.

Jones has chosen to work against "dark forces": fraud, kidnapping, betrayal, murder. But he doesn't believe that we are living through worse times than in the past. Human weaknesses have not changed, he says. "However, the internet has increased the opportunities for crime – and, especially, for cheating husbands and wives to meet others online." That should keep Michael Jones in business for many years to come – if he can keep safe.

Vicki Sussens is a feature writer who edits the Intercultural and Management sections of Business Spotlight.

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4 Idiomatic and metaphorical expressions

Complete the expressions from the text with the missing words. Explain what the expressions mean and find them in the article to see how they are used. Then, use the expressions in sentences of your own.

1. cloak and d _____
2. the lines between f _____ and reality blur
3. in the thick o ____ i ____
4. o ____ t ____ basis of ...
5. the t _____ of the hunt
6. b _____ and butter
7. k _____ tabs on someone
8. roll up your s _____

5 Profiles

Read the profile of a private detective. Then interview a partner about their own job and write a similar profile for them.



PROFILE OF A PRIVATE DETECTIVE

- ▶ **Name:** Michael Jones (alias)
- ▶ **Company name:** Lawsons International (owner)
- ▶ **Years working in security:** 20
- ▶ **Training:** on the job
- ▶ **Job satisfaction:** high



The skills of the trade

According to Michael Jones, a good private detective needs to be able to:

- move through a crowd without getting noticed;
- read a situation quickly and know how to respond;
- react quickly when the situation changes;
- build up a profile of a person under observation, using patterns of behaviour to predict future behaviour;
- keep safe;
- have a large network of people from other fields to work with.

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6 Discussion

- What mental picture do you have of a private detective? Where do you think this image comes from? What is it influenced by?
- Where would you look to find a private detective?
- What qualifications or experience would you expect a private detective to have?
- Under what circumstances would you advise someone to employ a private detective?
- Should large companies and organizations engage the services of private detectives?

7 Research

Try to find out:

- how many private detectives there are in your area;
- where they advertise;
- what services they advertise;
- what they charge.

