

Fun with articles by Andrew Starck

Age:	Teenagers / Adults
Level:	Pre-intermediate +
Time:	120 minutes
Objective:	to practise using definite and indefinite articles; to differentiate between the past simple and present tense usage
Key skill:	Writing
Materials:	One copy of the sample sentences, cut up (or re-write them onto large pieces of paper); one copy of the worksheet per student; sticky notes with four colours (enough for nine of each colour per pair); sticky tape; scissors

Procedure

- Start by writing the three articles **the**, **a** and **an** on the board. Tell the students, 'Today, we're going to have fun with articles.'
- Tell the students to get into pairs or small groups. Hand out packs of multicoloured Post-it notes (the small size, used to highlight book pages, are fine). Ask the students to share them around, making sure each pair has at least nine sticky notes of each of the four colours. While they are busy doing this, stick the sample sentences up around the classroom.
- Then, tell the class: 'One colour is for **the**, one for **a**, one for **an** and one for **blank**.' Ask them which colour they would like to choose for each. Take a vote if necessary. Write the colour for each article on the board to avoid confusion.
- Get students to write the articles on the corresponding coloured sticky notes and leave the notes blank for the zero article – for example, **the** on green, **a** on pink, **an** on yellow and leave orange **blank**. **Note:** So that the sticky notes are the correct width for the gaps, you may want to tell students to cut or tear the notes to 4cm in width (or wider if you have written the sample sentences onto larger pieces of paper), making sure to retain the sticky part of the note.
- Tell the pairs to go around and stick their notes onto the gaps they think are correct.

- When they have finished, ask them if they had the same answers as other groups, check for any mistakes and answer any questions.

Key:

- a; the
- the; Ø; an
- Ø; a; the
- the; a
- a; Ø; the
- an; the; Ø
- the; the; the

- Explain some basic article rules – for example, *the* is used with –est when there is only one of something, etc. (See www.macmillandictionary.com/dictionary/british/a 4 and www.macmillandictionary.com/dictionary/british/the for useful explanations.)
- Now, hand out one copy of the story per pair of students. Students should work in pairs to write *the*, *a*, *an* or Ø (zero article) in the boxes and the past simple or present simple of the verbs in the gaps.

Key:

The old man and his beard

A long time ago, there was **an** old man who came from **a** country far away. **The** old man had **the** longest beard anyone had ever seen. **The** only thing was (be), his beard had (have) **a** strange smell. It was (be) definitely not **a** bad smell; actually, it smelt of roses. That's weird, you might think: why should **an** old man's beard smell of roses? **The** reason is not so easy to explain to modern people because they do not believe in **Ø** magic.

If you are easily scared, **the** best thing for you to do is to hold onto one of your classmate's hands while reading this story and remember **a** very important thing: **the** only way to protect yourself against **Ø** ghosts and magic is to be very, very brave. Think of **the** bravest person that you know – it just might help you. Now, let's go back to **the** time when the old man was (be) just **a** little boy. **The** land, the sea and the sky were (be) not like they are (be) today. Countries were (be) not the same either; they did (do) not have names

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like we use nowadays: Japan, England, the United States and China. They were called: Ig, Og, Ug and Ish. The world was joined together by a very strong glue. The sea and the sky were (be) not the same as they are today but a whole rainbow of colours, constantly changing. It was (be) quite a sight.

Have you ever thought (think) what it would be like to see the world from a completely different perspective? The old man had seen everything just as it was (be) before we destroyed it with our human ways and ignorance. He knew (know) that humans are such a stupid race. If only he could make us all see clearly – but even God had trouble doing that.

Anyway, this is a the story of an old man and how his beard always smelled of the freshest roses. As we said, it all started when the old man was just a little boy. Even the colours of the rainbow were different and constantly changing so people didn't rely so much on their sight to 'look' at the world. They used their other senses. All that could be heard at that time was an eerie whisper. But if you listened carefully, other sounds could be heard beneath the whisper.

- When they have finished, students should finish the story using their own ideas with at least three more paragraphs. If there's not enough time in class, this could be set as homework. They can then share their stories in small groups or with the whole class.

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1. There's strange man knocking on door. ✂

2. Did you see butterfly? It had blue wings and
 orange body.

3. I love ice cream. Could I have scoop of
 chocolate chip, please?

4. Where is toilet, please? I'm in hurry.

5. I saw film last night; it got good reviews but
I thought it was worst film I have ever seen.

6. My sister recommended art teacher to me. Unfortunately,
 teacher is busy all year.

7. moon is very bright tonight and is shining on
surface of sea.

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_____ long time ago, there was _____ old man who came from _____ country far away. _____ old man had _____ longest beard anyone had ever seen. _____ only thing _____ (be), his beard _____ (have) _____ strange smell. It _____ (be) definitely not _____ bad smell; actually, it smelt of roses. That's weird, you might think: why should _____ old man's beard smell of roses? _____ reason is not so easy to explain to modern people because they do not believe in _____ magic.

If you are easily scared, _____ best thing for you to do is to hold on to one of your classmate's hands while reading this story and remember _____ very important thing: _____ only way to protect yourself against _____ ghosts and magic is to be very, very brave. Think of _____ bravest person that you know – it just might help you. Now, let's go back to _____ time when the old man _____ (be) just _____ little boy.

The land, the sea and the sky _____ (be) not like they _____ (be) today. Countries _____ (be) not _____ same either; they _____ (do) not have names like we use nowadays: _____ Japan, _____ England, _____ United States and _____ China. They were called: Ig, Og, Ug and Ish. _____ world was joined together by _____ very strong glue. _____ sea and _____ sky _____ (be) not the same green and blue as they are today but _____ whole rainbow of colours, constantly changing. It _____ (be) quite _____ sight.

Have you ever _____ (think) what it would be like to see _____ world from a completely different perspective? _____ old man had seen everything just as it _____ (be) before we destroyed it with our human ways and ignorance. He _____ (know) that humans are such a stupid race. If only he could make us all see clearly – but even God had trouble doing that.

Anyway, this is _____ story of an old man and how his beard always smelled of _____ freshest roses. As we said, it all started when _____ old man was just _____ little boy. Even the colours of the rainbow were different and constantly changing so people didn't rely so much on their sight to 'look' at the world. They used their other senses. All that could be heard at that time was _____ eerie whisper. But if you listened carefully, other sounds could be heard beneath the whisper.