

Topic-based reading: Santa – Pre-intermediate by Jackie McAvoy

LEVEL: Pre-intermediate (A2)

AGE: Teenagers / Adults

TIME NEEDED: 60 minutes

OBJECTIVES: To predict content from a text, to read a text for gist and specific information, to agree or disagree with a topic and give reasons

KEY SKILLS: Reading, speaking

MATERIALS: One copy of the text and worksheet per student, a board and board pens, paper and pens for making a poster (optional)

LEAD-IN: PRE-READING TASKS

- 1 Explain the concept of *dressing up* (wearing special clothes – a costume – in order to look like somebody or something different). Give an example by showing a picture of yourself or somebody else dressed up.
- 2 Either as a whole class or in pairs / groups, ask students if they can give an example of a time they dressed up; for example, for a party, a play, a festival. This could be either as an adult or when they were a child. Ask students who they dressed up as.

Tip: Give a simple example

When I was a child I went to a party dressed up as a duck. After that, all my friends called me quacky so I really hate dressing up now! This helps lower-level students to understand the task.

- 3 Tell the students you are going to read out the first three sentences of the text: *I have a friend called Sam who hates December. Can you guess why? He's tall, quite large and has a large beard.* Repeat the sentences again if necessary.
- 4 Ask students to guess why Sam hates December. If they can't guess, show them the picture from the text, but don't give them the text yet.
- 5 Read out the next part of the text: *Yes! His boss always asks him to dress up as Santa Claus for the children's party, and he hates being Santa Claus.* Elicit if anyone guessed correctly and check that they understand how Sam feels.
- 6 Tell students that there are three reasons why Sam hates being Santa Claus and see if they can guess what they might be. Encourage students to think about this in pairs and then report back their ideas to the class.



Tip: Encourage predicting

Students will be able to understand the text better if they have anticipated the content.

Tip: Share ideas

All students, including those who couldn't think of any suggestions, will then benefit.

READING 1

- 7 Hand out copies of the worksheet. Ask students to read the text and answer the two questions.

Tip: Tell students that you only want short answers

This is a first reading task so students just need to show that they've got the main idea (gist) of the text. They don't need to give long answers.

- 8 Ask students to compare their answers in pairs, then elicit answers from the class.

Key: _____

1. *Sam hates the costume, the children (who don't say 'thank you') and the fact that the real meaning of Christmas is lost / people buy too many presents.*
2. *Sam feels happier because he is going to be 'Zenta' this year, instead of 'Santa'.*

Explain that *Zenta* is a combination of the Japanese word *Zen* and the word *Santa*. *Zen* means 'calm'.

READING 2

- 9 Ask students to read the text again and complete question 3. Once finished, ask students to compare their answers in pairs, then elicit answers from the class.

Key: _____

Father Christmas: Came from Britain, he was originally called Old Man Winter, went to people's houses asking for food and drink.
Santa Claus: Came from Turkey (St. Nicholas), helped people and gave children presents.
Zenta Claus: Comes from Japan, thinks about the people buying things they don't need.

Tip: Think about quick feedback

If you have a projector or an IWB you could have the answers ready to show the students once they've given their suggestions.

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Tip: Think about other reading tasks

This reading is mainly to provoke a reaction and encourage speaking. To extend it, ask the students to write their own comprehension questions for each other. Limit to five questions. Students then swap questions and answer them. This involves no preparation for the teacher and is a great activity to get students talking!

POST-READING TASKS: SPEAKING

- 10 Elicit from the students other events similar to Christmas that involve giving gifts (for example, Mother's Day, Valentine's Day, Thanksgiving).
- 11 In pairs or groups, ask students to decide if they agree with Sam or not, in response to the statement *At Christmas, people give and receive too many gifts*. If students struggle to give a response, write the following on the board for them to choose from, adding more opinions of their own, if possible:

*Yes, I agree, people buy too many things they don't need.
Sort of, but I like shopping.
No, I disagree. It's good to buy lots of things.*

Follow up with some brief open class feedback to see what most students think.

Tip: Think about different speaking tasks

Students could also tell each other about something they've bought but never used, for example an ice cream maker, an exercise machine, an article of clothing or a gym membership.

POST-READING TASKS: MAKING A POSTER

- 12 Explain to students that they are going to design a poster to stop people buying so many things. Tell students to work in pairs or small groups and come up with some good reasons for people to save their money.
- 13 Once students have enough ideas, they have to think of the best way to present the information on a poster that's going to be put up outside shopping centres. They will need to think of a good heading to attract the attention of shoppers.
- 14 Once completed, display the posters around the classroom and get students to compare them. Which are the most effective and why?

Tip: homework

If you are short of time, ask students to create the posters for homework and then have the students compare and discuss them in the next class.

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READING 1

Read the text and answer the questions:

1. What are the three things that Sam hates?

2. Why does Sam feel happier at the end of the text?

SANTA

I have a friend called Sam who hates December. Can you guess why? He's tall, quite large and has a large beard. Yes! His boss always asks him to dress up as Santa Claus for the children's party, and he hates being Santa Claus! Also, people call him *Samta* Claus and he really hates that, too!



Sam explains more: 'First of all, I hate the costume. The red and white trousers and jacket look terrible on me. I also have to wear a hat, a belt, gloves and boots, which makes me feel very hot. I have to say 'Ho, ho, ho' all the time, too.'

'Secondly, the children never say 'thank you' when I give them a present. I think children nowadays have too many toys and presents already; they don't need any more. The presents are very expensive too – why do children only want expensive presents?

'Thirdly, Santa Claus, or Father Christmas, is not the most important thing about Christmas, but that's all people think about – getting presents.' Sam looks unhappy. He really doesn't want to be Santa Claus again this year.

He then tells me the difference between Santa Claus and Father Christmas. 'They are not the same people,' he says. I didn't know this. 'Father Christmas has a much older history. In the past, long before Christianity came to Britain, an old man from every village or town went to all the houses and asked for food and drink. The man

was called 'Old Man Winter' and later 'Father Christmas'. People were kind and gave him food and drink.'

So who was Santa Claus, then? 'He was Saint Nicholas, a Bishop from Turkey hundreds of years ago. He helped people and gave presents to children. The Dutch called him *Sinterklaas* and when they moved to the US they took *Sinterklaas* with them and he got a new name: Santa Claus. That's why the Americans say Santa Claus but the British say Father Christmas.'

I then have an idea. 'Sam,' I say, 'I know your boss will ask you to be Santa Claus again. However, why not be *Zenta Claus* instead?'

Sam looks at me, surprised. 'Who is *Zenta Claus*?' he asks.

'Well, other people are also unhappy about Santa Claus and the buying of so many presents. In Japan there is now another person. This person looks like Santa Claus with the same red and white costume and beard, etc, but there is a big difference. He doesn't give presents to children and he doesn't make people buy lots of things.'

'So what does *Zenta* do, then?' asks Sam.




I explain, 'Well, he sits quietly on the floor and thinks about how bad it is that everyone buys so many things they don't need.'

For the first time Sam is smiling. 'This year, I'm *Zenta Claus*, not Santa Claus!' And then he laughs: 'Ho, ho, ho!'

READING 2

3. In the text, Sam talks about three people: Santa Claus, Father Christmas and *Zenta Claus*. Read the text and find out which country each person came from and what they did / do.

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	Santa Claus	Father Christmas	Zenta Claus
			
Where does he come from?			
What did / does he do?			