

## Mysteries: Teachers' notes and tips – elementary

### 1 Pre-reading tasks

- a Tell the students they have to guess the theme of the lesson. You are going to read out a list of words and the first person that calls out the correct theme wins. Start with *captain* and then slowly add *crew*, *on board*, *coastguard*. You can write these on the board as you go. Once someone has said *sailing* or *boats* they win but keep going until all the words are said. The winner can explain any words to the others if need be.
- b Give each student a copy of the reading tasks and ask them to look at the questions in part 1. This is a pair-work speaking activity; make sure nobody is writing. Monitor and listen for any interesting comments.

#### Tip: provide a context for new vocabulary

Articles about specialist subjects will always have specialist vocabulary. If there is too much this can be off-putting for elementary students, even if they can get the general gist of the text. Give the students time to understand and use the new words in context before reading. As always try to personalize the subject so that students can talk about their own experiences and opinions.

#### Tip: lesson plans should be flexible

If you think it's better, get the students to do the vocabulary task in part 2 before the speaking.

- c Ask for some open-class feedback, encourage students who said something interesting to tell the whole class.
- d Students then match the words with the definitions in part 2 and then compare their answers.
- e Feedback: 1. *dinghy*; 2. *sail*; 3. *rope*; 4. *cargo*
- f Tell students they are all going to read a newspaper article called *Abandoned ship*. Write this on the board and get students to guess the meaning (to leave a ship, especially because it is impossible or dangerous to stay). Elicit some reasons for why someone may leave a ship – what would make it impossible or dangerous to stay? The boat was on fire or sinking, pirates..?

#### Tip: encourage speculation

Getting students involved in the story beforehand means that when reading, they'll focus more on the content rather than understanding every word.

### 2 First reading tasks

- a There are two readings: A and B. Divide the class in two and give half the A reading and the other half the B reading. However, the students should be working in pairs: AA and BB.
- b Ask students to read their texts and to tell each other if there is a reason why the crew abandoned their ship.

#### Tip: provide appropriate first reading tasks

Ask questions that require students to think about the overall meaning rather than looking for specific information. The task should make students read all the text and help them with the gist.

- c Feedback: there is no reason given, it's a mystery.

### 3 Second reading tasks

- a Tell students they are now going to read the text in more detail to complete the table in question three on the worksheet. They only need to write notes.
- b Students work individually but they should be comparing their answers with their partner.
- c There's no feedback so monitor well (do the tasks yourself first!) and make sure students are on the right track. Perhaps put pairs in groups of fours to compare their answers. They should notice the year of their story.
- d You need to have all the students ready before the next task so get early finishers to quiz each other on the answers.

**Tip: encourage note-taking**

There shouldn't be sentences here, only notes. This task helps students to find the main information contained in the text and will help them with the following speaking task.

### 4 Post-reading tasks – speaking

- a Students are now put in different pairs so that a student who read text A pairs up with a student who read text B. They students don't need the texts, only the worksheet with their answers on.
- b Students take it in turn to tell each other about their newspaper articles. Make sure this is a speaking activity; they mustn't show each other their notes. However, students can use their notes to help them tell the story.
- c Do explain that this is not a question and answer task – one student should be giving the whole story, although the other student can ask questions if they don't understand or want further information. Students should also notice the differences and similarities between the two stories.
- d Finally, students together try and decide what happened in each case. This may be difficult at this level but let them have a go anyway.

**Tip: link the reading to a speaking activity**

The students should be able to speak for quite a few minutes about their story. This gives them confidence in both their reading and speaking skills.

### 5 Post-reading tasks – writing

- a Using the table in part 3 of the reading tasks students come up with their own *Abandoned ship* story for a newspaper article. They need to decide the main information first and use their notes to put together a couple of paragraphs. The notes can be made in class with your support and the writing done at home.

**Tip: link the reading to a writing activity**

You can also give students a copy of both stories – they will notice the repeating phrases and can use these themselves in their own story.

**Tip: remember a writing task also means another reading task**

Get students to read each other's newspaper articles – can they decide a reason for why the crew abandoned the boat?

**Note:** A boat is smaller than a ship but the headline uses *ship* for both. A ship is a large boat that is used for carrying passengers or goods by sea. The Australian boat was actually a yacht (a sailing boat used for pleasure).