

Hybrids: Teachers' notes and tips – upper intermediate

1 Pre-reading tasks

- a In the lesson before give students the worksheet and ask them to do part 1 and 2 for homework – they can use the Internet, encyclopaedias etc. They should ignore part 3.

Tip: create interest in the topic beforehand

This will help to motivate the students to read the text.

- b Then put students together in small groups to compare their answers.
- c Feedback: only cover the questions that students have been unable to answer. **a** head and body of a human female and the tail of a fish; **b** a horse with bird wings; **c** the body of a man and the head and tail of a bull; **d** a horse with an antelope's horn on it's forehead; **e** a Hindu god with an elephant's head; **f** a Greek mythical character with snakes for her hair; **g** the head and body of a man and the body of a horse.
- d Also ask students which creatures they think are the most interesting / dangerous; would they like to meet any of them?! What they have in common, of course, is the fact they are all made up of two different creatures. See if there are any others that students know about that have been missed off the list.
- e The creatures on the worksheet are also all mythical, can the students think of any real life hybrids (creatures that have parents of two different species)? It doesn't matter if they can't think of anything!

Tip: have a back-up plan!

If you forget to give the worksheet out the lesson before ask students to look at the list any way and see how many they can answer. Perhaps they could do this as a follow-up task instead.

2 First reading tasks

- a Tell students they are going to read about a real hybrid animal. Show the second page of the text and the gapped word.
- b Give each student a copy of the reading and ask them to read it quite quickly – their task is to decide what word should go in the gap, There are clues in the text.
- c Students compare their ideas.

Tip: make sure the first reading is 'doable'

A task like this helps students concentrate on the important information and worry less about detail and unknown vocabulary.

- c Feedback: Nathaniel. The name comes from Nathalie (the mother) and Daniel (the father).

3 Second reading tasks

- a Ask students to now look at part 3 of the worksheet.
- b There are lots of situations given in the text, and most of these are explained. Students need to read again to find the reasons behind them all, and then

make notes. Some of the reasons are not explicit so the students have to think these out for themselves.

- c Students should be working independently but once they have finished they should compare their answers and discuss their ideas.

Tip: do an example first

Elicit: *because it (the story) was very unusual / strange, the cub was cute / v different etc*

Tip: provide questions that aid comprehension

Questions like these help students to understand the main information contained in the text. They also encourage students to 'read between the lines'.

- d Feedback: students may have extra ideas which is fine. **a** see example; **b** perhaps to involve the community in a special local event **c** because he feels it's unnatural; **d** because they can help animals and educate people about them; **e** to make money / because they couldn't have any lion or tiger cubs; **f** they don't believe in mixing the species; **g** for public amusement / to make money / because we now have the technology? (perhaps discuss this with your students); **h** because they are less healthy.
- e Can the students identify the animals that make the other hybrids that are mentioned in the text?
- f Feedback: *tiger+lion / zebra+donkey / zebra+pony / horse+zebra / goat+sheep / whale+dolphin / yak+cow*

4 Post-reading tasks – speaking and writing

- a The text only has Nathaniel's point of view. Students now consider the thoughts of the owner of the zoo. What is his / her opinion of the cub and the reason for allowing the *liger* to be born? What are the advantages for the zoo? Is this something that they will repeat again in the future, perhaps with other animals? Is it really such a bad idea?
- b Put students into pairs to brainstorm ideas and make notes. The information doesn't have to be factual (they can make things up) but it should be very much in favour of the hybrid cub.
- c Students then use this information to write an interview with the zoo owner for the local paper. Elicit some suitable headlines that could go with the article e.g. *Nathaniel's a success!* or *We love little liger!*

Tip: help students to recognise bias

Very few texts are really balanced and unbiased. By having to write the zoo owner's opinion and a different angle on the story highlights the fact that this is missing from the original text.

- d What are the students' opinions? Do they tend to agree with Nathaniel or the zoo owner? Let them now tell each other what they personally think – perhaps have a vote at the end to see which way most students think.

Tip: allow students to give their own opinions

Readings with a slightly controversial opinion can motivate students to speak and write in English. Having to consider both sides in some detail first will also help students to form an opinion about something that is probably new to them.