

## Stamps: Teachers' notes and tips – elementary

### 1 Pre-reading tasks

- a If you have brought in something you collect, then get the students to ask you questions about that – when you started, how many you have, etc.
- b If not, then hand out the task sheet immediately and get students to ask each other the questions in 1 in pairs. Monitor and if you hear someone talking about a collection they have, invite them to talk about it to the other students.
- c Quick feedback. Is stamp collecting popular because it can be quite cheap to do? Because it's interesting to find out about other countries?
- d Back in pairs again to ask each other questions in 2.
- e Ask for a short feedback on comments (and to clarify meaning of adhesive).

#### Tip: use realia

If you yourself like collecting something, and it's not too big, bring a few examples into the classroom. Or borrow from another teacher who collects something – the students will be much more interested in the reading then. If one of your students likes collecting something, ask them to bring some examples in next lesson to show everyone.

### 2 First reading tasks

- a The text, minus the headings, are on the last page of these notes. Make one copy and cut them up. Place the 6 pieces randomly around the classroom or, better still, outside if possible (do this while the students are talking to each other).
- b Ask students to look at the six questions in 3. Tell them the questions are about a woman called Penelope White. Then explain that the text (a paragraph answering each question) is on the walls. Each paragraph has a letter on it: A to F. They have to decide which paragraph answers which question. Show students that one has been done already as an example: the answer to question 6 is in paragraph B. The students remain in pairs – one stays seated while the other runs up, reads a paragraph and decides which question this answers. They then write the letter *only* by the question. Now their partner can run up and do the same. As soon as a pair has finished, they raise their hands.
- c When most have finished ask for a quick feedback: 1C 2E 3D 4A 5F

#### Tip: encourage different reading speeds (and promote more efficient readers)

This activity really makes sure the students read the text quickly for the answers, and it's always fun. This particular task also makes sure all the students are looking at the correct paragraphs for the answers for the next task, otherwise weaker students may find it too difficult.

### 3 Second reading tasks

- a Now the students do the same thing but this time they run up (still in turns) to find the answers to the questions. This will take a bit longer. Some of the answers are obvious, some questions may have more than one answer (so they have to decide which is the best answer) and some answers are quite long (so they have to summarise the answer).

- b There's no need for feedback. When most have finished, ask them to compare their answers and then give them each a copy of the full text.

**Tip: encourage learner autonomy**

The aim of all these readings is that students become better and more confident readers, and perhaps want to read more in English outside the classroom, so try to use more student-centred ways of making sure they're on the right track.

**4 Third reading tasks**

- a Students, working individually, find the information asked for in 4. Perhaps they don't disagree with anything, or don't find anything interesting – that doesn't matter.

**Tip: provide real-life responses to a text**

We often read something in our own language and think *That's not right* or *What do they mean by that?* Elementary students should be encouraged to do this too.

**5 Post-reading tasks – speaking**

- a In small groups students compare information they liked, thought was boring, etc. They can help each other if there's anything they don't understand.

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

It's also natural that we share our thoughts on an article, book, etc we've read with someone else – so get the students to do this too. Much nicer than answering comprehension questions!

**6 Post-reading tasks – using the Internet**

- a This website is updated regularly and has some useful information about UK stamps. Students can tell you the answers in the next lesson. Do tell students though that once they have found the **Stamp of the month** they must click the image which will lead onto more information about it, and similar stamps – it's not that clear from the website.

**Tip: choose post-reading tasks that are most appropriate for your class**

If your students don't have access to the Internet why not consider asking them to design a stamp of their own – one which says something about them (celebrating the birth of a child, passing their driving test...) or a fantasy one (first person on Mars, king of their country...). These can be done for homework and shared with the other students in the next lesson.

Or perhaps the students would prefer to find out about stamps from their own country and then tell the other students.

Or younger students may enjoy finding stamps which have different animals on; almost every animal has been on a stamp. They could have a 'stamp zoo' and explain to the class next lesson why they chose the animals they did.

Cut these up and place them around the classroom walls, or outside if possible.

**C** Because of my name! My parents call me Penelope but everyone else calls me Penny. When I was at school my teachers sometimes changed my name from Penny White to Penny Black. They said it was the name of the very first stamp in the world. I thought that was great! I wanted to know more about stamps so I started to collect them. I think both the history of stamps and their designs are very interesting.

**E** Well, the Penny Black was first sold in 1840 and it was very popular. It cost only one penny and so poorer people could send letters too. More people wanted to read and write now, which was a good thing. Another good thing was that the new Post Office had a savings bank so for the first time people could save their money.

**D** The Penny Black itself had a large picture of Queen Victoria on it. The everyday stamps in the UK still have just a picture of the King or Queen on but sometimes there are stamps for special occasions. For example every December there are special Christmas stamps. We often have stamps to remember important people. The person who has been on most stamps is Sir Winston Churchill who was the prime minister during the Second World War. The next person is Christopher Columbus, the Italian born explorer who discovered America. We also have beautiful stamps with animals and birds, or flowers on – I think they're all lovely!

**A** After the UK the next country to have stamps was Brazil in 1843 and then Switzerland. They were followed by the USA and Mauritius in 1847 and then France and Belgium in 1849. The first country to have self-adhesive stamps was Sierra Leone in 1964. The stamps were in the shape of the country. The second country was the Pacific Island of Tonga but this time the shape of the stamp was a bunch of bananas!

**F** That's easy – the stamp the Nicaraguans made in 1900. The design included a picture of Mount Momotombo on it. The artist wanted the stamp to look more interesting so he painted the mountain with lots of smoke coming out of it. The Americans wanted to build a canal through Central America and they had to choose between Nicaragua or Panama. When they saw the stamp they decided that Nicaragua was too dangerous and chose Panama – but in fact the mountain is completely safe!

**B** In 1885 a 14 year-old Swedish boy found a yellow *Tre Skilling Banco* stamp. He knew it was unusual (they are usually green) and he sold it for seven kroner. In 1996 it was sold for an incredible £1,400,000. That stamp, unfortunately, is not in my collection!

