

## ADAPTING A PICTURE STORY

Alan Marsh MATEFL

Lots of teaching materials, course books etc contain picture sequences that have to be re-ordered. Students then read or listen to the story to check if they were right – and thereby develop their reading or speaking skills. This in itself is an interesting and effective activity, but a lot more can be added to make it more fun, more challenging and ultimately more satisfying. Further, an activity which in the coursebook lasts an average of 10-15minutes can be effectively spun out to last a good 90 minutes!!!

As an example. let's use the following picture strip from the old Headway Pre-Intermediate Unit 3, the James Bond story (pictures available at end of article as .jpeg images. Just click on them to copy!. Here's the technique – which of course can be used with any picture sequence.

- 1 Tell students they're going to be 'doing' a story about .... (James Bond)
- 2 Cut up the pictures, mount each one on card (and laminate for long-lasting use, if you can).
- 3 Enlarge two of the pictures – A4 size if you can.
- 4 Divide the class into Team A and Team B. Ask each team to select an artist (they don't need to draw very well – stick figures will do.). Draw a line down the middle of the board. Each team's artist will draw on a different half of the board. So now the two teams sit as far away as possible from the board, at different sides of the classroom, whilst their artists stand at the board.
- 5 Give each team one of the two enlarged pictures, which they **must not show** to their Team Artist. Simultaneously, the two teams 'dictate' their picture to their Team Artist, who has to draw the picture as accurately as possible on the appropriate half of the board. Lots of 'learning noise' will be happening – all part of the fun. Set a (flexible) time limit for this. When they've finished, the two artists can look at the enlarged pictures, and each team looks at the other team's enlarged picture. Congratulate the teams and the artists.
- 6 Tell the class that the two pictures form part of a sequence of pictures in a story. You are going to hand out the other pictures in the story. Students **must not show** their picture to anyone else.
- 7 Give each student one picture. Share if you have more than six students. If you have fewer than six, take a picture yourself and/or give some stronger students two pictures.
- 8 Tell the students that in a moment they're going to describe their picture to the other students. The other students can ask questions for clarification. The idea is to guess the possible sequence of the pictures. Students mentally prepare, look up necessary vocabulary in their dictionaries, call you over for help in their preparation, etc. Students now proceed to describe their pictures. You might want to ask them to sit in the order their pictures come in the story.
- 9 When students think they have a logical sequence, put all the pictures on the board or face upwards on the table so that everyone can see them. Ask if they

want to change anything. They now listen to or read the story and decide if their order was correct.

- 10 Afterwards, elicit the story from the students using only the pictures and the appropriate narrative tenses (books closed!) You might like to input some linkers (eg *then, next, after that, suddenly, at the end* etc)
- 11 Students tell the story to each other in pairs (usually much more effective than simply writing it).
- 12 Do whatever follow-up work there is in the coursebook, or on the language the students used – or didn't use – while telling the story.

Have fun!

**Alan Marsh**

Acknowledgement: I picked up the basis of this technique from Jim Scrivener in Malta in 1994





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