

## Storylines

This is a speaking and listening communication activity which is aimed at pre-intermediate students and above. It was developed to help students practise narrative tenses and structures. The duration of the activity depends on the size of the class, but will take at least twenty minutes for an average size class.

### Procedure

Students form a 'storyline' chain where they pass and add part of a narrative to the next student in the class. In this way, the students construct a simple group narrative.

This activity can be approached in several ways.

- First you need to prepare a card or piece of paper for each student with a key word written on it.
- Explain the task to your students - they must remember the story which is told them, relay it to the next student in the storyline and add a sentence or two to continue the narrative, including the key word you give them on a card or piece of paper.
- With small groups or slightly weaker groups, get the students to sit in a circle and do the activity in the classroom.
- With larger, stronger groups, ask one student to remain in the classroom and invite the others to wait outside until you ask them to re-enter the room. Now tell student A the beginning of the story and give them a keyword card. Invite student B into the room. Student A passes the story to student B with his/her addition to the narrative. Then invite student C into the room and ask A to wait outside. Give students help and encouragement where appropriate in order to keep the activity going and the story more-or-less on course.
- This is a communication-based activity so don't worry too much about grammatical accuracy.
- Explain to the final student that they must find a satisfactory end to the story.
- At the end of the exercise, ask the last student to tell the whole story to student A, then ask student A to tell the story to you...
- If you have access to a tape-recorder, tape student A and then invite feedback from the whole group ...

### Story Beginnings

- 'When Peter finally reached the top of the mountain, he couldn't believe his eyes...' 'Kate sat at her desk and turned on her computer. Then, something strange happened...'
- 'It was a terrible night. Outside, there was a storm. It was nearly midnight when suddenly there was a loud knock at the door...'
- 'Amanda stared at the man. It was him! It was definitely the man she had seen on TV...'
- 'Ben was having the best day of his life. It began with a phone call after breakfast ...'

### Follow-up activities

There are numerous ways of following or adding to this activity.

- With strong groups, go back through the group so that the story continues in reverse sequence, finally ending with student A.
- Alternatively, arrange the students into small groups and ask them to work together to write down the story in a way which is as grammatically accurate as possible...
- Alternatively, arrange your students into pairs or small groups, give them each a new keyword card and then tell them they have fifteen minutes or so to write a short story containing the keyword. Get each pair to read their story to the class and then invite the class to guess what the keyword was ...

*By David Done*