

Lateral thinking

A fun activity to practise questions forms and a wide range of vocabulary.

Aims

- To get students thinking.
- To allow for practice of question forms and a wide range of vocabulary.
- This activity does not have to be linked with any others.

Procedure

- Explain that you are going to read out something strange and the students have to work out what has happened.
- The students can ask questions about the situation and you can only respond with a yes/no/maybe.
- Read out one of the descriptions below and make sure that the students have understood.
- The first student to guess what has happened is the winner.
- You can allow students to work in pairs or threes or teams to discuss the situation and help each other.

Situations

1. A man is lying dead in a snowy field. There are no footprints to or from his body. The man has a pack on his back. How did he die?
A: He jumped out of a airplane with a parachute on his back that failed to open.
2. When Harry comes home he finds Sarah is dead, lying in a pool of water and Tom is sitting quietly on the armchair. There is some broken glass on the floor. Tom won't be charged with murder. Why not?
A: Sarah is a fish and Tom is a cat. Sarah was swimming in her bowl. Tom started playing with it and knocked it over.
3. A man walks into a bar and asks the barman for a glass of water. The barman pulls out a gun and points it at the man. The man says 'Thank you' and walks out.
A: The man had hiccups. The barman recognized this from his speech and drew the gun in order to give him a shock. It worked and cured the hiccups - so the man no longer needed the water.
4. Five pieces of coal, a carrot and a scarf are lying on the grass. Nobody put them on the grass but there is a perfectly logical reason why they should be there. What is it?
A: They were used by children who made a snowman. The snow has now melted.
5. A woman had two sons who were born on the same hour of the same day of the same year. But they were not twins. How could this be so?
A: They were two of a set of triplets (or quadruplets etc.)
6. One day a man received a parcel in the post. Carefully packed inside was a human arm. He examined it, repacked it and then sent it on to another man. The second man also carefully examined the arm before taking it to the woods and burying it. Why did they do this?
A: The three men had been stranded on a desert island. Desperate for food, they had agreed to amputate their left arms in order to eat them. They swore an oath that each would have his left arm cut off. One of them was a doctor and he cut the arms off his two companions. They were then rescued. But his oath was still binding so he later had to have his arm amputated and sent to his colleagues.
7. A man rode into town on Friday. He stayed for three nights and then left on Friday. How come?
A: The man's horse was called Friday.

