

CRAZY GAPPED TEXT (grammar, collocation, text cohesion)

Level: pre-intermediate and above

Teens, adults

If you've ever heard of Madlibs (www.madlibs.com), you'll recognise this activity. This is a favourite Madlib adaptation of mine in the EFL classroom because it raises student awareness about word forms and revises grammatical terminology, and helps students think about text cohesion, sentence structure and collocations.

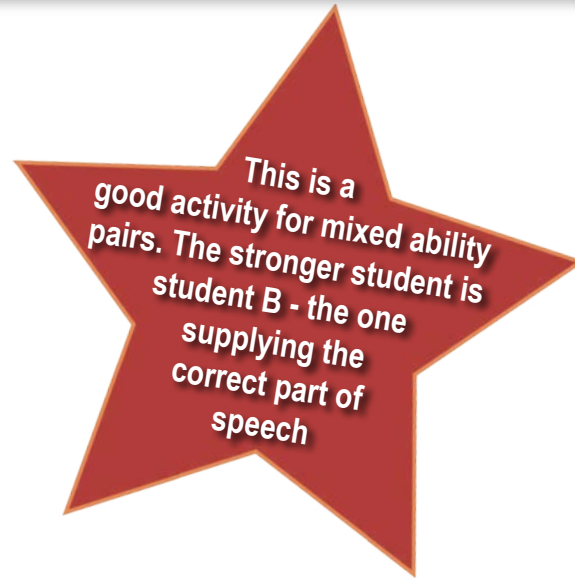
1. Review the grammatical terms listed in the gapped text.
2. Put students into pairs. Give student A the gapped text. Student A should look at the grammar terms next to the gaps in the text and ask student B for a word. For example, if the gap needs an adjective, student B should say an adjective.
3. Once the gaps have been filled with the correct part of speech, the students read the text. Of course, it will sound very silly because student B won't have seen the text to know what word would make sense!
4. Give the students another copy of the gapped text and ask them to think about what words might have been in the original text.
5. Ask students say what clues they used to fill in the blanks. For example, in the level 1 text, they may have guessed that the place was England because the letter was from the Oxford Orchestra. In the level 3 text, students will have used the collocation clue 'Eve' and the phrase 'merry Christmas' to guess the holiday.
6. Hand out the original text so that students can compare.
7. There are a number of ways to follow up:

Lower Level

- a: Ask the student to write the next paragraph of the story
- b: Read or listen to the story with the class

Higher Level

- a: Ask the student to write what the nephew says to Scrooge next
- b: Discuss opposing views on Christmas - why is Scrooch rich but miserable and his nephew is poor but happy?



BOOKWORMS LEVEL 1

Original Text

Source: [Christmas in Prague by Joyce Hannam](#)
 The Oxford Bookworms Library. OUP p.5

England 1995

‘Hey, Jan, look at this!’ Carol said. She had a letter in her hand and took it across to her husband at the breakfast table. ‘It’s from the Oxford Orchestra,’ she said. ‘They’re giving concerts in the Czech Republic this Christmas. They’re doing three concerts in Prague and they’re asking me to go because they need a harpist. Shall we go to Prague for Christmas? I can play with the orchestra, and you can come with us.’

‘When are the concerts?’ asked Jan. ‘I always have a lot of work in the weeks before Christmas. I must finish writing my new book then.’

BOOKWORMS LEVEL 1

Gapped Text

_____ (place) 1995

‘Hey, Jan, look at this!’ Carol said. She had a _____ (noun) in her hand and took it across to her husband at the breakfast table. ‘It’s from the Oxford Orchestra,’ she said. ‘They’re giving concerts in the Czech Republic this Christmas. They’re doing three concerts in Prague and they’re asking me to _____ (verb) because they need a _____ (job). Shall we go to Prague for Christmas? I can play with the orchestra, and you can come with us.’

‘When are the _____ (plural noun)?’ asked Jan. ‘I always have a lot of work in the weeks before Christmas. I must finish writing my _____ (adjective) book then.’

BOOKWORMS LEVEL 3

Original Text

Source: [*A Christmas Carol by Charles Dickens.*](#)

The Oxford Bookworms Library. OUP. pp 3-5.



One Christmas Eve, old Scrooge was working busily in his office. It was cold, frosty, foggy weather. Outside it was already dark, although it was only three o'clock in the afternoon, and there were candles in all the office windows. The fog covered everything, like a thick, grey blanket.

.....

'Merry Christmas, uncle! God bless you!' cried a happy voice. Scrooge's nephew had arrived.

'Bah!' said Scrooge crossly. 'Humbug!'

'Christmas is humbug! Surely you don't mean that, uncle?' said his nephew.

'I do,' said Scrooge. 'Why do you call it "merry" Christmas? You're too poor to be merry.'

'Well,' replied the nephew, smiling, 'why are you so cross? You're too rich to be unhappy.'

'Of course I'm cross,' answered the uncle, 'when I live in a world full of stupid people like you! You say "Merry Christmas"! But what is Christmas? Just a time when you spend too much, when you find yourself a year older and not an hour richer, when you have to pay your bills. Everyone who goes around saying "Merry Christmas" should have his tongue cut out. Yes, he should!'



BOOKWORMS LEVEL 3

Gapped Text

One _____ (holiday) Eve, old Scrooge was working _____ (adverb ending in -ly) in his office. It was cold, frosty, foggy weather. Outside it was already _____ (adjective), although it was only three o'clock in the afternoon, and there were _____ (plural noun) in all the office windows. The _____ (noun) covered everything, like a thick, grey blanket.

.....

' _____ (exclamation), uncle! God bless you!' cried a happy voice. Scrooge's nephew had arrived.

'Bah!' said Scrooge crossly. 'Humbug!'

'Christmas is humbug! Surely you don't mean that, uncle?' said his _____ (family member).

'I do,' said Scrooge. 'Why do you call it "merry" Christmas? You're too _____ (adjective) to be merry.'

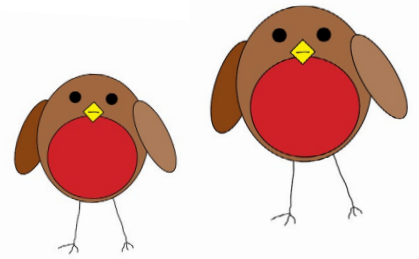
'Well,' replied the nephew, smiling, 'why are you so cross? You're too _____ (adjective) to be unhappy.'

'Of course I'm cross,' answered the uncle, 'when I _____ (verb) in a world full of stupid people like you! You say "Merry Christmas"! But what is Christmas? Just a time when you spend too much, when you find yourself a year _____ (comparative adjective) and not an hour richer, when you have to _____ (verb) your bills. Everyone who goes around saying "Merry Christmas" should have his _____ (body part) cut out. Yes, he should!'

ROUND ROBIN LETTER (writing)

Level: pre-intermediate to advanced

Any age group



If you don't celebrate Christmas, you can still round off the year with a Round Robin letter. Round Robin letters are a sort of family newsletter which is sent to members of the (extended) family or to close friends.

1. Start by telling the class that you've received your first Round Robin letter of the year and that you're going to read it to them. They should listen and tell you what they think a round robin letter is. Read the letter to the class. You can use the one below or write your own.

Dear family,

We have had an eventful year! As you know, Katie Margaret was born just after New Year's Day, and she is growing up fast! Benjamin loves his little sister. He won't go anywhere without her and he loves to make her laugh. Katie has just started to crawl and Michael says she has called him 'dada', but I haven't heard that yet.

Benjamin is in year 3- can you believe it? He enjoys school and his favourite subject is science. He says he's going to be an inventor one day. You should see his drawings - he draws all sorts of imaginative inventions. He's working on a machine that will tie shoes - something he needs help with still!

Michael got a promotion this year - to regional sales manager. It means he travels more, but he's enjoying it. My writing work is going well, too. My third novel will be published early next year. I won't tell you the title - a big surprise!

This year was our year to do some work around the house. We painted the outside, so it looks much better. We also planted a few fruit trees in the garden, and put up a fence around the pond so that Katie won't fall in.

We have all sorts of wildlife out in the garden. There is a family of red squirrels in the old Elm tree and last night we looked out and saw three deer on the lawn. We also have a number of birds including a very noisy woodpecker.

I've enclosed some pictures of us all from our holiday in Devon this past summer. We had a marvellous time by the sea. Katie didn't like the water much, but Benjamin - as you can see - loved it. We thought he might be half fish!

I miss you all very much and I hope you are staying well. Write to let us know what's happening with you.

Love always,
Martha

2. Ask the class what they think a round robin letter is - Who is it to? What kinds of information does it contain? Find out if anyone receives or writes round robin letters.
3. Tell students they are going to write a round robin letter - their audience could be the rest of the class, the school or their family.
4. Working alone at first, they should think about things that happened during the past year and write notes. A good way to do this is to use a mind map.
5. Put students into pairs. Each student should ask the other about the information on the mindmap. For example, "What happened here in March?" "Who is Raul?" Etc. This stage helps students think more deeply about their audience and what information they need to include.
6. Using the mindmap, ask students to write their letters. When they have finished, they should swap their letter with a partner who should read the letter and comment about anything that isn't clear. Students should use this feedback to write their final drafts. Let them include photos if they wish.

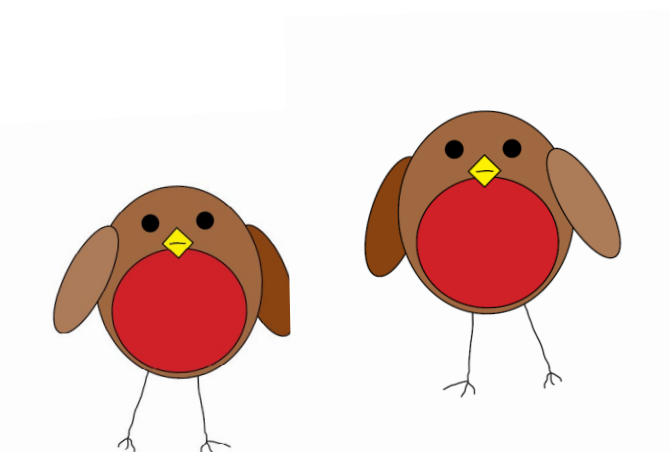
If you can, let students write their letters on the computer so that they can import pictures and also share electronically.

Publish the letters on a class blog, or bulletin board or ask the students to post them to their family.

7. As a follow-up, ask students to read the letters and find 3 similar things, 3 things that are different and 3 things that surprised them.

ALTERNATE ACTIVITY

Another type of Round Robin letter is one that is written by many people. Ask the class to contribute to a round robin letter on the theme of "What we've learned in class this term". This will help students reflect on what they've learned and will also serve as a useful summary for parents or school directors.



12 DAYS OF CHRISTMAS or 12 DAYS OF WINTER

(vocabulary revision)

Level: any

Young learners, teens, (adults)

The 12 Days of Christmas is a popular Christmas song, and you could teach students the song and sing along. Go to www.lyricstraining.com to find the song with gap-fill activity games for beginners up to 'expert'. (Use the search function to find the song). Pre-teach some of the more difficult vocabulary first, and use a projector and speakers to complete the activity online.

Another idea is to take just the theme of the song about giving of gifts over the 12 days of Christmas to revise vocabulary, counting and ordinals.

1. Put 12 pictures of vocabulary words or just the words into a bowl or hat. They should be large enough for the whole class to see. In the example below, the teacher is using food vocabulary.
2. Arrange the class into a circle.
3. Start by saying, "On the first day of Christmas, my true love gave to me..." then draw a card and finish the line with the vocabulary word, getting everyone to join in, e.g. "...one red apple." Pass the hat. The student with the hat draws a card and says what's on it. Use this for the next verse: "On the second day of Christmas, my true love gave to me two pears and a red apple."
4. With each pass of the hat, the numbers increase and you count down, e.g.: "Four sweet potatoes, three bananas, two pears and a red apple."
5. Ideally, you and the students should try to remember each item without looking back at the card!

If you don't celebrate Christmas in your culture, you can substitute; "On the first day of Winter, I gave my family..."

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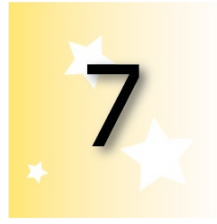


ADVENT CALENDAR (vocabulary)

Level: any

Young learners

Advent calendars are a popular way to count down the days until Christmas. The calendar contains 24 numbered windows. Each day children open a new window to see the picture behind it. Modern calendars might contain sweets. You can use the idea of an advent calendar to introduce vocabulary.



1. Decide on 24 words you want students to learn or to revise. Ideally, use pictures to represent the words.
2. Create a large advent calendar to put on the wall. Behind each window, put one of the vocabulary pictures.
3. Create a routine in class. Each day, ask one child to come up and open one of the windows. This will be your word of the day.



ALTERNATE IDEA

Any age or level

Get the students to create the advent calendar



1. Create a large Christmas tree shape on the wall – large enough to stick 25 envelopes on it..
2. Depending on the level, ask each student to write a sentence or short paragraph describing ...
 - the best gift they've received or given, or
 - a gift they would like to receive, or
 - a holiday wish, or
 - their favourite thing about Christmas.
3. Put each student's writing into an envelope. Seal it and number the front. Stick it to the advent calendar. If there are more than 25 students, put two in some of the envelopes.
4. Each day, ask a student to come and open one of the envelopes. Read it to the class.



The students will enjoy the anticipation of seeing whose writing is next!

