

Santa: Teachers' notes and tips – upper intermediate

1 Pre-reading tasks

- a Ask students to think about their childhood. Get them to recollect a time when they learnt something, or found out about something, that surprised them. If the students don't have anything specific like this then they can just tell each other about a memory from early childhood.
- b Monitor well and if a student or two have an amusing story then let them tell the whole class.

Tip: start with an anecdote

If you have your own story, start the lesson by telling the students. It can be very simple – finding out that your dad was no longer holding the bike and you were actually riding it yourself, for example.

- c If you have students who are all familiar with Father Christmas (or Santa Claus – whichever name the students use) ask them to write down everything they know about him. Perhaps put the students in groups of three and after a few minutes the team with the most information reads this out and the others add anything that's missing.

Tip: activate schemata

There are loads of references – the costume, the elves, the North Pole etc. Asking students to think of all these first will help them to understand the text more easily.

2 First reading tasks

- a Give each student a copy of the reading and tell them they're going to read about Father Christmas. They have to read the text quickly and
 - identify the writer's childhood memory (was it good, bad or something else?)
 - and name the person in the photograph.
- b Get students to compare their answers before eliciting the answers.
- c Feedback: the day the writer found out that Father Christmas wasn't real (at the time it was very upsetting news), and Zenta Claus.
- d If other students remember this too, or something similar, let them talk about it and how they felt.

Tip: get students to respond to the text

Perhaps give students *This reminds me of when...* as a prompt to help them. Reacting to the text like this is a real-life response so allow time for it.

3 Second reading tasks

- a Students now read the text more slowly and then summarize it in no more than **30** words. They can work together to help each other if they want.
- b Perhaps give a time limit on this - 10 mins? By the end of that time they should have one, maybe two sentences.
- c Students look at each other's sentences and decide whose is better and make any changes. When everyone is ready they can read these out and decide whose is best and why.

- d If students want a model answer you can give them this, although students may well have done better: This reading is about Father Christmas – the day the writer found out he did not exist, the origins of the man and a modern alternative.

Tip: use summaries as an alternative comprehension exercise

Asking students to summarize a reading helps them to identify the most important parts and leave out those which are irrelevant.

4 Third reading tasks

- a Students read the text again and underline all the Father Christmas references - did they have all of these before reading? For students who are not familiar with Father Christmas, what are all the things they now know about him?
- b At the same time ask students to notice the different ways Father Christmas is referred to in the text.
- c Feedback: food and drink left overnight for him, he travels by sled, delivers presents to children all over the world and leaves these under the Christmas tree, has reindeers, climbs down chimney, has bells, chuckles (ho ho ho!), visits toy shops and schools, toys made by elves, he lives the North Pole, wears red and white suit, has long white beard, is used to sell products. Is there anything missing?! He's referred to as Father Christmas, old man, Santa, the bona fide man in red, Santa Claus.

Tip: think about quick and efficient feedback

Students will be bored if you go through all the answers and it'll be too teacher centred. Consider having an OHT or IWB page prepared in advance, for example.

5 Post-reading tasks – speaking and writing

- a The powers that be have decided to get rid of Father Christmas - it's been decided that he's no longer appropriate! Students have to decide whether or not they agree with this decision and then write to their local newspaper with their opinion. (If students are non-Christian and they feel that Father Christmas is starting to appear in their culture this can well be a reason for getting rid of him!)
- b Put students with the same ideas together. They need to come up with a list of reasons for him to stay or go.
- c Then, either in class or for homework, they write a letter to the editor. The editor (you) chooses one for and one against to appear in the next edition of the paper.

Tip: Use the vocabulary in a follow up lesson

Perhaps give a list of verbs and ask students if they can remember how they were used in the text: look back on, keep somebody going, strain, boast, accuse, meditate... Or the adjectives: vague, pacified, awkward, astounded, inconsolable, synonymous...