

What happened next?

Warm up A story circle

This activity may not produce writing of a very high *quality* but it is a fun, collaborative way into a skill that many students feel is difficult and even dull. It frees the imagination, encourages fluency and can generate a lot of laughter too!

Students all need a sheet of lined paper to write on. Arrange the students in circles of 4–6.

Dictate **one** of these opening sentences to the class:

I was on my way to interview one of the most famous movie stars in the country. OR

The next time I saw George, he looked completely different.

Each person has to write the **second** sentence of the story.

They then pass their paper to the next person in the circle.

Everyone reads the two sentences and then adds a third and passes the paper on.

This continues until each paper has come back to its owner.

It is important that everyone is in step, so you may need to give students a time limit of 1 or 2 minutes for each sentence.

When everyone has their own paper back, they have to read the whole thing and add a concluding sentence. Students then take it in turns to read the resulting stories (which will probably be fairly crazy!) aloud to the class.

Main activities

Students can do these activities in pairs or small groups, though they should do the writing on their own.

- 1 Rather than giving out the activity sheets immediately, you may want to write the opening sentence on the board and elicit questions and answers from the students.

They may suggest further questions like these:

Who will be at the party? Children, teenagers, adults, people of all ages?

Why doesn't the narrator want to go to the party?

Why does the narrator have to go?

What happens at the party? Something bad (which is what the narrator expects) or something good (which the narrator did not expect)?

Then give out the activity sheets and go straight to exercise 2.

- 2 Read the three possible ways this story could develop. Ask students which they prefer. Invite other ideas for development.

Students then write their own fourth scenario.

Ask students to compare their results with a partner. Or you may prefer to ask a few individuals to read their scenario aloud to the class.

- 3 The aim is for students to think quickly but also to consider different options (one of the things that can go wrong in writing a story in the exam is embarking too quickly on an unpromising route, and then finding it difficult to develop or finish the story).

Students will probably come up with questions of this kind:

Why were you surprised? What was the sport?

Were you good at it or not? What team was it?

Were they going to play an important game?

Why did they choose you? What happened next?

How did the game go? Did you play well? What was the result? How did you feel?

- 4 Working in groups of three or four, students make a compilation of all the different questions that were written. Monitor the groups to make sure incorrect or inappropriate sentences are rewritten or discarded.

Students create a mind map like the one in exercise 2, with the opening sentence *I was very surprised when I was chosen to play for the team* in the middle and their alternative development ideas around it.

- 5 Working alone, students choose **one** of the alternative development ideas in the mind map (if possible, a different one for each member of the group).

They write the rest of the story.

Follow up

Students read each other's stories and discuss any interesting differences that they notice.

You could ask them to nominate 'best closing sentences', which you write on the board.

What happened next?

1

I didn't want to go to the party but I had to.

This opening sentence could develop into many different stories. First we need to ask ourselves some questions about the situation. For example:

Who is the narrator (the person telling the story)? Male or female? A child or an adult?

Whose party is it?

Think of some more questions to ask, beginning with *who*, *why* and *what*.

- 2 Here are three different ways the story could develop. Think of a fourth idea of your own and write it in the box.

I was six years old. I knew that older, bigger children were going to be there. I knew they were going to play party games that I didn't like. I was scared.

I knew that my ex-boyfriend, Matt, would be there and I didn't want to see him, especially as he would be with his new girlfriend, Jane. I hated her!

I didn't want to go to the party but I had to.

I didn't know any of the people who were going to the party. I knew I'd end up sitting on my own while everyone else was chatting happily.

- 3 Here is the opening to another story:

I was very surprised when I was chosen to play for the team.

Write as many questions as you can about the situation (look back at the questions in exercise 1 for ideas).

- 4 Work in small groups. Read out all the different questions you have written about the story in exercise 3. Discuss the different possible answers.

Design a mind map like the one in exercise 2, with the opening sentence of the story in the middle and your alternative development ideas around it.

- 5 Choose one of the alternative development ideas in the mind map (it's a good idea if each member of the group chooses a different one).

Write the rest of the story, using about 100 words.

Follow up

Read each other's stories.

EXAM PART

Writing Part 3

EXAM SKILLS

Writing a story

Opening sentences

Developing a story

TOPIC

Parties; sports

TIME

50 minutes

KEY LANGUAGE

Questions

Past tenses in narrative

PREPARATION

One photocopy of the activity page for each student

Optional: extra writing paper for the Warm up