

Lesson plan: Magic Mirror storytelling

Magic Mirror storytelling**Topic:** Telling Personal Stories**Level:** SfL Entry 3, Level 1/ SQA Intermediate 1, Intermediate 2 / CEFR B1/B2**Time:** 60-75 mins**Aims**

- To provide speaking and listening practice
- To develop speaking fluency
- To develop students' ability to tell stories
- To give practise in asking questions about the past
- To develop teachers' awareness of how to use storytelling as a technique in the ESOL classroom

Introduction: the 'Magic Mirror' technique

This lesson uses a simple storytelling technique (Magic Mirror) to give students speaking practice in a relaxed, non-threatening environment. Magic Mirror can be used at any level, but works best where students have a sufficient level of English to narrate a story orally. The idea behind Magic Mirror is to give students an opportunity to use the language they have to tell each other about something that is personally important to them.

A Magic Mirror is really nothing more than a blank piece of paper, on which the students create a picture to illustrate a story that they will then tell to their peers. The drawing stage allows for individualised preparation time, as the students will think about their story as they create their picture, thus allowing them to think about what they want to say in advance.

During the storytelling phase, students collaborate with each other by actively listening and asking questions about the picture and the story. The picture itself acts as a useful prop for the students in their story telling.

Magic Mirror works best as a mingling activity, with students telling their story a number of times to different partners. This repeated telling of the story helps the students to build confidence, become more fluent and more adept at relating a story. As they rehearse and repeat the story, they are likely to add more detail and build the story.

In this particular lesson a short language focus is built in to give the students a quick review of question forms. More targeted practice on narrative tenses could also be included. However, the purpose of this lesson is not to focus on accuracy, but rather to allow the students to share their experiences using the English they have. It is an excellent vehicle for building speaking confidence and classroom relationships.

You can familiarise yourself with the value of using storytelling in the classroom by looking at the following resources:

- a short article by Mario Rinvoluceri <http://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/article/story-telling-language-teachers-oldest-technique>

- Jan Benjamin describing the value of storytelling: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HyjpgQeHLAw>

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Magic Mirror capitalises on the three main tenets of the **Dogme** Approach to teaching English, insofar as it:

- is materials-light (all that is needed is a piece of paper for drawing on)
- is conversation driven (the students talk to each other about their personal stories)
- uses emergent language (the act of listening and talking about personal experiences mirrors real life talk outside the classroom).

The ESOL Nexus website has an interactive CPD module on Dogme if you want to familiarise yourself with its principles:

<http://esol.britishcouncil.org/cpd-modules/cpd-module-introduction-dogme-esol>

Preparation and materials

Sample materials (Magic Mirror visual and a short story) are provided after Task 1 and Task 2 of this lesson plan (the mirror is also reproduced in the separate student worksheet file). These could be used for the lesson, but preferably you would create your own visual and short story representing a memorable, amusing or surprising event in your life.

Prepare and rehearse the story for Task 2. Make sure you can tell the story without reading from a script, and be prepared to adlib. If using the sample story in the lesson plan, you can adapt it to make it more personal to yourself (bearing in mind that the story is written from the perspective of a woman).

Prepare the visual you will display in your Magic Mirror for Task 1. If you are going to draw it onto the board, then practise this before the lesson. If you are using the sample materials, a copy of the Magic Mirror is provided in the appendix of this lesson plan.

Access to an interactive whiteboard will allow you to use separate pages for your Magic Mirror visual (Tasks 1 and 2) and the questions (Tasks 1 and 4).

Make copies of the Student's worksheet. Use the first page (blank Magic Mirror template) for Task 3. Blank pieces of A4 paper work just as well. As an alternative, students could use a drawing tool on a tablet computer such as the I-Pad Sketches tool. The second page of the worksheet should be handed out at the Cooler stage.

Procedure

Warmer (5 mins)

- Dictate the following quote from Rudyard Kipling to the students.
 - *"I keep six honest serving men (they taught me all I knew); Their names are What and Why and When and How and Where and Who."*
- Write the quotation on the board for students to check the accuracy of the text they have written. There is no need for further feedback on this at this point.

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Task 1 – Introducing Magic Mirror (5 mins)

- Draw a large rectangle on the board or hold up a blank piece of paper. Ask the students what they think it is.
- Tell the students that it is a mirror, and that the mirror is magic! Display the Magic Mirror template in the Appendix.
- Explain that the Magic Mirror allows a person to look at themselves at any time in their life – the past, present or future.
- Draw or display your completed Magic Mirror.

Sample Magic Mirror



- Refer students back to the Rudyard Kipling quote and elicit the question words *who, where, when, why, how, what*. Write the question words on the board in a list.
- Elicit questions the students could ask using the question words and build up on the board
 - *Who was there? / Who were you with?*
 - *Where were you? / Where did it happen/take place?*
 - *When/How long ago was it? / When did it happen/take place?*
 - *Why were you there? Why did it happen?*
 - *How did you feel?*
 - *What did you say? What did you do? What were you doing in the picture?*
- Clarify issues of form such as use of auxiliary *did*.
- Drill the questions with the students.

Task 2 – Telling the story (10 mins)

- Explain to students you are going to tell them the story behind your magic mirror picture. Remind them they can ask you questions to find out more information as you go along.
- Tell the students your story, pausing to elicit information and answer any questions the students offer. Keep the story dynamic and engaging, encouraging students to ask questions as you go.

Sample Story (Adapt as necessary)

This happened to me a long time ago but I still remember it like yesterday. My boyfriend (girlfriend) invited me to go to Paris with him (her) for a long weekend. We were very much in love and I was so excited about the trip. So what did we do while we were there? Well. It was autumn and we spent the first two days strolling around the streets of the city, jumping on and off the Metro and eating in small French cafes. Then the time came to do what every tourist in Paris must do – the most romantic part of the whole weekend – that’s right, it was time to go up the Eiffel Tower. I was very nervous, can you imagine why? Oh my, I thought, ‘He’s (She’s) going to ask me to marry him (her), he’s (she’s) going to propose to me!’

So, we walked along by the river and headed in the direction of the glistening tower. But no matter how often we turned left and right, we never seemed to get any closer to the tower. We could see the top of it above the other buildings, but we just couldn’t touch it! We kept asking for directions and tried to follow them, but still the tower was no closer. We were tired, bored and about to give up when, suddenly, there it was – the Eiffel Tower – right in front of us. It was majestic, amazing and so, so tall!

We started to climb the tower with all the other thousands of tourists. I was becoming more nervous by the second. How should I respond? Had he (she) brought a ring?

Well, of course, we got to the top and the views were just magnificent. We huddled together, looking at the beautiful skyline, and then he (she) turned to me. I breathed in, my heart was thumping fast... ‘Would you like to go for a cup of coffee now?’, he (she) asked! No proposal, not even a hint of one. (We did eventually get married and our 20th wedding anniversary is next week!/We only stayed together for 2 weeks after that/ We’re now happily married etc).

Task 3 – Magic mirror creation (10 mins)

- Tell the students you are going to give them each their own Magic Mirror. Hand out the first page of the Student worksheet (or a blank sheet of paper) to each student and provide coloured pens.
- Ask the students to visualize a time in their life/a memorable story from their past.
- Tell the students to draw a picture to illustrate the story.
- Give the students some time to work on their drawing. Make sure you give students enough time to think about their story as they draw. (This is an important preparation stage as the students will be thinking about their story as they draw). Emphasise that it is not important for them to be able draw well.
- Monitor unobtrusively. It is likely that as the students think about the story and the picture, they will ask you about the language they need to tell the story they are visualizing. Be prepared to provide vital vocabulary to students as you monitor.

Differentiation

- Some students may be reluctant to draw anything. Encourage them to take part, reminding them (perhaps by pointing to your own artwork) that they do not have to be very artistic. If they still refuse to draw, suggest that they put down some key words and phrases in their Magic Mirror to illustrate their story.
- The topic of the story can be specified to fit with work you are doing at the moment, e.g. seasons, special occasions, a favourite festival, future plans.

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Task 4 – Storytelling mingling (20 minutes)

- Tell the students they are going to tell each other the stories in their Magic Mirror.
- Display the questions from Task 1 and elicit any further questions the students asked while listening to your story. If using an interactive whiteboard elicit and reveal each question, drilling the question for correct pronunciation and intonation.
 - Who was there? / Who were you with?*
 - Where were you? / Where did it happen/take place?*
 - When/How long ago was it? / When did it happen/take place?*
 - Why were you there?*
 - How did you feel?*
 - What did you say? What did you do? What were you doing in the picture?*
- Ask the students to stand up and find a partner to tell their story to. When all the students have found a partner, remind them of the questions that they could use to find out about the stories.
- Allow the students to mingle with different students. Move the students around every three or four minutes, ensuring they don't stay with the same partner for too long, and that they talk to at least three other students.
- When the buzz in the class starts to wane, tell the students to sit down in their original group.

Task 5 – Feedback on content (10 minutes)

- Ask students to work in groups to discuss the stories they have just heard and those they enjoyed most.
- Ask for feedback from the students on the stories. You could ask them some of the following:
 - *Did anyone tell you a love/romantic story?*
 - *Whose story was the most dramatic/exciting?*
 - *Whose story had the best ending? What was it?*
 - *Which story had the saddest ending?*
 - *Which was your favourite story? Why?*
- Ask follow-up question about the stories where appropriate, i.e. where something of interest crops up. Invite students to also ask follow up questions.
- At this stage, be sure to praise the students for the wonderful stories they have shared with their peers.

Cooler – Quotes on stories (10-15 mins)

*The idea here is to consider how storytelling is an important part of using a language. It provides the students with opportunities to talk about the types of stories they tell in their every day lives and their feelings towards stories and storytelling.

- Put the students into small groups. Invite the students to talk about the stories they usually tell their partners/their friends/their children on a daily basis. After a few minutes close the discussion. It is not necessary to take any feedback at this time.
- Provide a copy of the Student Worksheet (page 2) to each student (or cut up and give each student in the group a different quote). Ask students to read the quotes to each other, discuss the meaning behind the quotes, and discuss which quote(s) they like most and why.
- Give the students five to ten minutes to discuss their ideas before taking some feedback.
- Display the quotes on the board and take feedback from each group. Find out from them which quote they liked the most and why. Did the whole group agree or have different opinions?
- To finish the lesson, ask the students if they know any quotes or proverbs in their own language about stories. Invite those who do to say it in their own language, and explain the quote or proverb in English to the rest of the group.

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Differentiation

- The quotes could be displayed around the classroom. Students go around and read the quotes, deciding which quote they like the most. When they have decided they should stand beside the quote they like most. For feedback, ask a student standing beside the quote to read it out and others to justify why it is their favourite quote.

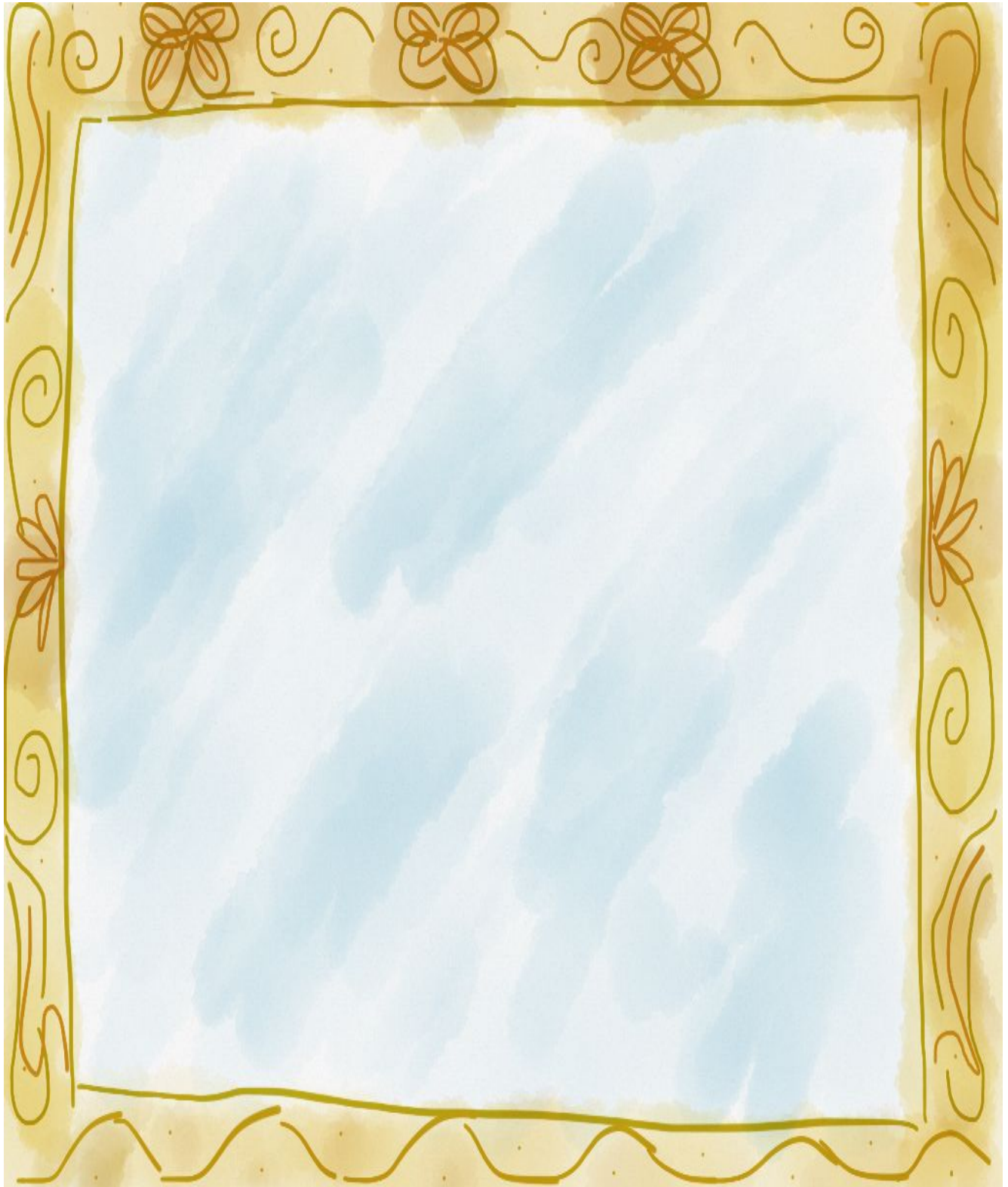
Homework

Students write their Magic Mirror story for homework and bring with them to the next lesson.

Extension activities (follow up)

- Collect in the homework texts during the next lesson. Provide some feedback and correction for the following lesson.
- In the following lesson, the students can work on improving their story. Ask the students to also give their story a title. When redrafted, display the Magic Mirrors and corresponding stories around the classroom.
- Use the texts to create a gap fill exercise/error correction task with sentences from different stories. Concentrate on interesting language items or common student errors you have found in the students' writing.

Appendix – Magic Mirror Template (For Task 3)



Appendix – Sample Magic Mirror (for Task 1 and 2)



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Cooler – Quotes on stories

1. “Stories can conquer fear, you know. They can make the heart bigger.” (Ben Okri)
2. “ My mother wanted us to know that the tragedies of your life one day have the potential to be comic stories the next. “ (Nora Ephron)
3. “There is no greater agony than bearing an untold story inside you.” (Maya Angelou)
4. “A story is based on what people think is important, so when we live a story, we are telling people around us what we think is important.” (Donald Miller)
5. “We're all stories, in the end.” (Steven Moffat)
6. “It's like everyone tells a story about themselves inside their own head. Always. All the time. That story makes you what you are. We build ourselves out of that story.” (Patrick Rothfuss)

