

Mysteries: Teachers' notes and tips – upper intermediate

1 Pre-reading tasks

- a Write on the board *sea legs* and tell your students that you have / don't have them. Can the students guess the meaning? Explain it's the ability to walk easily on a moving ship and not to feel sick at sea. Have any of the students been on a boat or done any sailing? Do they have sea legs or not?
- b Depending on your students and where you teach, either put them in pairs or small groups to compare stories, or ask one student to tell the class about being on a boat. (*Remember that ships and boats are female!)

Tip: know your students

If you think it's going to be difficult to get students to talk about personal experiences, have a story of your own ready to tell. It doesn't have to be a great adventure, it could just be a pleasant boat trip, but this will help the students be interested in the topic. Any photos would help too. Also, if you think that the students won't have heard of the *Mary Celeste*, that's fine, don't ask them what they know. Just suggest that *she's called a 'ghost ship'*, and see if they can guess what this means.

- c Have any of the students heard of the *Mary Celeste*? Elicit any information about the ship but don't, of course, tell them if they're getting mixed up with the Conan Doyle story or if the information is not true. Just see how much they know.
- d Then give each student a copy of the reading tasks and speaking in pairs ask them to look at part 1. They then compare their answers with another pair.
- e Feedback: **a ship** - a large boat that carries people or goods by sea; **a boat** - a vehicle (smaller than a ship) that travels on water; **a vessel** - a more formal term for a boat or ship; **a dinghy** - a small open boat that you sail or row; **a catamaran** - a fast sailing boat with two hulls; **a yacht** - a large sailing boat, often with an engine and a place to sleep on board, used for pleasure trips and racing.

Tip: expand students' vocabulary

Again, depending on where you teach, students may also be interested in knowing the words *ferry, barge, cruise liner, oil tanker, hovercraft...*

2 First reading tasks

- a Read the first paragraph out aloud. Then tell students to read the whole text and answer the question: *Is there justification for comparing the two events?*
- b Give each student a copy of the text. They need to read this fairly quickly and then decide yes or no. They should then compare their answer with other students.

Tip: provide appropriate first reading tasks

Ask questions that require students to think about the overall meaning rather than looking for specific information. The task should make students read all the text and help them with the gist.

- c Feedback: yes, both boats had a mysteriously missing crew but there are also differences in the two cases.

3 Second reading tasks

- a There has been a lot of misinformation about the *Mary Celeste*. Students look at the sentences in part 2 of the worksheet and then read about the case again to decide if each sentence is a fact or just a theory.
- b Students work individually but they should be comparing their answers with each other.
- c Encourage students to underline the phrases that show when information is just a theory.
- d Feedback: make sure students, if they disagree, explain why. Only 1, 2, 6, 9 and 11 are facts. (12 – or the sailors drank the alcohol, nobody knows.)

Tip: use the feedback constructively

Elicit the phrases that show when sentences are theories e.g. *this suggests... Captain Morehouse's explanation... it appeared... could link to the fact... etc.*

- e Now students identify the five theories in the *Kaz 11* case.

Tip: do an example

Ask students to identify a (far-fetched) theory in the first paragraph, and then turn this into a sentence: *The men vanished into thin air*. Students then continue on their own.

- f Feedback: (accept suggested sentences from the students) 2 The life jackets were untouched. 3 She had been tied to another boat. 4 She was willing to be approached by another boat. 5 The men were stranded after pushing the boat off a sandbank.

4 Post-reading tasks – speaking

- a Put the students in pairs. They can choose to be either Captain Briggs or skipper Derek Batton. Together they come up with their ideas of what really happened. This should explain some of the strange scenes (e.g. why the ship was wet and the galley in a mess or why the men left everything on the boat).
- b Once students are happy with their stories, get them to change partners and to retell their stories. The students should be actively listening – asking questions and reacting to the news.

Tip: link the reading to a speaking activity

Even students who have never been on a boat should be keen to invent a possible solution.

5 Post-reading tasks – writing

- a Fortunately everyone survived! Both Captain Briggs and Derek Batton wrote a letter explaining what happened and 'posted' it in a bottle which they sent out to sea. The bottles have now been washed ashore. Students can either write one of the letters or be a journalist reporting the story in a newspaper with the headline: *Mystery solved!*

Tip: link the reading to a writing activity

Students can read each others letters/stories in a follow up lesson and decide whose is the most likely solution.