

1.15

Smileys

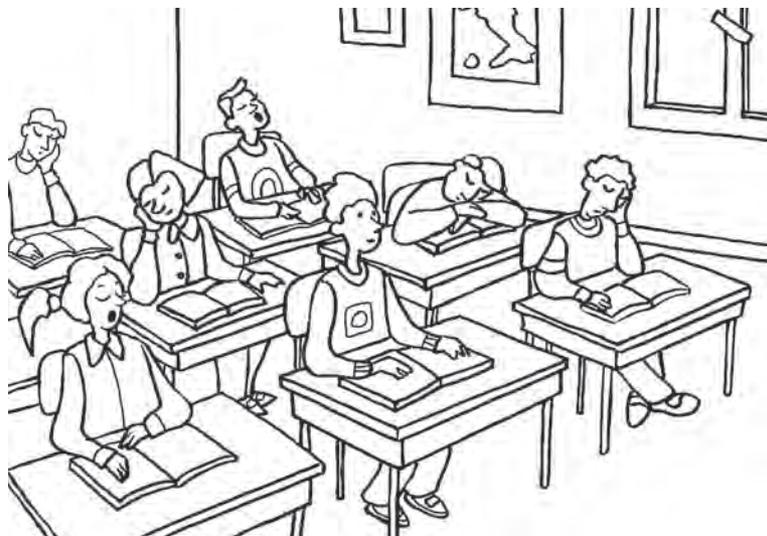
Focus	To help students share their feelings with other group members.
Level	Any
Time	3-5 minutes
Preparation	None

in class

- 1 Ask the students to think how they are feeling today, what sort of mood they are in.
- 2 Next, invite them to stand and to pair up with someone they haven't had many opportunities to talk with.
- 3 Taking it in turns, invite them to draw the smiley corresponding to their mood on their partner's back and see if she can guess what it is.
- 4 You might want to ask the students to switch their partners and repeat the activity with one or two more people.

Comment

I think having a clear idea how the individual members of a group are feeling on a given day is very important in that it helps us get rid of assumptions that might not correspond to reality. Hands up who hasn't at least once said: *Oh dear. You ALL look tired today*, or a similar blanket statement. In my experience, it may be that 24 out of 25 students are indeed tired. But what about the one student who isn't? There's bound to be one student who's not feeling tired and is actually energetic and very eager, but how is she going to feel and how is she going to behave after such a remark?



2.21

Jokes

Focus	To start the lesson in a fun, relaxed way.
Level	Elementary and above
Time	3-5 minutes
Preparation	Make a slide, or handout of a list of jokes (see sample below). You'll need to find jokes that are fairly simple to understand.

in class

- 1 Place a handout on each student's desk/chair before they come into the classroom.
- 2 Invite the students to read the jokes and to evaluate them from *funniest to least funny*.
- 3 Ask them to work in pairs and discuss their ideas.
- 4 Have the group vote for the funniest joke.

Sample jokes/aphorisms

- 1 *The lion and the calf will lie down together but the calf won't be getting much sleep. (Woody Allen)*
- 2 *As long as there are tests, there will be prayers in school.*
- 3 **Q:** *How do you count cows?* **A:** *With a cowculator.*
- 4 *I've been happily married for four years - out of a total of ten. (Mark Watson)*
- 5 *I was vegan for a while. I lost six pounds, but most of that was personality. (Pippa Evans)*
- 6 *A man got hit in the head with a can of Coke, but he was alright because it was a soft drink.*

Comment

I've often found humour is an excellent tool to anchor the students' concentration.

3.20

Post Scriptum

Focus	To use a famous writer's creativity as the basis for a writing activity.
Level	Upper intermediate and above
Time	20-30 minutes
Preparation	None, apart from Proust's letter which is provided here.

in class

- 1 Ask the students what they know about Marcel Proust (they do in France, where I live).
- 2 If you have the facilities, go on Wikipedia and have the students read a bit about him, his life, his art.
- 3 Now tell them you want to dictate a short letter he once wrote, but that you will start from its Post Scriptum.
- 4 Dictate the following to your students:
Please forgive me. I've just found it.
- 5 Ask the students to work in pairs and write the letter. Obviously the students will have to take a few decisions, namely:
 - a Who is the recipient? Friend? Relative? Lover? Consequently, what register should they use?
 - b What does *it* refer to? How important is *it* to Proust?
- 6 Leave the students some time to write.
- 7 Have the students share their work with the class. Don't make any comments on the language but you can make mental notes to go back to imperfections later if you wish.
- 8 Now dictate Proust's original letter to your students:
Dear Madam,
I left my cane at your house last night. Kindly give it to the bearer of this note.
Kind regards.
Marcel Proust.
PS: Please forgive me. I've just found my cane.
- 9 Ask the students why they think Proust sent the letter even after finding his cane. Would they?

Comment

This activity both amuses and intrigues the students. It's rather surprising that Proust decided to send his note in the end. What's even more surprising, however, is the brevity of the text, very un-Proustian!