

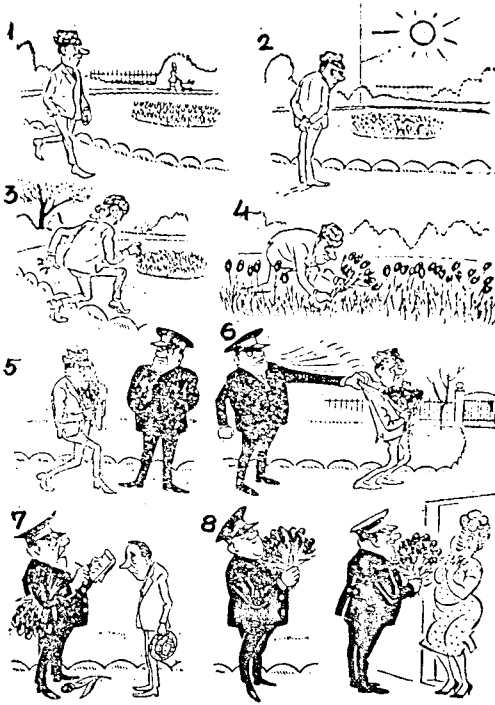
Živa riječ

Potaknuti rezultatima ankete, u kojima se vidi da naši čitaoci žele što raznoobraznije i zanimljivije članke, odlučili smo da rubrika *Živa riječ*, pored svog dosadašnjeg oblika, u pojedinim brojevima bude tematski usmjerena.

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Uredništvo



R. Mary Todd

PICTURE COMPOSITION

Though when given a chance people tend to put the story in words first in their own language, picture composition, used carefully, has the advantage of encouraging a direct link between the meaning (the objects, people and actions shown) and the target language. Pictures themselves can

also be extremely flexible aids: one set of pictures can often be used with different ages and levels of learner and in different ways to practice different skills. Picture stories are most useful when, as in some published sets, there are both large pictures which can be used with the whole class and smaller ones which the learner can use individually in the classroom or take home for further work. This is not of course essential, but it is convenient, and for the first stages or work on pictures I prefer to have the whole class looking at the same large picture, as their attention is then more easily focussed on the same feature of a picture or the same picture in a series, and they are more likely to be looking at the right action or detail when the language relating to it is being used, while with small individual sheets, or, even more, with books, the more interesting and amusing the pictures the more likely the pupils are to look ahead and stop listening. Individual copies of the pictures are however extremely useful not only because they can be taken home, but because they allow for more detail than can be clearly seen at long range, and for some kinds of work, especially group-work, this is desirable.¹

While first looking at and discussing pictures it is natural to use the present simple and continuous for most of the time (this story, as do many, lends itself to practice in contrasting simple and continuous forms of the verb). The present is not a natural form for a finished story in English, but this stage of oral class preparation while looking at the pictures is desirable because elementary learners then need make no effort to memorize the story and can give all their attention to language. A class which expects to retell the story orally or in writing will in any case try to find words for it as it first looks at the pictures, and if the teacher is not asking for English then these learners will use their native language, which is likely to interfere with the English they produce later. It seems best, then, except, on occasion, with advanced students, not to move directly to the past, final version of the story, or to expect a class to look at and memorize the picture story silently before telling the story, but to work first on the pictures orally and mainly in the present.

Usually the oral work will take the form of question and answer, especially with elementary students, though as a class becomes used to the technique fewer and fewer questions will probably be necessary at this stage, and questions will come from the class as they search for the language needed to say what they want to. The pictures need to be numbered for easy reference. Questions for the first three pictures might be: »Where is Mr Jones? Where is he going? What's the weather like? What's he just seen? Why is he looking round? What is he doing in picture three?« But as soon as a class has sufficient proficiency in the structures required it is advisable to change to a form like »What's happening in picture three?« or, probably later, »What about picture three?«, because these questions naturally require full sentences in answer, and they allow the class the freedom to comment first on the features they notice, not those selected by the teacher. The teacher can always follow with more precise questions to make sure that useful teaching and practice features are not overlooked.

¹ One set of pictures published in this way, with class pictures, individual books and a teacher's booklet is Gerald Fleming and Fougasse, *Guided Composition for Students of English*, University of London Press. There is also a version adapted for use in teaching French.

The first form of question, however, («Where is Mr Jones?») is useful as providing a framework on the board which will ensure that in writing the class includes all that is wanted and practices the forms the teacher wants.

Exactly what is written and how long how much of it remains there will vary according to the teacher's purposes in a particular lesson. It might, with an elementary class, be at first simply the leading questions on the left and the vocabulary on the right, with a space in the centre. When the story has been gone through orally in the present there follows, except with advanced pupils who should need only a brief reminder, the important stage of ensuring that the pupils can now tell the story in the past. This is also a natural way to use verbs here: at first the story was new and we watched it unfold and commented on what we were watching, but now, with the pictures simply as a reminder, we recount what happened previously. If the story has been written fully in the present there will be changes which will be awkward to explain to any but advanced students. It will have seemed quite natural, for instance, to use a continuous tense for many of the actions because we are talking about what Mr Jones is doing now as we watch. In recounting the story the simple past will be needed in most of these cases. To use the simple present would have been artificial or suggested a meaning or style not wanted, but changing present continuous into past simple might confuse elementary learners. It would therefore seem best not to write fully the answers to the questions in the first oral work, and indeed to write the questions themselves after they have been answered, and in the past. With some classes, writing the answers fully on the board will be necessary at this stage, and, with the teacher helping to link pupil's suggestions naturally, the questions given for the first three pictures might produce: »Mr Jones was (on) his way home (from) work one day. It was (a lovely) sunny afternoon, and while he (was walking through) the park he (caught sight of) a bed (of) bright red tulips. He looked (round).« If the complete story was written on the board the words in brackets (or others, depending on what points the teacher was most eager to practice) might be erased before the class in its turn wrote. But, with elementary pupils, once the story had been told orally in the past and partially or entirely written on the board, pattern practice of the most important or difficult points should come between class preparation of the story and their rewriting (or their oral retelling, or filling in the blanks again as a class exercise. If picture composition is used frequently it is better not to ask the pupils to write themselves every time). With more advanced classes this would be reduced to a brief drill of any points over which they had come to grief in the course of composing the story, or of any new structures and idioms. In any case, the language the teacher was most anxious to teach is what should, after due warning, be erased, and what the class must memorize.

Examples of exercises that might be used at this point:

1. for elementary students, to practice the use of the structure »there are«, names or seasons or months, and names of common flowers.

Elicit from the class the names of seasons (or months) and flowers they know, and add others. Then ask them to complete the following sentences, orally or in writing:

In spring, there are ... in the park (Or, In January ...)

In summer, ... in the park.

In autumn...

The last sentence, from the teacher, would probably be 'In winter (or December), there aren't any flowers in the park'.

2. for elementary and intermediate students, to practice choosing between the simple past and past continuous.

Put sample sentences on the board: 'While Mr Jones was picking tulips, a park keeper caught sight of him'. 'While the park keeper was writing, he dropped one tulip'. Ask the class who else might be in the park and what they might be doing, if necessary using pin-figure drawings to suggest activities. Using the people and activities suggested, write skeleton sentences of the desired form on the board:

While some boys (PLAY) tennis, a dog (TAKE) their ball.

While a gardener (CUT) the hedge, he (FIND) a bird's nest, etc.

Pupils have to put the verbs in brackets in the correct forms, orally or in writing.

3. for elementary and advanced students, for practice in the past perfect.

Put the pattern sentence on the board: 'Mr Jones was wearing his hat. He had put it on that morning because it was chilly'. Ask for oral or written explanations, using the past perfect, of the following:

The park keeper's buttons were shining.

Mr Jones's shoes were muddy.

Mrs Green's hair was very curly.

The grass was very short.

The baby was crying loudly.

Mr Jones was very disappointed.

4. for intermediate and advanced students, oral.

Which of the three characters might have said:

a) Just a moment, Sir.

b) I didn't think it would matter.

c) They come from a shop near the station, actually.

d) Oh, *how* nice. I thought you had forgotten.

e) I'm terribly sorry.

f) It won't happen again.

g) Don't let this happen again.

h) What a *very* nice surprise.

i) Oh, nothing, nothing.

j) Many happy returns of the day.

5. for intermediate and advanced students, reported speech, written.

Put b, c, d, e, f, g, and j into reported speech.

An elementary or intermediate class might therefore write with before it not only the series of pictures but a series of questions and a list of vocabulary, or a skeleton of the whole story with certain important grammatical words or basic vocabulary items erased. A more advanced class would of course work differently and one would hope that the stories it produced would vary far more from each other.

More advanced classes, or better pupils in any class, can usefully have more freedom in composing their stories, and would be invited to speculate as to why the men wanted the flowers, or the scenes as they had

left home that morning, or might be asked to write the whole story from the point of view of one of the men, or a particular onlooker, perhaps the boss of the attendant in the picture, or a sequel showing the attendant called to order for taking the confiscated flowers home. These additions would need the use of the past perfect and continuous and some oral preparation for this («As he was leaving home that morning his wife had said to him...») or speculation by the characters about the future («She might like... She will be pleased when I bring her these. I wonder what she will say.») and other examples of the characters' thoughts which can involve the use of varied and difficult structures and verb forms if wished («I hope he didn't see me. I hope he won't notice the bulge under my jacket. Ah, he has let me go by, so he can't have noticed anything. Oh dear...»). There are no real limits on vocabulary here, either: the more advanced the students, the more one would try to give them (or, as far as possible, to elicit from them) a choice of words to discuss and compare so that individuals could choose the shade of meaning and style they preferred.

In the list of suggested vocabulary which follows I have underlined words and phrases which one might want with an elementary class and bracketed those only useful for advanced students, but of course the choice would in fact be made by the teacher according to what the class had previously learned and ought to reinforce and what was to come soon and could usefully be introduced now.

VOCABULARY. A *park*, a *flower-bed*, a *bed of*, a *pram*, an edging, a border, to glance, *carefully*, cautiously, (surreptitiously), (warily), to *step over*, on tiptoe, a *tulip*, to *pick* (many classes would need to be taught or reminded that this is not the same as 'to pick up' which may be needed for picture seven where there is one flower on the ground), to gather, (a great sheaf), a *bunch*, a bouquet, nervously, eagerly, an attendant, a *park keeper*, (a park superintendent), an official, broad-shouldered, stout, stern, (portly), to clutch, to attempt to, (to eye), a *jacket*, *suddenly*, to *catch hold of*, to shoot out, to bulge, guilty, guiltily, to seize, to grab, by the collar, (by the scruff of X's neck), (to stop X in X's tracks), (the long arm of the law /pointing out that it is a cliché/), (unceremoniously), to bark, to snap, to *break a law*, to forbid, (a byelaw), (a regulation), *Sir*, to *take away*, to confiscate, *upside-down*, to tuck under, to take down, to *write down*, (to caution), an *excuse*, (sheepish), embarrassed, to *blush*, a *name and address*, to *smell flowers*, sentimental, to soften, an *expression*, (booty), (spoils), (trophy), to present, to be overjoyed, to be delighted, thoughtful, *kind*, after all, to be touched, a wedding anniversary.

A useful final touch with any level of learner, provided the story is suitable, is to look for a final moral, or, for any story, a title: here, perhaps, »Justice wins«.

I have spoken throughout as if the production of individual written stories was the goal of picture composition, and of course it usually is. But the goal may equally be a class composition on the board (though not with advanced students), compositions produced by groups within the class pooling their knowledge, dialogues rather than stories, or dramatization.