

Telling fact from fiction

Language

Past tenses for describing someone's life
speculating

Level

Pre-Intermediate; (equivalent to CEF level A2)

Comment

In this lesson students read about three famous people and discuss whether they really existed or not. This activity can be followed up with a discussion about the new film *Robin Hood*, which opens in many countries this month, or for watching a scene from the film *Sherlock Holmes*, which is available on DVD in many countries this month. It can also link with the 100th anniversary of Florence Nightingale's death on 13th August.

How to use the lesson

- 1 Write the names from exercise 1 on the board. What can students tell you about the different people? Make notes on the board and then give students copies of the worksheet. In pairs or small groups, students do exercise 1. When they are ready, go through the names and ask for a show of hands in each case, making a note of how many students think each person is real or fictional.
- 2 Ask a student to read out the first paragraph of the article and check that everyone understands what they have to do. Students read the article, referring to the Glossary if necessary. When they've finished reading, students work in pairs and complete exercise 2. Write the three names on the board and make a note of how many students think each person is real or fictional. Then check through the answers.
- 3 Students continue working in pairs. They look at exercise 3 and try to match the different names to the three people without looking back at the article. They then write sentences, explaining the relevance of each name. Encourage them to do as many of the sentences as they can without looking back at the article but allow them to consult when they need to. Student pairs compare their answers with another pair.
- 4 In their new groups of four, students do the next exercise in which they answer questions about the article. Once they're ready, go through the answers in open class, inviting different students to answer.
- 5 Remind students of the survey mentioned at the start of the article. Explain that they're going to read some of the results from the survey. They read the summary of results and write the percentage numbers in the summary, using the written text to help them. Check answers.
- 6 Are the students surprised by the survey results? Discuss how the findings of the survey compare with the class results. Check the board to find out how many students thought King Arthur was a real person. How do the figures compare with the survey results? Do the same with the three names from the article.

- 7 Ask students if there are famous fictional characters from their culture that people believe actually existed. Students can choose one of the names from exercise 1, or the name of another real or fictional person from the past. If they know about the person then they can write a short description of the person's life. Alternatively, you can set this task for homework and ask students to do some research on the Internet. Students write a short description of the person without mentioning the person's name.
- 8 In small groups or open class, students read out their descriptions. The other students have to try to identify the person from the description and say if they think the person actually existed or if the person is a fictional character.
- 9 As an optional activity you can discuss the new *Robin Hood* film. Do any students plan to see the film? What do they know about the film? Have they seen any other films or TV series about Robin Hood? If you would like to use a video clip in the class then follow the link below and download a short (2:30) documentary about the Robin Hood film.
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9vgtf45hU5I>
 If you have access to the DVD of the recent Sherlock Holmes film then show a scene in class.

Answer key

1
 1 T 2 F 3 F 4 T 5 F 6 T

2
 1 F (although some people believe he is based on a real person)
 2 T
 3 F

3
 Robin Hood: His greatest enemy was the Sheriff of Nottingham; Piers Plowman is one of the earliest poems in which his name appears; Sherwood Forest is the place where he lived.
 Florence Nightingale: She became known as 'The Lady with the Lamp' during the Crimean War; St Thomas's is the hospital where she started a nursing school; it was The Times newspaper that gave her the name.
 Sherlock Holmes: He lived at 221B Baker Street, London; he went to university in Cambridge; his friend and biographer was Dr. John H. Watson.

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 1 Because he only stole from the rich to help the poor.
 2 The new film will generate interest in Robin Hood and the places associated with him.
 3 The city in Italy where she was born.
 4 It's on May 12th, her birthday.
 5 He was approximately 27 years old.
 6 The expression was used in films and television series of the stories and became popular.

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 1 65 2 51 3 27 4 58