



THE HARVEY SKIDOO TREE SERIES



SUGGESTED GENERAL APPROACH

- introduce story (title)
- set scene
- introduce questions
- read/listen to story
- go over questions
- look at the language
- discuss
- do a follow-up

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The main idea is for the students to work on their English through interacting with the story, whether it is presented as a listening or a reading. Below are some suggested steps to follow but feel free to modify them to a better adapt the activities to the students you have and your teaching style.

1 INTRODUCING THE STORY

Write or project the title on the board and elicit from the students what they think the anecdote might be about.

2 SETTING THE SCENE

You may wish to present the brief forward provided which gives a short synopsis of the story. After the students are a little orientated towards the coming story you might have a look at some of the vocabulary which will appear. Many teachers like to pre-teach some vocabulary and have the students talk about the theme to prepare them better for the coming text. Each story will have 6 items of vocabulary and a few questions to discuss provided in the *Setting the Scene* section in *Reading / Listening Comprehension*. You can write the items on the board and ask the students the questions, project them onto the screen, or give it all out as a handout. You could select one or two new words and ask the students how they might be relevant to the story they are about to encounter.

3 INTRODUCING THE QUESTIONS

If you simply want the students to listen to or read the story and then speak about it later, you can skip sections 3 (this section) and 5 (Going Over the Questions). Otherwise it is recommended to go over the questions beforehand, not only to provide direction to their reading or listening but also because some of the questions introduce vocabulary or ideas used in the story and this can better prepare them before taking on the task. This is especially important for students that are not in a high level of English class.

4 THE STORY

Either in written or spoken form the anecdote has a brief forward followed by the story. If you haven't done so already in section 2 (Setting the Scene) or in section 3 (Introducing the Questions), you could present the brief forward before giving the students the story. After the first reading or listening, have the students try to answer those questions they can before going through the story again. This can be done with students in pairs or groups of 3, with them sharing what they know. It also encourages them to use the vocabulary, focusses them further, and they feel better that it's difficult for others, too.

5**GOING OVER THE QUESTIONS**

Encourage the students to justify their answers, referring to the appropriate elements in the story to back their interpretations up. This includes speaking about specific examples as well as putting into their own words what they read or heard. (This is also a good way to encourage them to use the target vocabulary and you can see how well they do it.) Feel free to make comments or further questions to go beyond just answering the questions provided.

6**LANGUAGE LOOK**

This section looks at 4 phrasal verbs that have appeared in the story as well as an expression or two and some aspect of how the language can be used. The recently covered story provides the context for the target language and exploring it helps prepare the students in using unfamiliar structures and language in the coming discussions. Try to have the students use the vocabulary to better understand and retain it. After communicating the meaning you could ask them to come up with a sentence using it in a way that applies to the story. Ex: *The two boys were heading for the tree.*

7**DISCUSSION**

There are questions that focus directly on the events from the story and others which provide students with more general themes or issues to explore (which originally stem from the story). As the texts are intended for high level students, encourage them to

- use new vocabulary (and structures if that is the case)
- offer and respond to opinions / perspectives
- connect examples from the text to their own experience or beliefs
- develop their argument and viewpoints with examples, comparisons and explanations
- speculate (for example):
 - ▶ why events happened the way they did
 - ▶ events prior to or happening after the sequence presented in the story
 - ▶ ‘What if’ one or more things were or had turned out differently
 - ▶ the students imagine that they were in a similar situation (how they would feel, what they would do)
- explore the themes and how people feel about them as far as they can with details, new ‘What if’ situations, consequences, connections to other issues
- enjoy the activity, taking pleasure from looking at something in depth a little and the interactions with the other students

8**FOLLOW-UP**

Generally speaking it’s a good idea to ‘close’ an activity before moving on to the next one. This could take on any of a number of forms. For example, you could

- ask the students how they felt about the story and/or the activities
- present some examples of how they could use the language better (based on when you were monitoring them during the discussion activity), focussing not only on error correction of grammar/vocabulary, but also on pronunciation, fluency, ways of approaching the activity and reminders of other structures they could have used.
 - mention what things they were doing well (like making sure everyone in their group was participating, incorporating the new vocabulary in their speaking, exploring the themes in detail, responding to what other people were saying)
 - ask them to write their own anecdote
 - quiz them in a future class on some of the language that came up

GENERAL TIP:

When eliciting their responses, such as their perspectives about the story or some of the issues that surfaced while discussing it, interact with the students by asking them further details, offering your own opinions, agreeing with them or recognizing how they might see things in that way, etc.