Tools for Activating Materials and Tasks in the English Language Classroom

Most teachers have seen the reactions students can have to tasks and activities that they do not find engaging: the glassy or rolling eyes, the unfocused behavior, and the cries of "Not again!" This article provides practical techniques that my students have helped me learn over the years to better "activate" materials and tasks in the English language classroom while tapping into students' interests, needs, and aims. Activation techniques, then, are tools to make materials and tasks more interactive and more learner-focused, encouraging students to take more responsibility for their own learning. This article demonstrates activating techniques through three strategies: elicitation, gapping, and adaptation/extension.

Elicitation

Elicitation is the process of drawing out something, of provoking a response. Using elicitation as a questioning strategy in the language classroom focuses discussion on the learners—on their ideas, opinions, imagination, and involvement. Classroom discussions that use elicitation as a technique allow students to draw on what they know—on existing schemata/scaffolding—and provide for a rich sharing of ideas within a sociocultural context (Huong 2003). Graves (in Nunan 2003) points out that elicitation, "because it emphasizes learners' experience and knowledge," helps "to take the focus off of the text as the source of authority and helps learners become more self-reliant" (237). Elicitation is also an excellent lead-in to many other activities that exercise critical thinking and inquiry (Ngeow and Kong 2003). As illustration, here are two elicitation activities: extended brainstorming and a top-down vocabulary elicitation game.

Extended brainstorming

Brainstorming has but one rule: there is no such thing as a mistake. Anything goes; all ideas are equal and welcome. To practice brainstorming,

teachers should draw on topics that students know and care about. As a teacher, I have always enjoyed learning about student interests, aims, and cultures through Frierian problem-posing, through collaboration and negotiation, and by focusing on loaded, culturally significant topics (Kabilan 2000; Englander 2002).

With a Frierian problem-posing approach, the classroom focus moves from a "banking model," where "memorization and regurgitation" and "right answers" are emphasized, to a learning environment where students are asked to reflect critically, where exploration is encouraged, and where there are multiple ways to construct solutions to problems (Serendip 2003). When I was a teacher in training at a secondary school in the United States, my students taught me the importance of negotiating topics and activities to make them more relevant to students' needs and interests. I was teaching a large, mixed-level, mixed-background English as a Second Language (ESL) class, and the textbook often left the students uninterested and feeling that the lesson was irrelevant. Many expressed this disconnect by not paying attention and by engaging in behaviors disruptive to other students. So, instead of going page by page through the textbook, I had the students reflect and ask questions about the subject matter to link to topics they knew and cared about studying, such as low-rider cars, something most of the students had a high level of interest and expertise in. We covered much of the same language-learning content of the chapter in the textbook—which was on travel by car—but we did it through focus on a topic the students truly cared about discussing. The interest was such that the students enthusiastically "published" their own handwritten and typed newsletters, which they posted in the classroom and shared with other students. And if your students are not excited about cars, other topics could include regional or traditional foods, activities, hobbies, or current events.

The first step in the process of brainstorming is to elicit responses from students as a group. Students should be encouraged to respond quickly with the first things that come to mind and to call them out to be included together on a map on the board. As the students give their responses, the teacher can help them see the connections between the generated vocabulary—producing a mind map that links like terms together—by circling key concepts and drawing lines to connect circles.

After the teacher has mapped out the brainstorm, the next step is to ask students to take on the roles of investigative journalists and look at the various facets of the topic under examination through these primary questions:

WHAT?
WHO?
WHERE?
WHEN?
HOW?
WHY?

Students work in groups to brainstorm the topic and one or more of the investigative questions. Depending on the size of the class, I might have each group work with one question word, or one group work with WHAT and WHO and another with WHERE and WHEN, and so forth. But it is important that the groups share the results and that WHY questions—or the WHY group—be last, as WHY is the existential question, the question that requires highest-order thinking skills. This overall approach allows the class to investigate findings together, come to conclusions, and perhaps develop thesis statements for potential writing projects.

The activity generates a list of vocabulary items and/or questions. About the topic of "falafel," for example, students could generate either a list of words or questions in relation to WHAT (*What is it? What does it look like, smell like, taste like, feel like, or sound like while you eat it? What are the ingredients?*). The brainstorm can generate questions that the students answer later, and/or a list of words or phrases that link the topic with WHAT. WHO typically generates questions such as *Who is involved in eating or preparing falafel?* and related questions such as *How wide is the distribution of people who partake in the phenomenon of falafel? Do people of all ages and social standing know about falafel?* WHERE and WHEN generate questions and vocabulary about locations where falafel is made (*Where is it made? Where is it most popular?*) and contextualize the times and

rituals associated with it (*When do people typically eat it?*). The HOW questions help students focus on processes: *How is falafel made? How is it eaten? How often does one eat it?* Finally, WHY helps students understand how to organize their research and agree upon conclusions: *Why is falafel such a popular food? What research findings from the other questions support the conclusion?* As this "WHY" example shows, students are free to add follow-up questions that do not necessarily begin with the same question word; the key is that the questions will lead to an investigation of the topic.

What results from this collaborative effort is a focused, collaborative look at a topic, a preliminary way to organize a great deal of material (the falafel brainstorm might generate a thesis such as, "Falafel is a popular traditional food in the Middle East because it is cheap, tasty, and quick to eat") and establish the basis for writing class publications/newsletters and cross-cultural exchange projects. These publications can be handwritten, typed, or printed on paper, or they can be published via email, blogs, social networking sites, or other online forums (see http://oelp.uoregon.edu/learn.html for examples of keypal and cross-cultural exchange sites). Because students are interested in the topic to begin with, they naturally want to learn more about it and are eager to share what they learn.

Elicitation vocabulary games

Another way elicitation can help students develop questioning skills and strategies is through vocabulary games. The one my students have particularly enjoyed has many permutations. In the game, a student or group of students elicits from other students a list of words headed by a title concept. A typical vocabulary set could be about nouns—for example, *Things in a School: blackboards, students, teachers, desks, pencils, erasers, chalk, textbooks*. A vocabulary set could also be defined by the first letter of the words or by rhyme, such as *Words That Start with "B": boys, book, bicycle, bird, big, blue* and *Words That Rhyme with "Eye": I, my, cry, high, lie, buy, why*. The set could include actions: *Things to Do at School: study, discuss, explain, write, read, listen, learn, teach*. It could be a more complex list of emotions: *happiness,*

sadness, loneliness, frustration, surprise, relief. The number of the words in a list can vary; rules and difficulty can be adjusted for student level. The pedagogic value of the task is in the amount of involvement and practice that the students experience. Typically, the topic and the list of items appear on a card; in pairs or small groups, students try to elicit the vocabulary items on their card from their partner or others in their small group, or from the whole class.

To get the game started, the teacher can demonstrate by using a card that has a topic with vocabulary items that should be familiar to the students; the teacher gives clues so that the class can guess each of the words on the list. Topics can be of general interest or drawn from a recent lesson or class unit. The idea is to foster oral communication, so all clues should be given verbally—no pointing, gesturing, or mimicking an action—with a set time limit, typically one to three minutes. While demonstrating how the game works, the teacher should pattern the interaction before students work together, illustrating elicitation strategies such as the following:

- giving definitions (what something is or is not);
- providing attributes (large, small, red, square);
- giving functions (used for X; not used for doing Y);
- comparing or contrasting;
- providing a word that the target word rhymes with;
- telling what letter the word starts or ends with (if the students get stuck).

Students get their cards, with a topic and a list of vocabulary items, then prepare and practice in pairs or small groups to give clues that will elicit the vocabulary from the rest of the class—or, more precisely, from the other groups. In large classes, limiting the guesses to one per group helps all groups listen more carefully; it also prevents groups from shouting out random guesses, and it forces the speaker to continue providing information about the target word so that groups can gain confidence that their one guess is correct. Another option is to keep a tally of points each group scores as it successfully elicits the vocabulary items from the other groups.

At first, the teacher will have to prepare cards showing the topic and the list of vocabulary items to be elicited, but once the students learn the rules and have practiced eliciting successfully, the next step is to have the students write their own vocabulary cards, essentially creating the content of the game. Students at different levels of proficiency can come up with their own topics and make their own cards by listing words for each topic. Students can draw subject matter for the cards from vocabulary and topics covered in class as well as from topics of interest. Collaboratively developing their own cards and elicitation strategies allows the students to reflect on what they know and to use critical-thinking skills to order their vocabulary. It also helps the students take the lead in their own learning, to write and help construct materials. And those materials help the teacher, too; as the students produce a portfolio with more and more cards, the teacher can keep a copy of the new materials to use as review or to use with other classes.

Gapping

Gapping refers to the authentic purpose for communication: transferring information, or bridging the gap, from one person to another. In a language classroom, using gapping activities means that each learner needs to negotiate, collaborate, and exchange information toward a common goal. Gapping also provides variety and fosters group work with existing readings and materials. As illustration, we can look at three gapped activities: Riddle Schmooze, Monster Madness, and Grids Galore. These activities can be modified to integrate additional vocabulary, prompt a new lesson, or review grammar.

Riddle Schmooze

To "schmooze" is to exchange information, or to chat informally; to come up with a gapped schmooze activity, one needs to have pieces or parts to complete a communicative act. Participants might have parts of a picture and need to find complementary pieces to make a whole. Or they may have different sections of a printed text (sometimes referred to as a jigsaw reading). Schmooze activities provide students with an opportunity to move about a room, make some (communicative) noise, and practice different registers:

for instance, how to greet someone and how to politely interrupt ongoing conversations (e.g., "If you wouldn't mind, I'd like to ask your assistance"; "I'm sorry to bother you …"; "Hey, dog/dude/man, give me a hand!").

To begin the riddle schmooze activity, the teacher gives each student two slips of paper. On one is a riddle question and on the other is an answer—the answer to a different riddle (see Appendix 1). Students have one to three minutes to memorize both. Then they fold the riddle and answer and give them back to the teacher. Next comes the noisy mayhem of a classroom of English language learners bridging the gap—chatting with other students to find the answer for their riddle and the riddle for their answer. The teacher should give a time limit and have the students sit down as soon as they have found their riddles and answers. In a variation of this activity, instead of riddles, each student can be given a vocabulary word and the definition for a different vocabulary word and asked to match the word to a classmate's definition and the definition to a classmate's word. In all cases, students are bridging the gap as they fit pieces of information they have with pieces of their classmates' information. (With larger classes, the teacher can copy sets of riddles/answers or vocabulary/ definition sets and have the students work in groups. For example, a class with 50 students could divide into two to five groups, with each group receiving identical sets of riddles.)

A secondary assignment once students finish schmoozing and sit down is to have them jot down alternative answers to their riddles or come up with any other riddles that they know. When the time is up, the teacher calls the students together and has each student ask his or her riddle to the whole group and goes over the responses. And if riddle answers are not clear to everyone, some students may be able to do the explaining.

Teachers can adapt schmooze activities to work with any question/answer format and with pictures or graphics. And once students have learned how schmoozing works, they can readily develop schmoozing materials by using class lessons or topics of interest, so that, as with the elicitation vocabulary games

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
I									
H									
G									
F									
E									
D									
C									
B									
A									

described above, students end up generating content for future classes. Whatever the content, schmoozing gap activities provide a fun, interactive way to review vocabulary or practice for a test.

Monster Madness

In this activity (thanks to Eric Dwyer from Florida International University), students draw a monster using only geometric shapes. The students then pair off, sit back-to-back, and describe what their monsters look like. The students alternate between describing their own monster, and listening to the description of their partner's monster and reproducing it. Preparation for the activity can include reviewing how to describe shapes (square, rectangle, circle, etc.), how to give directions and locations ("Start by drawing a two-centimeter square in the upper left-hand corner; then …"), or how to compare and contrast ("The circle is twice as large as the square"). For a wrap-up activity, have students summarize how the gapped picture is different from the original. Spin-off activities include having students describe differences in photographs or drawings.

Grids Galore

Grids provide many possibilities for gapped speaking practice. They allow the teacher and students to use the format with all kinds of content that is created by and for a particular teaching context. Grids also work with a variety of teaching levels. The directions are much like those for Monster Madness: each participant (or group) gives verbal directions to a partner (or other members of the group), who fills in boxes on the grid (that each of the participants has) without showing it to her or his partner(s). The students then compare the original grid with the grids filled in by each listener. The result can take the form of a correct final destination (for example, Box A1), or the result can be a picture that the listeners create by filling in the appropriate squares.

Grids can be almost any size, and it is fine to have students draw the grids themselves to prepare for the activity. Here is one example with varied question content:

Partner A directions

1. If the past tense of *go* is *gone*, mark an X in the box in A1. However, if the past tense of *go* is *went*, mark an X in the box in A2.

2. If the plural of *tooth* is *tooths*, mark an X two boxes to the right, one box up. But if the plural of *tooth* is *teeth*, mark an X three boxes to the right, two rows up.

3. If the middle name of U.S. President Barack Obama is "Harry," mark an X on the next box to the right, same row. But if President Obama's middle name is "Hussein," mark an X on the next box to the right, one row down.

4. If the plural of *child* is *children*, mark an X six rows up, on the same column. But if the plural of child is *childs*, mark an X six rows up, one row to the right.

5. If reading is more fun than singing, mark an X two boxes to the right and four boxes down. If, however, singing is more fun than reading, mark an X three boxes to the left and one box down.

Partner B directions

1. If the past of *see* is *seen*, mark an X in the A1 square. However, if the past of *see* is *saw*, mark an X in the A4 square.

2. If a synonym of *gorgeous* is *beautiful*, mark an X five boxes up and one to the right. But if a synonym of *gorgeous* is *big*, mark an X in the same column, one box up.

3. If falafel is a plant, mark an X one box to the right, one row above. But if falafel is a tasty food, mark an X one box to the right, one row down.

4. If people who don't eat meat are called *veterinarians*, mark an X in the column to the left, same row. But if people who don't eat meat are called *vegetarians*, mark an X in the column to the left, two rows up.

5. If English is easier than math, mark an X four boxes to the right, in the same row. If, however, English is more difficult than math, mark an X two boxes to the right, in the same row.

Once students become familiar with grids, even more learning and interactive fun take place when the students write their own grids to practice vocabulary or grammar or to review content covered in class. Valuable interaction and negotiation take place as students practice their listening skills and follow directions—and when they discuss why and how they came up with different solutions or even how the questions could be changed to be clearer or more concise. Open-ended discussion questions (such as in each #5 above) can also be included as springboards for debates or to link to upcoming topics and themes. The communicative value of the activity, then, comes as much as or more from the process (providing added language practice) than from producing the finished, "correct" grid.

Extending and adapting

Extending and adapting are techniques that offer a practical way for teachers to draw on realia and authentic materials to spice up classroom activities. Adapting allows for materials to be drawn from unlimited sources that the students already know and care about. The value of adaptation was illustrated to me many years ago when I noticed how engaged some students in the back of the class were. I thought they were focused and avidly discussing the activity, and I was pleased to see that they were so interested. Upon closer inspection, however, I discovered that the students were engaged in a word game in their native language instead of the activity from the textbook. Instead of criticizing the students for being off-task, I offered them the opportunity to contribute to the lesson by sharing their game. With my assistance, the students then adapted the activity to the content we were studying, thus taking a larger stake in their own learning.

With teachers' guidance, students can readily identify fun formats and adapt them to the classroom. Ideas from board and card games, from local game shows (see Appendix 2), and from puzzles can be applied to learning English. Other possibilities for adapting or extending materials and activities from students' ideas and other resources follow.

Scenarios and role play

These activities can be used in conjunction with a loaded theme of interest to students. Many students respond to a scene of conflict at work or between parent and child. These scenes or *strategic interactions* (Alatis 1993) can also be taken from a picture or news report, and students can be asked to discuss one role (or one side of an issue) in a small group; they then either elect one student to represent the group or, better yet, act out the scenario collectively after planning together. This activity is not to be confused with reading aloud a dialog or the parts of a play because in these strategic interactions, no one knows the outcome of the exchange in advance. Students must actively negotiate toward a solution or to clarify the situation. And the activity can be beneficial even if students do not reach a clear-cut solution, as learning occurs throughout the process of performing scenarios, regardless of the outcomes. Teachers can focus on providing language forms (such as modals, expressions, idioms, and verb forms) to help the students prepare for the exercise and, as a wrap-up or debriefing, provide a summary of language-learning points learned or needed. Students can also summarize who they feel "won" the exercise, explain why, and make their own observations on language used or language they needed in order to be more effective in expressing their ideas.

Topics for scenarios can come from students' personal lives, their communication with other students and teachers at school, work environments, or scenes taken from readings or literature. Two scenarios, with role cards for students, appear on pages 8 and 9.

"Movie Night Out"

Daughter (age 13–18)

You would like to go out to a movie with a few of your friends. One of the friends is a boy you are interested in getting to know better. You are worried, however, that your parents may not approve. Try to convince your parents that the boy is trustworthy and that they should let you go out.

Mother

You are concerned about the friends your daughter is keeping. You would like her to spend more time on her studies and more time at home. At the same time, you don't want to keep her from enjoying time with her friends. Find out more information from your daughter to determine whether you will grant her permission to go to a movie with her friends.

Boy

You have decided to drop in and visit your new friend to see if she is able to go to the movies with you and some other friends. When you arrive, you find that your friend and her mother have already been deep in discussion about whether or not your friend will be permitted to go to the movie. Your task is to help your friend's mother feel confident that you are a responsible, trustworthy person.

Father

You have just returned from work to find your wife deep into a discussion with your daughter and a young man you have never seen before. You are in a hurry to prepare to go back out to a business dinner. Ask each of the members of the discussion to provide a quick summary of what has happened and what they think the decision should be and why. Then discuss with your wife, alone, what the final decision should be.

"The Scholarship"

Student

You have just been informed that you have been awarded a scholarship to study in the United States for a year. You haven't had much experience traveling alone and have never been outside of your country on your own. Your parents were not very excited about your applying to the program and have told you they are very concerned about your living on your own in another country. Discuss the scholarship with your parents and try to reassure them that you are able to handle living on your own and that the experience will be safe and important for your future studies and career.

Parents (Father, Mother, or both)

You have just learned that your daughter (or son) has been awarded a scholarship to study in the United States for one year. You are very concerned about her/his safety and the effect that the year away will have on your child's future studies and career. Ask your daughter/son questions to determine whether you will allow her/him to accept the scholarship.

School Adviser

You have been called to provide advice and counseling to the parents of a student who has won a prestigious scholarship to study in the United States. You want to stress both the challenges and the rewards of studying abroad and to do what you can to assure the parents that schools in the United States take the security of their students very seriously.

Group presentations, reports, and newscasts

Students take a theme or topic and work together to present their ideas in a cohesive format. They can write individual or group reports and then work together to present to the rest of the class a program, or a newscast, that has an introduction and a conclusion. This activity can be done as a daily or weekly presentation that allows students to share topics of interest. The class can post presentations and reports on blogs, on social networking sites, or as collaborative, cross-cultural exchanges.

While blogs or networking sites would be problematic (or impossible) in contexts where access to the Internet is limited or not available, in-class newscasts can work anywhere, and teachers can incorporate them as a regular feature of their classes. Students, individually or in groups, are responsible for the newscasts on a rotating basis, whether they are done daily or weekly, and take on roles such as reporter, interviewer or interviewee(s), anchorperson, and so on. These roles can change as the group's turn to present the newscast comes around again. Not only do students get opportunities to practice speaking and to use vocabulary they might not otherwise use, but newscasts also give students opportunities to introduce and discuss issues of international, national, local, or schoolwide interest.

Peer review and publication committees

Student publications can include class newsletters or newspapers for which the students function as writers, peer editors, and editorial writers. Students identify topics of interest and relevance and do research on their topics. The teacher functions as a co-worker or senior editor on the publication, offering consultation and guidance as needed. The longer and more elaborate the publication, the more time and collaborative effort will be required.

Another option for class newsletters is to publish shorter articles on a class blog (www.blogger.com is one example) or on collaborative, customized social networking websites such as www.ning.com. For newscasts, students can make live presentations to the class or record their sessions and save them as podcasts or post them as videos on sites such as www.youtube.com.

Student evaluation and practice test writing

Students work in groups to come up with practice quizzes and exercises to review for upcoming tests. The teacher helps the students reflect on what they have learned by prompting them with a list of language objectives reached (from lesson and unit planning, for example) and through guiding the students to compile portfolios to list and share what they have accomplished in class over a set period of time. Students can develop practice activities in the form of elicitation cards, grids, games, or scenarios (as detailed above) or as review questions or language review exercises. Many students enjoy playing the role of "teacher," asking questions to the class or developing short quizzes for their peers.

If the class has access to computers, the program Hot Potatoes is an easy-to-learn and fun-to-use tool to draft exercises that will work on any computer or that can be easily posted online (see http://hotpot.uvic.ca/ to download).

Conclusion

Activating techniques focus on the students in the classroom, on keeping them involved, on having them *doing* and *producing* rather than *passively receiving* information. This article has described some techniques that my students have helped me learn to better focus the class content and tasks according to their needs. My students have helped by sharing their ideas, interests, and aims and by being engaged members in collaborative learning. I have learned that through the strategies of elicitation, gapping, and extension/adaption, students interact more, construct solutions together, and have the tools to draw on to not only receive an education but to participate in and contribute to that education.

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Appendix 1   Riddle Schmooze

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Here is a starter set of riddle questions and answers. Remember, at the start of this activity, students get two slips of paper—one slip with a riddle question and the other slip with the answer to a different riddle question.

QUESTION	ANSWER
What is in the middle of Paris?	"r"
What word is always spelled wrong?	"wrong"
What is the capital in England?	"E"
What is the longest word in the English language?	"smiles" (… because there is a "mile" between the first "s" and the second "s")
Can a word become shorter if you add a syllable to it?	Yes, "short" (… when it becomes the word *shorter*).
Which is the shortest month?	May (It has only three letters.)
The more there is, the less you see—what is it?	darkness
What is the difference between here and there?	"t"
What has teeth but can't eat?	a zipper (or a comb)
What has a face and two hands, and goes round?	a clock
What did the little hand on the clock say to the big hand on the clock?	"See you in an hour!"
What does everybody in the world do at the same time?	age (get older)
If five dogs are chasing a cat down the street, what time is it?	five after one

Appendix 2   Engl-o-teka

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This activity is loosely based on a Croatian TV game show that features a kind of role play. Two suggestions for incorporating role plays into the language classroom are given here.

Role Play Option A

The purpose is for students to get practice speaking English through trying to determine which of three game show guests has the target role and which two are pretending. All three claim to be the real "X." Students can work in groups to draft questions and prepare information about how the person in the target role might respond to questions from the class. During the activity, each group has three minutes to ask as many questions as they can of Guests #1, #2, and #3. One option—lion trainer—is given below. Any profession, however, could work in this activity, and students in a group can choose their own profession. After asking all the questions and listening to the answers from the three "guests," the groups vote for the guest they think is the actual professional (lion trainer, in the example below). Points are given to each group that attracts incorrect guesses—but, as usual, the real value of the activity comes from having students ask and answer questions, exchange information, and communicate in a meaningful way.

Here are sample instructions. One student plays the "real" lion trainer, while the other two students pretend to be lion trainers.

> (For one student): You are, for the purpose of this part of Engl-o-teka, to play the part of a lion trainer. You have been working at this job for five years. You only work with very calm lions and you have not been attacked, yet. Of course, you may make up anything else to try to convince the contestants that you are not the lion trainer.

> (For the other two students in the group): You are to pretend to be a lion trainer. You can say you have been working at the job for five years, that lions are trained from birth to be at ease with humans, and that only a certain kind of African lion is used because they are tamer than other species. To tame a lion, one must be calm, stay collected, and repeat the steps of training often. The lions must be rewarded for correct behavior with large meals of raw flesh, preferably of an animal and not the trainer!

Role Play Option B

Students get together in groups, preferably of three, and again they will play the parts of "guests." Instead of choosing a profession, though, they choose an experience that one of the students has had, but the other two students haven't. For example, suppose one student has gone swimming in a lake after dark, but the other two haven't. For the purposes of this activity, all three students will tell their classmates that they *have* gone swimming in a lake after dark. Their classmates then ask questions, which the three "guests" answer, each trying to convince the class that he/she is the person who really has gone swimming in a lake after dark. Finally, the class votes on who is telling the truth and who is pretending.

Students can prepare in their groups by telling one another about unusual things they have done or experiences they have had. Together, they pick one of those experiences. Then, each student must prepare to answer questions from classmates. The student who really did swim in the lake after dark will be able to answer truthfully, whereas the other two students will have to imagine scenarios where they might have swum in a lake after dark; each student's scenario should be different. The three students can work together to develop scenarios so that all three of them will be able to answer questions like When, Where, Who, Why, etc.

When all groups are ready, the groups take turns going to the front of the class. Each person in the group will make the same statement ("I have gone swimming in a lake after dark") about the experience. After that, members of the class ask questions, the "swimmers" answer them as convincingly as possible, and then, after a time limit of perhaps three minutes, the class votes on who they believe is telling the truth.