

# STRATEGIES TO ENHANCE THE TEACHING OF READING, THINKING AND WRITING SKILLS

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## Abstract

This paper presents classroom methodologies using the whiteboard as a means of working with students on developing their writing skills. It also addresses reading, thinking and cooperative skills in a carefully mapped out and pedagogically grounded game which can be adapted for use at all levels of language instruction. Both of these methodologies include grammar and vocabulary building elements which can be expanded as deemed necessary. The paper concludes with two examples of the reading-based game ready for use by teachers.

## บทคัดย่อ

งานวิจัยนี้เสนอวิธีการสอนในชั้นเรียนโดยใช้ไวท์บอร์ดเป็นสื่อในการทำกิจกรรมเพื่อพัฒนาทักษะการเขียนของนักศึกษา รวมทั้งทักษะการอ่าน การคิดและการทำงานร่วมกัน โดยใช้เกมเป็นพื้นฐาน ซึ่งสามารถดัดแปลงใช้ได้ในการเรียนการสอนภาษาอังกฤษทุกระดับ วิธีการทั้งสองได้รวมองค์ประกอบ การสร้างคำศัพท์และไวยากรณ์ซึ่งสามารถดัดแปลงได้ตามความจำเป็น งานวิจัยนี้ยังรวมตัวอย่างเกม การอ่านสำเร็จรูปของอาจารย์ไว้ด้วย

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## INTRODUCTION

### Games in the Classroom

A game is defined by Merriam-Webster as an “activity engaged in for diversion or amusement”. In considering the inclusion of games in the ESL classroom, one must also add the various elements of learning the language from grammar and vocabulary improvement to the development of writing and reading skills. Also important for student success is the development of critical thinking skills and the ability to work with others toward a common goal. This paper presents a specific game addressing reading, thinking and cooperative skills along with a series of whiteboard activities focused upon the development of writing skills. Both of these activities involve teamwork, grammar and vocabulary building “The justification for using games in the classroom has been well demonstrated as benefiting students in a variety of ways. These benefits range from cognitive aspects of language learning to more co-operative group dynamics” (Lengeling, 1997).

The argument has been made that games should be treated as central not peripheral to a foreign language teaching programme (Lee, 1979). A similar opinion is expressed by Richard-Amato, who believes games to be fun but warns against overlooking their pedagogical value, particularly in foreign language teaching. There are many advantages of using games. “Games can lower anxiety, thus making the acquisition of input more likely” (Richard-Amato 1988:147). They also enable learners to acquire new experiences within a foreign language which are not always pos-

sible during a typical lesson. Furthermore, to quote Richard-Amato, they, “add diversion to the regular classroom activities”, break the ice, “[but also] they are used to introduce new ideas” (1988:147).

### Writing for Fun

In Thailand, every English language teacher faces the problem of how to teach writing and grammar to Thai students in an interesting, constructive and meaningful way. Lessons on how to write in English must always focus on writing, grammar improvement and correction of common errors as well as on increasing the vocabulary of students and increasing the maturity level of their writing. This paper is a non-research paper providing detailed, contextualized reports of certain aspects of EFL classroom methodology which have worked well for me over the years and which I would like to share with other teachers in this field. It is a project which I have worked on and substantially refined since my initial efforts were published a few years ago.

Writing is by its very nature an individualized process which usually does not allow a teacher to access or influence the process as it is happening, get involved in the revision that may occur while students are writing or afterwards, or provide for students to share what they have written with their peers. “Students need to be personally involved in writing exercises in order to make the learning experience of lasting value. Encouraging student participation in the exercise, while at the same time refining and expanding writing skills”, requires a certain pragmatic approach (Beare, 2007). When teaching writing to various levels of students in classes where English is a second or third language,

teachers are faced with the problem of how to make what can be a dull and boring activity into one that is more engaging.

There is an article on the BBC website called *Teaching English*, by Emma Pathere. In this article, she explains how her students benefit from responding to each other's writing. "It is easy to think that you, as the teacher, are the only person who can or should respond to your students' writing, but don't forget the other people in the classroom as well . . . the students! By getting my students to read each others' writing, I am helping them in several ways: Getting to know each other, learning from each other, having an authentic 'audience' or readership and responding to the content of my students' writing. When we write, we write for a reader. Having the students read each other's work provides a wide readership who will respond to the writing in a variety of ways, giving a richer response than just a single person (the teacher). Knowing that other students will read their work also encourages students to take more time over the thinking, planning and writing stages" (Pathere, 2006).

### **Stepping up to the Board**

I have noticed in observing ESL classes over the years that the classroom whiteboard is not often used by students, probably for a variety of reasons, not the least of which is the confusion that can result from students getting up out of their chairs and walking around the room. There can be a sense of losing control of the class if they are particularly unruly, but this is also common with most classroom games and activities that students actually find fun so I would really encourage teachers to take the risks.

Students here in Thailand appear to be accustomed in high school and certainly in university to write at their desks during class or to write assignments as homework. They rarely get the opportunity to share their work with fellow students, to look at their work through the eyes of others or to watch corrections made and explained on the spot by the teacher. There is a collegial aspect as well and this can be a team project from the very beginning if shyness is a problem or if students in general or several students in particular show a real lack of confidence.

It certainly needs to be accepted up front that the public correction of student errors, the whole activity of correcting a person's writing in front of the class is delicate and a teacher needs to be very careful indeed not to belittle or criticize what a student has written and to make corrections in the most positive and constructive manner. I often ask when confronted with a punctuation error or a major grammatical error something along the lines of, "Is there another way to say this?" I also skip over things that are either not so important to teach at that moment or gloss over something that I am not ready to tackle yet or some expression that is simply awkward.

"Finally, the question of which type of correction will facilitate a useful writing exercise is of utmost importance. Here the teacher needs to once again think about the overall target area of the exercise. If there is an immediate task at hand, such as taking a test, perhaps teacher-guided correction is the most effective solution. However, if the task were more general (for example developing informal letter writing skills), maybe the best approach would be to have the students work in groups thereby learning from each other. Most importantly, by choosing the correct

means of correction, the teacher can encourage rather discourage students” (Beare, 2007).

### **Sanuk Dee!**

The classroom activities I have developed and which I describe here are especially appropriate for a class of not more than fifteen to twenty students, although I have used some aspects with classes as large as forty with good results. The activities are appropriate for secondary English classes and university level students. I have used these methods of teaching writing for the last ten years here in Thailand and I have discovered that students always enjoy them and learn from them. There are aspects here that fit very well with the Thai cultural concept of “sanuk” which figures so heavily into the popular English language programs on television and into the teaching style so often used by native English speakers engaged to teach in Thai primary and high schools. The various classroom activities presented here work well with the Thai idea that making something “sanuk” is the best way of teaching it and the best way for students to learn.

### **RATIONALE**

Most of the whiteboard activities and games that I describe here allow students to more closely examine their own writing than they might otherwise do on their own. The activities allow the teacher to focus on any of several aspects of communication and they allow other students to relate to the errors shown by their peers. Some parts of these classroom activities allow students to teach

or to help teach each other. The point has often been made that the best way to learn something is to have to teach it to someone else. As the writer Joubert put it, “To teach is to learn twice”.

As well, it has been proven that for a student to hear an error or grammar point explained by a fellow student gets through where hearing the same point explained by the teacher may not. Some of this may simply be the words a teacher is using and a fellow student is more likely to use Thai to provide the same explanation. But generally speaking, the value of peer teaching can not be underestimated. For a student to explain an error or a point of grammar to a fellow student cements it in that student’s mind and makes it a part of his or her learning experience.

### **MATERIALS**

The materials needed for these writing activities are inexpensive and often provided by the school or university. Obviously a whiteboard is needed and these seem to be nearly universal these days as the old slate blackboards go out of style. Smaller versions of classroom size whiteboards are even available in many stores. It may just be a matter of taste, but I feel that none of this works quite as well on an old fashioned dusty chalkboard.

For markers I like to use as many different colors as I can find. I often use different colors for different purposes as red for grammar errors, green for punctuation, blue for verbs or orange for adjectives. I usually have the original work done in black or blue but variety is good though. I often mix things up by having them write in red and using the black or blue markers to do the gram-

mar work. In some classes I have had to keep a rather tight control of the markers, handing them out as needed and collecting them when a student has finished. Issuing just one marker per team also works to minimize loss and confusion and it ensures that only one person from each team is out of his/her seat at the same time.

### **LESSON FOCUS**

The focus of each of the activities I describe here can be changed to suit the lesson that needs to be taught. Grammar is an obvious focus. I often have seven to fifteen sentences on the board on a similar topic. I then am able to collect the similar errors and use these points to teach from. I have for example gone through every sentence and underlined the verbs or the adjectives to show how they work for the class as a whole in their own writing. Of course, the teacher has a great deal of control over what to highlight and what to leave for another day.

### **METHODS**

The following four games use the whiteboard and address writing skills. The concept is presented here but of course variations may be introduced to fit specific instances or requirements. All four of these offer opportunities for students to work together and/or compete with each other. Obviously these can be combined and the same set of sentences may be used to serve several different purposes

#### **1. Generate a Single Sentence Using a Prompt**

Using a set topic, have the class write one to three sentences on paper at their desks. These can be shared in a group first if desired and the sense of working on them as a pair or a group might be good with shy students or those in a very mixed class with good and poor students working together. I often have them write three and then chose the one they like best or the one they feel is most correct. Invite students to write a sentence on the whiteboard.

You can look over their shoulders and indicate certain sentences that you might like to see written on the whiteboard for your own purposes, or just leave the choice up to the individual. I often walk around the room and hand out markers to those who seem ready to share their efforts or who seem least shy. I have used this strategy many times during English Camp classes where the students are young and where I do not know them as well as with university students who I know very well indeed.

#### **2. Use a Prompt to Generate a Short Paragraph**

Begin with a simple prompt such as “Write about a Pet”, “Describe your Friend, or “Tell What You Did Yesterday after School”. The structure of a paragraph can be taught here with the range of sentences on the board used to show a good short paragraph as well as a good longer paragraph and perhaps one right in the middle as to the number of sentences. This is also a good place to work on sentence variety and on compound and complex sentences, as well as various

methods of joining sentences and punctuation.

### 3. The Story Continuation Game

This whiteboard writing activity takes a while to catch on and I have found that after two or three stories a class will enjoy the fun aspect and learn a great deal from the exercise. The basic premise is to have each student take a turn adding a sentence to move a story along. The first attempts are sometimes a bit difficult and teacher intervention in the form of suggestions to students who are unsure of themselves or stuck on what to do next sometimes helps. The teams can be set up in different ways and I often have two or three teams working on their stories at the same time, depending upon the number of students and the space available for work.

With this writing exercise, the teacher begins with a prompt at the top of the whiteboard. Some of the more common prompts like, “It was a dark and stormy night . . .”, “It was late at night when I heard a knock on my door”. or “The box that the messenger delivered sat on the floor of my room”. might be used, but a teacher can get as creative as he or she likes here. Prompts can be drawn from local stories, popular songs or movies and TV shows.

What the students write can be left completely open and up to them (as long as what they are writing are indeed sentences and appropriate to the classroom). The only thing to keep in mind is that the prompt needs a following action to move it along. These stories are the most fun since the students are free to improvise and to be as creative as they want to be. Some really marvelous stories can develop using this activity. A really good story

can be copied down and then typed up for future reference or further work by the class. Once a story is on the whiteboard, it can be used for a variety of different teaching activities ranging from looking at the basic grammar of each sentence to circling and studying all of the verbs, nouns or adjectives to show commonality, agreement or variety.

As a strictly fun activity, the stories can simply be enjoyed as stories with no further analysis. A similar activity developed by Lindsay Clandfield and written up in the *One Stop English* website called “Mini-sagas” also presents the opportunity for another interesting variation. She notes that her mini sagas, “. . . provide an excellent vehicle for a short writing lesson. This is because: they are easy to read, it is an easy task for the learner to understand . . . writing fifty words does not sound difficult (not at first!), they focus on accuracy (in the editing stage) like all creative writing, they have the potential to be very motivating”. (Clandfield, 2007).

### 4. Developing the “Story Continuation” Game

Greater structure can be introduced and used to advantage by introducing a specific pattern to be followed. This needs to be carefully explained to the class and perhaps the details need to be handed out on a separate piece of paper, dictated or noted down in the corner of the whiteboard. Here is an example of how this variation works.

First, the teacher provides the initial prompt to set the scene and to start the story rolling, as in the first version described above. Then the students are told that the second sentence must deal with a feeling. The third sentence must include a description and the

one after that some action being taken. This pattern can be added to, changed and/or repeated so that throughout the story you have a combination of feelings, thoughts, descriptions and something happening. You might work in smells, colors and tastes to this mix.

Obviously this would work best with a more advanced group, but using simple sentences and explaining the idea as you go along makes it useful with any level of student. Both of these variations can also be set out as a competition to see which team is able to produce the best or most interesting or surprising story. To give it a grammatical edge, you might set up the competition to see which team has made the least number of errors in punctuation or spelling or verb usage.

These “story creation” activities turn out to be the most fun when the teams are only allowed to communicate through what they actually write on the whiteboard. That way they have to follow along as the writing happens, read each other’s work and understand the storyline before responding with a sentence of their own.

## **USING THESE ACTIVITIES TO TEACH FROM**

Reviewing student work as written on the whiteboard can take many forms depending on the writing and grammar points to be stressed. The story alone can be the focus. Is it clear? Can the reader tell exactly what is going on and does it make sense? The last is an important point to consider as I have found students not reading very carefully and writing something that does not fit the story or that just does not make any sense. The point can be made that writing is all about

communicating on the sentence level, on the paragraph level and on the level of a longer story.

David Martin writes, “There is a way we can help our students take feedback more seriously and that is through the conference. The teacher can explain the remarks that were put on the paper carefully and effectively in the writing conference. It is important that the paper not be graded prior to the conference. Realistically, in many teaching situations individual conferences are simply not possible due to time and space constraints. However, much of the dialog and content that would go into a conference can be realized in the form of written comments on the students’ compositions, conversing with the teacher in the classroom, and in peer editing”. (Martin, 2007). It is exactly his last two concerns which are addressed by the methodology that I am presenting here.

With any type of writing, from single sentences to complete stories, you might ask whether the writers use adjectives to make the story more interesting. You might discuss how the piece of writing can be made more colorful and interesting. You might focus on the punctuation in the sentence or story or analyze the use of verbs or the spelling. With anything that students write on the white board, a teacher can work on a variety of issues, though probably not all of these at the same time. Looking too long at a single piece of writing or a single group of sentences can get boring and the activity of getting up out of their seats and writing on the whiteboard stimulates a student’s body and one hopes the mind as well. At the very least you won’t have anyone sleeping through your class!

## Reading for Fun!

In looking at the material for teaching or improving reading skills, it is obvious that reading is not considered ideal fun material and there is a dearth of reading games. Very few of the myriad ESL games I have come across over the years include reading to any extent beyond a simple phrase or sentence. I have developed a collection of jokes and short stories to be read by students to each other or to be read to the class which have filled this void to some extent. Especially useful but limited as far as reading goes are short jokes and riddles which help with speaking and listening skills. Prompted by the need to develop something more substantial than a riddle that fosters more careful reading, following directions and working with others as a team, I came up with what I have come to call, simply “The Game”. In addition to explaining how I developed this and how it works in a sample, I have included two versions in the appendix.

### RATIONALE:

I have found is that many students really need to learn how to follow directions more carefully. This reading/ critical thinking game was developed to address the problem that students have with following directions in doing homework, taking exams, completing assignments and the like, often with catastrophic results. This activity was developed to focus on carefully following directions, working with others to reach a certain goal, using the whiteboard, working on reading skills and having fun while all this is happening. “Games also help the teacher to create contexts in which the language is useful and meaningful. The learners want to take part and in order

to do so must understand what others are saying or have written, and they must speak or write in order to express their own point of view or give information” (Wright 1984).

### MATERIALS:

This kind of game takes considerable effort and ingenuity to develop, not to say a substantial amount of time. A reading passage must be found that closely matches the reading level of the majority of the students. It must not be too difficult or take more than ten to fifteen minutes to read through or momentum will be lost. The reading passage can then be adapted and edited to include special vocabulary words or to remove sections that are not needed carry on the game. For interest, pictures and illustrations can be cut and pasted. Some of these are “red herrings”. The following is a story I adapted from a joke that appears in many places on the internet in a variety of forms. I will use this passage to demonstrate how I developed this game.



*The famous British detective Sherlock Holmes and his dear comrade Dr. Watson go on a camping trip. They hike for several hours and finally, as the setting sun colours the sky amber and pink, they pick a grassy spot upon which to set up their tent. After building a campfire in front of*



their tent, they cook a pleasant meal, consisting of a flavourful stew, éclairs and tea. Tuckered out after their long hike, they decide to turn in.

Some hours later, Holmes wakes his faithful friend.

“Watson, look up at the sky and tell me what you see”.

Watson replies, “I see millions of stars”.

“What does that tell you?” asks Holmes.

Watson thinks for a minute.

“Well, it tells me that the universe is immense and beautiful. Whenever I look at the stars in the night sky, it makes me think of God. And if I look over there, I can see the wondrous constellations Leo, Pisces and Libra and the great giant Orion is overhead”.



Watson continues, “And you know Holmes, whenever I look up at night, I always make a wish on a star. Wishing on a star is supposed to make your dreams come true. But if you just want to know the time, it appears to be approximately a quarter past three”. “Finally, Watson concludes”, In terms of the weather, it tells me that it will be a nice sunny day tomorrow

“What does it tell you, Holmes?”

Holmes is silent for a moment, then speaks.

“Watson, you idiot, it tells us that someone has stolen our tent”.

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Once you have a reading passage like this, the first step is to start writing the various tasks. Both of the examples in the appendix work with longer reading passages and more complex questions. With most passages I start by setting seven to ten comprehension questions. Notice that the directions state that they are to read through all the directions before beginning. Here are the directions given to the students at the top of the task page for this version of the game along with the first three tasks. Task #3 is later cancelled in Task #8 so students who do not read the all directions, immediately get caught drawing a parrot!

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**This is a project for your team to complete. It will take wit, imagination and cleverness. The winning team will be awarded a prize. Read through all the tasks first and be sure to follow them very carefully. This is a race. The first group to finish wins. The key is to follow the directions very carefully.**

**TASK #1:**

**Read through all these tasks before you begin.**

**TASK #2:**

**Carefully read the story on the next page**

**TASK #3:**

**Send one person from your group to**

**the whiteboard to draw a parrot. Write all your nicknames inside the parrot.**

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The next two tasks involve general knowledge and task #5 is an example of a trick question based on the accompanying drawings. (The picture is of Sherlock Holmes not Watson!)

**TASK #4:**

**Name any three planets.**

\_\_\_\_\_

**TASK #5:**

**In the drawing, what is Dr. Watson holding in his hand?**

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Then I add tasks dealing with vocabulary and spelling. In drawing these up, I go back and edit the passage to include words I want to introduce or reinforce. The words in task #7 are arranged to form another word with their initial letters. One advantage of this is that you can easily check which team has completed the task successfully by looking at the single word they have produced for task #9.

**TASK #6:**

**Two words in this story are spelled in the British way. What are they?**

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_

**TASK #7:**

**Find words or expressions in the passage to match the following:**

1. pastry \_\_\_\_\_
2. close friend \_\_\_\_\_
3. soup \_\_\_\_\_
4. tired \_\_\_\_\_

5. yellow \_\_\_\_\_
6. go to bed \_\_\_\_\_
7. very large \_\_\_\_\_
8. a group of stars \_\_\_\_\_

**TASK #8:**

**You do not need to do task number three after all. Skip it.**

**TASK #9:**

**Take the first letter of each of the words above.**

**These letters will form the word**

\_\_\_\_\_

**The answer will make you extremely happy.**

The conclusion of these games always includes the team having to draw something on the whiteboard. This adds an element of real fun since the animals drawn in haste are generally hilarious. It also makes it easy for the teacher to declare a winning team.

**TASK #10:**

**Think of an animal that is large, gray and common here. Have one person on your team draw this animal on the whiteboard. Inside it write your word for task 9. Under it write your nicknames.**

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**METHODS**

Ideally, the worksheet with the reading on one side and the questions and activities on the other will be handed out to each student. One of the great things about this kind of game is that it begins in relative silence and demands that each team concentrate on reading over the story and the directions.

Well organized students soon learn to assign tasks to individuals on their team so that time is not lost with everyone doing the same work. In fact, I often encourage them to do this.

By walking around the room, it is relatively easy to see how they are doing with the various tasks. If things seem to be going slowly or most of the teams are stuck on something, hints may be appropriate. I have asked the class as a whole which answer will help them the most or what are stuck on. Each team needs to work on a single “official” copy for checking and turning in at the end, but every student needs the paper. I often construct the teams to include both sharp and shy students and (in university classes) students from different language backgrounds so that English must be used for communication within the team.

The answers to the sample Game above are as follows: **Task #3** is cancelled in **Task #8**. If they don't follow directions in **Task #1**, they get caught. Possible answers for **Task #4**: Mercury, Mars, Saturn, Jupiter, Venus, Neptune, Earth, Pluto, Uranus. **Task #5**: The answer is “nothing” or “we can't tell”. This is based on some knowledge of the characters of Holmes and Watson. **Task #6**: colours, flavourful. **Task #7**: éclair, comrade, stew, tuckered out, amber, turn in, immense, constellation. **Task #9**: ECSTATIC.

## CONCLUSION

The sources I have consulted in writing this paper seem to concur that feedback on student writing is best when it is done “live” as soon after it is written as possible, that peer review of writing is an excellent teaching tool and that active involvement in each other's

work helps students to learn. W. R. Lee holds that most language games make learners use the language instead of thinking about learning the correct forms (1979:2). Others also seem to concur that getting students out of their chairs from time to time during class is a good thing and that having students teach each other can be a very effective classroom tool. In the final analysis, I feel that the most important aspect of the writing methodology is that it presents opportunities for students to write for an audience that is present and to see immediately the effect of what they have written upon that audience. The teacher is also given the opportunity to give immediate feedback on what the student has written on any number of levels.

The reading based game is an excellent tool because it is so flexible. A teacher can begin with a reading passage to suit the individual class and reinforce some specific skills that need work. The passage can be adapted to include vocabulary words or sentence types that need to be learned, jokes can be introduced and added to the tasks to liven up the class atmosphere. In other versions I have added grammar and punctuation questions to the tasks along with vocabulary. True this game takes a great deal of preparation, but the result is always fun and profitable for the students.

I have used these reading and writing based games with students from Mattayom 4 level through university and found them a pleasant and interesting way to get students writing, reading each other's work, focusing on communication through writing and working together to solve a puzzle. Of course, all of this includes having some fun at the same time. “It is important to note that in a relaxed atmosphere, real learning takes place, and stu-

dents use the language to which they have been exposed and which they have practiced earlier” (Silvers,1982).

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## APPENDIX

### The GAME! A

This is a reading and thinking project for your team to complete. It will take wit, imagination and cleverness. The winning team will be awarded a prize. Read through all the tasks first and be sure to follow them *very* carefully. Begin by reading the following edited excerpt from *The English Passengers* by Matthew Kneale.



### Chapter 13

#### The Reverend Goeffrey Wilson, January 1858

Finally on this, the third day of the new year 1858 – a date that would, I had no doubt, be well remembered in future ages – our expedition was ready to depart. What joy was within me as I climbed into the saddle and gave out a cheery shout of “Away!” What wonder I felt as my call was answered with a mighty creaking of packs and the sound of two hundred hooves ringing out, as this Christian venture, of which I humbly found myself leader, set forth upon its way with vigour.

Our departure from Hobart was, I confess upon my honour, a little restrained. I had made no secret of the day and time, and expected quite a crowd would be gathered to bid us farewell, but it seemed the earliness of the hour – I had been determined to make a prompt start – was too much for these lazy Tasmanians. The only people to be seen through the morning darkness, indeed, were a group of fishermen, who seemed mostly concerned with carrying their catch on to the quay, and also a couple of tavern drinkers still remaining from the night before, whose outrageous attentions, in truth, we could happily have done without. As we passed through the city streets, however, I was pleased to see our great party was the source of no little interest, causing curtains to twitch and faces to stare out in surprise.

Before long we left the town behind and had conquered our first mile, then our second, our fifth, and the early morning sun was rising above the Derwent river – already I could think of this only as the Ghe Pyrrenne, or Euphrates – that stretched away to our right, so broad and majestic. The land was rich with farm houses and often their inhabitants would step forth to ask who we might be, and whither we were journeying. What looks of amazement appeared upon their faces when I answered with a cheerful shout, “We are going to find the Garden of Eden!”

Having never taken part in any such enterprise till now, I must confess to being agreeably surprised with the swiftness with which I found I became accustomed to rough travelling ways, as, after only a few days, I felt quite as suited to this outdoor life as any native aborigine. In the morning I would wake with the dawn and wait, with an explorer’s patience, as the mule drivers brought the fire to life so that they might prepare a rude breakfast

of sugared tea, porridge, biscuits, and freshly cooked eggs. As soon as they had cleaned the cooking pots, taken down the tents and packed all away, I would climb into the saddle and lead us fearlessly forth once again.



In Camp.

Soon after midday we would stop for the very simplest of meals, this being little more than bread, potted ham or beef, and perhaps a few pieces of sugared fruit, and at four we would halt again and endeavour to restore ourselves with biscuits and cold tea. Finally, after still more miles had been dispatched, we would choose a place to make camp – hardly caring how wild and remote it was – and, in a triumph of weary limbs, I would sit with my colleagues about our sturdy portable dining table and await a well-earned dinner, composed of boiled rice and Aberdeen hotch potch, or preserved salmon. Renshaw and Potter would quite

insist on completing the day with a glass of brandy, and though, needless to say, I took none, I saw no harm in making a little allowance in such circumstances.

**TASK #1:**

**Answer each of the following questions.**

1. How many camels are they taking on this expedition? \_\_\_\_\_
2. In what direction are they heading? \_\_\_\_\_
3. What nationality are the explorers? \_\_\_\_\_
4. What people came out to see them off? \_\_\_\_\_
5. How many meals did they have each day? \_\_\_\_\_
6. Who is doing all the work on this expedition? \_\_\_\_\_
7. How many explorers are there? \_\_\_\_\_
8. What are their names? \_\_\_\_\_
9. What country are they in and where is it? \_\_\_\_\_
10. Why doesn't the narrator end the day with a glass of brandy? \_\_\_\_\_

**TASK #2:**

**Find words in the passage to match the following:**

1. on time \_\_\_\_\_
2. native people \_\_\_\_\_
3. rough or unfinished \_\_\_\_\_
4. distant \_\_\_\_\_
5. extreme, over the limit \_\_\_\_\_
6. joy of success \_\_\_\_\_



**TASK #3:**

The first letters of the words you found in Task #2 form a word. Use that word in a sentence beginning with a noun clause and write it on the whiteboard.

**TASK #4:**

Draw a picture of the word from Task #2 on the whiteboard.

**TASK #5:**

Three words in this excerpt are spelled in the British way. What are they?

1. \_\_\_\_\_ 2. \_\_\_\_\_ 3. \_\_\_\_\_

**TASK #6:**

Some of the answers to Task # 1 are numbers. Add these together and write the result inside the drawing for task #4.

**TASK #7:**

The narrator claims, “I felt quite as suited to this outdoor life as any native aborigine”. Is he correct in this presumption? (Yes/ no)

**TASK #8:**

Bring your paper up to be checked when you have finished with all the tasks

**The GAME! B**

This is a project for your team to complete. It will take wit, imagination and cleverness. The winning team will be awarded a prize. Read through all the tasks first and be sure to follow them **very** carefully. Begin by reading the following edited excerpt from JRR Tolkien’s *The Lord of the Rings*.

**A Long-Expected Party**

When Mr. Bilbo Baggins of Bag End announced that he would shortly be celebrating his eleventy-first birthday with a party of special magnificence, there was much talk and excitement among the inhabitants of Hobbiton. Bilbo was very rich and very peculiar, and had been the wonder of the Shire for sixty years, ever since his remarkable disappearance and unexpected return. The riches he had obtained on his treacherous travels had now become a local legend, and it was popularly believed, whatever the



old folk might say, that the Hill at Bag End was full of tunnels stuffed with treasure. And if that was not enough for fame, there was also his prolonged vigour to marvel at. Time wore on, but it seemed to have little effect on Mr. Baggins. At ninety he was much the same as at fifty. At ninety-nine they began to call him well-preserved; but invigorated would have been nearer the mark. There were some that shook their heads and thought this was too much of a good thing; it seemed unfair that anyone should possess (apparently) perpetual youth as well as (reputedly) inexhaustible wealth. "It will have to be paid for", they murmured. "It is abnormal, and trouble will come of it!"

But so far trouble had not come; and as Mr. Baggins was generous with his money, most people were willing to forgive him his oddities and his good fortune. He remained on visiting terms with his relatives (except, of course, the Sackville-Bagginses), and he had many devoted admirers among the hobbits of poor and unimportant families. But he had no close friends, until some of his younger cousins began to grow up. The eldest of these, and Bilbo's favourite, was young Frodo Baggins. When Bilbo was ninety-nine he adopted Frodo as his heir, and brought him to live at rural Bag End; and the hopes of the Sackville-Bagginses were finally dashed. Bilbo and Frodo happened to have the same birthday, September 22nd. "You had better come and live here, Frodo my lad", said Bilbo one day; "and then we can celebrate our birthday-parties comfortably together". At that time Frodo was still in his tweens, as the hobbits called the irresponsible twenties between childhood and coming of age at thirty-three.

Twelve more years passed. Each year the Bagginses had given very lively combined birthday-parties at Bag End; but now it was understood that something quite exceptional was being planned for that autumn. Bilbo was going to be eleventy-one, a rather curious number, and a very respectable age for a hobbit (the Old Took himself had only reached 130); and



Frodo was going to reach an important number: the date of his "coming of age". Tongues began to wag in Hobbiton and Bywater; and rumour of the coming event travelled all over the Shire. The feeling of excitement was palpable. The history and character of Mr. Bilbo Baggins became once again the chief topic of conversation; and the older folk suddenly found their reminiscences in welcome demand.

**TASK #1:**

**Answer each of the following questions.**

11. What is the age at which Mr. Bilbo Baggins went on his "travels"? \_\_\_\_\_
12. What was too much of a good thing? \_\_\_\_\_
13. What is the relationship between Bilbo and the Sackville-Bagginses? \_\_\_\_\_
14. What is the relationship between Bilbo and Frodo? \_\_\_\_\_
15. What age will Frodo be on the planned birthday? \_\_\_\_\_
16. Write Bilbo's age "a rather curious number" in numerals. \_\_\_\_\_



**TASK #2:**

In the passage find and list here eight words from the four crossword puzzles you are studying. (Note: the form of the words may differ.) List these in the order that they are found in the passage. To make this a bit easier, you may want to do TASK #5 first.

- |          |          |
|----------|----------|
| 1. _____ | 6. _____ |
| 2. _____ | 7. _____ |
| 3. _____ | 8. _____ |
| 4. _____ |          |
| 5. _____ |          |

**TASK #3:**

**Write the first letter of the words above in the following order: 2, 3, 4, 7, 6**  
These letters will form the word. \_\_\_\_\_

**TASK #4:**

**Draw a picture of the word from Task #3 on the whiteboard.**

**TASK #5:**

**Find words in the passage to match the following:**

1. extended \_\_\_\_\_
2. memories \_\_\_\_\_
3. not responsible \_\_\_\_\_
4. grand or imposing beauty \_\_\_\_\_
5. people who live in a certain place \_\_\_\_\_
6. underground passage \_\_\_\_\_
7. cannot be used up \_\_\_\_\_
8. strength \_\_\_\_\_
9. out of the ordinary. \_\_\_\_\_

**TASK #6:**

**The first letters of the words you found in Task 5 form a word. Use that word in a sentence beginning with a noun clause and write it on the whiteboard.**

**TASK #7:**

**Do NOT do task #4**

**TASK #8:**

**Go back to task #1 and add up the numbers in your answers. \_\_\_\_\_**

**TASK #9:**

**Think of an animal that is large, gray and common here. Have one person on**

**your team draw this animal on the whiteboard. Inside it write your answers to the questions in task 1.**

**Under it write your names.**

**TASK #10:**

**Three words in this excerpt are spelled in the British way. What are they?**

1. \_\_\_\_\_ 2. \_\_\_\_\_ 3. \_\_\_\_\_

**TASK #11:**

**Raise your hand when you have finished with all the tasks**

**Answers: Game A**

- Task #1: 1. 51                      2. vigor, money    3. enemies            4. cousins  
            5. 33                              6. 111
- Task #2: 1. treacherous    2. invigorated    3. apparently    4. rural  
            5. abnormal
- Task #3: TIARA
- Task #5: 1. prolonged    2. reminiscences    3. irresponsible  
            4. magnificence    5. inhabitants    6. tunnel  
            7. inexhaustible    8. vigour            9. exceptional
- Task #6: PRIMITIVE
- Task #8: 195
- Task #10: favourite, vigour, rumour

**Answers: Game B**

- Task #1: 1. zero (the picture of the camel is misleading)                      2. north  
            3. English                      4. no one                      5. four                      6. servants  
            7. three                      8. Wilson, Renshaw, Potter  
            9. Tasmania, near Australia                      10. he is a reverend (minister)
- Task #2: 1. prompt                      2. aborigine                      3. rude                      4. remote  
            5. outrageous                      6. triumph
- Task #3: That the parrot is a noisy bird is without question. (answers will vary)
- Task #5: honour, vigour, endeavour
- Task #6: seven
- Task #7: no