

Matchmaker

Matching text types on the interactive whiteboard

Deconstructing texts to allow students to explore and recreate them has been an activity in English classrooms for some time. Before the advent of ICT, this involved a great deal of photocopying, cutting up and sorting slips of paper. Feedback would either be by reading aloud or handing out an 'answer sheet' – followed by vain attempts to collect everything back into the correct envelopes at the end of the lesson.



The computer makes all this much easier and more flexible – with the bonus that the components of the jigsaw should never be lost.

On an interactive whiteboard this is even simpler. Creating blocks of text that can be dragged around on screen is more straightforward and works more intuitively, with the whole class now involved in the shared process. Alternatives can be debated and created on the spot, with students asked to justify their suggestions as interesting re-creation takes place in front of the class.

This offers a range of classroom activities, from sequencing a text that has been separated into sentences or paragraphs to separating out two or more texts that have been jumbled up like the contents of different jigsaws that tumbled out onto the floor. The exploration that results can shed interesting

light on the similarities and differences between texts, which could have been written at widely separated periods or for entirely different purposes.

The accompanying SMART Notebook™ software file (Matching.notebook), for example, contains extracts from Dickens and Orwell written almost a hundred years apart and about quite different countries – yet their similarities are as interesting as the differences. Alternative sources of texts could be different ways of writing about places – Peter Carey's description of Kuala Lumpur in 'My Life as a Fake' could be compared with a travel agent's prose about the city. What are the features (syntactical, grammatical and so on) of the two text types that help readers untangle the two forms? Do the writers attempt to trick us by incorporating features of another text type?

Notes

Suggested activity outline

- Select two (or more) extracts from the kinds of texts you wish to compare. The accompanying file contains extracts from a nineteenth century novel, a mid-twentieth century non-fiction account and a recent newspaper article. The Internet should provide what you need. (If not, the extracts could be typed in; they should not, in any case, be too long or they won't fit on the screen at the same time.)
- Create a page for each extract and keep this to show later so that the class can see the original text.
- Copy each extract onto a new page and break it up into component units – possibly paragraphs, more likely a sentence or two. You could shuffle the components and use these pages as sequencing exercises on one text so save these pages too.
- Copy and paste the components into a new page made up of the two (or even three) texts you wish the class to unscramble. You may need to adjust the text size to fit the blocks of text on the screen – but ensure that students can still read the words.
- Give students a little while to read and, if possible, discuss the page. What kinds of questions are they asking as they read? What clues are they looking for?

Each question or comment is a potential insight into the passages used and into wider aspects of language and literature as well. You could note these comments down on a separate whiteboard screen or annotate the page itself.

- Ask students, preferably in pairs or groups, to attempt to sort out the texts. If they have access to computers with the whiteboard software, they can do this on screen in a similar way to using the board. Otherwise they could use word processor pages you have created separately, paper copies or simply refer to the screen and note their decisions on paper. Ask them to justify their decisions.
- In a plenary session, invite some students to present their recreated texts on the whiteboard. They should be prepared to explain their choices – they could, for example, highlight similarities in vocabulary and phraseology in the extracts.
- Conclude by asking students to summarise what they have learnt about the texts they have studied and the genres they represent.

SMART specific

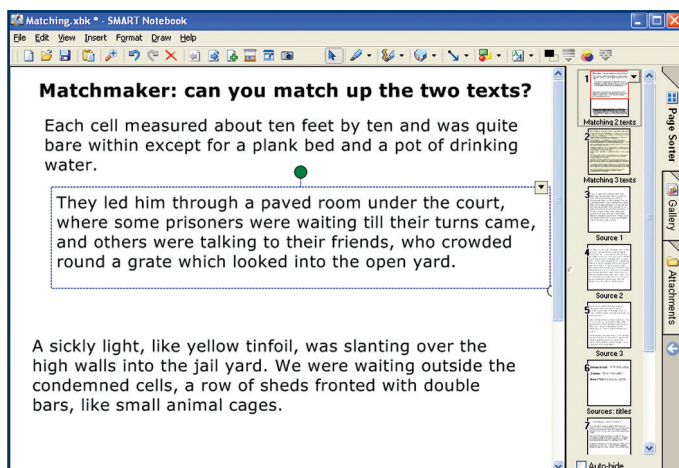
If the extracts will not fit on the screen, you can click 'extend page' at the bottom of the main page. However, don't try to cram too much on the page or students will not be able to take it all in.

You can set text size when creating text frames - but you can also shrink or enlarge extracts to fit them in the page by making the frame active and then dragging the bottom right-hand handle (a circle) in or out.

To make copying extracts and creating the activities easier, use the 'clone page' option in the page sorter view.

Name the pages so that you can quickly jump to the one you want - for example, the complete source materials.

You could also use background colours to distinguish between pages.



Example 1

Extension activities

Set students the challenge of creating their own text jigsaws for other groups to sort. They will need to do some careful research to find texts that have similarities but also interesting differences - you might want to offer some guidance on suitable authors or text types or even provide a list of websites.

This activity could focus on the basic differences between genres - the key differences between narrative fiction and advertising material, say. For more advanced students it would be interesting to explore texts that disguise themselves as other types: fiction that uses the devices of reporting or autobiography, advertising in the form of narrative, etc. What gives the game away?

Use poetry instead of the prose examples given here. What clues in style, metre, rhyme, etc, enable students to separate the poems? **(see English lesson activity 1).**

Text Extracts

Not all the extracts from Orwell and Dickens given here were used in the accompanying SMART Notebook software file "Matching.notebook.". The extracts from a novel by Peter Carey and the travel agent's site are provided as additional resources with a focus on Kuala Lumpur.

It was in Burma, a sodden morning of the rains. A sickly light, like yellow tinfoil, was slanting over the high walls into the jail yard. We were waiting outside the condemned cells, a row of sheds fronted with double bars, like small animal cages. Each cell measured about ten feet by ten and was quite bare within except for a plank bed and a pot of drinking water. In some of them brown silent men were squatting at the inner bars, with their blankets draped round them. These were the condemned men, due to be hanged within the next week or two.

One prisoner had been brought out of his cell. He was a Hindu, a puny wisp of a man, with a shaven head and vague liquid eyes. He had a thick, sprouting moustache, absurdly too big for his body, rather like the moustache of a comic man on the films. Six tall Indian warders were guarding him and getting him ready for the gallows. Two of them stood by with rifles and fixed bayonets, while the others handcuffed him, passed a chain through his handcuffs and fixed it to their belts, and lashed his arms tight to his sides. They crowded very close about him, with their hands always on him in a careful, caressing grip, as though all the while feeling him to make sure he was there. It was like men handling a fish which is still alive and may jump back into the water. But he stood quite unresisting, yielding his arms limply to the ropes, as though he hardly noticed what was happening.

Eight o'clock struck and a bugle call, desolately thin in the wet air, floated from the distant barracks.

George Orwell – 'A Hanging' (1931) – see <http://www.george-orwell.org>

They led him through a paved room under the court, where some prisoners were waiting till their turns came, and others were talking to their friends, who crowded round a grate which looked into the open yard. There was nobody there to speak to HIM; but, as he passed, the prisoners fell back to render him more visible to the people who were clinging to the bars: and they assailed him with opprobrious names, and screeched and hissed. He shook his fist, and would have spat upon them; but his conductors hurried him on, through a gloomy passage lighted by a few dim lamps, into the interior of the prison.

Here, he was searched, that he might not have about him the means of anticipating the law; this ceremony performed, they led him to one of the condemned cells, and left him there - alone.

Day was dawning when they again emerged. A great multitude had already assembled; the windows were filled with people, smoking and playing cards to beguile the time; the crowd were pushing, quarrelling, joking.

Everything told of life and animation, but one dark cluster of objects in the centre of all—the black stage, the cross-beam, the rope, and all the hideous apparatus of death.

Dickens – 'Oliver Twist' – Chapter 52 – (1837)

Several thousand Iranians cheered yesterday as a man convicted of murdering at least 20 people, most of them children, was publicly executed in a town square.

As relatives of the victims looked on, court officials took turns to administer 100 lashes to Muhammad Bijeh's bare back, leaving it raw and bloodied, before hanging him from a rope attached to a crane.

Public executions are rare in Iran except as punishment for heinous crimes which have triggered public outrage. The government justifies them as setting an example to the population.

Robert Tait - The Guardian, 17th March 2005

I am not a good tourist, as I said, but that second night I was too angry to stay in my comical hotel. I forced myself to eat satay in a street market in what is called Kampong Baru, a Malay quarter five minutes' walk from the Merlin.

The next day, likewise, I grumpily stepped out to stare at the Batu Caves, the Moorish railway station, the stinking Chinese wet markets. The smells were the most challenging aspect of my tourism, not merely the wet markets, but also the alien mixture of smoke and spice and sewer and two-stroke exhausts and all the sweet mouldy aroma of those broad-leafed tropical grasses. I preferred walking the streets very early in the cool morning as the Sikh bank guards were eating sweet barfi and drinking their beloved cow's milk in the street. The rain trees were lovely, all of Jalan Treacher heavy with green leaves and yellow flowers. Only the sight of a boy cutting a banana tree with a machete reminded me that, not three years before, the gentle smiling inhabitants of Kampong Baru had been butchering their Chinese neighbours. Blood had run along those deep drains beside which I now walked.

Peter Carey – 'My Life as a Fake' (Faber and Faber 2003)

Meander through Kuala Lumpur, a magical maze of the old and the new, or enjoy a taste of colonial Malaysia in genteel Georgetown.

Cultures collide in Kuala Lumpur (KL), where old blends with new to dazzling effect.

Glinting modern sky-scrappers, including the immense Petronas Towers, rub shoulders with bejewelled old temples. Lose yourself amid the alleyways of Chinatown for a taste of the 'KL' of old, or hit the city's first-class malls and department stores for some of the Far East's finest shopping opportunities.

Text extract (continued)

For more down-tempo appeal, an afternoon at Lake Gardens offers the chance to glimpse a dazzling array of exotic flora and fauna. With such convenient access to several of Malaysia's most idyllic islands, as well as the popular city of Singapore, it's easy to include 'KL' in any itinerary.

Travelbag (travel agent) 2005 – see www.travelbag.co.uk

For more on Kuala Lumpur, see the Rough guides site: travel.roughguides.com



Resources

This lesson activity should be used in conjunction with the SMART Notebook™ file 'Matching.notebook'.



Notes

Produced by Steljes,
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association with



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