




eslactive

The Gist Of It

Tags: [intermediate](#), [kids](#), [narrative tenses](#), [sequence adverbs](#)

In The Gist Of It ESL activity, students listen to/watch a short story, then retell it to a partner who hasn't heard/seen it.

 2+  20-40 mins  Internet and Projector **or** Prepared Stories

Setup

Prepare three different short stories, in audio/video format (depending on the equipment you have available). Myths and legends such as Aesop's Fables and Aboriginal Dreamtime stories work well. Below are links to Youtube videos of three suitable Dreamtime stories:

[Mirram The Kangaroo and Warreen The Wombat](#)

[Tiddalick The Frog](#)

[Biladurang The Platypus](#)

If you have no audio/video equipment available, you could also just read stories.

Divide the class into two groups, A and B. Try and make sure students from different groups are not sitting next to each other.

Activity

1. Model the exercise by showing/reading the first story, then eliciting a summary in five key points (and writing them on the board in note form).
2. Group B leaves the classroom, and Group A listens to/watches the second story. When it has finished, Group A leave the classroom, and Group B watch the third story.
3. All students return to the classroom, and have one or two minutes to note down the five key points in the story they saw (the gist). Encourage the students to write very brief notes, not full sentences.

4. Each student now finds a partner from the other group and tries to retell the story they saw using their notes. The students should now focus on forming complete sentences using the target language.
5. The students return to their original places. Ask each group to tell you the gist of the story they were just told, and write it on the board.
6. Listen to/watch the stories again, and elicit which details were commonly missed out.

Target Language

The Gist Of It ESL activity is designed to practise the specific skill of listening for key information and relaying it to someone else. As such it fits perfectly with the topic of storytelling. By retelling stories students will use [narrative tenses](#), particularly the [past simple](#) and [past continuous](#).

With low intermediate students you could also use it for [sequence adverbs](#), with students instructed to utilise appropriate adverbs at each point in the story.