

Lesson Plan Starter



The Black Pearls Richard MacAndrew

Aims

- To introduce students to the characters in the story.
- To introduce students to the main themes of the story.
- To stimulate students to read the book.

1. Tell students that the title of the book is “The Black Pearls” and write it up on the whiteboard. Tell them that the ‘black pearls’ refer to a necklace that is in the story – explain ‘necklace’ if necessary. Tell them that they are going to guess what genre the book belongs to – a romance, a murder mystery or a thriller – based on the title alone. First of all, briefly discuss the meaning of the word *genre* and what the key elements of each of these genres might be. (Note: In a *romance* a man and a woman meet. There is a difficulty that keeps them apart, but they usually get together in the end. In a *murder mystery*, someone is killed and a detective tries to find out who the murderer is. A *thriller* is a fast-paced story in which a hero has to stop a ‘bad’ person from doing something.)
2. Divide students into three groups – one for each of the three genres discussed in Exercise 1. (This could be according to their guesses if this gives you groups with an equal number of students in each.) Based on their knowledge of the three genres, ask them to talk about what might happen in the story, and then get the groups to report back to the whole class.
3. Now tell the class that the story is actually a thriller about a man, Wolfgang Peters, who steals things for people from museums. Ask students which museums they have been to and write them up on the whiteboard. Ask them if they like going to museums. Whether yes or no, ask them to give reasons for their answers.
4. Ask students to read Extract 1 about some of the things Peters has stolen from museums. Now ask them to look back at the list of museums they have been to. Which things from these museums might Peters want to steal? Make a list.
5. Ask students to read Extract 2 about Wolfgang Peters’ name. Explain to students that the name ‘Minute Man’ is a *nickname* for Peters. Ask students to think of a suitable nickname for themselves and to share them with the whole class.
Optional extra: Students could also think of nicknames for other class members.
6. Tell students that the character Janet Hunter, a police inspector from New Zealand, is after Peters because he stole the old book from the museum in Auckland. Ask them to read Extract 3, which is about Janet Hunter and her work. Ask them what Janet spends a lot of her time doing.
Suggested answers: waiting and watching.
Tell students that this kind of work is called *surveillance*. Now ask them what type of person would be good at this type of work. They should use bilingual dictionaries if necessary.
Suggested answers: a person who is patient, good at noticing things (observant), quiet, good at staying hidden or out of sight.
Do the students think they would be good at surveillance? They should give reasons for their answers.
7. Ask students to read Extract 4. What else have students learnt about Janet Hunter?
Suggested answers: she is polite, friendly, clever; she thinks quickly.
8. Tell students that one of the characters in “The Black Pearls” is a Hollywood actor. Ask them to think of the names of some Hollywood actors and write them up on the whiteboard. Now ask them to say which actor they like best and make a list of the ‘Top Ten’.

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9. Ask students to read Extract 5. Tell them that in the extract a necklace is stolen from the museum. Now ask them to write a paragraph describing what is happening inside the museum as the necklace is taken. Divide students into pairs or small groups and ask them to read out what they have written to each other. Brave students can read their work out to the whole class.
10. Tell students that Epati is an inspector in the Cook Islands police where the story takes place. Now tell them that Epati asks Wolfgang Peters some questions after the necklace is taken from the museum. Working in pairs, ask students to think of the questions Epati asks Peters and how Peters answers the questions. They should write these down. Next, the pairs should read out these questions and answers to the whole class, with one student as Epati and the other as Peters.
11. Go back to the title "The Black Pearls". Do students think this is a good title? Ask them to think of other possible titles.
12. If you have the books, hand them out and ask students to start reading.

Extract 1

'A Fabergé egg from a museum in Virginia in the United States, a Picasso painting from a museum in St Petersburg in Russia. And then this year an old book from a museum in Auckland in New Zealand. It's the only one in the world.'

Extract 2

'His name is Wolfgang Peters,' she answers. 'Some people call him the "Minute Man".'

'Why?' Epati asks.

'Because one minute he's there and the next minute he's not,' answers Hunter.

Extract 3

- a) Hunter waits next to the woman for a minute or two. Then she goes to her car.
- b) She sits in her car across the street and waits.
- c) Hunter waits five minutes. Then she too leaves and goes to the Waterside Inn.
- d) 'I'm going to wait here in the car for now and watch,' says Hunter.
- e) Hunter is sitting in her car. She's watching the front door of the museum.
- f) People go to the restaurant doors. Hunter waits and watches.

Extract 4

- a) Then she says, 'Peters is coming here this morning on a plane from Tahiti. I want to watch him, and try to get him. But is that OK with you? After all, this is your island.'
- b) Hunter watches Peters' face. He doesn't have the necklace – she just knows it. She looks at his computer. 'Is there something here?' she thinks.

Extract 5

She gets out of her car fast. There's a noise from the museum and a lot of shouting. She runs to the museum, but people are running out with their hands over their faces. Hunter tries to get in, but she can't. She runs to the back door. It's open. Two people from the museum come out.

'The necklace,' shouts one. 'It's not there!'