

MEMBERSHIP

FENTON!



About this activity

The story of a well-known viral video from 2011

⚠ WARNING: This activity features a video whose title and audio include the use of "Jesus Christ" as an expletive. Please be sensitive to this and exercise with caution.

- ▶ **Language level:** B1 upwards
- ▶ **Age of learner:** Teenagers and adults
- ▶ **Duration of activity:** 40 minutes
- ▶ **Activities:** Predicting; writing; listening; speaking
- ▶ **Topics:** YouTube & viral videos; human-animal relationships; the nature of humour
- ▶ **Language aims:** Language for conversational storytelling

For this activity, you will need the following:

- **A YouTube video** from 2011 titled "Jesus Christ in Richmond Park" (see below)
- **An accompanying slideshow** on Canva
- **A story script** for each student (pages 4 and 5)

Note: For all materials and discussion, please go to the corresponding page in the Resources section:

<https://membership.lessonstream.com/resources/fenton/>



The video

The video featured in this lesson plan is titled "Jesus Christ in Richmond Park." It captures an incident in which a Labrador Retriever chases a herd of deer across Richmond Park in London. The video was uploaded to YouTube in 2011 and quickly went viral. The title refers to an expletive shouted by the desperate dog owner during the chaotic scene.

Activity outline

1. Tell students you have a story for them. Tell them that it involves the following items, which you can write on the board:

- Richmond Park in London
- “Fenton!”
- A stampede
- Over 10 million views

2. Make sure students know what a stampede is.

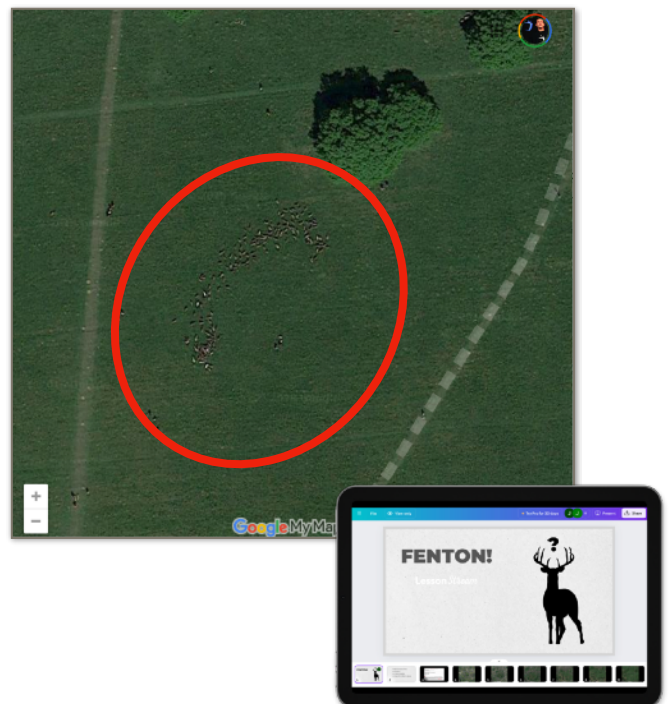
According to the MacMillan Dictionary, a stampede is “a situation in which a group of people or animals all start to run in a very fast, uncontrolled way because they are frightened or excited.”

3. Find out if anyone knows (or thinks they know) this story. If so, ask them not to say anything at this stage.

4. Tell students that this is a true story – something that happened in London in 2011. Invite students to ask you closed questions in an attempt to work out what happened. (Closed questions = questions to which you can only answer yes or no.)

5. After a few guesses from students, find out if anyone has been to Richmond Park in London. Tell them that it is famous for something and ask students if they know or can guess what it is (Answer: among other things, the park is famous for its large population of deer.)

Tip: The accompanying slideshow includes a series of Google map images that zoom in on a herd of deer in Richmond Park. You can use these to get students guessing about what the park is famous for.



6. After establishing that Richmond Park is famous for its deer, add “a herd of deer” to the story items list as follows:

- Richmond Park in London
- “Fenton!”
- A stampede
- Over 10 million views
- A herd of deer



Add this new story item to the list

Tip: You can ask students if they know what the words 'sheep' and 'deer' have in common. The answer is that both words have the same form for their singular and plural versions.

7. Ask everyone to write a single paragraph of around 50 words to put their predictions on paper. This can be done as an individual or collaborative writing task.

8. Invite students to read out their paragraphs and share their predications with the rest of the class. As they do this, listen carefully for opportunities to give language feedback.

9. Refer to the script on pages 4 and 5 to tell students the story of “Fenton”.

10. Show the video to your students, ask them if they like it and then display the two comments which were found underneath the video on YouTube. Ask students to choose which comment they agree with the most and why.

- ▶ “This is the funniest thing I have ever seen. I must have watched it over a hundred times!”
- ▶ “I just don’t understand why everyone thinks this video is so funny. Those poor deer are terrified. And there could have been an accident. I don’t get it.”

11. Give out copies of the handout on pages 4 and 5. Students can use it as a model for creating similar scripts for other videos.

12. For homework, ask students to go online and explore the legacy of the viral video. Ask them to find a story to share. There are many articles and other videos to choose from:

- The story of the nationwide search to find Fenton and his owner
- How the story was reported in the British media
- Other videos that referenced Fenton (e.g. parodies, memes, mashups, etc.)



Example videotelling script

FENTON!

Use this handout to create similar scripts for other videos. The script is on the left and the notes on the right provide information about the different things to think about:

- The introduction
- The setup
- The action
- Visual imagery
- Interpretation
- Ending



The script



Notes



“ This is a well-known viral video from 2011. It's titled, “Jesus Christ in Richmond Park”. It's an incident caught on camera by someone who was standing in the middle of the park filming some deer.

Picture this:
It's a sunny evening.
Long shadows on the green grass.
Directly in front of us, there are about six or seven deer.
Some standing, some sitting, all chewing.
Behind them, quite far away from us ...
There's a small road that cuts through the park.

And then we hear the voice of a man:
A desperate man.
We can't see him – he's out of the shot.
But we can hear him shouting:
“Fenton”
“Fenton!”
The deer seem a bit uncomfortable.
The man's voice gets louder.
“Fentoon!”
“Fentooooooooooooon!”

This first part is an **introduction**. It provides basic information about the video including its title, type and the year it went viral.

This is the **setup**. It describes the scene at the start of the video. It gives information about the opening shot, the location and the things that are happening before the action. Note that it mentions “the small road that cuts through the park” – a detail that will become important later in the story.

The **action** starts here. The script builds tension (excitement) by mentioning the shouting, the stampede, the dog and finally the desperate owner. This follows the same order as the events in the video.

The person filming the video turns around to see
 what's going on
 And what we see is a stampede
 Of about 60 or 70 deer
 Running past us
 Completely out of control

The stampede gets bigger and bigger as more deer
 join it
 And as they move away from us into the distance
 You can just see a tiny black shape running behind
 them
 It's a dog
 There's a dog chasing the deer across the park
 And then across the road
 It's chaos
 Cars have to stop to let them pass

And finally, the desperate man comes into the shot
 The dog owner
 Running after his disobedient black Labrador
 Shouting its name:
 "Fenton!"
 "Fenton!"
 "Jesus Christ, no!"
 Fenton!"

This became the most famous viral video of 2011
 in the United Kingdom.
 A lot of people thought it was funny.
 But other people disagreed and thought that it was
 cruel because the deer were terrified.

The video led to a search for the dog and its owner,
 a debate on deer welfare and a rise in popularity
 for Fenton as a name, not just for dogs but also for
 human babies!



Scan or click the code
 to see the video

This part of the script contains a lot of **visual imagery**. This means that the words allow the listener to vividly (clearly) imagine the video for themselves and create images in their minds. To achieve this, we have to choose our words very carefully.

If we want to keep our listeners' attention, we have to make it easy for them to visualise. Do you remember the "small road that cuts through the park" mentioned in the setup? Well, this is where it comes into the story. The repetition helps the listener make a connection with something already familiar, making it easier to visualise the scene without introducing new information.

This part of the script offers an **interpretation** – two common reactions to the video.

Listeners need to know when the story is finished. In this script, the **ending** is a mention of the video's cultural legacy (the affect that it had on people and society. Alternatively, you could choose to end with your interpretation (see above) and share your personal thoughts about the video.