

MEMBERSHIP

THE LOST BOOK



About this activity

A classic British TV advert from the 1980s

- ▶ **Language level:** A2 upwards
- ▶ **Age of learner:** Teenagers; adults
- ▶ **Duration of activity:** 25 minutes
- ▶ **Tasks:** Reading; speaking; writing
- ▶ **Topics:** Advertising
- ▶ **Language focus:** Language for conversational storytelling

For this activity, you will need the following:

- **A handout** for each student (page 4)
- **A TV advert** which is available on YouTube (see below)
- **A Canva slideshow** which contains all texts and media (optional)

Note: For all materials and resources, click on or scan the QR code



The advert

This activity makes use of a classic British TV advert from the days before the internet. The advert tells the story of an elderly gentleman on a mission to find a second-hand book. But what is so important about the book? How does the story end? And what is the product being advertised? These questions are for your students to consider.

Activity outline

1. On the board or screen, write the following:

“Fly Fishing” by J.R. Hartley

Tell students that this is a book which became famous in the UK in 1980s. Ask students the following questions:

- Do you know what fly fishing is? Have you ever tried it? (Answer: It is a fishing technique that uses artificial flies to attract and catch fish. The UK has a small but enthusiastic number of fly fishers.)
- Why might a book about fly fishing become so well-known? Any ideas?



2. Tell students that the book became popular because of a story that you are about to tell them. Read aloud the text on page four but stop just after the third last line which says, “Hello. I wonder if you have a copy of ‘Fly Fishing’ by J.R. Hartley.” Tell students that the story isn’t quite finished yet.

3. Ask students to get into pairs to share and compare everything they understood. Then ask the following comprehension checking questions:

- Where is the man and what is he doing in the first part of the story? (Answer: He is visiting **second-hand bookshops** in London, looking for **a copy of the book** “Fly Fishing”.)
- What is the problem? (Answer: The book is **out of print** – they don’t make it any more – and he can’t find a copy.)

(The words and phrases **in bold** are key to the story and you can write them on the board.)

4. Read the story a second time and stop at the same place as before. Ask students to discuss the following questions in pairs or small groups:

- How do you think the story ends?
- When do you think the story is set?
- Where do you think the story comes from?

5. Invite students to share their answers with the whole class. The story would seem to be set in the days before the internet because there are now second-hand book websites that make it easy to find what you are looking for.

6. Tell students that the story comes from a famous British TV advert from 1983. Give out copies of the handout on page four. Ask students to read the text and find out how the story ends. Importantly, the text makes no reference to the product. Ask students to read it again carefully and think about the following questions:

- What do you think the product is?
- How does the product fit into the story?

7. Listen to students' answers and then show the famous Yellow Pages advert from 1983 (see page one). Ask students what they think of the advert and find out if anyone guessed the product correctly.

In the days before the internet, people used special books called directories to find telephone numbers. The Yellow Pages was a business directory that listed contact information for local businesses and services.



Follow-up task

Ask students to find another advert that tells a story. This could be any of the following:

- A controversial TV advert
- A TV advert from your childhood
- An advert that you love or hate
- A funny advert
- A well-known advert from your culture
- An innovative or unusual advert

Students should then create a text similar to the one on page four, where they tell the story in the advert. If they like, they can choose not to mention the product.

Later, in class, students can read out their story texts. If they chose to withhold the product, it will challenge other students to listen carefully and guess what it might be.



Lesson Stream

A FAMOUS BRITISH ADVERT

The story below comes from a well-known British TV advert from 1983. While the advert clearly shows the product, the story does not mention it. Read the story carefully and think about the following:

- What do you think the product is?
- How does the product fit into the story?

Fly Fishing by J.R.Hartley

An elderly gentleman is walking around the streets of London. He has neatly combed back white hair, a brown suit and a walking stick in hand.

He steps into one second-hand bookshop after another.

“Excuse me. Do you have a copy of ‘Fly Fishing’ by J.R. Hartley?” he asks with a hopeful smile.

But the answer is always the same. The book he is looking for has been out of print for years and there are no copies to be found.

Eventually, the man returns home, tired and disappointed.

“No luck, Dad?” asks his grown-up daughter with concern. “Don’t worry, there are still some more shops to try.”

The next day, the man decides to do things differently. Rather than visit the remaining shops in person, he calls them from the comfort of his own home.

Sitting in his favourite armchair, he picks up the phone and starts to call.

“Hello. I wonder if you have a copy of ‘Fly Fishing’ by J.R. Hartley.”

And finally, success.

“You do! Oh, that’s wonderful! Can you keep it for me? My name? Yes, it’s J.R. Hartley.”

