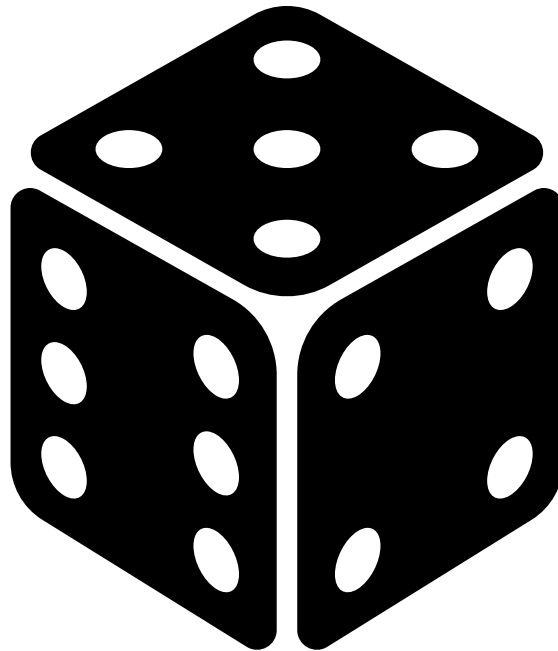


MEMBERSHIP

BLIND LUCK



About this activity

The story in this activity is based on a short film about a dishonest shopkeeper and an unexpected act of karma.

- ▶ **Recommended language level:** B1+
- ▶ **Main story task:** Teacher-led storytelling
- ▶ **Topics:** Gambling; dishonesty; karma

For this activity, you will need a short film – see below.

The short film

“Blind Luck” is a short film by James Sieradzki. The story takes place in a British newsagent’s shop and involves a transaction between a regular customer and a dishonest shopkeeper. The film was shortlisted for a 2010 Virgin Media Shorts award.



Part one: story seeding

Note: ‘Blind luck’ is a short film with a particularly strong audio track. Try listening to it with headphones and closed eyes. It starts and ends with the ringing of a shop doorbell. And in between, we hear voices, footsteps, a scratching sound and much more. These individual elements of the audio track come together to provide us with a narrative – a story told in sounds. And importantly, it’s as much about what we hear as what we don’t hear. Listen to the silence – the sparseness and the use of space – the lack of conversation. This creates suspension and tells us that whatever is going on here, there is a lack of warmth between the characters involved. This is the most perfect video that I have ever found for an audio first activity and that is how we are going to start.

1. Tell students that you are going to let them hear a story told in sounds. Ask students to listen very carefully and make a note of all the things that they hear (or think they hear.)

2. Play the short film so that your students can hear it but not see it.

Notes:

- The lesson plan page includes an mp3 file which contains the isolated audio track.
- The better your audio system, the more successful this activity will be.
- If you are teaching online, encourage students to wear headphones when they listen.
- If you choose to play the video, be aware of the Virgin Media Shorts jingle at the beginning and end. This could interfere with the activity. For this reason, I suggest that you start the video at 00:07 and stop it at 01:50.

3. Ask students to get into pairs or small groups and share/compare what they heard.

4. Listen to students’ ideas and write the most relevant ones on the board. Some possibilities:

- A bell ringing
- Footsteps
- “Matthew?”
- “David”
- Coins in a purse or a pocket
- A scratching sound
- “Ka-ching!” (The sound of an old-fashioned cash register)
- “Better luck next time.”
- “Oh well”
- Paper or card being torn

Concept checking questions:

- When would someone say, “Oh well”? (Answer = when accepting a disappointing situation)
- Although “Ka-ching” is the sound of an old-fashioned cash register, in this case, it symbolises something. Any ideas what? (Answer = it symbolises someone realising a money-making opportunity.)

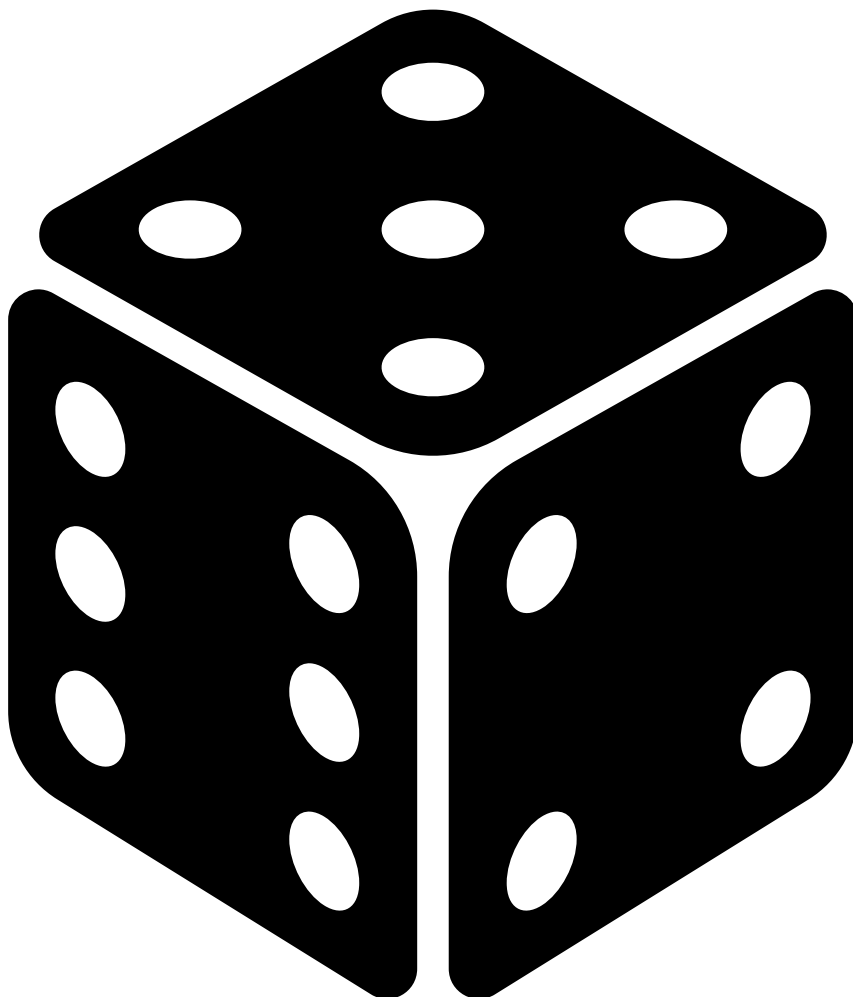
5. Let students hear the audio track a second time. This can allow them to consolidate and develop their ideas.

6. In their pairs or groups, ask students to consider the following questions:

- Where do you think this story takes place? Give a reason for your answer.
- What is the relationship between David and Matthew? Can you guess?
- What do you think happens in the story?

7. Invite students to share their answers. Give feedback in the form of clues and more questions. You can also invite students to ask you closed questions in an attempt to work out what is going on (Closed questions = questions to which the answer can only be yes or no.)

Note: Once students have established some basics of the story (e.g. where it is set and who is involved) you can move onto part two on page 4. The idea is that students should have many unanswered questions and curious minds.



Part two: storytelling

Tell students the Story of David and Matthew and pause to ask questions as shown. Note that the story is based on the short film 'Blind luck' but withholds a key piece of information – the fact that David is blind.

The story of David and Matthew

David is an English gentleman
He is a creature of habit
Every day, at the same time, David leaves his house and goes to buy something

Question:

- Can you guess what he goes to buy?

The answer is a scratch card
Every day, at the same time, David goes to buy a scratch card

Possible questions:

- How old do you have to be to buy scratch cards and lottery tickets in your country? (In the UK, you have to be 16 years old.)
- Do you buy scratch cards/play the lottery? Will you when you are old enough?
- Have you or your family ever won anything?
- Do you think that it is good or bad to gamble in this way? Why or why not?

OK, let's get back to David
Now, despite the fact that David buys a scratch card every day, he has never won anything
Absolutely nothing

So, David has just had lunch and now it's time to leave his house
He's going to buy his a scratch card

Question:

- Do you know where you would buy a scratch card in the United Kingdom?

David buys his scratch cards from his local newsagent's shop
That's a shop that sells newspapers, magazines, cigarettes, lottery tickets and snacks

David walks into the shop and when he does so, a bell rings
This is to let the shopkeeper know that a customer has entered the shop
And the shopkeeper's name is Matthew

The two men greet each other

David says, "Matthew?"

Matthew says, "David"

David walks over to the counter

He puts his hand in his pocket and takes out a coin – one pound

He puts the coin on the counter

Matthews knows exactly what he wants

He hands David a scratch card

David takes out another coin and starts to scratch – right there on the counter

And today, for the first time ever, David has a winning scratch card

Question:

- Can you guess how much he has won?

David has won £50,000

Questions:

- How much is that in your currency?
- What would you do if you won £50,000?

So what about David?

What does he do?

Well, David does something a bit strange

He picks up the scratch card and tears it in half

Then he walks out of the shop

And the question is:

- Why?

Ask students to guess why David tears up the scratch card. Then show them the short film 'Blind Luck' (see page one).

Note: When students see the short film, they will realise the following:

- David is blind so cannot see that he has a winning scratch card.
- It is Matthew that has the 'Ka-ching' moment – not David.
- Matthew does not tell David that he has a winning scratch card. Matthew wants to keep it for himself and tries to trick David by saying: "Better luck next time."
- Thinking that the scratch card has no value, David says: "Oh well!" and tears it in half. This means that no one can claim the £50,000.

Part three: discussion and students' stories

1. Ask students what they think of the short film.

2. Ask students the following questions:

- What do you think about Matthew? Do you agree that his actions are inexcusable?
- If you had been in Matthew's shoes, would you have been just a tiny bit tempted to do what he did? Or at least, would the idea have occurred to you? If so, what would stop you from being dishonest?
- Do you think that Matthew changed in any way as a result of this experience? If so, how?

3. Put students into pairs or small groups and give them the following task:

Create a backstory

Think of an imaginary situation or some possible mitigating circumstances that might justify Matthew's actions. For example, perhaps his mother was ill and she desperately needed £50,000 for an operation. Make a list of as many ideas as possible.

4. Listen to students' ideas and use this as an opportunity to work with emergent language, which you can write on the board.

- Matthew is in debt with **loansharks**.
- David was Matthew's teacher at school and treated him very badly. This was Matthew's opportunity to **get his own back**.
- David is currently going through **gambling addiction** therapy. Matthew knows this and was intending to keep the winning scratch card safe for him until the therapy is complete.

In each case, ask the rest of the class whether or not these situations make Matthew's actions excusable.

5. Ask students to find and prepare a story about one of the following:

- A time when you did something dishonest
- A time when you witnessed an act of dishonesty