The blob on the bridge

Language level:	Intermediate (B1) +
Learner type:	Young learners; Teens; Adults
Time:	50 minutes
Activity:	Listening; Writing
Topic:	Animals
Language:	* Past narrative tenses * Modal language of deduction/speculation * The /dʒ/ sound
Materials:	Slideshow

Preparation, materials and equipment

1. For this activity, you will need a PDF slideshow which you can download from lessonstream at:

   http://bit.ly/gCiHjc

2. Make a copy of the Bear Story text on page 7.

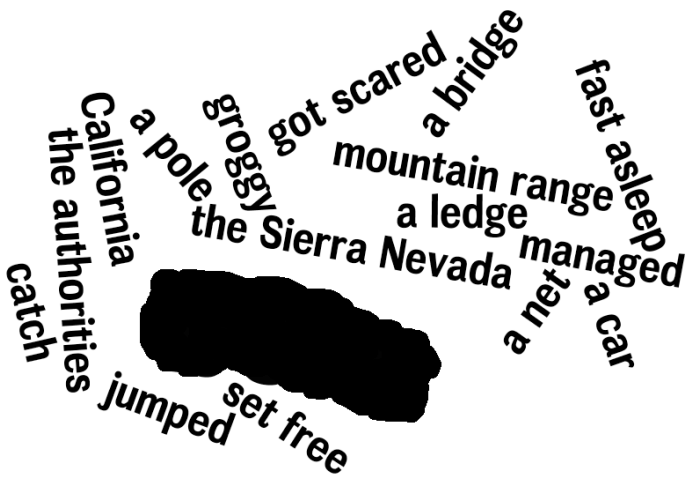
Decide how you are going to display the slideshow in class. Possibilities include:

- Laptop or desktop (good for small groups)
- Computer, projector + screen
- iPhone or other mobile device (good for one-to-ones/intimate classes)

Lesson plan

1. Tell students that they are going to hear a true story.

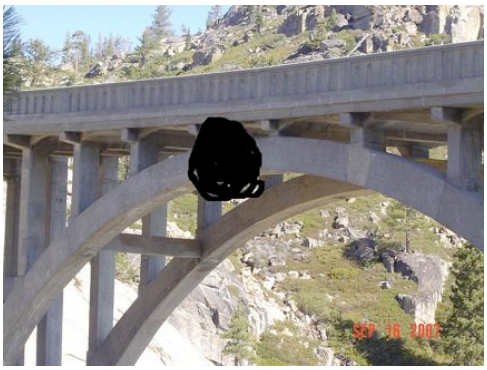
2. Show the word cloud on **Slide 1** (see below). Tell your students that the words and items in the cloud are featured in the story and explain any unknown language. Also draw students' attention to the black blob, which obscures a key word – the protagonist of the story.

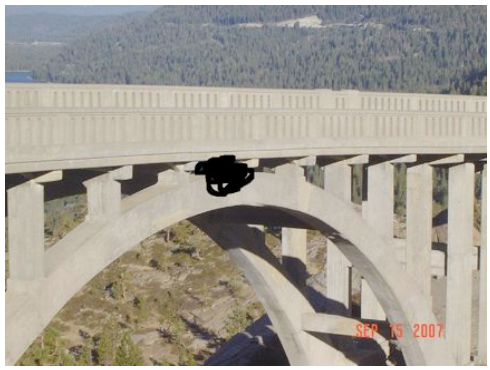


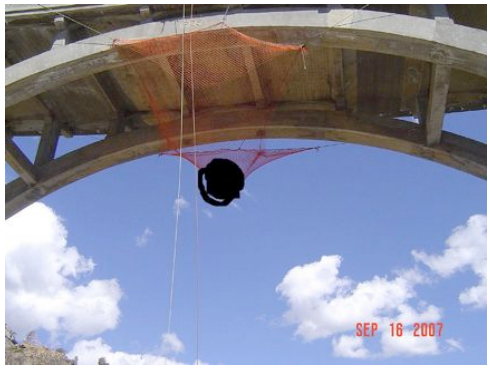
3. Put students into pairs or small groups and ask them to:
   - Guess what the hidden word is.
   - Guess what the story is about and what happens in it.

4. Conduct feedback and allow students to share ideas.

5. Tell students that you are going to show them the story in photographs. Show **Slides 2 – 7**. Explain that as before, the protagonist of the story has been covered by a black blob.







6. Ask students to guess about who or what the protagonist is but don't tell them that it is a bear at this stage. Use language of speculation/deduction/elimination for this purpose. For example:

- *Could it be a bungee jumper? It might be.*
- *It couldn't be an eagle because an eagle would fly away.*
- *Surely it isn't a cow. Why would there be a cow in the mountains?*
- *It probably isn't a cat either.*
- *I don't think it's a bear. The black blob is too small to cover it.*

7. Ask students to give the protagonist a name. They should be able to do this, even though they don't know who or what the protagonist is at this stage.

8. Show **Slides 3 – 8** a second time and read them the story below. Don't tell students that the protagonist is a bear. Refer to the bear using the name that your students gave it. In the example below, it has been decided that the protagonist is a male called Chulín.

One day, in the Sierra Nevada mountain range, California, ***Chulín*** *was walking over a bridge, minding his own business. When a car passed,* ***Chulín*** *got scared and jumped over the side of the bridge. Somehow, he managed to catch a ledge and pull himself to safety. News of* ***Chulín*** *reached the authorities and when they arrived at the scene, they found him fast asleep on the ledge. It was getting late so they decided that nothing could be done that night.*

They returned the next morning with a net, which they positioned under the bridge. They shot ***Chulín*** *with a tranquilizer dart and waited for him to fall asleep. They used a pole to push groggy* ***Chulín*** *off the ledge and into the net.* ***Chulín*** *was lowered to the ground and set free.*

"My wife is never going to believe this," ***Chulín*** *thought to himself as he went on his way.*

Note that if the protagonist is given a female name, you will have to change the story accordingly. For example: *"My husband is never going to believe this,"* ***Katia*** *thought to herself as she went on her way.*

9. Tell students that they are going rewrite the story in their own words but first they are going to hear it a second time. As you read the story a second time, draw attention to any key structures that you would like your students to include and write these on the board. For example:

- *Minding his own business*
- *Over the side of the bridge*
- *Off the ledge and into the net*
- *As he went on his way*

10. Ask students to write their reconstructed texts. Give them access to the word cloud on **Slide 1**, which contains key language.

11. Allow individuals to pair up and compare what they have written. In response to this comparison step, students may make changes or improvements to their texts, even if this means copying parts of their partner's work.

12. Show students **Slides 10 – 15**. They will now see that the protagonist of the story is a brown bear.

13. Give out copies of the **Bear Story** text so that students can compare it with their own. Take in students' texts for marking if necessary.

Follow up

Once students have been given copies of the **Bear Story** text, ask them to identify 6 new pieces of language (words, structures, etc) that they would like to take away with them. An example choice might be:

- *The bear went on its way*
- *Somehow, he managed to catch the ledge*
- *It was getting dark*
- *Groggy*
- *He fell over the side of the bridge*
- *A tranquiliser dart*

Once everyone has chosen 6 pieces of language, ask them to retell the bear story, in its entirety, to a partner. Importantly, each student should include his or her chosen pieces of language.

Variation

The text reconstruction (step 10) can be done collaboratively. To do this, put students into pairs or small groups and ask them to work together. Importantly, each group member should write an identical text.

Some notes:

- The fact that everyone is writing an identical text should ensure collaboration.
- Students should be aware that this is an exercise in thinking and collaborating. In other words, they should be working together to consider and select the most suitable grammar structures, vocabulary and discourse options.
- It is important that everyone writes. This should prevent one person from doing all the work while the others take a back seat.

Comment

The story contains a good number of words that contain the /dʒ/ sound (*jumped*, *range*, *bridge*, *managed* and *ledge*) and may be useful for students who have problems with this sound.

Credits

I originally received the bear story images as one of those viral PDF slideshows that gets passed around by email. Despite the fact that the photographs are posted all over the Internet, I have been unable to find out who owns them.

The bear story

One day, in the Sierra Nevada mountain range, California, a brown bear was walking over a bridge, minding his own business. When a car passed, the bear got scared and jumped over the side of the bridge. Somehow, he managed to catch a ledge and pull himself to safety. News of the bear reached the authorities and when they arrived at the scene, they found him fast asleep on the ledge. It was getting late so they decided that nothing could be done that night.

They returned the next morning with a net, which they positioned under the bridge. They shot the bear with a tranquilizer dart and waited for him to fall asleep. They used a pole to push the groggy bear off the ledge and into the net. The bear was lowered to the ground and set free.

"My wife is never going to believe this," the bear thought to himself as he went on his way.