



Level: B1

Focus: Listening, Writing

Theme: Life cycles

Activity: Listening to a life story; Writing an 'autobiography'

Language: past tenses, time phrases

THE LIFE OF A TREE

This activity is based on a lesson in *Pen Pictures 3* by Mark Hancock and Annie McDonald, (Oxford University Press). The images in the video are from the book.

PROCEDURE

1. Ask questions to introduce the theme of the life of a tree, for example:
 - Where can you see a lot of trees? (forest; wood; park; garden)
 - How quickly do trees grow? (slowly; a few centimetres a year)
 - What changes happen with the seasons? ... (depends on climate. In temperate countries, they grow new leaves in spring and lose their leaves in autumn)
 - How long do they live? (sometimes hundreds of years)
 - Do they always live a long time? Why/Why not?
2. Tell the students they will hear the story of the life a tree in six parts. Write the following titles of the parts on the board. Check vocabulary as necessary. Ask students to guess the order that they will hear these parts.
 - a. The polluted city
 - b. First years of life
 - c. A terrible war
 - d. The village becomes a town
 - e. The forest grows again
 - f. Trees are cut down to make farms
3. Play the audio or video and ask students to check their guesses from 2.

Answer key: b-f-d-c-a-e

4. Play the audio/video with pauses. Before each part, ask the following questions about what the tree 'says'. After each part, ask students in pairs to agree answers to the questions. Check answers as a class. Go over vocabulary as necessary after each part.

Part a: How was the tree different from the young animals? (they died; it kept growing)

Part b: Why was the tree lucky? (it was between two fields so it wasn't cut down)

Part c: Where did the tree live in the big town? (in the garden of a big house)

Part d: Why was the tree lucky again? (fire didn't reach it)

Part e: Why was the tree unhappy? (traffic; pollution; kids writing on it)

Part f: What happened after the people left? (forest grew, buildings fell, air became cleaner)



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5. Give out the worksheet. Ask students to do the underlining task with the grammar and phrases at the bottom of the page. Check answers and review as necessary.

Answer key: give line numbers?

used to:

passive:

could:

Time phrases:

Change:

6. Ask students to look at the story and focus on the changes in the life of the tree. Ask them to decide which changes happened slowly, and which changes were big and fast. Check answers. Ask them which things they think the tree enjoyed, and which it didn't.

Answer key:

(slowly): watching the changing seasons; watching animals grow; the village growing into a town; the buildings falling down, the forest growing again.

big and fast: people arrived and cut down trees; there was a terrible war)

7. Write the phrases below on the board. Ask students to work in pairs. Tell them to choose one of the items and imagine the changes in the 'life' of the thing. Ask them to make a list of the changes that happened slowly and the changes which were big and fast.

a Christmas tree; a canary; a potato; a car; a prehistoric man; other...

8. Ask students to imagine they are the thing in 7 and to write a story of its life similar to The Life of a Tree. They should use some of the grammar and phrases from the worksheet.

THE LIFE OF A TREE

When I was small, I used to live in a beautiful forest. The air was fresh and it was quiet, just the sound of the wind in the leaves and the birds. I watched the winter change to spring and spring into summer, I saw the summer turn into autumn and back to winter again, year after year. I saw young animals grow old and die, but I just grew bigger and bigger.

Then one day, people arrived. They cut down all the other trees around me to make fields. I was lucky, because I was between two fields, so they let me live as part of the hedge. In the distance, I could see a farm and a peaceful little village with a church.

Time went by, and little by little the village grew into a big town. I lived in the garden of a big house. In the summer, the family from the house used to sit under me to read and relax. In the distance, I could see some big factories.



When I was about a hundred and fifty years old, something terrible happened. There was a war. The town was bombed and there were big fires. A lot of buildings were destroyed. I nearly died. Fortunately, the fire didn't reach me, but one of my branches was broken and some of my leaves were burnt.

After the war, the town was rebuilt, but it was ugly and dirty. The air became very polluted. I stood at the side of a noisy street with a lot of traffic, and the kids used to write their names on me with knives. I was about two hundred years old at the time, and I was so unhappy.

The years went by and something very strange happened. The people all left the city and the place was empty. Little by little, all the buildings fell down, and in their place grass and trees started to grow. The air became cleaner. Now, I'm very old, but I live in a beautiful forest again and I'm happy. All that remains of that ugly city are a few old ruins.

Underline examples of these in the text:

Grammar

used to: describes an action in the past which happened many times, or during a long time, e.g. *I used to live...*

passive: describes an action without saying who (or what) did the action, e.g. *the town was rebuilt.*

could: describes something that was possible in the past, e.g. *I could see...*

Words and Phrases

Time: When I was...; year after year...; Then one day...; After...; The years went by and...; Now

Change: turn into; little by little; grew bigger and bigger; little by little; became