

Activity Type

Reading, writing,
listening and speaking
activity, group work

Language Focus

Past simple - verb 'to be'

Aim

To take on the role of an unnamed famous person in history and try to establish the identities of other famous people in your group by asking and answering questions using the past simple of the verb 'to be'.

Preparation

Make one copy of the worksheet for each group of four and cut as indicated.

Level

Pre-intermediate

Time

20 minutes

Introduction

In this intriguing was/were activity, students take on the role of an unnamed famous person in history and try to establish the identities of other famous people in their group by asking and answering questions using the past simple of the verb 'to be'.

Procedure

Divide the students into groups of four (Student A, B, C and D).

Give each student a corresponding part of the worksheet.

Tell the students not to show their worksheet to anyone.

Explain that the students are going to take on the role of an unnamed famous person in history.

Ask the students to read the information about their mystery famous person in the 'You were...' section of the worksheet.

Tell the students that their task is to find out information about the other famous people in their group by asking and answering questions using the past simple of the verb 'to be'.

The students then go around their group asking the questions on their worksheet, e.g. 'Were you born in 1961?'

When a group member replies 'Yes, I was', the student writes their letter (e.g. Student B) next to the question in the 'Who was...?' section of the worksheet.

The students continue asking and answering questions until all the worksheets are complete.

The students then discuss their findings about each student and try to guess the names of the four famous people.

Afterwards, get feedback from each group on their four guesses and then reveal the correct answers.

Groups score one point for each correct answer. The group with the most points wins.

Answer key

Student A - Abraham Lincoln
Student B - Diana, Princess of Wales
Student C - Mother Teresa
Student D - Pelé

Note: This is an editable PDF. To edit the document, select the Edit PDF tool in Acrobat.

Student A
You were...

- born in 1809.
- born in Kentucky, USA.
- a famous president.
- patient and generous.
- married in 1842.

Who was...

- born in 1961?
- born in Macedonia?
- a famous football player?
- hard-working and caring?
- married three times?


Student B
You were...

- born in 1961.
- born in Norfolk, England.
- a famous princess.
- kind and sensitive.
- married in 1981.

Who was...

- born in 1910?
- born in Brazil?
- a famous president?
- friendly and respectful?
- married in 1842?


Student C
You were...

- born in 1910.
- born in Skopje, Macedonia.
- a famous nun.
- hard-working and caring.
- never married.

Who was...

- born in 1940?
- born in the USA?
- a famous princess?
- patient and generous?
- married in 1981?


Student D
You were...

- born in 1940.
- born in Minas Gerais, Brazil.
- a famous football player.
- friendly and respectful.
- married three times.

Who was...

- born in 1809?
- born in England?
- a famous nun?
- kind and sensitive?
- never married?
