Practical group activities for lower level learners

QATESOL Professional Development
Syllabus, Strategies and Sanity Savers
Gold Coast, June 2018

Developing understanding of oral language across the register continuum

- Explore a couple of classroom activities which provide opportunities to use small group/paired work and oral language as an integral part of teaching a subject.
- Look at what makes these classroom tasks effective and look at when and how they might be used.

Talk as Process

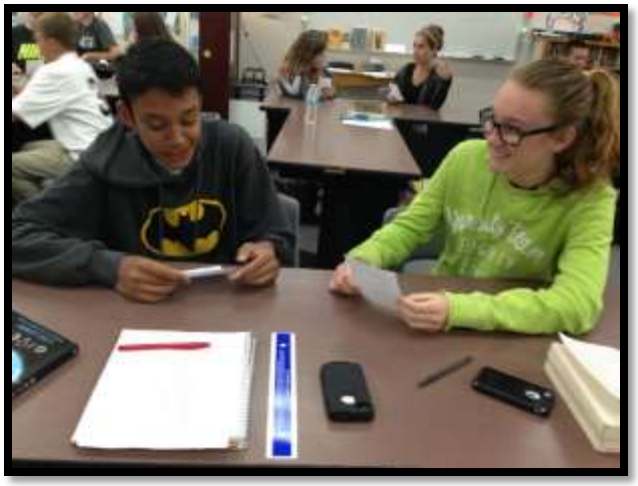
- Talk as process (Jones, 1996) refers to talk that accompanies activities – 'hand-ons'.
  - For example students may be engaged in activities to explore floating and sinking or sequencing of events
  - A way for students to focus on talking their way to understanding.

- Because meanings are being made through ways other than through language, these are often seen as very supportive of EAL students.
  - It provides the teacher with opportunities to scaffold students through ongoing micro-interactions: by naming things or actions, explaining what is happening, and recasting or commenting on what is happening.

Using small group or paired work

- Small-group and pair activities are supportive of EAL students as tasks can be designed to give students opportunities to:
  - Participate even if language levels are low
  - Explore talk that is content-focused as students hypothesise
  - Language is practiced in a purposeful way
  - Expert language users can model
  - Gives opportunities for the teacher to observe and work closely with a group of students
  - Increased metacognition and metalinguistic awareness through talk focused on thinking, strategies and language in context

Before starting …



- Before moving students into groups or working in pairs some points need to be considered:
  - The expectation that students can work effectively in groups or pairs without prior tuition in cooperative learning skills is unreasonable and unrealistic
  - You need to know your class as individuals

Activity One - Narrative

CONSIDERATIONS:

EAL English class majority of students operating at bandscales:
Writing [2] – Reading [2] – Listening [3] – Speaking [3]

AIM:
short

Students to negotiate sequencing of images for a narrative

WHEN CAN THIS ACTIVITY BE USED:

At the beginning of a unit to determine how much students know about narrative

As a formative piece of assessment to consolidate

Activity One - Narrative

MATERIALS:

Sequence of Activity

Students are paired and given one set of laminated cards.

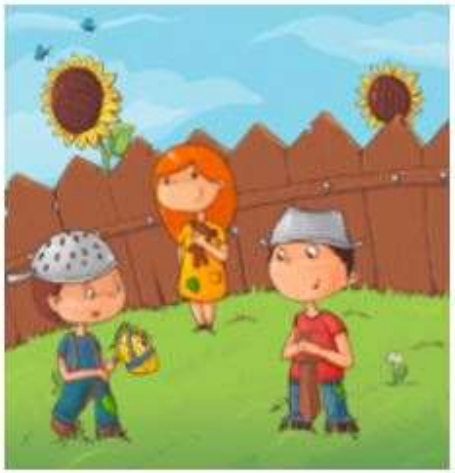
Each student is given a story template, and a paper set of story images.

Students cut & paste the images onto their template and write their story.

Provide sentence starters for the lower level students

Extension

Working in pairs again students map out their story



Story Sequencing

Names: _____

Story Map

Name: _____

Title: _____

Complication:

Characters:

Events: Rising Actions

Falling Actions

Resolution:

Setting:

Theme:

Activity Two – Medieval Timeline

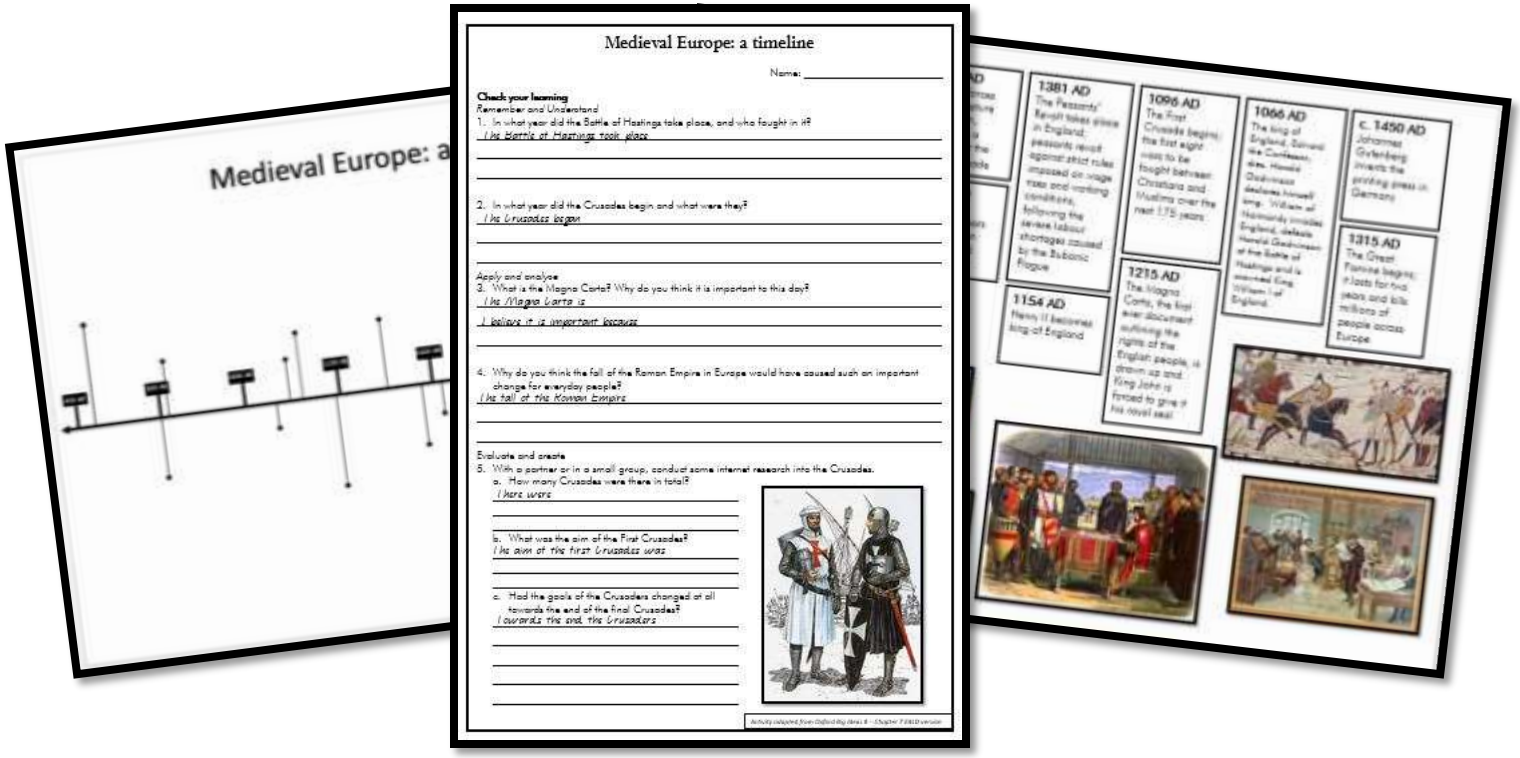
CONSIDERATIONS: EAL Humanities Year 8 class majority of students operating at bandscales:
Writing [3] – Reading [3] – Listening [4] – Speaking [4]

AIM: Students to negotiate sequencing of images and information to complete a timeline and worksheet on Medieval Europe

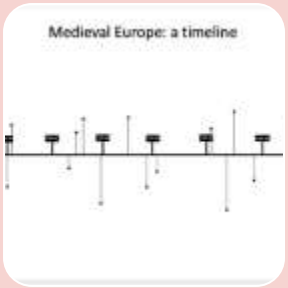
WHEN CAN THIS ACTIVITY BE USED: At the beginning of a unit to introduce topic and important events to be studied

MATERIALS:

Activity Two – Medieval Timeline



Sequence of Activity



Students are paired and given an A3 timeline template

Students are then given images and information to create their timeline

Students then complete their individual worksheet [lower level with sentence starters]

Extension

Students with higher bandscale can be challenged with additional questions and no sentence starters

Activity Three – Medieval Social Structure

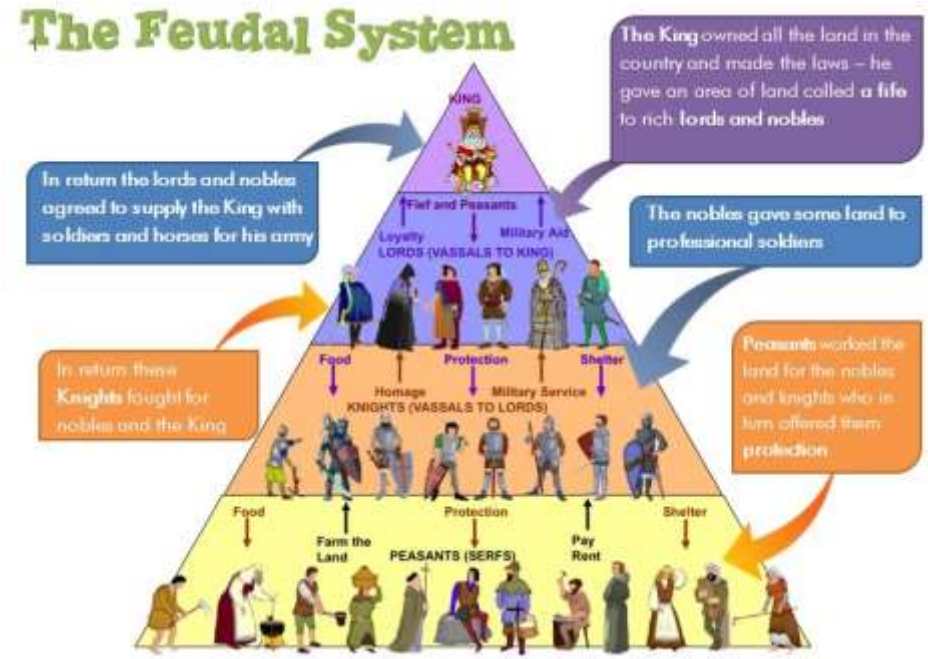
CONSIDERATIONS: EAL Humanities Year 8 class majority of students operating at bandscales:
Writing [3] – Reading [3] – Listening [4] – Speaking [4]

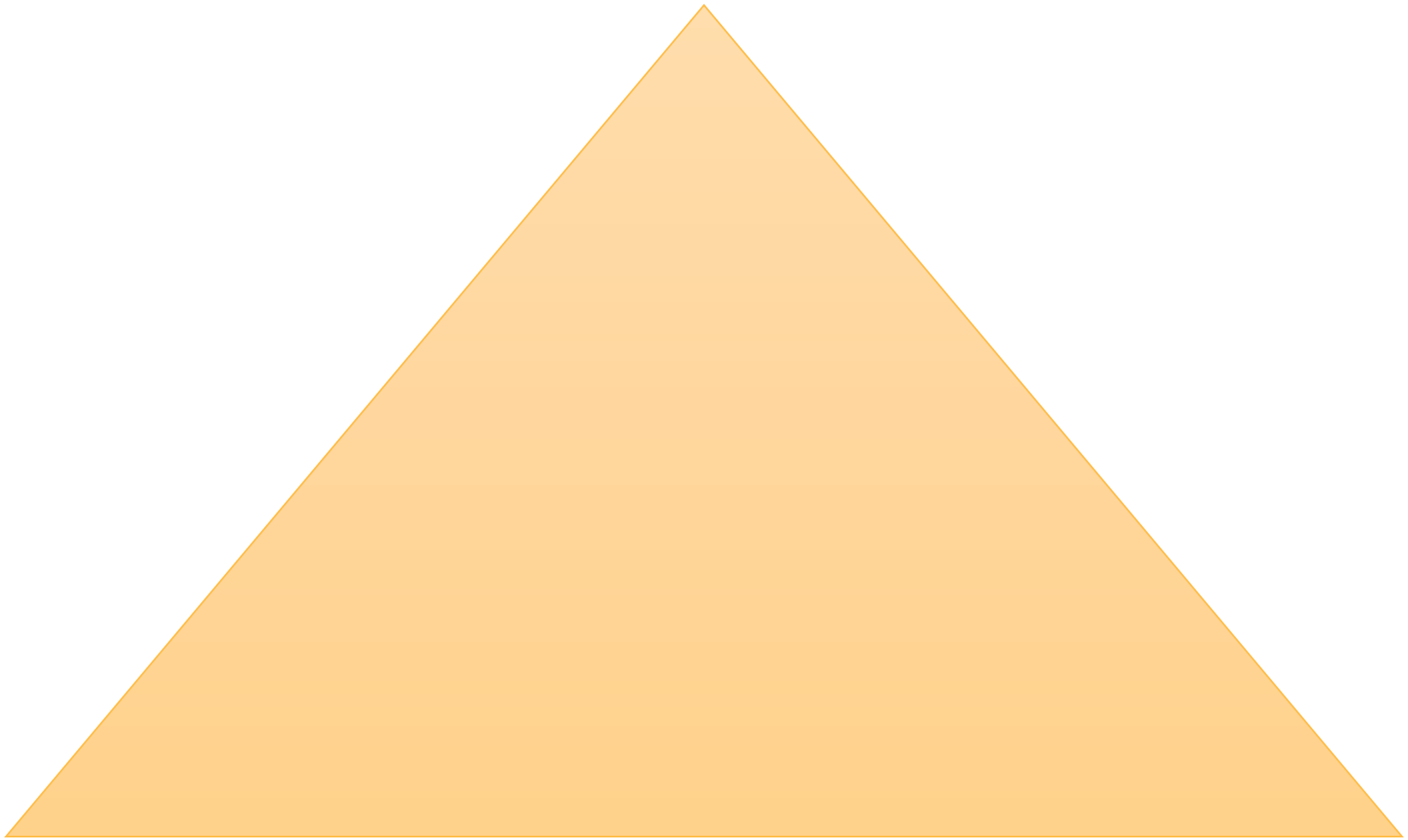
AIM: Students to recreate the social structure as a class then write a TEEL paragraph.

WHEN CAN THIS ACTIVITY BE USED: As a consolidation activity

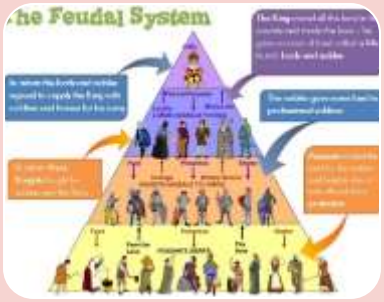
MATERIALS:

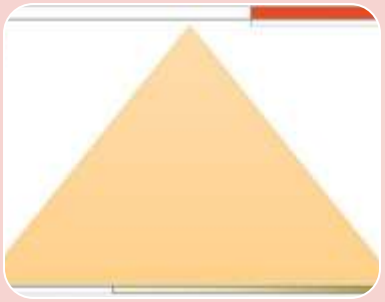
Activity Three – Medieval Social Structure





Sequence of Activity





Students work through the social structure in all its details

Each student in class is given one vocab and one image to place on the structure. Pairs are given a description card and arrow.

After the activity has been completed as a class, individual students complete a TEEL paragraph.

Medieval Social Structure

Name: _____

Date: _____

T Topic Sentence	*The feudal system was based on a system of service and obligation. In the feudal system different classes held various responsibilities both to the classes below as well as to the ones above*
E Explain/Elaborate	
E Explain/Elaborate	
L Link to topic	

References

Government of South Australia, D. o. (2012). Teaching ESL students in mainstream classrooms: Language in learning across the curriculum. Hindmarsh: DECD.

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Images used

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