

1 Tell learners that this lesson is based on a true story which was reported in *The Guardian* newspaper a few years ago. The first stage (steps 2 to 4) involves encouraging learners to speculate on the story on the basis of a few clues. At step 5 they make up their own stories to fit the clues. At steps 2-4 learners should ideally work in pairs or groups, but if they are not used to this they could work first as individuals, perhaps making up their story for homework, and then get together in groups to share ideas.

At step 6 they compare stories. At the end of this they should be keen to and/or hear read the newspaper story (step 7) to find out what really happened.

Step 8 gives some sharply focused listening practice.

2 Give learners the headline:

I'VE JUST JUMPED OFF THE EMPIRE STATE BUILDING.

Ask them how it is possible that someone who has jumped off the Empire State Building will still be alive to talk about it.

[Not to teachers: Some possibilities: *He might have abseiled on a rope/ He might have landed on something soft/ He might have had a parachute/ He might have been bungee jumping/ There might have been something to catch him near the top.* The use of the modal *might have* is difficult. Don't worry if learners have trouble with it. Just repeat their contribution rephrasing it correctly. Tell them they can use *perhaps* or *maybe*: *Perhaps/Maybe he had a parachute.*]

3 Give them the phrases: *decide not to commit suicide; knocked on the window; depressed; took a lift; a ledge on the 85th floor; 300 metres below; hard at work in his office; I poured myself a stiff drink; opened by Bill Stackman; safety fence; a television station.*

Explain that all these phrases are in the story, but not in this order. Ask them what they think happened in the story, but do not tell them if their guesses are right or wrong. The best thing is for them to work in pairs or groups and discuss their ideas. This will give them a lot of speaking practice.

4 Tell them you are going to ask some of them to tell their stories to the class. Give them some time to prepare their stories. Go round and listen as they work.

5 Ask one of them to tell the story.

6 Ask the others if their stories are the same or different. Ask them to say how their story is different.

7 Hand out the story for them to read. Or, if you want them to have some listening practice you can read the story out before they read it.

I'VE JUST JUMPED OFF THE EMPIRE STATE BUILDING

John Helms, a young artist found himself all alone in New York city at Christmas time. He had no money and was so depressed that he decided to kill himself.

Helms, aged 26, took a lift to the top of the Empire State Building. For a few moments he looked over the safety fence, then he said a short prayer before throwing himself off.

A short time later he awoke to find himself on a ledge on the 85th floor, blown there by strong winds. He took a look at the cars crawling along Fifth avenue about 300 metres below and decided not to commit suicide after all.

He knocked on the window, which was opened by Bill Stackman who had been hard at work in his office. 'I couldn't believe my eyes, said Bill. 'You don't see a lot of guys coming in through the window of the 85th floor. I poured myself a stiff drink and one for him too ...'

So the story had a happy ending. When the story was reported on the radio hundreds of families called Helms to offer him a home for the holidays, so he was able to enjoy Christmas after all.

8 Tell them you are going to play a recording made by someone who was guessing the story as they did. Ask them to listen to the recorded version of the story. Is it different from the written version?

9 Language work.

9.1 Recognition:

Ask them to go through and pick out expressions with *-self*.

found himself all alone; decided to kill himself; before throwing himself off; he awoke to find himself on a ledge; I poured myself a stiff drink.

9.2 Analysis.

9.2.1 In all the examples above the reflexive pronoun is *himself*. But *himself* and its plural are unusual in the way they are formed. Look at the other reflexives:

myself – herself – itself – yourself – ourselves - yourselves

How are they formed? What about *himself* and *themselves*?

[Note to teachers: *himself* and *themselves* are formed from the object pronoun *him/them* plus the reflexive *self/selves*. The other reflexives are formed from the possessive: *my/her/your/its/our* plus the reflexive.

9.2.2 Most transitive verbs, including verbs with prepositions, can be used with a reflexive pronoun.

He said a short prayer before throwing himself off.

Look! You can see yourself in the water.

She locked herself in the bathroom.

*He was looking at himself in the mirror.
They don't look after themselves properly.*

These are the verbs most commonly found with a reflexive:

Blame – cut – dry – hurt – introduce – kill – teach

9.2.3 Sometimes the reflexive gives the verb an idiomatic meaning:

He awoke and found himself on a ledge. (He realised that he was on a ledge.)

Can you use the verbs in the right hand box to complete these sentences?

<i>It was such a silly mistake. I could ...myself. It's dangerous. You have to ... yourself. There's plenty of food. You can ... yourself. I don't ... myself today. I've got a bit of a headache. He was looking forward to the party. He was going to ...himself. They are always naughty. They don't know how to ...themselves.</i>	<i>enjoy watch behave help feel kick</i>
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After learners have done this exercise give them a few minutes to study the sentences, then see how many the class can remember.

9.2.4 Reflexives are less common in English than in some other European languages like French and Italian. With some verbs we only use the reflexive for emphasis, to show that something is unusual or unexpected.

*She's only two, but she can dress herself.
I had to help him because he couldn't shave himself.
He's too ill to wash himself.*

9.2.5 Reflexives are often used as an indirect object:

*I poured myself a stiff drink.
She sent herself an email.
I bought myself a present.*

9.3 Practice – vanishing words:

Show learners this sentence:

He had no money and was so depressed he decided to kill himself.

Ask one of them to read it out.

Remove a few words replacing each letter with an asterisk or a blank:

*He *** no money and was ** depressed he decided ** kill *****.*

Ask one of the learners if they can still remember the sentence.

Remove a few more words:

*He *** ** money *** was ** depressed he decided *** **** *****.*

Ask another learner to reconstruct the sentence.

Go on until all the words are removed:

*** *** ** **** *** *** ** ***** * * ***** * * ******

[Notes to teacher. This is a good sentence to use because it contains several important grammar points:

- A result clause with *so*.
- Elision (omission) of the word *he*: *He had no money and (he) was so depressed...*
- *Decided + to*
- The reflexive pronoun: *to kill himself*

You can make the activity easier by:

- Giving learners time to study the sentence before you do the activity.
- Allowing them to work things out in groups
- Repeating the sentence more than once at each stage
- Rubbing out only one or two words at a time