

# LESSON PLAN

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- Aim**
- to develop reading skills
  - to extend vocabulary
  - to predict the continuation of a story
  - to identify a literary genre
  - to encourage the pleasure of reading

**Level** B1.1

**Time** 45 mins

**Materials:** 1 front page illustration of the graded reader *The Eighth Sister*  
2 worksheet

## Introduction

This lesson plan introduces *The Eighth Sister*, a fantasy/horror story centred around two 15 year old protagonists. The short extracts chosen will draw students into the plot, encourage them to ask questions, develop their vocabulary and predict what will happen next. All of this with the aim of increasing their pleasure in reading.

## Background notes on the story

It's almost Christmas in the English village of Hollybrook but the winter magic is about to turn into something much more sinister. A series of strange coincidences lead Helen and her cousin Will to investigate clues left by their ancient aunt and manage to break the circle of magic which has reigned over the village for centuries.

The story starts when Helen's mother buys an antique painting. The girl in the portrait looks exactly like Helen. Shortly afterwards Helen receives an unusual necklace for her 15<sup>th</sup> birthday with a red stone in it. It is the same as the one the girl in the portrait is wearing. The accompanying note tells her it is from a Aunt Charlotte, one of her grandmother's eight sisters who everyone thought was dead.

As the story unfolds Will and Helen discover that witches have lived for centuries in the village and baby girls born there during the Yule month (December) are born with witch's blood and destined to join the circle when they are fifteen. They celebrate their powers every year on the night of the winter solstice. Once every fifty years the presence of the Holly King is required to ensure the renewal of the witches' power. The only way to break the circle and stop the magic is for one of the witches themselves to throw a firestone into the Yule Fire.

Before they can do this, there are some questions that need to be answered:

What is a firestone?

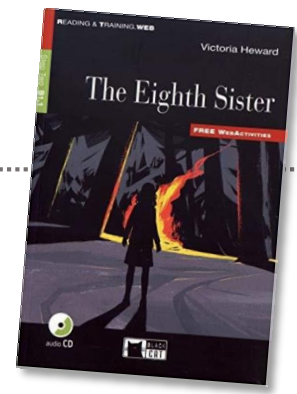
Was Aunt Charlotte really a witch?

And what has all of it got to do with Helen?



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## PROCEDURE

### **Before the lesson**

- make a copy of the worksheet (one per student)
- download a photo of an English Village during Christmas as a context of the activity

Tell the students you're going to be speaking about a book called *The Eighth Sister*.

- read the background notes on the story to the class.
- write the title of the graded reader on the board.

### **First Step (10 minutes)**

Ask the students to comment on their first impressions and ask them some questions.

- What genre do you think it is?
- Why is the title unusual?
- How could the 8<sup>th</sup> sister be different from the others?

Show the students the cover illustration and ask again.

### **Second Step (30 minutes)**

Give students the worksheet and explain that the text comes from Chapter 2 of the story.

- Ask them to do EXERCISE 1, Before you read.
- Ask them to work in pairs to check their answers.
- Read Exercise 2, EXTRACT PART 1. You could read it out loud the first time to make the dialogue more dramatic.
- Then ask the students to read it alone or in pairs for a more detailed understanding the second time.
- Ask students to comment with their opinions, predictions and observations.

#### **• Ask students to read EXTRACT PART 2 (Exercise 3)**

**Then** ask the students to underline the questions (Exercise 4).

This prediction exercise is to help increase their interest in the story and use their imagination. They could speak in pairs or small groups using L1 or English and then present their ideas to the rest of the class.

### **Last Step (5 minutes)**

Ask the students to predict what could happen (Exercise 5). The exercise can be done in pairs or in small groups.

This exercise could be used as a written homework exercise if there is no time in class.



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## WORKSHEET

### Chapter 2 – The Shop

Helen's mother has recently bought an antique painting. Strangely, the girl in the painting looks exactly like Helen. Things get even stranger when Helen receives a mysterious present for her 15<sup>th</sup> birthday. Her cousin Will asks her to explain what has happened.

#### 1 Before you read

Match these words from the text to their definition.

- |               |  |
|---------------|--|
| 1 parcel      | a a piece of jewellery                                   |
| 2 necklace    | b lost consciousness                                     |
| 3 portrait    | c very strange   |
| 4 fainted     | d a package covered in paper                             |
| 5 weird       | e the painting of a person                               |
| 6 coincidence | f when there's no logical explanation for similar things |

#### 2 Read the first part of the extract

"Tell me again, exactly what happened?"

"Will, this is the sixth time I've told you. The postman delivered a parcel. Inside there was a letter and a necklace. The letter was from an Aunt Charlotte and the necklace was... well..." She looked up at the portrait on the wall. "...The necklace was that one."

Her cousin Will looked up at the painting too. There was no mistake about it. The golden necklace worn by the girl was exactly the same as the one on the table in front of them.

"And then," continued Helen, "when I picked it up it felt strange. I can't really explain what it was. Suddenly everything went black and I fainted."

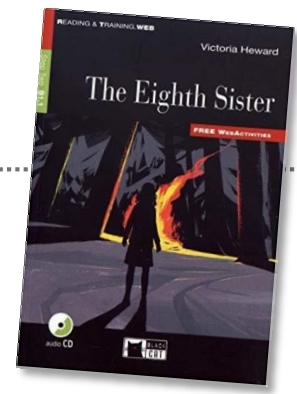
"That is so weird. I mean, sooo weird!" said her cousin. "What are you going to do about it? What do you think it means? Why do you think...?"

"Will! Shut up! I don't know. I have no idea. What can I think? My mum, for no reason, decides to buy an old painting... I mean, my mum hates old stuff so I have no idea why she bought this... and by some strange coincidence the painting looks exactly like me! And now a necklace arrives out of nowhere which is just the same as the one she's wearing."



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## WORKSHEET

### 3 Read the second part of the text

Helen tells Will that Aunt Charlotte sent the necklace. She was one of their grandmother's many sisters. There are still many questions that remain unanswered.

"So, why did she send me a necklace? How did she know about the painting? Will, there are just too many questions."

"I think we should try and understand who the girl in the painting really is. I mean, how come the painting was in the shop in the first place?"

Helen thought for a moment. "Look Will, I know we said we would go to the cinema in town this afternoon but why don't we go and have a look at that antique shop instead?"

### 4 Underline the questions in the second part of the text.

In pairs or small groups choose one question and try to imagine a possible answer

Compare your ideas to see which you prefer.

5 Helen and Will decide to visit the antique shop. What do you think happens? Continue the story with your own ideas.

