



4 Urban Myths

1 Synopsis

This video is about urban myths. It begins by explaining that storytelling is an important part of human culture, and that storytellers have always invented stories and tricked people into believing they are true. "The Piltown Man" was a famous scientific hoax. This was a skull created by someone using bones and teeth from various animals and humans. When this skull was found, people believed that it was real for a long time until finally scientists proved that it wasn't. Two more urban myths are given, and we, the audience, have to decide which one is the truth and which one is a hoax. After giving us the answer, humans' love of stories, storytelling, and making up stories are reflected on.

Length of video: 5:05 min

2 Target Language

Grammar: Reported speech

Vocabulary: Storytelling and hoaxes

Language Points: *Really? I don't believe it! No way! Seriously? That's incredible! That's terrible!*

3 Procedural Notes

A Before you watch

As a class. Ask students to read the four newspaper headlines. Take a vote on whether the class thinks each one could be true or not. Elicit from the class what things they would like to know about each story, e.g., for headline b *Who was abducted? Where were they when it happened? How long did the abduction last?* Ask students if they would read the article for each of the headlines, or if they would simply ignore it. Write the words *urban myth / urban legend* on the board. Ask students if they know what these expressions mean. Explain that *myth* and *legend* both mean *story*, but that they imply a story with a long history that is passed from person to person, possibly being changed or exaggerated along the way. Urban legends typically involve strange, mysterious, terrifying, or humorous events.

B While you watch

1 In pairs. Do a jigsaw viewing (see *Techniques for teaching with video* in the DVD booklet) of the first part of the video. Play the video with the sound off from the very beginning. One of the students in each pair (facing the screen) watches the silent video and

tells their partner (facing away from the screen) what is happening. Their partner notes down the activities. Pause the video when the words *URBAN MYTHS* appear on screen [00:51]. Ask students to exchange roles and papers. Play the same section again with the sound off.

As a class. Ask a student *What did your partner say?* Elicit the correct form of reported speech. *He said the moon was rising. He said there was an Indian.* Write these examples on the board:

"The moon is rising." → *He said the moon was rising.*
"There's an Indian." → *He said there was an Indian.*

At this point, it isn't necessary to review reported speech comprehensively. Invite other students to report what their partner said. Correct any errors in the use of reported speech.

2 As a class. Ask students to read the sentences and answer options, underlining any words they don't know as they read. You may then need to pre-teach all or some of the following words:

mischievous (adj.) – having fun by causing trouble
trick (v.) – to make someone believe something that is not true
hoax (n.) – a trick in which someone deliberately tells people that something is true when it is not
align (v.) – to organize things so that they form a straight line
Noah's Ark (n.) – from the Bible, the large boat that Noah built to save animals from the flood that covered the whole world
remains (n., plural) – the parts of something that continue to exist when the rest has been finished, used, or destroyed

Individuals. Tell students that they are going to watch most of the video, choosing the answers as they listen. Play the video from the start until the presenter asks *Which story is true?* [04:00].

As a class. Check the answers as a class. Then, make sure students understand the two stories by asking some questions, e.g., *Who made the prediction about gravity reduction?* (the space institute, NASA); *Where can we see the remains of Noah's Ark?* (in new satellite pictures of the mountain).

Answer key: 1 a 2 c 3 b 4 a 5 c

In pairs. Tell students to discuss which story they think is true and which is a hoax. Encourage them to give reasons.



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As a class. Nominate a few pairs to share their ideas with the class. Then, hold a class vote. Ask *Who thinks Gravity Reduction is a hoax? Who thinks Noah's Ark is a hoax?* Count the votes for each choice and write the numbers on the board. Then, play the remainder of the video [04:00–end]. Elicit which story was the hoax (Gravity Reduction) and how many students got the answer right. Ask a few students to explain why they are (or are not) surprised.

3 As a class. In this exercise, students will practice listening for some specific details. First, ask the class if they can remember what *mischievous*, *trick*, and *hoax* mean. Then, pre-teach the meaning of *skull* (n.) (the bones of the head). Nominate a few students to read aloud sentences 1–9. Make sure the task is clear by focusing on the example on the worksheet. Play the entire video. Have students do the exercise while watching.

In pairs. Have students compare their answers. Then invite different students to read aloud the correct versions of the sentences.

Answer key:

- 2 Mischievous storytellers have always made up **fantastic** tales to trick people.
- 3 One urban legend is about a **baby** who gets sunscreen in his eyes.
- 4 A hoax often uses pictures or objects to make a story **more** believable.
- 5 People believed the Piltdown Man hoax for **40** years.
- 6 Piltdown Man was a hoax created by using the skulls of medieval **humans**.
- 7 Scientists at NASA predicted that Neptune would pass **in front of** Uranus.
- 8 The British astronomer Patrick Moore told the Gravity Reduction story **on the radio**.
- 9 The satellite images of the top of Mount Ararat reveal a **mysterious** large object.

the following sentences on the board and eliciting the reported equivalent:

Class: "We were tricked!" → The class said they had been tricked.

John: "I never heard the story about Gravity Reduction." → John said that he had never heard the story about Gravity Reduction.

Patrick Moore: "People will be able to float." → Patrick Moore said that people would be able to float.

Individuals. Ask students to do the exercise and then compare their answers in pairs, discussing any differences. To check answers, nominate students to read aloud the reported sentences.

Answer key:

- 2 English scientists said Piltdown Man was a hoax.
- 3 Patrick Moore said gravity would be reduced.
- 4 Scientists at NASA said Neptune would pass in front of Uranus.
- 5 Some people who saw the satellite images said the pictures showed Noah's Ark.
- 6 Some radio listeners said they had floated.
- 7 The reporter said the images had revealed a mysterious large object.

2 As a class. Demonstrate this activity first by writing three sentences about yourself on the board, one of which is not true. Try to make this as difficult as possible, e.g.:

I have a pet spider/snake/lizard.

I've met a famous person.

I got up at 5:30 this morning.

I once fell down the stairs and broke my leg.

I am really scared of flying.

Read the sentences one at a time, and ask students to raise their hands when they think you are lying. If you want to keep up a feeling of mystery, tell the class that you will reveal the truth at the end of class.

In groups. Highlight the instructions on the worksheet. Give students time to write their three sentences, then put them in groups of three or four. Tell students to take turns reading aloud their three sentences. Encourage the rest of the group to explain why they think a particular sentence is false and then, when the student has revealed the answer, to ask questions to find out more information.

As a class. Ask a few students to share something interesting they learned about a classmate.

C After you watch

1 As a class. Remind students of reported speech. Read aloud the example. Elicit that in reported speech, the verb tense changes. Simple present becomes simple past; simple past becomes past perfect; and *will* becomes *would*. Highlight that some subject pronouns also change in reported speech. Practice as a class by writing



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| | told, someone who believes it tells it to a friend, fully convinced that it actually happened. And the story spreads and spreads. | Reporter: | There has been an aeronautics and space report presented by NASA. |
| Woman 1: | A woman my friend knows had a baby who went blind after he got sunscreen in his eyes. | Presenter: | Scientists at NASA predicted that Neptune would pass in front of Uranus. Using Einstein's theory of relativity, they determined that when the planets were aligned in this way, the pull on the earth would be powerful enough to diminish the force of gravity. They predicted that if you jumped in the air at that moment, you would feel as if you were floating. Now, are you ready for story number two? |
| Woman 2: | That's terrible! Oh, the poor baby. | | Noah's Ark Found. Everyone knows the story of Noah's Ark. In fact, three of the major world religions – Christianity, Judaism, and Islam – all share the story that the world was destroyed by a flood. Only Noah and those aboard the Ark were saved, when they landed on top of Mount Ararat in Turkey. But did it really happen? New satellite pictures of the mountain show an object. It is believed to be the remains of Noah's Ark. Which story is true? |
| Man 3: | A man in our town died after he'd eaten bananas that contained a deadly bacteria. | | Our Gravity Reduction story is based on a famous hoax. On April Fool's Day 1976, British astronomer and children's book author Patrick Moore announced on the radio that the planet Pluto would pass behind Jupiter. Many listeners called in and actually claimed to have floated around the room. During a remarkably warm winter, snow on the top of Mount Ararat in Turkey melted. For the first time, satellites were able to record images of an object that had previously been buried under the snow. These satellite images do in fact reveal a mysterious large object, which may or may not be Noah's Ark. Stories of the fantastic, the improbable, the bizarre. We love to hear them, we love to tell them, and we want to believe them. And that's why some of us love to make them up. |
| Woman 3: | Deadly bacteria? No! | | |
| Presenter: | All of these stories sound bizarre and terrifying, yet, none of them is true. They are all urban legends, stories that are told to trick people into believing that they are true. Urban legends are a type of hoax. Hoaxes are elaborate tricks designed to fool people. A hoax may employ objects or pictures to make the story more believable. Probably the most famous scientific hoax was started by a man in England. He altered a number of bones and fossils and then buried them. Charles Dawson found them and claimed to have found the Missing Link, a fossil that proved that humans descended from apes. These fossils were called Piltdown Man. For 40 years, many people believed Piltdown Man really was the Missing Link. But in the end, scientists determined that the Piltdown Man had been created using the skulls of medieval humans, the jaw of an orangutan, the tooth of a hippopotamus, and the canine tooth of an early chimpanzee. It's still not certain who created Piltdown Man, but it was one of the most famous hoaxes ever. Would you believe in Piltdown Man? Maybe, maybe not. Let's see how good you are at detecting the truth. I'm going to tell you two stories. One story is based on a famous hoax. The other actually happened. After watching both stories, you decide which one is true. Ready? Story number one, Gravity Reduction. | | |