

Introduction

You can listen to a recording of this article at:

<http://learnenglish.britishcouncil.org/magazine-articles/magic>

This support pack contains the following materials:

- a pre-reading vocabulary activity
- the article that you can listen to
- a comprehension activity based on the article
- an activity in which you rearrange the words in sentences

Before you read**Vocabulary activity**

Match the words and phrases at the top to their definitions.

a. blamed	b. harm
c. household names	d. infamous
e. levitating	f. persecuted
g. pick	h. potion
i. spell	j. tap into

1. a liquid believed to have a magical effect
2. choose
3. famous for something considered bad
4. famous people that most people know of
5. hurt someone
6. make a connection with
7. making something rise or float in the air without support
8. said to be the cause
9. spoken words thought to have magical power
10. treated cruelly for a long time because of your beliefs

Read the article

Magic

by John Russell

*Double, double, toil and trouble;
Fire burn and cauldron bubble.
Fillet of a fenny snake,
In the cauldron boil and bake;*

Macbeth – William Shakespeare



A.

From the witches in Shakespeare's Macbeth, to Gandalf the Wizard in Lord of the Rings books and films, it is clear that the idea of magic has been around for many years. Both play and books / films use the idea of something mysterious to add interest and excitement to the story – but they also tap into something deeper...our fascination with magic.

B.

The word 'Magic' has many different meanings. A man playing card tricks in the street is doing magic, just as a wizard in a story fighting with dragons is using magic. Magic is when something happens that we can not explain or understand. Often forcing us to not believe our own eyes or even appearing to be breaking the laws of physics or nature! When a rabbit appears in a hat or when someone claims to see into the future – both can be called magic.

C.

In the past anything that people couldn't understand was called magic – and many people

were persecuted or even killed because they were thought to be witches or wizards. When a sick person suddenly became well or a well person (or even animal) became ill, magic was the cause. Unexplained events were blamed on people who were said to use magic. It was thought that the devil or strange forces allowed them to have these powers. However, accusing someone of being a witch or of having magical powers was often just an excuse to remove an unpopular person from the community or take someone's property away. Unfortunately, thousands of people were executed for witchcraft over hundreds of years. The most infamous recent trials were the Salem witch trials in America, dramatised in Arthur Miller's play, The Crucible.

D.

Magic has always been used as a form of entertainment. People enjoy the mystery of working out which cup the little ball is underneath or how he knows which card I was thinking of. From early Egyptian times magicians and illusionists have entertained people, and there have been many great magicians. Harry Houdini was one of the first world-famous magicians – famous for escaping from deadly situations. In more recent times magicians such as David Copperfield or David Blane have become household names for their illusions; such as making the Statue of Liberty disappear or levitating.

E.

Not a lot of people would argue that David Copperfield has real magical powers – he is just a great illusionist. But there are some who believe magic really exists and can change our lives. A few believe that a spell can make someone fall in love or a potion will protect you from danger. White magic is the idea that spells, or mixtures of certain herbs can have a positive influence on our lives. Black magic is the opposite of this, the idea that magical powers can be used to harm others. Dark magic is associated

with the devil and evil powers, but white magic is more to do with the earth and nature.

F.

Wizard, warlock, witch, sorcerer, enchantress. All names associated with magic, but made popular (and most created) through stories, plays or films. Shakespeare was not the first to add interest to a story with magic and the 20th Century saw a huge rise in stories about magic. The fantasy novel and film has created new universes where magicians fight to save the world, or something magical is the key to the story (like the ring in Lord of the Rings). T.H. White wrote about the most famous wizard of all – Merlin, in his books

about King Arthur. The British author Terry Pratchett uses magic a great deal in his popular Discworld series of books, witches and wizards are often his main characters and there is even an 'Unseen University' of magic. A young wizard called Harry is also quite popular in books and films at the moment, so I'm told ...

G.

Magical rings and three headed dogs may not be real, but does this mean nothing magical really exists? Can you always explain how the magician has done the card trick? Maybe it is better not to explain, but to leave a little magic and mystery in our lives. Pick a card, any card ...

After reading

Comprehension activity

Someone has magically removed the headings from each paragraph in the text. Can you match the correct heading with the correct paragraph? There is one extra that you don't need to use.

Paragraphs in text:

A	B	C	D	E	F	G
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Headings:

1. But it's fun to watch...
2. Do you believe in magic?
3. Good magic, bad magic, black magic, white magic
4. Have people always liked magic?
5. It's a kind of magic!
6. Magic books and silver screens
7. Magic on television
8. What is magic?

Word ordering activity

These sentences from the article have been mysteriously mixed up. Can you put them back in the right order? Try not to look back at the text.

1. events were on Unexplained blamed people use were said to magic who
2. make A believe a spell few that can in fall love someone
3. is clear magic idea of It has been that the around for years many
4. 20th a saw huge The about rise in Century magic stories
5. always you explain the trick how magician Can done the card has

Answers to vocabulary activity:

1. h; 2. g; 3. d; 4. c; 5. b; 6. j; 7. e; 8. a; 9. i; 10. f

Answers to comprehension activity:

1. D; 2. G; 3. E; 4. C; 5. A; 6. F; 7. extra heading; 8. B

Answers to word ordering activity:

1. *Unexplained events were blamed on people who were said to use magic;* 2. *A few believe that a spell can make someone fall in love ;* 3. *It is clear that the idea of magic has been around for many years;* 4. *The 20th Century saw a huge rise in stories about magic;* 5. *Can you always explain how the magician has done the card trick*

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