



Why Were You...?

1. Student ability: **High Beginner ~ Advanced**
2. Approximate length of lesson: **25+**
3. Number of students necessary: **2+**
4. Preferred age/maturity: **HS, College, Adult**
5. Type of lesson: **Pair Work Activity**

Language Target: Simple past tense with *was & were*, offering **believable** reasons or explanations for behaving oddly.

Setting Up: Demonstrate the target by saying something like: *I was running up a hill at 3:30 this morning wearing a blue and green apron.* Encourage students to ask: *Why were you running up a hill at 3:30 this morning wearing a blue and green apron?*

The teacher might answer with something like: *I was trying to catch the newspaper delivery boy.* Students continue with additional **follow-up** questions such as: *Why were you trying to catch the newspaper delivery boy* or *Why were you wearing a blue and green apron at 3:30 this morning?*

Try a few other examples until the students are familiar with this grammar structure.

Pair students and give Page A to one and Page B to the other. Explain that Worksheets A and B are different from each other therefore listening is important.

Note: Stress the importance of thinking up believable reasons and explanations. Students should **not be able to deny the actions** or use other excuses such as *It wasn't me! I was drunk! It was a dream!* etc.

Getting Started: Tell the students that they have to explain **why** they were doing the unusual things printed on their worksheets.

Partners write notes in the boxes below the questions. (**Or** they could use another sheet of paper to write the answers in complete sentences.)

The purpose is to offer a **believable** reason for the odd behavior. After listening to the reason, the partner may continue to ask **follow-up questions** before finally rating the believability of the answer from 1-10 and circles this number on the worksheet. After all of the reasons have been given, students add up the believability quotient of their partner. The one with the highest score is the winner.

At times, the teacher may assist the pairs in determining the believability of someone's reasons or the teacher may coax students into explanations that may be more credible.

Variation 1: Try this as a whole-class activity; divide the students into teams, offer one point to each team with a believable reason and zero points for teams offering unbelievable reasons.

Have the students rate the believability of each team's reasons.

Variation 2: Do this as a double pair-work, i.e., two students work from Worksheet A while two others work from Worksheet B. This helps lower ability students become more creative and communicative.

Variation 3: When students have finished, pair two Worksheet A students and two Worksheet B students. They ask each other questions about their former partner, i.e., **Why was *Bill* digging a hole in *his* neighbor's garden?** Or **Why was *Terry* putting *parsley* in *her* pocket at the store?**

Building Fluency: It's not important to finish the entire worksheet, in fact, if students are having a fun discussion (enjoying their English conversation), encourage them to continue as long as they like on any situation.

Writing Practice: Have students pick any one (or several) of the situations and write a fictitious short story about the strange experience.

Similar Lessons:

Why Weren't you...?

(Lesson Collection Set 3 – Lesson 1b)

Why Did you...?

(Lesson Collection Set 3 – Lesson 1c)

Why Didn't you...?

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Contributed by Kurt Scheibner

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