

## Materials reviews

*Edited by Sandee Thompson*

Variety is the spice of life and this issue of *Voices* certainly has plenty of both! Katharina Gale has provided us with information regarding an older grammar games book by Garnet that I had never seen before and Vicki Hayden reviewed a text for learners in need of technical English put out by the same publishers. Ben Shearon used some Cambridge readers with his class, to some good effect, and Mark Graff reviewed a conversation board game created for ESL learners called *Truth or Dare*. That is what I call variety! As always, we hope you enjoy our selection.



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### Truth or Dare for English Language Learners

Speekeezy Publications, 2010  
ISBN: 978 0 9688018 1 9  
<http://www.speekeezy.ca/hikashop/category/12-truth-or-dare-for-english-language-learners.html>

A common complaint is that games don't provide enough meaningful interaction or practice for advanced students who wish to improve their fluency. Wouldn't it be fantastic if a game had different levels to accommodate beginner to advanced students?

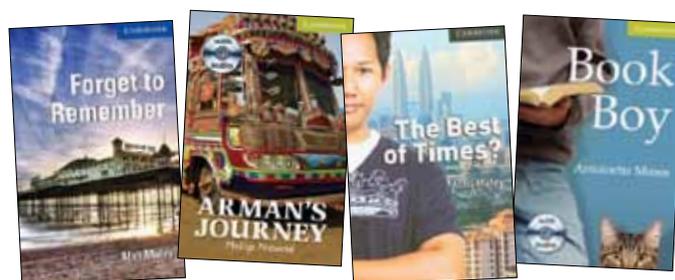
*Truth or Dare for English Language Learners* is that game! Nominated for an ELTon award this year, the play and objective of the game is familiar to all: a group of two to six students sit in a circle at a table. A spinner selects the student who picks up a 'Truth' card, reads it, and puts it face up to read. The card has a single word, like 'actress', and the student formulates a question using the word, while other students help him/her by contributing their own questions. While one player is answering, all others are encouraged to ask more questions and dig deeper to get at the truth. The player also has the option of not answering by choosing a 'Dare' card, which may direct him/her to do a funny stunt. There is no right or wrong answer, and there is no winner. Lovely! Maintaining conversation is the objective. In addition, there is a mini-whiteboard on the spinner to list language goals for the group. The mini-whiteboard is meant to remind students to work the target into each turn.

When I tested the game on five Japanese students, I had a group of mixed levels ranging from beginner to advanced, so some students required translation to fully grasp the rules and speed up game play. They all contributed a question once the card was selected and they had the option of selecting the question. In order to play the game successfully, I would recommend that players have an equivalent English ability to provide a level playing field. This ensures everyone is able to participate to their full capacity.

There are three sets of 'Truth' cards that correspond to English levels: green is for beginners, yellow is for intermediate, and blue represents advanced. These cards can be used to ensure the right level is used for the appropriate players. I would also suggest students ask follow-up questions from the same student until he/she selects a 'Dare' card. This would make it more interesting and closer in spirit to the original game.

**Mark Graff**

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### Forget to Remember

Alan Maley  
Cambridge University Press,  
2011  
ISBN 9780521184922

### Arman's Journey

Philip Prowse  
Cambridge University Press,  
2011  
ISBN 9780521184960

### The Best of Times

Alan Maley  
Cambridge University Press,  
2009  
ISBN 9780521735469

### Book Boy

Antoinette Moses  
Cambridge University Press,  
2010  
ISBN 9780521156776

Cambridge Readers feature original fiction, which is a welcome break from the barrage of rewrites of classic books and film/TV series adaptations that dominate the graded reader shelves. Recently they have been veering even further from the norm, introducing stories set in locations all around the world and whose characters face issues like drug use, homelessness, prostitution, war, human trafficking, and family conflict. I was already a fan of the series and was delighted to have the chance to read the following and try them out with my students.

The four titles listed above are:

- *Forget to Remember*: siblings struggle to deal with their mother's senility and each other.
- *Arman's Journey*: a boy travels to England illegally to escape from violence.
- *The Best of Times*: a Malaysian teenager deals with his parents' divorce, love, drugs, and growing up.
- *Book Boy*: a young orphan meets a homeless girl and tries to save her from her street life.

Other titles in the series include:

- *Within High Fences*: a woman working as a guard in an asylum falls in love with one of her charges.
- *Man Hunt*: a serial killer in the UK, partially told from his perspective.
- *Dragon's Eggs*: land mines and government negligence threaten an African village.