

# Your Time Is Up!

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## Overview

Three children try to order pizza – but their efforts are thwarted by an automated answering service. This humorous play explores the increasing presence of machines in our lives and how frustrating this can be for customers. In the end, the characters turn the tables on the machine!

The author's choice of the play text-form to convey his ideas – and, most importantly, to persuade readers – is the focus of this lesson. This text also provides opportunities for students (including ESOL students, who may be less confident with spoken English) to practise speaking and listening within a supportive, repetitive, and humorous framework.

## Suggested teaching purposes

- To support the students in developing the comprehension strategies of analysing and synthesising, **identifying the author's purpose and point of view**, and evaluating.
- To engage the students in reading and performing a text that explores ideas about automation in a humorous way.

## Suggested learning goal

I am learning to explore the author's choice of text form to convey his message and meet his purpose(s).

## Success criteria

I will be successful when I have:

- followed the characters' experiences in the play
- used these experiences to identify the author's message and purpose(s)
- discussed why the author chose a play text-form to convey his message
- shared what I think of that choice.

## Features of the text

*What features of this text support the teaching purposes?*

- The possible meanings of the title (relating to how the machine hangs up on the children and how they later hang up on it) and how these meanings relate to the author's message and purpose(s)
- The theme of automation (machines taking over from people in business)
- The imperative language ("Please follow", "Press 1") and conditional sentence structures ("If ..., press 1", "To order ..., press 2") used by the answering service
- The negative portrayal of automation (in the illustrations and text) and the related purpose of the author – to persuade
- The children's increasing frustration as the play progresses and the solution they choose as a result
- The theme of how advertising can seduce people to act in certain ways
- The language of advertising, for example, "Gobble 'n' Go", "two-for-one",

“super-size”, “Dial a Donut”

- The contrast between the children’s colloquial language and the language of the machine.

## **Readability**

Noun frequency level: 11–13 years for guided reading

*What prior knowledge or experience might help my students to read this text?*

- Their experiences of automated answering services and fast-food advertising
- Their familiarity with the conventions of plays.

*What text features might challenge my students and require a prompt or a brief explanation?*

- Particular words and concepts, including “Gobble ‘n’ Go”, “specialists”, “automated service”, “priority queue”, “hash”, “cabbage brain”, “capsicum”, “hungry customer demands”
- ESOL students may need support with some colloquial language (“Takes one to know one”, “two-for-one”, “leftovers”, “side order”) including phrasal verbs where the meaning of the phrase is different from the meanings of the individual words, for example, “going on”, “punches in”, “Hang on”, “hanging up”, “cut off”, “hold on”.

## **Preparation for reading**

Ask the students to do one of the following tasks the day before reading the text.

Have the students ring (from home) a place likely to have an automated answering service – for example, a cinema – and try to find out specific information, such as what time a particular movie is on. “How long did it take? How many buttons did you have to press?” If a student doesn’t have the phone, have them talk to someone about their experiences of automated answering services. If you have access to a phone, you could have the phone on speaker and do this with the group.

Have the students look out for and record examples of the language used in advertising, for example, on billboards, in newspapers, or on television.

## **A framework for the lesson**

*How will I help my students to achieve the learning goal?*

### **Before reading**

- Share findings from the pre-reading task. Discuss how positive the phoning experience was and anything that might have made it easier. Review the advertising language and briefly discuss its purpose and effectiveness. (Making connections)
- Discuss the title and ask the students to predict what it might mean. “Do the illustrations give you any clues?” (Forming and testing hypotheses)
- Share the learning goal and success criteria with the students.

### **During reading**

*Refer to Effective Literacy Practice in Years 5 to 8, pages 80–93, for information about deliberate acts of teaching.*

- If appropriate, let the students read the whole text, supporting them only as necessary. In this way, they can appreciate the flow and humour of the text. Ask them to consider the characters’ experiences as they read. (Analysing and synthesising)

- Discuss the experiences of the characters. “How would you describe their experiences? What in the text suggests this?” Have the students reread the text and summarise the characters’ experiences on a chart (do the first one together as a group). Help to draw out the following aspects and relate them to the author’s purpose. (Analysing and synthesising; inferring; identifying the author’s purpose and point of view.)

Page	The children’s experience/feelings	Evidence
2	Jude is frustrated even before getting on the phone.	“Brothers!”
3	Jude is shocked at being answered by a machine. Toby is keen to hear the specials.	“What’s going on? They never used to be!” “Too right.”
5	Jude feels more and more frustrated.	“This is going to take forever!” “I don’t believe this! I thought we’d finished!” “I’m sick of this.”
6	Jude is very frustrated – and then shocked.	“Hurry up!” “I can’t believe this is happening. It’s hung up on me.”
7	Toby understands Jude’s frustration. The kids give up and get something else to eat.	“ <b>Twenty minutes!</b> ” “I’ll go and find a tin of baked beans.”

### After reading

- Review the students’ charts. Then focus on the final sentence on page 2. “Did the children get exactly what they wanted? What does that say about the automated answering service?” Also notice and discuss the increasing range of options that the machine offers them. “Do the children really need these options? Do the options help them or not?” “How could you make this answering service work for you?” (for example, by previewing to find out the options or making a list before calling). (Analysing and synthesising; evaluating ideas and information)
- In regard to the points directly above, discuss ideas about the main message of the play and, related to this, why the author might have written it. Be sure to include a focus on the illustrations – how the machines are depicted and how the characters look and act. (You could even add a column to the table above.) Draw out the author’s purpose of persuasion. (Identifying the main idea; identifying the author’s purpose and point of view)
- Revisit the students’ ideas about the meaning of the title. Draw attention to the following sentence on page 6: “Your time is up. Goodbye, and thank you

for calling Gobble 'n' Go." Discuss why the author doesn't stop the play here. "What does the following text add? Whose time is up in the end?" Draw out how the children hang up on the machine. "What message does this give you?" (Analysing and synthesising; identifying the author's purpose and point of view; identifying the main idea)

- Discuss why the author chose a play to convey his ideas. "Would you expect a play to be persuasive? Why or why not?" "What does this text form allow or add?" Draw out the importance of the dialogue in conveying the characters' frustration – and in contrasting the voice of the machine with that of real people. Also discuss how a play can feel more light-hearted than other text forms. (Identifying the author's purpose and point of view; analysing and synthesising)
- "How effective was this text form for you?" Brainstorm other ways that the author could have presented his message, for example, in an article, lecture, or poem. "What might some pluses or minuses of these text forms be?" (Evaluating ideas and information; making connections)
- Review the learning goal and success criteria and reflect with the students on how well the learning goal has been achieved. For example, "What do you think the message is in the play?" "Is the play form an effective way of conveying this? Why or why not?"

### **Links to further learning**

*What follow-up tasks will help my students to consolidate their new learning?*

The students could:

- work in pairs to devise a humorous automated message with various paths for ordering another type of product. For example, "Press 1 if your child is sick. Press 2 if ..." and "Press 1 if your child has the measles. Press 2 if they have a cold ..." Have the students take on the roles of the caller and answering service and then combine with another pair to repeat the exercise but with different choices. Encourage the use of polite, "robotic" voices (Analysing and synthesising; making connections)
- rewrite the play (or part of it) as an article or a narrative to explore how effective another text form might be (Analysing and synthesising; making connections)
- compare the text with "The GHB", SJ 3.2.06, in terms of how both texts use text forms that are less standard for persuading readers (Analysing and synthesising; making connections)
- compare the text with "Drive-through", SJ 2.3.07, which uses a narrative form to convey similar ideas. (Analysing and synthesising; making connections)