

## TEACHER'S CORNER – FEBRUARY 2015

### REGRETS AND WISHES OF THE RICH, FAMOUS, OR FICTIONAL

---

In this activity, students will practice or review using conditionals to express wishes and regrets about the past. This conditional form used in this situation is often called the past unreal conditional or the third conditional.

**Level:** Upper intermediate and above

**Language skill focus:** Writing, grammar (primary focus); speaking, listening (secondary focus)

**Goal:** Students will use the written and spoken unreal past conditionals to describe wishes or regrets of famous/well-known people, historical figures, or fictional characters. Other students will guess the person or character based on the wishes or regrets that are described.

**Materials:**

- Teacher: whiteboard, chalkboard, or large pieces of paper posted on the wall; markers or chalk; a clock or timing device
- Students: pencils or pens, blank writing paper

**Preparation**

- Develop 1-2 example characters and a list of 3-4 wishes or regrets that could identify them to use in the modeling/explanation stage of the activity (see Step 3 below).

**Procedures**

1. Write the word “regret” on the board and elicit the meaning from the class using prompting questions if needed.
2. Ask students to give a few examples of regrets, such as “I never met my grandmother.” or “I didn’t do my homework last week.” Ask students why these situations are regrets, that is, why do they wish the past were different? Based on their answers, write unreal past conditional sentences on the board such as:

- *If I had met my grandmother, she would have told me stories about my father.*
- *If I had done my homework last week, I would have done better on the exam.*

If desired, elicit the underlying grammatical form for these unreal past conditionals:

*If* + past perfect tense..., *would have* + past participle....

3. Next, write one set of example descriptive conditional regret or wish sentences you developed before the lesson on the board. Ask students to guess the target character or person. For additional modeling, read your second set of example conditional regret or wish sentences aloud and allow students to guess the target. For example:

- If I hadn't been so round, life would have been much easier for me.
- If I had never sat on that wall, I would have avoided a disaster.
- If the kings' men had been smarter, I would still be in one piece.

**Answer:** Humpty Dumpty, a nursery rhyme character

- If I hadn't lived during wartime, my job would have been much less challenging.
- If southern U.S. states hadn't supported slavery, my country would probably have remained unified.
- If I hadn't attended a play at Ford's Theater, I would have been able to share more time with my family.

**Answer:** Abraham Lincoln, American president during the Civil War

4. Depending on your class size, put students in groups of 4-8 students, and then have the group members divide into pairs.
5. Ask the pairs to work together to choose a target person or character. Remind students that they can choose any famous real person or fictional character, past or present.
6. Tell pairs they will have 10 minutes to develop a written list of 3-4 wishes or regrets the target person or character might have about the past. Adjust the amount of time dedicated to this portion of the activity according to your students' level.
7. After the designated time has elapsed, ask pairs to rejoin their group mates. Each pair will read their "wish or regret" clues aloud, and the other pairs will try to guess the target character or person.
8. When the activity is over, groups can share their funniest, most unique, or most difficult set of clues with the whole class.