

## EPISODE 18: IN A FOREST

C: Okay? One of the things when I was doing teaching practice

A: in Barcelona, or where?

C: actually, it was in France, I was in France in a lycée, and some kind of colleagues at the time, they gave a few little games to play to get people talking.

A: Okay.

C: And I still use them to this day because I found them actually quite enjoyable. And to get people's... the content of the answers as much as the language that you could get from people.

A: it's important to get to know students and to get students to get to know each other, I think, during the course of a year is really important.

C: Here's a super simple one. Okay? And it's very simple. It's just...okay, what's your favourite animal?

A: Are you asking me?

C: Yeah.

A: I'm really into those red pandas these days. Those cute little ones who look like raccoons.

C: Okay. And then you ask the person. Okay, so red panda, and why? Give me, say, three five adjectives.

A: Because they're cute and sweet, and they eat with their hands, and they seem to be vegetarian, according to their Instagram accounts. And I think it's actually the logo from Firefox.

C: Okay. Second favourite animal?

A: Rabbits.

C: Because...

A: they're delicious No, I'm just kidding. I'm a vegetarian. They're adorable. They're sweet, they're soft and fluffy and cuddly.

C: Third favourite animal?



A: Otters.

C: Okay.

A: Because they're playful. They like to throw stuff up in the air. They're sweet. They hold hands while they're floating on their backs in the water.

C: So, this is the point where I start laughing, because I know where this is going. The whole idea is that it's meant to be some sort of little psychological game

A: to see how many animals we'll name before we get annoyed?

C: Exactly. But the idea here is that the first animal you choose is what you would aspire to be. Like how you would like to be.

A: I'd like to be a red panda.

C: And then what's great then is like because this is what you aspire to be: cute, okay?

A: adorable, Instagram sensation.

C: The second animal is how others see you.

A: What was my second one? A rabbit. Okay. Vegetarian, pooping little chocolate sized balls.

C: Okay. Well, that's how people see you. And the third animal then is more closer to the reality of who you really are.

A: An otter.

C: Yeah.

A: Okay. There's some dark stuff about otters that is not appropriate maybe to mention on this podcast, but if you're listening, google otters and baby seals and see what they do to them.

C: Yes, but again, it's quite fun. It's very simple. And these things so I got this idea, again, of these little psychological games, and I think people, whether they believe in any of this or not...

A: do they sign release forms before you do these psychological games on them? It seems like it's borderline

C: Of course, yeah, yeah, that was great. Then, there was one I did for years, and it ended up in one of the more famous editorial publishing.

A: Really?



C: Yeah. I was quite shocked when I saw it there because I've been doing it for years.

A: But because you told them about it?

C: I think they stole my idea.

A: That's what I was going to say.

C: No, but it was this thing of being in a forest. So, this is a nice activity, so I'll talk you through it. And in a group, it's kind of kind of nice because you get people... you can even say, "Close your eyes, and imagine you're in the forest"

A: My eyes are closed, for the listeners out there.

C: I can verify that. And they'll explain the forest. And the idea here is that you explain what's? The trees? Tall, small?

A: Am I supposed to do this?

C: You can talk.

A: Okay. Well, it smells like what's it called? a moss that grows on the sides of the trees. There are large trees. It's dark, but sunlight still filters through from above. There's rabbits and otters and red pandas all playing together.

C: Time of day or season?

A: Maybe afternoon, indiscriminate season, because it seems like it's California, northern California, where the weather is kind of similar most of the year.

C: and temperature?

A: cool, but not cold.

C: And again, the atmosphere is it intimidating? Is it peaceful?

A: No, it's peaceful. Even though I don't like Lord of the Rings at all, it's very Lord of the Ringsish. So, I guess maybe I'm in New Zealand perhaps, even though I've never been there.

C: Right. Again, I would try to elicit as many details as possible. Quite fun again, to get some of the vocabulary, like different words...

A: green, brown, light, dark, cold, hot...

C: Well, you get that cool, cold, warm, mild, hot, roasting, boiling. Yeah, got this.



A: Talking about potatoes, again?

C: there's three parts to this. The first part is where you describe the forest, etcetera. At this point, they can work in groups and explain to each other group feedback, and then I reveal to them that, okay, well, the forest you're describing is the society that you live in, and it reflects a little bit how you feel about that society.

A: Okay.

C: I've done this for many years, and you start to see certain things. One is that it can either be very reflective of the actual surroundings at that time of year.

A: okay.

C: As in, if it's really hot in the summer and you're doing this in July, people say, forest? oh, yeah, it's rough. I'm sweating. It's really hot.

A: And wouldn't they maybe go for a cool forest because that's what they were hoping for?

C: It doesn't work like that. It's kind of subconsciously describing where you live. There's also a tendency that people who live in cities will have more trees, tall trees, less light, etcetera. People come from villages or something. There'll be more sparse kind of elements.

A: Yeah.

C: You do start to see that and it's crazy there when you actually say to somebody, okay, so you've just described the forest in this way. Do you happen to live in a village? They freak out and go: "Yeah! How did you know?"

A: Do live in a forest...?

C: What also is interesting here is that how the forest... if you describe something that's quite pleasant, which most people do, they say you know...

A: Which is the word forest, I think, should elicit.

C: Exactly. So, should be something quite positive. But if you get somebody who describes you know it's cold and dark and there's lots of noises that are intimidating stuff, and that can be a little sign of, hey, maybe somebody is really unhappy with, you know, their life where they live or something

A: need to talk to someone professional.

C: Yeah, yeah. So



A: interesting!

C: It's never really happened in, I think, about 20 years using this activity, but I'm always a little bit scared.

A: The trees are spattered with blood. "Spattered" great for vocabulary word.

C: Okay, good. Which leads me to part two.

A: Oh God...

C: Now, at this point, I say, okay, you start walking in the forest. You take a little walk, and you come across... you run into an animal, okay? Now, in part one, you may have described there were certain animals or noises, but at this point, it's very important that you only choose one animal that when you're walking, you come kind of face to face, head on with this animal. Which animal is it, and what happens? What's the interaction? What's the feeling?

A: It's my favourite red panda. Okay. He wants apples because that's all they eat in their Instagram videos.

C: What do you think students say at this point? What kind of answers would you imagine

A: in terms of the animal or the interaction?

C: Both.

A: The animal? I don't know. A bear, a dog? Squirrels.

C: Squirrels.

A: But there's no way they pronounce it the way you just squirrels.

C: Squirrels. Squirrels.

A: For my money, I think it's one of the most difficult words to pronounce in English for them. World and squirrel. Squirrel. Yeah. Okay. Squirrels. That makes sense. But yeah, I guess squirrels live in a forest. Okay.

C: At the same time, there's no reason for them. I kind of say, this is your forest. It can be

A: They'd say a unicorn.

C: Some people say snake. Okay. A lot of people ask wild boar.

A: Sure, the Catalan.



C: this is where you're going now. Okay. And then you talk about what's the interaction between you and the animal, what happens here? I insist a lot is like, how do you feel? Are you scared? Or do you actually touch the animal? Do you lift the animal? Do you cuddle the animal? Do you run away and elicit again, as much....

A: But how do you do this with the class? You're saying all these questions to individual students of the group, or...

C: No, I've got them in the group and then they've got to discuss. So, I kind of explain

A: okay, this is what I want you to discuss.

C: I'll give you an example and then get the feedback.

A: Okay.

C: And at this point, again, they really are looking at me going like, oh God, what is this going to mean? Am I going to make a fool of myself? But I quite enjoy this one because the animal represents, or supposed to represent how you view society and then your interaction with people in society.

A: Okay. So, if you're afraid of the animal, you're a person who is uncomfortable.

C: The first thing I say, the animal you chose, is it a scary animal? Is it a dangerous animal? Or is it quite safe? I love when people say then "would you say a bear is a scary animal?" Have you ever come face to face with the bear?

A: Well, yes, but there's a big difference between a realistic bear and the way that we represent bears in our minds.

C: Could a bear kill you?

A: I mean, anything could kill you.

C: A rabbit!

A: A Rabbit could kill you. Oh my God. Yes. Blood thirsty, rabbit, rabbits.

C: it will go for you. You get the idea, and you start to see there is some sort of maybe personality trait here. People are a little bit interesting. Yeah. Okay. A lot of people here, and probably the most common answer is something that's not super cuddly, safe animal. Usually not a pet, like a dog or a cat, but something like a rabbit, maybe, or a fox or something like that.

A: Sure, that makes sense.



C: Which you would find in a forest. Right. And that the interaction normally is that nothing much happens. You look at it, it looks at you, but there's no fighting... And that would be probably the way most adults behave. So, like this kind of distance when you first meet someone.

A: Sure. Especially in Catalonia.

C: The stereotypes?

A: Well, no. And I say Catalonia, we should say Barcelona. In a large city, you just don't go say hi to random people, because that's weird.

C: But again, it would I kind of say, like, if it is something like an animal that you pick up, like maybe some people say a tortoise. I pick it up.

A: I'm sorry, say a what?

C: Tortoise.

A: Is that how you say that word?

C: That's how I say it.

A: A tortoise. Tortoise. I thought you were doing the Spanish pronunciation. Interesting. Okay.

C: But if you are very comfortable with it, maybe you're too naive, maybe you're too innocent and you're too trusting.

A: Or maybe you come from a small town where you know and trust everybody also. Right?

C: It could reflect that. Okay, and the final part and this is my favourite part as well. Right, you keep on walking, and now you come across a river. And here, very simply I do not need your answers. I'm just going to explain what it is, and then I'll reveal what it means. Come across a river.

A: Okay.

C: And there's five things I want people to describe about the river. Number one, is the river straight or winding? Straight or winding. Number two, how deep is the water? Deep water or shallow water? Okay. Number three. How wide is the river? Okay, so very wide or or quite narrow as a river. Next, if there are any objects in the river here, I'm talking, like stones,

A: Dead bodies?

C: dead bodies, dead bears, dead animals. What's in the water? Pebbles, rocks, stones, branches of trees.



A: I'm familiar with all these words? Tortoises.

C: Tortoises. Okay. And then the final part is what about the flow of the water? I mean, how fast

A: is it Raging?

C: Raging water, calm still.

A: Okay.

C: which is great again for the vocabulary.

A: I feel like you're naming vocabulary to see that I understand all these words, and I do, except for Tortoise.

C: You've passed the test.

A: Well, done.

C: And then I reveal that the river apparently and this is to make it a bit fun, it's reflective of your love life and your romantic relationships. And apparently, apparently, if a river is quite straight, you tend to be more faithful in a relationship, and if the river is winding, then you might have many partners.

A: Interesting. Okay.

C: Interesting. how deep the water is, deeper, shallow... The deeper the water is, you're more committed in a relationship.

A: The relationship is deeper. Yeah.

C: And you get this talk about somebody who's shallow. They think of Me, me, me.

A: Right.

C: And this idea, the deeper the water, then you get involved, share a bank account, move in together quickly. There's the commitment to a relationship. How wide or how narrow is how affectionate you are in a relationship.

A: Okay

C: so, the wider the river actually seems to indicate, according to these studies, that you would be more affectionate, that you would be the type of person who sends a little message out of the blue and buys flowers from time to time unexpectedly, stuff like that.





A: Interesting.

C: And narrow. And again, if you put your body narrow, it's just that you're kind of just avoiding that hugging or any maybe caring with the other person.

A: Interesting.

C: The objects. Brilliant, this, I love this. I... is how conflictive you are.

A: Okay, so what is if I find dead bodies meaning?

C: that dead bodies would be the extreme.

A: Okay.

C: The idea here is meant to be that if the object is something that is not really a barrier in a way so pair balls and things like that.

A: Beaver dam.

C: Yeah. If the water can keep flowing, a description of that or very few contents means that you're the type of person you avoid conflict, you avoid arguing you don't like. And the stronger, harder the object, the more confrontational you are. So, again, if you have large rocks, it's like when you start a fight, you're like, hey, what did you say? What? Excuse me. Dead bodies would be an extreme that I've never encountered.

A: The Chicago Influence.

C: And then the final bet, the flow of the water is how passionate you are in the relationships.

A: Okay. Interesting.

C: Try it out.

## Vocabulary bank

**fluffy**= refers to something that is light, soft and often puffy in texture, such as a pillow or a kitten's fur.

**cuddly**= describes something that is cute and huggable, often referring to soft toys or pets that are comforting to hold.

**I'll talk you through it**= This means to provide instructions or guidance in a step-by-step manner to help someone understand and complete a task successfully.



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# UB talkin' to me?

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**moss=** is a type of small, soft, non-flowering plant that grows in damp and shady places, often covering rocks, trees, and soil.

**perhaps=** is an adverb used to express uncertainty or possibility, similar to "maybe" or "possibly."

**to elicit=** means to draw out or bring forth a reaction or response from someone, often through questioning or prompting.

**sparse=** describes something that is thinly scattered or distributed, often referring to objects or people in a given area.

**spattered=** means to have small droplets or spots of a liquid, such as paint or blood, scattered or sprayed across a surface.

**winding=** refers to something that follows a twisting or curving path, such as a road or a river.

**raging=** describes something that is intense, uncontrolled, or violent, often referring to emotions or a natural force like a storm or fire.

