

# The Catfish



a short story for English  
reading and speaking

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# Introduction

What is a catfish?

What is an online scam?

Can people easily be fooled by someone online?

How?

# The Catfish

**"This is Detective Sergeant Mike Alloy interviewing John Sayles in connection with the crime of deception, fraud, and theft," Mike stated firmly.**

He nodded to his colleague, Ella, and took a deep breath.

"So, John, let's start again. We have all the files of you taking money from a number of women, we have the bank statements, we have the screenshots of conversations between you and the victims online, we have the phone calls and messages."

Mike looked up at John, who remained impassive, his heavy-lidded eyes revealing nothing. Beside him, his lawyer, avoiding eye contact with everyone.

"We have everything, John. We have enough evidence to put you away for a long time. So what do you think? Shall we just come clean? And then we can all go home."

***John Sayles finally looked up, his expression still devoid of emotion.***

"I haven't done nothing wrong, detective," he said, a hint of contempt in his voice. The way he pronounced the word detective. Like it was a worthless thing. Something he had found on the sole of his shoe.

Mike shook his head, keeping his frustration in check.

"That's clearly not true, John. Look at all the evidence. There's

just so much of it. You think this is going to stand up in court? The jury will take one look at that, and it's going to be goodnight and see you later. The judge will put you away for years."

Mike leaned back in his chair. He blinked the tiredness from his eyes. In his peripheral vision, he could see the clock. Just after midnight. They had exactly six hours to get a confession from this man, or they would have to let him go.

*We need a confession, said the chief. No confession, no trial.*

The expression on John's face showed no remorse, only a stubborn belief that he was being wrongfully accused.

When Mike had gathered all the evidence together, he and his team could not believe what they were dealing with. This man had tricked over thirty women into handing money over to him, living a lavish lifestyle with their contributions.

John Sayles lived in a luxury apartment. He said it was his, but he had no documents to prove this. And he drove a high-end Mercedes-Benz. He could not produce any papers to show the car belonged to him either.

"Let's start with the bank statements," said Mike, picking up one at the top of the file on the desk. "This one here. This is one of eighteen different bank accounts that we have discovered in your name so far—"

"Private information which my lawyer is investigating right now," John interrupted. His lawyer shifted in his seat, shuffled through some papers in front of him.

"—and payments made into these accounts every three or four

days," continued Mike, ignoring the interruption. "This first page here, £750 on June 16th, £400 on the 18th, another £550 on the 19th."

***Mike paused and let out a short laugh.***

"How do you explain it? How do you justify all these incredible amounts of money being paid to you by all these women?"

John Sayles took a slow breath, exhaled, and rolled his eyes. The irritation in Mike's chest grew stronger.

"I think—***detective***—you will find that all these payments, as you put it, are quite legitimate and legal. They are gifts given to me for my photographic services or for money given to me for hotel or airfares. These women were, after all, merely friends or business associates. We were not lovers."

The idea of this man being anyone's lover was beyond Mike. It wasn't just his appearance, but his overall demeanour that made it hard to believe.

***He didn't seem to possess one redeeming feature at all.***

"So these women just handed this money over to you because they liked you?" Mike asked him.

John Sayles shook his head.

"You will have to ask them. I have no idea why they insisted on giving me money. They chose to."

Mike nodded.

"Well, we would ask them, but that's the thing. One of them is

in the hospital, unable to receive visitors. Another refuses to talk to us at all. A third one—she's on some kind of medication..."

As Mike turned the pages of the bank statements, he realized that without concrete evidence or a confession, their case was slipping away.

"People like me, detective," John Sayles said calmly. "I have many friends. Many of them are women. I can't help it if they choose to send me gifts. That is not my fault."

Mike sighed, feeling the weight of frustration and helplessness. The women's children, all grown, had come forward. Other people had accused John Sayles of wrongdoing. But none of the women themselves.

Just then, there was a knock at the door. Mike turned as a uniformed police officer poked his head round the door. "Sorry, Mike. Something's just come in. You're going to want to see this."

Mike paused the recording of the interview and rushed out the room. Ella followed quickly behind.

As soon as they left, John Sayles berated his lawyer for things he should have said, should not have said.

"This better be good," Mike said to the cop.

The young officer gave Mike a tight smile. "Trust me, it is."

By the front desk of the station stood an old woman. Next to her a large man in a suit, holding a briefcase under one arm.

The officer waved his hand, and Mike stepped forward.

"Hello, I'm —"

The woman held up a hand.

"I know who you are," she said. "I know what you are doing. I just want to end all of this right now. Today, if we can."

Mike shook his head. "I'm sorry, ma'am, I don't understand —"

The woman nudged the man next to her and he opened the briefcase.

"I have enough evidence here to put that man you have back there behind bars for life," she said. "John Sayles has been scamming, cheating and extorting money from me for years. It's all here."

Now the woman had Mike's full attention.

"Sorry," he said. "Who are you? Do you know this man?"

The woman raised her eyebrows slightly and let out a sigh.

***"Yes, I know him. I gave birth to him."***

## Reading Comprehension Questions

Who is Detective Sergeant Mike Alloy, and what is he doing in the story?

What are the crimes that John Sayles is accused of in the story?

How does John Sayles react when confronted with the evidence against him?

Why does Mike need to get a confession from John Sayles within six hours?

Describe the lifestyle John Sayles appears to be living based on the evidence.

What is the significance of John Sayles not having documents for his luxury apartment and high-end car?

According to John Sayles, why did these women give him money?

What challenges does Mike face in trying to gather evidence against John Sayles?

Who are the potential witnesses or accusers mentioned in the story, and what is their status?

What happens when a uniformed police officer interrupts

Mike's interview with John Sayles?

Who is the old woman mentioned in the story, and why is she at the police station?

What evidence does the old woman claim to have against John Sayles?

How does Mike react to the old woman's revelation that she is John Sayles's mother?

What might be the implications of John Sayles's mother providing evidence against him?

Do you think John Sayles is guilty or innocent based on the information in the story?

How would you describe John Sayles's attitude and demeanour throughout the interview?

Why do you think the women involved in this case are reluctant to cooperate with the police?

What do you think will happen next in the story after the old woman's arrival at the police station?

How does the old woman's appearance change the dynamics of the case against John Sayles?

If you were in Detective Mike Alloy's position, what would you do next in this investigation?

## True or False?

Take a look at the statements below.

Say if they are true or false.

***You can check your answers at the end of the lesson plan!***

John Sayles is a detective.

Detective Mike Alloy has a lot of evidence against John Sayles.

John Sayles confessed to his crimes during the interview.

John Sayles received money from women for his photographic services.

The women willingly gave John Sayles money as gifts.

Mike believed that John Sayles could be someone's lover.

Most of the women involved in the case refused to cooperate with the police.

John Sayles had concrete evidence to prove his innocence.

The interview was interrupted by a knock on the door.

Mike and Ella left the room when they heard the knock.

John Sayles was pleased with how his lawyer handled the interview.

The old woman at the police station had evidence against John Sayles.

The woman at the police station claimed to be John Sayles' mother.

Mike knew the woman at the police station before she introduced herself.

The woman at the police station wanted to see John Sayles behind bars for life.

# Essential Vocabulary

evidence	visitors	extorting
confession	medication	birth
trial	weight	Detective Sergeant
lawyer	frustration	colleague
bank statements	helplessness	impassive
phone calls	police officer	contempt
messages	station	peripheral vision
emotions	old woman	lavish lifestyle
apartment	large man	high-end Mercedes-Benz
luxury	suit	redeeming feature
car	briefcase	hospital
legitimate	scamming	concrete evidence
friends	cheating	grown
uniformed	tight smile	

## Exercise

Write down all the words and phrases in your vocabulary notebook. Look in your dictionary and find the meaning of each word. Write the definition next to each word.

Then make up your own sentences using each word or phrase.

For example:

**Evidence:** *Information or facts that support a belief, claim, or statement, often used to prove or demonstrate something.*

**Visitors:** *People who come to a place, such as a home, city, or website, for a visit or to spend time there.*

Then write a sentence of your own that uses the new word or phrase correctly.

***The fingerprints on the glass were crucial evidence in solving the crime.***

***The national park attracts visitors from all over the world with its stunning natural beauty.***

Do this with all the vocabulary and, over time, this will help improve all your English skills — reading, writing, speaking and listening.

# Guess the Right Synonym

Synonyms are words of similar meaning.

Look at the table below and choose the right synonym for each word.

***Check your answers at the end of the lesson plan!***

Lawyer	Feeling
Confession	Suspect
Accused	Childbearing
Fraud	Interrogation
Theft	Authentic
Interview	Blame
Emotion	Cheating
Lavish	Attorney
Genuine	Deceit
Medication	Coercion
Accuse	Opulent
Scamming	Admission
Extorting	Robbery
Birth	Prescription

# Guess the Right Antonym

Antonyms are words of similar meaning.

Look at the table below and choose the right antonym for each word.

***Check your answers at the end of the lesson plan!***

Confession	Disavowal
Money	Honesty
Luxury	Empowerment
Statement	Austerity
Friends	Exonerated
Frustration	Donating
Helplessness	Denial
Children	Speculation
Accused	Parents
Evidence	Enemies
Scamming	Poverty
Extorting	Gratification

## Fill In The Gaps

Look at the table of words below.

Now use each of the words in the sentences below. Use the right word for each sentence.

***Check your answers at the end of the lesson plan!***

fraud	business associates	justify
helplessness	evidence	lavish
accusations	deception	theft
extorting	luxury	frustration
medication	confession	legitimate

Her elaborate \_\_\_\_\_ involved creating a fake identity to gain access to confidential information.

The company uncovered a massive \_\_\_\_\_ scheme that cost them millions of dollars in losses.

To prevent bicycle \_\_\_\_\_, it's essential to invest in a good lock and secure your bike properly when not in use.

The detective collected crucial \_\_\_\_\_ from the crime scene, including fingerprints and DNA samples.

Faced with overwhelming \_\_\_\_\_, the suspect finally made

a tearful confession to the crime.

The heated argument between the two neighbours led to mutual \_\_\_\_\_ of noise disturbance.

The document was deemed \_\_\_\_\_ after thorough verification of its authenticity.

The celebrity's \_\_\_\_\_ lifestyle was evident in their extravagant parties and luxurious vacations.

Staying in a five-star hotel with a private beach was the ultimate \_\_\_\_\_ vacation experience.

She tried to \_\_\_\_\_ her actions by explaining the dire circumstances that led to her decision.

He regularly met with his \_\_\_\_\_ to discuss new investment opportunities.

The doctor prescribed a daily \_\_\_\_\_ to manage the patient's chronic condition.

After hours of trying to solve the complex puzzle, he slammed his hands down in \_\_\_\_\_.

Watching the disaster unfold before her, she felt a sense of \_\_\_\_\_ as she couldn't do anything to prevent it.

The criminal was arrested for \_\_\_\_\_ money from local businesses by threatening to reveal damaging information.

# Words and Meanings

Look at the table of words below.

Now choose the right meaning in the sentences below the table.

***You can check all your answers at the end of the lesson plan!***

Lavish	Redeeming	Impassive
Demeanour	Theft	Confession
Extorting	Frustration	Extortion
Contempt	Scamming	Briefcase

The act of stealing or taking someone else's property without permission.

Showing no emotion or feeling; calm and composed.

The feeling of disdain or scorn towards something or someone.

The feeling of being upset or annoyed due to the inability to achieve a goal.

Extravagant or luxurious in an excessive and often wasteful way.

A formal admission of wrongdoing or guilt.

A person's outward behaviour or conduct.

Serving to offset or compensate for a negative quality or aspect.

Engaging in fraudulent schemes or activities to deceive and defraud others.

Obtaining something, typically money, through force or threats.

A small, flat, rectangular case used to carry documents, papers, or other items.

The act of obtaining something, especially money, through force or threats.

## Discussion Questions

What crimes is John Sayles accused of in the story, and what evidence does Detective Mike Alloy have against him?

How would you describe John Sayles' attitude during the interview with Detective Mike Alloy?

Why does Detective Mike Alloy need to obtain a confession from John Sayles within a limited time frame?

Do you think John Sayles is guilty based on the evidence presented in the story? Why or why not?

What do you think about John Sayles' explanation for the money in his bank accounts? Do you find it convincing?

How would you characterise the relationship between John Sayles and the women who gave him money in the story?

What does the appearance of the old woman with evidence against John Sayles reveal about his character?

What is the significance of the woman's statement, "I gave birth to him," in the story?

If you were Detective Mike Alloy, how would you react to the new evidence presented by the woman? What steps would you take next in the investigation?

How does the presence of the woman and the evidence in the briefcase change the dynamics of the story?

Do you think the woman's actions are justified in seeking justice against her own son? Why or why not?

What challenges do you think Detective Mike Alloy and his team will face in building a case against John Sayles with the new evidence?

How does the story explore themes of deception and betrayal?

What role does the lawyer play in John Sayles' defence, and how effective is he in the interview with Detective Mike Alloy?

How does the story highlight the vulnerability of the victims who fell for John Sayles' scams?

Do you think John Sayles' lack of remorse and his demeanour make him a convincing catfish? Why or why not?

What would be the implications for the victims if John Sayles is found guilty and convicted?

How might the story have turned out differently if the woman had not come forward with the evidence against her son?

What do you think the future holds for John Sayles after the new evidence is presented?

In your opinion, what lessons can be learned from this story about online scams and the importance of seeking justice?

What is catfishing, and how does it differ from other forms of online deception?

Have you ever encountered or personally experienced

catfishing or love scams? If so, what was the situation?

What motivates individuals to engage in catfishing or online cheating? Is it solely about financial gain, or are there other factors involved?

How can people protect themselves from falling victim to online love scams or catfishing schemes?

Are there red flags or warning signs that can help someone identify a potential catfish or scammer early on?

How can technology and online platforms improve their security measures to prevent catfishing and online cheating?

Are there ethical considerations when it comes to online impersonation and deception in the context of relationships?

What are the psychological and emotional impacts on victims of catfishing or love scams?

Should there be legal consequences for individuals who engage in catfishing or online cheating? Why or why not?

How do social media and dating apps contribute to the prevalence of catfishing and online cheating?

What role does the anonymity of the internet play in enabling catfishing and online deception?

Is there a difference in the experiences of men and women who

fall victim to online love scams or catfishing?

Have you heard of any successful efforts to track down and prosecute catfishers or online scammers?

How can victims of catfishing and online cheating find support and recover from their experiences?

Do you think the media portrays catfishing and love scams accurately, or does it sensationalize them?

What responsibility do online platforms have in preventing and addressing catfishing and love scams on their platforms?

How can individuals maintain a healthy level of scepticism without becoming overly paranoid when forming online relationships?

What advice would you give to someone who suspects they may be involved in an online relationship with a catfish or scammer?

# Is John Sayles a Narcissist?

**This is a class discussion exercise.**

In the story, John Sayles shows signs of being a narcissist.

A narcissist is someone who exhibits narcissism

Narcissism is a complex personality trait, and individuals can exhibit varying degrees of narcissistic traits.

***Look at all the statements below and say if you think John Sayles shows signs of this behaviour.***

They have an inflated sense of self-importance and believe they are unique or exceptional.

They constantly seek admiration and attention from others.

They lack empathy and have difficulty understanding or caring about the feelings of others.

They often exploit or take advantage of others for personal gain.

They have a strong sense of entitlement and expect special treatment.

They frequently exaggerate their achievements and talents.

They are preoccupied with fantasies of unlimited success, power, beauty, or love.

They have a fragile self-esteem that can be easily wounded by criticism or perceived slights.

They tend to be envious of others and believe others are envious of them.

They can be manipulative and use charm to manipulate people to their advantage.

They may struggle with maintaining healthy, long-term relationships due to their self-centredness.

They have difficulty accepting responsibility for their mistakes or shortcomings and often blame others.

# Writing

**This is a creative writing exercise.**

This is a writing exercise on the themes of catfishing and online cheating.

You can use all the vocabulary and ideas that you discussed before in this writing exercise.

Now you have the opportunity to express everything that you have learned so far in the lesson plan in your English writing skills.

## Instructions

### Warm-up Discussion

Begin by discussing online relationships and the concept of catfishing. Ask each other about these terms and if anyone has any personal experiences or stories to share. Encourage an open and respectful conversation.

### Vocabulary Building

Some keywords that might be relevant to your writing are:

- Catfishing
- Fake profile
- Online cheating
- Trust
- Deception

- Identity

But you should also use some of the other words that you have learned in the vocabulary exercises.

## **Creative Writing Task**

You have a choice in the writing task.

You can either be a victim of catfishing.

Or you can be the person who is catfishing someone else online.

Look at the writing prompts below to help you.

### **Option A (Victim)**

Write a diary entry or a letter to a close friend, detailing your feelings, suspicions, and discoveries about the person you've been communicating with online. Describe the emotions you've experienced and how you plan to confront or deal with the situation.

### **Option B (Catfisher)**

Write a confession letter from the perspective of the person who has been deceiving someone online. Explain the reasons behind your actions, your feelings of guilt or remorse, and what you plan to do next to make amends.

## Review

When you have finished your writing, read your stories out in front of the class.

***Or you can give your writing to your teacher for a full review.***

## True or False — Answers

These are the correct answers.

### *How did you do?*

John Sayles is a detective. False.

Detective Mike Alloy has a lot of evidence against John Sayles. True.

John Sayles confessed to his crimes during the interview. False.

John Sayles received money from women for his photographic services. False. (He says he received money like this, but it is strongly suggested that he tricked the money from the women).

The women willingly gave John Sayles money as gifts. True. (It is strongly implied that the women willingly gave him the money, even though they were tricked into doing it).

Mike believed that John Sayles could be someone's lover. False. (He cannot understand why any woman would wish to have him as a lover).

Most of the women involved in the case refused to cooperate with the police. True.

John Sayles had concrete evidence to prove his innocence. False.

The interview was interrupted by a knock on the door. True.

Mike and Ella left the room when they heard the knock. True.

John Sayles was pleased with how his lawyer handled the

interview. False. (He started to argue with his lawyer).

The old woman at the police station had evidence against John Sayles. True.

The woman at the police station claimed to be John Sayles' mother. True.

Mike knew the woman at the police station before she introduced herself. False.

The woman at the police station wanted to see John Sayles behind bars for life. True.

## Guess the Right Synonym — Answers

These are the right answers below.

***How many did you get right?***

Lawyer	Attorney
Confession	Admission
Accused	Suspect
Fraud	Deceit
Theft	Robbery
Interview	Interrogation
Emotion	Feeling
Lavish	Opulent
Genuine	Authentic
Medication	Prescription
Accuse	Blame
Scamming	Cheating
Extorting	Coercion
Birth	Childbearing

## Guess the Right Antonym — Answers

These are the right answers below.

***How did you do?***

Confession	Denial
Money	Poverty
Luxury	Austerity
Statement	Disavowal
Friends	Enemies
Frustration	Gratification
Helplessness	Empowerment
Children	Parents
Accused	Exonerated
Evidence	Speculation
Scamming	Honesty
Extorting	Donating

## Fill In The Gaps — Answers

These are the correct answers below.

***How many did you get right?***

**Deception:** Her elaborate deception involved creating a fake identity to gain access to confidential information.

**Fraud:** The company uncovered a massive fraud scheme that cost them millions of dollars in losses.

**Theft:** To prevent bicycle theft, it's essential to invest in a good lock and secure your bike properly when not in use.

**Evidence:** The detective collected crucial evidence from the crime scene, including fingerprints and DNA samples.

**Confession:** Faced with overwhelming evidence, the suspect finally made a tearful confession to the crime.

**Accusations:** The heated argument between the two neighbours led to mutual accusations of noise disturbance.

**Legitimate:** The document was deemed legitimate after thorough verification of its authenticity.

**Lavish:** The celebrity's lavish lifestyle was evident in their extravagant parties and luxurious vacations.

**Luxury:** Staying in a five-star hotel with a private beach was the ultimate luxury vacation experience.

**Justify:** She tried to justify her actions by explaining the dire

circumstances that led to her decision.

**Business associates:** He regularly met with his business associates to discuss new investment opportunities.

**Medication:** The doctor prescribed a daily medication to manage the patient's chronic condition.

**Frustration:** After hours of trying to solve the complex puzzle, he slammed his hands down in frustration.

**Helplessness:** Watching the disaster unfold before her, she felt a sense of helplessness as she couldn't do anything to prevent it.

**Extorting:** The criminal was arrested for extorting money from local businesses by threatening to reveal damaging information.

## Words and Meanings — Answers

These are the correct answers below.

***Did you get them all correct?***

Theft	The act of stealing or taking someone else's property without permission.
Impassive	Showing no emotion or feeling; calm and composed.
Contempt	The feeling of disdain or scorn towards something or someone.
Frustration	The feeling of being upset or annoyed due to the inability to achieve a goal.
Lavish	Extravagant or luxurious in an excessive and often wasteful way.
Confession	A formal admission of wrongdoing or guilt.
Demeanour	A person's outward behaviour or conduct.
Redeeming	Serving to offset or compensate for a negative quality or aspect.
Scamming	Engaging in fraudulent schemes or activities to deceive and defraud others.
Extorting	Obtaining something, typically money, through force or threats.
Briefcase	A small, flat, rectangular case used to carry

	documents, papers, or other items.
Extortion	The act of obtaining something, especially money, through force or threats.

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