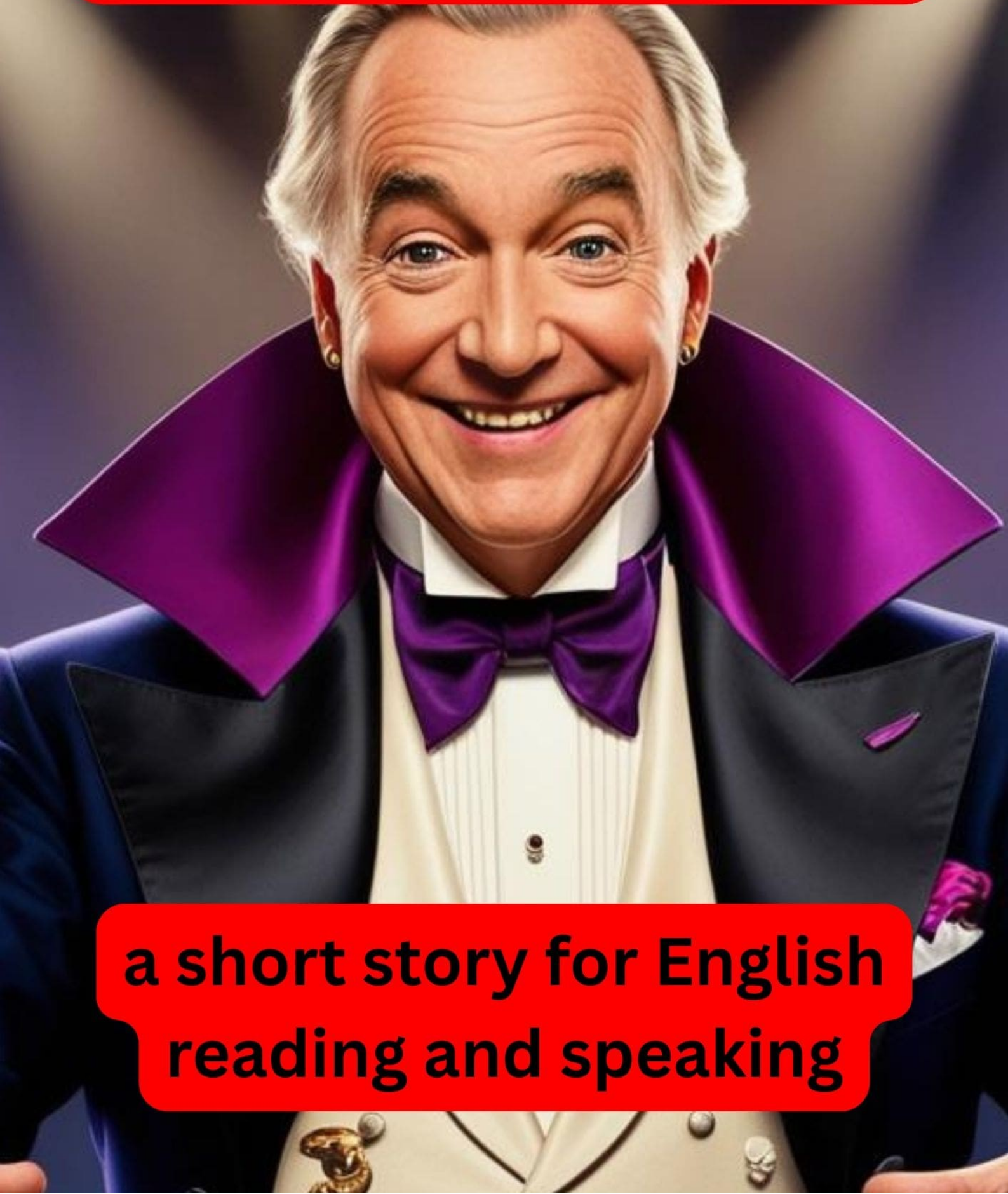


The Vanishing Act



**a short story for English
reading and speaking**

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Introductory Questions

Have you ever seen a magic show or watched a magician perform a trick?

What was the most impressive or confusing trick you saw?

Do you think it was all real or just an illusion?

What would you do if someone you knew suddenly disappeared with no explanation?

Would you go to the police right away?

Do you think people should always tell the truth during an investigation, even if it gets them into trouble? Why or why not?

Have you ever been in a situation where you were blamed for something you didn't do?

What happened, and how did you prove you were innocent?

The Vanishing Act

It was a great routine. The crowd loved it.

But now The Great Majesto—real name Al Fenicci—was slumped in a chair, drenched in sweat.

What happened to all these broads?

Where the hell did they go?

Across from him sat two detectives.

He'd already figured out who was playing good cop and bad cop.

The smaller one—Ed—sat directly in front of him. Nice face.

Smiling, but there was doubt in his eyes.

The bigger one, Jackie, looked like he'd drag The Great Majesto to Coney Island pen without blinking.

Ed leaned in.

“Okay, let's go through this one more time. You get on stage, do a few warm-up tricks—rabbits out of hats, pigeons

from your pockets. Then comes the finale.”

“Yeah, like I told ya,” The Great Majesto muttered, wiping sweat from his brow again.

“Then what?” Ed asked, his face the picture of naïve curiosity.

An act, Majesto knew. He’d seen plenty of acts in his time. He'd worked in theaters and sideshows his whole life. This was his life. It was all he knew.

“Then I do the vanishing act,” he said.

Jackie lit a cigarette, eyes narrowed.

“Well, ya sure made this broad disappear. Along with five other dames.”

He exhaled sharply, shaking his head.

“What happened, Al?” Ed asked.

“The girl—Tina—she walks around the box. I show the crowd it’s empty. She gets in. I say the magic words, the old abracadabra, open the door—it’s empty.”

He wrung his hands, then stopped, noticing it looked like he was praying.

“Then I call the stagehand. He sees there’s a problem.

Curtain comes down.”

Jackie scoffed.

“Cept this time, she don’t come out. She just—what?—vanishes?”

He barked a laugh, looked at Ed, and thumbed at The Great Majesto.

“Jeez, this guy.”

Ed shot Jackie a look that said, Let me handle this.

“So she don’t reappear,” Ed said. “But she usually does, right?”

Majesto nodded too fast. “Yeah, that’s the whole thing. She reappears and that’s the end of the show.”

“So, when she don’t come out... what did you do?”

Ed’s eyes scrutinized The Great Majesto’s face. Al could feel his eyes on him. Watching every little tic, every little tiny movement.

“I called the stagehand. We brought the curtain down.”

Ed continues staring at him. Into him.

“Then what?”

The Great Majesto shakes his head, holds both hands out,

palms up.

“We go looking for her,” he says.

Jackie leaned in again.

“Maybe she went down Macy’s. Buy some pantyhose or something.”

He smiled, and for a second it looked real. Then it turned into a glare.

“Or maybe, maybe you killed her. Maybe her body’s some place we need to find out.”

“I didn’t— I didn’t do anything!” Majesto cried. “I don’t know what happened to her.”

Ed gives him a look that is a cross between sympathy and great doubt.

“Thing is, Al, it’s not just her, is it?”

His eyes stayed locked on Majesto’s.

“Six other girls. All showgirls. Come to the city, wanna join the theater. Six of them, Al.”

That look.

Like he’s saying: I’m trying to help you here, pal. But you’re not making it easy for me.

Jackie flicked his cigarette to the floor and crushed it under a boot that looked the size of a mailbox.

“Hey, I got a great idea,” he said. “Why don’t you tell us where you buried ‘em all? Then we can go home and get a good night’s sleep. Whaddya say?”

The Great Majesto looked from Jackie to Ed, hoping for a glimmer of mercy. An opening. But Ed just stared back with a blank poker face.

“I swear to God,” Majesto said. “On my mother’s life—God rest her soul—I didn’t touch those girls. I didn’t do nothing.”

Jackie eased back against a table cluttered with costumes and props.

“Maybe they all just went back home, huh? Maybe they went to Penn Street, got train tickets, and headed back to Idaho. Or maybe...”

He leaned in.

“Maybe you killed them.”

“No!”

It came out too fast. Too loud. Too much. He should’ve kept them guessing. That gave too much away.

“Al,” Ed said gently, “just start from the beginning. Tell us what happened.”

It was too much now. Majesto mopped his forehead again. The handkerchief was soaked.

“Okay. So the first one, her name was Betty. I think. Or maybe Betsy. Something like that. She was in the city all alone. I just—I don’t know—I just wondered what it would be like to...”

And the words began to fall from his mouth like water through a hole in a bucket.

Essential Vocabulary

routine	slumped	drenched
detectives	good cop	bad cop
leaned in	warm-up	muttered
naïve	sideshows	vanishing act
lit a cigarette	narrowed	exhaled
wrung	stagehand	curtain
scoffed	barked	scrutinized
tic	palms	glare
sympathy	flicked	crushed
glimmer	poker face	props
mercy	soaked	handkerchief
confession		

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:

Routine – *a regular way of doing things in a particular order.*

Slumped – *sitting or standing with your shoulders and head bent forward, usually because you are tired or unhappy.*

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

I try to follow a healthy morning routine to start the day well.

He slumped in his chair after the long meeting.

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

The Vanishing Act — story and reading comprehension questions

This is the story and reading comprehension questions divided into clear sections.

This may make it easier to use in the classroom.

You can find all the right answers at the end of the lesson plan.

Section 1

It was a great routine. The crowd loved it.

But now The Great Majesto—real name Al Fenicci—was slumped in a chair, drenched in sweat.

What happened to all these broads? Where the hell did they go?

Across from him sat two detectives.

He'd already figured out who was playing good cop and bad cop. The smaller one—Ed—sat directly in front of him. Nice

face. Smiling, but there was doubt in his eyes. The bigger one, Jackie, looked like he'd drag The Great Majesto to Coney Island pen without blinking.

Reading Comprehension Questions

What is The Great Majesto's real name?

How does the story describe his emotional or physical state at the beginning?

How does The Great Majesto describe the two detectives?

What role does Ed appear to play in the interrogation?

What role does Jackie play?

Section 2

Ed leaned in. "Okay, let's go through this one more time. You get on stage, do a few warm-up tricks—rabbits out of hats, pigeons from your pockets. Then comes the finale."

"Yeah, like I told ya," Majesto muttered, wiping sweat from his brow again.

"Then what?" Ed asked, his face the picture of naïve curiosity. An act, Majesto knew. He'd seen plenty of acts in his time.

He'd worked in theaters and sideshows his whole life. This was his life. It was all he knew.

“Then I do the vanishing act,” he said.

Reading Comprehension Questions

What types of tricks does The Great Majesto perform before the final act?

What phrase shows that Majesto is feeling pressured?

How does Ed pretend to act during the questioning?

What does The Great Majesto reveal about his life?

What is the final trick in his performance?

Section 3

Jackie lit a cigarette, eyes narrowed. “Well, ya sure made this broad disappear. Along with five other dames.”

He exhaled sharply, shaking his head.

“What happened, Al?” Ed asked.

“The girl—Tina—she walks around the box. I show the crowd it’s empty. She gets in. I say the magic words, open the door—empty.”

He wrung his hands, then stopped, noticing it looked like he was praying.

“Then I call the stagehand. He sees there’s a problem. Curtain comes down.”

Reading Comprehension Questions

How many women does Jackie imply are missing?

What is the name of the woman involved in the current trick?

What steps does The Great Majesto describe in the vanishing trick?

What does he do after noticing Tina has vanished?

What detail shows Majesto is nervous or worried?

Section 4

Jackie scoffed. “Cept this time, she don’t come out. She just —what?—vanishes?”

He barked a laugh, looked at Ed, and thumbed at Majesto. “Jeez, this guy.”

Ed shot Jackie a look that said, *Let me handle this.*

“So she didn’t reappear,” Ed said. “But she usually does, right?”

Majesto nodded too fast. “Yeah, that’s the whole thing. She reappears and that’s the end of the show.”

“So, when she didn’t come out... what did you do?”

“I called the stagehand. We brought the curtain down. We went looking for her.”

Reading Comprehension Questions

What is Jackie's attitude toward Majesto's explanation?

What does Ed ask about the typical outcome of the trick?

How does Majesto respond when asked about Tina's disappearance?

What action does Majesto take immediately after she fails to reappear?

What does Majesto's fast nodding suggest?

Section 5

Jackie leaned in again. "Maybe she went down Macy's. Buy some pantyhose or something."

He smiled, and for a second it looked real. Then it turned into a glare.

"Or maybe you killed her. Maybe her body's somewhere we need to find."

"I didn't— I didn't do anything!" Majesto cried. "I don't know what happened to her."

Ed's face showed sympathy. Or maybe doubt.

"Thing is, Al, it's not just her, is it? Six other girls. All showgirls. Come to the city, wanna join the theater. Six of them, Al."

Reading Comprehension Questions

What does Jackie suggest Tina might have done?

What does his fake smile turn into?

How does Jackie escalate the accusation?

How does The Great Majesto respond to this accusation?

What new detail does Ed reveal about the case?

Section 6

That look. Like *I'm trying to help you here, pal, but you're making it real hard.*

Jackie flicked his cigarette to the floor and crushed it under a boot that looked the size of a mailbox.

"Hey, I got a great idea," he said. "Why don't you tell us where you buried 'em all? Then we can go home and get a good night's sleep. Whaddya say?"

Majesto looked from Jackie to Ed, hoping for a glimmer of mercy. An opening. But Ed just stared back with a blank poker face.

Reading Comprehension Questions

What does Ed look at Majesto?

Are Jackie's feet big or small?

What does Jackie suggest Majesto should do?

How does Ed react while Jackie speaks?

What does Majesto hope to see in Ed's face?

What does the phrase "*you're making it real hard*" suggest about Ed's attitude?

Section 7

"I swear to God," Majesto said. "On my mother's life—God rest her soul—I didn't touch those girls. I didn't do nothing."

Jackie eased back against a table cluttered with costumes and props.

"Maybe they all went home, huh? Maybe they went to Penn Street, got train tickets, and headed back to Idaho. Or maybe..."

He leaned in.

"Maybe you killed them."

"No!"

It came out too fast. Too loud. He should've kept them guessing. That gave too much away.

Reading Comprehension Questions

What phrase does Majesto use to swear his innocence?

Where does Jackie sarcastically suggest the girls might have gone?

What is Jackie's final accusation in this section?

Why does Majesto's loud "No!" seem like a mistake?

What does "keep them guessing" suggest about Majesto's usual behaviour?

Section 8

"Al," Ed said gently, "just start from the beginning. Tell us what happened."

It was too much now. Majesto mopped his forehead again. The handkerchief was soaked.

"Okay. So the first one, her name was Betty. I think. Or maybe Betsy. Something like that. She was in the city all alone. I just—I don't know—I just wondered what it would be like to..."

And the words began to fall from his mouth like water through a hole in a bucket.

Reading Comprehension Questions

What does Ed ask Al to do?

What physical detail shows Majesto is under pressure?

What does Majesto begin to say about the first missing girl?

What might his hesitation about her name suggest?

What does the final sentence suggest about his emotional state?

Reading Comprehension Questions

This is a list of only the reading comprehension questions.

You can find all the right answers at the end of the lesson plan.

What is The Great Majesto's real name?

How does the story describe his emotional or physical state at the beginning?

How does The Great Majesto describe the two detectives?

What role does Ed appear to play in the interrogation?

What role does Jackie play?

What types of tricks does The Great Majesto perform before the final act?

What phrase shows that Majesto is feeling pressured?

How does Ed pretend to act during the questioning?

What does The Great Majesto reveal about his life?

What is the final trick in his performance?

How many women does Jackie imply are missing?

What is the name of the woman involved in the current trick?

What steps does The Great Majesto describe in the vanishing trick?

What does he do after noticing Tina has vanished?

What detail shows Majesto is nervous or worried?

What is Jackie's attitude toward Majesto's explanation?

What does Ed ask about the typical outcome of the trick?

How does Majesto respond when asked about Tina's disappearance?

What action does Majesto take immediately after she fails to reappear?

What does Majesto's fast nodding suggest?

What does Jackie suggest Tina might have done?

What does his fake smile turn into?

How does Jackie escalate the accusation?

How does The Great Majesto respond to this accusation?

What new detail does Ed reveal about the case?

What does Ed look at Majesto?

Are Jackie's feet big or small?

What does Jackie suggest Majesto should do?

How does Ed react while Jackie speaks?

What does Majesto hope to see in Ed's face?

What does the phrase "you're making it real hard" suggest about Ed's attitude?

What phrase does Majesto use to swear his innocence?

Where does Jackie sarcastically suggest the girls might have gone?

What is Jackie's final accusation in this section?

Why does Majesto's loud "No!" seem like a mistake?

What does "keep them guessing" suggest about Majesto's usual behaviour?

What does Ed ask Al to do?

What physical detail shows Majesto is under pressure?

What does Majesto begin to say about the first missing girl?

What might his hesitation about her name suggest?

What does the final sentence suggest about his emotional state?

True or False?

Look at all the true or false statements below.

Say whether they are true or false according to the story.

You can find all the right answers at the end of the lesson plan.

The Great Majesto appeared confident and calm while speaking with the detectives.

Al Fenicci is the magician's real name.

The two detectives used a good cop/bad cop routine to interrogate him.

Jackie's approach was aggressive and sarcastic.

Ed pretended to be naïve to make Al talk more freely.

Tina disappeared in the middle of a card trick.

The Great Majesto claimed the vanishing act always ended with Tina reappearing.

After Tina vanished, Al immediately called for help backstage.

Jackie believed Tina had left voluntarily to go shopping.

Al admitted that he had a romantic relationship with all six missing women.

Several women had gone missing after performing in The Great Majesto's show.

Jackie pressured Al by joking about where the bodies might be buried.

Ed showed signs of sympathy, but he also doubted Al's innocence.

Al completely denied any involvement and gave no further information.

At the end of the story, Al starts to reveal something about the first missing girl.

What is the Correct Synonym?

Look at the table below.

Match the words on the left with the correct synonym on the right.

A synonym is a word of similar meaning.

You can find all the correct answers at the end of the lesson plan.

routine	mocked
slumped	examined
drenched	act
detectives	investigators
muttered	soaked
naïve	admission
vanishing act	innocent
scoffed	whispered
scrutinized	disappearance
confession	collapsed

What is the Correct Antonym?

Look at the table below.

Match the words on the left with the correct antonym on the right.

An antonym is a word of opposite meaning.

You can find all the correct answers at the end of the lesson plan.

glare	stood
sympathy	whispered
flicked	tissue
mercy	real items
poker face	expressiveness
props	cruelty
soaked	dry
handkerchief	placed
barked	smile
collapsed	indifference

Correct the Slang or Colloquial Language

Look at the sentences and phrases below taken from the story.

The language used here is very casual. Often used in speaking or in very casual conversations.

This is very common in English-speaking countries!

Look closely at all the sentences below and correct the grammar or explain terms that are used.

You can find all the correct answers at the end of the lesson plan.

1. What happened to all these broads?
2. Where the hell did they go?
3. Yeah, like I told ya.
4. Then I do the vanishing act.
5. Well, ya sure made this broad disappear.

6. Along with five other dames.
7. What happened, Al?
8. She gets in. I say the magic words, the old abracadabra, open the door—it's empty.
9. 'Cept this time, she don't come out.
10. She just—what?—vanishes?
11. Jeez, this guy.
12. So she don't reappear, but she usually does, right?
13. We brought the curtain down.
14. Then what?
15. Maybe she went down Macy's.
16. Buy some pantyhose or something.
17. Or maybe, maybe you killed her.
18. I didn't do nothing!
19. Six other girls. All showgirls.
20. Whaddya say?
21. I didn't do nothing.

- 22. I didn't touch those girls.
- 23. I didn't do anything.
- 24. Maybe they all just went back home, huh?
- 25. Too loud. Too much.
- 26. She was in the city all alone. I just—I don't know—I just wondered...

Words and Meanings

Look at the word bank below.

Now match each word with the correct meanings below the word bank.

You can find all the correct answers at the end of the lesson plan.

Word Bank:

- looks like he's praying
- Jeez
- wipe the sweat from one's forehead
- on my mother's life
- broads
- start from the beginning
- the vanishing act
- figured out
- jerks a thumb
- glare

Definitions:

A facial expression showing strong anger or disapproval.

An old-fashioned and impolite slang term for women.

To raise your hand and move your thumb suddenly, often as a gesture to point or signal.

To understand or solve something after thinking about it.

A loud or surprised exclamation, often expressing frustration or disbelief.

To appear to be praying by holding your hands together in a specific position, especially when anxious.

A common phrase used when making a solemn promise or swearing that something is true.

To begin retelling an event or story from the very beginning.

To remove sweat from one's forehead, often because of stress or heat.

A magician's final trick where someone disappears from view.

Gap-Fill Exercise

Look at the word bank below.

Now use each word from the list and place in the correct sentences below the word bank.

Use each word only once.

You can find all the correct answers at the end of the lesson plan.

Word Bank:

- figured out
- broads
- the vanishing act
- Jeez
- glare
- wipe the sweat from one's forehead
- start from the beginning
- on my mother's life
- jerks a thumb
- looks like he's praying

After hours of confusion, the detective finally _____

what had really happened backstage.

“_____!” she said, stepping back from the scene.
“What happened here?”

The magician ended the show with _____, and the audience roared in applause.

The man was silent, sitting with his hands together. He
_____.

You’ll have to _____—I didn’t hear the first part of your story.

The suspect swore, “_____, I didn’t touch any of those girls!”

The detective gave him a cold, hard _____ as he asked another question.

During the performance, the magician would often stop to
_____ before continuing.

He didn’t speak, just _____ at the stagehand, signaling him to bring the curtain down.

Jackie laughed and said, “What happened to all those
_____ who used to work with you?”

Discussion Questions

This is a list of discussion questions to be used in the classroom.

Each student should ask one of the questions and the other students answer with their own opinions, thoughts or ideas.

There are no correct answers to these questions as they are mostly based on people's own ideas.

What kind of person do you think The Great Majesto is? Do you trust him? Why or why not?

What do you think really happened to Tina and the other girls?

Why do you think The Great Majesto was sweating and nervous during the interview?

What role does Ed play in the interrogation? How is he different from Jackie?

Do you think the detectives are using a fair approach to question Al? Why or why not?

Why does Al keep saying he didn't do anything? Do you believe him?

Why might someone confess to something they didn't do in a situation like this?

What would you do if you were falsely accused of a serious crime?

What is the effect of Jackie using humor or sarcasm during the questioning?

Do you think Tina's disappearance was part of a trick gone wrong, or something more serious?

Why do you think the writer included the detail about Jackie's big boots?

How does the story build suspense? Which parts made you feel tense?

What do you think Majesto was about to say at the end of the story?

Would you like to watch a magic show like Majesto's? Why or why not?

If you could ask The Great Majesto one question, what would it be?

If you were a detective on this case, what would you do next?

Why do you think so many girls went missing after working with Majesto?

What kind of ending would you write for this story?

What clues in the dialogue or descriptions suggest Majesto might be guilty—or innocent?

If you were writing this as a film, how would you show the final scene?

Role Play

This is a role play activity.

Role Play: The Interrogation Room

Title: ***What Really Happened to Tina?***

Level: B1–C1

Duration: 30–40 minutes

Skills Practiced: Speaking, vocabulary use, listening, creative thinking, reasoning

Objective:

Students will step into the roles of characters from *The Vanishing Act* and use vocabulary and ideas from the story to explore motives, ask detailed questions, defend their character's perspective, and build fluency in extended conversation.

Roles:

- Assign or let students choose from the following:

- The Great Majesto (Al Fenicci): The magician under suspicion
- Detective Ed: The calm, logical “good cop”
- Detective Jackie: The aggressive, sarcastic “bad cop”
- Stagehand: Witness who helped during the act
- Showgirl (Tina or another): (Optional: survivor or witness)
- Reporter: Asks follow-up questions at a press conference afterward

Setup:

- Split students into groups of 4–5.
- Each group gets a brief summary of the story (or reads the full version in advance).
- Give each student a role card with basic instructions, goals, and character info (see below).
- Give each group a few minutes to prepare their strategies.

Role Cards (Sample Summaries):

The Great Majesto:

You say you did nothing wrong. Explain what happened on stage and how the trick usually works. Use strong language to defend yourself. Try to appear confused and emotional.

Use phrases like "on my mother's life" or "I swear I didn't do nothing."

Detective Ed:

You're the calm detective. Ask for details about the trick. Stay polite, but look for contradictions. Use expressions from the vocabulary like "start from the beginning" and "keep the crowd guessing." Try to catch Majesto slipping up.

Detective Jackie:

You're suspicious and sarcastic. Push Majesto hard. Suggest he's guilty. Ask about the other girls. Use words like "broad," "vanishing act," and slang like "Whaddya say, huh?" Try to make him confess.

Stagehand:

You were working backstage. You saw something strange but aren't sure what it was. Maybe you're nervous. Try to stay neutral—but you have one secret you haven't told yet.

Reporter (optional):

After the scene ends, you call a press conference. Ask questions like a journalist would—about Majesto's guilt, the police methods, the missing girls.

Procedure:

- Preparation (5–10 min): Students read their roles, review useful vocabulary, and prepare 2–3 key sentences or facts they will use.
- Role Play (15–20 min): The group acts out the interrogation. Encourage natural conversation and improvisation. You can give time warnings or prompts (e.g. "The reporter enters").

Class Debrief (10 min):

Each group explains what they think happened.

Discuss:

- Who seemed guilty?
- Who made a good case?
- What language was used effectively?

Language Focus (During or After):

Encourage use of:

Key vocabulary (from matching/gap-fill exercises)

Phrases with emotion or emphasis ("No!" "I swear..." "I figured it out.")

Reporting language (e.g. "He claimed...", "She admitted...")

Optional Extension:

Students write a short report or news article summarizing the events of the interrogation. This supports written production and consolidates vocabulary.

Writing

This is a creative writing exercise.

Creative Writing Exercise: Secrets Behind the Curtain

Level: Upper-Intermediate (B2) to Advanced (C1)

Skills Practiced: Narrative writing, character development, suspense building, descriptive language, dialogue

Option 1: Story Extension – What Happens Next?

Instructions:

Write the next part of The Vanishing Act. Use the final line as your starting point:

“Okay. So the first one, her name was Betty. I think. Or maybe Betsy. Something like that. She was in the city all alone. I just—I don’t know—I just wondered what it would be like to...”

Your task:

Continue the story from this moment.

You can choose whether Majesto is innocent or guilty.

Develop the mystery further—reveal what happened to the girls, or add a new twist.

Include at least two characters speaking, and use suspenseful or descriptive language.

Write 250–400 words.

Option 2: Choose a Prompt – Write Your Own Mystery

Choose one of the prompts below and write a short story or opening scene (250–400 words):

Writing Prompts:

A magician's assistant disappears mid-performance. The police search backstage... and find something that shouldn't be there.

Every night at 10 p.m., the lights go out in the same theater—but no one can explain why.

A detective is sure the suspect is guilty—but the evidence keeps disappearing.

A showgirl receives a mysterious letter before her big audition. After reading it, she vanishes.

A performer confesses to a crime... but their story changes every time they tell it.

A young stagehand overhears something behind the curtain—something that could destroy lives.

A magician claims to make people disappear... but no one has ever come back.

During rehearsal, a trapdoor opens on stage by itself—and someone falls through.

A missing person is found alive years later—insisting they've been part of a magic trick gone wrong.

A detective goes undercover in a traveling circus where performers keep dying mysteriously.

Tips for Students:

- Use descriptive language to create atmosphere and tension.
- Include dialogue to show character emotion and motive.
- Think about how to hide or reveal information to keep readers curious.

Reading Comprehension Questions — Answers

These are all the correct answers below.

How many did you get right?

What is The Great Majesto's real name?

Al Fenicci.

How does the story describe his emotional or physical state at the beginning?

He is slumped in a chair and drenched in sweat, indicating exhaustion or anxiety.

How does The Great Majesto describe the two detectives?

He identifies one as a good cop (Ed) and the other as a bad cop (Jackie). Ed has a nice face and smiles, while Jackie looks tough and unyielding.

What role does Ed appear to play in the interrogation?

Ed plays the "good cop," showing a more sympathetic and gentle demeanor.

What role does Jackie play?

Jackie plays the “bad cop,” appearing aggressive and intimidating.

What types of tricks does The Great Majesto perform before the final act?

He does warm-up tricks like pulling rabbits out of hats and pigeons from his pockets.

What phrase shows that Majesto is feeling pressured?

He wipes sweat from his brow again, and later says, “like I told ya,” which shows impatience or stress.

How does Ed pretend to act during the questioning?

He pretends to be naively curious, asking questions as if he doesn’t know the answers.

What does The Great Majesto reveal about his life?

He’s spent his entire life working in theaters and sideshows. It’s all he knows.

What is the final trick in his performance?

The vanishing act.

How many women does Jackie imply are missing?

Six women.

What is the name of the woman involved in the current trick?

Tina.

What steps does The Great Majesto describe in the

vanishing trick?

Tina walks around the box, Majesto shows it's empty, she gets in, he says the magic words, opens the door, and it's empty.

What does he do after noticing Tina has vanished?

He calls the stagehand, and they bring the curtain down.

What detail shows Majesto is nervous or worried?

He wrings his hands, then stops when he realizes it looks like he's praying.

What is Jackie's attitude toward Majesto's explanation?

He mocks it and clearly doesn't believe it, expressing sarcasm and disbelief.

What does Ed ask about the typical outcome of the trick?

He asks, "But she usually does [reappear], right?"

How does Majesto respond when asked about Tina's disappearance?

He nods too fast and insists that she normally reappears.

What action does Majesto take immediately after she fails to reappear?

He calls the stagehand and brings the curtain down to look for her.

What does Majesto's fast nodding suggest?

It suggests anxiety, desperation, or an attempt to convince them too quickly.

What does Jackie suggest Tina might have done?

He sarcastically says maybe she went shopping at Macy's for pantyhose.

What does his fake smile turn into?

It turns into a glare.

How does Jackie escalate the accusation?

He outright accuses Majesto of possibly killing Tina.

How does The Great Majesto respond to this accusation?

He denies it emotionally, crying out that he didn't do anything.

What new detail does Ed reveal about the case?

That six other girls, all showgirls new to the city, are also missing.

What does Ed look at Majesto?

With a blank poker face, showing no emotion or sympathy.

Are Jackie's feet big or small?

Big—his boot is described as the size of a mailbox.

What does Jackie suggest Majesto should do?

He sarcastically suggests that Majesto tell them where he buried the bodies so they can go home and sleep.

How does Ed react while Jackie speaks?

He maintains a blank, unreadable expression.

What does Majesto hope to see in Ed's face?

A glimmer of mercy or sympathy—an opening.

What does the phrase “you’re making it real hard” suggest about Ed’s attitude?

It suggests that Ed may be trying to help Majesto but is losing patience or becoming frustrated.

What phrase does Majesto use to swear his innocence?

“I swear to God. On my mother’s life—God rest her soul—I didn’t touch those girls.”

Where does Jackie sarcastically suggest the girls might have gone?

He says maybe they went to Penn Street, bought train tickets, and went back to Idaho.

What is Jackie’s final accusation in this section?

He says, “Maybe you killed them.”

Why does Majesto’s loud “No!” seem like a mistake?

Because it’s too fast and too loud, which may seem like overcompensation or guilt.

What does “keep them guessing” suggest about Majesto’s usual behaviour?

It implies that he usually knows how to control the narrative or keep people uncertain, like in a magic act.

What does Ed ask Al to do?

He gently asks him to start from the beginning and tell them what happened.

What physical detail shows Majesto is under pressure?

He mops his forehead with a handkerchief that is already soaked with sweat.

What does Majesto begin to say about the first missing girl?

He vaguely remembers her name and says she was alone in the city, and he wondered what it would be like to...

What might his hesitation about her name suggest?

It suggests emotional detachment, guilt, or that there were too many victims for him to remember clearly.

What does the final sentence suggest about his emotional state?

He is breaking down emotionally, and his confession is pouring out uncontrollably.

True or False — Answers

These are all the correct answers below.

How successful were you?

- False – *He was sweating, nervous, and clearly distressed during the interrogation.*
- True
- True
- True
- True
- False – *Tina disappeared during the final vanishing act, not a card trick.*
- True
- True
- False – *Jackie sarcastically suggested she might have gone shopping, but he clearly did not believe it.*
- False – *Al never said he had a romantic relationship with the women; he only began to speak about the first girl at*

the end.

- True
- True
- True
- False – *At the end of the story, Al starts to say something about the first missing girl, showing he may confess.*
- True

What is the Correct Synonym – Answers

These are the correct answers below.

Did you crack them all?

routine	act
slumped	collapsed
drenched	soaked
detectives	investigators
muttered	whispered
naïve	innocent
vanishing act	disappearance
scoffed	mocked
scrutinized	examined
confession	admission

What is the Correct Antonym – Answers

These are the correct answers below.

Was that a perfect score?

glare	smile
sympathy	indifference
flicked	placed
mercy	cruelty
poker face	expressiveness
props	real items
soaked	dry
handkerchief	tissue
barked	whispered
collapsed	stood

Correct the Slang or Colloquial Language — Answers

These are the correct answers below.

How well did you perform?

1. **"Broads"** – Slang for women, considered rude/offensive. Replace with “women” or “girls.”
2. **"The hell"** – Intensifier, informal. "Where did they go?" is neutral.
3. **"Ya"** – Informal for “you.” Correct: “Like I told you.”
4. **"Do" (present tense)** – Should be past tense: “Then I *did* the vanishing act.”
5. **"Ya" and "broad"** – Informal “you”; “broad” = offensive slang for woman. Correct: “You sure made this woman disappear.”
6. **"Dames"** – Outdated slang for women. Use “women” or

“girls.”

7. This is grammatically fine, but very conversational.
8. Sentence lacks parallel structure. Add subjects: “I open the door and it’s empty.”
9. **"Cept" and "don't"** – Should be: “Except this time, she *doesn't* come out.”
10. Sentence fragment used for emphasis.
Acceptable in dialogue but not formal writing.
11. Incomplete sentence. Meant to express disbelief.
12. **"Don't"** – Should be: “She *doesn't* reappear...”
13. Informal but grammatically acceptable.
14. **"Then what?"** – Missing subject/verb; should be: “What happened next?”
15. **"Down Macy's"** – Missing preposition: “Went down *to* Macy's.”
16. Incomplete sentence. More formal: “Maybe she went to buy some pantyhose.”
17. Repetition and structure are emotional, not

formal. Could be: "Or did you kill her?"

18. **Double negative** – Should be: "I didn't do *anything*."
19. Sentence fragments. Could be: "There were six other girls, all showgirls."
20. **"Whaddya"** – Informal contraction of "What do you."
Correct: "What do you say?"
21. Same as #18. Double negative.
22. Acceptable informal grammar; no correction needed.
23. Correct grammar – contrast with #18/21.
24. **"Huh?"** – Informal tag. Could be removed or replaced with "don't you think?"
25. Sentence fragments used for dramatic effect.
Full sentence: "It was too loud. It was too much."
26. Repetitions, pauses, and sentence breaks for character emotion. Could be: "She was alone in the city. I don't know—I wondered what it would be like to..."

Words and Meanings — Answers

These are all the correct answers below.

Did you win?

Original Phrase	Correct Definition
glare	A facial expression showing strong anger or disapproval.
broads	An old-fashioned and impolite slang term for women.
jerks a thumb	To raise your hand and move your thumb suddenly, often as a gesture to point or signal.
figured out	To understand or solve something after thinking about it.
Jeez	A loud or surprised exclamation, often expressing frustration or disbelief.
looks like he's praying	To appear to be praying by holding your hands together in a specific position.

on my mother's life	A common phrase used when making a solemn promise or swearing that something is true.
start from the beginning	To begin retelling an event or story from the very beginning.
wipe the sweat from one's forehead	To remove sweat from one's forehead, often because of stress or heat.
the vanishing act	A magician's final trick where someone disappears from view.

Gap-Fill Exercise — Answers

These are all the correct answers below.

How many did you get correct?

Answer Key

- figured out
- Jeez
- the vanishing act
- looks like he's praying
- start from the beginning
- on my mother's life
- glare
- wipe the sweat from one's forehead
- jerks a thumb
- broads

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