

- * Deduction and probability
- * Vocabulary: expressions with *story*

1 Read and listen

- a** Each of the two pictures shows part of a story. What do you think is happening in each one?
- b** Read the text quickly to check your ideas.



THE RISE AND RISE OF URBAN LEGENDS



[1] So there's this girl who eats a hamburger from her local fast food restaurant. A week later she goes to the doctor with a huge lump in her cheek. After a lengthy investigation, it's found that she had been bitten by a pregnant cockroach, which had been hiding in her hamburger. She now has hundreds of cockroach eggs growing in her cheek. You don't believe it? OK, try this one. After the Exxon Valdez oil spill in Alaska, hundreds of oil-soaked seals were cleaned and saved at an average cost of \$80,000 per animal. At a special ceremony, two of the animals were symbolically released back into the wild while hundreds of people looked on and cheered. A minute later, in

full view of everyone, they were both eaten by a killer whale.

[2] You might have heard one, if not both, of these stories before. They are both classic examples of urban legends, and stories like these have become such an integral part of modern life that ^A.....⁴..... But just in case you have somehow managed to miss them, let me quickly fill you in.

[3] Urban legends, or urban myths as they're commonly known in the UK, are stories that are quickly passed on by word of mouth or electronically. They can be about anything and everything, although certain topics will crop up time and again: some favourites are crime and horror,

schools and universities, cases of food contamination and the Internet. These stories, often incredible, horrific or funny, are always told as if they are true and usually happened to 'a friend of a friend'. However, although occasionally they may really have happened, they will usually have been entirely made up. Perhaps the best definition of an urban legend is that ^B.....

[4] People started using the term 'urban legend' more than seventy years ago, but it was only in the 1990s that ^C..... Opinions differ, but many experts believe that the 'alligator' story was the grandfather of the modern legends. You must have come across the tale about a

c **06** Read the text again and listen. Complete the spaces A–F in the text with clauses 1–7. There is one clause you do not need to use.

- 1 the term really came into use
- 2 academics now discuss the wider implications of contemporary legends
- 3 you can always tell whether a story is true or not
- 4 there can't be anyone left who doesn't know what they are
- 5 we are so ready to believe that a story might be true
- 6 they have never been more popular
- 7 it's a story that's too good to be true

d Read the text again and answer the questions.

- 1 What examples are given of topics that urban legends are often about?
- 2 According to the article, are most urban legends true or untrue?
- 3 What is believed by some experts to be the first urban legend and how did it arise?
- 4 What can the Internet tell you about urban legends?
- 5 Three examples are given of issues the academic conferences discuss. What are they?
- 6 What do experts think is more important than whether the legends are true or not?

e Find words or phrases in the text with these meanings.

- 1 very good instances (paragraph 2)
classic examples
- 2 through people talking to each other (paragraph 3)
- 3 appear (paragraph 3)
- 4 followed to find the origins of (paragraph 4)
- 5 a lot of different topics (paragraph 6)
- 6 an atmosphere in which many people feel afraid (paragraph 7)
- 7 generally not very important (paragraph 7)
- 8 no examples at all (paragraph 7)

Discussion box

- 1 Which is your favourite and your least favourite of the urban legends in the text?
- 2 Do you know any other urban legends?
- 3 Do you agree that urban legends 'reflect the climate of fear in which many of us live'?

colony of huge alligators that live deep down in the sewers underneath New York City. It can be traced back to stories from the 1930s which told how New Yorkers would bring back baby alligators with them from their holidays in Florida, only to flush them down the toilet when they got too big. Despite a number of claims, no one has ever been able to provide any photographic proof. This is hardly surprising when you consider that a baby alligator wouldn't last a day in the freezing sewer system of New York.

[5] These days, the spread of the Internet and, in particular, social networking sites, has given urban legend tellers an immediate audience of millions, and ^D..... There are now even websites dedicated to investigating the truth behind the thousands of urban legends circulating in cyberspace. Is it true that a man died when he fell asleep

with his laptop still on, causing the machine to overheat and set fire to his bed? Have people really been killed by lightning while talking on the phone during a thunderstorm? You can find the answers to these and other questions on the Internet.

[6] These stories have become such a part of our everyday life that ^E..... Ever since it was founded at the University of Sheffield in 1982, the International Society for Contemporary Legend Research has held an annual conference in North America or Europe to discuss the latest stories and their significance. Over the years, these meetings have looked at a wide range of issues – from humanity's compulsion for storytelling, to the cautionary nature of many of the legends, to a comparison of urban legends and traditional fairy tales.

[7] Recently, many academics have

shown more interest in what current urban legends tell us about modern society and particularly how they reflect the climate of fear in which many of us live. Experts argue that whether or not the stories are true is largely irrelevant. What is interesting is that ^F..... and, in some cases, we will change our behaviour because of it. As an example, the following legend is often quoted: an email warns that motorists have been stopping to investigate baby car seats that have been left beside countryside roads. As soon as the would-be do-gooder has got out of their car to investigate, they are attacked and beaten by a group of men, who drive off in their car leaving them for dead. Now, although not one single case of this has ever been reported, a lot of people are reluctant to stop their car to help people in distress, for fear that this could happen to them.

2 Grammar

* Deduction and probability

a Read the sentences and **circle** the correct option.

- There can't be anyone who doesn't know them.
 (a) it is not possible b it is possible
 c it is not certain
- People might believe a story.
 a it is certain b it is possible
 c it is not possible
- Certain topics will crop up.
 a it is not probable b it is possible
 c it is certain
- They may really have happened.
 a it is possible b it is not possible
 c it is certain
- You must have come across this story.
 a it is not certain b it is very probable
 c it is not possible
- The stories will usually have been made up.
 a it is certain b it is not certain
 c it is not possible

b Complete the sentences with a modal verb plus the correct form of the verbs in brackets. There may be more than one answer.

- I'm not sure where Natasha is, but she might/may be (be) outside in the garden.
- Pete's got a foreign accent, so he (not be) from this country.
- Let's ask Fred about the homework – he (know) how to do it.
- I'm not sure I believe that story! Jose (make) it up.
- Alana hung up in the middle of our conversation. I think I (say) something she didn't like.
- Peter and Thomas know everything about musical films, so they (watch) thousands of them.

c Discuss the differences between these pairs of sentences.

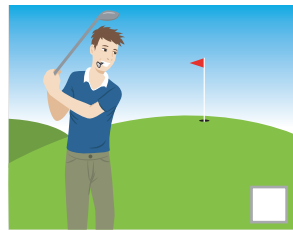
- There's someone at the door. It must be James.
 - There's someone at the door. It might be James.
- Ask Monica where her brother is – she'll know.
 - Ask Monica where her brother is – she may know.
- It's seven o'clock now. My sister will have arrived in New York.
 - It's seven o'clock now. My sister must have arrived in New York.

3 Listen

a Look at the pictures of the two stories. What do you think is happening in each story? The pictures aren't in the correct order.

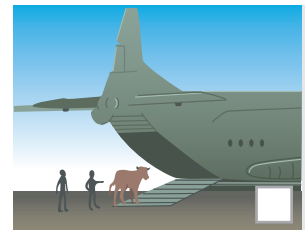
Story 1

True False



Story 2

True False



b 07 Listen to a radio show. Number the pictures above in the order they appear. Then tick (✓) true or false to say if the stories are true or not.

c Work with a partner and use the pictures to retell each of the two stories.

4 Vocabulary


* Expressions with story

a Match the expressions 1–8 with their definitions a–h.

- | | |
|--------------------------------|--|
| 1 to cut a long story short | a something that's very hard to believe |
| 2 a sob story | b something unwanted that frequently happens to you |
| 3 end of story! | c the events as he or she describes them (often contradicting another version) |
| 4 it's the same old story | d a story someone tells you to make you feel sorry for them |
| 5 that's a likely story | e all that needs to be said about something |
| 6 it's the story of my life | f to tell the main facts without the details |
| 7 his or her side of the story | g to invent an excuse |
| 8 to make up a story | h something negative that has happened many times before |

b Read the dialogues and circle the correct words.

- 1 A: Dad – I thought I might go out with my friends tonight.
B: Well, OK, but if you want to go out, you have to do your homework first – end of story / a sob story!
- 2 A: Where's your homework?
B: Sorry, Miss, I had to go shopping and cook dinner and ... well, to cut a long story short / to make up a story, I didn't have time to do it.
- 3 A: I'm sorry I lost your camera, but really it was Sally's fault.
B: Well, I'm going to talk to Sally and hear the story of her life / her side of the story.
- 4 A: Let's go to the cinema.
B: Yeah, good idea – but I'm broke, can you buy my ticket?
A: Again?! It's the same old story / End of story, isn't it?
- 5 A: Sorry I didn't come last night!
B: But why didn't you phone me? And please don't make up a story / cut a long story short about your phone not working!
- 6 A: Where's your homework?
B: Well, I did it, but then my dog ate it.
A: Oh, right! That's a likely story / a sob story!
- 7 A: So – how did you do in the test?
B: I failed – again! It's the story of my life / my side of the story!

c  08 Listen and check. Work with a partner and practise the dialogues in Exercise 4b.

Get it right! Turn to page 116.

5 Speak

Play *A Likely Story*. Work in pairs.

Student B: turn to page 125. Student A: read the outline of the urban legend below. You have five minutes to think of more details for it and make it as convincing as possible. Then you must tell Student B the story. Student B has to decide if it is true or not.

This happened in California.

A couple were driving their car. Their baby was with them in the car.

They stopped for a break. They took the baby out of the car.

They forgot to put the baby back in the car and drove off.

Two hours later they found the baby again and it was OK.



Culture in mind

6 Read and listen

- a Read the text and match the pictures A–C with the paragraphs 1–3.

Mythological creatures

[1] **W**hen the first explorers arrived in Australia, the Aborigines warned them about the bunyip, a horrible creature that lived in deep waterholes and killed anyone who went near it. There were multiple descriptions of the beast, but they usually involved huge teeth, sharp claws and a terrifying scream. The early settlers believed the stories and kept as far away from these waterholes as possible.



These days, of course, not too many Australians are worried about the existence of such a creature. Interestingly though, most of the descriptions of the bunyip bear a close resemblance to a prehistoric creature called a Diprotodon, whose bones have been found in Australia. Some scientists think that the legend came from the Aborigines finding such prehistoric bones: when they were shown the remains of some extinct Australian animals, Aborigines would often identify them as the bunyip. Is it possible that the bunyip was really a creature from the past? Or maybe it was just a story that the Aborigines invented to scare away their unwelcome visitors?

[2] **I**n the Himalayan mountains, some locals call him Meh-Teh, others know him by the more familiar name of Yeti. But, whatever the name, most agree that a large ape-like man is living somewhere out there. The Yeti is perhaps the most famous of all mythological creatures, and many people have set out to find him. He is, allegedly, a shy, hairy animal with thick brown or black fur and long arms reaching down to his knees, supposedly living in the forests of the Tibetan plateau.



But, so far, no one has brought back any real evidence, though there have been numerous sightings of giant footprints in the snow by mountaineers who have gone to climb in the area. However, to this day, the true nature of this ‘man of the mountains’ remains one of modern life’s greatest mysteries.

[3] **U**nderneath the icy waters of Scandinavia, a giant octopus waited. As far back as 1250, the giant Kraken was being described in ancient Norse sagas. This beast was believed to attack Norwegian fishing boats and drag them beneath the waves with its huge tentacles. Fishermen in the area faced a dilemma: where there was a Kraken there were always plenty of fish, but could they risk going anywhere near it? The Kraken were said to be so big that they were often mistaken for islands and included on maps of the sea.

Reports of these monsters were still cropping up as late as the 1850s. The Kraken has appeared in literature too – in a poem by Tennyson and in the 1953 novel *The Kraken Wakes* by John Wyndham. These days, most biologists believe stories of the Kraken were based on sightings of giant squid, which can measure as long as 13m. Perhaps they’re right – or is there something even bigger still hiding under the sea?



b  09 Read the text again and listen.

Which creature or creatures...

- 1 lived in water?
- 2 has/have more than one name?
- 3 wasn't always described in the same way?
- 4 presented the locals with a huge problem?
- 5 has/have been the subject of a massive search?
- 6 were the people who lived in the area terrified of?

Discussion box

- 1 Do you think that any of these creatures exist(ed)? Explain your reasons.
- 2 What other mythological creatures have you heard of?

7 Write

- a** Read the newspaper article. Do you believe the story? What kind of newspaper do you think it comes from?



DOCTORS at San Antonio Community Hospital managed last night to save the life of 17-year-old George Brooke from a mysterious illness that had ¹*dramatically / miraculously / tragically* already claimed the lives of his father and grandfather years before. But, as well as preventing the young man from dying, medical experts have also managed to solve an age-old mystery that has been haunting the Texan family for generations.

George Brooke became ill late on Tuesday night. When his mother Barbara saw the symptoms, she immediately feared the worst. His skin turned grey and he began to have problems breathing. It seemed she was witnessing exactly the same illness that had taken her husband 20 years earlier and her father-in-law 20 years before that. The boy was rushed to hospital, where doctors diagnosed him as suffering from the effects of snake venom. Although the poisoning was already in the later, dangerous stages of development, they were ²*miraculously / luckily / tragically* able to administer the antidote in time.

However, the doctors were still left mystified as to how the venom had entered his body. They found no snake bites and the boy hadn't reported seeing a snake that day. The only thing he could remember that was a little strange was feeling a small prick on his foot when he had put on his cowboy boots. It turned out that it had been George's birthday that day and one of his presents had been a pair of boots that had originally belonged to his grandfather. When questioned further, Barbara told of how both other members of the family had died ³*overwhelmingly / in a mysterious way / in unexplained circumstances* while wearing these boots. There was talk of how the boots had been cursed by a rattlesnake that her father-in-law had stamped to death while wearing the boots, a few days before he died. She had always refused to believe the story. The doctors examined the boots and, ⁴*in a spectacular turn of events / incredibly / mysteriously*, found the fang of a rattlesnake embedded in the sole of the right boot. ⁵*Incredibly / Finally / Amazingly* it still contained enough poison to kill several people. ⁶*At last / Finally / Astonishingly*, it seems that the revenge of the snake is over.

- b** Read the story again. Which of the three adverbs does not fit each of the spaces?
- c** What type of story do you expect from each of these titles?
- 1 Killer snake strikes from beyond the grave. *...A horror story.*
 - 2 Family mystery finally solved.
 - 3 These boots were made for killing.
 - 4 Teenager survives deadly snake bite.
- d** Look again at the two stories in Exercise 3 on page 14. Choose one of them and write it as a newspaper article. Use the story above as a model.