

Teacher’s Notes & Answer Key

Level	Intermediate +
Lesson Aims	For students to have practice speaking for fluency in a pyramid activity about horrible bosses.
Approximate Timing	45-60 minutes
Notes to the teacher	In the style of “it could always be worse!” this lesson celebrates Bosses’ Day (October 16 th) by taking a lighthearted (for us, anyway) look at horrible bosses. The students read a selection of boss horror stories sent in to <i>The Washingtonian</i> magazine, and then rank them in a pyramid-style speaking activity.
Text Link	http://www.washingtonian.com/articles/people/real-life-horrible-bosses/
Image Links	https://www.google.com/url?sa=i&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=images&cd=&cad=rja&uact=8&ved=0CAcQjRw&url=http%3A%2F%2Fblog.ambassadorhighway.com%2F2014%2F05%2F28%2Fworking-for-an-incompetent-boss%2F&ei=q2VCVeDEJlirgwT8xYEY&bvm=bv.92189499,d.eXY&psig=AFQjCNF6CxIjeval7Vek_j281MnEeAs0YQ&ust=1430501161846537



Teacher’s Notes

- 1) Write the word “Boss” in the center of the whiteboard and ask students in pairs to think of words/phrases they associate with this word. Have them come up and write some words around “Boss”, making a word web. Look

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- at the contributions: are they mostly positive or negative? Do quick feedback on that.
- 2) To prepare for the speaking activity, have students sort the adjectives (Worksheet 1) under the headings Good Characteristics of a Boss/Bad Characteristics of a Boss. Monitor and then do feedback, clarifying meaning and pronunciation as necessary, and eliciting opposites.
 - 3) Give each student two or three different “bad boss” tales (depending on class size): they should rank them and decide which one they think is worst. Monitor to help with vocabulary.
 - 4) Pair the students and have them re-rank, choosing a new “ #1 worst” together.
 - 5) At this point, have the pairs write the reason why they think this particular tale is the worst, using the stem “This boss is especially bad because....” Encourage them to use some of the adjectives from step 2. This step will help prepare them for the next stage, when they have to defend their choice in a larger group.
 - 6) Group into 4s, or whole class if your class is small, and let them decide on the most horrible boss of all. For groups of 4, you can now have them “present” their boss to the whole class, or for small classes, you can do a discussion about their choice whole class.
 - 6) To finish, tell a quick story about a boss you had—and feel free to share a good boss story if you want to finish the lesson on a positive note!—and then put the students in new pairs and have them share a similar story of their own. If they haven’t had a boss yet, they can instead speculate on what sort of boss they would be, if they were a boss!

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Student Worksheet 1

Look at the words in the box and decide if they describe a good boss or a bad boss. Put them in the correct column. (You may decide some of the words can go into both columns)

Caring	Ethical	Respectful
Divisive	Trustworthy	Open
Loyal	Domineering	Disengaged
Ruthless	Decisive	Steady
Clear	Manipulative	

A Good Boss is:

A Bad Boss is:

Teacher materials

Cut these up into individual stories and distribute three to each student.

1. “He made anyone late to a meeting stand in the corner for the entire time, and he had others who said anything particularly ‘stupid’ stand on their chair or the table.”
- 2)• “At the law firm I used to work at, a partner punched her secretary because she was unhappy with the way he had cut a peach for her.”
- 3)• “A guy at my old company used to make his employees ask before they could use the restroom—and he would time them. If they were gone longer than five minutes, he would add the time up at the end of the week and make them use vacation time.”
- 4)• “Years ago, I worked at a small staffing company, and the owner was a grouchy dinosaur. He caught the office manager chewing gum and made her wear it on her nose for the rest of the day.”
- 5) • “A boss did not allow an employee off for funeral leave when his father passed away. The boss’s quote: ‘We need you now. What difference does it make to him?’ ”

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6)• “I had a boss who would stand behind me and watch me type. When I made a mistake, he actually shook my chair while I was in it. I left that place in a hurry.”

7)“At my previous employer, the CEO was furious that we hadn’t fired an employee before he could get his liver transplant, as it was going to affect our health-care plan.”

8)• “Another employer would frequent gentlemen’s clubs after work and forget which parking garage he used, and he’d have me and another employee drive around DC the next morning looking for the car.”

9)• “At a former employer, people found out from a Post-it note on their computer that they were laid off.”