

Technology and Reading

Reading with Digital Fiction

We Tell Stories: Digital Fiction from Penguin
(wetellstories.co.uk/stories/week 1/)



Summary

In this activity, learners read and interact with a piece of digital fiction. This text is freely available online and provides a number of activities that can be completed at a learner's own pace. These activities help encourage engagement with, and understanding of, the text.

Aims

Within the context of promoting reading for pleasure, this activity aims:

1. To encourage readers to engage with and experience a piece of digital fiction.

Objectives

By the end of this activity, learners will have:

- Obtained specific information through detailed reading;
- Gained understanding of difficult words in the text; and
- Used the internet to find out more about the text and its author.

Method

This activity is designed to be used independently by a learner with only limited support required.

Resources

A broadband internet connection and a desktop or laptop computer.

Context/background

This activity is a way to introduce learners to a new and more interactive form of reading. It introduces the reader to this new form of online fiction by requiring the reader to do quite close reading for the first part of the story, and then encourages them to finish the story by themselves in order to find out what happens.

As well as online fiction, the internet also offers a wealth of knowledge that can support and encourage further reading. With this resource readers will explore biographical information on the author, related literature and understanding of genre.

The resource is based on Charles Cummings' *The 21Steps* from the Penguin Digital Fiction collection, *We Tell Stories*.

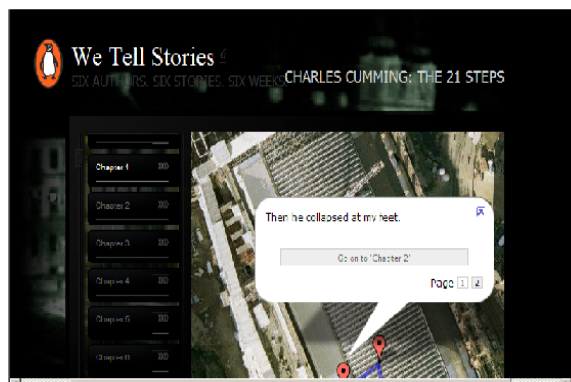
The 21 Steps

by Charles Cumming

(wetellstories.co.uk/stories/week1/)

The 21 Steps is a new **interactive** story created when Penguin (the book publisher) worked with a computer games company.

Written by the author Charles Cumming, *The 21 Steps* is the exciting story of Rick – “the wrong man in the wrong place at the wrong time”.



The story starts in St Pancras station in London when a man is shot and collapses at Rick’s feet. The story then unravels as Rick becomes involved with suspicious characters, who all seem to think he is something he is not.

Over the next few pages are some activities that are a good way to start reading and thinking about *The 21 Steps*. Have a go and see if you like digital fiction.

Let’s get started!

Open your web browser¹ and type into the address bar² at the top of the webpage: www.wetellstories.co.uk/stories/week1/ (be sure to ask for assistance here if you are not used to using the internet).



Follow the instructions on *The 21 Steps* webpage and join Rick as his adventure takes him across the map of the world.

Read the first three chapters of this story and complete these tasks...



1. Read the sentences, then choose a word from the box to fill in the gaps so that each sentence makes sense.

¹ Internet Browser: A software program that lets you see and hear what’s on the web. Examples include Firefox and Microsoft Internet Explorer.

² Address Bar: The space on the top of your browser that lets you type in the URL of a website.

ten-minute	St Pancras	Ran	better
Collapsed	Kalba	Shot	Stomach
Help	Memory stick	Know	Quick
Find	LATE	Never	Exit

Chapter 1

- A) I'd only come to _____ to see what all the fuss was about.
- B) It was only a _____ walk from my flat, and it wasn't as though I had anything _____ to do.
- C) I picked the left-hand _____ and was going through alone when _____ came towards me.
- D) I'd _____ seen the guy before in my life.
- E) Then he _____ at my feet.

Chapter 2

- A) In fact he had been _____ twice in the _____ and had about two minutes to live.
- B) But when I saw the blood on the ground I felt I had to _____.
- C) "They _____ you", was all that he managed to say. "I am Jack Kalba".
- D) I stood up and _____.

Chapter 3

- A) I knew that I could _____ access the information on the memory pen and _____ out what the hell was going on.
- B) DO NOT BE _____.



2. Find the following words in the dictionary and write their meaning.

A) Implied

B) Muster

C) Whimpering

D) Emerged

E) Vial

Finding out more...

The author

Like many other authors Charles Cumming has his own website. On his website you can learn all about the author and think about the relationship (or not) between the author's life and his writing. You can also see the other books he has written.



By going to Charles Cumming's website: www.Charlescumming.co.uk, see if you can find the answers to the questions below:

A) What year was Charles Cumming born?

B) What newspaper does he occasionally write book reviews for?

C) Which of his books have film rights been bought for?

The 21 Steps was based on a classic novel called *The 39 Steps*. Use the internet to find answers for the following questions. A good place to start would be the wetellstories.co.uk website you looked at earlier, or by doing a Google search (if you are unsure about doing a search, ask for help).

A) Who wrote the book *The 39 Steps*?

B) In what year was *The 39 Steps* written?

C) What is the name of the main character in *The 39 Steps*?



The 21 Steps has been described as a “thriller” or “spy novel”.

A) What is a thriller?

B) Name some other thriller writers

Discuss your completed work with your tutor or group leader

The next step

Now you have read the first three chapters of Charles Cumming's *The 21 Steps*, do you want to find out what happened to Rick? Or who 'they' are? If so, you will need to read the rest of the book (keep a dictionary at hand for new words).

The Reading for Pleasure suite of materials:

- CPD modules: Reading for pleasure in a number of contexts
- Storytelling: CPD unit with lesson ideas
- Families, Learning and Storytelling: Using archives for community cohesion
- Take Your Partner: Engaging emergent adult readers
- Technology and Reading: How to use blogs, wikis, iPods and e-books to promote reading
- Putting two and 2 together: Creating a bridge between literacy and numeracy learning
- Resources for libraries: Guidance on how to engage families to read for pleasure