

The third conditional

- **Language level:** Pre-intermediate +
- **Learner type:** Teens, adults
- **Time:** 30 minutes of class time + homework
- **Main activity:** Using the Internet as a corpus
- **Topic:** Phrases which begin, '*If God had wanted ...*'
- **Language:** Third conditional
- **Materials:** An image of Homer Simpson; worksheet

Preparation

For this activity, you will need:

1. Internet access in class. Here are some possibilities:
 - Set up a single online computer and get students to gather around the screen
 - Set up a single online computer with projector and screen
 - Take students to a computer room
2. Students with Internet access at home.
3. A photocopies of the **Worksheet** for each student.
4. A picture of Homer Simpson



Lesson plan

1. Find out how many vegetarians or vegans there are in the class.
2. Show the picture of Homer Simpson and introduce the cartoon character if necessary (see Wikipedia for more). Tell students that in one episode of the Simpsons, Homer uses an excuse for not being a vegetarian. Ask students if they can guess what he says.
3. Write the following grid on the board:

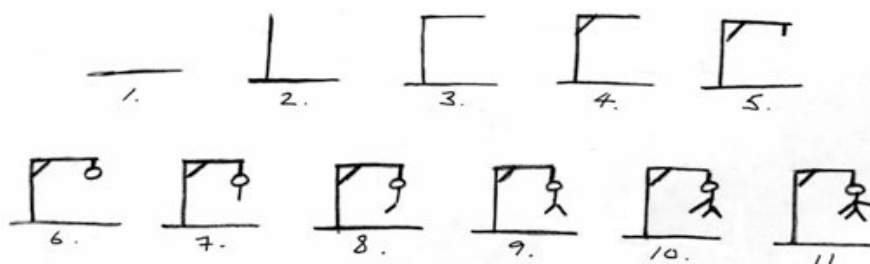
“ _____
_____, _____,
_____.”

Note that this grid represents Homer’s carnivorous justification: *“If God had wanted us to be vegetarians, he wouldn’t have made them out of meat.”* Each line in the grid represents an individual word in the quotation.

4. Use the grid to play **Word Hangman**. Instead of suggesting individual letters, students try to guess whole words that fit on the grid. To do this, they will have to concentrate and use their knowledge of grammar.

Word Hangman

- Start by adding two or three content words to the grid in the correct places (e.g. *God, vegetarians, animals*, etc).
- Ask students to suggest more words that would fit on the grid to complete Homer’s quotation.
- Whenever a student suggests a word that appears in Homer’s quotation, you (the teacher) write it on the correct line in the grid.
- Whenever a student suggests a word that doesn’t appear in Homer’s quotation, write the word on the board and add a part to the hangman diagram (below).
- Students win if they successfully manage to identify the whole quotation before making 11 incorrect suggestions.



5. Ask students what they about Homer's justification.
6. Ask students if they can think of any more quotations or example sentences that start with the words:

"If God had wanted ..."

If students are able to make any more suggestions, help with the grammar and write them on the board. If students are unable to think of any more examples, don't worry.

7. You are now going to demonstrate to your students how they can use the Internet to look for more examples. Go to your favourite search engine (Yahoo, Google, Altavista, Lycos, etc) and type the phrase into the search window. Make sure you type it between inverted commas (""):

8. Click search and you will be given a page of partially contextualised examples of the language.



9. Bring a few of the example sentences to your students' attention. For example, the page above has the following:

- *If God had wanted us to vote, he would have given us candidates.*
- *If God had wanted me otherwise, he would have created me otherwise.*
- *If God had wanted us to be concerned for the plight of toads, he would have made them cute and furry.*
- *If God had wanted you to succeed, he would have made you a BMW.*
- *If God had wanted man to play soccer, he wouldn't have given us arms.*

Note that in some cases you will have to click on the links to see the whole sentence.

10. Give out copies of the **Worksheet** and ask students to complete it for homework. Alternatively, let students complete it in an IT room if you have one.

Note that you could add a competitive element to the activity – the person who finds the most interesting examples wins.

Follow up

Take back the completed worksheets and choose the 8 funniest or most thought-provoking examples that were found. Type them, give copies to your students, and ask them to translate the sentences into their own language(s) on a separate piece of paper. Then take back the original English sentences and ask students to translate the translated sentences back into English.

Notes

In actual fact, Homer's quotation has been paraphrased. His actual words were, "*If God didn't want us to eat animals, why did he make them out of meat.*" You might want to share this with students.

In 2009, Sarah Palin angered vegans and vegetarians with a similar statement. In her memoir *Going Rogue*, she wrote: "If God had not intended for us to eat animals, how come He made them out of meat?" See link:

<http://latimesblogs.latimes.com/washington/2009/11/palins-book-sparks-republican-war-on-vegetarians.html>

Disclaimer

Some students may consider that this lesson plan trivialises religion and feel offended. Also, example sentences that students find may be sexist, homophobic, antireligious, etc. Only you can judge whether or not an activity is suitable. Teachers should:

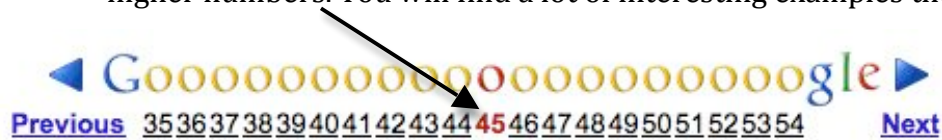
- Get to know their students.
- Make professional decisions about classroom content.
- Not hold me responsible when things go horribly wrong.

Worksheet

Use a search engine to find 8 sentences that begin with the phrase, “*If God had wanted ...*” (Don’t forget the “inverted commas”). Write the sentences in the spaces below.



- Include any additional information, only if necessary.
- Make sure you choose examples that you like and understand.
- You could also try: “*If God had intended ...*” or “*If God had meant ...*”
- Don’t just look at the first few pages that the search engine finds. Go up to the higher numbers. You will find a lot of interesting examples there.



	Any additional notes (where it came from, who said it, etc)
1. If God had wanted ...	
2.	
3.	
4.	
5.	
6.	
7.	
8.	