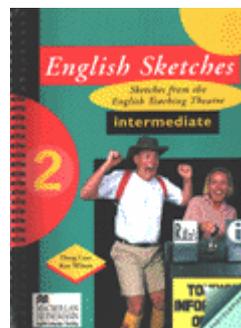
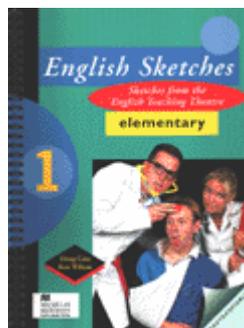


# English Sketches

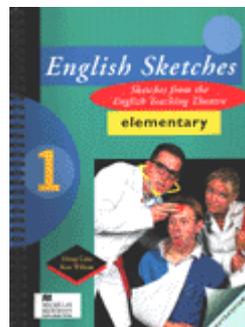
## BOOKS 1 and 2



Tapescripts and Teaching Notes

# English Sketches

## BOOK 1



Tapescripts and Teaching Notes

# I Tea break

This sketch was first performed in 1979. Towards the end of the sketch, the stage version included an explanation of the process of making tea, done in the style of a military briefing with a large visual-aid diagram. This has been omitted from the version in this book. We have also amended the end of the sketch for the version here: in the stage version, Tom returned from the café with the orders, but dropped them in the wings at the last minute, and the sketch was then followed by a 1950s-style pastiche song about how to make tea, the 'best drink of the day'.

## Words and expressions

*café, coffee; kettle, stove, match, gas, teapot; lemon tea, cream cake, whisky and soda*

The expression *Come on!* is used when someone has said something unreasonable or hard to believe.

The word *Right* is used several times in the sketch: it is a useful simple way of confirming that you have heard and understood something. Note the other expressions with *right* which occur in the sketch: *All right, Let me get this right, That's right, All right?*

## Preliminary practice

In the sketch, one person takes orders for tea, coffee, etc. from a group of people. This is not entirely straightforward as the members of the group change their minds about their orders. You can use this behaviour as a warm-up activity.

Put the students in groups of five. In each group, four students give orders (for tea, coffee, soft drinks and snacks) to the fifth, who tries to remember all the orders without making any notes. Then each of the four makes a small change in their order: for example, they can change white coffee to black coffee, or a cheese sandwich to a ham sandwich. The person taking the orders then tries to remember them again.

Then the process can be repeated, with a different person taking the orders.

## Follow-up activities

① Put the students into groups of six. In each group, one person takes orders for drinks and snacks from four others, as in the preliminary practice and in the sketch itself. The sixth person is a café owner.

The four people who give their orders can change their minds as before (more than once if they like!), and the person taking the orders notes them down on a piece of paper. This person then goes to another group and finds the café owner there, improvising with the café owner the conversation about requesting and paying for the drinks and snacks. The café owner can simply supply the drinks and snacks, or can say that certain things are not available and substitute alternatives. The 'order-taker' then returns to his/her original group and delivers the drinks and snacks, with comments about unavailable items as necessary.

② In the sketch, the characters give Tom a series of instructions for making tea (*Put some water in the kettle; Put the kettle on the stove; Light a match, etc.*), with the characters saying one instruction each. The students could give some other sets of instructions in a similar way. These instructions should be for simple tasks, such as making coffee, making a tomato sandwich, or getting to the nearest railway station. The more explicit (or even pedantic) the students make the instructions, the better.

## Props and costumes

For simple classroom re-enacting, all that is needed is a table and four chairs. The sketch can be done with or without Tom having a notebook and pencil.

For a more elaborate performance, the table could be brightened up with a tablecloth, and in addition to the four chairs, a tray of strange-looking drinks would be needed for the ending. It is useful if Tom has a notebook and pencil so that he can be seen noting the orders, and crossing out or amending his notes when someone changes their mind or adds something to their order.

# Tea break

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**Scene** A rehearsal room in a theatre  
**Characters** Five actors taking a tea break: Tom, Jerry, Jane, Martin, Sara

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**Jerry** All right. That's enough. It's time for a cup of tea.

**Tom** Oh, good. A cup of tea. I can't wait.

**Jerry, Jane, Martin and Sara sit down. There is no chair for Tom.**

**Jane** OK, Tom, make the tea.

**Tom** Me?

**Sara** Yes, make the tea.

**Tom** Make the tea? Me?

**Jane** Why not?

**Tom** All right. What do I have to do? I mean, how *do* you make tea?

**Jerry** Huh! He doesn't know how to make tea!

**Tom** OK, Jerry. How *do* you make tea?

**Jerry** Er...I don't know.

**The others laugh.**

**Martin** Listen, Tom – it's easy. Put some water in the kettle.

**Sara** Put the kettle on the stove.

**Jane** Light a match.

**Martin** Turn on the gas.

**Sara** And light the gas.

**Jane** Then put some tea in the teapot –

**Tom** It sounds a bit complicated.

**Jane** Oh, come on! It's easy!

**Martin** Listen, Tom. You don't have to make the tea.

**Tom** Oh, good.

**Martin** You can get some from the café.

**Tom** Oh. OK. See you later.

**Tom goes towards the door.**

**Jerry** Wait a minute!

**Tom** What?

Tea break 2

- Jane** You don't know what we want yet.
- Tom** Oh, yes. Sorry. What do you all want? Sara?
- Sara** I'd like a cup of tea – with no milk and no sugar.
- Tom** One tea – no milk, no sugar. Jane?
- Jane** I'd like a cup of tea – with lots of milk and no sugar.
- Tom** Lots of milk – no tea. Right.
- Jane** No *sugar*!
- Tom** No sugar. Right. Jerry?
- Jerry** I'd like a lemon tea and a big cream cake.
- Tom** A lemon cake and a cream tea.
- Jerry** Careful!
- Tom** What do *you* want, Martin?
- Martin** A whisky and soda.
- Tom** With milk and sugar?
- Martin** Of course.

**Tom wants to check the orders.**

- Tom** OK. Let me get this right. Sara, you want a cup of tea, with no milk and no sugar.
- Sara** Yes. Oh...No. On second thoughts, I think I'd prefer *coffee*.
- Tom** Coffee.
- Sara** Yes, a cup of coffee – with milk and sugar.
- Tom** Right. So – it's one *coffee* with milk and sugar, and one *tea* with milk and sugar.
- Jane** No sugar!
- Tom** No sugar. Right. Jerry, you want a lemon tea and a big cream cake.
- Jerry** That's right.
- Tom** And Martin – you want a whisky and soda.
- Martin** With milk and sugar.
- Tom** With milk and sugar. Right. OK. See you in a minute.

**Tom leaves. Very soon, he comes back.**

- Tom** Right. Here you are. One coffee and soda, one whisky and cream, one lemon and milk, and one big sugar cake. All right?
- Jane** Martin?
- Martin** Yes?
- Jane** Go and make some tea.

# The ticket inspector

2

This sketch was first performed in 1975. It was originally written for the BBC English by Radio series *Let's Speak English*, and then adapted for the ETT's stage show. The script here is exactly as used in the stage show, with one small exception: In the stage show, the names which the passenger uses were varied to suit current affairs (for example, Henry Kissinger, Leonid Brezhnev) and local personalities (for example, the Prime Minister of the country where the performance was taking place, a locally-known pop singer, etc.).

## Words and expressions

*compartment, passenger, steward, waiter, station, It's in the book (= the rule book), sir.*

The ambiguity of the expression *first-class* is exploited by the passenger in the sketch: *first-class* is a type of compartment (as opposed to a *second-class* compartment), and can also mean 'excellent'.

Note the use of stress for contrast (e.g. 'I'm not *selling* tickets, sir. I want to see *your* ticket.') and for emphasis (e.g. 'Yes, it is *very* nice, isn't it?').

## Preliminary practice

Ask students to write down an occupation on a piece of paper; walk round and make sure that the occupations are different. Collect the pieces of paper and hand them out to different students, and ask them to think about miming the occupation on their piece of paper. Then ask the students to do a double mime to the class: (1) the occupation, and (2) a leisure activity.

From the mimes, the other students should say the occupation, a simple description of what that person does (using the Present Simple tense), and the leisure activity that the person is doing now (using the Present Continuous tense). For example:

Mime 1 (window cleaner) – Class: *You're a window cleaner. You clean windows.*

Mime 2 (watching TV) – Class: *You're watching TV.*

## Follow-up activities

① In the sketch, the passenger refuses coffee and dinner. The students could improvise dialogues in which the passenger does not refuse, but buys something from the steward and makes some enquiries of the waiter; like this, for example:

*With the steward:* Buy a coffee. Ask what sandwiches there are. Choose one. Pay. Ask what time the train arrives at its destination.

*With the waiter:* Ask what time dinner is served until. Ask how much it costs. Ask what is on the menu. Ask if the train is on time.

② The students could improvise some dialogues in situations which are parallel to the sketch, such as:

Policeman, car-driver: Driver has no licence.  
Customs officer, traveller: Traveller has no passport.  
Stadium attendant, football supporter: Football supporter has no ticket.

The dialogues can follow a similar development to the sketch, incorporating the students' own ideas.

③ The students could improvise either of these conversations, after the passenger has left the train:

The man meets a friend at the station, and describes the events on the train.

The ticket inspector has a cup of tea in the buffet, and tells the steward and waiter about the events.

## Props and costumes

Whether for simple classroom re-enacting or for a more elaborate performance, two chairs facing one another will represent the compartment very well. The passenger should have a newspaper (or magazine or book) and the inspector a pencil and small notebook, kept in a pocket until needed. The students should be encouraged to mime opening and closing the door, glancing out of the window, and so on.

For a performance, a peaked hat and uniform jacket are needed for the inspector, as well as costumes for the waiter and the steward; the steward may also have a tray with coffee on it.

# The ticket inspector

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<b>Scene</b>	A compartment on a train
<b>Characters</b>	A passenger on a train A ticket inspector A steward and a waiter

---

***The passenger is sitting in a compartment on a train. He is reading a newspaper. The steward opens the door.***

<b>Steward</b>	Coffee!
<b>Passenger</b>	No, thanks.

***The passenger closes the door, and continues reading. The waiter opens the door.***

<b>Waiter</b>	Seats for dinner!
<b>Passenger</b>	No, thanks.

***The passenger closes the door again, and continues reading. The ticket inspector opens the door.***

<b>Inspector</b>	Tickets!
<b>Passenger</b>	No, thanks.
<b>Inspector</b>	Pardon?
<b>Passenger</b>	I don't want a ticket, thank you.
<b>Inspector</b>	I'm not <i>selling</i> tickets, sir.
<b>Passenger</b>	No?
<b>Inspector</b>	No, I want to see <i>your</i> ticket.
<b>Passenger</b>	Oh, I haven't got a ticket.
<b>Inspector</b>	You haven't got a ticket?
<b>Passenger</b>	No. I never buy a ticket.
<b>Inspector</b>	Why not?
<b>Passenger</b>	Well, they <i>are</i> very expensive, you know.
<b>Inspector</b>	Sir, you're travelling on a train. When people travel on a train, they always buy a ticket.
<b>Passenger</b>	Er –
<b>Inspector</b>	And <i>this</i> is a first-class compartment.
<b>Passenger</b>	Yes, it <i>is</i> very nice, isn't it?
<b>Inspector</b>	No, sir. I mean: This is a <i>first-class</i> compartment. When people travel in a first-class compartment, they always buy a first-class ticket.

***They look at each other for a moment.***

- Passenger** No, they don't.
- Inspector** What?
- Passenger** A lot of people don't buy tickets. The Queen doesn't buy a ticket, does she? Eh? Eh?
- Inspector** No, sir, but *she's* a famous person.
- Passenger** And what about you? Where's yours?
- Inspector** Mine?
- Passenger** Yes, yours. Your ticket. Have *you* got a ticket?
- Inspector** Me, sir?
- Passenger** Yes, you.
- Inspector** No, I haven't got a ticket.
- Passenger** Ooh – are you a famous person?
- Inspector** (***Flattered***) Famous? Well, not very – (***Back to normal***) Sir, *I* am a ticket inspector. I inspect tickets. Are you going to show me your ticket?
- Passenger** No, I haven't got a ticket.
- Inspector** I see.

***The ticket inspector puts his hand into his pocket.***

- Passenger** What are you going to do?
- Inspector** I'm going to write your name in my book.
- Passenger** Oh.
- Inspector** What is your name, sir?
- Passenger** Mickey Mouse.

***The inspector begins to write.***

- Inspector** Mickey –
- Passenger** – Mouse. M-O-U-S-E.

***The inspector stops writing.***

- Inspector** Your *name*, sir?
- Passenger** Karl Marx? William Shakespeare? Charles Dickens?
- Inspector** I see, sir. Well, if you're not going to tell me your name, please leave the train.
- Passenger** Pardon?
- Inspector** Leave the train.
- Passenger** I can't.
- Inspector** You can't what?
- Passenger** I can't leave the train.
- Inspector** Why not?

*The ticket inspector 3*

**Passenger** It's moving.

**Inspector** Not *now*, sir. At the next station.

**Passenger** Oh.

**Inspector** It's in the book, sir. When you travel by train, you buy a ticket, and if you don't buy a ticket, you –

**Passenger** ] – leave the train.  
**Inspector** ]

**Inspector** Here we are, sir. We're coming to a station. Please leave the train now.

**Passenger** Now?

**Inspector** Yes, sir. I'm sorry, but –

**Passenger** Oh, that's OK.

**Inspector** – it's in the book, and – What did you say?

**Passenger** I said: 'That's OK.'

**Inspector** OK?

**Passenger** Yes, this is my station. Goodbye.

***The passenger leaves the train.***

# The King of Boonland

Having decided to write a sketch including the language used for describing or finding out about a country, we invented a mythical country in the middle of the Atlantic Ocean, whose king visits Buckingham Palace. The sketch was first performed in 1981, coinciding with the marriage of Prince Charles and Lady Diana Spencer. In the stage version, the King of Boonland had come to Buckingham Palace to bring the happy couple greetings from Boonland. This has been modified for the version in this book.

## Words and expressions

*prove, coin, note, change, good wishes, present (= gift), map, ocean, population, capital*

The words *boono*, *boonito* and *Boonese* are of course invented, and the students will deduce their meaning from the context and by reference to *Boonland*.

Several Object clauses occur in the sketch (e.g. 'I think *he's deaf*'; 'I can prove *I'm the King of Boonland*'; 'You don't know *where Boonland is?*'); these should not pose any comprehension problems.

## Preliminary practice

Draw the outline of a real or imaginary country on the board. If it is a real country, ask the class if they can recognize the outline. Then ask the class what they would like to know about the country. Write their answers on the board: *capital city, population, currency, etc.* Then elicit what questions would be asked to find out this information. Encourage the class to find more than one way of asking the same thing, e.g. *What's the population?* or *How many people live there?*

If the country is real, but was not guessed from its outline, you can then reveal its name. If the country was imaginary, tell the class that they are now going to find out such things about the imaginary country of Boonland.

## Follow-up activities

① Once familiar with the sketch, the students could work in groups to invent and enact their own sketch with a parallel structure. For example:

A visitor from another imaginary country tries to get into 10 Downing Street, past the policeman at the door, in order to see the British Prime Minister.

Or: The sketch could be set in the students' country, with the visitor being an eccentric British tourist.

② The students could do some research in dictionaries, encyclopedias or reference books about countries where English is a first or official language (e.g. Australia, New Zealand, the USA, Canada, India, Nigeria). Individual students or pairs/groups of students should take one country each. They might like to complete a form, like this, for example:

Name of country: .....  
 Location: .....  
 Head of state: .....  
 Population: .....  
 Capital city: .....  
 Language(s): .....  
 Unit of currency: .....

The students could also add any other interesting items of information they discover. When they have gathered the information, they can give a brief talk to the class.

## Props and costumes

For classroom re-enacting, these props are useful: a book (to represent the map), pieces of paper (the *boono* notes), a coin (the *boonito*), a rolled sheet of paper (the banana); the King can carry his things in a plastic bag, and produce them when relevant. The guard may like to use a broom as a rifle.

For a more elaborate performance, improved versions of the props above will be needed, including a real or plastic banana. In our stage version, the coin was very large. Costumes: a uniform for the guard, possibly including a red tunic and the tall furry helmet called a 'busby'; our King had a crown, but apart from that was rather absurdly dressed (garish shirt, baggy shorts, football socks and tennis shoes).

# The King of Boonland

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<b>Scene</b>	In front of Buckingham Palace
<b>Characters</b>	A guard A sergeant The King of Boonland

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***The guard and the sergeant march to the sentry-box.***

**Sergeant** Quick march! Left, right, left, right, left, right, left, right! Halt!...Right turn!...Bradshaw!

**Guard** Sir!

**Sergeant** You are guarding Buckingham Palace.

**Guard** Yes, sir!

**Sergeant** Don't forget!

**Guard** No, sir!

***The sergeant leaves. The guard stands silently. The King of Boonland comes up to the guard.***

**King** Good morning...Hello?...Nice day, isn't it?...Do you speak English?...Sprechen Sie español?...I think he's deaf. Oh, well...

***The King starts to go into the Palace.***

**Guard** Oi!

**King** Oh! He can talk!

**Guard** Where are you going?

**King** I'm going into Buckingham Palace.

**Guard** Stand there!

**King** I don't want to stand there. I want to go in there.

**Guard** Stand there!!

**King** Oh, all right.

**Guard** Who do you think you are?

**King** I'm Fred, King of Boonland.

**Guard** Well, listen to me, Fred King –

**King** No, no, my name isn't Fred King. I am King Fred.

**Guard** Are you trying to tell me that *you* are a real king?

**King** Yes. I am the King of Boonland.

**Guard** Boonland?

**King** Yes.

**Guard** And where exactly is Boonland?

**King** Huh! You don't know where Boonland is?

**Guard** No.

**King** Oh. OK, look at my map...

**The King finds his map.**

**King** ...yes, here we are. Now, this is a map of the world.

**Guard** Yes.

**King** And Boonland is *here*.

**Guard** *That* is the Atlantic Ocean.

**King** Yes – and Boonland is in the middle.

**Guard** What? In the middle of the Atlantic?

**King** Yes.

**Guard** I don't believe you.

**King** Eh?

**Guard** I think you are trying to get into Buckingham Palace.

**King** That's right. I am.

**Guard** Well, you can't.

**King** Yes, I can. Wait a minute – I can prove I'm the King of Boonland. Look!

**Guard** It's a five-pound note.

**King** No, it's not five *pounds*.

**Guard** Isn't it?

**King** No, it's five *boonos*.

**Guard** Five *boonos*?

**King** Yes.

**The guard looks at the note.**

**Guard** Oh, yes! Five boonos. So this is the money you use in Boonland.

**King** Yes, it is.

**Guard** How many boonos are there in a pound?

**King** Half a million.

**Guard** Half a million?

**King** Yes, and there are one hundred *boonitos* in a boono.

**Guard** Now, listen to me –

**King** Ah! I can prove I'm the King of Boonland. There's a picture of me on the one-boonito coin. Um...Have you got change for ten boonitos?

**Guard** No, I haven't!

**King** Oh. It's all right. Look – one boonito coin, with a picture of me on it.

**Guard** Oh, yes. A picture of you.

**The King nods.**

**Guard** Tell me – why do you want to go into the Palace?

**King** I am here to bring the Queen the good wishes of the people of Boonland.

**Guard** The good wishes of the people of Boonland?

**King** Yes.

**Guard** How many people are there in Boonland?

**King** Well, there's me, and my mother, and –

**Guard** No, No! *All together!* What's the *population* of Boonland?

**King** Ah – well, there are the people in the capital –

**Guard** In the capital?

**King** Yes, Boonland City. And there are the people who live in the mountains – we call them 'the mountain people'.

**Guard** Very clever.

**King** And there are the people who live in the lake.

**Guard** In the lake?!

**King** Yes.

**Guard** What do you call them?

**King** Stupid.

**They laugh.**

**Guard** So, there are the people in the capital –

**King** Boonland City.

**Guard** – and the people who live in the mountains –

**King** The mountain people.

**Guard** – and the people who live in the lake.

**King** The idiots.

**Guard** How many is that all together?

**King** Um...Fourteen.

**Guard** Fourteen?!

**King** Yes. And we want to give the Queen a special Boonese present.

**Guard** A special present from Boonland?

**King** Yes – here it is!

**The King takes a banana from his bag.**

**Guard** But that's a banana.

**King** I know.

**Guard** What's so special about a banana?

**King** It isn't an ordinary banana.

**Guard** Isn't it?

**King** No. Put it in your ear.

**Guard** What?!

**King** Put the banana in your ear.

**Guard** Why?

**King** Just put the banana in your ear!

**Guard** All right.

**The guard puts the banana in his ear.**

**King** Can you hear anything?

**Guard** Oh, yes!

**King** What does it sound like?

**Guard** It sounds like an elephant with toothache.

**King** What?! *That* is the National Song of Boonland. (**He sings**) Oh, Boonland! \*/!\*&\*@::!\*/!\*

**Guard** Oi!

**King** It's all right – I'm speaking Boonese. \*/!\* is a word in Boonese.

**Guard** And what exactly does \*/!\* mean?

**King** It means 'land of sunshine and bananas'.

**The King sneezes.**

**Guard** What does *that* mean?

**King** It means I've got a bad cold. Now give me the banana, because I don't want to be late for tea with the Queen.

**Guard** Oh, right, sir. Here you are, sir.

**The guard gives back the banana.**

**King** Thank you very much. Oh, this is for you.

**Guard** What is it?

**King** Half a million boonos.

**Guard** Half a million boonos?!

**King** Yes. Go and buy yourself a cup of tea.

# 4 The restaurant

This sketch was first performed in 1979, and since then there have been several stage versions, including one in which a customer had lost her voice and the restaurant had no written menu, thus necessitating the use of a lot of mime to order the meal. Also, in most versions, music was actually supplied by Manfred Schmidt, the Spanish guitarist, in the form of a song which followed the sketch itself. The version in this book is a combination of elements from the various stage versions.

## Words and expressions

*trattoria, reservation, food, menu, manager, service (not) included, take-away service, Look here (used to begin an objection)*

Note the expressions *It must be a mistake* (used to refer to a specific mistake – here, a misprint) and *There must be some mistake* (used when trying to resolve a confusion or a misunderstanding in a conversation). Also note the formal tone of *Allow me to...* and the ironic tone of *I don't know. I only work here.*

## Preliminary practice

Here is an activity using mime to show what you want to eat, as if in a restaurant, having lost your voice.

Put the class into pairs or groups and then give each group a piece of paper on which is written a three-course menu. (The menus for the various pairs or groups should be different, although some dishes may appear on more than one menu.) Give the students a few moments to think about how they could mime the dishes so that someone else would understand.

The groups then mime their dishes for the rest of the class to guess. Group mime takes away the threat of embarrassment, and allows students to help each other by adding extra information.

## Follow-up activities

① In groups (of four, for example), the students could simply practise ordering from a menu. One student is the waiter and the others the customers, ordering and asking for explanations as necessary. You could provide simple menus, like this:

<b>MENU</b>		
<b>Starters</b>		
Tomato soup	Prawn cocktail	Grapefruit juice
<b>Main dishes</b>		
Roast beef	Grilled chicken	Fish pie
<b>Desserts</b>		
Ice-cream	Apple pie	Fresh fruit

The students could add their own ideas to the menus, e.g. invented dishes such as 'vampireburgers' which will definitely need some explanation from the waiter.

② The students could build on the preliminary practice activity and produce a sketch like our earlier version mentioned in the introductory note above: The students work in pairs; in each pair, one student is the waiter in a restaurant which has no written menu; the other student is a customer who has lost his/her voice. The customers thus have to explain what they want, ask questions, etc. entirely in mime, and the waiters have to work out what is intended. The sketch should comprise arriving, asking for a table for one, finding that there is no written menu, miming the dishes desired (a starter, a main dish, a dessert, and a drink), eating, paying the bill and leaving.

## Props and costumes

For classroom re-enacting, these props are useful: a newspaper (or a sheet of paper to represent it), perhaps with the details which **B** reads out to **A** pasted inside it; a table and two chairs; a piece of paper or card (the menu); a pencil; and a sandwich in cellophane (or something to represent it, e.g. a book). Manfred can mime his guitar.

For a more elaborate performance, improved versions of the props listed above will be needed, e.g. an English newspaper if possible; a tablecloth and items on the table (cutlery, possibly a vase of flowers, etc.), a guitar. Costumes: normal clothes for the customers; perhaps a smart dinner-jacket for the manager; a cabaret costume for Manfred, perhaps with some Spanish and some German elements.

# The restaurant

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<b>Scene</b>	The customers' home in London, and then a restaurant in London
<b>Characters</b>	Customer A Customer B The manager of the restaurant Manfred Schmidt, a Spanish guitarist

---

**A and B are at home.**

- Customer A** Let's go to a restaurant tonight.
- Customer B** OK.
- Customer A** Somewhere different.
- Customer B** All right. Let's have a look in the newspaper.

**B opens the newspaper.**

- Customer B** Er... Cinemas...Theatres...Restaurants. Ooh, this sounds nice. (**Reading**) 'London's newest restaurant. The *Trattoria Romantica*.'
- Customer A** It sounds good.
- Customer B** 'The *Trattoria Romantica*. The best French restaurant in London.'
- Customer A** French?
- Customer B** Yes.
- Customer A** '*Trattoria Romantica*' sounds Italian.
- Customer B** It says *French* here.
- Customer A** What else does it say?
- Customer B** 'Open every evening –'
- Customer A** Good.
- Customer B** '– from 7.30 to 7.45.'
- Customer A** What? Fifteen minutes?
- Customer B** It must be a mistake.
- Customer A** I hope so. Anything else?
- Customer B** Yes. 'Music every evening –'
- Customer A** Good.
- Customer B** '– from our Spanish guitarist –'
- Customer A** Spanish guitarist?
- Customer B** '– Manfred Schmidt.'
- Customer A** Manfred Schmidt?!
- Customer B** Yes. Oh, and there's a picture of the manager.

- Customer A** What's his name?  
**Customer B** Stavros Papadopoulos.  
**Customer A** Stavros Papadopoulos?  
**Customer B** Yes.  
**Customer A** But that's a Greek name.  
**Customer B** Yes.  
**Customer A** So it's an *Italian* restaurant, serving *French* food...The *Spanish* guitarist has got a *German* name...And the manager's *Greek*.  
**Customer B** That's right. It sounds very international. Let's try it.  
**Customer A** All right.

**Later. They arrive at the restaurant.**

- Customer B** Well, here we are – the *Trattoria Romantica*.  
**Customer A** There's no one here. (**Calling**) Hello?

**The manager appears. He is not very friendly.**

- Manager** Yes?  
**Customer A** Oh, good evening. Is this the *Trattoria Romantica*?  
**Manager** I don't know. I only work here.  
**Customer A** Pardon?  
**Manager** Yes, yes, yes. This is the *Trattoria Romantica*, but we're closed for lunch.  
**Customer B** Closed for lunch? But it's nine o'clock.  
**Manager** Ah. In that case, we're closed for breakfast.  
**Customer B** It's nine o'clock in the evening.  
**Manager** (**Friendly**) Yes, of course it is. Just a little joke. Allow me to introduce myself. I am Stavros Papadopoulos, the manager of the *Trattoria Romantica*. What can I do for you?  
**Customer B** We'd like a table for two, please.  
**Manager** Have you got a reservation?  
**Customer B** Er...No.  
**Manager** Ah. That's a problem.  
**Customer A** But the restaurant is empty.  
**Manager** Is it? Oh, yes. Er...a table for two...

**He looks around the restaurant.**

- Manager** Yes. Here you are – a lovely table for two.  
**Customer A** Thank you.

**A and B sit down at the table.**

- Manager** Is everything all right?

- Customer B** Yes, thank you.
- Manager** Good. That's £12.50, please.
- Customer B** What?
- Manager** £12.50.
- Customer A** What for?
- Manager** For the chairs.
- Customer A** The chairs?!
- Manager** Yes – £6.25 each.
- Customer B** There must be some mistake.
- Manager** Oh, sorry – £6.30. That's £12.60 altogether. And of course £37 for the table.
- Customer B** £37 for the table?!
- Manager** That's...er...£49.60 altogether.
- Customer A** Look here –
- Manager** Service not included.
- Customer B** Service?!
- Manager** Would you like to pay separately or together?
- Customer A** Look – we don't *want* the table or the chairs.
- Manager** Oh, you want to sit on the floor.
- Customer B** No, we don't want to *take* them *away*.
- Manager** That's good. We don't have a take-away service.
- Customer B** We want to sit here and eat something.
- Manager** Eat something?
- Customer B** Yes.
- Manager** Ah.
- Customer B** Can we see the menu, please?
- Manager** Er...yes. There you are.

**He gives them a very small menu.**

- Customer A** It's a very small menu.
- Manager** It's a very small restaurant. Now, what would you like?
- Customer B** (**Looking at the menu**) Let's see...(Reading) 'Egg and chips. Double egg and chips. Double egg and double chips.'
- Customer A** Um...Isn't this a *French* restaurant?
- Manager** Oh, yes. Sorry. Give me the menu.
- The manager takes the menu.**
- Manager** Thank you. Have you got a pencil?
- Customer B** Here you are.

**B gives the manager a pencil.**

**Manager** Thank you.

**He writes on the menu.**

**Manager** There – a French menu.

**He gives the menu back to B.**

**Customer B** (**Reading**) 'Oeuf et pommes frites. Deux oeufs et pommes frites. Deux oeufs et deux pommes frites.'

**B puts the menu on the table.**

**Customer A** What if you don't like eggs?

**Manager** Have the chips.

**Customer B** What if you don't like chips?

**Manager** Have the eggs.

**Customer A** What if you don't like eggs or chips?

**Manager** Have a sandwich.

**Customer B** A sandwich?

**Manager** Yes. I've got one here in my pocket.

**He puts a sandwich on the table.**

**Customer B** Thank you. Er...what's *in* this sandwich?

**Manager** Sand.

**Customer A** } Sand?!  
**Customer B** }

**Manager** Yes, sand. That's why it's called a sandwich – because of the sand which is inside it.

**Customer A** (**To B**) Come on, let's go.

**Manager** What's the matter? You're not going already, are you?

**Customer B** Yes.

**Manager** Why?

**Customer A** Because this must be the worst restaurant in London.

**Manager** No, it isn't.

**Customer B** Isn't it?

**Manager** No. I've got another one round the corner. It's much worse than this one. Anyway, people don't come here for the food.

**Customer A** I'm not surprised.

**Manager** No, they come here for the music.

**Customer B** The music?

**Manager** Yes. Allow me to present Manfred Schmidt and his Spanish guitar.

**Manfred comes in with his guitar.**

- Manfred** Olé! Guten Abend, meine Damen und Herren!
- Customer A** Stavros?
- Manager** Yes?
- Customer A** What can Manfred play?
- Manager** Anything you like.
- Customer A** Really?
- Manager** Yes, anything at all.
- Customer A** Good. Tell him to play football.
- Manager** Football? What do you mean?
- Customer A** We're leaving. Goodbye.
- Manager** Oh, goodbye. Do come again. Don't forget to tell your friends!

**A and B leave the restaurant.**

- Manager** That's the trouble with English people, Manfred.
- Manfred** What's that, Stavros?
- Manager** They don't know a good restaurant when they see one.

# 5 The doctor

Over the years, we have written several sketches set in doctors' consulting-rooms. The first was in 1978 and involved two patients who always spoke together, saying exactly the same thing; in 1986, we had a sketch concerning two rather disconcerting surgeons. The sketch in this book was first performed in 1988. We have simplified the opening section somewhat: the stage version involves considerable confusion between the telephone, a banana in a fruit-bowl, knocking at the door and the student having entered the room while the doctor thinks she is still on the phone.

## Words and expressions

*student-doctor, patient, examine, take (someone's) temperature, feel (someone's) pulse, arm, back, cough (vb./n.), remedy (n.), rub*

The sketch includes a pun on the word *patient*, as a noun, meaning someone visiting a doctor, and as an adjective, meaning the opposite of 'impatient'. The word *wrong* occurs in several expressions: *Find out what's wrong, There's nothing wrong with..., I know what's wrong with him.*

## Preliminary practice

Collections of jokes often include a lot about doctors. Find some which consist of just two lines – the patient speaking and the doctor replying – like these:

*Doctor, I've swallowed a pencil: what shall I do? – Use a pen.*

*Doctor, I think I've become invisible. – Who said that?*

*Doctor, no one is interested in me. – Next!*

*Doctor, I've had this problem before. – Well, you've got it again.*

Write the doctor's utterances on individual pieces of paper, and do the same for the patient's utterances. Distribute the pieces of paper to the students, who then find the person with the other half of their joke. When the pairs have been formed, they can deliver their jokes so the whole class can hear them.

## Follow-up activities

① In pairs, the students could improvise some conversations between a patient and a doctor. Before starting, the patients decide what is wrong with them, and how long they have had the problem – or this information could be provided on cue-cards. In the conversations, the doctors should ask questions to find out about the problems, the patients should ask for advice about treatment, and the doctors should give some advice. (The advice need not always be serious; it could be to take a holiday, to find a new job, or to move to a different house, for example, even if this is inappropriate to the patients' problems.) Finally, the patients thank the doctors and leave.

② The previous activity could be expanded into an activity for groups of three students: one student is a patient, another is the doctor's receptionist, and the third is the doctor. In each group, the patient 'telephones' the receptionist and makes an appointment to see the doctor. The patient then arrives and tells the receptionist about the appointment. The receptionist takes the patient in to see the doctor, and the activity proceeds as before.

③ A variation (using either of the formats above) would be to set the sketch at a vet's, with the customers bringing a sick animal rather than being patients at a doctor's.

## Props and costumes

For simple classroom re-enacting, all that is needed is a table, two chairs, and a sheet of paper (the list of questions); a telephone on the table is useful, and the patient may like to improvise a sling (using a scarf, for example).

For a performance, improved versions of those props will be needed (the list of questions could be on a clipboard, the patient should have a proper sling, and note that the telephone has to ring), plus a stethoscope and bottle of medicine for the doctor. Costumes: white coats for the doctor and student-doctor; clothes for the patient as desired.

# The doctor

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<b>Scene</b>	A doctor's consulting-room
<b>Characters</b>	The doctor A student-doctor A patient

---

***The doctor is sitting at his desk. The telephone rings: the student-doctor is calling.***

- Doctor** Hello?
- Student** Doctor Watson?
- Doctor** Yes?
- Student** My name's Smith.
- Doctor** What's the matter with you?
- Student** Nothing, doctor. I'm fine.
- Doctor** Really? In that case, why are you calling?
- Student** Well, I'm a doctor.
- Doctor** You're a doctor?
- Student** Actually, I'm a student-doctor.
- Doctor** You're a student?
- Student** – doctor.
- Doctor** Yes?
- Student** Er...I'm a student-doctor.
- Doctor** Ah! A student-doctor!
- Student** Yes, I'm studying to be a doctor, doctor.
- Doctor** A doctor-doctor? What's a doctor-doctor?
- Student** Well, *you're* a doctor, doctor.
- Doctor** Am I?
- Student** Yes, and I'd like to come and watch you working.
- Doctor** Fine. Come any time. Goodbye.

***The doctor puts the telephone down. There is a knock at the door.***

**Doctor** Come in!

***The patient enters. He has one arm in a sling.***

**Patient** Good morning, doctor.

**Doctor** (**To the patient**) Ah, you must be the student-doctor.

**Patient** Pardon?

**Doctor** Student-doctor.

**Patient** Student-doctor? No, actually, I'm –

**Doctor** Sit down.

**The patient sits down.**

**Doctor** Now, you want to watch me working.

**Patient** Er...No, actually, I'm not a –

**There is another knock at the door.**

**Doctor** Ah. That'll be my first patient. Come in!

**The student-doctor comes in.**

**Student** Good morning, doctor.

**Doctor** Good morning. (**To the student-doctor, indicating the patient**) This is a student-doctor. He's come to watch me working. (**To the patient, indicating the student-doctor**) This is a patient. I'm going to ask her a few questions.

**Student** Doctor?

**Doctor** Yes?

**Student** I'm a student-doctor.

**Doctor** Really?

**Student** Yes.

**Doctor** (**To the patient, indicating the student-doctor**) She's a student-doctor. Like you.

**Patient** I'm not a student-doctor.

**Doctor** You're not a student?

**Patient** – doctor.

**Doctor** Yes?

**Student** I think he's a patient, doctor.

**Doctor** A patient doctor? That's marvellous! Patient doctors are the best kind.

**Student** No! I'm a student-doctor – he's a patient.

**Doctor** I'm a student-doctor – he's a patient.

**Patient** No! I'm a patient – you're a doctor.

**Doctor** I'm a patient – you're a doctor.

**Patient** } No!!  
**Student** }

**Student** You're a doctor – he's a patient!

**Doctor** You're a doctor – he's a patient!

**Patient** } No!!  
**Student** }

**Patient** You're a doctor – she's a student-doctor.

**Doctor** You're a doctor – she's a student-doctor.

**Patient** }  
**Student** } No!!

**Student** (**Indicating**) Student-doctor...doctor...patient, doctor.

**Patient** (**Indicating**) Patient...doctor...student-doctor, doctor.

**Doctor** (**Pointing in various directions**) Doctor, doctor, doctor, doctor, doctor, doctor!  
(**Indicating correctly**) Patient...doctor...student-doctor.

**Patient** }  
**Student** } Yes!!

**Doctor** Well, I'm glad that's all clear. Goodbye.

**Student** Doctor?

**Doctor** Yes?

**Student** I think you should examine the patient.

**Doctor** Examine him?

**Student** Find out what's wrong.

**Doctor** What a good idea! Now, when you examine a patient, the first thing you must do is tell the patient to sit down. You try it.

**Student** (**To the patient**) Sit down.

**Patient** I'm already sitting down.

**Student** He's already sitting down.

**Doctor** Ah, this is a very common problem. If the patient is already sitting down, *don't* tell him to sit down.

**Student** Oh. (**To the patient**) Don't sit down.

**Patient** Oh. Right.

**The patient stands up.**

**Doctor** Sit down!

**Patient** Right.

**The patient sits down.**

**Doctor** Now, when the patient is sitting down, what's the first thing you should do?

**Student** Take his temperature?

**She feels the patient's forehead.**

**Doctor** No.

**Student** Feel his pulse?

**She feels the patient's pulse (on his good arm).**

**Doctor** No.

**Student** Tell him to say 'Aah'?

The doctor 4

- Doctor** Pardon?
- Student** Say 'Aah'.
- Doctor** 'Aah!'
- Student** No – him.
- Doctor** 'Himmm!'
- Student** No! Tell *him* to say 'Aah'.
- Doctor** Ah! Him! (**To the patient**) Say 'Aah'.
- Patient** Pardon?
- Doctor** Say 'Aah'.
- Patient** Aah.
- Doctor** Good!
- Patient** Actually, doctor, the problem is my arm –
- Doctor** Now we can ask the patient some questions.
- Student** Questions?
- Doctor** Yes – and here they are.

**The doctor gives the student-doctor a list of questions.**

- Doctor** Go on – you can ask him the questions.
- Student** Oh. Right.
- Doctor** (**To the patient**) Now listen very carefully, because we have some very important questions for you.
- Patient** But doctor, the problem is –
- Doctor** (**To the student-doctor**) Read the first question.
- Student** Are you Mrs Elisabeth Robinson of 45 Shakespeare Avenue?
- Patient** No.
- Doctor** Correct.
- Student** Is this your first baby?
- Patient** What?
- Doctor** Try the next one.
- Student** What is the capital of Uruguay?
- Patient** Montevideo.
- Doctor** Correct. Well, there's nothing wrong with his South American geography.
- Patient** But doctor –
- Doctor** You're fine. You can go now.
- Student** Doctor!
- Doctor** Yes?
- Student** I really think you should examine the patient.
- Doctor** Good idea.

**The doctor places his stethoscope on the patient's chest.**

**Doctor** Cough.

**The patient coughs.**

**Doctor** I know what's wrong with him.

**Student** What?

**Doctor** He's got a cough.

**Student** He's got a cough?!

**Doctor** Yes – and I, Doctor Watson, have got the answer.

**The doctor produces a bottle of medicine from his pocket.**

**Doctor** (**Pointing at the bottle**) 'Doctor Watson's Universal Cough Remedy.'

**Student** 'Doctor Watson's Universal Cough Remedy?'

**Doctor** Yes.

**Student** But what about his *arm*?

**Doctor** Er... (**Pointing at the bottle again**) 'Doctor Watson's Universal Cough *and Arm* Remedy.'

**Student** 'Universal Cough *and Arm* Remedy?'

**Doctor** Yes – and this is how it works. He can drink it –

**He makes the patient drink some of the medicine.**

**Patient** Aaargh!

**Doctor** – but it tastes horrible. *Or* he can rub it on his back –

**He rubs some of the medicine on the patient's back.**

**Doctor** – but he must mix it with water first.

**Patient** Aa...aaa...aaargh!

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**Doctor** As you can see, he's feeling much better now. All he needs is six months in hospital. Let's take him away.

**Student** Where? To the hospital?

**Doctor** No, to the bus stop. Come on!

***The doctor and the student-doctor help the patient to his feet, and they all leave.***

# Gussett and Rose

# 6

This sketch was first performed in 1975. It began as a dialogue written for the Belgian magazine for learners of English, *English Pages*. The idea was to have a dialogue which *ended* with the words 'How do you do?', rather than *beginning* with those words. This dialogue was then rewritten for the ETT's stage show, and used as a short link between two sketches. It proved a popular item with audiences and was expanded slightly to become a sketch in its own right.

## Words and expressions

wife, married; Army, Navy, architect, taxi-driver, *How are you, then?* (= So, how are you?), *Actually, .../... , as a matter of fact.* (used when correcting someone)

The sketch includes a number of idiomatic expressions: *Goodness me!* and *Well I never!*, expressing surprise; *It's a small world*, commenting on a coincidence; *Doesn't time fly!* and *It seems like yesterday...*, commenting on the passage of time.

## Preliminary practice

The two characters in the sketch ask each other a lot of questions in an attempt to find out if they have met before. So a simple game of 'Twenty Questions' will be useful preparation for the students.

Ask individual students to think of a famous person (preferably someone who is still alive). The rest of the class then ask the individual students questions to find out who their famous person is. Questions must be the kind which can be answered Yes or No, rather than questions beginning *What...?*, *Where...?*, etc.

Remember that it is always better for the students to 'be' their famous person, so that the questions are of the type *Are you a politician?*, *Do you live in this country?*, and so on (rather than *Is he/she a politician?*, *Does he/she live in this country?*, and so on).

## Follow-up activities

① For some further practice of meeting and introducing people, put the students into groups of three: student **A** will be the 'introducer'; students **B** and **C** have not met before. Give each group a set of cue-cards which assign particular identities to **B** and **C**: their names, the cities in which they live, their jobs and their hobbies. **A** is given details which are not all correct, so that **B** and **C** will have to correct the introductions. Here are examples of what the cue-cards could look like:

CARD FOR B	CARD FOR A	CARD FOR C
Albert Smith.	Arthur Smith.	Doris Brown.
Born in Liverpool,	Liverpool.	Birmingham.
living in London.	Teacher.	Nurse.
Retired teacher.	Climbing.	Swimming.
Climbing.	←	→

② Put the students into pairs. Each student imagines that they have to introduce their partner as a celebrity on a TV show, and writes a few lines as their 'script' for doing this. (Real names can be kept, but other details – job, nationality, etc. – must be invented.) The students do not show their 'script' to their partners or to other members of the class. Then each student introduces their celebrity to the rest of the class; the celebrities deny each piece of information given about them; for example:

- *I'd like to introduce Sergio Rossi, the film actor.*
- *Actually, I'm not a film actor – I'm a film **director**.*

## Props and costumes

This sketch needs no props at all, either for simple classroom re-enacting or for a more elaborate performance.

For a performance, costumes can be as desired by the students. The only limitations are that the two characters are English, and that, when they meet, they are outdoors (in the street) – thus they could be wearing outdoor clothes, perhaps including hats, for example.

# Gussett and Rose

---

**Scene** A street  
**Characters** Two Englishmen: Albert Gussett and Harold Rose

---

***The two men pass in the street.***

**Rose** Goodness me!  
**Gussett** Well I never!  
**Rose** Herbert Bishop!  
**Gussett** Arthur Trigwell!  
**Rose** No...Actually my name's Harold Rose.  
**Gussett** I'm Albert Gussett, as a matter of fact.  
**Rose** Albert Gussett. Of course.  
**Gussett** And you're Harold Rose. Of course you are.  
**Rose** Well I never!  
**Gussett** Goodness me!

***They hesitate for a moment.***

**Rose** Well, how are you, then?  
**Gussett** Fine, fine. How's Alice?  
**Rose** Alice?  
**Gussett** Yes, Alice. Your wife's name's Alice, isn't it?  
**Rose** No, no...Gloria, actually.  
**Gussett** Oh, yes. Gloria Trigwell.  
**Rose** Er...Rose.  
**Gussett** Rose Trigwell?  
**Rose** No. Gloria Rose.  
**Gussett** Gloria Rose. Of course. How is she?  
**Rose** She's very well. How's...er...  
**Gussett** Doris?  
**Rose** Yes, Doris, your wife. How is she?  
**Gussett** Oh, she's very well –  
**Rose** Good, good.  
**Gussett** – but she isn't my wife.  
**Rose** No?

**Gussett** I'm not married.

**Rose** Oh.

**Gussett** Doris is my sister.

**Rose** Oh, yes.

**They hesitate again for a moment.**

**Rose** Well, it *is* a small world, isn't it, Herbert?

**Gussett** Albert.

**Rose** Albert, yes. It seems like yesterday –

**Gussett** Yes, it certainly does...

**Rose** – when we were at that awful school together.

**Gussett** School?

**Rose** Yes. Doesn't time fly?

**Gussett** We weren't at school together.

**Rose** Do you remember that awful English teacher with black teeth?

**Gussett** We *weren't* at school together.

**Rose** Weren't we?

**Gussett** No, we were in the Army together.

**Rose** We weren't.

**Gussett** Weren't we?

**Rose** I was in the Navy.

**Gussett** Oh.

**They hesitate again for a moment.**

**Rose** Er...Albert, I mean *Herbert* –

**Gussett** No, no, Albert's my name.

**Rose** Er, yes...Albert, how *do* we know each other?

**Gussett** I was just wondering about that myself, er...

**Rose** Harold.

**Gussett** Yes, Harold. Er...Are you an architect?

**Rose** Yes! Are *you* an architect?

**Gussett** No, I'm a taxi-driver.

**Rose** Oh.

**They hesitate again.**

**Gussett** Are you interested in boxing?

**Rose** No, not at all.

**Gussett** Ah.

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**Rose** Do you go to the theatre?

**Gussett** I went once – about twenty years ago.

**Rose** I see.

**Gussett** Do you take your holidays in Brighton?

**Rose** No, never.

**Gussett** Mmm.

**Rose** Do you play golf?

**Gussett** No, I don't.

**Rose** Well, that's not it then.

***They hesitate again.***

**Rose** Do you know, Albert, I don't think we've met before.

**Gussett** No, you're right. We haven't.

**Rose** Well, er...I'm Harold Rose.

**Gussett** And I'm Albert Gussett.

**Rose** How do you do?

**Gussett** How do you do?

***They shake hands.***

# The passport office

This sketch was first performed in 1980. The version given here is very close to the stage version: we have omitted one or two purely visual jokes and a short section addressed to the audience, but apart from those amendments the complete text of the stage version remains intact in this book. This sketch is an example of the type of 'two-person confrontation' which we enjoy very much – the two people being a person having an official function of some kind and a customer, applicant, etc., one or both of whom behave in an unusual way.

## Words and expressions

*form* (n.), *cross...out*; *Where were you born?*  
*family name, first name, address, nationality*

The clerk uses the form-of-address *Miss* before the family name: *Well, Miss Schwarzkopf...* The use of *Ms* (pronounced /mɪz/ or /mæz/), avoiding *Mrs* or *Miss*, is now preferred by many speakers.

The word *Look* is used in the sentence *Look – where do you live?* as a way of being insistent when attempting to make something clear to someone.

## Preliminary practice

In this activity, half the students (Students **A**) are travellers who have lost their passports; the other half (Students **B**) are people who have found the passports. Give each Student **A** an identity, i.e. a piece of paper bearing a name, a nationality and an occupation. Some of the details should 'overlap'; for example:

Name: <i>Bill Jones.</i>	Name: <i>Bill Jones.</i>
Nationality: <i>British.</i>	Nationality: <i>American.</i>
Occupation: <i>Doctor.</i>	Occupation: <i>Taxi-driver.</i>

Distribute among Students **B** the corresponding 'passports', i.e. pieces of card, on each of which is written the information from one of the pieces of paper. The students circulate, with Students **B** asking Students **A** *Are you Bill Jones?*, etc., until all the passports have been returned to their owners.

## Follow-up activities

① The students could improvise an alternative version of the sketch in groups of four. One student takes the role of the clerk, and sits at a table with a form. This form could simply have the same headings as in the sketch (*Name, Address, Nationality*), or could be expanded to include other headings – some or all of these, for example:

Family name: ..... Height: .....  
First name(s): ..... Colour of eyes: .....  
Date of birth: ..... Colour of hair: .....  
Place of birth: ..... Address: .....  
Nationality: ..... Telephone number: .....

The other three students independently decide who they are, e.g. a famous contemporary or historical figure. They are then each questioned by the clerk. (The clerk may ask questions in any appropriate way, e.g. *What is your place of birth?* or *Where were you born?*) This is an often amusing activity, as only the individual applicants know their identity in advance.

② For another alternative version, the students (in pairs) could follow the format of the original sketch, but substitute other eccentric reactions to the family name and first name; i.e. instead of using high and low voices, they could sneeze, whistle, cough, make an animal noise, etc. The applicants should not tell the clerks in advance what sounds they are going to use.

## Props and costumes

For classroom re-enacting, the following props are useful: a table and two chairs, a sheet of paper (to represent the form), a pen or pencil, pieces of paper (to represent the money), a small notebook (to represent the passport). The clerk could have a pile of notebooks on the table.

A more elaborate performance would require improved versions of the props noted above; it is also useful to have a sign reading 'Passport Office', either on the table or (larger) free-standing on the floor. Regarding costumes: the man should be wearing a raincoat because of the joke which refers to it.

# The passport office

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<b>Scene</b>	A passport office in Britain
<b>Characters</b>	The passport office clerk A man who wants a passport The man's girl-friend

---

***The clerk is working at her desk. The man comes in and coughs twice.***

**Clerk** Oh, good morning. Can I help you?

**Man** Yes. Have you got any passports?

**Clerk** Yes, we have.

**Man** Oh, good. The shop next door hasn't got any. I'd like twenty, please.

**Clerk** Twenty?

**Man** Yes. All different colours.

**Clerk** I'm sorry. That's impossible.

**Man** All right. All the *same* colour.

**Clerk** No, no – it's impossible to have twenty passports.

**Man** Is it?

**Clerk** Yes. You can only have one.

**Man** Oh, all right. One passport, please.

***He offers some money.***

**Clerk** Just a minute. It isn't as easy as that. You have to answer some questions.

**Man** Oh.

**Clerk** What kind of passport do you want?

**Man** What kind of passport?

**Clerk** Yes.

**Man** A big round yellow one.

**Clerk** We've only got small blue rectangular ones. When I say 'What kind?', I mean: How long?

**Man** How long?

**Clerk** How long? Five years? Ten years?

**Man** I want it *today*.

**Clerk** No, I mean: How long do you want it to last?

**Man** How long do I want it to last?

**Clerk** Yes.

**Man** A hundred years.

**Clerk** A hundred years?!

**Man** Yes.

**Clerk** You can't have a passport for a hundred years.

**Man** Why not?

**Clerk** Er...I don't know. All right – a passport for a hundred years. Now, we have to fill in this form. Er...Do sit down.

**Man** Oh, thank you.

**He sits down.**

**Clerk** Now...first question. Name.

**Man** William Shakespeare.

**Clerk** William Shakespeare?

**Man** Yes.

**Clerk** Is that your name?

**Man** No, but it's a very nice name.

**Clerk** Yes, but what's *your* name?

**Man** Oh, *my* name. Sorry.

**Clerk** Well, what is it?

**Man** Smith.

**Clerk** (**Writing**) Smith.

**Man** (**In a high voice**) That's right. Smith. S-M-I-T-H.

**Clerk** Pardon?

**Man** Smith, that's right.

**Clerk** And what's your first name, Mr Smith?

**Man** (**In a high voice**) Charles.

**Clerk** Pardon?

**Man** Charles.

**Clerk** (**Writing**) Charles.

**Man** (**In a low voice**) That's right.

**The clerk is puzzled.**

**Clerk** Mr Smith?

**Man** (**In a high voice**) Yes?

**Clerk** There's something rather strange about the way you speak.

**Man** Is there?

**Clerk** Yes. When I say your family name –

**Man** Smith.

**Clerk** Yes, Smith –

**Man** (*In a high voice*) Yes?

**Clerk** Your voice goes up.

**Man** Does it?

**Clerk** Yes. And when I say your first name –

**Man** Charles.

**Clerk** Yes, Charles –

**Man** (*In a low voice*) Yes?

**Clerk** Your voice goes down.

**Man** Er...yes, it's true. It's a very big problem when I'm having a conversation.

**Clerk** That's right.

**Man** But there *is* a solution.

**Clerk** What is it?

**Man** You can call me by a different name.

**Clerk** A different name?

**Man** Yes. Then we can have a normal conversation.

**Clerk** Oh, good. What name would you like?

**Man** Brunhilde.

**Clerk** What?

**Man** Call me Brunhilde.

**Clerk** Brunhilde –

**Man** – Schwarzkopf.

**Clerk** I beg your pardon?

**Man** Schwarzkopf. Brunhilde Schwarzkopf. Just write it down.

**Clerk** (*Suspicious*) Write it down?

**Man** Oh, yes – you *must* write it down. You see, if I see my *real* name on a piece of paper, my voice goes funny. (*In a high voice*) Look, there it is –

**He taps the form.**

**Man** (*In a high voice*) – Quick! Smith! Cross it out! Cross it out!

**Clerk** Oh. Right.

**The clerk crosses out his name.**

**Man** That's better.

**Clerk** (*Writing*) Now...Brunhilde Schwarzkopf. Well, Miss Schwarzkopf, there are one or two more questions. Er...Question two: Address.

**Man** Pardon?

**Clerk** Address.

**Man** No, it isn't.

**Clerk** What?

- Man** It isn't a dress. I'm not wearing a dress. It's a raincoat.
- Clerk** No, no – address, address!
- Man** No, no – a raincoat, a raincoat!
- Clerk** Look – where do you *live*?
- Man** Oh, where do I *live*?
- Clerk** Yes.
- Man** Round the corner.
- Clerk** Can you be more exact?
- Man** Er...*just* round the corner.
- Clerk** Brunhilde! What is your address?
- Man** OK, OK. My address is 14...Brunhilde Street.
- Clerk** (**Writing**) 14, Brun – Ah! That means 14 *Smith* Street, doesn't it?
- Man** (**In a high voice**) No – 14, *Charles* Street.
- Clerk** 14, Charles Street.
- Man** (**In a low voice**) That's right.
- Clerk** Now...nationality.
- Man** Er...just write 'British'.
- Clerk** Are you British?
- Man** It doesn't matter. Just write 'British'.
- Clerk** Brunhilde, are you or are you not British?
- Man** That is a very good question.
- Clerk** And what is the answer?
- Man** It's a bit complicated.
- Clerk** All right, then. Let's start at the beginning. Where were you born?
- Man** I don't remember.
- Clerk** You don't remember.
- Man** No.
- Clerk** Why not?
- Man** I was very young at the time.
- Clerk** Well, what about your father and mother?
- Man** They were older than me.
- Clerk** Brunhilde! Tell me about your mother.
- Man** She was very nice...tall, with a long black beard.
- Clerk** Your mother?
- Man** Oh no, that was my father...
- Clerk** (**Angry**) All right! That's enough! I don't want to hear any more! Just take your passport –
- Man** Oh, thank you.

The passport office 5

**She gives him a passport.**

**Clerk** – put a photograph in it, and go anywhere in the world. But *don't* come back here!

**She leaves the office.**

**Man** Hmm...A British passport, in the name of Brunhilde Schwarzkopf. Excellent. Brunhilde!

**His girl-friend, Brunhilde, comes in.**

**Brunhilde** Ja?

**Man** I've got a passport for you.

**Brunhilde** Ja?

**Man** Now we can go anywhere in the world.

**Brunhilde** Ja!

**Man** What about a holiday in the sun?

**Brunhilde** Ja!

**Man** (*To himself*) She doesn't understand a word I say.

**Brunhilde** Ja!

# Fire practice

This sketch was first performed in 1982. In the stage version, the sketch is considerably longer, as the new recruits' fire practice also includes how to get into a house via a door or a window and a certain amount of precarious ladder-practice. The version given here is thus a shortened version, but the sketch resolves in the same way as it does on stage. (Note that the term *fireman* is used in the sketch; this is now usually replaced by the term *fire fighter*, which can be applied to both sexes.)

## Words and expressions

*Fire Service, fire station, fireman, fire chief, equipment, axe, smash (vb.), whistle, ambulance, then (at end of sentence = in that case)*

Foggins says *Ring, ring* to represent the telephone, because British telephones have a double ringing tone; *Brrrrrr* represents the sound of the dialling tone.

The sketch includes some examples of ellipsis at the start of sentences, typical of colloquial speech: (*I*) *Don't know*, (*There's*) *Nobody there, sir*.

## Preliminary practice

This sketch is light-hearted, but of course fire is a very serious subject. The preliminary practice could thus be on the serious side.

You could ask the students to say in English what the regulations are in case of a fire in the school. Pose the question as follows: *What should you do if there's a fire in the school?* The students should give their answers using *you* in the sense of *one* or *everybody*, e.g. *You should leave the school quietly.* (This use of the impersonal 'you' occurs in the sketch.) The students could also give directions for getting from their classroom to the assembly-point designated in the event of a fire. They could combine all the information into a fire notice in English (based on one in their language if there is one on display).

## Follow-up activities

① As the telephone is used several times in the sketch, the students could follow up with some telephone practice. For example, in threes (Students **A**, **B** and **C**):

**A** makes a telephone call.

**B** answers the telephone.

**A** wants to speak to **C**.

**B** passes the telephone to **C**.

**A** then invites **C** to go out (to the cinema, to a party, etc.); they make their arrangements and hang up.

② Here is another activity, which can also be done in threes (Students **X**, **Y** and **Z**).

Firstly, all the **Zs** move to a corner of the room, and remain there for a few moments, so that they do not overhear the following among the **Xs** and **Ys**:

**X** makes a telephone call.

**Y** answers the telephone.

**X** wants to speak to **Z**.

**Y** offers to take a message.

**X** leaves a short message, saying the reason for the call (which is a question of some kind), and asking for **Z** to call back.

**Y** notes this message on a piece of paper, and the call is concluded.

The **Ys** then give their written messages to the **Zs**, and the **Zs** call the **Xs** back, giving the answers to their questions.

## Props and costumes

For classroom re-enacting, these props are useful: a telephone (on a table at the start, and later used by the characters), and a whistle (although the fire chief can simply make the noise vocally).

For a more elaborate performance, you will need: a table, a telephone and whistle, as noted above; an axe (made of wood or stiff cardboard); possibly a small step-ladder, brought on by Boggins and Coggins or already on stage. Note that the telephone has to ring near the beginning and end of the sketch.

Costumes: a uniform for the chief (helmet, heavy jacket, etc.); amusing versions of the uniform for Boggins and Coggins, e.g. slightly too big or too small; the costume for Foggins can be as desired.

# Fire practice

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<b>Scene</b>	A fire station
<b>Characters</b>	The fire chief
	Boggins } new recruits to the Fire Service
	Coggins }
	Foggins }

---

**The fire chief is in the fire station. Someone knocks loudly at the door.**

**Fire chief** Come in!

**Foggins comes in.**

**Foggins** Don't panic!!!

**Fire chief** Can I help you?

**Foggins** Yes. I want a job.

**Fire chief** You want a job.

**Foggins** Yes. I want to be a fireman.

**Fire chief** You want to be a fireman?

**Foggins** That's right.

**Fire chief** Why do you want to be a fireman?

**Foggins** Well, I like *smashing* things – like doors, and windows, and tables –

**Fire chief** Well, I don't know...

**Foggins** Please!

**Fire chief** What's your name?

**Foggins** Foggins.

**Fire chief** Foggins?

**Foggins** Yeah, 'Smasher' Foggins.

**Fire chief** Well, Mr Foggins, do you know anything about the Fire Service? For example, what is the most important thing in a fireman's equipment?

**Foggins** What is...the meaning of the word 'equipment'?

**Fire chief** Equipment...you know...*things*. What is the most important thing a fireman's got?

**Foggins** His axe.

**Fire chief** Wrong.

**Foggins** What is it, then?

**Fire chief** His telephone.

**Foggins** His telephone?

**Fire chief** Yes, Foggins.

**Foggins** You can't smash doors with a telephone.

**Fire chief** That's right, Foggins. But when this telephone rings, someone is in trouble. When this telephone rings, someone needs help. When this telephone rings, someone needs the Fire Service.

***The telephone rings. The fire chief answers it.***

**Fire chief** Not now, I'm busy.

***He puts down the telephone.***

**Fire chief** (**To Foggins**) So, Foggins, the most important part of our equipment is –

**Foggins** – the telephone.

**Fire chief** Right! OK, Foggins, I've got an idea. You can do fire practice today with the new firemen. Would you like to meet them?

**Foggins** Yes, please.

**Fire chief** Good. Boggins!

***Boggins comes in.***

**Boggins** Sir!

**Fire chief** Coggins!

***Coggins comes in.***

**Coggins** Sir!

**Fire chief** Foggins, this is Boggins and Coggins. Boggins, Coggins and Foggins. Coggins, Foggins and Boggins. Right – fire practice. Question one. Boggins!

**Boggins** Yes, sir!

**Fire chief** Where do most fires start?

**Boggins** In a box of matches, sir.

**Fire chief** No. Coggins?

**Coggins** Don't know, sir.

**Fire chief** Foggins?

**Foggins** What was the question again?

**Fire chief** Where do most fires start?

**Foggins** At the fire station.

**Fire chief** No, Foggins. The answer is: In your house.

**Foggins** What?!

**Fire chief** Yes, Foggins. In your house.

**Foggins** Well, I'm not staying here, then.

***Foggins goes towards the door.***

**Fire chief** Where are you going?

**Foggins** I'm going home.

**Fire chief** Why?

**Foggins** You said most fires start in *my* house.

**Fire chief** Not in *your* house, Foggins. In *everybody's* house.

**Boggins** }  
**Coggins** } What?!  
**Foggins** }

***They panic. The fire chief blows his whistle.***

**Fire chief** Look – don't panic. It's just an expression. It means 'houses in general'.

**Boggins** }  
**Coggins** } Oh.  
**Foggins** }

**Fire chief** Now, question two. Coggins!

**Coggins** Sir!

**Fire chief** What should you do if there's a fire in your house?

**Coggins** Go next door, sir.

**Fire chief** No, Coggins. You should call the Fire Service.

**Coggins** Ooh, good idea, sir.

**Fire chief** And that's where we start work. Because the most important part of our equipment is –

**Boggins** }  
**Coggins** } – the telephone!  
**Foggins** }

**Fire chief** Right! Now, telephone practice. Boggins!

**Boggins** Sir!

**Fire chief** Give the telephone to Coggins.

**Boggins** Sir!

***Boggins gives the telephone to Coggins.***

**Fire chief** Coggins!

**Coggins** Sir?

**Fire chief** *You* are the telephone. Foggins!

**Foggins** What?

**Fire chief** *You* are the telephone bell.

**Foggins** What do you mean?

**Fire chief** When I blow my whistle, make a ringing noise. Telephone practice – begin!

***The fire chief blows his whistle. Foggins makes a noise like an ambulance.***

**Fire chief** Not an *ambulance*, Foggins – a telephone! Start again.

***The fire chief blows his whistle again.***

- Foggins** Ring, ring. Ring, ring.  
**Fire chief** Boggins.  
**Foggins** Ring, ring.  
**Boggins** Yes, sir?  
**Foggins** Ring, ring.  
**Fire chief** The telephone's ringing.  
**Foggins** Ring, ring.  
**Boggins** No, it isn't sir.  
**Foggins** Ring, ring.  
**Boggins** It's Foggins, sir. He's going 'Ring, ring', sir.  
**Foggins** Ring, ring.  
**Boggins** There you are, sir.  
**Fire chief** Boggins, answer the telephone!  
**Foggins** Ring, ring.  
**Boggins** All right, sir.

***Boggins picks up the telephone.***

- Foggins** Ring, ring. Ring, ring.  
**Fire chief** Foggins!  
**Foggins** Ring – What?  
**Fire chief** Stop it!  
**Foggins** Brrrrrr.  
**Boggins** Nobody there, sir.  
**Fire chief** Let's start again.

***Boggins puts down the telephone.***

- Fire chief** Telephone practice – begin!

***The fire chief blows his whistle again.***

- Foggins** Ring, ring. Ring, ring.

***Boggins picks up the telephone.***

- Boggins** Hello?  
**Fire chief** Fire station.  
**Boggins** Oh, hello, fire station!  
**Fire chief** No, Boggins! You *are* the fire station.  
**Boggins** Oh, yes. Sorry, sir. Hello? Fire station.

- Fire chief** (*In a high voice*) Help! Help!
- Boggins** Is something wrong, sir?
- Fire chief** No, Boggins. I am an old lady. I'm an old lady, and my house is on fire. That's why I'm calling the fire station.
- Boggins** I see, sir.
- Fire chief** Continue.
- Boggins** Hello, old lady. Can I help you?
- Fire chief** (*In a high voice*) Yes. There's a fire in my kitchen.
- Boggins** OK. We're on our way.

***Boggins puts down the telephone.***

- Boggins** Was that all right, sir?
- Fire chief** Boggins, where is the fire?
- Boggins** In the old lady's kitchen, sir.
- Fire chief** Where is the old lady's kitchen?
- Boggins** In the old lady's house, sir.
- Fire chief** Where is the house?
- Boggins** Oh, dear!

***The telephone rings.***

- Fire chief** Boggins, stop making that noise.
- Boggins** It's not me – it's the telephone.
- Fire chief** Is it? Oh, right. Coggins!
- Coggins** Sir?
- Fire chief** Answer the telephone.
- Coggins** Sir!

***Coggins answers the telephone.***

- Coggins** Yes...Yes...Yes...Yes...Yes...Yes. OK, we're on our way.

***Coggins puts down the telephone.***

- Fire chief** Very good, Coggins. What is it?
- Coggins** A fire, sir.
- Fire chief** Did you get the name?
- Coggins** Yes, sir.
- Fire chief** Did you get the address?
- Coggins** Yes, sir.
- Fire chief** Do you know how to get there?
- Coggins** Yes, sir.

**Fire chief** Right. Get in line and don't panic. This is your first fire. Coggins, where's the fire?

**Coggins** In Railway Street, sir.

**Fire chief** In Rail – In Railway Street?!

**Coggins** Yes, sir.

**Fire chief** What number?

**Coggins** Number 44, sir.

**Fire chief** What?! Quick! Hurry up! Get out of here and *do something!*

**Foggins** All right, all right – you said 'Don't panic'.

**Fire chief** Never mind 'Don't panic'. Panic!

**Boggins** What's the matter, sir? It's just a house on fire.

**Fire chief** Yes, but it's *my* house! Panic!

**They panic.**

# 9 The post office

This sketch was first performed in 1989, and the version given here is more or less exactly the version we have used in ETT stage shows. On some occasions in stage shows, we have used the name *Watt* for the customer (and her daughter), leading to similar confusions as arise with the traveller in Sketch 12, *The check-in desk*; in the version here, the name used is *Wellington* and the confusion is over the ambiguity in the term 'second name', which may be taken to mean either 'second given name' or 'family name'.

## Words and expressions

*parcel, post (vb.), send...by post, coffee-pot, food, look like..., sound like..., smell like..., It's in the book (= the rule book)*

The sketch includes a pun on the words *wait* and *weight*, both of which have the same pronunciation: /weɪt/.

Note the idiomatic use of *he* and *him* to refer to the fish; these pronouns are used rather than *it*, since the fish is a pet and is thus considered almost as a person.

## Preliminary practice

Ask the students to each bring a 'parcel'. These 'parcels' should be everyday objects wrapped in paper or in plastic bags. (If the shapes of the parcels give clues to what the objects are, this is fine, although ambiguity is helpful.)

In pairs, the students act out short conversations, with one student being a post office worker and the other a customer. In each pair, the post office worker tries to guess what is in the customer's parcel by saying what it *looks like*; they can also, by handling the parcel or shaking it, say what it *feels like*, *sounds like* or even *smells like*. The customer confirms or denies the guesses, and finally the parcel is opened to reveal the object. Then the roles are reversed to repeat the exercise with the other person's parcel.

## Follow-up activities

① The students could devise a sketch of their own, following the general shape of the original, but involving a parcel containing a different unusual object, different details for the person it is being sent to, etc.

② Here is a competitive team-game based around a 'posting box':

Divide the class into six teams, called **A, B, C, D, E** and **F**. Each team thinks of five questions\* – that is, one question to be put to each of the five other teams – and writes these questions on individual pieces of paper. They then fold the papers in half, and on each paper write the letter of one of the other five teams. All the papers are then 'posted' in a box, and a 'clerk' (yourself, a student, or several students taking turns) is appointed to 'deliver' them, i.e. to dip into the box in front of the whole class, and take out the papers one at a time, saying which team each question is for and reading the question out. The teams are awarded a point for each question correctly answered.

\*The questions should be *factual*, and can be about any subjects (although if you wish, they could be limited to a particular subject, e.g. geography, following up the mention of cities in the sketch). They should not be questions which can be answered with a simple *Yes* or *No*. In other words, they should be questions beginning *What...?*, *Who...?*, *How many...?*, etc., or of the type *Name three presidents of the USA*, etc.

## Props and costumes

For classroom re-enacting, you will need a table or desk to represent the post office counter, something to represent the fish-shaped parcel and a set of scales (or something to represent it); a small notebook (the 'rule book') and pen or pencil for the clerk are also useful.

For a performance, you will need the counter with the set of scales on it, a sign reading 'Wait here' (e.g. made of wood or cardboard and fixed to a support such as a lampstand), the fish-shaped parcel with a label attached to it, a bag for the customer, and the 'rule book' and pen for the clerk. Costumes: as desired (the clerk doesn't need to wear a uniform of any kind.)

# The post office

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**Scene** A post office in Britain  
**Characters** The post office clerk  
A customer

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**The clerk is behind the counter. Some distance from the counter, there is a sign which says 'Wait here'. The customer enters and waits by the sign.**

**Clerk** Good morning.

**The customer does not react.**

**Clerk** Good morning!

**The customer still does not react.**

**Clerk** Can I help you?

**Customer** Pardon?

**Clerk** Can I help you?

**Customer** I can't hear you!

**Clerk** Can I help you?!

**Customer** I can't hear you. You're too far away.

**Clerk** Well, come over here.

**Customer** Pardon?

**Clerk** Come over here!!

**Customer** Come over there?

**Clerk** Yes!!!

**Customer** I can't. I've got to wait here.

**Clerk** No, you haven't.

**Customer** Yes, I have. This sign says 'Wait here'.

**Clerk** Yes, but you're the only customer. So you can come over here!

**Customer** Oh. Right.

**The customer goes to the counter.**

**Clerk** Now...can I help you?

**Customer** Can I send a parcel to Australia?

**Clerk** Yes, you can.

**Customer** Good. I want to send this to my daughter.

**The customer produces a large parcel from her bag. The parcel is shaped like a fish.**

- Clerk** What's this? (**Reading the label on the parcel**) 'Contents: One coffee-pot.' A coffee-pot?
- Customer** Yes.
- Clerk** It doesn't *look* like a coffee-pot.
- Customer** Doesn't it?
- Clerk** No.

**The clerk bangs the parcel on the counter.**

- Customer** Be careful!
- Clerk** And it doesn't *sound* like a coffee-pot. And...(**Sniffing the parcel**) ...it doesn't *smell* like a coffee-pot. It smells like a fish.
- Customer** All right, all right, it's a fish.
- Clerk** Well, I'm sorry, you can't send a fish by post.
- Customer** Why not?
- Clerk** Look. It's in the book: 'No food by post.'
- Customer** (**Reading from the book**) 'No food by post.' Food?! This isn't food! This is Napoleon!
- Clerk** Napoleon?
- Customer** Yes, Napoleon. He's my daughter's fish. And my daughter lives in Australia. That's why I want to send him to Australia.
- Clerk** Well, you can't send him by post.
- Customer** Please!
- Clerk** No.
- Customer** Please!!
- Clerk** Oh, all right. But there's no name on the parcel.
- Customer** Oh, sorry. (**She starts writing**) 'Nap-o-le-'
- Clerk** Not the name of the *fish*. Your *daughter's* name. What is your daughter's name?
- Customer** Josephine.
- Clerk** Josephine. And what is her second name?
- Customer** Elisabeth.
- Clerk** No – when I said 'her *second* name', I meant her *family* name. What is her *family* name?
- Customer** It's the same as mine.
- Clerk** Yes. But what is it?
- Customer** Wellington.
- Clerk** Wellington.
- Customer** Yes.
- Clerk** So...your daughter's name is Josephine Elisabeth Wellington.
- Customer** Yes.

- Clerk** Address?
- Customer** Pardon?
- Clerk** Address. Where does she live in Australia?
- Customer** Er...
- Clerk** Sydney?
- Customer** No.
- Clerk** Melbourne?
- Customer** No.
- Clerk** Adelaide?
- Customer** Adelaide!
- Clerk** Adelaide.
- Customer** No. Ah, I remember – Vienna!
- Clerk** Vienna?
- Customer** Vienna.
- Clerk** Vienna's in *Austria*.
- Customer** That's what I said.
- Clerk** No, you didn't. You said 'Australia'.
- Customer** Did I?
- Clerk** So this is going to Josephine Wellington in Vienna, Austria.
- Customer** Yes. How much is it?
- Clerk** That depends on the weight.
- Customer** Pardon?
- Clerk** Weight.
- Customer** Oh. OK.

**The customer starts walking back to the 'Wait here' sign.**

- Clerk** No! I didn't say (**Indicating the sign**) 'wait'. I said (**Indicating the scales on the counter**) 'weight'.

**The clerk weighs the parcel.**

- Clerk** Two and a half kilos. That's £17.50.
- Customer** £17.50?! That's very expensive.
- Clerk** Well, he *is* going by air.
- Customer** By air? Napoleon can't go by air!
- Clerk** Why not?
- Customer** He's a fish, not a bird.
- Clerk** No, he's going on an aeroplane.
- Customer** On an aeroplane?

- Clerk** Yes.
- Customer** How extraordinary! I'm going on an aeroplane today.
- Clerk** Really?
- Customer** Yes. I'm going to visit my daughter.
- Clerk** Your daughter Josephine?
- Customer** Yes.
- Clerk** In Vienna?
- Customer** Yes.
- Clerk** Well, why don't you take Napoleon with you?
- Customer** Take Napoleon with me?
- Clerk** Yes. On the aeroplane.
- Customer** Take Napoleon with me on the aeroplane?
- Clerk** Yes! To Vienna!
- Customer** Of course! Take Napoleon with me on the aeroplane to Vienna!
- Clerk** Yes!
- Customer** And then when I get to Vienna...
- Clerk** Yes!!
- Customer** ...I can post him from there!

***The customer picks up the parcel and leaves.***

# Mr Jones

10

When someone suggested that we write a sketch illustrating the use of the expressions *So do I, Nor do I, etc.*, we hit on the idea of three men who all claimed to be the same person. Why would the three men do this? The answer seemed clear: money! The sketch was first performed in 1975. For this book, the ending has been slightly altered: in the stage version, Mr Jones and his cousin Jane celebrated their good fortune with a song called 'Going to the country', which also involved the *So do I/Nor do I* expressions.

## Words and expressions

*advertisement, newspaper; celebrate, Congratulations! tax, government, millionaire, share (vb.), bus fare, What are they called? (= What are their names?)*

Note the ironic tone of *What a coincidence!*, the polite tone of *Sorry to have troubled you*, and the surprised tone of *You've grown up!*

The real Mr Jones, who is from Wales, does not use any specifically Welsh expressions, but he does speak with a slight Welsh accent.

## Preliminary practice

Put the students into a circle—or, with a large class, a series of circles—and ask them to say alternately things they like and don't like, building up sequences like this:

*Student 1: I like spaghetti.*

*Student 2: So do I. I don't like snakes.*

*Student 3: Nor do I. I like playing tennis. (etc.)*

Once the pattern is established, the students can vary their statements, saying things they can and can't do, for example, or things they have and haven't got. This will generate varying replies: *So can I/Nor can I, So have I/Nor have I, etc.*

This exercise assumes the students automatically agree. To be able to say what they really think, they will also need to practise responses such as: *Do you? I don't, Don't you? I do, etc.*

## Follow-up activities

① The students could think of the situation in the sketch slightly differently, imagining that Mr Jones 2 and Mr Jones 3 are in fact called Charles Edward Jones, but are not the *right* Charles Edward Jones (because they do not come from Cardiff, have more or fewer than three children, none of whom is called Alan, Michael or David). In groups, the students read the sketch again, working out what the two men would have said if they had told the truth. The sketch will remain the same as far as the line *Mine is, too!*, but it will then become clear who is the right Mr Jones. Although in reality she might have stopped earlier, the girl can ask all her questions and all three men can reply. The students should continue up to the point at which Mr Jones 2 and Mr Jones 3 leave.

② In the sketch, Mr Jones 2 and Mr Jones 3 claim that they did not understand the advertisement. They were pretending, but sometimes you *really* need to show that you made a mistake – if you want to return something to a shop, for example, or change a ticket after you've bought it. In pairs, the students could improvise dialogues, based on cue-cards like these:

*(For Student A) CLOTHES SHOP: You are the shop assistant.*

*(For Student B) CLOTHES SHOP: You are a customer. Yesterday you bought a silk shirt by mistake. You wanted a cotton one.*

## Props and costumes

Simple classroom re-enacting of this sketch requires only three chairs, placed side by side. (We have found that it works best to seat the real Mr Jones between the two other men, rather than at one end.)

For a more elaborate performance, the following props are useful: a newspaper for each of the three men; a pen and a clipboard with some papers on it for the girl. Costumes can be as desired: it is not necessary for the men to wear anything distinctively Welsh; the girl may like to wear a pair of sober glasses to give her a stern official appearance in the early part of the sketch.

# Mr Jones

---

**Scene** An office, at four o'clock one afternoon  
**Characters** A girl  
Mr Charles Jones  
A second 'Mr Jones'  
A third 'Mr Jones'

---

***Mr Jones goes into an office.***

**Mr Jones** Good afternoon.

**Girl** Good afternoon.

**Mr Jones** My name's Jones. Charles Jones. I come from Wales, from Cardiff. I saw an advertisement in the newspaper. It said: 'Charles Jones. Money. Four o'clock. Tuesday afternoon.' And it gave this address.

**Girl** Ah yes. Wait in here please, Mr Jones.

***She takes Mr Jones into another office.***

**Mr Jones** Thank you.

**Girl** With these two gentlemen.

**Mr Jones** Oh, thank you.

***The girl goes out.***

**Mr Jones** Good afternoon.

**Mr Jones 2** Good afternoon.

**Mr Jones** Good afternoon.

**Mr Jones 3** Good afternoon.

**Mr Jones** Nice day, isn't it?

**Mr Jones 2** Yes.

**Mr Jones 3** Yes, it is.

***The girl comes in.***

**Girl** Now – Mr Jones?

**Mr Jones** }  
**Mr Jones 2** } Yes?  
**Mr Jones 3** }

**Girl** Mr Jones.

**Mr Jones** }  
**Mr Jones 2** } Yes?  
**Mr Jones 3** }

**Girl** Which one of you is Mr Jones?

**Mr Jones** I am.

**Mr Jones 2** So am I.

**Mr Jones 3** So am I.

**Mr Jones** No, *my* name's Jones.

**Mr Jones 2** So's mine.

**Mr Jones 3** So's mine.

**Girl** I want to speak to Mr *Charles* Jones.

**Mr Jones** Charles Jones! That's me!

**Mr Jones 2** No, *I'm* Charles Jones.

**Mr Jones 3** That's my name, too!

**Girl** Charles *Edward* Jones.

**Mr Jones** Yes! My name is Charles Edward Jones.

**Mr Jones 3** So's mine.

**Mr Jones 2** Mine is, too!

**Girl** I want to speak to Mr Charles Edward Jones from Cardiff.

**Mr Jones** That's right. *I* come from Cardiff.

**Mr Jones 2** So do I.

**Mr Jones 3** So do I.

**Girl** The Mr Jones I want to see has got three children.

**Mr Jones** Yes, that's me! I've got three children.

**Mr Jones 3** So have I.

**The other man hesitates.**

**Girl** What about you?

**Mr Jones 2** I've got three children.

**Mr Jones** You haven't! What are they called?

**Mr Jones 2** What are *yours* called?

**Mr Jones** Alan, Michael and David.

**Mr Jones 2** So are mine.

**Mr Jones 3** What a coincidence! So are mine.

**Girl** So you *all* say you're Mr Jones?

**Mr Jones** }  
**Mr Jones 2** } Yes.  
**Mr Jones 3** }

**Girl** And you *all* saw the advertisement in the newspaper.

**Mr Jones** }  
**Mr Jones 2** } Yes.  
**Mr Jones 3** }

- Girl** (**Very seriously**) Well, Mr Charles Edward Jones, who lives in Cardiff, and has three children, hasn't paid any tax for the last five years. He must pay the government *five thousand pounds*.
- Mr Jones 2** Er...actually, my name *isn't* Jones.
- Mr Jones 3** Nor is mine, and I don't live in Cardiff, either.
- Mr Jones 2** Nor do I. I live in...Edinburgh, as a matter of fact. I didn't understand the advertisement.
- Mr Jones 3** Nor did I. I didn't realize it meant Charles *Edward* Jones.
- Mr Jones 2** Nor did I. My name *isn't* Charles Edward Jones.
- Mr Jones 3** Nor is mine. *He's* the man you're looking for.
- Mr Jones** Oh dear.
- Mr Jones 2** Yes, of course he is! Sorry to have troubled you. Goodbye.
- Mr Jones 3** Yes, sorry to have troubled you. Goodbye.

**The two men leave.**

- Girl** So you're Mr Jones.
- Mr Jones** Yes.
- Girl** Congratulations!
- Mr Jones** Eh?
- Girl** You're a rich man.
- Mr Jones** I'm not!
- Girl** Yes, you are. You've got a lot of money!
- Mr Jones** I haven't. I can't pay that tax.
- Girl** There isn't any tax!
- Mr Jones** I haven't got – No tax?
- Girl** No. That was just a story. I had to find the *real* Mr Jones.
- Mr Jones** Why?
- Girl** Because the real Mr Jones is a very rich man.
- Mr Jones** I don't understand.
- Girl** Mr Jones – Charlie – Your great-uncle Max died last week.
- Mr Jones** Oh, no...
- Girl** And his money goes to you!
- Mr Jones** To me? But great-uncle Max was a millionaire!
- Girl** That's right.
- Mr Jones** So now *I'm* a millionaire?
- Girl** Er...no.
- Mr Jones** Oh.
- Girl** You're *half* a millionaire.

**Mr Jones** Half a millionaire? Which half? The top half or the bottom half?

**Girl** No, no, no. You share the money with one other relation.

**Mr Jones** Half a millionaire! Who do I share the money with?

**Girl** Me!

**Mr Jones** You?

**Girl** Yes, I'm your cousin Jane.

**Mr Jones** Cousin Jane? Really? You've grown up!

**Girl** So have you.

**Mr Jones** And now you're half a millionaire.

**Girl** And so are you! Let's go out and celebrate.

**Mr Jones** Good idea! Let's go out and celebrate! Come on!

***He opens the door.***

**Mr Jones** Oh...er...Jane?

**Girl** Yes?

**Mr Jones** Have you got enough money for the bus fare?

# II The shoe stall

This sketch was first performed in 1990; we had previously written several sketches set in shops, and thought that a market stall would also be a promising comic situation. In the stage version of the sketch, on the line 'This is a pear', Harry produces from his case a card showing a picture of a pear, and follows it up with two other cards ('This is an apple', 'And this is a banana'); his multiple-choice questions ('Are you (A) Unhappy?', etc.) are also on cards which he produces from his case.

## Words and expressions

*What's the problem?, complain, make a complaint, take (something) seriously, husband, similar, owe*

The sketch includes a pun on the words *pair* and *pear*, both of which are pronounced: /peə[r]/.

A number of adjectives describing feelings occur in the sketch: *satisfied, unhappy, annoyed, angry, furious, suicidal*; there are also several intensifiers: *very, extremely, absolutely, completely*.

## Preliminary practice

Here is a lively competitive game which practises adjectives expressing feelings (negative ones like those in the sketch – *angry, furious*, etc. – and more positive ones such as *surprised, delighted*, etc.):

Divide the class into two teams. A volunteer from each team sits in a chair with their back to the board. The remaining members of each team then choose an adjective and write it on the board behind the other team's volunteer. The adjectives are now mimed by the teams. So, for example, Team **A** choose the adjective *angry* and write it on the board behind Team **B**'s volunteer, and the remaining members of Team **B** mime it. At the same time, Team **A** mime the adjective chosen by Team **B**. Each of the two volunteers tries to be the first to guess their adjective correctly.

## Follow-up activities

① The students could improvise some short sketches between a stallholder and a customer, in a similar format to that of the original sketch, i.e. the customers are bringing something back to make a complaint about it, and the stallholder is unwilling to admit that there is a problem. Cue-cards may be helpful for this activity. Those for the stallholders should all read:

*You work in a market. You sold something to a customer. A relative or friend of the customer is coming back to complain about it. Don't accept the complaint immediately.*

And here are some possibilities for the customers:

*Your mother bought an umbrella in the market yesterday. It has holes in it. Complain to the stallholder.*

*Your sister bought a radio in the market last Friday. It only gets one station. Complain to the stallholder.*

*Your father bought a shirt in the market last week. It has shrunk in the washing-machine. Complain to the stallholder.*

*Your brother bought a book in the market yesterday. The last page is missing. Complain to the stallholder.*

② Alternatively, the students could simply practise in pairs some more straightforward conversations between a stallholder and a customer: having decided what the stallholder is selling, they improvise choosing something to buy, discussing the price, etc.

## Props and costumes

For classroom re-enacting, you will need a table to represent the stall, two pairs of shoes of different colours, and some pieces of paper to represent the money.

For a performance, you could cover a table with a cloth to represent the stall. Harry needs a hat with a small card reading 'Honest Harry' fixed to it; a case containing one red shoe and one green shoe, and a pear (e.g. in his pocket). The customer needs a shopping-bag in which there is a shoe box containing one red shoe and one green shoe. Both Harry and the customer need some paper money. You may also like to incorporate the cards mentioned in the introductory note above.

# The shoe stall

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**Scene** A shoe stall in a street-market in Britain  
**Characters** Honest Harry, the stallholder  
A customer

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**The stallholder is standing at his stall; he has a small card in his hat, saying 'Honest Harry'. The customer comes to the stall, carrying a shoe-box.**

**Harry** Good morning, madam. Can I help you?  
**Customer** Are you Honest Harry?  
**Harry** Er...maybe. Why?  
**Customer** I want to make a complaint to Honest Harry.  
**Harry** A complaint?  
**Customer** Yes.  
**Harry** In that case, I'm not Honest Harry.  
**Customer** What?  
**Harry** Honest Harry's on holiday.  
**Customer** Oh. (**Noticing the card in his hat**) Wait a minute – your *hat* says 'Honest Harry'.  
**Harry** Oh, yes – this is Honest Harry's hat. I'm wearing it while he's on holiday.  
**Customer** What?!  
**Harry** I'll tell you what I'll do. I'll give you Harry's telephone number...in Argentina.  
**Customer** Now listen to me –  
**Harry** All right, all right, all right. I *am* Honest Harry. What's the problem?

**The customer puts the shoe-box on the stall.**

**Customer** Well, my husband came here yesterday.  
**Harry** Oh, really?  
**Customer** Yes. And he bought these shoes.

**The customer takes two shoes from the box (one is red, the other is green) and closes it.**

**Harry** Yes?  
**Customer** Well, my husband can't wear these.  
**Harry** Why not? Are they too big?  
**Customer** No.  
**Harry** Too small?  
**Customer** No.

- Harry** So what's the problem?
- Customer** They're not the same colour.
- Harry** Not the same colour?
- Customer** That's right.
- Harry** Not the same colour as what?
- Customer** They're not the same colour as each other! One of them's red and the other one's green.
- Harry** Oh, yes! One of them's red and the other one's green.
- Customer** Yes!
- Harry** I see! So which one are you complaining about?
- Customer** Pardon?
- Harry** Which one don't you like?
- Customer** Look, there's nothing wrong with the shoes –
- Harry** Good.
- Customer** – but they're not a pair.
- Harry** No, you're right, madam. They're not a pear. *This is a pear.*
- Harry produces a pear and bites it.**
- Harry** Mmm, delicious!
- Customer** I don't think you're taking this very seriously.
- Harry** Sorry, madam. Let's start at the beginning. Your husband bought these shoes.
- Customer** Yes.
- Harry** From me.
- Customer** Yes.
- Harry** And you're not satisfied with them.
- Customer** That's right. I'm not satisfied at all.
- Harry** What do you mean, exactly?
- Customer** What do you mean: 'What do I mean'?
- Harry** What do I mean what do you mean?
- Customer** Yes.
- Harry** What I mean is this: Are you: (A) 'Unhappy', (B) 'Annoyed', (C) 'Angry', or (D) 'Suicidal'?
- Customer** Well, I'm unhappy.
- Harry** You're unhappy.
- Customer** Yes.
- Harry** You're not annoyed.
- Customer** No – well, yes, I am.
- Harry** So you're annoyed.

- Customer** Yes.
- Harry** You're not just unhappy – you're annoyed.
- Customer** Yes.
- Harry** But you're not angry.
- Customer** No.
- Harry** You're sure?
- Customer** Yes.
- Harry** Oh, you *are* angry.
- Customer** No! I'm *sure* I'm *not* angry!
- Harry** You're not angry.
- Customer** I'm not angry!
- Harry** Well, you look angry to me.
- Customer** All right, I'm angry!!
- Harry** You're angry! Right. But not suicidal.
- Customer** That's right.
- Harry** Good. You're angry!
- Customer** Yes!!
- Harry** Now, are you: (A) 'Very angry', (B) 'Very very angry', (C) 'Extremely angry', or (D) 'Absolutely furious'?
- Customer** Look, this is stupid.
- Harry** Oh, it's stupid, is it?
- Customer** Yes, it's stupid.
- Harry** I see. Would you say it's: (A) 'Very stupid', (B) 'Very very stupid', (C) 'Completely stupid', or (D) 'Absolutely idiotic'?
- Customer** Look, all I want to do is change these shoes.
- Harry** Change the shoes? Well, why didn't you say so? You're very lucky, madam, because I have here another pair of shoes that are very similar.
- Harry produces the corresponding red shoe and green shoe, and puts them on the stall.**
- Customer** No, wait a minute – that's a red one and a green one as well.
- Harry** You're quite right. OK, let me change this red one for this green one.
- He does so, making a red pair and a green pair.**
- Customer** Thank you.
- Harry** And this green one for this red one.
- He does so, making two mixed pairs again.**
- Harry** Satisfied?
- Customer** No.

The shoe stall 4

**Harry** All right then. I'll change this green one for this red one...

**He does so, making a red pair and a green pair.**

**Harry** ...and this red one for this green one.

**He does so, making two mixed pairs again.**

**Customer** Look –

**Harry** Just a minute – I've got a better idea. Your husband bought *this* pair of shoes...

**He indicates one mixed pair.**

**Harry** ...so if you buy *this* pair as well...

**He indicates the other mixed pair.**

**Customer** Yes?

**Harry** ...you can have one pair, and your husband can have the other.

**Customer** All right. (**Putting the two pairs into her bag**) One pair...two pairs. How much is that?

**Harry** Twenty pounds.

**Customer** Twenty pounds. (**Giving Harry a £20 note**) Here you are.

**Harry** No – it's twenty pounds a *pair*. That's forty pounds.

**Customer** Forty pounds?

**Harry** Yes.

**Customer** But my husband paid you twenty pounds yesterday.

**Harry** Did he?

**Customer** Yes. So *you owe me* twenty pounds.

**Harry** (**Confused**) Do I?

**Customer** Yes.

**Harry** Oh. (**Giving back the £20 note**) Here you are then.

**Customer** Thank you. Goodbye.

**The customer leaves.**

**Harry** Goodbye. (**Realizing his mistake**) Er...no...just a minute...Come back!

**He runs after the customer.**

# The check-in desk

An early version of this sketch was performed in 1984, but it was considerably revised in 1993, and that is the version given here. We have omitted one or two mainly visual sections from the stage version: a joke based on the term *hand luggage* (the traveller has a shoulder-bag shaped like a large hand), and a sequence in which the clerk gives the traveller instructions supposedly to take him to another check-in desk – via a long (off-stage) detour ‘up the stairs’, ‘along the corridor’, etc. – but which in fact finally bring him back to the same desk.

## Words and expressions

Connected with air travel:

*airport, airline, (aero)plane, passenger, pilot, captain, luggage, seat, seatbelt, (non-) smoking, departure gate, fly, flight, Have a good flight!*

Connected with food:

*chicken, carrot, meal, vegetarian (n.)*

The sketch includes puns on the name *Watt* and the word *what*, both pronounced /wɒt/; and on the words *right* and *write*, both pronounced /raɪt/.

## Preliminary practice

Put the class into groups of three or four, and ask the groups to write down as many questions as they can think of which would be asked by a check-in clerk at an airport. Walk round replying to any queries the groups may have about vocabulary. The groups then share with the whole class the questions they have noted down, and points may be awarded to groups who have questions which no other group thought of.

Then ask the groups to think of completely *irrelevant* questions to ask someone who is checking in at an airport: for example, *What is your favourite pop group?*, *Have you ever visited a museum?* The groups then offer their irrelevant questions to the class; if other groups can find a way to make the questions relevant, they – rather than the questioners – gain points.

## Props and costumes

For classroom re-enacting, you will need a table or desk to represent the check-in desk, a chair, a small bag for the traveller’s hand luggage, and a piece of paper to represent the ticket; it is also useful to have a belt, and something to represent the plastic chicken and the large carrot (e.g. pictures thereof).

For a performance, improved versions of those props will be required, and it is useful if the table or lectern used for the check-in desk has a large sign on the front reading ‘Elephant Airlines’. Costumes: airline uniform for the clerk; perhaps holiday clothes for the traveller; pilot’s uniform for Captain Strange.

## Follow-up activities

① In the sketch, the check-in clerk gives reasons for the name *Elephant Airlines*: the planes are very big, move very slowly, and make a noise like an elephant. Here is an activity based on that idea.

Divide the class into small groups. Each group thinks of a name for an airline, and of a reason or reasons for the name. They write the names on pieces of paper, which are then collected and put into a hat or a box, or simply in a pile. Students pick up the pieces of paper one at a time, reading out the name of the airline on each one and asking *Why is it called (...) Airlines?* The group who invented the name give their reason(s), and other groups can suggest reasons too.

② Here is another group activity. The situation is a plane, on which the intercom has broken down, and the pilots and stewards all have sore throats and cannot speak; information must therefore be given to the passengers in mime. Each group is given an announcement written on a piece of paper: for example

*Ladies and gentlemen, we are flying at 35,000 feet.  
We will soon be serving dinner and drinks.  
We will shortly be landing at London Airport.  
Please do not smoke when moving about in the cabin.  
The weather in London is cold, wet and windy.*

The groups decide how they can mime their information. Each group then does so and the other groups try to deduce the meaning of the mimes.

# The check-in desk

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**Scene** The 'Elephant Airlines' check-in desk at an international airport in Britain  
**Characters** The check-in clerk  
An English traveller  
Captain Strange, a pilot

---

**The traveller comes to the check-in desk. He is carrying just one small bag, as hand luggage.**

- Clerk** Good morning, sir. Can I help you?
- Traveller** Monte Carlo!
- Clerk** Pardon?
- Traveller** Monte Carlo!
- Clerk** Oh! Hello, Mr Carlo.
- Traveller** No! I want to *fly* to *Monte Carlo*.
- Clerk** Oh, I see!
- Traveller** Can I check in here?
- Clerk** For the flight to Monte Carlo?
- Traveller** Yes.
- Clerk** Who are you flying with?
- Traveller** Pardon?
- Clerk** Who are you flying with?
- Traveller** Nobody – I'm going by myself.
- Clerk** No, sir. I mean, which *airline* are you flying with?
- Traveller** Oh. Elephant Airlines. Here's my ticket.
- Clerk** Thank you.
- Traveller** This is my first flight, you know.
- Clerk** Well, I'm sure you'll enjoy it, sir. (**Reading from the ticket**) Elephant Airlines, Flight 999 to Monte Carlo.
- Traveller** Er...Why is it called 'Elephant Airlines'?
- Clerk** Well, sir, the planes are very big –
- Traveller** (**Pleased**) Ah.
- Clerk** They move very slowly –
- Traveller** (**Uneasy**) Ah.
- Clerk** And they make a strange noise.
- Traveller** A strange noise?

**Clerk** Yes. A noise like an elephant.

**The clerk makes an elephant noise.**

**Traveller** What?! Your planes sound like elephants?!

**Clerk** Yes, sir.

**Traveller** But – But – But –

**Clerk** Take it easy, sir. They're quite safe. Now... (**Reading from the ticket**) ...Mr Right.

**Traveller** Pardon?

**Clerk** Mr Right.

**Traveller** No, that's wrong.

**Clerk** Pardon?

**Traveller** My name isn't Right. It's wrong.

**Clerk** Your name is Wrong?

**Traveller** Yes.

**Clerk** Well, Mr Wrong –

**Traveller** No! My name isn't right on the ticket.

**Clerk** Yes, it is. Look...Mr Right.

**Traveller** No...my *name isn't* Right!

**Clerk** Ah! Your name isn't Right!

**Traveller** Right!

**Clerk** Right! What is your name?

**Traveller** Watt.

**Clerk** Your name.

**Traveller** Watt!

**Clerk** What is your name?!

**Traveller** Yes! Watt *is* my name!!

**Clerk** Ah! Right!

**Traveller** No! Watt!

**Clerk** Right! Watt!

**Traveller** Yes. (**Pointing at the ticket**) Write Watt!

**The clerk corrects his name on the ticket.**

**Clerk** Right. Any luggage, Mr Watt?

**Traveller** Pardon?

**Clerk** Have you got any luggage?

**Traveller** Just this little bag.

**Clerk** That's fine. Now, smoking or non-smoking?

**Traveller** Non-smoking, please.

**Clerk** Eating or non-eating?

**Traveller** Pardon?

**Clerk** Eating or non-eating? Do you want a meal on the plane?

**Traveller** Oh. Yes, please.

**Clerk** Er...Here you are.

**The clerk produces a plastic chicken.**

**Traveller** What's that?!

**Clerk** Your lunch.

**Traveller** But that's a chicken.

**Clerk** Yes.

**Traveller** I can't eat that. I'm a vegetarian!

**Clerk** Oh. Well, in that case...er...you can have this carrot.

**The clerk gives the traveller a large carrot.**

**Traveller** (**Confused**) Thank you.

**Clerk** Well, everything seems to be in order. So...your seat.

**Traveller** Yes.

**Clerk** Where is it?

**Traveller** Pardon?

**Clerk** Where's your seat?

**Traveller** My seat?

**Clerk** Yes. Have you got one?

**Traveller** Aren't there any seats on the plane?

**Clerk** (**Laughing**) Seats...on the plane?

**Traveller** Yes.

**Clerk** No. You have to take your own.

**Traveller** I haven't got a seat.

**Clerk** No seat?

**Traveller** No.

**Clerk** You've come to the airport without a seat?

**Traveller** Well, it *is* my first flight...

**Clerk** Well, never mind – you can borrow mine.

**The clerk gives the traveller her chair.**

**Traveller** But wait a minute, this isn't an aeroplane seat, is it?

**Clerk** Well, it's a seat – you put it on an aeroplane – it's an aeroplane seat.

**Traveller** What about a seatbelt?

**Clerk** Here you are.

**The clerk produces a belt.**

**Traveller** Look – that isn't a seatbelt, is it?

**Clerk** It's a belt – (**Putting it on the seat**) you put it on a seat – it's a seatbelt.

**Traveller** Thank you. Is that everything?

**Clerk** Yes, sir. You've got your seat, you've got your seatbelt, and you've got your carrot.

**Traveller** Where do I go now?

**Clerk** To the Departure Gate.

**Traveller** The Departure Gate.

**Clerk** Yes. Gate Number 13.

**Traveller** Thank you.

**Clerk** Have a good flight, sir.

**Traveller** (**Still confused**) Thank you.

**The traveller starts to leave. The clerk bursts out laughing.**

**Traveller** What's the matter?

**Clerk** I'm sorry, sir. You didn't believe all that, did you?

**Traveller** All what?

**Clerk** All that about the seat – and the seatbelt – and the carrot.

**Traveller** What do you mean?

**Clerk** Sir...it was all a joke.

**Traveller** A joke?

**Clerk** Yes. You see, *you* are the one-millionth passenger to fly with Elephant Airlines, so we thought we'd have a bit of fun!

**Traveller** Oh! So it's not true: the seat, the seatbelt – and the carrot!

**Clerk** No, sir – flying isn't like that!

**Traveller** I thought it was a bit strange!

**Clerk** Yes.

**Traveller** But this *is* my first flight.

**Clerk** Yes.

**Traveller** You must think I'm a complete idiot!

**Clerk** Yes. Anyway, you're the one-millionth passenger, so the captain himself is going to accompany you to the plane.

**Traveller** The captain? You mean the pilot himself?

**Clerk** That's right, sir.

**Traveller** Wonderful!

**Clerk** I'll call him. Captain Strange!

**Captain Strange enters, singing 'Flying, up above the clouds'. He is rather strange.**

- Traveller** Is *that* the captain?
- Clerk** Yes, sir. Captain Strange is the *best* pilot with Elephant Airlines. In fact, he's the *only* pilot with Elephant Airlines. Er...Captain Strange!
- Captain** Yes?
- Clerk** This is Mr Watt, your very special passenger for today's flight.
- Captain** Mr Watt! How nice to meet you! How very, very nice!
- Clerk** You go with the captain, Mr Watt. He'll take you to the plane.
- Captain** The plane, yes. Where is it?
- Traveller** What?!
- Captain** The plane.
- Traveller** I don't know!
- Clerk** It's at Departure Gate 13, Captain.
- Captain** Thank you. Tell me, Mr Watt...Have you ever flown a plane before?
- Traveller** No. Why?
- Captain** Well, I'm not feeling very well. I thought that perhaps *you* could fly the plane.
- Traveller** What?!
- Captain** Take it easy, Mr Watt. Flying a plane is no problem.
- Traveller** But –
- Captain** Come on, Mr Watt. Let's go.
- Traveller** Aaargh!

**The traveller leaves, accompanied by Captain Strange, singing 'Flying, up above the clouds'.**

- Clerk** Have a good flight, sir!

# The police

This sketch was first performed in 1990. We are quite fond of sketches involving groups of people in uniform, since they provide good scope for humour when dignity and efficiency are aimed for but not achieved. Apart from this sketch, for example, we have used sketches involving customs officers, astronauts, and – included in this book – the fire brigade (Sketch 8) and (in Book 2) the army (Sketch 2). (Note that some regional police forces in Britain use the term *WPC* (*Woman Police Constable*) as in this sketch; others use *PC* (*Police Constable*) for both sexes.)

## Words and expressions

Connected with the police:

*inspector, constable, police force, criminal, arrest, equipment, whistle, truncheon, notebook, pen*

Clothes vocabulary:

*clothes, uniform, hat, helmet, blouse, shirt, trousers, skirt, boots*

The sketch includes a pun on the two senses of the word *left*: as the opposite of 'right', and in the expression *There won't be any criminals left*.

## Preliminary practice

When the police are at training college, they often observe crimes being acted out by professional actors and then comment on what they saw. A version of this activity can serve as a warm-up to this sketch.

Divide the class into groups of five or six, and ask each group to act out a crime, such as a bank robbery or the theft of a car. In each group, some students will be the 'perpetrators' and the others will be the 'victims'. Give the groups some time to prepare, and while they are doing this go round ensuring that they are not simply going to *mime* the event, but also *speak* during it. The groups then act out their 'crimes' for the rest of the class to watch. After each 'crime', the rest of the class say what they can remember about it, including who did what, what was said, etc.

## Follow-up activities

① The sketch includes various interpretations of the abbreviations *PC* and *WPC*, some more plausible than others. You could base an activity which requires the students to do some inventive quick-thinking on some other abbreviations, like this, for example:

Write some English abbreviations on small pieces of paper. These could be abbreviations such as *BBC* (British Broadcasting Corporation), *CIA* (Central Intelligence Agency), *FBI* (Federal Bureau of Investigation), *GB* (Great Britain), *ITV* (Independent Television), *LA* (Los Angeles), *NATO* (North Atlantic Treaty Organisation), *OPEC* (Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries), *RAF* (Royal Air Force), *UK* (United Kingdom), *UN* (United Nations), *WHO* (World Health Organisation), etc., or any you feel suitable. In turns, the students take a piece of paper, read out the abbreviation written on it, and invent a meaning for the abbreviation. (These meanings can be as fanciful as they like; for example, 'Brazilian Banana Company' or 'Bring big cheques' for *BBC*.) The other students then give the real meaning.

② You could base an activity on the 'notebook' idea from the sketch. Each student writes a sentence on a piece of paper – something personal (but not intimate or embarrassing) about themselves. These sentences are then collected and read out, with the students trying to guess who wrote each one.

## Props and costumes

For classroom re-enacting, the following props are useful: three whistles, for Black, Green and Brown (although they can make the noises vocally if no whistles are available); two truncheons (or something to represent them, e.g. rolled paper), for Brown and Green; a children's comic (or magazine to represent it) for Grey; a small notebook, for Brown; and a pen, for Black.

For a performance, real versions of those props will be needed, plus costumes for the characters: an inspector's uniform for Black; helmet, shirt, trousers and boots for Green; hat, blouse, skirt and boots for Brown; helmet, boots, bright shirt, long shorts for Grey.

# The police

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<b>Scene</b>	A public meeting at which Inspector Black is giving a talk about the British police force
<b>Characters</b>	Inspector Black PC Green WPC Brown PC Grey

---

**Black** Good evening, ladies and gentlemen. My name is Inspector Black, and I've come here tonight to talk to you about the police force in Great Britain. The police force in Great Britain is very professional, very intelligent and very...professional. So, I'd like you to meet some of my very professional and intelligent police officers. First of all, I'd like you to meet PC Green. Ladies and gentlemen, PC Green.

**PC Green enters.**

**Black** Good evening, PC Green.

**Green** Good evening, Inspector Black.

**Black** Now, what does PC mean? Tell them, Green.

**Green** I beg your pardon, Inspector?

**Black** Tell them.

**Green** Tell them what, Inspector?

**Black** What do the letters 'PC' stand for?

**Green** Oh! 'PC' stands for 'Peter Christopher'.

**Black** What?

**Green** It's my name, Inspector. Peter Christopher Green – PC Green.

**Black** Green...

**Green** Yes, Inspector?

**Black** Do you think that we call you 'PC Green' because your name is Peter Christopher Green?

**Green** Yes, Inspector.

**Black** Well, you're wrong. 'PC' stands for something else.

**Green** Really?

**Black** Yes. Now think: What does 'PC' stand for?

**Green** Postcard?

**Black** No!

**Green** Personal computer?

**Black** No!!

**Green** Oh, I know! Prince Charles!

**Black** Green, 'PC' does not mean 'Prince Charles', or 'postcard', or 'personal computer'. It means 'Police Constable'!

**Green** Really? I didn't know that.

**Black** You are Police Constable Green.

**Green** Thank you, Inspector.

**Black** Now, ladies and gentlemen, I'd like you to meet another British police officer: WPC Brown.

***WPC Brown enters.***

**Brown** Hello.

**Black** Now, if 'PC' means 'Police Constable', what does 'WPC' mean?

**Brown** 'Wife of Police Constable.'

**Black** Don't be stupid, Brown! You are not 'Wife of Police Constable'!

**Brown** Yes, I am, Inspector. I'm married to PC Green.

**Green** That's right, sir. We're very happy.

**Black** 'WPC' means 'Woman Police Constable'. Now, ladies and gentlemen, as you can see, Green and Brown are wearing nice blue and white uniforms.

***Green and Brown demonstrate their uniforms like fashion models.***

**Black** Hat – or helmet. Blouse – or shirt. Skirt – or trousers. Boots...or boots. So, this is a police uniform. But there are a lot of police officers out there in the street with no uniform.

**Green** No uniform?!

**Brown** They must be very cold, Inspector.

**Black** No! They're wearing normal clothes.

**Brown** Why's that, Inspector?

**Black** They're wearing normal clothes because they want to look like normal people. So...here is a police officer dressed exactly like a normal person. Ladies and gentlemen, PC Grey.

***PC Grey enters. He is wearing a police helmet and boots, and a pair of long shorts and a brightly-coloured shirt.***

**Black** Now, as you can see, there is no way that you would know that PC Grey is a police officer.

**Brown** Except for the helmet.

**Black** Except for the helmet.

**Green** And the boots.

**Black** And the boots. Except for the helmet and the boots, there is no way that you would know that Police Constable Grey is a police officer.

***PC Grey does not look very pleased.***

**Black** Now, Grey – tell these people what it feels like to be a police officer with no uniform.

**Grey** It feels stupid.

**Black** What?

**Grey** It feels stupid. I mean, I'm a police officer: I want to wear a uniform!

The police 3

**Black** That's enough, Grey.

**Grey** I don't want to walk the streets looking like this!

**Black** Grey! Get back in line!

**Grey** Would you walk the streets looking like this?

**The Inspector blows his whistle. Grey gets back in line.**

**Black** Green! Brown! Grey! It's time for equipment demonstration.

**Green** }  
**Brown** } Equipment demonstration!  
**Grey** }

**Black** Now, every police officer has three important pieces of equipment. A whistle –

**Green produces a whistle.**

**Black** – a truncheon –

**Brown produces a truncheon.**

**Black** – and a notebook.

**Grey produces a comic.**

**Black** A notebook, Grey, not a comic.

**Grey** They didn't give me a notebook.

**Black** I see.

**Grey** No uniform, no notebook. It's ridiculous!

**The Inspector blows his whistle.**

**Black** That's enough, Grey! Now, what are these very important pieces of equipment for? First of all, the whistle. The whistle is used to attract the attention of other police officers. Like this:

**Green blows his whistle.**

**Green** Oi!

**Brown blows her whistle.**

**Brown** Oi!

**Grey has no whistle.**

**Grey** No uniform, no notebook – and no whistle!

**Black** And now, the truncheon. Green, Brown, Grey – ready with your truncheons!

**Green** Sir!

**Brown** Sir!

**Grey has no truncheon.**

**Grey** No uniform, no notebook, no whistle – and no truncheon!

**The Inspector blows his whistle.**

**Black** Right – forget the truncheons. The notebook. Green?

**Green** Yes, Inspector?

**Black** What is the notebook for?

**Green** For making notes, Inspector.

**Black** Very good, Green. Brown?

**Brown** Yes, Inspector?

**Black** Have you got anything in your notebook?

**Brown** Yes, Inspector.

**Black** Good. Read it.

**Brown** Oh. All right. (**Reading**) ' "What I did today", by Woman Police Constable Brown, aged twenty-five...and a half. Got up. Said "Hello" to Police Constable Green. Made a cup of coffee –'

**Black** Thank you, Brown. Grey?

**Grey** Yes, Inspector?

**Black** Have you got anything in your notebook?

**Grey** (**Holding up the comic**) You mean this?

**Black** Yes.

**Grey** Yes. (**Reading**) ' "Mickey Mouse goes for a picnic." On Saturday, Mickey and his friends –'

**Black** Grey! I mean: Have you written anything in it?

**Grey** No.

**Black** Why not?

**Grey** Because they didn't give me a pen!!

**Black** All right, all right, all right. Here you are.

**The Inspector gives Grey a pen.**

**Grey** Thank you, Inspector.

**Black** Now, have you all got everything you need? Whistle?

**Green** Yes!

**Brown** Yes!

**Grey** No!

**Black** Truncheon?

**Green** Yes!

**Brown** Yes!

**Grey** No!

**Black** Notebook?

**Green** Yes!

**Brown** Yes!

**Grey** No!

**Black** Boots?

**Green** Yes!

**Brown** Yes!

**Grey** Yes!

**Black** Helmet?

**Green** Yes!

**Brown** No!

**Grey** Yes!

**Black** (*Slightly confused*) Well, that seems all right. Now it's time for action!

**Green** }  
**Brown** } Action! Right!  
**Grey** }

**Black** I want you to get out there, in the street!

**Green** }  
**Brown** } In the street! Right!  
**Grey** }

**Black** And find some criminals!

**Green** }  
**Brown** } Criminals! Right!  
**Grey** }

**Black** And when you find them...

**Green** }  
**Brown** } Right!  
**Grey** }

**Black** You know what to do!

**Green** }  
**Brown** } What?  
**Grey** }

**Black** You arrest them!

**Green** }  
**Brown** } Arrest them! Right!  
**Grey** }

**Black** And then there won't be any criminals left!

**Green** }  
**Brown** } Right!  
**Grey** }

**All** Left! Right! Left! Right! Left! Right!...

***They all march away.***

# Hotel Splendido

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This sketch was first performed in 1987, and was reprised in a slightly shortened and simplified form in 1991; it is that later version which is given here. We have found over the years that sketches set at a counter or a desk can provide good opportunities for humorous confrontations: other examples in this book are Sketch 7 *The passport office*, Sketch 9 *The post office*, Sketch 12 *The check-in desk*, and Sketch 16 *A ticket to Birmingham*. In Book 2 examples are Sketch 5 *Tourist information*, and Sketch 9 *The lost property office*.

## Words and expressions

Connected with hotels:

*reception desk, manager, single room, double room*

Other expressions:

*insult (vb.), complain, report (vb.), I don't like your attitude, unhelpful, unpleasant, horrible, ridiculous*

The sketch includes puns on the words *book* (as a noun, and as a verb in the expression *book a room*), and *free* (meaning both 'unoccupied' and 'gratis').

## Preliminary practice

Write on small pieces of paper some two-line exchanges which could take place in a hotel between a guest and a receptionist. For example:  
*I'd like a single room. – Sorry, we only have double rooms. Can I have breakfast in my room? – Certainly. What time?*  
*I need to send a fax. – Sorry, the fax machine is out of order.*  
*Is there a swimming-pool in the hotel? – No, but there's a sauna.*  
*I'd like a room with a view of the sea. – Sorry, that's not possible: the sea is 100 miles away.*

Distribute the papers to pairs of students. In their pairs, the students work out how to *mime* their exchanges, using just gestures and no words. Then the pairs mime their exchanges for the rest of the class, who try to guess the words.

## Follow-up activities

Here is an activity which can be done in groups (of four students, for example). In each group, one student is a hotel receptionist, and the other three are people wishing to book rooms. The receptionist is provided with a cue-card giving information about the hotel, like this, for example:

Single rooms: £25 per night

Double rooms: £40 per night

All rooms have bath or shower. Breakfast included.

Pets not accepted. Car park available.

Restaurant open: 12.00–15.00, 18.00–23.30.

Tonight the hotel is fully booked, but rooms are available for any other night.

Here are some possible texts for the guests' cue-cards:

*You want a double room with a shower for next Wednesday night. Ask about the price. Ask if you can bring your two dogs.*

*You want a single room for tonight and tomorrow night. You will arrive by car, so ask if there is a car park.*

*You want two single rooms for next Friday and Saturday. You will arrive quite late on the Friday and would like a meal when you arrive.*

The guests 'telephone' the receptionist and try to book their rooms. Then a different person in each group is appointed as the receptionist; these new receptionists go to different groups and the activity is repeated.

## Props and costumes

For classroom re-enacting, all that is needed is a table (the reception desk), and a large book (the guest registration book which the receptionist consults).

For a performance, the table used for the reception desk could have a large sign on the front reading 'Welcome to the Hotel Splendido: Reception'; the tourist could have a suitcase; and the large guest registration book will also be needed, of course. Costumes: the tourist has shorts and a bright, multi-coloured shirt; the receptionist should be dressed smartly as appropriate to the job.

# Hotel Splendido

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**Scene** The reception desk at a hotel in England  
**Characters** The receptionist  
An English tourist

---

**The tourist arrives at the reception desk; he is wearing shorts and a very bright, multi-coloured shirt.**

**Receptionist** Good afternoon, sir. Welcome to the Hotel Splendido.

**Tourist** Thank you.

**Receptionist** (**Pointing at the tourist**) Good heavens! Look at that!

**Tourist** (**Alarmed**) What? Look at what?

**The receptionist indicates the tourist's shirt.**

**Receptionist** Your shirt!

**Tourist** My shirt?

**Receptionist** Yes!

**Tourist** Do you like it?

**Receptionist** No!

**Tourist** No?

**Receptionist** No. It's horrible.

**Tourist** I beg your pardon?

**Receptionist** It's horrible! But for you, it's a good shirt.

**Tourist** Thank you.

**Receptionist** Because when people look at you, they look at the shirt.

**Tourist** I know.

**Receptionist** And that's good – because if they look at the shirt, they don't look at the shorts.

**Tourist** What?

**Receptionist** And the shorts are *really* horrible.

**Tourist** Now, listen. I didn't come here to be insulted by you.

**Receptionist** Oh, you want somebody else to do it. (**Calling**) Hey, George, come here for a minute!

**Tourist** Stop! Look, I want to book a room.

**Receptionist** Book a room?

**Tourist** Yes. Have you got one?

**Receptionist** What? A book or a room?

**Tourist** A room! Have you got a room?  
**Receptionist** Yes, we've got lots of rooms. It's a big hotel.

**Tourist** Yes, but have you got a room *free*?  
**Receptionist** Free?

**Tourist** Yes.  
**Receptionist** No! You have to pay for it!

**Tourist** I mean: Have you got a room with no one in it?  
**Receptionist** I don't know.

**Tourist** Well, can you have a look in the book?  
**Receptionist** Pardon?

**Tourist** Have a look in the book.  
**Receptionist** A look in the book?

**Tourist** Yes. Have a look in the book.  
**Receptionist** OK.

**The receptionist picks up the guest registration book, opens it, looks quickly at it and closes it again.**

**Receptionist** OK. I've had a look in the book.

**Tourist** And what do you think?

**Receptionist** It's a nice book.

**Tourist** Look! Have you got a room, or haven't you?

**Receptionist** OK, OK, OK!

**The receptionist looks at the book again.**

**Receptionist** Yes, we've got a room.

**Tourist** Good.

**Receptionist** A *single* room.

**Tourist** No good. I need a double room.

**Receptionist** Ah yes, for you and your shirt.

**Tourist** No! For me and my wife. She's arriving this evening.

**Receptionist** Ah. (**Looking at the book again**) Yes, we've got a double room.

**Tourist** Good! How much is it?

**Receptionist** How much?

**Tourist** Yes.

**Receptionist** (**Demonstrating with her arms**) It's about this long and about this wide and about this high.

**Tourist** No! Not how *big*, how *much*?

**Receptionist** Ah! Ten pounds.

**Tourist** Ten pounds.

- Receptionist** Yes. Ten pounds for you, ten pounds for your wife, and fifty pounds for the horrible shirt.
- Tourist** Fifty pounds for the shirt?! That's ridiculous!
- Receptionist** It's a ridiculous shirt!
- Tourist** Now you listen to me. I don't like your attitude.
- Receptionist** I don't like your shirt.
- Tourist** I'm going to complain to the manager.
- Receptionist** She's not here.
- Tourist** Where is she?
- Receptionist** In hospital.
- Tourist** In hospital? Oh dear. Did she have an accident?
- Receptionist** Not exactly. She had dinner in the hotel.
- Tourist** Well, I would just like to say that you are the most unhelpful, the most unpleasant, the *worst* receptionist that I have met in my life.
- Receptionist** (**Pleased**) Thank you very much.
- Tourist** And I am going to report you to the manager!
- Receptionist** Fine. Shall I give you the phone number of the hospital?
- Tourist** Right, that's enough! My wife and I are *not* going to stay at this hotel. I'll go and book a room at the hotel next door.
- Receptionist** OK. See you there.
- Tourist** Pardon?
- Receptionist** I'll see you there.
- Tourist** What?
- Receptionist** This is my last day at *this* hotel. I lost my job this morning. I start work tomorrow at the hotel next door.
- Tourist** (**Leaving**) Oh, no!
- Receptionist** See you tomorrow!

# The bus stop

15

This sketch, which has been shortened somewhat for the version in this book, was first performed in 1979. The British habit of forming queues at bus stops is often commented on by visitors to Britain, so we decided to write a sketch set in this situation. We also thought that there were amusing possibilities in the use of a phrasebook to make oneself understood, and thus incorporated this idea into the general misunderstandings at the bus stop. (This phrasebook, *English for All Situations*, re-appears in another sketch in Book 2: Sketch 1, *Gerry Thatcher's party*.)

## Words and expressions

*rob, robber, robbery, thief, gun, pleased, real, pain, back (n.), teeth, railway station, police station*

Note the uses of the definite and indefinite articles in referring to the bus service (*the 44, the Number 44 bus*) and to a particular bus on the route in question (*a 44, a Number 46*). Note also the sarcastic tone of *You call yourself a robber!*, and the pacifying tone of *All right, all right, all right!*

## Preliminary practice

Put the class into several queues. Give the person at the back of each queue a question on a piece of paper (a different question for each queue). The questions should be long, but easily answerable from personal experience, e.g. *When was the last time you spoke to your very first English teacher?* The person at the back of each queue asks the question\* to the person in front of them, who then asks the person in front of them, until the question reaches the person at the head of the queue. This person then answers the question\*, and the answer is passed along the queue until it reaches the back. The person at the back then announces the original question and the answer received: sometimes there will be little connection between them!

\*Note: The Q (and A) should be said quietly *over the shoulder*, and each person should say the Q (and A) *once only*.

## Follow-up activities

① In the sketch, the student makes a mistake with the words *money* and *Monday*. Here is a follow-up activity based on similar mistakes. Put the students into eight groups and give each group one of the following sets of words written on a piece of paper:

*August, September, October, November, Remember, spring, summer, autumn, window, one, two, tree, four, five, six, seven, eight, January, February, Mars, April, May, June, shirt, socks, shoes, tea, jacket, bedroom, living-room, bathroom, chicken, dining-room, green, yellow, red, grey, wait, black, blue, trousers, hate, dress, coat, scarf.*

In their groups, the students decide which word in their list is a mistake (i.e. *Remember* should be *December*, *window* should be *winter*, etc.). They then invent a sentence including that mistake, e.g. *Christmas Day is Remember 25th, Skiing is a popular window sport*, etc. Each group then reads their sentence to the rest of the class, who have to identify the mistake by saying 'Not Remember – December' or 'Window should be winter', etc.

② The students may also like to improvise a sketch in which a robber goes into a bank and uses a phrasebook – either an English robber attempting to rob a bank in their country, or a robber of their nationality attempting to rob a bank in Britain.

## Props and costumes

For classroom re-enacting, these props are useful: a small piece of paper or card (the robber's 'business card'); a toy gun (or something to represent it); a book (representing the phrasebook), in which the 'Dialogue 1' text could be pasted.

For a performance, you will need: the business card, the gun, the phrasebook (with the title *English for All Situations* on the cover), a whistle for the policeman, a bus stop (this could be a wooden or cardboard sign fixed to a support such as a lampstand). Costumes: in addition to a uniform for the policeman, these could include a college or university T-shirt for the student, a striped sweater for the robber, and a handbag for the old lady. The sound of the buses passing can be made by the old lady and the robber.

# The bus stop

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<b>Scene</b>	A bus stop
<b>Characters</b>	An old lady A robber A student A policeman

---

**The robber is waiting at the bus stop. The old lady joins him.**

- Old lady** Excuse me.  
**Robber** Yes?  
**Old lady** The 44.  
**Robber** The 44?  
**Old lady** Yes. The Number 44 bus. Does it stop here?  
**Robber** I don't know.

**He looks at the notice on the bus stop.**

- Robber** Um...39...40...41...42...43...45. No, it doesn't.  
**Old lady** Pardon?  
**Robber** The 44 doesn't stop here.  
**Old lady** Oh, good.  
**Robber** Pardon?  
**Old lady** I said 'Oh, good'. I'm very pleased.  
**Robber** What do you mean?  
**Old lady** I don't want to catch a 44.

**She laughs. The robber is not pleased, and stands with his back to her.**

- Old lady** Excuse me again.  
**Robber** Yes?  
**Old lady** The 46.  
**Robber** The 46?  
**Old lady** Yes. The Number 46 bus. Does it stop here?  
**Robber** Do you want to catch a 46?  
**Old lady** Um...Yes.

**The robber looks at the notice again.**

- Robber** 42, 43, 45...45A, 45B, 45C, 45D...46. Yes. Yes, the 46 stops here.

**Old lady** Oh, good.

**Robber** Ah, here comes a 46 now.

***A bus passes very fast.***

**Old lady** It didn't stop!

**Robber** I know.

**Old lady** But you said the 46 stopped here. You're telling lies!

**Robber** No, I'm not. That one was full. Ah, here comes another one.

**Old lady** A Number 1? I don't want a Number 1. I want a Number 46.

**Robber** I didn't say 'A Number 1'. I said 'Another one'. Another Number 46.

**Old lady** Oh, I see.

**Robber** This one will stop.

***Another bus passes very fast.***

**Old lady** It didn't stop!

**Robber** I know.

***The robber stands with his back to the old lady.***

**Old lady** Excuse me again.

**Robber** No!

**Old lady** Pardon?

**Robber** No! The 47 doesn't stop here –

**Old lady** No, no, no.

**Robber** – or the 48, or the 49, or the 50!

**Old lady** No, you don't understand. I want to ask you a question.

**Robber** Oh, yes?

**Old lady** Are you a doctor?

**Robber** What?

**Old lady** Are you a doctor?

**Robber** No, I'm not.

**Old lady** Are you sure you're not a doctor?

**Robber** Yes, I am!

**Old lady** Oh, you *are* a doctor!

**Robber** No! I'm *sure* I am *not* a doctor!

**Old lady** Oh. What a shame. You see, I've got this terrible pain in my back.

**Robber** Well, I'm sorry. I am not a doctor. I am a robber.

**Old lady** A what?

**Robber** A robber – a thief.

**Old lady** Teeth? No, no, not my *teeth* – my *back*. The pain's in my back. My teeth are all right.

**Robber** No! I didn't say 'teeth'. I said 'thief'. Thief – robber! I am a robber. Look – here's my card.

**He gives her his card.**

**Old lady** (**Reading**) 'Sam Poskins. Robber. Banks a speciality.' Oh, you're a robber.

**Robber** That's right.

**He takes back his card.**

**Old lady** Help!

**Robber** What's the matter?

**Old lady** Police!!

**Robber** Stop it!

**Old lady** Murder!!!

**Robber** Look – be quiet. It's all right. I rob banks. I don't rob people. And I certainly don't rob old ladies.

**Old lady** Old ladies!

**Robber** Yes.

**Old lady** Old ladies! *I'm* not an old lady. I'm only 92.

**Robber** Well, I don't care if you're 92 or 192. I am *not* going to rob you.

**Old lady** I don't believe you.

**Robber** What?

**Old lady** I don't believe you're a robber.

**Robber** Well, I *am*.

**Old lady** No, no, no – impossible.

**Robber** What do you mean?

**Old lady** You're too small.

**Robber** What do you mean – I'm 'too small'? I am *not* too small.

**Old lady** Yes, you are. You're *much* too small.

**Robber** No, I'm not. And anyway, I've got a gun. Look!

**He takes out his gun.**

**Old lady** Oh, yes. You've got a gun.

**Robber** That's right.

**Old lady** Help!

**Robber** It's all right. It's not real.

**Old lady** Not real?!

**Robber** No.

**Old lady** You call yourself a robber! You're too small, your gun isn't real, and you can't even rob a 92-year-old lady at a bus stop!

**Robber** All right, all right, all right! I'll show you. I will rob the next person who comes to this bus stop.

**Old lady** Oh, good!...Look – here comes someone.

**Robber** Right. Watch this.

**The student stands at the bus stop, holding a book.**

**Robber** Excuse me.

**Student** Yes?

**Robber** Put up your hands.

**Student** I'm sorry. I don't speak English.

**Robber** Oh. Er...Give me your money.

**Student** What?

**Robber** Your money!

**Student** Money?

**Robber** Yes – money, money, money!

**Student** Ah! No, it's not Money...it's Tuesday.

**Robber** No, no, no. I didn't say 'Monday'. I said 'money'. Money!

**Student** No. I told you – it isn't Money, it's Tuesday. Look – it's in this book.

**The student opens the book.**

**Student** Money, Tuesday...

**The robber takes the book.**

**Robber** What is this book? 'English for all situations'. Oh, good.

**He looks through the book.**

**Robber** Um...'In a restaurant'...'On a train'...Ah, yes – this is it: 'Unit 16. The robbery.' Good. Look – here. 'Dialogue 1: Give me your money.'

**The student reads in the book too.**

**Student** Ah, money! Um...'Are you trying to rob me?'

**Robber** 'Yes, I am.'

**Student** 'Are you a robber?'

**Robber** 'Yes, I am.'

**Student** 'I will call a policeman.'

**Robber** 'No, you won't.'

**Student** 'Yes, I will.'

**Robber** 'No, you won't.'...'Policemen are like buses. You can never find one when you want one.'

**Student** 'No, you are wrong. There's a policeman standing behind you.'

**This is true.**

**Robber** Ha, ha! I don't believe *that!*...Oh.

**Policeman** Now, what's going on here?

**Robber** Ah. Er...well...

**The robber, the student and the old lady all talk at once. The policeman blows his whistle.**

**Policeman** Right. You can all come with me to the station.

**Robber** Oh, no!

**Student** Oh, yes – 'Unit 17: The police station.'

**Old lady** Station? I don't want to catch a train. I want to catch a Number 46 bus.

**Policeman** Not the *railway* station, madam – the *police* station.

**Old lady** Oh, the police station! Yes, I know it. It's very near my house. Come on, everybody!

**The robber, the student and the old lady walk away, all talking at once again. The policeman follows them, blowing his whistle.**

# A ticket to Birmingham

16

Having noticed that people in several countries tend to make jokes about railway services in the way that has become traditional in Britain about British Rail, we wrote this sketch. It was first performed in 1979, and the version in this book is substantially the same as the stage version. As is clear from several sketches in this collection, we are quite fond of situations in which one character seeks to prevent another from achieving some theoretically easy objective (see also Sketch 12 *The check-in desk* and Sketch 14 *Hotel Splendido*, for example).

## Words and expressions

*lovely, terrible, awful, ridiculous, second-class, single, ticket office, platform, miss (a train) plenty of time, in a hurry, There's no hurry*

The sketch includes several conditional sentences (e.g. *You'll get very tired if you run*), including the type used for giving advice beginning: *If I were you, I'd...*

Note the use of present tenses for 'fixed timetables' or 'future arrangements': *What time does the train leave?, The train's leaving any minute now.*

## Preliminary practice

In the sketch, the railway employee seems to wilfully avoid doing the simple thing, i.e. selling the traveller a ticket. It may be enjoyable for the class to engage in some similar wilful avoidance.

Tell the students that they are going to ask each other for something – it can be an object they wish to borrow, a favour, a piece of information, etc. – and that the students who are addressed must think of ways of *not* lending the object, *not* granting the favour, *not* giving the information, etc. For example, if Student **A** asks: *What time is it?*, Student **B** could reply: *Why do you want to know?* or *Doesn't time go quickly when you're having fun?* or *You know, I must buy a new watch.* Give each student the chance to ask a question and also to avoid answering one.

## Follow-up activities

① The students may like to improvise a sketch of their own, in which someone wants to buy a ticket of another kind – a rock concert ticket, for example – and the ticket-seller attempts to dissuade them.

② In pairs or in groups, the students could complete the brief telephone conversations from the sketch, in which only the British Rail employee's words are given. There are six such conversations, and all are introduced in the script by the phrase *On the phone*. (The pairs or groups could take one or two different conversations each, or all the pairs/groups could have the same conversation(s).)

The students should write out the BR employee's words as given in the script, leaving a line for each reply (represented by three dots in the script), and then decide what the other speaker said. When they have completed their conversations, the pairs or groups could read them out to the rest of the class.

③ In pairs, the students could of course simply improvise some conversations in which they buy a railway ticket in the normal way, i.e. without any of the problems which arise in the sketch because of the BR employee's delaying tactics. The conversation would cover the destination, the type of ticket required (first- or second-class, single or return), the price, how the traveller wants to pay, etc.

## Props and costumes

For simple classroom re-enacting, the only props required are a table, two chairs, a newspaper for the employee at the beginning (although this is not vital), and a telephone.

For a more elaborate performance, the above props will be needed, plus costumes for the characters: the employee should have a railway uniform jacket, and possibly a cap; the traveller's costume can be as desired. The traveller could also have a suitcase or a rucksack. Note that the telephone has to ring during the sketch.

# A ticket to Birmingham

---

**Scene** A railway station in Britain  
**Characters** A traveller  
A British Rail employee

---

**The BR employee is sitting at a table, reading a newspaper. The traveller comes in.**

- Traveller** Excuse me.
- BR employee** Can I help you?
- Traveller** Yes. I want a ticket.
- BR employee** A ticket?
- Traveller** Yes. I want a ticket to Birmingham.
- BR employee** A ticket to Birmingham?
- Traveller** Yes.
- BR employee** Why?
- Traveller** Why what?
- BR employee** Why do you want a ticket to Birmingham?
- Traveller** Well –
- BR employee** Birmingham's a terrible place! It's awful! If I were you, I wouldn't go to Birmingham.
- Traveller** I live there.
- BR employee** Now, Oxford's a very nice place.
- Traveller** I *live* there.
- BR employee** Why don't you go to Oxford?
- Traveller** I *live* there!
- BR employee** What? In Oxford?
- Traveller** No! In Birmingham!
- BR employee** Oh.
- Traveller** And I want to go to Birmingham. Today.
- BR employee** Impossible.
- Traveller** What?
- BR employee** It's impossible. It'll take you three days.
- Traveller** Three days?
- BR employee** Oh, yes. It'll take you at least three days – walking.
- Traveller** Walking?! I don't want to *walk* to Birmingham!
- BR employee** You don't want to walk?

- Traveller** No.
- BR employee** Oh, I understand.
- Traveller** Good.
- BR employee** You want to run.
- Traveller** Run?!
- BR employee** You'll get very tired if you run.
- Traveller** Listen –
- BR employee** If I were you, I'd walk.
- Traveller** I don't want to walk, and I don't want to run. I want to take the train.
- BR employee** The train? Ha! You'll get there much faster if you walk.
- Traveller** Now, don't be ridiculous. I want a ticket for the next train to Birmingham.
- BR employee** The next train to Birmingham?
- Traveller** Yes. When is it?
- BR employee** Pardon?
- Traveller** What time is it?
- BR employee** I don't know. I haven't got a watch.
- Traveller** No! I mean: What time is the train? What time does the train leave?
- BR employee** Oh, I see. Sorry. I'll check.

***He picks up the telephone and dials a number.***

- BR employee** Take a seat.
- Traveller** Thank you.

***The traveller sits down.***

- BR employee** (***On the phone***) Hello? Bert?...Who's that?...Oh, hello, Charlie. Where's Bert?...Is he? Oh, well, is Eric there?...Hello? Eric?...Isn't Bert there?...Oh, dear – very sad. Is Arthur there?...Hello? Arthur?...Who? Oh, hello, Charlie. Is Bert there?

***The traveller is getting impatient.***

- Traveller** Look – can you please find out when the next train to Birmingham leaves?
- BR employee** Yes, all right. (***On the phone***) Er...Charlie...Who's that? Eric?...Oh, Arthur. Can I speak to Dave?...Yes, OK, I'll hold on.

***The traveller is getting more impatient.***

- Traveller** Look –
- BR employee** It's all right. I'm holding on. (***On the phone***) Dave?...Hello, Dave. This is Sid...Very well, thanks – and you?...Good. Listen, Dave, there's something I must ask you. How's your wife?...Did she?
- Traveller** The next train to Birmingham!
- BR employee** Oh, yes. (***On the phone***) Dave, I've got a young man here. When is the next train to Birmingham? Yes...Yes...Yes...Yes...Yes. Thanks, Dave. Hold on.

- Traveller** Well?
- BR employee** He doesn't know.
- Traveller** He doesn't know?
- BR employee** No.
- Traveller** Why not?
- BR employee** Well, Dave doesn't work at the station.
- Traveller** He doesn't work at the station?!
- BR employee** No. Dave works at the café across the road. You should never ask Dave about trains.
- Traveller** I didn't ask him. You asked him!
- BR employee** Eric's the one who knows about trains.
- Traveller** Well, ask Eric then.
- BR employee** Right. (**On the phone**) Er...Dave, can you put Eric back on?...Eric?...Eric, I've got a young man here. It's about trains to Birmingham. When is the next one?  
...Right...OK...Fine...Super...Smashing...Super...Fine...OK...Right. Thanks, Eric.  
Bye.

**He puts down the telephone.**

- Traveller** So, when is the train?
- BR employee** The train, yes. Well, there's a small problem.
- Traveller** What's that?
- BR employee** They can't find it.
- Traveller** They can't find what?
- BR employee** They can't find the train. It's lost.
- Traveller** Lost?!
- BR employee** Well, it's not exactly *lost*. They know where it is.
- Traveller** Well, where is it?
- BR employee** It's somewhere between here and Birmingham.
- Traveller** This is terrible.
- BR employee** Yes, but it happens every day. If I were you, I'd start walking.
- Traveller** But I'm in a hurry.
- BR employee** Well, run then.
- Traveller** I don't want to run.
- BR employee** Well, take a taxi!
- Traveller** I don't want to take a taxi!

**The telephone rings. The traveller answers it.**

- Traveller** Hello!!!...It's for you.

**The BR employee takes the telephone.**

**BR employee** Thank you. (**On the phone**) Hello? Sid speaking. Who's that?...Eric! Hello! What is it?...The train to Birmingham?...What?...Marvellous. Where was it?...At Platform 2?...It was there all the time. Amazing...OK, Eric, I'll tell him. Bye.

**He puts down the telephone.**

**BR employee** Well, there is a train to Birmingham.

**Traveller** Marvellous.

**BR employee** It's at Platform 2.

**Traveller** Wonderful.

**BR employee** And it's leaving any minute now.

**Traveller** Oh, good. A second-class single to Birmingham, please.

**BR employee** Pardon?

**Traveller** Can you give me a second-class single to Birmingham?

**BR employee** No, I can't.

**Traveller** Why not?

**BR employee** Well, this isn't the ticket office.

**Traveller** What?!

**BR employee** The ticket office is next door.

**Traveller** Oh, no!

**BR employee** What's the matter?

**Traveller** I'm going to miss the train!

**BR employee** Don't worry. You've got plenty of time.

**Traveller** Plenty of time? The train's leaving any minute now.

**BR employee** Yes, but there's no hurry.

**Traveller** Why not?

**BR employee** Because I'm the driver.

**Traveller** You're the driver?!

**BR employee** Yes. The train can't leave without me, can it?

**Traveller** No.

**BR employee** Now, you come with me.

**Traveller** Platform 2?

**BR employee** No. Dave's café.

**Traveller** Oh, right.

**BR employee** We'll have a nice cup of tea and a sandwich before we go.

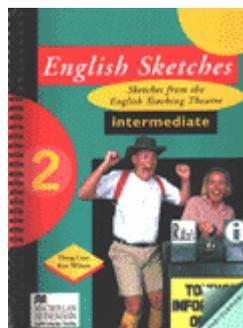
**Traveller** Lovely.

**BR employee** And I'll introduce you to Dave and his wife. I think you'll like them...

**They leave, chatting.**

# English Sketches

## BOOK 2



Tapescripts and Teaching Notes

# Gerry Thatcher's party

This sketch was first performed in 1981. Most coursebooks include in their earliest lessons the language used in meeting and greeting people, introducing oneself and others, and so on. A very useful follow-up to this is the language used in inviting someone out, so we included this alongside the former language in this sketch. We chose to set the events at a 'smart' party because of the comic rather than realistic possibilities. The versatile book *English for All Situations* proves just as useful here as it does in Sketch 15, *The bus stop* (in Book 1).

## Words and expressions

*invitation, lounge* (= living-room)  
*actually, useful, wonderful; The trouble is...*  
*pick (someone) up* (= call for/collect someone)

In the sketch, the word *Night* leads to confusion: this confusion is possible because *Night* is often used as a contraction of *Good night*. Some British family names have two hyphenated parts: it is this feature which enables the formation of the imaginary name *Smith-Actually*.

## Preliminary practice

Put the class into pairs or groups, and ask each pair or group to devise five questions that could be used when inviting someone out. Don't mention the sentences that Horace uses in the sketch (or indeed any specific sentences). Just give some ideas for topics, such as:

- Ask about availability on a particular day.
- Propose an activity.
- Ask if the person likes a particular kind of food, music, films, etc.
- Suggest a means of transport.

When the students have devised their questions, they can try them out on someone from another pair or group, who may answer as they like. The people making the invitations should try to ask all five of their questions, even if they get a negative response early on from the people they are inviting!

## Follow-up activities

① As a whole-class activity, the students could improvise a party scene, in which the host introduces several celebrities (famous contemporary or historical figures) to different small groups of other guests – one celebrity to each group. The groups talk to the celebrities about their life, work, interests, and so on. For this activity, the teacher or a student can act as the party host, and periodically move the celebrities around to introduce them to different groups. The host can also periodically interject offers of drinks and snacks.

② Here is another activity connected with the subject of parties, this time involving the students working in groups.

Each group composes an invitation for a party of some kind and writes it on a card or a piece of paper. The text should include the usual information, such as the date, time and place of the party, what it is celebrating, whether the guests should bring something, etc. When these invitations are complete, each group delivers their invitation to another group. Then there are two possible ways to proceed:

- a. the groups compose and write a reply to the invitation they have received, and deliver this written reply back to the inviting group;
- b. each group nominates one person to 'telephone' a person in the inviting group and reply to the invitation orally.

## Props and costumes

For classroom re-enacting, you will need a table, a book (placed on the table until needed), and some empty glasses (plastic ones are more practical than real ones). The doorbell sound can be done vocally.

For a more elaborate performance, you will need the table, made attractive with a tablecloth; plastic glasses; a bottle or two; the book, with the title *English for All Situations* on the cover; a doorbell sound off-stage. Costumes: smart party clothes for Gerry (perhaps a dinner-jacket) and Amanda (perhaps a long dress); a bow-tie and smart shirt for Maxwell; and for Horace something slightly awkward, e.g. a non-matching shirt and tie, and trousers which are a little short.

# Gerry Thatcher's party

---

<b>Scene</b>	A smart party
<b>Characters</b>	Gerry Thatcher, the host Maxwell, Gerry's butler Horace Smith Amanda Spencer ] guests at the party

---

**The doorbell rings. Maxwell opens the door.**

**Maxwell** Yes, sir?

**Horace** Er...Hello. Is this Gerry Thatcher's house?

**Maxwell** Yes, sir.

**Horace** Oh, good. I've got an invitation to Gerry's party. My name's Horace Smith.

**Maxwell** In that case, please come in, sir.

**Horace** Thank you.

**Maxwell** Mr Thatcher is in the lounge. This way.

**Horace** Er...Thank you.

**They go into the lounge, where the party is in progress. Horace sees Gerry.**

**Horace** Er...Hello.

**Gerry** George!

**Horace** What?

**Gerry** George Wilberforce!

**Horace** Pardon?

**Gerry** How are you, George?

**Horace** Actually, I'm not –

**Gerry** Good, good, good!

**Horace** No, just a minute –

**Gerry** How's your wife?

**Horace** I'm not married.

**Gerry** Good, good, good!

**The doorbell rings again.**

**Gerry** Maxwell, give George a drink. I'll go to the door.

**Maxwell** Yes, sir.

**Gerry opens the door.**

- Amanda** Gerry!
- Gerry** Amanda! How are you?
- Amanda** Fine.
- Gerry** Good, good, good! Come in, come in, come in.
- Amanda** Thank you.

**Gerry brings Amanda over to Horace.**

- Gerry** Amanda, I'd like you to meet one of my oldest friends – George Wilberforce.
- Amanda** How do you do, George.
- Horace** Actually, my name *isn't* George.
- Gerry** Isn't it?
- Horace** No.
- Gerry** What is it, then?
- Horace** It's Horace Smith, actually.
- Gerry** Of course it is! Amanda, I'd like you to meet one of my *dearest* friends, Horace Smith-Actually.
- Horace** It's just *Smith*, actually.
- Gerry** That's what I said.
- Amanda** I'm very pleased to meet you, Mr Actually.
- Horace** No, it's *Smith*, actually.
- Amanda** Oh, yes. Mr Smith-Actually.
- Horace** No, no, no...My name isn't Smith-Actually, actually. It's just *Smith*, actually.
- Gerry** I'm sure it is. Have a drink. Amanda?
- Amanda** Yes, Gerry?
- Gerry** Come and have a look at the garden.
- Amanda** OK.

**Amanda goes into the garden with Gerry.**

- Maxwell** Your drink, sir.
- Horace** Thank you. She's very nice, isn't she?
- Maxwell** Yes, sir. Very nice indeed.
- Horace** I'd like to go out with her.
- Maxwell** Would you, sir?
- Horace** Yes, very much. The trouble is, I never know what to say when I meet people.
- Maxwell** In that case, sir, I think you need this book.

**Maxwell shows Horace a book.**

- Horace** What is it?

- Maxwell** 'English for all situations', sir. It's full of useful expressions. Look – 'Unit 1: In a restaurant.'... 'Unit 2: On a train.'... 'Unit 3: At a party. Useful expressions in English, when you meet someone at a party.'
- Horace** Wonderful.
- Maxwell** (**Reading**) 'Are you doing anything on Saturday night?'
- Horace** No, I'm not, actually.
- Maxwell** No, sir. That's the first question. Try it.
- Horace** Ah. Are you doing anything on Saturday night?
- Maxwell** Good. 'How about going to the cinema?'
- Horace** How about going to the cinema?
- Maxwell** 'What time shall I pick you up?'
- Horace** Pardon?
- Maxwell** That's the next expression.
- Horace** Ah. What time shall I pick you up?
- Maxwell** I think, sir, that you should suggest doing something before going to the cinema.
- Horace** Good idea. What, for example?
- Maxwell** Well, going to a restaurant – an Italian restaurant, perhaps.
- Horace** OK.
- Maxwell** So you say: 'Do you like Italian food?'
- Horace** Do you like Italian food?
- Maxwell** *She'll* say 'Yes', because everyone likes Italian food. So *you* say. 'So do I.'
- Horace** So do I.
- Maxwell** 'Let's have *spaghetti alle vongole* before we go.'
- Horace** Let's have *spaghetti on a gondola* before we go.
- Maxwell** Hmm...And finally you say: 'See you on Saturday!'
- Horace** See you on Saturday!
- Maxwell** Good. Now let's practise.
- Horace** Right. Um...Are you doing anything on Saturday morning?
- Maxwell** Night.
- Horace** Oh, good night.
- Maxwell** Saturday *night*, sir. Try again.
- Horace** Are you doing anything on Saturday night?
- Maxwell** (**In a high voice**) No, I'm not.
- Horace** What?...Oh, I see. Er...good. How about going to the cinema?
- Maxwell** (**In a high voice**) I'd love to.
- Horace** What time...shall I pick you up?
- Maxwell** (**In a high voice**) Eight o'clock?
- Horace** Do you like Italian food?

- Maxwell** (*In a high voice*) Yes, I love Italian food.
- Horace** So do I. Let's have...*spaghetti alle vongole* before we go.
- Maxwell** (*In a high voice*) That would be lovely.
- Horace** See you on Saturday!
- Maxwell** Very good, sir. Now, take the book, and have a little practice before she comes back.
- Horace** Right. Thank you.

**Horace concentrates on the book. Gerry and Amanda come back from the garden, laughing.**

- Amanda** Oh, Gerry, you're awfully funny!
- Gerry** Yes, I know. Amanda?
- Amanda** Yes, Gerry?
- Gerry** Are you doing anything on Saturday night?
- Amanda** No, I'm not.
- Gerry** Super! How about going to the cinema?
- Amanda** Oh, Gerry, that would be wonderful.
- Gerry** Super! What time shall I pick you up?
- Amanda** Eight o'clock?
- Gerry** Super!

**The doorbell rings again.**

- Gerry** It's all right, Maxwell – I'll go. See you on Saturday, Amanda!
- Amanda** OK, Gerry.

**Gerry goes to open the door. Amanda goes over to Horace.**

- Amanda** Oh, hello. I don't think we've met.
- Horace** Yes, we have, Amanda. It's me – Horace.
- Amanda** Horace?
- Horace** Yes, Horace Smith.
- Amanda** Oh, yes – Mr Actually.

**They laugh.**

- Horace** Er...Amanda?
- Amanda** Yes, Horace?

**Horace looks at the book.**

- Horace** (*Reading*) 'Are you doing anything on Saturday night?'
- Amanda** Yes, I am.
- Horace** (*Still reading*) 'Good. How about going to the cinema?'

**Amanda** Actually, I'm going to the cinema with Gerry on Saturday night.

**Horace** 'What time shall I pick you up?'

**Amanda** Horace, I'm going out with Gerry on Saturday night.

**Horace** 'Do you like Italian food?'

**Amanda** No, I *hate* Italian food.

**Horace** 'So do I. Let's have *spaghetti on a gondola* before we go.'

**Amanda** Oh, Horace, you *are* funny. Why don't we go for a walk in the garden?

**Horace** 'See you on Saturday!'

**Amanda** (**Laughing**) Oh, Horace!

**They go into the garden.**

# 2 The army

This sketch was first performed in 1987. The script as given here is the stage version in full, with the exception of a short, mainly visual, section in which the captain demonstrates to the unimpressed privates some 'secret signs' supposedly used by enemy agents, which has been omitted. As noted in connection with Sketch 13, *The police* (in Book 1), we have often found useful comic possibilities in groups of people in uniform who fall short of the dignity and efficiency they aim for.

## Words and expressions

Connected with the army:

*captain, private, Halt!, Attention!*

*the enemy, attack (vb.), enemy agents*

Other expressions:

*cap, glasses (= spectacles), lazy, cross the road, recognize, not necessarily*

Note that *the enemy* is treated as a plural noun: '*If the enemy know that we get up at five o'clock... They'll attack us at four o'clock.*'

## Preliminary practice

The army is traditionally an environment in which one does what one is told, so some practice of giving and obeying instructions may be a useful preparation for this sketch.

You could use an activity of the type usually associated with the Total Physical Response technique. Such activities usually involve the teacher – and then the students – giving instructions to members of the class, which the members of the class carry out. These instructions can start very simply: for example, *Get up. Walk across the room. Pick up a book, etc.*

Once the idea is established, the class can think of some military-style instructions to be carried out, such as *March!, Left, right! Left, right!, Stand to attention!, Stand at ease!*, for example.

## Follow-up activities

① In the sketch, the soldiers discuss things which one *must* do and things which one *mustn't* do in the army. Some of these things are 'reasonable' in the army context (*You must get up at five o'clock in the morning, You must never give information to enemy agents*) and some are not 'reasonable' (*You mustn't cross the road*). The students may like to devise their own version of the sketch, in which they replace these rules with different ones.

② The sketch ends with the soldiers marching off to the pub for lunch, under instructions to all buy the captain a drink. The students could improvise a continuation of the sketch to cover the scene at the pub. This would involve five students – the four characters from the sketch, plus a person serving at the bar. The general shape of the scene could be as follows:

The captain and the privates arrive at the pub, still marching, and march up to the bar.

They order drinks.

One private pays for the drinks, and the others each reimburse a third of the cost.

They then look at a list of sandwiches available at the bar\*, and each order something.

They then march over to a table with their drinks and food, and sit down.

\*You could provide the list, e.g. **Sandwiches:** *Ham, Cheese, Chicken, Ham and Cheese, Ham and Chicken, Ham Salad, Chicken Salad, etc.*

## Props and costumes

This sketch needs no props at all, either for simple classroom re-enacting or for a more elaborate performance (although the captain may like to have a whistle with which to silence the privates on the occasions when he calls *Silence!*, etc.).

Costumes needed for a performance would be, of course, army uniforms as appropriate for the captain and the privates. The captain's hat is a peaked cap, the privates' hats are berets or forage-caps. Potter should either be without a hat, or be wearing a hat which doesn't match those worn by Large and Small.

# The army

---

<b>Scene</b>	A British army base
<b>Characters</b>	A Captain Private Large Private Small Private Potter

---

***The Captain, Private Large and Private Small arrive, marching.***

<b>Captain</b>	Left, right! Left, right! Left, right! Halt! Attention!...Private Large!
<b>Large</b>	Sir!
<b>Captain</b>	Private Small!
<b>Small</b>	Sir!
<b>Captain</b>	Private Potter!...Private Potter!...Where is Private Potter?
<b>Large</b>	I don't know, sir!
<b>Small</b>	Haven't seen him, sir!
<b>Captain</b>	Private Potter!!

***Potter arrives in not-very-military style.***

<b>Potter</b>	Here I am! Hello! Sorry I'm a bit late – I couldn't find my cap.
<b>Captain</b>	Get in line, Private Potter! Left, right! Left, right! Left, right! Attention!

***Potter is now in line with Large and Small.***

<b>Potter</b>	( <b>To Large and Small</b> ) Did you take my cap?
<b>Captain</b>	Private Potter!
<b>Potter</b>	Yes?
<b>Captain</b>	Yes, <i>sir</i> .
<b>Potter</b>	Captain, you don't have to call me 'sir' – I'm a private.
<b>Captain</b>	Private Potter, when <i>you</i> speak to <i>me</i> , <i>you</i> call <i>me</i> 'sir'!
<b>Potter</b>	Oh, sorry – I forgot...sir.
<b>Captain</b>	That's better. Now, I want to talk to you. In fact, I want to talk to <i>all</i> of you. You're in the army, right?
<b>Large</b> <b>Small</b> <b>Potter</b>	} Right!
<b>Captain</b>	And in the army, there are some things you <i>must</i> do, and some things you <i>mustn't</i> do. Isn't that right, Private Large?
<b>Large</b>	Pardon, sir?

- Captain** In the army, there are some things you *must* do and some things you *mustn't* do.
- Large** Yes, sir!
- Captain** Give me an example!
- Large** I don't know, sir!
- Captain** Private Large?
- Large** Yes, sir!
- Captain** You're an idiot!
- Large** Thank you, sir!
- Captain** Private Small!
- Small** Yes, sir?
- Captain** Give me an example!
- Small** An example of what, sir?
- Captain** An example of something you *must* do in the army!
- Small** Oh right, sir. Er...
- Captain** Come on!
- Small** You must get up in the morning, sir!
- Captain** What?
- Small** You must get up in the morning, sir!
- Captain** No, Private Small, that's wrong. Correct him, Private Potter.
- Potter** You *mustn't* get up in the morning?
- Captain** No!...Private Large!
- Large** Yes, sir!
- Captain** Did you hear Private Small's example?
- Large** Yes, sir!
- Captain** It was wrong, wasn't it?
- Large** Yes, sir!
- Captain** Why was it wrong?
- Large** I don't know, sir!
- Captain** Private Large?
- Large** Yes, sir?
- Captain** You're still an idiot!
- Large** Thank you, sir!
- Captain** Listen. Getting up in the morning is not just an army rule. *Everyone* has to get up in the morning.
- Potter** Not necessarily, sir. A lot of people don't have to get up in the morning.
- Captain** You mean *lazy* people, Private Potter?
- Potter** No, not *lazy* people – people who work at nights.
- Small** Or in the afternoon.

- Large** Or in the evening!
- Captain** Silence! All right, all right. The rule in the army is this: You must get up at *five o'clock* in the morning. Isn't that right, Private Large?
- Large** Yes, sir!
- Captain** Isn't that right, Private Small?
- Small** Yes, sir!
- Captain** Isn't that right, Private Potter?
- Potter** Yes, sir!...But it's stupid.
- Captain** What was that?
- Potter** It's stupid getting up at five o'clock in the morning.
- Captain** Why is it stupid getting up at five o'clock in the morning, Private Potter?
- Potter** It's too early.
- Captain** Too early?!
- Potter** Yes. It's much too early.
- Large** I agree, sir!
- Small** So do I, sir!
- Potter** Why can't we stay in bed until seven o'clock?
- Small** Or eight o'clock?
- Large** Or lunchtime?
- Captain** Silence! You have to get up at five o'clock in the morning because –
- Large** }  
**Small** } Yes?  
**Potter** }
- Captain** Because we may be attacked by the enemy!
- Large** }  
**Small** } Ah!
- Potter** But that's also stupid.
- Captain** What?
- Potter** If the enemy know that we get up at *five o'clock* –
- Large** }  
**Small** } Yes?
- Potter** They'll attack us at *four o'clock*.
- Large** }  
**Small** } Oh yes!
- Potter** So...if we stay in bed until twelve o'clock midday –
- Large** }  
**Small** } Yes?
- Potter** The enemy will come at *eleven o'clock*!
- Large** }  
**Small** } Oh yes!

- Potter** And that's a much better time to be attacked.
- Large** I agree, sir!
- Small** So do I, sir!
- Potter** And another thing –
- Captain** Silence! Private Potter, you are wrong! You must get up at five o'clock!
- Potter** But why?
- Captain** Because you're in the army. It's an army rule. Now, can anybody tell me something you *mustn't* do in the army?
- Small** Yes, sir!
- Captain** Well done, Private Small. Let's have your example. What *mustn't* you do in the army?
- Small** You mustn't cross the road, sir!
- Captain** Eh?
- Small** When the little man is red, sir!
- Captain** What?
- Small** You mustn't cross the road when the little man is red, sir.
- Captain** *What* little man, Private Small?
- Small** The little man on the crossing, sir. On the red light, sir.
- Large** He's right, sir. You must wait until the little man is green, sir.
- Captain** Private Large!
- Large** Yes, sir?
- Captain** You know I said you were an idiot...
- Large** Yes, sir?
- Captain** I was wrong.
- Large** Thank you, sir!
- Captain** You and Private Small are *both* idiots!
- Large** } Thank you, sir!
- Small** }
- Captain** 'You mustn't cross the road when the little man is red.' Do you *really* think that's something you mustn't do in the army?
- Small** Yes, sir.
- Captain** Private Small, you must understand the difference between *general* rules and *army* rules. There are special rules just for the army.
- Large** Can you give us an example, sir?
- Captain** Yes, Private Large – an example. You must never give information to enemy agents!
- Large** } You must never give information to enemy agents!
- Small** }
- Potter** }
- Small** Excuse me, sir.
- Captain** What is it, Small?

**Small** How do you recognize an enemy agent, sir?

**Captain** Well, they are either men –

**Large** }  
**Small** } Yes.  
**Potter** }

**Captain** – or women.

**Large** }  
**Small** } Oh.  
**Potter** }

**Captain** Some of them wear dark glasses –

**Large** }  
**Small** } Yes.  
**Potter** }

**Captain** – some of them wear ordinary glasses –

**Large** }  
**Small** } Ooh!  
**Potter** }

**Captain** – and some of them –

**Large** }  
**Small** } Yes?  
**Potter** }

**Captain** – don't wear glasses at all!

**Large, Small and Potter panic.**

**Captain** Silence! Now, what have we learnt about life in the army? Private Large!

**Large** You must get up at five o'clock in the morning, sir!

**Captain** Correct. Private Small!

**Small** You must never give information to enemy agents, sir!

**Captain** Correct. Private Potter!

**Potter** You must always call the Captain 'sir'...sir.

**Captain** Right! It's time for lunch. We can all go down to the pub. And don't forget the most important rule of all.

**Potter** What's that?

**Captain** You must all buy me a drink! Left, right! Left, right! Left, right!...

**They all march away.**

# 3 The dentist

The idea for this sketch came from a member of the ETT who had studied to be a dentist. It was first performed in 1975. In the stage version, it is a very visual sketch with a very large number of props, so we have rewritten it somewhat for this book. It has, in fact, been used in ETT shows in several versions over the years, including a 1992 rewrite in which the patients were Batman and Superman, and the dentist had an assistant, with those two characters turning out to be Catwoman and Parrotwoman respectively.

## Words and expressions

*molar, anaesthetic, extraction, injection, string, hammer (n.), superstitious, work (vb.) in It works!, How does it work? and That worked very well.*

Note the rather formal tone of *What seems to be the matter?* and *I'll be with you in a moment.*

The sketch includes several examples of the Present Perfect tense, including its use after expressions such as *It's/This is the first time...*

## Preliminary practice

The sketch begins with a man and a woman 'making conversation' in the waiting-room. The students could improvise some short conversations of this type. Here is a possible way of doing this:

Put the students into groups of three, and give each group a 'waiting' situation (e.g. a doctor's waiting-room, a bus shelter, an airport departure lounge; the groups do not all have to have *different* situations). They begin with one person sitting and waiting. Another person arrives, and the two of them 'make conversation' for a few moments: they can say anything which feels appropriate, and it doesn't have to be complicated! The third person then arrives and joins in the conversation. (The students can simply work in their groups, or they could 'perform' for the rest of the class.)

## Follow-up activities

① In the sketch, the man and the woman have to deal with the 'dentist' who is very insistent about what he intends to do. The students could improvise dialogues in similar situations; for example:

*Shopkeeper and customer:* the customer only wants a box of matches, but the shopkeeper wants to sell something large and expensive.

*Patient and doctor:* the patient has a headache, but the doctor insists on examining his/her foot.

*Celebrity (rock star, film star, Prime Minister) and person in street:* the celebrity is busy, but the person insists on taking him/her home for a cup of tea.

Cue-cards would be useful for this activity. For example, the customer's card could read:

*You are a customer in a shop. You only want a box of matches. Do not buy anything else.*

And the shopkeeper's card could read:

*You are a shopkeeper. Try to sell the customer something large and expensive. If the customer says 'No', insist.*

② Elicit and write on the board things which, like visiting the dentist, may make people nervous: for example, flying, high places, snakes, horror films, large crowds, etc. The students can then discuss in groups, choosing something which makes them nervous, saying why, and adding any personal anecdotes they have about it.

## Props and costumes

For simple classroom re-enacting, if possible put a few magazines on a low table or desk in front of the chairs used by the man and woman: this will suggest a waiting-room, and the characters can flip through them during the opening part of the sketch. A bag of some sort is useful for the 'dentist'.

For a more elaborate performance, you will also need some pieces of string, a hammer, forceps and a syringe (these last three preferably toy ones); and scissors, socks and trousers in the bag used by the 'dentist'. Costumes: as desired for the man and woman; perhaps white jackets for the 'dentist' and the real dentist.

# The dentist

---

<b>Scene</b>	A dentist's waiting-room
<b>Characters</b>	Two patients: a man and a woman A 'dentist' The real dentist

---

***The man and the woman are sitting in the waiting-room. The woman is calm, but the man is very nervous.***

- Man** Um...is he good?
- Woman** Pardon?
- Man** The dentist. Is he good?
- Woman** I don't know.
- Man** You don't know?
- Woman** No. I haven't seen him before. He's new.
- Man** New!?
- Woman** Yes. It's his first day.
- Man** Oh...This is *my* first visit, you know.
- Woman** Oh, really?
- Man** It's the first time I've been here.
- Woman** Oh.
- Man** Don't you understand? It's the first time I've been to the dentist in my life!
- Woman** I see.

***The man looks at his watch.***

- Man** He's late, isn't he?
- Woman** Well, it *is* his first day.
- Man** Oh well, perhaps I won't wait. I can come back tomorrow...or the next day.

***They hear the dentist coming.***

- Woman** Ah, here he comes now.
- Man** (*Disappointed*) Oh, good.

***The 'dentist' comes in, carrying a large bag.***

- 'Dentist'** Ah, good morning, good morning, good morning. Sorry I'm late. Now, who's first?
- Woman** He was here first.
- Man** Oh no, after you.

**Woman** No, no, you were before me.

**Man** No, no, ladies first.

**'Dentist'** Now, now, what seems to be the matter?

**Man** I've got a bad tooth.

**Woman** So have I.

**'Dentist'** Well, I can do you both at the same time.

**Man** } Both at the same time?  
**Woman** }

**'Dentist'** Yes. I've got two pieces of string. Look!

**Woman** String? To take out a tooth? Have you done that before?

**'Dentist'** Not on people, no. But I tried it this morning on the cat.

**Woman** And was the cat all right?

**'Dentist'** Oh, yes! It got up, ran across the room, and jumped out of the window. And we live on the thirteenth floor.

**Woman** The thirteenth floor?

**'Dentist'** Don't worry, the cat's not superstitious.

**Man** But dentists don't use *string* to take out teeth!

**'Dentist'** Don't they? What do you want, then?

**Man** Well, to begin with, I'd like an anaesthetic.

**'Dentist'** Oh, you'd like an anaesthetic, would you? Just a minute.

**He takes a hammer out of his bag.**

**'Dentist'** Ah, yes. Here we are.

**Woman** What's that?

**'Dentist'** A hammer.

**Man** Ah! Is that the anaesthetic?

**'Dentist'** I'm not sure. It's the first time I've given an anaesthetic. Sit still.

**He hits the table; this frightens the man, who faints.**

**Man** Oh! Ohh!

**'Dentist'** Oh, it works!

**He puts the hammer down.**

**'Dentist'** Now, madam, what's the matter with you?

**Woman** I've got a pain.

**'Dentist'** Where?

**Woman** In my mouth.

**'Dentist'** Yes, I know it's in your mouth, but which tooth?

**Woman** This one here.

- 'Dentist'** Ah yes, a molar.
- Woman** What are you going to do?
- 'Dentist'** I'm going to take it out.
- Woman** How?
- 'Dentist'** I don't know.
- Woman** You don't know?
- 'Dentist'** No. This is the first time I've taken out a molar. In fact, it's the first time I've taken out a tooth.
- Woman** The first time you've taken out a tooth!
- 'Dentist'** Yes. This is a very important day for me – my first extraction. Now, where's that hammer?
- Woman** Listen, I don't want the hammer and I don't want the string. I want you to take my tooth out with a pair of –
- 'Dentist'** A pair of scissors?
- Woman** No.
- 'Dentist'** A pair of socks?
- Woman** No.
- 'Dentist'** A pair of trousers?
- Woman** No.
- 'Dentist'** Oh. Just a minute.

**He looks inside his bag, and takes out a large pair of forceps.**

- 'Dentist'** These?
- Woman** Yes, I suppose so.
- 'Dentist'** Right then. Open your mouth.
- Woman** But what about the anaesthetic?
- 'Dentist'** Oh yes. Pass me the hammer.
- Woman** I don't *want* the hammer! I want a *proper* anaesthetic. I want an injection.
- 'Dentist'** An injection?
- Woman** Yes.
- 'Dentist'** Just a minute.

**He looks inside his bag again, and takes out a large syringe.**

- 'Dentist'** Ah yes, this is for injections, isn't it? How does it work?
- Woman** Well, you're the dentist. Don't *you* know?
- 'Dentist'** No. It's the first time I've used one of these. Oh well, I'll have a try. Open your mouth.
- Woman** Er, no...I don't think you really know...er...no, no, I'll come back another day. I –

**The man wakes up.**

- Man** Where am I? Hey, what are you doing?

*The dentist 4*

**'Dentist'** I'll be with you in a moment, sir. Now, just sit still, madam...

**Man** No, no, stop that! You're absolutely crazy!

**Woman** I agree. He's absolutely crazy, completely mad. Let's get out of here.

**Man** Oh yes, good idea.

**'Dentist'** So you don't want me to take out that molar?

**Woman** Certainly not. (**To the man**) Come on.

**Man** Yes. Good idea.

**The man and the woman leave.**

**'Dentist'** Hmm, that worked very well.

**He puts his things into the bag, laughing to himself.**

**'Dentist'** 'But dentists don't use *string* to take out teeth!' – 'Oh, you'd like an anaesthetic, would you?'

**The real dentist arrives.**

**Dentist** Oh, good morning. Sorry I'm late. It's my first day. It's the first time I've been here. Are you the only one?

**'Dentist'** Yes, there's just me.

**Dentist** Right. You can come straight in, then.

**'Dentist'** Oh, good. I hate having to wait.

# Mr Williams and the postman 4

The idea for this sketch came from a classroom activity: a revision activity with a class of intermediate students, whose common mistake was to omit the word *one* in expressions such as *the red one* or *the Japanese one*. The sketch itself was first performed in 1976. In the original stage version, the ending was slightly different: Mrs Williams won a weekend in Brighton with the postman; this ending has subsequently been modified and it is a modified version which is used in the script given here.

## Words and expressions

*envelope, competition, star prize, win, unhappy, unfortunate, exciting, ridiculous, silly, What's going on? (= What's happening?), Concentrate!, Stop wasting our time.*

The expression *the Post Office*, as used in the sketch, means the organization responsible for postal services, not one particular post office in the street. Note the use of stress for contrast (e.g. 'I want the *blue one*') and for emphasis ('*Today's star prize...*').

## Preliminary practice

Here is an activity focusing on expressions such as *the red one*, *the blue one*, etc.: Put the students into groups and give each group several pieces of card, of varied colours. On some cards, the students draw pictures of objects (one picture per card) and on others they write the words corresponding to the objects (one word per card).\*

In random order and with the plain side visible, stick the cards in lines on the board, or place them on a table, ensuring that all the cards in any given line are of different colours. The students have to try to find the matching pictures and words by asking to see two cards, e.g. *Can I see the red one in the top line and the green one in the second line?* The activity continues until all the matching pairs have been revealed.

\*Note: the activity works best if there are at least 16 cards in total, and if no picture is on the same colour card as its corresponding word.

## Follow-up activities

① The students could improvise the dialogue that would have taken place if Mr and Mrs Williams had opened the white envelope and found the cheque for £500: firstly the dialogue with the postman, and secondly the dialogue between themselves (after the postman has gone), speculating on what they will do with the money.

② The students could act out a TV quiz game in which prizes can be won. In groups, they make up the questions – six questions per group, for example – and decide on the prizes. The questions could be either about general knowledge or questions about English words, places or institutions (similar to the postman's first two questions in the sketch). One group can then appoint a 'presenter', who will put the group's questions to 'contestants' from another group. All the groups take a turn in this way. In playing the game, the presenters could use expressions like these:

*Here's the first question.*

*The prize is (a bottle of milk)!*

*Congratulations! You've won the (bottle of milk)!*

*Listen carefully.*

*Never mind – try another question.*

*Today's star prize is (a holiday in Scotland).*

Some suspense could be added by making the game one of the 'all-or-nothing' variety, i.e. if a team wins five prizes, but fails to answer the sixth question correctly, they lose all their prizes.

## Props and costumes

For simple classroom re-enacting, all that is needed is three envelopes – appropriately coloured, if possible – two with pieces of paper inside (representing the note and the cheque) and one empty.

For a more elaborate performance, you will need the coloured envelopes, the note, the cheque, and a bag for the postman. Costumes: a uniform for the postman, and perhaps dressing-gowns, slippers, etc. for Mr and Mrs Williams. There is no need for an actual door: opening and closing it can be mimed, and the sounds of knocking and ringing the bell can be made by the postman.

# Mr Williams and the postman

---

<b>Scene</b>	The front door of 65 Shakespeare Avenue, early one morning
<b>Characters</b>	A postman Mr Henry Williams Mrs Agnes Williams

---

***The postman walks up to the front door. He knocks at the door and rings the bell.***

**Postman** Good morning! Hello! Wake up!

***Mr Williams opens the door.***

**Postman** Ah, good morning!

**Henry** Good morning.

**Postman** Mr Williams?

**Henry** Yes.

**Postman** Mr *H.* Williams?

**Henry** That's right.

**Postman** Mr *Henry* Williams of 65 Shakespeare Avenue?

**Henry** Sixty-five? Er...yes. Have you got anything for me?

**Postman** No.

**Henry** No?

**Postman** No.

**Henry** Then why did you wake me up?

**Postman** It's part of my job.

**Henry** What? Waking people up?

**Postman** Yes. It's a new service from the Post Office.

**Henry** Hmm. Listen – you're a postman.

**Postman** Yes.

**Henry** And postmen bring letters.

**Postman** Yes.

**Henry** But you haven't brought any for me.

**Postman** Wait a minute, Mr Williams. I'm sure I can find something for you. Um...

***He takes three letters out of his bag.***

**Postman** Ah yes, here we are. Three letters. Which one would you like? The red one, the white one, or the blue one?

**Henry** But those letters aren't for me.

**Postman** No, Mr Williams, but this is another new service from the Post Office – a new service for all those unhappy, unfortunate people who never get any letters.

**Henry** Oh.

**Postman** And you, Mr Williams, you never get any letters, do you?

**Henry** No, I don't.

**Postman** All right then, which one would you like? The red one, the white one, or the blue one?

**Henry** Um...I'll have the red one, please.

**Postman** The red one is yours – if you can answer a simple question.

**Henry** A question?

**Postman** Yes. Where does Queen Elizabeth the Second of England live?

**Henry** Why? Have you got a letter for her?

**He laughs.**

**Postman** No, Mr Williams. That was the question. Where does Queen Elizabeth the Second of England live?

**Henry** Ah. Where does Queen Elizabeth live?

**Postman** Yes.

**Henry** I don't know.

**Postman** Mr Williams! It's easy! B-B-B-Buck –

**Henry** Oh, yes! Buckingham Hotel.

**Postman** No, no! Palace!

**Henry** Palace Hotel.

**Postman** No!

**Henry** I know! Buckingham Palace!

**Postman** That's right! You've won the red envelope!

**Henry** Oh, thank you! This is very exciting!

**Mr Williams opens the red envelope.**

**Henry** There's nothing in it.

**Postman** No, there's never anything in the red one.

**Henry** This is ridiculous!

**Postman** No, it isn't. There are still two more envelopes.

**Henry** Yes, but is there anything in them?

**Postman** Of course there is.

**Henry** All right. The blue one.

**Postman** Very well, Mr Williams. Here is the question for the blue envelope. What is the approximate population of Great Britain?

- Henry** Er...thirty-five million?
- Postman** No. Higher.
- Henry** Eighty-five million?
- Postman** No. Lower.
- Henry** Fifty-five million people!
- Postman** – is the correct answer! You've won the white envelope!
- Henry** I don't *want* the white one. I want the *blue* one.
- Postman** Oh, go on. Take the white one.
- Henry** I don't *want* the white one!
- Postman** Oh, all right. Here's the blue one.
- Henry** Thank you.

**Mr Williams opens the blue envelope.**

- Henry** Hmm. Just a piece of paper.
- Postman** What does it say?
- Henry** It says: 'You should have taken the white one.'
- Postman** I told you.
- Henry** This is very silly. I'm going back to bed.
- Postman** Wait a minute, Mr Williams. Today's *star prize* is in the white envelope.
- Henry** The star prize?
- Postman** Yes.
- Henry** All right then, ask me the question.
- Postman** Now listen carefully. If a man walks at five miles an hour, in the same direction as a car which is travelling at thirty miles an hour, how long will it take for the car to be 107 miles from the man?
- Henry** Eh?
- Postman** Mr Williams! Concentrate! If a man walks at five miles an hour, in the same direction as a car which is travelling at thirty miles an hour, how long will it take for the car to be 107 miles from the man?
- Henry** I don't know. Three days?
- Postman** No, no, Mr Williams. Look, why don't you ask your wife to help you?
- Henry** All right. Agnes!
- Agnes** Yes?
- Henry** Come here!
- Agnes** All right. I'm coming.

**Mrs Williams comes to the door.**

- Postman** Ah, good morning, Mrs Williams.
- Agnes** What's going on?

**Henry** I'm trying to win the white one, Agnes.

**Agnes** The white what?

**Henry** The white envelope. I've already won the red one and the blue one.

**Agnes** Henry, what *are* you talking about?

**Henry** It's a competition. We answer questions and win prizes – and the star prize is in the white envelope.

**Postman** And here is the question for the white envelope. If a man walks at five miles an hour, in the same direction as a car which is travelling at thirty miles an hour, how long will it take for the car to be 107 miles from the man?

**Agnes** That's easy. Four hours, sixteen minutes and forty-eight seconds.

**Postman** Four hours, sixteen minutes and forty-eight seconds is the correct answer! You have won today's star prize. Here you are.

**Agnes** Ooh, thank you!

**Henry** Well done, Agnes.

***Mrs Williams opens the white envelope.***

**Henry** What is it?

**Agnes** It's just a piece of paper.

**Postman** No, it isn't.

**Henry** Yes, it is. Look! Just another piece of paper!

***They give the postman back the envelope and paper.***

**Postman** But, Mr Williams...Mrs Williams...

**Henry** Stop wasting our time. Come on, Agnes, let's go back to bed.

**Postman** But come back! I can explain!

***Mr and Mrs Williams go back into the house.***

**Postman** I'm sure it's not just another piece of paper. There's always a prize in the white one. Let's have a look...It's a cheque...for £500! Mr Williams! Mrs Williams!

**Henry** Go away!

**Postman** But Mr Williams, you've won the star prize!

**Henry** Go away!!

**Postman** Oh...Well, if Mr Williams doesn't want the £500, I think I'll keep it...It's a lovely day today...

***He walks away, singing to himself.***

# 5 Tourist information

This sketch was first performed in 1992, although it developed from an earlier sketch set at a tourist information desk which we originally performed in 1985. In the stage version, the sketch takes place on an invented British national holiday called National Banana Day, on which bananas, rather than sterling, are used as currency: this notion is presented prior to the sketch, in a link in which the punch-line for the sketch ('After all, it is National Banana Day.') is also given. These rather fanciful ancillary notions are omitted from the script given here.

## Words and expressions

*Pleased to meet you, What a coincidence!, Congratulations, Enjoy your stay in England, cost (vb.), owe, rent a car, car rental company, keys (= car keys), What is going on here? (= What is happening here?), Sydney (name of city and name of person)*

The colloquial expression *come on* (in *No, come on – this is a joke, isn't it?*) means 'stop being unreasonable', 'be serious'.

## Preliminary practice

As preparation for this sketch, it may be useful to practise the kind of questions which tourists ask when they arrive – or before they arrive – in the country they are visiting.

Put the students into pairs and ask each pair to devise a short dialogue between a tourist and a tourist information officer in a particular country. The pairs then act out their dialogues for the rest of the class, who guess which country is being enquired about. For example, if the dialogue includes this exchange:

Student A: *I like skiing very much. Are there any mountains here?*

Student B: *No, not really – the country is very flat.*

the rest of the class may ask if the country being enquired about is the Netherlands.

## Follow-up activities

① Near the end of the sketch, the tourist realizes that it is possible to request information without using direct questions. He says: *I'd like to rent a car... And I'd like you to tell me where I can do it, not Where can I rent a car?* Here is an activity based on that idea:

Put the students into groups. In their groups, they think of three pieces of information they would like to know about a particular country. (These could be the types of information from the preliminary practice.)

They must then think of ways of getting this information without asking direct questions – a different way for each of the three pieces of information they want to obtain. For example:

**We'd like to know** if there are any mountains.

**We'd like you to tell us** what the climate is like.

**We need to find out** the name of the capital city.

When the groups have prepared their sentences, each group then tells the class the country they are enquiring about and reads their sentences aloud. The other groups give the information if they can.

② The students could improvise some short dialogues at a car rental company – in twos (clerk and customer) or in threes (clerk and pair of customers). The customers should say the type of car they want, how long they want it for, and can add special requests (e.g. the car must be green or have a radio) making their requests as unusual as they like.

## Props and costumes

For classroom re-enacting, you will need a table or desk to represent the information desk, a horn (or something similar to make the noise), and some small cards marked £5, £10, £15, etc. Some pieces of paper to represent the tourist's money, and a set of keys, are also useful.

For a performance, the table or lectern used for the information desk should have a sign on it reading 'Rita's Tourist Information Office', which can be removed to reveal 'Rita's Rent-A-Car'. The cards marked £5, £10, £15, etc. can be in a container fixed to the desk, so that they can be removed one by one at the appropriate moments (i.e. the card marked £5 is at the front). It is also helpful if the horn is fixed to the desk, thus making it easier for Rita to operate. Also needed: money and keys, as noted above. Costumes: probably a smart uniform for Rita, and holiday clothes for the tourist.

# Tourist information

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**Scene** A tourist information office at an international airport in England  
**Characters** Rita, the tourist information officer  
An Australian tourist

---

**Rita is behind her desk, on which there is a sign saying 'Rita's Tourist Information Office'. The tourist arrives.**

**Tourist** G'day!

**Rita** Pardon?

**Tourist** G'day!

**Rita** Sorry, sir, I only speak English.

**Tourist** I am speaking English. 'Good day!' It's Australian. It's Australian for 'Hello'.

**Rita** Is it?

**Tourist** Yes.

**Rita** Oh, I see. 'G'day!'

**Tourist** (**Holding out his hand**) Wallaby.

**Rita** Pardon?

**Tourist** Wallaby.

**Rita** Ah! (**Shaking his hand**) 'Wallaby'.

**Tourist** No, no, no. Wallaby is my *name*.

**Rita** Oh, I see. Pleased to meet you, Mr Wallaby.

**Tourist** I've come from Sydney.

**Rita** Sydney?

**Tourist** Yes.

**Rita** Sydney who?

**Tourist** What?

**Rita** Sydney Watt? Who's Sydney Watt?

**Tourist** No, no – Sydney is in Australia.

**Rita** Sydney's in Australia.

**Tourist** Yes.

**Rita** Oh, I see. So he couldn't come to England.

**Tourist** What?

**Rita** You've come, but Sydney hasn't.

**Tourist** No, no, no, no! Sydney is the place where I live.

**Rita** Oh, I see.

**Tourist** At last!

**Rita** Sydney is the name of your *house*.

**Tourist** (**Giving up**) Yes, all right.

**Rita** So which *town* do you come from?

**Tourist** Sydney!!

**Rita** So Sydney is the name of your house *and* the name of your town! What a coincidence! So how can I help you?

**Tourist** I'd like some information.

**Rita** Some information?

**Tourist** Yes, some tourist information.

**Rita** OK, sir. Welcome to Rita's Tourist Information Office. I can answer all your questions.

**Tourist** Good.

**Rita** But it will cost you five pounds.

**Tourist** Pardon me?

**Rita toots a horn and reveals a sign saying '£5'.**

**Rita** Five pounds. Ask me anything you like: the questions are five pounds each.

**Tourist** Five pounds each?

**Rita** Was that a question?

**Tourist** Yes.

**Rita toots the horn again and changes the sign to '£10'.**

**Rita** That's ten pounds.

**Tourist** Just a minute! Do I have to pay you five pounds for every question?

**Rita toots the horn again and changes the sign to '£15'.**

**Rita** Pardon?

**Tourist** I said: Do I have to pay you five pounds for every question?

**Rita toots the horn again and changes the sign to '£20'.**

**Rita** Yes, sir.

**Tourist** But is this normal?

**Rita toots the horn again and changes the sign to '£25'.**

**Rita** Oh yes, sir. It's quite normal.

**Tourist** Is it?

**Rita toots the horn again and changes the sign to '£30'.**

**Rita** Yes, sir.

**Tourist** No, come on – this is a joke, isn't it?

**They both laugh. Then Rita toots the horn again and changes the sign to '£35'.**

**Rita** No, sir.

**Tourist** Look – all I want is some information.

**Rita** What did you say?

**Rita toots the horn again and changes the sign to '£40'.**

**Tourist** I said – Wait a minute! I didn't ask a question then.

**Rita** Didn't you?

**Rita toots the horn again and changes the sign to '£45'.**

**Tourist** Look! *You've* just asked two questions and *I'm* paying for them.

**Rita** OK, I'm sorry, sir. You can have two *free* questions.

**Tourist** Can I?

**Rita** That's one.

**Tourist** Er...now, what do I want to know?

**Rita** And that's two.

**Tourist** Look, what is going on here?!

**Rita toots the horn again and changes the sign to '£50'.**

**Rita** Fifty pounds! Congratulations, sir. You now owe me fifty pounds. Now, you can pay me the fifty pounds...*or*...you can answer one simple question and double the fifty pounds to one hundred pounds!

**Tourist** (**Confused**) Er...

**Rita** Here's the question: How old are you?

**Tourist** Twenty-six.

**Rita toots the horn.**

**Rita** – is the correct answer!

**She changes the sign to '£100'.**

**Rita** You now owe me one hundred pounds!

**The tourist gives her £100.**

**Tourist** There you are.

**Rita** Thank you, sir.

**Rita removes the £100 sign.**

**Rita** Enjoy your stay in England.

**Tourist** Thank you.

**The tourist starts to leave but then comes back.**

**Tourist** Wait a minute – I haven't had any information yet!

**Rita** Don't worry, sir. Ask me anything you like – but don't forget: it costs...

**Rita** }  
**Tourist** } ...five pounds a question.

**Tourist** Right. Five pounds a question. Er... Can you tell me –

**Rita is going to toot the horn.**

**Tourist** – no, no, no, no... Do you know –

**Rita is again going to toot the horn.**

**Tourist** – no, no, no, no, no... Ah. Five pounds a question. Right. I'd like to rent a car.

**Rita** You'd like to rent a car?

**Tourist** Yes. And I'd like you to tell me where I can do it.

**Rita** You'd like to rent a car?

**Tourist** Yes.

**Rita** Well, sir, there is a car rental company in the airport.

**Tourist** Good. (**Looking around**) And it's –

**Rita** – right here!

**Rita changes the 'Tourist Information Office' sign to a 'Rent-a-Car' sign.**

**Rita** Welcome to Rita's Rent-a-Car.

**Tourist** Oh.

**Rita** We have cars from all over the world. And I have here, in my hand, the keys to a Rolls-Royce.

**Tourist** A Rolls-Royce! Yes, please!

**Rita** (**Giving him the keys**) Here you are. That's fifty pounds.

**Tourist** (**Giving her the money**) Here you are. Fifty pounds for a Rolls-Royce!

**Rita** No, sir. It's fifty pounds for the keys.

**Tourist** Oh.

**Rita** Now, sir – do you have any more questions?

**Tourist** Well, I've only got five pounds left.

**Rita** So you can have one more question. What would you like to know?

**Tourist** What time is the next plane back to Australia?

**Rita toots the horn.**

**Rita** I don't know, sir.

**Rita takes his £5 note.**

**Rita** Thank you very much. Goodbye.

# The bank

The idea for this sketch came from an old joke about writing a cheque to cover an overdraft. We also liked the idea of a customer pretending not to understand a bank manager, and a bank robber who was not very competent, so we combined these elements and wrote this sketch. It was first performed in 1976. For this book, the stage version has been slightly shortened and the ending altered; on stage, Mr Moore and the robber went off together to rob another bank, leaving the manager to sing a song.

## Words and expressions

Connected with money in general:  
*earn, make (= earn), spend, save, rob, steal*

Connected with banking in particular:  
*cheque, cheque-book, account, open (an account), in the red, overdrawn*

Note that the bank manager uses quite formal language most of the time: for example, *Do sit down, I don't think you quite understand, Just excuse me one moment, I'll get the necessary papers.*

## Preliminary practice

You could start by brainstorming words concerning money and banks; this will probably generate some of those listed above. You could also use magazine advertisements for banks as a source of vocabulary; these often suggest that one's local bank is a friendly place with smiling people waiting to help you, and would set the scene for the sketch quite well.

Then ask the students to each think of a reason to give their bank manager in order to justify their being £200 overdrawn: for example, they absolutely had to buy something or to give the money to someone; these reasons can be as fanciful as they like. Even if your students are too young to have experience of meeting a bank manager, they should be able to imagine the situation fairly easily.

## Follow-up activities

① The bank manager in the sketch tries to convey to Mr Moore the meaning of the expression *in the red* by paraphrasing it, first giving another word (*overdrawn*) and then giving a full explanation. The students could improvise some dialogues in other situations which involve paraphrasing, such as these:

*Traveller and immigration official: The traveller's passport has expired.*

*Customer and shopkeeper: The customer pays with a £10 note which is a forgery.*

Cue-cards will be useful for this activity. For example, the traveller's card could read:

*You are a traveller. Your passport has expired. Pretend you do not understand when the official explains this to you.*

And the official's card could read:

*You are an immigration official. You are talking to a traveller whose passport has expired. Explain this to the traveller.*

② The robber gives Mr Moore a set of instructions for robbing a bank. The students could practise giving some other sets of instructions, such as a recipe or how to make a call from a public telephone. They could work in groups to produce their set of instructions in writing, and the groups could then exchange what they have written with other groups, who decide if the instructions are clear and complete.

## Props and costumes

For re-enacting in the classroom, you will need a chair for the manager and a desk for her to sit behind; two other chairs, one for Mr Moore and one for the robber; a cheque-book (or a small notebook to represent it); a bag and a piece of paper for the robber.

For a more elaborate performance, the following extra props are useful: a telephone, nameplate and some papers on the manager's desk; a gun and some bundles of money for the robber. Costumes can be as desired: probably something quite smart for the manager; perhaps a striped sweater for the robber.

# The bank

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<b>Scene</b>	The manager's office in a bank
<b>Characters</b>	Miss D. Posit, the bank manager Monica, Miss Posit's secretary Mr Moore, a customer A bank robber

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***Miss Posit is sitting at her desk. The intercom buzzes.***

**Miss Posit** Yes, Monica?

**Monica** Miss Posit, there's a gentlemen to see you. Mr Moore.

**Miss Posit** Ah, yes. Mr Moore. Bring him in please, Monica.

**Monica** Yes, Miss Posit.

***Monica brings Mr Moore in.***

**Monica** Mr Moore.

**Miss Posit** Good morning, Mr Moore.

**Mr Moore** Good morning.

**Miss Posit** Thank you, Monica.

***Monica leaves the office.***

**Miss Posit** Do sit down, Mr Moore.

**Mr Moore** Thank you.

***He sits down.***

**Miss Posit** Now, Mr Moore, the situation is like this. Your account is in the red.

**Mr Moore** Pardon?

**Miss Posit** In the red.

**Mr Moore** I'm sorry. I don't understand.

**Miss Posit** In the red. Overdrawn.

**Mr Moore** 'Overdrawn.' No, I'm sorry. I've never heard that word before in my life.

**Miss Posit** It's very simple, Mr Moore. It means that you've taken more money *out* of the bank than you've put *in*.

**Mr Moore** Oh, I see. Thank you very much.

**Miss Posit** I don't think you quite understand, Mr Moore. It means that you've put in *less* than you've taken out.

**Mr Moore** Oh.

**Miss Posit** Your account is overdrawn. £200 overdrawn.

**Mr Moore** £200 overdrawn. I see. Well, don't worry. I can put that right immediately.

**Miss Posit** Oh, good.

**Mr Moore** Yes, I'll write you a cheque, shall I?

**He takes out his cheque-book and begins to write.**

**Mr Moore** Now...two hundred pounds...

**Miss Posit** Mr Moore, Mr Moore, if you write me a cheque for £200, you'll be overdrawn *more*, Mr Moore.

**Mr Moore** I beg your pardon?

**Miss Posit** *More*, Mr Moore. M-O-R-E, *more*.

**Mr Moore** No, no...*double-O...M-double-O-R-E*, Mr *Moore*. It *is* my name.

**Miss Posit** Mr Moore, I don't think you quite understand the situation. You see –

**The robber comes in suddenly.**

**Robber** Nobody move!

**Miss Posit** – you see, if you write me a cheque for £200 –

**Robber** I said: 'Nobody move!'

**Miss Posit** Can I help you?

**Robber** That's better. *You* –

**Mr Moore** Me?

**Robber** Yes. Read this.

**He gives Mr Moore a note.**

**Mr Moore** Oh. OK. Er...**(Reading)** 'Two pounds of tomatoes, six eggs, and a packet of chocolate biscuits.'

**Robber** No, no, no. The other side.

**Mr Moore** Oh, sorry. Er...**(Reading)** 'Give me all your...honey, or I'll...kiss you.'

**Robber** Not *honey* – *money*.

**Mr Moore** Oh, sorry. **(Reading)** 'Give me all your *money*, or I'll kiss you.'

**Robber** Not *kiss* – *kill!*

**Mr Moore** Oh. Er...Miss Posit, I think this is for you.

**He gives the note to Miss Posit.**

**Miss Posit** **(Reading)** 'Give me all your money, or I'll kill you.' I see. Would you sit down for a moment?

**Robber** Sit down?

**Miss Posit** Yes, I'm very busy at the moment. Please sit over there.

**Robber** But –

**Miss Posit** I'll be with you in a moment.

**The robber sits down.**

- Miss Posit** Now, Mr Moore. How much do you earn?
- Mr Moore** £35 a week.
- Robber** Excuse me –
- Miss Posit** Just one moment, *please!*... So you earn £35 a week. How much do you spend?
- Mr Moore** £70 a week.
- Robber** Excuse me -
- Miss Posit** One moment, *please!*... £70 a week. So you spend twice as much as you earn.
- Mr Moore** Yes, I earn half as much as I spend.
- Miss Posit** How do you do it?
- Mr Moore** It's easy. I use my cheque-book.
- Miss Posit** Exactly, Mr Moore!
- Robber** *Excuse me!*
- Miss Posit** Yes!!
- Robber** I make £2,000 a week.
- Miss Posit** £2,000 a week? And how much do you spend?
- Robber** £1,000 a week.
- Miss Posit** Really? So you save £1,000 a week.
- Robber** Yes.
- Miss Posit** (**Very politely**) Would you like to sit here?
- Robber** Thank you.
- Miss Posit** Mr Moore, would you sit over there for a moment?

**The robber and Mr Moore change places.**

- Miss Posit** So you save £1,000 a week.
- Robber** Yes.
- Miss Posit** Tell me...where do you keep this money?
- Robber** Here. In this bag.

**He puts a large bag full of money on the desk.**

- Miss Posit** Oh. Oh, yes. Very nice. Um...would you like to open an account, Mr...?
- Robber** Mr Steele.
- Miss Posit** Steele. I see. S-T-double-E-L-E?
- Robber** Yes, that's right.
- Miss Posit** Well, just excuse me one moment, Mr Steele, and I'll get the necessary papers.
- Robber** Certainly.

**Miss Posit leaves the office.**

- Mr Moore** Excuse me...
- Robber** Yes?
- Mr Moore** You make £2,000 a week.
- Robber** Yes.
- Mr Moore** How do you do it?
- Robber** I rob banks.
- Mr Moore** Oh, I see. You rob banks and *steal* the money.
- Robber** Yes.
- Mr Moore** How do you do it?
- Robber** It's easy. You take a gun –
- Mr Moore** I haven't got a gun.
- Robber** Oh...well, borrow mine.
- Mr Moore** Thank you very much.

***Mr Moore takes the gun and fires it.***

- Robber** Be careful!...You take a gun and you take a note.
- Mr Moore** Oh, yes, the note. That's very good. I like that. (**Reading**) 'Two pounds of tomatoes, six eggs –'
- Robber** The other side!
- Mr Moore** Oh, yes. (**Reading**) 'Give me all your honey, or I'll kiss you!'
- Robber** 'Money' and 'kill'!
- Mr Moore** Oh, yes.
- Robber** You take the note, go into the bank, and put the note on the bank manager's desk.
- Mr Moore** Is that all?
- Robber** Yes.
- Mr Moore** I see.

***Miss Posit comes back into the office.***

- Miss Posit** Ah, yes. Now, Mr Steele –
- Mr Moore** Give me all your honey...*money*, or I'll kiss...*kill* you.
- Miss Posit** Money, Mr Moore? Certainly. Take this bag.

***She gives Mr Moore the robber's bag.***

- Mr Moore** Oh, thank you. That was easy.
- Robber** Yes, but –
- Miss Posit** Mr Moore, your account is still £200 overdrawn.
- Mr Moore** Oh, yes. Well...um...Here you are.

***He gives her £200 from the robber's bag.***

**Mr Moore** £50...£100...£150...£200.

**Robber** But...But...

**Miss Posit** Thank you, Mr Moore.

**Mr Moore** Goodbye.

***Mr Moore leaves.***

**Miss Posit** Now, Mr Steele – your account.

**Robber** But...But...But...

**Miss Posit** Mr Steele...

**Robber** Just a minute! I think something's gone wrong. Hey, you! Come back! Bring back my money – and my gun! Come back!

***He runs after Mr Moore.***

**Miss Posit** (***On the intercom***) Monica, would you bring me some coffee, please? Some *strong black* coffee...

# The Superlative vacuum cleaner 7

This sketch was first performed in 1974, prompted by the idea that praising the qualities of something when selling it is a useful context in which to demonstrate the use of superlative adjectives. Since the word *superlative* can itself be used to indicate high praise, it seemed an appropriate brand name for the vacuum cleaner being sold. The script given here is almost exactly the same as the stage version. We have used the context of 'selling' in several other sketches, such as Sketch 11 *The shoe stall* (in Book 1), and Sketch 10 *The travel agency* (in this book).

## Words and expressions

dust (n.), carpet, handbag, salesman/woman, sales technique, on the market, smart, economical, effective, revolutionary, boring, colourful, detest, go on (= continue)

The expression *My goodness me!*, used to express surprise, is rather old-fashioned in tone. Notice the use of *just*, meaning 'only' or 'simply' in *Just £65 to you, madam* and *I'll just go and get some money*.

## Preliminary practice

As this sketch involves praising the qualities of something when selling it, a good introduction would be an activity based on some advertisements from newspapers and magazines.

Show the class some advertisements and ask them to tell you what the 'selling point (or points)' – i.e. the main qualities being praised – are in each case. If possible, choose advertisements which include expressions such as *the fastest*, *the most comfortable*, *the most economical*, etc., as this will provide some useful practice of superlative adjectives.

Then you can lead into the sketch by telling the students that its title is *The Superlative vacuum cleaner*, and asking them to predict which superlative adjectives they think they will hear.

## Follow-up activities

① You could organize some role-playing activities in which the characters change roles as the salesman and the housewife do in the sketch. For example: A police officer stops a motorist for speeding. The police officer is not very competent, so the motorist offers to ask the questions. The dialogue might start with lines similar to those in the sketch, like this:

*Police officer:* You were driving too fast.

*Motorist:* That's right.

*Police officer:* Ah.

*Motorist:* Well, go on, then.

*Police officer:* I've finished.

*Motorist:* Finished? You haven't said very much. What sort of a police officer are you?

*Police officer:* Not a very good one, I'm afraid.

*Motorist:* I can see that. Look, you get into the car, and I'll ask the questions.

Some other possible situations: shop assistant and customer; manager explaining job to new employee; geography teacher and student who knows more about geography than the teacher; journalist and politician.

② The students, individually or in groups, could design an advertisement for the 'Superlative' vacuum cleaner, using information from the sketch, inventing a slogan, and adding a drawing and other details such as where it can be bought.

## Props and costumes

For simple classroom re-enacting, any object can be used to represent the vacuum cleaner (for example, a wastepaper basket, a pile of books, a bag). Some pieces of paper can be used to represent the money.

For a more elaborate performance, a real vacuum cleaner is needed, and costumes for the characters as desired. As always, it is fun – and more practical – for the door to be mimed and for the doorbell sound to be made vocally by the characters.

# The Superlative vacuum cleaner

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**Scene** The hall of a house  
**Characters** A vacuum cleaner salesman  
A housewife

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**The salesman rings the doorbell several times.**

**Housewife** Yes, I'm coming.

**She opens the door.**

**Housewife** Good morning.

**Salesman** Good morning, young lady. Is your mother in?

**Housewife** My mother? I'm the mother in this house. What do you want?

**Salesman** Dust, madam.

**Housewife** Dust?

**Salesman** Yes, madam. Dust.

**Housewife** I haven't got any dust.

**Salesman** Oh yes you have!

**He shakes dust onto the floor from a paper bag.**

**Salesman** All over your carpet!

**Housewife** Hey! I've just cleaned this carpet! Why are you putting dust all over it?

**Salesman** Don't worry, madam. I've got the answer to all your problems *here!* The Superlative vacuum cleaner!

**Housewife** The Superlative vacuum cleaner! Why's it called 'Superlative'?

**Salesman** Because, madam, everything about it *is* superlative. It's the quickest, the cleanest, the cheapest, the smallest, the smartest, the most economical, the most effective, the most beautiful, the most revolutionary vacuum cleaner in the world. And it's only £65.

**Housewife** Are you trying to sell me a vacuum cleaner?

**Salesman** Yes, madam.

**Housewife** Well, go on, then.

**Salesman** I've finished, madam.

**Housewife** Finished? You haven't said very much. What sort of a vacuum cleaner salesman are you?

**Salesman** Not a very good one, I'm afraid.

**Housewife** I can see that.

**Salesman** No, I'm a very *bad* vacuum cleaner salesman. In fact, I'm the worst salesman in our company.

- Housewife** The worst?
- Salesman** The worst. I sometimes think I'm the worst vacuum cleaner salesman in the world.
- Housewife** Oh, dear. Do you...like your job?
- Salesman** Like my job? No, madam. I detest my job. It's the most boring job in the world. Every day it's the same: 'Good morning, young lady. Is your mother in?...The Superlative vacuum cleaner...The quickest, the cleanest, the cheapest, the smallest...'
- Housewife** Well, is it the quickest?
- Salesman** No, it's probably the slowest.
- Housewife** Is it the cleanest?
- Salesman** Cleanest? Don't make me laugh! I don't think there's a dirtier vacuum cleaner on the market. And it certainly isn't the cheapest either.
- Housewife** No, no, no. This is no good at all.
- Salesman** Pardon?
- Housewife** Look, do you want to sell this vacuum cleaner or don't you?
- Salesman** I suppose so.
- Housewife** Well, your sales technique is all wrong.
- Salesman** Is it?
- Housewife** Yes. I could sell vacuum cleaners better than you.
- Salesman** No, you couldn't.
- Housewife** Yes, I could. I'll show you. You come into the house, and I'll ring the bell and sell the vacuum cleaner to you.
- Salesman** You'll sell the vacuum cleaner to *me*?
- Housewife** Yes.
- Salesman** OK. But it isn't as easy as you think.
- Housewife** We'll see. Go inside and shut the door.
- Salesman** All right.

***The salesman goes into the house and closes the door. The housewife rings the bell. The salesman opens the door.***

- Salesman** Not today, thank you.

***He closes the door. The housewife rings the bell again. The salesman opens the door again, and speaks in a high voice.***

- Salesman** Yes?
- Housewife** Hello!
- Salesman** Hello.
- Housewife** My goodness me, what a beautiful house you've got!
- Salesman** Ooh, do you like it?
- Housewife** Like it? It's the most beautiful house I've seen for a long time.
- Salesman** Thank you very much.

- Housewife** May I come in?
- Salesman** Er...
- Housewife** Thank you. Oh, what a colourful carpet!
- Salesman** Yes, it's lovely, isn't it?
- Housewife** It's the most colourful carpet I've seen for ages. I should think it was very expensive.
- Salesman** The most expensive one in the shop.
- Housewife** And I suppose you've got a very good vacuum cleaner to look after it.
- Salesman** A vacuum cleaner? No, I haven't.
- Housewife** You haven't got a vacuum cleaner?
- Salesman** No.
- Housewife** Well, madam, this is your lucky day, because I have *here* the best vacuum cleaner that money can buy: the Superlative vacuum cleaner.
- Salesman** Is it really good?
- Housewife** Good? Good? It's the...the...
- Salesman** (***In his own voice***) Quickest.
- Housewife** ...the quickest, the...
- Salesman** Cleanest.
- Housewife** ...the cleanest, the cheapest, the smallest, the smartest, the most economical, the most effective, the most beautiful, the most revolutionary vacuum cleaner in the world.
- Salesman** (***In a high voice again***) Ooh! How much is it?
- Housewife** Just £65 to you, madam.
- Salesman** I'll buy one.
- Housewife** Good.
- Salesman** (***In his own voice***) Er...where's the money?
- Housewife** It's in my handbag on the kitchen table.
- Salesman** Oh, right. (***In the high voice***) I'll just go and get some money.
- He goes to the kitchen to get the money.**
- Housewife** Good idea, madam. You've made the right decision.
- The salesman comes back, speaking in his own voice.**
- Salesman** Do you know, you're a fantastic saleswoman.
- Housewife** Ooh!
- Salesman** You've got a fantastic sales technique.
- Housewife** Do you think so?
- Salesman** Yes, you've got the best sales technique I've seen all day.
- Housewife** Thank you!
- Salesman** Thank *you*, madam.

**He leaves and closes the door.**

**Salesman** (**Speaking to himself, counting the money**) Ten, twenty, thirty, forty, fifty, sixty, sixty-five. Now *that's* the way to sell a vacuum cleaner.

# 8 Superman and the psychiatrist

This sketch was first performed in 1975, and the text here is a shortened version of that used on stage. On stage, Superman achieved success as a pop star, singing with a rather intense electric guitarist and three dancing vocalists providing the accompaniment, the whole ensemble wearing shiny silver jackets. This ending has been modified here. (Superman, being a widely recognized figure, is a character we have used more than once in ETT sketches, as mentioned in the introductory note to Sketch 3, *The dentist*, in this book.)

## Words and expressions

*shout* (vb.), *library*, *librarian*, *contract* (n.), *climb*, *lift* (vb.), *fly* (vb.), *trouble* (vb./n.) in *Sorry to trouble you* and *What seems to be the trouble?*

Note: rather than drawing attention to the words *library* and *librarian* or pre-teaching them if they are new words, you may like to let the students deduce their meaning from the context. This will avoid pre-empting the joke.

## Preliminary practice

In the sketch, the psychiatrist gives some advice to the two patients, Mr Wilkins and Superman, using the expression *I think you should...*, so the preliminary practice could be based on this point.

Present the students with a series of problems or dilemmas, and ask them to come up with as many pieces of advice as they can for each one. Here are some problems or dilemmas to start with:

- I've just found £1000 in the street.
- The postman always reads my letters.
- My new shirt came to pieces in the washing-machine.

As the sketch involves Superman, you may also like to brainstorm the names of superheroes and see how much the class knows about them: for example, Superman has X-ray vision and can fly, etc.

## Follow-up activities

① This activity, in which the students ask for and give advice in groups, is an extension of the preliminary practice. Each student has a problem or a dilemma written on a piece of paper. Here are two examples:

*You are a police officer. You haven't got very much money, and you have a lot of debts. A criminal has offered you £5000 if you don't arrest him.*

*You are an architect. Someone has offered you a good job in another country. You will have to stay there for two years. You want to go, but your family don't.*

The students take it in turns to explain their dilemma to the rest of their group, who offer advice, asking questions for more information, etc. as they think necessary. When all the students have had their turn, one student from each group could explain to the class their dilemma and the advice they received.

② Here is an activity for pairs of students. In the pairs, each student decides on a job. The jobs can be anything the students choose, but the activity is more entertaining if not *all* the jobs are conventionally 'exciting' ones (e.g. one student could be a librarian and the other a pop singer). Both dislike their jobs, and try to explain to the other the disadvantages of their own job and the advantages of the other's job. The pairs may like to re-enact their conversations for the whole class, avoiding actually *naming* the jobs and seeing if the rest of the class can guess what they are.

## Props and costumes

For simple classroom re-enacting, all that is needed is a chair and desk for the psychiatrist, and another chair which is occupied successively by Mr Wilkins and Superman.

For a performance, it may be useful to have a telephone and some papers on the psychiatrist's desk. If a psychiatrist's couch rather than a chair is used for the patients, they should not remain lying down for long or the effect of their lines will be lost. Costumes: a white coat and perhaps glasses for the psychiatrist; possibly a white coat for the receptionist also; a costume – especially the T-shirt with the 'S' logo – for Superman; clothes as desired for Mr Wilkins.

# Superman and the psychiatrist

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<b>Scene</b>	A psychiatrist's consulting room
<b>Characters</b>	A psychiatrist Angela, the psychiatrist's receptionist Mr Wilkins Superman

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***The receptionist comes in.***

<b>Psychiatrist</b>	Who's next, Angela?
<b>Receptionist</b>	There's a man to see you, doctor. His name is Wilkins. He says he can't talk quietly. He can only shout.

***Mr Wilkins shouts from outside the door.***

<b>Mr Wilkins</b>	Can I come in?!!
<b>Psychiatrist</b>	Hmm. Yes, I see. Ask him to come in.
<b>Receptionist</b>	Come in, Mr Wilkins.
<b>Mr Wilkins</b>	Thank you!!

***He comes in. The receptionist goes out.***

<b>Mr Wilkins</b>	Hello, doctor. Sorry to trouble you.
<b>Psychiatrist</b>	That's all right, Mr Wilkins. Do sit down.

***Mr Wilkins sits down.***

<b>Psychiatrist</b>	Now...what seems to be the trouble?
<b>Mr Wilkins</b>	Er...Well, doctor, I can't talk quietly. I can only shout.
<b>Psychiatrist</b>	( <b>Shouting</b> ) How long have you been like this?
<b>Mr Wilkins</b>	Pardon?
<b>Psychiatrist</b>	( <b>Back to normal</b> ) How long have you been like this?
<b>Mr Wilkins</b>	About a week.
<b>Psychiatrist</b>	Well, don't worry. I think you've got a very nice shouting voice.
<b>Mr Wilkins</b>	But I can't go on like this. I'll lose my job.
<b>Psychiatrist</b>	What is your job?
<b>Mr Wilkins</b>	I'm a librarian. I work in a library. I can't shout at work, you know.
<b>Psychiatrist</b>	In that case, Mr Wilkins, I think you should change your job.
<b>Mr Wilkins</b>	But what can I do? No one wants a man who can only shout!
<b>Psychiatrist</b>	You could get a job as an English teacher.

- Mr Wilkins** An English teacher?  
**Psychiatrist** Yes, they shout all the time.  
**Mr Wilkins** All right, doctor. I'll do that. Goodbye.  
**Psychiatrist** Goodbye, Mr Wilkins.

**He leaves, still shouting.**

- Mr Wilkins** Hey, you! Write down this verb!  
**Receptionist** Goodbye, Mr Wilkins.

**The receptionist comes back into the room.**

- Receptionist** Is Mr Wilkins all right, doctor?  
**Psychiatrist** Yes. He's going to be an English teacher.  
**Receptionist** Oh.  
**Psychiatrist** Who's next?  
**Receptionist** Superman.  
**Psychiatrist** Superman?  
**Receptionist** Yes.  
**Psychiatrist** Oh, I see...someone who *thinks* he's Superman.  
**Receptionist** No, doctor. He really *is* Superman.  
**Psychiatrist** What? The big, strong man who flies through the air?  
**Receptionist** Yes.  
**Psychiatrist** Oh, I see. Ask him to come in.  
**Receptionist** Yes, doctor. (**To Superman**) Come this way, please.

**Superman comes in, very tired and out-of-breath.**

- Superman** Thank you.  
**Psychiatrist** Thank you, Angela.

**The receptionist goes out.**

- Psychiatrist** Good morning, Mr...er...  
**Superman** Superman.  
**Psychiatrist** Yes, Superman. Do sit down.

**Superman sits down.**

- Superman** Thank you.  
**Psychiatrist** Well, what seems to be the trouble?  
**Superman** Well, doctor, I'm Superman. People think I can do everything, but I can't. I can't do *anything* any more.  
**Psychiatrist** What can't you do?

- Superman** I can't climb buildings, I can't lift cars...and I can't fly.
- Psychiatrist** Well, don't worry. A lot of people have that problem.
- Superman** But you don't understand. I'm Superman. If you can't fly, you can't be Superman. It's in the contract.
- Psychiatrist** Ah yes, I see.
- Superman** In the old days, when people called for Superman, I could run into a telephone box, take off my boring grey city suit, and become Superman, all in ten seconds. Yesterday, I went into a telephone box, and it took me fifteen minutes just to take off my trousers. And when I came out, I couldn't remember where I was going. What do you think of that?

**The psychiatrist is asleep.**

- Superman** Eh?
- Psychiatrist** (**Waking up**) Er...What? Pardon?
- Superman** What do you think?
- Psychiatrist** I think you should change your job.
- Superman** But what can I do?
- Psychiatrist** Well, you've got a very nice face. You could be a pop singer.
- Superman** A pop singer?
- Psychiatrist** Yes, I can see it all now. Your name will be in lights! You'll be famous!
- Superman** But I *am* famous. I'm *Superman*.
- Psychiatrist** Not any more. From today, you are Rocky Superdazzle!
- Superman** Do you think it's a good idea?
- Psychiatrist** Yes, of course...Rocky.

**The receptionist comes in again.**

- Receptionist** Doctor –
- Psychiatrist** Yes, Angela?
- Receptionist** – Mr Wilkins is back again.

**Mr Wilkins comes in, shouting as before.**

- Mr Wilkins** Yes, I am. I've changed my mind. I don't want to be an English teacher. What else can I do?
- Psychiatrist** Don't worry, Mr Wilkins. I've got another job for you. You can work with Rocky Superdazzle here.
- Superman** How do you do?
- Mr Wilkins** Rocky Superdazzle? That's not Rocky Superdazzle! That's Superman. I saw him in a telephone box yesterday. Superman! Huh! It took him fifteen minutes just to take off his trousers.
- Psychiatrist** Well, he was Superman, but he's not Superman any more. I think you can both work together...

***A few weeks later, at a pop concert.***

**Mr Wilkins** Ladies and gentlemen, you've heard of Rod Stewart! You've heard of Mick Jagger! You've heard of...Queen Elizabeth the Second of England! Well, tonight we present a new star on the pop scene. He's *sexier* than Rod Stewart! He's *wilder* than Mick Jagger! And he's...*taller* than Queen Elizabeth the Second of England! Ladies and gentlemen – Rocky Superdazzle!

***The audience screams and applauds.***

**Superman** Thank you! Thank you very much! Thank you!

# The lost property office

This sketch was first performed in 1982, and was initially prompted by the wish to write a sketch involving some language used in describing people or things. The version given here is very slightly condensed from the stage version, and the ending has been simplified: in the stage version, for the policeman's entrance, a rope was pulled in from the wings by the clerk (as if indeed an elephant were on the end of it), tied around the gangster's waist, and then pulled in further to reveal the policeman holding the other end.

## Words and expressions

*gangster, umbrella, elephant, circus, kilt, owner, traffic lights, fall asleep/wake up, generous, loving, bald, unusual*

The expression *Kootchie-kootchie-koo!* is best described as 'baby-talk'.

Note the emphatic tone of the gangster's reply *I'd love to*, the formal tone of *Now, if you'd like to follow me...*, and the polite tone of the expressions *Not to worry*, *Sorry to have troubled you*, *Thank you for your help*.

## Preliminary practice

Ask each student to think of an animal – it could be their favourite animal or an animal they find impressive – and to draw it on a piece of paper.

Ask all the students to make their animal special, unusual or distinctive in some way – an elephant with extra-long tusks, a cow wearing sun-glasses, or a squirrel playing the guitar, for example. (This is useful, since several students may well choose the same animal, and it also adds fun to the activity and allows the students to be imaginative.)

Put all the pieces of paper in a box, and ask each student in turn to take out one piece of paper and describe the animal shown on it. The other students listen to the descriptions and, for each one, try to guess who drew the picture.

## Follow-up activities

① The students could devise a sketch of their own, like the original, but with the gangster inventing a different story about what he lost.

② As suggested in connection with Sketch 16 in Book 1, *A ticket to Birmingham*, the students (in pairs or groups) could complete the brief telephone conversations from the sketch, in which only the clerk's words are given. These are on page 4 of the sketch:

Hello? George?... It's Brenda... , etc.

Yes, George, I'm listening... Yes... , etc.

George... I want you to put a banana, etc.

George? George!... Get up, etc.

George, I think you should bring, etc.

The pairs or groups could take one or two different conversations each, or all the pairs/groups could have the same conversation(s).

The students should write out the clerk's words as given in the script, leaving a line for each reply (represented by three dots in the script), and then decide what George said. When they have completed their conversations, the pairs or groups could read them out to the rest of the class.

③ Individually, in pairs or groups, the students could give brief descriptions of famous people, whose identities the rest of the class then have to deduce.

## Props and costumes

For simple classroom re-enacting, all that is needed is a table, two chairs, a sheet of paper (the form), a pen or pencil, and a telephone.

For a performance, the props noted above would be needed, and a large 'Lost Property Office' sign is also useful. Costumes: perhaps the classic outfit for the gangster (hat, dark shirt, light tie, jacket or mackintosh); a jacket or overall for the clerk; a uniform for the policeman. The gangster could wear dark glasses at the beginning, but should not keep them on throughout, as the face becomes less expressive if the eyes cannot be seen. The police sirens and the elephant noise can be made vocally off-stage.

# The lost property office

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<b>Scene</b>	A lost property office
<b>Characters</b>	The lost property office clerk A gangster A policeman

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**The gangster runs into the lost property office. There are police cars passing in the street at high speed.**

- Clerk** Can I help you?
- Gangster** Where am I?
- Clerk** You're in a lost property office.
- Gangster** A lost property office?
- Clerk** Yes. Have you lost something?
- Gangster** Probably.
- Clerk** What have you lost?
- Gangster** I've lost my...umbrella.
- Clerk** Ah, you want the Umbrella Section.
- Gangster** The Umbrella Section?
- Clerk** Yes. Go out into the street, turn left, and it's on the left.
- Gangster** Into the street?
- Clerk** Yes. You see, this isn't the Umbrella Section. This is the Animal Section.
- Gangster** The Animal Section?
- Clerk** Yes.
- Gangster** In that case, I've lost my dog.
- Clerk** You've lost your dog?
- Gangster** Yes.
- Clerk** Well, in that case, you want the *Small Animal* Section.
- Gangster** The *Small Animal* Section?
- Clerk** Yes. Go into the street, turn right, and it's on the right.
- Gangster** Into the street?
- Clerk** Yes. You see, this isn't the *Small Animal* Section. This is the *Large Animal* Section.
- Gangster** The *Large Animal* Section?
- Clerk** Yes.
- Gangster** In that case, I've lost my elephant.
- Clerk** You've lost your elephant?

**Gangster** Yes.

**Clerk** I see. Well, I'll need a few details. Would you like to sit down?

**Gangster** I'd love to.

**The gangster sits down.**

**Clerk** Now, first of all: Name.

**Gangster** Er...Winston.

**Clerk** Well, Mr Winston –

**Gangster** No, *my* name isn't Winston. The elephant's name is Winston.

**Clerk** I see. And what is *your* name?

**Gangster** Churchill.

**Clerk** (**Writing**) Churchill. Address?

**Gangster** Er...Churchill's Circus.

**Clerk** Oh, I see. It's a circus elephant.

**Gangster** Is it?...Yes. Yes, it is!

**Clerk** When did you last see him?

**Gangster** Who?

**Clerk** The elephant.

**Gangster** Oh, Winston. Well, we were on a bus yesterday –

**Clerk** On a bus?!

**Gangster** Yes.

**Clerk** How did Winston get on a bus?

**Gangster** How did Winston get on a bus?

**Clerk** Yes.

**Gangster** That's a very good question. Well...He waited at the bus stop, and when the bus came along, he put out his arm. And when the bus stopped, he got on.

**Clerk** I see. And then what happened?

**Gangster** Well, we were upstairs on the bus –

**Clerk** Upstairs?!

**Gangster** Yes. Winston wanted to smoke a cigarette.

**Clerk** A cigarette?!

**Gangster** I know – I tell him every day: 'Winston, smoking is bad for you.' But he never listens.

**Clerk** Hmm. What happened then?

**Gangster** Well, I fell asleep.

**Clerk** You fell asleep?

**Gangster** Yes.

**Clerk** I see. And then what happened?

**Gangster** I don't know – I was asleep. But then I woke up, and Winston wasn't there.

- Clerk** Hmm. Well, I'd better ask you a few questions about him. What kind of elephant is he?
- Gangster** Oh, he's very nice – generous, loving...he likes collecting stamps.
- Clerk** No – when I say 'What kind of elephant?', I mean: Is he an *African* elephant?
- Gangster** Oh, no.
- Clerk** So he's an *Indian* elephant.
- Gangster** No.
- Clerk** What kind of elephant is he?
- Gangster** Scottish.
- Clerk** A Scottish elephant?!
- Gangster** Yes. He wears a kilt.
- Clerk** I see. What colour is he?
- Gangster** Colour? Well, he's elephant-coloured.
- Clerk** And what colour is that?
- Gangster** Blue.
- Clerk** Blue?!
- Gangster** It was very cold yesterday.
- Clerk** Yes, it was. Next question: Colour of eyes.
- Gangster** Well, you know, like an elephant.
- Clerk** What colour is that?
- Gangster** Red.
- Clerk** Red?!
- Gangster** Green.
- Clerk** Green?!
- Gangster** One red, one green.
- Clerk** One red, one green?!
- Gangster** Yes. We call him 'Traffic Lights'.
- Clerk** I see. Colour of hair?
- Gangster** Hair?
- Clerk** Yes.
- Gangster** He hasn't got any hair.
- Clerk** I see. (**Writing**) Bald...So we're looking for a bald, blue, Scottish elephant, wearing a kilt and smoking a cigarette.
- Gangster** Yes.
- Clerk** Is there anything unusual about him?
- Gangster** No, nothing at all.
- Clerk** Good. Now, Mr Churchill, what should we do if we find Winston?
- Gangster** Well...Put a banana in your hand, walk up to Winston, and say 'Kootchie-kootchie-koo'.
- Clerk** What will Winston do?

**Gangster** Well, if it's Winston, he'll sit down and he'll eat the banana.

**Clerk** All right, Mr Churchill. Just wait a moment, and I'll call the Elephant Section.

**Gangster** Fine.

**The clerk picks up the telephone and dials a number.**

**Clerk** Hello? George?...It's Brenda...I'm fine, thank you – and you?...Good. George, have you got any elephants?...You haven't? Hold on a moment. (**To the gangster**) He hasn't got any elephants.

**Gangster** No elephants? Well, not to worry. Sorry to have troubled you. Thank you for your help. I'll be on my way. Goodbye.

**He gets up. A police car passes in the street. He sits down again.**

**Gangster** Er...Ask George to have another look.

**Clerk** All right. (**On the phone**) George, can you have another look?

**Gangster** Tell him to look under the table.

**Clerk** Look under the table...What?...(**To the gangster**) He's got one.

**Gangster** A table?

**Clerk** No, an *elephant*.

**Gangster** An *elephant*?

**Clerk** Yes. It was under the table.

**Gangster** Really?

**Clerk** (**On the phone**) Yes, George, I'm listening...Yes...Yes...Yes...Yes...Yes. Hold on. (**To the gangster**) He's got a bald, blue, Scottish elephant, wearing a kilt and smoking a cigarette. It sounds like Winston.

**Gangster** What about the banana?

**Clerk** Oh, yes. (**On the phone**) George...I want you to put a banana in your hand, and say 'Kootchie-kootchie-koo'...No, not to *me* – to the *elephant*. OK?...What?...Oh, no!

**Gangster** What's the matter?

**Clerk** The elephant sat down.

**Gangster** Good.

**Clerk** On George.

**Gangster** Tell George to give Winston the banana!

**Clerk** Right. (**On the phone**) George? George!...Get up and give the banana to the elephant...Hello?...What?...Oh, no!

**Gangster** What is it?

**Clerk** He's eaten the banana.

**Gangster** Who? Winston?

**Clerk** No. George.

**Gangster** Oh, no!

**Clerk** (**On the phone**) George, I think you should bring the elephant down here. The owner is waiting to take him away...OK...Bye.

***The clerk puts down the telephone.***

**Clerk** Don't worry, Mr Churchill. Your elephant will be here in a moment.

**Gangster** Look – before this elephant arrives, there's something you should know –

***They hear the sound of an elephant.***

**Clerk** Ah, that must be Winston.

***They hear the sound of someone falling over.***

**Clerk** And that's George.

***Someone knocks at the door.***

**Clerk** Go on, Mr Churchill. Open the door.

**Gangster** Oh, all right.

***He opens the door.***

**Gangster** Hello, Winston. Kootchie-kootchie-koo!

**Policeman** Mr Churchill?

**Gangster** But...this isn't an elephant. It's a policeman.

**Policeman** Very good, sir. Now, if you'd like to follow me...

**Clerk** Goodbye, Mr Churchill. And don't forget: If you lose your elephant again, the Lost Property Office is here to help you.

**Gangster** Oh, good. I'll remember that.

***He leaves with the policeman.***

# The travel agency

Like Sketch 6, *Gussett and Rose*, in Book 1, this sketch began as a dialogue written for the Belgian magazine *English Pages*. It was adapted for the ETT's stage show, and first performed in 1975. In the stage version, the travel agent used a large number of visual aids, among them a rubber snake, a toy parachute and a reversible diagram of the Sahara Desert and the Atlantic Ocean, in order to illustrate the holidays he was offering; the script has therefore been slightly adapted for this book.

## Words and expressions

*fish and chip shop, parachute, map, sandstorm, snake, stampede (n.), camel, bullfighting, exciting, dangerous, frightened, terrifying, wonderful, How about...? and What about...? (used in making suggestions)*

Various place-names and geographical terms occur in the sketch: *the Sahara Desert, the Arctic Ocean, the Amazon jungle, the Eiffel Tower, the London Underground, Spain, Paris and Brighton*.

## Preliminary practice

Write each of the place-names and geographical terms listed above on an envelope, and put the envelopes on the board or a table. The individual students then each choose three of the places, and write, on small pieces of paper, an adjective to describe each of those places. (Encourage them to be imaginative about this; in other words, *hot* for the Sahara Desert and *cold* for the Arctic Ocean are a bit obvious.)

The students then place their pieces of paper in the relevant envelopes. Then invite students in turn to dip into an envelope and take out an adjective. If it is one of their own, they should say why they wrote, for example, *sad* about the Eiffel Tower; if it is someone else's, they can try to work out why that person wrote it and the person can then give their reason.

## Follow-up activities

① The students could improvise conversations similar to the sketch. They could do this in pairs (travel agent and customer) or in threes (travel agent and two customers). The travel agents should try to sell a holiday which is strange and expensive; the customers should insist on the type of holiday they want. Cue-cards may be helpful; for example:

For the travel agent: *You are a travel agent. You have to sell holidays on the moon.*

And for the customer(s): *You want a skiing holiday in Scotland. Do not accept any other holiday.*

A variation: give each group a line – not obviously connected with holidays – which they must include in their conversation (e.g. *I've lost my glasses* or *My uncle grows his own vegetables*). The groups enact their conversations for the rest of the class, who try and identify these 'imposed' lines – believe it or not, they can be quite hard to spot!

② Give the students a few moments to think about the *best* holiday they have ever had and the *worst* holiday they have ever had. They can make brief notes if they like. Then they each have a maximum of one minute to speak: thirty seconds on their best holiday and thirty seconds on their worst holiday. They do not need to say anything very complicated: they could simply say when and where the holiday took place, who they were with, and what happened to make it good or bad.

## Props and costumes

For simple classroom re-enacting, all that is needed is a chair and desk for the psychiatrist, and another chair which is occupied successively by Mr Wilkins and Superman.

For a performance, it may be useful to have a telephone and some papers on the psychiatrist's desk. If a psychiatrist's couch rather than a chair is used for the patients, they should not remain lying down for long or the effect of their lines will be lost. Costumes: a white coat and perhaps glasses for the psychiatrist; possibly a white coat for the receptionist also; a costume – especially the T-shirt with the 'S' logo – for Superman; clothes as desired for Mr Wilkins.

# The travel agency

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**Scene** A travel agency in London  
**Characters** A travel agent  
Martin and Brenda Spencer

---

**The travel agent is sitting at his desk in the travel agency. The phone rings.**

**Travel agent** (**On the telephone**) Honest Harry's Happy Holidays. Can I help you?...Oh, it's you, sir...This is Perkins speaking, yes...The holidays in Brighton? Well, I haven't sold very many...I'm doing my best, but people aren't interested in Brighton these days...My job? Yes, I *do* like my job...Yes, I *do* want to keep my job...Yes, sir. All right, I'll sell some holidays in Brighton. Yes, sir. Yes, sir. Goodbye.

**He puts the phone down.**

**Travel agent** Oh, dear.

**Martin and Brenda come in.**

**Martin** Go on, Brenda.

**Brenda** Excuse me, is this a travel agency?

**Travel agent** No, madam. It's a fish and chip shop.

**Brenda** Oh, sorry. Come on, Martin.

**Travel agent** No, no, this *is* a travel agency. Just a little joke.

**Brenda** Oh.

**Travel agent** Yes, welcome to Honest Harry's Happy Holidays. Do sit down.

**Brenda** Thank you.

**Martin** Thank you.

**They sit down.**

**Travel agent** What can I do for you?

**Brenda** We'd like some information about holidays.

**Travel agent** Oh, good.

**Martin** Yes, we'd like to go somewhere interesting.

**Travel agent** Somewhere interesting? Have you been to Brighton?

**Martin** Brighton? No, we haven't –

**Travel agent** Really?

**Brenda** – and we don't want to, either.

**Travel agent** Why not?

**Martin** Well, it's not *exciting*. We want to go somewhere *exciting*.

- Travel agent** Oh, I see. How about the Sahara Desert?
- Brenda** The Sahara Desert?
- Travel agent** Yes. Have you ever been there?
- Martin** No, we haven't.
- Travel agent** Well, this is the holiday for you. Forty-five days in the middle of the Sahara Desert.
- Brenda** In the middle of the Sahara Desert? Is there anything to do?
- Travel agent** Oh yes, there's plenty to do. Have you ever been in a sandstorm?
- Martin** A sandstorm? No, we haven't.
- Travel agent** Oh well, it's very exciting. There are sandstorms nearly every day. And lots of dangerous snakes. Have you ever been bitten by a dangerous snake?
- Martin** } No!  
**Brenda** }
- Travel agent** Oh well, it's very exciting.
- Brenda** No, I don't think we'd like –
- Travel agent** Sandstorms, dangerous snakes, and, on the last day, a stampede of camels!
- Martin** A stampede of camels? What's that?
- Travel agent** Haven't you ever seen a stampede of camels?
- Martin** No.
- Travel agent** Oh, it's very exciting. You stand in the middle of three hundred camels, someone fires a gun in the air – Bang! – and all the camels get frightened and run away.
- Brenda** With us standing in the middle?
- Travel agent** Yes. Have you ever seen a frightened camel?
- Brenda** No. Is it exciting?
- Travel agent** Exciting? It's terrifying!
- Martin** Isn't it dangerous?
- Travel agent** Of course it's dangerous! That's what makes it exciting!
- Martin** Er...how much is it?
- Travel agent** £800.
- Brenda** £800!
- Travel agent** And £5 extra for the stampede of camels.
- Brenda** That's very expensive.
- Travel agent** Ah, I see. You want something cheaper. Um...how about the Arctic Ocean? Have you ever been to the Arctic?
- Martin** No, we haven't.
- Travel agent** Well, we can give you three weeks in a small boat in the Arctic Ocean. Each boat has a small hole in the bottom –
- Brenda** A hole in the bottom?
- Travel agent** – and you have enough food for ten days.
- Martin** Ten days?

- Travel agent** That's right.
- Martin** But the holiday is for three weeks.
- Travel agent** That's what makes it exciting! And it's only £600.
- Brenda** £600! It's still much too expensive for us.
- Martin** Have you got anything a little bit cheaper?
- Travel agent** Cheaper...well, I don't know. Let me see...Um...Oh, yes. Now *this* is a holiday to remember. The Amazon jungle. Have you been to the Amazon jungle?
- Martin** No, we haven't.
- Travel agent** Well, this may be the holiday for you. We drop you into the middle of the Amazon jungle by parachute –
- Martin** By parachute!
- Travel agent** Yes, we drop you into the middle of the Amazon jungle, with a map –
- Brenda** Well, at least you get a map.
- Travel agent** – with a map of the London Underground.
- Brenda** Oh. I don't think we'd like that. It sounds very dangerous.
- Travel agent** Yes, but it's very *exciting*! This is the twentieth century. People want exciting holidays. *You* said you wanted an exciting holiday.
- Martin** But all your holidays are dangerous, expensive, and too far away from home.
- Travel agent** Oh, I see. Now you want something nearer home.
- Martin** Er...yes.
- Travel agent** Have you ever been to Spain?
- Martin** No, we haven't.
- Travel agent** We can offer you a month, fighting the strongest bulls in Spain.
- Brenda** Bullfighting? No, I don't want to do that.
- Travel agent** Oh. Have you ever been to Paris?
- Martin** No, we haven't.
- Travel agent** What about ten days in Paris?...
- Martin** That sounds marvellous!
- Travel agent** ...painting the outside of the Eiffel Tower.
- Brenda** } No, thanks!  
**Martin** }
- Travel agent** Well, what about two weeks in Brighton?
- Brenda** No, thanks!
- Martin** Just a minute. Did you say 'Brighton'?
- Travel agent** Yes. How about two weeks in Brighton, staying in a nice quiet hotel by the sea?
- Brenda** Well, yes...
- Martin** Yes, that sounds wonderful!
- Travel agent** It's not very exciting. No camels, no snakes, but you can't have everything, can you?
- Brenda** No. That's very nice. We'll take it.

**Martin** How much is it?

**Travel agent** £50 each, please. Could you just sign this form for the reservations?

**He gives Martin a form.**

**Travel agent** Just here, please.

**Martin signs.**

**Travel agent** Thank you. And here. And here. And here. And... here. Thank you.

**Brenda** Thank you very much.

**Martin** Goodbye.

**Travel agent** Goodbye, and I hope you enjoy your holiday.

**Martin and Brenda leave. The telephone rings.**

**Travel agent** (**On the telephone**) Honest Harry's Happy Holidays. Can I help you?... Well, we've got some very nice holidays in Brighton, as a matter of fact...

# 11 Gerry Brown's Driving Test

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*Scene: A car*

*Characters: Gerry Brown, Brian Smith,*

*Gerry's friend, a driving examiner Brian has just arrived at the test centre in his car. He is sitting in it, waiting for Gerry.*

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**Brian:** Hmm...Three o'clock. Where is he? Ah, there he is. Gerry! Gerry!

*(Gerry comes to the car.)*

**Gerry:** Ah, hello!

**Brian:** Hello, Gerry,

*(Brian gets out of the car.)*

**Brian:** Well, the big day, eh?

**Gerry:** Yes, my driving test. It's very good of you to lend me your car.

**Brian:** Oh, that's all right, Gerry. You have had driving lessons, haven't you?

**Gerry:** Oh, yes. Well...I had one.

**Brian:** One?

**Gerry:** Yes, I had one last night. It was very good.

**Brian:** That's not enough. You should have had at least ten!

**Gerry:** Now don't worry. I've flown aero planes, you know, and it's all more or less the same. You just jump in, switch on, and up she goes!

**Brian:** Yes, but this isn't an aero plane. It's a car. My car!

**Gerry:** Oh yes, I can see that.

**Brian:** Hmm...that's another problem.

**Gerry:** What?

**Brian:** Your eyes.

**Gerry:** What's the matter with my eyes?

**Brian:** Well, they're not exactly perfect, are they?

**Gerry:** Well, I know I can't see very well, but -

**Brian:** But you told the authorities that your eyes were perfect. You shouldn't have done that.

**Gerry:** Yes, I know. But don't worry, everything will be all right. I borrowed these glasses from my uncle, and he says they're marvelous.

**Brian:** Your uncle's glasses! But Gerry, you should have brought your own glasses

**Gerry:** I haven't got any of my own. But don't worry, my uncle has worn these for twenty-five years, and he's a brain surgeon.

**Brian:** Gerry -Gerry! Look, I'll put them on.

*(He puts on the glasses.)*

**Gerry:** There, Oh...Um...Brian?...Brian? (He bumps into the car.)

**Gerry:** Oh.

**Brian:** Gerry, look, here comes the examiner.

**Gerry:** Oh yes, I see. He looks like a very nice man.

**Brian:** Gerry, it's not a man. It's a woman.

Gerry: Oh.

Brian: Now listen, Gerry. There's only one way you can pass this test.

Gerry: Yes?

Brian: Be polite.

Gerry: Be polite and

Brian: Shhht, Gerry. Here she is,

*(The examiner arrives.)*

Examiner: Mr. Brown?

Gerry: Er...yes.

Examiner: I'm the examiner. Shall we get in?

Gerry: Er...yes. Allow me to open the door for you

*(He opens the door and the examiner gets into the car.)*

Examiner: Thank you.

Gerry: Was that all right?

Brian: Very good, Gerry. But I think I'll come with you, just in case.

Gerry: All right.

*(Gerry and Brian get into the car. Brian sits in the back.)*

Examiner: Now, Mr. Brown. I'd like you to drive the car straight down the road.

Gerry: Straight down the road. Yes.

*(He tries to drive away. The car stops.)*

Gerry: Oh. Sorry,

*(He tries again, and drives away very fast.)*

**Examiner:** Turn right, Mr. Brown. (Gerry turns left.)

**Brian:** Gerry! You turned left. She said 'Right'. You should have turned right.

**Gerry:** (Cheerfully) Sorry!

**Examiner:** Turn left, Mr. Brown.

*(Gerry turns right.)*

**Brian:** Gerry! You turned right. You should have turned left.

**Examiner:** The traffic lights are red, Mr. Brown.

**Brian-Examiner:** Red!

*(Gerry stops the car at the traffic lights.)*

**Gerry:** Ha, ha! Very good, eh? Straight on?

**Examiner:** Er...n-n-no, Mr Brown. I think I'll get out here.

**Gerry:** Oh. Allow me to open the door for you.

**Examiner:** No, no, thank you. That won't be necessary.

*(She gets out of the car and walks away.)*

**Examiner:** I should have stayed in bed today. I knew it...I knew it was going to be a bad day.

**Gerry:** Oh, dear.

**Brian:** I told you you should have had more lessons, Gerry.

**Gerry:** Ah, green!

*(Gerry drives away very fast.)*

**Brian:** Gerry! Gerry! Slow down, Gerry! Gerry!!

# 12 Giovanni's café

This sketch was first performed in 1975. The idea came from the thought that there are a lot of humorous possibilities in the situation where two people who want to be alone – for example at a café table – are interrupted by a third person. The stage version in fact consisted of two sketches, the first set in Paris, with only Geoffrey and Dorothy, and the second (coming later in the show) set in Rome, and involving all four characters. The version here is a combination of elements from both these sketches.

## Words and expressions

*romantic, innocent, remarkable, magnificent, honest, honeymoon, statue, kindergarten, telephone-box, we haven't got a care in the world (= we haven't got any worries); all the time in the world (= lots of time), May I sit here? (more formal than Can I sit here?)*

Note the expressions *Delighted to meet you* (used when meeting someone) and *Delighted to have met you* (used when leaving someone after a first meeting), both of which Teresa says very coldly.

## Preliminary practice

Ask the students, in pairs or groups, to think of the most *romantic* holiday they can imagine. They should make a note of the location, the season, the means of transport to get there, and any other details they like. Then invite each group to tell the rest of the class what they have decided. Then, as a plenary activity, ask the students to think of the most *embarrassing* thing that could happen during such a romantic holiday.

If you feel that your students are too young for this activity, you could simply brainstorm what to say when wanting to join people you don't know at a café table or in a train compartment, for example (*May I sit here?, Do you mind if I sit here?, Is this seat taken?, etc.*), and then have the students practise some short exchanges using those expressions.

## Follow-up activities

① The general shape of the sketch is this: Two people (**A** and **B**) are joined by a third (**C**) who knew **B** some time ago; they discuss their reasons for being in the city they are in and the circumstances in which **B** and **C** knew one another. The students could improvise similar conversations based on cue-cards such as these:

*Card for A and B:* You are an engaged couple. You are on holiday in Paris. Your names are Tom Johnson and Alice Brown. Tom knew Brian Williams at school.

*Card for C:* Your name is Brian Williams. You are an engineer. You are in Paris for a business meeting. You knew Tom Johnson at school.

Or:

*Card for A and B:* You are a grandmother and grandson. You are on holiday in Athens. Your names are Martha Green and Jack Green. Martha used to work with Diana Walker.

*Card for C:* Your name is Diana Walker. You are a retired nurse. You are in Athens visiting some friends. You used to work with Martha Green.

② In the sketch, Geoffrey tries several times to change the subject of the conversation: *Look at that remarkable statue!; I think we'd better go*, etc. The students could try something similar, one person attempting to explain something to another (or tell them a joke, for example), while a third makes constant attempts to change the subject.

## Props and costumes

For simple classroom re-enacting, a table with three chairs at it is all that is required.

For a more elaborate performance, the table could have on it a bright café tablecloth and miscellaneous objects (e.g. a menu, containers for salt, pepper, sugar, etc.). Costumes: Geoffrey and Dorothy could have sunglasses – although not worn throughout, as hiding the eyes makes the face less expressive – and perhaps cameras, as accessories to their casual holiday wear; Teresa should also be in summer clothes; Giovanni could have an apron or short waiter's jacket, and perhaps a tray.

# Giovanni's café

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<b>Scene</b>	A pavement café in Rome
<b>Characters</b>	Geoffrey Burton Dorothy Burton, Geoffrey's wife Teresa Pilkington Giovanni

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**Geoffrey and Dorothy are sitting at a table in front of the café.**

**Geoffrey** Well, here we are in Rome. The sun is shining, and we haven't got a care in the world.

**Dorothy** Yes, Rome is so beautiful.

**Geoffrey** And it's such a beautiful day.

**Dorothy** This square looks lovely in the sunshine.

**Geoffrey** And it's so nice, sitting here with you. No trains to catch...

**Dorothy** No telephones to answer...

**Geoffrey** No boring business people to talk to...Do you know, this is the first holiday we've had for five years – since we were married.

**Dorothy** And it's our first visit to Rome, too. It's like a second honeymoon.

**Geoffrey** Yes, and now we're alone together, with all the time in the world.

**Dorothy** Yes.

**Geoffrey** Just you, and me, and romantic Rome.

**Dorothy** Yes.

**Teresa comes to their table.**

**Teresa** Excuse me, do you speak English?

**Geoffrey** Yes.

**Teresa** May I sit here?

**Geoffrey** Er...oh...yes.

**Teresa sits down.**

**Teresa** Thank you. Just a minute – it's Geoffrey – Geoffrey Burton!

**Geoffrey** Good God! Teresa Pilkington!

**Teresa** Geoffrey, darling! How lovely to see you! It's been so long since we –

**Geoffrey** Er...Teresa, this is my wife, Dorothy.

**Teresa** Oh, your wife. Delighted to meet you.

**Dorothy** So you know Geoffrey, do you?

**Teresa** Oh yes, Geoffrey and I are old friends, aren't we, Geoffrey?

- Geoffrey** No. Er...yes. Er...what are you doing in Rome, Teresa?
- Dorothy** You're old friends, are you?
- Teresa** Oh yes, I've known Geoffrey for years and years, since we were both young and innocent.
- Geoffrey** Goodness me! Look at that remarkable statue!
- Dorothy** Geoffrey!...Tell me, Miss Pilkington, what exactly do you mean by 'young and innocent'?
- Teresa** Well, darling, before Geoffrey met me, he was just an innocent boy.
- Geoffrey** Er...yes...we met at kindergarten.
- Teresa** Oh, Geoffrey, you know that's not what I mean.
- Dorothy** Well, what exactly *do* you mean?
- Geoffrey** Good Lord! Look at that magnificent telephone box!
- Dorothy** Geoffrey!
- Geoffrey** Well, you don't see telephone boxes like that in England, do you?
- Teresa** Poor Geoffrey! Before he met me, his life was so boring. He was a student at an awful college in the mountains, and he hated every minute of it.
- Dorothy** But Geoffrey – you told me you *loved* that college in the mountains!
- Teresa** Oh yes, that's because he met *me* there.
- Dorothy** What – at the college?
- Teresa** No, in the mountains.
- Geoffrey** Er, Dorothy, I think we'd better go. The Colosseum closes at six o'clock, you know.
- Dorothy** Sit down, Geoffrey. It's only half past eleven.
- Teresa** Yes, I remember that day so well – the day that we met. The mountains were so beautiful, the sky was so blue –
- Dorothy** – and Geoffrey was so *green*, I suppose.
- Teresa** 'Green'? What do you mean?
- Dorothy** 'Green.' Young and innocent. Just the way you like them, I suppose.
- Teresa** Well, really!
- Teresa gets up.**
- Teresa** Excuse me!...Goodbye, Geoffrey. (**Sarcastically**) Delighted to have met you, Mrs Burton.
- Geoffrey** Teresa...um...
- Teresa** Goodbye, Geoffrey.
- Teresa leaves.**
- Geoffrey** Oh, dear.
- Dorothy** So before you met her, you were just an innocent boy! You told me I was the first woman in your life, and I believed you...and *I've* been so honest with *you*.
- Geoffrey** Yes, Dorothy.
- Dorothy** I've told you everything.

**Geoffrey** Yes, Dorothy, I know. I was the first man in your life.

**Dorothy** The first and *only* man, Geoffrey.

***Giovanni comes to the table.***

**Geoffrey** Oh...waiter. I'll have a Martini, please.

**Giovanni** Certainly, sir. And for you, madam? Oh! Dorothy!

**Dorothy** Giovanni!

**Giovanni** Dorothy!

**Geoffrey** Giovanni?

**Giovanni** Dorothy, it's wonderful to see you again!

**Geoffrey** Dorothy, have you met this man before?

**Dorothy** Well, Geoffrey –

**Giovanni** Dorothy, it must be five years!

**Dorothy** Six, Giovanni, six!

**Giovanni** And now you've come back to Rome!

**Geoffrey** Come back? What's he talking about?

**Dorothy** Well, Geoffrey –

**Giovanni** Come with me, Dorothy. We've got so much to talk about!

**Dorothy** Oh...er, yes...um...excuse me, Geoffrey.

***Giovanni and Dorothy leave.***

**Geoffrey** Dorothy! Dorothy!

# 13 Shakespeare's house

This sketch was first performed in 1974. (The idea came from an example used by one of the ETT members in a lesson concerning the use of *must/can't (be)...* and *must/can't have (been)...* for making deductions about present and past situations.) We have adapted it slightly for this book, but the 'plot' remains the same as the stage version. We were originally going to include more quotations from Shakespeare, but in the end stuck to just the most well-known one of all, 'To be or not to be...'

## Words and expressions

tragedy (= type of play), furniture, armchair, ashtray, typewriter, tape-recorder, microphone, souvenir, grandson, *There must be some mistake* (= I believe there is a misunderstanding here), *disturb* (in *I hope we haven't disturbed you too much*)

The quotation 'To be, or not to be – that is the question' is from *Hamlet*, Act III, Scene I.

## Preliminary practice

Here is an activity to practise deductions using *must be* and *must have been*. Write on the board, jumbled up, the first names, family names, nationalities and occupations of three famous living people; for example:

BILL LENNOX FRENCH POLITICIAN  
ERIC CLINTON SCOTTISH SOCCER PLAYER  
ANNIE CANTONA AMERICAN SINGER

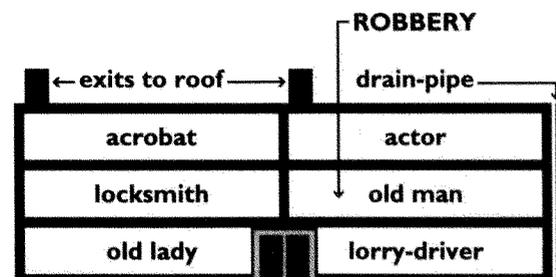
In groups, the students make sentences such as *We think Bill Lennox is a Scottish soccer player*. Keep inviting sentences until the correct identities of two people have been established; then you can say, for example, 'So Annie Lennox *must be* a Scottish singer.'

The same exercise using three famous people who are no longer alive will result in a sentence with *must have been*.

## Follow-up activities

The preliminary practice, and the sketch itself, provided examples of deductions using *must (be)*, *must have (been)*, etc. Here is another activity involving deductions, in which the students attempt to solve a crime. If they think they know the answer, they should express their ideas using *must*, and other students can challenge them.

A robbery has taken place in an old man's flat in a small block. Draw a diagram on the board, like this:



Two students choose roles from the five suspects above, e.g. the actor and the acrobat. They leave the room and jointly prepare their alibi (where they were at the time of the robbery, what they were doing, etc.). The rest of the class prepare questions and then act as detectives, questioning the two suspects individually; this may reveal inconsistencies in the alibis. The class should then give their conclusions, e.g. *It must have been the actor* or *The acrobat must have done it*.

## Props and costumes

For classroom re-enacting, it is useful to have a table and chair to refer to in the early part of the sketch, and a newspaper for the man to remain behind until he is woken up; a typewriter and an ashtray (or objects to represent them) and some pieces of paper (to represent the money) are also useful.

For a more elaborate performance, you will need some furniture, including a chair or armchair for the man, and the typewriter, ashtray and newspaper. It is not necessary to have a television on stage – in our stage version, it was always indicated by the actors as being in the audience. The tourists could have cameras and perhaps sunglasses (although not worn throughout, hiding their eyes).

# Shakespeare's house

---

<b>Scene</b>	The living-room of a house in Stratford-upon-Avon, the town where Shakespeare was born
<b>Characters</b>	Sidney and Ethel, tourists A man

---

***Sidney and Ethel come into the room.***

**Sidney** Well, Ethel, here we are in Shakespeare's front room. This must be where he wrote all his famous tragedies.

**Ethel** I'm not surprised, with furniture like this.

**Sidney** What do you mean?

**Ethel** Well, look at that armchair. He can't have been comfortable, sitting there.

**Sidney** Don't be silly! He probably sat at this table when he was writing tragedies.

**Ethel** Oh, yes...Look!

***She shows Sidney a typewriter.***

**Ethel** This must be Shakespeare's typewriter.

**Sidney** Shakespeare's typewriter?

**Ethel** Yes. He must have written all his plays on this.

**Sidney** Ethel! That can't be Shakespeare's typewriter.

**Ethel** Why not?

**Sidney** Because Shakespeare didn't use a typewriter.

**Ethel** Didn't he?

**Sidney** No, of course he didn't. He was a very busy man. He didn't have time to sit in front of a typewriter all day. He probably used a tape-recorder.

**Ethel** A tape-recorder?

**Sidney** Yes. I can see him now. He must have sat on this chair, holding his microphone in his hand, saying: 'To be, or not to be.'

**Ethel** What does that mean?

**Sidney** Ah well, that is the question.

**Ethel** Sidney, look!

**Sidney** What?

**Ethel** Over here. This must be Shakespeare's television.

**Sidney** Shakespeare's television?

**Ethel** Yes, it must be. It looks quite old.

**Sidney** Shakespeare didn't have a *television*.

**Ethel** Why not?

**Sidney** Why not? Because he went to the theatre every night. He didn't have time to sit at home, watching television.

**Ethel** Oh.

**They hear someone snoring.**

**Ethel** Sidney, what's that? I can hear something. Oh, look!

**Sidney** Where?

**Ethel** Over there. There's a man over there, behind the newspaper. I think he's asleep.

**Sidney** Oh, yes. He must be one of Shakespeare's family. He's probably Shakespeare's grandson.

**Ethel** Ooh!

**Sidney** I'll just go and say 'Hello'.

**He goes over to the man and shouts.**

**Sidney** Hello!

**Man** What? Eh? What's going on?

**Sidney** Good morning.

**Man** Good mor— Who are you?

**Ethel** We're tourists.

**Man** Tourists?

**Sidney** Yes.

**Ethel** It must be very interesting, living here.

**Man** Interesting? Living here? What are you talking about?

**Sidney** Well, it must be interesting, living in a famous house like this.

**Man** Famous house?

**Ethel** Yes, there must be hundreds of people who want to visit Shakespeare's house.

**Man** Shakespeare's house? Look, there must be some mistake.

**Sidney** This is Shakespeare's house, isn't it?

**Man** This is Number 34, Railway Avenue...and I live here!

**Ethel** Yes. You must be Shakespeare's grandson.

**Man** Shakespeare's grandson?

**Ethel** Yes.

**Sidney** Ethel! Look at this!

**Ethel** What is it?

**Sidney** Look at it!

**He is holding an ashtray.**

**Ethel** Ooh, Shakespeare's ashtray!

**Sidney** Yes, William Shakespeare's ashtray! Mr Shakespeare, I would like to buy this ashtray as a souvenir of our visit to your grandfather's house.

**Man** For the last time, my name is not –

**Sidney** I'll give you ten pounds for it.

**Man** Now listen... Ten pounds?

**Sidney** All right then – twenty pounds.

**Man** Twenty pounds for that ashtray?

**Ethel** Well, it was William Shakespeare's ashtray, wasn't it?

**Man** William Shakespeare's... Oh, yes, of course. William Shakespeare's ashtray.

***Sidney gives the man twenty pounds.***

**Sidney** Here you are. You're sure twenty pounds is enough...

**Man** Well...

**Sidney** All right then. Twenty-five pounds.

***He gives the man another five pounds.***

**Man** Thank you. And here's the ashtray.

***The man gives Sidney the ashtray.***

**Sidney** Thank you very much.

**Ethel** I hope we haven't disturbed you too much.

**Man** Oh, not at all. I always enjoy meeting people who know such a lot about Shakespeare.  
Goodbye.

**Ethel** Goodbye.

***Ethel and Sidney leave.***

# 14 Mr Universe

This sketch was first performed in 1980. The version in this book is slightly different from the version used on stage: in the stage version, there were *four* contestants in the competition, the first of them being a member of the audience; after all the contestants had been seen, the audience chose the winner, who always – unsurprisingly – turned out to be the first contestant, the audience-member. This winner was then rewarded with an ETT souvenir, while the three losing contestants were involved in a song.

## Words and expressions

*contestant, judges, votes, congratulations, fantastic, incredible, amazing, fascinating, sensational, ambition, hobby(ies), free time, unemployed, What do you do? (= What's your job?), Really? (showing interest in something someone has said); quite (for emphasis, in that's quite enough)*

Note the exaggerated tone of *Windows are my life!*, the rude and abrupt tone of *All right, get on with it!* and the ironic tone of *That was fascinating*.

## Preliminary practice

Here is an activity to prepare the students for the kind of interviews they will hear in the sketch.

Put the class into pairs. In each pair, one student is a famous person, the other a journalist. In their pairs, the students decide who their famous person is. Then – quietly, so that other pairs can't overhear them – the pairs of students prepare their interviews. In the interviews, the celebrities' names should not be mentioned, but they should be questioned about their life, their work, etc. (For example, if the famous person were Steven Spielberg, the interview might include: *Why are you here in Italy? – I've come to talk about my new film*, etc.) The pairs then perform their interviews in turn for the rest of the class, who work out the identity of each famous person.

## Follow-up activities

- ① The students could devise a sketch of their own, along the same lines as the original, but with different contestants in the competition, i.e. characters with different jobs, hobbies and ambitions.
- ② The students could do a class survey on the subjects of *Hobbies*, *Jobs* (actual or desired for the future) and *Ambitions*. The class could be divided into three groups, with each of the groups responsible for one of the subject areas. The members of the groups then (inside or outside class) gather information from all the members of the class about the relevant area, and arrange this information in tables, lists, categories, etc. When this work has been completed, the groups' spokespersons present the results of their surveys to the class as a whole.
- ③ Individual students, or pairs or groups, each think of a job. The other students try to find out what the job is by asking questions. The questions must be of the type which can be answered with *Yes* or *No*. For example, *Do you work indoors?*, *Do you work outdoors?*, *Do you work in a shop?*, *Do you work in an office?*, *Do you earn a lot of money?*, *Do you work with animals?*, etc. There could be a limit on the number of questions which can be asked (as in the traditional game of 'Twenty Questions'); if the job has not been guessed within that number of questions, it is then revealed.

## Props and costumes

For classroom re-enacting, no props are really necessary, although Gloria may like to have something to represent a microphone (e.g. a pen or rolled paper) and three small pieces of card.

For a performance, the following props are useful: the microphone – although it does not have to be plugged in – and cards for Gloria; a bucket and sponge for Arnold, and a piece of paper for his poem (perhaps unfolded or unrolled to great length on the line 'There's a bit more'); a large sign reading 'The Mr Universe Competition'. Costumes: possibly something 'sparkly' for Gloria to coincide with her family name; an overall for Arnold; short trousers for Elvis; clothes as desired for Ernest.

# Mr Universe

---

<b>Scene</b>	The 'Mr Universe' competition
<b>Characters</b>	Gloria Sparkle, the presenter
	Arnold Higgins
	Elvis Smith
	Ernest Bottom
	} the contestants

---

***The competition is just beginning.***

**Gloria** Yes, ladies and gentlemen, it's time once again for the 'Mr Universe' competition – the competition to find the most *fantastic*, the most *incredible*, the most *amazing* man in the world. Who will be this year's Mr Universe? Our three judges will decide. But first let's meet the contestants. Contestant number one – Arnold Higgins!

***Arnold Higgins enters, carrying a bucket and a sponge.***

**Gloria** Ladies and gentlemen, this is Arnold Higgins.

**Arnold** Hello!

**Gloria** (***Reading from a card in her hand***) Arnold is 63 years old.

**Arnold** What? No, no, no. 36, not 63.

**Gloria** Sorry, Arnold.

**Arnold** That's all right.

**Gloria** Arnold is 36 years old. Tell me, Arnold – what do you do?

**Arnold** I'm a window cleaner.

**Gloria** He's a window cleaner, ladies and gentlemen! And tell me, Arnold – how long have you been a window cleaner?

**Arnold** Well, Gloria, I'm 36 now, and I started cleaning windows when I was 33. So I've been cleaning windows for...er...

**Gloria** Three years?

**Arnold** Yes. How did you know?

**Gloria** It's written on this card. Do you like it?

***Arnold looks at the card.***

**Arnold** Yes. It's a very nice card.

**Gloria** No, no – not the card. Do you like cleaning windows?

**Arnold** Do I like cleaning windows?

**Gloria** Yes.

**Arnold** Do I like cleaning windows?

**Gloria** Yes.

**Arnold** Do I like cleaning windows?

**Gloria** Yes.

**Arnold** No! I don't *like* cleaning windows – I *love* it!

**Gloria** You love it.

**Arnold** Yes, I love it. Big windows, small windows, broken windows –

**Gloria** Yes, I see.

**Arnold** Windows are my life! I've cleaned windows all over the world.

**Gloria** Really?

**Arnold** Yes. Do you know Buckingham Palace?

**Gloria** Yes.

**Arnold** Do you know the *windows* of Buckingham Palace?

**Gloria** Yes. Arnold, have *you* cleaned the windows of Buckingham Palace?

**Arnold** No – but I'd like to.

**Gloria** Ah, so your *ambition* is to clean the windows of Buckingham Palace.

**Arnold** Yes.

**Gloria** Thank you, Arnold.

***She wants Arnold to go.***

**Arnold** Before I go, I'd like to tell you about my hobby.

**Gloria** What's that, Arnold?

**Arnold** My hobby is writing poetry. I'd like to read one of my poems.

**Gloria** Oh.

**Arnold** It's about windows.

**Gloria** Ah.

**Arnold** (**Reading**) 'Oh, windows! Oh, windows! Oh, windows!'

**Gloria** Oh, no!

**Arnold** 'Windows, windows, big and small!  
 Windows, windows, I love you all!'

**Gloria** Thank you, Arnold.

**Arnold** There's a bit more.

**Gloria** No, thank you, Arnold – that's quite enough. Ladies and gentlemen, the first contestant: Arnold Higgins!

***Arnold leaves.***

**Gloria** Now let's meet the second contestant, who also wants to be this year's Mr Universe!

***Elvis Smith enters. He is wearing short trousers and is rather shy.***

**Elvis** Er...Hello.

**Gloria** What is your name?

**Elvis** Elvis.

- Gloria** Elvis?
- Elvis** Yes. Elvis Smith.
- Gloria** How old are you, Elvis?
- Elvis** 42.
- Gloria** And what do you do?
- Elvis** Nothing. I'm still at school.
- Gloria** Still at school?
- Elvis** Yes.
- Gloria** What do you want to do when you leave school?
- Elvis** Go to university.
- Gloria** I see. And what is your hobby, Elvis?
- Elvis** My hobby?
- Gloria** Yes. What do you like doing in your free time?
- Elvis** Oh well, I like meeting people. Hello, Gloria.
- Gloria** Hello, Elvis.
- Elvis** And I like fishing.
- Gloria** Yes?
- Elvis** And swimming.
- Gloria** Thank you, Elvis.
- Elvis** And collecting stamps, and playing football, and dancing --
- Gloria** Thank you, Elvis.
- Elvis** And climbing mountains, and water-skiing, and boxing --
- Gloria** *Thank you, Elvis!* Ladies and gentlemen, Elvis Smith!

**Elvis leaves.**

- Gloria** Well, ladies and gentlemen, that was Elvis Smith. Now let's meet the last contestant. From Liverpool: Ernest Bottom!

**Ernest Bottom enters. He is not very friendly.**

- Gloria** Well, Ernest, it's wonderful to have you here --
- Ernest** All right, get on with it!
- Gloria** Oh. Well...Ernest, would you like to answer a few questions?
- Ernest** No.
- Gloria** Oh, come on, Ernest!
- Ernest** All right -- just a few.
- Gloria** Thank you. Tell me -- what do you do?
- Ernest** What do I do?
- Gloria** Yes.

**Ernest** Nothing. I'm unemployed.

**Gloria** Oh.

**Ernest** I used to be a bus driver.

**Gloria** Did you?

**Ernest** Yes. But I lost my job.

**Gloria** Why?

**Ernest** I can't drive.

**Gloria** Oh, I see. What do you like doing in your free time?

**Ernest** Nothing.

**Gloria** Oh, come on, Ernest! Haven't you got any hobbies?

**Ernest** Well...I've got one. I like gardening. Shall I tell you about my garden?

**Gloria** Yes!

**Ernest** Well...it's...

**Gloria** Yes?

**Ernest** It's...

**Gloria** Yes?

**Ernest** It's green!

**Gloria sighs.**

**Gloria** Well, thank you, Ernest. That was fascinating. Ladies and gentlemen, Ernest Bottom.

**Ernest leaves.**

**Gloria** Well, now we've met the three contestants, and our judges are ready with their votes. For Arnold Higgins: *one* vote. For Elvis Smith: *one* vote. And for Ernest Bottom: *one* vote. Well, this is sensational, ladies and gentlemen! This year, we have *three* Mr Universes! So, congratulations to our three contestants, and thank you to our judges: Mrs Doris Higgins, Mrs Brenda Smith and Mrs Margaret Bottom. From all of us here, good night!

# The new James Bond film

# 15

This sketch was first performed in 1983. The stage version is somewhat longer than that given here: we have omitted a number of visual jokes involving the painter's ladder, and a (mimed) electric door through which Bond and Barbara enter Mr Big's office, for example. Also, in the stage version, the sketch is followed by a song which is a pop video made by Hank. Our liking for misreadings of written texts – such as the book in Sketch 15 *The bus stop* (in Book 1) and the robber's note in Sketch 6 *The bank* (in this book) – recurs here in the badly typed film script.

## Words and expressions

Connected with films:

*producer, director, direct* (vb.), *star* (n./vb.),  
*film* (n./vb.), *script, title, scene, lines* (in the script),  
*play* (vb.) (= play the part of)

Other expressions:

*macaroni, cannelloni, pasta, secret agent, criminal* (n.),  
*gun, shoot, paint* (vb.), *paintbrush, ladder, typing  
mistake, Go ahead* (= Yes, you can do what you  
requested)

## Preliminary practice

You could prepare for the sketch with a brief discussion about film styles, concerning what types of films the students like, the best film they have seen recently, etc., and then focus particularly on the James Bond series: Do the students like the Bond films, or do they agree, for example, with Hugh Grant's famous description of Bond as simply 'a boring 60s chauvinist with a bad toupee'?

If the social interaction in the class is very good, you could ask the students to nominate each other for particular roles in films, saying why they think their nominee would be suitable. (This is perhaps not a good activity for younger classes, where the students may take advantage of the situation to make fun of each other.)

## Follow-up activities

① During the sketch, the characters rehearse part of a film script, which includes several typing mistakes: *eats* for *meets*, *Pond* for *Bond*, *Mr Pig* for *Mr Big*, *shout* for *shoot*, *Mr Bag* for *Mr Big*, and *rocket* for *pocket*. Here is an activity based on such mistakes.

In small groups, the students write some short dialogues. These dialogues can be of any type, but the students may like to imagine that they are extracts from film scripts; they do not need to be very long (ten lines is sufficient, for example). In their dialogues, the students make some 'typing mistakes' like those in the sketch, i.e. they replace a few words with other words.

Each group then passes their 'script' to another group. The groups then, in turn, act out the scripts they have received for the rest of the class to watch. They should act out the scripts exactly as they have received them, i.e. including the 'typing mistakes'. After each group has acted out a script, the rest of the class can identify and correct the 'typing mistakes'.

② For another activity in groups (or pairs), the students could write some telegrams, which they read out to the rest of the class. In reading them out, they can include the punctuation, saying *Stop* and *Comma* as in the sketch, if they like. The 'telegrams' could be instructions to other individuals in the class; e.g. *Hello – Comma – Maria. Stop. Please stand up – Comma – turn round – Comma – and walk to the window. Stop.*

## Props and costumes

For classroom re-enacting, all that is really required is three 'film scripts' (it is useful to have the text of Scene 6 written in them, including the typing mistakes), and a piece of paper to represent the telegram (with the telegram text written on it). The ladder, paint tin and paintbrush can be mimed.

For a performance, you will need the film scripts and the telegram, plus a real step-ladder, a paint tin – empty, so the painter is not obliged to deal with real paint – and a paintbrush. Hank could be sitting at a desk at the start, but this is not vital. Costumes: an overall for the painter; others as desired.

# The new James Bond film

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<b>Scene</b>	Hank Cannelloni's office
<b>Characters</b>	Hank Cannelloni, the director of the film
	Linda Stone } the stars of the film
	Romeo Higgins } the stars of the film
	A painter

**Hank is in his office. There is a knock at the door.**

**Hank** Come in!

**Linda comes in.**

**Linda** Hi, Hank!

**Hank** Linda! Hi!

**Linda** So, Hank, why do you want to see me?

**Hank** Linda, I want you to be the star of my new film.

**Linda** Great! Tell me about it.

**Hank** I am going to direct the new James Bond film.

**Linda** The new James Bond film!

**Hank** Yes. It's going to be a great film – and you're going to be a big star!

**Linda** I *am* a big star, Hank.

**Hank** Yes, Linda, of course you're a big star. But you're going to be an even *bigger* star!

**Linda** Great! Er...Hank...

**Hank** Yes, Linda?

**Linda** Who's going to play James Bond?

**Hank** Well, we decided that we wanted Tom Cruise –

**Linda** Tom Cruise?

**Hank** Yes.

**Linda** That's great!

**Hank** But there's a small problem.

**Linda** What's that, Hank?

**Hank** Well –

**There is a knock at the door.**

**Hank** Come in!

**Romeo opens the door.**

- Romeo** Hello! Is anybody there?
- Hank** Oh, hi, Romeo. Come in.
- Romeo** Hello, Mr Macaroni.
- Hank** Cannelloni.
- Romeo** Cannelloni, yes. Sorry.
- Hank** Romeo, come over here.
- Romeo** Right. (**To Linda**) Oh, hello. I don't think we've met. I'm Romeo Higgins.
- Linda** Romeo who?
- Romeo** Higgins. H-I-G-
- Linda** Hi, Romeo. (**To Hank, quietly**) Hank, who is Romeo Higgins?
- Hank** (**To Linda, quietly**) He's...er...he's ...
- Romeo** I'm very pleased to meet you.
- Linda** I'm sure you are.
- Hank** Romeo is...er...starring in the film with you.
- Linda** What?
- Hank** Yes. He's going to be the new James Bond.
- Linda** The new James Bond?
- Romeo** Yes. I'm very excited about it.
- Linda** (**To Hank, quietly**) What happened to Tom Cruise?
- Hank** (**To Linda, quietly**) He's busy.
- Linda** Oh, no!
- Hank** OK, let's talk about the film. The film takes place in Honolulu.
- Romeo** Great! Honolulu, Linda!
- Hank** But we're not going to film it in Honolulu.
- Linda** We're not going to film it in Honolulu?
- Hank** No.
- Linda** Where *are* we going to film it?
- Hank** In Manchester.
- Romeo** Great! My grandmother lives in Manchester. Er...Mr Macaroni?
- Hank** Cannelloni! The name is Cannelloni!
- Romeo** Oh, I can't tell the difference between macaroni and cannelloni.
- Hank** What is it?
- Romeo** Well, I know they're both types of pasta...
- Hank** No, I mean: *What* do you want?
- Romeo** Am I really going to be the new James Bond?
- Hank** Yes, Romeo. Here's your script.

**Hank gives Romeo a script.**

- Romeo** Oh, thank you.  
**Hank** And Linda...  
**Linda** Yes, Hank?  
**Hank** You play Barbara, another secret agent.

***Hank gives Linda a script.***

- Linda** Thanks, Hank.

***The painter enters with a ladder.***

- Painter** Is there anyone here called Macaroni?  
**Hank** Cannelloni! The name is Cannelloni!  
**Painter** Is that you?  
**Hank** Yes!  
**Painter** Telephone call for you, Mr Cannelloni.  
**Hank** Tell them I'm busy.  
**Painter** It's Hollywood.  
**Hank** Hollywood! Right – (**Starting to leave**) – I'll be back in a minute.  
**Painter** Mr Hollywood – your bank manager.  
**Hank** Ah. (**Coming back**) Right. Never mind.  
**Painter** Can I finish painting this wall?  
**Hank** Go ahead.

***The painter sets up his ladder and starts painting.***

- Linda** Hank!  
**Hank** What is it, Linda?  
**Linda** I've just noticed the title of this film. It's called 'Bond Eats Mr Big'.  
**Painter** 'Bond Eats Mr Big.' What a great title!  
**Hank** That's a typing mistake.  
**Romeo** A typing mistake?  
**Hank** Yes. It should be 'Bond Meets Mr Big'.  
**Romeo** Oh, yes – a typing mistake. There are hundreds of typing mistakes. The typing is really terrible. Who typed this rubbish?  
**Hank** I did.  
**Romeo** Oh.  
**Hank** Just do your best. Now, let's look at one of the important scenes. Scene 6 –

***Hank, Linda and Romeo find Scene 6 in their scripts.***

- Hank** – where Bond –  
**Romeo** Yes.

**Hank** – and Barbara –

**Linda** Yes.

**Hank** – go into the office of Mr Big.

**Romeo** Mr Who?

**Hank** Mr Big.

**Romeo** Who's Mr Big?

**Hank** He's the biggest, most dangerous criminal in the world.

**Linda** Who's playing Mr Big in the film?

**Hank** I am.

**The painter laughs.**

**Hank** What's the matter with you?

**Painter** (**Changing his laugh into a cough**) I've got a cold.

**Hank** OK, remember: I'm Mr Big. So...lines, everybody.

**Romeo** (**To Linda**) What did he say?

**Linda** I don't know. (**To the painter**) What did he say?

**Painter** I think he said 'lions'.

**Romeo and Linda make the sound of lions roaring; the painter joins in.**

**Hank** I said *lines*, not *lions*!!

**Romeo** }  
**Linda** } Sorry, Hank.

**Hank** OK, let's begin. (**Reading from his script, in a strange voice**) 'Ah-ha! Who are you?'

**Linda** (**To Romeo**) What did he say?

**Romeo** I don't know. (**To the painter**) What did he say?

**Painter** 'Who are you?'

**Romeo** Romeo Higgins.

**Painter** How do you do?

**Romeo** How do you do?

**Hank** Romeo! Lines! Just read the *lines*!

**Romeo** What? Oh, yes. (**Reading**) 'My name is Pond – James Pond.'

**Hank** What did you say?

**Romeo** 'My name is Pond – James Pond.'

**Linda** It's not James *Pond*, it's James *Bond*! Idiot!

**Romeo** (**Pointing at his script**) It says 'Pond' here.

**Hank** Just get on with it! 'Ah-ha, Bond! This is the moment I've been waiting for!'

**Romeo** (**To the painter**) What did he say?

**Painter** I'm not sure, but I think he said: (**Imitating Hank's strange voice**) 'Ah-ha, Bond! This is the moment I've been waiting for!'

**Romeo** Thanks.

**Linda** 'Look out, Bond! He's got a gun.'

**Painter** No, I haven't. It's a paintbrush.

**Romeo** 'I'm not afraid of you, Mr Pig.'

**Painter** Mr *Big!*

**Romeo** 'Mr Big.'

**Linda** 'Bond! Look out!'

**Romeo** 'What is it, Banana?' Er... 'Barbara?'

**Linda** 'He's got a gun. He's going to shout!'

**Painter** Not 'shout' – 'shoot'! 'He's going to *shoot*' – with his gun!

**Romeo** 'Don't shoot, Mr Bag!' – 'Mr *Big!*'

**Hank** 'Ah-ha! Why not!'

**Romeo** 'Because...'

**Hank, Romeo and Linda all turn over a page in their scripts.**

**Romeo** '...I've got something I want to show you. It's here – in my rocket.'

**Painter** Not 'rocket' – 'pocket'! 'It's here in my *pocket*.' Oh! Stop everything! I've got something I want to show you! It's here in my pocket!

**The painter takes a telegram from his pocket.**

**Painter** It's a telegram for you, Mr Cannelloni – from the producer, Mr Broccoli.

**Hank** From the producer?! Read it!

**Painter** OK. (**Reading**) 'Hello. *Stop*. How are you? *Stop*. Have you started the film yet? *Stop*. If you've started – *Comma* – stop. *Stop*. If you haven't started – *Comma* – don't start. *Stop*. *Stop*. *Stop*. Signed: The Producer. *Stop*.'

**Romeo** I didn't understand a word of that.

**Linda** It means there's no film. (**Leaving**) Bye, Hank.

**Hank** Er...Bye, Linda.

**Romeo** No film?

**Hank** That's right.

**Romeo** Do you mean I'm not going to play James Bond?

**Hank** I'm afraid not, Romeo.

**Romeo** Oh, no! That means I haven't got a job.

**Hank** You haven't got a job! What about *me*? I haven't got a job either!

**Painter** Hank, Romeo, don't worry.

**Hank** What do you mean?

**Painter** I can give you both a job.

**Romeo** Really?

**Painter** Yes. Hank, you take this paintbrush...

***He gives Hank his paintbrush.***

**Hank** What?

**Painter** And Romeo, you take the ladder...

***He gives Romeo his ladder.***

**Romeo** Eh?

**Painter** Call me when you've finished. I'll be in the canteen.

***The painter leaves.***

# 16 World record

The idea for this sketch came from a role-playing activity devised by a member of the ETT to practise the Present Perfect Continuous tense with a class (the use of *How long have you been -ing...?* and *I've/He's/She's been -ing for [period of time]* seeming quite appropriate in the context of world record attempts). The students were filmed on video and very much enjoyed the activity. It was thus agreed that a sketch should be written for the show, based on the idea, and this sketch was the result. It was first performed in 1974.

## Words and expressions

*programme, studio, viewers, contestant, stand, lean (vb.), break a record, bucket, brush (n.), trousers, look at, look for, have...on (= wear), take off*

The expression ...*to go* occurs several times in the sketch, in sentences such as *You've got a long way to go!*, *You've only got four minutes to go!* and *Only ten seconds to go!*

Note the ironic tone of *Congratulations, Albert!*

## Preliminary practice

*The Guinness Book of Records* contains some very unusual (often amazing) world records under the heading 'Human Achievements: Miscellaneous Endeavours'. Many of these involve strange activities, rather like those in the sketch.

If you can get hold of a copy of the book, you could select a few of these strange world records, such as walking with a milk bottle on one's head, playing the accordion non-stop, or sitting in a tree.

Write each activity (and the record distance, time, etc.) on a piece of paper and distribute the papers to the students. Each student mimes the activity on their paper, and the other students guess what it is. When it has been guessed correctly, the student who mimed it can tell the others the record distance, time, and so on.

## Follow-up activities

① The students may like to do another version of the sketch, in which Albert and Mabel are trying to break different world records. Here are some suggestions (the students may have ideas of their own, of course):

Sitting on top of a flagpole.

Walking from one end of the country to another.

Eating eggs.

Telling jokes non-stop.

② In the sketch, Albert's world record attempt fails, but the students could imagine an alternative ending in which he is successful and holds a press conference. Four students could sit at the front of the class in the roles of the four 'celebrities': Albert, Mrs Hargreaves, Michael Moonshine and Mabel Phillips. The rest of the class are journalists asking questions. The journalists could be in four groups, with each group being designated to put questions to a particular person, so that not all the questions are put to Albert.

③ During the 'press conference' activity, the students playing the journalists could take notes of the celebrities' answers. Then the celebrities could join the relevant groups, and the groups could each produce a short newspaper article, entitled *A New World Record: 'My Story' by Albert Hargreaves (or ...by Daisy Hargreaves, ...by Michael Moonshine, ...by Mabel Phillips)*.

## Props and costumes

For classroom re-enacting, a pen or pencil or rolled paper can represent a microphone, held by Michael; Mabel can lean on anything (a desk, for example); Albert can mime standing in the bucket.

For a more elaborate performance, a real microphone is useful (although it does not have to be plugged in), and you will need a long-handled brush or broom for Mabel, a bucket for Albert and a jug for Mrs Hargreaves. It is best if the bucket and jug are empty, i.e. Mrs Hargreaves pretends to pour soup into the bucket. Michael and Mrs Hargreaves should have watches to consult. Costumes: Michael could have a shiny TV-presenter's jacket or suit; costumes for the other characters as desired.

# World record

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<b>Scene</b>	A TV studio
<b>Characters</b>	Michael Moonshine Albert Hargreaves Daisy Hargreaves, Albert's wife Mabel Phillips A man

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**Michael** Thank you, thank you, thank you. Yes, ladies and gentlemen, this is the programme that gives *you* the chance to break a world record. We have here in the studio tonight two people who are trying to break world records. Let's meet them and see what they're doing. Tell me, sir, what is your name?

**Albert** Albert Hargreaves.

**Michael** Albert Hargreaves. Well, Albert, what are you doing?

**Albert** I'm standing on one leg in a bucket of hot soup.

**Michael** Ladies and gentlemen, he's standing on one leg in a bucket of hot soup!

**The audience applauds.**

**Michael** Albert, how long have you been standing on one leg in that bucket of hot soup?

**Albert** I've been standing here for six hours and fifty-eight minutes.

**Michael** And what is the world record for standing on one leg in a bucket of hot soup?

**Albert** The world record is seven hours and three minutes, Michael.

**Michael** Seven hours and three minutes! And you've been standing there for six hours and *fifty-nine* minutes now. Well, Albert, you've only got *four* minutes to go!

**The audience applauds.**

**Michael** Albert, you've been standing on one leg in that bucket of soup for almost seven hours now.

**Albert** That's right, Michael.

**Michael** Tell me – is the soup still hot?

**Albert** Yes. My wife's been coming in every half-hour with more hot soup. Here she comes now.

**Mrs Hargreaves comes in.**

**Daisy** Here you are, Albert.

**She pours some hot soup into the bucket.**

**Albert** Aaaargh!

**Michael** Well, I'm glad it's *your* leg in the soup, Albert, and not mine.

**The audience laughs.**

**Michael** Now we have another contestant in the studio, a very charming young lady. Can you tell the viewers your name?

**Mabel** Mabel Phillips.

**Michael** Mabel Phillips. Well, Mabel, what are *you* doing?

**Mabel** I'm leaning on this brush.

**Michael** She's leaning on a brush, ladies and gentlemen!

**The audience applauds.**

**Michael** Mabel, how long have you been leaning on that brush?

**Mabel** I've been leaning on this brush for three hours and seventeen minutes.

**Michael** She's been leaning on the brush for three hours and seventeen minutes. What is the world record for leaning on a brush, Mabel?

**Mabel** Thirty-seven hours and fifty-six minutes.

**Michael** Thirty-seven hours and fifty-six minutes! And you've been leaning on that brush for three hours and seventeen minutes. Well, Mabel, you've got...three, four, five, six – you've got a long way to go!

**The audience laughs.**

**Michael** Well, Albert has been standing on one leg in his bucket of hot soup for seven hours and *one* minute, so he's only got *two* more minutes to go! Poor Mabel's got a *long* way to go...And here is another young man – and he hasn't got any trousers on.

**The audience laughs.**

**Michael** Now, sir, what are *you* doing?

**Man** I'm looking for my trousers.

**Michael** I can see that. And how *long* have you been looking for your trousers?

**Man** I've been looking for my trousers for five minutes.

**Michael** And what's the world record?

**Man** Pardon?

**Michael** What's the world record for looking for trousers?

**Man** I'm not trying to break a world record. I took my trousers off to have a bath, and when I got out of the bath, my trousers were gone.

**Michael** I see. Get out of the way! We're on television!

**The audience laughs.**

**Michael** Sorry about that, ladies and gentlemen. Now back to Albert Hargreaves. Albert, you've been standing in that bucket of hot soup for seven hours and *two* minutes. Only *one* more minute to go, and you will break the world record. And here comes Mrs Hargreaves with more hot soup!

**Daisy** Here you are, Albert.

***She pours some more soup into the bucket.***

**Albert** Aaaargh!

**Michael** Tell me, Albert, how does it feel?

**Albert** Hot!

***The audience laughs.***

**Michael** No, no, no! How does it feel to be approaching the world record?

**Albert** Well, Michael, I've been dreaming about this moment, I've been thinking about nothing else –

**Michael** Yes, Albert.

**Albert** – I've been practising every day –

**Michael** Yes, Albert.

**Albert** Twice on Sundays!

**Michael** Yes – and here comes Mrs Hargreaves.

**Albert** Oh no, not again!

**Michael** It's all right, Albert, she's only looking at her watch!

***The audience laughs.***

**Daisy** Albert! Albert! Only ten seconds to go! Ten, nine, eight, seven –

***Mabel pushes Albert.***

**Mabel** (*Ironically*) Congratulations, Albert!

**Albert** Aaaargh!

***Albert falls over.***

**Michael** Well, ladies and gentlemen, Albert Hargreaves *hasn't* broken a world record, but he *has* broken...his leg!!