

# The Road Less Travelled

## Introductory lesson

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<b>Level:</b> Intermediate
<b>Age:</b> Teenagers / adults
<b>Skills:</b> Reading, speaking
<b>Language focus:</b> Phrasal verbs (optional)
<b>Note:</b> This short lesson can be used as an introduction to the onestopenglish soap opera, <i>The Road Less Travelled</i> . The aim here is to spark some discussion on drama series in general and to introduce the characters from the soap opera.



### Warm up

Write on the board the names of some well known television series (some English language examples are *Lost*, *Desperate Housewives*, *Prison Break*, *Heroes* or *Crime Scene Investigation*; you could include classics such as *Dallas*, *Starsky and Hutch* or *Star Trek*). Ask the students what they have in common and what other series they can think of. Put these up on the board too.

### Stage 1

Tell students that these are all television series. Distribute the worksheet and ask them to work in pairs to ask and answer the questions.

### Stage 2

Direct students to the reading text and explain that these are all characters from an invented serial. Ask them to read once quickly and tell you what kind of serial it is.

**Answer:** *drama*

**Option:** if you are able to project images from a computer you could play the trailer for the series – available at [www.onestopenglish.com](http://www.onestopenglish.com)

### Stage 3

Tell students to read again and answer the questions.

**Answers:** a) T, DS, F    b) T, F, F    c) F, DS, T  
d) DS, F, T    e) DS, T, T

### Optional language focus:

If you want, you could focus on the different phrasal verbs and idiomatic expressions in the text. Ask the students to find verb phrases with the following meanings:

Katie – to be in a particular place after doing something (*end up*)

Mark – to begin to live with someone (*move in*); to get a better job or position (*move up*)

Sal – to have a (good) relationship with someone (*get on*)

Rich – to leave school before you finish your course (*drop out*)

Michael Mensah – to return (*come back*)

### Stage 4

Ask students to work in pairs. What do they think could happen between these characters? Tell them to brainstorm three possible events and write them down. Give an example: *Katie breaks up with Mark*. When they have finished, ask pairs to compare their sentences. Who has the most interesting predictions?

### Stage 5

Your class is now ready to begin listening to the drama series *The Road Less Travelled*. Each episode will come with a worksheet with language exercises and speaking exercises for your students. During the series you can also check back to the sentences people wrote in Stage 4 above to see if their predictions were right.



### Katie

Katie is 24 years old. She was born and grew up in a boring town in southern England. She hasn't travelled much although she loves watching travel programmes. Her dream is to visit other countries – she went to Portugal last year but that was to see a football match with her boyfriend. She doesn't think that counts. She's a bit of a romantic.

Last year she graduated in history of art from university. She hasn't found a job connected to her studies yet. To fill the time and help pay off her student loan she's working in a call centre selling Internet connections.

Katie met her boyfriend Mark when she was at university. They've been living together for nine months. Time has been going by and Katie is stuck. Is she going to end up leading a mediocre life like her mother?

### Mark

Mark is 26 years old and has lived with Katie for nine months. He is starting to take their relationship for granted. He's a very big football fan and is happy to spend all weekend in the pub with his friends watching match after match.

Mark's friends were surprised when he and Katie moved in together. They had secretly assumed Katie would finish the relationship early on as her and Mark don't seem to have too much in common. Mark studied economics at university, because that's what his Dad did. He didn't do very well. He is working at an insurance company but he's in the mail room – maybe he will move up one day. He's not particularly bothered as long as Manchester United (his favourite team of all time) are doing well in the Premiership League.

Mark has a pretty bad temper – he sometimes gets into fights in pubs. He and Kate don't argue much in their relationship, since they are always doing what Mark wants.

### Sal

Sal and Katie are cousins and get on really well. Sal used to live near Katie's hometown until she moved to California 18 months ago. Sal went to drama school. Her dream is to be an actress, and there's no better place than Los Angeles to follow that dream! At the moment she is working several different part-time jobs.

Sal met Rich about six months ago in his club. They get on well and he makes her laugh but for some reason she doesn't trust him 100%.

Sal is also very romantic but has always been more impulsive. She is a risk-taker. Katie likes Sal's wild side, Sal admires Katie for her cool head.



### Rich

Rich was born in California and couldn't imagine living anywhere else. He dropped out of college and opened a club, which is quite successful. He's a fun-loving guy who has lots of friends, mainly female. Since he started going out with Sal he seems to have calmed down slightly.

Rich comes from a lower middle class family, but likes to pretend he's from a poor, working-class family. Rich likes to think that his club might be a Los Angeles landmark one day. He sometimes tells a story that the rappers 50 cent and Eminem had a secret party in the VIP room at the back of his club but this isn't true.

Rich acts like a rich rapper. But he isn't that tough – and he probably has a good heart after all.

### Michael Mensah

Michael was born in Ghana but has lived in California for many years after moving there with his family. He got a grant to go to university in Los Angeles and did very well. At university he became politically active in student life and went back to Africa after graduating to work in refugee camps. It was during this time that he began writing poetry.

Michael fell in love with a woman from the United Nations but it ended terribly. He came back to LA broke and broken-hearted. He still writes poetry, but to make ends meet he writes scripts for commercials and some TV shows. He feels his life is empty but after being broken-hearted once he has lost his optimism. He finally got some of his poems published in England, but who knows what could happen next?

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1. Work in pairs. Read the information about a *serial* from the box. Then ask and answer the questions.

**serial** (*noun*) a story that is broadcast or published in a series of separate parts. Television serials are called series.



- What are some of the most popular serials on television at the moment in your country?
- Can you think of any popular book serials? Which ones? Have you read them?
- Are you currently following a serial on television? Which one?
- What were some popular serials when you were a child?
- Have you ever listened to a radio serial?

2. Read the information about a group of people from a new serial for language learners called *The Road Less Travelled*. What kind of serial do you think it is?

science fiction      drama      police procedural      comedy

3. Read again and answer the questions *True (T)*, *False (F)* or *Doesn't Say (DS)*.

a) **Katie...**

lives with her boyfriend.  
enjoyed her trip to Portugal.  
works in art history.

b) **Mark...**

doesn't appreciate Katie as much now.  
has a lot in common with Katie, according to his friends.  
is eager to move up in the company where he works.

c) **Sal...**

lived in the same town as Katie.  
is a great actress.  
has a good relationship with Katie.

d) **Rich...**

has never left California.  
comes from a poor family.  
owns a club.

e) **Michael Mensah...**

left Ghana because of political trouble.  
has worked in Africa and the United States.  
doesn't have a lot of money.

4. What do you think could happen between the characters in this series? Work in pairs. Write three predictions. Compare with others in the class.