

Teacher's notes and answer key

Level: Intermediate and above

Age: Adults

Time needed: 45 minutes plus

Procedure: The 'Twelve top tips' will give you extra ideas for using the plays in the classroom.

Notes on language and culture

1. Reading is a large town located about 40 miles west of London.
2. 'Course in the case of 'Course she does!' is a colloquial way of expressing the adverbial phrase *of course*.
3. *There's a good dog* is a typical expression that people use when talking to their dogs in order to reward them.
4. When Fiona says 'I don't understand why bigger dogs like yours never catch on', Tina misunderstands, thinking *catch on* means *become popular*. Fiona is using the other meaning of *catch on* which is *understand* or *realize*. She wonders why bigger dogs don't understand the pointlessness of fetching the stick.
5. Tina uses the expressions *you know* and *you see*, both of which are used to underline what has been said immediately before. *You know* is primarily used to emphasize an opinion and *you see* is used when you are explaining something.
6. We use the proverb *once bitten, twice shy* to show that we will be careful about doing something again or will be unwilling to do something again because we failed or were hurt the first time we did it.
7. *Bin lorry* is the colloquial term for the vehicle used by refuse collectors. There is a clue to its meaning when Tina says they threw the dead dog in the back.
8. An 'MRI scan' is a medical test in which images are made of the organs inside your body. MRI is short for *magnetic resonance imaging*.
9. The idiomatic expression *keep someone at arms' length* means to ensure that there is some emotional distance or limited contact between you and someone else.
10. Rottweilers and Pit Bulls are two different categories of dog that are popular in the UK. Although



many breeds in these categories are classed as 'family-friendly', there have been several attacks on humans that have led the media to label them as 'dangerous dogs'. It is against the law to breed or own Pit Bulls in the UK.

11. When Fiona says, *doesn't bear thinking about!*, she believes that that subject is too shocking and unpleasant to think about.
12. Having 'roots done', is a colloquial expression for having hair dyed. Tina is being sarcastic and suggesting that Fiona treats her dog so much like a person that she would colour her fur.
13. Ellipsis (see Exercise 4) is a very common feature of spoken English. The subject of the sentence (and in questions sometimes the auxiliary verb) is often omitted.

Twelve top tips

1. Take away the title of the play. Students try to guess the context. Who? Where? Why? What?
2. Ask students to describe the appearance, personality and social status of the characters in the play.
3. Cut the play up into four sections. Students then put it back in the correct sequence.
4. Supply several statements of fact or opinion about the play. Ask students to assess whether each one follows from the play, supports it, contradicts it or is assumed.
5. Use the play alongside a onestopenglish news lesson or news article on the same subject and hold a debate and discussion on the topic to link the content with students' experience or knowledge.

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by Tim Bowen and Liz Plampton

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6. Students add their own stage directions, e.g. ... *he said angrily – rising from his chair.*

7. Students can finish the play off in their own words or change its ending.

8. Students interpret the play, perform it and then record and listen to themselves for correct use of stress and intonation.

9. Students perform the play using the same words but in different styles, e.g. a romance, a ghost story, a thriller, etc.

10. Students identify vocabulary that has a negative connotation.

11. Students identify the word/phrase/phrasal verb that means ...

12. Take an adjective or adverb out of a sentence and put it in brackets at the end of the line. Students put it back in the correct place or wherever it will logically fit, for example:

Little dogs can be more aggressive than the big ones. [FAR]

Little dogs can be far more aggressive than the big ones.

Answer key

1. Find the correct order

1. e; b; c; a; d

2. c

2. Vocabulary: Verbs

1. d; 2. f; 3. a; 4. e; 5. c; 6. b

3. Find the colloquial expression

1. catch on; 2. soulmate; 3. nigh on; 4. squeamish;
5. put down; 6. doom and gloom

4. Colloquial language: Ellipsis

1. It must be difficult just finding the time.
2. Did you hear about the woman who was mauled by her own dog?
3. She got run over by a bin lorry.
4. She looks like a dog to me.
5. It doesn't bear thinking about.

Dog owners

Transcript

Scenario: Two women exercise their dogs in a park in Reading

Characters: Tina, Fiona

Tina Fetch!

Fiona I expect a dog like that needs quite a bit of exercise!

Tina Daily.

Fiona Must be difficult just finding the time.

Tina I don't mind. I enjoy the exercise, myself.

Fiona With Mishka it's just a question of fresh air. That's all she needs, really.

Tina Doesn't she have legs?

Fiona 'Course she does! Don't you Mishki? They're only little!

Tina With legs like that, you could put her in a chicken run and she'd get exhausted.

Fiona Not necessarily. She just never wants to be too far from her mummy, do you Mishki?

Tina There's a good dog.

Fiona I just can't understand why bigger dogs like yours never catch on!

Tina I'm sorry?

Fiona Well, you'd think they'd begin to think something was wrong. Every time they fetch the stick, the owner goes and throws it back again.

Tina Dogs aren't the same as humans, you know!

Fiona Mmm.

Tina Fetch!

Fiona Mishka's like a soulmate to me. She's never happier than when she's tucked under my arm, nestling in my handbag! Are you Mishki?

Tina She looks like she's growing out of it. She can hardly breathe in there.

Fiona No, she always pants like that. Anyway, I give her nothing but the best. All her food's organic and vitamin-enriched.

Tina Perhaps Mishka needs to go on a low-carb diet? I try not to get too close to Ben.

Fiona Why?

Tina He pongs a bit! No, I've learnt from experience. It took me nigh on 12 months to get over the death of my last dog. Once bitten, twice shy! Forgive the pun.

Fiona How did it die?

Tina Got run over by a bin lorry. We were looking for her for days, but they'd thrown her in the back. No questions asked, you see. The assistant in the baker's told me. She'd seen it all.

Fiona How terrible for you! I've got my little Mishka insured.

Tina What for? Fire and theft?

Fiona No, medical insurance. She had her first MRI scan last month. All clear, thank goodness!

Tina I don't think dogs should be treated like human beings. Love 'em, but keep 'em at arms' length.

Fiona Oh, but Mishka's more than just a ... dog.

Tina Looks like a dog to me. Hear about the woman who was mauled by her own dog?

Fiona Mishka and I are both a little squeamish if you don't mind! What was it? One of those Rottweilers? I see them all the time! Or was it a Pit Bull? They should all be muzzled!

Dog owners

Transcript

Tina Little dogs can be far more aggressive than the big ones. Anyway, the dog attacked her while she was asleep.

Fiona Oh my word! I hope she had it put down.

Tina I believe so.

Fiona Ooh, doesn't bear thinking about!

Tina No.

Fiona I'm not a deep sleeper, myself. Anyway, no more doom and gloom. It's time for our hair appointment! Come on Mish-mash!

Tina Mmm, looking too much like a dog, is she? Needs those roots done, no doubt!

Worksheet

1 Find the correct order

1. Here are five lines from the beginning of the play. Put them in a logical order.

- a. I don't mind. I enjoy the exercise, myself.
- b. Daily.
- c. Must be difficult just finding the time.
- d. With Mishka it's just a question of fresh air. That's all she needs, really.
- e. I expect a dog like that needs quite a bit of exercise!

2. What do you think the play is about?

- a. exercise
- b. time
- c. dogs

2 Vocabulary: Verbs

Match these verbs from the text with their meanings.

- | | |
|-----------|---|
| 1. tuck | a. attack with claws and teeth |
| 2. nestle | b. cover a dog's mouth with a special protective device |
| 3. maul | c. smell very bad |
| 4. pant | d. keep something safe or hidden |
| 5. pong | e. breathe loudly with your mouth open |
| 6. muzzle | f. find a comfortable and safe position to be in |

3 Find the colloquial expression

Look in the play and find the following words and phrases. Note that they are in the order in which they appear in the play.

- 1. A two-word phrasal verb meaning *both become popular and understand*.
- 2. A noun meaning *someone you have a special relationship with because you share the same feelings, attitudes and beliefs*.
- 3. A two-word expression meaning *nearly*.
- 4. An adjective meaning *easily shocked or upset by something unpleasant*.
- 5. A two-word phrasal verb meaning *to kill an animal using a drug because it's old, ill or dangerous*.
- 6. A three-word expression meaning *a feeling that a situation is very bad and without hope*.

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Worksheet

4 Colloquial language: Ellipsis

Which words are missing from these examples from the play?

1. Must be difficult just finding the time.
2. Hear about the woman who was mauled by her own dog?
3. Got run over by a bin lorry.
4. Looks like a dog to me.
5. Doesn't bear thinking about.

5 Discussion questions

1. Why do you think the people in this play have dogs as pets?
2. Do people in general spend too much time and money on dogs?
3. Is it cruel to treat dogs like humans?
4. Do you like dogs? Why? Why not?
5. What should be done about the problem of dangerous dogs?
6. How do dogs contribute to human society?

6 Listen and speak

Listen to the recording and read the play aloud in time with the recording.