

# Mini-plays

by Tim Bowen and Liz Plampton

## The bank

### 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. Loughton is town in the county of Essex, located approximately 12 miles from central London. Epping is a small market town close to Loughton and Walthamstow is a district of north-east London, close to the border with Essex.
2. The expression *Would you look at that ...* is commonly used in spoken English to tell someone to look at something because it is surprising or unusual.
3. *A pain in the backside* is a euphemism for the less polite expression *a pain in the arse*, meaning something or someone that is really annoying.
4. *A holiday from hell* is a holiday that is extremely unpleasant for some reason, e.g. you got food poisoning, the hotel was only half-built, the resort was next to an airport runway, etc.
5. If homeowners who have borrowed money from a bank to pay for their home (taken out a mortgage) cannot keep up with their mortgage repayments, the bank may send bailiffs to their home to take away valuables such as furniture and electronic equipment equivalent to the value of the money they owe.
6. *Get a place on the council* means to be given social housing (a flat or house) owned by the local authority. Tenants pay rent to the local authority for such housing and priority is normally given to those with young children.
7. When Jo says 'how's that, then?' she is asking Sarah to explain the reason for the statement she has just made.
8. *What with* is a more colloquial way of saying *because of*.
9. Sarah refers to Christine's child as 'the baby' when saying 'having a baby' or 'a baby' would be more grammatically correct. It is quite common in colloquial English for the indefinite article to be replaced by the definite article.



10. The informal expression *and that* at the end of a sentence, is used for including other similar people or things in what you are saying.
11. When Sarah says Christine's boyfriend 'couldn't take it', she means that he couldn't tolerate the situation.
12. Used informally, the word *juicy* can mean *worth a lot of money*, as in the example in the play 'a juicy bonus'. Another example would be a *juicy contract*.
13. The use of *never mind* is sarcastic here. The speaker could also say 'Don't worry about us, then'.
14. When Jo says 'We just paid for it, that's all', she is referring to the fact that at the end of 2009, the UK government gave failing banks huge amounts of public money (i.e. money paid for by taxes). Many people were angry about this. However, Jo is confusing the people who work as cashiers in banks with the bankers who work in the city of London and often receive huge bonuses in addition to their salaries.

#### 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.

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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.

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:

*The hole in the wall's run out of cash and they send most of their cashiers to lunch.*

[STILL]

*The hole in the wall's run out of cash and they still send most of their cashiers to lunch.*

5. It must be tough, though.

6. They're probably gonna discuss her juicy bonus this year.

#### 5. Phrasal verbs

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

#### 6. What's the topic?

There is no single answer to this. Lazy staff and winning competitions are mentioned, as are social housing and, indirectly, relationships. The fact that the play is set in a bank and that the two women complain both about the service and the fact that the banks have 'their money' suggests that the main theme is poor performance of banks at various levels.

### Answer key

#### 1. Find the correct order

4; 5; 2; 3; 1

#### 2. Vocabulary

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

#### 3. Find the colloquial expression

1. hole in the wall; 2. hook, line and sinker; 3. sarnie;  
4. can't stand; 5. fess up; 6. make your blood boil

#### 4. Colloquial language: Ellipsis

1. Can you see the blonde girl on the end?
2. She chats away to all the customers.
3. Do you know Christine?
4. Does she still live in Epping?

### Transcript

**Scenario:** Two colleagues waiting in a queue at a bank in Loughton, Essex

**Characters:** Jo, Sarah

- Jo** Oh, no, not again! Would you look at that queue!
- Sarah** Just my luck! This is my lunch hour!
- Jo** What do they care? The hole in the wall's run out of cash, and they still send most of the cashiers to lunch!
- Sarah** What is this, a bank holiday?
- Jo** Ssh! A pain in the backside, that's what it is!
- Sarah** See the blonde girl on the end? She's always so slow! Chats away to all the customers, completely unaware that, actually, some people would rather be elsewhere!
- Jo** No, that's just a ploy so you read all their adverts about travel insurance and free prize draws to make you sign up for all sorts of things you don't need.
- Sarah** You know Christine? Well, she actually won one! A weekend in Malaga.
- Jo** No!
- Sarah** Yes! But she said it was a holiday from hell!
- Jo** How did she win?
- Sarah** Well, if you take out a mortgage with them, they enter you into their free prize draw. It's just a sales gimmick.
- Jo** And she fell for it?
- Sarah** Yes! Hook, line and sinker. And they ripped her off for the travel insurance.
- Jo** She still living in Epping?
- Sarah** No, she had the bailiffs round last month. Couldn't keep up with the mortgage repayments. Yet another repossession!
- Jo** I've gotta be back at work in ten minutes and I haven't even had my sarnie yet!
- Sarah** She lives in Walthamstow, now. With her mum.
- Jo** Oh, right.
- Sarah** She can't stand her mum, though. She says it's only temporary 'til she can get a place on the council.
- Jo** Oh, how's that, then?
- Sarah** Well, what with the baby and that.
- Jo** What?
- Sarah** She's got the baby, hasn't she?

**Transcript**

**Jo** Oh, that's right.

**Sarah** Must be tough, though, 'cause you know her boyfriend walked out on her, don't you?

**Jo** No, I had no idea!

**Sarah** Yeah, she fessed up about her credit card debts. He couldn't take it and left.

**Jo** That's why she couldn't keep up with the mortgage, then?

**Sarah** Yes. 'Ere, look! I don't believe it, that blonde one's just closed up!

**Jo** What?

**Sarah** Yes, the manager just told her to!

**Jo** She's walking into his office now!

**Sarah** Probably gonna discuss her juicy bonus this year.

**Jo** That's nice! Never mind us. We just paid for it, that's all.

**Sarah** Ooh, it makes my blood boil!

**Jo** Come on, let's go, or we'll lose our jobs and end up being another statistic!

### Worksheet

#### 1 Find the correct order

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

- Ssh! A pain in the backside, that's what it is!
- What do they care? The hole in the wall's run out of cash, and they still send most of the cashiers to lunch!
- What is this, a bank holiday?
- Oh, no, not again! Would you look at that queue?
- Just my luck! This is my lunch hour!

2. Now look at the play and check your answers.

#### 2 Vocabulary

Match these nouns from the text (1-6) with their meanings (a-f).

- |                 |  |
|-----------------|--|
| 1. ploy         | a. a situation in which a bank regains ownership of a property because the owners are unable to continue paying for their loan |
| 2. gimmick      | b. money borrowed from a bank to buy a house   |
| 3. bailiff      | c. a way of tricking someone to make them do what you want   |
| 4. repossession | d. an official whose job is to take away the possessions of someone who has not paid money they owe                            |
| 5. mortgage     | e. extra money paid in addition to your usual salary   |
| 6. bonus        | f. something that is intended to impress you but is not really useful at all   |

#### 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 four-word expression meaning *cash machine (ATM)*
2. a four-word expression meaning *believing something completely, usually something that is not true*
3. an informal noun which is short for *sandwich*
4. a two-word expression meaning *not willing to tolerate someone or to accept something that someone has done*
5. a two-word phrasal verb meaning *admit something is true or that you have done something wrong*
6. a four-word expression meaning *to make you feel very angry*

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### Worksheet

#### 4 Colloquial language: Ellipsis

Which words are missing from these examples from the play?

1. See the blonde girl on the end?
2. Chats away to all the customers.
3. You know Christine?
4. She still living in Epping?
5. Must be tough, though.
6. Probably gonna discuss her juicy bonus this year.

#### 5 Phrasal verbs

Match the verbs (1-6) with their meanings (a-f).

- |                 |   |
|-----------------|---|
| 1. run out (of) | a. believe that a trick is true               |
| 2. sign up      | b. suddenly leave a person who needs you      |
| 3. fall for     | c. cheat                                      |
| 4. keep up with | d. agree to join something                    |
| 5. walk out on  | e. use all of something and not have any left |
| 6. rip off      | f. continue with                              |

#### 6 What's the topic?

Which of these topics do you think is the main topic of the play?

- a. queuing
- b. the poor performance of banks
- c. lazy staff
- d. winning competitions
- e. social housing
- f. relationships

#### 7 Discussion

Is it right for governments to give money to banks that have made mistakes and caused huge economic problems? Why? Why not?