

Mini-plays

by Tim Bowen and Liz Plampton

Relationships

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. Bolton is a town in Greater Manchester, in the north-west of England. According to a survey of the British Association for the Advancement of Science, people from Bolton are the friendliest in Britain. (source: Wikipedia)
2. The expression at the beginning of the play 'You'll never guess' is often used at the start of a conversation when you want to tell the other person about something interesting that's just happened to you.
3. When Sarah-Jane says that she 'couldn't help it', she means that she couldn't stop herself from doing it.
4. 'It's no good ...' in this case means 'There's no point ...'. Sarah-Jane is making excuses for her boyfriend and Lesley is making it clear that she disapproves.
5. *Seeing someone* is a way of saying that you are dating someone. With this meaning, the structure is always used in the continuous form without specifying a time or place.
6. The expression 'to go all emotional on someone', means to start talking about feelings to them. Sarah-Jane says her boyfriend 'goes a bit funny' when she does this. This probably means he goes quiet and doesn't say much.
7. The expression 'Tell me about it!' is used to show that you understand because you have experienced exactly the same thing. In this context, it does not literally mean 'give me all the details'.
8. Sarah-Jane protests that Lesley has 'got him all wrong' because Sarah-Jane believes that Lesley has the wrong impression of her boyfriend and what he is like.
9. In the sentence 'Doesn't want commitment, more like', the speaker means 'It's more likely that he doesn't want commitment'.
10. When people say they are 'getting a place together' it means that they plan to live together.



11. 'Here we go' in this context means 'Oh, no. Not again'. Lesley probably says this in a bored voice with a sigh.
12. A coot is a water-bird with a white beak. They have featherless frontal shields above their beaks which could give the impression of baldness, hence the origin of the expression 'as bald as a coot'.
13. 'God's gift' is short for 'God's gift to women': a man who is very vain and thinks he is remarkably attractive. The suggestion here is that he isn't.
14. 'You wait' is a colloquial expression used either before or after someone has made a prediction, to underline their confidence that it will happen. Sarah-Jane is confident that her boyfriend will text her back.
15. When Lesley says 'He's got a nerve!', she is showing her disgust at his rude behaviour towards her friend.

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

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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:

He's still in bed or something. [PROBABLY]

He's probably still in bed or something.

Answer key

1. Complete the extract

1. ages; 2. honest; 3. funny; 4. type; 5. innermost

2. Vocabulary

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

3. Find the colloquial expression

1. spit it out; 2. on tenterhooks; 3. up for it; 4. strut your stuff; 5. as bald as a coot; 6. God's gift

4. Colloquial language – Ellipsis

1. Were you drunk again?
2. He doesn't want commitment, more like.
3. He doesn't like cats.
4. I've done it.
5. I've told him I met Chris.
6. I can't wait.

Transcript

Scenario: Two friends sitting in a café in Bolton discussing relationships

Characters: Sarah-Jane, Lesley

- Sarah-Jane** You'll never guess what I did last night ...
- Lesley** Don't tell me. Not again?
- Sarah-Jane** Yes, I know. I couldn't help it.
- Lesley** Drunk again?
- Sarah-Jane** Yes.
- Lesley** Last night?
- Sarah-Jane** Yes. I did ask you to come out with me last night, didn't I? You should have been there.
- Lesley** Don't blame me! I can't always be there to confiscate your mobile.
- Sarah-Jane** But now look what's happened! Oh no, now what am I going to do?
- Lesley** What did you say?
- Sarah-Jane** The worst thing ever.
- Lesley** Come on, spit it out.
- Sarah-Jane** I L-O-V-E you.
- Lesley** I see. And did he text back?
- Sarah-Jane** No. Err, but he's probably still in bed or something. I mean, it's only 11.30.
- Lesley** It's no good making excuses!
- Sarah-Jane** I've been on tenterhooks all morning. Can't even think about my hangover!
- Lesley** I don't know why you're so worried. You've been seeing him for ages. Surely you can be honest with each other.
- Sarah-Jane** Yes, but he gets a bit funny if I go all emotional on him.
- Lesley** Tell me about it! I know the type!
- Sarah-Jane** No! You've got him all wrong. It's just that he can't express his innermost feelings.
- Lesley** Doesn't want commitment, more like.
- Sarah-Jane** I s'pose. But we were talking about getting a place together last week.
- Lesley** Oh yeah? You never told me.
- Sarah-Jane** Well, he seemed to be up for it ... that is until I told him about Bella.
- Lesley** Oh?
- Sarah-Jane** Doesn't like cats.

Transcript

- Lesley** Allergic is he?
- Sarah-Jane** His eyes go red, apparently.
- Lesley** So you said you'd leave Bella at home?
- Sarah-Jane** Well, yes, but he said that he just couldn't put me through the heartache just for *his* sake. I know! I'll make him jealous!
- Lesley** Here we go. How are you going to do that?
- Sarah-Jane** I'll tell him I met Chris at the club last night. He hates him! Says he can't understand how anyone can strut their stuff like he does when they're as bald as a coot!
- Lesley** Yeah, well, Chris does think he's God's gift.
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- Sarah-Jane** Done it.
- Lesley** What?
- Sarah-Jane** Texted him! Told him I met Chris.
- Lesley** You shouldn't play games!
- Sarah-Jane** You wait, he'll text me back in a minute.
- Lesley** Can't wait.
-
- Sarah-Jane** Aaah! He's texted me! He's texted me! I can't look. You read it.
- Lesley** No way!
- Sarah-Jane** Here we go. Oh! ... Oh! ... He's just dumped me! He's just dumped me! By text message!
- Lesley** He's got a nerve! I told you he wasn't worth it!

Worksheet

1 Complete the extract

Here is a short extract from the play. Fill the gaps in the sentences using the words in the box. Then check your answers in the play's transcript.

funny type ages innermost honest

Lesley I don't know why you're so worried. You've been seeing him for (1) _____. Surely you can be (2) _____ with each other.

Sarah-Jane Yes, but he gets a bit (3) _____ if I go all emotional on him.

Lesley Tell me about it! I know the (4) _____!

Sarah-Jane No! You've got him all wrong. It's just that he can't express his (5) _____ feelings.

2 Vocabulary

Match these words from the text with their meanings.

- | | |
|---------------|---|
| 1. confiscate | a. affected by a bad reaction to something that you eat, breathe or touch |
| 2. hangover | b. end a romantic or sexual relationship |
| 3. commitment | c. the feeling of being tired and sick after drinking alcohol |
| 4. allergic | d. a duty and responsibility you have accepted |
| 5. heartache | e. emotional pain and sadness |
| 6. dump | f. officially remove someone's possessions |

3 Find the colloquial expression

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

1. a three-word expression meaning *hurry up and say it*
2. a two-word expression meaning *nervous because you don't know what's going to happen*
3. a three-word expression meaning *willing to do something*
4. a three-word expression meaning *show people how attractive you look*
5. a five-word expression meaning *with no hair at all*
6. a two-word expression meaning *someone who considers themselves to be extremely attractive*

Worksheet

4 Colloquial language: Ellipsis

Which words are missing from these examples from the play?

1. Drunk again?
2. Doesn't want commitment, more like.
3. Doesn't like cats.
4. Done it.
5. Told him I met Chris.
6. Can't wait.

5 Discussion

Which of the following things would you do / not do in a relationship?

- try to make your partner jealous
- lie
- tell your partner your innermost feelings
- tell your partner you love him/her by text message
- dump your partner by text message

6 Listen and speak

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