

Christmas special: Part 1

Level: Intermediate / Upper intermediate

Age: Young adults / Adults

Aims: In this lesson the students will:

1. learn about the Christmas lights of Oxford Street;
2. practise listening for gist and reconstructing audio stories from memory using comprehension questions as prompts;
3. focus on the meaning, form and use of positive and negative colloquial expressions;
4. practise these expressions in two personalized speaking tasks.

Materials: One copy of the worksheet per student; full transcript for Christmas special: Part 1 (with all key vocabulary highlighted in red for reference); full audio for Part 1 – all downloaded from onestopenglish

Summary: Follow Lord Jeffrey as he meets you on Oxford Street to watch the Christmas lights being switched on. Witness a conversation between him and the cynical Lucy, who doesn't see the good in Christmas! How will Lord Jeffrey, a passionate lover of everything about Christmas, react?

Warmer activities

Aims: to engage students with the theme of Christmas, teach a few key pieces of vocabulary items and practise listening for gist.

1. Write *Christmas in Britain* on the board and discuss what students know about how people in Britain celebrate it. Do they know any traditions? Do they themselves celebrate Christmas? Do they like Christmas? Do they think Christmas has changed? Why do they think some people don't like Christmas that much?

Here are just a few ideas to share with your students:

- Christmas is the main national celebration in Britain.
- Like many countries around the world, people buy gifts for each other and fill stockings full of presents for children.
- People eat a big meal on 25th December (usually involving a roast turkey) and spend a good few days with close family and friends.
- Most people enjoy Christmas and feel that values of love and togetherness alongside fun traditions are still very much at the core of the festivities. However, critics feel that it

has become a very commercial celebration which tends to involve hordes of people shopping and consuming.

2. (Only required if this is the first time students have listened to an episode.) Explain to students that they are going to listen to a very special guide to Christmas in London.

Read this to the class:

Your guide is Lord Jeffrey, the Ghost of London, who is hundreds of years old. He's seen London change so much during this time and has been there to experience it all – from the Great Fire of London in 1666, to the explosion of music and fashion on the King's Road in the 1960s. He's the perfect person to show you around. He can choose to be either in human form or ghost form at any time and, as you'll hear, he often changes his form to scare people who try to cheat him!

3. Pre-teach the following vocabulary: *Christmas lights, precious jewels, marvellous, indulgence, gluttony* and *Big Ben*. Here are some definitions and notes on culture to help you:

Christmas lights – coloured lights and displays that illuminate the streets at Christmas time
Nearly every high street in Britain displays Christmas lights (sometimes as early as October)

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to encourage shoppers. The initial moment when the lights are turned on is a big event in major shopping areas and they are often switched on by celebrities.

precious jewels – valuable stones such as rubies or diamonds

marvellous – extremely enjoyable or exciting

indulgence – something special that someone does for pleasure, not because they need to

gluttony – the bad habit of eating or drinking much more than you need

Big Ben – the nickname for the bell in Elizabeth Tower, which stands at the north end of the Palace of Westminster.

Although, Big Ben is the bell, the term is used by many people, including Lord Jeffrey, to refer to the clock tower.

4. Explain to the students that they are going to listen to a guide to Christmas in London. Dictate these three questions:

1. How does Lord Jeffrey feel about Christmas?
2. Where does he meet you in London?
3. Why does Lord Jeffrey take Lucy away with him?

5. Play the full audio for Part 1. Get students to answer the questions you have dictated.

Key:

1. he loves it, for him it gets better every year
2. on Oxford Street
3. to help her remember the magic of Christmas

Memory task

Aims: to encourage students to mentally reconstruct what they have listened to and to work collaboratively in groups

1. Hand out the worksheet and refer students to the memory task. Put students into small groups to answer the questions.

Key: 1. by taxi (cab); 2. because it's very busy; 3. like precious jewels sparkling in the night; 4. She feels people are greedy and just consume. They spend lots of money and eat

until they're fat; 5. She used to like it; 6. He says the tradition and magic of Christmas is all about love; 7. due to his family and friends; 8. She's never going to celebrate Christmas again and it's pointless; 9. The ghost of Christmas past; 10. to the clock tower of Big Ben; 11. she fears Lord Jeffrey might hurt her; 12. his mother

Colloquial language task

Aims: Students to distinguish between positive and negative colloquial expressions, match them to more standard phrases of the same meaning and consolidate new expressions in a personalized speaking task.

1. Refer students to the instructions for the task.

Key:

1. getting into the spirit of things [J]
2. it's pointless [L]
3. It thrills me to bits [J]
4. It really grates on me / It gets on my nerves [L]
5. It's the best thing since sliced bread [J]
6. Let's soak up the atmosphere [J]
7. It's not what it's cracked up to be [L]
8. just for the sake of it [L]
9. It's my pet hate [L]

2. Put students in pairs to discuss the meaning of the expressions. Lord Jeffrey's expressions are all of a positive nature compared to Lucy whose are all of a negative nature.

3. Refer students to the instructions of the third task and ask them to work in their pairs.

Key:

- a. It makes me really excited and happy [3]
- b. It annoys me so much [4]
- c. It doesn't live up to expectations [7]
- d. Let's stay here for a while and really enjoy the mood [6]
- e. Just because that's what you do and there's no reason why [8]
- f. It's the thing I dislike the most [9]
- g. There is no reason why it exists [2]
- h. To enjoy and feel positive about doing something [1]
- i. It's absolutely wonderful [5]

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Further notes:

- *The Ghost of Christmas Past* is a reference to Charles Dickens's novel *A Christmas Carol*. In the novel, The Ghost of Christmas Past takes Scrooge (who is even more cynical about Christmas than Lucy!) back in time to when he was a child.
- 'For when one tires of Christmas, one tires of life' is a wordplay on the famous Samuel Johnson quote '... when a man is tired of London, he is tired of life; ...'.

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Memory task

Work together with your partner and see if you can answer these questions from memory.

1. How does Lord Jeffrey arrive on Oxford Street?
2. Why does he tell everyone to come in close?
3. How does Lord Jeffrey describe the Christmas lights?
4. Why does Lucy dislike Christmas?
5. What was her opinion of Christmas as a child?
6. What does Lord Jeffrey think Christmas is all about?
7. Why does Lucy think Lord Jeffrey is lucky?
8. What two things does Lucy say that really shock Lord Jeffrey?
9. What does Lord Jeffrey rename himself as when he decides on a 'ghostly intervention'?
10. Where does Lord Jeffrey take Lucy first?
11. Why is Lucy scared at this point?
12. Who does he then choose to take Lucy to meet next?

Colloquial language task

1. Look at the box below containing expressions used by Lucy and Lord Jeffrey during their encounter on Oxford Street. Put an L next to expressions used by Lucy and a J for those used by Lord Jeffrey.

1. getting into the spirit of things
2. It's pointless
3. It thrills me to bits
4. It really grates on me / It gets on my nerves
5. It's the best thing since sliced bread
6. Let's soak up the atmosphere
7. It's not what it's cracked up to be
8. just for the sake of it
9. It's my pet hate

2. What pattern do you notice? Discuss the meaning of these expressions with your partner.

3. Match the following English phrases to one of the more colloquial expressions in Exercise 1.

- a. It makes me really excited and happy
- b. It annoys me so much
- c. It doesn't live up to expectations
- d. Let's stay here for a while and really enjoy the mood
- e. Just because that's what you do and there's no reason why
- f. It's the thing I dislike the most
- g. There is no reason why it exists
- h. To enjoy and feel positive about doing something
- i. It's absolutely wonderful

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Choir: We wish you a merry Christmas, we wish you a merry Christmas,
We wish you a merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

Good tidings we bring to you and your ...

Taxi driver: I'm sorry, please don't hurt me! Don't worry about the money!

Lord Jeffrey: Thank you! And next time remember to use the meter!

Taxi driver: Just get out my cab!

Lord Jeffrey: A-ha, traveller. How lovely to see you again! It's me, of course! Lord Jeffrey: The Ghost of London. Now come in close, it's extremely busy here this evening. I do hope you managed to get home safely after our last little adventure in Soho! What a night that was!

Ha! Oh, but look! They're turning on the Christmas lights! Yes, I know it's only the beginning of November, but it's never too early to start celebrating. And every year, here on Oxford Street, right in the heart of London, is where Christmas really begins.

Ha ha ha ha ha! Would you look at that! The Christmas lights are up, sparkling like precious jewels in the night. Ahhh. Let's walk and **soak up the atmosphere**, hey? Isn't it marvellous? Simply marvellous! I do love Christmas, it gets better and better every year!

Lucy: No, it doesn't.

Lord Jeffrey: I-I beg your pardon?

Lucy: It gets worse every year if you ask me. Look around you. Thousands of people queuing and consuming **just for the sake of it**. Christmas is **not what it's cracked up to be**.

Lord Jeffrey: Well, I beg to differ. These people work hard for their money and can spend it how they want. I think Christmas **is the best thing since sliced bread!** It only happens once a year and it always **thrills me to bits**. So surely you can forgive a little indulgence?

Lucy: You say indulgence, but I say gluttony. Everyone just spends loads of money and eats until they're fat! Why can't we make presents for each other rather than buying them? And what about the people who have barely enough food to eat? I used to like it when I was a kid, but these days Christmas is only about consuming and it **gets on my nerves**.

Lord Jeffrey: I guess you do have point, but you're not **getting into the spirit of things!** Yes, we may overindulge ourselves a little, but the tradition and magic of Christmas is all about love! To come together with family and friends on cold, dark winter nights and remind ourselves how much we care about each other.

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Lucy: Well, I guess you're lucky. Not everyone has family and friends like yours. And another thing: why do the preparations for Christmas have to begin so early? Grrr! **It really grates on me.** Christmas is **my pet hate** and I wish everyone would forget the whole thing. In fact, I've just decided. I'm never going to celebrate Christmas again.

Lord Jeffrey: Let me get this straight. You would *forget* about Christmas?

Lucy: Yes. **It's pointless!** I just don't believe in the magic of Christmas anymore.

Lord Jeffrey: Pointless? Pointless? Pointless, you say! Well, I think this calls for an intervention! A *ghostly* intervention!

Lucy: What the ...? What's happening?

Lord Jeffrey: It seems you have forgotten about Christmas. I am LORD JEFFREY: The Ghost of Christmas Past and I've been sent to make you remember!

Lucy: OK. That's a very impressive magic trick, but I really need to be on my way now.

Lord Jeffrey: Umm, I see. Err, usually that works, although I don't often meet people *this* cynical. If you thought that was impressive, try this!

Lucy: How did we get here? Where are we?

Lord Jeffrey: We're in the clock tower of Big Ben, right by the bell. And it's 8 o'clock.

Lucy: OK, err, what do you want? Please don't hurt me!

Lord Jeffrey: Now, now, I'm not going to hurt you, I just want to help you, my dear! Christmas is a time for giving and we must look out for each other. For when one tires of Christmas, one tires of life!

Lord Jeffrey: NOW, HOLD ONTO MY HAND!

Lucy: But, but I can't see your hand?

Lord Jeffrey: Ah, yes. NOW, HOLD ONTO MY HAND!

Lucy: Where are you taking me?

Lord Jeffrey: To meet my mother. And she likes Christmas even more than me!

Lucy: Now, there's no need to go out of your way!

Lord Jeffrey: Oh yes, there is! Here we go!