

# SWAPSHOP

Send in your teaching suggestions, ideas or anything you would like to share with your fellow teachers. However simple they may seem to you they could be new to someone else. We shall publish your ideas here.

## The NEW Swapshop

This issue sees an expanded Swapshop with photocopiable material \* designed for teachers to use in the classroom. It is hoped that before too long this part of the newsletter will develop into a stand-alone supplement but for the time-being we have decided to keep it in the main newsletter.

The main part of this issue's *Swapshop* is devoted to a jigsaw reading exercise, *The Dead Parrot*, submitted by Neville Britten. This page carries some comments on jigsaw methodology. The following pages carry three student texts (Texts 1, 2 & 3) and the conclusion (the letter from Sherlock Holmes, Text 4) with some additional notes for teachers. However the texts stand alone and can be used by teachers as they see fit. Further comments on Neville Britten's Jigsaw material (and how to obtain more of it) are on page 103 of this section. Page 104 of Swapshop in this issue carries other assorted ideas contributed by readers.

\* Photocopying permitted provided page headers are not removed. We suggest enlarging texts when photocopying.

## Reading Jigsaws General methodology

### Stage 1:

Students prepare to talk about their texts. This stage takes 25 minutes of a 50-minute lesson.

- i. Divide the class into thirds - thus if you have a class of 18 people, put them into three groups of six each. Give each group a different letter to read (it will help greatly if the letters are printed on different coloured paper). Students read their text together, discussing it as they do so.
- ii. As students read the text, you can familiarise yourself with the case, reading each of the three texts as well as the solution.
- iii. I advise you not to tell the students the title of the case or to pre-teach vocabulary, both of which may give the game away. In any case it is much better if students' attention is focused on unknown words (which are often crucial to the mystery) when they come across them while reading themselves. You can of course answer any questions about vocabulary.
- iv. When the students have finished reading, write on the board: *What are the main points of your text?* Students talk together briefly. (In a lower level monolingual class you might consider letting them do this in their first language). Now write on the board: *Working in pairs, practice retelling the story.* Still within the same group, Student A tells the story which they have both read to Student B. Tell B to correct A's every mistake and to be very strict, correcting errors of grammar, pronunciation, vocabulary and any mistakes of fact affecting the story. Then the other way round, Student A listening and B speaking. Then A re-tells the story without looking at the text. Next if possible change the pairs, so that A works with D and C with B. Meanwhile you monitor actively, concentrating on accuracy and correcting errors. With thorough preparation students can cope with material that at first sight appears well above their level. (My thanks to my colleague Lindsey Anderton for these ideas.)
- v. If there is time, students re-read the text and make a final mental note of new expressions and vocabulary.

### Stage 2:

Students form groups of three and talk together to solve the case. This takes 20 minutes of a 50-minute class.

- i. When you think the students have a firm grasp of the text write on the board: **FORM GROUPS OF THREE AND TELL THE OTHERS YOUR STORY. IF POSSIBLE WITHOUT LOOKING AT THE TEXT. SOLVE THE MYSTERY.** You may also write the names of the main characters in the case so that unfamiliar names do not cause unnecessary problems in the discussion.
- ii. Re-group the class into threes. In each threesome there must be one person who has read each letter. In other words, in each group all three people must have a different letter.
- iii. Now is the time for students to develop their fluency, so don't correct errors too much at this stage. I only correct if I see that Student A's error is impeding comprehension by B and C to such an extent that the group's ability to achieve the solution will be adversely affected. The discussion should as far as possible be in English, and the more preparation the students have done in stage 1 the less chance there will be of their reverting to their mother tongue in a monolingual class. However, to insist on 100% English at this stage may be asking too much and prove counter-productive. Perhaps we should be satisfied with less than total perfection once they have got carried away by the discussion.
- iv. The ideal is that the students should be able to solve the case on their own, given time, with the teacher keeping the lowest of profiles. However, if the students get stuck, then you will have to help them out. There is an appended survival kit of questions for you to ask groups, after a minimum of 15 minutes of group discussion, if they can't get any further on their own. These questions are designed to lead the students towards the truth without making it too obvious.

### Stage 3:

Tying things together at the end of the class

- i. In the five minutes at the end of the lesson you can present the class as a whole with the leading questions. It is better to ask them orally rather than hand out the questions - or at least that's what I feel. Another thing you can do is get one group to explain their solution to the class and see if the other groups agree. The more discussion between students the better. The reply from Sherlock Holmes is designed to help you grasp the case, but some teachers give it out to the class - though I personally wouldn't. Others give out the synopsis with crucial words blanked out as a kind of cloze.
- ii. I prefer not to let the students see an 'ideal' written solution because I give out all three letters to everyone and get them to write the solution - in the form of a letter from Sherlock Holmes to one of his correspondents - for homework. This is a writing activity that involves a large number of sub-skills, not least summarising, and it also revises the vocabulary.

### Timing:

Each of these activities fits into a 50-minute class. If your class takes more than 50 minutes then you are probably using a case which is too difficult for them. This may not be a bad thing; if you want a bright class to have a really challenging task, give them a jigsaw which is above their level and just make sure that they have more than 50 minutes to get to grips with it.

**Text 1**

20 August 1908

Dear Mr Holmes,

My name is John Smithers. I am a butler for Mr and Mrs Bosley in their house here in north London.

Yesterday I was serving lunch, when Mr Bosley looked out of the dining room window and saw something in the garden. 'There is somebody out there,' he shouted, 'I'm going to get him. Come on, Smithers,' he said, 'get a knife and come with me.' Mr Bosley put his hand into his pocket and took out a revolver.

'No, William!' screamed Mrs Bosley. 'There's no one there, it's your imagination. Don't go!' But it was too late. Mr Bosley was already in the garden, hurrying towards the garage. I took the meat knife and ran out behind Mr Bosley.

As we hurried across the garden I noticed that the back door of the garage, which is normally locked, was open, and that a piece of wire was in the lock. 'The man's inside the garage,' said Mr Bosley quietly. 'He's opened the lock with that piece of wire. The front door of the garage is locked and so the only way out is through the back door. We've got him now!'

I looked in through the open door. There was a tall young man with a black moustache standing in the middle of the garage, looking at a parrot in a cage and laughing. He was laughing so much he was crying.

At that moment the stranger saw Mr Bosley and myself standing at the door. He put the cage down and came towards us. Mr Bosley shouted, 'Get back!' but the man came closer. Mr Bosley fired a shot, which hit the parrot and not the stranger. The young man jumped forward, hit Mr Bosley in the stomach, took the gun out of his hand and threw it away into the garden. He ran past me and escaped into the street.

I could see at once that Mr Bosley was dead. He had had a weak heart for many years and doctors at University College Hospital later confirmed that he had died of a heart attack.

Mr Holmes, I have seen that young man before. Mrs Bosley was speaking to him in the street a week ago. But I heard Mrs Bosley tell the Scotland Yard detective who is investigating the case that she has no idea who the young man is. She is lying. Why, Mr Holmes? What is happening?

John Smithers

**Text 2**

MESSRS PRY SNOOP & PEEP  
PRIVATE DETECTIVES  
12 BOND STREET  
LONDON

26 August 1908

Dear Mr Holmes,

Ten days ago I was visited by a middle aged woman who was terribly upset. 'My name is Mary Bosley,' she said. 'My husband William and I have been married nearly twenty-five years, and our marriage has always been perfect. But now there is another woman in my husband's life.

'I discovered William's secret quite by accident,' she went on. 'One night I woke up and realised that William was getting out of bed. He put on his dressing gown and went out. Thirty minutes later he came back. I didn't say anything to him, but the next night the same thing happened.

'The third night when my husband got up and went out I followed him. He went downstairs very quietly, without turning on any lights, and then went out into the garden. I followed him. At the bottom of the garden there is the garage. As I watched, my husband unlocked the door of the garage and went inside. I waited outside and listened. Soon I heard his voice, saying again and again, "I love you, Darling Pussy Cat, I love you, Darling Pussy Cat." For twenty-five years William has always called me Darling Pussy Cat, and now he was calling another woman by the same name!! It is especially cruel because next month is our twenty-fifth wedding anniversary.'

Mrs Bosley put £75 on the table. 'Here, take this,' she said. 'I want you to find evidence against my husband so that I can get a divorce and keep the children. I am going to make him pay for his little adventure,' she added bitterly.

Well, Mr Holmes, I have been following Mr Bosley for days but I have discovered nothing. I have hidden in the garden and watched him come out at night, and listened outside the garage door and heard him repeat, 'I love you, Darling Pussy Cat, I love you, Darling Pussy Cat.' Strangely, the woman doesn't answer when Mr Bosley speaks to her. I have watched the garage all night, but I have never seen her. I can't see inside the garage because there is no window and the doors are always locked. I think she probably comes into the garage hidden in Mr Bosley's Rolls Royce and goes out the same way.

It's a great mystery, Mr Holmes, and I don't know what to do. What is your advice?

Sebastian Pry

**PHOTOCOPIABLE MATERIAL**

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## Text 3

221B Baker Street  
West London

20 August 1908

Dear Holmes,

I hope you're having a good crossing of the Atlantic. This letter is just to say that my old friend William Bosley has been to see me. William has been my patient for some years now. He has a very serious heart condition, and when he came in this morning I could see at once that he was in a bad state.

'What's the matter, William?' I asked.

'It's the heart as usual,' he said. 'I'm feeling worse because I'm very worried. Frightened in fact. A man has been following me in the street since Wednesday. He followed me here today. Look, he's outside in the street now.' I looked out of the window. A tall, athletic young man with a black moustache was standing outside reading a newspaper. 'Could I speak to your friend Mr Holmes?' asked my patient.

'I'm afraid he left yesterday for the United States,' I said. 'But I'll try and help. Have you told the police about this?'

'No. The police would ask questions, and I don't want my wife to know. She's a very nervous person anyway.'

'Well, I advise you to buy a gun,' I said. 'If that man gets too close, just fire in the air. That will make him run away.'

'And there is another thing,' William went on. 'It's our twenty-fifth wedding anniversary in two weeks, and I had £75 in a drawer in my desk, I was going to buy my wife a gold necklace. The drawer is locked and I keep the key in my trouser pocket. On Tuesday I found the money was gone. Someone had taken the key out of my trousers, while I was asleep I suppose, and stolen the money.'

'Well, I am sure that has no connection with the strange man who is following you. One of your servants is a thief, that's all. Look, William, here are some more pills for your heart. Relax, don't get excited, and come and see me again in a week.'

'Thank you, doctor,' Mr Bosley said. 'I shall follow your advice and get a gun.' As he went out I saw the man in the street put away his newspaper and begin to follow him.

Well, Holmes, what do you think? I hope I have done the right thing. Please write and tell me what to do next.

Watson

## Text 4

THE GRAND HOTEL  
SAN FRANCISCO  
CALIFORNIA

21 September 1908

Dear Watson,

*I got to San Francisco last night and found several letters waiting here for me. From these it is quite clear that a tragedy has occurred while I have been away from London. I am referring of course to the death of your friend William Bosley, killed in his own garden last month.*

*The story began when Mrs Bosley noticed that her husband was sneaking out of the house at night and repeating, 'I love you, Darling Pussy Cat,' to someone in the garage. She assumed that her husband was being unfaithful to her, and stole £75 from his desk to hire a private detective by the name of Sebastian Pry to get evidence against him for a divorce. Mr Bosley, terrified to find himself being followed in the street, came to see you. You will remember that you suggested that he should buy a revolver. Your advice cost Mr Bosley his life.*

*Meanwhile the detective had followed Mr Bosley out to the garage at night and heard him repeating, 'I love you, Darling Pussy Cat.' Mr Pry couldn't understand why he never saw the mysterious woman in the garage, and so he decided to break into the place. One Sunday while Mr and Mrs Bosley were having lunch he did so. Unfortunately for all concerned, Mr Bosley saw him in the garden and ran out with his gun, followed by Smithers the butler. Looking through the open garage door, they saw Mr Pry looking at the parrot and roaring with laughter - the reason being that he had just realised who Mr Bosley's lover was.*

*The tragedy came when Mr Pry saw that he was trapped in the garage by Mr Bosley and the butler. When he went towards the two men, Mr Bosley fired in the air, hitting the parrot. Mr Pry, no doubt believing that his life was in danger and not realising that Mr Bosley had a weak heart, hit him in the stomach to disarm him. Mr Bosley, as you know, suffered a heart attack and died on the spot.*

*I shall not be passing this information on to Scotland Yard. However, I hope that this sorry episode will prove a lesson to you, and that in the future you will not recommend people with no experience of firearms to carry them.*

Holmes

## The mystery of the dead parrot

(Notes for Teachers)

**SYNOPSIS:** Mr William Bosley buys a parrot for his wife on the occasion of their twenty-fifth wedding anniversary and hides it in the garage. At night he sneaks out to teach the bird to say I love you. His wife follows him, overhears his words and, believing that her husband is having an affair, hires a private detective to get evidence for a divorce. Mr Bosley, alarmed at being followed, gets a gun on the advice of Dr Watson, who suggests he should fire in the air if necessary to scare the man. The detective later breaks into the garage but is discovered there by Mr Bosley, who fires the revolver. The bullet does not hit the detective, who disarms Mr Bosley by hitting him in the stomach. Mr Bosley has a weak heart and dies on the spot while his killer escapes. The stray shot kills the parrot. Apologies to Monty Python.

See the comments at the end of this section from John Davie.

### Step 1

**To establish who killed Mr Bosley and how**

- Who killed Mr Bosley?  
*Sebastian Pry, the private detective.*
- Who was he working for?  
*Mrs Bosley.*
- Where did she get the money?  
*She stole it from her husband.*
- Why did Sebastian Pry hit Mr Bosley?  
*Because he thought that Mr Bosley was going to shoot him.*
- Do you think that Mr Bosley was trying to kill him?  
*Probably not: Watson's advice was to fire in the air.*

### Step 2

**To establish that Mr Bosley was teaching the parrot to say 'I love you, Darling Pussy Cat.'**

- Was there a mysterious woman in the garage?  
*No.*
- And so who was Mr Bosley speaking to in the garage at night?  
*The parrot.*

### Factors to consider:

By breaking into the garage he was committing a criminal offence, and in the course of this illegal act he killed Mr Bosley. But on the other hand Mr Pry believed that Mr Bosley was trying to kill him, and so when he hit him he was acting in self-defence. He probably did not know that Mr Bosley suffered from a weak heart and that by hitting him he might kill him.

If there is time at the end of the lesson you might have quick round-up from the different groups and ask them for their opinions.

- Why was he repeating 'I love you, Darling Pussy Cat' to the parrot?  
*To teach the parrot to say it.*

- And why was he so secretive about the whole thing?

**Maybe a pause here for further discussion**

- What was he going to do with the parrot when it could say 'I love you, Darling Pussy Cat'?  
*Give it to his wife.*

- Why? Was it her birthday?  
*No, it was their twenty-fifth wedding anniversary.*

- When the butler looked into the garage, he saw Mr Pry looking at the parrot and laughing. Why?  
*Because he had realised what Mr Bosley was doing at night in the garage.*

### Step 3

**To occupy groups that finish before the others.**

- Is Mr Sebastian Pry guilty of murder? Imagine you are a judge and jury. Should he go to prison, and if so for how long?

## Feedback on the 'dead parrot'

John Davie, British Institute, Thessaloniki, Greece

In the following lesson we conducted the trial of Sebastian Pry for manslaughter as a role play which went very well. A great end of term activity.

The roles were: **Sebastian Pry** (who has to anticipate questions, especially re-his knowledge of Mrs B.); **Mrs Bosley** (who has to deny ever seeing Pry until / unless she gets tied up by questioning whereupon she can dissolve into tears!); **John Smithers** (who can be prepared to give a character reference on Mr B. was he naturally violent? etc); **the doctor** from the hospital (who can if asked confirm that Mr Bosley might have died from causes other than the blow, e.g. the shock of seeing the dead parrot. This role needs to be under strict instructions to answer questions as briefly as possible).

Our sincere thanks to Neville Britten of Madrid, Spain for this photocopyable exercise. For more details of Neville's work see box below.

ble not give away any more than necessary; **Watson** (who can also prepare a character reference on Mr B.); **the judge** (whose job it is to control proceedings; the rest of students in two teams as **prosecution** and **defence counsel**. Teacher may choose to give these teams some ideas for lines of argument to follow although they soon came up with their own). While counsels are preparing their cases the characters can give thought to how they will answer questions based on the information above, given to them on role cards. Time about 1 hr - 1 hr 30 mins.

Judge will probably have to impose time limits on questioning of each witness. Our case ended rather inconclusively when Pry slipped the judge a bribe'.

## More jigsaws, anyone ?

If you found this jigsaw exercise useful you may like to know that as a special service to its readers *ELT News & Views* has arranged with Neville Britten that (if enough readers are interested) we will distribute a collection of fifty of his jigsaw reading puzzles on diskette at a special low cost (simply to cover expenses).

If you would like to receive this package please send us a letter, fax or email stating which system you would like (Word for Macintosh, Word for Windows or Word Perfect 5.1). We shall then arrange for the duplication and confirm the cost (probably about US\$10) and delivery details. More news on this in these pages next issue.

## Translation vocabulary game

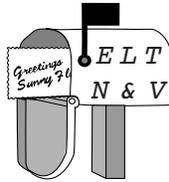
This is an adaptation of one of Mario Rinvoluceri's ideas. Get your students to form a circle or line and give each a long strip of paper. Each student writes a word on their strip of paper and passes it on to the next student. The next student looks up the word in a bilingual dictionary and writes the 'translation' below, folding the paper to conceal the first word. The papers are passed on in this way, each time leaving only the last word visible.

After each student has 'translated' in turn the students then unfold the papers and look at the word groups. In pairs they try to work out the difference in meaning between different words on the list, going back to the dictionary as necessary.

This exercise is good for vocabulary development and the teacher can follow up by concentrating on more subtle nuances and shades of meaning, register, etc. It is also fun, and uses student's knowledge of their first language, a resource which is not often called upon in the ELT classroom.



# Readers' Views



We welcome your views. Letters should be clearly marked “For Publication” and should include the writer’s name, address, fax/tel number(s) and ID details. These are legal requirements, but only the name will be published and this may be withheld if so requested. All letters are subject to editing and should in any case not be more than 200 words in length. In all matters the editor’s decision is final.

Dear Sirs,

I’m writing to you as an *ELT News & Views* Reader, because I guess I am the one who submitted the word ‘parecious’ for the June 1996 Prize Quiz. I am sending you a copy of the relevant page in Webster’s *Encyclopedic Unabridged Dictionary of the English Language*, 1994 Edition, De Luxe Edition, where I found it. I hope this is enough to verify it.

I’m looking forward to hearing from you and, go ahead, yours is a very helpful magazine for us who living in the south have few opportunities for attending courses.

Alicia B de Legendre  
Bariloche - Río Negro  
Argentina

For readers’ interest we reproduce the Webster’s entry below:

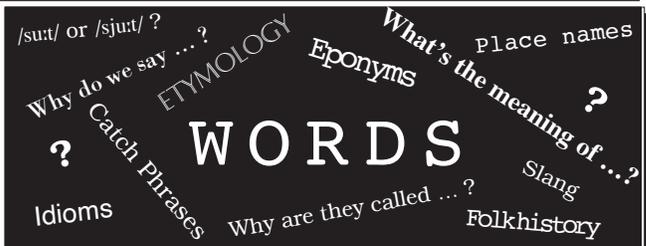
**parecious** (pəˈreɪʃəs), *adj.* Bot. parvicous. – **pa-reciously**, *adv.* – **pare’ciousness**, **pare’cism**, **pare’cy**, *n.*

Dear Sirs,

As a complement to Vladimir Keremidschief’s article about using Rock and Roll in the classroom [*ELT News & Views* September 1996 - ED], here I send you my personal list of titles and their possible uses. I know some of them are a little bit old but still all the same effective.

FOCUS	SONG	BY
to be	<i>Stair way from heaven</i>	Led Zeppelin
to be	<i>Living on the edge</i>	Aerosmith
to be	<i>Imagine</i>	John Lennon
to be + adj.	<i>Hand in my pocket</i>	Alanis Morissette
Phrasal verbs	<i>Oh,, l’amour</i>	Erasure
Simp. Pres.	<i>Wonderful tonight</i>	Eric Clapton
Simp. Pres.	<i>Every breath you take</i>	The Police
Simp. Pres. / ?	<i>Eye of the beholder</i>	Metallica
Simple Past	<i>Norwegian wood</i>	The Beatles
Simple Past	<i>My wild love</i>	The Doors
Simple Future	<i>Hope of deliverance</i>	Paul McCartney
Simple Future	<i>All my loving</i>	The Beatles
Simple Future	<i>Two steps behind</i>	Def Leppard
Conditional	<i>I’d do anything for love</i>	Meat Loaf
Conditional	<i>Tears in heaven</i>	Eric Clapton
Pres. Cont.	<i>Knocking on heaven’s door</i>	Gun’s & Roses
Pre. Cont.	<i>The lady in red</i>	Chris de Burgh
Mixed Tenses	<i>My way</i>	Frank Sinatra
Prepositions	<i>The gambler</i>	Kenny Rogers
Adjectives	<i>Logical song</i>	Supertramp
Adjectives	<i>Wild child</i>	The Doors
Must and Can	<i>Blowing in the wind</i>	Bob Dylan
Christmas	<i>I still believe in Santa</i>	New Kids on the Block

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Readers are invited to send us their word queries. We shall do our best to answer them in this column.

## Why is a mouse when it spins ?

Answer: Because the higher the fewer.

This particular interchange should be familiar to anyone who has been brought up or has lived in London, (although not necessarily to those who live in other parts of the English-speaking world), and is of course a *non sequitur*, so any attempt to extract the “meaning” of it is doomed to failure. It seems to have first been recorded in about 1900, and was certainly a common schoolboy interchange in the late 1940s. (It appears in a letter written by John Dos Passos in 1919, and as he was at school in England in 1906-7 he could well have picked it up there).

The whole point is that there **is** no meaning. Around the world there are many phrases like this; *Do they have ponies down a pit ?*; *What’s the difference between a chicken ?*; *What was the name of the engine driver ?*; *How old is Anne ?*; *How high is up ?*, etc. These are not the kind of questions to which a factual answer is expected as much as examples of a particular kind of rhetorical question in which the literal meaning of the words has no direct connection to the subject matter, rather there is an implied meaning of “What a dumb question !”.

A rather better-known parallel would be the cliché *How long is a piece of string ?*, a question often given in answer to show just how meaningless a question that has just been put to the speaker is. (If you ask me, for example, *How long will I take to learn English ?* I might just reply *How long is a piece of string ?*, in the sense that there is no term of reference that can quantify the concept “learn English”).

So if someone asks you a quite ridiculous or unanswerable question, e. g. *Do you think it will rain on your birthday next year ?*, standard retorts such as *How old is Anne ?*, or *How high is a Chinaman ?*, comment on the meaninglessness of the question and incidentally imply the stupidity of anyone dumb enough to ask such questions.

The deliberate illogicality of *Why is a mouse . . .* is repeated in *What’s the difference between a chicken ?* (The “answer” to this one is of course that *One of its legs is both the same*). And *What was the name of the engine-driver ?* comes from the old joke about giving lots of detailed information about a train’s speed, destination, times, etc. and then asking the poor listener a question completely unconnected with the details he has been concentrating on. This expression can be used either to express disinterest in something someone has been saying, or, somewhat more aggressively, to start an argument. The same goes for *Do they have ponies down a pit ?* and *Why is a mouse when it spins ?*, both of which **can** signal the start of an altercation, possibly a violent quarrel, although are not necessarily always used for this purpose. Because they have become catch phrases, the answers *because the higher the fewer* and *one of its legs is both the same* are stock replies to the “first half” of their pairs. This tendency to finish off a phrase started by someone else is typical of the catch phrase, and a particular feature of much inter-city slang, both of these being cockney in origin. In this case of course the fact that they don’t “make sense” is precisely the point.

So the “joke” is very much an in-joke, an example of that kind of hermetic humour that is often impenetrable to outsiders, be they South American teachers or translators or Mancunian or Liverpudlian bank managers.