

# Views from Edinburgh

## Teachers' Notes

### Characterisation – Pre-Reading

**Note 1: It is important to do this section before showing the complete poems to the students!**

**Note 2:** Edinburgh is pronounced /'ɛdɪn,bra/

### I Try My Absolute Best: Jackie Kay

1. Quiz. This is to get the students to think about what it might be like to have the responsibility of parenthood. Go through the vocabulary in the quiz with them first – there are quite a few colloquial expressions, and they may not be familiar with all of them. They select their answers as they read through on their own.

After the 'fun' bit it's down to serious business as the students have a look at their partner's attitudes and discuss with them what kind of parent they might make, and how hard they would try to be a good parent.

If they haven't already read the poem, let the students have a look at it now.

2. The next exercise involves looking through the poem to see what attempts the parent makes to do their best, why, and what stops this happening. Use the **glossary**.

Here are some possible answers:

The parent tries to...	...because...	...but...
Give the children pure apple juice	No sugar, less acid than orange juice	
Buy the baby soya milk formula	Non-dairy No cholesterol Good for the heart Stops the arteries hardening	
Purify the water		It doesn't work because the purifier collects impurities
Buy mineral water		It's got benzene in it that gives rats cancer
Buy the children carob-coated date, cherry and banana bars	Because it's health food	They have more sugar than Mars Bars
Buy organic vegetables	They have no sprays or chemicals	The apples have been sprayed by alar which gives you cancer The soya beans have been

		cooked in aluminium pots which harm the brain The soil is full of lead
Drinks decaffeinated coffee	To calm down and not feel stressed	Decaff is worse for you than Nescafe

Then students personalise (and practice the second conditional) by speculating about how they might behave as a parent. Have a dummy run first so that they get the idea that they need to begin with a **bare infinitive**:

Eg: If I was a parent, I would always (**get up** before my children to make their breakfast).

Monitor and help as necessary, and then get the students to compare their answers with each other and decide who is most similar to the parent in the poem.

3. Check understanding of the vocabulary. You could get the students to decide which words they think have positive connotations and which have a negative meaning.

Then they choose which words could be applied to the parent in the poem, before adding their own ideas.

4. The next talking points are to try and get the students to see things from the perspective of the parent in the poem. When they have decided which adjectives could be applied, they can debate one or more of the points formally, or discuss informally in pairs or groups.

5. The students look at the extract from the poem and discuss why they think the parent is going to such lengths to do their best. And whether they are succeeding.

6. Students read another extract from the poem before reflecting once more, and then independently thinking of their answers to the questions. (Help out with any questions that come up on vocabulary). This may challenge stereotypes of parenthood, and should get them thinking about traditional male and female roles. After this period of reflection they can share their ideas with their partner.

7. For the last activity, students work in (possibly new) pairs. Assign roles of Yes and No, go through the questions to check understanding of vocabulary, and set a one minute time limit for each talking point. Students should aim to keep talking (this is a fluency activity), and to argue their case as convincingly as possible, recycling vocabulary that has come up in the poem/lesson. If you want to give feedback, this could happen after each minute, or you could save it up until all five points have been discussed. It depends on how things are going, the pace, the momentum and other factors unique to your situation. Feedback could be centred around how well the students did to keep on talking (if this has been an explicit aim), on vocabulary that was successfully recycled, on how well the students took turns, negotiated meaning, or persuaded the other to change their point of view. These are just suggestions – do what suits you and your class best.

# Dusting the Phone – Jackie Kay

## Teachers' notes

**Look at the title and elicit what it means: if there is dust on a phone, has it been used recently? Why is someone dusting a phone? Why would we pay any attention to a phone?**

1. Get the students to imagine that they can see the person dusting the phone, waiting for it to ring. Ask them to go through the questions above one by one and write a short answer (notes, not sentences) for each one. Then they compare their notes with their partners. They should have built up clear mental pictures – share these ideas as a class.
2. Moving on to think about the person's relationship with the one who isn't ringing: again, the students go through the questions to create a plausible context in their minds, and compare their ideas.
3. Ask the students if they have ever waited for something for so long that their obsession has led them to fear the worst...if so, share experiences, but tread gently in case you're touching on something personal that the students would prefer to keep to themselves.

Then the students make lists, individually, of the worst things that could have happened, and the best. They should do this from the perspective of the person waiting for the phone call, but they might also want to explore things from the other side.

After that they compare lists and try and come up with the most likely explanation.

Ask them to read the first part of the poem:

I am spending my time imagining the worst that could happen.  
I know this is not a good idea, and that being in love, I could be  
spending my time going over the best that has been happening.

The phone rings heralding some disaster. Sirens.  
Or it doesn't ring which also means disaster. Sirens.  
In which case, who would ring me to tell? Nobody knows.

The future is a long gloved hand. An empty cup.  
A marriage. A full house. One night per week  
in stranger's white sheets. Forget tomorrow,

4. Perhaps the students are thinking about what prevents the person in the poem from being proactive and ringing the other person. Individually they should make a list of possibilities before completing the sentence stems with a partner. Go round monitoring and feeding in ideas if necessary.

Now read the second half of the poem

You say, don't mention love. I try. It doesn't work.  
I assault the postman for a letter. I look for flowers.  
I go over and over our times together, re-read them.

This very second I am waiting on the phone.  
Silver service. I polish it. I dress for it.  
I'll give it extra in return for your call.

Infuriatingly, it sends me hoaxes, wrong numbers;  
or worse, calls from boring people. Your voice  
disappears into my lonely cotton sheets.

I am trapped in it. I can't move. I want you.  
All the time. This is awful – only a photo.  
Come on, damn you, ring me. Or else. What?

I don't know what.

5. What advice could be given to the person trapped during the phone? Students might role play giving advice, or write a letter giving advice.

## Sassenachs

### What does Sassenach mean?

1500 years ago, Britain was a mixture of peoples and languages. The most important were the Celts and the Saxons. The Celts were in Britain first, and had settled for hundreds of years. Then, the Saxons invaded from what is now Northern Germany, pushing the Celts into the remote, mountainous corners of Britain (Ireland, Wales, and Scotland) and settled mostly in the flatter area known now as England. The modern English language has its roots in the Saxon language.

The Celts of Scotland and Ireland called their Saxon neighbours "**Sassenach**", and the Celts of Wales "**Saes**". These words live on as the Scottish people of today call the English "**Sassenach**", as a usually friendly term of abuse for the ancient "enemy".

### What is a "tartan tammy"?

Tartan is a pattern or design of interlocking lines which has made Scotland world-famous. A "tammy" (or Tam-o-shanter) is a hat, resembling a beret. It can be worn by men or women.

### What is a "pony"?

Ponytail. (Long hair tied into a "tail")

### What is "bru"?

"**Iron Bru**" – a bright orange fizzy drink first made in 1901 in Scotland and still popular. It is said to cure hangovers. Advertising slogan: "*Made in Scotland. From girders.*"

### What is London, Euston?

One of London's main train stations, situated in the North of the city.

**Here are a few things to think about when exploiting poetry in the classroom, to get you started:**

Role play

Personalisation

Vocabulary work

Pronunciation

rhythm, stress, intonation

Fun with words

rhyme, alliteration, making up new words

Parallel Writing

Write a letter

to a character in the poem  
to the poet

Discussion

Debate

Running dictation

Draw pictures

Illustrate poems

Project work

Video

Watch the poet perform live or on video

Listen to the poet on CD

Look at poets' websites

Correspond with a poet by email

Invite a poet into your classroom

Cover your walls in poems

Look at the poetry that is all around us

and *Always* have a poem in your heart

## Context

### True or False?

This is a light-hearted introduction to Edinburgh that could be done before or after the web quest.

Students read the questions (make sure that they understand the vocabulary) and think about their answer. They put a tick in the T column if they believe the statement is true; one in the F column if they think it is false. They then write a number between 10 and 100 (any number in between is possible) – this is their 'bet'. They do this for each question in turn and then they talk about their answers with a partner.

Next, you go through the answers (below), eliciting if possible and taking the opportunity to talk about any parallel references in the students' culture(s). If a student has the correct answer, they win the total they have bet; if their answer is wrong they lose that number. To calculate their total, work out the total number of wins and losses. Then starting with 100, add the wins and subtract the losses.

Students are not expected to know all the answers, but might make reasonable guesses at some of them. As a language teacher, it might be interesting to see which students are the biggest and smallest risk takers; risk taking is an important part of learning a foreign language because making mistakes is all part of the learning process. When taking exams such as the Cambridge exams, students might miss the chance of getting the right answer in a multiple choice situation if they don't dare to try in case they get it wrong. Encourage students to have a go, and praise risk taking even if the answer is wrong!

Instead of playing this individually, it could be a team game.

### Answers

1. Edinburgh is in the north west of England **FALSE**  
**Edinburgh is in Scotland and has a long history of friendly rivalry with England. Both England and Scotland are part of Britain. Edinburgh is the capital city of Scotland and has its own Parliament and educational and legal system**
2. There is an internationally famous festival every summer in Edinburgh **TRUE**  
The Edinburgh Festival, and the alternative Fringe Festival is a wonderful arts event that takes place all over the city in the summer
3. You can visit the Royal ship, the Britannia, in Edinburgh **TRUE**  
The Britannia was built in Scotland, was launched in 1953, and hosted 968 Royal Official visits. It is now a museum
4. When the Queen visits Edinburgh, she stays in the castle **FALSE**  
The official royal residence in Edinburgh is a former monastery dating from 1128 called Holyrood Palace, a mile down the Royal Mile from the castle
5. Edinburgh castle is built on an extinct volcano overlooking Princes Street Gardens **TRUE**
6. You can see the Hogmanay fireworks in Princes Street Gardens on 31<sup>st</sup> August every year **FALSE** **The Hogmanay fireworks in Princes Street Gardens are on 31<sup>st</sup> December – Hogmanay is the Scottish New Year and a big parties are held all over Scotland to celebrate. At midnight everyone links arms in a circle and sings *Auld Lang Syne*. For good luck, you can be first footed: this means that the first person to visit you on 1<sup>st</sup> January is a tall dark stranger carrying coal.**

7. The first Harry Potter book was written in an Edinburgh pub **TRUE J K Rowling comes from Edinburgh**
8. You can travel by bus and tram in Edinburgh **FALSE Sadly, trams no longer exist but you can, of course, travel by bus**
9. Cult film *Trainspotting* is set in Edinburgh **TRUE Starring Ewan McGregor**
10. Celtic is the name of an Edinburgh football club **FALSE Celtic is a Glasgow club; the two Edinburgh teams are Hibernian (Hibs) and Heart of Midlothian (Hearts).**

## Context

### The Royal Observatory Edinburgh

#### Teachers' notes

This exercise is for those students who need Cambridge First Certificate exam practice, and could be set for homework. The answers are underlined below.

1. a) started                      b) established   c) begun                      d) done
2. a) distance                      b) travel                      c) kilometres                      d) far
3. a) places                      b) buildings                      c) centres                      d) houses
4. a) latest                      b) new                      c) modern                      d) recent
5. a) intelligence                      b) knowledge   c) facts                      d) brains
6. a) crashed                      b) collided                      c) smashed                      d) hit
7. a) risk                      b) problem                      c) danger                      d) worry
8. a) look                      b) see                      c) examine                      d) watch

#### New Year - Edinburgh Style

This year's **Edinburgh's Hogmanay** was one of the best yet - the city was really buzzing.

We had four fabulous days and nights of fun!

On the 29th December, we set the city ablaze with thousands of people carrying burning lights down The Mound and up Calton Hill in the **Torchlight Procession**.

On the 30th, we partied like never before at the **Night Afore International** with spectacular Catalonian street performers on George Street.

And on the 31st we birlled through the bells at **The Royal Bank Street Party**- with four stages of live music set against the backdrop of Edinburgh Castle.

**The Concert in the Gardens** gave us an all star Scottish bands line up with Texas, KT Tunstall and El Presidente. And it didn't end there.

For the first time ever, we held a **Ceilidh in the Gardens**. Funky ceilidh bands rocked the dance floor and much Scottish reeling was done.

**The Revels** were also reeling with the ever popular party held in the Assembly rooms. With a Ceilidh Room, a Dance Hall and guest DJ's in the Club Bar it was another night to remember.

For the more serene, the **Candlelit Concert** at St. Giles' Cathedral offered an evening of sublime music in an historic setting.

And of course, at midnight, the **Seven Hills Fireworks** lit the night sky in one of the most impressive, multi-level displays yet.

On New Year's Day, the **One O'clock Run** blew away the cobwebs and for the seriously fit the **Edinburgh Bicycle Triathlon** started the year with a challenge.

## Interview with Jackie Kay

- 1 C
- 2 B
- 3 E
- 4 D
- 5 A

And a special question and answer for teachers!

**Which contemporary poets would you recommend to teachers who wanted to start enjoying poetry themselves?**

Carol Ann Duffy, Simon Armitage, John Agard, Don Paterson, Seamus Heaney, Kathleen Jamie, Grace Nichols, Alice Oswald, Paul Muldoon, Moniza Alvi and many more. I would say to teachers: Read widely, and remember that reading and writing are opposite sides of the same coin.

Other possible activities:

Webquest: [www.roe.co.uk](http://www.roe.co.uk)

Discussion or project work on the topic.



## Language Work

### Stative verbs

A

Stative	Dynamic
<i>Know</i> Like Love Prefer Want Wish Dislike Hate	<i>Happen</i> Spend Climb Pay Buy See Talk

B

1a what was going on in her mind?

b she believes

2 a they believe

b has sensation (of being ill)

3 a In the process of taking the dimensions

b fixed, unarguable fact

4 a (don't) understand

b meeting (or going out with)

C

- 1 dislike
- 2 wants
- 3 has been happening
- 4 astonished
- 5 measures
- 6 know/knew
- 7 am seeing
- 8 was paying
- 9 prefers
- 10 feels/felt

NOTE: Some students might remark that the poem 'Attention Seeking' has an example of this 'rule' being broken: 'I am needing.....' This is an exception due to its Scottish origins. In Scots Gaelic, the continuous form is used for more than in English and this has transferred into English. It is not standard English, however.