

# 2

# WRITER'S BLOCK TEACHER'S NOTES

## Objectives

### SUMMARY

Emma has a tricky homework assignment: to write a 500-word short story which ends with the sentence 'thanks, you saved my life!' Walking along the street, first thinking of, then rejecting an idea for a story, Emma seems lost for inspiration. Then she meets a woman who is on her hands and knees on the pavement. It emerges that this woman has dropped her keys down the drain and that the keys in question open the art gallery at which she works as the assistant manager. Emma tries to retrieve the keys, but is unable to do so. Eventually, Emma has an idea for how she can get them back. Having borrowed a hanger from a nearby dry cleaner's, she shapes the metal into a hook and uses it to retrieve the keys. The woman, effusive in her gratitude, says, 'thanks, Emma, you saved my life,' thus giving Emma an idea for her short story. Later at the cafe, Emma reads the completed story to her friends and tells them that she got a very good mark for it.

### LANGUAGE

Functions: Expressing frustration (*oh, this is a nightmare, oh no!, this is awful!*), Vocabulary: expressions with good (*that's no good, it's a good thing, for good, it's all good*)

### USEFUL INFORMATION

*Writer's block* refers to someone's inability to be able to think of what to write. The noun *block*, in this context, refers to an obstacle to normal progress; something that gets in the way of the writer being able to proceed.

Refer students back to episode 2 of the photostory. Ask them what they remember about the story. *What does Emma have to do by Friday?* (Write a 500-word short story.) *Who comes up with an idea to help Emma?* (Justin.) *What does Emma think of Justin's idea?* (She doesn't think it was a helpful one.) *Who tells Justin that his behaviour was wrong?* (Liam.)

## THINK ABOUT

- 1 Refer students to questions 1 and 2. As a way of getting students to think about stories and storytelling, you could begin this exercise by asking students to tell one another about their favourite books and films. Monitor while students discuss the questions and encourage them to be imaginative. After a few minutes, put different groups together so they can compare their ideas. Students feedback as a class. With the class as a whole decide which of the ideas for short stories that the students came up with is the most interesting one.
- 2 Ask students to read through sentences 1–8 and then try to remember who said each line. Students write *E* or *W* next to the sentences. Then watch the video to check their answers. Ensure students understand the meaning of all the sentences by asking them to translate them into their own language. When checking answers, you could point out that *it's all good* has become, in recent years, a very common informal way of saying 'everything is all right', and that it is often used as a lighthearted way of suggesting that there is absolutely nothing to worry about.

### Answers

- 1 Woman 2 Emma 3 Woman 4 Woman 5 Woman  
6 Emma 7 Woman 8 Emma

### Mixed ability idea

Ask stronger students to express the sentences in items 1–8 in different ways. They should attempt to keep the original meaning, but use alternative vocabulary, e.g. Instead of saying 'Oh, no! Oh, no!' in item 1 they could say, 'This is not good! This is not good!'

### Optional activity

Ask students to consider how Emma felt when talking to the woman. The latter's behaviour is quite eccentric. She doesn't always concentrate on what is being said to her, seems to forget what has just been said, and is very excitable. Do the students think Emma enjoyed talking to the woman? Why? Why not?

## THINK BACK

- 3 Students work in pairs and decide if the sentences are true or false. They correct the false sentences.

### Answers

- 1 False: She says that Emma's shoes are nice.
- 2 False: They are the keys to the art gallery the woman works at.
- 3 True
- 4 False: It is Emma's idea.
- 5 True
- 6 True

- 4 Ask students to look at the adjectives in the list. Elicit the meanings of each of the adjectives. This you can do by either offering definitions for students to match to a word or by saying or doing something which is an example of each of the personality adjectives. Write the following on the board: *I think she is (adjective) because (reason)*. Put students into pairs. Ask students to use the sentence on the board in their conversation about how they would describe Emma and the woman. If necessary, give students an example of a completed sentence (e.g. *I think Emma is imaginative because she comes up with the idea to use the hanger.*).

**Suggested answers**

Emma: bright, responsible, decisive, imaginative  
 The woman: bad-tempered, impatient, arrogant

**Mixed ability idea**

In a weaker class, you could do Exercise 4 in the following way. Watch the video again, stopping it each time one of the characters behaves in a responsible or bad-tempered way, etc. Elicit the appropriate adjective and write it on the board. In a stronger class, you could do Exercise 4 in a similar way, but instead of stopping the video when the relevant characteristic is on display, you could ask the students to say 'stop'.

**Optional activity**

Ask students to work in pairs to decide which of the adjectives in the box describe their friends or family members (e.g. *Well, my mum's quite an impatient person. She hates waiting for anything!*)

**THINK THROUGH****ROLE PLAY Solving a problem**

Read through the task with the students. Encourage them to use the information in the guide to help them plan their role play. Before students begin the task, elicit examples of problems that could feature in their role plays, for example, a cat stuck up a tree, the lid of a jam jar being too tight to open, a ring that won't come off a finger.

Students can write notes or a script if they prefer. Monitor and offer support while students are preparing their role play. Encourage as many students as possible to perform their role plays. Consider asking pairs to perform to each other. The 'audience' pair can monitor language use and make corrections if necessary. This can also be done as a full-class exercise.