

Lesson Plan

Level 4



In the House Margaret Johnson

Aims

- To learn about the background of the book, which is a reality television programme.
- To find out about the characters in the story.
- To have fun while learning something about the book.
- To stimulate students to read the book.

1. Tell students that the title of the book is *In the House*, and that it is a romance. Ask them what they expect from a romance novel.

Possible answer: Girl meets boy; there is a problem that keeps them apart; the problem is resolved and the pair get together.

Ask them to suggest what might happen in a romance novel with the title “In the House”.

2. Ask students to read Extract 1, which appears at the beginning of the book. Tell them that this is the ‘House’ mentioned in the title. Did anyone guess that? Now ask the students if they are familiar with reality television programmes like this one. Initiate a discussion about such programmes – do the students enjoy them? Do they think they are a good idea? If not, why not? Why do they think people apply to appear on programmes like this? Would they like to be part of a reality television programme themselves? Do they think the experience would turn out to be as they’d expected? Do they think a romance that starts under such circumstances is likely to last?
3. Ask students to imagine that they are living in the Big Eye House, and ask them to do a piece of writing that describes how they are feeling about the experience. Divide students into pairs and ask them to read out what they have written to their partner. Have they managed to convey the experience and/or emotions?
4. Ask students to read Extract 2. Working in the same pairs (or in small groups), ask them to discuss what the extract tells them about the character of Annie, the main character in the

book. They can use their bilingual dictionaries if necessary.

Possible answers: Annie is clumsy, funny, honest, messy, not careful, etc. Feedback to the whole class. You can teach your students that a colloquial word that perfectly describes Annie is ‘scatty’ – meaning she often forgets things or behaves in a silly way.

5. Ask students to think of an embarrassing moment or big mistake from their own lives and to share the experience with a partner. If these are suitable to share with the whole class, ask for volunteers to recount their stories.
6. Tell students that in the book, Annie takes part in a game where she has to take the first letter of the name of each person on the show and use it to think of a word to describe them – e.g. Sporty Simon, Lazy Leo, Pleasant Pete etc. Now ask them to do the same with their own names, using the first letter to think of a word to describe themselves. Ask students to share these with the whole class. They should try to give a reason why the adjective they’ve chosen is appropriate: ‘I am Funny Francesca because ...’; ‘I am Angry Anton because ...’, and so on.
6. Now ask students to read Extract 3, which gives us a little information about the four men in the House. Working in the same pairs or groups, ask students to discuss and make notes on what they have found out about Simon, Nigel, Leo and Pete.

Possible answers: Simon: likes to keep fit, determined (teach ‘disciplined’), used to his own habits, perhaps obsessive (teach ‘obsessive’). Nigel: bad-tempered, childish, likes to complain, unhappy. Leo: amusing, easy to get on with, popular, relaxed. Pete: clever, thoughtful, likes to achieve (teach ‘conscientious’), proud. Now either ask groups to feedback to the whole group, or ask two groups to share their thoughts with each other. Is everyone in agreement, or are there differences of opinion?

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7. Remind students that *In the House* is a romance and tell them that Annie has a romance with one of the men in the House. Ask them to consider which man they think she has a romance with and to give reasons for their conclusions. Take a vote on it. Which man has emerged as the winner?
8. Ask students to read Extract 4, which describes an aspect of life in the House. Now tell students that in the book, Big Eye asks Annie to think of a task for the men to do. It should be something that will show how they feel about Annie. Ask the students to think of a suitable task for Annie to set the men. Now ask them to share their ideas with the whole class and write their suggestions up on the whiteboard. Discuss these ideas as a class. Would they work? That is, would they really show how the men felt about Annie? Take a vote on which is the best idea.
9. Tell students that Annie regularly receives hand-made presents from one of the men. She finds them on her bed when she wakes up, and she doesn't know who is leaving them for her. Whoever is making them for her is just using things he finds around the house. Ask the students to suggest what types of things he could make and write these up on the whiteboard. Why do they think someone is leaving these presents for Annie?
Possible answers: because he likes her / wants to please her, etc.
 How do they think Annie feels when she receives these presents?
Possible answers: pleased/excited/intrigued, etc.
10. If there are enough copies of *In the House* to go round, hand them out and ask students to start reading.

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Extract 1

Big Eye is a fictional reality TV programme about young people living together for forty days in the Big Eye House.

The young people have been chosen – out of thousands – to be on the programme and stay in the Big Eye House. They cannot see or talk to anyone outside the House and there are cameras that watch almost everything they do. People at home can watch it all on their televisions. They can also phone up to say who they want to leave the House. On Leaving Night, one person has to leave the Big Eye House and is out of the competition. The last person in the House after forty days wins a lot of money – £70,000.

Extract 2

‘What’s the worst mistake you’ve ever made?’ Leo asked. ‘Your most embarrassing moment.’

I thought about it. There were so many to choose from. ‘Well,’ I said, ‘there was the time when my bikini top fell off when I jumped into the swimming pool. And the time I was working in a hospital when I was a student. I had to give patients their meals in their beds and I dropped a big bowl of peas on the floor. They went under everyone’s beds.’ ...

‘And it wasn’t a very good moment when I locked two schoolboys in one of the rooms in the museum,’ I continued.

Extract 3

a Simon

I looked out of the window, searching for Simon. There he was, jogging as usual. Every morning, he ran for an hour before breakfast. He’d already worn out some of the grass in the small garden. By the time the competition ended on Saturday there probably wouldn’t be any grass left at all.

b Nigel

‘That’s not fair!’ he complained, after I’d described what Big Eye wanted them to do. ‘I don’t even like writing shopping lists! I wouldn’t even know how to *begin* to write a poem. And *he’s* a writer already.’

c Leo

Out of all the men in the House, Leo was the one who had made the least effort to get me to like him. He was the same with everybody though – Leo was just Leo, and we could take him or leave him. But somehow we liked him anyway. He was very sociable, and even though he could be lazy, he was also funny and interesting. I didn’t think Leo had ever had to try very hard with people.

d Pete

‘I like seeing what I’ve helped to make, after it’s finished,’ he told me. ‘A bridge or a building – you stand and look at it and you think, I helped to make that. It’s a good feeling.’

Extract 4

Every day we were given something to do – a task. This was partly to keep us busy, but mostly to interest the viewers at home. Some people enjoyed just watching us cleaning the House or chatting to each other by the pool in the garden. I have no idea why. But most people wanted to see us doing silly things.