

# The Double Bass Mystery

## Aim

- To introduce students to the context of the story, its setting and characters.

1 Ask students to get into groups of four and list any instruments they know from a western classical symphony orchestra. Call them back from the groups' secretaries and write them on the board under the different sections. If nobody gives you *double bass* try to elicit it.

**Answers:** The main sections of the orchestra and the instruments commonly found in them are as follows: *strings*: violin, viola, cello, double bass; (*wood*)*wind*: flute, oboe, clarinet, bassoon; *brass*: trumpet, trombone, French horn, tuba; *percussion*: tympani (drums), triangle, cymbals, tambourine.

2 Ask students, still in their groups, to list what they know about Barcelona. Elicit and note any facts they can give you on the board.

**Possible answers:** capital of Catalonia in north-east Spain; Gaudi's architecture; football team; seaside; Les Rambles (the Ramblas, in English) shopping street; the Picasso Museum.

3 Ask students to read the Blurb, and find the connection between the orchestra and Barcelona.

**Answer:** The story is about a musician in an orchestra which is visiting Barcelona.

4 Ask students to read Extract 1 and tell you what Penny Wade's problem is. NB: Frank is the Manager of the BSO (Barston Symphony Orchestra).

**Answer:** Penny's double bass has been stolen from the lorry that was transporting it from Barston in England to Barcelona.

Ask students why they think someone would want to steal a double bass. If they don't come up with any ideas, you might like to prompt them as follows: In what ways is a double bass different from other instruments? Think about its size/shape, etc. What might someone want to do with a big instrument?

5 Penny Wade has a relationship with Simon Hunt. Ask the students to read the extracts in Penny and Simon and tell you what they can find out them about their relationship.

**Answers:** she likes him (not 'loves!'); she thinks he's handsome; she says 'I think' about their boyfriend/girlfriend status; he doesn't listen when she talks and looks strange; he doesn't meet her after the concert; he's another bass player; he seems to have problems.

6 Ask students to read the text in Extract 2. Elicit first that it is a newspaper report. Ask them to make suggestions about what the connection might be between the report and what they already know of the story. Refer to Activity 4.

Ask students in pairs to write the dialogue of the interview that took place between the journalist and Delia Hitchen from the Tate Gallery before the article was written. They should use information from the article, but also think of other questions that the journalist would have asked Delia about the theft and her possible answers. Students should then perform their dialogues for others.

7 Ask students if they ever have dreams they can remember. Ask them to get into groups of four and tell each other one of their dreams. Call back some dreams from the whole class, and tell one of your own, if you wish. Try to focus on the mixed-up nature of dreams – how people appear from different times in one's life and in different places. Ask students if they think their dreams mean anything.

8 In Chapter 3, after a busy day out in Barcelona with other members of the orchestra, and a trip to the beach, Penny has a vivid dream. Ask students to read Extract 3. Elicit from them what Penny's dream was like and how it might be linked to reality.

**Answers:** The dream is a mixture of things connected with the orchestra, being on the beach earlier in the day, her missing double bass and Simon, plus her old music teacher from the past. Other answers open.

Ask students what they think the screaming might be. To help, ask them to read the Blurb again, and try to link one of the events mentioned in it with the screaming that wakes Penny from her dream.

**Answer:** Someone is screaming because someone is dead.

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## Blurb

Penny Wade is a musician. She is enjoying her first visit to Barcelona with her orchestra. But first her double bass is lost, and then someone with her orchestra dies. The police want to know what happened, and Penny's life changes as she also slowly learns the truth.

## Extract 1

'What's the problem?' my friend Adriana said from the seat behind me. Adriana plays the violin in the orchestra.

'It's my double bass,' I said. 'Frank can't find it.'

'I'm sorry,' Frank said. 'We put it in the BSO\* truck in Barston and it wasn't in the truck when it arrived in Barcelona.'

All the big instruments came by road. It was cheaper than taking them in a plane.

'He says someone's taken it,' I told Adriana.

\* Barston Symphony Orchestra

## Penny and Simon

- a** I went to the dining room and had coffee. Simon Hunt was at my table. I was his girlfriend, and he was my boyfriend. I think.
- b** I liked Simon very much. He was tall and handsome. He had dark hair and blue eyes. He was double bass number two in our orchestra and ten years older than me.
- c** 'You're not listening to me at all!' I said.  
'Sorry?' he said, looking back at me.  
'I said "You're not listening to me at all".'  
'OK, OK, sorry. It's just, well, I've got a lot that I have to think about.' He looked strange.
- d** ... I looked for Simon, but he wasn't in the theatre. I went to the room behind the stage.  
... I waited for Simon. But he didn't come.

## Extract 2

### Thieves Steal Picture from Gallery

Two nights ago some men got into the Tate Gallery in London. They took a painting called *The Gardener* by the French painter Cezanne.

'It's one of our most famous pictures,' said gallery director Delia Hitchin ... It is worth about two million pounds.

## Extract 3

I was asleep, but my head was full of pictures and stories. I was dreaming about double basses and violinists and parties on the beach. Simon was in my dream. Our conductor was in it. So was my old teacher, playing a double bass on the sand. Then I heard a different sound. Somebody was shouting. No, it was worse than that. Somebody was screaming, screaming very loudly. I opened my eyes. I woke up. It was five o'clock in the morning.

Somebody screamed again. And again. And again. This time I wasn't dreaming.