

Staying Together

Aim

- To introduce students to the linked stories, the characters and the places involved in the story.

1 Tell students that this story is set in several different places – Tokyo (Japan), Birmingham (England), Mungwi (Zambia) and on the Red Sea (Egypt). Ask them to work in a group of four and make a list of things they know about the four places and countries. Call back information from the whole class.

2 Ask students to read Extracts 1. Ask them to decide which of the four places mentioned above are being described in the extracts and how they can tell.

Answers: a Red Sea, b Birmingham, c Tokyo, d Mungwi.

3 Explain to the students that the book is divided into two parts: Part 1 'Going Away' with nine chapters, and Part 2 'Coming Home' with seven chapters, and that the story concerns relationships between people from the same two families fifty years apart. Ask them to decide which of the pieces in Extracts 2 took place in 2000 and which in 2050, and to explain how they know.

Answers: 2000: a/c/f; 2050: b/d/e

4 Tell students that this story deals with the romances between a Japanese–Zambian couple who first meet in Birmingham in 2000 and a little later in Mungwi, and their grandchildren who meet at the Red Sea in 2050 and later travel to Mungwi. Read Extracts 3 and try to decide which relationship is being described.

Answer: 2000 (Ikuko and Bernard) a/c; 2050 (Taka and Joyce) b/d.

5 Ask students to read Extract 4 in which Bernard from Zambia is talking to Ikuko from Japan. Ask students what it tells them about the problems in Bernard and Ikuko's relationship, and what they think happens. Ask them to suggest some different possible endings to this part of the story.

6 Tell students that another theme of the story is that of going to live in a foreign country. Ask them if they have ever arrived in a new place (abroad or in their own country) alone. If so, how did they feel and what were their impressions?

7 Alternatively/Also ask them to choose one of the four places in Activity 1, and imagine that they had to go and live there for a year. Ask them to make notes on how they think they would feel, what they would miss most about home and what they might find difficult about living in these places. What would they do to cope with living somewhere different? Based on these notes, ask students to write a journal entry or a letter to a friend or family member back at home, describing their feelings and experiences. Ask them to read their work to a partner who has chosen a different place, and see whether their accounts express similar concerns and feelings.

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Extracts 1

- a The sand danced below her and the sunlight shone through the waves making patterns. Then rocks started to appear in the sand. The small coloured fish who lived among the rocks swam so close . . . that she could almost touch them.
- b There was a narrow road with cars parked along it, and a few trees with no leaves left on them. Everything looked cold and dark in the early morning light.
- c [They] walked slowly together beneath the cherry trees in the park . . . The trees had finished flowering and it was already summer . . . The Sunday afternoon crowds filled the park.
- d Every day she walked to the market . . . and bought vegetables. It was a long walk there and back in the hot sun, carrying the heavy bag of vegetables. She watched the . . . women with their babies on their backs and their shopping on their heads.

Extracts 2

- a Ikuko carried the suitcase into her room, feeling much better. Now she could have a shower and change her clothes. But first she must ring Hiroshi. She got her mobile phone out of her handbag and dialled his number.
- b She wondered if she could leave now. But it would be sad to go without taking a look at the sea. She changed into her swimming things, put on a skirt, picked up her artificial gill and left the room.
- c 'OK everyone, let's go!' Mike started up the minibus and they drove off through the grey streets, then along the motorway and into the countryside.
- d In the research centre, a well-dressed woman with a young face and white hair was talking to a screen on the wall.
- e As the supersonic plane landed at Marsa Alam, Joyce Mutanga turned off the video-disk that she wore round her neck and stretched out her long brown legs.
- f 'I'll fax you as soon as I arrive in Mungwi,' he said. 'The phone's not so good for international calls. And you've got my school address – you can always write to me there.'
- g Tiny air-taxis, looking like insects in the sky, flew here and there, taking passengers to beaches along the coast or to the airport at Marsa Alam.

Extracts 3

- a 'Bernard . . . I don't know what happened to me. I've already got a boyfriend in Japan.'
'Yes, I know. Do you want to tell me about him?'
'He's called Hiroshi. We've been together for two years. He's my first real boyfriend. We're getting married later this year. But I wanted to travel first, to see new places. He didn't mind at all. He trusted me . . .'
'Have you told him anything yet?' Bernard asked.
'No,' she replied. 'I thought maybe there was nothing to tell. Until last night.'
- b In the end it was three days before they booked the tickets. Three days in which they spent long lazy hours in and out of the sea . . . They woke up late each morning, the bedroom curtains waving in the wind from the sea. They'd turned off their video-disks, letting the messages pile up with no-one to read them.
- c 'You're looking for something, Ikuko. But you don't know what. Maybe you'll find it back in Japan after all. In your own country.'
'But if I leave who will look after the children?'
'I'll have to manage,' said Bernard. 'It won't be easy, but I can do it. That's not the problem. The problem is losing you. I hoped we'd stay together. But Mungwi isn't Tokyo. I couldn't live all my life in Birmingham, even though I loved it. And I don't think you can live all your life in Mungwi, even though you've tried so hard.'
- d She sat there for a time in the sun. Then she picked up her video-disk and pressed a button. She spoke softly. 'Hi. I'm in Mungwi. I'm just outside grandfather's house.' In the screen she saw a man's face, young, with dark hair falling over his eyes and a pointed chin. His eyes looked out of the screen from the other side of the world. She continued speaking. 'I've got something to show you . . . but not on the video-disk. I'd like you to come here, Taka'
'I've got something to show you too, Joyce,' he said.
'Something you have to read. And I'm already on the plane. I'm coming.'

Extract 4

Then Ikuko spoke. 'Bernard, I love you very much. And I love your children, too. I'd like to stay here. But I don't know if I can.'

'I know, Ikuko. I wanted you to come here, to see what it was like. But I know it isn't an easy life for you.'