

# He Knows Too Much

## Aim

- To stimulate students to read the book.

- 1 Tell students that the title of the book is *He Knows Too Much*. Ask them to guess – from the title alone – what genre the book is. (You may want to have a discussion about the different genres of books alongside this, and make a list on the whiteboard of students' suggestions of genres, e.g. murder mystery, thriller, ghost story, adventure, horror, romance, science fiction, human interest, etc.)
- 2 Still without revealing the genre of the book, ask students to read Extract 1, which is the 'blurb' from the back cover (teach blurb if necessary). Ask students again what genre they think the book is. Finally, tell students that the genre is human interest, and discuss what this means. Does this change their expectations of the book?  
**Suggested answer:** A human interest story is a story about relationships, so, although the blurb shows that there are thriller elements to the story, it is primarily about feelings and relationships.
- 3 Ask students to read Extract 2, which is a list of characters in the book. Draw their attention to the fact that all the characters are identified except for John Verghese. Working in pairs, ask them to guess who John Verghese is and why his identity has not been revealed. Feedback to the whole class.  
**Answer:** John is the secret son of Molly and Keith Lennox. NB: without reading the book, it is very unlikely that students will guess correctly, and to avoid spoiling the surprise – as has been done in the list of characters – do not reveal John's identity.
- 4 Ask students to read Extract 3, which is a telephone conversation from the beginning of the book. Using the list of characters, ask them to guess who is speaking. (Dick Sterling and his boss, Keith Lennox). What are they speaking about? (Dick has discovered that Vish, the office manager, is corrupt, but his boss wants him to keep quiet about it.) How are the two characters feeling and acting? (Lennox – worried, determined, threatening; Dick – can't believe what he is hearing, outraged, etc.)

- 5 Ask students to rewrite Extract 3 as if the two men are having a conversation face to face rather than on the phone. It will be helpful if they decide in advance whose point of view they want to write the scene from – Dick's or Keith Lennox's – because then they will be able to include their viewpoint character's thoughts. They should also decide in advance whether to write in the first or third person, include some action, and an indication of where the conversation is taking place. When they have finished, ask students to read what they have written to a partner for feedback. Those who wish to could read their work out to the whole class.
- 6 Ask students to read Extracts 4 and 5. Working in small groups, ask them to discuss which images they think are the strongest in the two extracts and why. Feedback to the whole class. Now ask the groups to identify which senses (sight, hearing, touch, taste and smell) are being used in the extracts.  
**Suggested answer:** mainly sight, hearing and smell.  
Ask them if they can think of ways to include any of the other senses. Share ideas with the whole class.
- 7 Tell students that in the book, there are four pages between Extracts 4 and 5. Ask them what they think they might be about and write their suggestions up on the whiteboard. (In the book, Dick looks back over the past three years from his arrival in Madras and his gradual realisation that Vish and Molly are corrupt, but you may choose not to tell students this.) Now ask students to do their own writing to fill this 'gap' (NB: they do not need to write four pages unless time allows). When they have finished, ask students to read their work to a partner. Those who wish to can read their work out to the whole class.
- 8 Ask students to read Extract 6, which is a list of word definitions taken from the glossary of the book (teach glossary if necessary). Ask them to memorise these, then divide the class into two teams and randomly ask students to supply definitions from memory. The team with the highest score wins.
- 9 If there are enough copies of *He Knows Too Much* to go round, give everyone a copy of the book and ask them to start reading.

# He Knows Too Much

## Extract 1

An English executive in India, Dick Sterling, is dismissed after he tries to uncover corruption within his company. He returns to England where his life falls apart and his marriage breaks up. He then sets out on a one-man search for the truth behind his dismissal. He returns to the rich mystery and beauty of India and is finally forced to choose between love and revenge.

## Extract 2

### Characters

**Dick Sterling:** general manager in Madras, India of Trakton, a multinational manufacturing company.

**Sally Sterling:** Dick's wife.

**Keith Lennox:** Dick's boss at Trakton. Works in Delhi.

**Barbara Lennox:** Keith's wife.

**Visvanathan (Vish):** office manager at Trakton.

**Molly:** Vish's wife. She also works at Trakton.

**Ramanathan (Ramu):** Dick's personal assistant at Trakton.

**Nagarajan:** in Accounts at Trakton.

**Lakshmi:** Nagarajan's daughter.

**Ned Outram:** a former employee at Trakton.

**Sir Percy Hancock:** former chief executive of Trakton, once head of the Delhi office.

**Sir Jeremy Jackson (Jacko):** retired professor of comparative philology at Cambridge.

**John Verghese.**

## Extract 3

'He knows too much. I must ask you to do nothing.'

'But this time I caught him in the act. I have proof, witnesses, everything. There is no possible doubt. Surely...'

'I said he knows too much! The company can't afford to have any problems. Our position is very sensitive in this country. We can't afford to take risks. I am telling you once again – you will do nothing. And if there is any trouble, I'm afraid I shall have to hold you personally responsible. So be sensible for once in your life.'

'I see. So you are telling me to close my eyes to corruption and behave as if nothing has happened. Is that right?'

'I didn't put it quite like that. But, if you insist, yes. What Vish does or doesn't do is a minor matter compared with the company's global strategy.'

## Extract 4

Dick's car left the Trakton office and made its way slowly along the dusty, bumpy road leading south into the centre of Madras, towards his home. Even though Dick passed these buildings every day, they never lost their fascination for him. No one style dominated this city of contrasts where majestic but neglected colonial buildings stood next to modern glass and concrete banks, slum huts built from mud and roofed with coconut palms, ramshackle groups of shops selling everything from used car tyres to Indian-made foreign liquor... And where the traffic was a chaos of vehicles competing anarchically for the few overcrowded spaces on the roads. The journey home would take a long time.

## Extract 5

Dick's mind came back to the present. For anyone with strong nerves, travelling in India is a constant source of interest and surprise.

His driver Gopal inched his way forward, successfully winning a few feet from a bus cutting in on one side and a water-tanker on the other, each puffing out clouds of billowing, black diesel fumes. The road widened as they passed Fort St George. Gopal speeded up and they were soon leaving the elegant but neglected university buildings behind. They drove the length of the Marina, the sea on the left and a succession of historic buildings on the right. Even at this hour a few people were strolling along the beach taking the early evening air. Soon there would be crowds, all escaping the oven heat of the city for the cooling evening sea breeze.

## Extract 6

**chowkidar:** night watchman

**idlis:** small balls of steamed rice

**chutney:** a sauce with a mint flavour

**jasmine:** a sweet-smelling white flower

**the Backs:** lawns and gardens between Cambridge colleges

**Grace:** a prayer of thanks which is said before meals

**mudra:** a position of the hand used especially in classical Indian dance

**lunghis:** the piece of cloth which men wear wrapped around their waists, instead of trousers, in many parts of India

**dowry:** the money and goods which the bride's family has to pay to the groom's family when their daughter marries

**goondas:** members of criminal gangs

**arrack:** a strong alcoholic drink

**choli:** the blouse which Indian women wear under their sari