

Trumpet Voluntary

Aim

- To stimulate students to read the book.

1 Tell students that *Trumpet Voluntary* is a thriller. (You may want to have a discussion about what a thriller is. Suggested definition: Thrillers are characterised by fast, frequent action, and resourceful heroes or heroines who must put a stop to the plans of more-powerful and better-equipped villains.) Now ask students to read Extract 1, which is the 'blurb' of the book. (Teach blurb if necessary – the text on the back of the book which gives us an exciting taste of what to expect.) Ask students whether they think the book will be a straightforward thriller, or whether it will incorporate another genre.

Suggested answer: *Trumpet Voluntary* is also about a quest for love, so could be said to incorporate the romance genre.

2 Ask students to read Extract 2, which is from the beginning of the book. Working in small groups, ask them to discuss the following questions. What do they think might have been happening 'before the narrator's nose'? Why do they think he is now so confident about the future, and what do they guess he has to look forward to in the future?

3 Creative writing activity: Ask students to read Extract 2 again and then continue writing where it stops. After about fifteen minutes, ask them to read out what they have written to the other members of their group.

4 Ask students to read Extract 3, which is a list of the chapter headings for the book. Working in pairs, and remembering what has been discussed in Activities 1 and 2, ask them to discuss what they think might happen in the story, based on the chapter headings. They should make some notes about their ideas and then feedback to the whole class. How similar are the ideas?

5 Now tell the class that a deadly chemical agent or nerve gas, Seratraxel, appears in the book. It has no smell, but if someone breathes it in, they are dead in four or five days. Ask them to look at the story ideas they came up with in Activity 3 again, and to change them to include the nerve gas.

6 Ask students to read Extracts 4 and 5, which are descriptions of two different women in the book. Working in pairs, ask them to discuss who they think the two women are, and what role they play in the life of the narrator, Derek.

Answers: Extract 4 is a description of Derek's friend, Rachel, who plays music with him and whom he comes to love and ultimately marries after his wife's death. Extract 5 is a description of his wife, Malgosia, who breaks his heart when she is unfaithful. NB: students will not be able to come up with this much detail without reading the book!

7 Ask students to read Extract 6. Now, working in pairs or threes, ask them to write some dialogue to show the scene that is described in the extract happening – i.e. they could write dialogue for Derek (the narrator), his mother

and his father, or just for Derek and one of his parents. The dialogue could be a discussion or an argument about whether Derek should become a musician or not. It should be written as if it is a play – i.e. dialogue only. When they have finished, they should take one of the roles and act the dialogue out. Those who wish to could act out their dialogue to the whole class.

8 Ask students to read Extract 7. In this extract, Rosemary, who is a friend of Derek's wife, is reluctant to help him out of loyalty to her friend. Divide students into small groups, and ask them to debate how important they think loyalty in friendship is. Would they stick by a friend if their friend were doing something they considered to be wrong? Feedback to the whole class.

9 Musical Instrument game. Write a list of the following musical instruments on the whiteboard: Violin, Cello, Double Bass, Trumpet, Saxophone, Flute, and Piccolo. (If you have a small group of students, adjust the number of instruments accordingly.) If students don't know what the instruments are, ask them to look them up in their dictionaries and discuss definitions until everyone is clear what all the instruments are, how big they are and how they are played. Now go around the room, secretly giving each student the name of one of the musical instruments. The students should then walk around the room carrying out a mime of playing their instrument. (There are subtle differences between some of the instruments, so they should take care to try to emphasise the size, etc.) Without speaking, students who feel they are playing the same instrument as someone else should join together to form a group. When everyone has found a group, students should reveal what instrument they were pretending to play to see if everyone is in the right groups.

10 Ask students to look at Extract 8, which is a mixed-up scene from *Trumpet Voluntary*. Tell them to put the scene in the right order. (The right order is: f, d, a, e, c, g, b.) Alternatively, you could photocopy this extract several times and cut it up (so that there are enough for each student to have a piece of the scene). Ask students to walk around the room until they have found people who have the same extract as them. NB: they are not allowed to show their pieces of paper to anyone, they must read them out. The next task is for these groups to circulate together to try to identify the correct order of the scene. The groups should then stand in the right order and take it in turns to read out their extract.

11 If there are enough copies of *Trumpet Voluntary* to go round, give one to each student and ask them to start reading.

Optional Extra

12 If you are able to get hold of any of the music mentioned in the book – *Trumpet Voluntary* by Jeremiah Clarke, or *Eine Kleine Nachtmusik* by Mozart – you could play it to the students and ask them to describe how it makes them feel, or the images it produces in their minds, etc.

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Extract 1

A musician disappears leaving only a strange e-mail message behind her. Her husband, in a desperate search to find her, revisits their shared past and has to face up to some unpleasant realities, before trying to rebuild his life. His journey of discovery takes us across the world to Rio and deep into the human heart.

Extract 2

It seems impossible to feel so happy and so sad all at the same time. Laughter and tears. Not what you would expect from someone in my situation. Maybe, in time, the future, in which I am so confident, will cancel out the bad memories of the past. There's so much to look forward to, after all. But there's so much to remember too.

It all started on the day that my wife disappeared. Well no, that's not quite true. It had started a long time before that, only I didn't know anything about it. That just shows you how stupid I was. Things were happening right in front of my nose, and I never even realised. I should have seen the signs, but I was blind to them.

Extract 3

- Chapter 1 The silent house
- Chapter 2 Tibor and Malgosia
- Chapter 3 Rachel
- Chapter 4 The new trumpet
- Chapter 5 Deciding on priorities
- Chapter 6 Breathtaking views
- Chapter 7 Voices in the distance
- Chapter 8 There's nothing for you here
- Chapter 9 A walk by the river
- Chapter 10 Sugar Loaf Mountain
- Chapter 11 Romantic love

Extract 4

She was quiet and gentle. She had light brown hair, and pretty, brown eyes set in a round, pleasant face. When she smiled she looked like a happy child and you knew you could trust her. She was very easy to be with.

Extract 5

She was laughing too, her beautiful head thrown back on her long neck, her mouth open to reveal perfect white teeth, her eyes shining with happiness. She was easily the most beautiful woman I had ever seen, with long red hair falling over her shoulders. I couldn't take my eyes off her.

Extract 6

My parents hadn't wanted me to be a music student. Even my mother, for whom music was almost as important as eating and breathing, and who wanted me to love music too, thought that it wasn't the right kind of career for me if I wanted to get on in the world. Instead, she and my father wanted me to be a doctor like he was, but I was never very good at science and anyway, I hated the sight of blood. I was probably a bit of a coward, I suppose.

Extract 7

'What's all this about?' Rosemary said from over by the sink where she was filling the kettle.

So I told her. I told her about the e-mail message, about Rio de Janeiro and Tibor. I told her about the police and the questions they had been asking me. I told her everything I knew.

She didn't say much. She just listened.

'Why didn't you ring?' I asked her suddenly. 'You said you were going to ring.'

'Yes, I did. I'm sorry,' she said, handing me my coffee, 'but I didn't know what to tell you. I didn't know what I could tell you. It's not really my business, you see, what Malgosia does, what you do. Anyway, I couldn't betray a friend.'

'Rosemary,' I told her, 'you above all people should know what it's like when your husband or wife starts behaving strangely. Don't you think I have a right to know?'

'Malgosia's my friend,' she replied simply.

Extract 8

- a 'Good. That's better. Now then, sir,' the short-haired one went on, 'you say you haven't been to Scotland for two years. What about your wife?'
- b 'Yes,' I started and then I suddenly remembered. 'I mean no. She's been there a few times. On her own. To get away. You know, to get some personal "space". We all need it sometimes, don't we . . .' I stopped. They were both looking at me strangely.
- c 'Yes, it must be difficult for her, getting away,' said the unpleasant policeman with a nasty tone in his voice.
- d 'I suppose so,' I heard myself saying. I just wanted them to go so I could try and decide what to do. Though I already had a pretty good idea.
- e 'Well, yes, She's been a few times. She came up to the festival to hear us play the first time we were there,' I said, remembering how happy we had all been, 'but it's difficult for her to get away from her own work sometimes, so she didn't come with us on the other two occasions we played there.'
- f 'I'm sure that won't be necessary,' said the fat policeman. He was obviously the 'nice' one in the pair. 'I'm sure Mr Armstrong will help us in any way he can. Won't you, sir?'
- g 'And that's the only time your wife went to Scotland?' the first policeman asked.