

All I Want

Aims

- To stimulate students to read the book.
- To encourage students to think about the characters in the book as well as their own characters/personalities.

1 In pairs, ask students to discuss their favourite characters from books and films. Why do they particularly like these characters? What makes them interesting and believable? Pairs report back to the whole class. Write the key points/names of characters on the board.

2 Read out Extract 1 (next page) to the class. Ask students what the extract tells them about the character.

Possible points: sex (female), age (a young 30), character (lively, dreamy, romantic, funny)

3 Ask students what they notice about the way Extract 1 is written. (It is narrated by Alex the heroine and written in the first person.) Teach students about character narration, where a book is written as if the character is speaking to the reader (in films the equivalent is voice-over). Do any of the students' favourite characters narrate their book or film? Encourage the students to discuss the benefits and disadvantages of character narration.

Possible advantages: the book or film comes to life; we really get to know the main character well and we can feel as if we're in the story and it's happening to us.

Possible disadvantages: it may only work if we like the narrator and are interested in what's happening to them; we can only see the story through that character's eyes – we can't see what is going on anywhere else.

4 Ask students to try to rewrite Extract 1 in the third person. They report back to the whole class about how easy this was. Ask students whether they prefer the extract in the first or third person and why.

Optional extra: using Extract 1 as inspiration, students try to write a passage from Brad's point of view.

5 Tell students that in *All I Want* Alex writes lists to try to motivate her to achieve things in life. Ask students to look at two of Alex's lists (Extract 2). Why do they think List One is so different to List Two? (List One was written before Alex met Brad, and List Two after she fell in love with him.) Which list do they prefer and why? Ask students to write their own lists of what they want to achieve. Collect these, mix them up, and then hand them out randomly. Ask students to read out the list they have. The class should try to guess who wrote it. Alternatively students could discuss their own lists in small groups.

6 Read out Extracts 3 – character descriptions of Alex's mother Betty/Willow, Barry and Brad. Discuss what sort of people they are. What adjectives could be used to describe them? Students can use their dictionaries if necessary. Write the suggested adjectives up on the board. Alternatively you could write a selection of mixed-up adjectives on the board and ask students to match them to the three characters.

Suggested answers: Betty/Willow – unusual, eccentric, colourful, boyish, etc.; Barry – calm, nice, interested, kind, relaxed, a good listener, etc.; Brad – unkind, mocking, outspoken, nasty, cruel, sarcastic, etc.

7 Read out Extract 4 – Alex's explanation of her parents' earth names. Tell students what an earth name is (a 'nature' name connected with plants, the weather, the planet, etc.). Working in small groups, ask students to think of earth names for Alex, Barry and Brad. Students report back to the whole class. Ask students to think of earth names for the other members of their group. Each student should then choose the name they prefer for themselves and write it on a label. Students should wear these labels and walk around the room to find others with the same/similar names. They should then discuss how suitable they feel the name is for themselves and the other person.

Optional extra: students could choose earth names for their favourite characters previously identified in Activity 1.

8 Working in different small groups, ask students to imagine conversations between Willow and Barry, Brad and Barry, and Willow and Brad. These conversations could take place in various settings – at a dinner party, at Brad's art gallery, while taking a walk by the sea, in the waiting room at the doctor when Alex has sprained her ankle while wearing unsuitable shoes, etc. Students then role-play these conversations to the whole class.

9 Ask students to make notes about their own characters/personalities. Working in small groups, ask them to share these thoughts and then to discuss what type of story they think they could appear in (romance, thriller, horror, science fiction, etc.).

10 If there is time, students could start to write this story, with themselves in the starring role.

11 If there are enough copies of the book, students could begin to read it.

All I Want

Extract 1

By now I think you will have guessed that three weeks ago I met Brad Courtney and fell madly in love with him. You might also have guessed that he's not in love with me.

Yet.

I work for Brad, or at least I do while his assistant, June Weatherby, is in hospital. June broke her leg when she fell off a horse. I wouldn't want you to think I'm happy that she's lying in pain in her bed at the hospital, because I'm not, of course. However, I am very happy that her accident has given me the chance to work for Brad. If June's horse had been a calm sort of horse instead of a wild one called Flame, then I'd never have met Brad and I'd never have fallen in love with him.

Extract 2

List One

1. Travel around the world.
2. Write a bestselling book.
3. Buy a house or a flat, preferably with a garden and a sea view.
4. Give up smoking.
5. Give up headaches due to drinking too much.
6. Give up problem boyfriends.
7. Go skiing this Christmas instead of visiting my family.

List Two

1. Have a conversation with Brad Courtney lasting longer than five minutes and without my knees shaking.
2. Get through a whole day at work without annoying Brad Courtney with my careless mistakes.
3. Tell my boyfriend Barry I do not want to go out with him any more.
4. Tell Brad Courtney I love him.
5. Get married to Brad Courtney.
6. Go skiing this Christmas with Brad Courtney.
7. Have Brad Courtney's children, preferably a girl and a boy, both with his beautiful dark eyes.

Extracts 3

Willow (Betty)

Today my mother's dressed in a short orange skirt and a red pullover. Her hair's orange too, and she's had it cut really short, like a boy's. For some reason she's wearing a red hat, even though she's indoors and the house is warm.

Barry

... Barry and I actually met because of a plate of food.

I was at a friend's wedding party, and there was lots of delicious food. I was very hungry so I had piled my plate with food and, I'm sure you've already guessed it, I dropped the plate. Some of the food landed on my new dress, but most of it went on Barry. The messiest food went on Barry.

Amazingly, he didn't shout at me. You see, even then he was too nice! We just found a kitchen and cleaned our clothes up a little and then we sat and chatted. Barry was really interested in everything I had to say. I liked that.

Brad

'I want to write a book,' I say after a while and, to my surprise, he laughs.

'You'll never do it!'

I feel really hurt. 'Why do you say that?'

'Because for one thing everybody thinks they could write a book, and hardly anyone does. And for another thing, don't forget I've seen you working at the gallery. You aren't an organised type of person. Writers have to be organised.' He laughs again. 'No, you'll never write a book.'

Extract 4

... Mum's name is Willow. (A willow is a type of tree that often grows close to rivers.) Dad's name is Moon. Moon is ... well, you know what the moon is. These are my parents' 'earth' names. Their real names are Betty (Mum) and Jeff (Dad). They chose their earth names two years ago because they said they 'wanted to feel closer to nature'.