

Apollo's Gold

Aims

- To allow students to read good descriptions and to practise writing descriptions.
- To stimulate students to read the book.

1 Put the title *Apollo's Gold* on the board and tell students they are going to read the story. Ask if they can guess which country it is set in. Don't tell them whether they are right or wrong.

2 Ask students to read the Blurb (handout opposite) to check.

Answer: Greece

3 Put students into small groups to discuss what they know about Greece, then take feedback and establish that it has lots of islands. If you have one, look at a map of Greece and find Athens and Sifnos on it.

4 Look back at the Blurb. Put the following genres up on the board or overhead and ask students which genre *Apollo's Gold* is (the Blurb will help). Genres: thriller, murder mystery, science fiction, horror, comedy, ghost story, romance, adventure, human interest.

Answer: adventure

5 Ask students if they like adventure stories. What kind of things happen in adventures? What are their favourite adventure stories? Discuss the fact that adventure stories often happen in beautiful settings and that the descriptions of the setting are a very important part of the book.

6 Tell the students that there are lots of descriptions of the island of Sifnos in the book. What do they think the island will be like? Discuss and write adjectives on the board.

7 Ask them to read the descriptions of Sifnos and Poulati (a village) in Extracts 1–4 and find examples of the following kinds of description. Explain that they will perhaps find several of some kinds.

- How something *feels*.
- The *look* of something.
- The *sound* of something.
- The *smell* of something.
- Simile(s) (describing something as like something else).

Answers:

a In Extract 2: 'Or perhaps what I love about Poulati is the feeling that everything has been there for ever.'

b You can find these descriptions in all of the extracts – colours etc.

c In Extract 3 there is a description of silence: 'It was very quiet walking along these paths. There were birds but no cars and only a few people.'

d In Extract 1, 'As the boat got close to the land I could smell the plants . . .'

e In Extract 1: 'When I woke up we were passing Serifos. It's the island before Sifnos. Serifos is like Sifnos; the houses are all white and square like pieces of sugar.' And also in Extract 4: 'The sea was like glass. When the sea is quiet like that, the Greeks say that the sea is like oil.'

8 Ask students if they like the descriptions. Do the descriptions use any of the adjectives they thought of in stage 6? Which description(s) do they like best?

9 Suggest that the writer obviously loves Sifnos. Ask students individually to think of a place they really love. It could be a holiday place, a small village they know at the seaside or in the mountains . . . What does it look like, feel like, smell like, sound like? Give them time to think about it. Then pair students up to tell each other about their place. Tell them to ask each other about look, feel, smell, sound.

10 Ask students to write a short description of this place they love, trying to bring in these different elements. Then ask the students to share their written descriptions in groups by reading, and choose a few descriptions to listen to and give feedback.

11 Ask students what they think will happen in this beautiful setting. Take ideas.

12 If you have the books, start reading and find out.

Apollo's Gold

Blurb

Liz studies and teaches archaeology in Athens. She works hard and needs a holiday, so she goes to the beautiful and peaceful island of Sifnos. But the peace does not last long when a mysterious yacht arrives, one of the local men dies, and Liz becomes involved with some very dangerous people.

Extract 1

The boat for Sifnos left very early in the morning. Because it was April there were not many people on the boat. The deck was very quiet. I sat in one chair and put my feet on another chair. The sea was very blue and it was warm in the sun. I fell asleep.

When I woke up we were passing Serifos. It's the island before Sifnos. Serifos is like Sifnos; the houses are all white and square like pieces of sugar. It's very pretty. As the boat got close to the land I could smell the plants and see the purple of the mountains.

Extract 2

What can I say about Poulati? It has a beach and a small harbour with a few fishing boats. There is Eleni's *taverna* and a shop that is also the village café and bar. But that does not tell you very much. You can say the same about most Greek fishing villages. But Poulati is different.

Is it that everything is white? The houses are white, the church is white, and even the paths between the houses are white.

Or perhaps what I love about Poulati is the feeling that everything has been there for ever. Of course that's not true. The plastic chairs in the café are new and some of the houses are new, but it feels old. The village feels as old as the mountain behind the village and the rocks under the sea.

Extract 3

I went for short walks around Poulati and Appollonia.

It was very quiet walking along these paths. There were birds but no cars and only a few people. But there were often people in the fields. They smiled and waved. Often they stopped me. 'Come here! Come here!' they said. And then they gave me tomatoes and oranges.

Extract 4

The sea was like glass. When the sea is quiet like that, the Greeks say that the sea is like oil. Sometimes when I fly to Greece, I look down and there is the sea below, like glass, like oil. It is the colour of gold and the islands are blue. There is nothing more beautiful than looking down on to the Greek islands from the air. That is the gold that I love. That is the real gold of the Greek islands. The sun on the sea.