

Circle Games

Aims

- To introduce students to the short story genre.
- To introduce students to contexts in the stories.
- To stimulate students to read the book.

- 1 Ask students if they can remember any short stories they have read in their own language. Do they like short stories? Why/why not? Do they have a favourite short story?
- 2 Tell students that they are going to read some extracts from five short stories with a common theme. Ask them to read extracts 1–5. (see handout opposite). Ask them what they think the theme is.

Answer: wheel/circle

- 3 Ask students: what the wheel or circle is in each of the extracts.

Answers:

Extract 1 – the wheel of a car; Extract 2 – a dance; Extract 3 – an old object found in the earth; Extract 4 – the wheels of the trishaw; Extract 5 – the wheel from an old ship.

- 4 Ask students to guess the title of the collection.
- 5 Ask students to look at the Titles of the stories on the handout. Can they match extracts to titles?

Answers: Extract 1 – c; Extract 2 – a; Extract 3 – e; Extract 4 – d; Extract 5 – b

- 6 Tell the students that the stories are set in three different countries: UK, Singapore and the US. Can they guess from the titles and extracts which story is set in which country?

Note: Students can probably work out which are set in Singapore from the titles. The word 'pub' in Extract 5 helps them to know that it's the UK. The other two have to be guesses.

- 7 What do students know about these three countries? Ask students to work in pairs and come up with three facts about each country. Then get each pair to share with another pair. Take feedback from the groups of four and share information with the class.

In addition or as an alternative: Put the information below on the board, overhead or a handout. Ask students which country is described in each piece of information.

Singapore, UK or US?

- a One of the languages here is Singlish.
- b The population is about 60 million people.
- c It consists of one main island and 63 others.
- d It has a large Spanish-speaking population (about 10 per cent).
- e The three most popular surnames are Tan, Lim and Lee.
- f It has four time zones.
- g The Romans were here in the past.
- h It's one of the smallest countries in the world.
- i The pub is an important part of the social life.
- j It has a lake called Lake Erie.

Note: Some of the information is linked to the stories.

Answers:

- a Singapore. (Singlish is a Singaporean patois mixing English with the odd phrase of Chinese, Malay and even Tamil)
- b UK
- c Singapore
- d US
- e Singapore
- f US (Eastern, Central, Mountain and Pacific)
- g UK
- h Singapore (and one of the most densely populated)
- i UK
- j US

- 8 Go back to the subject of short stories. Point out that because they are very short, the beginning of the story has to really 'grab' the reader. Ask students to read Extracts 6–10. These are the beginnings of the five stories. Which do they think is the most interesting/exciting beginning? Why? Students tell a partner, then pairs report back to the class.

Note: Students can vote on the most exciting beginning.

- 9 If you have the books, students can start reading, each one of them starting with the story they want to read most.

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Extract 1

One of the policeman said that you could not drive Mrs McFee's car with only three wheels. But Grover was sure he saw four wheels on the car when it arrived. The policeman said, 'I'm sorry, sir, but there are only three wheels on the car.'

But Grover just knew he saw four wheels on the car. Yet, when he looked again, he saw only three wheels. Why was that? What happened? Could Emilio tell him where the fourth wheel came from? Where was it now?

Extract 2

A young father and his two small children listened as Caleb talked. And talked. And talked. They were getting hungry. Caleb started to show them moves from the Lion Dance. 'You turn like a wheel – see?' Caleb told them in a loud voice. His hands moved in front of him. His feet moved too. People were looking at him. Not all of them knew what he was doing. It just looked strange to them. And all the time the heavy rain fell.

Extract 3

'A *real* archaeologist sees right away what something is. That's what we're here for. We're here to study things from the past; things we find in the earth. We can learn important things – if we know how to look. So, how did this beautiful thing find you?'

I looked again at the beautiful thing he had in his hands. It was round and big as my hand . . . A thin, silver-coloured wheel. It was dirty but you could still see its lovely silver colour. Like a CD. But there were lines on it. Was it writing of some sort?

Extract 4

Gregory's father, Thomas Lim, was strong, very strong, and he loved his son. No father could feel better about his son than Thomas did. He was always thinking about his only child. Thomas drove a trishaw and he worked for many hours a day. He drove people around on a three-wheeled trishaw bicycle . . .

Years ago people used trishaws a lot. But people these days wanted taxis because they were quicker. Trishaws were too slow for most people.

Extract 5

Earl was looking at the wall outside the pub. The pub's name, *The Old Swan*, was on the wall. Next to the name was a wooden ship's wheel and in the middle of the wheel was the name of a ship, *HMS Swan*. The wheel was old, Earl could tell. And it was there, just above his head.

Titles

- a Quick Man Tan
- b The Wheel on the Wall
- c Special Clay
- d The Trishaw Man
- e Beautiful Thing

Extract 6 *Quick Man Tan*

Everybody called him 'Quick Man Tan' when he was a young man. That was a long time ago. Now people called him by his real name – Caleb Tan.

Caleb liked to talk about the old days. He talked to anybody who was interested. He told them that when he was younger he could catch a fly in his hand.

Extract 7 *The Wheel on the Wall*

'Well, just take a look at that wheel!' Earl Cooper said to Candy, his wife. 'It must be older than anything we have back home.'

When Earl Cooper travelled he always thought of home. But there weren't many really old buildings in Texas. Now he was in Portsmouth in the south of England. Portsmouth, Earl knew, was one of the best places to see old ships.

Extract 8 *Special Clay*

Emilio Lopez was a boy with problems.

His family was poor and they didn't know what to do with him. He was thirteen years old, but his parents still couldn't find the right school for him. Not anywhere in Cleveland, Ohio in the USA. So far, not one of the schools wanted to have Emilio. They just couldn't help a boy with his 'difficulties'.

Extract 9 *The Trishaw Man*

Gregory Lim was only thirteen years old, but he was the best student in his class. All his teachers said he was doing very well. 'Singapore needs young people like him,' they said. 'He'll go far.'

Extract 10 *Beautiful Thing*

'Beautiful! Very, very beautiful! Where did you find it?' the professor asked.

'Well,' I said. 'I didn't really find it – it found me.'

Professor Selkirk looked very happy and I was feeling happy myself.