

# Frozen Pizza and other slices of life

## Aims

- To encourage the study of short stories as ways of observing culture.
- To stimulate students to read the book.

1 Tell students they are going to read a short story collection. Don't tell them the title yet. Ask students what their favourite short story is. What do they think makes a short story effective? Elicit ideas. Point out if necessary that there is often one event that is pivotal in the life of a character, and that that event will illustrate the theme. Tell them that they are going to first look at the themes of this collection.

2 Put the following first line from the Blurb on the board or overhead: 'These highly enjoyable stories offer eight slices of life in England today.' Elicit a possible example of a theme first, then put students into small groups and ask them to brainstorm what they think the themes of the stories will be. Tell them that there are lots of different themes. Take feedback from the whole group, but don't agree or disagree with the themes they come up with.

**An alternative:** Gap the Blurb, as shown below. Ask students to fill the gaps with possible themes. Tell the students that each gap may be more than one word.

These highly enjoyable stories offer eight slices of life in England today. The themes covered include ....., ....., ....., ....., ....., ....., ..... and ..... . Well-observed, lively and amusing, these stories provide a fascinating picture of the country at the start of a new century.

Show students the full Blurb (handout opposite) to find out what the themes are. Did they get any right?

3 Ask students what they think the title of the collection is. Elicit ideas. Tell them that the title is *Frozen Pizza and other slices of life*. Which theme do the students think that title belongs to? (food)

4 Ask students to look at the titles of the stories (see Contents on handout). Ask them which story is about which theme. They check in pairs and then as a class.

**Answers:** Two Worlds – inner-city problems; The Old Oak Bowl – immigration; One of the Lads – hooliganism; Frozen Pizza – food; Sweetie – student life; The Star Reporter – the media; Don't Miss the Mozart! – leisure activities; The Shivering Mountain – the countryside

5 Put students back into groups. Each group takes one theme, brainstorms for a few minutes and comes up with what they know about the theme (in England). It doesn't matter if it isn't much at this stage. Reporters from each group report back to the whole class. Discuss whatever comes up.

6 Ask students to look at Extracts 1–6 (see handout) and match each one to these six themes from the book: **a** food; **b** the media; **c** immigration; **d** football hooliganism; **e** inner-city problems; **f** the countryside.

Answers: a/4, b/3, c/2, d/1, e/5, f/6

7 Ask students in pairs to choose one of the extracts. What do they learn about the theme from the extract? Take class feedback and discuss. If students are going to read the stories independently, ask them to choose which of the stories they'd like to read first. If they are going to read as a class, take votes on where to start.

# Frozen Pizza and other slices of life

## Blurb

These highly enjoyable stories offer eight slices of life in England today. The themes covered include food, the media, immigration, student life, football hooliganism, inner-city problems, leisure activities and the countryside. Well-observed, lively and amusing, these stories provide a fascinating picture of the country at the start of a new century.

## Contents

Two Worlds  
The Old Oak Bowl  
One of the Lads  
Frozen Pizza  
Sweetie  
The Star Reporter  
Don't Miss the Mozart!  
The Shivering Mountain

## Extract 1

'England! England! England!'

'The time's right,' said Dave. 'We have to go to Amsterdam.' The lads nodded.

'This could be another Charleroi,' added Mike, remembering the stories of friends who had been in Belgium for Euro 2000. 'And this time we'll be there.'

'We'll give them a day to remember,' Steve laughed. 'Hey, Lukey,' he added, 'my glass is empty.'

'Luke got in the last round of drinks,' said Dave, who was feeling good at the thought of the promised fighting ahead. 'You get the round, Steve.'

Steve went to the bar and bought five more pints of beer.

'Why don't all these politicians understand that the fight is part of the game?' complained Dave as they drank.

## Extract 2

It seemed to Mr Walker that there were too many foreigners at the school these days. He only called them foreigners to himself, as the other teachers said they were English, part of the new multicultural society. But despite the fact they all spoke English, Mr Walker could not help thinking that they weren't really English. Their families hadn't always lived in England and many of them were coloured. He had learnt not to use that word in public, but he could not help saying it to himself. He disliked the term 'black'; he thought 'coloured' was more suitable.

## Extract 3

When it rains, the tabloids scream, 'Stop this flooding!' and when it doesn't rain they scream, 'Where's the water?' They love crime because then they can have full-page headlines that shout, 'WANTED!' or show some face and scream, 'Is this the face of the most evil man in Britain?'

I've always hated the tabloids and the way they react to the news. They are like two-year-olds who scream when they are hungry or lose a toy. I've never thought that their attitude to world affairs was grown-up. Today I feel differently. I think that what they do in order to increase their readership is actually evil. But then I would say that, wouldn't I, after what happened?

## Extract 4

The young man was still very puzzled. In his country he sometimes had pizzas with friends after going to the cinema. But they never had pizza at home, only in pizza restaurants. 'But when do you have dinner?' he asked.

'We don't have dinner,' she said. 'As I said, we all just help ourselves. I eat when I get back from my aerobics class and the kids grab something to eat when they get back from school before they go out. Though sometimes, like today, they go straight from school to their friends' houses. And Harry, that's my husband, he eats at different times. It depends whether he's working late or at the pub. We're a very independent family.'

'I was right,' she thought. 'In his country it must be very different. He's never been in a home like this.' She felt sorry for him.

'Her husband works late and goes by himself to the pub and her children go to their friends' houses. She must be very lonely,' thought the young man. 'That is why she doesn't cook proper meals.' He felt sorry for her.

## Extract 5

The next day was sunny and Rosie woke up as usual to the sound of her little sister, Kylie, crying. Her mother shouted something, but didn't get up. Rosie knew that she had been drinking the previous night and probably wouldn't get up until lunchtime. Rosie swung her thin legs over the bed and walked on bare feet across the room, where she and her sister slept, to the kitchen. It was dirty as usual and the floor felt sticky under her feet.

## Extract 6

Nick laughed at Paolo's disgusted expression. He seemed to enjoy the fact that Paolo disliked everything about the country. The more things Paolo complained about, the more Nick laughed. It was as if he had become a different person in the country. Nick didn't seem to mind the rain and just said it was always like that. Nick didn't mind the lack of television, or cinemas or cafés or any of the things that Paolo had always thought were an essential part of life.

In fact, Nick seemed to get more and more cheerful every day.