

Next Door to Love

Aim

• To stimulate students to read the book.

- 1 Ask students what they think makes somebody a good neighbour. What makes a bad neighbour? (You might want to pre-teach 'noisy', 'nosey', 'unfriendly', etc.) Ask students if they would like to have their boyfriend/girlfriend living next door.
- 2 In *Next Door to Love*, Stella is a chef at Marcello's Italian Restaurant (teach 'chef' if necessary). Ask students to read Extract 1 and, working in pairs, discuss what the extract says about Stella's attitude to her job.
Suggested answers: She enjoys it; she likes colour (is creative); she likes to do a good job, etc.
- 3 Ask students to discuss what jobs they have done. Have they felt the same way as Stella about their jobs? Ask them what their dream job would be.
- 4 Tell students they are going to read some extracts from *Next Door to Love* that will tell them a bit more about Stella, Tony and Daisy – the important people in the story. Ask students to read Extracts 2, 3 and 4 and then to work in pairs to discuss the answers to the following questions.
 - a How old is Daisy? (five years old) What do they learn about her from the extract? (She is confident, chatty and friendly; she has a cat called Moo-Moo.)
 - b Why does Tony say that some of him dies when Daisy is away from him? (He wants to be with her and he is sad.) Why does he look away from Stella when he is talking to her about Daisy? (Because he is sad – teach 'close to tears'.)
 - c What does Stella think when she sees James in the bar? (She remembers that he had lots of girlfriends and she was sad a lot.) What does she think when she sees Tony with another woman? (She thinks he might be like James.)

Report back to the whole class.

- 5 Ask students to read Extract 2 again. Ask them to change the character of Daisy – e.g. she could be a teenager, or she could be unfriendly to Stella. Ask them to rewrite the extract with this new Daisy.
- 6 Ask students to read Extract 4 again. Working in pairs, ask them to think about the conversation Stella has with Tony after this. What do they say to each other? What happens next?
- 7 Ask students to imagine Stella goes to Tony's house when the woman from Extract 4 is there. What do they say to each other? Who is the woman?
- 8 Ask students to imagine Stella goes into the restaurant in Extract 4 to speak to James and his new girlfriend. What do they say to each other?
- 9 Ask students to read Extract 5. This is what Stella's friend Janet always tells Stella to do. Do they think this is a good idea? Do they do this, or do they stop to think?
- 10 Ask students to pick one of their new conversations from Activities 5, 6 or 7, and role-play it to the whole class.
- 11 Put students in pairs and ask them to read the Chapter Summaries and put them in the correct order. You might want to pre-teach 'lawyer' and 'court'. Pairs report back to the whole class.

Correct order: d, b, a, f, c, e

Optional extras:

- 1 Creative writing – students could develop Activity 1 by working in small groups to combine their different neighbours into a story – e.g. the little old lady who hardly ever goes out with a group of young people who have parties every night.
- 2 Put students in pairs and ask them to think of three more chapters (anywhere in the story). Ask them to tell the class about these chapters. How do they change the book?

Next Door to Love

Extract 1

Then Tony looked at me. 'Tell me about your job,' he said. 'What food do you like to cook?'

I thought about it. 'Food with lots of colour,' I said. 'I like my meals to look good. That's very important to me.'

Extract 2

About Daisy

'Can she come to tea with us, Daddy?' Daisy asked her father.

'She has a name,' Tony told her. 'She's called Stella.'

'OK, can Stella come to tea with us?' Daisy asked.

Tony smiled at me. 'Of course she can,' he said.

We sat in Tony's garden and Daisy told me about her cat. She talked a lot.

'He's black and white,' she said, 'like a cow. I call him Moo-Moo, like the noise cows make. But he drinks milk. Cows don't drink milk.'

'Cows *make* milk,' Tony told her. He smiled at me over Daisy's head.

Daisy looked at him. 'I know that, Daddy!' she said. 'I'm not a little girl anymore!' And she went to look at the flowers.

Extract 3

About Tony

'I think she likes you,' Tony told me.

I smiled at him. 'I like her too.'

Tony looked at the flowers in his hand. 'Some of me dies when Daisy's away from me,' he said. Then he looked at me. 'Daisy lives with her mother, Kathy, and Kathy's husband, Cameron.' Tony looked away. 'Daisy's got a new family now,' he said.

Extract 4

About Stella

And then one evening in October everything changed. I left work to walk home and I saw James in a bar. He was with a woman. They were laughing, and they looked happy. 'He laughed with me like that when he was my boyfriend,' I thought, and I wanted to go into the restaurant to talk to the woman. I wanted to say to her, 'James is no good!' But I didn't. I just walked up the street. But I was sad for her.

Then, when I got back to Bridge Street, I saw Tony in front of his house. He was with a woman too – a woman I didn't know. I saw Tony look down into the woman's face. 'He looks at *me* like that,' I thought. 'He stands near *me* like that.'

Extract 5

There's something Janet always says to me, something that's very important to her. She says, 'When you want to do something, just do it. Don't stop and think about it! Don't wait. Just do it!'

Chapter Summaries

- a Stella goes to the cinema with Klaus, a friend from work. Klaus wants Stella to be his girlfriend, but Stella thinks about Tony Bryant, not Klaus.
- b Stella has a coffee with Tony in his garden. His daughter, Daisy, is there. Tony tells Stella he is sad because Daisy lives with her mother.
- c Stella asks Tony about the other woman. He says it was Kathy, Daisy's mother. Then he tells Stella he loves her, but she knows he is sad. When she asks him why, he tells her Kathy wants to take Daisy away to Scotland to live.
- d Stella meets her new neighbour, Tony Bryant. She thinks he is sad about something.
- e Stella and Tony go to see a lawyer and then they go to court. Kathy and her new husband are there with their lawyer. But the judge decides that Daisy has to live with her mother. Tony is very sad, but Stella tells Tony they can live in Scotland near Daisy. Then Tony is happy again.
- f Stella goes out for a drink with Tony. They talk for hours and then they kiss. For two months they meet every day. Then Stella sees Tony with another woman.