

The Fruitcake Special and other stories

Aim

- To stimulate students to read the book.

1 Tell students that *The Fruitcake Special* is a collection of five short stories about 'discovery'. Ask them what discovery means and write their suggestions up on the board. Copy the Story Titles (next page) onto the board but *don't* give students the sheet yet. Remind students again that the stories are all about some sort of discovery and ask them to work with a partner to guess what they might be about. Afterwards they should report back to the whole class. How similar were people's ideas?

2 Give out the handout and ask students to read Extract 1 (from *Brains*). Working in the same pairs, ask them to guess what Gina Capaldi has discovered (a drug she thinks will make people more intelligent). Ask the pairs to share their ideas with the whole class, and then tell them the right answer if they haven't guessed. Put the students into small groups and ask them to talk about whether such a drug would be a good idea or not. They should write two lists – one of reasons why the drug might be a good thing, and one of why the drug might be a bad thing.

Suggested answers: good – people might achieve more, there would be more well qualified people, etc; bad – there might be side-effects, there might be too many well qualified people and not enough jobs for them, people might not want to do the work they do now – e.g. road repairers, shop workers, cleaners, etc., and there might not be anybody to do these jobs.

3 Tell students to read Extracts 2 and 3 (from *The Real Aunt Molly*) and ask them to make notes about what the two characters are like.

Suggested answers: Extract 2 – quiet, dull, depressed, unintelligent, shy, etc.; Extract 3 – confident, bossy, calm, clever, efficient, etc. (Teach vocabulary as necessary.) Next, explain that they are actually both descriptions of the same person – Aunt Molly – before and after something happens to her. Ask them to guess what might have happened to change her so much. When they have given their suggestions, tell them – if they haven't already guessed – that Aunt Molly's character changes after she goes to a hypnotist's show. Ask students whether they have ever seen a hypnotist either in real life or on television. (They may have stories about the silly things people have been made to do, etc.) Ask students which Aunt Molly they prefer and why, and then divide them into pairs and ask them to tell their partner what aspect of their own behaviour or personality they would like to change if they went to a hypnotist. These ideas can be shared with the whole class if students wish to do so.

4 Tell students that in the story *The Book of Thoughts* Chester discovers a book in an antique shop that tells him what people are thinking. Ask them to read People in *The Book of Thoughts* and Extracts 4. Ask students to match the thoughts to the people.

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

5 Ask students whether they think it would be a good thing to be able to read people's thoughts. Using their comments, write two lists up on the board – what would be good about it, and what would be bad about it.

6 Tell students to read Extract 5, which is a fight scene from *The Fruitcake Special*, then ask them to write some sentences about what they think happened before and after this extract. Ask them to take turns to read their whole scene (including the fight) out to a partner.

7 Tell students that in the story *Finders Keepers* Harry finds a whistle that makes time stand still. Ask them to read Extract 6 and then continue the story. Divide students into small groups and ask them to read out what they have written to each other. How similar were their ideas?

8 If there are enough copies of *The Fruitcake Special*, give one to each student and ask them to start reading it.

Optional extra: Ask students to read Extracts 2 and 3 again. Divide them into pairs and tell one student to be the Aunt Molly in Extract 2, and the other to be the Aunt Molly in Extract 3. Ask them to role-play a conversation between the two Aunt Mollys – you might want to give them some locations for these conversations, e.g. in a bus queue, at the cinema when someone is making a noise during the film, in a shop, etc.

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Story Titles

The Fruitcake Special
The Real Aunt Molly
Brains
The Book of Thoughts
Finders Keepers

Extract 1

The woman reached for the fruit from a bowl close by and gave it to the monkey. Max ate it happily. The woman's name was Gina Capaldi and she was twenty-six years old. She was studying for a Ph.D. at a university in Rome. She was hoping to become a Doctor of Science. Her ideas had already caused much excitement. Now her work was almost finished. Great things were expected of her.

As Gina prepared the monkey's next drug, Max played with his Rubik cube. The Rubik cube was one of Max's favourite puzzles. He enjoyed turning around the sides of the cube in his hands so that each of the six sides was a different colour. Gina looked over at him and was pleased. He was getting better every day.

Extract 2

She was poor and her parents had died early on. She was left to look after herself. She had never learned to read properly and left school at an early age. But she was always cheerful and honest and never complained about the hard work she did to earn her living. She worked as a cleaner wherever there was work to do. She liked cleaning because she didn't have to make any difficult decisions.

Extract 3

She turned to the nearest person in the audience and said, 'Well, don't just sit there, man! This man has obviously had a heart attack – call for a doctor and an ambulance at once. He needs immediate attention.'

The man did as he was told while Aunt Molly undid Maxwell's tie and put him in a comfortable position. She acted as if she knew exactly what to do.

People in *The Book of Thoughts*

- 1 waiter
- 2 Chester's brother
- 3 tough-looking man wearing a T-shirt, showing his powerful arms
- 4 smartly dressed middle-aged lady
- 5 man who works for Chester

Extracts 4

- a I'll teach that young fool a lesson. I've got some figures he doesn't know about hidden in my office. I've been working on this longer than he has. When he can't come up with the right figures he'll look stupid.
- b I've given the best years of my life to him. Bank managers have married their secretaries before now. He must decide today – leave that awful wife and marry me or I'll shoot him and myself dead.
- c He wouldn't look so pleased with himself if he knew what I had put on to his chicken while I was in the kitchen. That will teach him to make me look silly.
- d I hate it when Chester and I play squash – he always wants to beat me. But he's always wanted to be a winner, at home, at school – it never stops, even when he has a career of his own.
- e I like chicken better than pork. Fried chicken is the best. Followed by chocolate ice cream – my favourite. Mum's a great cook – I love you, Mum.

Extract 5

The waiter sang even louder than before. David hit him on the chin. As I moved away from the table, a fight developed between Sabina, David, the singing waiter and several more waiters who were trying to calm things down.

Soon the place was a loud, confused mess of cake, pieces of lobster, pools of wine and bits of broken guitar.

Extract 6

His heart seemed to rise to his mouth as he realised what had happened. And the whistle lay in tiny pieces on the ground. Harry knew, as soon as he saw it, that it was too difficult even for him to repair. He was stuck there.

Harry tried shouting at the still-smiling tourist, at the waitress, at everybody he saw. But it was useless. They could not hear him. They could not see him.