

Wild Country

Aim

- To stimulate students to read the book.

1 Tell students that Tess and Grant, the two main characters in the book, are tour leaders for a group walking holiday in the mountains of the South of France. Ask them what types of personalities, skills and abilities they think a tour leader for such a holiday should have, and write their answers up on the whiteboard.

Suggested answers: personalities – organised, confident, friendly, calm; skills and abilities – language skills, map-reading skills, people skills, physical fitness, etc.

2 Tell students that “Wild Country” is written in the first person, from Tess’s point of view (she is the narrator – the ‘I’ in the book). Now ask students to read Extracts 1–4. Tell them that Extracts 1 and 2 show Tess’s personality, and Extracts 3 and 4 show Grant’s personality. Working in pairs, ask students to discuss and make notes about each character’s personality.

Suggested answers: Tess – disorganised, hopeless, always late, forgetful, dreamy, observant, creative. Grant – bossy, tells people what to do, expects people to do what he wants, organised, experienced, confident, strong.

Pairs should share their ideas with the whole class. Next, have a whole class discussion on whether Tess or Grant would make the better tour leader and why. Follow this with a class vote for either Tess or Grant.

3 Dialogue Exercise 1. Ask students to read Extract 3 again. Now ask them to write a few lines of dialogue which show Grant speaking to people on holiday as if he were a soldier. When students have finished, ask them to take turns to share their dialogue with a partner. Students should give each other feedback.

4 Dialogue Exercise 2. Ask students to read Extract 5, which appears near the beginning of the book. Now ask them to continue the extract, writing the conversation that takes place between Tess, the blonde woman and the flower seller. They should use dialogue only, no description. Next, working in groups of three, ask students to be Tess, the blonde woman or the flower seller. Ask them to read out each student’s dialogue. Which dialogue works best, and why? Groups that wish to could read out their dialogue to the whole class.

5 Remind students that ‘Wild Country’ is the name of the holiday company that Tess and Grant work for. Working in pairs, ask students to think of a holiday company they would like to start up. It should have a theme (Wild Country is a walking holiday company). For example, if students like opera, it could be an opera holiday company, or if they like pizza, it could be a pizza-making and eating holiday. Now ask students to think of a suitable name for their company.

6 Ask students to read Extract 6. Working in the same pairs, ask students to think of some advice for tour leaders working for the company they have thought of in Exercise 5. They should write this down. Now ask pairs to share the details of their holiday companies with the whole class.

7 Ask students to look at Extract 7, which is a mixed-up scene from the story. Tell them to put the scene in the right order. (The right order is d, f, b, h, a, e, i, g, c.) Alternatively, you could photocopy this extract several times and cut it up (so that there are enough for each student to have a piece of the scene). Ask students to walk around the room until they have found people who have the same extract as them – NB they are not allowed to show their pieces of paper to anyone; they must read them out. The next task is for these groups to circulate together to try to identify the correct order of the scene. The groups should then stand in the right order and take it in turns to read out their extract.

8 Tell students (if they don’t already know) that Tess is an artist. Divide the class into two groups and ask each group to think of as many famous artists as possible. The groups should then share their names. The group with the most is the winner.

9 If there are enough copies of “Wild Country” to go round, give them out and ask students to start reading.

Optional Extra

10 Ask students to read Extract 8. Now divide them into pairs and ask them to draw a caricature of their partner. Arrange the caricatures on the wall as a display. Ask students to vote for their favourite.

Wild Country

Extract 1

I'd been a tour leader for Wild Country, my father's walking holiday company, for a year. In that time I'd been late meeting a group at the airport several times. I'd also lost my wallet, with all the money to buy food for the tour group for a week in it. And, of course, everybody who worked for Wild Country knew about the time I'd taken a group to the wrong town on the wrong day. They'd all missed their plane home.

Extract 2

'The colours are beautiful,' I told the group. 'The river is so blue through the trees, and the mountains seem to be looking down on us like people . . .'

Extract 3

Before he started working for Wild Country, Grant had been a soldier for five years. Sometimes he spoke to tourists as if they were soldiers too.

Extract 4

I had no idea why Grant wanted me to go shopping with him, because half the time he was walking ahead of me. Even when I did catch up with him, he didn't agree with anything I wanted to buy.

'That cheese is no good, Tess,' Grant said.

'Why not? It tastes lovely,' I replied.

'True, but it'll also smell horrible after a few days in the sun,' Grant went on.

'Not peaches, Tess,' he said.

'What's wrong with peaches?' I asked.

'They're too soft. Apples are better,' he replied.

Extract 5

I screamed and jumped back from the dog. Too quickly. There was a very loud crash behind me.

'*Mademoiselle!*' shouted an angry voice.

I turned round to see flowers all over the ground. 'I'm sorry,' I said. 'That dog – it bit me!'

'What dog?' asked the angry flower seller.

'Well, that one,' I said, but when I looked down, the dog had disappeared. 'It was here a minute ago,' I said, turning to look. Unfortunately, I turned so quickly that my shoulder bag flew through the air and crashed into some more flowers.

'*Mademoiselle!*' shouted the flower seller again.

'I'm sorry,' I started to say, but then I noticed that things were about to get even worse. A river of dirty water from the flowers was moving very quickly towards the blonde woman's expensive white summer shoes.

'*Madame!*' I shouted, but it was too late.

'My shoes!' cried the blonde woman.

'My flowers!' cried the flower seller.

I held up my hand to show what the dog had done.

'My finger!' I cried, but neither the flower seller nor the blonde woman was interested in my hurt finger.

Extract 6

'A tour leader should smile as often as possible.' That's what it said in the book I was given when I started the job. 'At the beginning of a tour, holidaymakers are often tired from their journeys. They may also be worried about what the other people on the holiday will be like. A smile from you makes everybody feel better.'

Extract 7

a 'You've never led any camping tours before, have you, Tess?' Grant said.

b 'Oh!' I cried, fighting to get it off.

c 'Well,' said Grant, 'you'd better watch and learn then.'

d I followed more slowly, feeling a bit worried as I watched Grant get the tents out of the bus. I hadn't actually put a tent up before. But it couldn't be too difficult, could it?

e 'No,' I agreed, 'I haven't.'

f It was. Within minutes of getting my first tent out of its bag, everything had gone wrong. The tent was very large, and I couldn't tell which way round it went. While I was trying to find out, the wind caught the tent, and soon it was over my head like a big, wet blanket.

g 'No,' I said.

h Grant came to help. 'Do you actually know what you're doing at all, Tess?' he asked. But he could see by the look on my face that I didn't.

Extract 8

'What's a caricature?' Astrid asked.

'It's a picture that makes you look stupid,' Grant told her helpfully.

I gave him a dirty look. 'It's a funny picture,' I explained to Astrid. 'It does look like you, but if you have a bit of a big nose, I make it *very* big. Or if you have small eyes, I make them very small.'