

# Within High Fences

## Aims

- To develop students' predictive skills.
- To develop students' ability to talk and write about characters.
- To stimulate students to read the book.

1 Write *Within High Fences* on the board or overhead and tell them it's the title of the book they're going to read. Ask students to guess what the high fences could be.

**Possible ideas:** prison, hospital for people with mental problems, etc. Don't tell them what the place is yet.

2 Ask students to read People in the story (see handout). Ask, 'Who are the most important characters?' Elicit Nancy, Tom and George. What's the relationship between the three characters? Can students predict what happens in the story?

**Possible answers:** a love 'triangle'; she leaves her boyfriend; she falls in love.

What kind of story do they think it is? Elicit 'romance'.

3 Ask students if they know what the high fences are yet. They know that Nancy is a guard and George is an asylum seeker. If they don't guess, finally tell them that in the book it's an asylum centre in London. To establish meaning, ask/tell them who stays there: people who have very bad problems in their own countries and have to leave. Elicit/give examples.

**Possible examples:** writers/journalists who say things against their governments; people who belong to opposition parties in countries where opposition is not allowed.

4 Ask students to read Chapter 1 of *Within High Fences* on the handout. What do they learn about Tom and Nancy? Students make notes while reading.

**Possible answers:** Nancy: works at night; wears a uniform in her job; she's beautiful; she met Tom when she was young (at school); she wants to be a writer. Tom: blond with blue eyes; doesn't like Nancy working at night; cold; tells Nancy that she isn't intelligent, so not very nice.

Ask students what they think will happen next.

**Alternative:** If you have the CD you can do this as a listening exercise.

5 Focus on George, the asylum seeker. Why could he be seeking asylum? Ask students to read Extracts 1 and 2 (see handout opposite) to find out.

Ask them to make notes on George, then to write a short paragraph about him.

**Possible paragraph:** George is a very kind man with a beautiful smile. He likes to help people. In his country he was a photo journalist and he had to leave because he took photos of the police. They were hurting women and children.

**Optional extra:** Get students to write their paragraph on a slip of paper. Get them to put the slips on a table or stick them up on the wall. Students have to look at the different paragraphs and vote for the best one. With a large class, you can do this in groups of eight or ten.

**An alternative:** An easier version of this is to read and complete the paragraph below.

George is a very ..... man with a beautiful smile. He likes to ..... people. In his country he was a photo ..... and he had to leave because he took photos of the police. They were ..... women and children.

6 Ask students to look at the character list again and to read Extracts 3–6. Which character said which extract?

**Answers:** Extract 3 – Tom; Extract 4 – Harriet; Extract 5 – George; Extract 6 – Nancy

7 Finally, ask students what they think happens in the story. Does George really like Nancy or does he just want a passport to stay in the country? If you have the books, hand them out and start reading.

# Within High Fences

## People in the story

**Nancy:** a guard

**Tom:** Nancy's boyfriend

**George:** an asylum seeker

**Harriet:** Nancy's best friend

**Steve:** Harriet's boyfriend

**Bill:** works with Nancy

## Chapter 1 Night work

There was nothing different about that night. It was the same as every other night, I thought. But that night, my life started to change. I didn't know it then, but I know it now.

It was a January evening and it was cold and dark. I was leaving to go to work and I was wearing my uniform. Tom, my boyfriend, was watching a DVD.

'Bye, Tom,' I said.

He didn't answer.

'Tom?'

'You know I don't like you working at night,' he said. He said this every night. He kissed me, but the kiss felt cold.

I walked out of the front door. We lived in a comfortable new house in Greenwich, South East London. I thought I knew who I was. I thought I knew what I wanted. I had Tom . . . my man. He was older than me, tall with blond hair and blue eyes. He liked buying me things – clothes, shoes, jewellery – expensive things. For my eighteenth birthday he gave me a gold watch.

We met when I was at school. I wanted to be a writer then. Tom laughed at me. He told me writers were intelligent. 'You're not intelligent,' he said. 'You're beautiful, but you're not intelligent.' And I believed him.

I moved in with him when I finished school. I didn't think about the rest of my life. I thought I was in love. Tom was all I wanted.

That night I started the car and drove through the dark. It was very cold. As I drove I thought about Tom. I put my hand up to my face. I could feel his cold kiss on my cheek.

Tom said the night was his time with me. He said I didn't need to work. It wasn't a great job but I liked the money. And I liked shopping. Now I could buy the things I wanted. For the first time in my life, I was earning some money. For the first time in my life, I didn't need Tom for everything.

## Extract 1

'My name's Nancy. What's yours?'

'I'm George,' he said. And when he smiled that beautiful smile, my heart jumped again.

'And do you agree with all the rules here?' he asked.

'No,' I replied. 'Not all of them.'

'Then why are you doing this job?'

I didn't know what to say. I did it because I liked having some money.

'I wanted to be a writer,' I replied, 'but I left school early.'

'You can do anything, if you really want to,' said George.

## Extract 2

'George, why did you come here, to this country?'

I didn't think George wanted to talk about his past. But this time he answered me.

'In my country, I was in danger,' he said.

'Danger? Why?'

'I was a photo journalist,' he said. 'I took some photos for the newspapers, but the police didn't like them. I took them because I wanted people to know what was happening in my country.'

'What were they photos of?' I asked.

'They were of soldiers hurting women and young children. But the police saw my photos and they came to find me.'

'That's terrible,' I said. 'You were trying to help those women and children.'

'Yes,' he said.

## Extract 3

'You are stupid, Nancy,' he said. 'I can't believe how stupid you are. This asylum seeker just wants your money and your passport. You hear about people doing this all the time. You'll come back to me, I know you will.'

## Extract 4

'Nancy . . . just remember, you love Tom. You live with Tom. You have a beautiful home and a good life. Don't lose it.'

## Extract 5

'It's possible they will send me home again. People say it's hard to get asylum here.'

## Extract 6

Did George take my things? Was Tom right? Did George just want my money and my passport?