

Mini-plays

by Tim Bowen and Liz Plampton

Nightmare neighbours

LISTENING SKILLS TEACHER'S NOTES

Teacher's notes and answer key

Level: Intermediate and above
Age: Adults
Time needed: 45 minutes plus
Procedure: The 'Twelve top tips' will give you extra ideas for using the plays in the classroom.

Notes on language and culture

- Norfolk is a county in the east of England.
- When George says 'them heavies', he is using the demonstrative pronoun *them* instead of the demonstrative adjective *those*. This is a common feature of spoken English.
- The people who 'swooped' on the house at the beginning of the play are council employees sent to remove possessions from the house following a court order. In this case, it is to remove audio equipment that the person has been playing loudly and annoying her neighbours.
- "Bout 'alf three, it was' is an informal way of saying 'It was about 3.30'.
- '(I) know what you mean' is a very common way of agreeing with someone. It is also a way of continuing the conversation.
- MTV is a satellite television channel that mainly broadcasts music videos.
- If you see something *in your mind's eye*, you can picture it or imagine it.
- 'It'll come to me in a minute' is a popular expression used when trying to remember something that you are confident you will remember soon.
- When George says that the council 'probably took the kitchen sink', he means that they 'probably took absolutely everything'. This derives from the expression 'they took everything except the kitchen sink', also meaning 'they took absolutely everything'.
- When George says 'Don't hold your breath', he means 'Don't be too optimistic'. We use this expression when we don't expect something good to happen, as in 'He says he'll finish the work by Monday but I'm not holding my breath'.



- ASBO* stands for *anti-social behaviour order*. These are issued to people (especially young people) who persistently engage in anti-social activities. The terms of the order often forbid them to visit certain streets or meet particular people.
- Eric uses the colloquial expression 'I ain't' which means 'I'm not'.
- If someone walks around with their 'hood up', they put the hood of their coat or jacket over their head.
- Baking hot* means *very, very hot*.
- CCTV* stands for *closed-circuit television* and is a system that allows someone to watch on a television screen what is happening in different parts of a building, town, etc.
- When Eric says 'Let's show 'em what we're made of!' he is asking George to help him show his neighbours that he is not intimidated by them by taking action.

Twelve top tips

- Take away the title of the play. Students try to guess the context. Who? Where? Why? What?
- Ask students to describe the appearance, personality and social status of the characters in the play.
- Cut the play up into four sections. Students then put it back in the correct sequence.
- Supply several statements of fact or opinion about the play. Ask students to assess whether each one follows from the play, supports it, contradicts it or is assumed.

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5. Use the play alongside a onestopenglish news lesson or news article on the same subject and hold a debate and discussion on the topic to link the content with students' experience or knowledge.

6. Students add their own stage directions, e.g. ... *he said angrily – rising from his chair.*

7. Students can finish the play off in their own words or change its ending.

8. Students interpret the play, perform it and then record and listen to themselves for correct use of stress and intonation.

9. Students perform the play using the same words but in different styles, e.g. a romance, a ghost story, a thriller, etc.

10. Students identify vocabulary that has a negative connotation.

11. Students identify the word/phrase/phrasal verb that means ...

12. Take an adjective or adverb out of a sentence and put it in brackets at the end of the line. Students put it back in the correct place or wherever it will logically fit, for example:

He must get hot in the summer. [BAKING]

He must get baking hot in the summer.

5. Colloquial language: Ellipsis

1. They probably took the kitchen sink while they were at it.
2. It drives you round the twist.
3. There's no respect, is there?
4. He's a nasty piece of work.
5. She does all that erotic dancing.
6. There's no need, mate.

Answer key

1. Complete the extract

1. slept; 2. row; 3. swear; 4. drives; 5. eye

2. Vocabulary

1. b; 2. f; 3. a; 4. e; 5. c; 6. d

3. Listen

2. There is a suggestion at the end that the neighbours might be violent too, but the main theme is the noise they make.

4. Find the colloquial expression

1. not 'alf; 2. go off your trolley; 3. drive someone round the twist; 4. five grand; 5. old banger; 6. nasty piece of work; 7. give someone a hand; 8. little squirt

Nightmare neighbours

Transcript

Scenario: Two next-door neighbours talking over the fence in Norfolk

Characters: George, Eric

- George** Quiet, isn't it?
- Eric** Not 'alf!
- George** Did you see 'em?
- Eric** Who?
- George** Them heavies from the council!
- Eric** No!
- George** Swooped, they did! Swooped! Swooped on the place this morning, didn't they? 'Bout 'alf three, it was.
- Eric** Well, do you know, I thought I heard something, but I was so knackered last night, I must have slept through it!
- George** Well, I'm not surprised. No one round here has been getting much sleep with all that row.
- Eric** Know what you mean. I've had to take time off! If I've heard that song once, I've heard it a thousand times! Over and over again, she plays it. I swear I'll go off my trolley soon.
- George** Oh, I know, drives you round the twist! What's her name? Always on the telly. MTV channel. My son watches it.
- Eric** I can see her in my mind's eye. Does all that erotic dancing. Can't think of her name.
- George** It'll come to me in a minute.
- Eric** Well, as I say, if she plays that same song again, I'll do something I might regret!
- George** No need, mate. They took all her stuff.
- Eric** No!
- George** Everything! TV, computer, DVD player, CD player, CDs. Probably took the kitchen sink while they were at it.
- Eric** Oh, fantastic! Peace at last! Do you know, she's made my life a complete misery?
- George** I wouldn't hold your breath, mate. She'll probably go out and buy another CD player!
- Eric** Not if she has to pay a fine, surely?
- George** How much, do you reckon?
- Eric** Oh? 'bout five grand, at least!
- George** She in?
- Eric** Think so. Look, she's parked her old banger right outside my house again!
- George** She must do it on purpose. There's plenty of other places.

Nightmare neighbours

Transcript

- Eric** No respect, is there?
- George** That's the younger generation for you.
- Eric** Well, I've had enough of this. No one's gonna park in *my* place. Give us a hand to push it out, will you?
- George** Oh, I wouldn't do that if I were you! There's that boyfriend of hers. Nasty piece of work. Shows off his ASBOs like they're trophies!
- Eric** I ain't scared of 'im! Jumped up little squirt. Walks around with his hood up all the time. I can't understand it. He must get baking hot in the summer.
- George** They wear their hoods up so you can't recognize them on CCTV. Little thugs, they are!
- Eric** Come on, then. Let's show 'em what we're made of!
- George** Aw, I don't know ... I mean I've got my kids to consider. I don't want any reprisals.
- Eric** Come on, mate. You take that side, I'll take the other!
- George** Ooh, my back ...

Nightmare neighbours

Worksheet

1 Complete the extract

Use these words to fill the gaps in this short extract from the play.

row drives slept eye swear

Eric Well, do you know, I thought I heard something, but I was so knackered last night, I must have _____ (1) through it!

George Well, I'm not surprised. No one round here has been getting much sleep with all that _____ (2).

Eric Know what you mean. I've had to take time off! If I've heard that song once, I've heard it a thousand times! Over and over again, she plays it. I _____ (3) I'll go off my trolley soon.

George Oh, I know, _____ (4) you round the twist! What's her name? Always on the telly. MTV channel. My son watches it.

Eric I can see her in my mind's _____ (5). Does all that erotic dancing. Can't think of her name.

George It'll come to me in a minute.

Now listen to the play or look at the transcript and check your answers.

2 Vocabulary

Match these words from the text with their meanings.

- | | |
|--------------|---|
| 1. swoop | a. something unpleasant done in revenge for something |
| 2. jumped up | b. make a sudden and unexpected attack on a place |
| 3. reprisals | c. large, strong men paid to persuade someone using threats |
| 4. knackered | d. think |
| 5. heavies | e. very tired (informal) |
| 6. reckon | f. thinking you are more important than you really are |

3 Listen

What is the main topic of the play?

1. violent neighbours
2. noisy neighbours
3. nose neighbours

Listen to the recording and choose the best answer.

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Worksheet

4 Find the colloquial expression

Look at the transcript of the play and find the following words and phrases. Note that they are in the order in which they appear in the play.

1. a two-word expression meaning *yes, definitely*
2. a four-word expression meaning *to go crazy*
3. a five-word expression meaning *to make someone crazy*
- 4 a two-word expression meaning *£5,000*
5. a two-word expression meaning *an old car in a bad condition*
6. a four-word expression meaning *an unkind or unpleasant person*
7. a four-word expression meaning *help someone*
8. a two-word expression which is an insulting term meaning *an annoying person, usually someone who is not very tall*

5 Colloquial language: Ellipsis

Which words are missing from these examples from the play?

1. Probably took the kitchen sink while they were at it.
2. ... drives you round the twist.
3. No respect, is there?
4. Nasty piece of work.
5. Does all that erotic dancing.
6. No need, mate.

6 Discussion

Anti-social behaviour (vandalism, drunkenness, theft and so on) is a major problem in many countries. What action should be taken against people who make the lives of other people a misery?