

TEXT	THE WOMAN IN WHITE
AUTHOR	Wilkie Collins
THEMES	What are you like? (Unit 1), Blockbusters and bestsellers (Unit 6), Against all odds (Unit 7), Crime and punishment (Unit 10)
VOCABULARY	Expressions, nouns and adverbs.
WRITING	Students write a description of a walking tour.
SPEAKING	Students rank and talk about challenging situations.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Wilkie Collins (1824–1889) was an English novelist and playwright. His two most famous books are *The Moonstone* and *The Woman in White*. Collins was a significant figure in the development of the modern detective/mystery genre. His innovative style involves multiple narratives, atmospheric settings, unreliable narrators and red-herrings.

WARMER

Focus on the picture. Elicit as much description and speculation as possible, e.g. 'What is this place?', 'Where is it?', 'What time of day is it?', 'How would you feel about being on this road?', 'Which way would you choose to go?'.

ABOUT YOU

The questions get students talking about walks and walking. Encourage them to give specific examples of walks they remember.

If students don't enjoy walking, encourage them to say what they dislike about it. You could introduce the idea that in the past people walked more because they didn't have access to cars, public transport, etc. You could add that some people find walking helps them think. Do students find they think better when they walk?

- 1 Ask students to explain their preference. Although most of the text is about the man, the woman is probably more interesting because she is unusual. However, there are many things we don't know about the man – what is *he* doing walking these roads so late at night? Where is he going?

2

Suggested answers

- 1 The picture and the text should give students a visual impression of the setting of the extract. They should work in pairs and describe what their pictures would show. The question obviously allows for the possibility of creating an actual picture if it is useful and appropriate to introduce an art activity.
- 2 It is an instinctive gesture of protection (get students to mime the action to make a kinetic association).

- 3 Elicit the idea that in stories and books things often have a symbolic, metaphorical or poetic, as well as literal meaning. We use the expression *at a crossroads* when we have to make an important decision in life. In literature, Oedipus, Jane Eyre and Robert Frost all make important decisions at a point where roads meet or diverge. The meeting of the characters at a crossroads in the extract could also be symbolic in some way.
- 4 Ask for ideas and suggestions – perhaps she got lost, her transport doesn't work, someone left her in this place, she is sleep-walking, etc.
- 5 Ask for ideas and suggestions. Will they become friends? What is her story? Is this going to be a happy or sad story? Will they work together to solve a mystery, perhaps?

VOCABULARY

3

Answers

- 1 distinctly
- 2 account for
- 3 melancholy
- 4 suspect (*reassure* is not used)

4

Answers

- 1 reassured
- 2 distinctly
- 3 mechanically
- 4 suspected
- 5 impatience

WRITING

- 5 Work through the introduction and instructions and make sure the students understand the task. Depending on the route they choose, they can focus more on historical, cultural or present-day aspects of their town. You can suggest they include a map to go with the text, which can be either drawn or marked on a photocopied town map.

SPEAKING

- 6 It is best for ranking activities to be done alone at first in order to avoid group members deferring to the opinion of the more confident students. Once each person has ranked their list, then the group can compare and discuss their ideas. You can also tell them to agree on a group ranking and groups can combine to compare their choices. Alternatively, as the final task involves suggesting a solution to the most serious problem, each group could present their solution to the whole class.

MIXED ABILITY

Both the setting drawing (Activity 2, Question 1) and the writing task (Activity 5) provide opportunities for drawing/illustration. If willing, weaker students could take on this task, which relies less on language but still involves communication and comprehension.