

TEXT	<i>Daddy-Long-Legs</i>
AUTHOR	Jean Webster
THEMES	Family ties (Unit 1), Making a point (Unit 2), When tomorrow comes (Unit 3), Food for thought (Unit 4), On trend (Unit 5), Sink or swim! (Unit 10), Changing times (Unit 12), A new chapter (Unit 16)
VOCABULARY	Various, including verbs and nouns for people and feelings.
WRITING	Students write an email.
SPEAKING	Students share and compare opinions.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Daddy-Long-Legs is a 1912 epistolary novel by the American writer Jean Webster (1876–1916). The protagonist, Jerusha Abbott (who changes her name to 'Judy'), leaves an orphanage to go to college. Her studies are paid for by a benefactor she has never seen. The novel has remained popular, probably due to its lively style and the appeal of the main character.

WARMER

Focus students' attention on the picture. Ask them to describe the scene. Why do they think the postman is the centre of attention? (Establish that even well into the 20th century, letters were the main way people communicated with people who lived in other places.) What kinds of letters do they think the people in the picture are expecting?



ABOUT YOU

The questions extend the theme of letter-writing and encourage students to think about how we communicate with people now, compared to how we communicated in the past. The last question relates to the extract. Students might reflect on the kind of language we use when we talk to someone we haven't met. As this is common now thanks to social media, they can talk about their own ideas and experiences.

- Judy refers to her excitement and 'new adventures', and we probably understand that life in the college is both more interesting and more fun than her previous life. She also mentions some specific things – the food – comparing 'ice-cream' to 'mush', and of course her clothes, which used to be hand-me-downs or, even worse, from the poor box. She also seems interested in her classes, as evidenced by her telling Daddy-Long-Legs about what she has learnt.

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Suggested answers

- Judy describes herself as 'mean' and 'shallow', as saying too much (writing too many letters) and suggests that she doesn't really deserve her education. Does this mean she is very honest, or is she lacking self-confidence? We know that she has had a hard life as an orphan, so perhaps she is very aware of how fortunate she is, and uses her self-criticism in an almost humorous way, highlighting her faults rather than her achievements.
- Ask for ideas and suggestions. We don't need to understand the description to realise that she is clever and interested in science. Given the previous question, does she want to show Daddy-Long-Legs that she is learning and studying? And by choosing a science subject, that she has the interest and ability to learn and understand complex concepts? Or is she telling him that she has discovered a subject that really interests her?
- Ask for ideas and elicit adjectives or words students could use to describe her – for example: *enthusiastic, talkative, friendly, brave/strong* (she doesn't seem bothered about her bruises), *grateful, funny, ironic*, etc. Work with the whole class to agree on a general definition of Judy using the words suggested.
- Begin by eliciting the conventions of letter-writing (this is also useful for the later writing activity). Ask what kind of language Judy uses – is it formal, conversational, neutral? Highlight some aspects which stand out, such as the use of capitals (VERY), questions, exclamations, speaking directly to 'Daddy', and the unusual signing off – 'yours talkatively'. Establish that it is a conversational but essentially polite and friendly style appropriate to a letter to an anonymous benefactor.

VOCABULARY

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Answers

- orphan
- giggle
- settled
- shallow (*mush* not used)

4

Answers

- handed
- poor box
- dreaded
- mush (*orphan* not used)

WRITING

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The students discuss the four situations. Ask for ideas from the whole class and write them on the board so they can be used later on. Make sure students understand they can invent the situation – it doesn't have to be autobiographical. Remind students of the letter conventions to use when writing – this is an email to a friend so encourage them to use an appropriate format and register. The writing can be done as an individual or collaborative activity.

SPEAKING

- 6 If you think it useful, revise functional language of agreeing and disagreeing (partially and completely), conceding, clarifying and repeating. If you think it works better to assign students an idea to defend or challenge, make pairs or threes and give them time to prepare their arguments.

MIXED ABILITY

A group hot-seat activity involves a student being given clues and definitions of a word or phrase. They have one minute to guess the word. If they don't guess the word, move onto the next word. If they guess it, they score a point and move to the next word. Allow about five minutes for the activity. The team with the most points at the end is the winner. Give each team a list of words from the text to elicit. Do an example with the whole class. Ask a stronger student to turn away while you write a word on the board, for example 'whisper'. Remove the word and begin giving the student clues and invite other students to do the same, e.g. *It's a way of speaking; It's how you speak when you want only one person to hear what you're saying; It might be a way of sharing a secret; It's the opposite of shouting*, etc. Make sure a stronger student is in the 'hot seat' and don't rotate, as you usually do with this activity. In this way, weaker students work with their partners trying to give definitions but don't have to be in the 'hot seat'. It's a fun, collaborative activity excellent for using synonyms and antonyms as well as describing situations and giving examples.