



### ABOUT YOU

Answer the questions and compare your ideas.

- 1 When was the last time you were really excited about something you were expecting to happen?
- 2 We usually think of hospitals as sad places because usually people go there when they are sick. But when might a hospital be a happy place to visit?
- 3 What are your earliest memories?
- 4 Why do you think most people cannot remember much about their early years?

F. Scott Fitzgerald's short story is set in the early part of the twentieth century. Mr Roger Button is going to be a father for the first time and is rushing to the hospital where his wife has given birth.

### 1 Read the text. As you read the text think about this question.

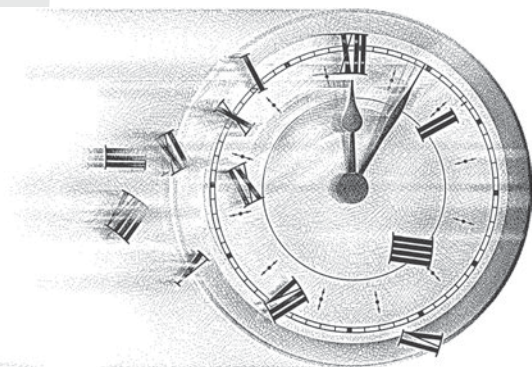
Which emotions is Mr Button experiencing in this extract?

## *The Curious Case of Benjamin Button* F. Scott Fitzgerald

Mr Roger Button, the president of Roger Button & Co., Wholesale Hardware, began to run toward Doctor Keene with much less **dignity** than was expected from a Southern gentleman of that picturesque period.

- 5 "Doctor Keene!" he called. "Oh, Doctor Keene!"  
The doctor heard him, turned around, and stood waiting, a curious expression settling on his harsh, medicinal face as Mr Button drew near.  
"What happened?" demanded Mr Button, as he came up
- 10 in a **gasp**ing rush.  
"What was it? How is she? A boy? Who is it? What –"  
"Talk sense!" said Doctor Keene. He appeared somewhat irritated.  
"Is the child born?" begged Mr Button.  
Doctor Keene **frowned**. "Why, yes, I suppose so – in a way."
- 15 Again he threw a curious glance at Mr Button.  
"Is my wife all right?"  
"Yes."  
"Is it a boy or a girl?"  
"Here now!" cried Doctor Keene in a perfect passion of **irritation**,
- 20 I'll ask you to go and see for yourself. Outrageous! Do you imagine a case like this will help my professional reputation? One more would ruin me – ruin anybody."  
"What's the matter?" demanded Mr Button appalled. "Triplets?"  
"No, not triplets!" answered the doctor angrily. "What's more,

- 25 you can go and see for yourself. And get another doctor. I brought you into the world, young man, and I've been physician to your family for forty years, but I'm **through with** you! I don't want to see you or any of your relatives ever again! Good-bye!"  
A nurse was sitting behind a desk in the **gloom** of the hall.
- 30 Mr Button approached her.  
"Good morning," she remarked, looking up at him pleasantly.  
"Good morning. I – I am Mr Button."  
At this a look of absolute terror spread itself over the girl's face. She rose to her feet and seemed about to run from the hall,
- 35 restraining herself only with the most apparent difficulty.  
"I want to see my child," said Mr Button.  
"Oh – of course!" she cried. "Upstairs. Right upstairs. Go – **up**!"  
"I want to see my child!" Mr Button almost shouted. He was **on the verge of** collapse.
- 40 "Come this way, then, Mr Button."  
"Well," gasped Mr Button, "which is mine?"  
"There!" said the nurse.  
Mr Button's eyes followed her pointing finger, and this is what he saw. Wrapped in a large white blanket, and partly squashed into
- 45 one of the **cribs** there sat an old man apparently about seventy years of age.



### GLOSSARY

**dignity**

**gasp**ing

**frowned**

**irritation**

**be through with** (someone)

**gloom**

**on the verge of** (doing something)

**crib**

calm and serious behaviour that makes people respect you

making a noise by suddenly breathing in because you are shocked or surprised

made your face show that you are annoyed or worried by moving your eyebrows

the feeling of being annoyed

not have a relationship with someone any more

darkness, but not complete darkness

very close to (doing something)

bed with high sides for a baby

## 2 Read the text again and answer the questions.

- 1 What do we learn about how a gentleman was expected to behave at the time the story is set?

.....  
.....

- 2 Look at the text which is not in direct speech. What kind of information does this text give us?

.....  
.....

- 3 What seems unusual about the way the doctor and the nurse behave towards Mr Button?

.....  
.....

- 4 Who do you think the old man is?

.....  
.....

## VOCABULARY

### 3 Complete the second sentence so that it has a similar meaning to the first sentence, using the word given. Do not change the word given.

- 1 Andy arrived just as I was going to leave the party.  
**VERGE**

I was ..... when  
Andy arrived.

- 2 'Alex, I don't ever want to see you again!' said Toni.  
**THROUGH**

Toni said ..... Alex.

- 3 You could see she was very irritated by the noise.  
**IRRITATION**

You could see her .....  
result of the noise.

- 4 Although I won the race, at the end I found it hard to breathe. **GASPING**

Despite .....  
at the end.

### 4 Complete the text with the correct word from the box.

cribs dignity frowned gloom

The senior doctor was highly respected by her team. She had the kind of <sup>1</sup> ..... that made people trust her experience. Although it was almost dark, she was inspecting the <sup>2</sup> ....., making sure the babies were comfortable. Suddenly, in the <sup>3</sup> ....., she turned to the nurse, <sup>4</sup> ....., and said with irritation, 'this child needs a clean blanket. Please get one immediately!'

## WRITING

### 5 Work with a partner. Think about your ideas from Exercise 2, Question 4 and decide who the old man is and why the nurse or doctor seem so upset.

Write a letter from the nurse or doctor to a close friend, describing what happened in the hospital, and explaining why you are upset. Write your letter in 200–220 words.

.....  
.....  
.....  
.....  
.....  
.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

## SPEAKING

### 6 Work in groups of four or five. Look at the two situations below. They describe situations where something unexpected happens. Discuss these questions.

- 1 What can people do in these situations?
- 2 Who, if anyone, do you think is to blame?
- 3 What might be the consequences of the situations?

#### Situation 1

A family arrive at their dream holiday destination. They go to the hotel their travel agency booked. The receptionist tells them there is no reservation in their name and the hotel has no available rooms.

#### Situation 2

Jay has an interview for a place at college to study physics. It's very difficult to get accepted and the interview is really important. Jay takes a bus for the 10 o'clock appointment but on the way the bus breaks down. Passengers are told there will be another bus in thirty minutes. The time is 9.45.