

NEIGHBOURS FROM HELL

A TALKING POINTS LESSON FOR
ENGLISH READING & SPEAKING

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Introduction

How do you get on with your neighbours?

Do you like them? Do they like you?

What kinds of complaints do people in your country have with their neighbours?

Discussion

Common complaints people have about their neighbours:

making too much noise	leaving rubbish in front of their house
a dog that constantly barks	kids running around and shouting
often having loud parties	a nosey neighbour
a neighbour that complains about the slightest thing	a small argument that escalates for years
a disagreement over territory	trees that block the sunlight
borrowing something and not returning it	envy over a new car

Do you have any complaints like this with one of your neighbours?

Or do they have a complaint with you?

Go through all the complaints and discuss with your teacher and classmates.

Reading

Neighbours can be worth their weight in gold. Or be your living worst enemy.

Most people usually have few problems with their neighbours. We either get on well enough with them we can bid them a cheery good morning as we leave for work. Or if we are especially lucky, our neighbours become good friends — people we love and trust with our lives.

In this case, it is not uncommon for some people to exchange spare keys with their neighbours because they have so much trust between them.

But then there are those unfortunates who have nothing but trouble with their neighbours.

Take, for example, Mr Paul Jones, who has had countless arguments with his neighbour over the building of a new wall between their gardens. Paul argues that his neighbour has stolen several centimetres of land from him by building the wall in a different place.

His neighbour says it is only a few centimetres and nothing to worry about. But as far as Paul is concerned that is not the point. It is about the principal of real estate. And in England, a man's home is his castle.

Then there is the case of Irene Burrell whose neighbour has a small yapping dog. The dog barks all the time. Constantly yapping day or night.

Any time Irene goes into her own garden the dog barks at her like she is an intruder. She has complained but her neighbour says there is nothing she can do. It is natural for a dog to bark and so her neighbour ignores any complaints.

Finally, we have Doug Mills. His neighbours are a group of noisy university students. They play loud music all the time — apart from before lunchtime. That is the time they are sleeping. But at night there are parties and as Doug tries to sleep before a long day at work all he can hear is loud music and laughter next door. He has complained and the students apologise. But by next week it is back to normal again. It is driving him mad.

Essential Vocabulary

barks	nosey	the slightest thing
escalates	territory	block
borrowing	envy	worth weight in gold
living worst enemy	cheery	exchange
spare keys	unfortunates	nothing but trouble
countless	the principal	yapping
intruder	driving him mad	

Exercise

Write down all the words and phrases in your vocabulary notebook. Look in your dictionary and find the meaning of each word. Write the definition next to each word.

Then make up your own sentences using each word or phrase.

For example:

Notebook—*a small book with pages of blank paper that students use to make notes when studying.*

“I left my notebook at home so I was unable to make any notes in my English class.”

Questions

1. Do you have any 'neighbours from hell'? Tell the class about this person.
2. What are some common problems with neighbours in your culture?
3. Has a neighbour ever complained about you? What was the reason?
4. Who deals with neighbour disputes in your city? Is this effective? Who should deal with neighbour disputes?
5. Do you have a neighbourhood watch system in your city? Is this a good idea? Why/why not?
6. Is it acceptable for neighbours to have dogs? Why/why not?
7. What animals are unacceptable for neighbours to have?
8. Do you think modern society prevents us from making friends with our neighbours? Why/why not?
9. There is an English phrase — Love Thy Neighbour. What do you think this means? Is this possible?
10. Should we even talk to our neighbours at all? Why/why not?

Teacher's Notes

Depending on where you live, you may find that most of your students live in a high-rise building. Their idea of neighbours and complaints about neighbours may differ from western ideas.

But the chance to let off steam about people we have a grievance with is always a good talking point!

Start off by looking at the list of common complaints and then move on to the reading.

At the end of the class you can do this role play exercise:

Role Play

There are three people in this role play:

- Mr Smith—he owns a small dog that barks all day-to-day
- Mrs Daniels—she has had enough of this dog barking all day and wants it to stop
- Miss Banes—a representative from the local community to help solve the problem

Miss Banes arrives to the neighbours houses and listens to their stories. She then has to reach a happy conclusion for all parties.

Credits

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