

# 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 about their neighbours?

## **Neighbours From Hell!**

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

Most people have few problems with their neighbours. We either get on well enough with them so 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 faith in them.

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

***Take, for example, Mr Paul Jones.***

Paul 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.

***Obviously to his neighbour's advantage!***

“My neighbour said it is only a few centimetres and nothing to worry about,” says Paul.

***But as far as Paul is concerned that is not the point.***

“It is more about the principal of the thing,” he says. “And the laws of property. In England, a man’s home is his castle.”

The case continues. But for the moment, Paul and his neighbour or not on speaking terms.

***Then there is the case of Irene Burrell.***

Irene’s neighbour has a small yapping dog. The dog barks all the time. Constantly yapping day or night.

***It is driving Irene mad!***

Any time Irene goes into her own garden the dog barks at her like she is an intruder.

“I tried to speak to my neighbour about it,” says Irene. “But she refuses to do anything about it.”

***It got to a point where Irene had to involve a lawyer.***

“But my neighbour just said that it is perfectly natural for dogs to bark,” says Irene with a sigh.

So her neighbour ignores any complaints.

***Finally, we have Doug Mills.***

His neighbours are a group of noisy university students.

They play music all the time. Loud music.

“The only time it’s quiet is in the morning,” says Doug. “And that is because they are all sleeping. Don’t they have any classes to go to?”

At night, there are very noisy 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 apologised. But by the following week, it is back to normal again.

“It is just infuriating,” he says.

***These are extreme cases. But it seems that having very difficult neighbours is not so uncommon.***

Disputes between neighbours can be a very costly experience too.

In some cases, people have had to sell their homes to get away from the neighbour from hell. And they may lose money by doing so.

For Doug Mills, he is very grateful that his terrible neighbours are students.

“I know they will leave the house by the summer,” he says.

“And I can enjoy some peace and quiet then.”

## Reading Comprehension Questions

What two values can a neighbour have?

How is most people's relationship with their neighbours? Good or bad?

If people have good neighbours, what kind of things do they say or do for each other?

What is the name of the first person mentioned in the article?

What argument does this person have with their neighbour?

What reason or excuse does the neighbour give in their defence?

Is the case closed?

Does Paul speak to his neighbour?

What is the name of the second person mentioned in the article?

What is the issue between this person and their neighbour?

Did the person talk to the neighbour about this problem?

What was the result?

Finally, what did Irene have to do?

What excuse does the neighbour give for the barking dog?

What is the name of the third person mentioned in the article?

What is the issue with this person's neighbours?

How does this affect his life?

Have the neighbours said sorry to Doug?

Do some people sell their homes to get away from bad neighbours?

Why is Doug looking forward to the summer?



## Essential Vocabulary

weight in gold	enemy	cheery
uncommon	exchange	spare keys
faith	unfortunate	countless
centimetres	advantage	principal
laws	castle	yapping
to bark	constantly	to drive sb mad
intruder	refuses	involve
lawyer	perfectly natural	sigh
complaints	infuriating	extreme
costly	grateful	peace and quiet

### 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.”***

## Discussion Questions

Do you have any 'neighbours from hell'? Tell the class about this person.

What are some common problems with neighbours in your culture?

Has a neighbour ever complained about you? What was the reason?

Who deals with neighbour disputes in your city? Is this effective? Who should deal with neighbour disputes?

Do you have a neighbourhood watch system in your city? Is this a good idea? Why/why not?

Is it acceptable for neighbours to have dogs? Why/why not?

What animals are unacceptable for neighbours to have?

Do you think modern society prevents us from making friends with our neighbours? Why/why not?

There is an English phrase — Love Thy Neighbour. What do you think this means? Is this possible?

Should we even talk to our neighbours at all? Why/why not?

## Common Complaints People Have With Their Neighbours

Take a look at the most common complaints people have with their neighbours below.

making too much noise	leaving rubbish in the wrong place
a pet or animal that causes problems	kids running around and shouting
having loud and noisy 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.**

## 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

### The Situation

Mr Smith and Mrs Daniels have had many arguments about Mr Smith's dog.

The dog barks all day and this has caused a lot of conflict between the two neighbours.

Now it has reached a point where Miss Banes, a representative from the local community office, has been called in to try to resolve the matter.

Miss Banes listens to both sides of the story from Mr Smith and Mrs Daniels.

Then she asks questions to try to make the peace.

Miss Banes has to make the final decision.

Will the neighbours be happy with the outcome?

In your groups, prepare your role play.

***When you are ready, show the class!***

## Writing

**This is a creative writing exercise.**

You are going to write a short story of 200 words.

The title of the story is...

### **The Bad Neighbour**

Write your story.

When you have finished, read it out loud in front of your classmates.

***Or submit it to your teacher for feedback.***

## Credits

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