

Racing Tips



a short story for English
reading & speaking

Table of Contents

Introduction.....	3
Racing Tips.....	4
Reading Comprehension Questions.....	7
Essential Vocabulary.....	8
Discussion Questions.....	9
Credits.....	11

Introduction

Can people predict the future?

Can people see the future in their dreams?

What do dreams mean?

Have you ever had a dream about the future?

Racing Tips

"Cup of cocoa, sweetheart?"

Stan was in the kitchen, heating some milk.

Next to the stove, the bottle of cheap, supermarket-brand brandy he kept in the back of the larder. Brenda never saw it.

A little nip of this and she would be out like a light.

He had his notebook and pencil all ready by the side of the bed.

"Yes, please, love."

Her favourite show on the telly was coming to a close soon.

Some American detective show. She loved them. Stan hated them. He hated the accents and the way the detectives always got their man.

He wanted the bad guys to win for a change.

Like his mate, Donald, said: *Crime does pay, old son. It pays very well.*

For the last few weeks, the bookies had paid Stan very well.

And it was all down to his Brenda.

He had no idea what she was doing at first. Just lying there, fast asleep, and talking to him about the 3:30 at Ascot.

What did she know about horse racing? Only what he told her, and she never seemed that interested anyway.

But that one night, she went on and on about a horse called The Blinder.

"It's going to win, Stan. And everyone is going to be very surprised."

At the time, Stan ignored her.

Daft old bird. She didn't know what she was talking about. She was just talking in her sleep.

But he couldn't get the name of the horse out of his mind. And when he went down to the bookies to meet the lads, who should win the 3:30 at Ascot?

The Blinder!

The whole place went berserk. No one knew who this horse was.

That night, Brenda talked again about another horse.

"Little Wonder, 4:00 Chester," she said, sleepily.

Stan wrote it down. The next morning, he rushed down to the bookies and put ten quid on Little Wonder.

The fat girl behind the counter said nothing to him. She had absolute disdain for all the people that went in there.

But the look on her face when Stan went in to collect his winnings.

6-1. So he pulled in seventy quid. Lovely!

That night, he took Brenda down to The Crown. They had a couple of drinks and pie and chips.

Every night, for the next few weeks, Brenda went to bed and muttered out the names of horses and race tracks in her sleep. Stan was raking it in.

The other lads were getting a bit fed up with him. He was winning every day and not sharing the knowledge.

"Where you getting your info from?" said Donald. "Come on, don't be tight. Tell us."

He had no intention of telling them anything. Instead, he started going to other bookies. He had to go all over town, placing bets to avoid suspicion. He was working flat out.

But the money. Oh boy, he'd never seen so much lolly in his life.

Soon they'd have enough for a car. And maybe a nice holiday.

Brenda had always wanted to go abroad, but he'd never fancied it. He liked England, and he liked what was what. No need to go on one of them big aeroplanes and go halfway round the world.

If she kept this up, they could have enough money for the rest of their lives.

Stan poured the hot milk into the cup. He stirred the cocoa into the milk, then added a large measure of the brandy.

She would be out like a light inside an hour. And then he would write down all the names of the horses she reeled off.

He took the hot drink into the lounge. Brenda was sitting on the sofa, a box of Quality Street beside her and the new telly on in the corner of the room.

It was brand new, that telly. One of them big ones with a remote control.

"Here are, girl," said Stan. "Get this down you, and then off to bed."

Brenda gave him a smile.

He had to wait patiently until the end of the detective show. The handsome star of the show caught the bad guy and made an unfunny quip. And then finally, the end credits.

Thank God for that.

Out of the corner of his eye, he saw Brenda packing her things away. The chocolates for tomorrow night, her cardigan, the remote control which she always kept on top of the telly.

"I'm going up, Stan," she said as she got to her feet.

"All right, my love," he said. "I'll be up in a bit."

He liked this time. The telly off. The quietness of the room. Just him sat in the living room by himself.

He gave it fifteen minutes, then went up himself.

In the bedroom, he could hear Brenda's light snoring.

He took his shoes off and then lay on the bed beside her.

"Got anything for me, Bren?" he whispered to her quietly.

She smacked her lips and breathed in through her nose. She held her breath, then let it out in a long gasp.

"Oh Stan, you won't believe what I've just seen," she said.

He budged up closer to her, notebook and pencil in hand.

"What's that, my love?"

"Stan, it's the end of the world. The world is going to end.

Someone pushed the button. We're all done for, Stan."

Then she rolled over and carried on snoring.

End of the world? What was she on about now? Maybe that was the name of the horse.

But then there was a flash of something outside, followed by a big booming sound in the far distance. A car alarm started going off. Then some more unclear noise.

Another big flash.

Stan went to the window and opened the curtains.

Outside, he saw something he had never seen before in all his days.

Bright silver objects rained down over the city.

And in the far distance, the biggest fire he'd ever seen in his life.

Reading Comprehension Questions

Who are the two main characters in this story?

What is Stan preparing in the kitchen?

What does Brenda like to do in the evening?

Do Brenda and Stan like the same kind of TV shows?

What is the name of Stan's friend?

What does Stan like to do in his free time?

What does Brenda say to Stan in her sleep?

Does Stan believe what she is saying?

What event convinces him she is speaking the truth?

How does Stan treat Brenda after his first win?

What do Stan's friends think of what he is doing?

How does he react?

What plans does Stan have with his newfound wealth?

What would Brenda like to do with the money?

What is Brenda's ritual before she goes to bed?

In the story, what does Brenda tell Stan in her sleep?

What does Stan hear outside?

What does he see out the window?

Essential Vocabulary

Cocoa	Disdain	Telly
Sweetheart	Quid	Snoring
Larder	Berserk	Whispered
Nip	Sleepily	Budge
Detective	Raking it in	Notebook
Accents	Suspicion	Pencil
Bookies	Quality Street	Gasped
Mate	Remote control	Flash
Booming	Car alarm	

Exercise

There may be a lot of new or unfamiliar vocabulary to you in the story. This is the perfect time to get to know these new and strange words and phrases.

Write down all the new words and phrases in your vocabulary notebook. Look up the meaning of the new vocabulary in a dictionary or online and write down the meaning next to the word or phrase.

It should look something like this:

Cocoa – *a hot drink made from cocoa powder mixed with sugar and milk or water.*

Supermarket-brand – *A supermarket's own brand. Often cheaper and sometimes of lower quality than other brands.*

Then write a sentence of your own that uses the new word or phrase correctly.

I love a cup of hot cocoa on a cold winter's night.

My friend offered me a hot drink but he only ever buys supermarket-brand coffee.

If you do this correctly, it will help you learn many new words and phrases. This will build your English vocabulary and writing down all the words and phrases, making sentences of your own, will all help you to remember all of this new vocabulary.

Discussion Questions

Do you think we could see the end of the world?

How could it happen?

Could it happen with nuclear war?

Explain your reasons.

What kind of person is Stan in the story?

Do you think he uses Brenda?

Is Stan a gambler? What kind of gambler is he?

Is gambling on horse racing popular in your country?

What kind of people do this?

Brenda gives Stan horse racing tips in her sleep.

Is this possible, do you think?

Can people see the future in their dreams?

Can our dreams reveal anything to us?

What can dreams tell us?

How would you describe Stan's relationship with his friends?

Are they his real friends?

In the story, Brenda goes from giving Stan horse racing tips to telling him about the end of the world.

What kind of dream do you think she had about the end of the world?

If Stan is seeing the beginning of a nuclear attack, what can he do about it?

What do you think he would do next in the story?

Would he try to help his wife Brenda?

Have you had any dreams that came true?

Have you had any dreams that seemed very realistic to you?

Talk about them in class.

Credits

This lesson plan is courtesy of ManWrites.

This content is copyright ManWrites 2023 — ManWrites©2023

For more information, go to www.manwrites.com

Or join my mailing list below and I will send you more ESL teaching ideas.

[**ManWrites Mailing List**](#)