

Lucky

Preparation

Characterisation

Janine

Before you read the story, you are going to discover a little about the characters in it, and you're going to do this by looking at extracts from the text.

Here some lines near the beginning of the story, when the narrator starts to explain what happened:

This is Janine, said Laura. She kicked Lisa under her desk then she said, She's filling in for Maggie.
 Welcome Janine filler-in-for-Maggie, he said. You let me know if they're not looking after you. My hands were sweating, I couldn't hit a single key right. I had to get out a pen and fiddle about pretending to make a note of something. He went over to Lisa's desk asking about some letters, his voice is deep and soft and furry my ears can pick it out anywhere it's right close up to them, in a crowd I can sometimes hear it too, low and close murmuring beside me as if it'll keep me safe from everything.

filling in	- assuming the role or job temporarily
looking after	- taking care
pick (it) out	- identify (it)
furry	- as if covered in fur or soft hair
murmuring	- speaking in a low, perhaps seductive, voice

- *How many people were in the room?*
- *Who is absent?*
- *Who is new?*
- *Why did Laura kick Lisa?*
- *Why were the narrator's hands sweating?*
- *What effect did 'he' have on the narrator?*
- *Where do they work?*

You should now have a little image in your mind of the people involved, something about their relationships and where they are. Let's find out a little more about the narrator:

I was giggling. I couldn't help it. He would hate me and think I was an idiot. He started to laugh.
 She's a giggler! he said to Laura and Lisa. Wonderful! A dose of that all round every morning and you'd halve the NHS waiting lists!
 He went then and I was giggling so hard I was gasping for breath, I could feel my face like a beetroot. But the other two didn't notice, they were whispering together, Maggie this and Maggie that, he can't wait till she gets back. He's been to see her twice in hospital.

giggle	- laugh in childish way
NHS	- National Health Service
gasping	- finding it hard to breath
beetroot	- root vegetable with dark, purple colour
whispering	- speaking and trying not to be heard

- *What might have caused the narrator to giggle?*
- *Why were the other two whispering? What were they whispering about?*

At lunchtime, we discover, the narrator, Janine, leaves her workplace. But where does she go?

At lunchtime you can sit by a pillar or the wall, usually you can get a table to yourself and there are invisible people there, old codgers with lots of coats and a cup of tea, sometimes studenty types I suppose they use the library, or ordinary people, fat with a shopping bag. There's a man with glasses who always reads a book, everyone ignores each other and you just queue and pay for your sandwich, none of that embarrassing waiter business.

old codgers	- derogatory expression for old people
back and forth	- going in front and behind; reflecting everywhere

- *Why does she choose this place at lunchtime?*
- *What place is it?*
- *Who does she like to have lunch with?*

One day, while enjoying her solitude, she is surprised to see 'him'.

I didn't dare to look at him until he was sitting down, he ate his sandwich in 7 bites. 7 is my lucky number.
 D'you use this library? he said. I shook my head and he leaned forwards. Have you ever been upstairs?
 Upstairs. I can't believe he asked me that.
 No. The giggles were rising in my throat nearly choking me.
 Well if you've finished come with me and have a look. You might want to use it one day.
 He stood up and drank his coffee in three gulps. It was coffee. The same as mine – not tea.
 We went up the marble steps together there are 26 to the ground floor, I stepped on each one at the same time as him. We moved at the same speed.
 Wonderful institution, public libraries, he said. But we must use them. Use them or lose them, eh Janine!
 He says my name so beautifully. I was giggling and he laughed too, he joins in my giggle.

choking	- not able to swallow or breath
gulps	- quick swallows, or drinking very quickly

- *The narrator seems to have an obsession with numbers. Why might this be?*
- *The narrator seems fascinated that they appeared to do the same things together. Why?*

- *Why did he insist they go 'upstairs'?*
- *Why do you think she thought they went 'upstairs'?*

We are beginning to get an idea of what Janine, the narrator, is like. What about 'him'? here Janine tells us some more:

He's married. You guessed that. I know everything about him. The others talk; he's got 2 kids at university. His wife's a doctor, his name is Paul. They talk about him and Maggie but they know nothing. Paul. In my dreams every night he's smiling – he's reaching out to touch my shoulder – he's leaning towards me and his voice is stroking, tickling, inside my ear.

- *Had you guessed that he was married?*
- *How old do you think he is?*

Here is a final section from the text. What can we learn from it?

As I was going across the lobby he came bursting in from the street carrying a huge bouquet.
 - Hello, he said. Coming up for a drink?
 - I have to go home.
 - Oh that's a shame. He wanted me there. He knew how much I wanted to be there.
 - Well have a carnation. I'm sure the chairlady of the AHA won't miss one!
 He pulled out a long-stemmed bright red carnation. As red as blood as red as my heart thumping Paul Paul Paul. It's a promise.

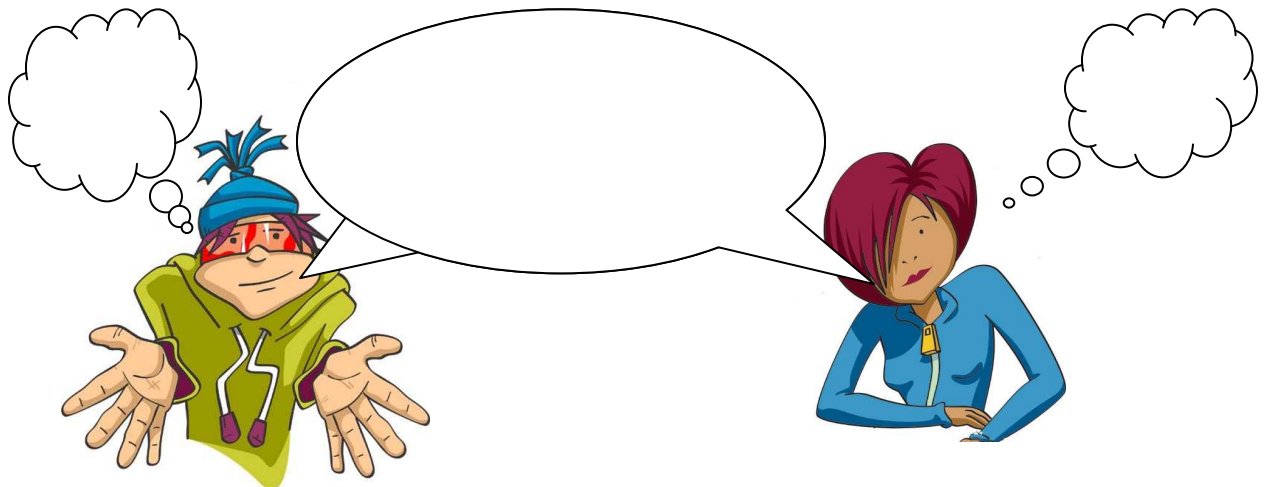
bursting	- arriving suddenly and unexpectedly
carnation	- pink or red flower; <i>Dianthus caryophyllus</i>

- *Why did give her a carnation? Was it because a) he was in love with her b) he wanted to give her a token of his respect c) he was casually flirting with her d) he felt sorry for her or e) he felt guilty?*
- *Can you describe her reaction to receiving the carnation?*

In the first part of this worksheet, we discovered quite a lot about Janine and ‘him’. However, we certainly don’t have the full story. Before you read the story itself, construct your own story on the information you already have. First, answer these questions. You will know the answer to some but you will have to guess the answer to the rest. If you guess all the answers, that’s fine too!

1. How did Janine travel to work each day?
2. What ‘rules’ did she invent to test that he loved her as she travelled to work?
3. What did she feel when she saw him for the first time?
4. What are the people like she works with?
5. How sociable was she?
6. What event – on what date – made the biggest impression on her?
7. What did she think when she saw the motto written in the library?
8. What event did she realise she couldn’t attend? Why?
9. What action did he make which said to her that he loved her?
10. What was she certain would happen next?

Using your answers to the questions above, tell the story of Janine and ‘him’.



Lucky

Preparation

Context

Superstition

According to her own words, Janine, the narrator in the story 'Lucky', was superstitious. This how the story starts:

There were 7 tests. If the 8.20 to Victoria was on time. If there were no empty seats. If I saw the weird couple. If I could get across the station concourse without them making any change-of-platform announcements. If the beggar was in that doorway just round the corner from the post office. If a pigeon walked across the pavement in front of me without me dodging to get it there. And if I arrived at work before nine. Check check check check check check check! He loves me.

Victoria –	train station in Manchester (also in London)
weird –	strange or peculiar
beggar –	someone asking for money
pigeon –	common large(ish) bird found often in cities
dodging –	moving quickly

During her working day she looked for other 'signs'. For example, in the snack bar:

I didn't dare to look at him until he was sitting down, he ate his sandwich in 7 bites. 7 is my lucky number.

And then in the library:

We turned round the corner and went up the next lot of steps. 35 (definitely lucky – the sum of my birth day and month, the 27th of the 8th).

Some people find this kind of superstition funny. Other people take it quite seriously. Which are you?

Do you do any of the following?

- Avoid walking under ladders
- Be extra careful on Friday 13th
- Throw salt over your shoulder if you spill some
- Watch out for black cats in front of you
- Touch wood to bring you luck
- Put shoes on the bed
- Get worried if you break a mirror
- Carry a 'lucky' object with you
- Have a 'lucky' number

Do you do something that isn't mentioned here that other people might think is superstitious? Would you share this information with other people in the class – or would that be unlucky?!

Now try this little quiz.

1. Your horoscope says that something awful will happen to you at work that week. It's already Thursday and everything is cool so far. Do you call in sick for Friday?
2. You're shopping for a new umbrella when the fire alarm in the department store sounds and the sprinklers go off. Do you open the umbrella to keep yourself dry?
3. You're just about to get your dream job. Do you keep quiet about it for fear of "jinxing" it?
4. You're getting last minute alterations at the tailor/dressmaker the day before your wedding when the mirror in front of you suddenly shatters. Do you:
 - Keep it between you and the tailor/dressmaker
 - Nervously share the news with your fiancé
 - Consider postponing the wedding
5. You're driving in your brand new car, or being driven in your parents' brand new car. You turn on the radio and it happens to be the same song you were listening to when you were in your last car accident. Do you:
 - Immediately switch radio stations
 - Forget about it and enjoy the new car
 - Insist on returning the car
6. You get on the same plane as a famous TV psychic. You overhear the psychic telling a stewardess they've got a "bad feeling" about his flight, and then they get off the plane! What do you do?
 - Catch up to them, have them explain their "bad feeling", then decide whether to get off
 - Get off that plane immediately
 - See if you can get their window seat
7. Have you ever passed on a chain letter or e-mail for fear of bad luck if you didn't?
8. Would you get married on Friday the 13th?
9. Do you wear a special item or, perform rituals before a big event?
10. Would you demand a new car licence plate if yours ended in "666"?

Your teacher will give you the key on scoring after you've completed the quiz.

If you like these tests, try this one:

We now have many scientific explanations for otherwise strange events - yet, many superstitions are still around. How guided are you by superstition? Take this quiz and see.

1. When you make a wish you
 - A) snap your fingers.
 - B) cross your arms.
 - C) cross your fingers.
2. It is bad luck to
 - A) open your suitcase indoors.
 - B) open your window at night.
 - C) open your umbrella indoors.
3. The number of lines on your forehead will
 - A) tell how many friends you'll have.
 - B) tell how many children you'll have.
 - C) tell how many sibling you have.
4. When you bite your tongue you will
 - A) tell a lie.
 - B) tell the truth.
 - C) tell a secret.
5. You will have good luck if
 - A) you sprinkle pepper on toast.
 - B) you sprinkle water on your feet.
 - C) you sprinkle salt on a bird's tail.
6. By sleeping on a table
 - A) it will bring you good luck
 - B) it will bring you bad luck.
 - C) you will fall off.
7. If you have hairy arms
 - A) you will be a very lucky person.
 - B) you will be very rich.
 - C) you are a very secretive person.
8. If your upper lip itches
 - A) you'll be kissed by a vampire.
 - B) you'll be kissed by a werewolf.
 - C) you'll be kissed by someone tall.
9. When you are telling someone the truth, you
 - A) pull your ear lobes.
 - B) cross you heart.
 - C) clap you hands
10. Which is the safest side of the bed to get out of,
 - A) the left side.
 - B) the right side.
 - C) either side but don't use the ends.
11. Hanging anything on a doorknob brings
 - A) good luck.
 - B) trouble.
 - C) guests.
12. Someone has something to tell you if
 - A) a cat crosses your path.
 - B) they walked beside a ladder.
 - C) a fly lands on your nose.
13. If your lower lip itches
 - A) you'll be kissed by someone short.
 - B) you'll be kissed by a witch.
 - C) you'll be kissed by a friend.
14. Which is the unluckiest day of the year
 - A) Sunday the 1st.
 - B) Wednesday the 20th.
 - C) Friday the 13th.

Read this article. Does it have anything to do with superstition? If you think it does, underline all the salient points. If you think it doesn't, prepare an argument stating why not.

Putting faith in the saints

Kurt Hollander

Although I was going to Havana to present my film at the festival, I had more important business there. My Serbian homeopath in Mexico City had told me that a scorned lover of mine years ago had given me the evil eye. I needed to have it taken care of before things could get better. I needed some *santería*

Santería, an African religion brought to the Americas by slaves, is thought to be practised by most Cubans, alongside other beliefs (including, though less and less, communism). Leandro is a *babalawo*, a "father of knowledge or divination", the highest rank in *santería*. A *babalawo* begins every day by consulting the Sacred Book of *Ifa*, and all decisions in life are based on the results.

He asked me a series of questions, flinging on the floor a chain fitted with eight round coconut "chips". After each throw he jotted down the sequence of the shells and consulted a photocopy of the Sacred Book.

According to the results, I was a disbeliever, I never went to sleep without eating, I had the powers of a holy man but lacked focus, and I thought about committing suicide. The session determined my personal *orishas* - the spirits I would need for the initiation ritual - and how much to charge. Leandro threw the chain and coconut chips to see if €200 was the right amount. Yes it was. But I only had €50. He accepted.

Now for the ritual cleansing, which improves one's health, wealth and love life. Leandro swilled a mouthful of *Santero* rum and spat it on his gods - a pile of objects on the floor covered in a thick layer of black gook, which I realised, in part from the smell, was dried blood.

After drawing a cross on my forehead with white chalk, he pulled the head off a pigeon and placed it on the altar. While the pigeon head stared at me, Leandro dripped the blood on to my three *orishas*: Ellegua, a rock-like head with shells for eyes and mouth, is the mischievous child that can open and close doors and paths, the embodiment of chance; Ogun is a violent warrior represented by a metal cauldron full of iron instruments; and Osum, a pedestal of tin with a chicken on top, the representation of my body.

I held a chicken in one hand and a pigeon in the other while Leandro cut their throats and sprinkled their blood on his altar of blackened gods. Thoughts of avian flu flitted through my mind. I wiped up the blood from the floor using the feathers I had plucked from the chicken. I kissed the *orishas* as Leandro presented them to me, then cleaned the blood off and wrapped them in newspaper.

He instructed me how to set my *orishas* up in an altar. For the rest of my life, every Monday, I have to knock three times on the floor, feed them (they like fruits and corn-based food), spit alcohol on them, light candles and ask them for help.

I wanted to believe that this ceremony would help me get back on track. But as the *orishas* realised, doubt and disbelief are part of my genetic make-up: even the kitsch paintings of *santería* gods and the cheap stereo playing old Cuban love songs, made it seem less sacred. I also realised that I was asking for financial help from gods in Cuba, where almost no one makes any money.

At the airport I was told I had to pay a €25 departure tax. The woman at the check-in said she'd help me sell some of my stuff to raise the money. I didn't think of selling off my *orishas*, but I did wonder if they were going to solve my money problems.

Lucky

Preparation

Context

In Love?

Prince Charles, at the time of his engagement, gave a rather astonishing answer when asked if he was in love by reporters. While Diana answered with a shy, 'Of course', the Prince replied, with a laugh, 'Whatever that means'. (1) _____

How do we fall in love? First of all, the time has to be right. We have to be willing, and whether consciously or not, *ready* for love. The man or woman who feels that either he or she is unlovable or avoids contact with the opposite sex, is unlikely to find a soul mate. (2) _____

_____ Many adults are surprised that it is when they have settled into a happy phase, when they are just getting on with life, that they find that special someone to love and who loves them back. Happiness, and a love of life, is a strong aphrodisiac.

Why do we fall in love? On a conscious level it is relatively easy to elaborate on why we find someone attractive or loveable, but the unconscious also comes into play and we often sense that the other person will truly understand us and meet our deepest needs. Hopefully this will turn out to be true: our instincts have led us to a partner who has the qualities we most admire, and there is a mutual psychological 'fit'. If this is not the case, then hearts can be broken. (3) _____

_____ Taken to its extreme, are stalkers; they often feel that the person in whom they have invested a great deal of care and thought, and even imagine themselves in love with, returns their passion.

Why do we fall out of love? Perhaps the cruelest of all words are: 'I don't love you any more'. To have love taken away, and perhaps not understanding why, can shatter the most confident person. (4) _____

_____ The pain is felt physically as well as emotionally, and it can take a long time to trust someone else in that intimate way.

Finding love can be a minefield, and falling in love has often been described as being under a spell. In a way we are, and that is an accurate description, and the enchantment of falling in love is quite addictive and can often blind us from seeing the reality of a relationship. Some people find themselves unable to move on to a more everyday kind of loving, and continue to search for that heady unreal feeling of walking on air we all experience at the beginning of a relationship.

Being in love means many different things to each person. Quite possibly it means something different to men and to women. But remember our first experience of falling in love was with the adults who cared for us as a child. Our experience of being in love will have been formed by the way they loved us back. (5) _____

_____ The adolescent falling in love with a pop or film star is no bad thing. It can be a rehearsal for the real thing at a safe distance. The trap can be if a young girl falls for a man and mistakes sex for love. Many a bewildered girl is left crying, 'But I thought he loved me'.

On the road to love we also meet others who have their own agendas, which can often lead to a collision or head-on crash. But with all the ups and downs of an intimate relationship, in the words of the song, 'Being in love is better than being out'.

I think most of you will agree with me about that.

1. *The following sentences are missing from the article above. Can you put them into the correct place. There is one sentence that doesn't belong at all.?*

- a) Quite possibly we all continue to search for a repeat of that first blissful experience.
- b) On the other hand, anyone desperate to find a lover will transmit this sense of urgency and need, and frighten away any possible suitor.
- c) Years later we understand more about his wariness and his reluctance to be more positive, unlike most newly engaged men.
- d) As anyone who has ever had a sad love affair knows, the heart, and pride, can take a long time to heal.
- e) It is rare for anyone to feel this strongly, in spite of the hype given to it, at least at first.
- f) When one person projects qualities onto the 'other' that he does not possess, the mistake can cost dearly

2. *Imagine that you had to give THREE pieces of advice to someone about falling in love. Based ONLY on what you have read in the article, what would these pieces of advice be?*

- i. _____
- ii. _____
- iii. _____

3. *Websearch. Use the following weblinks to discover some more about yourself!*

- a) What kind of romantic partner are you?

<http://www.blogthings.com/howareyouinlovequiz/>

- b) Find your perfect partner!

http://web.tickle.com/tests/lovetype/?sid=2005&supp=search_lovepersonality_2&test=lovetypeogt

- c) Are you in love? Quiz

<http://teenadvice.about.com/library/teenquiz/14/blisitlovequiz.htm>

- d) BBC 'love calculator'

http://www.bbc.co.uk/teens/girls/funstuff/games/love_calculator.shtml

Lucky

Preparation

Context

Manchester Central Library

In the story 'Lucky', by Jane Rogers, the narrator talks about going to a library, where she can also get a cheap lunch.

The library. I go to the library for my lunch. Often I think I won't, I think I'll go to a wine bar where there are foreigners or business men doing deals but in the end I go to the library.

A later description in the story tells us a little bit more about the library.

We turned round the corner and went up the next lot of steps. 35 (definitely lucky – the sum of my birth day and month, the 27th of the 8th). There's a desk where you get books stamped then he turned in through an archway into the centre of the building and I followed him in between two tall bookcases in to the middle where it opens up. He looked at me. He was looking at me to see if I liked it. It opens up under a vast round white dome smooth as an egg, with a glass circle at the top. Around the edges, gilt lettering; SHE SHALL BRING THEE TO HONOUR WHEN THOU DOST EMBRACE HER. SHE SHALL GIVE TO THINE HEAD AN ORNAMENT OF GRACE. Me. Me and him. It must be. He knows it. Brilliant sunlight pouring through the glass dome.

The library that is being described is the Central Library in Manchester.



The central Library is an important British library, which serves the city and the region, and one of the largest outside London, it has an extensive collection of books for lending and for reference, as appropriate for a major university city. It also contains audio-visual material and exhibitions.

Manchester had been the first local authority in Britain to introduce a public lending and reference library in the middle of the nineteenth century. Lending of books was free, costs being supported by local taxes.

The existing building came as a result of many years searching for a suitable place to house Manchester's growing collection of books and printed materials. Amongst these are 30 incunabula - books printed before 1501. It also houses the Library Theatre, a café, shop and Local Studies Unit

Project:

What is the most important public library near to your school? Find out something about its history, and people associated with it now and in the past? What does it do apart from have books on the shelves? Collect some pictures of the library and present a small leaflet - containing texts and pictures - to encourage visitors to your area to visit the library. Of course, these visitors only speak English!