

# The Strap Box Flyer

## Introduction

This BritLit kit for intermediate students was written by a team of teachers from Portugal, Turkey and India and were guided in their task by trainers from NILE (Norwich Institute for Language and Education) – Claudia Ferradas and Michaela Cankova. The teachers attended an intensive course at NILE, centred around BritLit activities during the summer of 2011. This kit is one of two that resulted from this course, the other being ‘The Ice Maiden’.

This kit is based on a story by Paul Jennings, entitled “The Strap Box Flyer”, the fourth of his stories subjected to the BritLit programme. The story is about a dishonest, but very convincing, salesman who sells a magic glue tube that will stick anything you can imagine. However, the effect does not last forever...

Like all BritLit kits, the materials offered here are not intended to be followed rigorously and teachers are expected to pick and choose the activities they want their students to work on before, during and after reading. Apart from focusing on language and textual awareness, teachers are encouraged to deal with the intercultural aspects as well as the understated values of the story while preparing lesson plans.

In this set of materials, the story is prepared to be read as group work. The activities range from arousing motivation to speaking, reading and writing tasks, in order to develop and integrate several skills. The sections presented in this kit are:

### **Pre-reading activities**

### **Reading activities**

### **Post-reading activities**

The “Pre-reading” section provides materials designed to arouse students’ curiosity about the story and also activate their schemata (their knowledge of the world) to engage them in the narrative. While using “Reading activities”, teachers are advised not to take too much time so as to avoid “killing interest in the story”. We have designed different tasks for teachers to choose from in order to develop different skills. In the “Post-reading” section teachers will find different alternative activities which range from art work to giving opinion in a debate, arguing and complaining.

All materials in the kit are downloadable and photocopiable. Pages suitable for photocopying for students are marked 

We would be delighted to hear from teachers about their experiences in using this material.

Ana Catarina Rocha  
Benny Matthew  
Carla Alexandra Moura  
Cláudia Gomes  
Denice Domingos  
Duygu Akçayoğlu  
Gleena Johny  
Júlia Ferreira  
Paula Correia

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Paul Jennings

## Pre-reading activities

### Activity One (6 -12 min)

#### Step 1 (1-2 min)

The teacher divides the students into groups of 4-5.

#### Step 2 (5-10 min)

The teacher puts up a PowerPoint slide or shows a picture of glue or brings a glue tube to class and asks students what they usually use it for.

The groups are asked to discuss possible answers to the question: How would you “make two thousand dollars in one day using the glue”?

Each group has to select a speaker who will talk about the group’s idea.

### Activity Two (20 min)

The teacher puts up the PowerPoint slide show with pictures from the story that students will be reading. They will try to identify what they illustrate and find the words in English.

 Glue	 Boat	 Money/dollars	 (fine) china
 Wrist watch	 truck	 greed / greedy man	 Your idea

The teacher asks students to work in pairs for about 5 to 7 minutes, in order to frame a story based on the pictures projected previously.

They have to use all the given words and supply another one.

When time is up they share their stories.

# Strap Box Flyer

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### Reading Activities

1. *Divide the class into groups and give each group one of the four parts of the story. (Note that the audio files follow the same division of the text). Tell students to read the part of the story they have. Then:*
  - a) *Students get ready to tell the other groups about their extract.*
  - b) *Ask them to make a short list of questions about the rest of the story (what would they like to know?).*
  - c) *Choose a speaker for each group, making sure shy or reluctant students are encouraged to take that role. Get the chosen speakers to retell their extract to the class, not following the order in the story.*
  - d) *Students change groups. You may reorder the groups placing one student from each of the groups in activity 2a together. Get them to go over their questions. Have they found answers in the other groups' retelling?*
  - e) *Encourage the groups to put the extracts in what they think is the right order.*
  - f) *As no group has been provided with the end of the story, they try to make guesses about how it ends.*
  - g) *Provide rest of the story (part 5). Is this what they expected? Would they change it? If so, how?*

## Part one

Hundreds of people were watching Giffen. They thought he was a bit mad. But they couldn't stop looking. He was very interesting.

Giffen went over to his truck and got out a tube of glue. On the tube it said GIFFENS GREAT GLUE. IT WILL STICK ANYTHING. Giffen held the glue over his head. 'This is the best glue in the world,' he said. 'It can mend anything that is broken. Who has something that is broken?'

A small boy came out the front. He held up a bow and arrow. 'My bow is broken,' he said. 'And no one can fix it.' Giffen took the bow out of the boy's hand. He put a bit of glue on the broken ends and joined them together. Then he put the arrow in the bow and shot it into the air. The people were surprised. They all clapped and cheered.

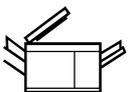
'That's nothing,' Giffen told them. 'You haven't seen anything yet.' He went over to the back of his truck where he had a big crane. It had a rope on the end of it. Giffen grabbed the rope. He put a dab of glue on the end of it. Then he put the rope on to the roof of the car. 'This glue can hold up a car,' he told the crowd. He stepped into his truck and started up the crane. The car was lifted up into the air. The only thing that held the rope on to the car was the glue.

The crowd thought this was great. No one had ever seen glue like this before. 'Now,' said Giffen, 'who wants to buy some of Giffen's Great Glue?'

The crowd rushed forward. Everyone wanted some glue. They couldn't get it quick enough.

They thought it was terrific. 'Get it while it lasts,' shouted Giffen. 'Only ten dollars a tube.' Giffen sold two hundred tubes of glue. He made two thousand dollars in one day. The customers took their glue and went home to try it out.

'You fools,' said Giffen to himself. 'You will soon find out that the glue stops working after four hours.'



## Part two

Miss Tibbs had bought a tube of Giffen's Great Glue. She was a very old lady. She lived all on her own.

Most of her friends were dead. There was no one to help her to fix things up when they got broken. So she was very glad to have the glue.

Miss Tibbs collected china. She had spent all of her life saving pieces of china. She had plates and cups and saucers from all over the world. She also had little china dolls and toy animals. She had so many pieces that she didn't know where to put them all. This is why she wanted the glue. She wanted to put up a new shelf.

As soon as she got home Miss Tibbs went and fetched a piece of wood from the shed in her back garden. Then she put some of Giffen's Great Glue along the edge of the wood and stuck it on to the wall. It worked well. The shelf was very strong.

'This is wonderful glue,' she said. 'It dries straight away.' Miss Tibbs started to put her china pieces on to the shelf. She decided to put her favourite piece out first. It was a small china horse. She had owned it for many years. It had been given to her by her father before he died. Miss Tibbs loved this horse. She put it in the best spot, right in the middle of the shelf.

After she had put all of the other pieces out Miss Tibbs sat down and had a rest. She was very tired. She fell asleep in her armchair in front of the fire.

Four hours later Miss Tibbs was woken up by a loud crash. The glue had stopped working.

The shelf had fallen off the wall and all of the china pieces were smashed.

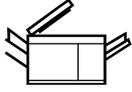
Miss Tibbs went down on to her hands and knees. She started to pick up all of the broken pieces. Then she remembered her horse. Her precious horse. She looked for it among the bits. She couldn't find it. Then she found something that made her cry. A leg and a tail and a tiny head. The horse was smashed to pieces.

Miss Tibbs cried and cried. She got her tube of Giffen's Great Glue and threw it in the fire.

Then she decided that she would go and find Giffen. She would tell him that his glue was no good. She would ask him to pay for the broken china.

She hurried back to the place where Giffen had been. But he was gone. There was no sign of him. She knew that he would never come back.



**Part three**

Another person who bought a tube of Giffen's Great Glue was Scott Bridges. He had bought it to mend his canoe. It had broken in half.

Scott's father had told him the canoe could not be repaired. He said that its back was broken. He told Scott to take it to the tip. But now that Scott had a tube of Giffen's Great Glue he knew that he could fix it.

The canoe was down at the lake. Scott went down there all his own. He didn't tell his father where he was going. He pulled the two pieces of the canoe together, and put Giffen's Great Glue along the join.

'Great,' yelled Scott. 'It's as good as new. This glue is fantastic.' He pushed the canoe into the water and climbed in. It floated well. It didn't leak at all. Scott began to paddle out into the middle of the lake. He was very happy. And excited. He paddled off as fast as he could go.

Scott was not allowed to go out in the canoe without a life jacket. But on this day he had forgotten. All that he could think about was the canoe and Giffen's Great Glue .

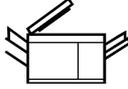
It was a sunny day and the time passed quickly. Soon four hours had passed. Scott noticed that some water was starting to leak into the canoe. He decided to start paddling for home. But it was too late. The glue had come unstuck. The canoe broke in two and sank.

The water was icy cold. Scott was frightened. It was a long way to the shore. 'Help,' he screamed at the top of his voice. But no one heard him. He was the only person on the lake.

Scott started to swim to shore. After a little while he began to get tired. His legs hurt and he had a pain in his stomach. His head went under the water. He tried to get to the top. But it was no use. His lungs filled with water and he sank to the bottom of the lake.

That night when Scott did not come home his father called the police. Divers searched the lake. They found Scott's body. And the broken canoe. In the bottom of the canoe was a tube of Giffen's Great Glue.

## Part four



Giffen was driving away in his truck. Very fast. He knew that he only had four hours to get away. Then the people who had bought the glue would start looking for him. He knew that they would be mad. He did not want them to catch him.

He decided to drive to Horsham. That was a long way off. They would not know about Giffen's Great Glue in Horsham. He could find some more suckers, and make some more money.

Two days later he arrived in Horsham. He took his truck to the centre of town. Then he put up a sign. The sign said:

TWO HUNDRED DOLLARS PRIZE.  
FOR ANYONE WHO CAN UNSTICK  
GIFFEN'S GREAT GLUE

Soon two men arrived. They were both riding tractors. One of the men got down from his tractor. He walked over to Giffen and gave him two pieces of rope. 'Join these up with your glue,' he said. 'Then we will pull it apart.'

Giffen smiled to himself 'OK,' he said 'I'll do it' He put a dab of glue on the ends of the two pieces of rope. Then he joined them together. The glue stuck fast.

The men took the rope that had been joined They tied one end to each of the tractors. Then they started the tractors up. There was a lot of smoke and noise. A crowd started to gather. Everyone thought that the glue would break. But it didn't. The wheels on the tractors sent up blue smoke. The engines roared. But still the glue held. Then there was a loud bang. The engine of one of the tractors had stopped. The other tractor started to drag it along the road. Everyone cheered at the top of their voices.

'Now; said Giffen, 'who will buy my great glue?'

The crowd pushed forward. Everyone wanted some. The people waved their money. They pushed and shoved. Giffen sold three hundred tubes.

At last everyone went home. Except one man. A short, bald man with a friendly smile.

'Excuse me,' he said to Giffen. 'But I wonder if you would like to buy something from me?'

'What are you selling?' said Giffen in gruff voice.

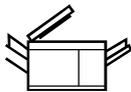
'A Strap Box Flyer. It is a small box that will make people fly.'

Giffen didn't believe that there was a box that could make someone fly. There was no such thing. This man was trying to fool him. Still, he was interested. It might be a new sort of trick that he could use himself, to make money from the suckers. He looked at his watch. He had to get out of this town before the glue started to come unstuck. He had four hours left. There was plenty of time to talk to the little man.

'OK,' said Giffen to the little man. 'Show me your Strap Box Flyer.'

'Not here, someone might see us. Come home with me and I will show you how it works.'

## Part Five



Giffen followed the little man home to his house. It was a small cottage. It was very untidy.

The grass was long and some of the windows were broken. Inside there was junk everywhere. There were tools, nuts and bolts, machines and bits of wire all over the floor.

'My name is Mr Flint,' said the little man. 'But everyone calls me Flinty.'

'I'm in a hurry, Flinty,' said Giffen. 'So let me see you do some flying.'

'Very well, very well,' replied Flinty. He went over to a shelf and took down a small box.

Then he lifted up the carpet and pulled out a short strap. It looked like a watch band made out of silver.

'I keep the strap in one place, and the box in another,' said Flinty. 'That's to stop anyone stealing my invention. I have to screw the box on to the strap. It won't work unless both pieces are screwed together.'

Flinty fiddled around with the box and the strap. It took a long time. About half an hour. Giffen was getting worried. He did not want to stay much longer. The crowd would be mad when they found out that the glue did not work for long. At last Flinty finished. He had screwed the box on to the strap. He put it on to his arm. It looked just like a wrist watch, only bigger.

'Now,' said Flinty. 'Watch this.' Slowly he rose up off the floor. He went up about ten centimetres.

Giffen could not believe it. His eyes nearly popped out of his head. 'How high can you go?' he asked Flinty.

'As high as I want to.' Flinty floated up to the ceiling. Then he flew around the room, just like a cloud.

Giffen knew that he had to get the Strap Box Flyer. It was worth its fortune. He could make a lot of money if he had it.

'Why are you showing this to me?' Giffen asked Flinty.

'Because you are a great inventor,' said Flinty. 'You have invented Giffen's Great Glue. I am an inventor too. I have invented the Strap Box Flyer. We could be partners. You could help me make the Strap Box Flyer. And I could help you to make the glue.'

Giffen did not say anything. He was thinking. He wanted the Strap Box Flyer. But he couldn't stay in Horsham. Once four hours was up his glue would stop working. The things that people had mended would start falling to bits. They would come looking for him. He could even end up in jail.

'Have you got another Strap Box Flyer?' Giffen asked.

'Yes,' said Flinty. 'I have one more. You can try it out if you want to. But first I will have to assemble it. I will have to screw the strap on to the box.'

'That will take half an hour,' said Giffen. 'I will go and get my truck. Then I will be back to try out the Strap Box Flyer myself.' Giffen went off. He had decided to steal the Strap Box Flyer. He wanted to have the truck nearby for a quick getaway.

Giffen could not believe his luck. Once he had the Strap Box Flyer he would find out how it worked. Then he would make more of them. He could sell them for thousands of dollars each. He would make a fortune. Everyone would want one.

He ran back to his truck. Then he drove to Flinty's house as fast as he could. The Strap Box Flyer was ready. There would just be time for a quick try out and then he would have to leave town.

Flinty put the Strap Box Flyer on to Giffen's arm. 'Now,' he said. 'All you have to do is to think of where you would like to fly to.'

Giffen thought that he would like to fly over to his truck. It worked. He went gently flying through the air and landed on the roof of his truck. Flinty floated over and joined him. 'Great,' said Giffen. 'Really great. How high can we go with these things?'

'As high as you like,' said Flinty. 'As high as you like.'

Giffen forgot about everything except the Strap Box Flyer. He forgot about the time. He forgot about Giffen's Great Glue and he forgot about getting out of town quickly.

'Let's go up to the clouds,' he said to Flinty. And so they flew together. High into the sky. When they looked down the people looked like tiny ants. It was wonderful to fly so high. Time passed quickly. Hours went by. It started to get dark Giffen decided that he would wait until it was night Then he would be able to get away from Flinty. He would just fly off and lose Flinty in the dark Then he would drive off in his truck and never come back. He could take the Strap Box Flyer to bits and find out how it worked. Then he could make a lot more of them. And sell them. Then he would be rich.

Flinty flew over to Giffen. 'We are very high,' he said. 'We can't go much higher than this. There will be no air to breathe.'

Giffen looked down. They were so high that he could not see the ground They were above the clouds.

'I have only made two Strap Box Flyers so far,' said Flinty, 'and yours is the best of the two.'

'Why is that?' asked Giffen,

'Because I joined it together with Giffen's Great Glue.'

Giffen was just in time to see his Strap Box Flyer break into bits. Then he started to fall.

He screamed all the way down.

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# Strap Box Flyer

Paul Jennings

## Post-Reading Activities



Teachers are provided with two different sets of suggestions for Post-reading activities, one aimed at intermediate students and the other at upper-intermediate students. Teachers should choose the activities which best suit their

class. There is also an activity (Intermediate, Activity 3) which could provide cross-curricular work with the Art teacher.



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## A. Post-Reading Activities for Intermediate Students

1.

Circle the expressions that Giffen uses to convince people to buy his product. Are they used in modern advertising? Find examples of similar strategies in ads and commercials.

2.

Read the story and complete the table below with information from the text:

Characters	First Opinions (on the glue)	Consequences/feelings after four hours
Miss Gibbs	e.g. "This is wonderful glue." (...)	e.g. "She cried and cried."
Scott Bridges		

3.

In groups, go through Part 2 of the story and draw Miss Tibb's pieces of china on the shelf. Do you collect china or other objects? On another shelf, draw your group's collections or the one you'd like to have. Which object would you be most sorry to lose?



4.

- a. What if Miss Tibbs met Giffen in some other town two months later? Write the dialogue between them, starting like this:



**Miss Tibbs:** Giffen, may we have a word in private?

**Giffen:** Oh, yes. What can I do for you?

**Miss Tibbs:** ...

**Speak  
out!**

- b. Imagine you are one of Giffen's victims.

How would you react if you ever had the chance to meet Giffen after being deceived?

5.

### EXPLORE YOUR CREATIVITY

Add another situation to the text – after Scott Bridges' episode – in which Giffen's glue victimises another character.

6.

### Over to you!

What do you think about Giffen's behaviour? Is he a successful salesperson? Do you admire him in some way? Is the ending a good punishment?

## KEY to Post-Reading Activities for Intermediate Level

1. The expressions that Giffen uses to convince people to buy his product are:

- “This is the best glue in the world...”
- “It can mend anything that is broken.”
- “That’s nothing (...) You haven’t seen anything yet.”
- “This glue can hold up a car...”
- “Get it, while it lasts (...) Only ten dollars a tube.”
- “Two hundred dollars prize for anyone who can unstick Giffen’s Great Glue.”
- “Who will buy my great glue?”

2.

<b>Characters</b>	<b>First Opinions (on the glue)</b>	<b>Consequences/Feelings</b>
<b>Miss Tibbs</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “This is wonderful glue.”</li> <li>• “It dries straight away”</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Miss Tibbs cried and cried.</li> <li>• She got her tube (...) and threw it in the fire.</li> </ul>
<b>Scott Bridges</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “ ‘Great’ (...) ‘It’s as good as new. This glue is fantastic.’ “</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Scott was frightened.</li> <li>• “ Help,” he screamed at the top of his voice.</li> <li>• He sank to the bottom of the lake.</li> </ul>

3. Students should draw different plates, cups, saucers, little china dolls, toy animals and a small china horse on a shelf, according to the information provided in the second part of the story. The rest will be personal creative work.

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## B. Post-Reading Activities for Upper-Intermediate Students



1.

Write a letter to a Consumers Protection Association or Agency complaining about Giffen's supposedly magic glue and the misleading advertising techniques he used.

2.

Write about 500 words on how advertising affects our everyday life.

3.



### DEBATE TIME!!!

Get into small groups and comment on the following statement:

**WE CAN RELY ON ADVERTISING**

Take notes of the different comments, and agree on a strategy to use to defend your position. Half the class should be for and half against the motion. Find examples in magazines or on the web to support your views.

4.

Find five adjectives to describe Giffen's behaviour. Do you think society condemns people like him? Or are they admired as successful and clever?

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## Useful Web Links

Description	URL
Students' work based on the story: Claymation film by Chartwell Elementary Division 3	<a href="http://mhunter45.edublogs.org/2011/06/22/claymation-2011-the-strap-box-flyer-by-paul-jennings/">http://mhunter45.edublogs.org/2011/06/22/claymation-2011-the-strap-box-flyer-by-paul-jennings/</a>
Book	<a href="https://www.pearsonschoolsandfecolleges.co.uk/Secondary/Literature/Fiction/NewWindmillsCollections/Resources/LevelUp/NWS%20-%20Level%20Up.pdf">https://www.pearsonschoolsandfecolleges.co.uk/Secondary/Literature/Fiction/NewWindmillsCollections/Resources/LevelUp/NWS%20-%20Level%20Up.pdf</a>
Paul Jennings' website	<a href="http://www.pauljennings.com.au/">http://www.pauljennings.com.au/</a>
Paul Jennings' Interview	<a href="http://www.jubileebooks.co.uk/2002/07/paul-jennings-interview/">http://www.jubileebooks.co.uk/2002/07/paul-jennings-interview/</a>
News article on Paul Jennings	<a href="http://www.theage.com.au/news/Books/How-Paul-did-a-dare/2005/05/27/1116950831646.html">http://www.theage.com.au/news/Books/How-Paul-did-a-dare/2005/05/27/1116950831646.html</a>
Paul Jennings' Book covers (Penguin Australia)	<a href="http://www.penguin.com.au/products/9780670070640/paul-jennings-weirdest-stories/40828/extract">http://www.penguin.com.au/products/9780670070640/paul-jennings-weirdest-stories/40828/extract</a>