

Unit 8

A memorable day

The Secret Diary of Adrian Mole aged 13 3/4

by Sue Townsend (1982)



The author and the novel

Sue Townsend was born in 1946 in Leicester, and has written various plays and dramas for the BBC. **The Secret Diary of Adrian Mole** was an instant success when it was published in 1982. Adrian Mole is a teenage boy who keeps a diary recording daily events in his life concerning himself, his family and his friends. There have been various sequels, the most recent being **The Cappuccino Years**, all written in diary form.

About the extract

This diary entry describes the Royal Wedding of Prince Charles to Lady Diana Spencer in 1981 and what Adrian's family did on that day. There was a great deal of interest in the wedding and most people watched it on television.

Discussion

- Is there a royal family in your country? Did you use to have one? Do magazines have photos and articles about them, and/or about the British royal family?
- Has there been a wedding in your country recently of a famous person such as a film star, a well-known sports person or a pop singer? Was there a lot of coverage in the newspapers and on TV?

Wednesday July 29th

ROYAL WEDDING DAY!!!!

How proud I am to be English!

Foreigners must be as sick as pigs!

- 5 We truly lead the world when it comes to pageantry! I must admit to having tears in my eyes when I saw all the cockneys cheering heartily all the rich, well-dressed, famous people going by in carriages and Rolls Royces.

Grandma and Bert Baxter came to our house to watch the wedding
10 because we have got a twenty-four-inch colour. They got on all right at
first but then Bert remembered he was a communist and started saying
anti-royalist things like 'the idle rich' and 'parasites', so grandma sent him
back to the Singh's colour portable.

Prince Charles looked quite handsome in spite of his ears. His brother
15 is dead good-looking; it's a shame they couldn't have swapped heads just
for the day. Lady Diana melted my heartstrings in her dirty white dress.
She even helped an old man up the aisle. I thought it was very kind of her
considering it was her wedding day. Loads of dead famous people were
there. Nancy Reagan, Spike Milligan, Mark Phillips, etc., etc. The Queen
20 looked a bit jealous. I expect it was because people weren't looking at *her*
for a change.

The Prince had remembered to take the price ticket off his shoes. So
that was one worry off my mind.

When the Prince and Di exchanged rings my grandma started to cry.
25 She hadn't brought her handkerchief so I went upstairs to get the spare
toilet roll. When I came downstairs they were married. So I missed the
Historic moment of their marriage!

I made a cup of tea during all the boring musical interval, but I was
back in time to see that Kiwi woman singing. She has certainly got a good
30 pair of lungs on her.

Grandma and I were just settling down to watch the happy couple's
triumphant ride back to the palace when there was a loud banging on the
front door. We ignored it so my father was forced to get out of bed and
open the door. Bert and Mr and Mrs Singh and all the little Singhs came in
35 asking for sanctuary. Their telly had broken down! My grandma tightened
her lips, she is not keen on foreign people. My father let them all in, and
then took grandma home in the car. The Singhs and Bert gathered round
the television talking in Hindi.

Mrs Singh handed round some little cornish pasties. I ate one of them
40 and had to drink a gallon of water. I thought my mouth had caught fire!
They were not cornish pasties.

We watched television until the happy couple left Victoria Station on a
very strange-looking train. Bert said it was only strange-looking because it
was clean.

45 Mrs O'Leary came in and asked if she could borrow our old chairs for
the street party. In my father's absence I agreed and helped to carry them
out on to the pavement. Our street looked dead weird without cars and
with flags and bunting flapping about.

Mrs O'Leary and Mrs Singh swept the street clean. Then we all helped
50 to put the tables and chairs out into the middle of the road. The women
did all the work, the men stood around on the pavement drinking too
much and making jokes about Royal Nuptials.

Mr Singh put his stereo speakers out of his lounge windows and we
listened to a Des O'Connor LP whilst we set the tables with sandwiches,
55 jam tarts, sausage rolls and sausages on sticks. Then everyone in our street
was given a funny hat by Mrs O'Leary and we sat down to eat. At the end
of the tea Mr Singh made a speech about how great it was to be British.
Everyone cheered and sang 'Land of Hope and Glory'. But only Mr Singh
knew all the words. Then my father came back with four party packs of
60 light ale and two dozen paper cups, and soon everyone was acting in an
undignified manner.

679 words

The Secret Diary of Adrian Mole aged 13 3/4 by Sue Townsend. This edition Arrow 1982, pages 104-106.

Glossary

pageantry (line 5): impressive ceremonies

cockneys (line 6): working-class Londoners

parasites (line 12): a creature or person who lives on others

dead (line 15): informal adjective meaning very

aisle (line 17): a passage between rows of seats in a church

Kiwi woman (line 29): the famous opera singer from New Zealand, Kiri te Kanawa

sanctuary (line 35): a safe place

cornish pasties (line 39): pastry filled with meat and vegetables

Nuptials (line 52): weddings

Des O'Connor LP (line 54): a long-playing record by a famous British entertainer

light ale (line 60): beer

Reading comprehension

- 1 Why is Adrian proud to be English? _____
- 2 Why did Bert make comments about 'the idle rich'? _____

- 3 Why did Adrian miss the actual moment of the marriage? _____

- 4 Why did the Singh family come round to Adrian's house? _____
- 5 What do we learn about English trains, according to Adrian? _____
- 6 How are the local families going to celebrate the wedding, after watching it on TV? _____

- 7 What caused everyone to stop behaving in a respectable way? _____

Vocabulary

Idioms with 'dead'

- i A dead-end job _____
- ii A dead loss _____
- iii A dead cert _____
- iv A deadline _____
- v Dead on time _____

In line 18, the people at the wedding are described as 'dead famous' and in line 47 the street is described as 'dead weird'. Here, 'dead' is slang and does not have the normal meaning connected with death, but is used to mean 'very'. The words and phrases on the left below use 'dead' informally in different ways. Complete the sentences using phrases from the right.

- a is something that will definitely happen.
- b is to arrive exactly at a particular time.
- c provides no chance of progress and probably pays poorly.
- d is something which is completely useless.
- e is a date or time by which something must be completed.

Now use four of these words or phrases in the sentences below.

- 1 As Manchester United are ten points clear at the top of the League, they are a _____ to be champions.
- 2 Don't forget to finish your article by the end of the week; the _____ is actually 2pm on Friday.
- 3 The reason why I want to find a new job is that I'm really stuck in this one - in fact, it's a _____.
- 4 I was worried that the train would be late, but in fact it arrived _____.

Vocabulary

Idioms with 'hand'

- i** Students hand in their homework
- ii** If you hand a book back
- iii** Teachers hand out exercise books
- iv** Older brothers and sisters may hand down their clothes
- v** If you leave something in safe hands
- vi** If something is off your hands
- vii** If you keep something to hand
- viii** If you have a hand in something

In line 39 Mrs Singh 'handed round' the food, meaning that she passed it to everyone.

Complete the sentences by matching the phrasal verbs and idioms based on 'hand' on the left with the ends of the sentences on the right.

- a** to their students.
- b** to younger members of the family.
- c** you return it to the owner.
- d** to the teacher.
- e** you are no longer responsible for it.
- f** it is easy to reach it.
- g** you are involved in it.
- h** it is being dealt with by someone you can trust.

Discussion

- Do you keep a diary yourself, or do you know anyone who does? If so, what sorts of thing do you/they like to record in it?
- If you became famous, would you be happy for your diary to be published? Why/why not?

Writing

Imagine you are someone like a famous film star (e.g. Nicole Kidman or Tom Cruise) a pop singer (e.g. Madonna) or a footballer (e.g. David Beckham). Think about what a typical week might be like, and write diary entries for two or three days. Write about 200-250 words.