

Text 1



Look into my eyes



Little Britain

is a BBC show written by and starring Matt Lucas and David Walliams. It started on BBC Radio 4, then was made into a TV show for BBC 3. Each episode is a compilation of sketches featuring strange, memorable characters who helped make *Little Britain* into one of the most successful shows in the UK.

Word help

1. entrée
2. homard
3. hate
4. costing me a lot of money

Kenny Craig, a hypnotist, is in a restaurant, sitting opposite a young woman. They are studying their menus.

KENNY: I usually just have a starter¹ and find that's enough.
CATHY: It's nice here. It's funny – I don't remember saying I'd go on a date with you. I don't know what to have. It all looks so nice.

KENNY: The... oh, the set menu is very reasonable.

5 **CATHY:** Oh, they do baked lobster². I've never had lobster before. I'll have that.

KENNY: Look into my eyes. Look into my eyes. The eyes. The eyes. Not around the eyes. Don't look around the eyes. Look into my eyes. (He snaps his fingers.) You're under. In a moment the waiter will appear, and when he does you will order from the set menu. Three courses, £8.95. You will not order the lobster. Three, two, one... (He snaps his fingers.) You're back in the room.

10 **CATHY:** Oh, there's lots of things I like on the set menu. You don't mind ordering from the set menu, do you?

15 **KENNY:** Hey, hey, whatever you want. You know. That's fine. Do you know what you want to drink yet?

CATHY: Seeing as it's a special occasion, it'd be lovely to have a bottle of bubbly.

20 **KENNY:** Look into my eyes. Look into my eyes. The eyes. The eyes. Not around the eyes. Don't look around my eyes. Look into my eyes. (He snaps his fingers.) You're under. You will choose a soft drink. You will *not*, repeat *not*, order champagne. I know it's our first date but I don't even fancy you that much and I really resent³ you bleeding me dry⁴ here. Three, two, one... (He snaps his fingers.) You're back in the room.

25 **WAITER:** Are you ready to order, madam?

CATHY: Yes, I'll order from the set menu, please. I'll have the spring roll and chicken chow mein.

WAITER: And to drink?

30 **CATHY:** Just a glass of water.

KENNY: Tap.

WAITER: And for sir?

KENNY: Er, I'm not really hungry. I'll just have the lobster and a bottle of champagne. Thanks.

Little Britain, series 1, episode 1, BBC, 2002



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Little Britain, series 1, episode 1, BBC, 2003.



Matt Lucas as Kenny Craig, *Little Britain*, BBC, 2003.

Overview

1 What type of text is this?
a scene from a play • a sketch • a real-life dialogue

2 Complete this summary with the following verbs. Don't forget to conjugate them!

order • date • realise • have • intend • invite • hypnotise • tell

Kenny Craig ... Cathy and ... her to a restaurant, but when he ... she ... to ... the most expensive things, he ... her so that she ... what he ... her to.

Zoom in

1 List all the words related to food and restaurants. What type of restaurant is it?

2 Focus on Kenny's first two lines. What is he trying to do?

3 Describe Cathy's mood at the beginning.

4 Explain what Cathy means when she says "It's funny".

5 Why does Kenny decide to hypnotise her? Explain your answer.

6 Explain Kenny's technique.

7 Is Kenny a good hypnotist? Justify your answer.

8 "Hey, hey, whatever you want." (l. 15) Comment on Kenny's behaviour.

9 Deduce the meaning of "tap" (l. 31) and justify your choice.

robinet • plate • pétillante

10 What does Kenny order? How do you react to that?

Zoom out

1 Do you find this extract funny? Explain why / why not.

2 Act out the dialogue.

– Make a copy of the dialogue and underline the stressed syllables (usually, **starter**, **enough**, etc.).

– Take down the transcriptions of "problem words" and practise repeating them. Example: baked /beɪkt/.

– Learn your part with a partner.

– Don't forget to act: look at your partner and pretend you really are in a restaurant.

3 What if you had Kenny Craig's powers? Who would you hypnotise and what for?

4 Rewrite the dialogue: this time another customer notices Kenny's tactics and interrupts him ...

Translate

Translate lines 13 to 18. Be careful to use acceptable words for "whatever", "that's fine" and "bubbly".

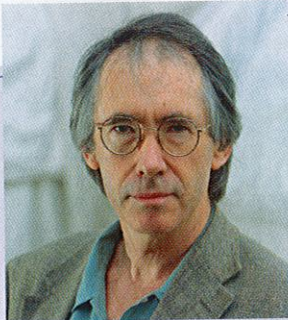
WATCH YOUR WORDS

Kenny: upset: *contrarié* • resort to sth: *recourir à qqc* • mesmerise = hypnotise • dishonest • ill-intentioned • pretend: *faire semblant* • courteous = gentlemanly • rude = impolite • egoistic = selfish ≠ generous

Cathy: delighted = very happy • in a good mood: *de bonne humeur* • puzzled = perplexed • gullible = naïve • go for sth = choose sth • puppet: *marionnette*



Harassed

**Ian McEwan**

(b. 1948) is one of Britain's leading novelists and has won many literary prizes in the UK and elsewhere. *The Child in Time*, *Enduring Love* and *Atonement* are among his major novels, some of which have been made into movies. His latest novel, *Saturday*, was published in 2006.

**Culture Flash**

Religious freedom is recognised by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948): "Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief, and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship, and observance."

Word help

1. tragedy
2. violence
3. *faire chanter*

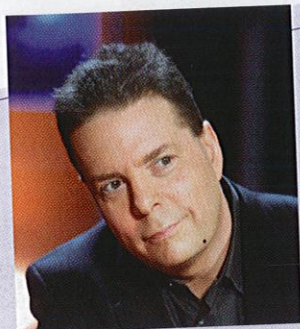
I walked quickly into my study, picked up the fax phone and called the police. In the seconds before I was connected I realised that I had no idea what to say. A woman's voice came on, laconic and sceptical, hardened against a workaday deluge of panic and woe¹.

- 5 I spoke in a gruff and reasoned tone of a responsible citizen. "I'd like to report a case of harassment, systematic harassment." I was transferred to a man whose voice showed the same wary calm. I repeated my statement. There was only a fractional hesitation before the first question. "Are you the person being harassed?"
- 10 "Yes. I've been ..."
- "And is the person causing the nuisance with you now?"
- "He's standing outside my place this very minute."
- "Has he inflicted any physical harm² on you?"
- "No, but he ..."
- 15 "Has he threatened you with harm?"
- "No." I understood that [...] Parry's behaviour had to be generalised into a crime.
- "Has he made any threats against your property?"
- "No."
- 20 "Or against third parties?"
- "No."
- "Is he trying to blackmail³ you?"
- "No."
- "Do you think you could prove that he intends to cause you distress?"
- 25 "Er, no."
- The voice slipped out of official neutrality into a near-genuine query. I thought I caught a Yorkshire accent. "Can you tell me what he's doing then?"
- "He phones me at all hours. He talks to me in the ..."
- 30 [...] "Is he using obscene or insulting behaviour?"
- "No. Look, officer. Why don't you let me explain? He's a crank. He won't let me alone."
- "Are you aware of what he actually wants?" [...]
- I said, "He wants to save me."
- 35 "Save you?"
- "You know, convert me. He's obsessed. He simply won't leave me alone."
- The voice cut in, impatience taking hold at last. "I'm sorry caller. This is not a police matter. Unless he harms you, or your property, or threatens the same he's committing no offence. Trying to convert you is not against the law." Then he terminated our emergency conversation with his own little stricture. "We do have religious freedom in this country."
- 40

Ian McEwan, *Enduring Love*, 1997.



A patriotic American



Douglas Kennedy

was born in New York in 1955. After running a theatre in Dublin, he wrote radio plays for the BBC, then a theatre play and a few travel books. In 1994, he had his first novel published. It was followed by seven more thrillers, which helped him become a bestselling writer. He currently lives in London.



Culture Flash

During the cold war, many US politicians were afraid of communism. US Senator **Joseph McCarthy** set up anti-communist committees to target people working in government, education and show business. Many innocent people were persecuted in this 1950s witch hunt which became known as **McCarthyism**.

Word help

1. *dossiers*
2. *quitting*
3. *lawyer*
4. *suppliant*
5. *absence*
6. *fournir*

New York, 1951. Eric Smythe is a TV comedy writer. One day, his boss calls him to a meeting with other TV executives... and an FBI agent.

"Mr Smythe, are you now or have you ever been a member of the Communist Party?"

Without even thinking about it, I instantly said, "No."

Agent Sweet tried to control a smirk as he opened my very substantial file, and said, "You're lying, Mr Smythe. [...] According to our records¹, you joined the Communist Party in March of nineteen thirty-six, and were a member of its New York cell for five years, resigning² only in nineteen forty-one."

"Okay, I confess. For a short period of my life, just after I left college, I was a member of the Party. But that was ten long years ago..." [...]

"So," said the ever-helpful Counselor³ Golden, "you realized Communism was wrong."

He didn't pose that sentence as a question – rather, as a statement. Bert Schmidt shot me this pleading⁴, *don't be stupid here* look. I said, "That's right. I decided Communism was wrong. And evil." [...]

"Given your admirable change of heart on the matter of Communism," Agent Sweet said, "would you call yourself a patriotic American?"

I was also expecting this dumb question. And I knew I'd have to lie. So I assured Agent Sweet – and everyone else at the table – that I loved my country more than life itself [...].

"Then you'd be willing to cooperate?" he asked me.

"Cooperate? What do you mean by *cooperate*?" [...]

"Quite simply," Golden said, "all Agent Sweet needs to know are the names of the people who brought you into the Party, and those individuals who are still active Party members today."

"And," Agent Sweet added, "by naming these names, you will not only be demonstrating your complete lack⁵ of affiliation with present Communist activity... you will also be confirming your patriotism."

"Since when has denouncing innocent people been considered an act of patriotism?" I asked.

"Communists are not innocents," Ross shouted at me.

"The one-time Communists I know certainly are."

"Ah," Agent Sweet said, "then you admit that you do know Communists."

"Former Communists, like me."

"Eric," Frankel said, "if you could just provide⁶ Agent Sweet with a few of their names..."

"And destroy their lives in the process?"

"If they are as innocent as you claim to be, then they have nothing to fear."

"Unless, of course, they also refuse to name names. That's the game here, isn't it?"

Douglas Kennedy, *The Pursuit of Happiness*, 2002.



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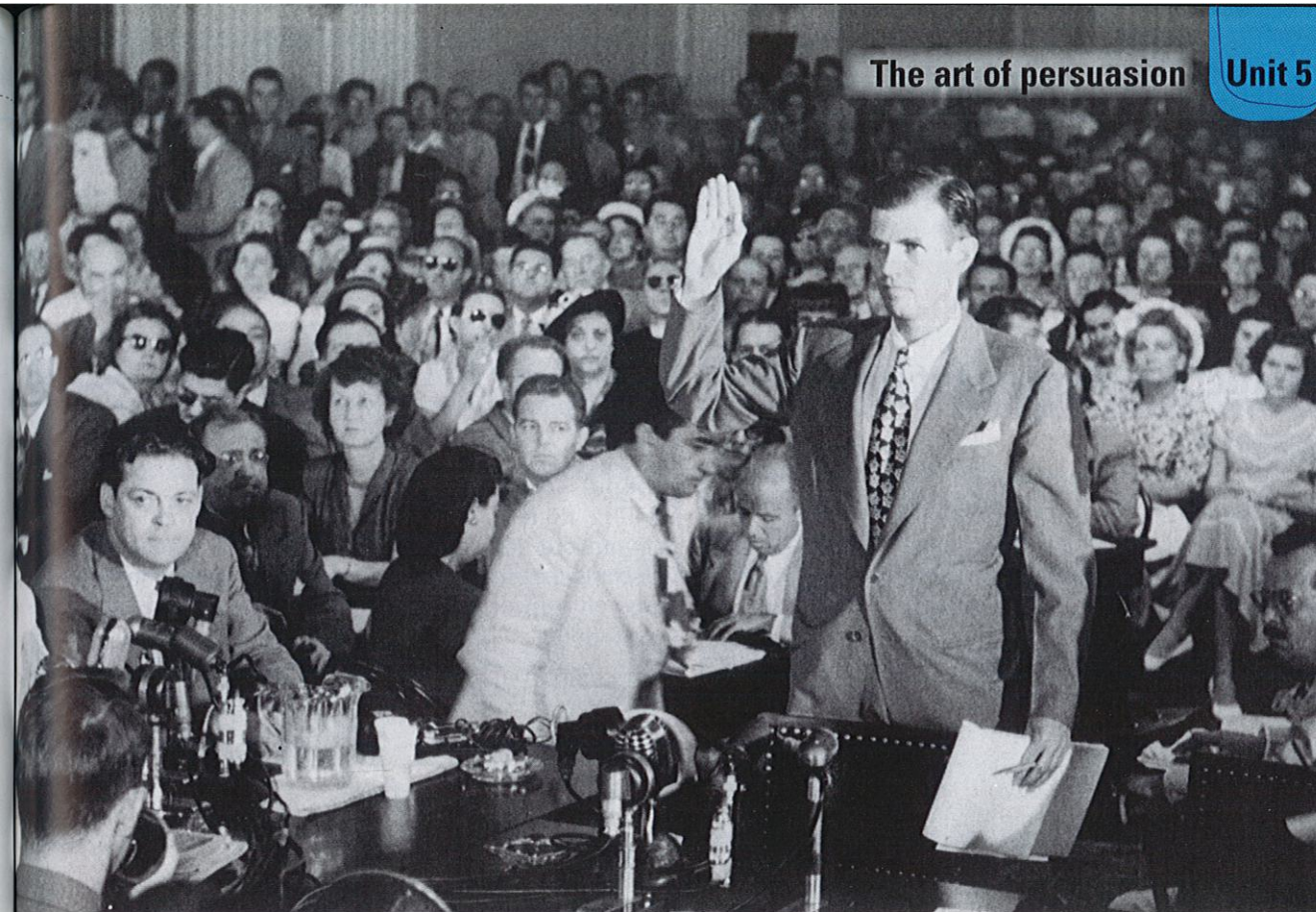
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Alger Hiss, accused of Communist espionage, before the House Committee on Un-American Activities, Washington DC, August 1948.

Overview

- List the characters present in the text and say who they work for.
- What is the narrator supposed to do?
- Does the narrator do all he is supposed to do?
- Describe the political context, with the help of *Culture Flash*.

Zoom in

Eric

- Focus on lines 1 to 20. Is Eric Smythe taking this interview seriously? Explain your answer.
- Why does Eric Smythe "have to lie" (l. 18)?
- Focus on lines 21 to the end. Does Eric's attitude change? Look at the type of sentences he makes to help you answer.
- Is Eric Smythe "willing to cooperate"? Say why or why not.

Agent Sweet

- Deduce the meaning of "smirk". *petit sourire* • *grimace* • *bâillement*
What does this smirk express?
- How much does the FBI know about Eric Smythe?
- Explain the logic behind Agent Sweet's arguments.

The TV executives

- True or false? Justify your answers.
 - They try to suggest what Eric Smythe should say.
 - They try to make things look easy.
 - They stand up against Agent Sweet.

Zoom out

- In your opinion, what makes someone patriotic? Give examples.
- Eric Smythe writes to a friend who is a former communist. He tells him about the trouble he's in.

Translate

Translate lines 4 to 8.
Avoid literal translation of *records*, *joined*, *resigning*.

WATCH YOUR WORDS

Eric Smythe: in a predicament: *en situation difficile*
• trapped = cornered • rebel against sb → a rebel → rebellious • doubt /dau/ sth: *douter de qqc* • frame-up: *coup monté*, *machination*

The TV executives: submissive: *soumis* • be on sb's side: *être du côté de qqn* • assist sb • helpful • support sb → (un)supportive

Agent Sweet: bully /buli/ sb = intimidate sb • suspect sb of (doing) sth → suspicion → suspicious • make sb understand sth