

Unit 1

Socialising

Bridget Jones's Diary

by Helen Fielding (1996)

The author and the novel

Helen Fielding lives in London, and has worked for the BBC and various national newspapers.

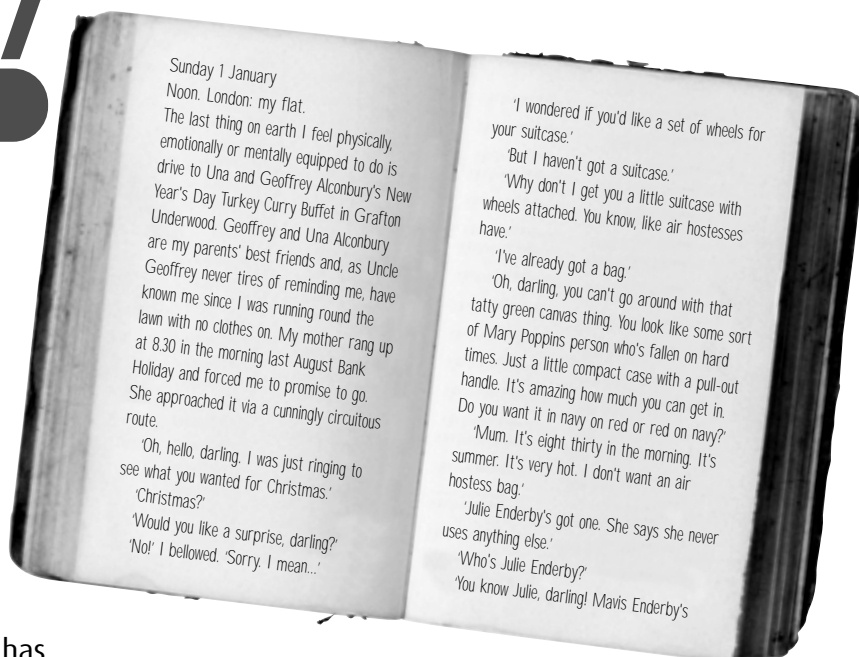
Bridget Jones's Diary became an instant success when it was published in 1996 and was subsequently made into a highly-successful film in 2001. Helen Fielding based her hero, Mark Darcy, and some of the plot, on **Pride and Prejudice** by Jane Austen. Colin Firth, who played Mr Darcy in the BBC version of **Pride and Prejudice**, played Mark Darcy in this film.

About the extract

Bridget Jones is an unmarried woman in her thirties living in a flat in London. Her mother is trying to persuade her to go to a party that is being organised by some of her mother's old friends.

Discussion

- ◇ Have you ever had to go to a social occasion to please your parents?
- ◇ How did you feel?
- ◇ What was the worst thing about it?
- ◇ Were there any good points?



Sunday 1 January

Noon. London: my flat. The last thing on earth I feel physically, emotionally or mentally equipped to do is drive to Una and Geoffrey Alconbury's New Year's Day Turkey Curry Buffet in Grafton Underwood.

5 Geoffrey and Una Alconbury are my parents' best friends and, as Uncle Geoffrey never tires of reminding me, have known me since I was running round the lawn with no clothes on. My mother rang up at 8.30 in the morning last August Bank Holiday and forced me to promise to go. She approached it via a cunningly circuitous route.

10 'Oh, hello, darling. I was just ringing to see what you wanted for Christmas.'

'Christmas?'

'Would you like a surprise, darling?'

'No!' I bellowed. 'Sorry. I mean...'

15 'I wondered if you'd like a set of wheels for your suitcase.'

'But I haven't got a suitcase.'

'Why don't I get you a little suitcase *with wheels attached*. You know, like air hostesses have.'

'I've already got a bag.'

20 'Oh, darling, you can't go around with that tatty green canvas thing. You look like some sort of Mary Poppins person who's fallen on hard times. Just a little compact case with a pull-out handle. It's amazing how much you can get in. Do you want it in navy on red or red on navy?'

25 'Mum. It's eight thirty in the morning. It's summer. It's very hot. I don't want an air hostess bag.'

'Julie Enderby's got one. She says she never uses anything else.'

'Who's Julie Enderby?'

'You know *Julie*, darling! Mavis Enderby's daughter, Julie! The one that's got that super-doooper job at Arthur Andersen...'

30 'Mum...'

'Always takes it on her trips...'

'I don't want a little bag with wheels on.'

'I'll tell you what. Why don't Jamie, Daddy and I all club together and get you a proper new big suitcase *and* a set of wheels?'

35 Exhausted, I held the phone away from my ear, puzzling about where the missionary luggage-Christmas-gift zeal had stemmed from. When I put the phone back she was saying: '...in actual fact, you can get them with a compartment with bottles for your bubble bath and things. The other thing I thought of was a shopping trolley.'

40 'Is there anything *you'd* like for Christmas?' I said desperately, blinking in the dazzling Bank Holiday sunlight.

'No, no,' she said airily. 'I've got everything I need. Now, darling,' she suddenly hissed, 'you will be coming to Geoffrey and Una's New Year's Day Turkey Curry Buffet this year, won't you?'

45 'Ah. Actually, I...' I panicked wildly. What could I pretend to be doing? '...think I might have to work on New Year's Day.'

'That doesn't matter. You can drive up after work. Oh, did I mention? Malcolm and Elaine Darcy are coming and bringing Mark with them. Do you remember Mark, darling? He's one of those top-notch barristers.

50 Masses of money. Divorced. It doesn't start till eight.'

Oh God. Not another strangely dressed opera freak with bushy hair

burgeoning from a side-parting. 'Mum, I've told you. I don't need to be fixed up with...'

55 'Now come along, darling. Una and Geoffrey have been holding the New Year buffet since you were running round the lawn with no clothes on! Of course you're going to come. And you'll be able to use your new suitcase.'

553 words

Bridget Jones's Diary by Helen Fielding. This edition Picador 1996, pages 7-10.

Glossary

Grafton Underwood (line 4): the name of the place where Una and Geoffrey Alconbury live

Bank Holiday (line 8): a national holiday when the banks and some shops are closed

bellowed (line 14): shouted loudly

tatty (line 20): an informal word meaning in bad condition

Mary Poppins (line 21): a fictional magic character who looks after children

super-doooper (line 29): an informal word meaning extremely good (now rather out-of-date)

missionary (line 36): used here to mean persuasive

zeal (line 36): eagerness to do something

hissed (line 43): said in a loud whisper

top-notch (line 49): an informal adjective meaning the highest quality

opera freak (line 51): someone who loves opera

burgeoning (line 52): growing quickly and plentifully

Reading comprehension

- 1 Bridget's mother phones at Christmas to discuss the party. [redacted]
- 2 Bridget's mother asks her immediately about the party. [redacted]
- 3 Bridget's mother offers to buy her a suitcase suitable for air travel. [redacted]
- 4 Bridget's mother works at Arthur Andersen. [redacted]
- 5 Julie Enderby probably has to travel as part of her job. [redacted]
- 6 If Bridget wants a bigger suitcase, some of her friends will pay for it between them. [redacted]
- 7 Bridget's mother always uses a shopping trolley. [redacted]
- 8 Bridget probably thinks that it's too soon to be discussing Christmas presents. [redacted]
- 9 Bridget's mother is hoping that Bridget will become friendly with Mark Darcy. [redacted]
- 10 Mark Darcy is a rich married man. [redacted]

Read the extract again and decide if the following statements are correct. Put YES, NO or NOT GIVEN (if it is impossible to say).

Vocabulary

Compound adjectives

- | | | |
|------------------|------------|--------------------|
| i last | [redacted] | a -class |
| ii absent | [redacted] | b -watering |
| iii far | [redacted] | c -minded |
| iv mouth | [redacted] | d -dressed |
| v second | [redacted] | e -fetched |
| vi well | [redacted] | f -minute |

In line 49, Mark Darcy is described as a 'top-notch' lawyer.

Match the following words to make compound adjectives, and then put them into the correct sentences below. There is one you will not need to use.

- 1 'Smart' means 'clever' in the USA and [redacted] - [redacted] in Britain.
- 2 Sometimes a very intelligent professor forgets ordinary details and is rather [redacted] - [redacted].
- 3 The new chef at that restaurant has created some very tasty meals which look really [redacted] - [redacted].
- 4 I don't believe that new employees in this company should be treated as [redacted] - [redacted] citizens.
- 5 The boss couldn't believe Tom's excuse about his train having an accident again; it seemed much too [redacted] - [redacted] to be true.

Vocabulary

Verbs: ways of speaking

moan mumble roar
shriek whisper

Bridget 'bellowed' in line 14 and her mother 'hissed' in line 43.

Put the following verbs describing ways of speaking into the correct sentences. You may need to change the tense of the verb to fit the sentence. There is one verb you will not need to use.

- 1 'Penalty' [] the football crowd as their star player was brought down by a defender.
- 2 'Help me!' [] Mary as she fell off the cliff onto a narrow ledge.
- 3 'Not another grammar exercise!' [] the students in Mr Johnson's class.
- 4 'I wish Professor Martin wouldn't [] like that when he lectures; I can never make out what he's trying to say.'

Vocabulary

Adverbs: ways of speaking

aggressively arrogantly
desperately modestly
persuasively

'No, no,' she said airily. (line 42)

The adverb 'airily' shows that Bridget's mother spoke in a way that was neither serious nor concerned. Match the adverbs in the box to the correct statements below. There is one adverb you will not need to use.

- 1 'Why don't you come - you'll really enjoy it, I know you will - come on, give it a try.' []
- 2 'I just know that I'm better than everyone else - they don't stand a chance.' []
- 3 'Do that again and I'll punch you in the face.' []
- 4 'I really have to pass my driving test this time - if I don't, I just don't know what I'll do.' []

Discussion

- ▷ Is it easy for teenagers to get on well with their parents, or is there a 'generation gap'?
- ▷ Do you feel that your parents are still trying to influence your decisions?

Writing

Imagine that you are Bridget and you are writing a letter to a friend telling him or her about the phone call with your mother and explaining the problem about going to the party. Ask for advice, and then invite your friend to visit you for a weekend next month. Give details of your plans for the weekend. Write your letter in 200-250 words.