



ABOUT YOU

Answer the questions and talk about your ideas.

- 1 How much time do you spend talking on the phone?
- 2 Do you think people spoke on the phone more in the past than now?
- 3 In which situations do we hear other people talking on the phone?
- 4 Is it interesting to listen to other people's phone conversations?

Telephones could be used in people's homes from 1877 in the USA. Mark Twain wrote this essay in 1880 so it was a very new invention. Phones were very heavy and the sound quality was not very good. You couldn't call people directly – you used a *switchboard*, a kind of control centre where someone connected you to another number.

- 1 Read the text. As you read, think about this question. What do you think is the relationship between the two people having the phone conversation?

A Telephonic Conversation (1880) Mark Twain

A telephone conversation – when you are sitting by and not part of that conversation – is one of the strangest things in modern life. Yesterday I was writing while such a conversation was going on in the room – a conversation

- 5 with only one end to it. You hear questions asked; you don't hear the answer. You hear invitations given; you hear no thanks in return.

Yes? Why, how did that happen?

Pause.

- 10 What did you say?

Pause.

Oh no, I don't think it was.

Pause.

No! Oh no, I didn't mean that. I meant, put it in while it is

- 15 still boiling.

Pause.

What?

Pause.

Yes, I like that way, too; but I think it's better with sauce.

- 20 Pause.

What did you say? Children, do be quiet!

Pause.

Oh! Hat! I thought you said you bought a cat!

Pause.

- 25 Since when?

Pause.

Why, I never heard of it.

Pause.

No! It seems impossible!

- 30 Pause.

Who did?

Pause.

Really!

Pause.



- 35 But I never allow them to eat candy. And of course, they can't, until they get their teeth, anyway.

Pause.

What?

Pause.

- 40 Oh, not at all – go right on. He's here writing – it doesn't bother him.

Pause.

Very well, I'll come if I can.

Pause.

- 45 Visitors?

Pause.

No, we never put butter on them.

Pause.

Oh, I think that is too much; we never pay more than fifty

- 50 cents for them.

Pause.

Must you go? Well, goodbye.

Pause.

Yes, I think so. Goodbye.

- 55 Pause.

Four o'clock, then – I'll be ready. Goodbye.

Pause.

Thank you ever so much. Goodbye.

