

TEXT	THE MOONSTONE
AUTHOR	Wilkie Collins
THEMES	Past Times (Unit 5), Totally Emotional (Unit 6), Telling Tales (Unit 7), Surprise! (Unit 10), We are Family (Unit 11), Points of View (Unit 19)
VOCABULARY	Expressions related to feelings and some more formal lexis.
WRITING	Students write a report of key events.
SPEAKING	Students perform a dialogue.

### BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Wilkie Collins (1824–1889) was an English novelist and playwright. His two most famous books are *The Moonstone* and *The Woman in White*. We are so familiar with the detective story genre that it is easy to forget that it did not exist until the middle of the nineteenth century. The present-day format was invented by Edgar Allan Poe, Wilkie Collins and Arthur Conan Doyle. *The Moonstone* was an especially innovative text as it involves multiple narratives, unreliable narrators and red-herrings set within a country house location and exploits a backstory with exotic locations and mysteries.

### WARMER

Find a number of pictures of detectives and police officers, e.g. Sherlock Holmes, Miss Marple, etc. and whatever other detective / crime series is currently trending. Ask students what kinds of stories they associate with these characters. Elicit the typical themes of detective stories – theft, murder, jealousy, politics, revenge, ambition, etc. Ask students to think of examples of detective stories they have seen or read. You could watch some film trailers - *Mission Impossible*, *Money Heist*, *Ocean's 11*, etc, and ask students what the appeal of these kinds of films is.

### ? ABOUT YOU

The questions get students thinking about precious stones – why they are special and where they come from. Some students might be aware of the issues surrounding ‘conflict diamonds’ and the working conditions in diamond mines, as this could be an important topic to discuss. The third question reinforces the warmer exercise. Do such stories appeal because the task seems impossible, or because the characters are often stealing for a ‘good’ reason?

**1** Go through the introduction to set the scene. There is some information in the text about what the characters look like – we learn that Betteredge must be quite old as he has worked for the family for a long time, and that Cuff is ‘melancholy,’ but students will need to mostly imagine their appearance. After reading, students should work in pairs and describe their characters to each other – are they similar or different? You could also ask them to draw the characters as they imagine them.

**2** **Suggested answers**

1 Because Cuff seems to know something but hasn't told him what it is. He is then upset because Cuff accuses Mrs. Verinder.

2 Probably because he understands how difficult it is for Betteredge to hear things about someone whom he admires and has worked for and known for many years.

3 Remind students that when we know someone very well we can often anticipate how they are feeling, even when they don't say anything. Perhaps Betteredge senses that Mrs. Verinder wants to say something about the diamond, the theft, or even admit her guilt.

4 Ask for suggestions and predictions – if Cuff is correct, the mystery is solved, if not, there must be another suspect (he is in fact wrong about Mrs. Verinder). You might want to introduce the genre term ‘red herring,’ to mean a clue or suspicion that is incorrect and distracts the reader from the truth.

### VOCABULARY

**3**

**Answers**

1 b 2 b 3 a 4 a

**4**

**Answers**

1 beg your pardon 2 melancholy 3 served 4 distress  
5 a nutshell  
(not used: self-control)

### WRITING

**5** The writing activity is, effectively, a mediation task. Students have to decide which information in the literary text would be appropriate to include in an informative report-type text. Before attempting the task, ask the class to reflect on which details in the extract would be important for a record of events. For example, Mrs. Verinder dismissing Cuff and Betteredge is probably not important, but the fact she seemed to be about to say something could suggest guilt or at least that she has a secret she wants to share. From a grammatical point of view, you might want to revise tense changes in reported speech.

### SPEAKING

**6** There's a lot of emotion and tension in the dialogue between Cuff and Betteredge which makes it ideal for a drama activity where students focus on stress, intonation, rhythm and volume. Tell students to highlight the spoken parts of the text and then try reading them as a conversation. Explain that the director's job is to listen, prompt and give feedback and suggest which words / phrases should be stressed and which emotions are being conveyed. Choose two or three groups to perform their dialogue for the class and consider how the performances are similar, or different.

### MIXED ABILITY

For activity 6, make stronger students the directors. They can encourage the other students to read the parts with an awareness of key words and significant phrases. In effect, their greater understanding of the text can help weaker students appreciate the meaning and drama of the extract.