



Tasty Tales Frank Brennan

Aims

- To make students interested in the book.
- To allow students to think about the differences between the short story and the novel.
- To give students the opportunity to think about some of the characters and the themes of the stories.

Pre-reading Activities

- 1 Tell students that the book is a book of short stories. Now ask them to look at Illustration 1 (the cover of the book), and to read Extract 1 (a list of the titles of the stories in the book). Do not tell them the title of the book yet. Ask students to guess what theme links the stories.

Answer: Food.

Now tell them the title is *Tasty Tales*. Ask *Can you think of any other stories or films that have food as a theme?*

Possible answers: *Chocolat, Babette's Feast, Like Water for Chocolate, Eat Drink Man Woman.*

- 2 Ask *What is your favourite food or meal? What is your least favourite food?* Draw up a short list of five favourite foods and five least favourite foods. Now take a vote on them. To recap, tell students which foods emerge as the number 1 favourite and the number 1 least favourite. Ask *Did you expect that result? Why? Why not?*

- 3 Start a discussion by asking *What do you think the differences between a short story and a novel are?* Make a note of students' views on the board.

Possible answers: The short story is shorter, usually between 200–500 words. Both have a beginning, middle and an end, but the short story is simpler – fewer things happen than in a novel. A short story often has only one mood and takes place over a shorter period of time. Short stories quite often have a 'twist in the tale' – just before the end, the story changes in some way because of something that happens, and this gives us a surprise ending.

Now ask students *Have you read any short stories before? Do you enjoy them, or do you prefer novels? Why?*

- 4 Ask students to look at Extract 1 again. Explain that *fugu* is a type of fish. Now ask *Which of these titles is the odd one out?*

Answer: *Changes* – it is not a type of food or drink.

Working in pairs, ask students to discuss and make notes about what might happen in *Changes*. Remind them that all the stories are connected to food and tell them that food should be important in their story. Feedback to the whole class.

- 5 Ask students to read Extract 2. Elicit who they think is talking in the extract.

Answer: A boss and an employee, Jean.

Tell students that Jean is the main character in the story. Elicit what Jean and her boss are talking about.

Answer: Advertising and selling products – making people want to buy something.

Ask students how companies use advertising to make you want to try to buy something. Write their ideas on the board.

Possible answers: By using famous people in adverts, making the advert funny, showing people who are happy because they bought the product (something that someone makes or grows so that they can sell it), saying that the product is cheaper or better.

Now, working in the same pairs as in Activity 4, ask students to design a TV advert for a type of food. They could use the food they used when they were discussing *Changes* in Activity 4.

- 6 Ask students to read Extract 3 and then to look at the list of story titles again (Extract 1). Ask *Which stories do you think Extracts 2 and 3 are from?*

Answer: Extract 2 is from the *Water of Wanting*, and Extract 3 is from *Full English Breakfast*.

Students now choose either Extract 2 or Extract 3 and continue writing where the extract finishes.

- 7 Students look at Illustration 2. Elicit what they think is happening, and which story in the book they think it might be from.

Answer: *A Little Pot of Honey*.

NB You may decide not to provide the answer at this stage.

Ask them to call out words the picture makes them think of (e.g. crash, heat, smoke, save, brave, strong) and write their suggestions on the board. Now ask students to think of a caption for the picture. Feedback to the whole class, and hold a vote to find the most popular caption. (NB Students are not allowed to vote for their own caption.) If time allows, students could use their caption as the heading for a newspaper story and write the story.

- 8 Ask students to read Extract 4 and elicit their opinions on fugu. Ask *What do you think of fugu? Would you like to try it? What do you think it takes to be a good fugu chef?*

Suggested answers: being good at doing something well, great care, confidence, qualifications, experience.

Now ask students to think of some facts about Taro (e.g. his age, where he lives, family, character, dreams, biggest problem).

- 9 Repeat Exercise 8, but asking students to think of some facts for a different character. They must choose either Jean in Extract 2 or Mr Dunn in Extract 3.
- 10 Students choose to 'be' either Jean, Mr Dunn or Taro and take turns to answer questions as their chosen character, either from the whole class or from small groups.

Post-reading Activities _____

- 1 Ask *Do you think it was a good idea to have a theme of food for a book of short stories? Why? Why not?*
- 2 Start a discussion with the phrase: *My favourite story in the book was ... because ...*
- 3 Ask students to choose three of the stories in the book and to write lists of people in the story for each. They should include a brief description of who the person is (e.g. Jean, works as a chemist. Married to Katya with a son Alain, aged 18 months.)
- 4 Ask students to choose one story and to change the ending completely. Feedback to the whole class. Hold a vote to find the most popular ending. (NB Students are not allowed to vote for their own ending.)

The Water of Wanting
Full English Breakfast
A Little Pot of Honey
Kung Fu Spice
Fugu
Changes

Extract 2 _____

‘Sometimes people just don’t seem to want to buy something.’ Jean’s manager, Charles, had told him earlier. ‘Companies spend a lot of money on persuading people to buy something but then nobody wants it.’

‘Maybe they don’t want it because they don’t like it,’ Jean had suggested. ‘It’s their choice, after all.’

‘People will like anything if you sell it in the right way,’ Charles had said. ‘No, we must be missing something out. What can we do to make sure that people will like what we sell?’

Extract 3 _____

Now don’t think for one moment that Ralph’s sausages are anything less than delicious. He makes sausages out of different kinds of meat. They are made in all kinds of different ways and flavours to please all kinds of tastes.

Except Mr Dunn’s.

You see, Mr Dunn was a vegetarian. A vegetarian doesn’t eat meat at all. No chicken, no beef, no pork and not even any fish. In fact, Mr Dunn didn’t even wear leather shoes. Even his sweaters, Brenda tells me, weren’t made of wool.

‘Now don’t tell me that’s normal,’ Brenda told me. ‘We’ve had vegetarians at the guesthouse before. I always manage to persuade them to have a sausage and once they’ve had one ...’ Here Brenda rose her eyes to the ceiling. When she did this, she meant, ‘you know what happens next.’ And, of course, I do. Nobody has ever tasted Ralph’s sausages before and not wanted another. I could see that she wasn’t going to let Mr Dunn be the first to refuse. Not if she could help it. I knew then that Mr Dunn, one way or another was going to eat a sausage.

Extract 4 _____

My notes _____

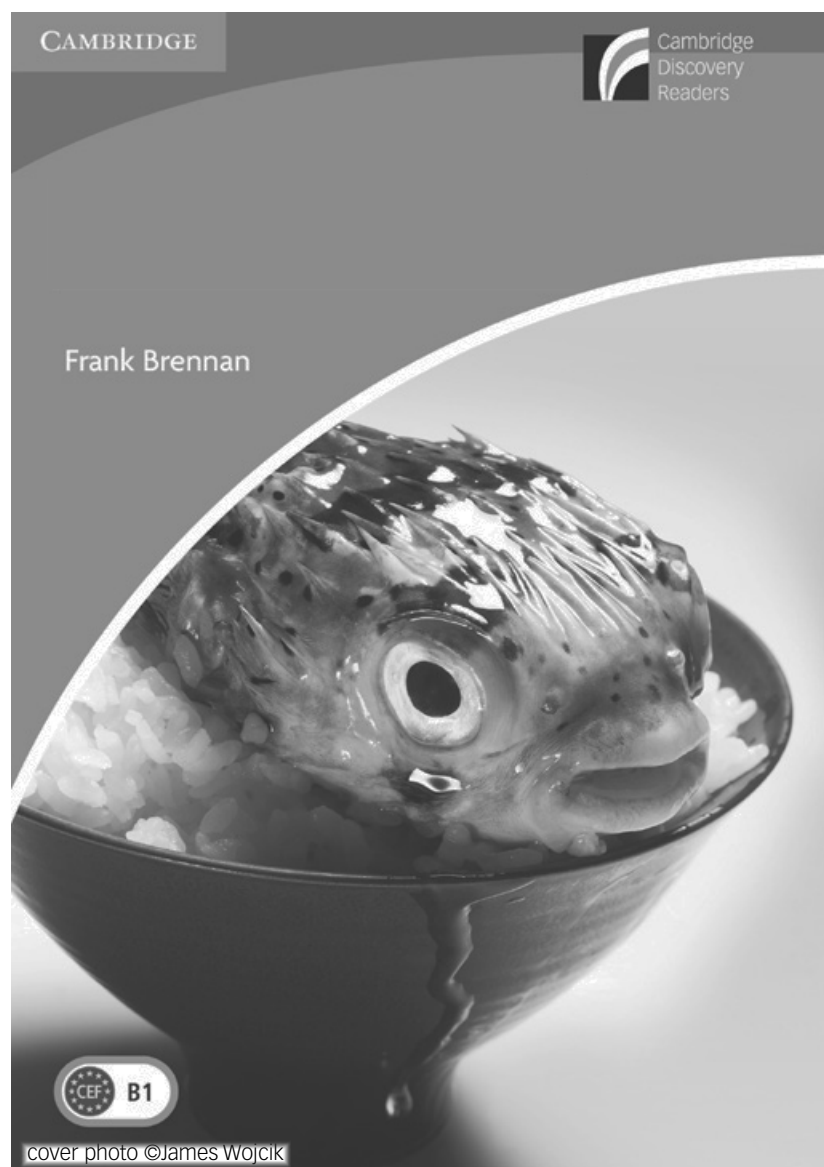
Fugu is the Japanese name for the puffer fish. Its skin, heart and liver are all poisonous – although sometimes the liver is carefully prepared for people who want to try it. You can eat most other parts of the *fugu*, but it sometimes leaves a strange feeling in you. It is like feeling that you can't stand up or like having a strong alcoholic drink. The feeling comes from the very small amount of poison that is left in the fish.

Of course, if too much poison is left in the fish, it can kill you. *Fugu* must be prepared very, very carefully. If it isn't, you will die.

In fact, *fugu* is so dangerous that you have to be carefully trained and even have a special licence before you are allowed to prepare it.

Taro had the training and the licence. He knew just how to leave the right amount of poison in the *fugu* to suit every customer. He always looked carefully at the person who was going to eat it – like he was measuring somebody for a suit of clothes.

Illustration 1 _____



My notes _____

Illustration 2 _____

