

## The Secrets of Mrs. B (C1)

### A – Before you start

*Answer the questions with a partner.*

1. Have you ever had a summer job? If so, when? What did you have to do?
2. Do you like listening to people talking about their lives? Why (not)?
3. Have you ever thought of writing a novel? If so, what kind?

### B – Listen and answer

*Read these statements. Then listen (without reading) and write T (true) or F (false).*

1. During the summer the author worked as a nurse looking after elderly people.
2. Mrs. B was well known in the neighbourhood.
3. Mrs. B's son was an attractive man with a happy-looking face.
4. Mrs. B was a bit overweight.
5. She enjoyed having her husband's poems read to her.
6. Mrs. B hadn't been faithful to her husband.
7. She died the following winter.
8. The key she had given the author opened the antique wooden box.

### C – Read and answer

*Read the article and answer the questions.*

1. Why did the author make notes of some of the things she was told by the elderly people?
2. What was Mrs. B pretending to do when the author first saw her?
3. Why was she pleased when she heard that her son had left?
4. Why did the author find it difficult to understand Mrs. B at first?
5. Who did Mrs. B get her cigarettes from?
6. What kind of life had Mrs. B led when she was younger?
7. What did the author find in the box that Mrs. B left her?
8. How did she feel about it?

### D – Learn it! Use it!

*Complete these sentences with words from the glossary. (You may have to adapt the expression in some way; e.g. change the verb tense.)*

1. Tom had never spoken in public before, so he felt rather \_\_\_\_\_.
2. We don't have to \_\_\_\_\_. There's plenty of time before the train leaves.
3. My sister's always \_\_\_\_\_ me for anything that goes wrong.
4. Granddad's hurt his head. He \_\_\_\_\_ to tie his shoelaces and lost his balance.
5. If you're going upstairs, could you \_\_\_\_\_ my mobile, please? I left it in the bedroom.
6. Everyone likes our new boss. She's always so \_\_\_\_\_ and optimistic.

### E – Ready for the C1 ADVANCED English Test? (Reading and Use of English, Part 4)

Complete the second sentence so that it has a similar meaning to the first sentence, using the word given. Do not change the word given. Use between 3 and 6 words including the word given.

**Example:** Mrs. B had worked a lot for charity in her local area.

**WORK** Mrs. B had done a lot of charitable/charity work in her local area.

1. “You won’t have to do much,” Hector said.

**FOR** “There won’t \_\_\_\_\_,” Hector said.

2. “Do you have a cigarette, by any chance?” Mrs. B asked.

**GOT** You \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_ you?” Mrs. B asked.

3. Her voice wasn’t very clear without her teeth in.

**MUCH** Her voice was \_\_\_\_\_ in.

4. Whenever I opened the bottom drawer, my eye fell on the inlaid box.

**SIGHT** Whenever I opened the bottom drawer, I \_\_\_\_\_ the inlaid box.

5. Mrs. B laughed loudly through her nose when I said I wanted to be a novelist.

**WITH** Mrs. B snorted \_\_\_\_\_ her I wanted to be a novelist.

6. “The key is something that will remind you of me,” Mrs. B said.

**REMEMBER** “The key is \_\_\_\_\_,” said Mrs. B.

### F – Talk about it

*In pairs or groups.*

1. Do you like reading biographies or autobiographies? If so, which ones have you read?
2. Have you ever kept a diary? If so, for how long? What kind of things do/did you write in it?
3. Do you think diaries are useful? Why (not)?
4. Do you think people usually write them for themselves or for others?
5. Can you name any famous historical diaries?

## **Answers**

### **B – Listen and answer**

1. F – She worked as a home help for the elderly. (Nothing medical.) 2. T 3. F – He was balding and had long melancholic features. 4. F – She was skeletal. 5. F – She thought they were rubbish. 6. T 7. F – She died the following autumn. 8. T

### **C – Read and answer**

1. Because she thought their anecdotes might provide material for a novel. 2. She was pretending to be fast asleep. 3. Because she wanted to have a cigarette. 4. Because she didn't have her teeth in, so her voice sounded thick. 5. She got them from her cleaner. 6. She had led an exciting life travelling all over the world and had had tempestuous love affairs. 7. She found the volume of poems written by Mrs. B's husband. 8. At first she was very disappointed, but then she found it amusing that Mrs. B had tricked her.

### **D – Learn it! Use it!**

1. self-conscious 2. rush 3. blaming 4. bent down 5. fetch 6. cheerful

### **E – Ready for the C1 ADVANCED English Test?**

1. be much for you to do 2. haven't got a cigarette, have 3. much clearer with her teeth  
4. caught sight of 5. with laughter when I told 6. something to remember me by