Unit 6 — Contemporary Short Fiction — Teacher copy

Track G+M · Klasse 10 · Niveau G/M

Niveau G+M

1. Reading

Read the text and use it for the activities below.

Reading — *The Note Under the Door* (extract)

The note, which someone had pushed under the door at 3 a.m., was written in pencil on a small piece of card. The handwriting, which I did not recognise, looked tired. The card said: 'I'm sorry about the cat.' I read it three times. We do not have a cat. The cat, I realised, was someone else's idea of an apology — delivered by accident to my door, the kind of delivery that explains nothing but rearranges the room.

Grammar — defining vs. non-defining relative clauses

Defining (no commas) — identifies which one:

- *The note that someone pushed under the door at 3 a.m. was written in pencil.* (which note? — defines)

Non-defining (with commas) — adds extra info:

- *The note, which had been pushed under the door at 3 a.m., was written in pencil.* (we already know which note)

That is fine in defining clauses; in non-defining clauses use *which / who*.

2. Practise

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1. Defining or non-defining? *The note (?) someone pushed under the door at 3 a.m. was written in pencil.* (which one?)
2. Insert commas as needed: *The handwriting which I did not recognise looked tired.*

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3. Build 3 sentences with defining + 2 with non-defining relative clauses.

3. Your turn

Literary response, 200 words. Read the extract. Answer: *Who is the narrator? What is the conflict? What is the theme? Which one detail is doing the most work?* Use 2 defining + 1 non-defining relative clause.

Sample

The note, which someone had pushed under the door at 3 a.m., does the most work in this short text — not because of what it says, but because of the small mismatch between sender and receiver. The narrator, whose voice is dry and careful, has no cat to apologise for. The misdelivered note becomes, in three readings, a different object each time: a scrap of paper, a stranger's regret, a domestic puzzle that won't rearrange itself. The conflict is not the noise at 3 a.m. — it is the impossibility of returning the apology to its real owner. The theme, I think, is the daily smallness of accidental contact in city life: we receive each other's lost messages all the time. The author's stylistic move is the line the kind of delivery that explains nothing but rearranges the room. That is the sentence that makes the whole story click into place. Without it, the note is a curiosity. With it, the note is a gentle invasion.

4. Further reading / listening

- The New Yorker — short fiction archive.
- BBC Radio 4 — *Short Story* podcasts.

5. Teacher answer key

G. 1. *that someone pushed* (defining, no commas).

2. *The handwriting, which I did not recognise, looked tired.* (non-defining, commas).

M. 3. Open.