

UNTERRICHTS MATERIALIEN

Englisch Sek. II



The grim reality of urban life in 21st century London

Die Schattenseiten des modernen Lebens in der Großstadt anhand von Auszügen aus *A Week in December* von Sebastian Faulks untersuchen

Themenkreis „Novel“

The grim reality of urban life in 21st century London as portrayed in Sebastian Faulks' novel *A Week in December*

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Kompetenzprofil

- Niveaustufe: 11./12. Klasse; B2/C1 (Europäischer Referenzrahmen)
- Kompetenzbereiche: *Reading, language, speaking*
- Aufgabenformate: *Language, pre-reading activities, working with texts, creative writing, comment, research, presentation, discussion, mediation*
- Medien: Romanausschnitte, Bild, Rollenkarten, Feedbackbogen, Zeitungsartikel
- fachübergreifende Aspekte: Gesellschaft, Politik, Wirtschaft, Religion

Bildnachweis:

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Pre-reading activity



VORANSICHT

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Worksheet: Religious extremism

Pre-reading activity

- I. a) Look at the picture of a London tube carriage and briefly describe it.
b) In how far does a tube carriage represent a microcosm of British society? What might be the passengers' attitudes towards each other? In a placemat activity, first exchange your ideas with three classmates, then write down your conclusions in the middle space of the placemat.

Language

2. Read the given extract from *A Week in December* by Sebastian Faulks. Draw up a list of words, expressions and phrases denoting Hassan's negative view of his surroundings. Briefly explain the meaning of these phrases and what the negative connotation consists in.

Words, expressions, phrases	Explanations

3. Find the words in the text that match these definitions.

a) Life that exists and continues forever:

b) To speak about God in an offensive way:

c) The part of a hospital where people needing urgent treatment are taken:

Working with the text – Use your own words as far as possible

4. Briefly describe the situation Hassan finds himself in in the first part of the given extract from *A Week in December* (ll. 1–36).
5. Identify the narrative perspective in the extract and analyse its impact on the reader.
6. Write a characterisation of Hassan.

Creative writing

7. Imagine you were a journalist working for a newspaper and you had the chance to talk to Hassan about his opinions and his general outlook on life. With a classmate, prepare an interview with Hassan.

Be prepared to act out your interview in front of the entire group.

The rest of the class will fill in a feedback sheet and give you feedback afterwards.



Escape to a virtual reality

Jenni Fortune was on the final circuit¹ of her Sunday shift². (...) Being a Tube driver gave her power and responsibility. (...) Jenni lived in a two-bedroom flat in Drayton Green, in the western suburbs between old Ealing and the new India of Southall. The second room was occupied by her younger half-brother, Tony, who was out of work (...)

Jenni walked back from the station when her shift was finished and let herself into the flat. (...) She made pasta shells with tomato sauce and opened a carton of orange juice; she ate quickly, eager to get on to the computer.

Sunday evenings were always busy in Parallax. People had been out clubbing on Saturday, got up late, spent the afternoon recovering and were now ready for a bit of fun before the week began again. (...)

She had left Miranda Star (...) on the banks of the Orinoco, where she had built a house. In order to pay for this, Miranda had borrowed 200,000 vajos from a mortgage³ lender called Point's West and had engaged to repay it at a rate of five percent interest⁴ over ten years. With Miranda's new job as a beauty therapist, this was just about feasible. (...)

The economy of Parallax derived⁵ from that of the real world, but with a lesser sense of responsibility. The inventiveness of the traders was such that few people understood the securities⁶ they bartered⁷, but the gains to be made were stupendous⁸, while the losses, after a certain level, became either too complicated to compute or too subdivided by onward sale to pin on one person. (...)

Most of the gamers, though, Jenni noticed, still preferred sex. She checked on the progress of Miranda's house and found that the builders had completed it overnight, a week ahead of schedule. The tiles in the swimming pool were slightly bluer than she'd imagined and there were rather more caged parakeets⁹ in the marble entrance hall than she remembered ordering, but otherwise it was perfect. Miranda's bedroom overlooked the river, and in the shining white bathroom were pink curtains with embroidered daisies on the hems. A breeze blew through the French doors that opened onto the balcony. (...)

When she'd finished her tour of inspection, she left the gated¹⁰ community on which the house had been built and went for a walk through some ruins on the edge of the encroaching¹¹ and still gorgeously untouched rainforest.

35 She had not gone far before she encountered a man. He had cargo pants to the knee, bare torso and multiple piercings. (...)

Jenni sighed. This was not the kind of man she would have chosen, but she had learned that it was pretty much standard dress for men in Parallax. (...)

She knew the man had seen her because she found herself being messaged.

40 "What's your name?"

"Miranda Star."

An answering legend appeared automatically (you couldn't message and withhold your own identity) above his maquette's head: "Jason Dog. Age 35. Pisces. Adventurer/Prospector."

45 "What you doing?"

"Looking at my new house."

"That's your's? Then we are neighbours!"

Jenni noticed his English spelling. Most of the gamers were American.

"Great," she wrote, feeling a twinge of exhilaration. (...)

50 "Let's go clubbing now. I know a good place." (...)

Jenni felt excited at the thought that someone was going to take Miranda clubbing. She'd have to get some new clothes tomorrow – a dress at least – and she wondered what the stores were like in Caracas. In what the gamers called 'TL' or True Life, she was on the second shift on the Circle Line, so she'd have
55 time. (602 words)

From: Sebastian Faulks, A Week in December, London, Vintage, 2010, pp. 26–31.

Annotations

1 circuit: a track that starts and ends in the same place

2 shift: a period of time when you do your work

3 mortgage lender: a company lending people money to buy houses

4 interest: *Zinsen*

5 to derive from: to come from

6 securities: property you promise to give to someone if you cannot pay what you owe them

7 to barter: to exchange goods for other things rather than for money

8 stupendous: surprisingly large

9 parakeet: a small parrot with a long tail

10 gated community: a community surrounded by a gate so that only residents can enter

11 encroaching: taking control of something in a gradual way, often without being noticed

Worksheet: Escape to a virtual reality

Pre-reading activity

- I. a) Reflect on the causes and dangers of escaping to a virtual world with the help of computer games etc.
- b) Exchange your ideas with a classmate. Then formulate a conclusion in a single statement.

Language and style

2. Find synonyms for the underlined words in the following sentences.

- a) "With Miranda's new job as a beauty therapist, this was just about feasible." (ll. 15–16)

- b) "She checked on the progress of Miranda's house and found that the builders had completed it overnight, a week ahead of schedule." (l. 23–25)

- c) "Great," she wrote, feeling a twinge of exhilaration." (l. 49)

Working with the text – Use your own words as far as possible

3. Find indications (expressions and phrases) in the given extract from *A Week in December* about Jenni's social status.
4. Reflect on why Jenni Fortune turns to virtual reality adopting a new identity with the name of Miranda Star.

Comment

5. Comment on Jenni's lifestyle. What do you think about the way she spends her time and she sets her priorities? Write a coherent text.


INFO

Useful expressions

When writing your text, the following expressions might be useful:

- It must be pointed out that ...
- I consider it to be wrong/difficult/essential/problematic that ...
- As a matter of fact, ...
- From this point of view, ...
- Assuming that ...
- That explains why ...
- Taking everything into account, ...
- In conclusion, ...

Further activities

6. a) Do some research on people suffering from online addiction. 
- b) Prepare a two-minute speech on the topic that you will deliver in front of the class.

Discussion

6. Prepare a discussion in your class on the following statement:

Material success is vital to the quality of life.

The following role cards can be used during the discussion:

You represent John Veals and you fully agree with the given statement. Your mind is exclusively focussed on money-making as the only purpose in life.

Person A

You strongly contradict the statement because for you, happiness does not come through making money. Friendship, love and helping other people represent the true meaning of life for you.

Person B

You are undecided. You realise how important money is in everyday life. On the other hand, you think there are other more important values that cannot be measured in financial terms.

Person C

For you, education and culture are vital to the quality of life. Money plays a minor role for you. You prefer a lack of money in your daily life to a lack of social and cultural events.

Person D

You work hard in your job as a nurse, but you make little money. This situation is frustrating to you, as you cannot afford to move to a larger flat with your two children or to go on holiday.

Person E