**Cambridge English B for the IB Diploma: Teacher resource**

**Audio scripts**

**Audio track 23**

[Individual oral, Higher level]

**Introduction**

You are going to listen to a higher level student’s individual oral. It is in response to the literary extract from *The Collector* by John Fowles provided in the coursebook.

[…]

**Student:** OK, I have selected a passage from *The Collector* by John Fowles. It’s a novel written in the early 1960s in the UK, and the story takes place in the same time and place, I think – in the early 60s in the UK. So... the novel is about a young woman named Miranda, who gets abducted by a young man named Frederick. This passage is taken from the scene right after she has been abducted, and she has been taken to Frederick’s cellar, where he plans to keep her locked up. This is the first dialogue between the characters, and so it’s the first time the reader sees them interact. And already, we can see the main conflict between them starting, which is: He is a psychopath and she is passive aggressive. She wants to escape and he wants to make her love him.

So to comment more on the conflict in this passage: she wants to know why she is being kept in this cellar, and Frederick, can’t actually explain it. She thinks that he wants ransom money. But he assures her that it’s not about the money, which he says here in this line: ‘it’s not about the money.’ What she doesn’t know is that he already has plenty of money, because he won the pools, which is like the lottery in England. She also doesn’t know that he has been stalking her. He is really fascinated by her and he sees her like a unique specimen that he wants to collect. In fact the title of the book helps explain why he is keeping her there. He likes collecting things. His uncle taught him how to collect butterflies. And all he really wants to do is the same thing with Miranda. He wants to collect her, so that he can enjoy her beauty forever. But she doesn’t understand this or realise it like the reader does.

The passage is written from Frederick’s point of view. You can see that he writes ‘I’ and he retells his part of the dialogue without quotation marks, which is kind of weird. It’s like he can’t be put on record for saying what he said to Miranda. He doesn’t think he has to take responsibility for his words or actions, which is a theme that runs throughout the novel. In the back of his mind he knows that what he is doing is wrong, but he thinks that Miranda will come to love him in the end anyways, so it doesn’t matter. So he thinks the ends will justify the means, but that is wrong – ethically wrong, because he cannot make her love him.

So first I’ll talk about Frederick and analyse him before I talk about Miranda and analyse her.

Frederick is totally out of touch with reality. In this passage you can already see how his plans are unrealistic. He says, ‘I wanted to look at her face, at her lovely hair, all of her all small and pretty, but I couldn’t, she stared so at me.’ Of course she is staring at him ‘coldly’ and fiercely because he just kidnapped her. And he’s surprised that he can’t have an intimate moment with her. This shows us just how deranged he is. Actually he’s a total psychopath. He can’t even imagine what it’s like to be her because psychopaths aren’t empathetic. Of course she was going to be angry. But he didn’t see this coming, because he is completely out of touch with reality and other people.

Another thing that he didn’t see coming was that she recognised him from the Town Hall Annexe. She knew what he looked like before he had a moustache. And his response was only to say ‘I don’t know what you mean’ and his mind was ‘all in a whirl’ as it says in the last line of this passage. Actually what’s really going on is that he can’t imagine that he was such a bad stalker that his victim has recognised him. Later she even says she saw his picture in the newspaper as the guy who won the pools, which is shocking for him. This is important for their relationship in the novel, because if she can identify him and then escape, then she could tell the police about him and then there would be consequences for his actions. And really, throughout the book, that is the problem for Frederick, he refuses to accept that there will be consequences for his actions. When she recognises him, he knows that he is past the point of no return. If she doesn’t fall in love with him, he will have to kill her and bury her, which of course is kind of what happens.

But Miranda’s death is also kind of her own fault. So I’d like to talk about her faults now and how we can see those already here in their first dialogue. She is very passive aggressive throughout the novel. She pretends to like him so that he will show sympathy for her and let her go. But of course that strategy doesn’t work with Frederick, because he can’t sympathise with anyone. It’s interesting to see that the first thing she asks Frederick is ‘where is this, who are you, and why have you brought me here?’ in a non-violent manner, as it says in the second line. It’s like she thinks she can reason with him and get straight answers from straight questions. But of course, it doesn’t work that way with him. He responds by saying ‘I can’t tell you’ as if he doesn’t have permission to talk to her. And later he makes up a whole story that he has to report to a boss, which isn’t true. But from this passage we can see that Miranda is being forceful with him to some extent, but not forceful enough. Instead of trying to push him over with physical violence, she starts to talk to him about his moustache. At first she walks straight toward Frederick, ‘toward the door’, but he doesn’t budge. The reader can see that he is actually scared her, because he tells us his thoughts: ‘I thought for a minute that she was going to attack me.’ But then she turns away, they stare at each other and there’s a ‘funny pause’.

Once he tells her that he hasn’t kidnapped her for the money she should be very concerned. If I were in her position, I would start asking him about his real intentions. I would be concerned that he would try to rape or kill me. But Miranda thinks that she can reason with him, which is strange. In class we talked about the hippie movement in the early 1960s and how non-violence and flower power were all the trend. But I think John Fowles is showing the reader that non-violence does not work in certain circumstances. Sometimes force needs to be met with force.

So to conclude, this passage shows us a conflict between a psychopath and a passive-aggressive art student. And we can already see that this story is not going to end well for Miranda, because Frederick’s thoughts and his dialogue with her, suggest that this conflict cannot be resolved. That’s what I have prepared for my individual oral.

**Teacher:** OK, good, thank you for that. It’s interesting how you can already predict the outcome of this novel, based on this early passage.

**Student:** Well, I’ve already read the whole novel of course, but now that I know how it ends, I see that I could have predicted it from this passage.

**Teacher:** Exactly. I’d like to talk about the rest of the novel and some of things you mentioned: You said earlier that that Frederick ‘kind of kills her’ in the end. What do you mean by this?

**Student:** Well, it’s not that he actively kills her by force, but he lets her die because he does not give her the medicine that she needs and he doesn’t find a doctor for her, like she asks. So in a way he kills her.

**Teacher:** But is it intentional or not?

**Student:** Well, it depends on how you look at it. See, he says that he couldn’t have known how bad her disease was. He calls it a cold. And because she had faked being ill before, he says that he cannot trust her. But of course, he knows it’s bad. But he’s constantly justifying his lack of action to the reader. He says that he cannot ask for strong medicine at the pharmacy for legal reasons. There would need to be a prescription and he could not get one without a doctor. And of course if a doctor got involved then he would be caught for kidnapping her. So it’s not that he intends to kill her so much as he does not intend to get caught and arrested. Ideally, he wanted to keep her alive to observe her and talk to her; to have a companion.

**Teacher:** And are they companions?

**Student:** No of course not, but she leads him to believe this, so that he will let down his guard and make a mistake, so that she can escape.

**Teacher**: But this plan doesn’t work, does it?

**Student:** No it doesn’t.

**Teacher:** And as you said, it’s kind of her own fault for not using more force with him. You said that she is too non-violent. Can you elaborate on this?

**Student:** Well, she had a perfect opportunity to escape and she had an axe in her hand, but she seemed to lose the strength to kill him with it. She hurt him, but she could not commit to killing him, because she does not believe in violence. She couldn’t bring herself to do it, because of her principles. And then she gets sick and dies after this part of the novel. Of course it’s not fair to say that her death is her own fault. It’s not like she asked for this situation. But she could have done so much more to physically hurt Frederick. As the reader, we know that he is actually rather weak.

**Teacher:** You said that earlier that the conflict of this story is very much about a conflict between characters. You said that he is a psychopath and she is passive aggressive. In what other ways are they different?

**Student:** In so many other ways, I don’t know where to start. First of all, she’s from a different social class. She’s studying art. She reads books. She wants to know more about the world. And she has an opinion on global matters. But Frederick is the opposite: his world is so small. He doesn’t have much of a family and he doesn’t want to have friends. He’s happy that his aunt has moved to Australia, so that she cannot bother him any more. His parents have both passed away, but they were very working class. He doesn’t think that his opinion on anything matters. And he doesn’t understand why anyone would want to study or create art. It’s like Miranda and Frederick are polar opposites.

And I think part of the problem is that she looks down on him and sees him as inferior, but she is not in a position to do this. He also feels intimidated by all of her ‘la-di-da’ upper-class snobbism, as he calls it. In fact, this is why he’s really frustrated with her. At the end of the novel, after she’s dead and Fredrick is thinking of ‘collecting’ another girl, he says clearly that he wants to find someone who is not as smart and opinionated as Miranda. Her personality and attitudes are a real problem for him. They get in the way of his main goal, which is collecting and observing her beauty. He didn’t really count on her talking back.

**Teacher:** That’s a very good observation. I see that it’s time to change topics and talk about one of the themes from the curriculum. But before we switch gears, can you tell me: Did you like the novel, *The Collector?* And if so, can you tell me why?

**Student:** Yeah I thought it was super exciting. I think what I liked most about it was how it was written. And that’s something I forgot to mention earlier. As the reader, you get to read the story from Frederick’s point of view *and* Miranda’s. His thoughts are quite twisted, but in his world they kind of make sense. And her diary entries also show you how angry she is and how she has plans to escape. It’s cool to see the same scenes from two different perspectives. I think that’s why I liked the book most. That, and the fact that it was just a good psycho-thriller.

**Teacher:** Yeah, it is a pretty good psycho-thriller. I’m glad you liked it. Maybe you’ll want to read more novels by John Fowles.

**Student:** Yeah I might do that.

**Teacher:** So to switch gears here a little bit: I’d like to talk to you about one of the prescribed themes. I thought we could talk about ‘identities’. And specifically, I thought we could talk about this unit that we did in class called ‘citizens of the world’. Let’s start with that phrase, first. What does it mean for you to be a ‘citizen of the world’? And would you say that it’s part of your identity?

**Student:** Yeah. I think of myself as a citizen of the world. And I’m not saying that just because I go to an IB school. In class we talked about being a third-culture kid, and I probably fit that description. My father is from America and my mother is Spanish, and I go to a British school. But my school friends are from all over the world.

**Teacher**: And do all of these different people in your life, with different nationalities, make you a citizen of the world?

**Student:** Well, no. Not necessarily. But it definitely helps to have them around me, because they see things differently and they all have a different outlook on life. I think what makes someone a ‘Citizen of the World’ is being open-minded. If my classmates behave differently, then I know I have to try to accept them for who they are. I think it’s about respecting differences.

**Teacher:** Can you elaborate on what you mean by ‘respecting others’? What does that look like in practice? Can you give me any examples from our classroom discussions?

**Student:** Yeah, I remember a few things that we discussed. First of all, I’ll never forget that photograph of the two women playing volleyball at the Olympic Games in Rio in 2016 [twenty sixteen]. For me that was very symbolic of the whole discussion on international mindedness that we had in class. On the one side of the net you could see this player from Egypt, jumping up to the net, and covered in a kind of spandex hijab. And on the other side of the net was this German player in a bikini, also jumping up to the net to hit the volleyball. In class we saw how the media reported this event in two different ways. One set of headlines clearly tried to portray a ‘culture clash’, as if this volleyball match was a war between East and West, which is just silly. But the other set of headlines used this image to bring people together and find common ground, which is what the Olympics is all about I think. In class we talked about how the women in the picture probably had a lot in common, despite their different ways of dressing. You could see that volleyball was a central part of their lives. They probably shared a competitive streak and a desire to win. Both women made the trip to Rio, after all. And both of them were part of this exciting celebration of world peace. So I think the photograph was a good example of how people can be different but still be respectful of each other.

**Teacher:** Yeah, I remember that discussion too. It was a good photograph for that reason. Can you think of some other texts that we worked on that really made the case for international mindedness?

**Student:** Yeah, I remember a few texts about people living abroad and how their experiences helped shape their identities. There was this story about an American girl living in China. It was interesting because she was born and raised in the States but she had Chinese parents. Even though you’d expect that she was rediscovering her roots by moving to China, you could see that she felt like a foreigner there. She found it difficult to live there because of the cultural differences. She was definitely going to move back to America, but she wanted to learn more about Chinese culture first. I think she was in her 20s and she was keen on having an adventure. And her story was also respectful of these cultural differences.

**Teacher:** Could you identify with this girl’s story about living abroad? Has living abroad taught you to respect other cultures?

**Student:** Well, yes and no. I mean I kind of live in a bubble in Dubai. We see a lot of expats everyday. But I try to get out and meet Emiratis and get to know the culture. I can see that it’s not my own culture. I mean, I don’t cover up or go to the mosque. But, like, when they’re fasting during Ramadan, I don’t eat in public or anything. I think it’s a beautiful thing that they fast, and I wish I could show that kind of discipline or devotion to a higher cause or being. It’s very noble. I really respect that.

**Teacher:** That sounds honest and genuine. We’re running out of time, but one last question: What else defines who you are? What shapes your identity, besides where you live and where your parents come from?

**Student:** Well I play several sports, and I think that tennis is definitely part of my identity. It has taught me a lot about life. That might sound strange, but I’ve learned to play to my strengths in tennis. Like you always say, ‘know thyself’.

**Teacher:** Actually it was the ancient Greeks who came up with that. But I agree that it’s very true, especially with respect to sports. That’s why I don’t run marathons anymore. Anyways, this is a good note to end on. Thanks for this talk. It’s been most enlightening. And best of luck with your exams.

**Student:** Thanks.