The Barcelona Game

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Summary

This is a story about a young girl from Manchester called Holly, who travels to Barcelona with her two brothers, Kev and Trev. Holly is excited because she wants to see some of the beautiful places she read about in a book, but her brothers are only interested in the funfair and the Barcelona–Manchester United football match.

In a café at the funfair, Holly puts her bag on the floor and an American man takes it by mistake. A Spanish boy called Pere, who is passing the café on his motorbike, helps. They follow the man across Barcelona. Holly sees lots of the famous places she wanted to see. Eventually, she catches the man outside the cathedral and they change bags. Pere drives Holly back across Barcelona and she goes with her brothers to the football game as planned. The two boys think Holly has had a boring day, but they don't know how exciting it really was.

Background and themes

Barcelona is a lovely, old city in the region of Catalunya on the north-east coast of Spain. It has many beautiful sights, including Gaudi's *Sagrada Familia*. *Las Ramblas* is a central street famous for its flower shops and both local people and tourists love to walk up and down it or stop at one of the many cafés you can find there. Barcelona held the Olympic Games in 1992.

Sport and culture: Football is a huge phenomenon throughout the world and both of the teams mentioned are internationally famous. It tends to be more popular with boys and men and this is reflected in the book. The main female character, on the other hand, is more interested in culture. She wants to see the famous sights and she loves reading.

Discussion activities

Before reading

1 **Pair work:** Write these activities on the board: *watching football / reading / going places with your brothers and sisters / visiting other countries or towns / going to the funfair* (pre-teach by referring students to the illustration on p. 5). Now write: *Do you like …? Yes, I do / No, I don't.* Students interview each other in pairs. Encourage them to give reasons for their answers. Get feedback from the whole class.

Part 1

After reading

2 **Write and guess:** Put the students in pairs and tell them to choose one of the illustrations from Part 1. Students write a description, making three deliberate mistakes. Each pair then reads out their description and the rest of the class identify the mistakes.

3 **Role play:** Put students in pairs. One is Holly and one is Kev or Trev. Tell them to act out the conversation in which they say what they want to do before going to the match and why.

Part 2

While reading (At the end of p. 9.)

4 **Discuss:** Ask students to discuss the following questions in small groups and then get feedback from the whole class.
What is Holly's problem? Do you think her brothers are going to be happy? Do you think Fred Burns is going to be happy? What can Holly do now?

After reading

5 **Write, ask and answer:** Write *What colour is Fred Burns's taxi?* on the board and elicit the answer (Yellow and black.) Now tell students to write similar questions about this part. Students then mingle as a group, asking and answering each other's questions.

Part 3

After reading

6 **Role play:** Tell students to imagine Holly arrives back late to the café. In pairs they write and act out the conversation between her and one of her brothers.

7 **Research:** In groups, students find information about another important tourist city and give an oral or artwork presentation.

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