

Us and them 🤔

David SEDARIS was born in 1956 in Johnson City, New York. He is a playwright and a regular commentator for National Public Radio. In 1994, he published his first book, *Barrel Fever: Stories and Essays*. His other novels have all been bestsellers: *Naked* (1997), *Holidays on Ice* (1997) and *Me Talk Pretty One Day* (2000).



David, a teenager, and his family have moved into a new house in a small town in New York State. They discover that the Tomkeys, their neighbours, have no television.

Word spread that Mr. Tomkey did not own a television, and you began hearing that while this was all very well and good, it was unfair of him to inflict his beliefs upon others, specifically his innocent wife and children. "Maybe they read," my mother's friend said. "Maybe they listen to the radio, but you can bet your boots¹ they're doing *something*."

I wanted to know what this something was, and so I began peering through the Tomkeys' windows. During the day I'd stand across the street from their house, acting as though I was waiting for someone, and at night, when the view was better and I had less chance of being discovered, I would creep² into their yard and hide in the bushes beside their fence³.

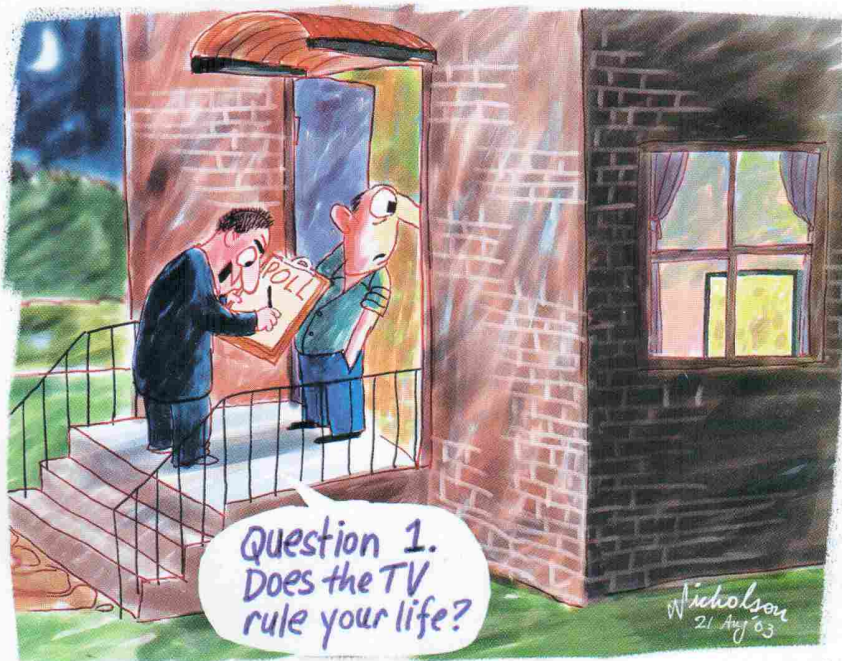
Because they had no TV, the Tomkeys were forced to talk during dinner. They had no idea how puny⁴ their lives were. They did not know what attractive was or what dinner was supposed to look like or even what time people were supposed to eat. Sometimes they wouldn't sit down until eight o'clock, long after everyone else had finished doing the dishes. During the meal, Mr. Tomkey would occasionally pound⁵ the table and point at his children with a fork, but the moment he finished, everyone would start laughing. I got the idea that he was imitating someone else, and wondered if he spied on us while we were eating.

When fall arrived and school began, I saw the Tomkey children marching up the hill with paper sacks in their hands. The son was one grade⁶ lower than me, and the daughter was one grade higher. We never spoke, but I'd pass them in the halls from time to time and attempt to view the world through their eyes. What must it be like to be so ignorant and alone? Could a normal person even imagine it? [...]

One day in class a boy named William began to write the wrong answer on the blackboard, and our teacher flailed⁷ her arms, saying, "Warning, Will. Danger, danger." Her voice was synthetic and void of emotion, and we laughed, knowing that she was imitating the robot in a weekly show about a family who lived in outer space. The Tomkeys, though, would have thought she was having a heart attack. It occurred to me that they needed a guide, someone who could accompany them through the course of an average⁸ day and point out all the things they were unable to understand.

David SEDARIS,
Dress Your Family in Corduroy and Denim (2004)

1. you can bet your boots: *tu peux parier tout ce que tu veux*
2. creep: *se faufiler*
3. fence: *clôture*
4. puny [*pju:ni*]: *ici, insignifiant*
5. pound: *frapper à coups de poing*
6. grade (US): *classe*
7. flail: *agiter violemment*
8. average: *ici, ordinaire*



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T.O.O.L.B.O.X

Nouns

- poll [pəʊl] = survey ['sɜ:veɪ]: sondage
- door-to-door
- gossip: commérages
- a couch potato [kaʊtʃ pə'tetəʊ]: qqn qui passe son temps devant la télévision

Adjectives

- hostile ['hɒstail]
- puzzled: perplexe
- inconceivable [ɪn'kɒnsi:vəbl]
- uninteresting ≠ interesting
- suspicious [səs'piʃəs]: méfiant
- unbearable [ʌn'beərəbl]: insupportable
- boring = monotonous [mə'natənəs]

Verbs & expressions

- can't believe one's ears / eyes
- welcome sb ≠ reject sb
- criticize ['krɪtɪsaɪz] sb for V-ing
- make fun of sb: se moquer de qqn
- pay attention to sb / sth
≠ ignore [ɪg'nɔ:] sb / sth
- trust ≠ mistrust sb: se méfier de qqn
- be prejudiced against:
avoir des préjugés contre
- find out = discover
- be deprived of [dɪ'praɪvd]: être privé de

Around the text

A Warming up

1. Observe and describe the cartoon, then imagine the man's answer to the pollster's question.
2. Read the title of the text and the introduction and imagine how David's family will react to the Tomkeys' having no television.

B Reading comprehension **Workbook p. 53-54**

Turn to your *Workbook* to understand the text better.

C Key questions

1. How do the neighbours react to the fact that the Tomkeys have no television?
2. What does David try to discover?
3. What does David think about the Tomkeys' life?
4. Why hadn't David tried to talk to the Tomkey children before?
5. What does David decide to do at the end of the text?
6. Imagine the Tomkeys' life without television.

Entraînements

D S'entraîner à traduire

Traduisez le passage de *During the day ...* (l. 9) à *beside their fence.* (l. 12) en tenant compte des indications données.

1. *I'd stand = I would stand*: *would* est-il l'auxiliaire du conditionnel ou indique-t-il une habitude ? Quel temps employer en français ?
2. Vous devez étoffer *from*.
3. Vous devez étoffer *at night*.
4. Ne traduisez pas *chance* par « chance »

E Savoir prononcer 😊

1. Lisez silencieusement le passage de *One day in class...* (l. 26) à *... she was having a heart attack.* (l. 33) en répondant aux questions suivantes.

- a. Combien de prononciations différentes de la voyelle **-a-** y-a-t-il dans ces mots ?
class – named – William – answer – arms – warning – danger – about – family – attack
- b. Trouvez les mots correspondant à chacune des diphtongues ci-dessous.

[eɪ] *page* [aɪ] *five* [ɔɪ] *noise* [əʊ] *no* [aʊ] *now*
7 mots 1 mot 3 mots 5 mots 2 mots

- c. Combien de prononciations différentes du digraphe **-ou-** y-a-t-il dans ces mots ?
our – about – outer – though – would – thought

d. **Formes faibles**: Dans la phrase *The Tomkeys, though, would have thought she was having a heart attack.*, *have* se prononcera-t-il [hæv] ou [əv] et *was* se prononcera-t-il [wɒz] ou [wəz] ?

2. Lisez le passage à haute voix et vérifiez ensuite à l'écoute.

F Enrichir son lexique **Workbook p. 54**

Relevez dans le texte au moins douze **prépositions de lieu** ou de **temps**, puis traduisez-les. Continuez cet exercice dans votre *Workbook*.

G Pratiquer la grammaire **Workbook p. 55**

Entraînez-vous à pratiquer les structures suivantes à l'aide de votre *Workbook*.

1. **NO / NOT A / NOT ANY** > Précis 22
... *the Tomkeys [...] have no television.* (l. 2)
... *Mr. Tomkey did not own a television...* (l. 3)
2. **WOULD**: habitude > Précis 17
... *Mr. Tomkey would occasionally pound the table...* (l. 17)
3. **THEY / THEM / THEIR / THERE** > Précis 23
They discover that [...] their neighbours... (l. 2)
... *they're doing something.* (l. 7)
... *I'd pass them...* (l. 23)