



THE MEMORY BOX

COMMUNICATIONS





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IDEAS AND ISSUES TO EXPLORE WITH YOUR CLASS

COMMUNICATIONS

The importance of modern communications systems to Abbi and her family can be seen by the placing of the family photograph right beside the telephone. The telephone is the most convenient way for Abbi and her mum to communicate with her dad and her older brother. They can keep in touch, and hear one another's voices just by dialling some numbers, though this obviously isn't the same as being able to communicate by touch, gesture and facial expressions.

The postal system is also important to Abbi as she must post her memory box to her father when he isn't allowed into Ireland for her graduation ceremony. But will she be able to post her important treasures and will she really be able to explain the significance of each memory? What will her dad think when he opens the box? Do you think he will ring Abbi and ask her what each piece means? Can you suggest modern methods of communication that might help Abbi explain to her dad why she included each treasure in her box?

COMMUNICATION IN THE PAST



When Irish people emigrated in the 1800s, they often had no means of communicating with those left behind. For many, the last sight of family and friends as the ship left Cobh was unbearably painful; they knew it might be many years before they would be able to communicate again.

In *Wildflower Girl* by Marita Conlon-McKenna (see four-page Teaching Guide at www.obrien.ie/resources/GuideWildflowerGirl.pdf), Peggy, now working in Boston, is delighted to receive two letters from home, but the letters also make her very sad as they detail important family events that she can no longer be part of. Her friend Kitty tries to comfort Peggy by saying that she'd never had a letter from home and that if she had, she couldn't have read it anyway.

- Hold a class discussion on how Peggy must have felt to learn that she'd missed her sister's wedding and that the family shop had been closed and was now boarded up. Try to express all the varied emotions she might have experienced.
- Survey the class to see how many children have access to the internet at home/have personal or family e-addresses/have communicated with penpal by 'snail mail' (letter by postal system)/have used web-cams etc. Brainstorm for other categories, and display results in

a central display area for parents and other grown-ups to see. Do you think the adults in your school might be surprised at the results of the survey?

- Ask parents/guardians/carers how long it took them to get in touch with their friends when they were in fifth or sixth class. Did they all have home phones and, if so, were they allowed to use them to call their friends? Discuss the differences between their access to communications systems and the access children in primary schools now have.
- Write a short letter in class, address and stamp the envelope, post it in your nearest post box. Record the time it took to compose and physically write the letter, to fold and place in the envelope, to seal and stamp it. How long does it take for your letter to reach its destination? You might also send an e-mail to your home or school and/or send a fax to the school fax-number and note how much more immediate these are.

NON-VERBAL COMMUNICATION

- Do a brief class-study on the history of communications systems. One group might investigate semaphore signalling, another the invention of the telegraph and/or Morse code. The whole class might learn to write the alphabet and first ten numbers in Morse code or the Irish Sign Language Alphabet. For these signs online, see www.irishdeaf.com/signs.php.
- Try communicating a message to the class without using any words at all. Ask a few children (maybe a maximum of ten) to stand in a line, perhaps facing the white/blackboard. The first two children stand facing one another with the child doing the mime standing with their back to the rest of the class. When this child has mimed some word or phrase to the child facing them, the second child faces the next child and mimes the word or phrase (s)he has understood from the original mime. What does the last child understand from the mime and does it differ from the original intention of the mime?
- Try designing a greeting card for a child in another country. You do not know what language the child speaks, nor what religion if any (s)he follows, nor anything about his/her personal circumstances and you do not wish to offend, only to send a greeting of friendship from one child to another.

