

MEMBERSHIP

THE HAND THAT FEEDS YOU



About this activity

A story to explore the ethics of teasing and pranking your pet

⚠ WARNING: This lesson plan includes a reference to an expression which could be considered crude, distasteful or impolite: “Don’t shit on your own doorstep”. If you use the activity, please point this out to your students.

- ▶ **Language level:** B1/B2
- ▶ **Age of learner:** Mature teenagers and adults
- ▶ **Duration of activity:** 25 minutes
- ▶ **Tasks:** Speaking; listening; reading; writing sentences
- ▶ **Topics:** Pets & ethics
- ▶ **Language focus:** Idiomatic expressions



For this activity, you will need the following:

- **A video** which is available on YouTube (see below)
- **A Canva slideshow** which contains all texts and media (optional)
- **The story** on page 2 (a copy for each student)

Note: For all materials and discussion, go to the corresponding page in the Resources section:

<https://membership.lessonstream.com/resources/the-hand-that-feeds-you/>

The video

This lesson plan makes use of a video that has been popular on Instagram and TikTok but originated from YouTube circa 2016. In the video, a hamster owner playfully teases their pet during feeding time, resulting in a comical reaction from the poor hamster: an expression of hurt feelings and disappointment.

The hand that feeds you

Kevin was brought up well.
He was always taught two things:
Never bite the hand that feeds you,
And don't shit on your own doorstep.

Although he sometimes did the latter,
Kevin always respected the hand.
After all, he depended on it.
And over the years, he had formed an excellent relationship with it.

But Kevin was to learn an important lesson:
Sometimes, those with great power do not appreciate the responsibility that comes with it.

Perhaps the hand was bored.
Or perhaps it just needed to remind Kevin who was the boss.

Kevin stood speechless,
A broken hamster,
A perfect image of betrayal.

The hand that fed him became the hand that failed him.
All that was sacred was now lost.

How could Kevin forgive?
How could he continue?
How could life ever be the same again?

Hello darkness my old friend.



Activity outline

1. Find out if students can answer the following questions:

- What should you not do to the hand that feeds you?
- What should you not do on your own doorstep?

Answers:

Both of these questions relate to idiomatic expressions or sayings:

- "Never bite the hand that feeds you" means that you should not behave badly towards the person or people who help, support or provide for you.
- "Don't shit on your own doorstep" is a saying that advises against doing things that could create problems in your own community or environment.

Tip: If students are not familiar with the expressions, ask them to look for answers online and also find specific situations that they could relate to. AI chatbots can be good for this. Use the following prompt:

"Give me 6 example situations to which you could apply the expression: never bite the hand that feeds you"

! WARNING: Make sure that students understand that the second expression is not suitable in polite situations. It is a slang or colloquial expression that you might use with friends or in informal contexts.

2. Show students the image on slide 3 and ask them if they can identify the animal (Answer: a hamster).



3. Tell students that you are going to read them a story which was inspired by a viral video that they might have seen before. Ask them to listen carefully and try to visualise the video as they do so. Tell students not to worry if there are any words or phrases that they are unfamiliar with. Now read aloud the text on page 2. Read it two or three times according to student requests.

4. Ask students to compare what they "saw" as they heard the story. Encourage them to go into as much details as possible.

5. Show students the video and ask the following questions:

- What do you think of the video? What adjectives would you use to describe it? (Possibilities include *funny*, *silly*, *cruel*, *immature*, *stupid*, *sad* and *sweet*.)
- Is it similar or different to the way that you imagined it?
- Do you think the hamster really is hurt and disappointed? Or are we anthropomorphising (i.e. giving human characteristics and behaviours to an animal)?

6. Give out copies of the story on page 2. Ask students to read the text and find words and phrases to complete the gap fill glossary which is included in the accompanying slideshow.

Tip: You might find that students are naturally motivated to revisit the story after watching the video. This is explored in the accompanying video which refers to the text–video–text approach as a “video sandwich”.

Glossary

- If you are **brought up well** you are polite and behave well towards other people.
- **The latter:** we use this phrase to refer to the second of two things that have just been mentioned (opposite = *the former*).
- **After all:** we use this phrase before a statement which supports or strengthens something you have just said.
- If you **appreciate** something, you understand the value or importance of it.
- **Responsibility** refers to the things you are expected to do – taking care of other people for example.
- If you are **speechless**, you are unable to speak because of shock or surprise.
- A **betrayal** is breaking someone’s trust, like cheating or lying to a friend.
- If something is **sacred**, it is very important and should not be changed.

7. Put students into pairs or groups and ask them to make a list of things that people might do to prank or tease their pets. The box below offers ten ideas.

- Pretending to throw a ball for your dog but keeping it hidden behind your back.
- Dressing your pet up and then laughing at it.
- Getting your cat to chase a laser pointer around the room.
- Holding a string in front of your cat and pulling it away just before the cat tries to grab it.
- Chasing your dog with the vacuum cleaner.
- Lying to your dog by telling it that there is a cat in the garden and getting it excited.
- Confusing your dog at winter by filling its bowl with snow at dinner time.
- Hiding from your dog.
- Pretending that you are dead to see how your pet reacts.
- Balancing a treat on your dog’s nose but forbidding it to eat it.

8. Finally ask students to discuss the following:

- Which of these things have you done? Do you have any stories to share?
- Which of these things do you think are acceptable and which are not?
- Will you think twice about pranking pets in the future after seeing the the sad hamster video?