

Reading

- 1 You are going to read an article about a teacher called Chris Searle. Read the first paragraph to find out more about him. Then skim the text, ignoring the missing sentences for the moment.

Stepney Words

Chris Searle started teaching at Sir John Cass Secondary School in Stepney, East London, in 1970. This particular job had appealed to him partly because he knew the area. More importantly, he had done his postgraduate thesis on an East End poet, Isaac Rosenberg, and saw this part of London as 'a very poetical place'.

Searle had only just qualified but certain progressive ideas about education were already settling in his head. **1** Some of the governors and teachers were ex-army or had a church background; gowns were worn and canes were used to punish trouble-makers if necessary. Stepney was a poor area and the rest of the staff saw no hope for their pupils. However, to Chris Searle, these under-achieving teenagers were the 'sons and daughters of the poet Rosenberg' and poetry was the key that would unlock their potential.

2 The short verses they wrote were sad and often bitter, with the East End shown as a place of no hope. To some of the staff at Sir John Cass, Searle's approach was alarming. Here was a teacher in his early twenties using the school as a laboratory for radical theories of education, and encouraging pupils to speak out. His classroom was noisy and lots of the girls had crushes on him. He saw pupils after school too, as he ran a half-price film club and lived in Stepney, unlike most of his fellow teachers, who fled each night to the suburbs.

Despite the negative attitudes of colleagues, Searle continued to focus on poetry. He persuaded a photographer, Ron McCormick, to bring his portraits of East London into class and with these visual images the poems got better and better.

3 The school governors, who thought these poems were too 'gloomy', had ordered Searle not to go ahead with the collection, but by March 1971, *Stepney Words* was out, paid for by Searle and parents. Extracts were even printed in the *Sun* newspaper.

Searle's 'enemies' (his own word) now made their move. One lunchtime in late May, the head called Searle in and fired him, instructing him not to come in after the end of the month. **4** Zeinaida de la Cruz, a strong-willed 16-year-old girl from Gibraltar, took charge: 'We arranged for people to tell each class. Immediately, everyone wanted to take action.'

When asked recently why they had all taken such a strong line on the sacking, she explained: 'It just didn't seem fair that a teacher everyone liked was being thrown out.' She remembers walking into the offices of a local newspaper after school to tell them what was going on. **5** Searle walked nervously to the school the next morning and found some 800 children standing outside the gates in the rain, where they stayed all day. Thanks to

Zeinaida, the journalists came along too. There was also a sympathy walk-out by the cleaning ladies, who made their feelings known by refusing to wipe the 'Don't sack Searle' graffiti off the school walls.

Other schools joined in and the next day there was a march to Trafalgar Square, in the centre of London. Searle stayed away, not wanting to be seen as their leader, but he did not let the matter rest from then on. **6** He also fought his dismissal through the union. In May 1973, the government's education secretary, Margaret Thatcher, ruled that Searle should be reinstated at the school. However, ignored by other staff and denied a class of his own, he decided to leave the school for good in July 1974. Searle continued to teach, however, and worked in many different countries around the world. He has also published his own poetry.



Lock up, unlock
That's me job for now
Lock up in the morning
Unlock at the end of day
It's an easy life
This job is
Just unlock in the morning
Enjoy meself all day
But at night, me back
It starts hurting
I can't bend
And turn that key
This job at night
It's not for me
In the daytime it's alright
But it's hard to turn
The key at night.

Christine Garratt

2 Now choose from sentences A–G the one which fits each gap (1–6).

There is one extra sentence which you do not need to use.

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| A His class heard the news the same afternoon. | E These views were not shared by the school, which, although quite new, was run very traditionally. |
| B However, many pupils had seen their own parents on strike picket lines, so they did. | F Although banned from the school, he managed to publish a second <i>Stepney Words</i> later that year. |
| C Searle contacted a local printer to arrange for their publication. | G So he made them read it and write it, believing that in this way, his pupils would make sense of their lives and their surroundings. |
| D They called the national press, which transformed the protest into a major event. | |

Grammar

Reporting

- 3 Here are some quotes from Chris Searle and his pupils, who were featured in a radio programme about *Stepney Words*. Rewrite them as reported speech. The first one is started for you.
- I went to the local paper and told them our plans. They asked me some questions to check me out, but in the end they promised to run the story. (Zeinaida)
Zeinaida said that she had gone to the local paper ...
 - That morning I went in through the side entrance. The school secretary was handing out the registers as normal, but there can't have been more than 20 or 30 kids in the whole building. (Chris Searle)
 - While we were outside the gates, teachers came across and talked to us. Some were sympathetic, though they weren't able to admit it. Some were aggressive and threw gym shoes at us! (a pupil)
 - Those children were made to feel that being ordinary meant failure. But it is the ordinary people and their daily work that make a country. (Chris Searle)

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Vocabulary

- 4 What do trouble-makers do? There are three other expressions with *make* in the article. Find them and look up their meanings in a dictionary. Then use the expressions and two from the box in the correct form to complete this short text about Chris Searle.

make a start make a good impression make use of

Chris Searle (1) on his pupils, because he helped them to (2) how they lived. To publish *Stepney Words*, he (3) a local printer. The school governors did not approve of the book and soon after it came out, they (4) and had him dismissed. Although Searle eventually got his job back at the school, the other teachers there (5) to him and in the end he chose to leave the school.

- 5 In these sentences written by exam candidates, use either a form of *make* or another verb collocation to complete the sentences.
- Our school is going to improvements to its reception area.
 - I a very bad experience with tents while I was camping last year.
 - Paul up his mind to propose marriage to Mary.
 - Finally, could you me a favour?
 - Technology has my life easier.
 - I don't need to a diet or spend money in a gym.
 - I believe that all parents should the first step to their children aware of the problems.
 - Cycling is one of the best ways to exercise.
 - I really myself at home.
 - Saying goodbye always me cry.