

## *Westward bound?*

### From Kiev to Kent – A novel extract by Marina Lewycka

#### 1. Thinking before reading...

Have you ever been away from home for more than three weeks, or considered it – maybe even going abroad? Imagine the situation and **note down** what kind of feelings you and your parents would have about your leaving and your perception in the foreign country.

- individual answers -

Then **read** the novel extract on pp. 70-72 in your textbook about a Ukrainian girl leaving home to go strawberry-picking in England.

**Info**

Marina Lewycka (born 1946 in Kiel) is a British novelist of Ukrainian origin. Shortly after her birth in a German refugee camp, her family settled in the UK. Lewycka has written several books on caring for the aged and only started writing fiction rather late in life, her first novel being the highly successful *A Short History of Tractors in Ukrainian* (2005).

*Two Caravans* (2007), Lewycka's second novel, deals with a group of legal and illegal immigrants from Eastern Europe, China and Africa who work as fruit pickers in the strawberry fields of Kent. When their supervisor is run down by a car, the immigrant workers are forced to flee in one of their trailer homes before the police arrive. Together they set off on a journey across England.

#### 2. Comprehension

a) What feelings does Irina show in the account of her journey from Kiev to Kent? **Write** them down chronologically and **compare** them with the feelings you brainstormed in task 1. Which of Irina's feelings surprised you most?

*embarrassment (l. 2); dismay at parents' sorrow (ll. 4, 11); parting pains (ll. 12 f.); boredom (l. 17); physical discomfort (ll. 18, 22 ff.); numbness (l. 23); anticipation (ll. 28 f.); dismay at meeting Vulk (ll. 30 ff.) and at his mention of expenses (l. 77); worry and resignation (ll. 42 f.); tiredness (l. 43); queasiness (l. 56); hunger (l. 56); superiority (ll. 67 f.); worry (l. 79, l. 86)*

b) What is Vulk's job? **Explain.**

*Vulk is the agent who is supposed to take Irina to her place of work in England.*

c) **'Translate'** what Vulk says into correct English. It might help to read aloud what he says and consider the context:

l. 35, l. 41, l. 64, l. 70, l. 76, ll. 81-83, l. 85.

*l. 41: 'I will keep these for you. There are many bad people in England. They could steal them from you.'*

*l. 64: 'Little flower wants something to eat?'*

*l. 70: 'No problem, little flower.'*

*l. 76: 'Food to eat in transit / on the way. It will all be added to your living expenses.'*

*ll. 81-83: 'The expenses include food, transport, accommodation. Life in the west is very expensive, little flower. Who do you think will pay for all this luxury?'*

*l. 85: 'Did you think all this would be provided for free?'*

### 3. Looking at the characters

a) Using a bilingual dictionary if necessary, **write** down at least five adjectives to describe Vulk's appearance and five more to describe his behavior.

*Vulk's appearance: badly dressed, dangerous, unkempt, scruffy, ragged, horrible, disgusting, unrefined, sleazy*

*Vulk's behaviour: uncultured, disgusting, flirtatious, incompetent/reckless (as a driver), bad-mannered, uncouth, offensive, chauvinist, impolite, bossy, rude*

c) Look at Irina's use of English in ll. 68 ff. **Explain** what she wants to say, how she says it (register<sup>1</sup>) and why she does it this way.

*She wants to say that she is hungry, but she says it in a complicated and affected way, using words like 'oblige', 'inconvenience', and 'appreciate' from a formal register not appropriate for someone like Vulk. It is her aim to show her linguistic superiority.*

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<sup>1</sup> For an explanation of the term 'register', check the glossary of your textbook (p. 164).

#### 4. What would you do?

Can you imagine going abroad to earn money? Which country would you go to?  
What kind of work could you imagine doing?

Apart from financially, how else could you profit from this experience?

**Write** at least three sentences using Conditional Sentences (Type II)<sup>2</sup>.

- *individual answers* -

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<sup>2</sup> You need a little repetition of the use and form of Conditional Sentences (Type II)? Have a look at p. 112 in your textbook.