The Death of Karen Silkwood

Before Reading

BEFORE READING ACTIVITIES (PAGE 44)

ACTIVITY 1 BEFORE READING
1 Yes  2 Yes  3 Yes  4 No  5 Yes  6 Perhaps  7 No

ACTIVITY 2 BEFORE READING
Encourage students to speculate and to make guesses but do not tell them the answers. They will find out as they read that the ‘yes’ answers are numbers 2, 3 and 5.

While Reading

CHAPTERS 1 AND 2 WHILE READING
1 Twenty-eight.
2 Because she was bringing them some papers and some photographs.
3 She had to wear a special white coat, some special shoes and a white hat.
4 The scanner knew and the alarm rang.

CHAPTERS 3 AND 4 WHILE READING
1 T
2 F Karen and Drew were happy together.
3 F When Susan checked her hands in front of the scanner, the alarm made a noise.
4 T
5 F After her shower, Susan went to the medical centre.

CHAPTERS 5 AND 6 WHILE READING
1 Susan
2 Karen
3 Most of the women and a lot of the men
4 Karen
5 The Union Committee
6 The managers
7 Pete / one of the Union leaders

CHAPTERS 7 AND 8 WHILE READING
1 Karen to Drew
2 Some workers to a manager
3 Pete to Karen
4 Susan to Karen
5 A doctor to Karen
6 One of the men in white to Karen

BEFORE READING CHAPTERS 9 AND 10
Do not give the answers but encourage discussion and let students check their answers when they read the chapters. The correct answers are:
1 Because someone put something radioactive in her bag.
2 Yes.
3 Yes.
4 He will tell Karen that she has to go for medical tests.

CHAPTERS 9 AND 10 WHILE READING
The correct order is: 4, 6, 2, 1, 5, 3

CHAPTER 11 WHILE READING
1 What . . .? That she was still a little radioactive. / That she was in no danger now. / That they didn’t know about the future.
2 How . . .? She felt years younger.
3 Where . . .? At the factory.
4 What . . .? A big, brown envelope.
5 Where . . .? To another meeting.
6 How . . .? In a car accident.

For the question about the ‘brown envelope’, encourage students to discuss their ideas and to explain why they think one answer is more likely than another.

After Reading

ACTIVITY 1 AFTER READING
8 Policeman: I’m afraid we have some bad news about your girlfriend, sir.
4 Drew: What’s happened to her?
9 Policeman: She’s had an accident, in her car.
1 Drew: What kind of an accident? Where is she?
12 Policeman: We took her to the hospital. But I’m afraid it was too late.
7 Drew: You mean that she’s dead? What happened?
3 Policeman: We found her car lying on its side below the road, next to the bridge wall.
2 Drew: But she was a good driver. Was something wrong with the car?
6 Policeman: No, nothing. She was tired. She probably fell asleep while she was driving. It happens very easily.
11 Drew: But she was coming to meet me. She had some important papers with her.
5 Policeman: We didn’t find any papers, sir.
10 Drew: I’m going to look for them myself.
It was dark when Karen left the factory. She was driving carefully along the road to the hotel when she saw the lights of another car behind her. The car came right up behind Karen and began to hit the back of her car again and again. Karen was very frightened so she drove faster. Her car left the road and turned over on its side. Karen hit her head and died. A man got out of the other car and opened the door of Karen’s car. He took the brown envelope from Karen’s bag, and then he drove away.

Activity 2: After reading

Open answers. Encourage students to write their own ending to the story if they like.

Activity 4: After reading

Words across: gloves, radioactive, uranium, shower, fuel rod, laboratory, photo

Words down: scanner, nuclear, alarm, negative

Activity 5: After reading

Open answers. Encourage discussion.

Activity 6: After reading

Possible answers:
- Karen is twenty-eight years old. She is pretty and brave.
- Drew is big and strong. He has a friendly smile.
- Susan is about forty years old and she is a little fat. She has three children.
- Mr Bailey has a thin smile and a cold voice.

Activity 7: After reading

Open answers. Encourage discussion. Prompt students if necessary by mentioning the accidents at Three Mile Island in the USA, or Chernobyl, in the former USSR. They may need vocabulary such as coal, oil, electricity and nuclear waste. This topic could be developed into a class project.