STAGE
2

Too Old to Rock and Roll and Other Stories

Jan Mark

Introduction

The stories
There are three short stories in this collection.

Too Old to Rock and Roll. Teenage Greg and his forty-year-old Dad are left alone after the death of Greg’s mother. Valerie, an old friend, comes to the house often to help out, and, gradually, after a very unhappy time, things start to look a bit more cheerful. Greg likes Valerie, and he is beginning to hope that perhaps she and Dad will get together.

Dad begins to both dress and look younger, and is clearly happy to have Valerie around the house, and it looks as though Greg’s hopes will be realised. Then one night Dad announces that he’s going to a party with some of the younger people he works with. Valerie will not be going. Soon Dad is going out more often.

A few days later Greg talks to Dad about Valerie. Dad makes it clear that Valerie is a friend and no more. And soon after Dad turns up with his new girlfriend – who is twenty-four and looks eighteen.

Invitation to Tea. The narrator of the story, a teenage girl, makes friends at school with a girl called Pat Coleman. They often walk part of the way home together. One day, Pat invites her friend home for tea. The narrator is expecting a proper tea at a table, but when they get to Pat’s home, she discovers that it is in a street of abandoned houses. Pat and her family are living in one room in a house that is partially a ruin. There is no water or electricity in the house.

The room is empty when they arrive, and Pat makes tea and puts four biscuits out on a plate. But conversation is difficult and the narrator gets up to leave early. As she leaves she meets Pat’s mother and younger brother. Pat’s mother looks old and tired and ill, but she is polite to the narrator. But as the narrator leaves the house she hears Pat’s mother talking to Pat – she is clearly unhappy that Pat brought a friend home.

After this, the girls’ friendship is more difficult. Years later, the narrator understands that Pat only wanted to be like other girls and invite a friend home for tea.

Party Wall. Four students live in the house next door to Daniel. He never meets them, and barely sees them. Most of what he finds out about them comes from what he hears through the party wall between the two houses. Jenny’s bedroom is next to his, and he finds out more about her than the others, a girl called Anna and two men, Russell and Duncan. He never really sees any of the four, although he does see Jenny’s arm on the window-sill. Russell is clearly in love with Jenny, but his love is not returned.

Daniel sits in his rooms and listens to what goes on in the house, and gradually builds up a picture of all four of its inhabitants – without ever meeting any of them.

Before reading
Here are some ways to help your students approach the story:

1. Give students the title of the book and show them the picture on the cover. Ask them to try and guess what kind of story it is.
2. Ask the students to read the text on the back cover of the book, and the story introduction on the first page. Then ask them a few questions about the story, or use the Before Reading Activities in the back of each Bookworm.
3. Use the pre-reading activity in this worksheet.
4. If there is a recording of this title, play the first few pages and stop at an interesting point.
**Too Old to Rock and Roll**

*and Other Stories*

*Pre-reading activity*

**Match the pictures with the words**

There are three stories in this collection. Think about the titles of the stories and decide which words and pictures go with them.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STORY TITLE</th>
<th>WORDS</th>
<th>PICTURES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Too Old to Rock and Roll</strong></td>
<td>a  ‘I’m sorry, I’ve got to go.’</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>b  The band practice was at a friend’s house.</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>c  The window opens beside him.</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Invitation to Tea</strong></td>
<td>d  Daniel’s garden is very small but it’s full of flowers.</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>e  He no longer looked like a tired old man.</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>f  On the other side of it is the back bedroom of the house next door.</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Party Wall</strong></td>
<td>g  When I told my mother she wanted to know Pat’s address and what her father’s job was.</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>h  ‘She looks older than him.’</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>i  Conversation was difficult.</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**To the teacher**

**Aim:** To familiarize students with the stories and their settings

**Time:** 10–15 minutes

**Organization:** Give one copy of the worksheet to each student or group of students. Ask the students to think about the story titles and then decide which words and which pictures will go with which story.

**Key:** *Too Old to Rock and Roll:* b, e, h, 4, 5.  
*Invitation to Tea:* a, g, i, 1, 6.  
*Party Wall:* c, d, f, 2, 3.
**Too Old to Rock and Roll and Other Stories**

*While reading activity*

**What next?**

**Too Old to Rock and Roll**

*What do you think happens at the end of the story?*

**Dad**
- He marries Valerie.
- He marries someone else.
- He gets a new job.
- He does something else.

**Greg**
- He leaves home.
- He goes to live with Valerie.
- He finds a new wife for his dad.
- He does something else.

**Valerie**
- She marries Dad.
- She comes to live with Greg and his dad (but doesn’t marry Dad).
- She marries someone else.
- She disappears.
- She does something else.

**The Students**
- They have a lot of parties and make a lot of noise.
- They work very hard.
- They aren’t interested in Daniel.
- They do something else.

**Daniel**
- He makes friends with all the students.
- He falls in love with one of the girls.
- He makes friends with Jenny through the wall.
- He never meets the students.
- He does something else.

**Party Wall**

*What do you think happens at the end of the story?*

**Valerie**
- She marries Dad.
- She comes to live with Greg and his dad (but doesn’t marry Dad).
- She marries someone else.
- She disappears.
- She does something else.

**Dad**
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- He marries someone else.
- He gets a new job.
- He does something else.

**Greg**
- He leaves home.
- He goes to live with Valerie.
- He finds a new wife for his dad.
- He does something else.

**The Students**
- They have a lot of parties and make a lot of noise.
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**Daniel**
- He makes friends with all the students.
- He falls in love with one of the girls.
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- He never meets the students.
- He does something else.

**To the teacher**

**Where:** *Too Old to Rock and Roll: do the activity at the break on page 7 and again at the break on page 11; Party Wall: at the second break on page 33*

**Aim:** To encourage prediction

**Time:** 10–15 minutes for each story

**Organization:** Give one copy of the worksheet to each student or group of students. Ask the students to agree on the fate of the characters shown, giving reasons for their answers.
Too Old to Rock and Roll and Other Stories

After reading activity

Character crosswords

Look at the crossword for Greg. Can you make similar crosswords for some of the other characters?

GOOD AT COOKING
PLAYS ROCK AND ROLL
LIKES VALERIE
NEEDS TO GET OUT OF THE HOUSE

To the teacher

Aim: To revise characters
Time: 20–30 minutes

Organization: Give one copy of the worksheet to each student or group of students. Ask the students to make character crosswords as in the example.