

Penguin Readers Factsheets

Teacher's Notes

Love Actually

by Richard Curtis



Level 4 – Intermediate Love Actually

Summary

The story consists of seven loosely interlocking stories about the following characters.

- Billy Mack, an ageing rock star, records a Christmas song. Although he thinks it's terrible, it surprisingly becomes the Christmas Number 1 hit. Billy is invited to Elton John's Christmas party, but leaves early to be with Joe, his long-suffering manager, who is about to spend Christmas alone.
- Mark, who runs an art gallery, films the wedding of his best friend, Peter, and Juliet. Later, Juliet asks Mark if she can see the film, but Mark is reluctant to show her. Juliet visits him unexpectedly and discovers that Mark's wedding video is only of her – he is secretly in love with her!
- Jamie, a writer, comes back early from Peter and Juliet's wedding to discover that his girlfriend is having an affair with his brother. He leaves London for his farmhouse in France, where he falls in love with his attractive Portuguese cleaning lady, Aurelia. After comic adventures involving lost manuscripts, communication problems and Aurelia's family, Jamie brings her back to London on Christmas Eve. At the airport, he introduces her to his friends, Peter, Juliet and Mark.
- Daniel struggles to come to terms with the recent death of his wife. His eleven-year-old stepson, Sam, is behaving strangely, and Daniel thinks this is because of his mother's death. He discovers, however, that it's because Sam is in love with Joanna, a girl at his school. Helping Sam to cope with the pain of his first love helps Daniel to bond with him and come to terms with his own grief.
- A new Prime Minister enters Downing Street and is attracted to Natalie, a tea-girl. After humorous episodes including a visit from the American President, the PM has Natalie transferred to another job. Unable to stop thinking about her, however, he goes to her house on Christmas Eve and accompanies her and her family to a school Christmas concert. They try to be inconspicuous, but end up kissing in front of the whole audience.
- Sarah works for a company called Fairtrade. She is in love with one of her colleagues, Karl, but is too shy to do anything about it. At the company's Christmas party, Karl invites her to dance. She invites him up to her flat, but their romantic evening is interrupted by a telephone call. Sarah's sick brother, Michael, needs her. Sarah spends Christmas opening presents with her brother in hospital.

- Karen is Daniel's friend. She is also the wife of Harry, Sarah's boss at Fairtrade, and the Prime Minister's sister. She spends her life helping other people with their problems, only to discover she has a problem of her own: her husband has secretly bought his secretary, Mia, an expensive Christmas present. After her children's Christmas concert (where she unexpectedly meets her brother, the Prime Minister!), she confronts her husband.

One month after Christmas, the Arrivals Hall at Heathrow Airport is a busy but happy place. Billy Mack and his girlfriend are met by Joe; Jamie and Aurelia are met by Peter, Juliet and Mark; Harry is met by Karen and the children; Joanna is met by Sam and Daniel (who has become friendly with Carol, a young mother); and Natalie and the Prime Minister are met by a crowd of journalists! Love is, actually, everywhere.

About Richard Curtis

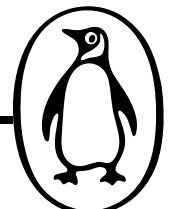
Richard Curtis is a very successful comedy writer. He wrote two popular TV series in the 1980s: *Blackadder* and *Mr Bean*. In the 1990s he started writing for the cinema. His successes include *Four Weddings and a Funeral* (1994), *Bean* (1997) and *Notting Hill* (1999). He also wrote the screenplay for *Bridget Jones's Diary* (2001). *Love Actually* came out in 2003.

Background and themes

Romantic Love can hit anybody at any time. It crosses social boundaries and brings chaos to our lives. It brings great sadness as well as great happiness. The journey of life is never easy when love interrupts our plans – but without love, is the journey worth making at all?

In the past, marriage was traditionally a business or political affair. Love was not a necessary part of it. But now, romantic attraction is seen as not only desirable but the only acceptable way of choosing a partner for life. It's probably the most difficult and complicated human relationship that can be attempted, combining the tenderness of love with household cares and the raising of children. But, in a cynical, competitive, materialistic modern world, romantic love remains almost everybody's goal. It is necessary for the satisfaction of our main emotional needs and happiness.

Christmas. The story is set just before Christmas and features a number of traditional seasonal activities – office parties, Christmas carols, Christmas shopping etc.



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Communicative activities

The following teacher-led activities cover the same sections of text as the exercises at the back of the Reader, and supplement those exercises. Further supplementary exercises covering shorter sections of the book can be found on the photocopiable Student's Activities pages of this Factsheet. These are primarily for use with class readers but, with the exception of pair/group work questions, can also be used by students working alone in a self-access centre.

ACTIVITIES BEFORE READING THE BOOK

- 1 Put these words on the board: *fame, wealth, power, love, job satisfaction, good looks, intelligence*. Ask students to number them in order of importance for the achievement of happiness. Put students into pairs and ask them to compare and discuss their lists.
- 2 Put students into small groups. Ask them to talk about Christmas in their country, or their most important annual festival.

ACTIVITIES AFTER READING A SECTION

Chapters 1–2

Put students into small groups. Ask them to discuss what they think will happen next to

- (a) Billy's Christmas song.
- (b) Daniel.
- (c) Jamie.
- (d) The Prime Minister and Natalie.

Chapters 3–4

- 1 Put students into small groups. Ask them to discuss this question

Karen says, 'People hate men who behave like girls.' Do you agree with her? Why, or why not?

- 2 Put students into small groups. Ask them to discuss this what they think will happen next to

- (a) Jamie and Aurelia.
- (b) Harry and Mia.
- (c) Sarah and Karl.
- (d) Sam.

Chapters 5–6

- 1 Put students into small groups. Ask them to discuss what they think will happen next to

- (a) Harry and Karen.
- (b) Mark and Juliet.
- (c) Billy's Christmas song.
- (d) The Prime Minister and Natalie.

- 2 Put students into pairs. Ask them to act out this conversation.

Student A: You are the Prime Minister. Tell your sister about Natalie. Ask for advice.

Student B: You are Karen. Tell your brother about your husband and the necklace. Ask for advice.

Chapters 7–9

Put students into pairs and ask them to act out this conversation.

Student A: You are the Prime Minister. You think Harry is a bad husband. Tell him why.

Student B: You are Harry. You think your brother-in-law is a bad Prime Minister. Tell him why.

ACTIVITIES AFTER READING THE BOOK

Put students into small groups. Ask them to discuss these questions.

- (a) Whose story were you most interested in? Why?
- (b) Whose story were you least interested in? Why?

Glossary

It will be useful for your students to know the new words found on page 60 of the Reader. They are practised in the 'Before you read' sections at the back of the book. (Definitions are based on those used in the Longman Active Study Dictionary).



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Student's activities

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Level 4 – Intermediate Love Actually Photocopiable

Students can do these activities alone or with one or more other students. Pair/group-only activities are marked.

ACTIVITIES BEFORE READING THE BOOK

1 Complete each item (a–j) with a word from the box.

biscuit bully carol charts designer
funeral lobster necklace reception

- (a) a school ... (b) a wedding ... (c) a sad ... service
(d) fresh ... (f) a dog ... (g) a gold ...
(h) a Christmas ... (i) the pop ... (j) a dress ...

2 Work in pairs. Talk about these questions.

- (a) What is your idea of a romantic evening?
(b) Do you believe in love at first sight? Why, or why not?
(c) What other famous love stories can you think of?

ACTIVITIES WHILE READING THE BOOK

Chapters 1–2

Match each character (a–g) with *two* descriptions from the list (1–14).

- (1) is a busy mother (2) is the boss of a company
(3) is interviewed on the radio (4) loves a colleague
(5) needs to talk to someone (6) feels old and lonely
(7) breaks a promise (8) is a stepfather
(9) pretends to be ill (10) has a sad friend
(11) likes playing jokes (12) cheats on her boyfriend
(13) has a beautiful secretary (14) is always on the phone

- (a) Billy
(b) Katya
(c) Daniel
(d) Karen
(e) Mark
(f) Sarah
(g) Harry

Chapters 3–4

1 Underline the correct word(s).

- (a) The Prime Minister *wants* / *doesn't want* a closer relationship with the USA.
(b) Harry *likes* / *doesn't like* Christmas.
(c) Karen thinks Daniel should be more *anxious* / *cheerful*.
(d) Daniel is *surprised* / *upset* when he talks to his stepson.
(e) *Sarah* / *Natalie* has just left her boyfriend.
(f) Mark is unwilling to help *Juliet* / *Mia*.
(g) Jamie's new cleaner is *French* / *Portuguese*.

2 Who and what are these sentences about?

- (a) He bangs his head on a table.
(b) He tries not to look at her.
(c) He stays in his room.
(d) She throws her hands in the air.
(e) He looks sadly at his typewriter.
(f) He offers to have him murdered.
(g) He behaves badly on TV.
(h) He hits his head against a wall.
(i) He doesn't want to talk to her.
(j) They cannot understand each other.

Chapters 5–6

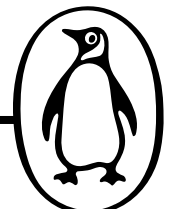
1 Choose the correct answer.

- (a) The Prime Minister becomes more confident because he is
(1) annoyed. (2) afraid. (3) anxious.
(b) Karen likes
(1) the Pointer Sisters. (2) Joni Mitchell. (3) the Beatles.
(c) Jamie is writing
(1) a love story. (2) a crime story. (3) a comedy.
(d) Sarah doesn't go to work after the party because
(1) she drank too much.
(2) she spent the night with Mark.
(3) her brother isn't well.
(e) Harry shops for a Christmas present for
(1) his wife. (2) his daughter (3) his secretary.

2 Complete each sentence with a word from the box. One word is used twice.

after although because if unless when while

- (a) Mark walks away from Juliet ... he doesn't want to be hurt.
(b) The Prime Minister wants Natalie to have another job ... he likes her.
(c) Sam comes in ... his father is staring at a photograph.
(d) Sam can't sleep ... Joanna is going back to America.
(e) Sam becomes a drummer ... he sees Billy's Christmas song.
(f) Sam thinks Joanna will like him ... he is in a rock group.
(g) Sarah is talking to Mia ... Karl asks her to dance.
(h) Daniel will not fall in love ... he meets Claudia Schiffer.



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Student's activities

Chapters 7–9

1 Put these events into the correct order.

- (a) Joanna kisses Sam.
- (b) Sarah visits her brother.
- (c) Aurelia meets Jamie's friends.
- (d) The Prime Minister kisses Natalie.
- (e) Karen goes to the school play.
- (f) Jamie meets Aurelia's family.
- (g) Elton John invites Billy to a party.
- (h) Juliet kisses Mark.
- (i) Daniel drives Sam to the airport.
- (j) The Prime Minister meets Natalie's family.

2 True or false?

- (a) Karen likes her Christmas present.
- (b) Billy expected his song to be Number One.
- (c) Sarah feels cheerful when she rings her brother.
- (d) Mark tells Juliet that he loves her.
- (e) Joe isn't invited to Elton John's party.
- (f) Natalie lives next door to Harry's secretary.
- (g) Karen feels unhappy at the school play.
- (h) Harry feels guilty about the necklace.
- (i) Daniel meets Claudia Schiffer.
- (j) Aurelia lives in Portugal.

ACTIVITIES AFTER READING THE BOOK

1 Work in pairs. Which part of the story did you find

- (a) the funniest?
- (b) the saddest?
- (c) the most interesting?
- (d) the least interesting?

2 Work in pairs. How do these people feel about each other at the end of the story? What will happen to them next? Who will be happy? Give reasons for your answers.

- (a) Jamie and his brother
- (b) Billy and Joe
- (c) Karen and Harry
- (d) Sarah and Karl
- (e) Juliet and Mark
- (f) Daniel and Carol
- (g) Sam and Joanna



Love Actually: first trailer for Red Nose Day 2017 sequel released. Brief letters Look on the sweet side of Love Actually. Published: 21 Mar 2017. Published: 21 Mar 2017. Look on the sweet side of Love Actually. What killed the romcom? It was Love, Actually. Hadley Freeman. Published: 21 Mar 2017. Published: 21 Mar 2017. What killed the romcom? It was Love, Actually. About 54 results for Love Actually. 1 2 3. Topics. "Love Actually" is a delightful homage to love. There are different situations, some of them dramatic, others funny, sometimes touching but never corny. The interconnection of the stories has a perfect timing. The cast is a constellation, highlighting the shining beauty of Keira Knightley and the nice role of Hugh Grant. Love Actually is a 2003 Christmas-themed romantic comedy film written and directed by Richard Curtis. It features an ensemble cast, composed predominantly of British actors, many of whom had worked with Curtis in previous film and television projects. Mostly filmed on location in London, the screenplay delves into different aspects of love as shown through ten separate stories involving a wide variety of individuals, many of whom are shown to be interlinked as the tales progress. The story begins five