

Reacting to events

Reading

Read through the following texts, noting the rather strong idiomatic language we can use to describe our reactions to slightly unusual events.

Some moments from our family scrap-book, when we were all:

surprised.

... We all **got the shock of our lives** last Christmas. We were sitting round the fire, forcing third helpings of Christmas cake into our mouths, when the doorbell rang. It **made everybody jump**. Auntie Jane **nearly jumped out of her skin**. I was pretty **startled** myself, I must admit. Anyway, there at the door — **believe it or not** - was Uncle Mac, with an armful of presents. (It was the first time in living memory that he had ever given anything to anybody.) Everyone **caught their breath** when they saw him. **No-one could really believe their eyes**. Poor Aunt Flossie actually **fainted**, and Uncle Bill kept **blinking, as if he had seen a ghost**. And Granny, who had been talking non-stop since breakfast, was absolutely **speechless**. I thought **her eyes were going to pop out of her head**. I reckon **you could have knocked all of us over with a feather**.

emotional.

... I looked across and saw that **tears were already trickling down** Mum's cheeks. I must confess **a lump had come to my throat**, and I was having to swallow hard. When the priest started speaking, Julia **burst out crying**, and that was the signal for Mum to **break down**; she was completely **overcome**. By this time **tears were rolling down** several faces - including Dad's - and I had a horrible feeling that I was going to **burst into tears**. The priest's few words were very **touching**; I think he was almost **moved to tears** himself. I'm not surprised. They made such a lovely couple and Maggie looked great in white.

angry.

... I think it was Dad's side of the family that started it, when Uncle Mac started **calling** Uncle Bill **names**. Auntie Jane **took offence** immediately and then Granny joined in. She made Aunt Flossie **lose her temper** and soon after that Dad **blew his top**. That led to Mum **going berserk** — I've never seen her so **livid**. It wasn't long before Maggie, for some reason, started **insulting** Uncle Tom and then it was his turn to **see red**; he really **went mad** — '**furious**' isn't the word for it. It was about then that Grandad, who had obviously been **seething** for some time, **hit the roof**. Things **quietened down** a bit after that and Granny dealt the next hand of cards.

afraid.

... Well, naturally most of us were **scared stiff**. Only Maggie **kept cool** throughout. Mum **went as white as a sheet** and even Dad **panicked** a bit. Auntie Jane's **hair stood on end** and Uncle Bill **ran a mile**. I must confess that **my heart missed a beat** or two. I mean, it's not every day that a tax inspector comes to your front door, is it? All the time he was with us, Uncle Mac was **twitching** as if he had an army of ants inside his shirt collar. Whenever the phrase 'failure to declare earned income'

came up, Aunt Flossie **winc**ed and Mac's hand started **shaking** so much he couldn't light his pipe. It was obvious that Granny was trembling too when she tried to pick her cup of tea up — three times. Everyone **shuddered** visibly when the man said he would be back - everyone except Maggie, that is. She didn't **flinch** once, **didn't turn a hair**. She's either a very good actress or extremely honest.

embarrassed.

... I could see that Julia was **dying of embarrassment** - not surprisingly, in the circumstances. I bet the incident is still **on her conscience**. Anyway, I could feel that I was **blushing**, and the other chap was **as red as a beetroot**. Julia **had a terribly guilty look in her eye**, or rather, she **had guilt written all over her face**. She started **stammering** something about feeling tired and having come up for a rest. **I didn't know where to put myself**, I can tell you. I've never felt so small in all my life; **about two foot tall**, that's how I felt. I stood there for a few seconds **hoping a hole would open up in the floor and swallow me**. In the end I just **gulped** and backed out of the room.

amused.

... Well, everyone **burst out laughing**, of course. Uncle Bill **laughed his head off**, and Auntie Jane **nearly died laughing**. And you should have seen Granny; she was in hysterics. Even Uncle Mac **couldn't help laughing** when he realized what the cause of their laughter was. The vicar was the only one who didn't **see the funny side of things**; completely straight-faced, stony-faced he was. Granny was still **hysterical** long after Uncle Mac had turned round, **chuckling** to himself, and put the matter straight.

ractice

Choose the correct word to complete each sentence.

- 1 I couldn't ... my ears when they told me.
a hear b believe c feel d accept
- 2 The Prime Minister was ... with rage.
a wordless b silent c shivering d speechless
- 3 Poor girl, there were ... running down her face.
a tears b lumps c shudders d cuts
- 4 I must admit, I nearly ... my sides laughing.
a cut b broke c split d swallowed
- 5 I can tell you, my heart nearly skipped a
a beat b moment c break d turn
- 6 Everyone ... out laughing.
a broke b burst c jumped d popped
- 7 They had joy ... all over their faces.
a placed b arranged c poured d written
- 8 My ... stood on end when I saw him.
a hair b head c heart d eyes

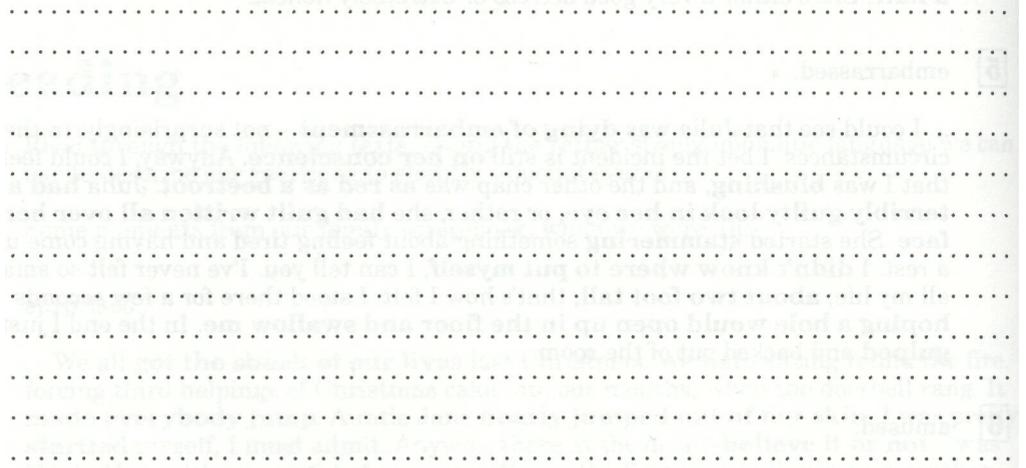
After a little thought, tell a partner or write about a memorably embarrassing, frightening or funny experience you have had.

Tell your partner or write the plot of a horror film you have enjoyed and still remember, or a comedy that amused you, or a thriller that kept you on the edge of your seat. Tell them about how you felt while you were watching it.

Reacting to events

4 Write, for your college or company magazine, a review of a ghost story you have read.

- Add any other words about our reactions to events as you meet them.

A large rectangular area with horizontal dotted lines, intended for writing a review of a ghost story. The lines are evenly spaced and extend across the width of the page.