

## Have you heard the gossip?

### VOCABULARY

What is a gossip ?

Can you give other words coming from this root or synonyms ?

**Choose the best word to complete the sentences (A–F). Then, match them with the responses (1–6) to create dialogues.**

- A. A little **bird/cat/mouse** told me you've been interviewing for a new job.
  - B. Come on, spill the **coffee/tea/juice** about what happened at the company retreat!
  - C. Rumour **does/takes/has** it that Professor Williams is leaving at the end of term.
  - D. I heard someone's been **plating/mealing/dishing** the dirt on the mayor. What's the latest?
  - E. Those false accusations could seriously **tarnish/garnish/varnish** his reputation in the industry.
  - F. We need to keep the new product design under **ropes/wrappings/wraps** until the launch next month.
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- 1. Really? He never mentioned anything about that in yesterday's lecture.
  - 2. Well, let's just say the CEO's karaoke performance was... memorable.
  - 3. I wish people would mind their own business; I was hoping to keep that private until they got back to me about the position.
  - 4. Don't worry, I haven't told anyone about the foldable screen feature.
  - 5. That's why he needs to address them publicly before they spread any further.
  - 6. Let's just say, someone's campaign funds didn't quite go where they should have.

### ACTIVITIES

## Have you heard the gossip?

1. Look at the words in the boxes and decide which is the odd one out.

gossip

myths

news

stories

2. Choose at least four of the statements and say if you agree with them. Then, add more details.

- There's no such thing as harmless gossip.
- People are more likely to share gossip face to face than via text.
- Social media is just digital gossip.
- The internet enables you to find out more about people, making gossip easier.
- The more successful you are, the more people gossip about you.
- People wouldn't gossip if they had more interesting lives.
- Gossip is a necessary social tool.



3. Listen to part of a **podcast** [<https://www.bbc.com/audio/play/m0027520>] (from 01:10 to 03:45). Then, choose one or more items in the boxes to talk about in more detail.

something that  
surprised you

something you could  
relate to

something you might  
change your mind about

4. Discuss the questions.

- Why do you think some people are universally drawn to gossip?
- The podcast suggests that gossip can create bonds between people. Have you ever experienced anything like that? Do you think it can also lead to exclusion? Why/Why not?
- What's the relationship between gossip and trust?
- Do you think gossip can be deliberately used as a form of storytelling purely for entertainment, rather than for spreading rumours or harming someone's reputation? Why/Why not?

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### 5. Choose the alternative you think is worse and explain your choice.

accidentally spreading a false rumour about your friend	or	discovering that a close friend has been gossiping about you
working in an office where everyone openly gossips	or	working in an office where gossip happens secretly
hearing gossip about yourself and knowing what people say	or	never knowing what gossip is being spread about you
being known as a boring person who never gossips	or	being known as a person with the juiciest gossip but who can't be trusted
being excluded from gossip circles and never gossiped about	or	being the person everyone gossips with, but also gossips about

### 6. Look at four different types of gossip and do the tasks below.

celebrity gossip

family gossip

political gossip

workplace gossip

- give an example for each (choose a real one, one from a book/film or an imaginary one)
- for each example, say what negative consequences the gossip might have
- say in which situations the gossip might be acceptable, or even helpful

### 7. Decide what you would do in these situations.

- You're in a group conversation, and others are gossiping about a colleague. You feel uncomfortable but don't want to be left out. Do you join in or stay quiet?
- You hear something about a colleague that seems shocking, but you later realize it was taken out of context. Do you confront the person who spread the gossip or keep it under wraps?
- You hear juicy gossip about a celebrity or public figure. Do you take time to double-check it or spill the tea straight away to be ahead of your friends?
- You're at a family gathering, and someone starts dishing the dirt on a relative. You feel uncomfortable because it could hurt their feelings if they find out. Should you speak up or stay quiet?

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- 8. Work in pairs. You're each going to get a card with a situation. Role-play the situation using the phrases in the box to start gossip. Swap roles being Student A and Student B for the next situation.**

A little bird told me...

Come on, spill the tea about...

Rumour has it that...

Not to dish the dirt, but...