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Abbreviations

sth = something
sb = somebody
sl = slang
vulg = vulgar

Before you start

1. What do you think living in Spain is like?
2. In the story, Melanie's father leaves his family and moves to Madrid. Would you move to a different country?
3. Here are some reasons people decide to leave their home and move abroad.

You can add more of your own. Which ones would be the most important for you?



4. Read the story and find out what motivated Melanie's father to move abroad. Do you think he made a good decision?



“A funny thing happened at the bank this morning,” said Mr Jarvis at dinner on Wednesday evening.

“Oh?” said his wife. “What?” Ian, his nineteen-year-old son, did not look up from his plate. Only fifteen-year-old Melanie asked eagerly, “What, Dad? You always enjoyed her father’s stories, and funny things sometimes happen at his bank every day.”

He smiled at her. “Well, **Flower**,” he said, “Jack Bobsworth – you know, he owns that big greengrocer’s shop in the High Street – came in to get fifty pounds. Dennis Baker, who works next to me, took the **cheque**, murmured something and went off. He came back with the **deputy** manager.”

27 **Flower** as one is expected to do – **26 Flower** a special name Mr. Jarvis uses for his daughter Melanie – **29 cheque** In the past, every bank customer had a cheque book. You filled in a cheque to take money from the bank. In many countries, cheques no longer exist. – **30 deputy** sb who is in charge when the person normally responsible is out of the office

“Well, – er –” said the deputy manager in an **embarrassed** way, “this is a rather difficult case –!”

“**Wotcha mean?**” demanded Bobsworth. (He’s a real **Cockney** – a **rough diamond**, you know!) “Wot’s difficult abaht it? I just want fifty **quid!**”

“Yes, I know,” said the deputy, “but I’m afraid I can’t let you have any money at the moment!”

“Wot?!” roared Bobsworth, “That’s a fine way to treat a customer! I demand to see the manager!”

Then at last Big Boss Potter appeared, looking very hot and uncomfortable.

“Ah – Mr Bobsworth –” he stammered. “The fact is – to **put it briefly** – your account has been closed.”

“Closed?!” exclaimed Bobsworth. “Why?”

“Well – ah – you see, officially you’re **dead!**”

“Yes.” The Big Boss wiped his forehead with his handkerchief. “You see, it is one of my duties, as manager, to read the **obituaries**

in the local paper, to find out how many of my customers have died. Your name was there last week, so I immediately closed your account. I’m sorry if there’s been a mistake –”

“IF?!” exploded Bobsworth. “There’s no if abaht it! That was my uncle’s obituary in the paper!”

Melanie laughed. “So what happened? I suppose Mr Potter reopened the account?”

“It wasn’t as easy as that!” **chuckled** her father. “We live in a world of computers, my dear! The computers had been told that Bobsworth was dead, and they had closed his account! Now it must stay closed until we can **persuade** the computers that he’s alive again!”

“Ah, yes,” said the deputy manager. “I’m afraid I can’t let you have any money at the moment!”

“Well, – er –” said the deputy manager in an **embarrassed** way, “this is a rather difficult case –!”

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“Poor Mr Potter!” said Mrs Jarvis. “How embarrassing –”

“**Serves him right** – the **conceited ass!** He saw me laughing, and he gave me a dirty look!”

“Was that wise, dear? Mr Potter’s been very kind to you!”

Her husband shrugged his shoulders. “Will you excuse me, please? I’ve promised to play at the Boathouse Club this evening. Their guitarist has fallen ill, and they’ve asked me to take his place for a few nights.”

He left the table and went out into the hall. Mother and son looked at each other.

“He oughtn’t to laugh at Mr Potter!” said Mrs Jarvis worriedly. “If it weren’t for him, he wouldn’t have this job at the bank!”

Ian nodded. “He shouldn’t talk about business with me, and mention customers’ names like that!” he muttered.

“Oh, you’re always criticising Dad!” exclaimed Melanie. “He only tells us!”

“That doesn’t matter! He shouldn’t even tell us!”

Melanie sighed. Ian was probably right. He had gone into banking when he left school three years ago, and was now a **cashier** like his father. The difference was that Ian would almost

certainly stay in banking all his life, and might one day become a manager himself; whereas Dad had only worked at the bank for a year, anyway, and would probably not stay there long. Dad never

stayed long in any job. He might give up banking any day to become a musician, a scientist, or a photographer, or an artist!

She was just thinking how very lucky it was that Dad and Ian did not work at the same bank, when Dad put his head round the door.

“**Cheerio!**” he said. “Oh, by the way, Joan, I’m going down to the coast this weekend. Three or four of the boys are hiring a boat to do some sea fishing, and they’ve invited me.”

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“But Daddy!” protested Melanie. “What about Hampton Court? Ever since we did Henry the Eighth at school you’ve been promising to take me there, and you still haven’t done it! You’re never at home at the weekend lately!”

“I’m sorry, Flower!” exclaimed her father. “I completely forgot about Hampton Court! But never mind – we’ll go next weekend! Don’t sulk now – there’s a good girl! Next weekend – I promise!”

Why could Mr Bobsworth not draw any money from his bank account?

What mistake had Mr Potter made?

Think about it...

Do you think Mr Jarvis will keep his job at the bank, or will he change jobs?

How do we know that Melanie and her father had a close relationship? Who do you have the closest relationship with in your family?

7 to sulk to be silent when you are upset or angry

Melanie's school **put on a play** every year, and this time she had a part in it. Only a small part, but she looked forward eagerly to the **rehearsals**. The next day there was to be a rehearsal after school but when Melanie went to the hall, she found the **cast** and the two drama teachers standing **glumly** around, doing nothing.

"It's that Findley boy!" explained her friend Jane. "He's not come!"

Michael Findley, the boy who had been given the leading role, had missed the last rehearsal, and now he had missed this one.

Melanie's heart sank. It was because of Michael Findley that she enjoyed the rehearsals so much!

"He's not ill, you know!" said a boy bitterly. "I saw him yesterday night in town! He's just **skiving**!"

"I'm really disappointed in Findley," said one of the drama teachers. "We didn't force him to take the part – in fact, I warned him it would be hard work! But he seemed keen! Now he's **let us all down** again!"

"Can't Chris Tankerton play the part?" someone asked. "He's not so good as Findley, but he's not bad!"

The teacher nodded. "I'll speak to Chris tomorrow," he said. "Anyway, we can't **rehearse** without our leading man, so we may as well go home."

"I can't bear that Findley!" muttered Jane, as they went to the **cloakroom** to get their coats. "He's so conceited! I suppose he thinks he makes a good actor just because his father is a famous actor!"

Melanie did not answer. She wanted to say that Jane was being unfair; she was sure Michael was not like that at all! But of course she did not. So she put on her coat, picked up her satchel and set off for home.

1 to **put on (a play)** to produce – 3 **rehearsal** practice before a performance – 4 **cast** actors – 5 **glumly** depressed – 13 **to skive** to miss school without permission – 16 **to let sb down** to disappoint sb – 21 **to rehearse** to practise, repeat a play – 24 **cloakroom** room in a place such as a theatre where coats and hats are kept
