Unit 4

Accident Black Spot

I'll never forget the sound of the accident – the sharp screeching, followed by the loud thunderous boom, followed in turn by the brittle tinkling, then the silence. The silence was probably the most frightening part.

The village is a small place, and that summer evening, I saw most of my neighbours dashing out of their houses. We all ran towards the bridge. That was where the sound had come from. All the locals knew that the bend in the road just before the bridge was a deathtrap.

My heart was pounding as I approached the old, stone humpback bridge. I caught up with Eileen and John who lived next door to me. Their faces were white. John glanced at me as we ran. "Another one," he stated grimly.

As soon as we reached the rise in the bridge, all our worst fears were confirmed. There was a large, white van at the corner. The rear end of the van stuck out across the road. The front of the van was buried in the ditch. A trail of black skid marks led back along the road like two snakes. None of us recognised the van, so we presumed it was just another stranger travelling too fast on a dangerous road. The driver had tried very hard to stop.

I heard others coming behind us as we reached the cab of the van. John and I pulled back branches as Eileen peered inside. "They're alive," she said. Two men, the driver and passenger, were strapped into their seats. They moaned in pain. Neither of them was fully conscious. The two of them were in a bad way. I heard people behind me making urgent calls on their mobile phones.

I reached in and turned off the ignition, to prevent a fire. John was about to pull the driver from his seat when Eileen stopped him. "We won't move them unless we have to," she said, pulling a strip of cloth from her apron. "This lad has a bad cut on his arm." As she tried to slow the flow of blood from the driver's arm, we heard the distant wailing of sirens.

Question Time

A

1. How many sounds did the accident make?
2. Describe the sounds.
3. Where did the accident take place?
4. How did the storyteller feel while running to the accident?
5. Who else did the storyteller meet along the way?
6. What had crashed?
7. What did John want to do to help the driver?
8. What did Eileen do to stop the blood flowing from the driver's injury?
9. What saved the driver and his passenger from being killed instantly?
10. Who called for help?
11. At what time of the day did the accident take place?
12. Describe the van that crashed.

B

1. Describe how you think the accident happened.
2. How did the people of the village react?
3. How do you know that something like this had happened before?
4. (a) Were the people in the van locals?
   (b) Could this be a reason for the accident?
5. What do you think was so dangerous about the road?
6. Why did Eileen stop John from pulling the driver out of the van?
7. Why did the storyteller turn off the van's ignition?
8. How do you know that help was on its way?
9. Why, do you think, was the storyteller's heart pounding?
10. What showed that the driver had tried hard to stop?
11. Who do you think was the most helpful in the emergency? Why?
12. What do you think happened next?

Think and Talk

1. What do you understand by the term 'accident black spot'?
2. How do you think the local people felt about the bend near the bridge?
3. If you were a villager that had just witnessed this crash, how would you feel?
4. What do you think should be done about the dangerous bend?
5. Pretend you are one of the villagers. Write a letter to the county council demanding that something be done about the dangerous bend in the road.