

Mystery flower beds while you sleep



Moses Oakey's garden

Residents of the town of Aldeymarsh in Lincolnshire do not know whether to be concerned or grateful for a series of visits the town has been receiving during the night over the last month. So far no fewer than eleven lucky householders have woken to find that their gardening has been done for them while they were sleeping.

Tasks carried out included: hedge cutting, weeding, edge trimming and even lawn mowing; most of the homes involved have also had new flowers and shrubs planted. Mother-of-two 28-year-old Anna Gagney of Romney Close said that last Tuesday, when she when she went to bed, her front garden was full of weeds. The following morning all the weeds had been removed and she was delighted to find that about twenty substantial flowering bushes had been planted -neatly and expertly - in her previously overgrown flower beds.

Most of the residents who have received the free garden makeovers are delighted with the results. Senior citizen Moses Oakey commented, "I'm amazed at this kindness. You don't usually get something for nothing these days." His neighbour, firefighter Peggy Maloney added, "I can't believe they managed to mow my grass in the dark and I didn't even hear the mower!" But accountant James Fearney does not agree. He said he found it alarming that strangers could visit his garden while he was asleep. "These

people have trespassed on my property. What's more, if I want flowers in my garden I'll choose and plant them myself."

How the mystery gardeners managed to carry out so many tasks so silently in the dark has baffled local police ever since they were first made aware of the problem by James Fearney. A spokesman for Superintendent Beth Holt confirmed that police are looking into eleven cases of overnight trespass and so far, have no leads to go on. It is unknown whether the trespassers, when found, will also be charged with theft of weeds.

Anyone with any information is requested to call Aldeymarsh Police in confidence on 020023 987987.

- 1) Why would people read this article?
- 2) Headlines often play with language using devices such as puns, alliteration, rhyme, references to well-known sayings, book titles etc. What does this one do?
- 3) Does the first paragraph answer the questions: Who? What? When? Where? (orientation)
- 4) In 2 or 3 words, what is each paragraph about?
- 5) Does the final paragraph bring the story up to the present or look to the future? (reorientation)
- 6) What do the following words mean: *alarmed, inhabitants, substantial, trespassed, baffled, in confidence*? How can you work them out if you don't know?
- 7) Find some facts from the article. Can you find any words in this which show the writer's opinion?
- 8) Who has been interviewed? (someone involved or affected / eyewitness / expert on relevant topic / spokesperson for relevant group)
- 9) Are the interviews in direct or reported speech? How can you tell? (Look for use of 1st or 3rd person, present or past tense, speech marks or no speech marks, but above all whether it is the actual words spoken.)
- 10) Can you find anywhere the writer has used a semi-colon? Can you find another place where the writer might have used a semi-colon to join two closely connected sentences?
- 11) Is the style chatty or formal? (Find some examples of reported or direct speech, use of informal 'chatty' language or use of formal, quite 'dry' language to help you decide what style the article is written in.)
- 12) Did you find the article a) informative and b) entertaining?