



## THE LANDLADY

1. The Landlady is the title of a short story by the British author Roald Dahl. As you already know, the word landlady describes a person who owns a boarding house and rents rooms to guests. England is full of such houses. Have you ever been to England or some other country and stayed in a place of this kind? Talk about your experiences.
2. Billy Weaver, this is the name of our character, rents a room in a boarding house in Bath. While signing the guest book shortly after his arrival, he is on the brink of discovering something very odd about the two previous guests. Read a short extract of the text and be ready to speculate about Billy's findings.

He found the guest-book lying open on the piano, so he took out his pen and wrote down his name and address. There were only two other entries above his on the page, and, as one always does with guest-books, he started to read them. One was a Christopher Mulholland from Cardiff. The other was Gregory W. Temple from Bristol.

That's funny, he thought suddenly. Christopher Mulholland. It rings a bell.

Now where on earth had he heard that rather unusual name before?

Was it a boy at school? No. Was it one of his sister's numerous young men, perhaps, or a friend of his father's? No, no, it wasn't any of those. He glanced down again at the book.

*Christopher Mulholland  
Gregory W. Temple*

*231 Cathedral Road, Cardiff  
27 Sycamore Drive, Bristol*

As a matter of fact, now he came to think of it, he wasn't at all sure that the second name didn't have almost as much of a familiar ring about it as the first.

'Gregory Temple?' he said aloud, searching his memory. 'Christopher Mulholland? ...'

'Such charming boys,' a voice behind him answered, and he turned and saw his landlady sailing into the room with a large silver tea-tray in her hands. She was holding it well out in front of her, and rather high up, as though the tray were a pair of reins on a frisky horse.

'They sound somehow familiar,' he said.

'They do? How interesting.'

'I'm almost positive I've heard those names before somewhere. Isn't that odd? Maybe it was in the newspapers. They weren't famous in any way, were they? I mean famous cricketers or footballers or something like that?'

'Famous,' she said, setting the tea-tray down on the low table in front of the sofa. 'Oh no, I don't think they were famous. But they were incredibly handsome, both of them. I can promise you that. They were tall and young and handsome, my dear, just exactly like you.'

Once more, Billy glanced down at the book. 'Look here,' he said, noticing the dates. 'This last entry is over two years old.'

'It is?'

Kiss kiss  
Roald Dahl  
Penguin Books, 1962  
p. 14 i 15

3. Read the short story at home and find out more about these two boys. See if your speculations or those of your friends have been confirmed.

In the next session we will talk about the short story again. We'll try to answer some questions together. I'm interested in knowing if you have enjoyed the story and if you'd like to read something else by the same author. If you manage to find some information about the writer, either by surfing the net or in the literature section at the CAM, we'll also talk about him. At the self access centre, there is a worksheet at your disposal, in case you are interested in doing some extra work on the story.