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# BBC LEARNING ENGLISH

## The White Elephant

### 28: Empathy



*NB: This is not a word-for-word transcript*

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#### **Ceilia**

Thanks for your attention everyone. Now, as you know, I attended a conference yesterday and one of the great ideas I learnt was giving members of staff the opportunity to experience what other members of staff do.

#### **Mary**

You mean a job swap?

#### **Gordon**

So one of you lot is going to try doing my job?! Impossible!

#### **Ceilia**

I want you to see what it feels like **to be in someone else's shoes**.

#### **Peter**

But I wouldn't fit in your shoes.

#### **Ceilia**

Not literally Peter. It's just to understand what other people do – I'll take your job and you can take mine. And Mary and Gordon you can swap jobs too. Now, I'll take some orders – can I have your notepad please Peter?

#### **Gordon**

Oh very well... actually, **from where I'm standing**, it seems like I've got the easy job!

#### **Mary**

We'll see about that.

#### **Peter**

So everyone back to work please. Come on Gordon, we need all these plates washed.

#### **Ceilia**

I have an order - Four Seasons Vegetable Ragout for two people.

**Mary**

OK, coming right up. Gordon – I'll need some large bowls washing... and I'll need that pan... come on, quick as you can.

**Gordon**

**I hear you!** I just can't believe I've got to do all this.

**Peter**

Well done Mary... you're doing a great job.

**Gordon**

Actually... can you **spare me a thought**... I've got to do all this.

**Peter**

Hmm, **I can see where you're coming from**. You can't cope... you're fired. Off you go.

**Gordon**

You can't do that!

**Mary**

Peter! **Take some pity on him** – he's after all only a washer-upper!

**Ceilia**

So how's the job swap going?

**Gordon**

He's sacked me!

**Ceilia**

Well done. I've been trying to do that for months! How's it going for you Mary?

**Mary**

It's all fine. All the food's ready to go. I don't know why Gordon makes such a fuss about cooking!

**Ceilia**

Nor do I. But you see in my job, I have to show **empathy** for people. So Gordon – you can stay... for now.

**Vocabulary**

**empathy**

being able to understand how someone else feels because you can imagine being in their situation

**to be in someone else's shoes**

to experience something from someone else's point of view

**from where I'm standing**

from my point of view; in my opinion

**I hear you**

I can hear what you're saying

**spare me a thought**

think about me as well

**I see where you're coming from**

I understand your situation

**take pity on him**

feel sorry for him

**Questions**

1. Why does Gordon say 'from where I'm standing, I seem to have the easy job'?

(Hint: What is he about to do?)

- a) By doing someone else's job he has to stand up.
- b) He can do the new job standing in the same place.
- c) His opinion is that the job he is about to do will be very easy.

2. In the job swap, what job does Peter have to do?

(Hint: It's Ceilia's job.)

- a) The boss
- b) The chef
- c) The washer-upper

3. What did Peter say to Gordon to mean 'I understand your situation'?

(Hint: Check the vocab reference.)

- a) I see where you're coming from.
- b) I see where you are.
- c) I see where you're coming to.

**Answers**

1. Why does Gordon say 'from where I'm standing, I seem to have the easy job'?

a) By doing someone else's job he has to stand up.

Wrong. He didn't mean that.

b) He can do the new job standing in the same place.

Wrong. He didn't mean that.

**c) His opinion is that the job he is about to do will be very easy.**

**Correct. Yes, he thinks he won't have to work hard.**

2. In the job swap, what job does Peter have to do?

**a) The boss**

**Correct. Yes, he has a go at being the boss.**

b) The chef

Wrong. He doesn't do that.

c) The washer-upper

Wrong. He doesn't do that.

3. What did Peter say to Gordon to mean 'I understand your situation'?

**a) I see where you're coming from.**

**Correct. That's the phrase he used.**

b) I see where you are.

Not correct. That's not quite right.

c) I see where you're coming to.

Wrong. That's not quite right.