



# Half a million secrets

Lesson code: GNF5-8TJB-CTA3-S

ADVANCED

## 1 Warm-up

Give some examples of secrets. Can you think of any famous secrets that have come out in the news recently?

## 2 Vocabulary development

Match the underlined words to their definitions.

1. I used to work with a bunch of uptight people and had to wear a tie.
  2. Johnny is extremely artful. He used paint, glue and glitter in his impression of the Tower Bridge.
  3. Soon the idea began spreading virally.
  4. He had a big smile and chuckled to himself.
  5. I cried my eyes out when she sang that soulful song.
  6. Politicians are often indifferent to human frailty. They are only interested in personal gain.
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- a. (spreading) very quickly, especially on the Internet
  - b. always behaving in a very correct way
  - c. expressing strong emotions, especially sadness
  - d. laughed quietly, especially in a private or secret way
  - e. showing creative skill
  - f. the condition of being weak or not in good health

## 3 Watching and listening

You are going to watch a part of the video presentation by Frank Warren. Read the questions below and then watch the video to find the answers.

1. How did the idea of secret postcards start?
2. If you are rude, what coffee will you receive?
3. Why is it sometimes good not to use a wireless microphone?
4. What was the 'Sunday morning ritual'?
5. What is the story behind the cat and the ring?



#### 4 Find the words

Read the transcript and find words or phrases which mean ...

1. distributed (phrasal verb, P1) \_\_\_\_\_
2. arrange things so that they are placed one on top of another (verb, P2) \_\_\_\_\_
3. a very small number of things or people (noun, P3) \_\_\_\_\_
4. very many, especially more than reasonable (adj., P4) \_\_\_\_\_
5. torn into small pieces (phrasal verb, P6) \_\_\_\_\_
6. happy, excited and full of energy (adj., P7) \_\_\_\_\_
7. something that you do regularly (noun, P8) \_\_\_\_\_
8. made a sudden sound or said something suddenly (verb, P9) \_\_\_\_\_

#### 5 Talking point

In pairs, discuss any of the following questions.

1. Do you know anyone who is a 'blabbermouth'?
2. Have you recently found out about a secret and did you manage to keep it?
3. Do you think that politicians' and celebrities' private lives should remain a secret?

#### 6 Use of English

Read the text below and type the word which best fits in each space. Use only one word in each space. More than one answer possible. Then check with the video.

around      embarrassing      explanation      made      mention      with

This next one takes a little \_\_\_\_\_<sup>1</sup> before I share it with you. I love to speak on college campuses and share secrets and the stories \_\_\_\_\_<sup>2</sup> students. And sometimes afterwards I'll stick \_\_\_\_\_<sup>3</sup> and sign books and take photos with students. And this next postcard was \_\_\_\_\_<sup>4</sup> out of one of those photos. And I should also \_\_\_\_\_<sup>5</sup> that, just like today, at that PostSecret event, I was using a wireless microphone. "Your mic wasn't off during sound check. We all heard you pee." This was really \_\_\_\_\_<sup>6</sup> when it happened, until I realized it could have been worse. Right. You know what I'm saying...

#### 7 Flashcard review

Don't forget what you learned in this lesson! Go to [www.linguahouse.com](http://www.linguahouse.com), click 'Learning English' and enter Lesson code: GNF5-8TJB-CTA3-S.



**3 Watching and listening**

- 1 (0:15-0:46)** Hi, my name is Frank, and I collect secrets. It all started with a crazy idea in November of 2004. I printed up 3000 self-addressed postcards, just like this. They were blank on one side, and on the other side I listed some simple instructions. I asked people to anonymously share an artful secret they'd never told anyone before. And I handed out these postcards randomly on the streets of Washington, D.C., not knowing what to expect.
- 2 (0:47-1:28)** But soon the idea began spreading virally. People began to buy their own postcards and make their own postcards. I started receiving secrets in my home mailbox, not just with postmarks from Washington, D.C., but from Texas, California, Vancouver, New Zealand, Iraq. Soon my crazy idea didn't seem so crazy. PostSecret.com is the most visited advertisement-free blog in the world. And this is my postcard collection today. You can see my wife struggling to stack a brick of postcards on a pyramid of over a half-million secrets.
- 3 (1:29-2:32)** What I'd like to do now is share with you a very special handful of secrets from that collection, starting with this one. "I found these stamps as a child, and I have been waiting all my life to have someone to send them to. I never did have someone." Secrets can take many forms. They can be shocking or silly or soulful. They can connect us to our deepest humanity or with people we'll never meet. (Laughter) Maybe one of you sent this one in. I don't know. This one does a great job of demonstrating the creativity that people have when they make and mail me a postcard. This one obviously was made out of half a Starbucks cup with a stamp and my home address written on the other side.
- 4 (2:33-3:23)** "Dear Birthmother, I have great parents. I've found love. I'm happy." Secrets can remind us of the countless human dramas, of frailty and heroism, playing out silently in the lives of people all around us even now. "Everyone who knew me before 9/11 believes I'm dead." "I used to work with a bunch of uptight religious people, so sometimes I didn't wear panties, and just had a big smile and chuckled to myself."
- 5 (3:24-4:17)** This next one takes a little explanation before I share it with you. I love to speak on college campuses and share secrets and the stories with students. And sometimes afterwards I'll stick around and sign books and take photos with students. And this next postcard was made out of one of those photos. And I should also mention that, just like today, at that PostSecret event, I was using a wireless microphone. "Your mic wasn't off during sound check. We all heard you pee." (Laughter) This was really embarrassing when it happened, until I realized it could have been worse. Right. You know what I'm saying.
- 6 (4:17-4:46)** "Inside this envelope is the ripped up remains of a suicide note I didn't use. I feel like the happiest person on Earth (now.)" "One of these men is the father of my son. He pays me a lot to keep it a secret."
- 7 (4:47-5:08)** "That Saturday when you wondered where I was, well, I was getting your ring. It's in my pocket right now." I had this postcard posted on the PostSecret blog two years ago on Valentine's Day. It was the very bottom, the last secret in the long column. And it hadn't been up for more than a couple hours before I received this exuberant email from the guy who mailed me this postcard.
- 8 (5:09-5:32)** And he said, "Frank, I've got to share with you this story that just played out in my life." He said, "My knees are still shaking." He said, "For three years, my girlfriend and I, we've made it this Sunday morning ritual to visit the PostSecret blog together and read the secrets out loud. I read some to her, she reads some to me." He says, "It's really brought us closer together through the years."



**9 (5:33-6:22)** And so when I discovered that you had posted my surprise proposal to my girlfriend at the very bottom, I was beside myself. And I tried to act calm, not to give anything away. And just like every Sunday, we started reading the secrets out loud to each other." He said, "But this time it seemed like it was taking her forever to get through each one." But she finally did. She got to that bottom secret, his proposal to her. And he said, "She read it once and then she read it again." And she turned to him and said, "Is that our cat?" (Laughter) And when she saw him, he was down on one knee, he had the ring out. He popped the question, she said yes. It was a very happy ending.

**10 (6:23- )** So I emailed him back and I said, "Please share with me an image, something, that I can share with the whole PostSecret community and let everyone know your fairy tale ending." And he emailed me this picture.



**1 Warm-up**

*Brainstorm ideas as a warm-up activity.*

**2 Vocabulary development**

*Students can work individually and check in pairs.*

1. b
2. e
3. a
4. d
5. c
6. f

**3 Watching and listening**

*Play video from the beginning to 6:36 only.*

1. Frank printed and distributed 3000 self-addressed postcards with simple instructions for people to share a secret they had never told anyone before. He did not know what to expect.
2. Decaf.
3. In case you forget to switch it off and go to the toilet.
4. A couple would read out secrets to each other, online, every Sunday morning.
5. A secret engagement.

**4 Find the words**

- |               |              |            |              |
|---------------|--------------|------------|--------------|
| 1. handed out | 2. stack     | 3. handful | 4. countless |
| 5. ripped up  | 6. exuberant | 7. ritual  | 8. popped    |

**5 Talking point**

*Check understanding of the word 'blabbermouth' -- someone who talks excessively and indiscreetly.*

**6 Use of English**

*After the task ask students to compare their answers, use the video (3:22) to illustrate the answers. Optionally, read the transcript. Good task for CAE use of English practice.*

1. explanation
2. with
3. around
4. made
5. mention
6. embarrassing

**7 Flashcard review**

*Students should try to review their flashcards on a regular basis in order to remember all the material from your lessons. Visit [www.linguahouse.com/expemo.php](http://www.linguahouse.com/expemo.php) for more information.*

