

Hilde und Günter

Teacher's notes

These short stories are written at the first year level. When is it appropriate for students to begin reading the first story? Students should be able to read the first story with the help of the teacher when they recognize at least 75% of the words. Students could read the story on their own when they recognize at least 90% of the words. Conduct a simple assessment. Pick a random page from the first story. Ask a student to count all of the words on that page that he/she doesn't recognize. At the same time you count up all of the words on the page. Simple division will result in a percentage. These stories have some past tense usage. Don't let that worry you. Students should be reading for comprehension; not for grammar recognition. Sometimes it helps students if you read a difficult passage out loud. No definitions are given of any of the words. Students should be able to understand some new words from context. Otherwise you could simply tell your students what new words mean. I do not recommend stopping the flow of context in order to look up a word in a dictionary.

Der Fall der gestohlenen Uhr

1500+ words. Themes: Simple greetings and questions.

The following cultural items may be discussed:

- Hilde and Günter are somewhat old-fashioned names in Germany. The names are based on the brother and sister from the Niebelungenlied: Günther and Kriemhild
- Hilde and Günter shake hands when greeting several people. Typical pleasantries are exchanged.
- The Swiss flag is described. The Swatch brand is named.
- Making the bed is not described, but could lead to a discussion about Bettdecken.
- Heavy Metal music is mentioned. Germans listen to a lot of British and American music.
- Answering the telephone is changing somewhat--especially with caller ID and cell phones. Germans may not always answer the phone with their last name anymore.

Der Fall der treulosen Freundin

Almost 2400 words. Themes: Family, friends, fun, seasons, weather, descriptions.

The following cultural items may be discussed:

- "Stakeout" may not be a recognized English word in German.
- A Park Café is mentioned.
- Address has street name before street number.
- The house has a gate to get into the front yard.
- Günter is very uneasy about hugging.
- Hilde is only 16 and has a cell phone.
- 50 Meters--metric measurements used.
- Vienna, Austria is mentioned.
- Inge plays "Für Elise".

Der Fall der schummelnden Schülern

About 2550 words. Themes: School, days of week, descriptions.

The following cultural items may be discussed:

- Hilde carries a Schultasche.
- Günter takes a snack for the "Pause".
- The school is named after Goethe.
- The German "letter grades" are really "number grades".
- Everyone takes English as one foreign language choice.
- The teacher spent a year in America as an exchange student.
- The word "Fräulein" is becoming passe in Germany. Here it is used sarcastically.
- A student stands up to speak in class.
- The romance at the end of the story is done for humorous reasons only. This, of course, would not normally occur in Germany. However, Herr Ledig and Frau Prost use the "Sie" form with each other--until they call each other by their first name.

Der Fall der verlorenen Maus

2900+ words. Themes: House, chores, rooms, furniture.

The following cultural items may be discussed:

- Euros are mentioned.
- Most Germans keep bedroom doors closed.
- Günter sets a "mouse trap" with Limburger cheese.
- Günter eats a cheese sandwich.
- Max has a dryer. Many Germans have a washing machine but no dryer.
- Brünhild the cat is named after a character from the Niebelungenlied.
- German computer terminology often uses a lot of English words.