

The red carpet

January 18, 2021

Vocabulary

Something had seen better days (phrase): Something is old and in poor condition

way that shows you are feeling happy and confident.

With a spring in his step (idiom): walk energetically in a

His heart sank: he felt disappointed or discouraged.

A surprising phone call

Three weeks ago Mr Tufty was sitting in his office at Tufty Carpets when he received a surprising phone call. The caller, who sounded foreign, wanted Tufty Carpets to provide a quotation for a red carpet, about 50 metres in length with the phrase “Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year” in French weaved into the carpet at regular intervals.

It turned out the caller was a Mr Verots, the mayor of somewhere named Saint Pierre du Perray. He wanted the carpet for the town’s shopping centre to be used for the 2021/2022 season. Mr Verots explained that the carpet the town used at the moment had seen better days and its dirty, dull appearance did not contribute to the Christmas spirit!

Mr Tufty had never heard for Saint Pierre du Perray, but to him the name suggested an interesting and historic town. He imagined an upmarket shopping centre with gleaming chrome, sophisticated flooring and lighting with expensive boutiques, jewellers, and exclusive French restaurants.

He told Mr Verots that he would speak to his team and that he would get back to him later in the day.

Mr Tufty’s quotation was very competitive. Mr Verots readily agreed to the price and the carpet was rushed into production.

One month later

Today was the day when Mr Tufty would see what the end product looked like! He walked down to the shop floor with a spring in his step. At first glance it looked like the factory had produced a very beautiful carpet, but then Mr Tufty looked a bit closer and his heart sank.

Instead of the message Mr Tufty was expecting: “Joyeux Noël et Bonne Année,” the carpet’s inscription, beautifully weaved every two metres was “Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year in French.”

Questions for discussion

1. How do Mr Tufty’s ideas about Saint Pierre du Perray compare with the real place?
2. Why do you think Mr Tufty was so pleased to receive the phone call from France?
3. Who is responsible for the mistake: Mr Verots, Mr Tufty, the production foreman or the workers on the shop floor?
4. Can you think how the French management team could ‘rebrand’ the carpet so that it could still be sold?
5. What quality control procedures would you recommend to Mr Tufty in light of this latest fiasco?

The new pronunciation challenge

I take it you already know
of tough and bough and cough and dough.
Others may stumble, but not you,
On hiccough, thorough, lough and through.
Well done! And now you wish, perhaps,
To learn of less familiar traps.

Beware of heard, a dreadful word
That looks like beard and sounds like bird.
And dead – it's said like bed, not bead.
For goodness sake, don't call it deed!
Watch out for meat and great and threat.
They rhyme with suite and straight and debt.

A moth is not a moth in mother,
Nor both in bother, broth in brother,
And here is not a match for there,
Nor dear and fear for pear and bear.
And then there's dose and rose and lose
Just look them up – and goose and choose.

And cork and work and card and ward.
And font and front and word and sword.
And do and go, then thwart and cart.
Come, come I've hardly made a start.

A dreadful language? Man alive,
I'd mastered it when I was five!

Attributed to T S Watt, 1954

Dates des cours

	janvier	fevrier	mars
Intermédiaire / avancé lundi	11, 18		

Dates, times and venues are subject to change.