

Listening Scripts

FILE 4

Listening 1

- Speaker 1** *The Green Mile*, Stephen King's *The Green Mile*. I could not put it down and I read it on holiday, so I had time to sit and read. I think I read it in, I don't know, 12 hours or something, but I remember finishing it at, you know, 4.30 in the morning, I absolutely had to, had to stay with it to the end. I thought it was amazing. About these guys on death row in America, it's slightly supernatural.
- Speaker 2** *We need to talk about Kevin*, I don't want to read about Kevin, yeah. It was one of those books that is very 'now' and everyone kind of says 'you must read this'. I just couldn't, I hated her style and I probably was a bit frightened of the subject matter, it's kind of about mother love and her child who's a killer. I just found it, I just couldn't deal with it. I started it and just stopped after about two chapters, maybe a little bit more than that.
- Speaker 3** It's called *The Fatal Shore* and it's by Robert Hughes, and it's about the early settlers in Australia and the Aborigines they met, the way they treated them, the lives of the Aborigines before the white settlers came. And it's a fascinating book, it's absolutely great. I read the first 60 pages, but it took me about three days to read them, with 600 pages to go, the print is so tiny and there is so much to take in, that you know what? I am going to have to come back to it.
- Speaker 4** I hated *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*, which is a real shame because I think I would probably really enjoy it now, but I think it was the fact that we were told to read it, forced to read it, and forced to look at all the imagery in it, like Angel Clare playing his harp up in the loft and all that. Yeah, and I thought, 'I know I'll enjoy this one day, but I don't want to read it now; I am not in the mood'. You know, you have to be in the mood to read a book, I wasn't in the mood to read it, so it sort of put me off.
- Speaker 5** Yeah, I remember when I was at school we had to read, you know, we did English and we had set books and one of them was *Paradise Lost* by Milton, which as you probably know is written about the 17th century or 18th century, I can't remember, but it's extremely long winded and biblical and, heavy and boring... Well, I had to get through it because we were going to get tested on it, but actually I managed to avoid all the questions in the exam, because you could choose, you know, so I don't think I ever answered any questions on it.

FILE 4

Listening 2

Just about everybody is familiar with muzak, the recorded background music that's been played for decades in all kinds of public places like elevators, hotel lobbies, waiting rooms, airports, and department stores. Plenty of people hate it too, but not many people know the story of its invention and development.

Muzak's origins lie in the US military and a man called Major General George Owen Squier. He was an inventor in the field of radio and also an aviation pioneer, helping with the first US Air Force planes at the beginning of the 20th century. During the First World War he was a leading figure in military signals technology and developed some of his work in that area to produce a system for wired sound. He realized that there was a market for this outside the military and sold the idea to a public utility company, which began piping music to a part of New York from its premises there. Pretty soon, radio was getting more and more widespread in people's homes and this wired domestic music service no longer had a market there. But there was still a market for it in the commercial sector and Squier set up his own company to provide piped music to public buildings and companies. He named the company 'Muzak' and it was a great success.

But piped music wasn't the full story, because in the 1940s Muzak came up with the concept of Stimulus Progression. This was a belief that piped music in the workplace could increase production if it was done properly. The theory was that a worker's mood would be lifted by listening to music that was programmed in 15-minute segments. Each programme began with the least stimulating music and ended with the most stimulating, with the last period of music followed by 15 minutes of silence.

This helped turn Muzak into a commercial phenomenon, its products found everywhere. For many years its dominance of the piped music market was unchallenged, until a rival form, Yesco, appeared in 1968. Yesco produced music made by real bands and singers, whereas Muzak's music was all made by its in-house orchestra. Muzak eventually caught up with the times and produced its own original artist material.

One interesting fact is that at Muzak's own headquarters, there is no music in the elevators. It's played in every other room, but not there. This is, the company says, for symbolic reasons. When Muzak started, people needed to be persuaded to go into elevators, as they were a new invention and people were scared of them. The music helped to take this fear away. Now, the company doesn't want to be associated with 'elevator music' because it has a lot more to offer.