



17 From teacher to plumber

The articles on pages 00 and 00 appeared on the same day in two different papers, *The Sun* (a popular tabloid) and *The Daily Telegraph* (a more serious broadsheet). They are about a university professor called Dr Karl Gensberg, who was unhappy about his pay. One day, a plumber came to install a boiler in Dr Gensberg's house and the two men got talking about how much money they earned.

1 Before you read, discuss the following.

What do you think happened next?

Do you think the newspapers will cover the story in the same way?

2 As you read, complete the crossword with twelve words from the two articles.

Across

- 2 Dr Gensberg has quit his job and other teachers may follow ...
- 3 talking (in a relaxed, informal way)
- 4 installing (boilers)
- 5 absolutely amazed, astonished (slang)
- 9 brilliant scientist (slang)
- 11 this produces hot water to heat a house
- 13 incredible

Glossary

The Sun

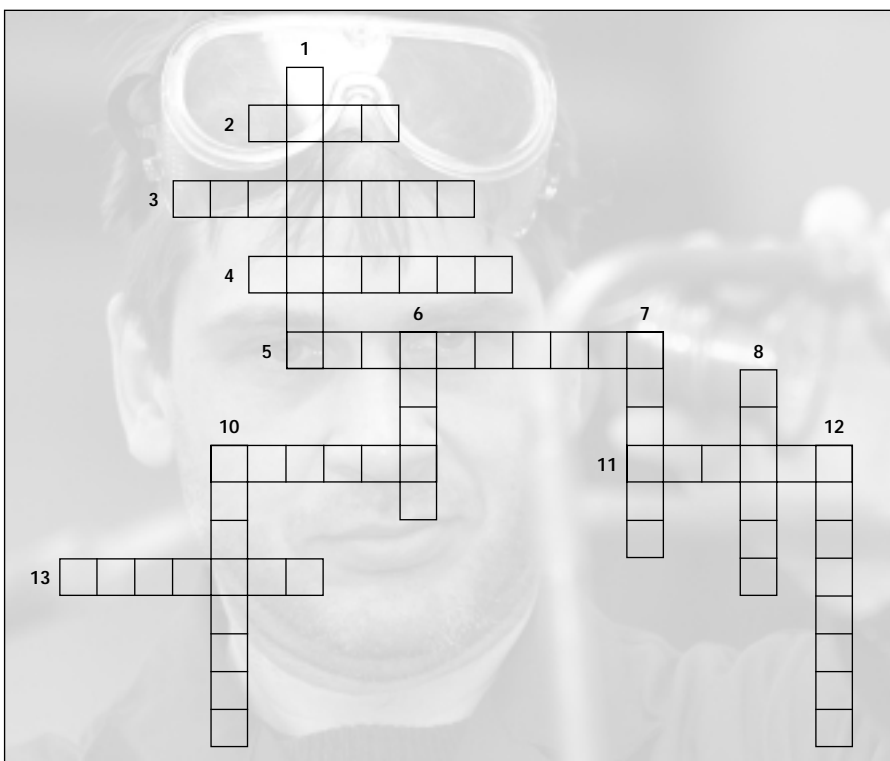
- 1 skint (slang): penniless
- 2 boffin (slang): a brilliant scientist
- 3 brainbox (slang): very clever
- 4 a Phd: a Doctor of Philosophy, the highest university qualification
- 5 gobsmacked (slang): astonished, very surprised
- 6 plum (informal): fantastic, wonderful

Daily Telegraph

- 1 only to realise: but then realised
- 2 follow suit: do the same
- 3 in their droves: in large numbers

Down

- 1 leaving, abandoning, resigning from
- 6 penniless (slang)
- 7 x 2
- 8 monthly pay
- 10 very intelligent (slang)
- 12 a detailed study of a subject, to understand it better



3 Now complete these sentences with words or information from the articles.

- a Dr Gensberg earned £ _____ a year as a molecular biologist, about £ _____ less than his plumber.
- b University lecturers are going on _____ for a week to protest about their pay.
- c One of Dr Gensberg's colleagues now runs a _____ in France.
- d Another is thinking about _____ the Royal Mail.
- e The plumber came to install a _____ in Dr Gensberg's house.
- f The plumber was _____ when he saw the doctor's pay slip.
- g Dr Gensberg's university _____ ends in April.
- h It is very sad that so many people like Mr Gensberg are leaving higher _____.
- i Plumbing is now such a popular career that it is hard to find a _____ to enrol on.
- j The Institute of Plumbing says that some plumbers are earning _____ £50,000 a year.

4 Now discuss the following.

Use this useful language.

- *The teacher would be better off as a plumber.* (= better paid, in a better situation)
- *It's difficult to make ends meet on his salary.* (= he finds it difficult to pay all his bills)
- *I get peanuts.* (= my pay is really bad)
- *If you pay peanuts, you get monkeys.*
- *a well-paid/a badly-paid job*
- *a skilled worker/a highly skilled worker*
- *a workaholic* (= someone who works too much; compare: an *alcoholic*, *shopaholic*)
- *to work like a dog* (= to work really hard)
- *a blue-collar worker* (= someone who does manual work, ie works with their hands, like a plumber)
- *a white-collar worker* (= someone who does non-manual work, like a teacher)
- *your take home pay* (= the money you receive after tax has been deducted)

- a Who should get more money, a plumber or a teacher? Why?
- b Why are most footballers better paid than a nurse?
- c Which of these people are paid:
 - a) too much? b) too little? c) about the right amount?

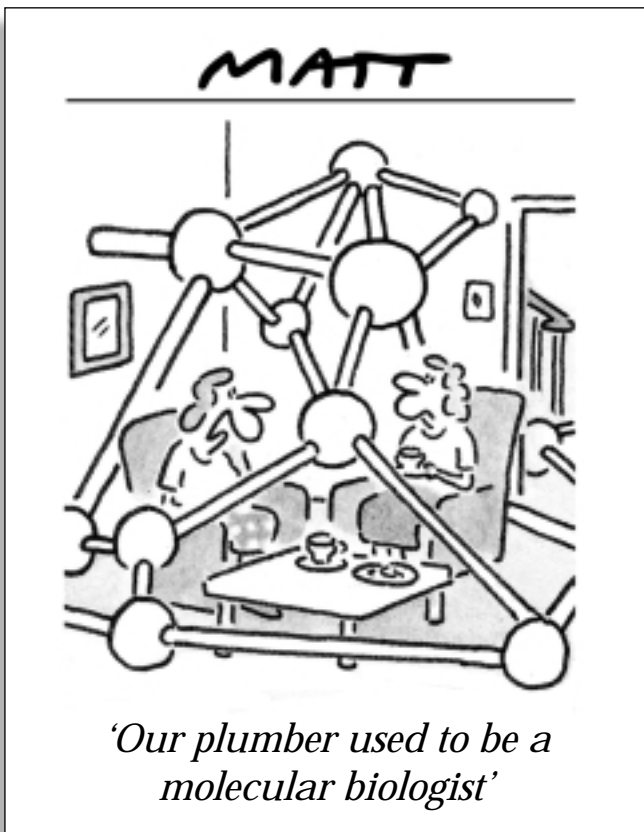
pop stars	surgeons	police officers
waiters	television presenters	cleaners
actors	builders	shop assistants

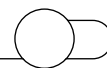
- d What do you think is the most important thing about a job: the pay, the people you work with or the job satisfaction?
- e How important is work? Do you want to 'work to live' or 'live to work'?

5 With your group, discuss the main differences between the articles in *The Sun* and *The Daily Telegraph*. Think about the following.

- a What kind of language do they use (slang, formal, informal etc.)?
- b Is there a difference in the use of headlines and photographs?
- c Which of the two papers is easier to read?
- d Which gives the most information?

Now in your groups, talk about a story in the news. Plan a paragraph in the style of *The Sun* and one in the style of the *Daily Telegraph*. Present your stories to the class.





SKINT BOFFIN QUILTS TO BE RICH PLUMBER

Top scientist will double his £23,000 salary



BY JOHN SCOTT

A BRAINBOX scientist is quitting his job – to double his pay as a PLUMBER.

Dr Karl Gensberg, a molecular biologist, decided on the career change after realising how little he earned compared to skilled and in-demand tradesmen.

He hopes to make twice as much as the £23,000 salary he was on at Birmingham University following a 13-year career in academic research.

News of the amazing job switch came as thousands of university

lecturers started a week-long series of strikes over pay yesterday.

Dr Gensberg, 41, told how he decided to make the change after chatting to a plumber who was fitting a boiler in his home.

The dad of one from Streetly, West Midlands, said: “He assumed I had loads of money as I had a PhD. I showed him my pay slip and he was gobsmacked. He said he earned £33,000 and some colleagues took home £50,000.

“I just thought, ‘What am I doing? My work is a combination of zero career structure, contractual abuse and

pathetic pay.’ I love molecular biology, but I’m looking forward to a better way of life.”

He is training as a plumber two days a week at Sutton Coldfield College and goes full time in July.

A university spokeswoman said his contract was due to end soon and he had been given “time off and flexibility in his working hours to pursue another career”.

The Institute of Plumbing said reports of salaries of up to £120,000 a year were exaggerated, although there is a huge skills shortage in the industry.

Biologist abandons vital research to double his salary fitting boilers

BY SALLY POOK

A MOLECULAR biologist whose research could help arthritis and cancer sufferers is to abandon his academic career for a better paid job as a gas fitter.

Karl Gensberg, 41, has been a postdoctoral research fellow at the University of Birmingham for 13 years but says he can no longer afford to work on short-term contracts in the education sector.

The scientist, who is married with a son, spent six years studying human biology and molecular microbiology only to realise he could earn more money and have more job security fitting boilers.

Mr Gensberg, who earns £23,000, believes that unless conditions in the profession improve, more academics will be forced to follow suit.

He knows of two other colleagues who have left Birmingham, one to run a boarding house in France. The other is considering joining the Royal Mail.

"My plumber was fitting my boiler and said he assumed I had loads of money because I had a PhD," Mr Gensberg said. "I happened to have my pay slip to hand and showed it to him and he was absolutely gobsmacked. He said he earned £33,000 and some of his colleagues took home £50,000. I just thought, what am I doing? My work is a combination of zero career structure, contractual abuse and pathetic pay, which is a pretty poor package."

Mr Gensberg, of Streetly, Walsall, studied for his degree and PhD at Aston University and then started work at Birmingham, where he has been on four short-term contracts. Each time a contract comes to an end, he has to compete for another, sometimes at a lower salary than he was previously earning. On one occasion, he took a



£5,000 pay cut.

"I feel like a fool," he said. "My plumber probably left school at 16 and has probably always earned more than me. I am just not prepared to keep looking around for jobs that are so badly paid. The university has never offered me a staff job. It is incredibly frustrating and I feel my education was a complete waste of taxpayers' money."

Mr Gensberg has been carrying out research into the effects of electromagnetic fields on the body. He believes his work, which investigates how wounds heal, could eventually help to relieve the pain of arthritis sufferers and cancer patients.

He says no one has so far made proper molecular studies into how such fields can speed up the healing of wounds on the body.

Mr Gensberg is now studying part time at Sutton Coldfield college in Birmingham and will qualify as a fulltime gas fitter in July. He completes

his contract at the university in April.

"I know it is extreme but I can't see any other way. I always thought if I worked hard I would progress, but it doesn't seem to work that way."

Mr Gensberg is not alone in feeling badly paid. Thousands of academic staff began a week long series of strikes yesterday after they rejected a three per cent pay offer. More than 1,200 staff at Birmingham are expected to strike.

The Association of University Teachers (AUT) says academics' pay has fallen behind other employees by up to 40 per cent in the last 20 years.

At least 2,000 staff are leaving Britain for America and Europe, where they can earn up to 50 per cent more, according to the AUT's figures.

"The tragedy is that there are hundreds of people like Mr Gensberg who are doing work of national or international importance who are now leaving higher education in Britain in their droves," said Paul Rees, a spokesman for the AUT.

Mr Gensberg claimed that when he told the university of his plans, they said they might offer him a job as a gas fitter.

A spokesman for the university could not confirm this. In a statement, it said: "Dr Karl Gensberg is employed on a fixed-term contract which will end shortly and therefore the university has been seeking to redeploy him.

"He has been given time off and flexibility in his working hours to pursue another career."

The Institute of Plumbing said it was difficult to enrol on gas-fitting and plumbing courses because so many people believe it is well-paid. A spokesman said: "The average salary is about £30,000 but you can earn up to £50,000."