The Full Monty

Wendy Holden
Based on the screenplay by Simon Beaufoy

About the film
The film, starring Robert Carlyle and directed by Peter Cattaneo, was released in 1997. It was shot in the northern English city of Sheffield and featured actors who were not very well known outside of the United Kingdom. With a production cost of only $3.5 million, it went on to earn a staggering $257 million worldwide. It was nominated for four Oscars but won only one, Best Original Music Score, mainly due to it being nominated in the same year as Titanic, which picked up fourteen. The film’s title sparked an interest in the origin of this strange English phrase, which is still debatable today.

Summary
The Full Monty tells the story of six men and their lives in the recession hit north of England in the 1980s. The central character, Gaz, is desperate to get some money to pay his estranged wife, Mandy, so that he can continue seeing his son, Nathan. After seeing a performance of an attractive male stripper group in his local club, he decides on a plan to turn his friends into a stripper group with a difference: they will take all their clothes off. Reluctance on the part of his friends gradually turns to enthusiasm as they realise the experience of practising their dance routines improves their individual lives and their friendships with each other. After a series of comical incidents, the group are a success for one night and the story ends happily.

Chapters 1–2: The town of Sheffield in England was once a prosperous steel producing centre, but now many men are unemployed. Gaz, his son Nathan and Dave, steal two girders (long pieces of metal) which they hope to sell, from a factory. They try to cross a canal by making a bridge using the two girders as walkways supported by an old car in the middle of the canal. The plan, like all of Gaz’s plans, goes wrong and Dave ends up falling into the canal. On their way back home they see a sign outside a working man’s club advertising the Chippendales, a group of attractive male strippers. Dave’s wife, Jean, is in the audience and Gaz decides to get her out. He and Nathan enter the club through the toilet window, and see the Chippendales dancing on stage. Then, Jean and her two friends come into the men’s toilet and Gaz hears them talking about a possible boyfriend Jean has at work. The next day the men are in a Job Club. They are all depressed because there is no work. Gaz has an argument with his ex-boss, Gerald Cooper, about the hopelessness of their situation. Then, Gaz begins to calculate how much money the Chippendale’s must have earned and an idea comes into his head.

Chapters 3–4: Gaz’s wife, Mandy, lives with her rich boyfriend, Barry, and Nathan stays with them most of the time. Gaz is allowed to see Nathan, but only if he pays Mandy some money every month. He now owes her 700 pounds. The only way he thinks he can get the money is to dance like the Chippendales. While Gaz and Dave are out running, Dave talks to Lomper, an old colleague, who is sitting in his car trying to kill himself with petrol fumes. He saves his life. Later that night, Gaz practises a dance routine in front of Lomper, Dave and Nathan. Nathan is embarrassed by his father and walks off. Gaz finds him and tells him he loves him and is doing the dance thing to get money to pay Mandy. The next day, the men see Gerald Cooper at a dance class and notice he is a very good dancer. They also meet Gerald’s wife, Linda, who they realise doesn’t know that Gerald is out of work. They try to persuade Gerald to teach them to dance but he refuses. Gerald has a job interview but half-way through it he sees some of his garden gnomes through the window and begins to act strangely. He is very angry with the men because their trick means he will probably not get the job. They see Gerald later and apologise, and he agrees to teach them to dance.

Chapters 5–6: The group decides to audition for some additional dancers in a room in the steel factory. The first man, Horse, is a very good dancer, and gets a job. The second man, Guy, although he can’t dance, also gets a job because he is good-looking. The group watches a video of the film Flashdance, which Dave has stolen from a supermarket. Dave tells Gaz that he is thinking of taking...
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a job as a security guard but Gaz convinces him to stay with the group. The group's dancing begins to improve and they start to become good friends. At Gerald's house the men take off their clothes as a practice session. At that moment, two men enter and start to remove Gerald's possessions because he hasn't made the monthly payments for them. Dave frightens them away. Gaz realises that the group should have uniforms for their act and decides on security guard uniforms and red leather G-strings.

Chapters 7–8: Gaz goes to see his friend, who owns the working men's club, to ask him if he can hire the club. The owner wants 100 pounds in advance. Gaz and Nathan go and see Mandy at the factory where she works to ask her for the money. She can't believe what she's hearing. Nathan wants to lend his father the money and after some hesitation, Gaz accepts it. Then Gaz organises the posters for the event and the men put them around the town. Gaz tells two women that the stripper group, Hot Metal, are better than the Chippendales because they take all their clothes off. This surprises and angers the rest of the group, who are not prepared to do it. Gaz thinks that the group is finished until he sees them dancing in a queue in the unemployment office. The group arrange a final practice but Dave is missing. Gaz goes to look for him and finds Dave working as a security guard in the supermarket. He runs out of the shop with a stolen jacket and Dave catches him. He tries, unsuccessfully, to convince Dave to return.

Chapters 9–10: Gaz tells the group that Dave is not coming and they begin to practise their dance in front of Horse's relatives. A policeman, hearing the music, enters and they all reflect on how the experience has bettered their lives. At the end of the show the men stand naked and proud in front of the audience.

Chapter 11: On his way to tell the club manager that the show is cancelled, Gaz meets the club manager who tells him he has sold 200 tickets. He rushes back to tell the men in the Job Club the good news. The men, apart from Dave, agree to do the show. Dave goes home to find his wife in tears. She has his G-string in her hands and she accuses him of seeing another woman. Dave confesses that he is a stripper. As the group are preparing for the show, Dave appears dressed in his uniform. The group go on stage without Gaz, who is having a panic attack, but Nathan orders his father to get on stage. As the men are dancing they all reflect on how the experience has bettered their lives. At the end of the show the men stand naked and proud in front of the audience.

Background and themes

Northern England in the 1980s: The 1980s were terrible times for the people in the industrial cities of northern England. Factories and mines closed down, or were closed down by the government, and many men were made redundant. This is the situation in which the characters in the story find themselves.

The effects of unemployment: In the story, the lives of all the characters have been radically changed by unemployment. The lack of money, and more importantly the lack of self-esteem and respect, have manifested themselves in many ways; Gaz is in danger of losing contact with his son because he can't find some money, Gerald lives a double life because he can't tell his wife he has no job, Lomper attempts suicide and Dave's obsession with his weight becomes worse because he has no positive aspects in his life to counteract it.

Humour: There are many funny moments in the story but the humour is not only used to make us laugh. It is used to endear us to the characters and to make us sympathise with them.

Triumph over adversity: From an apparently hopeless situation, the men discover something that will not only change their lives financially, but will enrich them and give them back some dignity.

Discussion activities

Before reading

1 Research: Tell the students that the story is set in Sheffield, a city in the north of England. Ask the students to look on the Internet for information about this town. Ask them to find answers to the following questions: How many people live there? Does
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it have any interesting places to visit? Does it have any well-known sports teams? What is the weather like? Was it or is it famous for any type of business? Are there any famous people from Sheffield? Students then give an oral presentation of what they have found out.

Chapters 1–2

While reading (Beginning of Chapter 2)

2 Game: Put the students in pairs and ask them to think of all the jobs they can in English. Put their suggestions on the board, adding some of your own. Then play a game of twenty questions. Each pair decides on a particular job but don’t tell the class what it is. The class then has to ask them questions to guess what job the pair has chosen. They have twenty questions to do this, and the pair can only answer ‘yes’, ‘no’ or ‘sometimes’ to the questions. See the Discussion activities key for example questions.

After reading

3 Write, ask and answer: Write Who fell in the canal? on the board and elicit the answer (Dave). Now tell students to write similar questions about Chapters 1–2. Students then talk to each other as a group, asking and answering each other’s questions.

Chapters 3–4

While reading (p. 14, after ‘Nathan had a better chance with Barry as a parent.’)

4 Role play: Put the students in pairs and tell them to act out a conversation between Barry and Gaz about Nathan. Barry has to give the reasons he will be a better parent and Gaz gives his reasons. See the Discussion activities key for an example of how to start the role play.

After reading

5 Write and guess: Put students in pairs and ask them to choose a short paragraph from Chapters 3–4. Tell them to write it again, making five changes to words in the text. Students then read out their paragraphs to the other students, who have to identify the mistakes.

Chapters 5–6

Before reading

6 Write: Ask the students to look at the photos on pages 29 and 31. Tell them to write a physical description of the two men. Then ask them to say which of the two men they think is the better dancer.

While reading (p. 31, after ‘He too was admiring Guy’s body.’)

7 Discuss: Put the students in groups and ask them to discuss how important it is for a singer, dancer, or actor to be good-looking in order to be successful. Ask the students to think of real life examples where a performers looks have been more important than their ability or vice versa.

After reading

8 Pair work: Write the following words on the board: bathroom, Frankie, video, security guard, football, television, G-strings. In pairs ask the students to talk and write about how these words were used in Chapters 5–6.

Chapters 7–8

While reading (at the bottom of p. 43.)

9 Discuss and write: Remind students that Gaz has had a poster made to advertise the show. Put them in small groups and ask them to discuss the following questions: What kind of things do people advertise? Apart from using posters, how can people advertise? Do they use any special things to make people buy or go to something? Choose a product or event and have students design an advertising campaign. Students present their ideas and the class votes for the best.

After reading

10 Write and guess: Write Horse invited his elderly father to watch the show. on the board. Elicit which word is wrong from the students (mother, not father). Now students choose a sentence from Chapters 7–8 and rewrite it changing one word. Students go around the classroom, reading out their sentences and the other students have to identify and correct the mistake.

Chapters 9–10

Before reading

11 Write and discuss: Ask the class for all the words they know in English that are connected to crimes and put them on the board, adding some of your own. Then, in small groups ask the students to put the crimes in order of seriousness and to decide on what punishment each crime should receive.

After reading

12 Discuss: Gerald did not tell his wife the truth. In small groups ask the students in what circumstances it might be OK to tell a lie.

Chapter 11

After reading

13 Research: Ask the students to look for information on the Internet about the film The Full Monty. Tell them to include answers to the following: When was it made? How much did it cost to make and how much did it earn? Who were the main actors? Did the people in the film business like it? Did the public like it?

Vocabulary activities

For the Word list and vocabulary activities, go to www.penguinreaders.com.