What are you doing?

Student: What are you doing?

*Tutor: Mmmm…?*

What are you doing?

*I’m writing a play.*

Writing a play?

*I like writing plays.*

I can see that.

*Mmmm…*

What’s this play about then?

*It’s just a conversation, really.*

Just a conversation?

*Yes. A conversation between two people.*

Just two people chatting?

*Two people like us.*

Just chatting?

*That’s right.*

An ordinary conversation?

*Yes.*

Between two ordinary people?

*Yes, people just like us.*

What is there to write about that?

*Mmmm…?*

A conversation between two people like us?

*Well……*

Sounds a bit dull to me.

*Not really.*

Not really?

*No.*

No?

*Most conversations are quite interesting.*

Are they?

*Yes. Once you get going.*

Oh….

*I think they’re interesting, anyway.*

I suppose that’s why you write plays?

*Yes. I suppose it is.*

But what’s this play about?

*What’s it about?*

Yes. What’s your play about?

*Well, it’s not really about anything.*

A play has to be about something.

*Oh. Do you think so?*

Of course it does!

*I’m not so sure.*

But anyway, what’s this play about?

*I just told you! I’m not sure.*

How do you mean you’re not sure?

*Well, I mean I don’t know.*

You don’t know what your own play is about?

*Not yet anyway.*

You’re writing it!

*Yes…*

How can you not know what it’s about?

*I think I might know what it’s about once I’ve finished it.*

You’ll know what your play is about when you’ve finished it?

*Yes. Probably.*

That seems a bit strange!

*When it’s finished, I’ll probably be able to see what it was about.*

But you have no idea right now?

*Not really, no.*

No idea at all?

*Well, maybe it’s about life.*

Life?

*Yes.*

That’s a bit grand, isn’t it? “Life!”

W*ell, yes and no.*

Yes and no?

*My little play is about life. Just a tiny slice of it.*

A tiny slice of life?

*Yes. Just a tiny slice of life.*

Mmmm…

*Like a conversation between two people like us.*

That’s not “life”.

*Yes it is.*

A conversation isn’t “life”.

*Yes, it is.*

It isn’t “life”. It’s just a conversation.

*Yes.*

That’s not “life”.

*Yes, it is.*

It isn’t.

*What else is there?*

Well… Ummm…

*There you are, then.*

But that’s nothing like real plays.

*Real plays? How do you mean?*

You know. Real plays.

*Real plays?*

Yes.

*Like?*

Plays like Shakespeare wrote.

*Plays like Shakespeare wrote?*

Yes. Romeo and Juliet. Hamlet. You know.

*Yes, of course I do.*

Well, then.

*My little plays are nothing like Shakespeare’s.*

That’s what I’m saying.

*Is it?*

Your plays are nothing like Shakespeare’s plays.

*Of course they’re not.*

Well, then.

*I never said they were!*

Shakespeare’s plays are important.

*How do you mean “important”?*

Well, for one thing they are all about something.

*Well, yes. I know that.*

And Shakespeare’s plays all tell a story.

*I know they do.*

They have a lot of characters in them, too.

*I know that!*

They have characters, and a story.

*Yes, they do.*

They are all about something.

*I know that. Really, I do.*

Your play won’t have a story.

*Well, it will. Sort of.*

No, it won’t.

*It will be the story of a conversation.*

Not much of a story!

*Only a little story, perhaps, but still a story.*

A conversation is not much of a story!

*Some conversations are very good stories!*

Mmmm….

*I think so anyway.*

Mmmm…

*My play will be little, but it might be quite good.*

But it will only have two characters.

*True.*

And a tiny story.

*Tiny.*

That’s not much of a play!

*No.*

Well, then.

*How do you mean “well then”?*

Your play will be nothing like Shakespeare’s plays.

*Of course it won’t!*

Well, then.

*I’m not trying to write plays like Shakespeare wrote.*

Shakespeare’s plays are all about something.

*So you keep saying. Of course they are.*

Well then.

*They’re big plays about big ideas.*

Exactly.

*Mine aren’t. They are about little stuff.*

Tiny, I’d say.

*That’s OK, though.*

Is it?

*I like it like that, actually.*

But a play must be about something quite big, surely?

*Not necessarily.*

Shakespeare’s plays are all about important ideas.

*Yes. I know. Shakespeare writes about important ideas.*

There you are then.

*But I write about the little things of life.*

I don’t see the point.

*Well…*

Why write about them, if they’re so little?

*My little plays are a bit like a photograph, I suppose.*

Like a photograph?

*A photograph freezes a tiny bit of life.*

And?

*Then you can see it properly.*

It doesn’t show us “life”.

*It does.*

Well…

*A tiny slice of life.*

Well…

*But it lets you see it properly.*

I’m not so sure about that.

*Well…*

How does that work?

*My play makes you look at a tiny slice of life differently.*

Mmmm…

*Like a photograph does.*

Well…

*So my play might help you to look at life a bit differently.*

Might make me feel different?

*A bit.*

Well…

*It might make you notice some little things.*

Things I might not notice otherwise, you mean?

*Yes.*

Mmmm…

*Little things that you don’t usually notice.*

I think I’m beginning to get this idea.

*Good.*

You’re saying a little play might make me see little things more clearly?

*Of course it might. It shows stuff that matters.*

Mmmm...

*Just not very big stuff.*

So you think little stuff matters?

*Yes, of course it does!*

Mmmm…

*I really like little stuff.*

Even a conversation between two ordinary people?

*Maybe especially a conversation between two ordinary people.*

People like us?

*Just like us.*

Mmmm...

*Little stuff.*

Do you think about what you want to say before you start writing?

*Mmmm…?*

Or do you just write?

*Both, I suppose.*

Mmmm…

*The play I am writing today is just a conversation.*

OK.

*It happens as I write.*

But sometimes you have something in mind before you start?

*Yes.*

Like what?

*Well, usually I have a story in mind before I start.*

But it will still be a conversation?

*It’s got to be a conversation, because it’s a play.*

Of course it does.

*Some sort of conversation, anyway.*

So what will today’s play be about?

*It will be about writing a play.*

Just a conversation about writing a play?

*There are two characters who disagree about it.*

Mmmm…

*At least to begin with.*

That doesn’t sound very interesting!

*Don’t you think so?*

Not really. No.

*Our conversation has been interesting, hasn’t it?*

Well, yes. It has been, really.

*I think so.*

Quite interesting.

*And we discussed some quite important things, didn’t we?*

Yes. I suppose we did.

*Well, then.*

Well then?

*Yes.*

What do you mean, “Well then”?

*That’s my play!*

That’s your play?

*Yes.*

What do you mean?

*Our conversation. That’s my play!*

You’re just going to write down our conversation?

*Yes.*

And call it a play?

*Yes.*

Oh…

*I think it will be quite a nice play.*

Oh…

*I hope so, anyway.*

What will you call it?

*I haven’t decided yet.*

It needs to have a title.

*Yes, it does.*

It needs to have a good title.

*Yes, it does.*

I think the title is very important.

*Yes, I agree.*

A good title is important.

*Maybe I’ll just call it “Writing a play”.*

No, no, no.

*No?*

That’s no good!

*Oh.*

That’s no good at all.

*Oh?*

That’s hopeless.

*Oh.*

“Writing a play” is no good.

*Are you sure?*

It’s boring.

*I suppose it is, really.*

It’s very boring, actually.

*It is. You’re right.*

And it’s closed.

*Closed?*

Yes. It can’t go anywhere.

*How do you mean “it can’t go anywhere”?*

It’s closed.

Mmmm…?

“Writing a play” is a dead end title.

*Yes. You’re right again. I think.*

You need a more interesting title.

*OK.*

A more open one.

*More open?*

You need a title that sets the imagination going.

*How do you mean?*

One that sets the mind wandering.

*Oh…… I see what you mean.*

Great.

*I think so, anyway.*

How about “What are you doing?”

*“What are you doing?”*

That’s an open title.

*Is it?*

“What are you doing?” sets the mind wandering.

*Does it?*

Yes, it does.

*Mmmm…*

If you listen to it.

*That’s what I’ll call it, then.*

Good.

*I’ll call it “What are you doing?”*