



Newspaper Articles to get Teenagers Talking



4 Going bananas

Yes, we have bananas – 30,000 of them.

Nelson surveys square's latest installation

By ARIFA AKBAR

WELL BEFORE dawn, the early birds around Trafalgar Square realised something was amiss. Bananas, hundreds of them, were being piled in a huge heap. That they were positioned next to the National Gallery offered a clue. The hundreds became 30,000 by 5am and London's most famous square had its latest art installation.

The bananas provoked much scratching of heads as the crowds of tourists and passers-by pondered what the latest statement on the North Terrace could possibly mean.

Its creator, Doug Fishbone, was giving away few clues. He and 20 dedicated friends had arrived in a truck at 1.30am yesterday with six tons of Cavendish bananas to create the eight-foot-high mound. This, though, was a temporary installation and by 3pm, Mr Fishbone, a 35-year-old New Yorker, had begun to dismantle his creation and distributed all the bananas to passers-by.

During the day, the artwork was described in a variety of ways: a post-modern work of staggering genius; a cunning marketing ploy; a chimpanzee's dream. But by the time the bananas were given away, no one seemed to care. A scrum of tourists, office workers and students battled to bag themselves a bunch. "I'm going to sell these at the Tube station. If he can call a bunch of bananas art, then I think I can too – and make a profit," said Aidan Ashton Griffiths, 16, from North London.

Two Russian women, who reckoned the artist's message was one of communist abundance ("to each according to his needs"), had arrived early with carrier bags to fill with free fruit. "We were told about this by the guide in our hotel. These will be our souvenirs," said Emilia Finkel, 70, from St Petersburg.

Art students guarded the work to ensure it was not dismantled prematurely by bystanders and many were admonished for attempting to eat the artwork.

Despite being pressured by the public



for an explanation, Fishbone remained silent. So the crowd resorted to their own theories. Some thought it was a war memorial. An Australian couple thought it might be the work of activists protesting against banana importation and Marxists felt it was a comment on capitalist greed. Art students admired its vivid colour and composition.

Fishbone said the discussion was exactly what he had set out to achieve. "A lot of people have asked me what it means but I'm stepping back. I want this to involve the audience. It's such a big physical presence and changes so much in different contexts that I cannot honestly say any more whether it still has its original meaning," he said.

He said he was inspired to build the sculpture while living in South America and had created five similar installations in Ecuador, Costa Rica, Poland and New York. He explained: "I was living in Ecuador and I came across a heap of plantains dumped on the road to sell. I

stopped in my tracks and thought that it looked magnificent and wanted to see it in an artistic context."

Critics were reluctant to accept the sculpture as anything other than a prosaic heap of bananas.

Anna Somers Cocks, founding editor of The Art Newspaper, said the "wow factor" had to be distinguished from its actual meaning, if any, while Brian Sewell condemned it as a hollow "attention grabbing" exercise. "It is merely the Elephant Man syndrome when people congregate to see something freakish," he said. "I could grab the same kind of public attention by standing on my head. What is not art ... is a heap of bananas in Trafalgar Square."

And what about dissent from the crowd of passers-by? John and Sonia Kemp, both 70, from Walton Creek, near San Francisco, were mystified: "When the folks back home see these pictures, they are going to think the Brits are a bunch of loonies," said Mr Kemp.

Doug Fishbone is an artist who creates installations, in which everyday objects are put together in unusual situations. For one of these installations, he built a huge pile of bananas outside the National Gallery in London. Later that afternoon, Fishbone dismantled his art and gave all the bananas away.

1 Before you read, discuss the following.

What do you think tourists, passers-by and art critics made of Doug Fishbone's pile of bananas?
How would you react?

Glossary

- 1 going bananas: going mad
- 2 Nelson = Lord Nelson, the Admiral who fought Napoleon Bonaparte at the Battle of Trafalgar. Nelson's statue stands in Trafalgar Square.
- 3 scratching of heads: confusion, puzzlement
- 4 to bag: to get (something in demand)
- 5 the Tube: the London Underground network
- 6 plantain: a tropical fruit similar to a banana
- 7 Elephant Man: a Victorian man who attracted attention because of his unusual looks
- 8 loonies: mad people

2 As you read, match the words from the article 1–9 with their meaning a–i.

- | | |
|---------------|--------------------------------------|
| 1 passers-by | a) take down (the opposite of build) |
| 2 pondered | b) large quantities of |
| 3 dismantle | c) criticised, told off |
| 4 abundance | d) found or met (by chance) |
| 5 prematurely | e) people going past |
| 6 admonished | f) thought about |
| 7 came across | g) weird, strange, unnatural |
| 8 freakish | h) very puzzled |
| 9 mystified | i) too early |

3 Now circle T (True) or F (False).

- | | |
|---|-------|
| a Trucks started bringing the bananas before 5am. | T / F |
| b Doug Fishbone was happy to talk about his installation. | T / F |
| c The installation was built to last. | T / F |
| d The installation was dismantled just before midnight. | T / F |
| e A respectful queue formed as the installation was taken down. | T / F |
| f Mrs Finkel brought a suitcase to fill with bananas. | T / F |
| g Doug Fishbone has created similar installations before. | T / F |

- | | |
|---|-------|
| h He was inspired by a pile of plantains in a supermarket. | T / F |
| i Art critic Brian Sewell loved the work. | T / F |
| j The Kemps, an American couple, did not understand the installation. | T / F |

4 Now discuss the following.

- a What do you think of Doug Fishbone's installation? Is it a work of art or a waste of time and money?
- b What is art? Is it important? Why/Why not?
- c Is there a difference between high art (opera, ballet) and popular art (soap operas, pop music)? Which is more important?
- d Is a fresco by Leonardo da Vinci any better than graffiti art spray-painted on a wall?
- e Should governments subsidise the arts? If you answer yes, which of the following kinds of art would you give funding to?

installations	folk music	pop music	
opera	theatre	buskers	poetry

- f Would money be better spent on something more useful, like medical research?

Fact file

Go to www.christojeanneclaude.net to see the work of the world's most famous installation artists, Christo and his wife Jeanne-Claude. Their work includes:

- stretching a 12,780 square metre orange curtain across the Rifle Valley in California.
- wrapping the German Parliament building in 75,000 metres of silver fabric and 8,000 metres of rope.
- an installation of 1,340 blue umbrellas (each six metres tall) in Ibaraki, Japan.

5 Your group have been asked to make a piece of installation art for a modern art exhibition. Read the Fact file. Then, using the objects in the room around you, create your own installation.

- a Decide what objects you are going to use.
- b Give your installation a name.
- c Build it. Write a short text explaining what the piece means.
- d Show and explain your installation to the rest of the class. Use the following language.

*Our installation is called ... and it consists of ...
We gave it this name because ...
The meaning of this piece is ...*

Ask other groups what they think of it.

10 Compensation culture

In July 1998, 83-year-old Stella Liebeck bought a cup of coffee from her local Macdonald's restaurant. When she went to drink it, the cup slipped and she spilled the boiling coffee onto her lap, burning both her legs. Mrs Liebeck was so angry that she took Macdonald's to court, saying that the restaurant should have warned her that the coffee would be hot. The court agreed and Macdonald's were forced to pay her \$1,700,000 in compensation.

1 Before you read, discuss the following.

What do you think of this story?

Whose fault was it, Mrs Liebeck's, Macdonald's or nobody's?

Was \$1,700,000 fair compensation for her injuries?

Now read two articles that describe the growing 'compensation culture' in Britain and America. These cases are so common that an internet company now organises the annual Stella Awards (named after Mrs Liebeck), where prizes are given to those who make the most ridiculous compensation claims of the year.

SAFeway LEAFLET CRIPPLED MY DOG

Muffin's letter-box injury

SAFeway bosses were left with a hefty claim after a DOG hurt itself grabbing a store leaflet posted through the door.

Pet lovers Gordon and Susan Musselwhite say their dachshund Muffin leapt up and fell awkwardly.

They returned home to find the pooch lying motionless in the hallway. The leaflets in the letter-box had teeth marks.

The six-year-old pet dislocated a disc in his spine and needed immediate surgery.

Dad-of-two Gordon said: "It was heartbreaking. Our children have grown up and our dogs are like a second family to us.

"We were warned it would be an expensive operation but what do you do?"

Now the retired couple want £2,300 for vet's fees and legal bills after a two-year legal battle with Safeway. They say the leaflet should have been put in a postbox by their front gate.

C I R C U L A R S

Gordon, 61, of Yealmpton, Devon said: "We have notices up saying we don't want circulars and a bright red letter-box right by the gate.

"We don't want things through our letterbox because it provokes the dogs. We did not invite anyone on to our property to cause this damage."

Safeway has referred the matter to its insurers. A spokeswoman said: "All complaints are taken very seriously."



Glossary

- 1 Safeway: a major supermarket chain
- 2 pooch: dog
- 3 circular: a printed advertisement delivered to lots of addresses

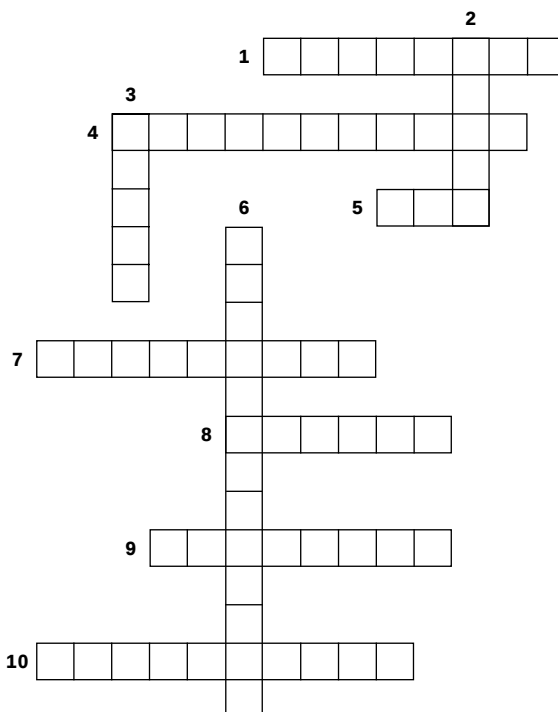
2 As you read, complete the crossword with ten words from the text.

Across

- 1 injured so badly that you cannot walk
- 4 a woman who speaks on behalf of a company or organisation
- 5 animal doctor
- 7 uncomfortably, in a clumsy way, in a way that might cause injury
- 8 opposite of pale
- 9 taking forcefully
- 10 not moving

Down

- 2 jumped
- 3 backbone
- 6 really sad



3 Now circle T (True) or F (False).

- | | |
|---|-------|
| a Safeways put a circular through the Musselwhite's door. | T / F |
| b Muffin was hit on the head by the leaflet. | T / F |
| c The dog jumped up to try and catch the leaflet. | T / F |
| d The Musselwhites were at home when the accident happened. | T / F |
| e The dog injured her neck. | T / F |
| f Muffin had an operation a few weeks later. | T / F |
| g The vet did not tell the family it would be an expensive operation. | T / F |
| h Mr Musselwhite is still working. | T / F |
| i The Musselwhites have a postbox next to their front door. | T / F |
| j Safeways are not interested in the case. | T / F |

Now read *Writs a mad, mad world.*



AMERICANS CASH IN WITH CRAZY COURT CLAIMS

Writs a mad, mad world!

CLAIM 1: When convicted bank robber Michael Brodson decided to make a break for freedom by scaling a 40ft prison wall, he ended up falling off and breaking his leg. Brodson promptly sued Ohio prison authorities, claiming they had failed to inform him that climbing the wall was dangerous. **RESULT:** Bradson received £12,000 for his efforts.

CLAIM 2: Drunk driver Franklin Loadaer was so hammered one night that he went through several detour signs near his Illinois home before crashing his car through a hedge and into a wall. When he sobered up, he sued the engineering company that designed the road, the contractor, four subcontractors and the state highway department. **RESULT:** After five years of legal wrangling, all of the defendants agreed to make the

case go away by settling with Loadaer for £21,000. The engineering firm was left with a legal bill for £120,000.

CLAIM 3: Teenager Carl Truman sued after his neighbour ran over his hand with a Honda Accord outside his Los Angeles home. **RESULT:** Even Truman must have been surprised to receive a £45,000 pay-out plus medical expenses - considering he had been trying to steal his neighbour's car at the time!

CLAIM 4: Kathleen Robertson, of Austin, Texas tripped over a toddler in a furniture store. **RESULT:** She won a whopping £470,000 compensation payout - even though the toddler who floored her was Robertson's own son!

CLAIM 5: They say people can get burned at barbecues... but spare a thought for the friendly neighbour who invited Alan Dunane over for sausages and steak.

After drinking heavily throughout the afternoon Alan, from Florida, climbed on to the back fence and attempted to walk along its length. Instead, he fell off into a canal on the other side and injured himself. **RESULT:** Dunane sued his neighbour because he claimed the fence had a flat top, rather than a pointed one, so he could walk on it. Amazingly, Dunane won the case and received £6,000 compensation.

CLAIM 6: Merv Grazinski, of Oklahoma purchased a brand new 32ft Winnebago motor home. On his first trip he set the cruise control at 70mph and calmly left the driver's seat as the Winnebago sped along the motorway, to go into the back and make himself a cup of coffee. Not surprisingly, the vehicle left the motorway shortly afterwards and crashed. **RESULT:** Grazinski sued Winnebago for not advising him in the owner's manual that he couldn't actually leave the

vehicle to drive itself. The jury awarded him £1,250,000 plus a new motor home.

CLAIM 7: Delaware clubber Kara Wilson decided to climb in through a nightclub's toilet window to avoid paying the £2 entry fee. She slipped, knocked out her two front teeth on the floor below - and sued. **RESULT:** She was awarded £7,000 and free dental expenses to repair her mangled gnashers.

CLAIM 8: Sweet-toothed Robert Forster, of Ohio, is currently suing both the manufacturers of M&Ms and his local store for "mislabelled and defective merchandise" after a packet of peanut-flavoured sweets included a plain one. Forster claim he bit down on the plain one too hard thinking it was a peanut one and cut through the skin on his lip. The injury, he says, then required a visit to the hospital. **RESULT:** The claim is still going through the courts - but if he wins, he stands to get £300,000.



Glossary

- 1 writ: a legal document explaining your claim (in the title, *writs* is a pun on *it's*)
- 2 hammered: very drunk
- 3 sobered up: became sober again (*sober* is the opposite of *drunk*)
- 4 wrangling: long, complicated argument
- 5 toddler: a very young child just learning how to walk
- 6 whopping: very large, huge
- 7 flooded: knocked down onto the floor
- 8 Winnebago: a make of motor home
- 9 40ft/32ft: 12.19m/9.75m.
- 10 mangled gnashers: damaged teeth

4 As you read, answer the questions to find the meaning of these words.

- a Does *scaled* mean climbed or fell from?
- b Does *promptly* mean very quickly or after some delay?
- c Is a *hedge* a barrier made of stone or made from plants/small trees?
- d Does *settling with* mean continuing the fight or coming to an agreement?
- e Does *purchased* mean sold or bought?
- f Does *sped* (the past of *speed*) mean went quickly or went slowly?
- g Does *manual* here mean by hand or a kind of book?
- h Does *sweet-toothed* refer to someone who enjoys sweet things or someone who hates chocolate?

5 Now write the number of the claim or claims to answer these questions.

In which claim ...

- a did the claimant sue a neighbour? **3,**
- b were the claimants drunk?
- c was the claimant trying to avoid paying?
- d was there an injury caused by a fall?
- e were drivers involved in a crash?
- f was there an accident caused by a very young child?
- g did claimants suffer injuries to their mouths?
- h did the claimant receive the most compensation?

6 Read and discuss the following statements.

Use this useful language.

- *How can you blame (someone) if ...?*
- *People should take more care when they ...*
- *It all depends on ...*
- *It's not my/his/the government's fault if ...*
- *It's a grey area ...*
- *to take responsibility for ...*
- *to blame someone else for ...*
- *over the top (=excessive) ...*
- *to claim damages (financial compensation) from / for ...*

- a Smokers should be able to sue tobacco companies.
- b If you do not like a film, the cinema should give you your money back.
- c Companies that pollute the atmosphere should be heavily fined.
- d If your train, plane or bus is delayed, you should always get compensation.
- e If you fail your exams, you should be able to sue your school.
- f Africans should get compensation for the slave trade of 200 years ago.
- g An actress photographed shopping without her make-up should be able to sue any paper that prints the pictures.
- h People who drop litter or chewing gum should pay for it to be picked up.

7 Imagine you are one of the characters in the newspaper articles. Write your claim for compensation, then present it to the class.

My name is ...

I am here today to claim ... from ... because I ...

What happened was ...

It wasn't my fault because ...

You should award me the money because ...

Let the class ask you questions, then have a class vote to see if the claim is successful or not. Is your class's decision the same as the decision taken by the courts?

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

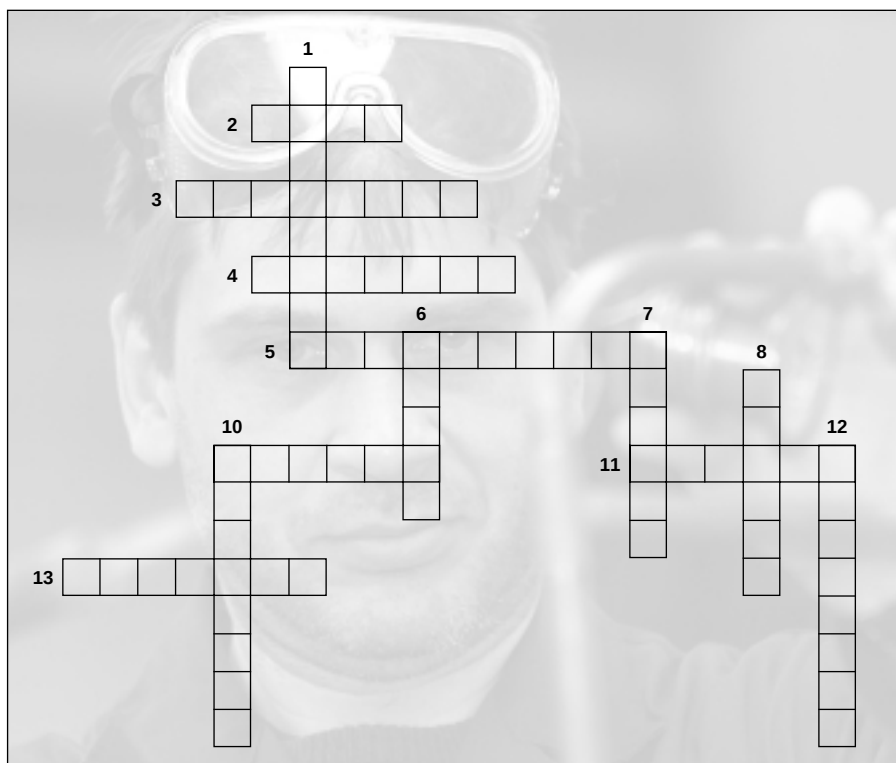
- 1 skint (slang): penniless
- 2 boffin (slang): a brilliant scientist
- 3 brainbox (slang): very clever
- 4 a Phd: a Doctor of Philosophy, the highest university qualification
- 5 gobsmacked (slang): astonished, very surprised
- 6 plum (informal): fantastic, wonderful

Daily Telegraph

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

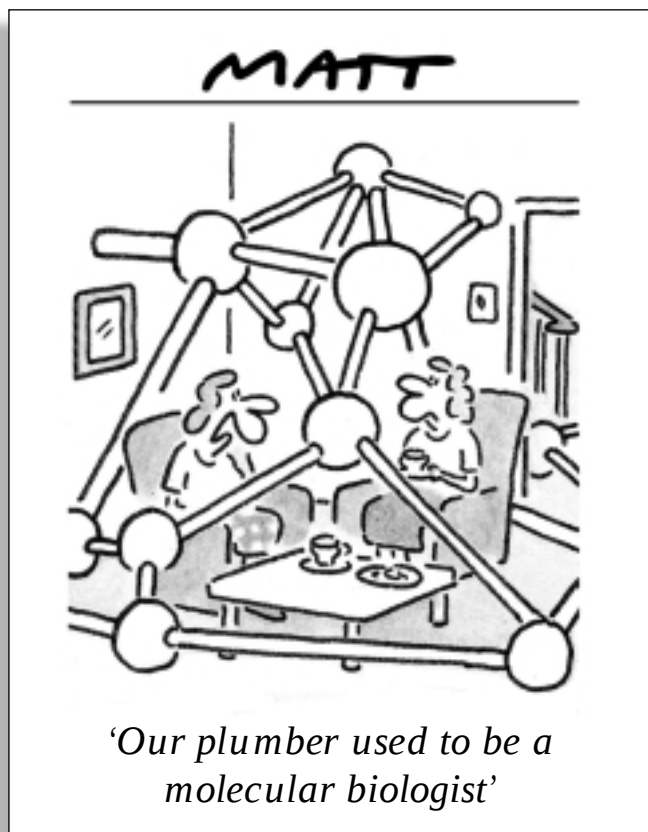
Down

- 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 QUITTS 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."