

EMC Teaching a Novel:

The Bone Sparrow



Written by Lucy Hinchliffe, with Andrew McCallum

Edited by Andrew McCallum

With thanks to Kate Oliver and Lucy Webster

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TEACHERS' NOTES

The resources in this pack have been designed to accompany whole class study of Zana Fraillon's *The Bone Sparrow*. We've chosen to highlight this novel because we believe that its exciting storyline, interesting narrative structure and sensitive handling of topical themes make it a novel that young readers can both learn from and engage with.

The learning, as directed by the resources, will primarily be literary in nature, though there will also be chances to find out more about some of the issues raised along the way. For example, there is one activity looking into the persecution of the Rohingya people by the government of Myanmar, and another exploring the *United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child* (UNCRC). In both these instances, though, the additional learning springs from the text itself. While some contextual information will help students get the most out of the novel, their main source of information about the ill treatment of some groups of refugees by first world authorities is the text itself. The text should be at the heart of learning at all times.

The resources have drawn on 'The Novel Project', an English and Media Centre research project about teaching the novel in ways that encouraged students to develop their own ideas dialogically, alongside their classroom teacher. One of the main ways that this was done was to develop what the project called an 'agenda'. We've renamed this an 'Ideas Log' in this resource pack, for clarity.

An Ideas Log is a document developed collaboratively and regularly updated by the whole class, with the teacher responsible for keeping a written record to be shared with students where relevant. This resource pack begins with an activity on page 5 offering guidance about how to start your class's own Ideas Log. The Ideas Log is then referred to throughout the pack, with teachers free to draw on it and develop it further whenever they see fit. We recommend that the Ideas Log is used sparingly, when there is a genuine purpose for revisiting it, to keep it fresh. Used judiciously, we have seen many times just how motivating it can be for students and how useful it can be for teachers' planning. The resource indicates moments where it might be particularly useful to revisit the Ideas Log. We also suggest students refer to it when undertaking after-reading activities.

The resource has been organised into 'before', 'during' and 'after' reading sections, for clarity's sake. We wouldn't expect any class to complete all of them and would obviously encourage teachers to add their own ideas and activities, whilst keeping up the pace of the reading. The tasks always require students to think about their reading and to respond with their own ideas, often in collaboration with others.

Before using this resource we'd urge all teachers to read and watch the material that emerged from the EMC novel project, focusing particularly on the 'agenda'. These can be found at <https://www.englishandmedia.co.uk/cpd-and-consultancy/our-projects/emc-its-good-to-talk-working-on-a-novel-at-ks3>.

Wishing you and your class well in your reading!

Andrew McCallum, Director



BEFORE READING

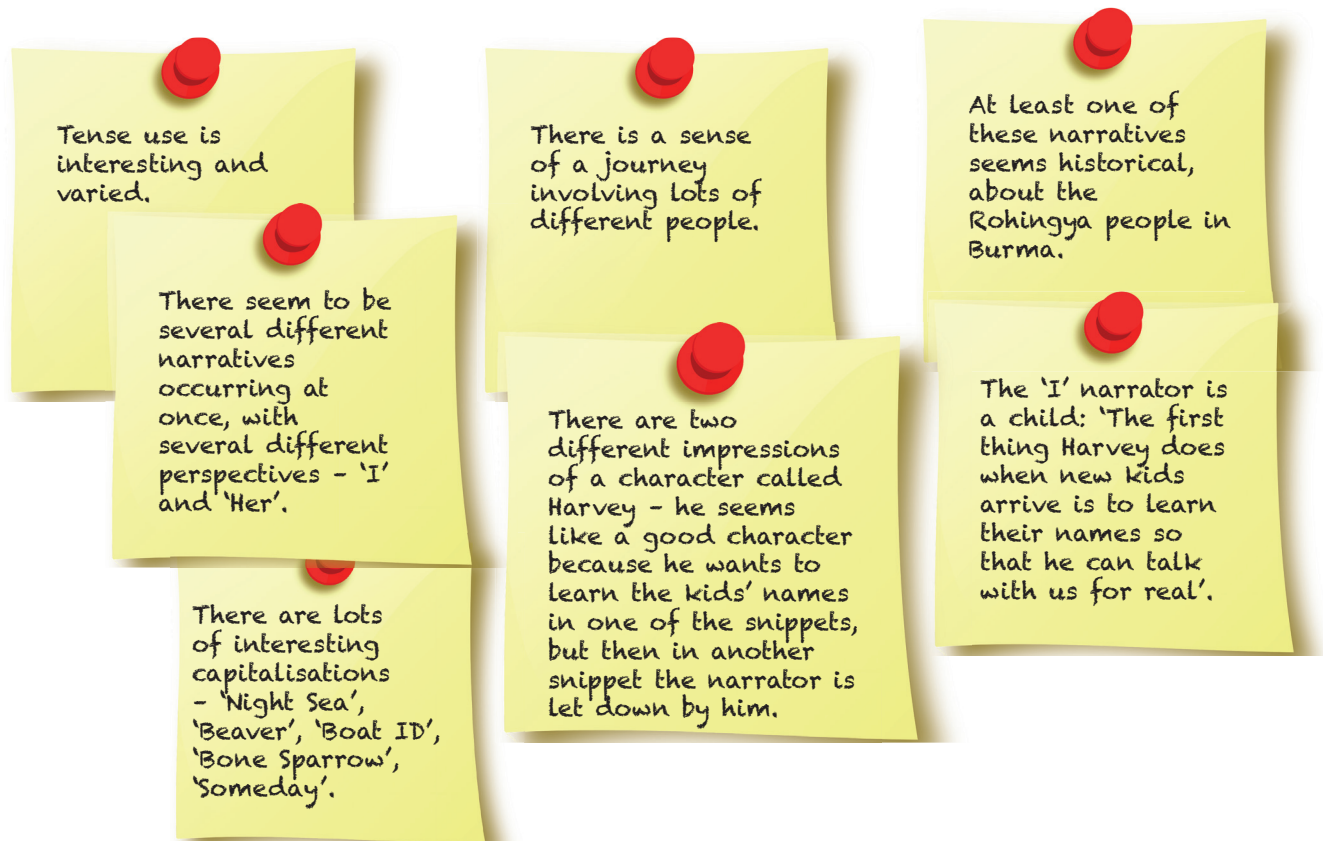


Keeping an 'Ideas Log'

You are going to read a series of snippets (page 6) from a novel you are going to study (at the moment, you don't even know its title). The snippets will give you some idea about what to look out for when reading the book, without giving too much away.

■ You should complete the activity as follows:

1. In a small group, spread the snippets out in front of you.
2. Read through them and discuss anything you notice. Make a note of your ideas.
3. Pause and share your ideas around the class.
4. Return to the snippets and in your group discuss anything said by another group that adds to your own ideas.
5. Read the ideas about the snippets listed below. In your group, pick one or two that help you to add something new to your ideas.



6. Take it in turns to share your ideas around the class. While you are doing this, your teacher will write down what you have to say. After the lesson, they will shape this into an Ideas Log that you can return to from time to time when reading the novel. Your Ideas Log will track your thinking about the book. It can be added to or changed as you read on and a fuller understanding of the novel emerges.



Chapters 7 and 8

Human rights

The Bone Sparrow has been endorsed by Amnesty International UK. This charity fights human rights' abuses wherever they occur in the world.



- As you are reading Chapters 7 and 8, think about why Amnesty might have endorsed this book.



- When you have finished reading, discuss your ideas as a class. As part of your discussion, consider which of the rights below are focused on in the book. In what ways?

- The right to freedom
- The right to justice
- The right to free speech and self-expression
- The right to meet other people
- The right to education
- The right to shelter
- The right to have sufficient food.

You will explore the presentation of rights in the book further in the after reading section.



Chapters 9-11

- Read Chapters 9-11 before completing the following activities.

Reflecting on the novel so far



- Share the six areas of focus on page 11 among small groups. Each group should take one.
- Feed back your group's ideas to the rest of the class, including the questions you want to ask.
- Your teacher can add anything significant to your Ideas Log.



AFTER READING

Making use of your Ideas Log

As you read *The Bone Sparrow*, you kept an Ideas Log, containing ideas, questions and observations about the novel. This is a really brilliant resource to draw on as you tackle activities which ask you to develop in more detail your critical response to the novel. So keep it to hand as you explore the characters, structure, style, themes and so on.



Personal response

Impressions of the novel

- In small groups, cut out the cards on page 17 and turn them face down.
- Each of you should take a card at random.
- Spend 2-3 minutes taking notes about what you can say to complete your sentence starter and add in detail explaining your thinking.
- Take it in turns to talk to your card. Set yourself the challenge of speaking for 30 seconds. If you make that target, see if you can keep going for full minute.



What do you think *The Bone Sparrow* is about?

- On your own, write a sentence, beginning, '*The Bone Sparrow*' is about ...
- Now write a second sentence, beginning, 'It is also about ...'
- Share your sentences around the class. What do you notice about what people have written? Are there any common themes? Any big differences?



Characters in *The Bone Sparrow*

Subhi and Jimmie

- In pairs, decide which of the words below apply to Subhi, which to Jimmie and which to both.
- Choose one word that you think particularly applies to Subhi, one to Jimmie and one to both. On your own write a sentence or two about how each applies.

Lonely	Imaginative	Independent	Adventurous
Unhappy	Spirited	Loyal	Hopeful
Brave	Timid	Naive	Generous



Creating Subhi and Jimmie

The writer, Zana Fraillon, made some interesting choices when she created the two main characters in *The Bone Sparrow*. Below you will find a few questions that one book blogger had for her.



- In pairs, take it in turns to ask and answer the questions in role as Zana Fraillon.
- On your own, choose two of the questions and write your response to them, again in role as Zana Fraillon.
 1. Which of the two characters is your favourite and why?
 2. Their friendship is an unlikely one. How did you try to make it seem authentic?
 3. Why did you decide to use the first-person voice for Subhi's narrative, while Jimmie's side of the story is in the third person?
 4. What do the two characters have in common and how are they different? Do you want readers to be more aware of the similarities or the differences? Why?
 5. Jimmie struggles to read, while Subhi loves anything to do with reading and writing. What was your thinking behind this big contrast?
- If there is time, ask your teacher to role play answering the questions. Do they come up with any ideas that you missed as a class?





What does *The Bone Sparrow* have to say about the world we live in?

Critical literacy

Critical literacy offers us a way to look at what a novel has to say about the world we live in. It can be used to explore important issues.

- In a pair or small group, discuss how the issues below might relate to *The Bone Sparrow*.

Freedom	Diversity and community	Justice	Change and action
Power and control	Tolerance, rights and respect	Democracy	Equality and responsibility

- Select one that you think provides an interesting way into the novel.
- Your teacher will give you a card to help you explore your chosen issue. In your group, discuss the questions on the card. (The cards can be found on pages 39-43.)
- Prepare a presentation on the card you selected. The purpose of the presentation is to inform your classmates about how the card relates to *The Bone Sparrow*.
- Share your presentations around the class.

