Benjamin Zephaniah

Teacher’s Dead

Worksheets
Introduction

Describe what you can see in the pictures below. How do you react to these images?
Chapters 1 & 2

The murder

Write down all the details about the murder that you can find in the first two chapters. How do you react to this description? To what extent is this description different from most death scenes you would see in Hollywood movies?

In your opinion, why was Mr Joseph murdered?

Remember: the murder = “der Mord”, « le meurte » • the murderer = “der Mörder”, « le meurtrier »
Chapter 4

Dealing with grief

The Kübler-Ross model

According to Elisabeth Kübler-Ross, a Swiss psychiatrist, we deal with grief and tragedy according to a certain model, which divides up the process into five distinct steps. The diagram below shows you the different steps. Read Mrs Joseph’s speech in Chapter 4 and show to what extent her own way of dealing with her husband’s murder respects the Kübler-Ross model. For more details on the Kübler-Ross model and for explanations on the various stages, visit http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kübler-Ross_model.
Chapter 5

Personal versus public

Compare the private funeral which Mr Joseph is given to the public memorial service that is held at Marston Hall. What differences do you notice?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Private funeral</th>
<th>Memorial service</th>
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Benjamin Zephaniah, *Teacher's Dead*
Chapter 6

Adi Macenzi

What details do you find out about Adi Macenzi? What do you make of his statement “At least I believe in God, so yeah, they should burn in hell.”?

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Chapter 7

Fentham Road

What kind of place is Fentham Road? Describe it using five adjectives, then justify your choice of adjectives.

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3) .........................................................................................................................................................
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Chapter 16

Violence at schools

In chapter 16, the judge says that “we cannot allow our schools to become places of violence.” What can head teachers, teachers, and students do to make our schools safer?

Additional information

**Education in England and Wales**

Children start primary school when they are 5 years old. From 11 to 16 they go to secondary school. When they are 16 they take the **General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE)** exams. At the age of 16 they can leave school or study for two more years in the sixth form. Here, they study three subjects for the qualification called **A-levels**. At the age of 18 they can go on to study at a university. Most university courses last three years. Students can apply to any university in the country and many young people choose to study away from home. *(Lifelines Intermediate, p.30)*
**Bullying tactics**
What tactics do bullies use to intimidate and terrorise other children? List five or six.

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3) ............................................................................................................
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**Dealing with bullying**
Your younger brother/sister tells you that he/she is being bullied by another student at school, and that she suffers so badly that she does not want to go to school anymore. Which advice do you give him/her?

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Chapter 18
Domestic violence

Describe the life which Lionel’s mother has to lead at home, both under Lionel’s father and under Lionel. How do you react to Zephaniah’s description of this life?

Additional information

Statistics

- In a 1995-1996 study conducted in the 50 States and the District of Columbia, nearly 25% of women and 7.6% of men were raped and/or physically assaulted by a current or former spouse, cohabiting partner, or dating partner/acquaintance at some time in their lifetime (based on survey of 16,000 participants, equally male and female).
- Approximately 1.3 million women and 835,000 men are physically assaulted by an intimate partner annually in the United States.
- Intimate partner violence made up 20% of all non-fatal violent crime experienced by women in 2001.
- Intimate partners committed 3% of the nonfatal violence against men.
- In 2000, 1,247 women and 440 men were killed by an intimate partner. In recent years, an intimate partner killed approximately 33% of female murder victims and 4% of male murder victims.

Chapters 18 & 19

Broken families

Which statements are made about broken families in these two chapters, both explicitly and implicitly?

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Various chapters

The press

Before answering this question, you might want to reread chapters 10, 14, and 26.

You are a journalist working for a sensationalist (= “using exciting or shocking stories or language at the expense of accuracy, in order to provoke public interest or excitement”) newspaper. Write a brief article about the relationship between Mrs Joseph and Miss Ferrier. Your reader wants to read a dramatic account of how furious Mrs Joseph is, and how badly Miss Ferrier raised her child. Include details, real ones or invented ones, to excite your readers.
Profile

Lionel Ferrier
Profile

Mary Joseph-Dowling
Profile

Mrs Martel
Addendum

The Lawrence murder case

Benjamin Zephaniah’s novel was influenced by a real-life homicide that took place in London in 1995. Read the article below to find out more.

Youth gang stabs head teacher to death
A head teacher has died after being stabbed outside his west London school while protecting a pupil who was being assaulted.
Paramedics performed emergency surgery on Philip Lawrence, 48, after he staggered into a classroom following the attack outside St George’s Roman Catholic School, Maida Vale, at about 1500 GMT today.
He was rushed to St Mary’s Hospital, Paddington, where surgeons lost their battle to save the father-of-four.
The attack took place when Mr Lawrence went to help a 13-year-old pupil who was being assaulted by a gang outside the 440-pupil mixed comprehensive.
A Scotland Yard spokeswoman said: “It appears that as one of the schoolboys left the school premises he was approached by a small group of male youths. The teacher, who was in the vicinity, intervened. The man sustained a stab wound but managed to stagger back into the school and raise the alarm. The suspects are believed to have made off on foot into roads nearby.”
The boy was also taken to hospital with head injuries.
More than 20 police officers have converted the main school hall into an interview room to investigate the attack on the head teacher, who had led the school for three years.
Witnesses described seeing Mr Lawrence “staggering and clutching his chest” after the attack.
A spokesman for the board of governors said: “We are shocked and appalled at the sudden and tragic loss of such an outstanding friend and colleague.
“At the moment our thoughts are with his family and we will be offering them all the support we possibly can.”
In a television interview last year, Mr Lawrence said he had increased security at St George’s to protect pupils, closing some school entrances and installing a video camera at another.

BBC News, 8 December 1995
source: http://bbc.in/b7Oi6N

Which elements from this real-life tragedy can also be found in the novel? Take notes.

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The man who killed headteacher Philip Lawrence, due to be released from prison within days, has said he will live “quietly and decently” after his release.

Learco Chindamo, now 29, was 15 when he stabbed Lawrence outside his London school in 1995. He was convicted of the murder in October 1996 and jailed indefinitely, with a minimum tariff of 12 years.

The parole board have given the go-ahead for Chindamo’s release and he is expected to be freed within days. In a statement, Chindamo said he has reformed and wants to live a “quiet and decent” life, but says he is aware that some people will not be able to accept that he has changed and deserves freedom.

“I did a terrible thing when I killed Mr Lawrence,” Chindamo said in the statement, published by the Daily Telegraph.

“I have been rightly punished and I have always understood that I should not be released until I had changed and was no longer dangerous.

“I know that some people will not be able to accept that I have changed or that I should be allowed my freedom. I also know that I will spend the rest of my life atoning for my crime, and mean to do so by living quietly and decently.”

Chindamo came to the UK when he was six, and has an Italian passport. His father is Italian, his mother is from the Philippines.

Philip Lawrence murderer plans ‘quiet, decent’ life after release

Learco Chindamo, who stabbed headteacher in 1996 aged 15, to be released on parole after serving minimum jail term

Three years ago he won an appeal against being deported to Italy after his lawyers argued it would breach his human rights. They successfully argued that deportation to Italy would have been illegal as Chindamo was from an EU country and had already lived in the UK for 10 years by 1995.

It was the second time the government had tried to remove Chindamo. An attempt in 2001 was blocked because it began too soon after he had been sentenced.

Chindamo was 15 when he stabbed Lawrence as the teacher defended a pupil outside St George’s Roman Catholic comprehensive school.

A parole board spokesman said yesterday that they could not comment on or confirm decisions or reasons in individual cases.

“The only legal question which has to be answered to determine the justification for detention thereafter is whether or not the prisoner is a risk to the public.

“The statutory test to be applied by the parole board is whether it is satisfied that the risk to life and limb to the public is no more than minimal.

“If it is so satisfied, it is required to release the prisoner.”

He said the board would take a number of things into account, including the offence, the prisoner’s offending history and progress in prison, statements on behalf of the victim, and reports from psychologists, probation officers and prison officers.

The Guardian, 8 July 2010
The profile of the gun-toting student in a trench coat is just one of the myths about the rare but murderous attacks in the nation’s schools. Here are 10 myths about school shootings, compiled by MSNBC.com from a 2002 study by the U.S. Secret Service and the U.S. Department of Education. The researchers studied case files and other primary sources for 37 attacks by current or former students, and also interviewed 10 of the perpetrators.

Myth No. 1. “He didn’t fit the profile.”
In fact, there is no profile. “There is no accurate or useful ‘profile’ of students who engaged in targeted school violence,” the researchers found. The stereotypes of teens in Goth makeup or other types of dress are not useful in preventing attacks. Just as in other areas of security -- workplace violence, airplane hijacking, even presidential assassination -- too many innocent students will fit any profile you can come up with, and too many attackers will not.

“The demographic, personality, school history, and social characteristics of the attackers varied substantially,” the report said. Attackers were of all races and family situations, with academic achievement ranging from failing to excellent. Most, but not all, have been male, though that fact alone doesn’t help an adult rule in or out someone as dangerous.

Myth No. 2. “He just snapped.”
Rarely were incidents of school violence sudden, impulsive acts. Attackers do not “just snap,” but progress from forming an idea, to planning an attack, to gathering weapons. This process can happen quickly, but sometimes the planning or gathering weapons are discoverable. Although the researchers point out that there is no “type of student” who is likely to commit such violence, there are “types of behaviors” that are common to planning or carrying out the attacks. This pattern, they say, gives some hope of intervening before an attack.

Myth No. 3. “No one knew.”
Before most of the attacks, someone else knew about the idea or the plan. “In most cases, those who knew were other kids: friends, schoolmates, siblings and others. However, this information rarely made its way to an adult.” Most attackers engaged in some behavior prior to the incident that caused concern or indicated a need for help.

Myth No. 4. “He hadn’t threatened anyone.”
Too much emphasis is placed on threats. Most attackers did not threaten anyone explicitly (“I’m going to kill the principal”), and most threateners don’t ever attack anyone. But less explicit words can reveal an intention, the researchers say. A child who talks of bringing a gun to school, or being angry at teachers or classmates, can pose a threat, whether or not an explicit threat is made.

Myth No. 5. “He was a loner.”
In many cases, students were considered in the mainstream of the student population and were active in sports, school clubs or other activities. Only one-quarter of the students hung out with a group of students considered to be part of a “fringe group.”

Myth No. 6. “He was crazy.”
Only one-third of the attackers had ever been seen by a mental health professional, and only one-fifth had been diagnosed with a mental disorder. Substance abuse problems were also not prevalent. “However, most attackers showed some history of suicidal attempts or thoughts, or a history of feeling extreme depression or desperation.” Most attackers had difficulty coping with significant losses or personal failures.

Myth No. 7. “If only we’d had a SWAT team or metal detectors.”
Despite prompt law enforcement responses, most shooting incidents were over well before a SWAT team could have arrived. Metal detectors have...
not deterred students who were committed to killing themselves and others.

Myth No. 8. “He’d never touched a gun.”
Most attackers had access to weapons, and had used them prior to the attack. Most of the attackers acquired their guns from home.

Myth No. 9. “We did everything we could to help him.”
“Many attackers felt bullied, persecuted or injured by others prior to the attack,” and said they had tried without success to get someone to intervene. Administrators and teachers were targeted in more than half the incidents.

Myth No. 10. “School violence is rampant.”
It may seem so, with media attention focused on a spate of school shootings. In fact, school shootings are extremely rare. Even including the more common violence that is gang-related or dispute-related, only 12 to 20 homicides a year occur in the 100,000 schools in the U.S. In general, school assaults and other violence have dropped by nearly half in the past decade.


Development
Now that you have finished reading the novel:
Which ones of the myths mentioned in the article show up in the story? Explain your answer.

☐ Myth #1  ☐ Myth #6
☐ Myth #2  ☐ Myth #7
☐ Myth #3  ☐ Myth #8
☐ Myth #4  ☐ Myth #9
☐ Myth #5  ☐ Myth #10
Benjamin Zephaniah

Now the headlines

How do you like your truth?
Gently spoken on breakfast TV
By a man and a woman who sit comfortably
Saying riots, and murder, when will it end?
As they struggle to act as if they are good friends.

How do you like your truth?
Bite-sized in sound bites cut easy to chew,
With a talking head saying the victim’s like you,
And when you’ve digested the horrors you’ve seen
You find good, you find evil, with no in-between.

How do you like your truth?
Fantastic, sensational, printed in bold,
Today it’s exclusive, tomorrow it’s old,
All on the surface with nothing too deep
With a story about animals to help you to sleep.

How do you like your youth?
From perfect families with parents that care,
Or in perfect families but still in despair,
Ten out of ten parents say they’d not choose
To have bad kids like those kids they see in the news.

Analysis
Which are the major ideas discussed in this poem? What is Zephaniah’s attitude towards them?