

# The allure of fun in senior English



**A study of three text responses for year 12  
English communications**

***The lovely bones* by Alice sebold**

***Whale rider* by niki caro**

***Stolen* by Jane Harrison**

**Presented by Saranigro  
2005**

A starting point...

## **Year 12 text response assessment criteria**

The student's performance in text response will be judged by the extent to which he or she demonstrates:

understanding

- ? To what extent does the student demonstrate knowledge of the texts?
- ? To what extent does the student demonstrate understanding of the ideas of the text?

analysis

- ? How well does the student recognize the characteristics of different text types?
- ? How clearly does the student recognize the author's use of the characteristics of different text types to communicate ideas and influence the reader's response?
- ? How clearly does the student recognize the ideas, experiences, beliefs, or values explored in the texts?
- ? To what extent does the student recognize the connections between his or her own ideas, experiences, beliefs, or values and those explored in the texts?

communication

- ? How accurate and fluent is the student's expression?
- ? How appropriate are the student's form and register for the audience and purpose?

*(taken from the English Communications Stage 2 Curriculum Statement, 2005)*

“Allure - to attract, charm or entice...”

## **Novel text: *The lovely bones***

A study of the writing techniques Sebold uses to engage with the readers.

(Refer to Question sheet.)

Focus on:

1. Narrative style
  - 1<sup>st</sup> Person Narrative
  - Tone
  - Imagery
2. Use of Flashbacks
3. Symbols
4. Names of characters

Themes:

- ? Death
- ? Grief
- ? Healing
- ? Loss of innocence
- ? Isolation /Ostracism
- ? Family relationships - coping with loss and change

## **Study of Techniques**

### 1. NARRATIVE STYLE

#### First Person

- powerful story telling device
- an intimate relationship is formed immediately so that we side with her instantly and begin to allow ourselves to be consumed by Susie's tragedy - 1<sup>st</sup> sentence
- we connect more closely with Susie because it is her telling her story - intimate and personal
- you, the reader are the only one to experience what she does, we are privy to every detail of her death, we cannot help but engage on an emotional level because she is the innocent victim
- she confides in us - not only rape/murder (Chap 1), but her first kiss (p14), the secret, revealing photo of her mother (p 43), her hiding spots (p145) etc, we form a relationship of trust. “I WANT TO GROW UP” - P19
- we are forced to connect with her on many levels, we are her only listeners.
- it binds us to be her confidant and sympathiser

#### Tone

- matter of fact, exact, blunt, frank, direct, upfront, raw, spares no detail,

- unsentimental tone
- chilling description - see imagery (imagery and tone work together to create sympathy)
- Sebald's narrative is void of feeling and sentiment - as if she does this so we the readers fill it with our own emotive reactions - empathy

Eg - 1<sup>st</sup> sentence, rape/murder

### Imagery

- stark, cold, grim, chilling description
- the strong and graphic imagery used evokes a strong emotional reaction from the reader- uses strong imagery to reinforce relationship between Susie and reader because we feel deep sympathy for what has happened to Susie
- fitting my limbs together, -p8
- by the time the Gilbert's dog found my elbow three days later -p10
- he had put me in a waxy cloth sack...tumbled together with my knees fingers and toes...p50
- rotting eyes - 165
- town of floating graves - 182

See worksheet 1

See examples of essays - narrative style para

## 2. USE OF FLASHBACKS

- a technique that acts as a vehicle in allowing us to understand characters better, and feel sympathy for them
- flashbacks are scattered right through the novel

Different ways flashbacks are used:

### a) Sympathy for Susie

- Susie's happy, fond memories are replaced with scenes from her rape and murder and unfair reality.
- Mr Harvey slowly steals her childhood and innocence away - sympathy.
- Happy, normal childhood memories juxtaposed with her cruel reality. - first kiss pg 13
- Everything that had a precious memory for Susie is ruined by Mr Harvey - flashbacks stylistic device used to further our hatred for Mr Harvey and our sympathy for Mr Harvey. - sinkhole p51
- technique of contrast - contrast present sadness of her life with youthful happiness of her stolen past

### b) To understand characters - contrast them before and after Susie's death - we see them deal with death, loss grief in different ways.

Jack Salmon

- many memories of him being perfect father, p7, p51 then we see him deteriorate to a broken man carrying the guilt of not being there for Susie when she needed him - p58
- contrast of happy memories with Abigail - strong marriage to breakdown of marriage due to Susie's death.

Lindsey Salmon

- many memories of her happy childhood with Susie - playing games p92 etc contrasted sharply to her becoming withdrawn, hardened due to Susie's death. "She would not break" -p33.

By use of flashbacks we are able to see the true journey these characters take in order to heal from the pain and loss they have suffered.

Mr Harvey

- Even as the villain, flashbacks are used to conjure sympathy for Mr Harvey. They are used to expose his disturbing childhood and force the reader to see him as once innocent and more human.p188- 189, p97

With these flashbacks we must consider Mr Harvey as a victim and his own inability to deal with loss and grief, (like Jack Salmon they both ostracize themselves from society).

Refer to worksheet

Refer to essay paragraph

### 3. SYMBOLS

There is much symbolism within the text - just a few to consider:

#### a) To symbolize theme of healing and loss -

Salmon family must accept Susie's death and find a new support structure amongst themselves.

- ? The charm keystone represents the support structure of a bridge that everything depends on to remain standing - Susie is who tied the family together she was the keystone to the Salmon family, once charm is taken by Mr Harvey, the Salmon family's support network breaks down - they must build a new support network amongst themselves.
- ? Susie's broken bones symbolize Salmon's broken family structure - as Susie is in heaven piecing together her bones the Salmon family must gather together and form a new structure to find closure to their grief. - once all characters heal, build new family structure by end of book - "these were the lovely bones that had grown in my absence" p320
- ? Make up - used to symbolize how characters hide and deal with grief Both Abigail and Lindsey, p43, p59, 103
- ? Water - rain and showers  
The symbolic washing away of pain and finding closure to their pain  
-Lindsey runs home in the rain - finally she is able to close the open wound of her sister's death - p 242

- Susie makes love to Ray in the shower- it was one of the last things she does before she is reconciled to the fact that she no longer is needed on earth and she can retire to heaven, her healing is complete
- p278 - it rains when Jack and Abigail reunite in the hospital, and rekindle their marriage, they have both dealt with Susie's death differently and are healed.

#### 4. NAMES OF CHARACTERS

Sebald uses names to establish relationships between characters and readers.

Names reflect the character's personal qualities

Names reflect the growth of a character

- ? Susie Salmon - shortened name - establishes notion of familiarity between reader and Susie - creates intimacy. It is an endearing, cute, can be connected with innocence and purity. The name highlights her age and how Susie will never grow up = sympathy. Established from very outset of book, therefore relationship established from outset - no change.
- ? Lindsey Salmon - Name never changes, it is resolute, tough, constant - like Lindsey. As the name cannot be shortened or changed, neither can the events that have taken place in her life - she must learn to deal with them.
- ? Abigail - throughout the novel she undergoes an identity crisis - Susie's death raises questions about Abigail's identity - her name thus changes a number of times to reflect this. She is 'Mom', 'Abigail' and at one point completely nameless when she is the most confused about her actions. P42, 152, 62  
For Abigail, when there is a change of name there is a change in her character.
- ? Mr Harvey - Susie refers to him as Mr Harvey - irony as he does not deserve the title and respect. Also creates distance between him and character - reinforces his ostracism. Name is simple - contrasts to his complicated life. Name is generic - anyone could be a murderer, he camouflages himself in the disguise of a generic name.  
Only referred to as George Harvey by len Fernmen and in childhood flashbacks - supposed to show human side to him, see him as a victim to Jack's "mad" accusations and sad childhood.

## **Film text: Whale Rider**

### Resources

- ? [artemis.enterprises@clear.net.nz](mailto:artemis.enterprises@clear.net.nz) - Teacher's Guide to *Whale Rider* can be bought online
- ? *Whale Rider, A Teacher Resource for Class Cinema Viewing*  
Produced by: Fiona Murray, Winifred Jackson and Brian Finch, Massey University, College of Education ( Resource sheets can be found on internet)
- ? DVD - *Whale Rider* - Director's notes and interviews

Teaching angle - study of film techniques

Refer to worksheet

Show film excerpts

Close study of Motifs in film:

- ? The bicycle - used to establish the love Koro does have for Pai. It is only in these scenes that we see him display any tenderness for Pai. It is also used to show the change in their relationship as Pai begins to assert herself as the new leader.

Look at camera shots that establishes intimacy, closeness

Look at camera angle, high angle used to show pai's respect love for Koro - she looks up to him. Low angle shot of Koro looking down on Pai - he is her caretaker.

Only time there is physical intimacy - Koro shelters her in a hug as he reaches for handle bars.

From very outset of film there is the notion that one day Pai will be the new leader - she clutches the Whale's tooth ( Symbol of Chieftdom) that is worn by Koro (the present leader).

Koro stops riding Pai to school - when she challenges tradition. Now we only see Koro the Chief, burdened with responsibility.

Pai begins to ride the bicycle herself - symbolic of her developing strength, she races the bus full of boys going to "Chief School" - symbolic of Pai's eventual leadership.

- ? The rope - Koro uses a rope to explain their history and story of their ancestors. When the rope breaks it symbolizes how Pai has broken the line of ancestry with her birth. He goes to get another rope (symbolic of him searching for a new leader). Pai fixes the rope symbolizing how she can provide a solution to finding a new leader.

When all the whales are beached, Koro's only solution is to tie a rope around them to haul them back to sea. But the rope breaks, symbolizing how Koro can no longer provide what is needed for the community. Instead it is Pai who leads the whales back to sea, finally assuming her rightful role as new leader.

- ? Koro's staff - a symbol of Koro's leadership and authority. It is carved with intricate characters of Maori culture - direct association to the ancestors. He uses it throughout the film by banging it on the floor to restore order, and relies on it (seeking help from his ancestors) in his moments of weakness. Finally when he realizes he is no longer the chief the community need, he drops it in the sea and it washes away with his Chiefdom.
  
- ? The waka - At start of film it is unfinished, abandoned by Porourangi ( seen by Koro as him abandoning his duties to be new Chief)
  - Throughout the film, Pai goes there to seek solace and comfort, she is comforted by Nanny Flowers and her father there, she leads from there and asserts her leadership. She calls the whales from the waka.
  - Later, when Koro accepts her as the new leader, it is completed and launched to sea - with Pai and Koro sitting side by side in it. Symbolic of brighter future.
  
- ? The Rei Puta - The carved whale's tooth necklace - a symbol of rightful leadership.
  - At first Koro wears it to establish him as the wise elder/leader of the community.
  - We see Pai clutching at it in second scene - omen for her later leadership
  - Koro throws it find new leader, none of the boys are able to retrieve it - Koro has failed, lost leadership. It is Pai who retrieves it - she again demonstrates her rightful claim to leadership. Finally when Koro acknowledges her as rightful leader he puts it around her neck.

Refer to assessment tasks

Refer to text response examples

# Drama text: stolen

## Resources

- ? *Insight Text Guide: Stolen By Jane Harrison*, Robert Beardwood & Marlene Drysdale, Insight Publications, Sydney, 2000. ISBN 1 875882 74 X

## Jimmy - Key Quotes

- ? “Willy Wajurri and I’ve got a mother’ - p27
- ? “I don’t even know what a mother feels like” - p30
- ? “I’m going now, to be with my mother. I can fight. I’m punched out”- 34
- ? ‘Someone’s gotta fight. I just can’t no more. They stuck a knife into my heart and twisted it so hard” - p34

Destroyed lives

Apathy of government - slamming filing cabinet

Death in custody - White indifference (warden)

Oppressive forces of white society

Institutionalization

Racism, alcoholism, violence

Aboriginal deaths in custody

Physical, sexual , emotional abuse

## Ruby - Key Quotes

- ? “I want my mummy...Where are you?” - p2
- ? “I promised not to tell” - p8
- ? “Don’t need no home of me own. Got enough to do” - 1, 35

Destroyed life result of institutionalization

Abuse, neglect

Powerlessness

Injustice

Physical, sexual and emotional abuse

## Shirley - Key Quotes

- ? “After all these years to get used to it, it still hurts” - p19
- ? “You people have been putting me on hold for 27 years...” - 22
- ? “I’m looking out of the back of the car...Mummy’s face is getting smaller and smaller” - p4

Represents importance of family, motherhood to identity and happiness

Entrapment - cycle of Stolen Generation

Entrapment as result of government policies: assimilation and segregation

Powerlessness

Hope

Birth of a new generation, reconciled with her family - return to tradition and culture

### Sandy - Key Quotes

- ? “Always on the run” - p 3,4
- ? My people are from the desert. Home of the red sands” - p22
- ? Been everywhere. Except one place. Home”
- ? “The women, to try stop the white men from raping them, would shove sand inside themselves” - p23
- ? “ I don’t have to run anymore” - p36

Nomadic life - though not by choice but due to prevalent racism, unequal work opportunities

Government tokenistic efforts to fix things - ‘A Can of Peas’

Importance to retain storytelling in order to restore Aboriginal culture

Land/nature central to Aboriginal identity

Sense of home, belonging

Survival and hope

### Anne - Key Quotes

- ? “My home’s got lace curtains - and I’ve got a room of my own” - p1
- ? “Life is full of tricky situations...to tan or not to tan” - p16
- ? “What do I want? I don’t know. I don’t know where I belong anymore...” - p 34

Dilemma for people who don’t fall into simplistically defined categories as decreed by government

Deception and shame

Identity crisis - black or white?

### Easy to get students to engage with characters

Emotionally

-Empathy

-Shock

-Shame

-Anger

Think more deeply

-Look at their own prejudices - stereotypes

-Consider their own ignorance - see the full picture

- How much of what happens in the play still happens today - refer to newspaper articles

- Why is Stolen important today? -racism still evident

-Challenge their thinking???

- Sorry Day - why is it so important??

- Compassion, understanding

Refer to oral examples