

First Year - Novels

In Pieces Trinity Comprehensive Writing Group

Tuck Everlasting Nicole Babbitt

The Real Rebecca Anna Carey

Girl Stolen April Henry

Night John Gary Paulsen

Half the Man, Twice the Lawyer John Grisham

The Cay Theodore Taylor

Buddy Nigel Hinton

Skellig David Almond

Wonder R. J. Palacio

Artemis Fowl Eoin Colfer

Wilderness Roddy Doyle

Coraline Neil Gaiman

Girl Missing Sophie McKenzie

Private Peaceful Michael Morpurgo

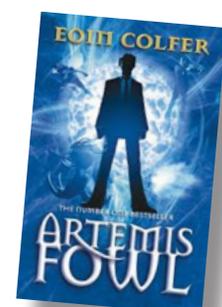
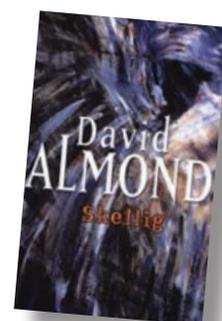
Cirque du Freak Darren Shan

The Hobbit J.R.R. Tolkien

The Scarecrow and his Servant Philip Pullman

Skulduggery Pleasant Derek Landy

The Boy who Lost his Face Louis Sachar



Second/Third Year Prescriptive Novels

To Kill a Mockingbird Harper Lee

Jane Eyre Charlotte Brontë

The Dare John Boyne

My Antonia Willa Cather

Once Morris Gleitzman

Lord of the Flies William Golding

The Outsiders S.E. Hinton

The Wind Singer William Nicholson

Animal Farm George Orwell

Of Mice and Men John Steinbeck

Stone Cold Robert Swindells

Shadows on Our Skin Jennifer Johnson

The Knife of Never Letting Go Patrick Ness

True Grit Charles Portis

The Book of Lost Things John Connolly

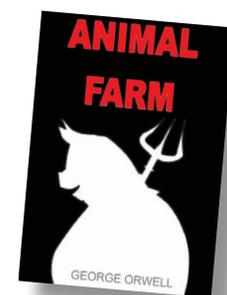
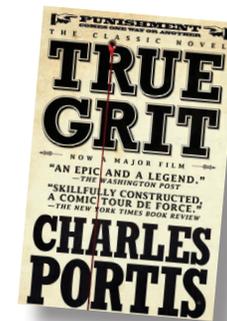
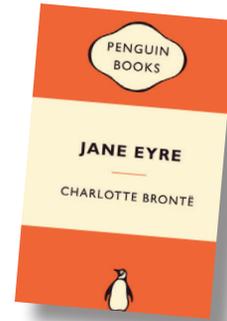
Noughts and Crosses Malorie Blackman

Trash Andy Mulligan

Into the Grey Celine Kiernan

Chalk Line Jane Mitchell

The Weight of Water Sarah Crossan



Prescriptive Plays

A Midsummer Night's Dream William Shakespeare

Romeo and Juliet William Shakespeare

Much Ado About Nothing William Shakespeare

Henry IV, Part 1 William Shakespeare

The Merchant of Venice William Shakespeare

West Side Story Arthur Laurents

Blood Brothers Willy Russell

Shadow of a Gunman Séan O'Casey

Warhorse Michael Morpurgo and Nick Stafford

The Woman in Black Susan Hill, Stephen Mallatratt

The Government Inspector Nikolai Gogol

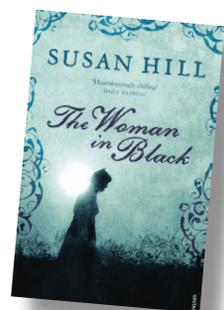
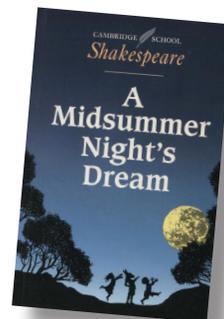
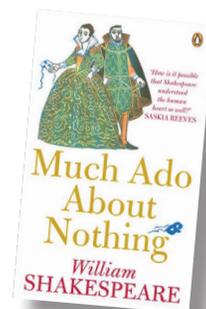
Pygmalion George Bernard Shaw

The Importance of Being Earnest Oscar Wilde

Alone it Stands John Breen

Lovers Brian Friel

Twelve Angry Men Reginald Rose



Prescriptive Films

The Night of the Hunter Charles Laughton

Bend it Like Beckham Gurinder Chadha

Son of Rambo Garth Jennings

Life is Beautiful Roberto Benigni

Whale Rider Niki Caro

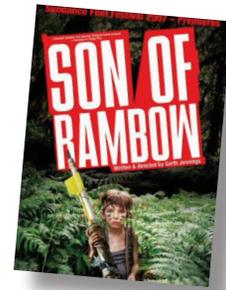
Beasts of the Southern Wild Benh Zeitlin

In America Jim Sheridan

E.T. Stephen Spielberg

Spirited Away Hayao Miyazakai

School of Rock Richard Linklater



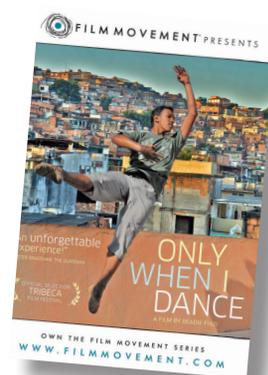
Some Suggested Documentaries

Spellbound Jeffrey Blitz

March of the Penguins Luc Jacquet

Senna Asif Kapadia

Only When I Dance Beadie Finzi



Some Suggested Short Films

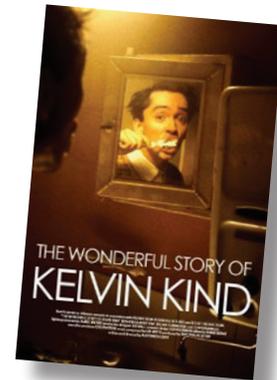
Badly Drawn Roy Alan Shannon

The Herd Kevin Wardrop

Signs Vincent Gallagher

The Wonderful Story of Kelvin Kind Ian Power

My Strange Grandfather Dina Velikovskaya



Do we need to reconceptualise the teaching of the class novel?

What Was

In our intermediate and middle-year classes, the class novel has too often become the backbone of the English program. Teaching a novel usually means analysis and close examination of literary elements, such as the plot line, the author's intent, and literary techniques. A whole class novel is manageable. The same assignments are used for everyone. Everyone is working at the same time, in the same place, at the same pace. It is traditional. It takes up time.

We believe that the time has passed when one size fits all. One of the challenges of today's diverse classes is that, when a teacher chooses one novel for the entire class, rarely can all the students actually read the novel. So the teacher, in an attempt to include everyone in the discussions about the novel, reads it to them chapter by chapter.

Two things then happen:

- a great deal of time is devoured.
- most students engage in almost no actual reading.

Neither of these results promote personal growth in reading. Nor do they create conditions for developing an enthusiasm for and a love of reading. The more-able readers are bored, the less-able readers are dormant.

What Can Be

We do believe that teaching a novel to the entire class is a worthy activity. However, we have come to rely on a set of beliefs for this teaching:

- The novel study should take three to four weeks at a maximum, as there simply isn't enough reading time for students otherwise.
- The novel needs to be introduced in a way that sets up all students to want to read it and be more able to read it.
- Not every chapter needs to be processed to the same depth; i.e., assigned a strategy, discussed, worked over.
- Not every literary technique or comprehension strategy needs to be covered in every novel. Teachers choose a theme, a technique, or a focus, and address this in one novel, knowing that they can address other curriculum goals using another novel.
- Students need to read independently as much as they can.
- Comprehension questions, chapter by chapter, take up valuable time and teach nothing.
- The purpose of a novel is to become engrossed in a good read, not to do 'stuff' like comprehension questions and book reports.
- A whole-class novel is an appropriate time to introduce, teach, model, and practise a reading/thinking/ strategy that students can later use in their independent reading.

Student Diversity: Classroom strategies to meet the learning needs of all students. Fay Brownlie, Catherine Feniak, Leyton Schnellert.

Possible areas worth exploring...

1 Narrative Structure and Action

Some Approaches

Pupils read the text aloud around the class and you stop to summarise the action.

List the key events of the novel in a ten-point plan.

Discuss what we learn in Chapter 2 and how that has added new information.

Write a brief summary of how the novel ends.

Write an essay in which you compare the opening of the novel with the way it is represented in the film version.

Draw a storyboard of the main events in each chapter and add a caption for each one which sums up the action.

Further Approaches

Prepare a dramatised reading in advance with one or two confident pupils.

How would you pitch the novel as a film to a Hollywood executive? Sum up the story in 30 words.

How could you turn the novel into a poem of ten lines? Could each line feature one key moment or event? Or a series of interlinked poems?

Could the novel begin with the very last paragraph? In pairs, compose the first page of the novel, but working backwards.

Possible areas worth exploring...

2 Characters

Some Approaches

Draw a chart of the main character noting down what he or she says, what he does, what others say about him, what he says about others, how others behave towards him.

Anna changes dramatically by the end of the novel! Write an essay in which you agree or disagree with this statement, backing up what you say with evidence and quotations.

We are going to 'hot-seat' the main five characters. Prepare at least two questions for each character.

Create a role on the wall; as we read Chapters 3 to 5, add strips of paper with adjectives about Anna to describe her.

Write a diary from Anna's mother's point of view which records what happened in Chapter five, and how she felt about it.

In your groups, divide up the characters and look at Chapters 1 to 5 to identify key quotations for each which tell us about the sort of person they are. Then feed back to the rest of the group.

Further Approaches

Set up a conscience corridor which the main character (a pupil in role) walks along with comments being spoken to him / her as he / she passes.

Can you come up with *three* provocative statements about Anna which seem to go against what most readers would think, and then defend them as best you can?

Set up a hot-seat situation with three Annas - Anna as a child before the novel begins; Anna at the start of the novel; Anna at the end. Prepare questions for the three Annas. You can go beyond the information in the text.

Write and perform a dramatic monologue from the point of view of a non-speaking or minor character who appears in the novel.

Has anything about the way the main character has developed taught you anything about your own life? Write a piece in which the main character lives your life for a day.

Possible areas worth exploring...

3 Themes, issues and ideas**Some Approaches**

What do you think the main themes, issues or ideas of the novel are? Write a response in which you explain your point of view, supporting your ideas with evidence and quotations.

How does the writer of the novel deal with the theme of growing up, compared with how the poet deals with it in the Roger McGough poem you read?

In pairs, prepare a short presentation in which you explain the importance of the theme of conflict within the text.

Do a card-sort in which particular themes or issues are then matched to chapters, characters and quotation cards.

Further Approaches

As a class, prepare a television 'special' on 'Teenagers Today', in which experts, presenters and characters from the book (as audience members or 'witnesses') discuss what happens.

Write an extended dissertation in which you discuss the representation of fathers in the novel we have read, plus four other texts (digital, non-fiction, poetry, scripts... as you choose).

Prepare a proposal of 50 lines first, saying which texts you intend to cover. Re-design the cover of the book to bring out a particular theme. Annotate your design with comments explaining your choices.

4 Language**Some Approaches**

Here is the opening page of the novel. How does the writer use language to convey the wartime setting?

On your own, jot down the two similes and two metaphors used by the writer on page 11. How do they add to our understanding of David's frame of mind?

Write your own description of a bombed-out street in London during wartime.

Discuss with a partner how the writer creates a feeling of suspense with her use of short or abbreviated sentences in the final two pages.

Further Approaches

Here are some words and phrases from the opening page of the novel. Categorise them into nouns, adjectives and verbs and, if possible, link them together. Do you notice any particular tone or feeling emerging? Now look at the opening page . . .

Use the image of a bombed street to describe the aftermath of a house party which has gone terribly wrong.

With a partner, prepare a rehearsed reading of the final two pages in which you bring out the suspense and tension. Start by deciding who will read which parts.

Fishbowl Reading 2

Source: *The National Strategies - Secondary Key Leaflets 'Teaching the Class Novel'*

Things to consider...

The Class Novel

Possible Actions

Review and assess my own knowledge with regard to teaching approaches for the novel.	
Check whether there is an agreed departmental policy with regard to what novels should be taught, when, and with what learning outcomes in mind.	
Evaluate the range and appropriateness of the novels on the Indicative and Prescriptive lists	
Analyse my own teaching plans; what part is the teaching of the class novel currently playing, and might it be improved?	
Review the resources I/we have for teaching the novel – are they fit for purpose?	
Review the way reading is assessed with regard to the novel, and make changes as and if needed.	
Other (my own priorities).	

Material adapted from: *The National Strategies* | *Secondary Key leaflet: "Teaching The Class Novel"*.

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