Novel Quests

Bog Child

Key Stage 3 English with Media Education

Based on the Novel Bog Child by Siobhan Dowd

Please read this novel in advance to make sure that the themes suit your learners before presenting it to your class.
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While this novel may help pupils nearing the end of Key Stage 3 to explore complex issues and prepare for their studies in a variety of subjects at GCSE level, it is important that you read it to decide whether its themes are suitable for your class. Please note that *Bog Child* contains political themes, sexual references and strong language.

When preparing to teach the novel, you may find it useful to carry out some background reading on the Troubles, for example *Nell* by Nell McCafferty and *The Telling Year: Belfast 1972* by Malachi O’Doherty.
Acknowledgements

CCEA would like to acknowledge and thank Alison Blackwell, Ryan McAuley and Maureen Boyle for their contributions to these units of work.
Using this Booklet

We have divided this booklet into the following sections:

- **Key Elements**;
- **Pre-Reading**;
- **Chapter by Chapter** (including opportunities for Ongoing Reflection, Activities that incorporate Media and Moving Image);
- **Post-Reading** (including some Media and Moving Image–based activities);
- **Opportunities for Connected Learning**; and
- **Resources**.

When planning your unit of work, please read through this booklet before deciding which activities to focus on. We suggest that you:

- choose suitable Opportunities for Connected Learning with other departments in your school;
- decide which Post-Reading tasks you are going to set; and then
- use these to help you choose relevant activities from the Chapter by Chapter section.

(For example, if you intend to set an essay on how Dowd presents the character of Fergus as a Post-Reading activity, you could include the character log on Fergus as one of your Chapter by Chapter activities.)

Some of the activities are structured in step-by-step detail; others outline a general approach and give you freedom to choose your own learning and teaching methodologies.

The following symbols highlight activities that you could use for the development and assessment of the Cross-Curricular Skill of Communication:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Symbol</th>
<th>Activity</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>🗣️</td>
<td>Talking and Listening</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>📚</td>
<td>Reading</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✒️</td>
<td>Writing</td>
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<tr>
<td>🔁</td>
<td>This symbol highlights opportunities for Ongoing Reflection. In planning your unit of work, you may decide to incorporate these into your teaching at various points.</td>
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<tr>
<td>🎥</td>
<td>This symbol highlights the main opportunities for incorporating a Media and Moving Image dimension.</td>
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Please note that Bog Child covers themes which could be considered sensitive and controversial. You may wish to consult the Exploring Controversial Issues in Class section in the Introduction booklet (p.5) before teaching the novel.
Key Elements

This unit provides many opportunities to address the Curriculum Objectives for Key Stage 3 English with Media Education and the Key Elements within them. Below are some examples of these opportunities. Many of these ideas are explored further through the activities in this booklet.

Developing Pupils as Individuals

Personal Understanding

- Engage with the situations of characters in the novel, and discuss how the pupils would have felt in their shoes.
- Discuss whether they would have made the same decisions if they were in Fergus’s position.
- Discuss the importance to the pupils of their moral, religious and political beliefs (or those of their parents) and how far they would be prepared to go for these beliefs.

Mutual Understanding

- Discuss how the writer presents Fergus as a normal teenager experiencing the everyday reality of growing up alongside the terrible suffering of the situation in Northern Ireland.
- Discuss in small groups what the pupils think Siobhan Dowd’s opinion is about the way children who grew up in the 1970s and 1980s in Northern Ireland were exposed to violence and terrorism.
- Explore and respond to Fergus’s emotions in key chapters of the novel.

Moral Character

- Express personal insights and viewpoints evoked by the novel.
- Discuss how Siobhan Dowd has challenged stereotypical viewpoints about the Troubles and suggested that the truth is more complex than some people might realise.

Spiritual Awareness

- Discuss the role of religious beliefs and spiritual strength in helping people to cope during times of conflict or terror.

Developing Pupils as Contributors to Society

Citizenship

- Use information in the novel about Joe and the pupils’ research about the hunger strikes during the Troubles as a starting point to discuss rights and responsibilities.

Citizenship/Ethical Awareness

- Discuss Felicity’s comment ‘I think religion was just the façade. As it sometimes is today’ (Chapter 39, page 274) in relation to the Northern Ireland Troubles and other conflicts.
- Discuss the pupils’ views on bigotry and tribalism in relation to the Troubles and ways in which today’s young people in Northern Ireland can take a lead in reconciliation and promote tolerance, diversity and inclusiveness in society.
- Using the novel and research from a range of historical texts, discuss the main causes of conflict in societies [such as discrimination, prejudice and stereotyping] and the reasons why people become involved in violence/terrorism/persecution. You could compare texts about the Northern Ireland situation and other conflict situations.
Opportunities for Connected Learning

Suggested Learning and Teaching Activities

There are many opportunities for connected learning with other subjects through *Bog Child*.

### The Tollund Man (History)

Pupils often learn about the Tollund Man (as well as the Iron Age, the Troubles and Pompeii) in Key Stage 3 History, so this could be an obvious starting point for connected learning. Research into the Tollund Man and other bodies discovered around the world in bog land could lead to further investigation of relevant aspects of Iron Age society (such as religious beliefs, punishment and human sacrifice). The pupils could look at Mel’s narrative in italics and base their research on questions raised in these sections of the novel.

You could also allow the pupils to write and perform a radio interview with Felicity, informing the public about:

- the discovery and subsequent study of Mel’s body;
- how it relates to past discoveries of bog bodies such as the Tollund Man; and
- theories about the deaths and burials.

### Background to the Troubles (History)

Aspects of the background to the Troubles that the pupils might explore in History and are also relevant to the novel include:

- border checkpoints;
- smuggling;
- soldiers and the British army;
- the hunger strikes and Bobby Sands;
- the banging of bin-lids;
- bag and body searches;
- tarring and feathering;
- car-bombs;
- Margaret Thatcher’s role in the events surrounding the hunger strikes; and
- ‘the disappeared’ of the Troubles.

The pupils may also find it interesting to look at the Civil Rights movement, the events leading up to the Troubles and the contraception ban in the south of Ireland at the time.
Pre-Reading

Suggested Learning and Teaching Activities

These activities introduce pupils to the novel and encourage them to think about genre, writers’ choices and presentational devices.

**Heaney’s ‘Punishment’**

A good lead in to the novel would be to read Seamus Heaney’s ‘Punishment’. The pupils could explore how Heaney uses the imagery of the bog people in his poem about the Troubles. This poem relates the injustice inflicted on the bog people before they died with the tarring and feathering of young women and the role of ‘bystanders’. Then, as they read the novel, they will begin to see the influence that Heaney may have had on Dowd’s writing.

**Introducing Bog Child**

Working in groups, ask the pupils to look carefully at the front cover of *Bog Child* and discuss why the title, tagline and image might have been chosen. Explore the idea of sacrifice: use the Christ-like pose of the young boy as a starting point to discuss the ways in which people make sacrifices and what causes they are sometimes attached to.

Next, ask: *How does the publisher make the novel appealing to the readers before they begin reading it?* This could be a group discussion or an individual written exercise. You could direct the pupils towards the following details:

- reference to the age or gender of the target readership;
- the blurb;
- the genre;
- the layout of the front cover (colour, font, illustrations); and
- anything else they think is important.
Chapter by Chapter

Suggested Learning and Teaching Activities

In this section, we have suggested activities that would be appropriate at specific points in your pupils’ reading. However, this can be flexible; you may wish to change the order to suit your scheme of work.

Chapter 1

First Impressions

Ask the pupils to suggest what they think makes an effective opening for a novel: what things does an author try to do? Answers may include:

- setting the scene;
- engaging the reader; and
- convincing them to continue reading.

Give the pupils time to read through pages 3–4 of *Bog Child* individually and make notes on how Dowd creates an effective opening in these two pages. Next, put them into pairs to compare their findings. You can use this exercise to remind them about the skills they have already developed in analysing authors’ language and techniques. Use some of their ideas to model the best way to structure analytical writing with a Point–Evidence–Explanation structure.

Tension and Suspense

After they have read the complete chapter, ask the pupils to reread from ‘Hiyack!’ on page 8 to the end of page 11 and make notes on how Dowd builds up tension and suspense at the discovery of the body. (This is a good opportunity to assess their skills in using the Point–Evidence–Explanation structure and to gauge if they need any further support.)

Log: Mysteries and Suspense

Introduce the idea of misunderstandings, noting how Fergus initially thinks that the child has been murdered by the IRA but they do not know what really happened. Ask the pupils to begin to keep a log of the mysteries that unfold in the novel.

Thinking about the Troubles

As a homework exercise, ask your pupils to interview their parents or grandparents about their memories of the Troubles, including their experiences and how they were affected. To provide a structure, you could give the pupils a list of words that appear in Chapter 1 to find out about from their relatives’ testimonies:

- ‘the free state’;
- ‘Republicans’;
- ‘Unionists’;
- ‘the Provos’; and
- ‘squaddie’.

Then, after reading Chapter 1 in class, divide the pupils into small groups. Ask each group to create and complete a KWL (Know–Want to Know–Learned) chart [see *Active Learning and Teaching Methods for Key Stage 3*] about the Troubles in Northern Ireland. You could again focus on their understanding of the words listed above. Use a spider diagram on the board to gather all the things that the pupils know (or think they know!). Next, identify the questions they still have in their ‘want to know’ sections. Give them an opportunity to research these areas using the internet or library books, then fill in the ‘learned’ section of their charts.
As an extension activity, have the pupils look in pairs at how the characters’ dialogue in Chapter 1 reveals their attitudes towards the police and/or IRA. Ask if they can make any predictions about the characters’ backgrounds based on this dialogue.

**Character Log: Fergus**

Ask the pupils to keep a character log about Fergus as they read the novel, adding to it as they find out more about him. They could use Resource 1: Analysing Character for support. The log could include:

- information about his personal qualities;
- his emotions;
- his opinions and attitudes to people and events;
- a drawing or other picture; and
- a note of quotations that support the pupils’ opinions about Fergus.

All this information would be useful for a final character essay about Fergus (see Post-Reading activities).

**Chapter 2**

**Dowd’s Portrayal of Northern Ireland**

Ask the pupils, in pairs, to track references that are specific to everyday life in Northern Ireland – such as vocabulary, dialect, slang, food, locations and politics – throughout the novel. Set the following questions:

- Do you think Dowd is effective in building up a convincing picture of Northern Ireland?
- Do you disagree with any of her depictions?

**Chapter 3**

**Newspaper Report**

Based on Chapters 2 and 3, ask the pupils to create a front page for *The Roscillin Star* that features a news report about the discovery of the body. The report should include an interview with Fergus, Uncle Tally and other important witnesses. Ask them to reread the two chapters in pairs, considering the five ‘W’s (where, when, who, what and why), and make notes for their report. This should ensure that they have all the information they need. Encourage them to suggest how they should format their front page and structure their text. Record the pupils’ suggestions on the board, and use these to negotiate success criteria with them, such as I will:

- use the appropriate format for a newspaper report;
- use formal language;
- include information on where, when, who, what and why; and
- use accurate spelling, punctuation and grammar.

**Historical Research**

Ask the pupils to research any unfamiliar names and phrases that they come across (for example Lloyd George and Long Kesh) to help them understand the context of *Bog Child*. They could continue to do this throughout their reading of the novel. As part of their research, they may find the information on conflict and politics in Northern Ireland at [http://cain.ulst.ac.uk](http://cain.ulst.ac.uk) useful.

**The Roscillin Star**

*Body found in Bog!*
Chapter 4

Researching the Hunger Strikes

Use the Graffiti Board technique (see Active Learning and Teaching Methods for Key Stage 3) to enable the pupils to begin to explore the topic of the hunger strikes. Then hold a class discussion, allowing them to present their thoughts. This discussion should give you an idea of how much the pupils know and how accurate their information is. You can then decide whether to allow them to research the topic further themselves or provide them with accurate information.

No Easy Answers Board

The topic of the hunger strikes recurs throughout the novel. You may wish to create a No Easy Answers Board (see Active Learning and Teaching Methods for Key Stage 3) to help your pupils to deal with the sensitive topics that arise. They could display questions to think about as they arise in the story, for example, when exploring Margaret Thatcher’s opinion, a possible question might be ‘Should the men involved take responsibility since they ´chose´ to die?’

Exploring Other Sources

At this point, you could read some of the writing from the time of the hunger strikes with the pupils. Extracts from the writing of Danny Morrison, Richard O’Rawe or Bobby Sands himself could help set the context of the novel for them.

Chapter 5

Significant Songs

_Bog Child_ includes many references to music; Fergus often listens to music from the era when the novel is set. Allow the pupils to listen to some of the songs that he refers to in the novel, for example John Lennon’s ‘I Don’t Want to Be a Soldier’ (explored further in Significant Songs: _Imagine_ in Chapter 12), The Clash’s ‘London Calling’, or ‘Alternative Ulster’ or ‘Suspect Device’ by Stiff Little Fingers, one of Joe’s favourite bands. This would be good preparation for the Post-Reading activity A Closer Look at Lyrics.

Chapter 6

Log: Fergus and Owain

Focus on the meeting between Fergus and Owain in this chapter. Ask the pupils to reread the chapter and make a list in pairs of the differences and similarities between the two characters.

The pupils could also look at Owain’s Celtic name and explore the significance of his Welsh identity. There is a reference on page 18 to Mel’s bracelet being both Irish and Celtic, and we are told on page 41 that Fergus’s name is both Scottish and Irish; you could consider together the significance of Scottish/Welsh/Celtic/Irish connections in the novel. For example, although Owain and Fergus share a Celtic heritage, these two young men are divided by circumstances beyond their control.

Encourage the pupils to keep this information in a log and add to it later in the novel.
Diary Entry: A New Friend?

Tell the pupils that they are going to use the information from their log to write a diary entry for Fergus or Owain about their meeting with the other young man. Provide them with a list of points to include:

- what you like about the other character;
- how he is different from you;
- what surprised you about him; and
- what you think about the idea many people have that two young men from such different backgrounds cannot be friends.

Additional Diary Entries

Ask the pupils to write one or more diary entries for:

- Fergus, at other key points in the text (for example at the end of Chapter 5 or Chapter 40);
- Fergus’s mother, after Joe passes into a coma and her relationship with Fergus’s father reaches a crisis point (Chapter 41);
- Owain, after Chapter 18 when his friendship with Fergus deepens; and/or
- Joe, in which he explains why he went on hunger strike (Chapter 9).

Chapter 7

Attitudes to the Hunger Strikes

Working in pairs, ask your pupils to look at the attitudes to the hunger strikers in this chapter and find quotes to show the different beliefs of Fergus and Michael. As the pupils discuss these attitudes and learn more, they can begin to develop their own opinions.

Chapter 8

Log: Mel’s Life

Explain to the pupils that they are going to build up a bank of clues about the bog child, her life and what happened to her. They should use the italicised sections of the novel, and any clues that they discover about the investigation taking place in 1981, to build up a picture, adding to their log as they find new information. They could use the headings in Resource 2: Playing Detective – Mel’s Life to help them.

The Tollund Man

Do a brief class KWL chart on the Tollund Man (the pupils may have already studied this topic in History or as part of their pre-reading research). If any ‘want to know’ questions remain after a class discussion, they could use the internet to research the bodies found in the bogs of Denmark. Ask them to find out about the stories behind some of the bodies and what historians think or guess may have happened.

Give the pupils a transcript of the lyrics of ‘The Curse of the Tollund Man’ by The Darkness, and allow them to listen to the song a few times. Set the following questions for group discussion:

- Why do you think the Tollund Man has become such a famous archaeological find?
- Why are people so interested in the bodies found in the bogs?
Chapter 9

Exploring Motives

If your pupils have not already done so, this chapter is a good opportunity to begin to look into the motives and beliefs of the hunger strikers. If appropriate for your class, show some suitable extracts of *Some Mother’s Son and Hunger*, explored further in Post-Reading activities. The pupils could use what they learn from these films and class discussions to begin their research or update their No Easy Answers Board on the background to the hunger strikes and Bobby Sands.

Please note that both of these films are rated certificate 15. While scenes from films mentioned in these activities may help some children to deepen their understanding of the novel, others may find them disturbing. It is important that you use your own judgement and knowledge of your class to choose clips that are suitable for your pupils.

Different Reactions

Focus on the reactions of the different characters in Chapter 9 to the news that the two boys have decided to join the hunger strike. Ask the pupils to write a paragraph on each character, explaining how Dowd shows their reactions through dialogue and actions.

Travel Brochures/Websites

Chapter 9 raises the issue of low levels of tourism during the Troubles, and this activity enables the pupils to explore how this has changed. Ask them to bring in a travel brochure or look at websites promoting holidays and note techniques that travel agents use to encourage holidaymakers to choose their destination.

Next, working in pairs or small groups, have the pupils list all the things that make Northern Ireland an appealing place for tourists to visit now. They may include references to the Troubles that have become tourist attractions, such as the Europa hotel and the murals. Set the pupils the task of creating a travel brochure or tourist website for Northern Ireland. Suggest that they focus on the ‘craic’, scenery, history and culture.

As a shorter extension activity, the pupils could design a poster advertising a holiday in Northern Ireland for a travel agent’s window.

Television Advertisement

If your pupils have access to the appropriate technology and editing software, they could be supported to create a television advertisement. Explain that their goal is to advertise their own area as a day-trip destination through the Northern Ireland Tourist Board. Show advertisements in class as inspiration. Suggest that they use imagery, music, language, voiceover etc. to create atmosphere and persuade tourists to visit.
Chapter 10

The Art of Persuasion: Role Play

Ask the pupils to read over Chapters 7 and 10 and focus on the techniques that Michael uses to persuade Fergus to do what he is asking, finding examples and explaining why he speaks and acts as he does. They could use Resource 3: Michael’s Persuasive Techniques for support.

Working in groups of two or three, set the pupils the task of creating and performing a role-play on the theme of peer pressure: one character tries to persuade the other(s) to become involved in something that is wrong. They should incorporate the persuasive techniques they have been learning about when they write their script.

Chapter 11

The Art of Persuasion: Fergus’s Arguments

Focus together on how Fergus tries to persuade Joe to abandon the idea of the hunger strike. Facilitate a class discussion about whether Fergus’s arguments are effective, asking:

- What do you think about Joe’s replies?
- Are you beginning to form your own opinions about the issue of sacrificing oneself for a cause?

A Sense of Tension

Ask the pupils, in pairs, to look at how the author creates a sense of tension in the description of the journey to the prison. They should support their points with quotations from the chapter. Give them an opportunity to feed their ideas back to the class, and together discuss what might have been going through the characters’ minds as they sat in the car.

Chapter 12

A Closer Look at a Chapter

Read through this chapter with the pupils in class. Then ask them to read it again by themselves, making notes on what happens in it and what effect it has on the reader. Facilitate a class discussion, based on the pupils’ notes and ideas, on why Dowd has included the chapter and what it adds to the novel. (For example, the happy memories of Joe and lyrics of his favourite songs create a picture of a normal brother, just like anyone else’s. This contrasts with the image of him as a hunger striker that we have seen up until now.)

Significant Songs: Imagine

Play some of the songs from John Lennon’s Imagine album mentioned in the novel, particularly in Chapters 11 and 12. Ask the pupils to listen carefully to the lyrics of ‘Oh Yoko’ and/or ‘I Don’t Want to Be a Soldier’. Play your chosen song(s) twice. Facilitate a discussion about the significance of Dowd choosing to mention these songs.

As well as Lennon’s idealistic hopes for the world, the pupils could research the rebellious nature of teenage sub-culture at the time the novel is set and the social concerns that spawned the culture of punk. They could consider why so many song lyrics of the late 1970s and early 1980s protested against or challenged society.
Chapter 13

Log: Food and Starvation

Using Cora’s asking for just an egg for breakfast as a springboard, the pupils could work in small groups to begin to track the references to food and starvation throughout the novel, keeping a log. They should find examples and explore the effect that these references have against the backdrop of the hunger strikes. You could refer to and discuss together:

- Cora herself, whose mother says she is ‘faddish’ about food in Chapter 42;
- the starvation theme across the plots, including Mel’s story;
- other examples of female starvation in history, such as the suffragettes and religious mystics; and
- relevant clips of the film *Hunger*, which uses food imagery very effectively (if appropriate).

Chapter 14

A Complex Issue

Facilitate a class discussion about the role of the ‘Provos’ in the hunger strikes: is Dowd suggesting that Joe is following advice from higher up in the IRA? This discussion can add to the pupils’ understanding of the complexities of the issue. They could refer to their No Easy Answers Board at this point.

Chapter 15

Tribal Culture

Ask the pupils to think about and discuss:

- what the term ‘tribal mentality’ means;
- how this might apply to both Mel’s story and the Troubles;
- any similarities between Fergus’s voice and that of Mel; and
- any areas of life where tribal culture shows its strength.

Their ideas might include aspects of youth culture, supporting particular football teams, racism against immigrants, or territorial murals.

If they have not already done so, the pupils could look in more detail at some of Seamus Heaney’s poems at this stage. For example, in ‘Punishment’ Heaney draws an analogy between the bog people sacrifices and the Troubles in terms of how tribal mentality relates to such conflict.

Chapter 16

More Details

Facilitate a class discussion about Michael’s information that the hunger strikes were planned so that people would die at intervals. Ask what the pupils think of this strategic use of death in pursuit of a cause.

Character Log: Michael

Ask the pupils, in groups, to create a character log for Michael, using this chapter as a springboard and the headings in Resource 1: Analysing Character for support. This should describe their impressions of Michael and explain these using evidence from the text.
Chapter 17

Letter to Margaret Thatcher

Discuss with your pupils:
• who Margaret Thatcher was;
• when she was Prime Minister; and
• what role she played during the hunger strikes.

To find out more about her, they could do their own research on the internet or ask their parents about their memories.

Together read through the letter that Fergus writes to Margaret Thatcher. Give the pupils the following questions to make notes on in pairs:
• Why does Fergus write to Margaret Thatcher?
• How does he try to persuade her to give in to the hunger strikers?
• What does he mean when he writes, 'Every death makes peace more distant'? From what you know about the Troubles and the hunger strikes, do you think this was true?

As a reading exercise, you could have the pupils answer these questions in full individually.

Exploring Thatcher’s Arguments

Ask the pupils to use what they have found out about Margaret Thatcher to list the arguments that she may have had for not conceding to the hunger strikers’ demands. They could look at some of the statements she made at the time (see, for example, the searchable database at www.margaretthatcher.org to see how she argued her case and presented it to the public). The pupils could share what they find out in pairs and then in groups of four.

‘What I Feel Strongly About’ Letter

Set the pupils the task of writing a letter to the First Minister/Prime Minister about an issue they feel strongly about (for example the war on terrorism, beating world poverty, child labour or preserving the environment). To help them, suggest that they reread Fergus’s letter to Margaret Thatcher.

In groups, ask the pupils to create a template for a letter. As they are doing this, they should each fill out a KWL grid (see Active Learning and Teaching Methods for Key Stage 3), outlining what they already know about letter writing and what they feel they need more support with. For example, they should know about structure, formal language, addresses and sign-offs.

Once the pupils are confident that they can structure a letter appropriately, ask them to begin writing the letter, individually, ensuring that they follow the guidelines on letter writing. They could then share their work with a peer assessment partner, giving and receiving feedback using the Two Stars and a Wish technique (see Active Learning and Teaching Methods for Key Stage 3), before they redraft the letter to hand up for marking.

Chapter 18

Log Update: Fergus and Owain

This chapter allows the pupils to explore the relationship between Fergus and Owain further. Ask them to use their findings in chapters 6 and 18 to suggest what Dowd is trying to show the reader about the religious/political prejudices and stereotypes that exist(ed) in Northern Ireland. Discuss whether the pupils think any of the assumptions about Northern Ireland or specific religions are true.
Chapter 19

Character Sketch: Uncle Tally

Ask the pupils to explore the character of Uncle Tally, using this chapter as a starting point. Working in pairs, they should make notes on each of the four points in Resource 1: Analysing Character. Then ask them to write a character sketch individually, explaining their impressions of Uncle Tally so far. Can they use any clues to predict what will happen with him later in the novel?

Chapter 20

Use of Similes

Write the word ‘simile’ on the board, and ask each pupil to note an example (they should be able to do this using their prior learning). Ask a few of them to read out what they have written. Ensure that everyone understands exactly what a simile is. Use the ‘Fist to Five’ technique (see Active Learning and Teaching Methods for Key Stage 3) as a quick and simple way to gauge understanding.

Challenge the pupils to find three similes as they read Chapter 20 that make Dowd’s writing more interesting and convincing. Have them share their ideas with a partner and write a paragraph together, using the Point–Evidence–Explanation structure, about how Dowd uses similes to make her writing more interesting. If time allows, each pair could read their paragraph out to the rest of the class.

Chapter 21

Mel’s Body

Read through the description of Mel’s body on page 145 together. Show the pupils pictures of real ‘bog people’ by searching for images on the internet. Ask them to reread the text and complete a short piece of writing that outlines the effect on the reader of Dowd’s description of the body lying on the trestle. They should concentrate on her use of descriptive details, verbs, adjectives and figurative language, such as similes and metaphors.

‘The Disappeared’

Ask the pupils what they know about ‘the disappeared’ who were killed and buried in bogland or border scrubland during the Troubles. This brings the significance of the bog child to another level and could inspire a class discussion about why it is so important to the families of the disappeared that their remains are found.

Chapter 22

Romance Blossoms

After reading this chapter, facilitate a discussion about the relationship between Fergus and Cora, asking the pupils whether they could have predicted romance between them. Give them an opportunity, working in small groups, to search for clues from earlier in the novel (Cora first appears in Chapter 8) that Fergus and Cora are going to be more than just friends.

Set a writing task: the pupils pretend to be Cora writing a letter to her friend back in Dublin. This letter should mention Fergus, how they met, their blossoming romance and the kiss in Chapter 22.
Chapter 23

Focus on Families

This chapter provides a good opportunity for the pupils to explore the impact of hunger strikes on the families of those who joined them. Discuss the question *Do you think people who use this as a protest method are acting selfishly towards their mothers, fathers, children and siblings?* This could be a good time to return to the No Easy Answers Board to highlight the complexities of sacrificing oneself for a cause.

Chapter 24

Symbolism in Dreams

Ask the pupils if they know what symbolism is. Facilitate a discussion about how events and objects that people dream about can symbolise their concerns in everyday life. You could include other terms such as ‘connotations’ and ‘imagery’. In small groups, ask the pupils to explore whether some of the imagery in Fergus’s dream could be symbolic and how Dowd uses his dreams to suggest what is in his mind.

As an extension activity, you could read out a list of common dream situations and ask the pupils to discuss in pairs what these might symbolise, for example:

- *being chased;*
- *sitting an exam or doing a presentation that you haven’t prepared;*
- *all your teeth falling out;*
- *falling off a cliff or a high wall; and*
- *realising you are naked in a public place.*

Chapter 25

Log Update: Fergus

Ask the pupils to consider why Fergus thinks so much about needing his ‘three Bs’. They could find evidence from throughout the novel, then explain why they think his exam results are so important to him.

Chapter 26

Sacrifice

Remind the pupils of the Pre-Reading activity that involved looking at the front cover of the novel and discussing the subject of sacrifice. Ask them to suggest why Dowd uses the comparison with Jesus on page 175 and why she chooses to include it at this point in the novel.

Hunger

If appropriate for your pupils, play a suitable scene from Hunger to show Michael Fassbender’s portrayal of Bobby Sands in the final stages of the hunger strike. Then ask them to discuss in pairs how Dowd creates a moving, poignant scene between the two brothers in this chapter. Play the John Lennon song ‘Oh Yoko’ in the background, as Fergus hears this song in his head at the end of the chapter.
Chapter 27

Sense of Memory

Read through this chapter with the class. Focus on the extract at the end in which Joe’s room stirs Fergus’s memories through what he sees and smells. Ask the pupils to suggest smells that create memories or associations in their minds. (For example, cut grass sometimes reminds people of the onset of summer.) Bring in stimuli, such as perfume, sweets, coffee, paint and baby products, to help them. Allow the pupils to suggest what they associate with these smells. Next, ask them to write about a time, person or place that they remember fondly, describing the sights, sounds, smells and tastes that they recall.

An Anatomy of Smell

Read Sinead Morrissey’s poem ‘An Anatomy of Smell’ with the pupils. This poem is about how a couple bring their own associated smells to a relationship before creating a smell of their own. Explore with the pupils the idea that they might associate smells with certain houses – for example their own, their friends’ or their grandparents’ – and how these bring back memories of times they spent in these places or with particular people.

Chapter 29

Log Update: Mel’s Life

Remind the pupils to continue adding to their information on Mel’s story. Ask them to play detective again, tracking the clues throughout the novel that suggested Mel was not a child. Had anyone guessed this before they discovered it in the novel?

Making Links

Ask the pupils, in groups, to begin making links between the different plots in Bog Child:

- Joe’s hunger strike;
- the investigation into Mel’s body;
- the flashbacks to Mel’s life; and
- Fergus’s smuggling of the parcels across the border.

They will probably come up with ideas such as:

- sacrifice (Joe and Mel);
- prejudice, stereotyping and fear of people who are different (Catholics and Protestants, Mel’s physical disability);
- escaping from an unfulfilled life (Fergus and Owain); and
- mystery (Mel’s story, the investigation into her body, the packages and the Troubles).

This could be a good opportunity to introduce terms such as sub-plot and main plot, highlighting how these can complement each other in a novel and often shed light on different parts of the story.
Chapter 30

Tension at a Funeral

Ask the pupils to write an answer to the following question, including quotations: How does Dowd convey the tension at Lennie Sheenan’s funeral? You could provide headings to help them, such as:
- words and phrases;
- actions and reactions of characters; and
- a sense of mystery about some things.

Writing Task

At this point, you could set one of the following written tasks:
- Write a diary entry for Fergus revealing the feelings he experiences at the funeral. You could explore how he feels about his own brother’s imminent death and the promise of being with Cora.
- Write an obituary for Lennie Sheenan by his former school teacher, focusing on the tragic waste of his young life.

Where Are You Really From?

In his memoirs, Where Are You Really From?, Tim Brannigan recalls attending a hunger striker’s funeral as a child and feeling awe at the martyrdom of the dead man. Read this account, from the chapter ‘Young, Lifted and Black’, with your pupils, and facilitate a class discussion on the reasons that young men such as Lennie and Joe might have had for joining the hunger strikes.

Chapter 31

Log Update: Fergus and Owain

Ask the pupils to add to their notes on the relationship between Owain and Fergus and the similarities and differences between them.

Chapter 32

Consequences, Real and Imagined

This chapter looks at some of the real and imagined consequences of Joe’s hunger strike. Refer back to the pupils’ No Easy Answers Board. Discuss together whether they think the effects on the families of these men were worth the changes they may have made to the situation in the country.

Chapter 33

The Troubles and Daily Life Collage

Focus on the extract where Da is watching a football match and it is interrupted by a newsflash (pages 224–227). Then ask the pupils to list ways in which ordinary people’s lives were affected by the Troubles on a daily basis, including other examples from the novel and wider research.

If they have not already interviewed a family member, the pupils could write a list of interview questions that would help them find out about an older relative’s experience of life during the Troubles. They could then carry out the interview as a homework exercise.

As a stimulus they could also refer to Resource 4: Testimonies about the Troubles which recounts some real people’s memories of living in Northern Ireland during that time.

Use the pupils’ findings as a springboard for a group/class wall collage (see Active Learning and Teaching Methods for Key Stage 3) that includes words, colours, images, newspaper cuttings etc. to represent the experiences of people living and growing up during the Troubles.
Media Manipulation?

Explore with the pupils how the choice of language and images in the press or news broadcasts can manipulate audience responses. For example, they could look at the connotations of the following groups of words:

• terrorists, freedom fighters, rebels;
• overran, liberated, took control of, invaded;
• insisted, pleaded; and
• riot, protest, demonstration.

Next, show the pupils internet news footage (such as Sky or BBC) of conflict, war or famine around the world, and ask them to analyse how news footage can influence audience reactions. You could include photographs or footage of people who have suffered in a terrorist atrocity.

A very famous example of journalism that provoked a reaction is Michael Buerk’s report on the Ethiopian famine in 1984. You could use the opening lines of the report to stimulate discussion about the power of language to influence audience reaction. The pupils could then watch the report on www.youtube.com and discuss why it inspired the biggest famine relief effort ever undertaken. (Bob Geldof organised Live Aid after seeing this report.)

Next, ask the pupils, in pairs, to create two news broadcasts on a war or conflict situation that is currently in the news. Allow them to research the conflict in a newspaper, the internet or on television news, finding a suitable incident to report on. They could use presentation software as a backdrop to their broadcast, showing relevant images. In each pair:

• one person should perform the broadcast in an entirely factual manner, reporting what, when, where, why and who; and
• the other person should recount the same incident or event but from a more emotive point of view, using language that is intended to manipulate audience reaction.

As an extension activity, have the pupils research the reasons for and impact of the broadcast ban on Sinn Fein and other republican and loyalist organisations from 1988 until after the IRA announced a ceasefire in 1994. This could lead on to a class or group discussion on freedom of speech, democracy and censorship.

On This Day...

Use the book *Lost Lives: The Stories of the Men, Women and Children Who Died through the Northern Ireland Troubles* to give the pupils a sense of the loss of life during the Troubles. Look up the entries for the date on which you do this activity under a few different years, and read the listings together. This can help give the pupils an awareness of the victims of the Troubles as individual lives instead of just a statistic of those lost in the conflict.
**Chapter 36**

**Intertwined Plots**

Ask the pupils to look carefully at the flashback extract at the beginning of this chapter. Give them time to review their notes on the story of Mel and add to their thoughts on why and how the novel’s two main plots are intertwined.

**Newspaper Report: All About Mel**

Selecting information from the notes that they have made about Mel so far, ask the pupils to write a newspaper report about:
- the discovery of the bog child;
- what scientists and historians think her home life was like; and
- the most likely explanation as to how and why she was killed.

**Log Update: Fergus and Owain**

Read through this chapter with the class, focusing on the scene on the mountain between Fergus and Owain. Ask the pupils, in pairs, to find quotations that show:
- how Dowd builds up tension as the young men are opening the packages; and
- how she shows their relief when they realise that a package contains birth control and not Semtex.

Take feedback, noting the pupils’ chosen quotations and the effects that they have on the reader on the board.

**Chapter 37**

**Log Update: Michael**

Ask the pupils to add to their notes on the character of Michael, considering:
- whether they have changed their opinions of him after this chapter and, if so, why; and
- why they think Dowd has developed this character in the way that she has.

**Chapter 39**

**Context Research**

To deepen their understanding, allow the pupils to research anything they are unsure of in this chapter, such as:
- Iron Age sacrifices (to find out about the ‘pattern’ that Professor Taylor mentions);
- the atmospheric aftermath of volcanoes; and/or
- what happened in Pompeii.

**Conflict Situations**

Explore the idea that religion is just the ‘façade’ for wars and murders, as Felicity says. There is a scene in *Hunger* where the Republican prisoners attend prison mass and use it to exchange information. If appropriate for your pupils, you could show this scene to stimulate discussion.

Ask what other reasons there might be for the disagreements and tensions between countries, religions or races. The pupils could choose (or you could assign them) a conflict situation sometimes perceived as having links to religion, for example:
- the Troubles;
- the Holocaust;
- Israel/Palestine; or
- Al Qaeda.

Allow them to research the background of their chosen conflict: the events leading to it and the actual role played by religion.

**Felicity, Professor Taylor and Mel**

Ask the pupils to look at the characters of Felicity and Professor Taylor and list the ways in which their reactions, opinions and beliefs about Mel and her history differ. Do they think there are reasons for this?
Chapter 41

Hunger Strike Attitudes Review

This chapter is a good opportunity for the pupils to refer back to their No Easy Answers Board and discuss, in pairs or small groups:

- the impact of hunger strikes on the families of those who joined them;
- the motives behind the hunger strikes (were they martyrs to a cause?);
- the use of hunger striking as a political tool (Ghandi, the suffragettes and Guantanamo Bay prisoners could all be included here);
- the argument that Fergus’s mother and father have (is it right to intervene when Joe cannot decide for himself, and who would be to blame for his death?); and
- the argument between Pat and Malachy (which one of them do the pupils agree with?).

Encourage the pupils to analyse their arguments and come to a conclusion. Discuss whether they found it difficult to arrive at an agreement.

Chapter 42

Character Board: Cora

Ask the pupils, individually, to track the development of Cora through the novel and consider whether their impressions of her have changed. Explain that many novelists use a ‘character board’ in the same way that interior designers use a ‘mood board’; this involves gathering images, colours, words, phrases and/or photographs that they think contribute to the feel, personality and look of the character they are trying to create. Give the pupils an opportunity to create a character board for Cora. They could display their work as a collage and present it to the class, explaining and justifying their choice of images and materials.

Chapter 43

Sins of Omission

Felicity says in this chapter, ‘We do more harm through the sins of omission than by the sins of commission.’ Ask the pupils what they think Felicity means by this; can they relate their ideas to the events in the novel?
Chapter 44

Fight for Beliefs?

Ask the pupils to look at Chapters 43–44 and consider Fergus’s thoughts about what will happen to his family and the country if Joe is not stopped. This could provide the stimulus for an interesting class discussion, with reference to the No Easy Answers Board, about the following:

- Do the pupils think Fergus has a point?
- Is it better to save the son and the family, because his death will make no difference to the state of the country anyway? Or is there always a case for fighting for something that you believe in?
- Is anything worth sacrificing your life for?

Allow the pupils to research another group of people who fought for their beliefs – the suffragettes – examining the methods they used and the issues at stake in their struggle. They could compare and contrast these with what they have learned about the hunger strikers in Northern Ireland. As an extension activity, they could explore the responses of the governments of both times.

Chapter 45

Tough Question

Look together at Chapters 44 and 45 and the consequences of the family’s decision to intervene. Ask: Would Joe’s death have changed the fate of the country?

Chapter 46

Tension and Reflection

Set one of the following tasks to allow your pupils to demonstrate the reading skills they have been building as they have read the novel:

- How does Dowd create tension and pace in this chapter, building up to the climax at the end? You could discuss:
  - the flashback to Mel’s death at the beginning of the chapter;
  - the setting;
  - Fergus’s realisation that Uncle Tally is implicated in the bombings; and
  - the extract on pages 316–317 building up to the discovery at Uncle Tally’s home.
- How does Dowd create a reflective tone in the final chapters through her use of:
  - sentence structure;
  - dialogue;
  - narrative voice; and
  - choice of words and phrases?

The Truth about Uncle Tally

Ask the pupils, in pairs or small groups, to play detective – making notes on Uncle Tally’s role in the IRA. What evidence could they have spotted earlier in the novel? (There were clues from the start.)
Newspaper Front Pages

Ask the pupils to bring in a selection of different types of newspaper front pages. Divide them into small groups, and ensure that each group has a tabloid front page and a broadsheet front page. Ask the pupils to compare the language and presentational devices used on each front cover, noting their findings on Resource 5: Read All About It!, and feed back to the class using presentation software. They should include the techniques used and examples from their newspapers. Have all the pupils make notes individually on the variety of language and presentational devices used.

Next, ask the pupils to create a front page story about Uncle Tally’s death while he was resisting arrest. They should choose whether to present the story in the style of a tabloid or a broadsheet newspaper and use appropriate language and presentational devices.

Chapter 47

Looking Forward

This final chapter shows Fergus leaving Ireland and looking forward to his future. Ask the pupils to make notes on:

- how Dowd shows that Fergus is both happy and sad to be leaving Northern Ireland to go to study medicine in England;
- what they think he is excited about for the future; and
- what they think he will miss about home.
Post-Reading

Suggested Learning and Teaching Activities

We suggest that you ask your pupils to complete one or more of these activities after they have read the novel. Preparation work could begin while they read.

**Bog Child Review**

Ask the pupils to write a review of the novel ‘selling’ it to a future class. In the success criteria, you could mention that they should comment on:

- what was engaging about the plot;
- the characters;
- the writing style; and
- the ultimate message of the novel.

**Letter from Fergus to Cora**

Ask the pupils to write a letter from Fergus to Cora six months after the story ends. They might want to include:

- news about what happened to Joe;
- Fergus’s experiences of studying and university life; and
- how he feels about everything that happened.

**Suggested Essay Titles**

This is an opportunity to assess the pupils’ progression in the reading and essay writing skills that they have been acquiring and developing as they have been studying the novel. Below are some suggestions for essay titles that you can adapt to suit the pupils in your class.

- **How does Siobhan Dowd present the character of Fergus?** (Comment on his emotions, his personal qualities, his relationships with his family/Cora/Owain, his ambition to get three ‘B’s, and what he learns from his experiences.)
- **How does Dowd create mystery and suspense in Bog Child?** How does she encourage readers to continue reading?
- **Discuss how Dowd uses the relationship between Fergus and Owain to illustrate the power of friendship in overcoming prejudice.** (Comment on how they interact with each other, what they think of each other and how this differs from what they might have grown up thinking of each other.)

You may wish to add to these essay titles with bullet points outlining specific success criteria.

**Everybody Writes**

The pupils could be inspired by the novel to produce a piece of personal writing about:

- a hobby or interest (inspired by Fergus’s love of running);
- hopes and ambitions for the future (for themselves and for Northern Ireland);
- someone who is very special to them or whom they admire (inspired by Fergus’s relationship with Joe);
- a time when they were sad, afraid or tempted to get involved in something they knew to be wrong; or
- a time when they were shocked by or disappointed in someone else (like Fergus with Uncle Tally).

You could also ask them to write a persuasive article for a teenage magazine in Northern Ireland. This could focus on the need for today’s young people to take a lead in reconciliation and the promotion of tolerance, diversity and inclusiveness in society.

Alternatively, the pupils could write a short story inspired by events and issues in the novel. You could provide a title as a stimulus, for example ‘Family Secrets’, ‘The Discovery’, or ‘Friendship against the Odds’.
Class Debate

Allow the pupils to use mind mapping (see *Active Learning and Teaching Methods for Key Stage 3*) and research to prepare for a class debate or group discussion. Possible topics that arise from issues in the novel include:

- Should a government make laws based on religious beliefs? (Refer to the laws on birth control in the Republic of Ireland at the time of the novel. The pupils could also discuss laws on abortion, divorce, euthanasia etc.)
- ‘No one is innocent anymore.’ (Michael brings up this idea in Chapter 16. Is there any such thing as a ‘just war’? Is everyone part of a war?)
- ‘It is never right to sacrifice one life for others.’
- ‘Resorting to violence to achieve political aims is morally unacceptable.’
- ‘It’s not teenagers who are the problem: it’s their parents!’

Reflection on Themes

In groups, have the pupils use the Ideas Funnel technique (see *Active Learning and Teaching Methods for Key Stage 3*) to generate ideas about what the main themes of the novel are. They should eventually come to some agreement about one main theme. After they have presented and justified their choices to the rest of the class, draw a ‘theme chart’ on the board including the main themes that the groups have come up with. This may include some from this list:

- sacrifice;
- growing up;
- friendship;
- prejudice;
- fear of the unknown;
- conflict/war; and
- escape.

Next, ask the pupils to collect key quotations for each theme and then share their quotations and analyses with the rest of the class. They could keep individual logs, or you could give each group responsibility for one theme.

Local Words and Phrases

In the light of Dowd’s use of language in *Bog Child*, have the pupils work in groups to compile a list of typical words and phrases used in Northern Ireland and explain their meaning. Examples include:

- ‘acting the maggot’;
- ‘oxters’;
- ‘she needs to pull her socks up’;
- ‘it’s banjaxed’;
- ‘she’s a gas’; and
- ‘he was scundered’.

You could then allow each pupil to design a souvenir tea-towel with a variety of these words and phrases on it to be sold in a tourist shop in their town or city.

The Troubles on Film

Give the pupils an opportunity to study how the Troubles have been portrayed in the media. Examples of films that you could use for this activity are:

- *Omagh* (2004);
- *In the Name of the Father* (1993);
- *Mickybo and Me* (2004);
- *The Devil’s Own* (1997);
- *Bloody Sunday* (2002);
- *Bogwoman* (1997);
- *Cal* (1984);
- *H3* (2001); and

Some scenes from these films may not be suitable for all pupils; please use your own discretion. Show a few appropriate clips from a selection of the films while the pupils make notes on how they portray people, places or general life in Northern Ireland. Next, ask them to discuss what they have seen, thinking critically about what impression people in other countries may have of Northern Ireland based on watching films or television.
If appropriate, allow your pupils to watch one or more suitable scenes from Steve McQueen’s film Hunger, which is about the H Block Maze prisoners who took part in the hunger strike and focuses particularly on the death of Bobby Sands. While it is a compelling film that could provide a stimulus for a number of activities, it is also a very brutal portrayal of the hunger strike; please use your professional judgement to discern if it would be suitable for your individual pupils. Choose one or more aspects of the film for the pupils to explore, such as:

- identifying links to Bog Child, for example references to Margaret Thatcher and the prisoners’ demands, and how they can inform the pupils’ understanding of the novel;
- exploring McQueen’s use of sound (and silence), making a note of the sounds that he uses in the film and the effects they produce;
- analysing directorial intentions (almost every sight, sound and movement in this film is used to create effect);
- focusing on McQueen’s use of imagery and how effective it is in creating a stark, moving and thought-provoking film (focusing, for example, on the use of religious imagery, food imagery or colour to create effects); and/or
- highlighting the balance to McQueen’s portrayal of characters (for example he shows the prison guards in a very human light at times, juxtaposing this with their cruel treatment of the prisoners; he also touches upon the horrific acts of the IRA at one point and how there are no easy answers to the ‘who was right’ debate that the pupils may be having).

Alternatively, you could focus on one of the most powerful scenes in the film: a dialogue between Bobby Sands and Father Moran, one of the only conversations in Hunger. This extended take (17 minutes long) could be an interesting scene to study, in terms of both the insight it gives into the mind of the character and the challenges and effects of filming such a scene without any cuts.

**Hot Seating**

Ask the pupils to prepare to be hot-seated as one of the characters from the novel, for example Fergus’s mum or dad, Uncle Tally, Joe or Cora. Explain that they will be asked to talk about their thoughts and how they feel about certain events and issues. Allow the pupils to choose which character they want to be, or assign roles to ensure that there is a range of different characters. Support the pupils in constructing questions to ask during the hot seating process to ensure that they give the characters the opportunity to fully consider, describe, explain and justify their feelings and actions in the novel. For further information on hot seating, see *Active Learning and Teaching Methods for Key Stage 3*.

This exercise could lead to a piece of creative writing: the pupils take on the role of one of the characters and recount their experience at a certain point in the novel.
Hold a class discussion on the effectiveness of the devices that the pupils have come up with. Encourage the pupils to illustrate their views by giving examples from the trailers.

Ask the pupils to choose 8–10 relevant quotations or incidents from throughout the novel that they think would be effective if they were creating a trailer for their own film version of *Bog Child*. They can then use these to structure a trailer by using either storyboarding or, if available, relevant editing software. Negotiate success criteria; these might relate to:

- consideration of audience and purpose;
- voiceover script;
- dialogue;
- the images they will have in each frame;
- sound effects; and/or
- any soundtrack that they use.

You could ask the pupils to write a commentary of their work to explain their use of language, imagery, structure, sound, sequencing and editing.

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**Bog Child Film Trailer**

Using open questions, ask the pupils to come up with the main purposes of film trailers: to showcase a film and encourage cinema goers to see it. Distribute blank post-its to every pupil, and show a selection of film trailers. (You can access these and more information on the Film Education website at www.filmeducation.org.uk, on other websites, or watch trailers from the beginning of DVDs.)

Ask the pupils to identify the aspects of the trailers that make the films stand out and encourage viewers to watch them. They should write one thing from each trailer on a post-it while they watch, then stick their post-its on a whiteboard or notice board.

Go through the post-its, reading out the pupils’ ideas, and, with class negotiation, dividing them into categories. The following categories may be helpful:

- voiceover;
- actors;
- soundtrack;
- cliff-hanger;
- dialogue;
- genre;
- moving images; and
- reference to previous films by the same director or with the same actors.

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Design a DVD Cover

Divide the pupils into small groups, and give each group a selection of DVD covers to look at. Ideally, these should include a variety of different genres. Ask each group to make a note of the target audience, genre and appealing features of each DVD cover, explaining their reasoning. Each group should negotiate roles and responsibilities, which might include chairperson, scribe, spokesperson and time-manager. Allow each group to feed their findings back to the class. Make a note on the board of the ideas generated.

Tell the pupils that they are going to use the knowledge and skills they have developed to complete the following task: Using some of the ideas from your initial study of DVD covers, design your own DVD cover for a film version of Bog Child. Remember to think carefully about your target audience when you are creating your DVD cover. You could provide the following success criteria:

*i will make sure my DVD cover:
• gives the viewer an idea of the film’s genre;
• makes the viewer want to watch the film;
• has an exciting blurb and a catchy tagline; and
• uses accurate spelling, punctuation and grammar.*

Responding to Poetry

Allow the pupils to read and listen to Seamus Heaney’s poems ‘The Tollund Man’ and ‘Punishment’. These poems link very well with many issues in the novel, including:
• the discovery of Mel’s body in the bog;
• the theme of sacrifice;
• the idea of the tribal mentality; and
• the conflict in Northern Ireland.

Ask them to write a personal response to one or both of the poems. They could focus on:
• analysing Heaney’s use of imagery;
• linking the poems to the themes of the novel; and/or
• showing how Heaney, like Dowd, draws comparisons between the sacrifices of the bog bodies and the situation in Northern Ireland during the Troubles.

You could also allow the pupils to look at Heaney’s later poem ‘The Tollund Man in Springtime’. They could explore how Heaney has moved the earlier analogy on with the development of the Peace Process.
Songs, Lyrics and History

Give the pupils an opportunity to research some song lyrics that make political points or have a specific message about the events of the Troubles. As well as those mentioned in the novel, songs you could choose include:

- ‘Alternative Ulster’ (Stiff Little Fingers);
- ‘Belfast Child’ (Simple Minds);
- ‘Give Ireland Back to the Irish’ (Wings);
- ‘Sunday, Bloody Sunday’ (U2);
- ‘Sunrise’ (The Divine Comedy);
- ‘There Were Roses’ (Tommy Sands);
- and/or
- ‘The Island’ (Paul Brady).

Allow the pupils to listen to one or two of these songs and read the lyrics (you can usually find these online through a search engine). Ask them to make notes on:

- the main message of the song(s);
- how the writers/singers create impact through their lyrics and the music itself; and
- why you think they wrote the song.

In pairs, they could also create a presentation that uses song lyrics and music as the background to a timeline of the Troubles from 1968 to 1998. If possible, this could involve using editing software and online images. For example, www.irishhistorylinks.net features images and a detailed timeline of Irish history in general, including information on the Troubles, the hunger strikes and the birth control controversies – all relevant to Bog Child.
Using Chapter 21 and information from elsewhere in the novel, the pupils could list all the things that scientists can find out by examining bodies found in the bogs like Mel’s. In Science, they could also find out about radiocarbon-dating and explanations for other aspects of forensic science mentioned in the novel, as well as researching the latest developments in the field. This could include the use of forensic science and pathology in novels and television, for example Crime Scene Investigation and Silent Witness, and the reasons why these aspects of science have such appeal.

In addition, the pupils could look at the conditions common to bogs in which bog bodies have been discovered (colder climate, near bodies of salt water, etc.) and find out what enables the bodies to stay so well preserved.

You could ask the pupils to use the knowledge they have gained in Science to write an article for a chemistry textbook titled ‘Why do bogs have the correct conditions for the preservation of bodies?’

The novel could also prompt discussion and exploration of the reasons why young people get involved in illegal organisations, crime or terrorism and how in one sense they are victims of their society as well as perpetrators. You could use Fergus’s smuggling of the mystery parcels over the border and Joe’s participation in the hunger strike as examples.

In Employability, the pupils could explore the job of forensic scientist. They could create a leaflet for their peer group explaining what the job of a forensic scientist entails, what qualifications are needed, the salary and job prospects, etc.
Resources
Resource 1

Analysing Character

Fill in some examples, under the following headings (if appropriate)

What does the author/narrator tell us?

What do the other characters tell us?

What does the character say?

How does the character behave?
Resource 2

Playing Detective – Mel’s Life

Appearance

Fears

Family

Home

Daily activities

References to food

Conflict

Relationship with Rur

Setting

Reasons for Mel’s death
Resource 3
Michael’s Persuasive Techniques

Body language

Friendly/Casual tone

References to Fergus’s family

Rhetorical questions

Reassuring language

Repetition

Short sentences

Flattery
Resource 4

Testimonies about the Troubles (1 of 3)

The following accounts are from people who lived in Northern Ireland at various times throughout the Troubles. Here they recount their memories of what life was like.

I lived in Belfast, in the nurses’ home of the Royal Victoria Hospital, from 1975 to 1978.

It was like living in a war zone, which, I suppose, looking back, is exactly what it was. No buses came up the Falls Road at that time, for fear of being burned out. All the shops in the city centre had security at entrance doors, searching people and handbags before letting anyone in.

I remember one time myself and three friends getting caught in the crossfire between British soldiers and IRA snipers. We were in a Mini car in the RVH grounds. The car conked out and we couldn’t get it started. All four of us had to lie on the floor until the shooting stopped.

I was 24 years old in 1981 and living in County Londonderry. When the hunger strike started everyone just thought it would be over in a couple of weeks, but unfortunately it continued. I’ll never forget when Bobby Sands died on the 5th May 1981. We walked into town that evening; there was complete silence and darkness, as the street lights had all been smashed. The shop front lights were all off, the pubs were closed, there were no cars out on the streets, and the few people around spoke in whispers. We all felt that something devastating but powerful had just happened.

I grew up in Belfast but left the bleak environment of bombs, hate and violence for England in 1976. At that time, I thought of myself as British and was shocked to be abused for being Irish when I was in England. By the summer of 1977 I was a full-blown punk, blasting out ‘Anarchy in the UK’ by the Sex Pistols. We were a generation who learned to numb ourselves to keep going and survive. We listened to music, danced and protested.

In 1981 I was 21 and back in Belfast at the local university. I considered myself a rebel then, a ‘rebel’ as in interested in change and in being myself, rather than being defined by which community I came from. I became ‘me’ through strands of multicoloured hair, clothes from Oxfam and big boots.

In August 1981 my boyfriend and I were planning to go to the Ballyshannon music festival with some of his friends. Someone couldn’t get the money together and we didn’t go.

My boyfriend’s best friend, aged 19, was shot dead by an off duty Ulster Defence Regiment soldier as he walked home that night. We felt such guilt, since if we’d got away that weekend he wouldn’t have been killed.

At his funeral, Army helicopters hovered overhead so no one could even hear the service. We put our first ever funeral notice into the Belfast Telegraph with the words of Bob Marley, ‘So Much Trouble in the World’.

One of the worst aspects of 1981 for me personally was that my father was a prison warden at Long Kesh/the Maze prison. This was the prison where the hunger strikers died. I have often felt deeply ashamed of this and always fearful about how people would react if they found out this secret or if I disclosed it. Some of my fears did come true.
In 1981 I was 21 and a student at Queen's University in Belfast. My memories of the hunger strikes are vague. I was young and didn't take much interest in what was going on politically – I just wanted to stay out of all that and get my life started.

There were bombs and shootings and people getting killed; my parents were very worried about me going out at night. My family was English, so not typical of the average Ulster Protestant. We always made sure to get away to avoid the 12th of July, but not everyone could do that.

I went to France in 1981 during the hunger strikes and met Moroccans who knew what was going on here. They supported Bobby Sands and laughed at the people they met from here who considered themselves to be British and not Irish. The whole world seemed to know and have an opinion about what was going on here.

My family moved to north Belfast from Tyrone in August 1967, when I was 13. My father's timing for this move was rather unfortunate, as history now shows.

We lived in Duncairn Gardens off the Antrim Road. We soon realised that this was the interface between the Loyalist Tiger's Bay and the Republican New Lodge area.

On my way home through the New Lodge one night I was stopped by the Army, who, when they heard my address, assumed that I was a Protestant. They said that I must be mad for walking down that street late at night, so, not wanting to spoil their illusions, I told them that I walked that way every night without any problems at all!

As the Troubles started to take hold in 1969, I used to lie in bed listening to the gun battles and was soon able to tell the difference between the Army and the IRA guns. Rural Tyrone and my idyllic childhood were getting further away by the day, and I didn't like it. We couldn't use the front room at night in case the lights would give our presence there away, and we were afraid of bottles or worse being thrown through the windows.

In 1970 I left school and started work as a clerk in the city centre. One day I was walking along Lower Donegall Street, and just as I turned off into a side street I heard a very loud explosion and foolishly ran back to investigate.

A massive bomb had just gone off beside a bin lorry that I had just walked past – two men were killed. They were still moving on the ground when I got there, but they couldn't have been resuscitated; it's a sight I'll never forget.

In 1971 the now infamous McGurk's Bar bomb went off, killing 15 people, including women and children. Some friends and I heard the explosion and went to see what had happened. When we arrived, the emergency services were still digging in the rubble to recover bodies.

As history shows, there were a lot of atrocities carried out by all of the various tribes and, although I know that some of my friends eventually got caught up in the Troubles and joined the IRA, I am eternally grateful that because of my parents' influence I felt strong enough to resist the peer pressure.

I never fully recovered from my initial culture shock, and I left Belfast in 1972 to return to Tyrone. Of course, the Troubles were alive and well in Tyrone too, but the tribal bitterness was much less intense and people just got on with it.

One night I was getting a lift to a dance with a friend, and we were stopped by the Ulster Defence Regiment. The soldier asked him his name, and my friend began to laugh. The soldier wasn't amused – neither was I, to be honest! When I asked my friend afterwards what was so funny, he informed me that he worked during the day with this young soldier and had actually given him a lift to work once or twice. Such were the subtleties of the relationship between the armed forces and young Catholics. We often thought these young men were to be pitied too – it was a very difficult time for everybody.
Resource 4  
Testimonies about the Troubles (3 of 3)

I grew up in North Belfast. I remember seeing a man being shot dead outside the barracks on North Queen Street as I was walking home from the library one day with my Enid Blyton books in my bag. It said on the news that the soldier’s gun had gone off by accident.

I also remember when a 400 lb bomb went off in the shop opposite our house – the glass was blown up our stairs, and all the windows on the street were blown out. I had been playing on the street moments before and ran into the house when I heard people screaming as they ran out of the shop. There were many incidents like this.

I remember when the Shankill Butchers were picking Catholic people up off the street and torturing them before murdering them. I was a teenager at the time and wanted to go out at night. We had no phone in the house, never mind a mobile phone, so I couldn’t reassure my mother that I was okay. It was an agony for her that I only understand now, as she said I would, because I have children of my own. I am only realising the effect it had on me now, more than 30 years later. And that is without having anyone close to me killed or injured in the Troubles. What must it be like for those who were even more closely affected?

I remember walking back from a dance in Lifford one night when I was 17. Soldiers started firing rubber bullets, and the two people on either side of me were hit. They were in a lot of pain for a while, but they weren’t badly injured. The boy on my left was wearing white trousers and the girl on my right had white tights on, so I think they must have aimed at the white. I was wearing black trousers and wasn’t hit. People just ran on and forgot about it. We used to be stopped for ages at checkpoints when we were going to dances.

At the time of the hunger strikes I was 27, and as I lived in Omagh then I wasn’t too badly affected by them compared to people who lived in Belfast and Derry. We used to listen to the news constantly, especially as the days went on; there was continuous reporting on the hunger striker progress. At the beginning everyone assumed that they would never keep it up until the end or that Maggie Thatcher would do a deal and stop it.

The night Bobby Sands died, the rioting was confined mostly to Belfast. One event always sticks in my mind for some reason; some poor man got caught up in the rioting on his way to work in the morning. I think he was a Protestant man. Some poor sod trying to go on with his life as normal.

On the day of hunger striker funerals, many people stayed off work as a mark of respect. As soon as one hunger striker died, another one started fasting. Then we would listen to how he was doing. But apart from more roadblocks and a general air of doom, it didn’t affect people outside the cities too much.

One time, British soldiers and Ulster Defence Regiment soldiers arrived at my mother’s house in Tyrone and just walked in and searched the house from top to bottom. It was about 1985 or so. They even searched under mattresses. They made fun of rosary beads and things like that.

In the nineties before the Greysteel massacre, someone was shot every day in Belfast for about a month. Every morning I used to turn on the news first thing, waiting to see who was shot last night.

That was the worst thing about the Troubles: the waiting to see what would happen next, always hoping you wouldn’t be caught up in anything when you were out at night. There was also a terrible distrust between Catholics and Protestants, a ‘them and us’ mentality. In that sense things have really improved since the Peace Process.
## Resource 5
### Read All About It! (1 of 2)

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How does each newspaper grab the attention of the readers?

Who do you think each newspaper would appeal to? Why?
Please read this novel in advance to make sure that the themes suit your learners before presenting it to your class.