

ANDY MULLIGAN

You never know
what you'll find ...

Teacher's
Notes

by Jane Fisher

'Outstanding' *The Times*

Trash

Teacher's Introduction to the Resource

Trash is a gem of a book for an English teacher – the kind that doesn't come around that often. It's a fast-paced thriller with a highly driven plot that swirls along with increasing fervour building to a beautiful climax; it's told by multiple equally loveable narrative voices; offers itself to a range of moral discussions and could inspire some wonderful creative work from the students.

It would be just as suitable for a class of keen readers as it would for those more hesitant readers who enjoy a fast moving plot and not too many words on a page. It twists and turns around a unique and breath-taking story of unlikely heroes who eventually win the day in the most imaginative way possible. It's certainly short enough for most classes to read within lessons but I also doubt that there would be many students who would need much pushing to read a few chapters on their own at home.

These resources are pitched at Year 8 but an enthusiastic Year 7 class would also do well with the book.

The book would be valuable for assessment of a range of focuses, but these are the ones that have been specifically identified for the suggested activities:

Focus	Objective
Reading	AF 2 – Understand, describe, select or retrieve information, events or ideas from texts and use quotation and reference to text AF 3 – Deduce, infer or interpret information, events or ideas from texts AF 4 – Identify and comment on the structure and organisation of texts, including grammatical and presentational features at text level AF 5 – Explain and comment on writers' use of language, including grammatical and literary features at word and sentence level AF 6 – Identify and comment on writers' purposes and viewpoints, and the overall effect of the text on the reader AF 7 – Relate texts to their social, cultural and historical traditions
Speaking and listening	AF2 – Talking with others AF3 – Talking within role-play and drama
Writing	AF 1 – Write imaginative, interesting and thoughtful texts AF 2 – Produce texts which are appropriate to task, reader and purpose AF 3 – Organise and present whole texts effectively, sequencing and structuring information, ideas and events AF 4 – Construct paragraphs and use cohesion within and between paragraphs AF 5 – Vary sentences for clarity, purpose and effect AF 7 – Select appropriate and effective vocabulary

Ways in...

Here are some ideas to get students engaged and interested in the book, before, during and post reading.

PRE-READING/EARLY READING

Deduce and Infer (Reading AF3)

The best way into this book is simply to start reading. The opening narrative voice (that of Raphael) is instantly engaging and sets the class up for a good discussion of what he may have found on page 5 with the narrative hook: "Then one day I did." Here would be a good place to stop reading and explore the possibilities of what might be found on a dumpsite to change the life of someone like Raphael. (They should not have seen the blurb on the back as this tells us it's a key.)

Research (Reading AF7)

Homework could also be set to do research on child labour (both historically and in the present) and especially on children working on dumpsites. Mulligan was living in Manila when he wrote this book and it was a visit to the dumpsite in Manila known as Tondo (or 'Smokey Mountain') that inspired this story but there are dumpsites where children work to reclaim and sell rubbish for recycling all over the world. There is indeed a school at Tondo created by a British woman – Jane Walker – who has put her heart and soul into changing the lives of these children and students could research that (possibly later during reading) as well.

Empathy Writing (Writing AF1, AF2, AF3, AF4 – or any selection)

Show some images of dumpsites, of slums, of children working on dumpsites (perhaps with a suitable moving soundtrack playing accordingly) and ask children to imagine what it would be like to work on a dumpsite. If they have done the homework research suggested above they should have a better idea of what the conditions might be like.

There are videos on YouTube (search for "children on dumpsites") and plenty of images on the net.

<http://p-c-f.org> is a useful website that shows images of the dumpsite in Manila, but there are many more.

- ⇒ Give each student a pile of post-it notes and ask them to write down one idea per post-it note in response to the question: what would it be like to work on a dumpsite day after day?
- ⇒ After two minutes of individual thinking, ask them to join with three or four other students to share and organise their ideas. They should group them together as they see fit, placing them on the table so that they can see all their ideas organised appropriately.
- ⇒ After this give them a set of (different coloured) post-it notes to give each group of ideas a title.
- ⇒ You can now get the groups to share their titles and ideas keeping notes on the board if appropriate.

They should now have a range of ideas that have been suitably organised. This could lead to a range of writing activities: a diary entry of a dumpsite worker; an informative leaflet about children who work on dumpsites; a persuasive letter or speech to stop child labour on dumpsites or any other activity the teacher sees fit.

DURING READING

Characters and Narrative Voices (Reading AF2, AF3, AF5)

The book has a range of loveable characters who sew together the story. Once the students have read a few of the chapters written by different voices, ask them to select a character in whom they are interested. They should look for clues as to what is said about that character and how that character's voice is unique. They could create a list or a mind-map of the clues they have gathered about that character and then join with another student who has selected the same character. This could lead to a range of activities on examining characters and how they are created and contrast with each other.

What makes each character unique? How is that conveyed to us?

Less able students might be more comfortable making more overt distinctions like the ones between children and adults, good and bad characters, but more able students might get a great deal out of examining the three protagonists and how they contrast with and complement each other, what their roles are within the group and how they rely on each other for accomplishing different tasks. This could lead to some cross-curricular (PSHE) discussion on friendships and how they work.

DURING READING

Structure (AF4, AF6)

The book is divided into five parts, which can also make less able readers feel like they are making rapid progress as each part is quite short, and, of course, each part is divided into chapters told by different narrative voices. There is a very clear structure to the book and it is mostly chronological. Discuss the strengths of this kind of structure: how does it contribute to the pace and excitement of the narrative?

Students could be asked to create a diagram of some sort. I am fond of tension graphs that are neatly divided into different parts and clearly annotated to examine how and where tension is created. The possibilities for a graph or diagram plotting the story, who it is told by and where tension increases and relaxes, are plentiful.

Writer's Craft (Reading AF2, AF5, AF6; Writing AF3, AF4, AF5, AF7)

Students could then examine how tension is created at points that they have identified: look at what happens to sentence structure and vocabulary choices. Some tense moments are highly energised (like when the hundreds of children take to the streets to save the boys from the police) and some are quite still and anxious (like when the boys are working out the book code). This could, perhaps, lead to a writing exercise where students are challenged to build tension using some of the techniques Mulligan employs in *Trash*.

Style and Structure (Reading AF4, AF5, AF6)

Both these exercises should prepare them for some independent work on structure and tension when they come to the final few chapters where the boys tell the story together. They could examine how this contributes to the climax as well as looking at how the climax occurs at the onset of the typhoon that has been threatening throughout the narrative. This could be used to introduce the technique of pathetic fallacy and how the climax in the weather pattern supports the story. Whilst examining techniques, the class could examine how the dramatic irony in Part 5, Chapter 2 (where Mulligan allows us to realise that the money is in the grave before the boys do) draws us further into this already very exciting point in the narrative.

POST READING

From page to screen (Reading AF2, AF3)

In many ways, *Trash* lends itself very persuasively to being turned into a film. The exciting narrative and the number of highly visual scenes are calling out to be put on screen. Students could select one of the highly visual scenes from this list or from elsewhere in the book:

- ⇒ The scene in the corridors of the prison
- ⇒ The scene where the street children take to the streets to protect the boys from the police
- ⇒ The scene at the graveyard
- ⇒ The typhoon of money
- ⇒ Arriving in paradise

More able students could attempt to write pages for a screen play, describing images sound and camera effects between dialogue. Less able students could create a storyboard of how they would film the scene for maximum impact.

Themes (Reading AF7; Speaking and Listening AF2)

The book raises a number of questions about morals: the police and government in the book are corrupt and greedy; the boys do a number of 'bad' things to achieve their final goal, which is ultimately a very good thing. A number of discussions about when or if it is right to do wrong or about working against 'the law' could be introduced. At the end, they give most of the money back to the people from whom it was stolen; students could consider other creative possibilities as to how that money might have been distributed amongst the people or what they would have done with it.

Alternate Ending (Reading AF2, AF3, AF6; Writing AF1, AF2, AF4)

Mulligan said he knew the end of this book before he knew the beginning. Discuss with the class whether there could be other ways that the book might have ended – perhaps incorporating some of their ideas from the above suggestions. Students could be challenged to write an alternate ending that still shows understanding of the book and the writer's intentions. They should be able to explain why their ending is appropriate for the book.

Trash

PUPIL'S NOTES

PRE-READING ACTIVITIES

1. "...maybe one day you'll find 'something nice'.

Oh yes.

Then one day I did."

Trash revolves around a group of boys who work on a dumpsite sifting through the trash to collect things that may have some value. Raphael tells us about this work in the first two pages of the novel. Discuss with a partner what Raphael might find that would be a life-changing discovery. Share your ideas with the class and imagine how these different scenarios might play out for someone like Raphael.

2. Many of us think that child labour is mostly a thing of the past. Research child labour and especially situations where children work on dumpsites to collect trash for selling/recycling. You might like to focus on working children or on life in the dumpsites.

3. Once you have done your research, your teacher will give you time to look at some images and/or videos of children working on dumpsites. After this you will write down all your thoughts and ideas about what life must be like for children who work and live in these conditions. Write one idea per post-it note.

⇒ Now join with 3/4 other students to share your ideas. Organise them into groups and lay them on the table so that you can all see all your ideas clearly.

⇒ Give each group of ideas a title.

⇒ Now share some of your ideas with the whole class.

4. You now have a chance to do some writing. You could choose one of these tasks or your teacher might choose one for you:

⇒ Write a diary entry for a child who works on the dumpsite

⇒ Write a leaflet persuading people to donate money to help children who work on dumpsites to gain an education

⇒ Write a letter to the government to persuade them to change the lives of these children



DURING READING

1. Read the first five chapters told by Raphael. Work with a partner to make a list of some of the key things we learn about him. Organise your information in the way that suits you best but try to include some ideas about the following:

- ⇒ what he says about himself
- ⇒ what he says to others
- ⇒ what he does
- ⇒ his appearance
- ⇒ the kind of language he uses
- ⇒ his relationships with others

What kind of a picture are you getting of this character so far? Do you like him and want him to succeed? Why is this? How does Mulligan make us have certain feelings about Raphael?

2. Continue reading some of the chapters told by some of the other characters. Even though this book is really all written by Andy Mulligan, he changes the way he writes for each character. This is called using multiple narrative voices. Try to identify some of the characteristics of each voice. You could create a table to compare the voices like this:

Character	What we know or can infer about him/her	His/her voice – the way s/he tells the story
Raphael	Works on dumps; hopeless before finding the key; innocent and street-smart at the same time; confident at times but reliant on Gardo; ready to fight for what he wants; realistic, brave and willing to take a chance	Talks directly to us like we are with him on his adventure; uses his own dialect sometimes; very honest about his feelings and experiences; sometimes uses quite a child-like register; switches between past and present tense

Extension task: collect evidence for some of your statements about each character and add this to your table.

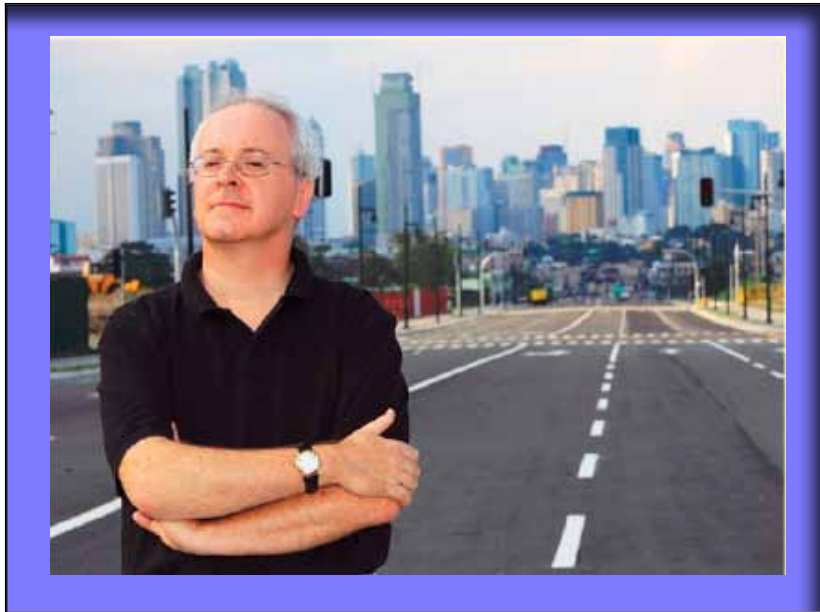
3. As you continue to read, create a chart on which you can monitor the structure of the book. A graph might work best so that you can plot where the tension increases and you can use different colours for each narrative voice. You might prefer to keep a table in which you can record what happens in each chapter and who tells the story. Try to identify the mini-climaxes throughout the book and why each character tells that part of the story.

4. Select one of the events in the story where you feel that tension is at a high point. Examine the way that this part of the story has been told. How does the writer manipulate us to increase the tension? What kind of sentence structures does he use? What kind of situations lead to tension? Look at how information is revealed to us and whether this has an effect on how tense we feel about the events we read about.

5. Once you have identified some of the techniques that Mulligan uses to create tension, have a go at writing a bit of narrative to create tension using the same techniques. You might choose to create your piece of writing based around some of the events in *Trash* or you might want to write your own narrative. The important thing is to demonstrate some of the techniques that Mulligan uses in *Trash*.

6. As you get towards the end of the novel, the narrators start to tell the story together. How does this increase the tension? In pairs try to identify some of the techniques that Mulligan uses in any chapter from Part 5 to maximise our interest in the final few chapters of the novel.

About Andy Mulligan



Andy Mulligan was brought up in South London. He worked as a theatre director for ten years, before travels in Asia prompted him to retrain as a teacher. He has taught English and drama in Britain, India, Brazil, and the Philippines. He now divides his time between London and Manila.

Behala dumpsite is based loosely on a place Andy visited while living in Manila. There really is a school there, and there really are children who will crawl through trash forever.

To find out more visit the website

www.andymulligan.co.uk/trash