

Plot, character and setting

SECTION

4

Information and enigmas

Objective: To develop an active attitude towards reading, seeking answers and anticipating events.

What you need: Photocopiable page 15, copies of *Carrie's War*, writing materials.

What to do

- Run this activity after Chapter 1 and before Chapter 2. The children could work individually or in pairs.
- Re-read Chapter 1, which is full of hints and mysteries. A troubling atmosphere of dereliction and sadness is established. Nina Bawden does give us a lot of information and clues as to what happened to Carrie, but she also leaves lots of unanswered questions.
- Ask the children to use photocopiable page 15 to summarise the information given in Chapter 1 about Carrie, and about Druid's Bottom.
- Next, ask the children to consider the information that Nina Bawden withholds.

What do we not yet know about Carrie and Druid's Bottom? For example, why does Carrie dream about running away? Why did she go there? Why is Druid's Bottom a ruin? Ask the children to summarise this missing information on the sheet.

- The children can then guess how the story will develop. Ideally, they will realise that there is a connection between Carrie's sense of guilt and the ruined state of Druid's Bottom.

Differentiation

For older/more able children: Review these story predictions in later reading. Were they good ones? Do the children want to change their predictions in the light of new information?

For younger/less able children: Provide the children with particular references in the text to concentrate on. For example, in the first paragraph we are told that Druid's Bottom can be reached by a dirt path beside the railway line; we aren't told why Carrie has a scary dream in which she is running away. Discuss together how the story may develop.

The wit and wisdom of Mr Evans

Objective: To investigate how a character is presented through dialogue.

What you need: Photocopiable page 16, copies of *Carrie's War*, writing materials, a dictionary of commonplace phrases, such as *Brewer's Dictionary of Phrase and Fable* (Cassell), internet access.

What to do

- Ensure that the children have read Chapter 3.
- Do the children know what a cliché is? (A tired, overused phrase.)
- Re-read Chapter 3, paying particular attention to pages 32 and 42. Pick out clichés that Mr Evans uses, such as 'you've fallen on your feet'; 'mind your Ps and Qs'; 'toe the chalk line'; 'children today don't know they're born'.
- Ask the children to put four of the clichés in the first column on photocopiable page 16. They

are in old-fashioned vocabulary, but provided the children can pick them out, the task is to try to 'explain' them, using the reference sources.

- Finally, in the third column: can the children explain what the phrases tell them about how Mr Evans feels? For example, he says that the children's good manners are 'a bit of sugar on the pill', suggesting that he sees the children as a pill (something nasty) he has to 'swallow' (put up with) but their manners make this task 'sweeter'.

Differentiation

For older/more able children: Ask the children to list clichés and overused phrases that they are familiar with. How might Mr Evans use them? Can the children write some new dialogue for Mr Evans?

For younger/less able children: The children could list clichés that they're familiar with and try to explain what these phrases mean.