

Key Stage Three English – Year 8

Autumn – ‘The Modern Novel’

Noughts and Crosses



Context

Apartheid

From 1948-1994, the South African government enforced apartheid. This meant that black and white people were forced to live separately, go to different schools and black people could not vote. White people got privileges and ruled the country. However, this all came to an end when black people finally got the right to vote and elected Nelson Mandela as president. He had spent 27 years in prison for fighting for black people’s rights.

Plot Overview

Sephy is a Cross - a member of the ruling class. Callum is a nought - a member of the underclass who were once slaves to the Crosses. The two have been friends since early childhood. But that’s as far as it can go. Until the first steps are taken towards more social equality and a limited number of noughts are allowed into Cross schools. Against a background of prejudice and distrust, intensely highlighted by violent terrorist activity by noughts, a romance builds between Sephy and Callum - a romance that is to lead both of them into terrible danger.

Characters

THE HADLEY FAMILY
X



THE MCGREGOR FAMILY
O

Malorie Blackman
Blackman was the Children’s Laureate from 2013 to 2015. Blackman’s motivation for writing *Noughts and Crosses*:
‘I wanted to turn society as we know it on its head in my story, with new names for the major divisions in society. I wanted to see this new world through the eyes of the main two characters, Callum (a nought) and Sephy (a Cross). Race and racism are emotive issues that most people are loathe to discuss, but I think they should be discussed, no matter how painful.’

KAMAL
Kamal strongly dislikes noughts. Kamal is a government official, and he regards Crosses as superior to noughts. His belief in the importance of segregation drives his behaviour in the novel.

JASMINE
Despite her family’s power and status, Jasmine suffers throughout the book. Her husband’s neglect causes Jasmine to feel lonely, insignificant and powerless.

RYAN
Ryan does all that he can to protect his family. He, alongside Jude, joins the Liberation Militia. However, as a result of his loyalty to this cause, and his devotion to his family, Ryan is imprisoned.

MARGARET (MEGGIE)
Meggie is a protective woman. For fourteen years, she worked for the Hadley family as a member of household staff. However, after being sacked by the Hadley family, Meggie and her family suffer financial hardship.

PERSEPHONE (SEPHY)
‘Sephy’ is the daughter of the powerful Kamal Hadley. She is a Cross, meaning that she was born with a certain amount of privilege, which is contrasted with her childhood friend Callum. Initially, Sephy is naïve to the brutal world around her. However, she learns to sympathise with Callum’s suffering.

MINERVA (MINNIE)
Minerva is the older sister of Sephy. Often, Minerva does not agree with Sephy’s positive opinions of noughts. Despite frequent arguments with her sister, Sephy does sometimes confide in Minerva.

LYNETTE
Lynette is Jude and Callum’s older sister. Previously, she dated a Cross and as a result, she was attacked by some noughts. Consequently, due to the trauma, the attack affects Lynette mentally.

JUDE
Callum’s older brother, who displays violent and aggressive tendencies. While Callum is resolved to playing the system and becoming successful within it, Jude is concerned with rebellion, becoming involved with a terrorist organisation.

CALLUM
Callum is intelligent and hard-working. During childhood, he was best friends with Sephy, sharing a close connection, and later entering into a romantic relationship. With the help of a scholarship, Callum is able to join Sephy’s ‘Cross’ school, which leads to discrimination and bullying.



Unit vocabulary

1. Ambiguous	Open to more than one interpretation; not having one obvious meaning. Not clear or decided.
2. Abrupt	i). Sudden and unexpected. ii). Brief to the point of rudeness.
3. Relentless	Continuing in a severe or extreme way.
4. Victimised	To treat someone in an intentionally unfair way, often because of their race, sex or beliefs.
5. Disconcerting	Making someone feel uncertain and uncomfortable, or worried.
6. Tension	An unsettling feeling of nervousness and apprehension before or during an important or difficult event.
7. Segregation	The act of keeping one group of people apart from another and treating them differently, especially because of race, sex, or religion.
8. Ignorance	Lack of knowledge, understanding, or information about something.
9. Prejudice	An unfair and unreasonable opinion or feeling, especially when formed without enough thought or knowledge.
10. Discrimination	Treating a person or particular group of people differently, especially in a worse way from the way in which you treat other people (e.g. because of their skin colour, sex or sexuality).
11. Equality/inequality	Equality - the right of different groups of people to have a similar social position and receive the same treatment.
12. Justice/injustice	Justice - fairness in the way people are dealt with.
13. Rebellious	If a group of people are rebellious, they oppose the ideas of the people in authority and plan to change the system, often using force.
14. Empathy	The ability to share someone else's feelings or experiences by imagining what it would be like to be in that person's situation.
15. Retaliation	The act of hurting someone or doing something harmful to someone because they have done or said something harmful to you.

Unit terminology

1. Dual narrative	A story that is told from two different perspectives.
2. Contrast	A type of opposition between two ideas or objects used to highlight differences.
3. Structure	The structure of a text refers to its shape as a whole. This can mean the order of plot events.
4. Theme	The main ideas that are explored throughout a piece of literature.
5. Context	The context of a text is the place and time in which it was written, who it was written by, and where it was published. All of these affect the purpose and effect of the text.
6. Shift of focus	Changes in what the writer focuses upon as texts develop – e.g. changing from focusing on one scene to another.
7. Dystopian	An imagined society where there is great suffering and injustice.
8. First-person narrative	When the text that you are reading is told from the point of view of a character in the novel.
9. Sentence functions	Declarative – when a sentence is making a statement. Exclamative – when a sentence conveys a strong sense of emotion and alarm, or strong emphasis. Imperative – when a sentence is giving a command. Interrogative – when a sentence is asking a question.
10. Dialogue	Spoken conversation between characters in a text.

Tips for Analysing the Text

WHAT

- **What** is the writer trying to show us?
- **What** is the precise textual evidence to support your ideas?
- **What** is implied about a character/place/theme?



HOW

- **How** does evidence from the text show this?
- **How** do key words create this idea?
- **How** do the writer's methods create meaning?



WHY

- **Why** is the writer showing us this now?
- **Why** might the reader react in a certain way?
- **Why** is this similar or different to other moments?



ANALYTICAL VERBS TO USE

- Suggests
- Implies
- Highlights
- Portrays
- Creates
- Conveys
- Reveals
- Illustrates
- Depicts
- Reflects
- Demonstrates