Chapter One

Chapter Summary

Link, the novel's protagonist introduces himself to the reader as 'one of the invisible people.' (p.1) The care or lack of it, that society affords to the homeless people that Link talks about, is an issue which will come to dominate the novel.

Link tells the reader of the events that left him with little alternative but to make himself homeless. The happy family life that he had enjoyed until his teenage years was shattered when 'Dad ran off with a receptionist in 1991.' This is a devastating blow for any adolescent, but Link manages to cope with the loss of his father, he does not dwell on the reasons for his father's departure, and does not blame him for the events that follow. 'That's not why I ended up like this,' Link reveals.

Link is uncompromising in his view of who ruined his chances of a normal adolescence. 'Vincent's to blame for that,' Link informs us. Vince's thinly veiled attempt to care for Link by inviting him to call him Dad, is quickly revealed for what it really is. Vince is not a father figure, and Link vows that even if 'he was the last guy on Earth [...] I wouldn't call that fat pillock Dad.' (p.4).

Taking offence to Vince's suggestive comments directed at his mother, Link observes how 'the slob leers and winks,' so that it makes 'me [Link] puke.'
Link watches his family disintegrate before his own eyes. Not only has Vince changed her [Link's mum], 'but something happened between Carole and Vince.' (p.5).

Before long, the verbal abuse that Link suffers at the hands of his abusive step – father is replaced by physical abuse. Link has been locked out of the house, and then receives a 'slapping […] around the head' on his return. Believing that the only option is to leave, Link makes himself homeless.

Activity 1

Ask the pupils to pick out the words and phrases that describe Vince, and to comment on why they are so effective.

Words and phrases to describe Vince

'Grey hair', 'fat belly', 'likes his ale', 'fat pillock', 'slob leers and winks', makes me puke', 'nastier and nastier', 'slapping me around the head', 'one hundred percent out – and – out bastard.'

Activity 2

In order to make our writing as detailed and interesting as possible, we need to use adjectives. Adjectives are 'describing words' which help to make the meaning of the noun fuller.

For example;
Fruit (noun) may be ripe, sweet, juicy, bitter, tempting or delicious.

Write a short, but detailed, description of two people. The description can be based on someone that you know, or be entirely fictional. Comment on the person's physical appearance and their temperament.

You may find that on re – reading your description, you can improve it. Treat your first attempt as a draft.

Your description could be enhanced by a detailed description of physical features, for example;

1) Mr. Savage's no coloured eyes disappeared deeper and deeper into his skull with every dull thud of the hammer. His contorted face was locked with the burning hatred that had consumed him for so long. The high pitched screech had ended an age before the final crash of the hammer invited the silence of that eerie night to return. Now, Savage's gnarled, cracked fingers bled at the pressure points where he had gripped the hammer with such force.
2) Mrs. Sweetman’s rosy face peered around the door. ‘Anyone home?’ she inquired. The cat purred as it wound its way around the fringe of her flowery skirt. Mrs. Sweetman reminded me of my own grandma.

The endless hours of fun I enjoyed as a child with my grandma, now flashed before me in an instant as the sweet smelling sticky toffee buns filled the air. ‘Fresh out of the oven, just for you,’ Mrs. Sweetman beckoned as she invited me to take the first cake.

I pondered how Mrs. Sweetman always looked so tidy. Her hair, always tied back neatly in a bun with a middle parting, her gold rimmed glasses, and her light flowery perfume almost made me look forward to growing old. Maybe then I too could bake delicious cakes all day long.

Chapter Two

Chapter summary

Link talks of how uncomfortable his situation is, of the embarrassment of meeting someone who recognizes you whilst you are begging for money.

Apart from the obvious physical difficulties, Link mentions the other dangers that are very real to those who live on the streets. ‘You’re going to be at risk every minute, day and night,’ he warns us.

Activity 1

Make a list of the problems and dangers that homeless people face. At the top of the list put the problem that you think is the hardest to overcome.

Examples

- Nowhere to wash / shower / brush teeth
- Nowhere to sleep
- Limited money to buy food
- Clothes become tatty and worn – no change of clothes
- Cold/ rain / snow
- Theft
- Accosted by drunks
- Befriended by undesirables

Discuss what might happen when a homeless person finds themselves faced with the above situations. For example a homeless youngster may turn to drink or drugs to blot out the unpleasantness of their situation.

Chapter Three

Daily Routine

It is prior to this chapter that Shelter’s ‘Daily Routine’ reveals how his mission is to ‘turn dirty, scruffy, pimply youths into soldiers. Into men.’ Tired of the how the ‘scruffy blighters’ are making the place look ‘manky,’ Shelter tells us that he has a ‘plot’ to rid the streets of the ‘dossers and junkies and drunks.’

Chapter summary

Link begins to feel depressed as he knows that he is unemployable in his present state. Although Link returns to his sister’s house for Christmas, it is far from the happy event that it should be. His mother and sister put together to buy him a new sleeping bag as a Christmas present. Link feels increasingly alienated from his family, and Vince doesn’t help by calling him a ‘disgrace,’ ‘a scrounger,’ and a ‘layabout’ who ought to be ‘looking for work.’

On returning to the streets, Link is pestered by a ‘stinky old ciderhead.’ He gives him twenty pence to get rid of him.
Activity 1

Write about a time when you have felt alone or alienated from others.

This could be something as simple as refusing to throw stones at a window. Perhaps you were laughed at, and called names by your peers for refusing to join in.

Remember to make your account detailed. It can either be true or fictional. Before you write your story, spend ten minutes planning the sequence of events, and how you will arrange them into paragraphs.

If you are stuck, use the following opening for your story:

It was a dark, wet December night and Mrs. Hampshire had already been to the window once to investigate the cause of the noise outside. As her shadowy figure disappeared from the window Daniel threw the stone. ‘What a cracker!’ he yelled as the stone shattered the top window. ‘Right,’ I shivered ‘Are you satisfied now? Can we get going, I’m starving.’ Daniel could read my thoughts. ‘Scared are we? You’re such a wimp,’ Daniel teased...

Chapter Four

Chapter summary

Link travels to London and with the money he has left, he books into a B&B. Optimistic that the future in London is brighter because you ‘can invent your own past and call yourself anything you choose,’ Link imagines that he will be able to find work. Link’s hope is short - lived as he realizes that he has two weeks to find employment, otherwise he’ll be out on the streets again.

Chapter Five

Daily Routine

Shelter trawls the streets of London picking up ‘recruits.’ He tells them that he ‘runs a hostel on Plender street’ Shelter seems pleased that he has little difficulty in persuading these desperate homeless men to accompany him back to his lodgings. ‘Part of my preparation […] Brilliant touch.’ he boasts. The real danger that Shelter poses is revealed when he informs us ‘I slipped up behind him and put him out of his misery.’ In a chilling afterthought, Shelter demonstrates his lack of remorse for the killing. In fact, he speaks as if he has done the stranger a favour by putting him out of his misery. ‘Cruel? I don’t think so. He’s neither cold nor hungry now,’ he tells us. In the final line of his speech, Shelter announces the reason behind his mission. He justifies the murder by claiming ‘there’s one less dosser to clutter up the place.’

Chapter summary

Link’s landlord comes to collect the rent three days early, and Link cannot afford to pay. After grabbing Link by the shirt and demanding immediate payment, Link knows that he must move on. Realizing that things have not worked out as he had planned, Link’s despondency is evident as he contemplates his situation, finding himself ‘poised at the top of that downward spiral.’
### Activity 1

**Comprehension questions**

1) How many places does Link visit to try to gain employment?

2) Which places does Link visit?

3) Why do you think that he cannot find a job?

4) What does Link live on? Why do you think this is?

5) How much money does Link have left?

6) What is the problem that he faces?

7) How does Link respond to the landlord's demand?

8) Why do you think that he does this?

9) What situation did Link think that he was in last week? How is this different from the situation that he finds himself in now?

10) What is there in this chapter to suggest that Link is both a reasonable and a kind person?

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### Chapter Six

**Daily Routine**

Shelter's matter of fact 'discourse' on killing in which he arrogantly states that he won't get caught because 'I've planned in advance,' and his boast that 'killing's easy. Dead easy.' negates any sympathy that we might have felt for a disturbed loner who had murdered from a misguided sense of helping the community. His questioning 'So why if I'm disposing of these druggy dossers whose activities are dragging the country down, am I a murderer? is almost beyond belief. He regards all of the homeless people that he picks up as 'dossers', and shows total contempt for their wellbeing.

It becomes obvious that Shelter is more than a cold - blooded murderer; he is deeply disturbed. We learn that he stores his victims' corpses under his floorboards. In a voice of cool detachment, he speaks of how 'our little friend now lies' under the floorboards where 'he doesn't feel the cold' now. In an odd reversal, Shelter now cares for the victims that he despised in life.

**Chapter summary**

In this chapter, Link has his most unpleasant encounter of the novel so far. Feeling numb from the cold and hungry, Link finds himself a doorway where he can at least shelter and try to get warm. Despite his shortage of money, Link is honest enough to try to pay to use the station toilet, but when the attendant upsets him, he vaults over the turnstile. His refusal to pay is met with a ‘punch at my [Link’s] head.’

On returning to his doorway, he finds it occupied. The man in the doorway has little sympathy, telling Link to 'sod off now!' Feeling upset after having been rejected by his own kind, Link feels as if 'I'd [he'd] spend the rest of my [his] life being pushed around.' The same man then mugs Link of his 'last treasure,' a watch given to him by his mother. Link wants to cry.
Activity 1

Imagine that you are Link. The last few nights have left you feeling desperate. You have encountered a number of problems so far, and there are more in store. You have been evicted from the B&B after being threatened by the landlord, you are cold and hungry, the attendant has tried to punch you, someone has moved into the doorway that you had intended to sleep in, and you have been mugged of your most treasured possession.

Write a letter to your mother telling her of the problems that you are facing, and how you wish that you could come home to a caring family once again.

Words and phrases that you might include in your letter

1) angry  2) unhappy  3) lonely  3) freezing cold
4) starving  5) crying  6) bitter  7) deserted
8) unwanted  9) desperate  10) frightened  11) despondent
12) homesick  13) depressed  14) outcast  15) worthless

Alternative task

1) Imagine that you are Link, and have just been evicted from the B&B that you have lived in for the past two weeks. You are now homeless, and have nowhere to go. You are given a free magazine whilst in town. You decide to write to the problem page to ask for advice about your situation.

2) Imagine that you are the ‘agony aunt.’ Write a reply to Link’s letter.

Remember that your letter and reply must be short, but needs to contain all the relevant information.

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Chapter Seven

Daily Routine

Shelter’s indifference to his crime is difficult enough to comprehend, but even more disturbing is his calculative nature. He talks about how he must ‘create as much variety as possible’ so that he does not arouse suspicion. Shelter is a dangerous character, he has both the compulsion to kill, and the ability to cover his tracks. He talks of ‘my appointed task,’ almost as if this it is his duty to kill.

He is able to trick a young homeless woman into believing that he can offer her a safe haven. Shelter enjoys the power that he holds over these vulnerable people, ‘I could see the dawn of hope in her eye,’ he tells us. He revels in the fact that he can persuade this young person to believe whatever he tells her. ‘I was brilliant,’ he boasts.

Again, shelter tells us of the bizarre ritual in which he studies the corpses of his victims.

Chapter summary

Link meets Ginger when he comes to share a doorway with him. Keen to strike up a friendship, Link talks to Ginger about life on the streets. Ginger warns Link not to tell other people that he has money on him.

After being woken and moved on by the police, Link and Ginger make their way to the all night kebab house where Ginger explains to Link how he survives on the streets. They find a spot and begin to beg for money. Link observes the different reactions of the people who pass by. Some simply ‘walk on glassy – eyed and expressionless,’ (p.47) whilst others shake their heads and shrug.
Later on they visit St. James’ church where they each buy a cheese roll for lunch. The situation that Link finds himself in is far from ideal, but he is grateful that he has a companion at least for the time being. ‘I had a friend, a full belly and a roof over my head,’ he tells us.

Activity 1

‘Nobody cares see? Nobody gives a toss’ (p.45, Ginger). Discuss the varying attitudes to homelessness, both in the novel and in real life.

Reasons why people become homeless:

- Problems at home - alcoholic parents, abuse, neglect, parents who can’t cope any longer, unhappy in local authority care, thieving from family to feed addiction etc
- Problems at school – causing disruption, being suspended or expelled, drug and alcohol abuse, etc

Attitudes towards homeless people

- Disgust
- Embarrassed when homeless people try to make conversation or ask for money
- Self inflicted – Link chose to leave home
- Dossers who don’t want work - Vince tells Link to find a job
- Addicts who have no one else to blame but themselves for the situation that they are in
- They are comfortable with the way that they live and wouldn’t accept a house if they were offered one anyway
- Understanding that some of these people are left with little alternative but to live on the streets
- Admiration for those who sell the Big Issue – they are trying to earn a wage and better themselves

Chapter Eight

Daily routine

Shelter refers to his work as ‘amusing.’

Chapter summary

Link has started to beg for money, but he finds it humiliating. Feeling rejected, he wonders how people can appreciate the ‘beauty of fine art’ whilst they pass a ‘fellow creature’ by and are insensitive to any feelings that he might have. Realizing that their rejection of him is not personal, Link becomes ‘indifferent too.’

In this chapter Link reminds us of the physical difficulties of living on the streets. The wind is strong, he is ‘half frozen,’ and has nowhere to sleep but on a ‘floor of stone, tile, concrete or brick’ which is hard and cold. (p.55)

Link recalls the time when he was robbed of his watch. There are, he reminds us, much worse experiences than that. There is the fear of being spotted by a gang of ‘lager louts,’ or the menacing ‘guys who like young boys.’ (p.56). The constant state of red alert means that it is difficult to sleep.

Link thinks back to how life used to be when he was living at home, but he knows that if he is to survive now, he ‘mustn’t think about that.’ (p.58). Link reveals that he misses his mum, and he wonders whether she misses him too.

Link’s living conditions are poor, and this takes its toll on his health. Feeling desperate and depressed, he talks of being ‘a social outcast [...] a non-person to whom every ordinary everyday activity is closed.’ Link hints at the inescapable circle that he is going around in. What is the use of wishing for tomorrow to arrive when it ‘is certain to be every bit as grim as yesterday?’
Activity 1

Diary writing

A diary is used to write down important things that have happened to you and how you felt about them at that time. Many people keep a diary and write in it regularly. Most diaries are personal; the only person who reads it is the person who has written it.

During World War II, a young Jewish girl called Anne Frank wrote a diary depicting her life in hiding from the Nazis. More recently, Zlata Filipovic, a young Bosnian girl, told of her experiences living in Sarajevo during the Bosnian conflict. The diary became a friend for Zlata, and she gave it a name.

Class discussion

Read an extract from either Anne Frank’s diary or Zlata Filipovic’s diary.

Discuss first person narrative - feeling of intimacy. Perhaps compare it with third person narrative.

Talk about what you might wish to include in a diary, and the style in which it is written.

Imagine that you are Link, and that you have spent the past week begging for money to buy food. You have nowhere to sleep, and it has rained heavily each night. Your clothes are damp and you smell. You are suffering from stomach ache from hunger, and your joints ache from the cold. You are desperate and depressed.

Write your diary for the past week. Remember that in a diary people record their feelings, worries, and hopes for the future.

Alternative Task

In this chapter, Swindells chooses vocabulary very carefully to describe Link’s situation. Choose ten words or phrases that reflect this. Next to each word or phrase make a note of why you think the author has used that particular description. For example;

1) ‘chattering teeth’ - the word chattering suggests that Link is extremely cold.
2) ‘half frozen’ - the ground can be frozen, but a person can’t. This is a figure of speech to help the reader understand just how cold Link is.

Chapter Nine

Daily routine

Shelter imagines that if he was caught ‘they’d probably make a film’ about him. Proud of his ‘skill’ and ability to deceive, he continues to emphasize how easily he can adopt the persona of a caring hostel warden to trap his victims.

Shelter derives pleasure from dressing, washing and caring for the corpses of his victims. Even though we can argue that he is evil and is fully aware of the seriousness of his crimes, surely this odd obsession also convinces us that he is deranged.

Chapter summary

Link and Ginger decide to spend the last of their change on a bed for the night. Link feels jealous of Ginger’s friends because ‘they’ve shared experiences.’ (p.71). Link considers how the parents of homeless people could have never dreamed that their child would end up existing like this in a society where he ‘live on scraps and be so unimportant that he’d vanish and no one would care’ (p.74)
Activity 1

Link's and Ginger's hopes are concerned with every day survival at the present moment.

Write about your hopes for the future and your ambitions. Perhaps someone who you respect has influenced choices that you have made in the past, or you will try to follow the path of somebody that you admire in the future.

Plan

**Introduction** – what your position is now – subjects you enjoy – options that you have taken with careers in mind

**Second section** – why you have this interest – what draws you to this particular career?

**Third section** – particular person that has influenced your decisions e.g father that has taught you how to repair cars etc.

**Fourth section** – route that you must follow in order to fulfill your ambition – how this will alter your life e.g if you want to become a doctor, you will have to train for seven years.

**Conclusion** – what you will aim for once you have achieved your goal.

Chapter Ten

Daily Routine

Shelter's observation of potential victims and his meticulous planning to snare them disgust us.

Chapter summary

Link is constantly wet and freezing and this makes 'sleep impossible.' The wind is biting, and Link is hungry. He is having trouble making any money through begging. For a brief moment, he even contemplates returning to Vince. The fact that Link considers this as a realistic option reveals just how desperate he really is. Link is starting to hallucinate, and knows that he must keep moving if he is to avoid hypothermia.

Link is further isolated when Ginger, his sole companion, goes off to 'meet some mates down Holburn way.' Feeling as if he has been cast aside by Ginger - who tells him 'I'll see you later - ' Link talks of the sense of rejection that affects him deeply. 'It hurt like Hell,' he confesses.

Not wanting to spend the night alone, Link decides to use the last of his money to pay for a bed at Captain Hook's.

Activity 1

**Task one**

Drugs and alcohol abuse is proportionally higher amongst homeless people.
Discuss the reasons for this with a partner.

**Task two**

**Attitudes towards drugs**

Discuss the difference between fact and opinion, and how facts and opinions are used in campaigns.

Complete the following exercise, by writing FACT or OPINION next to each sentence.

1. Drugs can kill people  
2. Cannabis should be legalised
3. Snorting cocaine is worse that injecting heroin  O 
4. Crack is a pure form of cocaine  F 
5. People who take illegal drugs are breaking the law  F 
6. People who take drugs are stupid  O 
7. Dealers should be put in prison for a long time  O 
8. Some people who suffer from Multiple Sclerosis smoke cannabis to ease their pain  F 
9. A single ecstasy tablet can kill a first time user  F 
10. Drug users who inject are at risk of contracting AIDS  F 
11. People wouldn't use drugs if there were other more interesting ways to spend their leisure time  O.

Task three

Most young people and adults are aware of the dangers of taking drugs, yet some people continue, for whatever reason, to experiment with drugs.

Design a leaflet to inform and educate people about drugs. Think hard about what you will include before you begin writing. Make your leaflet attractive, so that people will want to read it. Include appropriate captions or slogans to draw people's attention to the issue.

Chapter Eleven

Daily Routine

Shelter begins to de - brief us on the day's events. He reveals how he followed Link and Ginger, waiting for them to separate. Shelter is almost animal like in the way in which he stalks his prey, only deciding to pounce when they are alone, apart from the shelter of a group.

Realizing that Ginger is alone, Shelter moves in. He convinces the 'cagey' Ginger that he has knocked Link down, and that the seriously injured Link is at his house. Ginger, concerned about his friend, follows Shelter. Ginger becomes the latest victim.

Shelter's sadistic nature is evident in his delight at his 'brilliance' in snaring Ginger who is at first wary of his tale. Again, the extraordinary sequence of events that Shelter engineers to convince Ginger that it really is the heavily bleeding Link under the blanket, display his unbalanced state of mind. In a chilling warning, Shelter vows to carry on the killings, flippantly stating 'there's always tomorrow,' when he fails to trap Link.

Chapter summary

After considering various reasons for Ginger's disappearance, Link decides to ask around. In a conversation that follows with a Big Issue vendor, Link learns that Ginger was seen talking to another man, and Link's name was mentioned. Tension is created as we realize that the vendor witnessed Ginger talking to his Killer. The murderer is also aware of Link's existence.

In a chance meeting, Link speaks to a Toya, a girl that knows Ginger. She too is unsure of Ginger's whereabouts, suggesting that he may have found employment and moved on. After a brief meeting with a second 'dosser' called Gail, Link tells her that he must go in keeping with his promise to himself not to allow anyone to get too close to him. He relents when she makes it clear that she needs his help.

Activity 1 - comprehension questions

1) Why is Link worried about Ginger? (p.85) 
2) Link asks a Big Issue vendor about Ginger. What information does he give him? (p.86) 
3) Who does Link meet in an 'all - night joint,' and what does she suggest might have happened to Ginger? (p.88) 
4) Why do you think that Link decides 'Don't let anybody close?' (p.88) 
5) Describe the unusual appearance of the 'dosser' that walks into the café. (p.89) 
6) What excuse does Link give for wanting to leave? What is the real reason that he wants to leave? (p.91) 
7) Give two reasons why Link decides to stay (p.91)
Activity 2

Link has just met Gail, a pretty girl who has sat beside him in a café. Link is about to leave but she urges him to stay, possibly because she is new to the streets and is frightened of being on her own. The chapter ends as Link drops his pack down and sits down.

Write the continuation of the chapter.

Section one
♦ Why is Gail desperate for you to stay?
♦ How does she think that you can help her?

Section two
♦ What does she tell you about how she came to be on the streets?
♦ What do you decide to tell her about your situation?
♦ What do you choose to keep to yourself?
♦ Do you tell her about your hopes and fears for the future?

Section three
♦ Do you agree to help her?
♦ What do you want, if anything, from her in return?

Chapter Twelve

Daily Routine

Shelter appears annoyed with himself because he has made a 'mistake.' Instead of concentrating on his next victim, Link, he 'went looking for [army] boots' to dress his collection of corpses in. This relapse strengthens his determination to capture Link. Now that Link has a companion, Shelter admits that he must 're-group' and 'devise fresh tactics' if he is to succeed this time.

Chapter summary

Homelessness moves individuals to the edge of society, to a place where they exist rather than live. Homelessness creates a 'separate species.' Link talks of how being an 'outsider' denies you the chance to 'get your hair cut or have dental check-ups,' because normal everyday experience doesn't apply to you.

At his lowest point, Link begins to think of himself as a 'different creature,' living beside, not in harmony with the world around him. In meeting Gail, Link learns to appreciate what it is to feel that he belongs to society again. He talks poignantly about how for the first time in months he 'wasn't some sort of freak.' The cold and the hunger are still a problem, but Link manages to 'stop noticing' them.

The chapter ends on a positive note, Link has made a friend, someone who seems genuinely interested in him as a person. However, we as readers are forced to reflect on our own materialistic existence. In the 21st century how many of us can honestly say that all we need to be happy is the company of others?

Activity 1

After reading this chapter, it is clear that Link begins to think more positively about his situation. He is still homeless, but some aspects of his existence have changed. What are they, and how does this alter Link's perspective on life?

Start by considering how Link feels at the start of the chapter, and at what point, and for what reason this changes.
Chapter Thirteen

Daily Routine

Shelter vows to continue his 'business' to 'rid my [his] country of riff - raff that's dragging it down.' The word 'business' indicates that Shelter believes that he is providing a valuable service. His self-serving logic that now:

None of my lads is hungry, and they've got a roof over their heads and a floor as well

is his attempt to convince us that he is carrying out this task for the benefit of the country.

Chapter summary

Feeling that Gail values him, Link becomes obsessed with finding a job so that he can provide a home for her.

Toya's father is scouring the streets looking for her. Link wishes that someone cared for him enough to come to find him.

Activity 1

Earlier on in the novel, Link repeatedly complains of the effects of the weather. He was 'constantly wet,' often 'freezing,' really hungry and found it impossible to sleep (p.76-77). His health was suffering too. He had 'stomach cramps, headaches from the flu, toothache, fleas and lice.' (p.57).

Look back at the above descriptions, and compare them with the weather in chapter thirteen, and how Link feels at this point.

Chapter Fourteen

Daily Routine

We learn that a middle-aged man has knocked at Shelter's door the previous evening. Suspicious of his appearance and warned by his instinct, Shelter views his visitor from behind a curtain, choosing not to open the door.

In a further insight into his warped mind, we learn how Shelter's life depends on being in control down to the finest detail. He is obsessive, only using a sixty-watt bulb so as to never 'show a strong light after dusk.' After checking that 'no illumination is visible' from outside, he is convinced that he has 'nothing to worry about.' He continuously 'checks everything,' and knows that he must exercise particular care over the next day or so if he is to avoid prying eyes.

The resourcefulness with which Shelter avoids suspicion and his astute observations on how he must behave in the future convince the reader of his wickedness.

Chapter summary

Nick, the Big Issue vendor, approaches Link to tell him that he saw Toya with the same man that he saw Ginger talking to. Nick's suspicions are aroused as both Ginger and Toya are now missing. Realizing that the man was Captain Hook, Nick sent Toya's father - who is searching for his missing daughter - to the house.
Concerned about what he has just heard, Link suggests that Nick should go to the police. Nick is less optimistic, expecting the police to conclude that Toya and Ginger are two dossers who have simply moved on.

Increasingly troubled by Ginger's sudden disappearance, Link persuades Gail to accompany him to the police station. Just as Nick had forecast, the duty sergeant is irritated, claiming that the matter has already been investigated, and that 'nothing has been found to justify further action.'

Chapter Fifteen

Daily Routine

Shelter launches into a venomous attack in which he declares that he has had the 'last laugh' as the enemy has 'been repulsed.' His laughing out loud makes us think for an instant that he is a lunatic. We must however remember the careful planning that has gone into all Shelter's work, this should convince us that he is far from mad.

Confident that he can continue to outwit the police, Shelter toys with the idea of whether or not he should open the door to the two officers waiting outside. Maintaining a calm exterior, he congratulates himself on being able to remain 'as cool as a cucumber.' As the master of manipulation, Shelter is able to adjust his persona to suit the moment. Convincing the officers that he is 'shy and modest,' with a genuine concern for the homeless people is easily accomplished.

Satisfied that Shelter is telling the truth, the officers offer advice telling him to be careful about who he invites into his home. Shelter's reply 'I'll be careful,' is deeply ironic. Of course Shelter will be careful, careful not to get caught.

Again, it is worth noting that Shelter is so certain of his ability to deceive the officers, that he tells them

I never let them stay overnight - well - because
I'm afraid I might be murdered in my bed.

Shelter is playing games, he deliberately addresses the constable as inspector, so as to make him feel more important. After shutting the door Shelter breaks into uncontrollable laughter at having fooled the police.

Chapter summary

Link and Gail plan to approach Captain Hook to find out where Nick lives, but aware that he wouldn't tell them, Gail decides to go on her own. Whilst Link is waiting for Gail to return, he reflects on how meeting her has changed his life for the better. Despite this, Link feels a strange uneasiness that he cannot explain. He is suspicious of Gail's confidence, and suspects that she might not really be homeless. He tells us 'she [Gail] wasn't screwed up enough.'

After finding out where Nick lives, Link and Gail set off to watch the house where they think Toya and Ginger were last seen. They spend a considerable amount of time watching the house over a few days, but their surveillance amounts to nothing. Convinced that 'horrible things had been done in the house,' Link is struck by the ordinary appearance of the man who lives there.

Gail has 'a couple of things to see to' so Link keeps watch alone. In a chance conversation about a 'missing' cat, the man invites Link into his house for something to eat. Tempting him with the offer of a coat that might keep Link warm and dry, he feels that it is rude to refuse such a generous offer.

On entering the living room, Link comments on how everything was in its place, the house is immaculate. The lingering suspicions that Link had as he surveyed the house, have now dissolved. Alone in the room, Link begins to 'feel more complacent by the second.' The sight of his watch on the sideboard alerts Link that there is something wrong. (Link had been mugged for his watch by another homeless man earlier on in the novel).

As the man walks into the room, Link starts to panic, and he feels a tightening sensation in his chest. 'Paralyzed with horror,' Link looks at the man's contorted face and he realizes that he is trapped by the same 'mad' man that had taken Ginger and Toya.
Shelter warns Link of the fate of the other 'recruits,' and he removes the floorboards for Link to see the bodies of the other victims. Realizing the urgency with which he must escape, Link tries to smash the front window, but the glass only cracks. Link, 'sobbing with terror,' manages to claw himself free, but Shelter pins him to the floor. Overhanging the hole in the floorboards, Link is forced to look at the bodies of the murdered victims below, and he recognizes Ginger, even though he has had his head shaved. Link is losing consciousness as Shelter is trying to strangle him. Shelter does get off Link but it is only to reach for a length of flex to kill Link more quickly.

Unexpectedly, the sirens scream, and the police arrive to drag Shelter out. Gail is waiting for Link, and she explains how, when she returned outside the house and he was gone, she alerted the police.

Gail reveals her true identity, that she is a T.V journalist researching homelessness. Angry and traumatized by his experience, Link at first accuses Gail of standing by when she was aware of what was happening. He realizes though that he 'hardly knew what he [Link] was saying.' Gail 'shoves a wad of bank notes into Links hand,' wishes him good luck and disappears into a waiting car.

Link reflects on what has happened to Shelter, and the situation that he now finds himself in. Shelter has been sent to prison, but as Link reminds us, he still has 'a roof [over his head], a bed and three square meals a day.' Link points out that a murderer is treated with more dignity than he is.

Link is not bitter about his near death experience, or even that he still has to struggle on the streets. He does hope however, that Gail's research into homelessness will prompt people to 'make things better if they know what's going on,' so that young people such as Link have other alternatives to life on the streets.

Activity 1
We spend millions of pounds housing criminals often for many years, yet we don't do enough to help those such as Link who are forced to become homeless. Discuss this view.

Points to consider
What help does society offer?
How effective is this help in a real world?
Are there any problems with the help that is offered?
How could we improve it?
Should prisoners have privileges?
What should we provide for prisoners?
What should we not provide for them?
Is prison just about punishment?
How can we try to ensure that on release from prison, prisoners are able to lead productive lives?
Should there be support for prisoners as well as victims?

End of Novel Assignments
1) Everyone has a choice in life, and Link chose to become homeless. Discuss this with reference to the novel.

It would be useful if you had accurate information and statistics about the reasons that people become homeless.

2) Shelter has taken people's lives and should lose his own. It costs the Government and the taxpayer far too much money to keep such prisoners.

Discuss the extent to which you agree or disagree with the above statement.

3) Shelter is obviously insane. We should seek to help rather than punish him.

Discuss the extent to which you agree with this viewpoint.