Suggestions for teaching

1. Prejudice - pre-reading

- Make a list of people or groups who experience prejudice anywhere in the world today.
- Identify a new group of people who will be the targets of prejudice - the Cornish? Anyone with blue eyes or straight hair?
- Discuss the different ways in which the group could experience unfair discrimination.
- Ask the class to invent situations in which prejudice could be exercised. In groups, role play situations of discrimination, prejudice, bullying.
- Immediately after the role play, ask the participants to write down their thoughts and feelings about their experiences (in role or as themselves.)

2. How the author hints at identity

It isn’t until page 52 that we are given proof of the colour-prejudice that exists in the society of the novel.

- Find this evidence and then go back through the novel, finding the clues that have been planted earlier.

Some relevant pages: 9, 30, 36, 46.

3. Sticks and stones, the language of hate.
(After reading Chapter 7)

Connotation: ideas we associate with certain words (e.g. green = envy or jealousy).

- What are the connotations of nought? Of cross, or crosses?
- Write these down.
- What is political correctness?
- What is the effect of labelling people? Write ‘names’ on the board and ask the class to think about what they mean and the effect they have on society.
- Task: as you read, make a list of the names or labels each side gives the other. Include the connotations of words like ‘blankers’ and ‘daggers’. Turn to Chapter 14 to read Callum’s thoughts on the effects of language on self-perception.
4. Narrative perspectives

The novel is written in the alternate narrative voices of Callum and Sephy.

- Choose an incident and write it from another’s point of view.

The scene at the school on Callum’s first day could be written from the points of view of:

- Mr Corsa the headmaster - writing a report to the school governors.
- A journalist reporting for a Cross newspaper.
- A member of the Liberation Militia, as part of a recruitment campaign.
- A diary entry written by Harry, Sephy’s driver.

5. Script writing

At various points in the novel, events are covered on the television news.

- Chapters 8, 9 and 10: Sephy’s father is interviewed.
- Chapter 17: general news items.
- Chapter 50: the explosion at the shopping mall.
- Chapter 71: updates on Callum’s father’s trial.
- Chapter 73: the verdict.
- Chapter 76: the stay of execution and its aftermath.
- Sephy’s kidnapping.
- Callum’s execution.

- Record the ITV news to show in class, or set a homework in which the class watch the ITV news, making notes on: format, news items, ordering and advertisements during the advert break, as well as the weather slot.
- In pairs, write up the scripts for events from the novel and put onto an ‘autocue’ for the newsreaders.
- Include live links to on-the-spot reporters, eyewitnesses. Invent experts and politicians to be interviewed in the studio.
- Set four separate pairs to work on suitable adverts.
- Include a weatherperson (Weathermap on PowerPoint or whiteboard).
- Decide on appropriate signature tune to play programme in and out.
- Choose or audition pairs of newsreaders, reporters, eyewitnesses etc, rehearse, then act or film all or some scenes.
- The class could complete a self-evaluation after watching the news programme.
Roles:

- Scriptwriters: whole class, various scenes
- Newsreaders x 2 or more, depending on number of news items
- Reporters x 2 or more
- Eyewitnesses/interviewees - outside links x 4
- Interviewees: newsroom x 4
- Weatherperson x 1 or more
- Four or more adverts: 8 to 10
- Camera operator x 1
- Studio directors

The above list is flexible to cover varying class sizes and how many or few scenes are used.

Callum’s last letter

Write the letter that Callum gives to Jack, his prison guard, to be delivered to Sephy. See page 438.