

Suspense is created when we do not know what is going to happen. Tension is increased as we wait for the characters to solve the problem in the text. Identify a key scene that creates suspense and a key scene that shows tension within the novel and describe how each scene does so.

Suspense (Class ideas):

- When Rafters meets Fergus and asks him to do a job for him
- The first time Fergus goes running over the mountain with the parcel and he meets Owain - we are afraid that Owain is going to search him and he will be arrested
- When Fergus and Uncle Tally find the body in the bog - we don't know how long it has been there or what happens
- Owain and Fergus open the parcel that they think has a bomb in it - all along the reader is led to believe that Fergus might be smuggling bombs or bomb making equipment
- When they receive the phone call from the prison about Joey slipping into a coma - we believe that he might die and that nothing can be done
- Chapter 41 the tension and suspense between Mam and dad, we don't know how either will react to the news of Joey in a coma and this creates conflict between the two

Tension (how the character reacts):

- When Fergus and Tally are unsure who to report the body of Mel to, the Gardai or the RUC and Fergus is shocked
- When Fergus visits Joe in prison and he is trying to convince Joey's to give up the hunger strike
- When Fergus is trying to convince his dad to save Joey "we suffer more for the sins of our omission than the sins of commission"
- When Fergus learns about the bomb at the sentry hut up the mountain and he immediately has a gut feeling that something has happened to Owain - the tension is created through the description of the blood draining from Fergus's body

3. Conflict

Conflict is a very important part of drama. Conflict happens when characters disagree about something. Conflict creates tension between the characters and helps to keep the audience interested. Identify a key moment where conflict is evident within the text *Bog Child* and explain what happens.

- When Fergus meets Michael Rafter. (see comparison chart in your copy from earlier in the year) They are very different and have very different beliefs, Rafter is involved in the IRA and Fergus feels unnerved by this. He feels threatened by Rafter and knows he is dangerous and could get him into trouble. He feels pressurised to do what he is asking him to help Joey.
- Ma and Da - throughout the novel they have differing opinions on Joey. Ma believes that his life is more important than the political cause while Da believes in self-sacrifice. (Chapter shows the start of this conflict and is a good key moment to look at)
- Inner conflict: Fergus shows his inner conflict when he writes the letter to Margaret Thatcher in Chapter 17 (pg. 117)
- Conflict in Mel's story - when Boss Shaun threatens her father and family
- Political conflict - this is clear with the IRA presence and gunshots fired as a salute at Len Sheehan's funeral

4. Climax

The Climax is the turning point and the most intense or shocking point in a story, it usually decides a character's fate or what will happen in the ending. To decide where the climax of a story takes place, always look at when we know the outcome of the main conflict (the resolution or ending). The climax will usually occur just before the resolution.

Identify the climax of the text Bog Child and explain what happens during this moment.

- When Fergus realises that Uncle Tally is the bomb maker (chapter 46 - pg 315)

5. Resolution (the ending, when we know the outcome of the plot/story)

Discuss the ending of the novel by answering the following questions (use the sentence starters in the Power Point on the ending sent last week to help you):

- ✓ What happens in the end?
- ✓ Were you surprised by the ending? Why/why not?
- ✓ How has the character of Fergus changed from the beginning to the end of the novel?
- ✓ If you were writing a sequel (a work of literature that continues the story) to this novel, what would happen next?
- ✓ Is there a hero in this novel? If so, what makes him/her a hero?
- ✓ Does the author send us a message in this novel? What is that message?
- ✓ Did you like the ending? Explain.

THEMES

There are several themes in the novel *Bog Child*, identify when these themes are shown within the novel

Love

- The love story in the sub-plot - Mel and Rur, Mel clearly is in love with Rur this is shown in many moments in the text, including when they are lying in the grass looking at the sky, talking about the future, it is also shown when she asks Rur for a lock of his hair before is killed symbolising her love for him (p.297 - 'love knot')
- Love story of main plot between Fergus and Cora - helps distract Fergus from the troubles, Joey and Mel and gives him a new focus, teaches him a lesson about love and how it can change your life etc.
- Sibling and family love - the love between Fergus And Joey, Fergus tries to protect Joey and save him at all costs, he succeeds. Their connection is shown at various stages during the novel as Fergus remembers Joey's favourites songs and memories from their childhood
- A mother's love - Fergus's mam demonstrates her love for her children throughout the novel, she never gives up on Joey and constantly fights for him, she also continues to support and encourage Fergus in his studies despite everything that she is going through. The father's love is more indirect and subtle (hidden), he struggles with showing his emotions and feelings. His inner conflict (the struggle in his head between his beliefs about Irish politics and the hunger strike and his love for his son Joey) prevents him from expressing his feelings.

Death

- Death is ever present and all pervading (throughout) in 'Bog Child'
- Fergus is constantly worried that Joey will die during his hunger strike - the idea of death hangs over him throughout the novel and is reflected in the bleak scenery of the mountains and sea when Tally and Fergus go out to practice driving
- The sub-plot concentrates on Mel's mysterious death and the focus is on how she died, we are constantly reminded of her death through Fergus's dreams
- Owain's death is a bleak reminder of the conflict and the ever-present threat of danger and death in 1980's border communities and the North of Ireland
- Uncle Tally's death at the end reminds us again of this conflict

Irish Politics (is a subject that is spoken about throughout the novel, when and how is it first introduced? What do we learn about how it is impacting Fergus, his family, Roscillin etc.? Give examples of where this is shown)

- Politics is tied in to the threat of conflict and violence throughout the text
- At the start of the novel, we are introduced to this idea in a subtle way when Fergus and Uncle Tally wonder whether to contact the police in the North (the RUC) or the gardai in the South - this idea is continued when the archaeologists argue whether Mel's body to be sent to a Museum in the south or elsewhere
- Many moments in the show highlight the nature of the political conflict and the impact it has on the characters - particularly when Fergus writes his letter to Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher - but does not send it. In this letter, he outlines the effect that this political conflict is having on his community and his family and pleads with her to end the hunger strike and the conflict.
- Political conflict is hinted at when the various murals and political graffiti are described by Fergus "such as the Bobby Sands joke and the 'Brits Out! Message)
- Len Sheehan's funeral brings the conflict to the fore as masked IRA members give him a gunshot salute reminding us of how close the conflict is to Fergus and his family
- Owain and Fergus's friendship is threatened throughout by their opposing sides, even though neither actually cares to take a political stance (side). While are friends and respect each other, never judging each other for their background it is clear that tension exists. When Fergus reveals the packages to Owain , their friendship strengthens and we realise that Owain can be trusted. Owain's death highlights the political conflict even further as he is an innocent victim of a conflict that he is not directly involved in.
- Fergus's dad demonstrates the dividing effects of the political situation. He struggles with his support of the IRA, the hinger Strike and his dislike of the British throughout and this causes tension between himself and Ma and almost results in Joey's death. Fergus manages to teach him a lesson and putting family before politics at the end of the novel

Self-sacrifice

- Self-sacrifice effects many characters throughout the novel, in some cases it is utterly selfless and in other cases the cause is political.
- Uncle Tally sacrifices his life for a political cause that he believes strongly in

- Mel sacrifices herself by taking the blame for Boss Shaun's death (even though it was her brother Brennor who killed him) she does this to save Rur, her brother and her family. This is a very selfless act.
- The hunger strikers sacrifice themselves to highlight a political cause - that they want political prisoner status and to demonstrate the effect of the conflict on Northern Irish Communities. Joey attempts to sacrifice himself also but is saved by his family

Creative Writing:

Imagine you are an interviewer on a chat show and Fergus and his family are the guests. Write 5 questions that you would ask them.

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.