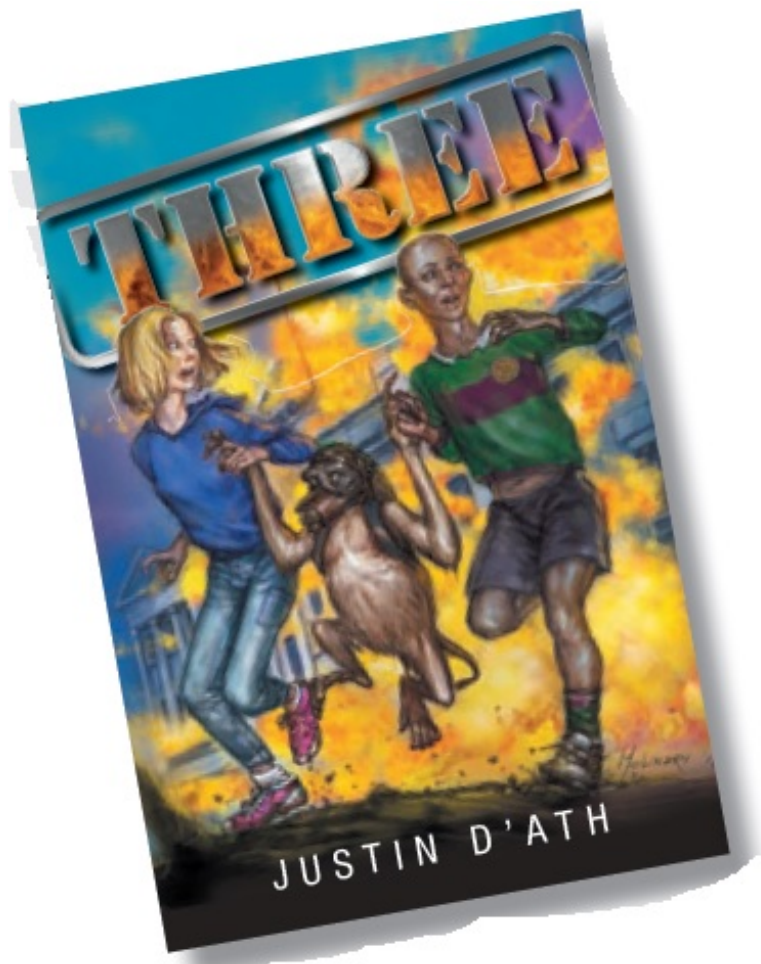# *Three* by Justin D'Ath

Synopsis

Sixteen-year-old Sunday Balewo is next in line for the presidency of Zantuga. When his father dies, Sunday finds himself on the run from the unlikeliest of assassins – a baboon with a bomb. Not just an action-packed thriller, but a novel about friendship, loyalty and the value of life itself.

About the author

Justin D'Ath lives in Queenscliff, Victoria. He has written 50 books for children and young adults. His 12-book *Extreme Adventure* series have been published world-wide and made into a popular TV series. His YA novel, *Pool*, was shortlisted in the Victorian Premier's Awards. He has written six CBC Notable Books and gained five Yabba/Koala nominations.

Also by Justin D'Ath:
Pool
Extreme Adventures series
Mission Fox series
Lost World Circus series
Stuff Happens: Cooper

Presenting *Three*

What's in a name?
- Have a class discussion about the cover of *Three*.
  What things stand out about it? How does it link to the title of the book? Why do you think this title was chosen? What expectations do you have for the book based on its cover?

Genre
The Australian Curriculum: English describes genre as 'The categories into which texts are grouped. The term has a complex history within literary theory and is often used to distinguish texts on the basis of their subject matter (for example, detective fiction, romance, science fiction, fantasy fiction), form and structure (for example, poetry, novels, biography, short stories)'.

A knowledge of a range of different genres and their conventions allows for an understanding of how and why each genre appeals to its readers. It also provides a foundation for students to create and experiment with their own writing.

- What are the some of the different genres? What are the conventions associated with these genres?
- What is meant by the terms realism and fantasy? Contemporary and historical? Which of these apply to *Three*? How do you know?

In her book, *A literary companion for teachers*, Lorraine McDonald describes the following conventions of realistic mystery/suspense stories:

➤ uncover secrets of some sort
➤ locate children away from parents or caregivers
➤ Give significance to things overlooked by adults
➤ create tensions when the child characters follow suspicious others without calling attention to themselves, but their usual invisibility does make them vulnerable when they are noticed
➤ allow characters to be physically threatened by the adults under suspicion
➤ portray characters who can reason, plan and organise, showing some understanding of the world

> ➢ are often set in natural spaces such as caves, underground tunnels, seashores and islands
> ➢ solve the mystery in the resolution.

McDonald, L. (2013). *A literature companion for teachers.* Newtown: Primary English Teaching Association Australia.

After reading the story revisit these conventions. Discuss which ones are present in *Three* and when in the story they are occur.

In the beginning

- Examine the various pages at the beginning of the book: imprint, title page, contents page. What information do we get from these pages? What is an ISBN? What does the copyright information mean? Who is the publisher? Why is this information important?
- Discuss first impressions and expectations. Does the opening grab you? What literary devices are used to achieve this?
- What do we learn about the world that the novel takes place in from the first chapter? Who is introduced? How are they introduced?

Language and structure

To aid in the creation of visual imagery the author has used a variety of language techniques.
- Find examples of similes and metaphors in *Three*. Re-write them to create the same effect using different imagery.
- Choose a passage from *Three* and identify different literary and grammatical devices used e.g. nouns, adjectives, verbs, hyperbole, personification, onomatopoeia. What is the effect created by each device?

Can you find examples of colloquial language and contemporary references in *Three*? What effect do these have?

Focus: Language for interaction
Age, status, expertise, and familiarity influence the ways in which we interact with people, and these interactions influence the way people engage with ideas and respond to others. One way of showing this in a text is through dialogue.

- Find a passage of dialogue where Sunday is speaking to an adult, and one where he is speaking to someone his own age. How can you identify who is speaking? How is

the language different in each of these conversations? Why do you think that is? What different ways do you speak to people in your life?

- Has the author constructed interactions and exchanges between characters in any other ways?

Focus: Narration

There are three types of narrative technique:

1. First person, where the point of view character (the voice telling the story) uses the word 'I'.
2. Second person, where the point of view character addresses the audience directly and uses the word 'You.'
3. Third person, where the author uses the words 'he', 'she', and 'it' to refer to the characters, including the point of view character. This type of narrator can be omniscient (all knowing like 'the eye of God') or can report events as they take place.

- Discuss the narration used in this book. Who is the narrator? What method of narration has been used? How can we identify this? Why do you think that the author chose this method?

Focus: Tense

Stories are usually written in past or present tense.
- What does this mean? How can the tense in a particular story be identified?
- What tense has the author used in *Three*? Why do you think he chose this?

Context/setting

The Australian Curriculum: English defines context as 'The environment in which a text is responded to or created. Context can include the general social, historical, and cultural conditions in which a text is responded to and created (the context of culture) or the specific features of its immediate environment (context of situation). The term is also used to refer to the wording surrounding an unfamiliar word that a reader or listener uses to understand its meaning'.

- Discuss the social, historical, and cultural context created or presented in *Three*
- What is the difference between context and setting?
- *Three* takes place in a fictional country, but one that is in a real continent. What cultural differences are explored? How are these presented? What similarities or differences do you notice about the culture in Zantuga and that in Australia? Do you think the author is being positive or negative about this? Why?
- What sort of cultural knowledge is needed to understand *Three*?
- Who has status or power in *Three*? How have they gained this? (Through wealth, skill, knowledge etc.)

- How many major characters are there? Are they male or female? Old or young? Is it balanced?
- What kind of communities do Sunday and Holly participate in? (School, family, etc.) What influence do these communities have on their thoughts and actions

Creativity/imagination

- The lives and characters in books exist only on the page but authors often hint about what might have happened to them before. Choose one of the minor characters you have met, take what you have learnt about them and use it as a basis to write about something that happened to them before the events of the story.
- Choose a character that you had strong feelings about (either positive or negative), and write a character profile, explaining why you think they are the way that they are and what makes you feel so strongly about them.
- Design a quiz based on the traits mentioned for some of the characters in *Three,* for people to work out 'Which character from *Three* would you be?'
- Think about the artefacts or objects that are central to the story. If you were to design an exhibition about *Three* what would you include? How would you curate it?
- Justin D'Ath is available for school visits via creativenetspeakers.com. How would you convince him to visit your school? Pretend you are a talk-show host and Justin D'Ath is your guest. What questions would you ask him?

Comprehension

- Present the events of *Three* to the class in your own words.
- Write a review of it for an online book review site. Remember that an online review site can be accessed anywhere in the world. How can you make this story appeal to students outside of Australia?
- There are four general forms of humour in writing: Physical/slapstick humour; humour of situation; humour through language play; humour through characterisation. Discuss what the conventions of each of these might. Justin D'Ath often uses humour in his stories. Find some specific passages from *Three* that you found funny. What techniques did the author use to convey humour?
- Is there a place for humour in stories which broach serious issues or themes? Discuss in relation to real life situations that young people might face, and how they might use humour as a way of coping.

Discussion

Use *Three* as a starting point for a discussion on:
- authority
- relationships
- family
- courage
- friendship
- diplomacy
- corruption
- revenge
- love
- terrorism
- death and loss.

Research

Use a theme, idea, issue, or character from *Three* as the basis for starting a research project. Some topics could be:
- Animal testing
- Africa
- A coup-de-tat
- Martial law
- Genetic engineering
- The role of sport in politics
- International embassies and what they do
- The use of animals in war/conflict (e.g. carrier pigeons).

Curriculum Links

The Australian Curriculum: English asserts in its Rationale that it 'helps students to engage imaginatively and critically with literature to expand the scope of their experience'. One of its Aims is to ensure that students 'develop interest and skills in inquiring into the aesthetic aspects of texts, and develop an informed appreciation of literature'. To facilitate this the Content Structure of English is built around the three interrelated strands being: Language — knowing about the English language; Literature — understanding, appreciating,

responding to, analysing and creating literature; and Literacy — expanding the repertoire of English usage.

Three is useful in exploring all of these elements in the curriculum. It uses many features of language, and can be used to explore vocabulary, parts of speech, and sentence structure as outlined in the 'Language' strand. The above activities focus especially on the 'Language for interaction' and 'Expressing and developing ideas' sub-strands.

Three also encourages critical engagement with texts. It inspires discussion of literary experiences, sharing responses, and expressing a point of view. It raises questions about social status and interaction, loyalty, friendship, and heroism, and variety of other topics and issues. In addition, it invites debate in a broader context about what it means to be human. These issues create links to the cross-curriculum area of Civics and Citizenship. It asks students to draw parallels between a fictional world and their own world, placing emphasis on exploring values, rights, and responsibilities.

Three is aimed at readers aged 11+ so can be effectively used with year 5 and above.