

# The Ice-cream Man

## Jenny Mounfield

This scary story telling of three friends and their situations will keep readers engrossed as they follow the fortunes of the boys who are stalked by the ice-cream man after he drives off rather than serving them and Marty does a death-defying slam-jump in front of his van. A plot filled with twists, turns and mystery is presented by Jenny Mounfield in authentic language and good prose.

There are also many questions touched on in this novel that will be of interest to young people.

**The Ice-cream Man** is packed full of action and emotions and suspense – and set in the heat of summer as a backdrop to the tension, reflecting the mood and atmosphere of the story.

### LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE

- ♣ When do you first know about Marty's situation?
- ♣ Have there been any hints about it before?
- ♣ Over what period does this novel take place?
- ♣ What does the billabong represent for the boys?
- ♣ What is meant by the term *pay the piper?* (126)
- ♣ What makes Aaron feel powerful, feel: *He'd never felt so high, so alive?* (131)
- ♣ Find sections from the text that show how the boys are feeling and how their minds are affected by the tactics of the ice-cream man
- ♣ Comment on the ending of the novel
- ♣ By the conclusion of the novel what has been learned by each boy?

### Genre

- ⊞ How would you best describe what type of story ***The Ice-cream Man*** by Jenny Mounfield is?

### Opening

- Jot down what is happening at the beginning of the story
- Write down what you know by page 3
- What do you know by the end of chapter 1?

### Characters

- Who are the main characters in this novel?
- Write a brief profile of each of them, touching on their backgrounds–family situation, habits, likes, dislikes, personalities and anything else you have gleaned about them from the novel.

- Compile a list of the minor characters

### Endings

- ♣ Comment on the way in which chapter 12 finishes
- ♣ Look at the ending of chapter 13 and jot down some thoughts

### Setting

- Where does the story take place?

### THE CRAFT OF WRITING

- Consider how an author engages the reader and then holds the attention of the reader.
- Consider how atmosphere is established in stories

### Style

- ♣ Talk about the style of this story and the tone in which it is told
- ♣ Does humour play a part in this novel?
- ♣ Give evidence to support your answer
- ♣ Examine in depth the position of the person telling the story – look at how they can divulge information or withhold it
- ♣ Find places in the novel where there is a hint or suggestion of something sinister going on
- ♣ Evaluate what the purpose of different type such as *italics* is used for in text
- ♣ State why you think it has been used and what its effect is

### Language

- From the novel, jot down a list of words and phrases that are particular to teenage boys' language
- Make some further observations and comments on the language used in this novel – Use examples to illustrate your findings
- Find some sayings from the text
- What is the purpose of sayings?
- Write sentences to show that you know the way in which the following words can be used to mean entirely different things in English: rent (53); tear (56)
- Find a descriptive passage that you found particularly apt.
- Read it out to the rest of the class and say why you chose that piece
- Compile a list of action words
- Look at the images Jenny Mounfield uses to make her prose come alive, such as on page 1, for instance, you have *with all the menace of a speeding train* and page 2: *a scream that could strip paint*; and: *Quick as a cobra* and ... *like newly risen bread dough* (page 3)
- Similes usually start with *like* and *as*
- Look up metaphors in the dictionary

- Find more similes and metaphors from the story and write them down
- Make an effort to use such vivid word pictures in your own writing
- Look at the place of direct speech in writing – that is when the characters speak.
- Direct speech is usually set in “inverted commas”.
- Consider what direct speech achieves and endeavour to use it in your own stories
- Look at where and how Jenny Mounfield gives the reader a hint or a clue about something that is going to happen and say what this does for the story
- Find places where the author introduces an element of surprise
- Find an incident or passage from the text that you can relate to and say what this contributes to the story for you
- Find a place where the author uses contrasts or the deliberate use of confusion to effect
- Find portions where there is an atmosphere of menace
- Find examples of body language and ascertain what this adds to the text
- How is suspense established? What about tension?

### Speaking

- Find a passage when the boys are in danger and read it out to the rest of the class
- Find a place in the story where a character thinks things through
- Look for a part where physical signs accompany emotions and read them out

People’s feelings are often touched on in this book.

- Find places where feelings are dealt with
- Read these portions out and talk about them
- Tell the story to a friend
- Do a review for *The Ice-cream Man* for your local radio station.

### DISCUSSION

Use the novel as a starting point for discussion about the following subjects:

- |  |                          |
|--|--------------------------|
| – feelings                             | – justice                |
| – attitudes                            | – different perspectives |
| – bullying                             | – motivations            |
| – violence                             | – bad omens              |
| – risk-taking                          | – trust                  |
| – paranoia                             | – blame                  |
| – control                              | – fate                   |
| – respect                              | – dreams; nightmares     |
| – fear                                 | – challenges             |
| – determination                        | – pay-back, retaliation  |
| – rage                                 | – relationships          |
| – attitudes to people in a wheelchair  |                          |
| – the way parents treat their children |                          |

- Consider how much a person's background affects their behaviour
- Why do people take risks?
- Why do people panic?
- How do they behave when they panic?
- How do you stand up for yourself?
- Talk about looks and appearances
- Talk about how this novel gives a picture of how society operates
- ⌘ for young people
- ⌘ for people with a disability
- Why do kids pick on others?
- Why do people treat others as they do?
- Discuss different personalities and the way people act in the same situation
- What did you learn from *The Ice-cream Man*?
- Talk about what constitutes 'weird'.
- How should decision-making be done in families?

## RESEARCH

- ♣ Find out more about cerebral palsy
- ♣ Find out more about bunyips
- ♣ Find a story that mentions these creatures
- ♣ What is the *Grim Reaper*? Find out its origin
- ♣ Find out more about the tune the ice-cream man plays

## WRITING

- o Design a cover and write a blurb to go on the cover of this novel
- Do you have a place that you go to where you can feel better?
- o Write about what you do to get away from and address problems – you can write in a private capacity if you like
  - o Write about what it would be like to be Aaron; to be Marty
  - o As Rick, tell your story
  - o Write about your dreams / nightmares
  - o Do you think: *Life is all about consequences?* (106)
  - o Describe the family situation of each boy

**Notes:** Nancy Mortimer