The Curse

Table of Contents

Introduction
Synopsis
Elements
Activities
Assessment
Answer Key
Glossary
Panel of writers
Introduction

What is a novel?

*Only in a novel are all things given full play – D. H. Lawrence*

A novel is a long narrative in literary prose. Novels tell stories, which are typically defined as a series of events described in a sequence. The novel has been a part of human culture for over a thousand years, although its origins are somewhat debated. Regardless of how it began, the novel has risen to prominence and remained one of the most popular and treasured examples of human culture and writing.

There have been stories and tales for thousands of years, but novels must combine a few unique characteristics in order to be defined as such. First, a novel is written down, rather than told through an oral account. Secondly, novels are meant to be fictional in form, differentiating them from myths, which are said to have their basis in reality or theology. Although some modern scholars argue differently, there is no truly established guideline for length, point-of-view, or even establishment of a moral or philosophical point in novels.

Sources:
- [http://www.wisegeek.com](http://www.wisegeek.com) Date accessed: 5th July 2010
The elements of a novel include the following:

i. **Plot** - the structure of a novel. It shows the arrangement of events and actions within a story (please refer to notes on Freytag’s Pyramid below for details).

ii. **Setting** - the time, place, physical details, and circumstances in which a situation occurs. Setting enables the reader to better envision how a story unfolds by relating necessary physical details of a piece of literature.

iii. **Theme** - is the main idea, or message, of an essay, paragraph, or a book. The message may be about life, society, or human nature. Themes often explore timeless and universal ideas and may be implied rather than stated explicitly. Along with plot, character, setting, and style, theme is considered one of the fundamental components of fiction. It is the universal statement or feel when you read a piece of writing.

iv. **Character and characterisation** - a character is a person in a narrative who may represent a particular class of group of people. Characters in a novel a the vehicle by which author conveys to us his / her view of the world. Characters maybe classify either main character or minor character. The characterisation of a character is revealed by actions, speech, thoughts, physical appearance, and the other characters’ thoughts or words.

v. **Language** - used by author to reveal the theme and purpose of the novel.
Notes on Freytag's Pyramid

Gustav Freytag was a nineteenth century German novelist who saw common patterns in the plots of stories and novels and developed a diagram to analyse them. He diagrammed a story's plot using a pyramid like the one shown here:

1. **Exposition**: setting the scene. The writer introduces the characters and setting, providing description and background.

2. **Inciting Incident**: something happens to begin the action. A single event usually signals the beginning of the main conflict. The inciting incident is sometimes called 'the complication'.

3. **Rising Action**: the story builds and gets more exciting.

4. **Climax**: the moment of greatest tension in a story. This is often the most exciting event. It is the event that the rising action builds up to and that the falling action follows.

5. **Falling Action**: events happen as a result of the climax and we know that the story will soon end.

6. **Resolution**: the character solves the main problem or someone usually solves it for him or her.

7. **Dénouement**: *(a French term, pronounced: day-no-moh)* the ending. At this point, any remaining secrets, questions or mysteries which remain after the resolution are solved by the characters or explained by the author. Sometimes the author leaves us to think about the THEME or future possibilities for the characters.
About the novel

In “The Curse” by Lee Su Ann, Azreen takes time off from her studies in London, UK, to return to her village in one of the legendary islands of Langkawi. She returns to mourn the loss of her older sister, Madhuri. However she finds out via rumours and loud whispers that Madhuri was murdered. At her village Azreen has to contend with a cold-hearted father and support an Alzheimer stricken mother. Azreen is subjected to negative comments and suspicion from her neighbours. She finds consolation in the company of the Old Lady, an outcast of the village. Although the grand Old Lady is educated and knowledgeable, the villagers shun her because she had murdered her abusive husband. Azreen has to confront the mystery that shrouds her sister’s sudden death under suspicious circumstances. Her old classmate, Mohd. Asraf, refuses to reveal what he knows. A mysterious figure keeps on watching Azreen and strange things happen. Madhuri’s room is partially destroyed in a fire. A carcass of a chicken with a broken neck is thrown in front of her house. Many villagers fall sick for no apparent reason. The Old Lady is killed in a fire accidentally caused by an angry Mohd. Asraf. Bit by bit, the mysterious death of Madhuri is revealed to Azreen.
Chapter 1
Azreen hurriedly leaves her studies in England to return home after receiving news that her sister had died. Her coursemate, Julian Ng, tries to offer his sympathy and condolence but she was not in the mood to talk about the matter.

Chapter 2
On the plane home, Azreen experiences flashbacks of her early days with Madhuri and how Madhuri was well-liked by people. Madhuri was beautiful and soft-spoken compared to Azreen, who was an obstinate child.

Chapter 3
Back home, on an island south of Langkawi Island, Pn. Kamsiah was talking with her daughter Siti about their neighbour, Normala, who is spreading rumours that Madhuri was murdered and she spilt white blood. Datin Sharifah and her husband were ready to fetch their adopted daughter from the airport. They were trying their best not to talk about Madhuri’s death.
Chapter 4

Mourners gather at Azreen’s house to pay their last respects to Madhuri before burial. The women folk gossip among themselves that Madhuri was murdered and she had put a curse on everyone on the island. Azreen arrives late to pay her last respects to her late sister. Azreen brings her sickly mother to the burial ground to bid farewell to Madhuri. She meets Mohd. Asraf and flashbacks of her schooling years fills the scene.

Chapter 5

Azreen meets Asraf. She enquires about Madhuri’s death but is only given vague details of the incident. Normala, the rumour monger, spreads rumours about what had happened to Madhuri. Awang, the bomoh, makes an appearance as he dreams that a disaster is about to hit the village soon. Awang recalls the incident when he stole a chicken at Encik Mohan’s farm causing a bull to escape. Asraf was blamed for the fiasco but Azreen bravely took the blame on his behalf. Back to the present, Azreen looks for the Old Lady in the jungle to catch up on old times. The Old Lady discloses that Madhuri was murdered.

Chapter 6

The Old Lady relates to Azreen that she saw Madhuri’s lifeless body and the wound on her. She suggests that Madhuri’s murder was covered up as investigation into her death would reveal more secrets. Puan Fatihah, the village headman’s wife recalls how her life changed forever when her husband, Haji Ghani, became attracted to Madhuri. Azreen recaps how Madhuri tried to defend her from her father’s wrath for stealing mangosteen and the good times she spent with Madhuri. In a flashback, Azreen admitted her folly for letting the bull go in order to save Asraf from Encik Mohan and his son’s wrath. The escaped bull knocked into the motorcycle that her parents were on and caused her mother to be paralysed. The Old Lady reveals her past life with her abusive husband who drove her to kill him in self-defence. She made herself a home in a deserted house in the jungle.
Asraf is concerned about his grandmother’s deteriorating health. At the same time, Hj. Ghani, mourns at Madhuri’s tombstone. While deep in thoughts, he almost saw someone, a woman in a flowing white dress, strolling past the trees. At home, Azreen’s father reprimanded her for not latching up the chicken coop. A chicken carcass, with its neck broken, lies on the bottom step of the coop. The next morning, Azreen reads Julian’s letter about the examination week in college. Then, she reads Madhuri’s letter of her marriage and relationship with Kak Fatihah (Haji Ghani’s first wife). The letter also hints that Madhuri has a secret to be revealed to Azreen when she returns home for her holidays.

Azreen’s mother dies. Meanwhile, Mohd. Asraf continues to worry over his sickly grandmother. Mohd Asraf goes to the market to look for medicinal plants for his grandmother but fails to find any. In desperation, he goes to the Old Lady’s house for help. The Old Lady hesitates at first but after much persuasion from Azreen and Mohd. Asraf, she finally agrees to go over to Mohd Asraf’s house to help his grandmother.
Chapter 9

Siti keeps an eye on Mohd. Asraf’s grandmother (Nek) while he goes out to get her medicine. Pn. Kamsiah and Normala are curious at the Old Lady’s presence at Mohd. Asraf’s house.

The Old Lady tries to cure Nek. Azreen is puzzled to discover a university prospectus that reveals Mohd. Asraf’s intention to pursue his studies in Kuala Lumpur. When Azreen returns home, she sees the bomoh scampering behind the bushes. As she confronts the bomoh, he informs her about the mob incident at Mohd. Asraf’s house.

She immediately runs to Asraf’s house. Normala blames Azreen for bringing the Old Lady to Mohd. Asraf’s house and causing heavy downpour to hit the village. An argument starts and Azreen’s father intervenes to stop the commotion. Meanwhile, Nek is beginning to recover and Mohd. Asraf is extremely relieved. They thank the Old Lady for bravely coming over to cure Nek and the rain finally stops.

Chapter 10

Azreen awakes to a flurry of knocks on her door. She finds out that Nek has passed away and Mohd Asraf is heading towards Nek’s house with a few men for revenge. Azreen tries to stop him and in a struggle, stabs him at the foot with a spade. The torch that he was holding fell onto the wall of the house and soon the house was on fire.

Azreen finds Nek, barely alive lying beside the stove and she advises Azreen to learn to forgive before it is too late. Azreen’s father saves her before the whole house crumbles.

Mohd Asraf confesses to Azreen that he loves Madhuri and they were planning to abscond from the island when he was offered a teaching course in Kuala Lumpur. Madhuri wanted to confess to her husband, parents and Azreeb about her affair with Mohd. Asraf. However, Madhuri was found dead at a rubber plantation. Azreen then meets Awang, the bomoh, who tells her that Madhuri was not her real sister. Awang also confesses that he was the one who left the gate open that led to the motorcycle accident that paralysed her mother. Awang also confirms that he had seen Madhuri and Mohd Asraf together several times in the rubber estate. The chapter ends with Haji Ghani, the headman thinking about his young wife meeting her lover on that fateful day when she was killed.
Azreen delves on the bomoh’s words that Madhuri was not her real sister. She encounters a shadow of a woman from behind the wooden fence again that directs her to a woodpile a few feet away behind her house. Azreen and her father walk towards the woodpile and see a “parang” that Saleh used to chop wood. There is white and sticky stain at the edge of the parang. Azreen immediately recalls Normala’s words “She had white blood” and she stares at her father in disbelief. Saleh recalls how fond was he with Madhuri and how he found her as a baby at the paddy field. He stumbles upon Madhuri and Mohd Asraf together at the rubber plantation. In his fury, he kills Madhuri and her body knocks over the latex-filled container. Upon hearing this revelation, Azreen runs away from her father.

Saleh suffers a heart attack and dies. Meanwhile in the village, a rumour spreads like a wildfire that a woman who looks suspiciously like his dead daughter had been wandering about at the time of his death.

Azreen visits her family’s graves. She leaves a flower on each grave and leaves quietly. She leaves a flower at the hillside where the Old Lady was buried, too. As Azreen leaves, she sees a smiling figure which resembles Madhuri’s smiles.
CHARACTERS

Azreen
Main character of the novel. Studies in England. Happy to be away from her village. Did not have good relationship with her parents especially her father due to her defiant behaviour and tomboyish outlook. An outspoken and independent girl. Envious of her adopted sister, Madhuri. A helpful friend especially when she claimed responsibility for letting the bull run loose in order to save Mohd. Asraf’s skin. Caring for her sick mother and Old Lady. Intelligent as she managed to further her studies in the United Kingdom.

Madhuri
A beautiful and polite lady. A submissive wife and daughter. Religious and good at reciting Quranic verses. Conservative compared to her sister, Azreen. Protective of her sister when they were young. A polite and caring daughter. Concerned about her sick mother.

Mohd. Asraf
A dedicated and popular teacher in a local school on the island. Independent since young. Good friends with Azreen while they were in school together. A caring grandson who is concerned about his grandmother’s well-being. Loves Madhuri and wanted to take her with him to Kuala Lumpur.
Saleh Abdullah

Madhuri and Azreen's father. Active and strong for his age. A stern father to Azreen since when she was young. Not on good terms with Azreen since the motorcycle accident which paralysed Azreen's mother. A manipulative father who let Madhuri become Haji Ghani's second wife in order to protect his interests. An egoistic person who could not accept Madhuri's love affair with Mohd. Asraf and in the end killed Madhuri in a fit of anger at the rubber plantation.

Haji Ghani

The village headman who fell for Madhuri and took her as his second wife. Neglects his first wife, Fathihah in the process. An influential man on the island. Hides the cause of his wife’s death in order to protect his reputation. Knows of Madhuri’s affair with Mohd. Asraf. A religious man.

Siti

An obedient daughter of Pn. Kamsiah. She helps Mohd. Asraf to look after his grandmother while he looks for the medicinal plants. She is also a responsible girl as she warns Azreen about the mob that is lead by Mohd. Asraf to the Old Lady’s house. She is gullible as she likes to ponder over the gossips and rumours told by Normala, the village gossip.
The rumour monger of the village and her topic of interest is on Madhuri and how she died. She is sneaky and malicious when she coaxed Mohd. Asraf to confront the Old Lady, accusing her as the reason why his grandmother’s health deteriorates and she finally dies. She is also superstitious when she blamed the Old Lady’s visit to Mohd. Asraf’s house as the reason for the continuous rain.

An educated woman as she has knowledge of herbal medicine to treat illnesses. Her house is always neat and situated by the hillside. She is a caring and concerned woman as she takes Azreen in and gives her food and shelter whenever she has fights and problems. She is also a resourceful person and she is a good cook and her recipes and secret ingredients are very much sought after.

Azreen’s rich foster parents whom she stayed with for two months foster programme. Datuk and Datin helped her financially in her studies in the UK. Even though she only stayed with them for a short period of time, she still maintains a good relationship with them. Even though they are foster parents, they treat Azreen as their own child. Azreen calls her Mak Cik which signifies their close relationship.
Azreen furthers her studies in London.

She is Haji Ghani’s first wife and appears to adore Madhuri. However, she secretly hold grudges against her husband’s your wife. She feels that her husband favours the young wife more than herself. She tries her best to win her husband’s heart after the death of Madhuri.

On the whole, the setting initially revolves around London and moves on to a village on a small island off Langkawi and the house of Datin Sharifah and her husband in Langkawi.

The Bomoh is the person whom the villagers seek for traditional cure. It is through the Bomoh that the mysterious happenings that took place in the village are uncovered. The truth behind the death of Madhuri and the status of Azreen are also finally revealed by him.
A VILLAGE ON A SMALL ISLAND OFF LANGKAWI.

Some of the places mentioned in the story.

Azreen's house
- Azreen lives with his father, mother and Madhuri.

Madhuri's room
- Azreen finds Madhuri’s photos are all torn in three parts. The room is also burnt down.

Nek's house
- Mohd Mohd. Asraf lives with his grandmother.

The rubber plantation
- The scene where Madhuri’s body is found.

The farm
- Awang leaves the gate open and Mohd. Asraf gets the blame when the bull escapes.

The forest
- The Old Lady runs to the forest and settles in an abandoned wooden house after the villagers outcast her.

The school
- The school where Azreen studied during her secondary years. This is also where she gets acquainted with Mohd. Asraf.

Paddy field
- Salleh Abdullah finds Madhuri as a baby in the makeshift bed of rags and leaves.

The cemetery
- Madhuri and her mother are laid to rest here.
**THEMES**

These are some of the themes found in the novel:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LOVE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The message of love is reiterated throughout the story.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parental Love:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Both Saleh Abdullah and his wife love Madhuri dearly like their own biological child.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Azreen’s inner conflict to garner her father’s love and affection. She always perceives the father as having greater love towards her sister, Madhuri.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forbidden Love:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Mohd. Asraf and Madhuri secretly loves each other that eventually led to Madhuri’s death.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unrequited Love:</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Azreen had a crush on Mohd. Asraf during school days.</td>
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>FORGIVENESS</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Before the Old Lady draws her last breath, she advises Azreen to forgive others. When Azreen discovers that it was her father who murdered Madhuri, she felt no anger or resentment towards him.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The story portrays how some men believe women to be the weaker sex and they are violent towards them. For instance, the Old Lady’s husband was abusive towards her and repetitively abused her. He hit and kicked her.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>GENDER STEREOTYPING</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Through the novel, gender stereotyping is portrayed through how females should behave. This can be seen especially through Azreen. For example, Azreen’s school friends start to cast suspicious eyes towards her when she behaves unlady-like. She plays hockey with the boys and even “laughs like a bunch of hyenas” with them. To them, as a woman, Azreen is not expected to be tomboyish and hangs too closely with boys.</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>BELIEF IN THE SUPERNATURAL</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The villagers seem to believe in supernatural. For example, many villagers call upon Awang, the village shaman to avert disasters. In another instance, Puan Normala tries to convince the villagers that the village is cursed since Madhuri’s blood is white.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
FEAR OF THE UNKNOWN

The villagers are puzzled about how Madhuri died. However, no one actually investigates the incident which is covered up well by Haji Ghani and his followers. In another instance, the villagers assume that the Old Lady is an evil witch that can turn anyone into squirrels or rats. Due to this assumption, the villagers outcast the Old Lady.

VALUES

These are some of the values found in the novel:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CARING</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Madhuri shields her sister, Azreen, from being punished by her father.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Madhuri helps Azreen to mend their mother’s favourite rattan basket which Azreen broke while collecting durians.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STANDING UP FOR WHAT YOU BELIEVE IN</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Being persistent in getting to the truth is highlighted especially through Azreen. She refuses to believe that Madhuri’s death was merely an accident. She finds clues that complete the puzzle.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RESPONSIBILITY</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Azreen repairs the trampled bed of vegetables and brings back fresh vegetables and seeds to replace the ones destroyed vegetables that belong to the Old Lady.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DILIGENCE</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Azreen diligently repairs the trampled bed of lady’s fingers outside the Old Lady’s house.</td>
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<tr>
<th>CONCERN</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>When Azreen refuses to eat her dinner after being caned by her father and scolded by her mother, Madhuri consoles and coaxes her to eat.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mohd. Asraf advises Azreen not to reveal about Madhuri’s death to her sickly mother who assumes that Madhuri is still alive.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
BRAVERY
When Encik Mohan and his sons harshly reprimand Mohd. Asraf for carelessly letting their bull escape, Azreen braves herself to come to Mohd. Asraf’s defence. She tells them not to blame Mohd. Asraf without any evidence.

LOYALTY
Shows her loyalty to her friend Mohd. Asraf by taking the blame calmly and bravely for the accident that involves her dad and mum.

PERSISTENCE
Madhuri and Azreen continue working on the rattan basket in their bedroom. Even when their parents return home, they excuse themselves quietly and forgo dinner to weave a new basket to match the original in their dimly lit room.

THOUGHTFULNESS
Mak Cik Sharifah and her husband, Azreen’s foster parents, leave behind two throw pillows from their car for Azreen to sleep on in her mother’s house. They are also thoughtful enough to leave her two bottles of water, some fruits and a bag of disposable toiletries.

HELPFUL
Siti obliges to help Mohd. Asraf take care of his sick mother while Mohd. Asraf goes out to get some traditional medicine. Siti keeps an eye on the sick woman whom she is quite fond of.
LITERARY DEVICES

SIMILE
A simile is a figure of speech comparing two unlike things, often introduced with the words "like", "as", or "than".

Examples:
1) …Pn.Kamsiah’s eyes bulged out like a toad’s…p.11
2) …and growled like some rabid dog… - p.23
3) Fingers pointed, harsh words were spoken and friends avoided her like a leper. p.104
4) His eyes burned wildly like the fire on his torch. - p.199
5) “People swarm around you like flies to a garbage can. Like maggots to rotten meat” – p.38

METAPHOR

Examples:
1) Especially that rotten durian neighbour of yours… p.23
2) …with the leaky-mouthed neighbour….p.171
3) …her father’s steely eyes…-p.222

PERSONIFICATION
An inanimated object is personified by attributing human traits and qualities to it.

Examples:
1) …the black taxis whizzing past… - p.3
2) The plank beneath her feet creaked… - p.80
3) …whose muscular biceps flexed menacingly…- p.93
4) …it gripped his heart like a vice…-p.227

ONOMATOPOEIA
Words that sound like the objects they name or the sounds those objects make.

Examples:
1) …the wheels of the suitcase screeched as she….p.2
2) The plank beneath her feet creaked…p.80
3) There was a rustling of leaves…-p.219
4) …words echoed boominly in her head….p.222

HYPERBOLES
Hyperboles are figures of speech that are exaggerated in order to create emphasis or effect

Examples:
1) … girls fell for him left and right… p.41
2) Argh I’ll be dead if the teacher finds out… p.91
POINT OF VIEW
The point of view is the 'eyes' through which a story is seen and told. The reader will learn about the story through an outside voice, the narrator.

In the novel 'The Curse', the author has used the THIRD PERSON OR OMNISCIENT point of view. He even narrates the story using dialogues.

TONE OF VOICE
Attitude of a character or a piece of writing.

Serious, mysterious, sadness, reflective, regret, emotional, humorous, envious,

IMAGERY
Imagery is the use of words or phrases that appeal to the five senses- sight, hearing, touch, taste and smell. These words create mental pictures in the minds of the readers hence making a piece of description more ‘alive’ and memorable.

Examples:
1) She sat up and stared at the rising sun that glowed orange and vermilion. – p.205
2) Sunlight danced through the leaves above – p. 206
3) The shades of the trees now left them and the glare of the morning sun blinded him for a while. - p.213
4) Somewhere nearby a church bell chimed and a red double-decker bus went whizzing by. - p.231
5) The sweet smell of jasmine caressed her senses, lifting a weight from her soul. p. 229
6) Azreen felt warm tears rolling down her cheeks. Her skin felt cold and clammy even under the hot afternoon sun. p. 226
**Aims**

1. To show development of the story.

**Materials**

1. Worksheet 1

**Steps**

1. Discuss the story with the class by giving the idea of rising and falling action.
2. Ask students to use a familiar story to show how a story has a beginning, rising action that leads to a climax and resolution.
3. In worksheet 1, students match the event with the plot structure indicated by numbers.

**Notes**

Students sequence the events chronologically.
Sequence the stages in the story pyramid by using the events given.

1. Azreen takes time off from her studies in England to attend her sister, Madhuri’s funeral.
2. Suspicions are fuelled by superstition and the Old Lady is killed in a fire.
3. Azreen finds out that her sister Madhuri is adopted.
4. Madhuri’s room is partially destroyed in a fire. It rains continuously and crops are damaged. Strange things happen to Azreen.
5. Azreen goes back to England to continue her studies.
7. Azreen hears rumours that her sister is murdered. Everyone believes that Madhuri’s death will cause a curse to be cast upon them.
8. Azreen finds out that Saleh killed Madhuri in a fit of fury because she wants to leave her husband for Mohd. Asraf.
9. Mohd. Asraf admits that he loves Madhuri and they are going to leave Langkawi.
The Significant Four

Time: 80 minutes

Aims

1. To trace the important events in the novel.
2. To highlight the timeline of important events in the novel.

Materials

1. Handouts

Steps

1. Elicit responses from the students on the plot of the novel.
2. Instruct students to write down the significant events in worksheet 2.
3. Ask students to elaborate on the events by stating the setting and also a short description of the event.
4. Select students at random to present their chosen events in the novel.
5. Elaborate on the significant events of the novel and their significance to the development of the story.

Notes

Teacher may list the events in chronological order at the end of the lesson.

Students come forward to role-play the events.
Write four significant events in the boxes.
THE CURSE

PLOT/ACTIVITY 3

Conflict Map

Time: 80 minutes

Aims
1. To identify conflicts in the novel.
2. To identify how characters in the novel respond to the conflict.

Materials
1. Worksheet 3

Steps
1. Start the lesson by asking the students to list out the conflicts found in the novel, in the Conflict Map handouts.
2. Explain to the students that the conflicts can be between characters or even thoughts or feelings of the character itself.
3. Ask students to work in groups to identify the conflict and also elaborate on the conflict.
4. Ask students to fill in Worksheet 3 where they will identify how the conflict is resolved in the novel.
5. Ask students to list out how the resolution of the conflict affects the character in the story.

Notes

What is conflict?

Conflict is the problem(s) found in the story. There are three types of conflicts.

1) Central conflict: the most dominant problem.

2) External conflict: the problem that exists between the main character and outside force (e.g. person vs. person and person vs. society)

3) Internal conflict: the problem that takes place in the main character’s mind.
THE CONFLICT

Why the conflict?

How was it resolved?

How does the resolution affect the character?

What happens after the conflict is resolved?
**Guess Who**

Time: 40 minutes

**Aims**
1. To identify characters in the novel.
2. To match dialogues to characters.
3. To write sentences in speech bubbles.

**Materials**
1. The novel
2. Worksheet 4

**Steps**
1. Extract a few dialogues from the novel.
2. Ask students to guess the characters that match the dialogue.
3. Distribute Worksheet 4 and students match dialogues to the characters.
4. Ask students to write the dialogues in the speech bubbles.

**Notes**

Students role play the dialogue.

All graphics from this worksheet are taken from Dear Yayah, The comics by Farehah Iskandar & Ard One (2010) PTS Millennia Sdn Bhd.
**Match the lines from the text with the characters.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NO</th>
<th>LINES FROM THE TEXT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>“Do you hear me? She has white blood. We have all been cursed!”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>What has the disease done to you, Mak?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>I’ve seen how he was looking at her during her majlis bersanding. He looked as if he was on the verge of committing suicide.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>She’s very pretty, and very sweet-tempered and respectful to her elders. And very young.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>I killed my husband. And now I’m paying for it.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>Go on and leave this house. You seem to think they’re better parents.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>I don’t know, Nek. If you don’t get well by noon, I’m going to call the headmaster to tell him I’m taking leave from work today.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>Oh, I actually meant Madhuri’s mother, Cik adik. I don’t remember her name but she’s very much alive. A little mad but alive.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>I thought you might need some support once you get back here.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
THE CURSE

CHARACTERS/ACTIVITY 5

Prove Me Right

Time: 80 minutes

Aims
1. To explore character traits in the novel.
2. To give description.
3. To provide evidence.

Materials
1. The novel
2. Handout
3. Dictionary

Steps
1. Call out a student at random and introduce him to the class.
2. Ask students to describe his character traits.
3. Ask students to pick characters they like from the novel and describe them.
4. Distribute Worksheet 5.
5. Ask students to read and understand the character traits given in the handout.
6. Instruct students to show textual evidence from the novel.
7. Ask students to write down the evidence in the column provided by quoting it from the novel.

Notes
Students refer to the dictionary to find meanings of difficult words.
Students work in pairs.
Prove Me Right

Fill in the box with textual evidence to support the character traits given.

Azreen
- Outspoken
- Envious
- Independent
- Defiant

- Helpful
- Caring
- Intelligent

Textual evidence:

Madhuri
- Religious
- Beautiful
- Submissive
- Conservative

- Protective
- Polite
- Caring
- Concerned

Textual evidence:
Siti
- Obedient
- Responsible
- Gullible

Mohd. Asraf
- Popular
- Dedicated
- Responsible
- Independent
- Caring

Textual evidence:
Pak Awang the bomoh
- Superstitious
- Annoying
- Informative

Textual evidence:

Haji Ghani
- Calm
- Religious
- Sympathetic

Textual evidence:
Pn Normala
- Malicious
- Sneaky
- Rumour monger

- Village gossip
- Superstitious

Textual evidence:

Salleh Abdullah
- Active
- Egoistic
- Manipulative

- Stern

Textual evidence:
Old lady
- Educated
- Healer
- Neat
- Caring
- Concerned
- Resourceful

Textual evidence:
Character Map

Time: 80 minutes

**Aims**
1. To enable students to analyse characters in the novel.
2. To help students to be familiar with the physical features, character traits and also how other characters react/treat the chosen character.

**Materials**
1. Worksheet 6

**Steps**
1. Begin by eliciting the names of characters in the novel.
2. Distribute the handouts to every pair of students.
3. Ask students to draw the face of their chosen character and list the physical features as well.
4. Ask students to write how the chosen character reacts to situations in the novel.
5. Ask students to write how other characters react to the chosen character in the novel.
6. Discuss the characters in the character map.

**Notes**

There are three types of characters; major characters, minor characters and round characters.
Choose a character from “The Cure” and draw the face in the picture frame provided. Then fill in the spaces below.
**Aims**

1. Describe events in the novel

**Materials**

1. A4 papers
2. Scissors
3. Glue
4. Tape
5. Worksheet 7

**Steps**

1. Divide class into groups of four.
2. Distribute materials to each group.
3. Each group creates a postcard according to the cases shown below.
4. Students identify significant events with close reference to the novels.
5. Ask students to present their work in front of the class.
7. Instruct students to match events with the pictures.

**Notes**
Using the notes provided, identify the setting (place) for each event

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>EVENT</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Azreen packed and left London.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Azreen and her family stayed here.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Madhuri’s body was discovered here.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Photos of Madhuri were all torn into three parts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Azreen used to stay here whenever she had misunderstanding with her father.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Awang left the gate open and Mohd Mohd. Asraf was blamed when the bull escaped.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>The Old Lady killed her abusive husband in self defence.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Awang revealed the truth about Madhuri’s adoption.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Saleh Abdullah found Madhuri as a baby here in the makeshift bed of rag and leaves.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Name The Spot

1. __________________________
   __________________________
   __________________________
   __________________________
Get The Message

Time: 40 minutes

Aims
1. To identify and analyse themes in the novel

Materials
1. Worksheet 8

Steps
1. Distribute worksheet 8 to each student.
2. Ask students to match the evidence with the theme.
3. Ask students to refer to the novel using the page reference.

Notes
This lesson can be carried out as pair work
Match the following themes to the evidence.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>EVIDENCE</th>
<th>THEME</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. A dozen disasters he had averted by performing his spells and charms. (p.54)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. What was wrong with that girl who behaved so unladylike, laughing like a bunch of hyenas with the boys' hockey team ... (p.37)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. Her mother was having trouble at the sink. Azreen helped her wash her face. (p.49)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d. What would all the disclosure do to his beloved Madhuri? It would shame her memory. Her innocence would be stained... (p.217)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e.</td>
<td>She has white blood. We have all been cursed. (p. 14)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>f.</td>
<td>Everyone knew that the Old Lady of the forest was an evil witch... She could turn anyone... into squirrels or rats. (p. 63)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>g.</td>
<td>She felt her legs take a few steps towards her father. He felt no anger, no resentment. Only loss. (p. 226)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>h.</td>
<td>She was the prettiest thing they had ever seen with the anaemic cheeks and scrawny legs. All they noticed were the delightful chuckles and the twinkling eyes. (p. 224)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>i.</td>
<td>Azreen caught sight of the long cane. She could even see the angry veins popping out from his arms. (p. 83)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>j.</td>
<td>What a weakling. Look at him. Crying like a baby 'cause a girl hit him in the face. (p. 90)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>k.</td>
<td>He was holding her by the shoulder, shaking her hard and yelling curses at her... He kneed her in the stomach, and kicked her... (p. 103)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>l.</td>
<td>Look at this flood. This endless rain, it's all a sign. (p. 186)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>m.</td>
<td>When she refused to budge, he growled and with a forceful lunge, he pushed her away... he raised the hoe again and whacked the door open. (p. 199)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Identify TWO other themes from the novel.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>Evidence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
That Says It All

Aims

1. To identify themes in the novel based on the plot

Materials

1. Worksheet 9

Steps

1. Organise students into groups of 3-4.
2. Distribute organisers to students. Students write down the information required in the boxes.
3. Check the answers.

Notes

Teacher provides page reference for students to assess information.
Write down the information required in the boxes.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Explanation</th>
<th>Sequence of Events</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
|       | There are rumours about how Madhuri died | 1. Madhuri is dead.  
2. Pn. Normala claims Madhuri’s blood was white.  
3. She spreads rumours about the curse that will be casted on the villagers |
|       | “Let bygones be bygones” | 1. The Old Lady is knowledgeable and educated. She marries a man who is loving at first.  
2. He loses his job and becomes drunk. He hits her but apologises. He injures her with a bottle.  
3. Then he kneels her and kicks her.  
|       | 1. _________________________  
   _________________________ | 1. _________________________  
   _________________________ |
|       | 2. Before the Old Lady holds her last breath, she advises Azreen not to hold grudges. | 2. Before the Old Lady holds her last breath, she advises Azreen not to hold grudges.  
3. _________________________  
   _________________________  
   _________________________ |
**Aims**

1. To explore the values in the novel

**Materials**

1. Worksheet 10

**Steps**

1. Ask students to sit in groups of 4-5. Students brainstorm the values in the novel.
2. Distribute Worksheet 10
3. Ask students to complete Worksheet 10 and discuss the answers.
4. Ask each group to act out a two minute scene from the novel that illustrates the meaning of the value. The students do not state the value they are performing.
5. When each group finishes its presentation, ask the rest of the class to guess the value.
6. Ask students to show textual evidence from the novel.
7. Ask students to write down the evidence in the column provided.

**Notes**

A moral/value is a specific lesson that a story teaches.
Read the extracts below. Complete the tables given.

**EXTRACT A**

“I’m hungry,” she murmured softly. Azreen lifted a spoon to her, but she waved it away. “I can eat by myself, sayang.” Azreen handed her the bowl of porridge.

As she watched her mother eat, Azreen felt a pang of sorrow. The disease was consuming whatever that was left of her mother – little by little.

The Curse, p.51

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Values</th>
<th>Evidence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**EXTRACT B**

The next day, however, she was back with a basket of fresh vegetables and a few packets of seeds, which she left by the Old Lady’s door.

The next day, the Old Lady came back from collecting wood only to find the girl diligently repairing the trampled bed of lady’s fingers.

“What do you want now?” she said to the girl who was all but covered with soil and fertilizers.

“Oh, nothing. Just to say I am sorry.”

The Curse, p.65

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Values</th>
<th>Evidence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
EXTRACT C

Madhuri put aside the basket, and went behind to the gardening shack to grab their father’s *parang*. “Come,” she said to Azreen. Azreen followed her into the jungle. They found some rattan and brought them home.

The two sisters struggled with the blade to shave the rattan into the right width and length. They brought the rattan and the broken basket to the bedroom and started work. When their parents returned, the girls excused themselves quietly and forwent dinner.

The Curse, p.143

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Values</th>
<th>Evidence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

EXTRACT D

Azreen moved forward, wisely keeping the men at a distance. She hoped they would not spot her until it was too late to stop her. Now that she was closer to the house, she finally saw her friend. He, too, held a torch in his hands. In the other, he was holding a long hoe. He was much nearer to the house than the other men. Unlike them, he had been within before. And most importantly, loss and anguish fuelled his actions. His eyes burned wildly like the fire on his torch.

Slowly but surely, he strode to the door and raised the hoe. Azreen sprinted. “No!”

The Curse, p.143

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Values</th>
<th>Evidence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**The good, the bad and the ugly**

**Aims**

1. To analyse the events that help Azreen transform into a better person.
2. To write about Azreen’s transformation.

**Materials**

1. Worksheet 11a and 11b
2. Coloured Pens/Highlighters

**Steps**

1. Discuss with students the kind of spiritual journey that the character Azreen took while making the actual physical journey.
2. Give each pair of students the graphic organiser. (Worksheet 11a)
3. In the boxes, students list the events that reflect the different values shown.
4. Ask students to display their worksheets on the class notice board.

**Notes**

For Low English Proficiency students, teacher can provide the events and students will match them to the correct suitcases.
In the following boxes, write the events that help Azreen to become a better person.

**The journey begins...**

**In England**

**On an island in Langkawi**  
(Before Madhuri’s death)

**On an island in Langkawi**  
(After Madhuri’s death)

**The journey ends...**

**In England**

### Events that made Azreen feel sad

1. ____________________________
2. ____________________________

### Events that made Azreen feel envious and angry

1. ____________________________
2. ____________________________

### Events that made Azreen feel determined, forgiving and peaceful

1. ____________________________
2. ____________________________
Imagine you are Azreen and write how you have changed due to certain events that have taken place in your life.
Imagery

Time: 80 minutes

Aims

1. To allow students to explore ways in which figurative language is used in the story.

Materials

1. Worksheet 12

Steps

1. Elicits different literary devices that students are familiar with.
2. Discuss the meaning of the literary devices identified by the students.
3. Introduce an example of a simile and gives its definition and evidence from the text.
4. Distribute Worksheet 12.
5. Ask students to work in groups or pairs to find textual evidence from the text for each of the literary devices.

Notes

For Low English Proficient students, they may be given the pages of the text to help them. Alternatively, they can also be paired with higher proficient students to promote peer teaching/learning.
**SIMILE**

**Definition:**

A simile is a figure of speech comparing two unlike things, often introduced with the words 'like', 'as', or 'than'.

**Evidence**

1. ... Pn Kamsiah’s eyes bulged out like a toad’s... p.11
2. ... and growled like some rabid dog... p.23

---

**METAPHOR**

**Definition:**

The use of words or phrases to an object or action to which it is imaginatively but not literally applicable.

**Evidence**

1. ___________________________________________________
2. ___________________________________________________
PERSONIFICATION

Definition:
An inanimate object is personified by attributing human traits and qualities to it.

Evidence
1. __________________________________________
   __________________________________________
2. __________________________________________
   __________________________________________

ONOMATOPOEIA

Definition:
Words that sound like the objects they name or the sounds those objects make.

Evidence
1. __________________________________________
   __________________________________________
2. __________________________________________
   __________________________________________
**HYPERBOLE**

**Definition:**

Hyperboles are figures of speech that are exaggerated in order to create emphasis or effect.

**Evidence**

1. 

2. 

---

57
THE CURSE

BEYOND THE TEXT/ ACTIVITY 13

Review it!

Time: 80 minutes

Aim

1. To give one’s opinion on the novel.

Materials

1. Worksheet 13

Steps

1. Ask students to fill in the book review form (Worksheet 13).
2. Once completed, encourage students to exchange their book review and read their friends’ book reviews.

Notes

Paste students’ book reviews on the school notice board to encourage other Form 4 students to read the story.

Alternatively, ask students to write book reviews for other titles from the Readers Programme.
Book Review

Title: 
Author: 
Year Published: 

This book is about ...........................................................................................................................................................................
...........................................................................................................................................................................
...........................................................................................................................................................................
...........................................................................................................................................................................

My favourite character is ........................................ because ............................................................
...........................................................................................................................................................................
...........................................................................................................................................................................
...........................................................................................................................................................................

I like / didn't like this book because .................................................................................................................................
...........................................................................................................................................................................
...........................................................................................................................................................................
...........................................................................................................................................................................

You should / should not read this book because ..............................................................................................................
...........................................................................................................................................................................
...........................................................................................................................................................................
...........................................................................................................................................................................
**Voice It!**

**Aims**
1. To identify points of view.
2. To discuss the point of view in the novel.

**Materials**
1. Worksheet 14
2. Scissors, glue, mah-jong paper, blu tack/cellophane tape

**Steps**
1. Place students into groups of 4-5.
2. Discuss the point of view in the novel and how stories can be written in first, second, or third person.
3. Provide students with worksheet and materials. Ask students to cut portion (B) of their completed worksheets and paste them on the mahjong paper. Display the mahjong sheets on the wall.
4. Allow students from other group to correct or add responses using green ink.

**Notes**
For Low English Proficiency students, teacher may underline the pronouns that have to be changed. Students may role play.

Third (Omniscient) voice allows author to tell the reader anything from any character’s point of view or location.
In the novel “The Curse,” the author used the THIRD PERSON or OMNISCIENT point of view. Rewrite the following two paragraphs by changing the voice into FIRST PERSON.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Third person point of view</th>
<th>First person point of view</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| They had always gone out walking or cycling together around the village when they were kids. They had been inseparable. When she was five, she used to follow Madhuri on the bicycle. She would sit on the carrier at the back as Madhuri cycled to the market or the post office to do some chores for their busy parents. They would cycle past paddy fields; the farmers would always wave back at them and at times, would even let them have a ride on the back of buffaloes as they ploughed the field. | We had __________________________
| | __________________________ |
| | __________________________ |
| | __________________________ |
| | __________________________ |
| | __________________________ |
| | __________________________ |
| | __________________________ |
| | __________________________ |
| | __________________________ |
Saleh Abdullah left the mosque after the prayers with determined steps. He had been unsure at first when he saw that piece of evidence near the rubble earlier. That yellow cord. He was sure he had seen it on that crazy bomoh’s wrist whenever that man scampered past him. Saleh had no patience for him. Many a times he had caught that bomoh trying to steal his chickens.
THE CURSE

BEYOND THE TEXT/ACTIVITY 15

Make The Connection

Time: 80 minutes

Aims

1 To state differences and similarities.

Materials

1 Worksheet 15

Steps

1 Ask students to brainstorm the legendary character 'Mahsuri'.
2 Ask students to compare and contrast Mahsuri with Madhuri.
3 Ask students to provide the relevant textual evidence from the novel by filling in the column.

Notes

Students can compare and contrast other real life people with the characters in the novel.
This activity can also be conducted in groups.
The name *Madhuri* in the novel *The Curse*, can be linked to the famous legendary character, Mahsuri. Where did the story take place?

Why do you think the title of the book is *The Curse*? Compare the information given below. Write your answers in the column below.

---

**Background details**

Mahsuri was the daughter of a Thai couple who moved from their native Phuket to the island of Langkawi in search of a better life. She was the most beautiful in all of Langkawi and married the warrior Wan Darus. Her husband had to go to war, leaving Mahsuri behind.

Reference:
Cause
Mahsuri befriended a young man named Deraman. The village chief's wife was jealous of Mahsuri's beauty. She spread a rumour that Mahsuri was unfaithful and was having an affair with Deraman in the absence of Wan Darus. Eventually the rumours grew strong enough that the villagers openly accused her of adultery.

Reference:

Effect
Mahsuri pleaded her innocence, but no one believed her. Mahsuri was to be tied to a tree (or pole) and stabbed to death but it did not work. After every execution attempt failed, she told them to kill her with her family's keris. When she was stabbed, white blood flowed from the wound, signifying her innocence. Before dying, she cursed Langkawi for seven generations of bad luck.

Reference:

Superstitious Belief
Many locals of Langkawi believe the legend to be true, citing the decades of failed crops that followed Mahsuri's death. Langkawi was also attacked by Siam numerous times.

Reference:
Writing about the text

Time: 80 minutes

Aim

1. To rewrite the letter

Materials

1. Worksheet 16

Steps

1. Elicit response from students on the plot of the story.
2. Ask students to assume the role of Azreen.
3. Ask students to write a letter to Julian, stating Azreen’s frustration, disappointments and feelings in regards to the events that have happened.

Notes

For Low English Proficiency students, the teacher can list down the events in the story and guides students to write the letter.
Rewrite Azreen’s letter to Julian describing her experience since the day she arrives at the village.

Dear Julian,

......................................................................................................................................................
......................................................................................................................................................
......................................................................................................................................................
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Yours sincerely,

Azreen
**Character Portfolio**

**Aims**
1. To be able to describe main characters.
2. To produce a portfolio on the main characters.

**Materials**
1. Worksheet 17

**Steps**
1. Elicit response from students on the main characters from the novel.
2. Ask students work in pairs and choose a character for their portfolio.
3. Guide students to the elements needed in the portfolio.
4. Ask students to develop the character portfolio based on the textual evidence from the novel.

**Notes**
For Low English Proficiency students, the teacher writes out the character traits of the chosen characters and instructs the students to look for textual evidence to support their answer.
Character Portfolio

Character’s name: _________________________

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PHYSICAL ATTRIBUTES</th>
<th>TEXTUAL EVIDENCE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CHARACTER TRAITS</th>
<th>TEXTUAL EVIDENCE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DILEMMA FACED BY THE CHARACTER</td>
<td>TEXTUAL EVIDENCE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RESOLUTION</th>
<th>TEXTUAL EVIDENCE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Pit Stop!**

**Aims**

1. To answer comprehension questions.
2. To answer an open-ended activity.
3. To practice Question 34 (Essay).

**Materials**

1. Worksheet 18

**Steps**

1. Elicit responses from students on the whole novel.
2. Distribute Worksheet.
3. Ask students to attempt all the questions.
4. Ask students to discuss the answers.

**Notes**
Based on the extracts given, answer the following questions.

“She was to confess everything to her husband and ask his permission to release her. She was convinced that he was a reasonable man and wanted the best for her. And I hoped against hope that she was right. But, we never had the chance. We met for the last time that day at the rubber plantation. I wanted to leave immediately but she asked to wait for another month. She wanted to break the news gently to your parents first. And most of all, she wanted to see you before she left. She told me she had written to you, asking you to return so she could tell you anything.”

1. Why is he leaving the island?

2. Who is ‘she’ in the extract?

3. What is the relationship between “him” and “her”?

4. In your opinion, is her action in confessing to her husband appropriate? Provide a reason for your answer.

For a moment, the hiss and whispering from Puan Normal’s corner stopped abruptly. Siti nudged away her brother’s head from her view to see what had caused the sudden hush. Out in the front, flanked by a robust woman and an edgy-looking man, a girl at about twenty came up the steps. She looked around hesitantly. Her eyes behind her glasses glared out rather angrily at the group of women near Puan Normala. Then without a word, the girl pushed forward her heavy bag and stormed past the living room.
5. What had caused the “sudden hush”?

__________________________________________________________________________

6. What do you think the girl is?

__________________________________________________________________________

7. When did this incident take place?

__________________________________________________________________________

8. Based on the excerpt, do you think the girl’s behaviour during the occasion is acceptable? State your reasons.

__________________________________________________________________________

The exercise below is based on the above extract. Indicate whether the following statements are True (T) or False (F).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>True / False</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(a) Mohd. Asraf wanted to leave the island for better employment.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(b) Mohd. Asraf is deeply in love with Azreen and wanted her to follow him, leaving the island.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(c) Madhuri wrote to Azreen and informed her about her affair with Mohd. Asraf.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(d) Mohd. Asraf and Madhuri could not leave the island immediately due to bad weather.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(e) Madhuri was murdered at the rubber plantation.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Based on the novel that you have studied, choose a character and discuss how a value is being demonstrated through the character you have chosen.
Activity 1 : Story Pyramid

1. Azreen takes time off from her studies in England to attend her sister, Madhuri’s funeral.
7. Azreen hears rumours that her sister is murdered. Everyone believes that Madhuri’s death will cause a curse to be cast upon them.
4. Madhuri’s room is partially destroyed in a fire. It rains continuously and crops are damaged. Strange things happen to Azreen.
2. Suspicions are fuelled by superstition and the Old Lady is killed in a fire.
9. Mohd. Mohd. Asraf admitted that he loved Madhuri and they were going to leave Langkawi.
3. Azreen finds out that sister Madhuri is adopted.
8. Azreen found out that Saleh had killed in a fit of fury because she wanted to leave her husband for Mohd. Mohd. Asraf.
5. Azreen goes back to England to continue her studies.

Activity 4 : Guess Who

1. Azreen – “What has the disease done to you Mak?” (Pg 26)
2. Madhuri – “No Abah. Please don’t. I love him.” (Pg 225)
3. Mohd. Mohd. Asraf – “I don’t know Nek. If you don’t get well soon, I’m going to call the headmaster to tell him I’m taking leave from work today.” (Pg 117)
4. Puan Normala – “Do you hear me? She has white blood. We have all been cursed.” (Pg 14)
5. Old Lady – “I killed my husband. And now I’m paying for it.” (Pg 101)
6. Noor – “I’ve seen how he was looking at her during her majlis bersanding. He looked as if he was on the verge of committing suicide” (Pg 59)
7. Fatihah – “She’s very pretty, and very sweet-tempered and respectful to her elders. And very young.” (Pg 79)
8. Julian – “I thought you might need some support once you get back here.” (Pg 232)
9. Saleh Abdullah – “Go on and leave this house. You seem to think they’re better parents.” (Pg 110)
10. Awang – “Oh, I actually meant Madhuri’s mother, Cik Adik. I don’t remember her name but she’s very much alive. A little mad but alive.” (Pg 208)
Activity 7 : Name The Spot

1. The Old Lady killed her abusive husband in self-defence
2. Azreen and her family stayed here.
3. Saleh Abdullah found Madhuri as a baby here in the makeshift bed of rag and leaves
4. Azreen packed and left London
5. Photos of Madhuri were all torn into three parts
6. Azreen used to stay here whenever she had misunderstanding with her father
7. Awang revealed the truth about Madhuri’s adoption
8. Awang left the gate open and Mohd. Mohd. Asraf was blamed when the bull escaped.
9. Madhuri’s body was discovered here.

Activity 8 : Get The Message

a. Belief in the supernatural
b. Gender stereotyping
c. Love
d. Love
e. Belief in the supernatural
f. Belief in the supernatural
g. forgiveness
h. Love
i. Violence
j. Gender stereotyping
k. Violence
l. Belief in the supernatural
m. Violence

Activity 9 : That says it all

Write down the information required in the boxes.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Main idea</th>
<th>Plot</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>FEAR OF THE UNKNOWN / BELIEF IN THE SUPERNATURAL</td>
<td>There are rumours about how Madhuri died</td>
<td>1. Madhuri is dead.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2. Pn. Normala claims Madhuri’s blood was white.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3. She spreads rumours about the curse that will be cast on the villagers</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Activity 10: Life’s lessons

Extract A

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Values</th>
<th>Evidence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Caring</td>
<td>Azreen lifted a spoon to her</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compassion</td>
<td>Azreen felt a pang of sorrow</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Extract B

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Values</th>
<th>Evidence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Responsibility</td>
<td>she was back with a basket of fresh vegetables and a few packets of seeds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diligence</td>
<td>the girl diligently repairing the trampled bed of lady's fingers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accountability</td>
<td>“Oh, nothing. Just to say I am sorry.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Extract C

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Values</th>
<th>Evidence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Caring</td>
<td>Madhuri put aside the basket, and went behind to the gardening shack to grab their father’s parang. “Come,” she said to Azreen.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Diligence</td>
<td>The two sisters struggled with the blade to shave the rattan into the right width and length.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Persistence</td>
<td>When their parents returned, the girls excused themselves quietly and forwent dinner.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Extract D

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Values</th>
<th>Evidence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Wisdom</td>
<td>wisely keeping the men at a distance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Loyalty</td>
<td>Now that she was closer to the house (the Old Lady’s house)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Bravery</td>
<td>Azeen sprinted. “No!”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Activity 11 : The good, the bad and the ugly

EVENTS THAT MADE AZREEN FEEL SAD

1. She felt lonely in England
2. She heard her sister had passed away

EVENTS THAT MADE AZREEN FEEL ENVIOUS AND ANGRY

1. Madhuri was everybody’s favourite
2. Madhuri was more beautiful and talented than her.
3. The girls in her class and her neighbours teased her for being unladylike.

EVENTS THAT MADE AZREEN FEEL DETERMINED, FORGIVING AND PEACEFUL

1. She wanted to solve Madhuri's mysterious death
2. She realised that Mohd. Mohd. Asraf was not the man she thought he was - he loved Madhuri, although she was married
3. She discovered that Madhuri was adopted
4. She realised her father was the one who had murdered Madhuri in a fit of anger, but she felt no rage at all
Activity 12 : Imagery

Metaphor: The use of words or phrases to an object or action to which it is imaginatively but not literally applicable

1. Especially that rotten durian neighbour of yours... p.23
2. ... with the leaky-mouthish neighbour... p.171
3. ... her father’s steely eyes... p.222

Personification: An inanimate object is personified by attributing human traits and qualities to it.

1. ... the black taxis whizzing past... p.3
2. The plank beneath her feet creaked... p.80
3. ... whose muscular biceps flexed menacingly... p.93
4. ... it gripped his heart like a vice... p.227

Onomatopoeia: Words that sound like the objects they name or the sounds those objects make.

1. ... the wheels of the suitcase screeched as she... p.2
2. The plank beneath her feet creaked... p.80
3. There was a rustling of leaves... p.219
4. ... words echoed boominly in her head... p.222

Hyperboles: are figures of speech that are exaggerated in order to create emphasis or effect

1. ... girls fell for him left and right... p.41
2. Argh I’ll be dead if the teacher finds out... p.91

Activity 14 : Voice It!

We had always gone out walking or cycling together around the village when we were kids. We had been inseparable. When I was five, I used to follow Madhuri on the bicycle. I would sit on the carrier at the back as Madhuri cycled to the market or the post office to do some chores for our busy parents.

We would cycle past paddy fields; the farmers would always wave back at us and at times, would even let us have a ride on the back of buffaloes as they ploughed the field.

I left the mosque after the prayers with determined steps. I had been unsure at first when I saw that piece of evidence near the rubble earlier. That yellow cord. I was sure I had seen it on that crazy bomoh’s wrist whenever that man scampered past me. I had no patience for him. Many a times I had caught that bomoh trying to steal my chickens.
Activity 18: Pit Stop

1. To pursue his studies in Kuala Lumpur
2. Madhuri
3. To discover whether the husband would accept her confession.
4. Accept any possible answer. Some suggestions of answers:
   Yes, rather than dwelling in the guilt (of the affair), it is better to be honest about it.
   No, because the implication of revealing the secret would destroy her marriage and tarnish her husband’s reputation as the village headman
5. The appearance of a robust woman and an edgy-looking man at the gathering.
6. Azreen Saleh
7. Madhuri’s funeral
8. Accept any possible answer. Some suggestions of answers:
   Yes, it is acceptable considering she might be distraught of what has just happened to her.
   No, even though she had just suffered a great loss she still need to behave appropriately.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WORDS</th>
<th>PAGE</th>
<th>MEANING IN CONTEXT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>acquiescent</td>
<td>p.79</td>
<td>agreeable, submissive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>deranged</td>
<td>p.80</td>
<td>disturbed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>drenched</td>
<td>p.82</td>
<td>soaked, dripping wet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>scowled</td>
<td>p.82</td>
<td>glared</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>stomped</td>
<td>p.82</td>
<td>walk heavily</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>devoured</td>
<td>p.84</td>
<td>eat greedily</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>intricately</td>
<td>p.85</td>
<td>complicatedly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>throbbed</td>
<td>p.85</td>
<td>beat, pulsate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lucid</td>
<td>p.86</td>
<td>clear</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>streaked</td>
<td>p.88</td>
<td>marked, splashed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>scrawny</td>
<td>p.89</td>
<td>thin, skinny,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hapless</td>
<td>p.90</td>
<td>unlucky, unfortunate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>grimaced</td>
<td>p.91</td>
<td>frowned</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>blabbermouth</td>
<td>p.91</td>
<td>big mouth, busybody, gossip</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hovering</td>
<td>p.92</td>
<td>soaring</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>flinched</td>
<td>p.93</td>
<td>draw back in fear; recoil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>squirm</td>
<td>p.93</td>
<td>feel humiliated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>snarled</td>
<td>p.94</td>
<td>growled</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>insolent</td>
<td>p.94</td>
<td>rude</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ruffled</td>
<td>p.95</td>
<td>stand out on its body when frightened</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WORDS</td>
<td>PAGE</td>
<td>MEANING IN CONTEXT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------</td>
<td>------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lurking</td>
<td>p.97</td>
<td>loitering</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>flustered</td>
<td>p.98</td>
<td>anxious/ uncomfortable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bashful</td>
<td>p.99</td>
<td>shy, timid, blushing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>disguise</td>
<td>p.103</td>
<td>hide/ conceal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>enraged</td>
<td>p.103</td>
<td>angry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>leper</td>
<td>p.104</td>
<td>a person who has leprosy (infectious skin disease)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>crutches</td>
<td>p.106</td>
<td>sticks which someone with an injured foot or leg uses to support them when walking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>strode</td>
<td>p.107</td>
<td>walked</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>slumped</td>
<td>p.107</td>
<td>sit down heavily because of feeling very tired</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pampering</td>
<td>p.110</td>
<td>to treat with great or excessive care</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ambivalent</td>
<td>p.113</td>
<td>unsure, undecided</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>deserting</td>
<td>p.114</td>
<td>abandoning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>amicably</td>
<td>p.114</td>
<td>pleasantly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>,sulk</td>
<td>p.115</td>
<td>silent and bad-tempered because you are annoyed with something.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ethereal</td>
<td>p.115</td>
<td>having delicate beauty that seems almost supernatural.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>suppress</td>
<td>p.117</td>
<td>restrain</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gait</td>
<td>p.120</td>
<td>manner of walking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ruckus</td>
<td>p.120</td>
<td>disturbance; commotion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mellowed</td>
<td>p.122</td>
<td>become kinder as result of growing older</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gesticulated</td>
<td>p.123</td>
<td>make movement with hands</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>doused</td>
<td>p.126</td>
<td>extinguish with liquid</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lurched</td>
<td>p.129</td>
<td>make a sudden, unintentional movement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>increduously</td>
<td>p.132</td>
<td>unbelievable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>forewent</td>
<td>p.143</td>
<td>decided not have</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>incantation</td>
<td>p.148</td>
<td>series of words that is used as a magic spell.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>scampered</td>
<td>p.152</td>
<td>move quickly with small light steps</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WORDS</td>
<td>PAGE</td>
<td>MEANING IN CONTEXT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------</td>
<td>------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>countenance</td>
<td>p. 153</td>
<td>appearance of the face</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>treacherous</td>
<td>p. 157</td>
<td>dangerous</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>alleviate</td>
<td>p. 158</td>
<td>relieve; lessen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>wayward</td>
<td>p. 171</td>
<td>difficult to control</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nudged</td>
<td>p. 185</td>
<td>pushed gently</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pariah</td>
<td>p. 187</td>
<td>social outcast</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>amiable</td>
<td>p. 195</td>
<td>agreeable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>anguish</td>
<td>p. 199</td>
<td>agony</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bewilderment</td>
<td>p. 211</td>
<td>the feeling of being confused</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>resentment</td>
<td>p. 226</td>
<td>hate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>vista</td>
<td>p. 231</td>
<td>view</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>horrendous</td>
<td>p. 232</td>
<td>terrible</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
THE CURSE

Panel of Writers

Coordinators

Diana Fatimah Bt Ahmad Sahani
Masreen Wirda Bt Mohammad Ali
Tengku Ireneza Marina Tunku Mazlan
Eileen Jessie Ah Guan
Ng Yew Kee

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Ng Yew Kee

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