

Killer Bees Jane Rollason

Aims

- To make students interested in the book.
- To familiarise students with the horror genre.

NB You may find that many of the activities described below can be exploited better in your students' own language or mother tongue, if you speak it. The mother tongue, if used carefully as a resource, can facilitate your students' progress in English and help them to understand the context of the story, thus preparing them to understand it better when they read it.

Pre-reading Activities

- 1 Ask students to look at Illustration 1 (the cover of the book) and to read Extract 1 (the blurb of the book). Students guess the genre of the story from the extract. If necessary, write some suggested genres on the board (e.g. adventure, murder mystery, horror, thriller, fantasy, science fiction, ghost story) for them to choose from. Talk briefly about each genre.
Answer: Horror
- 2 Ask students *What horror stories – either film or fiction – do you know?* Write their suggestions on the board.
Possible answers: *Dracula, Jaws, Halloween, Alien.* Then elicit a definition of the horror genre.
Suggested answer: a story or film that makes you afraid and keeps the reader or audience 'in suspense', waiting to see what will happen.
Ask *What other genre (or genres) do you think horror is a bit like?*
Suggested answer: science fiction, adventure, thriller, fantasy.
- 3 Ask *What age group are horror films often for?* Elicit that horror films are often for adults only, with an 18 certificate. Make sure they understand what '18 certificate' means.
Discuss why horror films are often for adults only.
Answer: Because children might be shocked.
Ask *Do you agree with the 18 classification for horror films? Do you think you would be afraid if you saw*

one? Do you know any horror stories that are for children?

Possible answer: The Goosebumps series of books.

What do you think might make horror stories more suitable for children?

Suggested answer: They don't make you as afraid as horror films.

- 4 Ask students to read Extract 2 (the beginning of the book) and Extract 3. In pairs, students discuss the extracts. Ask *What is happening in the extracts?*
Answer: First, Jo is arguing with her mother. Then, Jo and a friend, Mikey, take Jo's mother's car without her knowing and go for a drive.
Ask students *What do you think of Jo? What sort of person is she? How is she feeling? Do you like her?*
Possible answer: Jo is a nice girl, but she is having some troubles at the moment.
Tell students – if they haven't guessed already – that Jo is the story's main character. Elicit why it is important for us to like or care about the main character in a horror story.
Answer: Because then we will be worried and afraid for the main character when bad things are happening. We will want him or her to get through it.
- 5 Ask students to look at Illustration 2. Working in pairs, ask them to discuss what is happening and what Jo is thinking or feeling. Now ask them to write Jo's thoughts down as if she were writing a page in her diary. When they have finished, students share these diary pages with their partner.
- 6 Ask students to read Extract 3 again and then plan a role-play of the scene with a partner. Students can talk about the mood of the scene; decide who is going to be who and comment on how the characters are feeling. When they are ready, students perform their role-play.
- 7 Ask students to read Extract 4 (five different messages between Jo and her mother). Two of these are text messages, and three are written messages. Ask *Which are the text messages?*
Answer: b and d.

Then elicit the usual difference between text messages and other sorts of message.

Possible answers: Text messages are often shorter. Sometimes they are written in a shortened way to save time.

Now ask *What is the mood of the two text messages?*

Suggested answer: Text b is saying sorry in a loving way. Text d is angry and worried.

- 8** Working either on their own or in pairs, students put all the five messages in Extract 4 in the order they think they appear in the book.

Answer: b, d, e, c, a.

Elicit what they have learned from the five messages.

Suggested answers: Jo and her mum have argued. Jo has gone somewhere and the car is not there. The soldiers are telling everyone to go north because the bees are dangerous. Amy and her mother have taken Merlin the dog with them. Jo decides to follow them north and gets to Oxford. Jo's mum and sister waited for Jo at Oxford, but now they've gone to Scotland, to Inverness. They sent Merlin back for Jo.

- 9** Ask students to write a sixth message from Jo to her mother and Amy in which she tells them of her plans now she has arrived in Oxford. Students must decide in advance whether the message will be a text message or a written message. Then, they share their messages with the whole class.
- 10** Ask students to look at Illustration 3. Elicit what students think is happening in the picture. *What do you think the men with the guns want? What are they saying?* Ask students to think of a caption for the picture.

Post-reading Activities _____

- 1** Ask students to talk about what they liked and disliked about the book. Then ask *If you were the writer of Killer Bees, what would you do differently?*
- 2** Ask for volunteers to 'be' some of the main characters from the book. Volunteers then answer questions from the class as if they were the character.
- 3** Ask students to 'place themselves' into the book. Ask *Where would you be? Travelling with Jo? Or somewhere else? What would you be doing?*
- 4** Ask students to imagine that a film is to be made of *Killer Bees*. Ask them to design a trailer of the film by choosing the best moments of the film that will make us want to watch it. (NB They should not give away the whole story – a trailer is not a summary.) They should write some words to accompany the clips they have chosen. If possible, play students some examples of trailers to give them an idea of what they need to do.

Extract 1

‘What day is it? Saturday? Where is everyone?’ Then Jo saw something strange far away. It was high in the air. It was like a cloud, but it was going round and round.

Jo has had an accident with her mum’s car and knows she is in trouble. But when she comes home, she realises that something has changed. Why are there soldiers on the streets? And where have her mother and little sister gone?

Extract 2

‘You can’t go out tomorrow night, Jo!’ shouted Jo’s mum. ‘You must look after Amy for me.’

‘But I *want* to go out,’ Jo shouted back.

‘Jo, I work all week. I want one night out,’ said her mum.

‘I work all week. I want to go out with my friends.’

Jo went into the kitchen. Breakfast was short and loud. BANG! She put her plate on the table. BANG! She shut the fridge door.

The radio was on. They were playing an old song by The Killers. Then it was the news. Jo went to get her bag from her room. She came back into the kitchen.

‘... *escaped after scientists ...*’ the radio was saying. She turned it off.

BANG! She put the coffee back in the cupboard.

‘Stop it, Jo!’ shouted her mum from the sitting room. ‘You’ll break something!’

Jo called Merlin. The dog ran up to her and she put her arms round his neck.

My notes

Extract 3

'Let's go out in your mum's car. Your mum won't know. We'll drive round for ten minutes and then come back. Come on!'

'Mikey, that is the worst idea ...' Jo said.

'Come on, it'll be fun,' Mikey said.

'Why shouldn't I have some fun?' she asked herself. People shouted at her all day – at home, at school.

'What will my mum say?' she said.

'She won't know,' said Mikey.

'People will see us,' Jo said.

'Nobody will see us – everyone's at work or at school,' said Mikey. 'Where are the car keys?'

She pulled on her big winter coat over her school uniform.

Mikey was already in the car. She got in next to him.

'I don't believe this,' Jo said. 'Why are we doing this?'

'You were feeling sad. Remember?' said Mikey. 'Now you're having a fun day! Ready?'

'OK, let's do it,' she said.

Mikey started the car. He drove carefully along the road and stopped at a red light. He turned left and started to drive out of town.

'What do you think?' he asked.

'What do I think about what?' Jo said. She was beginning to feel sick. 'Am I a good driver?' Mikey said. He was smiling.

'Mikey, this is really stupid,' said Jo.

He started to drive faster. Jo was really afraid now.

'Mikey, can we turn round, please? Now! This isn't funny.'

Mikey laughed.

They were in the country now. They drove through some woods.

'How fast can this car go?' said Mikey.

'Mikey, stop! Please stop the car.'

'Watch this!' he said. The car went faster.

'Mikey! Stop!'

Then the road turned to the right. Mikey tried to turn but he was going too fast.

'MIKEY!' Jo screamed.

My notes

Extract 4

a Jo, it's Thursday night. We're waiting at Oxford. I'm sending Merlin back for you. I didn't want to leave without you. They said I had to go. They're taking everyone to lots of different camps in Scotland. Amy and I are going to Inverness. Come and find us there. Get inside if you see any bees. Take food and water with you. Love, Mum and Amy.

b Sorry I shouted. Hope you weren't late for school! Love Mum XX

c Mum and Amy, if you get back before me, don't worry. I'm following you north. I'll come home when it's over. Merlin is with me. We're fine.

d Where are you? Where's the car? We have to go. Everyone's going. Call me right now.

e Jo, we've got to go. The soldiers are telling everyone to go. Amy and I are travelling north because of the bees. The scientists think the bees can't live in the cold. If you're reading this, come north now. Amy and I have taken Merlin. We love you. We'll meet you when we get there. Got to go.

XXX Mum XXX

My notes

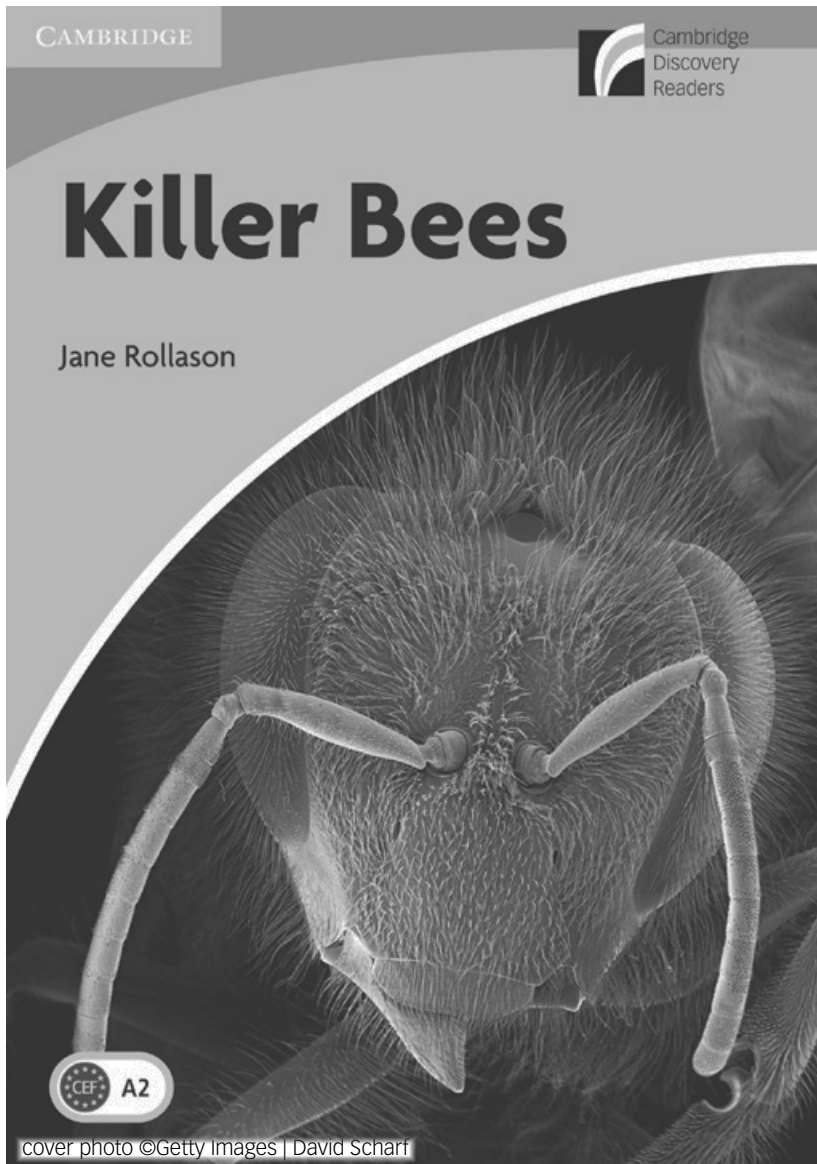


Illustration 2



Illustration 3



My notes