

Grade 9 English Worksheet

Reading comprehension - "The township boy"

Read the three verses from the poem by DJ Brindley.

The Township Boy

Who plays in the streets with a can for a ball?
Who whistles at girls with a piercing call?
Who joins the fight when words become a brawl?
The township boy, the township boy:
His rage is shared by all.

Who searches a dustbin twisted and bent?
Who lives in a shanty, box or tent?
Who has no money to pay the rent?
The township boy, the township boy:
He's swallowed his last cent.

Who asks the queen for a tot of rum?
Who eats his dinner on an old tin drum?
Who runs when amasosha come?
The township boy, the township boy:
He knows no other home.

Part A: Comprehension

Choose the most correct answer.

- 1 Why does the township boy kick a can? (1)
A He doesn't have a ball.
B He likes to make a lot of noise.
C There is a lot of rubbish in the street.
D He likes to drink from a can.

- 2 At what stage does the township boy join in a fight? (1)
A He joins in a fight at its beginning.
B He starts the fight.
C He joins the fight when they start quarrelling.
D He joins the fight when it becomes physical.

- 3 Why does the township boy look in rubbish bins? (1)
A He wants to see what's inside.

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- B He is looking for food or other useful items.
C He is hungry.
D The rubbish bin is twisted.
- 4 Why is the township boy described as having “swallowed his last cent”? (1)
A He eats his money.
B It is an idiomatic saying.
C He is desperately poor.
D He’s used any money he had to feed himself.
- 5 Who is the “queen”? (1)
A The queen of England.
B The queen of the shebeen.
C The queen of Sheba.
D The queen of the township.
- 6 Where does the township boy live? (1)
A He lives in a tent.
B He lives in a shanty.
C He lives in the township.
D He lives in a box. (6)

Part B: Conditionals 1

Answer true or false to the following questions.

- 7 If the township boy had a ball, he would kick it. (1)
- 8 If the township boy sees a girl, he whistles at her. (1)
- 9 If there is a fight, the township boy walks away. (1)
- 10 If the township had a house, he wouldn’t live in a box. (1)
- 11 If the queen gave the township boy rum, he wouldn’t drink it. (1)
- 12 If the soldiers came, the township boy would talk to them. (1)
- (6)

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Part C: Word families

Give the past tense of the words.

	Present tense	Past tense	
13	plays		(1)
14	whistles		(1)
15	joins		(1)
16	become		(1)
17	is shared		(1)
18	searches		(1)
19	lives		(1)
20	has		(1)
			(8)

Part D: Sounds

- 21 Read the poem aloud and try to pronounce the words properly. Focus on
- a in can and shanty
 - a in ball, call, brawl and all
 - a in rage
 - a in shared
 - a in swallowed and last
 - ay in plays
 - e in bent, tent, rent and cent
 - ea in search
 - ea in eats
 - ee in streets
 - i in girl
 - i in fight
 - i in twist and lives
 - oi in joins
 - o in word
 - o in box and tot
 - ow in township
 - o in come
 - o in home and knows
 - u in dustbin, runs, rum and drum
 - uee in queen

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Part E: Stress

22 Read the poem again.

Stress the word “Who” at the beginning of lines.

Note that your voice should go up for a question.

Drop your voice each time you say “The township boy, the township boy.”

Notice the rhythm of the “tòwn/ship/bòy, the tòwn/ship/bòy”.

Notice that in the last line of each poem the underlined words are stressed.

- His rage is shared by all.
- He’s swallowed his last cent.
- He knows no other home.

Part F: Write a poem

23 Look at the first verse of the poem *The township boy*. Note that the first three lines rhyme with the last line. Use this pattern to write a poem about someone who lives in the suburb. You can repeat the words “the suburban girl, the suburban girl” in the fourth line.

Here are some rhyming words to finish your lines with:

beat, cheat, compete, conceit, deceit, discreet, eat, feat, feet, fleet, greet, heat, maltreat, marguerite, meat, meet, mistreat, neat, petite, receipt, seat, street, sweet, treat, tweet, offbeat, drumbeat, upbeat, athlete, concrete, window seat.

Part G: Discussion

24 In groups, discuss how the township boy’s situation could be improved.

- What could be done to help him?
- Who could help?

Select one person in the group to report back on the discussion to the class.

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Suggested Solutions

Part A: Comprehension

Choose the most correct answer.

1	A He doesn't have a ball.	(1)
2	D He joins the fight when it becomes physical.	(1)
3	B He is looking for food or other useful items.	(1)
4	D He's used any money he had to feed himself.	(1)
5	B The queen of the shebeen.	(1)
6	C He lives in the township.	(1)
		(6)

Part B: Conditionals 1

Answer true or false to the following questions.

7	True	(1)
8	True	(1)
9	False	(1)
10	True	(1)
11	False	(1)
12	False	(1)
		(6)

Part C: Word families

Give the past tense of the words.

	Present tense	Past tense	
13	plays	played	(1)
14	whistles	whistled	(1)
15	joins	joined	(1)
16	become	became	(1)
17	is shared	was shared	(1)
18	searches	searched	(1)
19	lives	lived	(1)
20	has	had	(1)
			(8)

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Part D: Sounds

- 21 Help learners to pronounce the words properly.

Part E: Stress

- 22 Help learners to read the poem again and place stress in the correct places.

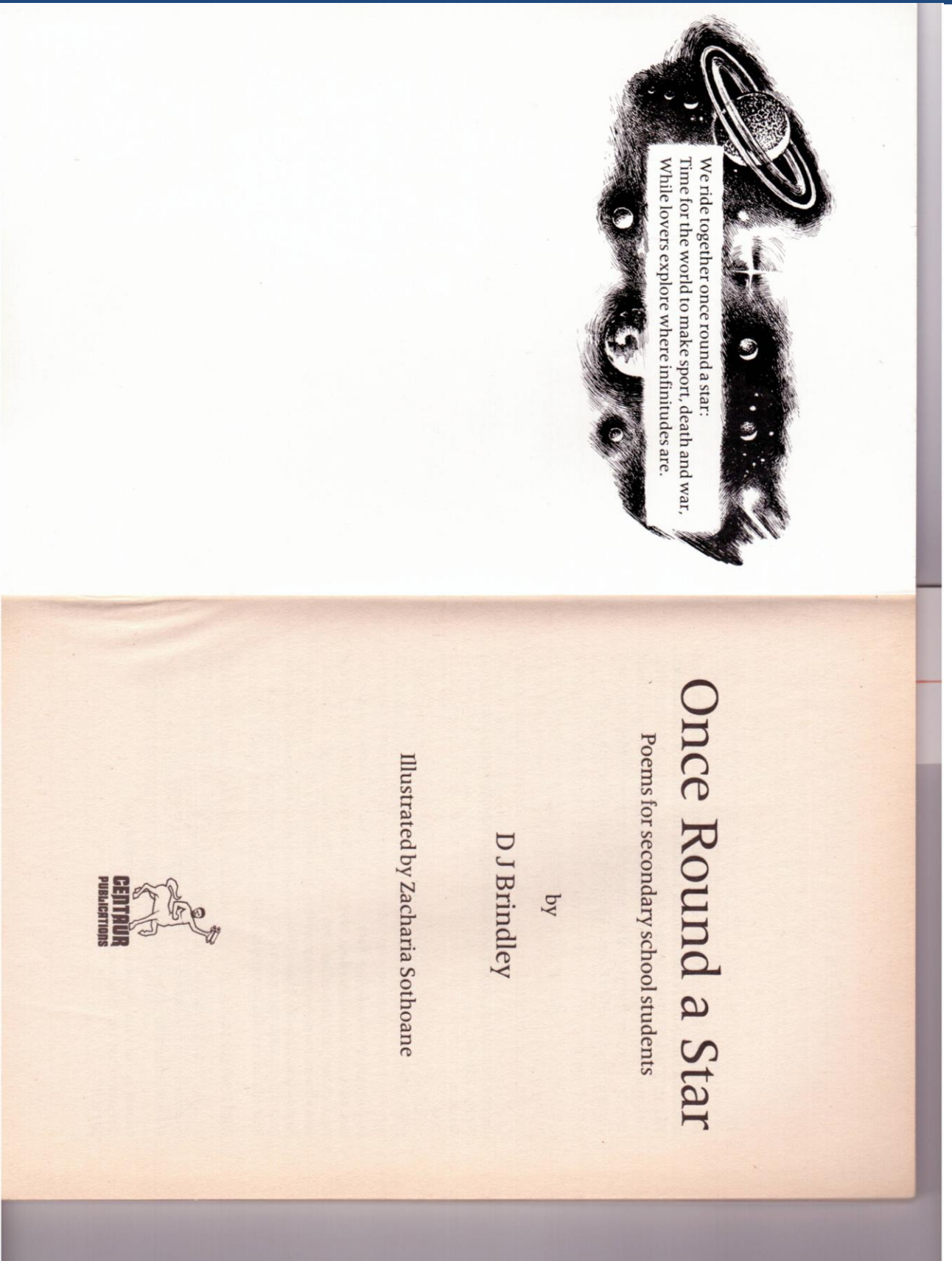
Part F: Write a poem

- 23 For example:
Who lives in the big house at the end of the street?
Whose green garden is such a treat?
Whose mother are you afraid to meet?
The suburban girl, the suburban girl.
The one you want to greet.

Part G: Discussion

- 24 Allow learners to discuss the topic in their home languages, but then they should put their points down in English and report back in English. Their suggestions will vary. Encourage them to question the township boy's situation and think about how it could be improved. Remind them to be empathetic and praise them for being innovative in their suggestions.

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For their very kind help and encouragement in the preparation of this book and other books of mine, I should like to thank Joan Bevan, Thandi Chaane, Sue Hepker, Marlys Levin, Barbara Meyerowitz, Clement Motlakeng, Themba Mhambi, Murray Robertson, Tessa Welch, Dorothy Wright and, especially, my wife Marianne and Centaur English Editor Brenda Eisenberg. I am indebted to you all.

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his teaching and writing to a vision of language teaching: language is the means by which we explore and express our experience of the world; language teaching needs to draw on and broaden the experiences of students. It is not merely the learning of structures, but the exploration of experience by means of those structures.

All the poems in this anthology contribute to this vision, but in 'Advice to Students' the author expresses it most directly: 'Reveal/The secrets of your heart/The real experiences that made you grow./The hates and loves,/The torments, longings, fears/ That pulsed along your blood/In sun or storm-drenched/Years.' This 'advice' David Brindley himself takes to heart through his writing. He explores his experience of young people — rooted in a still fresh understanding of his own youth, and augmented by many years of working with young people as teacher and friend.

If we as teachers skim this anthology to find an appropriate poem for discussion or for a theme we are teaching, we will find material to meet our needs. But we will be missing the most important experience the collection offers: a rare insight into the values, attitudes and sensitivities which are evident in the real teacher, one who can understand, guide and inspire young people. To gain this experience, we need to read carefully through the entire collection and enter into the world which the author creates. It is a world of heroes as well as anti-heroes; it celebrates physical mastery as well as fragility; it is hilarious as well as serious, exuberant as well as critical.

The poems in this volume thus explore the world of young people; but they also evoke in the teacher a sensitivity to the needs of his or her students, emphasising the necessity of allowing education to move beyond the classroom into the world, and through meaningful involvement into the hearts and minds of the students.

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Whispers, Whispers

The Force were in the streets today
With soldiers spoiling for the fray
And children ran — as well they may —
They whisper some have passed away.
Yet what is happening none can say.

The ghettos seem in disarray
As old men kneel and women pray,
New mourners dress in black and grey
And curfews keep the guns at bay.
Yet what is happening none can say.

The shops are closed, no students play,
The vans go rumbling on their way,
The jobless walk with feet of clay
And smoke-clouds rise where men delay.
Yet what is happening none can say.

The government spokesman's rather fey:
He says that everything's OK:
Silence, it seems, is here to stay.
Perhaps until the Judgement Day.
But it's happening, though they dare not say.

The Township Boy

Who plays in the streets with a can for a ball?
Who whistles at girls with a piercing call?
Who joins the fight when words become a brawl?
The township boy, the township boy:
His rage is shared by all.

Who searches a dustbin twisted and bent?
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He's swallowed his last cent.

Who asks the queen for a tot of rum?
Who eats his dinner on an old tin drum?
Who runs when amasosha come?
The township boy, the township boy:
He knows no other home.

Whose school has a fence with a guard outside?
Whose train is crowded and dangerous to ride?
Whose jacket has a slit with a knife inside?
The township boy, the township boy:
His fame spreads far and wide.

Who staggers to the clinic with gasping breath?
Who brings fresh flowers for a funeral wreath?
Who mourns his sister Elizabeth?
The township boy, the township boy:
He walks with Brother Death.

Who challenges laws that seldom bend?
Who suffers from wounds that never mend?
Who is dark as pitch yet calls you friend?
The township boy, the township boy:
Will his sorrows ever end?

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