

Best Books Study Work Guide:

Snitch

For Grade 7 & 8

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Foreword to the Learner

Enjoy reading *Snitch*!

As you read, interact with the text. Enjoy the humour, reflect on what Ben comments on and what it tells you about what he feels and what matters to him.

For example, I am walking to school on my lonesome and it feels as if I am travelling across the Sahara desert carrying a camel on my head. Every step takes a million years. Then when I am escorting Elizabeth home, before I know it, I am handing back her satchel and she is saying, “See you tomorrow, Stalker.”

Questions you could ask

What do the underlined words show you about how Ben is feeling before Elizabeth joins him?

A possible answer is: The reference to the Sahara desert shows how little joy there is in his life. The image of his carrying a camel on his head shows that how impossibly hard he is finding life. It takes enormous effort just to survive.

There are questions on each of the chapters to help you check to see that you are following the story and enjoying the ways in which Edyth Bulbring brings it alive. The more personally involved you become, the more you will get out of reading.

You will see that there are spaces after the questions for you to jot down your answers. There are suggested answers in the last section of the book. Remember that the suggested answers are not always the only “right” answers in the way that a solution to a problem in Mathematics Literacy or Mathematics usually has a single correct answer. Sometimes there are a variety of possible answers. The key thing to remember is that you must be able to find evidence in the text. Answers can be “wrong”, of course. If you say Ben is feeling on top of the world before Elizabeth joins him, for instance, that would be wrong: all the evidence in the text points to the opposite being true.

The *pre-reading questions* focus on a key theme or event in the chapter. They may also help you to anticipate what will happen in the chapter. To be able to say what is likely to happen next, you need to combine what you know about what has happened so far, what you have learnt about the characters, and your own experience.

The *during reading questions* are there to help you notice things as you read. It is very important to remember that the main idea is for you to enjoy reading the book. Just jot down quick answers (that you will understand later) so that you do not interrupt the thread of the story. Of course, if you find that you are not sure what is happening, you may have to re-read, skim (read fast to get the general picture) or scan (read fast to find particular information) to find what you missed or did not notice when you read that part.

The post-reading questions will help you to see whether you have understood the characters' motives or their development and have taken note of and understood how their actions affect what happens next.

Remember, the questions will not always ask you to give information that is explicitly given in the text. You will need to read between the lines (work out what is not clearly said or what has happened). You will also need to read beyond the lines at times, using your own experience or what you know about the way novels work.

In Section C, there is one example of a contextual test question and one example of a contextual examination question for you to try your hand at doing. Answering more formal contextual questions will help you to see how well you 'know' the book.

In Section D, there are a range of enrichment activities for you to do.

The Glossary at the back provides a list of words used in the book that you may not know. You can flip to the back of this guide if you need to find out what a word in the novel means. Always try to work out the meaning first.

The information in the first part of the book and at the back of the book are there to help you to understand the book and enjoy it more.

SECTION A: HELPFUL INFORMATION

1. Overview

There are a number of essential characteristics of a novel. These are the **setting** (where the events in the novel take place), the **plot** (the order in which things happen in the novel, how they develop tension until the **climax** is reached and the ultimate **resolution**), the **characters**, the **point of view** (whose story it is), the role of the **narrator**, **conflict** (internal and external conflict experienced), and the **themes** (topics explored in the novel).

2. Author

After studying Economic History and English at university, Edyth Bulbring worked as a journalist for fifteen years and became the political correspondent for the *Sunday Times*, covering the constitutional negotiations and the first democratic election. After completing an MBA and working as a project manager for a few years, she decided to stay at home and look after her three children. This is when she began to write children's books. She has a delicious sense of humour and she enjoys telling stories that make children laugh.

She is an avid reader and says that it all began with wanting to read the 'stories behind the pictures' in newspapers for herself. Her favourite young adult writers are Philip Pullman and Roald Dahl. Some of her favourite characters are April-May February (Melly series) and Pops (*Pops and The Nearly Dead*).

Melly, Fatty and Me was awarded the Percy Fitzpatrick Prize for Youth Literature in 2012 and *The Mark* was awarded this prize in 2016. *Snitch* won the 2017 M.E.R Prize for best Afrikaans or English youth novel and *The Choice Between Us* was awarded it in 2020.

Edyth Bulbring's rules for writing are: #1 Read, read, read and read some more; #2 Keep a diary; #3 Write every day; #4 Don't let other people tell you what to write. Write the stories you want to tell – not someone else's; #5 Respect your readers. Don't write rubbish.

Edyth Bulbring feels that newspapers are a good place to get ideas for a story or even a book. Why not try this idea out?

3. Background

Many children in South Africa are brought up by a single parent. This is often because of divorce. In this case, Sarah Smith, Ben's mother, is a widow. Children who grow up in a single parent home experience a deep sense of loss, particularly during puberty. In the first year of high school, boys (and girls) have a strong need for help and support from parents when they experience bullying, falling in love for the first time, face peer pressure and the changes that adolescence brings. There are also challenging moral issues to work through. When is it right to speak up about activities that are happening that are dangerous or wrong and when should one be bound by a conspiracy of silence.

4. Introduction to the specific features of a novel

Plot

The **storyline** tells you what happens in the story, in simple terms, this happened, then this happened, then this happened and so on. The plot is about why certain events happen and how they affect later events.

The start of the action is called the **inciting event**. In this novel, it is when Ben discovers that the members of the rugby team are taking steroids. The **key event** is when his mother tells a friend what he told her in confidence and the friend passes on the information to the headmaster. In the **development phase**, life at school becomes more and more complicated as Ben is the object of cruel comments and humiliation. The tension rises (known as **rising action**) as he is not only bullied, but he slowly becomes a social outcast and loses his best friends during the crisis phase. The **climax** is reached when Small is kidnapped by the senior boys. The **falling action** or the events that lead to the resolution. The **denouement** or **resolution** comes when Small is taken back to his home, Ben is able to see his mother, Uncle Charlie and his sister in new ways and is able to become his own person. He has his first date

Setting

This is the term given to where the story takes place. In *Snitch*, the main setting, school becomes a most unpleasant place that creates opportunities for Ben to be humiliated or to be emotionally or physically hurt. The cloakrooms, for instance, are the places where Ben has to use his toothbrush to clean the filthy toilet bowls. The swimming pool is the place where Ben is forced to become the chief tormentor. Some of the action takes place at his home, where he no longer feels at ease, as well as other places like the park, Uncle Charlie's flat, the shopping centre and the waiting room at the doctor's consulting rooms.

Narrator

We see what happens through the eyes of Ben, a first-person narrator. Although he has blind spots about himself and others, he is perceptive in many ways. We are thus able to gain a good understanding of the other characters. He describes what they look like, what they say, and the effect other people's actions have on them. For instance, we have a clear description of Helen, his sister, and learn more about how she sees things as well as the things that matter to her. The same is true of Elizabeth.

Point-of-view. Ben is the **narrator**. Words like "I", "me" and "my" make it clear that the story is in the 1st person. Although he has blind spots about himself and others, Ben is perceptive in many ways. He does not always understand everything that happens because he only knows what he has experienced himself. We are thus able to gain a good understanding of him.

Structure

The book is structured into 18 parts or chapters. In every case, Edyth Bulbring lists a rule as the heading. Each 'chapter' illustrates why that rule is important in teenager life. At the same time, the experience related to the rule is a way of presenting the overall storyline and plot of the novel.

Conflict

Inner conflict arises from the problems that the main character or protagonist faces. In the case of Ben, the inner conflict arises from his need to stop playing safe, to develop his own identity and to assert his independence. He longs for the freedom that his sister seems to have.

External or outer conflict relates to verbal or physical battles. In *Snitch* this is related to the cruel treatment that he faces from bullies like the headmaster, his teacher, his mentor and the other boys at school.

Mood or atmosphere

In *Snitch* this ranges from being light-hearted when Ben is with his friends, Elizabeth or Uncle Charles to the harsh atmosphere created during times of physical or emotional cruelty. An example of this is the time when Ben is forced to become a tormentor. His victim is William who has to swim for a long time even though he is asthmatic and the water in the pool is cold. His worst fear is having his head underwater. Knowing this, the bullies make him do crawl. They also make him continue swimming even although his jocks have fallen off.

Tone

The narrator's **tone** usually reflects the way he sees a particular event or emotion. The tone in the book ranges from tender, to light-hearted or mocking to ironic or sarcastic, to harsh and bitter.

Characterisation

Main characters

Ben is the main character and the protagonist. He is well-rounded. This means that he has a complex personality, with both strengths and weaknesses, and develops in the course of the novel. From the way that Ben tells the story, it is clear that a number of people have a maturing influence on Ben. As he comes to respect, appreciate and feel a growing affection for Elizabeth, Helen, his mother and Uncle Charles, Ben gains a greater understanding of himself and begins to establish his values. He also recovers his trust in his mother.

Ben is five months off from his fourteenth birthday when the novel begins. He has taken care not to draw attention to himself up till now. Everything changes when he tells his mother that the rugby team are taking drugs. From being someone with a low profile who is generally liked, he becomes the centre of attention an outcast that everyone in the school seems to despise. He has to face endless humiliation and cruelty. Even at his lowest moments, he tells his story with a mixture of irony and wit. However, beneath the humour, it is clear that the bullying he has to endure is very distressing. Eventually he finds a way of escaping from it.

He matures during the novel. He comes to respect, appreciate and develop deeper relationships with his friends, Elizabeth, Helen, his mother, and Uncle Charles. Ben also gains a greater understanding of himself and begins to establish his own values. He also recovers his trust in his mother.

The table below shows one way of drawing up a profile while you are reading the book and also when you work through it afterwards.

What is Ben like?	How do we know?
He is resilient.	Even though he has really tough days at school, when he sees Elizabeth at the gate waiting for him, he is able to forget the horrible day he has had to this point.
He has inner strength.	The tasks Swot makes him do are humiliating and disgusting. Other boys join in the bullying. They do barbaric things to his property. Seeing his homework literally going down the toilet must have been disheartening. Although he finds these actions painful, he continues doing his homework and going to school every day.

<p>He is loyal.</p>	<p>He refuses to name Tsietsi as the culprit although the video clearly reveals his identity. When the seniors force the junior to go to the swimming pool, he offers to swim backstroke with William so he will not be the only boy doing that stroke.</p>
<p>He is a loving son.</p>	<p>The first part of the book shows that he respects and values his mother for her good qualities. He loves spending time with her. His loss of trust in her is temporary. He not only recovers his faith in her, but also gains a new understanding of her needs.</p>
<p>He is open to change.</p>	<p>He changes his view of Helen, Uncle Charles and Terror. He begins to see that Helen can give good advice. He also becomes protective of her. In the course of the novel, he also comes to appreciate Uncle Charlie's kindness and to accept his mother's need to have a male companion and even to marry again.</p>
<p>He is able to take good advice.</p>	<p>He realises that the best way to treat bullies is to appear to like what they ask him to do.</p>
<p>He has a keen sense of humour.</p>	<p>He tells his story in a way that is very funny.</p>

Characters who play an important role are Sarah (Ben's mother), Helen and Uncle Charles, who also develop in the course of the book. It is a good idea to build up a profile of each of them while you are reading the novel. As you read the novel, you will find you can add to this table. It would also be useful to draw up a table on the other characters.

Sarah Smith is a widow whose husband died when her son Ben was seven months old. She works as an accountant for an insurance company and is able to quote probability statistics (how likely something it is that something will happen). She is determined to keep her children safe and many of her decisions like her strict vegetarianism are related to that. She respects her children and tries hard not to embarrass them in public. Her fear of losing the people she loves prevents her from forming a close relationship with people beyond her family. Towards the end of the book, she changes her views.

Helen Smith lives outside the circle. She does not care about being popular or fitting the stereotype for girls. The boys at St David's admire her and give her nicknames like Hell-raiser, Hell on Wheels and Helluva Cool. She does things like wearing green dreadlocks (later dying them blue), riding a motorbike, being openly affectionate to other girls in public). She is also well able to defend herself and strikes back when a boy insults her and the girl she is with. For most of the book, she is very hard on her brother, but we come to see a very different side to her.

Elizabeth, to whom Ben is strongly attracted, is a girl who makes her own decisions (outside the circle). Although she has kept Ben at arms' length in the early part of the book, she openly supports him when he becomes a social outcast and walks to and from school with him. She has a strong interest in veterinary science and so is the only one who recognises that Terror behaves so aggressively and has gone off her food because she is in constant pain.

Charles (Uncle Charlie) is in love with Sarah. He is a stand-up comic but not very successful at it. He is not very well coordinated and dresses rather absurdly. He is kind and genuinely fond of Helen

and Ben. He has strengths that are revealed in the course of the book like real concern for others and the ability to meet their needs in sensitive ways.

Flat characters

Tsietsi is not well rounded. What we do know is that he is not very robust. He is described as a mosquito target because he has so many itchy bites. Which he is constantly scratching, especially when he is feeling stressed His mother makes him wear silk gloves at night so that he won't leave bloodstains on the duvet. He does not have a good relationship with his father. He and William are Ben's closest friends. He remains loyal to Ben even when he (Ben) becomes an outcast. However, he ceases to be Ben's friend when he suspects him of 'snitching' on him.

William, like Tsietsi, is not well-rounded. We know little about him beyond that he is an asthmatic, has a phobia about putting his head into water, and is a good friend to Tsietsi and Ben. His friendship with Ben suffers when Ben is forced to time him while he swims again and again across the pool. The final blow to their friendship is struck when Ben thinks that he would be open to bribery.

The embarrassing mothers

There are a number of embarrassing mothers who talk about their sons in public, revealing private information. They dress and behave inappropriately, seemingly quite unaware of how ridiculous and embarrassing they are. They also choose names for their sons that make it easy to tease or insult them. They add to the humour in the book and serve to show how different Sarah Smith is.

The antagonist(s)

Swot is the antagonist. He is outwardly successful academically and personally, but he is deeply insecure. This is seen in the mean and cruel actions that he takes against Snitch. He thinks up horrible ways of humiliating Snitch and of making life unbearable for him. He is aided by the other 'mentors', notably Tank, the teachers, and the other boys – even those who loathe what he is doing. The other boys who follow his lead, simply imitate his behaviour as part of pack behaviour.

The staff play a supporting role. They ignore the bullying and other forms of violence that take place, unless it relates to breaking one of the golden rules at St David's. They allow the cycle of violence to continue.

Style

Ben uses a conversational style. The novel is very much like a journal of events. Ben is very direct. He uses informal language and even slang to tell his story in a very convincing and graphic way.

Dialogue

Most of the dialogue comes from Ben. He speaks easily and naturally, using informal language and slang – just as he would do when talking to a friend. Examples of slang are: *kiepie*, *rubbish diet*, *popping zit*, *booze tent*, *butterfly tat*, *bog roll*, *twerk show* and *mankier*. Examples of informal language are: *I am going to buy me a komodo dragon* and *She's real affectionate like that*. Ben quite often quotes his mother. The dialogue takes on another flavour then, because these are not his own words. He is quoting from statistics that affect the level of insurance risk.

Figurative language

Edyth Bulbring makes use of **imagery** to help the readers imagine the setting or the people or to experience the humour of the situation. One form of figurative language that you may not have come across is a Spoonerism. This involves the swopping of usually the initial sounds of two or more words. Work out what Shiloh Pitt becomes.

Other examples of figurative language:

Simile A direct comparison is made between two people or things using <i>like</i> or <i>as</i> .	<i>As different as mince is to tofu.</i>
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<p>Metaphor</p> <p>A comparison of two things without using <i>like</i> or <i>as</i>.</p>	<p><i>Tank's a crate face.</i></p> <p><i>His face is a funeral.</i></p>
<p>Euphemism</p> <p>A word or expression that softens or disguises reality.</p>	<p>Bone density and lung capacity test. (p. 78)</p>
<p>Personification</p> <p>A non-human thing is given human qualities or abilities.</p>	<p>Time shatters the clock.</p>
<p>Irony</p> <p>The use of a word or expression that reflects the opposite of what is true to emphasise the truth.</p>	<p>Ben describes Swot as a <i>real charmer</i>.</p> <p>The senior boys are described as <i>mentors</i>.</p>
<p>Understatement</p> <p>When something is presented as less serious than it is.</p>	<p>I tell her that on occasion Terror has been snappish and cross.</p>
<p>Onomatopoeia</p> <p>Words that echo the sound that is being described.</p>	<p><i>clickety, rattling sound.</i></p> <p><i>Boom. Boom.</i></p> <p><i>Splish, splatter, splat.</i></p>

Motifs

An example of a motif is a box. This strengthens the theme of being true to yourself and of moving on to new possibilities. There is the box that holds all of Ben's childhood precious possessions, such as the letter that his father wrote him. In a sense, holding on to the past prevents Ben from becoming his true self (being 'out of the box'). Helen helps him to escape his role as a powerless victim by

saying, “Boxes, Beno. Boxes. People are always trying to put you in a box with a label. You’ve got to climb out of the box.” His father’s letter expresses this hope: *My hope for you is that you will have decided to stand outside the boxes that trap the ones who race with the pack.* In and out of the circle is another way of describing those who allow themselves to be trapped and those who don’t.

Laughter is another motif. This relates at times to the jeering that Ben endures. At other times it relates to the way laughter can make even people who are feeling completely downhearted and pessimistic see life very differently. Laughter raises the pain threshold, so they are able to cope with physical and mental pain.

Themes

The author has certain views or beliefs. These come through the selection of events, what is emphasised and the way the book ends.

There are a number of themes in this book. The five main ones are the cycle of violence (institutional violence as an accepted norm), the trials of adolescence, strolling down your own path (confidence in own identity), when to remain silent vs when to speak up, and growing up in a single parent household.

Cycle of violence

We first encounter violence at the rugby match against Voortrekkers. We see the way Ben is treated once he becomes “Snitch”. The older boys do all they can to humiliate and punish Ben. They also make sure that he loses his friends and that no one else has anything to do with him. Other boys add their support to make sure that Ben’s life is made as difficult as possible. They look for ways to shame him, dispirit him to the point where he cries, make him feel helpless and to isolate him.

Staff at the school make it possible for bullying to continue. Teachers look the other way when boys are victimised and even encourage violent behaviour. The boys who are sickened by bullying

actions do not speak out. Edmund Burke once said, “The only thing **necessary** for the **triumph** of evil is for good men to do nothing.”

In the name of tradition, the junior mentoring programme at St David’s (according to Ben, one of the last of the schools to hold on to this) is allowed to continue. This abusive system used to be called fagging. Each grade eight boy is assigned to a mentor from grade 12. The claim is that the mentors are the protectors and guiders of the juniors, but they are actually cruel tormentors who enjoy making life as unpleasant as possible for their mentees. Although there are exceptions, like Michael, who treats Ben well, they do not oppose what they know will bring deep unhappiness, humiliation and embarrassment.

It seems that those who suffer most are the most determined to continue the tradition. It is the Old Boys who play the strongest role in ensuring that the abusive system is retained.

The staff turn a blind eye to what is happening.

The trials of adolescence

There are many difficulties adolescents have to face. These include acne, intense emotions, mood swings, interest in sexual relationships, a search for identity, and rebelliousness. During this time, adolescents often find their parents’ behaviour very embarrassing.

Strolling down your own path (Being true to yourself and your own values)

Ben’s mother’s behaviour is very different from the other parents in the novel. She is concerned about her son and does everything she can not to humiliate him. She is not influenced by the behaviour of other mothers. Ben’s sister, Helen does not try to fit in and does not care if she attracts attention. She does all sorts of other things that make her stand out as different. She makes no secret of the fact that she is drawn to other girls rather than the opposite sex. She rides a motor bike, she wears green, then blue, dreadlocks to school and paints her fingernails black. Elizabeth, to whom Ben is strongly attracted, shows that she too can resist peer pressure and openly supports Ben.

In the course of the book, Ben comes to understand his dad's letter to him: "My hope for you is that you will have decided to stand outside the boxes that trap the ones who run with the pack."

Ben is aware that Uncle Charlie (someone who is in love with his mother) would love to be his father. Ben finds this unthinkable. However, in the course of the book, he comes to a different view.

Remaining silent vs revealing the truth

The need to keep secrets is indicated in "What Ben tells you in the kitchen, says in the kitchen" and variations of it. The school insists on loyalty to the school even when dangerous or unethical behaviour is involved. The worst thing someone can be accused of is being a snitch.

Growing up in a single-parent household

Ben's father died when he was only a baby. He is interested in finding out everything he can about his father so he can be as much like him as possible. He tends to romanticise what it would be like to have a father. It is ironic that Tsietsi, who does have a father, does not have a close relationship with his father. In fact, he hardly ever sees his father, so in many ways is growing up in a single-parent household.

SECTION B: EXPLORING THE BOOK: CHAPTER BY CHAPTER

RULE#1 NEVER LET YOUR MOM TAKE YOU TO SCHOOL WEARING INAPPROPRIATE CLOTHING

Outline

In this chapter, Sizwe’s mother drives her son to school, wearing her night clothes. The engine seizes so she has to ask for help. Ben is grateful that his mother never embarrasses him. Ben learns that the team members all take vitamins.

Plot development

In this chapter, part of the development phase, the setting is described – the world of the grade 8 boys at St David’s school. We meet the protagonist, Ben Smith, his mother, Sarah, Ben’s best friends and Tsietsi and William, as well as Sizwe and George and their embarrassing mothers as part of establishing the setting. We are also told about Helen, Ben’s sister. It seems that mothers (with the exception of Ben’s mother) constantly embarrass their sons. This started when they named their sons. The **problem** is foreshadowed – Ben is going to break the rule: “never tell your mother stuff” once too often. The inciting incident is that Ben discovers that the team members all take vitamins.

Pre-reading

1. Look at the cover. Suggest a reason why every rule starts with “never”?

[Insert one row of dots]

2. Which rule is the most important one, in your opinion? Why?

[Insert two rows of dots]

During Reading

3. In your view, which surname “Dover” or “Ten” would have been more embarrassing for Ben?

Briefly explain.

[Insert 2 rows of dots]

4. Why does Sizwe disappear from the scene as soon as he can?

[Insert two rows of dots]

5. What was Ben's father's name?

[Insert one row of dots]

6. What makes the simile that Ben uses on page 13 (Everyone one of them is built like he'd pulled an ox-wagon single-handed across Table Mountain" so effective.

[Insert two rows of dots]

Post-reading

7. How successful is Ben at playing rugby? Refer to page 12 to justify your answer.

[Insert two rows of dots]

8. Why do the boys not give their parents all the information from the school that they are supposed to?

[Insert one row of dots]

9. Which mother is the most embarrassing? Why do you think so?

[Insert two rows of dots]

10. Suggest a name (not mentioned in the book) that could be a source of embarrassment because of the changes peers might make to it.

[Insert one row of dots]

Themes

Cycles of violence

There are two rules in this chapter that emphasise ways in which you can keep safe (escape unwelcome attention). The first is to make sure that your mother is appropriately dressed when she takes you to school and the other is never to confide in your mother. Ben protects himself by being as close to average as possible, so he does not draw attention to himself or attract hurtful or aggressive behaviour.

Trials of adolescence

Problems range from embarrassing parent behaviour like hooting, dressing inappropriately, referring loudly to body parts, treating their boys like children (using endearments like “Pumpkin” or including notes in their lunchboxes) to acne.

Strolling down your own path

At this point, Ben does not have a definite idea of who he is. His concern is more about not ensuring that he does not draw undue attention to himself by being markedly different (remaining in the circle / staying in the box). Therefore, he keeps a low profile, and he is happy that his parents have kept a low profile too.

Remaining silent vs revealing the truth

A great deal is made of Ben’s mother who allows / keeps a confidence. This is in sharp contrast with the other mothers who share the most private information with anyone in earshot. They seem totally unaware of the embarrassment they cause their sons.

Single-parent family

Ben frequently refers to the quality of his mom’s parenting.

Character development

Ben prides himself on being someone who does not stand out from the crowd. Having a low profile is a guarantee of safety. He clearly appreciates his mother and has a good relationship with her. He is a supportive friend. He is sympathetically aware of the problems they face. He has a wonderful sense of humour seen here in the way he discusses spoonerisms and the way he describes the behaviour of the parents dropping off their children at school.

Sarah Smith

Ben’s mom is a model parent in that she never embarrasses Ben and can be trusted to keep a secret. She limits displays of affection to a discreet hand squeeze.

RULE#2 NEVER LET YOUR MOTHER COMMENT ON YOUR FACEBOOK STATUS

Outline

Facebook is the focus of attention. Ben's mother has been unfriended by her daughter. The team captain makes a boastful post.

Plot development

This chapter, part of the development phase, gives some idea of Ben's family life, the other setting of the novel. It confirms the close relationship between Ben and his mother. There are three years between Ben and his older sister Helen. Unlike Ben, Helen chooses to be rebellious and she constantly clashes with her mother.

Subplot

The relationship between Uncle Charlie (Charles) and Sarah Smith is introduced. At this point, it seems that Uncle Charlie's feelings are stronger than Sarah's.

Pre-reading

1. In your opinion, why would it be a bad idea to let your mom comment on your Facebook status?

[Insert two rows of dots]

2. If you were choosing a pet like a dog or a cat, what quality would you hope the pet would have?

[Insert one row of dots]

During Reading

3. How close is the relationship between Elizabeth and Ben? Explain briefly.

[Insert two rows of dots]

4. Name two things that show that Helen does not believe in following school rules.

[Insert one row of dots]

5. Ben is not being literal when he says that Terror "does not quite manage to amputate Helen's arm at the wrist". What picture does he give you, the reader, of what Terror is doing?

[Insert two rows of dots]

6. Quote from page 18 to prove that Uncle Charlie is not a very successful comedian.

[Insert one row of dots]

Post-reading

7. The R5 jar is meant to discourage swearing. What effect does it have on Helen?

[Insert two rows of dots]

8. In your opinion, what is the weakest joke Uncle Charlie tells?

[Insert one row of dots]

9. Helen and Ben have very different personalities. What is the main difference between them?

[Insert two rows of dots]

10. What is most important to Sarah Smith as far as her children are concerned?

[Insert two rows of dots]

Themes

Trials of adolescence

The behaviour of other adults is not as embarrassing to them as that of their own parents. Uncle Charlie's jokes are rather weak and he pulls up his trousers above his stomach, but Ben is not embarrassed because he is not his father.

Ben is facing the problem that his body odour has become unpleasant. Helen, on the other hand, is rebellious and concerned to assert her independence.

Ben is also experiencing the trials of unrequited first love.

Strolling down your own path

Helen chooses her own path. She has dyed her dreadlocks blue and paints her nails black. She despises the behaviour of the first team, so posts insulting comments about them. She rebels against fitting the stereotype girl and is trying to establish her indisputable right to make her own independence.

Single-parent families

Sarah takes her responsibilities as a parent very seriously. The relationship between her and Charles has not developed very far for this reason. Ben identifies very strongly with his dead father and is not willing to have a replacement for him.

Character development

Sarah is very concerned to protect her children from harm. She monitors her children's Facebook pages and gives them only healthy food to eat.

Ben is loyal to his mother and will even stand up to Helen if she makes his mother feel sad. He is strongly drawn to Elizabeth, even though she gives him no encouragement.

Uncle Charlie tells very weak jokes. It is clear that he would dearly like to be part of the family.

Helen ignores Ben in public and only speaks to him when she wants to manipulate him into doing something for her.

Terror

Terror is not a particularly fine specimen of a Jack Russell. She is bad-tempered and aggressive. Unlike other dogs, she is not interested in ball games or walks.

RULE#3: NEVER LET YOUR MOM CHOOSE YOUR CLOTHES

Outline

Ben's mother comes to the rugby game modestly dressed. The other parents dress themselves and their younger children in ways that embarrass their high school sons. During the game between St David's and Voortrekker, their formidable opponents, Adrian collapses and has to be rushed off to hospital.

Plot development

This chapter forms part of the rising action. It is clear that it is all important to win the rugby game. The key event occurs when Ben discovers that the vitamins the team are taking are dangerous steroids, Methyltestosterone, after Adrian collapses on the field during the match.

Development of the subplots

The relationship between Ben and Elizabeth at this stage is wishful thinking on Ben's part.

Pre-reading

1. Who chooses your clothes. Why?

[Insert two rows of dots]

During Reading

2. The chapter begins, "Mom nudges me awake." What does this suggest about Sarah's attitude to Ben?

[Insert one row of dots]

3. Sarah does not like rugby. Why does she go to the game?

[Insert two rows of dots]

4. Ben plays wing, not prop. What does this suggest about his physical build?

[Insert one row of dots]

5. What is the difference between the way Ben's mother and William's mother approach a rugby game?

[Insert two rows of dots]

6. How do we know that Tsietsi's parents are well off?

[Insert one row of dots]

7. Give an example of Helen's not fitting the stereotype St Anne's girl.

[Insert one row of dots]

8. Why is William so worried when Frank, the tortoise, remains asleep inside his shell?

[Insert two rows of dots]

Post-reading questions

9. What kind of person is Tank?

[Insert two rows of dots]

10. Ben knows that the 'vitamins' the team is taking are really steroids. What would you have advised him to do about it?

[Insert two rows of dots]

Themes

Cycle of violence

At St David's, it is important to win rugby games at any cost. Any boy who does not play rugby is viewed as an outcast or is given menial tasks to do. Although the coach leads the players in prayer before the game, he urges them to crush their rivals. The game then becomes a kind of war and the wounded lie on the side of the field. Feelings run high. When the oracle does not work in the team's favour, Tank becomes extremely aggressive and vents his anger on William's property.

The trials of adolescence

Not only do William's parents embarrass him by coming to the game in ridiculous outfits, but they also dress their younger children in the same way.

This is the time of coping with acne, of intense emotion and also of mood swings as Tank shows.

Strolling down your own path

Helen marks herself off from the herd by not coming to the rugby and making insulting comments about the level of the game. She is also not at all interested in becoming a pom-pom girl.

Remaining silent vs revealing the truth

Characterisation

Sarah Smith is a good mother, who makes sure her children's physical needs are met and tries to support what they do, even when it is something she hates like rugby.

RULE#4 NEVER GO SHOPPING WITH YOUR MOM

Outline

The mothers meet and exchange embarrassing stories on Sunday morning as usual. They are indiscreet about their personal lives and their sons' secrets. However, shopping is followed by Ben's favourite activity, sharing stories about his dad who died when Ben was seven months old.

Plot development

This chapter forms part of the rising action in which the tension increases. Adrian's heart attack is a topic of conversation at the regular Sunday morning at the supermarket. Ben's mother's knowledge of risk statistics means that she finds it hard to understand how someone of that age could have a heart attack. The other mothers' reveal embarrassing details about their sons, including the silk gloves Tsietsi wears at night. At the breakfast afterwards, Ben shows how important being like his Dad is to him. Confident that he can trust his mother, he tells his mother about the steroids that the team are taking.

Pre-reading

1. How do you feel about going shopping with your mom? Explain.

[Insert two rows of dots]

During Reading

2. Ben's mom does not check the ingredients of the pet food. What is the reason, do you think?

[Insert one row of dots]

3. How concerned is Tsietsi's mother about her nine-year old daughter and her son? Explain your answer.

[Insert two rows of dots]

4. "What I hear in the shopping aisles in Checkers, stays at Checkers," says Ben. What saying (taken from a film) is he basing this on?

[Insert one row of dots]

5. What does Ben mean when he says, “I reboot my face?” (p.34)

[Insert one row of dots]

Post-reading

6. Compare what you know about Ben’s dad and Tsietsi’s dad. What seems to be the main difference between them?

[Insert two rows of dots]

7. Why does Ben’s mom tell stories about Ben’s dad in such detail?

[Insert two rows of dots]

8. Why did Ben want to buy a komodo dragon? What does this say about him?

[Insert two rows of dots]

9. What emotion makes Ben’s mother chew her bottom lip?

[Insert one row of dots]

10. Look at the last paragraph of the chapter. What do you think is going to happen in the next chapter?

[Insert one row of dots]

Themes

Cycle of violence

As in the case when Tsietsi’s father gave him a hiding, a victim is not given the chance to explain his/her actions.

The trials of adolescence

Another examples of the ways mothers embarrass their sons is given. Tsietsi’s mother loudly talks about her children’s problems and reveals embarrassing details about the gloves her sons wears at night and his sensitive bottom. She does not seem to have any idea of how her son feels.

Remaining silent vs revealing the truth

The mothers have no filters. They reveal the most embarrassing facts about their sons. A variation of the motif of keeping something secret (What happens in ... stays in ...) is seen in “What happens in

the shopping aisles in Checkers stays at Checkers” emphasising the point that the three friends do not reveal information about each other that could be embarrassing.

When Ben decides to tell his mother about the steroids that were responsible for Adrian’s heart attack, he expects her to regard it as a secret.

Another thread of this theme is the loose tongued mothers. They seem quite unaware of the need for discretion in public places like supermarkets and loudly announce very private information about their sons.

Single-parent families

Clearly, Ben likes nothing more than to hear stories about his Dad, and he tries to be as much like his father as possible. He is acutely aware of the many things that he has never been able to do with his father.

In her comment about Adrian, the boy who has a heart attack on the rugby field, Sarah infers that boys without fathers are likely to experience stress. She does her best to make sure that Ben has the positive memories of his father that he needs to make him a confident adolescent. In a sense, though, Tsietsi, whose father is hardly ever at home, can be said to be in a one-parent home. Tsietsi’s father doesn’t seem to know his son at all. It is Tsietsi’s mother who handles the generous donation from the family to ensure that her son does not have to play rugby.

Characterisation

Ben’s reassurance to Tsietsi shows that he is a loyal friend.

Sarah Smith is not like the other mothers in that she seems to offer sensible solutions to problems raised and does not make embarrassing comments about Ben or his sister. She tries her best to

understand Helen's need to assert her independence, but she finds Helen's motorbike riding a cause of great anxiety.

Tsietsi shows that he is sensitive (effect on him when he was given a hiding) and imaginative (pretending to be Spiderman).

RULE#5 NEVER LET YOUR MOM LOOSE AT THE DOCTOR

Outline

When Ben's mother takes him to the doctor because he has a cold, he is in for another uncomfortable time. The doctor's reception room is where mothers exchange stories. He is worried when his mother receives an aggressive call that is clearly from Adrian's father.

Plot development

The tension rises sharply in this chapter. Sarah arrives at the school. Ben has a cold, so she is taking him to see the doctor. Ben is puzzled by signs of hostility to him and his mother. The coach is clearly angry with his mother and she is no less unfriendly. The team members that they encounter are clearly not happy to see Ben. In the doctor's consulting rooms, Ben has to endure listening to their indiscreet discussion of intimate details of their anatomy and the exercises they are doing to alleviate problems caused by childbirth. He also hears embarrassing information about Themba. Ben is unnerved by the aggressive phone calls his mom receives from Adrian's father.

There is more tension to come. In the Big Assembly, the headmaster has chosen the path of denial. To prove the claim that the rugby team was taking steroids all rugby teams are to be tested. Ben has a growing awareness that everyone knows he 'snitched'. Tank flatly accuses him and from then on Ben becomes Snitch.

Pre-reading

1. How do you feel about having to sit waiting in a consulting room? Explain your answer.

[Insert two rows of dots]

2. Look at Rule#5. Why is this warning necessary? What damage could a mother do at the doctor's?

[Insert two rows of dots]

During Reading

3. Why does Ben's mother make an appointment for Ben to see the doctor during school time?

[Insert one row of dots]

4. Why does the coach head-butt the noticeboard? Choose the best option below. Write only the letter next to the option you think is the best one.

A) He is testing the wooden panel behind the noticeboard.

B) He is frustrated because the first rugby team had lost its match.

C) He is thinking of introducing soccer at the school.

D) He is feeling angry because the secret is out.

[Insert one row of dots]

5. At what point does Ben realise that his mother has betrayed his confidence? Explain.

[Insert two rows of dots]

6. Explain the brackets round "And shut up the trouble-makers insisting on it." (p. 43)

[Insert one row of dots]

7. On page 44, Ben tries to pretend that he is innocent. How do we know he is not successful?

[Insert one row of dots]

Post-reading

8. Do you think that Ben is right to try to deny that he had told his mother. Explain your view.

[Insert two rows of dots]

9. The Headmaster claims that the school is known for its team spirit and fair sportsmanship. What happened in an earlier chapter that makes it difficult to believe this?

[Insert two rows of dots]

10. Suggest another rule as the chapter heading (instead of "Never let your mom loose at the doctor's).

[Insert one row of dots]

Themes

The cycle of violence

The coach head butts the notice board. This suggests that violence is his chief way of dealing with problems. This is in line with the instructions he gives before a match.

The cycle of violence depends on a conspiracy of silence. Even at this point, although a boy has had a heart attack, the school is not prepared to admit to the drug abuse in the school.

The trials of adolescence

The mothers in the waiting room disregard the fact that Ben is in the waiting room and discuss their physical problems as a result of childbirth in great detail. One of them reveals private information about her son, Themba.

Remaining silent vs revealing the truth

Ben's mother feels that the serious danger steroids pose means that she cannot remain silent. Her dilemma is that her son trusts her not to repeat what she tells him.

Single-parent families

Adolescents without a father long to have a father figure to confide in. Here Dr Basil fits the role to some extent for Ben.

RULE#6: NEVER LET YOUR MOM HAVE CONVERSATIONS WITH YOUR TEACHERS

Outline

Ben's sister reveals that the steroid taking is an open secret. Ben is still stunned at the thought that his mother has betrayed his confidence. At school, Ben has to endure a series of punishments and humiliations. The day brightens when Elizabeth appears.

Plot development

Helen is dying her blue dreadlocks green as a mark of her refusal to comply with school rules. Ben discovers from his sister that everyone knows about the steroids. The tension rises more sharply in this chapter as Ben is subjected to punishment and humiliation. Elizabeth swims against the stream and decides to openly support Ben by walking to school and back home with him.

Pre-reading

1. What possible reason could there be for not letting your mother have a conversation with your teachers?

[Insert one row of dots]

2. If Ben's mom had been at home that day, what "conversation" would she have had with Ben?

[Insert two rows of dots]

During Reading

3. Why does Ben make himself an apricot jam, cheese and pickle sandwich.

[Insert one row of dots]

4. Ben could have pretended to go to school and have returned to the house as soon as his mother has left for work. Why does he choose to go to school instead?

[Insert two rows of dots]

5. Explain why Elizabeth is so determined not to allow anyone to call her "Betty".

[Insert one row of dots]

6. On page 50, Ben ironically describes Sizwe as a "charmer". What word could you use to make his meaning plain?

[Insert one row of dots]

7. Stalker is an insulting name. Why is Ben so happy to be called that? (p. 53)

[Insert one row of dots]

Post-reading

8. The rules that Ben lists are there to prevent unpleasant things happening. Why is there no rule for a black swan?

[Insert two rows of dots]

9. What do you think is the worst thing that happens to Ben that day? Briefly explain.

[Insert two rows of dots]

10. How do Tsietsi and William prove they are Ben's true friends? Suggest two ways in which they do this.

[Insert two rows of dots]

Themes

Cycle of violence

This is centred on the junior mentoring programme at St David's (according to Ben, one of the last of the schools to hold on to this). This used to be called fagging. It is an abusive system that allows grade 12 boys (called mentors) to bully the grade eight boy that is assigned to each of them. The school's proud claim is that the mentors are the protectors and guiders of the juniors, but they are actually tormentors who enjoy making life as unpleasant as possible for their mentees.

St David's clings to this tradition. The Old Boys ensure that it continues – their view is that they had to suffer through it so the generations to come must suffer too. The staff pretend the violence and abuse are not happening. Not even Michael, who treats Ben well, opposes the actions of his fellow mentors, even though he knows that it results in deep unhappiness, humiliation and embarrassment. Ben is treated as if he were an object. His new mentor, Swot, is the worst of all of the tormentors. He thinks up a particularly nasty way of making Ben suffer. William, who is asthmatic, is made to strip down to his vest and jocks and swim for an hour in the icy cold water on his own. Ben has to time him. In other words, Ben is forced to be part of the torment his best friend has to endure. What is specially humiliating for William is that his mother has labelled his underpants so he has one for each day of the week. The label on William's underpants show he has not been changing his underpants every day.

The teachers and other members of the staff directly or indirectly support the behaviour of the senior boys. The key to the swimming pool is left in a place where the senior boys can easily get it.

Any attempt by parents to try to stop the bullying of their sons leads to even more intensely cruel behaviour. The cycle of violence continues.

Strolling down your own path

Helen dyes her green dreadlocks to confirm that she will not be boxed in by school rules. Elizabeth chooses to walk home with Ben. She takes a public stand against the social isolation and hostile actions he is being forced to endure.

Remaining silent vs revealing the truth

The boys are always honest with one another.

Characterisation

In a rebellious act, **Helen** dyes her hair green. She also uses some of her mother's best towels.

Ben has been totally unaware that steroids are being used, but, neither are William or Tsietsi. Ben has not understood the posts on Facebook.

Elizabeth shows that she makes her own choices, no matter how unpopular they may be. She does not join the pack.

RULE#7: NEVER LET YOUR MOM SPEAK LIKE A TEENAGER

Outline

Ben joins Uncle C and his laughter club at the park. William and Tsietsi meet him at his house for science club in which they do things like making fake snot. Ben's mother explains how the story reached the principal. Ben dreads the next day at school.

Plot development

There is a lull in the tension. Uncle Charlie offers him a way of using laughter to vent his traumatic experiences.

In the subplot, there is a danger to Uncle Charlie's relationship with Sarah, because Nancy is clearly very interested in Uncle Charlie. At this point, William and Tsietsi are still loyal friends in being able to understand that mothers cannot be trusted and so they do not judge him. Ben is still trying to find ways of being able to stay at home, but his mother recognises that is fake snot. Sarah reveals how the principal came to hear about the steroids, but Ben remains distant.

Pre-reading

1. Have you (or someone you know) pretended to be ill so you would not have to go to school (or somewhere else)? Briefly recount this.

[Insert two rows of dots]

2. How do you feel when you have had a really good laugh?

[Insert one row of dots]

During reading

3. What does Uncle Charlie mean when he says, "Laughter is life's best medicine"?

[Insert two rows of dots]

4. Uncle Charlie invites Ben to join the laughter class. What does it tell you about how well he knows Ben?

[Insert two rows of dots]

5. What would the words 'defs', 'cray-cray', 'amaze-balls', and 'totes' be in standard English?

[Insert one row of dots]

Post-reading

6. Briefly explain why Tsietsi and William pretend they haven't seen Ben lying in the grass.

7. Uncle Charlie walks home with Ben, saying that he likes to walk because it gives him time to work on the punch lines for his jokes. What do you think his real reason is? What does this reveal about his character?

[Insert two rows of dots]

8. Do you think that Ben's mom was right to tell her friend Gail what Ben had told her? Explain your view.

[Insert two rows of dots]

9. Ben remains polite, but his responses show that his relationship with his mother is a distant one. How would Helen have talked to her mother if her mother did something that upset her?

[Insert two rows of dots]

10. Ben dreads going to school the next day. What does the sound of mocking laughter made by the branches hitting against the roof foreshadow?

[Insert one row of dots]

Themes

Cycle of violence

The way Ben has been treated is taking its toll on him. He is in very low spirits.

The trials of adolescence

Here is it Nancy's behaviour that is embarrassing. She uses teenage slang as if she were on the same level as Ben. He finds it highly embarrassing and does not want to be her friend.

Adolescence is also a time of uncertainty. William sucks on his asthma pump and Tsietsi scratches at his mosquito bites.

Remaining silent vs revealing the truth

The friends are honest with each other and need few words to reach an understanding. They are essentially loyal and respect each other's privacy. Tsietsi and William do not continue talking about what is happening to Ben at school when he joins them. The words: "What happens in the den, stays

in the den” serve to confirm their pact to keep each other’s secrets. They also do not comment on Ben’s attendance of the laughter classes.

Motif

Here we see laughter in different guises. Laughter allows Ben to release tension, but he is between laughter and tears. The sound of laughter caused by the branches of a tree drumming against the roof are a reminder that laughter can be cruel.

Characterisation

In contrast to other mothers, **Ben’s mom** wants to talk to Ben, but does not embarrass him by talking about it in front of his friends.

Tsietsi and **William** remain loyal even though they are also being targeted at school because of their friendship with Ben.

Uncle Charlie shows unexpected depth in his insight into the therapeutic value of laughter. He recognises that Ben is feeling dispirited and invites him to join the laughter class. He is aware that Ben is stressed. He creates a reason to walk home with Ben, because he wants to give him a chance to talk. He is sensitive to Ben’s needs and so does not press him to talk.

Rule#8: NEVER LET YOUR MOM ATTEND YOUR BIOLOGY TALKS

Outline

Ben’s two closest friends also become the victims of bullying. It is the time of the Big Talk, which year after year the grade 8s find disgusting and embarrassing / distasteful. Later Ben is called in by one of the teachers (presumably the biology teacher) and is pressed to identify Tsietsi as the vandal who destroys a flash drive and throws the bananas across the room.

Plot development

The tension continues to rise. The short respite Ben is offered by the walks to school with Elizabeth, is over all too soon. His friends, William and Tsietsi, are also being victimised in an attempt to break the friendship. The Big Talk is part of forcing the boys to endure a particularly unpleasant experience. They have to endure a ritual that is repeated each year. Tsietsi is so upset that he destroys the memory

stick with the video and slide material on it and throws the bananas across the room. One of the teachers lays a trap for Ben. Even though he refuses to identify Tsietsi, he is made to seem that he has betrayed one of his best friends. Ben's helplessness to change what is happening at school is intensified. Elizabeth is not at the school gate, so he has to walk home alone.

Pre-reading

1. Why would having your mother sitting next to you make a sex education talk more embarrassing and even distressing?

[Insert two rows of dots]

2. What time of the day do you find that time drags?

[Insert one row of dots]

During Reading

3. Explain "time shatters the clock" (p. 62) in your own words.

[Insert one row of dots]

4. Is the following statement true or false? Explain your answer.

The bullies at school are very inventive and come up with new ideas every day.

[Insert one row of dots]

5. Why do you think William vomits during the Big Talk?

[Insert one row of dots]

6. Is the following statement true or false. Explain your answer.

The teacher called Ben into the office because he knew he was one of the most reliable boys at the school.

[Insert one row of dots]

Post-reading

7. How is Ben's mother's approach to sex education different from that of the other parents?

[Insert two rows of dots]

8. Ben envies William because he has a father that he can talk to. Why is this ironic?

[Insert two rows of dots]

9. To what extent is the Big Talk part of cycle of violence that is perpetuated (continued) at the school?

[Insert two rows of dots]

10. Explain Tsietsi's destructive behaviour in the Big Hall after the Big Talk.

[Insert two rows of dots]

Themes

Cycle of violence

Here we see the cycle of emotional violence regardless of cost to the boys. This is an annual event that is part of being a St David's boy. The boys are forced to go to the presentation year after year and suffer emotionally and even physically as a result. This event continues because the Old Boys want all of the grade 8 St David's boys to suffer as they did. There is a kind of betrayal in this. The letter to parents hypocritically claims the school "wants this aspect of their son's education to be conducted in a safe and loving environment".

The powerlessness of the boys (victims) is emphasised in Ben's comment that they were "herded into the Big Hall like lambs to the slaughter".

The emotional violence has a strong effect on the boys. William is literally sick to his stomach and vomits and Tsietsi cries and scratches himself. Later he vandalises some of the equipment used to show the video. The teacher who showed the video makes use of the situation to isolate Ben. He makes Tsietsi believe that Ben has betrayed (snitched on him). It is not only the boys at the school who perpetuate the cycle of violence.

The trials of adolescence

Physical development and the hormonal changes that accompany this presents many challenges. It seems that helpful parental guidance in this regard is the exception rather than the rule. Ben's mother

is quite matter of fact towards sex education. She believes that boys should have access to accurate information on sex that shows that it is a natural process. The books that she gives him are easy to read, very informative and are not at all embarrassing. The other parents' attempts to talk to their sons are embarrassing and non-informative.

Adolescence is clearly a time of intense emotion and also idealism. The boys are looking for a view of sex that makes it beautiful and desirable.

Single parent families

Although Ben does not have a dad, he is better off with a mother who takes the trouble to source good material and so provide Ben with sound information relating to sex education.

Characterisation

Ben shows his empathy. He is not as affected by the distasteful presentation because his mother had given him books and comics that had shown the process of having sex as beautiful, but he really feels for his friends. He is a loyal friend and refuses to identify Tsietsi – even though it is quite evident who the vandal is.

Tsietsi has been gentle and low-key up to now. He shows himself capable of intense emotion.

Sarah, Ben's mother, is revealed as a woman who has a clear insight into how to handle sensitive situations. She has done the research and has discovered good material and the wise approach to take.

RULE#9 NEVER LET YOUR MOM SPEAK TO YOUR FRIENDS ON THE PHONE

Outline

W and T do not appear for Science at the usual time. His attempts to contact William and Tsietsi are not successful so he has a long wait. William does come in the end but does not stay long. Ben finds that Tsietsi has blocked him on Facebook.

Plot development

The tension intensifies. Tsietsi has just had the session with the principal so he does not reply to Ben's phone calls. (It takes Ben a while to recognise this). He is also unable to contact William. He finds Tsietsi has blocked him on Facebook and that he has been tagged by pictures of mothers with oversized mammary glands – this is part of a strategy to break his spirit – he is branded as a tell-tale tit. Although William does come, he is conflicted because of what has happened to Tsietsi.

Subplot

Nancy seems to be closer and closer to Uncle Charlie, placing any possible future relationship with Sarah Smith at risk.

Pre-reading

1. Have you ever tried blindfolding yourself and then tried to guess what you are tasting? What is your favourite thing to eat, and what is the thing you would like to taste least?

[Insert two rows of dots]

2. Why is it not a good idea to let your mother talk to your friends on the phone?

[Insert two rows of dots]

During Reading

3. Is Ben being generous when he volunteers to test the first two items in the control and testing? Explain.

[Insert one row of dots]

4. "The experiment gives me a chance to stuff my face with food mom doesn't like to see me eating."

What does "stuff my face" suggest about how keen or otherwise he is to eat this kind of food?

[Insert one row of dots]

5. How comforting do you think Ben finds his mother's reassurances? (p. 71)

[Insert one row of dots]

Post-reading

6. What is different in the tone of 'ho-ho-ho-ho-ho' here and the sound of the tree in Rule#7?

[Insert two rows of dots]

7. Tsietsi has unfriended Ben. What is the difference between his motive and Helena's motive when she unfriended her mother?

[Insert two rows of dots]

8. Who would you rather talk to: Tsietsi's mother or William's mother? Why?

[Insert two rows of dots]

9. What do you think has happened to make William take so long to come to Ben's house and to be so distant?

[Insert two rows of dots]

10. What makes tagging someone in 157 photos a form of cyber bullying?

[Insert two rows of dots]

Themes

Cycle of violence

The outbreaks on Ben's face reflect the stress he has been experienced. There is more evidence of pack behaviour. Sadist plans are used to make the victim's life as miserable as possible. This time Facebook is used. Ben receives 157 tagged photographs branding him as a Tattle-tit. He also finds that Tsietsi has blocked him.

Earlier Ben observes cruel and violent behaviour of weaver birds. This emphasises that what he has been undergoing is primitive behaviour, which is done to demonstrate dominance and humiliation.

Characterisation

Ben has always shown that he has a sense of humour, but here he is showing a creative way of finding humour in treating his pimples and in managing the lengthy time of waiting for his friends to arrive. He also shows how naïve he is in that it takes a long time for it to dawn on him that the teacher has manipulated the situation to make it seem as if he (Ben) has betrayed (snitched on) Tsietsi.

William is feeling conflicted. He knows what has happened to Tsietsi, yet he finds it hard to break with Ben

Tsietsi is quite a nervous person, which often affects his stomach. He has found the time in the principal's office very stressful. He is horrified that Ben seems to have snitched on him and he wants nothing more to do with him. He prizes loyalty and would not have betrayed his friend.

RULE#10: NEVER LET YOU MOM SEW LABELS ON YOUR CLOTHES

Outline

Ben finds himself in a very painful position. His new tormentor, Swot, makes Ben remain fully clothed and time William doing the crawl across the length of the swimming pool in only his vest and underpants. William who is asthmatic and hates having his head underwater is forced to do the crawl in icy cold water.

Plot development

The tension intensifies. Ben no longer has Michael as his mentor. The prefects have voted to have Michael and Swot trade their mentees. Swot has a cruel torture in mind. The tension rises sharply as first William and Ben are singled out and then the malicious goal is revealed. Ben is to become one of the hated tormentors. He is to remain fully clothed and time his friend, while William has to swim (do crawl) lengths on his own in the pool, dressed only in his underpants. What is particularly cruel is that the water is icy cold and William, who is asthmatic finds it terrifying to put his head into water. Afterwards, he does not see Ben coming to bring him a towel. The friendship is destroyed.

Pre-reading

1. Why do few people in South Africa swim in an outdoor pool in winter?

[Insert one row of dots]

During Reading

2. What is the main reason that the 'mentoring' programme at St David's continues?

[Insert two rows of dots]

3. What kind of person is Michael? How well does the description ‘tormentor’ fits him?

[Insert two rows of dots]

4. Ben describes his vocal cords as ‘cracking’. What emotion is he feeling at this point?

[Insert one row of dots]

5. There are two meanings to ‘washes his hands’. The literal one is obvious. What is the other meaning?

[Insert one row of dots]

6. What do you think Tsietsi is thinking when he stares at Ben after the swimming is over?

[Insert one row of dots]

Post-reading

7. The Rule is “Never let your mom sew tags on your clothes”. Would “Never let your mother write the days of the week on your jocks” be a better rule or not? Briefly explain your view.

[Insert two rows of dots]

8. What do you think turned Swot into the “meanest guy” at the school?

[Insert one row of dots]

9. The episode at the pool is extremely dangerous. Mention **two** things that make it so dangerous.

[Insert two rows of dots]

10. Look at the words of the chapter: “Completely alone.” What had Swot hoped to achieve through the swimming pool incident?

[Insert one row of dots]

Themes

Cycle of violence

This is part of the entrenching tradition at St David’s. There are those who are distressed by what is happening, but they dare not or do not have the courage to speak out. There are others like Michael (and the staff) that pretend that it isn’t happening. Violence thrives on a lack of resistance. What is being done is dangerous and cruel.

The chief aim of the bullies/tormentors is to break the spirit of their victim. They make their victim feel powerless through public humiliation and to isolate him.

Some of the cruelty is not planned. William is revealed as someone who does not change his underwear every day. The elastic in his underpants seems to have stretched because they come off when he is swimming. Both are humiliating experiences. Swot's experience of bringing a towel and taking William off to have cocoa is a strategy to make William grateful to him. The anger that he feels will then be directed only at Ben.

Remaining silent vs revealing the truth

Michael does not, Ben has chosen not to speak out and to remove himself from the situation. This may be a kind of denial.

Character development

Ben's loyalty to and empathy with his friend is evident in his offer to swim with William as is his choice of backstroke. He is helpless to resist and is prevented from comforting William at the end of the gruelling swim. Swot who brings a towel and takes him William off to have cocoa.

RULE#11 NEVER LET YOUR MOM TALK TO YOUR POTENTIAL GIRLFRIEND

Outline

Ben has been moping. Helen persuades him to take a walk so he walks to Elizabeth's house and puts what he thinks is Elizabeth's dog inside the garden. When he returns home, he discovers that Elizabeth is on the phone. He finds out that the dog has done a great deal of damage. He agrees to ask his mom to pick her up from Tsietsi's party.

Plot development

There is development in the plot and the subplots.

The tension is making Ben very depressed, even mildly suicidal. He is feeling very lonely. Helen gives him good advice.

When Ben takes Helen's advice, he signals the end of his being a victim. The subplot which traces Elizabeth and Ben's relationship has a promising development despite his putting a strange dog into their garden who causes havoc: Elizabeth asks for a ride back from the party.

Subplots

Sarah and Charles's relationship moves forward. Sarah finding herself really wanting Charles to be there.

The growing relationship of Ben and Elizabeth has an important boost. Elizabeth phones the house and asks Ben's mom for a lift home from the party. Fortunately, Ben attempt to win her favour by putting what he thinks is her dog into her garden (with disastrous results) does not negatively affect their relationship.

Pre-reading

1. Think of a difficult situation that you once found yourself in. What advice were you given helped you to get out of that situation? (You can also answer this question by describing something you saw in a film or in a television programme or read in a book.)

[Insert two rows of dots]

During Reading

2. Look at the list Ben makes on page 84. Why does Edyth Bulbring choose to present this in list form and not in normal paragraph style?

[Insert one row of dots]

3. How effective is Ben's mother's comment (in which she quotes statistics) in making him feel better? Briefly explain your view.

[Insert two rows of dots]

4. Ben refers to Helen as an outlier. Look at the parts of the word. What do you think "outlier" means?

[Insert one row of dots]

5. What do you think Ben's tone is in, "Yes, she calls Swot, Snot?" (p. 89)

[Insert one row of dots]

Post-reading

6. What is strange about Sarah Smith eating a slab of chocolate a night?

[Insert two rows of dots]

7. Which part of Helen's advice do you think is the most useful. Why?

[Insert two rows of dots]

8. What information tells you that Elizabeth has not enjoyed the call she made hoping to speak to Ben as much as Ben's mom has?

[Insert one row of dots]

9. Why does Ben not own up that he put the dog into Elizabeth's garden?

[Insert one row of dots]

10. What are the first sign that Ben may be moving away from being a helpless victim? Explain.

[Insert two rows of dots]

Themes

Cycles of violence

Ben has been reduced to being suicidal to die – the goal bullies have in mind for victims is to reduce them to a feeling of being powerless and depressed, of no account and totally friendless. The fact that Dudley (Dud) was forced to go to another school is a reminder that it is useless to try to fight the system.

Strolling down your own path

Helen shows that she is not totally self-centred. She is capable of giving sound and practical advice and is fond of her brother. She helps him see that laughter is a way of breaking the power of others who want to break your spirit, as is signalling to all that you are a confident person. There is also more evidence that she does not conform to the stereotype.

Character development.

Ben is at low ebb and is feeling suicidal. He reflects on the ironies of his situation.

He is perceptive in recognising that his mother is no longer indifferent to Uncle Charlie.

Ben also shows his resilience. He recognises good advice and takes it. He takes advantage of an opportunity to put Elizabeth's dog inside the grounds. Ben is showing signs of recovery. He talks confidently, invites Elizabeth to go to the party with him and lies convincingly to avoid trouble.

Helen notices Ben's needs and is able to offer him very practical and sound advice. She is able to adopt just the right humorous tone. She clearly cares about her brother. It seems that she is able to call on her own experience in understanding her brother's needs.

Elizabeth shows her feistiness by referring to Swot as Snot and by phoning to ask for a lift back from the party.

Sarah is beginning to focus on her own needs. She clearly misses Charles. This shows that she is no longer totally concerned with protecting her children with no place for anyone in her private life. Her advice to Ben shows that she is sympathetic but does not really understand the depth of Ben's suffering.

Motif

The role of laughter. Helen reminds her brother of the importance of laughter as an antidote.

RULE#12 NEVER LET YOUR MOM FIGHT YOUR BATTLES FOR YOU

Outline

When Ben's mother discovers that he has not been invited to Tsietsi's party, she phones Tsietsi's mother. The call ends on a sour note. His conversation with Tsietsi the next day is disastrous. Swot tells him of a way to gain entry to the party.

Plot development

Sarah is determined to protect her son from hurt, so she phones Tsietsi's mother. This leads to a rift in the two mothers' relationship, but not before Tsietsi's mother reveals more embarrassing

information about Tsietsi. The next day at school, Ben uses this information. He breaks their code and uses private information to say some very hurtful things to Tsietsi. Their friendship is over. Swot is very nice to Ben, who responds by revealing a great deal about himself, including his desire to go to the party. Swot reveals that Ben can get into the party by paying a bribe of R100 to William who will be the bouncer at the party.

Pre-reading

1. Sometimes we lose something and keep going back the same place again and again to look for the lost article. Why do we do this?
2. At what point should mothers stop fighting the children's battles for them?

During Reading

3. Ben is feeling more and more anxious because he has not received an invitation to the birthday. When would he have normally received the invitation?
4. When he asks Tsietsi directly about the invitation, Tsietsi says he can only invite fifty guests. (p. 92) What makes Tsietsi's answer particularly hurtful?
5. What is the emotion on Ben's face when he tries to pretend that he does not really want to go to the party?

Post-reading

6. What do you think is more important to Ben – being with his friend on his birthday or dancing with Elizabeth?
7. What significant shift is there in Ben and Tsietsi's relationship? (p. 95)
8. Why, do you think, Swot is being so particularly nice to Ben?
9. What makes the task Swot sets so particularly disgusting and humiliating?
10. The boys who come to watch Ben are an important part of the success of the aggressive behaviour. How do they make the experience worse for the victim?

Themes

Cycle of violence

Swot like most bullies uses repetitive activities designed to humiliate, revolt and dispirit the victim. There is more evidence of pack behaviour. A group of boys comes to jeer. They use crude and primitive behaviour to lengthen Ben's task and make it as unpleasant as possible. Quite unexpectedly, Swot treats Ben kindly and appears to be keen to help him. Ben ignores his instinct that warns him that Swot is not playing true to form.

There is also evidence that the strain on Ben is affecting other people. Ben's mother attempts to put things right by phoning Tsietsi's mother about Ben's exclusion from the party. Her helplessness to right the situation, results in her becoming rude and aggressive.

Ben and his former friends have a very hostile encounter in which they trade insults and betray confidences. They have all been affected by the situation at school.

Trials is independence

This is a time of feeling things very intensely. In this case, Ben is devastated that he has been left off the invitation list.

Characterisation

Ben shows how naïve he is and how very much he wants to be included in the party. He goes again and again to his locker to find an invitation. When he plucks up the courage to ask Tsietsi directly, he receives an answer that hurts him very deeply. He lies to his mother saying that he does not want to go to the party.

Sarah is so focused on setting things right for her son that she is rude to one of her dearest friends and, in fact, makes the situation worse. She shows her vulnerability and that she is not always sensible.

RULE#13: NEVER LET YOUR MOM CONTROL YOUR FINANCES

Outline

Ben is unsuccessful at getting money at first, but he is able to borrow money from Helen. The attempt to pay William to let him into the party ends in humiliation. Swot has deceived him.

Plot development

The tension is still rising. Ben feels frustrated because Tsietsi's party offers a chance to dance with Elizabeth. His sense of powerlessness increases when his attempt to bribe his way into the party fails.

Pre-reading

1. Do you think your parents should have a say in how you spend your money, especially when there is a big sum involved? Explain your view.

[Insert two rows of spaces]

During Reading

2. "Staccato" is a music term meaning that every note is sharply separated from the others. What does it mean in "The way we talk these days is careful and staccato?" (p. 98)

[Insert two rows of spaces]

3. Why does Ben say that he was not thinking of using some of the money that his father gave him, when he actually was?

[Insert one row of dots]

4. Ben goes to Uncle Charlie to ask for money. How is their relationship changing?

[Insert two rows of spaces]

5. What is the atmosphere in the flat like?

[Insert one row of dots]

Post-reading

6. Ben does not tell his mother that Nancy was at Uncle Charlie's flat or that he ate meat. What is the reason for this do you think?

[Insert two rows of spaces]

7. Why is Helen amused when Ben says that the money he needs is “her investment in our relationship of trust and mutual respect”?

[Insert two rows of dots]

8. Which of the words Tsietzi says are most hurtful, do you think? (p. 104)

[Insert one row of dots]

9. Suggest another rule that could be used as a heading for this chapter and briefly explain why you chose it.

[Insert two rows of dots]

10. Why should Ben not have believed the story that William was open to bribery.

[One row of dots]

Themes

Cycle of violence

When Ben tries to bribe William, he finds that he has been deceived by Swot. He suffers further humiliation. He has been fooled and once again shown how powerless he is.

Trials of adolescence

Ben is still rather naïve. He does not pick up any of the signs that he has been deceived.

Strolling down your own path

Ben is showing signs that he may be reinventing himself. As yet, his actions are limited to acts of rebellion like eating meat and swearing.

Characterisation

Ben shows signs of wanting to assert his independence. He has strong feelings about the restrictions that his mother places on him as if he were still a child. These are reflected in “hack me off”, “burn

my butt” and “grates my nerves”. He also jumps at the chance to eat food that his mother would not like him to eat.

He is more and more at ease with Uncle Charlie and sees him as someone whom he can confide in him man to man.

Although he prides himself on being a scientist, he allows his desire to go to the party overrule what he knows to be true. He knows very well that William would not take bribes.

Tsietsi shows what has hurt him most is the betrayal of a confidence and **William** is appalled that Ben could have thought that he could be bribed.

RULE#14: NEVER LET YOUR MOM CUDDLE YOU AT NIGHT

Outline

It is the night of Tsietsi’s party. Helen has gone out on her motorbike. There is a phone call From Uncle Charlie to tell them that Helen is at the hospital. Ben and his mother comfort each other during the storm.

Plot development

Ben and his mom find common cause as they watch the storm and worry about Helen.

So many boys are at the party that it gets out of hand. One of the mothers calls the police. Helen is involved in an altercation and a fight at a club and gets as good as she gets. Undaunted by the experience, Helen has to have hospital treatment. Uncle Charlie is called to the hospital because of the laughter club card in Helen’s pocket. This means Sarah and Uncle Charlie meet. Sarah cannot contain her jealousy, revealing her feelings for Uncle Charlie. There is a breakthrough in the relationship between Ben and his mother as they comfort each other during the thunderstorm.

Subplot

Uncle Charlie and Ben’s mother are brought together again. It is a shock for Sarah to meet Nancy and see how close they were. Sarah’s jealous remark reveals that she feels strongly about Uncle Charlie.

Pre-reading

1. What makes you scared? Thunderstorms, sound of gunfire, floods? Why?

During Reading

2. What does “Modjadji has left the building” mean?

Insert one row of dots]

3. “The clock ticks past another hour.” (p. 107). What makes this example of personification so effective?

[Insert one row of dots]

4. What do you think a holiday in Guatemala Bay would be like?

[Insert two rows of dots]

5. The storm marks a turning point in Ben’s total identification with his father. Which sentence on page 111 tells us this?

[Inset one row of dots]

Post-reading

6. How differently would most other girls have behaved in Helen’s situation?

[Inset two rows of dots]

7. How has Ben’s way of speaking to his sister changed?

[Insert two rows of dots]

8. What does Ben’s mom imply when she tells Nancy, “You’re brave to wear a dress with legs like yours.”

[Insert one row of dots]

9. In what way is the title of the chapter ironic? (*Never let your mother cuddle you at night*)

[Insert one row of dots]

10. What was Ben and Helen’s dad like before he died?

[Insert two rows of dots]

Themes

Cycle of violence

Violence seems to arise in part from an inability to deal with differences. The boy who insults Helen is irked because Helen and Thandeka's behaviour seems outside the norm to him.

Strolling down your own path

Helen is making her own choices. She is experimenting at this point, and is open to making changes if and when she finds she needs to.

Remaining silent vs revealing the truth

One of the mothers has phoned the police. She feels she cannot allow the dangerous and illegal behaviour at the party to continue. She has to tell the truth.

Single-parent family

The strain of managing the parenting becomes evident. Sarah feels the need of someone to comfort her and share the responsibility.

Characterisation

Helen shows how different she is from the stereotype schoolgirl. She not only rides her motorbike fast, she goes to a nightclub and stays out late. There she kisses a girl because she finds her attractive and shows that she can give every bit as good when she gets in a physical fight. Far from being cowed by her experience, she is quite pleased with herself. She does not seem to have any regrets about the evening.

RULE#15: NEVER TELL YOUR MOM STUFF

Outline

For three days Elizabeth avoids Ben. His mom receives crank calls and unwanted deliveries. Helen is still suffering as a result of the attack, but she is uncharacteristically kind to Ben. Ben reads the detailed letter his father left him.

Plot development

The climax is reached in this chapter. Elizabeth seems to have rejected him and Ben’s family becomes the target of aggressive action such as phone calls and unwanted deliveries. Ben is angered by this action against his family, whereas he had accepted the aggressive action against himself. Helen gives Ben valuable advice that enables him to see that he should no longer be a victim. As he tries to deal with his problems, Ben begins to realise that his dad is no longer the source of comfort to him that he was. His mom and Helen are closer.

Subplot

Elizabeth has stopped walking to school and ducks down when she and her mother drive by Ben and she does not meet at the school gate after school. The romance seems to have come to an end.

Pre-reading

1. Have you ever dreaded going somewhere because you think something bad may happen? Briefly describe this experience.

[Insert two rows of dots]

During Reading

2. How do you think Ben feels when Elizabeth ducks down when she and her mother pass him in the car?

[Insert one row of dots]

3. What were the boys at the party smoking, do you think?

[Insert one row of dots]

4. Who is the “somebody” to whom Ben refers? (p114)

[Insert one row of dots]

5. What is the purpose of the crank calls and unwanted deliveries that Ben’s mother receives?

[Insert two rows of dots]

Post-reading

6. There is evidence in this chapter that Helen and Ben’s relationship has changed. What is that change?

[Insert two rows of dots]

7. Helen seems so carefree. Refer to the text to show that she has faced prejudice.

[Insert two rows of dots]

8. Ben’s sense that his security lies in his close relationship with his father is changing. Discuss what happens in this chapter that heightens his awareness of this.

[Insert four rows of dots]

9. What do you expect will happen next? Briefly say what you are basing your answer on.

[Insert two rows of dots]

10. Putting together what you have found out, what kind of person was Ben and Helen’s dad?

[Insert two rows of dots]

Themes

Cycle of violence

One of the strategies used is to include anyone close to the victim. In this case, there is also another reason. One of the mothers had called the police to deal with the illegal activities at Tsietsi’s party. Ben’s mother is immediately suspected, even though there is no evidence against her. She starts getting unwanted deliveries and crank calls. This unnerves her, but it also upsets Ben. He is totally

dispirited and is showing suicidal tendencies – not unusual consequences of persistent bullying. Helen is able to give good advice.

Strolling down your own path

Helen helps Ben to see that this is an opportunity for him to “build a new model” or “to climb out of the box”. In other words, he needs to define himself and be his own person.

Single-parent families

Ben longs to have all the benefits of a father who introduces him to things and enjoys doing things with him. He really feels deprived. Every year, his list of what he would have liked to have shared with his father gets longer. However, he is beginning to see that nearly fourteen years later, has changed and memories of his father can no longer help him.

Characterisation

Ben is at a very low point because Elizabeth is no longer meeting him in the morning and after school. There is nothing for him to look forward to or to give him relief from the bullying at school. Thinking about his father no longer comforts him. He is slowly beginning to see the limitations of a relationship with a dead man.

Helen reveals that she is not as resolved as she appears to be. She has faced prejudice and judgement. When she offers advice, she calls on her own painful experiences.

RULE#16: NEVER LET YOU MOM MEET YOUR POTENTIAL GIRLFRIEND

Outline

Ben adopts a different approach. He gives his homework to his tormentors and enthusiastically proceeds to do more than he has been told to do. He refuses to trade insults. It all pays off. He discovers why Elizabeth has been avoiding him and why Terror is so bad-tempered.

Plot development

This is the beginning of falling action. Ben is no longer powerless and seems to revel in the punishments rather than be crushed by them. He hands over his homework rather than waiting for them to take it out of his back. This robs the bullies/tormentors of their power because their actions no longer humiliate or embarrass him. Ben has become his own person and is starting to shake off the effects of what has been done to him.

Subplot

Two other problems are resolved: Why Elizabeth has been avoiding him and why Terror has been aggressive. Their relationship is strengthened by Ben's discovery that Elizabeth is also an avid fan of Animal Planet.

Pre-reading

1. There is a saying that you can only be a victim if you agree to be a victim. What does this mean?

[Insert one row of dots]

2. Why is it necessary to warn boys against introducing their potential girlfriend to their moms?

[Insert two rows of dots]

During Reading

3. Whose mother called the police to deal with the criminal activities at the party?

[Insert one row of dots]

4. Explain what Ben means when he says he could've said "... it was for me." (p. 122)

[Insert two rows of dots]

5. The boy whom Helen punched has to have his jaw wired. (p. 122) Why does this make him a figure of fun rather than someone to feel sorry for?

[Insert two rows of dots]

6. What does Ben mean when he says, "Those nails are taking a beating." (p. 124)

[Insert one row of dots]

Post-reading

7. Ben takes a new approach to his punishments. How effective is this strategy? Explain.

[Insert two rows of dots]

8. Why is Ben so excited when he finds out that Elizabeth has been avoiding him because of her swollen face.

[Insert one row of dots]

9. Why is Ben particularly delighted to hear that Elizabeth is an Animal Planet fan?

[Insert two rows of dots]

10. Do you think that Elizabeth is likely to be a good vet? Briefly explain your answer.

[Insert two rows of dots]

Themes

Cycle of violence

Ben discovers that the only way of stopping the violence against him is stop playing their game. As long as he plays the role of a victim, he will continue to provide enjoyment. By making it seem that he is revelling in the tasks set, and taking the initiative, rather than being crushed by the actions of the tormentors, the tormentors are confused and disempowered. The fun eases.

Strolling down your own path

This theme is dealt with most clearly in this chapter. Ben has come to realise that you need to make the choices that seem right to you and be comfortable with them. He gives two examples of boys who do not run with the pack. One has chosen to play tennis not rugby and another loves singing in the chapel choir.

RULE#17 NEVER LET YOUR MOM GO ALL COUGAR ON YOUR FRIENDS

Outline

During the matrices' last day celebrations, Frank, the St David's mascot is captured by the St Anne's girls, who present a list of demands. The St David's boys kidnap Small Trevor, the brother of the head girl of St Anne's. Ben finds out what to do when you have a question that can't be answered.

Plot development

The falling action phase continues. The capture of Frank and the kidnapping of Small Trevor create an opportunity for Ben to initiate action. He is no longer powerless.

Subplots

Sarah Smith and Uncle Charlie pick up their relationship and lay the foundation for a deep relationship. They are obviously both committed to the relationship and Helen and Ben support it.

Elizabeth and Ben's relationship moves forward. Ben and Elizabeth are going to combine to return Frank, the tortoise, so that Small Trevor can be returned home.

Pre-reading

1. What possible danger could there be in allowing your mother to go all cougar on your friends?

[Insert two rows of dots]

2. What happens at your school on the grade 12s last day of school? Briefly explain.

[Insert two rows of dots]

During Reading

3. Tank angrily asks William, "Where has it [the tortoise] run off to?" What makes this a ridiculous question?

[Insert one row of dots]

4. What is significant about the fact that Michael does a double wink at Ben and calls him Ben? (p. 129)

[Insert two rows of dots]

5. What, do you think, is the tone of "Oopsie-daisy, butterfingers"? (p. 130) Briefly explain your answer.

[Insert two rows of dots]

Post-reading

6. What does Ben mean when he says, "But my reality is way outside the games they are playing"?

[Insert one row of dots]

7. What lies behind Sarah Smith's confession that she was scared of investing in something that she might lose? (p. 131)

[Insert two rows of dots]

8. List three indications that Ben has matured during the course of the novel.

[Insert three rows of dots]

9. The many references to blood or bleeding suggest that Ben has something on his mind. What is he anxious about?

[Insert one row of dots]

10. What signs are there that Uncle Charlie and Sarah Smith's relationship has a promising future?

[Insert three rows of dots]

Themes

Remaining silent vs revealing the truth

Helen tries to persuade Ben to tell her where Small Trevor is being held. She is very aware of the risks to him. This is a time to speak up.

Single-parent family

Uncle Charlie and Sarah Smith are well on their way to a committed relationship, Ben and Helen are ready to accept Uncle Charlie and support the relationship. Ben is even ready to allow Uncle Charlie to call him "son". It seems very likely that Ben and Helen will soon have a two-parent family.

Characterisation

Ben is finding ways of not being manipulated or victimised. This is evident in the confident way he declines to take the principal's call.

Uncle Charlie shows that he can be serious and a good partner. He also shows that the children and Sarah will be able to trust and depend on him because he genuinely cares about her and her children

and is sensitive in the way he deals with them. He shows his skill in talking to Ben and helping him to find a solution.

Sarah Smith shows that she is willing to take risks and to be less rigid in her lifestyle and is ready to trust Uncle Charlie. She really cares about him.

RULE#18: NEVER LET YOU MOM KNOW WHAT HAPPENS ON YOUR DATES

Ben and Elizabeth rescue Frank with Helen’s help. Small Trevor is delivered to his front door, and William is able to use irresistible bait to get Frank to stick his head out again. Elizabeth and Ben go on their first date.

Plot development

This is the final part of the resolution phase. Ben is no longer a victim. He takes bold action in carrying out the rescue of Frank and also in managing the return of Small Trevor. Ben overcomes his fear of Swot, has his first date with Elizabeth, and his relationship with his mother is restored.

Pre-reading

1. With whom do you discuss what happens on your dates?

[Insert one row of dots]

During Reading

2. What tone does Helen use when she says, “You snitched.”? (p. 136) Choose one of the options below:

A. mock serious B. disgusted C. shocked D. delighted E. angry

[Insert one row of dots]

3. Why is Helen wearing her dressing gown?

[Insert one row of dots]

4. What does Ben mean when he says, “There’s a golf ball stuck in my throat.”? (p. 137)

[Insert two rows of dots]

5. Ben and Elizabeth think that Helen is referring to smoking cigarettes when she says, “I know what you boys and girls get up to behind the tennis courts”. What is she actually referring to?

[Inset one row of dots]

6. How do we know that Ben is no longer afraid of Swot? (p. 138)

[Insert on row of dots]

Post-reading

7. In what way is the tortoise similar to Terror?

[Insert one row of dots]

8. What signs are there that Ben’s friendship with Tsietsi and William is being restored?

[Inset three rows of dots]

9. In your view, what is the worst thing that happens during Elizabeth and Ben’s first date? Briefly explain the reason for your opinion.

[Insert two rows of dots]

10. Do you think the relationship between Ben and Elizabeth is likely to last. Explain your view?

Refer to the text to justify your view.

[Insert three rows of dots]

Themes

Cycle of violence

It appears that Small Trevor was in no danger, apart from being given too much orange juice to drink or too much chocolate to eat. It would seem that even the supposed slam against the car was staged because there was not a spot of blood on him. It would seem that it is possible to choose not to abuse or be violent in any other way.

Trials of adolescence

The first date reflects all the awkwardness of a first date and so many things go wrong. However, overall, it is sheer delight.

Strolling down your own path

Ben has begun his journey, outside the circle, out of the box.

Remaining silent vs revealing the truth

It is right for Helen to reveal where Small Trevor is. Small Trevor could be in serious danger, otherwise.

The friendship of the three boys is restored. Little is spoken about the Snitch episode. And they are back to the understanding that “sometimes best friends don’t need to say anything”.

Characterisation

Helen has new confidence and sees Ben in a much more positive light, but her practical experience means she is still the one who directs operations.

Ben has matured. He now has greater insight into when it is necessary to break a confidence. He is still socially awkward, but his sense of humour helps him to put situations in perspective.

SECTION C: EXAMPLES OF FORMAL ASSESSMENT

Levels of Questions

There are five basic levels of questions: Literal, Reorganisation, Inference, Evaluation and Appreciation. The explanations below will help you identify the kind of answers you are being asked to give.

Cognitive Levels	Activity (Types of questions)	Specific Examples
Literal (Level 1)	Questions that deal with information explicitly stated in the text <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Name the things/people/places/elements ... • State the facts/reasons/points/ideas • Identify the reasons/persons/causes 	Name Ben's closest friends. Who collapsed on the rugby field during the match against Voortrekker High? State the reason why Terror was so aggressive. Identify the person whom Sarah Smith told about the drug-taking.

<p>Reorganisation (level 2)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • List the points/names/reasons ... • Describe the place/person/character ... • Relate the incident/episode/ Experience <p>Questions that require analysis, synthesis or reorganisation of information explicitly supplied in the text</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Summarise the main points/ ideas/pros/cons ... • Group the common elements/ factors • State the similarities/differences ... • Give an outline of ... 	<p>List the names of the boys who are mentioned in the first chapter.</p> <p>Describe what Terror looks like.</p> <p>Relate what happens at Tsietsi's party</p> <p>Summarise Sarah Smith's ideas on nutrition.</p> <p>What do William and Tsietsi's mother have in common?</p> <p>What is the main difference between Swot and Michael?</p> <p>Outline how Ben and Elizabeth rescue Frank.</p>
<p>Inference (Level 3)</p>	<p>Questions that require a candidate's engagement with information explicitly stated</p>	

	<p>in the text in terms of his/her personal experience</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explain the main idea ... • Compare the ideas/attitudes/ actions • What is the author's (or character's) intention/attitude/motivation/ reason ... • Explain the cause/effect of ... • What does an action/comment/ attitude (etc.) reveal about narrator/writer/ character ... • How does the metaphor/simile/image affect your understanding ... 	<p>Explain the main idea in chapter 3 (RULE#3: NEVER LET YOUR MOM CHOOSE YOUR CLOTHES)</p> <p>Compare Swot's attitude to Michael's attitude to their respective mentees.</p> <p>What is the author's reason for making each rule begin with never?</p> <p>Explain why Ben does not use information that he has on Sizwe.</p> <p>Sarah Smith cooks Uncle Charlie a steak. What does this reveal about her feelings for him?</p> <p>How does the simile in "her face like a heart attack" help you to visualise George's</p>
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What, do you think, will be the outcome/effect (etc.) of an action/a situation 	<p>mom's feelings at this point?</p> <p>What, do you think, will be the outcome of the teacher's making it seem that Ben has betrayed his friend, Tsietsi?</p>
<p>Evaluation questions (Level 4)</p>	<p>These questions deal with value and worth. They include judgements regarding reality, credibility, facts and opinions, validity, logic and reasoning, and issues such as the desirability and acceptability of decisions and actions in terms of moral values.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do you think that what transpires is credible/realistic/ possible ...? • Is the writer's argument valid/logical/conclusive? • Discuss/Comment critically on the action/intention/ motive/attitude/suggestion/ implication ... 	<p>Do you think that Ben's being taken by Swot is credible?</p> <p>Comment critically on the attitude of most of the boys to the bullying going on around them?</p>

<p>Appreciation</p> <p>(Level 5)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do you agree with the view/statement/observation/ interpretation that ... • In your view, is the writer/ narrator/character justified in suggesting/advocating that ...? (Substantiate your response/ Give reasons for your answer.) • Is the character's attitude/ behaviour/action justifiable or acceptable to you? Give a reason a reason for your answer. • What does a character's actions/attitude(s)/motives show about him/her in the context of universal values? • Discuss critically/ Comment on the value judgements made in the text. 	<p>Do you agree with Uncle Charlie's statement that laughter is the best medicine? Substantiate your response.</p> <p>In your view, is the headmaster right to insist that there is no truth to the rumours? Substantiate your answer.</p> <p>In your view, is Helen justified in punching George in the eye? Substantiate your response.</p> <p>The school staff look the other way, allowing the bullying to continue. What does this say about their ethical values?</p> <p>Do you think that Michael's willingness to</p>
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	<p>These questions are intended to address the psychological and aesthetic impact on the candidate. They focus on emotional responses to the content, identification with characters or incidents, and reactions to the writer's use of language (such as word choice and imagery)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discuss your response to the text/incident/situation/conflict/dilemma. • Do you empathise with the character? What action/decision would you have taken if you had been in the same situation? • Discuss/Comment on the writer's use of language ... • Discuss the effectiveness of the writer's style/ introduction/ 	<p>trade mentees with Swot is acceptable? Give a reason for your answer.</p> <p>How did you feel when William is forced to swim length after length? Discuss your response.</p> <p>Ben goes to his locker hoping to find an invitation to the party. What would you have done if you had been in his place? Explain.</p> <p>Comment on Ben's use of teenage slang.</p> <p>Edyth Bulbring describes the death of a baby bird</p>
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	conclusion/imagery/metaphors/ use of poetic techniques/ literary devices	during the storm. Discuss the effectiveness of this description.
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Mid-year Formal Assessment

Read the following extracts then answer the questions that follow.

1.

I walk up the driveway to school, past the sign: Keep off the grass. It's one of St David's golden rules. Students who even think about jumping around on the grass get to do a hundred push-ups.

Then I smell that grass. Two inches from my nose.

I've carelessly tripped and fallen off the pathway facedown onto the forbidden lawn. When I look up, I see Themba grinning at me. I grin back because he may have pushed me onto the sacred grass, but I know about the boob under his armpit. And about the bedwetting.

Sir's also grinning. He keeps grinning as he watches me do two hundred push-ups. A hundred for thinking about it. A hundred for doing it. He counts out every one of them. Along with ten other guys who've joined the counting party.

A couple of guys from my history class slip past the circus, shoulders hunched, faces averted. Not everyone's in the mood for fun.

Afterwards I go to the cloakroom and wash my face.
I hear the toilet flush and glance down at my satchel:
the contents are lying on the floor. I look up and see
Sizwe (aka Pumpkin). The smirk on his face as he comes
out the stall says my biology essay's floating down the
sewerage pipe along with his spag bol supper. For sure,
Sizwe is a charmer.

1.1 Refer to line 1: "Then I smell that grass"

Give an outline of what has just happened.

(2)

[Insert two lines]

1.2 Refer to lines 11–12: "Sir's also grinning. He keeps grinning as he makes me do two hundred push-ups."

Do you think that the teacher's behaviour is acceptable? Substantiate your answer.

(2)

[Insert two lines]

1.3 Compare the attitude of the ten boys in the counting party with that of the history boys to the push ups Ben is being forced to do.

(2)

[Insert three lines]

1.4 Refer to lines 20 to 21: "I look up and see Sizwe (aka Pumpkin)."

Who calls Sizwe Pumpkin?

(1)

[Insert one line]

1.5 What does the word "smirk" tell us about how Sizwe feels about what he has done?

Sizwe is very pleased with the way he has dealt with Ben's homework.

(1)

1.6 Refer to line 25. "... Sizwe is a charmer". What synonym could you use for "charmer" in this context?

(1)

(10)

2.

I tell Tsietsi it's not the way Sir told it. I'll lend him some of my stuff to read. He doesn't have to be scared and angry. Loving someone isn't ugly, it's magic. Not that I know the exact ins and outs of it all, but that's what Mom's books told me.

I leave Tsietsi outside the Big Hall and go and spend eternity eating my lunch. Except the bell rings sooner than I expected. Because most of the guys in my grade are too busy trying to scrape the images of the slide show from their frontal lobes (and issuing firm denials that their moms were sitting next to them, holding their hands) to bother causing trouble for me.

Before the end of the school day, Sir calls me to the office. He asks me (orders me) to sit in front of a computer.

2.1 Ben never identifies teachers by name. He always calls them "Sir". Why do you think he does so?

(1)

[Insert one line]

2.2. What do Ben's words to Tsietsi show about his character?

(2)

[Insert 2 lines]

2.3 What are the two main differences between Sarah Smith's (Ben's mom) way of providing appropriate sex education the way the other parents handled this?

(2)

[Insert 3 lines]

2.4 How did Tsietsi show his distress during the talk?

(1)

[Insert one line]

2.5. Refer to lines 5 to 6: "I leave Tsietsi outside the Big Hall and go and spend eternity eating my lunch."

Comment on Edyth Bulbring's use of the word "eternity" to help you to visualise what lunch time was like for Ben.

(2)

[Insert two lines]

2.6 Why does Ben put "orders me" in brackets?

(1)

[insert one line]

2.7 What is the teacher about to show Ben?

(1)

[Insert one line]

(10)

(20)

(20 ÷ 2 = 10)

End-of-the-Year Formal Assessment

Read the two extracts below and then answer the questions that follow each of them.

1.

The phone rings and Mom leaps for it like it's the last remaining lifejacket and her ship's sinking. It's Uncle Charlie. "You're at the hospital? With Helen and Nancy. Oh dear God, please tell me Helen's OK!" And then: "Who's Nancy?"

On the way to the hospital, we pass Tsietzi's house.

The lower part of the house is in darkness, just flashes of light, music blaring. A bunch of guys are kicking beer cans around the street in the rain and passing a bottle of hot stuff around. "Are those boys drinking alcohol?"

Mom says. I say they seem to be having a lot of fun.

Mom says, "Sorry, Ben."

Then we're in the Emergency section at Linksfield hospital, where we find Helen. She's got a cut on the side of her head and a black eye any heavyweight boxer would be proud of. "I told you. Didn't I tell you that bike was a menace?" Mom says. She's on her knees, peering up at Helen's face, her trembling fingers smoothing the bruised eye and the stitches on the cut as though she could make them vanish with her touch.

1.1 Refer to lines 1–2: “like it’s the last remaining lifejacket and the ship’s sinking”.

What do these lines suggest about the speed at which Sarah Smith moves?

(2)

[Insert two rows of dots]

1.2 Outline why Ben was not at Sizwe’s party?

(2)

[Insert three rows of dots]

1.3 Who is Nancy?

(1)

[Insert one row of dots]

1.4 Some of the schoolboys at a fourteen-year-old’s party are drinking alcohol. Do you think that it was the right thing to call in the police to take action? Explain your answer.

(2)

[Insert three rows of dots]

1.5 Why does Ben use brackets around “by my immediate family, at least”?

(1)

[Insert one row of dots]

1.6 What is the difference between the way Ben responds to Helen’s black eye and the way his mom responds?

(2)

[Insert two rows of dots]

(10)

2.

Fifteen minutes later, we find Frank in the girls’ cloakroom

at St Anne’s school. He’s come out of his shell,

guzzling away at an item of girl's clothing I don't even want to think about identifying. He's striking a very chipper pose, eyeing me with his oracle's glare. The look says: St David's will win big on the field next year. (William will be pleased.)

"Sjoe! But he's big. How we going to move him?"

Elizabeth says.

I examine Frank. He's super-big for a mountain tortoise who's lived off a diet of lettuce all his life. It'll need at least three of us to shift him back to where he belongs.

A voice calls from outside. It's one I recognise. I turn to Elizabeth. Her face has gone a pale shade of honey.

She says, "Eish! I think we're busted."

Helen stalks into the cloakroom and points an accusing finger at Elizabeth: "You snitched!"

Elizabeth stands back, clutching at a shower curtain.

Because Hellcat the Left Hook has a terrifying rep. But Helen grins at my girl and says, "Don't just stand there. Let's get this useless reptile back to where he belongs."

2.1 Outline how Frank came to be in the cloakroom at St Anne's.

(2)

[Insert two rows of dots]

2.2 What other animal in the novel likes to eat underwear?

(1)

[Insert one row of dots]

2.3 Is "guzzling" the right word to describe the way Frank is eating the underwear? Justify your view.

(1)

[Insert one row of dots]

2.4 Why has Helen come to the cloakroom?

Write only the letter of the option you think is the best one.

- A. She is furious that Elizabeth has "snitched".
- B. She knows that Elizabeth and Ben will need help.
- C. She is fiercely against cruelty to animals.
- D. She loves ordering her brother around.

(1)

[Insert one row of dots]

2.5 Quote a two-word phrase that shows that Ben and Elizabeth's relationship is on firm ground.

(1)

[Insert one row of dots]

2.6 Compare Ben and Helen's attitude to Frank.

(2)

[Inset two rows of dots]

2.7 Do you think that Elizabeth is right to reveal where Frank is being held? Justify your view.

(2)

[Insert two rows of dots]

(10)

Total 20 marks

SECTION D: ENRICHMENT ACTIVITIES

1. DIARY ENTRY

It is the night before Elizabeth decides to let Ben walk to school with her. Write the diary entry as if you were Elizabeth, expressing your mixed feelings about the next day and the way you will be carrying out your plan.

OR

This is the night after William has been forced to swim lengths in the pool. Write the diary entry as if you were William, expressing your feelings about the experience and how you plan to treat Ben the next day.

Your response should be between 80 and 100 words in length.

2. STORY

Choose ONE of the following topics.

2.1 It is many years later. Elizabeth is happily married and tells her daughter about her first boyfriend. Write down the story she tells. You must include the sentence:

I hated the way in which he followed me about at first and I started calling him Stalker.

OR

2.2 Ben has become a scientist. He decides to join an organization aimed at putting a stop to bullying at schools. At a meeting a school in which he talks to the boys, Ben tells the story of how he was bullied and some of the ways he was able to stop being a victim. Write the story he tells. You must include the sentence: The moment Helen reminded me about how important it was to laugh was when I stopped being a victim.

The story must be 200 and 250 words in length (1 to 1½ pages).

The words given in the topic MUST be included somewhere in the story.

Provide your own title.

Remember that a good story has good a beginning, a strong story line and a convincing ending. If you can, try to bring some humour into it.

3. DIALOGUE

A new principal is appointed to St David's (or St Anne's). He (she) decides to put a stop to the mentor/mentee system and does a presentation in the form of an interview with Ben (or Helen) to get some advice.

Remember:

At the beginning of an interview, the interviewer always sets the context for the audience, telling them why the talk is important. Do this in 2 lines.

He/ she chooses Ben/ Helen to interview.

Identify who is speaking each time by beginning:

Interviewer:

Ben / Helen:

When you do this, you do not need to use quotation marks.

The dialogue should be between 120 and 150 words in length (about 12 to 15 lines).

4. REVIEW

You have been asked to write a review of *Snitch* for Goodreads. The review should be between 120 and 150 words in length (about 12 to 15 lines). Look at the website to get some idea of how these reviews are written.

Remember to give your review a title.

5. NEWSPAPER ARTICLE

The story about the heart attack suffered by Adrian is a front-page story. Write the article.

Remember:

The story must have a headline. The language is reduced, e.g. Boy Escapes Lion.

You are the journalist so write your name in the by-line.

Paragraphs in newspapers are short. There is often only one sentence per paragraph.

- The first paragraph summarises all the important information: who, what, where, when.
- The second paragraph gives the most important point, perhaps detail from those directly concerned.
- The next paragraph gives the next most important point – perhaps a comment from the principal or from Adrian’s parents.
- The next paragraph gives another important point – perhaps a spokesperson from the hospital.
- The last paragraph gives the least important point.
- Conclusion.

It is a good idea to look at a few front-page stories to get an idea of how front-page articles are constructed.

SUGGESTED ANSWERS

SECTION B: EXPLORING THE NOVEL: CHAPTER BY CHAPTER

Please remember that these answers do not cover all of the possibilities.

RULE#1: NEVER LET YOUR MOTHER TAKE YOU TO SCHOOL WEARING INAPPROPRIATE CLOTHING

Pre-reading

1. Open-ended. Ben is wanting to emphasise how important these rules are.

During Reading

2. Open-ended. Choice of rule + justification.

During Reading

3. Dover = bend over and Ben Ten = the name of a child hero who appeals to primary school children.

‘Bend over’ would have been more embarrassing because it has a sexual connotation or of someone who is being dominated. /Ben Ten would have been more embarrassing to a high school boy who would be seen as childish.

4. Sizwe is deeply embarrassed and wants to distance himself as far as possible from his mother.

5. Ben(jamin) Smith.

6. It is effective because it creates a picture of someone who has incredibly huge muscles. Moving an ox-wagon across Table Mountain is a greater feat than most weight-lifters (“iron men”) manage.

Post-reading

7. Ben is not that good. He says, “I am playing reserve in the junior with a bunch of other guys from the lower grades.” /Ben has only recently made the team. He says, “last week, I made it onto the team and I nearly scored a try.”
8. They would prefer their parents not to come to events organised by the school.
9. Any choice + justification.
10. Open-ended.

RULE#2: NEVER LET YOUR MOM COMMENT ON YOUR FACEBOOK STATUS

Before-reading question

1. Open-ended. /It would be embarrassing for other people to see her as one of one's 'friends'. /She may well post something that you would not like to let others see.
2. Open-ended. /Affectionate. /Playful. /Good-tempered or similar.

During Reading

3. How close is the relationship between Elizabeth and Ben?

At this point, there is no relationship. He does not even know her name and she calls him 'Stalker' a very insulting name.

4. She wears blue dreadlocks and she paints her nails black.
5. He creates a picture of the dog "gnawing" her lower arm. There is no real danger to Helen; it seems to be more of a game, with the dog putting on quite a show.
6. "Jokes are his bread and butter. Most months the bread is dry."

Post-reading

7. Helen regards it as something else to rebel against and happily pays rather than to keep the rule.
She also enjoys teasing her mother by using words that seem to be swearwords but are not.
8. Open-ended.
9. Ben likes to play safe and not draw attention to himself, whereas Helen enjoys breaking the rules and revels in drawing attention to herself by rebelling against authority.
10. Sarah Smith's job as a "number cruncher" has made her aware of the many risks there are, and she tries to keep herself and her children safe.

RULE#3: NEVER LET YOUR MOM CHOOSE YOUR CLOTHES

Pre-reading

1. Open-ended.

During Reading

2. Sarah is very considerate. She allows Ben to wake up gently.

3. Ben plays rugby because it is compulsory to do so at St David's. Sarah does her best to support her children, so she goes to the game because Ben invited her to come.
4. Ben must be slightly built.
5. William's mother dresses herself, her husband and William's siblings in ridiculous ways designed to emphasise they are the support team, whereas Ben's mother's way of dressing does not draw attention to itself. She dresses modestly and appropriately.
6. Tsietsi's mother made a handsome donation to the costs of the school's overseas tour.
7. St Anne's girls are enthusiastic fans and enthusiastically support St David's teams, especially the rugby team. Helen makes insulting remarks about the rugby team and never goes to the rugby matches.
8. William is worried because the school only wins if Frank, the tortoise, puts his head out of his shell.
9. Tank is very aggressive.
10. Open-ended.

RULE#4: NEVER GO SHOPPING WITH YOUR MOM

Pre-reading

1. Open-ended.

During Reading

2. She is more concerned about cost than the quality of the product.
3. She does not seem to be very concerned at all. She offers a solution that puts the problem in the hands of someone else and quickly moves on to talking about Tsietsi. /She allows her daughter to spend long hours watching TV (screen babysitting).

OR

She is concerned to some extent in that she has noticed that her daughter is putting on weight and wants to take her to see a psychologist.

4. The saying is “What happens in Vegas stays in Vegas” from the advertising campaign/film of the same name.
5. It means that he removes any expression from his face.

Post-reading

6. The main difference between them is that Ben’s father had a very deep understanding of what his children were like, whereas Tsietsi’s father does not seem to know his son at all. /Ben’s father cared very deeply about his children whereas Tsietsi’s father does not seem to have a relationship with him.
7. She tells the stories in such detail because she knows how important it is to Ben to feel close to his father.
8. Ben wants to buy a Komodo dragon so he can train him and become a kind of superhero. Ben longs for recognition as someone very special.
9. She chews her lip when she is feeling worried or anxious.
10. Open-ended. /His reference to his mom as a person whom he can always trust suggests that something is going to happen to shake that confidence. She is going to pass on the information that the team are taking steroids. /She is going to make a fuss.

RULE#5: NEVER LET YOUR MOM LOOSE AT THE DOCTOR

Pre-reading

1. Open ended.
2. Open-ended/ She could reveal private information.

During Reading

3. She cannot get an after-school appointment. She is not willing to put Ben at risk of becoming very ill by delaying medical attention.
4. D.
5. Although there are earlier clues, he only realises she has broken his confidence when he hears her speaking to Adrian’s father.

6. The brackets indicate what the headmaster implies, not what he actually says.
7. He has a guilty look on his face.

Post-reading

8. Yes. He knows that he will be punished if he admits his role. /He is in a state of shock and finds it hard to believe that his mother has betrayed his confidence. /No. He should have been honest.
9. At the game, the coach made it clear that the game should be won “at any cost”. /The team are all taking steroids.
10. Open-ended.

Rule#6: NEVER LET YOUR MOM HAVE CONVERSATIONS WITH YOUR TEACHERS

Pre-reading

1. Mothers or teachers could reveal information you would prefer them not to.
2. She would have tried to explain why she had broken his confidence.

During Reading

3. He is feeling insecure and finds comfort in eating the food that his father used to eat.
4. Ben is realistic. He knows that sooner or later he will have to go to school. Staying away for one day is not going to help./ It shows his inner strength. He chooses to face his problems rather than to run away.
5. A Spoonerism would make her Sweaty Bollox.
6. Any word that can be seen as having the opposite meaning to “charmer”. Examples: monster, tormentor, beast, horror, terror.

Post-reading

7. He is happy to be called anything other than Snitch.
8. The rules are based on experience. A black swan is something that cannot be predicted.
9. Open-ended. Explanation of the choice is important.
10. They continue to speak to him openly at school and continue to make after school plans.

RULE#7: NEVER LET YOUR MOM SPEAK LIKE A TEENAGER

Pre-reading

1. Open-ended
2. Relaxed and happy.

During Reading

3. When you are feeling miserable or depressed, laughter is the best way of getting over it.
4. He knows Ben well enough to recognise that he is feeling low and he knows just how to persuade him to join the “laughter class”.
5. Definitely, (really) crazy, amazing, totally.

Post-reading

6. This is part of their agreement as friends. They do not speak about things that could possible embarrass others.
7. Uncle Charlie walks home with Ben to give him support and possibly also to allow Ben to share his problems.
8. Open-ended. This question explores what you think is right. You can make a case either way.
9. It would have been rude and she would have angrily confronted her mother about betraying her confidence.
10. It foreshadows that Ben will face a situation in which he will be ridiculed.

RULE#8: NEVER LET YOUR MOM ATTEND YOUR BOLOGY TALKS

Pre-reading

1. It is difficult for boys to share aspects like that with their mothers and if they were having a hard time, it would make it worse to have their mothers looking on.
2. Open-ended. There are many possibilities, ranging from waiting for a meal when you are very hungry to having to do something that you do not like to do for a set time.

During Reading

3. Time moves at high speed – the clock is completely unable to control the movement of time.
4. False. They repeat the same punishment day after day.

5. He is thoroughly revolted by the crude way the Big Talk is presented.
6. False. He calls Ben in because he knows Tsietsi is one of his friends.

Post-reading

7. Ben's mother sees development into adulthood as a natural process so she is matter of fact about sex education. She gives Ben books that are easy to read when he is nine that offer clear explanations. The other parents are so embarrassed that they give their children a distorted picture and fail to give their children any useful information at all.
8. It is ironic because William's father does not create opportunities to speak to him. When William's parents called him in for the Big Talk, his father spent most of the time gazing out of the window.
9. It is part of the tradition of the school. Boys are forced to endure this presentation which they find disgusting and embarrassing.
10. Tsietsi is very angry that the school has turned something that should be viewed as beautiful into something horrible. He vents his intense anger on the equipment used to do the presentation.

RULE#9: NEVER LET YOUR MOM SPEAK TO YOUR FRIENDS ON THE PHONE

Pre-reading

1. Open-ended.
2. Open-ended. /Mothers may take over the call or reveal what you consider embarrassing information.

During Reading

3. Open-ended. A case can be made for either view.
4. The expression "stuff my face" suggests that you eat a great deal. He must be keen to eat the food, because his experiments require only a little taste.
5. They bring little comfort because what he is looking for is an end to the treatment he is receiving at school.

Post-reading

6. The tone here is light-hearted but the tone of the 'ho-ho-ho-ho-ho' sound made by the tree was mournful/sad.
7. Helen wanted to prevent her mother finding out about the drugtaking, whereas Tsietsi wanted to make it clear to everyone that Ben is no longer his friend.
8. Open-ended. A case can be made for either choice.
9. He is conflicted (finding it difficult to know what to do). He has to choose between supporting Tsietsi and rejecting Ben or remaining Ben's loyal friend and risking his friendship with Tsietsi.
10. Posting material of this kind on social media is a form of cyberbullying designed to cause the victim emotional distress and to have a negative effect on the way others see him.

RULE#10: NEVER LET YOUR MOM SEW TAGS ON YOUR CLOTHES

Pre-reading

1. Probable answer: The water is unpleasantly cold and it is hard to breathe when you are swimming.

During Reading

2. There is little or no chance that it will end because policy is made by the Old Boys on the Board, who want it to continue. They suffered through it and want others to suffer through it too.
3. He is not like the other grade 12 mentors in that the tasks he gives Ben are not cruel or humiliating.
4. He is feeling upset/fearful/nervous.
5. It means to take no further responsibility for a decision or to have any further involvement in it.
6. Tsietsi is feeling horrified/disgusted/upset that Ben could have done this to William, one of his closest friends.

Post-reading

7. Open-ended. It is possible to make a case for either view.
8. Open-ended. / Swot was probably a prime target when he was in grade 8 and now like the old boys, he wants others to suffer as he did.
9. Any TWO.

There is no lifesaver on duty./ William is a severe asthmatic and could have had a fatal attack./ William who is not robust could have suffered from hyperthermia.

10. The aim was to isolate Ben. William was his last remaining friend.

RULE#11: NEVER LET YOUR MOM CHAT TO YOUR POTENTIAL GIRLFRIEND

Pre-reading

1. Open-ended.

During Reading

2. He has become an outcast (not worthy to be a St David's boy) and is being made to feel "small" by being embarrassed or humiliated.

3. This is not effective at all. What he longs for is to be accepted by the other boys and the staff members. Nothing else will make him feel better.

4. An outlier is literally someone who is outside the norm – or someone whose behaviour is different from the rest of the group.

5. Admiration.

Post-reading

6. She usually chooses health food and has small helpings.

7. Open-ended. There are a number of possible choices. The justification for the choice should be convincing.

8. Elizabeth is aware that the phone conversation has gone on for 22 minutes, whereas Ben's mom is surprised when Elizabeth mentions this.

9. He does not want to lose favour with Elizabeth.

10. He is starting to behave confidently.

RULE#12: NEVER LET YOUR MOM FIGHT YOUR BATTLES FOR YOU

Pre-reading

1. Open-ended.

2. Open-ended.

During Reading

3. He would normally have been the first to receive an invitation (along with William).

He has a pleading look/ a desperate look on his face.

4. This suggests that he is a rank outsider.
5. He has a pleading look/ a desperate look on his face.

During Reading

6. At this point, the most important thing to Ben is having a chance to be with Elizabeth.
7. Tsietsi addresses Ben as Snitch and Ben betrays the fundamental understanding among the three friends that none of them talks about embarrassing information he has on any of the others. The friendship is over.
8. Ben would have to bend down into the toilet bowl and experience the vile smells.
Using a toothbrush to do the cleaning would make the task take much longer.
Using something to clean a toilet bowl that you put into your mouth is particularly revolting (barbaric).
9. Swot hopes to win Ben's confidence and trick him into giving him information that he (Swot) will be able to use to torment him.
10. Those who watch make it much worse because they jeer and take photographs and recordings to send to others.

RULE#13: NEVER LET YOUR MOM CONTROL YOUR FINANCES

1. Open-ended.

During Reading

2. The conversation does not flow smoothly. The exchanges are short.
3. Ben does not want to tell his mother anything because he does not trust her any more.
4. Ben sees that Uncle Charlie is kind and warm and Ben feels that he can trust him not to say anything about the food he has eaten or the swear word he has used.
5. The atmosphere at the flat is relaxed and happy.

Post-reading

6. Even though he is not on the best of terms with his mother, he does not want to upset or hurt her.
7. He is using the line that she used to get her mother to give her an allowance.

8. "I've only invited my friends to the party."
9. Open-ended. The justification must be valid.
10. William is his close friend, so he should know that he would not accept bribes.

Rule#14: NEVER LET YOUR MOM CUDDLE YOU AT NIGHT

Pre-reading

1. Open-ended.

During Reading

2. It has stopped raining.
3. A clock ticks very slowly. In this case it suggest that the clock is in control of time and makes time go by very slowly.
4. What would a holiday in Guatemala Bay be like, do you think?
5. "Thoughts of Dad bring me no comfort. /"Mom says he loved storms."
6. Most girls would have cried. When their family arrived, they had given an account that would have shown just how awful it all was. They would probably also have immediately revealed who it was because they would have wanted him punished. /Any valid description.

Post-reading

7. He is speaking with more confidence as if he were speaking to an equal.
8. She implies that Nancy's legs are so unattractive that she should wear long dresses to hide them.
9. She hates hospitals because her husband died in a hospital while she was sleeping.
10. It is ironic, because Ben found great comfort in being held tightly by his mother during the storm.

RULE#15: NEVER TELL YOUR MOM STUFF

Pre-reading

1. Open-ended.

During Reading

2. He feels devastated.

3. It is probably cannabis/dagga.
4. He is referring to himself.
5. The calls are meant to harass and annoy Sarah as a kind of punishment for her whistle blowing, but at the same time upset Ben. (fam)

Post-reading

6. They speak to each other more like understanding friends. She calls him Bendy and he strokes her hand to comfort her.
7. Helen's reference to preconceptions and stereotypes suggests she has had her fair share of prejudice.
8. Ben's doubts stem from his becoming aware that his father has not offered him the exciting possibility he offered Helen. He is no longer wanting to be someone with a low profile. When he sleeps that night, he is only aware of the support he gets from Helen and his mother.
9. Open-ended, but the answer given should be based on the text.
10. Ben and Helen's dad seems to have been a loving father who had a good sense of his children's personalities. He did not have much time between diagnosis and his death, but he managed to write a letter to each of the children and to make financial arrangements.

RULE#16: NEVER LET YOUR MOM MEET YOUR POTENTIAL GIRLFRIEND

1. It means that you have a choice, to accept what is done to you or refuse to allow it.
2. Mothers might say something embarrassing or reveal information their boys would prefer not to be known.

During Reading

3. Tsietsi's mother phoned the police.
4. He does the "swim" as part of showing the grade 12s (and the rest of the school) that they have no power over him.
5. The others laugh at him because a girl was able to beat him so conclusively in a fight.
6. Elizabeth bites her nails down to the quick.

Post-reading

7. Ben's strategy is very effective. The tormentors take pleasure in gaining power over their victims and humiliating them and causing them distress. By appearing to enjoy the tasks and even choosing to add to what he is asked to do, Ben disempowers the tormentors and robs them of any pleasure.
8. He had thought that she was no longer interested in him. He has just found out that the opposite is true.
9. This is one of Ben's favourite programmes.
10. Yes. She is good with animals and she likes helping them overcome any problems they have.

RULE#17: NEVER LET YOUR MOM GO ALL COUGAR ON YOUR FRIENDS

1. The boys you bring home might find your mother more attractive than you. That could mean that you would lose a potential boyfriend.
2. Open-ended.

During Reading

3. It is a ridiculous question because a tortoise cannot run anywhere. /William obviously does not know where the tortoise is.
4. Michael's actions signal that Ben is once again an accepted member of St David's – as far as Michael is concerned anyway.
5. The tone is ironic. The game that the grade 12s are playing is actually a dangerous one.

Post-reading

6. Being with Elizabeth is far more important to him.
7. She is referring to the pain of losing her husband, Ben and Helen's father.
8. (Any three).

Ben notices that his mother is not able to walk confidently in very high heels. However, he is impressed with her, not embarrassed. /When Uncle Charlie calls him "son", Ben tells him it is fine and looks forward to the things they will do together. /When the headmaster makes a phone call to him, he asks his mother to give him a message making it clear he will not speak to him. / He is not intimidated by his sister. /He asks Uncle Charlie's advice in a mature way.

9. Ben is anxious about Small Trevor who is a bleeder and so needs special care.
10. Sarah Smith has cooked a meat meal specially for Uncle Charlie.

Both of them have taken care to look their best.

They speak very directly to each other, clearing up any misunderstandings or things that might stand in the way of a strong relationship.

RULE#18: NEVER LET YOUR MOM KNOW WHAT HAPPENS ON YOUR DATES

1. Open-ended.
2. What tone does Helen use when she says, “You snitched?” (p. 136) Choose one of the options below:
 - A. mock serious.
3. It is night time. Helen was already in bed when she realised that her brother has gone to fetch Elizabeth so they can rescue the tortoise.
4. Having Elizabeth so close to him is very exciting and that makes it difficult for him to swallow.
5. The back of the tennis courts is a place where boys like to meet with their girlfriends.
6. He calls him Snot (instead of Swot) over the phone.

Post-reading

7. They both like to eat underwear.
8. Ben goes to visit William and Tsietsi pops in to see Ben. In keeping with their former agreement, they do not speak about the embarrassing and upsetting things that have happened at the school and between them. This is to be forgotten.
9. Open-ended.
10. Open-ended. Either option with a valid justification.

SECTION C: FORMAL ASSESSMENT

Suggested Answers

Please remember that these answers do not cover all of the possibilities.

Mid-Year

1.1 Ben, who has been branded as a snitch, has become the victim of aggressive treatment/bullying.
✓. /Themba has tripped Ben up so he will be punished for being on the grass. ✓
(2)

1.2 No. He knows that Ben has been tripped up✓. /He is unfairly doubling up the punishment✓ / He
should not be enjoying seeing a boy suffer ✓. /He has descended to the level of the meanest
bully✓. Any two valid points.
(2)

1.3 The boys who are counting are thoroughly enjoying✓ seeing Ben punished, whereas the history
boys find it upsetting ✓ and want no part in it✓. /Their shoulders are hunched and they cannot
bear to look at what is happening. ✓ (The first point and any two of the other points)
(3)

1.4 Sizwe's mother.
(1)

1.5 The word "smirk" reveals that Sizwe is particularly pleased with himself.
(1)

1.6 A possible synonym in this context is "nasty piece of work".
(1)
(10)

2.1 He does not have a close relationship with any of them. /Or any credible answer.
(1)

2.2 Ben really cares about his friend and wants to reassure him. ✓

Ben likes to share his knowledge. ✓

(2)

2.3 She provides sound resource material that offers the necessary information ✓

She does not attempt to offer information herself. ✓

There is no embarrassment involved. ✓

(2)

2.4 Tsietsi has scratched his arms and legs raw. /Tsietsi has hidden under a chair. (1)

[Insert one line]

2.5 The word “eternity” gives the idea of the depth of his unhappiness. Lunchtime seemed to last forever. (2)

2.6 He wants to make the teacher’s tone clear. /He wants to make it clear that the atmosphere is unpleasant. (1)

2.7 He is about to show a video of Tsietsi damaging the equipment that was used during the presentation. (1)

(10)

(20 ÷ 2 = 10)

END-OF-YEAR ASSESSMENT

1.1 These lines suggest that Sarah Smith is desperate for news so moves incredibly fast.

(2)

1.2 Ben was not invited to the party because Tsietsi was led to believe that he (Ben) had turned informer and revealed that Tsietsi had caused the damage to the school equipment.

(2)

1.3 Nancy is a woman who spends as much time as she can with Uncle Charlie. /She is very keen to have a close relationship with Uncle Charlie.

(1)

- 1.4 Yes. The party had got out of hand and the boys could have injured themselves/ The boys were engaging in dangerous and illegal behaviour. /No. She could have called the parents and asked them to take their boys home. The explanation must convincingly support the *Yes* or *No* answer (2)
- 1.5 Ben wants to insert a sense of humour. /Ben wants to be a bit more accurate. (1)
- 1.6 Ben is somewhat in awe of his sister's injuries. /Ben wants to take action against the boy who injured her, whereas his mom is upset by the injuries and concerned about the pain Helen must be feeling. One mark for Ben's response and one mark for the mother's response. (2)
- (10)**
- 2.1 Frank was captured and put there by the St Anne's girls to ensure that the St David's boys complied with the ultimatums that were set as an end-of-the-year "low jink". (2)
- 2.2 Terror. (1)
- 2.3 Yes. Frank is eating with relish. /Frank is eating it with speed and enthusiasm. (1)
- 2.4 Why has Helen come to the cloakroom?
B (1)
- 2.5 "my girl" (1)
- 2.6 Ben speaks affectionately and admiringly about Frank. /Ben (mocks) romanticises Frank/ whereas Helen sees the tortoise as pretty useless. (2)

2.7 Elizabeth is right. She realises that Small Trevor may be in danger and this is the only way to get the St David's boys to release him.

(2)

(10)

Total 20 marks

GLOSSARY

Difficult words

abyss (p. 45) – bottomless pit

ailment (p. 41) – illness

assertively (p. 89) – insistently

besieged (p. 109) – unable to escape

botulism (p. 17) – a kind of bacteria

carcinogens (p. 18) – cancer causing substances

Chinese bangle (p. 22) – painfully twist someone's lower arm in two directions

churned up (stomach) (p. 42) – (stomach) discomfort caused by anxiety

conflicted (p. 75) uncertain

contravening (rules) (p. 57) – breaking the rules

credence (p. 43) – truthfulness

deactivated (p. 88) – no longer active

deal-breaker (p. 100) – something that destroys a relationship

desperados (p. 19) – desperate people

despite (the twin status) (p. 79) – even though (they are twins)

elusive (p. 87) – hard to find

endorphin (p. 53) – substance released by the brain that reduces pain

enhance (p. 92) – make better

flails (p. 82) – movement without control, thrashes about

foetal (p. 86) – like an unborn baby

gargantuan (p. 13) – enormous, huge

grimaces (p. 60) – pulls a face, showing dislike

heinous (p. 21) – very bad and shocking or evil (crime)

holy grail (p. 15) – grand prize

hyperthermia (p. 80) – dangerously low body temperature

interrogation (p. 132) – cross-questioning

intones (p. 46) – speaking in a voice that does not rise and fall much

loiter (p. 113) – hang about

morphed (p. 17) – changed into

mutilates (p. 28) – squeezes it hard

number-cruncher (p. 18) – a financial analyst who works with risk statistics

obligatory (p. 99) – compulsory, no exceptions allowed

playing possum (p. 131) – pretending to be asleep or to be dead

provocation (p. 28) – something said or done that makes one angry

puny (p. 82) – very slight

rendezvous (p. 20) – meeting place

respiratory tract (p. 42) – tube through which you breathe

saga (p. 79) – a very long story

spawned (p. 16) – created, fathered

spurious (p. 43) – false

threshold (p. 55) – edge

underwhelming – disappointing, a let down

unobtrusive (p. 103) – not easily seen

vandalised (p. 75) – deliberately damaged or destroyed

visibility (p. 107) – the ability to see or be seen

wallowing (p. 84) – delighting in

