

6 - Comprehension Questions by Chapter

Prologues

- 1) What is the effect of two almost identical prologues at the beginning of the novel?
- 2) What point to you think that Zephaniah is trying to make?

Chapter 1

- 1) Use adjectives to describe some of Alem's feelings when he is at Heathrow Airport.
- 2) What are the differences between African and English roads (p17)?
- 3) How much does the taxi driver charge Alem's father? Why?
- 4) Why does Alem find understanding people difficult (p21)?

Task: Write Alem's diary entry after his day in London. The entry should be about half a page long. Remember to use the first person when writing your diary.

Chapter 2

- 1) Read page 30. What has Alem's father done?
- 2) What does Alem do without his father (p32)?
- 3) What is political asylum?

Homework: Find out about the Refugee Council. What is their purpose?

Chapter 3

- 1) Why is this chapter written in the first person rather than the third person?
- 2) Rewrite page 38, changing it to 3rd person narrative. Read it to the rest of the class. What is the effect of this change?
- 3) What do we learn about Alem's parents in this chapter?

Chapter 4

- 1) Why do you think that Alem's father has left him?
- 2) Is Alem's father's action justified? Give reasons for your answer.
- 3) What do you think will happen to Alem now?

Chapter 5

- 1) What impressions do you gain of the children's home from the outside?
- 2) Look at page 53. How can you tell that Alem is unhappy?
- 3) Pretend that you are Sarah Cohen, who is the director of the home. Write a report about both Alem and Stanley. Why are they in the home? How do they behave? How long will they stay in the home? Use the writing frame in Section 7 of this guide to help you.

Chapter 6

- 1) Do a survey of the different accents spoken by the members of your class. What is the difference between accent and dialect? Does any of your class speak the same dialect as Mustafa? What is Mustafa's dialect?
- 2) What does Alem learn about life in a children's home in this chapter?
- 3) Before reading the next chapter, complete the worksheet on verbs in Section 7 of this guide.

Chapter 7

- 1) Re-read page 83. Why is Alem humiliated by the screening process?