

EMC Teaching a Novel

When Shadows Fall



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Acknowledgements

Illustrations on pages 7-8 are taken from *When Shadows Fall*: artwork © Natalie Sirett (<http://www.sirett.com/illustration-portfolio.html>)

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Contents

Before Reading	5
Illustrations	6
Forms, styles, fonts and layouts	9
Narrative voices	10
During Reading	11
General discussion questions	12
Pause points during reading	12
After Reading	17
What is it about?	18
Illustrations	19
Forms, styles, fonts and layouts	20
Narrative voices	21
Character study: Kai	22
Thinking of the reader	23
Critical literacy cards – 3 different ways to use them	24
Analysing texts – critical literacy cards	25
Creative and critical writing activities	31
In role as the writer	32
The reviews	33



TEACHERS' NOTES

The resources in this pack have been designed to accompany the study of Sita Brahmachari's *When Shadows Fall*. We think this would be best done in small groups, possibly as intervention work.

We've chosen to highlight this book because we believe that its exciting storyline, interesting narrative structure and sensitive handling of topical themes make it a book that young readers can both learn from and engage with. We strongly advise teachers to read the book carefully in advance of introducing it to students, and discuss it with other members of their department, as it does contain some difficult material around grief, loss, mental health and violence.

The learning, as directed by the resources, will primarily be literary in nature, though there will also be chances to discuss some of the central topical issues raised along the way. These opportunities are built into many of the activities, especially the 'During Reading' questions and the critical literacy cards. Students are also encouraged to journal their thoughts about the book along the way.

Journaling, as we suggest it, is exploratory writing at significant points during the reading. This is sometimes prompted in the resources themselves but may also emerge from interesting discussions in the 'During Reading' activities or at significant points in the novel, for example:

- ▶ After the Prologue
- ▶ After Sula's death
- ▶ After 'Between the Acts'
- ▶ After Kai's father's attempted suicide
- ▶ After the attack on Kai

Teachers are free to develop the use of the journal as they see fit. We recommend that it is used sparingly, when there is a genuine purpose for it, to keep it fresh. Used judiciously, we have seen how it can consolidate students' thinking following discussions about texts.

The resource is organised into three main sections: 'Before Reading', 'During Reading' and 'After Reading'. We wouldn't expect any class to complete all of them and would obviously encourage teachers to add their own ideas and activities, whilst keeping up the pace of the reading. The tasks always require students to think about their reading and to respond with their own ideas, often in collaboration with others.

Wishing you and your students well in your reading!

Lucy Hinchliffe, EMC Consultant



Illustrations



- Spend some time studying the selection of illustrations from the book and then discuss the following with your group:
 - ▶ What you notice about different illustrations
 - ▶ What you notice about the illustrations as a whole
 - ▶ Which illustrations you find most interesting and why
 - ▶ What you like about the illustrations and their effect on you
 - ▶ What the illustrations suggest about the novel you are about to read:
 - » What will it be about? You can consider a possible plot, but also likely themes and ideas.
 - » What will its tone and mood be?
- As you read the novel, continue to develop your ideas about the illustrations. There will be a chance to study them in more detail in the After Reading section of the resource.



Narrative voices



Most of *When Shadows Fall* is narrated by three different characters: Kai, Omid and Orla.



■ In a small group, read each extract in turn and think about:

- ▶ What is distinctive about each narrator's voice
- ▶ How this narrator's personality comes across in the writing
- ▶ Which narrator you are most interested in hearing more from and why.

Kai

It's summer now, though there was a time that felt like eternal winter. If you ever get sucked into Shadowlands remember: no matter how bleak, seasons change.

So here I am, sitting on our Green Hill, writing this...

There is a green hill far away without a city wall.

Strange how you think you're doing the writing then lines from songs bombard your mind and write into you.

*There is a green hill,
far away,
without a city wall.*

Omid

I must tell what I witnessed. What I felt. People did not take us for who we are, did not see the potential in what we could be here in this country, and I had anger in my heart when you looked at me, but it made me stronger. I thought, *Let them learn who my Aunt Gisou is when her shadows lift and she has English Language to show them. I too will show them.* These were my thoughts on the day I watched you and Orla and your mothers planting one small tree. The sight of you brought shadow memories of my older brother Ishy and my mother and father too.

Orla

Strange how all our friendship bonds together are somehow connected to the Bothy and our little bit of Greenlands wildness. I was thinking the other day ... it's like this bit of land keeps trying to bring us together and help us grow. Like it's always had our backs. Weird how, when the news came of the plans for a road to run through it, it gave us a problem but for a moment it gave us an answer too, of sparking the life in you again, bringing you back to us. But it was a such a fleeting moment.

■ As you read the novel, continue to develop your ideas about its use of narrative voices. There will be a chance to study them in more detail after reading.





DURING READING



General discussion questions



You can use these questions at any point during or after reading the novel.



General discussion questions

At this point in your reading...

1. What are the most important aspects of the plot?
2. What stands out to you about the novel? You might like to think about the story itself or how it is written.
3. What are you learning from the novel?
4. What is your emotional response to the novel?
5. Does the novel remind you of anything else that you have read/watched/listened to? How and why?
6. Which themes and ideas in the novel do you think are most important and why? Do the themes and ideas grow or change in any way?
7. How do you feel about the characters in the novel? Have your feelings about any characters changed? If so, how and why?
8. What are your thoughts about one or more of the forms used, e.g. verse, play, journal?

Pause points during reading

On pages 13-16 there are some specific points to pause at while reading the story, with accompanying questions.

You can use the questions in a number of ways. For example, you might like to:

- ▶ Discuss them in small groups
- ▶ Role play answering them in pairs, with one of you asking a question, the other answering as an expert reader
- ▶ Use them as the starting point for writing a journal entry after a pause point.

