



A Funeral for an Owl

Questions for Bookclubs

In order to provide book clubs with thought-provoking questions, it is necessary to reveal important aspects of the plot. We suggest that you finish the book before you read on.

“Jane’s writing drew me in from the very first page with a school playground fight that certainly seemed only too real and believable. This fight would have consequences to all involved as Jim overstepped his boundary as a teacher to try to help Shamayal. The fact that Jim and Shamayal are both missing important people in their lives makes a deep impression on the way they act, as well as strongly influencing their hopes and dreams. Jane is one of those writers that make

you really believe the story you are being told; the descriptions of places meant that I felt I was by the railway tracks, in the high-rise flat or in the school playground witnessing a fight, a true gift.”

- Cleopatra Loves Books.

- What do you think the key themes of the novel were?
- The action in the book takes place in 1992 and 2010. How effectively do you feel this technique worked to chart the social changes that took place in the intervening years?
- Aimee White came into Jim’s life at a time when her influence was strongly felt. Do you think that its impact would have been as powerful had their friendship simply petered out?
- What do you think was Aimee White’s longest-lasting legacy?
- Jim carried the guilt of failing to read the signs that someone he knew was in trouble into adulthood. How did this inform his attitude to teaching?
- Jim’s early experience that ‘people leave’ affects his attitude to relationships. How?
- How did you feel about Jean’s decision to ask Nick to leave the family home?
- Ayisha’s initial stance is that the rules she and Jim break aren’t rules you can simply take or leave. Is there ever a case for rule-breaking, or should Ayisha and Jim have been punished?
- With the railway bridge being both a physical and a symbolic barrier, how did you feel about the author’s choice to base much of the action in the railway cuttings?

- Ayisha undergoes something of a transformation during the novel. How did that manifest itself?
- “You act like it’s bad, Sir. But I can’t tell if it’s good or it’s bad. It’s just my life.” How did you feel about that comment when you read it? How do your feelings change to know that it was taken from real footage of a fifteen-year old, abandoned by both parents and living alone in a council flat?
- Far from being despondent about his lot, Shamayal felt that his life compared favourably to both Ayisha’s and Jim’s. Did you feel that there was any truth in this?
- Jean commented that there wasn’t much in Mr White’s attitude that encouraged honesty, only to find that Jim had been lying to her. How did Jim’s feeling that it was his duty to protect his mother affect his relationship with her?
- Of all of the characters, who do you think was the most heroic and who do you think was the most naive?
- Did the novel leave any questions open-ended that you would have liked to have known the answer to?