

## INTRODUCTION

Dear Learner

*Whitney's Escape* is a story about a life-changing experience that all began with an invitation. Set in Thembalethu in the Western Cape, Whitney's story deals with concerns that affect young people, like yourself, in some way or another. No matter where you live or where you come from, you share a common future that will be shaped by the choices and decisions made by the youth of South Africa today.

Some of the activities in this section are based on an Activity Sheet. These are numbered according to their chapter and activity number, and can be found at the end of these Reading Activities. Your educator will give you photocopies of these sheets to work on. Enjoy taking part in the following activities with your educator and fellow learners to share in the experiences and lessons of Whitney and her friends.

## Before you read *Whitney's Escape*

Let's begin with some introductory activities that will increase your enjoyment of the book.

### ► Listen and Speak

- i. This activity will either give you a chance to get to know each other better or to share your experiences when you first arrived at high school. Your educator will place you in groups to think back and discuss your first week in high school. Use the questions and statements below to guide you in your discussion. Make sure that you take down notes about what you discuss which you will use in another activity. The more detailed you are, the better.

- a. Briefly describe how you felt when you arrived at high school on your first day.
- b. What did you enjoy most about primary school? (Focus on 3 things per group member.)
- c. How did you feel about leaving primary school?
- d. What were your biggest fears, coming to high school?
- e. Did anyone warn you about all the dangers of high school?
- f. About which possible dangers were you warned?
- g. Have you encountered any of those dangers yet?
- h. Have you made any new friends yet?
- i. Are there any old friends from primary school in your class?
- j. Has your high school experience so far been better or worse than you thought it would be?

**ii. Working with your group, predict what you think this book is going to be about. Look for clues in the cover picture, title page, text layout and glossary. Prepare to report back to the class.**

- a. What do you think the word "escape" from the title *Whitney's Escape* means in this context? Use the following thesaurus (similar words or phrases) to help you:
  - To evade
  - To flee
  - To dodge something
  - Run away
  - Get away
  - Break loose
  - Get out
  - Get free
  - Break out
  - To miss something
  - To avoid
  - Flight
  - Running off
  - Leak
  - Elude
  - Diversion
  - Distraction
  - To bunk
  - Leisure activity or pastime

b. Choose 3 words or phrases that are best suited to the title and look up their definitions in a dictionary. Share your information with the rest of the class.

iii. **Decide whether the following statements about narrative (story) writing are TRUE or FALSE. Be prepared to give reasons for your choices.**

- a) A good story must have a beginning, middle and an end.
- b) A story will only be good if it is true.
- c) In a good story, characters need to undergo a change - either negative or positive.
- d) Writing is a talent, not something that can be learnt or taught – you are either a good writer or a bad one.
- e) The ending of a good story can leave the reader with unanswered questions.
- f) A good story must have one or two major events which affect the lives of the main or minor characters.
- g) A good story can have more than one plot.

Have a class discussion on narrative writing with your educator. Participate and listen closely then write down any other interesting points about narrative writing in your workbook. This will help you with your own narrative writing later.

iv. **Dialogue Activity: Refer to Activity Sheet iv on p.55.**

Your educator will give you a photocopy of this activity sheet to work on.

- a. Paste the activity sheet into your workbook and complete the activities.

[20]

v. **In your groups, do a role-play of the dialogue you wrote in activity (iv) above. Each person in your group needs to take on the role of one of the people from your dialogue.**

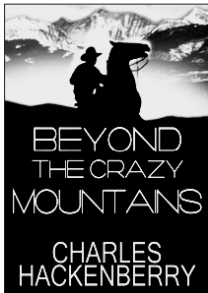
[10]

► *Read and View*

vi. In your local library, *Whitney's Escape* would be listed as a Youth Novel. Before we begin reading we need to be aware of the words used to describe various elements of the story. Some of the words might be new to you. Ask your educator if you are unsure. In the table below, match the literary term in column A with its meaning in Column B.

COLUMN A		COLUMN B
1. PLOT	a.	The reader experiences an anxious or curious interest.
2. CLIMAX	b.	The time and place where the novel is set.
3. NARRATIVE	c.	This is a series of related events or incidents.
4. SETTING	d.	This is a problem that needs to be solved. There can be more than one.
5. CHARACTERS	e.	Tells a story.
6. CONFLICT	f.	These are the people in the story.
7. INITIAL SITUATION	g.	These are the events that happen after the climax where things are put right or explained.
8. RISING ACTION	h.	The actions that the main character takes to resolve the conflict.
9. DENOUEMENT	i.	The events or circumstances that the main character experiences at the beginning of the story.
10. SUB PLOT	j.	This is the point in the story when conflict is resolved. The main character must make a decision or take action.
11. SUSPENSE	k.	Second and less important story within a story.

vii. Look at each book jacket (cover) below and say which genre (a French word pronounced: zh'arn-ruh) or type of novel it reflects. Your educator will provide you with a list of genres. Provide reasons for your answers.



a)



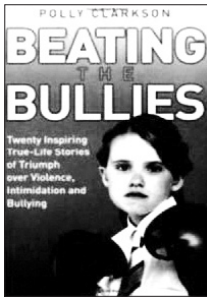
b)



c)



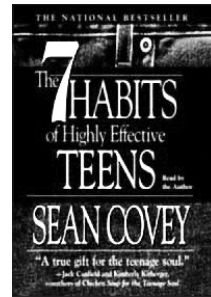
d)



e)



f)



g)

**viii. Purpose and Style Activity: Refer to Activity Sheet viii on p.58.**

Your educator will give you a photocopy of this activity sheet to work on.

- a. Paste the activity sheet into your workbook and complete the activities.

**ix. Types of Writing Activity: Refer to Activity Sheet ix on p.61.**

Your educator will give you a photocopy of this activity sheet to work on.

- a. Paste the activity sheet into your workbook and complete the activities.

**x. Story Plotting Activity: Plot and Subplot. Refer to Activity Sheet x on p.63.**

Your educator will give you a photocopy of this activity sheet to work on.

- a. Paste the activity sheet into your workbook.
- b. Work with your group to plot the story example that your educator will give you.

**xi. Irony Activity: Introduction to Irony. Refer to Activity Sheet xi on p.68.**

Your educator will give you a photocopy of this activity sheet to work on.

- a. Paste the activity sheet into your workbook. and complete the activities.

► **Language use**

**xii. What and how we think and feel about objects, other people or ourselves is determined by the words that are used to describe them or us.**

Every word has a denotation and several connotations. The denotation or dictionary definition of a word will be the same in all dictionaries.

The connotations or meanings we associate with a word are very different depending on our culture and experiences.

For example, the **denotation** of the word 'dog' would be: "a domesticated pet of the canine variety". However, the **connotations** of

the word are very different. Some might think of a dog as an animal friend, but what does the poor postman think?

As writers, we have the power to influence readers to take a particular point of view on various subjects or characters through the words we use to describe them.

**As readers, we need to be critically aware of everything we read.**

**a. Discuss the following pairs of words that have the same basic meanings, but note your reactions to each one:**

- 1) Social group / gang
- 2) Security guard / bouncer
- 3) Medication / drug
- 4) Responsible / prudish
- 5) Happy pill / mescaline
- 6) Whistleblower / snitch

### ► Write and Present

xiii. Read the following extract about **Writer's Purpose** from an interview with **Onne Vegter**, the author of *Whitney's Escape* and then complete the activity that follows:

Interviewer: What do you hope to achieve with *Whitney's Escape*?

My hope is that teenagers who read the book will enjoy the story and learn something from it. I hope that readers may be inspired by Whitney to make decisions and adopt values that will help them succeed in life and avoid the suffering that comes from poor choices. Each person holds their own future and destiny in their hands. Many of the things that destroy the lives and futures of young people can easily be avoided by simply making wise choices. My hope is that Whitney can be a fictional role model to encourage teenagers to live wisely, make a success of their lives and inspire others to do the same.

- a. You and your classmates want to persuade your English Teacher that *Whitney's Escape* would be a good book to study in class. Summarise 10 points from the interview above that you would use to persuade your teacher as follows:

- Each point of your summary must be no longer than 12 words.
- Write the number of words used at the end of each point.
- Use full sentences.

[15]

**xiv. Read the following extract about Writing Process from an interview with Onne Vegter, the author of *Whitney's Escape*:**

Interviewer: Do you think that writing can be taught or is it a gift that you either have or don't?

Writing can definitely be taught. Some people might have a unique gift or talent to write, but in my case it was a skill I had to develop and learn. The best way to develop your language ability and writing skills is to read a lot. The more you read, the better you will write.

Interviewer: Describe your writing process.

When I start writing a book, I first try and think up the storyline or the plot outline. Dreaming up a good story is the most difficult part. Once I have a story in mind, I begin by summarising the plot in a few pages. This becomes my framework and helps me to focus. Then I begin writing the first chapter and see where it takes me. Sometimes, even I am surprised at something that happens in the story! I always picture each scene and conversation in my mind, as if I am standing right there when it happens.

- a. In pairs, read and discuss the process Onne Vegter goes through when he writes.
- b. Explain to each other the process you use when you write and prepare to share your ideas with the class.
- c. Have a class discussion in which you agree on a writing process that would be good to use.

► *Review and Reflect*

xv. **Your educator will show you which of your workbooks to use as a journal.**

A journal is a form of a diary in which you can express your innermost thoughts. It is a tool that allows you to reflect and grow personally. This year it will also be used to improve your writing.

In your journal, you will be able to write freely and it will not count for marks. This is one of the times when spelling and grammar won't count. The only requirements are that you may not write in SMS language and you may not be rude. It is also very important that you are honest and truthful with yourself in order to grow.

Your educator will give you a topic or a "Whassup?" question that will enable you to write about whatever is on your mind. You will have time to reflect and write in your journal regularly and opportunities to share your thoughts and ideas. Start by writing down your thoughts on the following:

**"The day I started high school - it was terrible/wonderful." OR "Whassup?"**