



## COVER SHEET

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# **“Does Violence Breed Violence?” and other sensitive and problematic themes**

*An upper primary multiliteracies project based on the award winning  
novel “Someone Like Me” by Elaine Forrester*

Themes explored:

- Violence
- Schoolyard Bullying
- Friendship
- International Terrorism
- Death
- (Dis)Ability

Activities prepared by Beryl Exley

Suggested length of project: 2-4 weeks

## Synopsis of Project:

The range of activities presented here is designed to engage all students using a range of literacies, and provide a forum for their varying viewpoints on the themes of violence, schoolyard bullying, friendship, international terrorism, death and (dis)ability. The novel, 'Someone Like Me', written by Elaine Forrestal, is the stimulus resource rather than the focus of study. As with all of Forrestal's work, readers will reach junctures where they are deeply affected by events, and perhaps confused by their complex moralities. You can pick and choose between the activities presented depending upon available time, students' interests and hardware resources.

The suggested culminating project is a group devised 3 minute multi-media presentation that explores a problematic related to one or more theme to an audience (live or virtual). These presentations can take the form of any media: eg. drama skits, live debates, moving images (video), computer animation (eg. Kahootz), flogs (online photologs), or vlogs (online videologs). Suggestions are provided, but you might want to construct your own problematic with your students.

SUGGESTED THEME	SUGGESTED PROBLEMATIC
Violence	Does violence breed violence?
Schoolyard bullying	How can we reform schoolyard bullies?
Friendship	Friendship is ....
International terrorism	International terrorism: Is it really international?
Death	A look at death
(Dis)ability	(Dis)ability: Disability or ability?

The suggested activities include process drama and system sanctioned blogs so students can work within a learning community to better understand the complex issues of their culminating presentation. The aim of the drama activities is to create forums where all students can engage with higher order thinking skills and express their disparate understanding through a range of literacies. The benefit of blogging is three fold: development of complex ideas can be traced and mapped over time; texts are being produced for a real life audience; users receive and respond to authentic feedback thus engaging with alternative ways of thinking about complex issues. Both the drama activities and blogs are designed to be repeated throughout the project. Both activities necessitate that systems of respect are mutually understood before tasks are undertaken. Understandings evolving out of the process drama and online blogs can feed into the culminating 3 minute-multi-media presentation.

## Synopsis of Stimulus Novel:

The appeal of Forrestal's novel as an impetus for this project lies with its multiple yet disparate topics for discussion and debate, in particular violence, schoolyard bullying, friendship, international terrorism, death and (dis)ability. This expertly crafted narrative is compelling for middle years students for the way it plausibly connects their current lifeworlds of mischief making and friendly follies to the wider issues listed above. The novel can be presented to a class of students either as a 'read aloud' or read independently. It is comprised of 20 relatively short chapters, that take approximately 10 minutes each to read. Its complexity lies with its content more so than its vocabulary or grammar. A word of caution though – the 'read aloud' option will be enhanced if you attempt an Irish accent in appropriate places!

## 1. Attributes List & Vocabulary Extension

**Aim:** Present, record and analyse students' different nominations for topics that will be considered throughout the project.

**Audience:** Whole class for drama, individual for blogging

**Time:** One hour plus independent blogging time

**Junctures:** Themes explored prior to reading novel and again at the conclusion of the novel include: friendship, schoolyard bully & violence. Other themes can be introduced at appropriate junctures: eg. international terrorism - before chapter 10 and after chapter 16; death – before and after chapter 19; (dis)ability – before and after chapter 20.

**Resources:**

Slip of A5 paper for making notes (one per students) and pencil (one per student)

Still or video camera (optional)

Blank flashcards (1 per student)

Pinboard, ribbon (or string), thumb tacks

**Activity Plan:**

1. Whole class to sit in a large circle. Ask students to write down 5 attributes (feelings, actions, etc) they think of when you say the word 'friendship'. Each response should be a single word. When five nominations are written, students stand to show they are ready to continue.
2. When all students are standing, invite each to nominate one attribute. Encourage students to nominate something that hasn't already been said. Go around the circle so all students make a contribution. Draw attention to the differences in nominations. Some students may offer suggestions that construct friendship as completely 'rosy' while others may focus on the 'work' side of friendships. Encourage students to think why people might have different views, ie the ideologies underpinning their social beliefs. The focus is on difference rather than what is supposedly 'right and wrong'.
3. Go around the circle again. Students give the same nomination, but this time they also add some action or expression. The focus this time is on using gestures and expression to add to meaning making.
4. Ready for the 'wave'...Go around the circle again. This time the students should be able to move quite quickly around the circle so their oral and gestural nominations flow in one continuous contribution (like a 'Mexican Wave').
5. Repeat steps 1-4 inclusive for the topics 'schoolyard bully' and 'violence'. Remember that students may respond to different aspects of the topic. For example, in response to the 'school bully' topic, responses might include 'pity', 'victim', 'power', 'attention seeker' etc.
6. **Repeating at other junctures:** Other themes can be introduced at appropriate junctures: eg. international terrorism - before chapter 10 and after chapter 16; death – before and after chapter 19 and after; (dis)ability – before and after chapter 20.
7. **Vocabulary extension:**
  - a. Write students' oral contributions on flash cards and arrange in a concept map. Group words that are alike and use the ribbon to show relationships between groups.
  - b. Construct vocabulary clines (staircases of words that increase in intensity or delicacy). An example of a 'friendship cline' might be the 'acquaintance – bosom buddy' continuum. An example of the 'school bully cline' might be the 'pity – anger' continuum. Students can refer to the clines when responding to tasks throughout the project.
8. **Online blog:** Students' written nominations and video (mpg) or still image (jpg) captures can be loaded onto the blog site for student comment.

## 2. Sculptures: Gestures for Creating and Observing Difference

**Aim:** Present, record and analyse students' different images of the major themes of the project: Friendship, school bully and violence.

**Audience:** Whole class involved in pairs work for drama; independent work for online blog

**Time:** One hour plus blogging time

**Junctures:** Themes explored prior to reading novel and again at the conclusion of the novel include: friendship, schoolyard bully & violence. Other themes can be introduced at appropriate junctures: eg. international terrorism - before chapter 10 and after chapter 16; death – before and after chapter 19; (dis)ability – before and after chapter 20.

**Resources:** Still or video camera

### Activity Plan:

1. You'll need a cleared space for process drama activities. Students work in pairs. One student in each pair becomes the lump of clay, whilst the other becomes the 'artist'. The artist instructs the lump of clay to take certain forms to create a statue that is a visual and gestural expression of the topic. Rather than 'touching' the lump of clay, instructions and/or demonstrations should be provided by the artist. You move from group to group, talking about what the artist wanted to achieve and what instructions they gave to achieve these outcomes. Photograph each statue as it is completed.
2. Students swap roles. Encourage students to think why people might have different views/representations. The focus is on difference rather than what is 'right or wrong'. Continue to swap roles so each student has had the opportunity to sculpt a statue for each topic.
3. After all topics have been explored in the pairs, invite all students to sit in a circle. Call half a dozen students to the centre to undertake the 'transformations' activity. Count the students into their first statue (eg. friendship) (Teacher to say: 3, 2, 1, and freeze). Walk around the friendship statues, tapping individuals on the shoulder and inviting them to say what their statue is feeling, thinking or might say (could be one word answers or a statement). Then count from 1 through to 10 very slowly and let the students transform into the second statue (eg. schoolyard bully). This ten seconds of transformation is supposed to help students focus on all the elements of the gestural form. Repeat the walk, tap and talk exercise. Then through another 10 seconds of counting aloud, students transform into their third statue (eg. violence). Repeat the walk, tap and talk exercise.
4. Repeat step three so all students get to present their 'transformations' to the larger group. Again, consider the different ideological presentations.
5. **Repeating at other junctures:** Other themes can be introduced at appropriate junctures: eg. international terrorism - before chapter 10 and after chapter 16; death – before and after chapter 19 and after; (dis)ability – before and after chapter 20.
6. **Online blog:** Students' written nominations and video (mpg) or still image (jpg) captures can be loaded onto the blog site for student comment.

### 3. Freeze Frames: Creating a Scene and Articulating a Viewpoint

**Aim:** Present, record and analyse students' different interpretations of images & scenes from the target text.

**Audience:** Whole class working in groups for drama; independent activity for online blog

**Time:** One hour plus time for blogging

**Junctures:** Freeze frames are explored after reading particular chapters. For example: schoolyard bully – after chapters 1, 9 & 15; international terrorism - after chapter 16; death – after chapter 19; friendship – after chapters 12, 16; violence – after chapter 20; (dis)ability – after chapter 20.

**Resources:** Still and video camera (optional)

**Activity Plan:**

1. Students form into groups of 5 or 6 and decide on a scene from the most recently read chapter to present as a freeze frame (or frozen photograph). Some students can become the main participants in the scene while others can become the props (eg. schoolyard gate).
2. Each group presents their freeze frame to the whole class. Teacher counts students in (Teacher says, 3, 2, 1 and freeze). Students stay frozen and teacher & students walk around the constructed scene to view it and take photos from multiple angles (eg. low angle, high angle, distant shot, close up, extreme close up etc).
3. Students in the freeze frame continue to remain frozen. Rest of the class return to sitting in a large circle around the frozen scene. Teacher uses the walk, tap and talk technique to bring each participant's or prop's subtext to the fore. This is the part of the episode that should be video taped for re-viewing and further discussion. Repeat step 3 so all groups have an opportunity to present.
4. Document differences in dialogue. Discuss in terms of different ideological presentations and the way oral language, body gestures and visual literacy of photos can be used as persuasive communication devices. The photos may be useful resources for students' culminating presentation.
5. **Repeating at other junctures:** Freeze frames are explored after reading particular chapters. For example: schoolyard bully – after chapters 1, 9 & 15; international terrorism - after chapter 16; death – after chapters 9, 10, 12 & 19 (compare across encounters); friendship – after chapters 12, 16; violence – after chapter 20; (dis)ability – after chapter 20.
6. **Online blog:** Students' written nominations and video (mpg) or still image (jpg) captures can be loaded onto the blog site for student comment.

## 4. Conscience Alley: Arguing a Viewpoint

**Aim:** Present, record and analyse students' different viewpoints of incidents within the target text.

**Audience:** Whole class for process drama, individual for blogging.

**Time:** One hour for drama plus time for blogging.

**Junctures:** As selected moral issues are raised in the novel. Eg Chapter One: Is wrestling violence?

**Resources:**

Video camera (optional)

Simple props to help students get into character (ie. mouth organ or square of clingwrap for TAS, school bag for Dreadlock, farm clothes for Dad, etc)

**Activity Plan:**

1. At particular junctures where a moral issue has been raised, set up a conscience alley. Invite students to think about their viewpoint on an incident (eg. Chapter One - Is it violence when TAS wrestles with Dreadlock at school?; Chapter Six - Is Dad right? To achieve equality we may need access to different resources). Students who believe in the affirmative form along the righthand side of the alleyway. Students who believe in the negative form along the lefthand side of the alley. One student takes on the role of a character (eg. TAS, Dreadlock, Dad etc) and walks down the alleyway (students in two lines facing each other). This is the part of the episode that can be videotaped. As the walking student moves down the alleyway, other students take turns at making a statement or asking a thought provoking question about the nominated incident. For example, if 'TAS' is walking down the alleyway, one student might affirm 'TAS any form of physical aggression is violence' whereas a student on the negative side might state 'It's only fun TAS. There's a difference between fun and hurting people.'
2. The teacher waits at the end of the alleyway to probe the walking student (out of role) about the tensions within their responses, the questions that were most difficult to think through. Video these responses and play them back for general discussion.
3. **Repeated at junctures:** Suggestions include: Chapter Three – Should TAS be punished for his puppet show: Should TAS be punished for putting the green frog in Miss Watson's drawer? Chapter Four – Should a promise always be kept? Chapter Six – Would it be better for all concerned if TAS went to another school in the city? Chapter Nine – Did TAS go too far this time? Chapter Sixteen – Is Enya true friend? Chapter Twenty – Violence can only breed more violence.
4. **Online blog:** MPG of conscience alley can be uploaded to blog site. Students can write on their blog site and reflect on the conscience alley activities undertaken.

## **Assessment Criteria for Multi-media presentation:**

In line with a multiliteracies approach, the culminating presentation for groups should evolve out of their most pressing interests. The use of media will be limited to available resources. Criteria for assessment and how it is presented on the worksheet should also be negotiated with the students at the beginning of the process, and again part-way through. Students can also self-assess at multiple stages and even assess the work of other groups. Such a step serves two purposes: it focuses students on the criteria; involves students in articulating their assessment of themselves and others according to the criteria. You'll need to think through your own philosophy of purposes and outcomes of assessment. Should you be formally assessing all aspects of the project OR just the culminating presentation? Whilst you would always be informally assessing an activity's usefulness and students' level of participation, formal assessment of process drama and blogging could inhibit students' explorations.

Just one parting comment from me to you – Don't forget to enjoy the journey with your students!