



World Words

Stone Cradle

Louise Doughty

Student Activities

Pre-Listening Activity 1



What is the connection between these three pictures?

Work in pairs or small groups to invent a story that includes all the elements in the pictures. You don't have to write the story down, but you will need to tell it to others in your class.

Is the story likely to have a sad or a happy ending?

Pre-listening Activity 2

You will hear the author talking about an extract from her novel, and some students discussing their reaction to it. Read through the following comments which are made in the broadcast and decide first who was speaking - the author or the students - and then decide if they were discussing the sense of **place** the author conjured up, the **research** she had done, the **characters** in the story or way that other **cultures** can be discovered by reading. Then listen to the broadcast to check your answers.

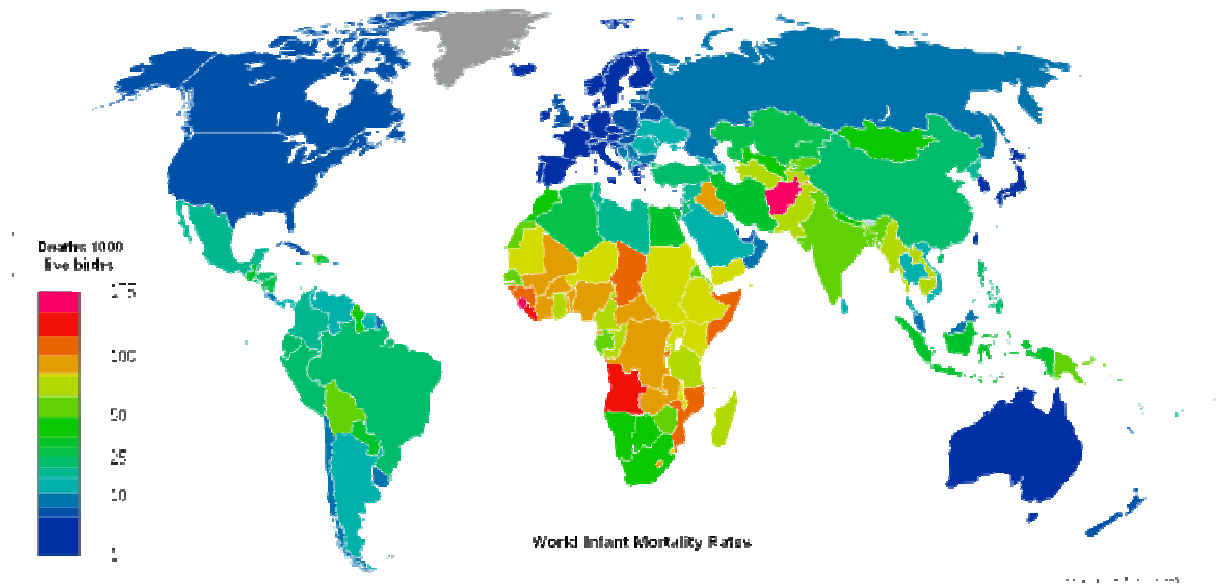
- a. "When my father was growing up in the 1920s, he told me you didn't mention to anybody that you had gypsy blood - you'd get a brick through your window if you did."
- b. "Learning about these things from their perspective, it helps us to understand more about their culture and their way of life."
- c. "Although Clementina is born into a very traditional family, she herself is quite an unusual woman and she does interpret things differently."
- d. "She describes these sounds so vividly, and it kind of gives the impression that everything else is silent."
- e. "The reader, when reading that piece, obtains information about their environment and therefore you learn about other cultures that way."
- f. "We are made up of all our ancestors, it's not just our parents but our grandparents and great great grandparents going way back, and for me to investigate those lives, it's a way of honouring how tough our ancestors lives were."
- g. "She's somebody who's got to be tough to survive. She's a feisty character."
- h. "The whole atmosphere is dark and sad because she has a grim setting, which is the graveyard, and she sets it off on a sombre note."
- i. "When the poor children of the parish died it was important for their parents that the children should be buried in holy ground."

	place	research	characters	cultures
The author				
The students				



After Listening Activities

A. Look at the following map which shows the distribution of infant mortality in the year 2008 (that is, the death of children under the age of 5).



Map from Wikipedia Commons

Write a brief description of the statistics shown by map, comparing one region with another (50 -100 words)

B. Look at the table below which shows the trends in preventing infant mortality worldwide since the 1950s, and predicting the trend into the future.

World historical and predicted infant mortality rates per 1,000 births (1950–2050) UN, medium variant, 2008 rev. ^[2]							
Years	Rate	Years	Rate	Years	Rate	Years	Rate
1950–1955	152	1975–1980	83	2000–2005	52	2025–2030	34
1955–1960	136	1980–1985	74	2005–2010	47	2030–2035	31
1960–1965	116	1985–1990	65	2010–2015	43	2035–2040	28
1965–1970	100	1990–1995	61	2015–2020	40	2040–2045	25
1970–1975	91	1995–2000	57	2020–2025	37	2045–2050	23

Write a paragraph describing the trend and the hopes for the future.

C. Language Work

The tone of the writing in this piece is quiet and restrained. The author seem to have chosen a style of writing that fits the sombre nature of the context - simple and undemonstrative - but carrying a solemnity. Most of the sentences are short, or made up of short uncomplicated clauses, with each action happening in chronological order. Longer sentences are sometimes preceded with a conjunction followed by a number of causes separated by commas. These sentences are then followed by a short sentence, as if to compensate.

Find examples of

- short sentences (subject, verb, object)
- sentences of clauses connected by commas, but each effectively short sentences (subject, verb, object)
- long sentences that start with a conjunction.

D Discussion

Was Clementina, in your opinion, displaying courage or was she being foolhardy?

Louise Doughty

Stone Cradle

Lijah was born at a time when little children died often. Rich or poor, Traveller or *gorjer*, made no difference. If there was sickness in a village it could come a-knocking any time. Of course, it stood a better chance of getting in if you were poor.

That whole time I was carrying Lijah and we were living in the cottage in the graveyard, we would see them, the secret burials. They always happened at night. We would hear the creak of the cemetery gate, the turning of the handcart wheels on the gravel path. We would go to the door to watch. Past our cottage they would come, the vicar leading, praying as he came. Behind him would be a poor family, sobbing and sobbing, pushing the handcart with a little dead child wrapped in cloth and lying on it.

They were the worst off of the parish, folk who could not afford a plot of a gravestone of their own. They must have begged the vicar to put their little one in Holy Ground and he had found a way to do it. Him and his sexton together, they opened up a grave, in the dark, and put the little child on top and closed it up again. They opened up the graves in no particular order, as far as I could see, whoever they belonged to. They just worked their way along the rows.

After the first time we saw it happen, the vicar came over to us afterwards and gave us a coin not to say a word to anyone. We took the coin, of course, but it upset my Dadus. When they were gone and we were back inside, he said, didn't they realise that if they kept opening up the ground then the *mullas*, the ghosts, would be getting up and walking abroad? He thought it wasn't good for me to see it in my condition. My unborn child would be cursed.

But the next time we heard the creak of the gate and the turn of the wheels on the gravel, we still went to the door to watch, peering in the dark. I know it sounds peculiar, but I found something comforting in it. I thought it was good that these poor little children should not be put in the cold earth by themselves but should rest in the arms of someone, even if it was a stranger. And maybe it was nice for the folk already in their graves, lying there alone for all eternity, to be joined by a little girl or boy who would keep them company. I thought it a nice thing.