



Exploring Senior Cycle Texts

I'm Not Scared directed by Gabriele Salvatores

I'm Not Scared directed by Gabriele Salvatores is a film included as part of the Prescribed Material for the Leaving Certificate English Examination in 2027 and 2028. It may be used as part of the Comparative Study.



Image courtesy of
IMDb



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Getting Started with
Guide for this Text](#)

Please note:

- The following tasks might be completed over a series of lessons.
- You may like to adapt and adjust the tasks to suit your context.
- *I'm Not Scared* covers themes which could be considered sensitive or controversial. You may wish to consult with our READY Framework to support you in your study.

Before you watch... (Teacher Guidance)

1. Anticipation Statements

Give students the following statements. They must mark each one as Agree / Disagree / Not sure, and be ready to explain their reasoning. After watching the clip, they'll revisit their answers.

- Keeping a secret can sometimes protect the people you care about.
- Friendship and loyalty are more important than following the rules.
- People are capable of hiding terrible truths behind an ordinary appearance.
- Fear can influence people to make choices they would not normally make.

2. Vocabulary Builder

Introduce key words or phrases students might encounter or find useful when discussing the clip. Have students match each word to its definition and/or use it in a sentence.

Innocence, betrayal, courage, conscience, manipulation, morality, trust, isolation, fear.

3. Discussion Starter

Yield space for students to consider the following question:

If you discovered a secret that could put you in danger, would you tell someone, keep quiet, or try to solve the problem by yourself?



Watch a Clip



Click [here](#) to watch a clip from *I'm Not Scared*.

Background: Set in rural southern Italy during the summer of 1978, it follows nine-year-old Michele, whose childhood innocence is shattered when he uncovers a disturbing secret. The film explores themes of fear, courage, loyalty, and the loss of innocence as Michele struggles to do what he believes is right.

Activities Based on Clip (Teacher Guidance)

The following may be completed in written or oral format,
as individuals or as part of a group activity.

1. Post-it Reflections

Give each student a post-it. Ask them to complete one of the following sentences:

“This scene made me wonder...”, “The moment that most caught my attention was...”, ‘One question I have after watching the trailer is...’

2. Character Thoughts

The trailer introduces Michele as a curious young boy who discovers something mysterious and disturbing.

Have students write Michele’s inner monologue during the moment he discovers the hidden child. They should write in first person, imagining what he is thinking and feeling.

Encourage pupils to consider:

- Is he frightened, curious, confused, or all three?
- Does he fully understand what he has discovered?
- Why does he keep returning to the secret?
- What questions might be running through his mind?

Students can then share their responses and compare how different people interpreted Michele’s emotions.

3. Filmmaking Techniques

Show the trailer again to pupils. In pairs, ask them to identify three filmmaking techniques used to create mystery, suspense, or tension.

They might consider:

- Camera angles and close-ups
- Lighting and colour
- Sound effects and music
- Editing and pacing
- Facial expressions and body language
- Setting and location

Afterwards, pupils should write a short analytical paragraph explaining how these techniques influence the audience and create a sense of danger or uncertainty.



Reflect and Respond (Teacher Guidance)

The following questions may be based on the extract included or form part of your extended study of the film.

1. Short Story

Instruct students to write a short story about a young person who discovers a secret that changes the way they see the people around them.

Encourage them to explore themes such as trust, fear, loyalty, and courage. Their story might focus on a difficult decision: whether to keep the secret, reveal it, or confront the people involved. The setting could be a rural community, a neighbourhood, or any place where appearances hide a deeper truth.

2. Discursive Essay

Provide students the prompt: *Children should always trust the adults in their lives.*

Have them write a discursive essay in which they explore arguments for and against this statement. They should consider issues such as responsibility, authority, honesty, protection, and what happens when adults make harmful choices.

3. Speech

Provide students the prompt: *Doing the right thing often requires courage.*

Have them write the text of a speech for a school assembly or youth event about moral courage and standing up for what is right, even when it is difficult. They may refer to situations involving peer pressure, secrecy, loyalty, or personal responsibility.

4. Article

Have pupils write an article for a teen magazine or blog exploring why people sometimes keep dangerous or important secrets. They should begin with the headline: *The Secrets We Keep*. Encourage them to discuss the consequences of secrecy, the reasons people hide the truth, and the impact secrets can have on families, friendships, and communities.

5. Film Review

If students have watched the entire film, they should write a film review of *I'm Not Scared* aimed at a teenage audience, focusing on:

- What the film is about (without major spoilers)
- Its emotional impact
- Visual and cinematic techniques
- The portrayal of Michele as a protagonist
- Key themes such as innocence, fear, courage, friendship, and betrayal

6. Comparative Connections

Direct pupils to create a comparison chart or Venn diagram linking *I'm Not Scared* to another text they have studied. They should identify both similarities and differences in themes, characters, and the social issues explored by the texts.