



Exploring Junior Cycle Texts

Truth Be Told by Sue Divin

Truth Be Told by Sue Divin is a novel included as part of the Prescribed Material for Junior Cycle English (For the student cohorts commencing Junior Cycle in 2025, 2026, and 2027 and presenting for examination in 2028, 2029, and 2030).



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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.
- *Truth Be Told* covers themes which could be considered sensitive and controversial. You may wish to consult with our READY Framework to support you in your study.

Before you Read (Teacher Guidance)

These activities help students connect with the historical and social context of Northern Ireland and distinguish between personal and political experience. Adapt as appropriate for your class.

1: Unpacking the Title and Structure

The novel's opening pages provide significant clues about its construction and central ideas. This activity encourages students to think like literary detectives.

The Epigraph: Present students with the epigraph from the Damian Gorman poem:

"Each generation has a sacred task: To tell a better story than it was told".

In pairs or small groups, ask students to discuss what this quote might mean. Prompting questions could include:

- What stories might a generation be "told"?
- What would make a story "better"?
- Why might this be a "sacred task"?

2: A Sense of Place – Derry/Londonderry, 2019

Before reading, ask students to research and define a list of key terms found in the text, such as:

- The Troubles
- The New IRA / Dissidents
- Punishment attack / Kneecapping
- Cross-community
- The Peace Process



Extract from

Truth Be Told

Background to the novel:

The following extract is the moment the protagonist, Tara, first sees Faith, her identical double, at the cross-community residential. This scene is the catalyst for the entire plot.

I bag a top bunk and apply filters to the tyre photo as Lena reads the list off the door. The four names we don't know are them. Bethany, Hannah, Grace, Faith. They sound shit holy.

I'm lamenting my sleeping bag – bright orange with flowers, like Nan salvaged it from the 1960s – and Lena and the others are touching up eyeliner, when we hear the second bus trundle across the cattle grid. We jam our noses against the dorm window, our breath misting the glass. Teenagers in jeans, hoodies and trackie bottoms mill about waiting for bags.

'They look kinda like us,' says Lena. 'Expecting martians, were ye?' I say. She kicks me in the ankle and I lean down to rub it. 'O-M-G.' She spells out the letters slow and low and I squish further along to look, knowing it means serious eye-candy. Except I'm wrong. Way wrong. It takes a moment to really sink in. A weird out-of-body feeling. Like holy mother of . . . The air is sucked from my lungs and now my friends are staring at me and back to the window like ping-pong, and I can't breathe, tranced out watching a girl step off the bus and she. She. SHE. Looks just like me. The same wavy black hair. Same fair skin. Same nose. Cheek bones. Stance. Everything. The exact same as me, only airbrushed posh instead of goth. If individual is all I've got, now I'm nothing. The burning floods from my stomach, rising to my ears. Anger. Hot and frightened.

'Talking of looking like us . . . ' says Lena. 'Shut it,' I say, slapping my hand flat on the wall. 'Like sweet Jesus. Seriously?' 'I know she's a Prod, but you have to be related. She's your clone, Tara. You sure your mam didn't have twins split at birth? Your one there does make-up way better, though'.

I shove Lena. Her eyes go wide as she lands on a bunk. Something is so wrong and my head can't get it. How? Just how? Is she something to me? Banter and footsteps sound down the corridor, coming towards our dorm and then she's there. Right there. Flaunting it.

'Hi. I'm Faith,' she says. Then, as she sees me, she drops her bag. Puts her hand to her mouth. Takes a step back. Three other girls jostle in through the door frame and then the whole room goes eerily still. As they freeze, I lunge. I don't even realize I'm doing it until – thwack – I punch her in the chest and she staggers as I barge past. Running. Fleeing. Up the corridor. I hear Emer shouting 'Tara, stop!' But I don't care. Out the door. Past the buses. Through the gate. And on and on. Gravel. Puddles. Hedges. Gates. Trees. Mud. Fields. Up and on, over and through, until my muscles burn and I fall on my knees, coughing. No way am I for crying. Bitch. I don't care about anything or anyone or any of this. All I can see in my head is a girl who looks just like me, only upgraded.

Bog water is soaking through the knees of my jeans. Hit and run. The look on her face was like a sick selfie when I punched her. I shiver in the dusk. Am I victim or villain? Sure doesn't feel like I'm in the driver's seat. Feels like my life's the car crash

(Sue Divin, Truth Be Told, 2022, pp. 19-21)

Activities Based on Extract

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

1. Support students in exploring **characterisation** in the extract. They may like to collaboratively discuss what adds to the characterisation such as;imagery, dialogue, word choice, syntax etc.
2. Encourage students to **imagine the challenges** Tara and Faith may face after their first meeting. They may like to collaboratively mind map possible conflicts or tensions and support their ideas with evidence from the text.
3. Ask students to identify **one powerful example of language** that shows Tara's shock at seeing her double. Then have them explain what this choice reveals about her emotions at that moment and why the writer might have used it.

Reflect and Respond

The following questions may be based on the extract included or form part of your extended study of the novel. Students may like to complete the activities individually or collaboratively.

1. Diary Entry

Ask students to write a diary entry in Tara's voice just after meeting Faith. Encourage them to capture her shock, confusion, anger, and the questions racing through her mind.

2. Gallery Walk

Have students create posters, short texts, or artworks on themes like identity, truth, or conflict. Display them around the room and run a gallery walk where peers leave sticky note comments or questions.

3. Rewrite the Scene

Invite students to rewrite the meeting scene with Tara choosing words instead of violence. Discuss how this change could alter the story's direction and relationships.

4. Social Media Feed

Ask students to design an Instagram or TikTok feed for Tara or Faith in the week after they meet. They should include posts, captions, emojis, or comments that reflect the character's emotions.

5. Book Trailer Project

Assign students to create a short video trailer (or storyboard) to promote Truth Be Told. Suggest they use voice-overs, key quotes, music, and imagery to entice their peers to read the book.