

The Man *By Fleur Beale*

10–11 years +

Introduction

“The man” is used to ruling the street and bullies other people to keep things that way – but he’s in for a shock! His world is turned upside down when a mysterious guy with a tambourine appears and introduces him to the world of capoeira. The experience challenges his status and ideas about himself. What will he do?

Reason for reading

You could use this book with your students:

- to explore the topics of bullying, conflict (including violence), and identity
- to learn about capoeira and its non-violent message
- to explore how the author builds character and creates atmosphere and tension.

Setting the scene

Draw on your students’ prior knowledge. If necessary, introduce concepts or vocabulary to help them access the story. Also communicate the reason for reading.

- Brainstorm ideas about bullying. “What does bullying mean? In what ways can bullying happen?” Also discuss situations of conflict in general and possible ways to deal with them. Write key vocabulary on the board.
- Set up a postbox in which your students can anonymously post their experiences of being bullied or of being in situations of conflict. Discuss these situations as a class or in small groups, being careful to retain the anonymity of the students unless they don’t mind sharing their experiences openly.
- Introduce any vocabulary that your students may need to access the text. Refer to Worksheet 3 for a list of potentially unfamiliar words. You could carry out this activity before or after reading. (See “Taking a closer look – Exploring language”.)
- Have your students look at the cover and predict what the text might be about. “Who could these people be?” Then explain that this story is about a bully and an experience he has that makes him question how he lives and behaves.

Getting stuck in

Choose the prompts that you feel your students need. Remind them to note any unfamiliar words and check for clues to the meanings in the text or images. The meanings of words in bold text are in the glossary at the back of the book.

- End page 3 – “How would you describe ‘the man’ (the narrator)? Where do you think this story might be happening and why do you say that? What might happen next?”
- End page 5 – “What language is ‘the man’ talking about?”
- End page 7 – “Why does the tambourine player stay so calm and friendly? What do you think will happen now? What would you do if you were ‘the man’? The tambourine player?”
- End page 10 – “Is this what you expected? Who do you think the tambourine player might be? Why does ‘the man’ say nothing to his boys?”

- End page 12 – “How has the experience affected ‘the man’?”
- End page 15 – “Why does the man walk down the same street at the same time the next week? What continues to irritate him? Do you think he’ll join in the capoeira? Why or why not? Have you ever heard of capoeira? If so, what do you know about it?”
- End page 17 – “Why does ‘the man’ want the people to get hurt? What is it about capoeira that appeals to him?”
- End page 18 – “What stops ‘the man’ from joining in?”
- End page 21 – “How is ‘the man’ feeling? What makes you say that? What do you think of the kind of Friday night he and his boys have? Do you think this is a normal night for them? Why or why not?”
- End page 23 – “What are some of the fears that ‘the man’ has? What do you think he’ll do? What would you do if you were him?”

Taking a closer look

Choose suggestions that suit your students and reason for reading.

Exploring ideas and opinions

- Ask for your students’ opinions of the story, including the ending. “How effective do you think it is and why do you say that? Why do you think the author left the ending open?”
- Have the students complete Worksheet 1 (the three-level thinking guide) and discuss their responses in pairs, in small groups, or as a class.
- “How would you describe what this story is about? What are some of the main themes?” Draw out ideas about conflict, bullying, and violence. “What types of conflict are in the story?” Encourage the students to think beyond the physical conflict to identify the narrator’s inner conflict. “Why do you think the experience affected ‘the man’ so much? What do you think of his behaviour and why?” Move your discussion towards the topic of identity – that is, how people can identify with a certain group and come to rely on that group to feel okay about themselves. “Have you ever been really confused about something in a similar way? If so, what did you do?” Have the students share their ideas in pairs or small groups.

Exploring character

- “After reading this story, what words would you use to describe ‘the man’? The capoeira guy?” Write the students’ suggestions on the board, perhaps in the form of a comparison chart. “What are some ways the author builds these characters?” Draw the students’ attention to her use of colloquial language and repetition of key phrases (for example, “I’m the man” and “nice and easy, nice and slow”). Also discuss her use of a first-person narrator and how this lets us in to the inner world of “the man”. You could also explore how the illustrations convey character and make comparisons between pictures in different parts of the story, for example, on page 7, page 11, and page 22.

Exploring structure

- Give the students the statements from Worksheet 2 and have them sequence them in the correct order.

- As an extension to this, the students could plot how the tension levels change in the story, building to a climax around page 9, subsiding, building to another climax around page 15 and 16, and so on. They could do this along an axis from high to low. (The line will come out looking similar to that on a heart monitor.)

Exploring language

- Cut out the words and definitions from Worksheet 3 and muddle them up. Hand them out to individual students and have them find their correct “partner”.
- As an alternative to the above, divide the class into two groups and have them complete Worksheet 4a and Worksheet 4b respectively. This activity involves the students in creating the definitions, which they then use to test the other group.
- Explore aspects of the text that help to build tension and atmosphere, for example, the use of the present tense, short sentences at points of climax, rhetorical questions, and dynamic words. (The illustrations also contribute significantly.) Focus on the dynamic language on pages 8 and 9 – punch, thunk, whirl, swish, swoosh. Notice the onomatopoeia of swish and swoosh. “Why do you think the author chose these words? What feeling do they give you?” Discuss how the words create a sense of speed and action.
- Have your students complete Worksheet 5 – the cloze activity.

Moving beyond the text

Choose activities that suit your students and reason for reading.

Reading

- Read the GO for IT magazine Capoeira Mundo to find out more about capoeira, including its African roots, Brazilian base, moves, music, and culture.

Writing

- In pairs, take turns to act as “the man” and the capoeira guy and afterwards as “the man” and one of his boys. Then write the conversation you might have tomorrow – when “the man” decides what to do.
- Rewrite part of the story, such as the ending, and illustrate your work.
- Write about a time you were bullied and how you felt in the situation.

Research

- Work individually or in groups to research more about capoeira and its history or to compare it with other sports. You could include places people can learn capoeira. Present your findings to the class.

WORKSHEET 1

The Man – Three-level thinking guide

- Level 1 – Reading on the lines (interpreting what the text says on a literal level)
- Level 2 – Reading between the lines (inferring, or interpreting what the text might mean)
- Level 3 – Reading beyond the lines (evaluating ideas by relating them to other knowledge)

Students write “agree” or “disagree” beside each statement and then discuss their responses in pairs, in groups, or as a class. The value of this activity lies in the discussion it generates as students justify their views. The activity is not intended as a test for comprehension.

LEVEL 1	Agree/disagree
Mario walks down the street playing a tambourine.	
The tambourine guy speaks a different language.	
“The man” puts his foot through the guy’s tambourine.	
“The man” growls deep and low like a dog.	
“The man” has to huddle down to protect himself.	
The tambourine guy beats “the man” to a pulp.	
The tambourine guy wears white trousers and a white T-shirt.	
The tambourine guy’s friends kiss each other.	
A berimbau is a musical instrument.	
Leo gets 32 stitches in his arm.	
Mario dies.	
Capoeira is a game developed in Africa.	
LEVEL 2	Agree/disagree
The tambourine guy becomes seriously irritated.	
“The man” and his boys go to school.	
“The man” wants to kill the tambourine guy.	
Nobody says no to “the man”.	
“The man” believes he will have no trouble fighting the tambourine guy.	
The tambourine guy’s friends don’t want “the man” to join in.	
Erik, Mario, and Leo really like “the man”.	
“The man” would like to learn capoeira.	
His boys would like to learn capoeira.	

His boys wouldn't like the music and the singing.	
"The man" is afraid that his boys will be better than him at capoeira.	
You need to be fit to learn capoeira.	
LEVEL 3	Agree/disagree
"The man" and the tambourine guy are likely to become friends.	
"The man" and his boys are irresponsible.	
"The man" is much more cool than the tambourine guy.	
"The man" should let his boys learn capoeira.	
People who learn martial arts are all mature, intelligent people.	
Capoeira should be taught at school.	

Sheet 2 of 2

Worksheet designed by Barbara Freeman, Wellington, New Zealand, 2007

WORKSHEET 2

The Man – Restore the order

Photocopy this worksheet. Cut out the statements and mix them up, keeping an intact master copy for yourself. Give each student a statement. Ask them to arrange themselves so that their statements are in the order of the story. To check that the order is correct, they can read their statements aloud in turn.

"The man" walks down the street, nice and easy, nice and slow.
The guy with the tambourine walks like he's "the man".
"The man" says stuff about the tambourine guy's mother.
The guy grins and plays his tambourine.
"The man" tells the guy to drop his tambourine, and the guy says no!
Nobody says no to "the man".
It all goes wrong for "the man" and he has to huddle down to protect himself.
"The man" is seriously irritated but unhurt by the tambourine guy.
"The man" meets the tambourine guy again.
"The man" watches the tambourine guy and his friends doing capoeira.
"The man" is impressed by the guy and his friends as they practise capoeira.

“The man” walks down the street, nice and easy, nice and slow.

“The man” realises the tambourine guy could have killed him.

“The man” spends Friday night with his mates.

“The man” wonders if his mates will still think he’s “the man” if they learn capoeira.

Sheet 2 of 2

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WORKSHEET 3

The Man – Match the meaning

Cut out the words and definitions, muddle them up, and have your students match them.

Word	Definition
tambourine	a round musical instrument that is similar to a drum and that has jingling discs around the rim
imagining	picturing something in your mind
foreign	from another country
seriously	very, to a great degree
irritated	annoyed
lethal	deadly
huddle	to crouch, to curl your body up
whirl	to move around fast
graze	to touch lightly, to brush past
pavement	footpath
capoeira	an Afro-Brazilian dance form that involves self-defence moves
berimbau	a musical bow with one string and a gourd at one end

Word	Definition
synchronise	to make events happen at the same time
flexible	able to bend easily
severely	extremely
bisects	cuts in half
acrobatics	gymnastics (for example, jumps, somersaults, and balances)
cruise	to move slowly along
defend	to protect
assert	to put forward, to communicate
opponent	the person playing opposite or against you

Sheet 2 of 2

Note that some words above may have other meanings in other contexts.

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WORKSHEET 4a – GROUP A

The Man – Vocab swap

- Divide the class into two groups and give half Worksheet 4a and half Worksheet 4b.
- In the second column, each group writes definitions for the words in the first column. Where a word has more than one meaning, they may need to check the page listed.
- They then fold the first column out of sight and swap sheets with the other group.
- That group guesses the original word and writes it in the third column. They can go to the page listed if they need help. For an extra challenge, they can guess without referring to the page.
- You could make this a fun competition and give points for every correct word.

Word	Definition (Group A)	Word (Group B)
tambourine (p. 2)	(p. 2)	
foreign (p. 5)	(p. 5)	
irritated (p. 7)	(p. 7)	
huddle (p. 9)	(p. 9)	
graze (p. 9)	(p. 9)	
capoeira (p. 14)	(p. 14)	
synchronise (p. 17)	(p.17)	
severely (p. 17)	(p. 17]	
acrobatics (p. 20)	(p. 20)	

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WORKSHEET 4b – GROUP B

The Man – Vocab swap

- Divide the class into two groups and give half Worksheet 4a and half Worksheet 4b.
- In the second column, each group writes definitions for the words in the first column. Where a word has more than one meaning, they may need to check the page listed.
- They then fold the first column out of sight and swap sheets with the other group.
- That group guesses the original word and writes it in the third column. They can go to the page listed if they need help. For an extra challenge, they can guess without referring to the page.
- You could make this a fun competition and give points for every correct word.

Word	Definition (Group B)	Word (Group B)
imagining (p. 5)	(p. 5)	
seriously (p. 7)	(p. 7)	
lethal (p. 9)	(p. 9)	
whirl (p. 9)	(p. 9)	
pavement (p. 11)	(p.11)	
berimbau (p. 15)	(p. 15)	
flexible (p. 17)	(p. 17)	
bisects (p. 19)	(p. 19)	
cruise (p. 22)	(p. 22)	

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WORKSHEET 5

The Man – Fill in the gaps

Add your own words in the spaces to make this passage come alive!

I walk alongside him. I him out of the corner of my eye. I for him to pick up the I wait for the I'm imagining I'm going to tell my boys. "You have seen him run. He all over. He shook so that his tambourine shook."

Then I he's not running. He's not shaking.

Maybe he doesn't me. He foreign. I decide to use a I know he will understand, a language can't pretend he doesn't know.

I in front of him and stop. My feet set apart and my hands are into fists. When I stand like this, scatter. They don't with me. I'm the and I fight to win.

He He taps a on his tambourine. "You're in way," he says.

He says it and calm like he expects to move.

Describe what happens next.

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TEMPLATE A

KWLH chart

<u><i>KNOW</i></u>	<u><i>WANT TO KNOW</i></u>	<u><i>LEARNED</i></u>	<u><i>HOW I LEARNED</i></u>