

# LESTER

by  
**BERNARD BECKETT**

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**M**ichael Patts has moved to Langton to get away from trouble. It's a fresh start. Unfortunately it coincides with the arrival of Lester – and a mysterious explosion of hatred in the town. Michael shouldn't get involved but...

Michael Patts is about to get into trouble again.

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**Here is a powerful and contemporary exploration of revenge, cover-ups, and the consequences of taking the law into our own hands.**

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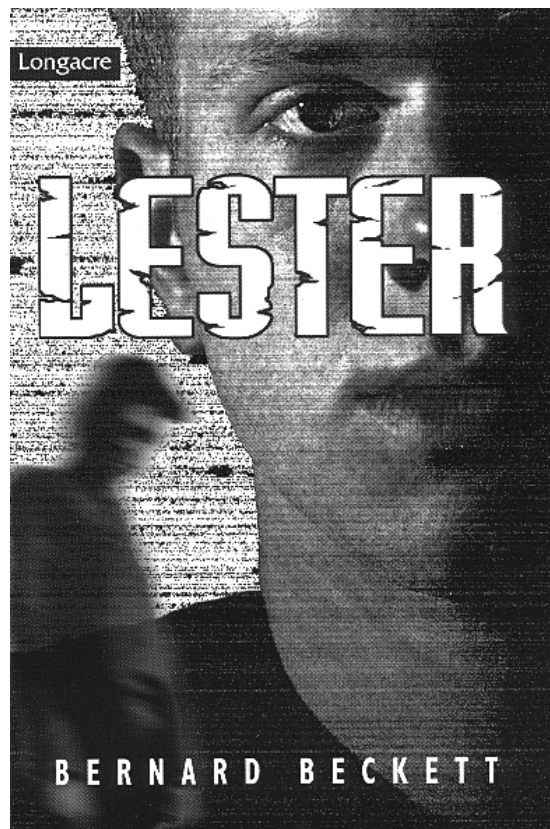
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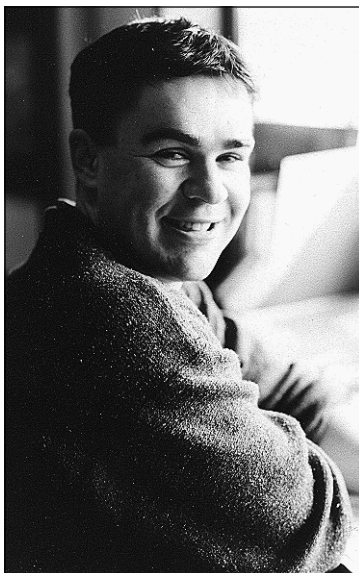
- author comment
- comprehension puzzles
- issues for discussion
- classroom activities and games
- extension ideas
- individual, paired and group work
- linked to the English curriculum

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## Bernard Beckett writes...



I've always written bits and pieces. I never did enough to get particularly good at it but any excuse to sit with a pen in hand would bring a smile to my face. My first crack at a novel came when I was living in Tokyo, theoretically spending my time teaching English to adults in evening classes. The pay was stupidly good and most people doing the job were making lots of money. The other option was do very little and so have buckets of spare time. I've never really liked money all that much so it was an easy choice. Somewhere along the way I wandered into Bic Camera, a legendary electronics chain in Tokyo where the same twenty second jingle plays on a continuous loop, and bought myself an electric typewriter.

I took to writing the first drafts freehand. Tokyo's very cool crowded trains were a good place, and I also remember writing quite a bit in Japanese McDonalds. I liked them because they made it easy for language cretins like me to point at items on the picture menu and so avoid starving (or accidentally ordering rice burgers.) Then I'd whip the stories into some sort of shape on my clattery little Brother, driving other residents in the Gaijin house crazy. To be honest part of my motivation in starting writing was to make an impression on one person in particular. All very Michael Patts in intent and execution I'm afraid. Enough said.

I wrote two and a half books in four months, a fair indication of their truly awful nature. Michael Patts didn't arrive until my third book. At that time I'd just finished reading Armistead Maupin's *Tales of the City* series as well as *Catcher in the Rye*. Struggling to find a style of my own I did a lot of borrowing. I adored the episodic structure and upbeat plotlines of *Tales* and Salinger's seemingly effortless voice blew me away. By contrast I was fast becoming a fairly average imitator. The story Michael attached himself to wasn't *Lester* but rather a thing called *Another Cup of Soup*, the tale of Michael's fifth form year before he and his family were forced to move from Hoveston. The end result was a great little story (from my perspective) wrapped up in some really muddled, derivative writing.

Not that I knew it at the time. I hadn't worked out that writing consists of a lot more than a couple of good ideas and a taste for the sound of your own inner voice. I had a whole heap to learn, about things like structure, control of plotlines and the building of characters. By the time I started to find people kind enough to provide me with the sort of guidance I so badly needed *Another Cup of Soup* was a distant memory. Michael Patts however was less easy to dislodge. He popped back up a couple of years later in

what was originally intended to be a story about the betrayal of trust. He was going to befriend a sexy young teacher (ridiculous idea, it had to go) who in fact was using him for her own dubious purposes. The story got silly very quickly and meanwhile Michael, being Michael, went and fell in love. And that's fascinating, always. I'm prone to attacks of romanticism and the other stories were forced to fight for their survival.

About this time I was lucky enough to be working with a fantastic group of school students who had the knack of bringing very simple ideas alive. I wrote a play version of *Lester* called *Everybody Knows* which centred far more strongly on the old tramp. This flowed through to the novel. From there it was a case of muddling through. In all *Lester* took a year to put together in a form close to that which you're reading.

I'm not sure how much help I can be in telling you what sorts of things *Lester* is about. I hope that for you reading is more a luxury than a chore. I hope it's a chance to challenge your imagination to form itself around a world you already half-know. I hope you don't have to feel like there's some need to 'get what I'm on about'. What you read is what's there really. It's pretty simple. It's fun thinking that the Michael Patts I've written is quite different to the one you'll be reading, just because of the unique images and experiences your imaginations will be working with.

I'm sure lots of the things I think and believe will have seeped into the pages of *Lester*. Here are some of them you'll have no trouble identifying: I am fascinated by the way adult and teenage worlds collide. I adore teaching and spending my days in the company of teenagers. It's an energy thing. I don't necessarily see adulthood as a progression from adolescence. It's more like, as a teenager you begin to realise the world is fairly confusing and you don't have all the answers. Perhaps adulthood is the point in time when you come to believe it is important to pretend otherwise. I think this might be the reason adults lie to teenagers all the time. In the absence of any decent answers, we have to. To me at least, *Lester* is a book about the lies adults tell, and the lies teenagers in turn learn to embrace.

I also think coming of age stories are a great tool for examining the health of a society. Growing up implies that there is something to grow in to. One of the reasons for the small town setting in *Lester* is the opportunity to present a simplified view of a confined society. Any society can lose its sense of direction. When this direction is lost adults can lose their sense of progress, which maybe is our sense of being adult.

Then we look around and see an excitable horde of confused and aroused teenagers on the horizon and it all gets a bit frightening. Sort of 'shit, they're headed towards me which is a bit of a worry, because I have absolutely no idea where I am.'

From there conflict comes easily. The conflict is heightened wherever the confusion is most profound. It's certainly no accident that issues of sex and religion are central here, right from the crime Lester's dad was supposed to be guilty of. If you look at how poorly many of us deal with sex and religion in our

own lives, it's always going to cause problems with the next generation.

It isn't meant to be a book without hope. More it's a book about facing up to dilemmas. Without hope, dilemmas don't exist, because dilemmas require preferred outcomes.

Or it might just be this readable little yarn about a guy who's trying to fit in. It was fun writing *Lester*. I hope it's fun to read too. If it isn't, put it down. Go and play outside. Try to impress someone. Tell your teacher I said it was okay.

## WORD SQUARE

### Comprehension exercise 1

#### Reading

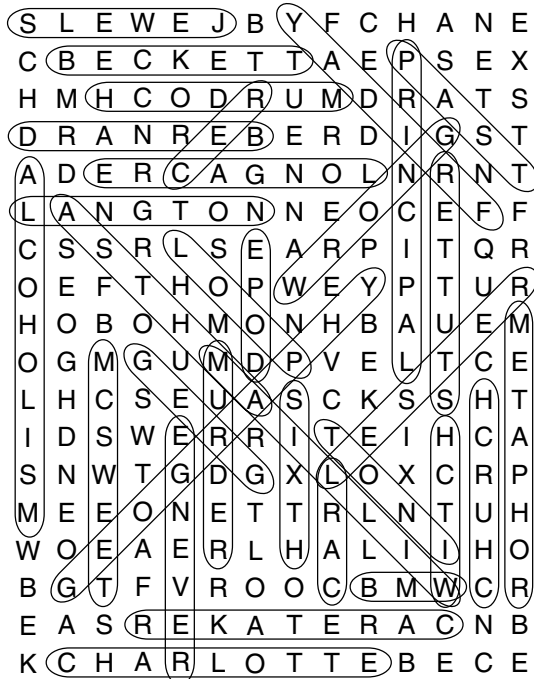
1. What is the name of the town where this story is set?
2. What is the name of the author? (two words)
3. Michael would like to be in a relationship with who?
4. Who arrives in town on a motorbike?
5. What do little children think Miss East is?
6. What is the real surname of Miss East?
7. Who takes Michael to listen to Greg the first time?
8. What is the position of Ms McSweet at Langton High?
9. Where does Lester make his camp-site?
10. What is Lester's real first name?
11. Toni finds a photograph of people in Langton thirty-five years ago. Where are they pictured?
12. Michael and his friends see Sean and who in the school shadehouse during the holidays? (two words)
13. What are they preparing for sale?
14. What causes Shane to collapse during a Christian rally at the school?
15. Who do some others believe made him collapse?
16. What is rumoured to be hidden in Carl Stutter's garage?
17. What subject does Mr Richmond teach?
18. Lester's father had a job at the local high school. What was he?
19. What form is Michael in?
20. What do Lester and Amanda's parents have in common?
21. What does the child in Lester's story know is buried in a corner of the field?
22. Who gives Greg permission to go on the school roof? (surname only)
23. What crime does Toni accuse her father of on p.152?
24. What night of the week was Lester's father killed?
25. Michael says 'We were angry and we were...' What?
26. When Lester returns to Langton the second time, Michael and Toni ask him to help them get what?
27. Michael describes sex in terms of driving a car for the first time. What figure of speech is this?
28. When Toni's father hits her mother for the first time, Toni says he stole her what?
29. Where was Lester sheltering the night he died?
30. Who is the publisher of this book? (one word)

S	L	E	W	E	J	B	Y	F	C	H	A	N	E
C	B	E	C	K	E	T	T	A	E	P	S	E	X
H	M	H	C	O	D	R	U	M	D	R	A	T	S
D	R	A	N	R	E	B	E	R	D	I	G	S	T
A	D	E	R	C	A	G	N	O	L	N	R	N	T
L	A	N	G	T	O	N	N	E	O	C	E	F	F
C	S	S	R	L	S	E	A	R	P	I	T	Q	R
O	E	F	T	H	O	P	W	E	Y	P	T	U	R
H	O	B	O	H	M	O	N	H	B	A	U	E	M
O	G	M	G	U	M	D	P	V	E	L	T	C	E
L	H	C	S	E	U	A	S	C	K	S	S	H	T
I	D	S	W	E	R	R	I	T	E	I	H	C	A
S	N	W	T	G	D	G	X	L	O	X	C	R	P
M	E	E	O	N	E	T	T	R	L	N	T	U	H
W	O	E	A	E	R	L	H	A	L	I	I	H	O
B	G	T	F	V	R	O	O	C	B	M	W	C	R
E	A	S	R	E	K	A	T	E	R	A	C	N	B
K	C	H	A	R	L	O	T	T	E	B	E	C	E

Answers can be found in a vertical, horizontal or diagonal direction – also forwards and backwards.

**Answers to WORD SQUARE**

1. Langton 2. Bernard Beckett 3. Toni
4. Lester 5. witch 6. Murdoch 7. Charlotte
8. principal 9. rec 10. William 11. pool
12. Carl Stutter 13. dope 14. asthma 15. Greg
16. BMW 17. Geography 18. caretaker 19. sixth
20. alcoholism 21. jewels 22. McSweet 23. murder
24. Friday 25. wrong 26. revenge 27. metaphor
28. past 29. church 30. Longacre



**EXPERTS**

**Comprehension exercise 2**

*Reading/Speaking/Listening*

This is a fun way of getting through the comprehension/familiarity with the text requirement.

Get the students into equal groups, say of four or five. Then split the area being studied into as many parts, e.g. pages 1-5, 6-10 etc, or maybe give them a character each. Each person within the group then has twenty minutes to become an 'expert' on their particular area. That is, they have to be prepared to answer questions on this.

At the end of prep time bring all the experts on one particular topic (i.e. one from each group) to sit in a line at the front.

Then run a quiz show where the chosen experts compete to answer questions, and score points for their team. It's a good idea to give each competitor one easy question each and then move into a free for all where the first hand up gets to answer.

Score ten points for a correct answer, five off if wrong.

By running through each batch of experts everyone gets a chance to answer questions and a whole lot of basic familiarity material gets covered. And as long as it's all 'good fun and supportive' they do love to compete.

*How much exactly do we know from the book about Michael's previous years? (Rivers, floods, Samantha, something to do with his mum). By exploring this the class are in effect exploring Michael's character. Here are two ways of imaginatively exploring Michael's backstory...*

**NO SPEAKS!**

**An information sharing game**

*Reading/Writing*

This is based on the incident which led to Michael Patts' family having to move to Langton. The aim is for groups of up to six students to use the information provided to piece together the story of what might have happened. It works something like this:

Each student in the group is given one of the cards which has three pieces of information on it (see next page). They sit in a circle-type arrangement and have to somehow between them bring together the information, following these rules:

- They cannot speak.
- They cannot show anybody else their card.
- They can communicate by writing down anything (including what is on the card).
- They can only communicate with the person on either side of them.

They have finished when their group has a written explanation of the event which occurred. This must include:

- What happened.
- Who did it.
- How.
- Who they did it to.
- What they were trying to achieve.

At the end the groups can present their answers and the class can judge them according to whether they are consistent with all the information given and whether they are consistent with the character of Michael Patts, as they know him.

There's no real correct answer in this. The idea is primarily to get a bit of co-operative problem solving going and also to get students to think creatively. This usually goes off well and is quietly chaotic. Perhaps do it as a starter lesson, following up with a couple of spells getting students to write up the event they decided upon in story form.

①

- Michael Patts was seen running from the crime scene.
- They couldn't have done it without the fire brigade.
- It happened at night.

②

- The mayor was the victim.
- Michael's motives were not entirely pure.
- The crime involved a hose.

③

- Samantha was involved.
- There was a river running through the middle of Hoveston.
- The mayor lived on a hill.

④

- The newspaper headlines read 'Now he knows how it feels!'
- The river flooded often.
- Michael thought the mayor's bedroom window was the lounge window.

⑤

- Nobody was hurt in the incident.
- Half the town thought it was funny.
- Samantha's dad had a key to the local fire station.

⑥

- They didn't steal a fire engine.
- It turned out causing more damage than they'd intended.
- The mayor was behind the building of a failed hydro dam up-river.

(For the record, in Beckett's version Michael and Samantha stole a high powered hose from the fire station, hooked it up to the mains outside the mayor's house and let rip through his bedroom window, to punish him for his unsympathetic view against the people on the plains who kept getting flooded. Samantha did it because she was something of a political hothead, Michael did it because Samantha did it.)

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**OR... here's another interesting way of exploring the same backstory.**

## OPRAH ON MICHAEL

### *Listening/Speaking*

Run an Oprah-style talk show involving the whole class to build up a profile of Michael's life before the action of the book begins.

#### **The Plan:**

- 2 kids to volunteer to be
  - a) Michael
  - b) TV Host (could be the teacher)
- Host conducts an interview with Michael about his life, e.g. 'How did you feel when your mother..?', 'I understand you experienced a flood when you were living in Hoveston?' etc.
- Other kids are free to challenge 'Michael' or ask further questions a la talk-show. If someone disagrees with the volunteer playing Michael in their interpretation of his character, they should not argue but rather tag in and take the place of 'Michael' themselves.

### *Writing extension*

Afterwards, the students could each write their own plot outline for the book that is Michael's 'fifth form year'.

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## EVERYBODY KNOWS

### *Listening/Speaking*

*Lester* began life as a play called *Everybody Knows* (from the Leonard Cohen song). Here are a couple of scenes from the original which it might be fun to have the class, or groups within the class, act out.

*Scene One: A group of teenagers in animated conversation.*

**Jess:** I'm telling you, it was a Japanese bike. The guy wasn't riding a Harley.

**Fran:** And you were there were you?

**Jess:** I heard.

**Fran:** Yeah well I saw it and it was a Harley okay? All chrome and shit.

**Jess:** Well I'm saying your eyesight's deficient.

**Kate:** I wonder how that happened.

**Fran:** And that makes me the only person in the world who plays with myself does it?

**Kate:** I don't.

**Fran:** Whatever.

**Kate:** I found alternatives.

**Fran:** Shame we can't afford them.

**Kaz:** Back to the story already. What did he look like?

**Fran:** I didn't get a close look. I'm not into staring at old tramps.

**Kaz:** I thought you said he was on a Harley. Tramps don't ride Harleys.

**Nick:** Nah, he's not a real tramp. He dresses all filthy and that but it's just a cover.

**Kaz:** What sort of cover?

**Nick:** I heard he's doing some sort of spying thing. Like an undercover cop looking for drugs.

**Jess:** Why would you use a filthy old bum on a hunk of shit motorbike?

**Fran:** Hey, a Harley's not a hunk of shit.

**Nick:** Because it's a cover. So no one will suspect.

**Jess:** Have your balls dropped yet?

**Nick:** That an invitation?

**Jess:** Shouldn't you be fantasising about undercover cops?

**Kate:** I heard he hasn't got any balls.

**Nick:** Wanna see them?

**Kate:** Not you, the tramp.

**Fran:** Bullshit.

**Kate:** No, it's true. He lost them in an accident and he's come back for revenge.

**Fran:** You don't lose your balls in an accident. What sort of accident would that have to be?

**Kate:** He didn't say.

**Fran:** You've talked to the tramp?

**Kate:** No, Trevor – he was there when the guy rode through town.

**Fran:** Yeah, well I was there too and he was wearing a big disgusting raincoat, like it flapped in the wind and that, and I swear you could smell him before he got to you, but there was no way you could tell if he had any balls or not. Not unless Trevor dug himself a hole in the road and was hiding there with some little mirror or something.

**Kate:** He had the balls to piss on that tree.

**Kaz:** That's not balls.

**Kate:** Not just any tree, that's the thing. It was the one in the town square. You know, the one they planted when that French guy visited last year.

**Nick:** Maybe he's one of those anti-French people.

**Jess:** Maybe he was just dying for a piss.

**Nick:** In broad daylight? Nah, I reckon he's with the cops.

**Kate:** Because he pissed on a tree?

**Jess:** By that reasoning so are my neighbours' dogs.

**Fran:** My neighbour's sleeping with one of the cops. That's what my Mum reckons anyway.

**Kaz:** What's his name, this tramp? Does anyone know?

**Fran:** He's put up a tent down at the rec. I've heard he's staying. You know what else I heard? I heard Mum telling Dad he was an orphan and he was just left on someone's doorstep and the family took him in.

**Jess:** When was this?

**Fran:** Ages ago. When Dad was little. But then all these strange things started happening to the family.

**Kaz:** What like?  
**Fran:** Their dog died.  
**Kaz:** How?  
**Fran:** It got run over.  
**Jess:** How's that strange?  
**Fran:** It was inside at the time – huge truck came straight through the wall. Then their budgie, one day it just started talking.  
**Kaz:** Where did your dad hear this?  
**Fran:** I don't know.  
**Kaz:** At the pub I bet. He's full of it.  
**Jess:** I heard there's some doubt he's your dad.  
**Fran:** At least my mum had a choice.  
**Kaz:** Maybe that's it! Maybe the tramp's your father!  
**Jess:** I thought he had no balls.  
**Kaz:** See, it's a family thing!  
**Kate:** I heard there's a petition started to get rid of him.  
**Nick:** Yeah, I signed that.  
**Fran:** Why?  
**Nick:** I got the wrong thing. Thought I was entering a draw to win a motorbike.  
**Kate:** Here's an idea. Run a competition to get rid of him and the winner gets his motorbike.

... and so it went on.

Bernard Beckett did this scene as the opening of the play with the students rushing on in a mad dash to claim the limited seats of a single couch (could be one/two ordinary chairs). He says:

'The challenge is for them to keep the energy up from the beginning right through. Get them to learn the lines, there aren't that many, and maybe at the end choose the best effort to be performed to another class or some such thing. There's also lots of room here to think about them writing another scene, using an incident in the book. Both Michael's first meeting with Lester and his meeting with Toni's parents were in the play and worked well. And of course here's a good place to teach the peculiar constraints and requirements of novel vs play form.'

### *Drama Extensions*

- A. If you have a keen or advanced group, you may like to extend the above scene into a status game – i.e. the characters position themselves either on, under or above the chair/s or couch according to how they feel in terms of status in relation to the other characters.
- B. The exercise could also be extended by the use of **Forum Theatre** (Boal).
- 1) Get the students to take on selected characters from the novel (including Lester), and improvise a scene around a particular issue; for example whether or not to get rid of the tramp.  
*The aim is to find a suitable solution to the problem.*

- 2) Where the scene reaches a climax/disaster/sticking point, discuss where the breakdown began and what contributed to it, then replay the scene accordingly.

It is an interesting way of discovering where certain decisions may lead.

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## THE TRIAL

### *Reading/Writing/Speaking/Listening*

An old classic. Students love it. They've all seen a hundred different law shows on TV and who amongst them doesn't fancy themselves as a bit of a bush lawyer on occasion? The trick is to find enough roles to keep everybody busy in the preparation stage. In a typical class of twenty-five to thirty this is an obvious challenge.

Host a trial based around Michael Patts' culpability in the death of Lester. Split the class into the following groups, each with the pre-trial jobs suggested.

1. *Prosecution Lawyers (3/4)*  
 Go through the book and make a list of all the people who might help you build up your case. Come up with written questions for each witness you decide to call. Also write your introduction to the case, where you will set out what it is the prosecution believes has happened and why Michael is guilty.
2. *Defence Lawyers (3/4)*  
 Decide upon an angle of defence, e.g. Michael wasn't trying to do any harm, it wasn't his idea, he was influenced by others or perhaps that he wasn't actually there. Remember the case rests entirely upon the things witnesses tell you. Make a list of the witnesses you will call and the questions you will ask them. Write an introduction statement for the case.
3. *Witnesses (as many as you can find in the book. Suggestions: Toni, Shane, Amanda, Sean, Carl Stutter, Miss East, Amanda's parents, Toni's parents, Michael's parents, Ms McSweet, Mr Richmond, Charlotte etc.)*  
 Each one is to write up a description of all the facts relevant to the case which they are likely to know. During the preparation spell there can also be a time for the teams of lawyers to talk with the potential witnesses individually, to set strategies.
4. *Jury (The remainder of the class)*  
 They should elect a leader who will be the judge. During the preparation spell they need to come up with a list of the crimes which may have led to Lester's death, in order of severity: e.g. from a

small-time player in the town conflict with indirect influence right through to deliberately lighting the fire knowing that Lester was in there. Having decided on the legal niceties, they should decide upon an appropriate sentence in each case.

This allows an entire spell for the build up. Keep in mind that it's only when these things are given sufficient time that students really get into them. The second spell, and indeed third if it works well, is the trial itself, with all the usual witnesses calling and so forth. Ideally there will be time between spells two and three when the lawyers can write their summary statements.

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## RADIO TALKBACK

### *Listening/Speaking*

This exercise can be used simply as an imaginative exploration of the issues in *Lester*, or extended into a study of the genre of radio talkback.

If the latter, begin the study by getting the class to listen to several excerpts from a range of talkback shows. Make notes about the different styles adopted by the talkback hosts, and specific examples of language or questioning used to elicit a response, then discuss as a class the effectiveness of the different hosts and behaviours.

Choose three volunteers to begin a discussion on Radio Langton. They will be:

#### *Option 1*

Radio host, Ms McSweet, Mr Richmond  
discussing **Lester's right to camp in the town Rec**

#### *Option 2*

Radio host, Toni's father, Michael  
discussing **whose fault it is that Lester was killed in the church burning**

The two guests prepare and discuss with the radio host (but not each other) what they are going to say.

During this time the rest of the class members choose a character who may or may not be featured in the book, and

1. Write down in bullet points the basic views of the caller
2. Write underneath the reasons why the caller holds those views
3. Write down briefly where and how the caller got their information (i.e. local newspaper, listening to the talkback, friends, comments by Ms McSweet at parent/teacher interview, personal involvement etc.)

The radio host conducts the five minute discussion between the two guests, (keeping control of the

situation!). Then he or she opens up the lines to callers who want to make their point.

The rest of the class take turns making a call to the talkback show and offering their view to the discussion, keeping true to their character notes, and the radio host controls how long they may speak according to how interesting their call is.

You may or may not choose to keep the two original guests involved in the talkback discussion, depending on how chaotic things get!

## TAG TEAM DEBATES

### *Reading/Writing/Speaking/Listening*

There are lots of healthy topics for debate which might spring out of *Lester*. Religion, punishment, revenge, secrets. Students often shy away from debating because it's just a bit more attention than they're ready for. Tag team debates are designed to take the pressure off. They work a bit like this:

1. In teams of five or so, students are given the topic(s) and are told to write down as a team all the pros and cons they can think of. They're not told in advance which side they'll be on.
2. After suitable prep time two teams are chosen to debate and the side is decided by a flip of the coin.
3. The whole team stand at the front, their first speakers facing off about a metre apart and the rest of the team mingling behind them. The teacher stands centre stage between the two protagonists. The affirmative speaker starts making their case and will continue until such time as they pause, repeat material or generally mess up. At this point the teacher calls 'side' and it's over to the negative.

However, at any time while a speaker is talking a team-mate may tag their shoulder and continue the argument on their behalf. In this way, a team working well together can continue to tag in and dominate speaking time.

A debate usually lasts three minutes or so, (it depends on how much they have to say) and they are told in advance that their team will be disqualified if they haven't all had some sort of say during the debate. Even if it amounts to no more than 'I agree' that's cool. That way they can all participate or not to the extent of their confidence.

Students seem to like the shambolic, competitive feel of this one. Way more fun than diving straight into formal debates.

## BELIEVE ME!

### *Writing/Speaking/Listening*

Obviously religion is one of the themes in *Lester* and that being the case it could be worthwhile to get the students doing a 'build your own religion' thing. (Some teachers will be wary of this one, but it's worth considering.) Apart from the obvious areas for thought-provoking discussion, it is a useful hands-on exercise in transactional language – understanding the language of religion and rhetoric.

1. Initially students are asked individually to come up with the basic tenets for a new religion which they are going to market amongst young people.
2. They then have to write the speech they would give as the self-styled leader at the opening rally. Make it a maximum of, say, five minutes.
3. Use a basic pyramid structure to work through the speeches. That is, students divide into pairs or threes and read their speeches to each other. They then decide which is best. Having done this, each group finds another group and the two best speeches are read. A winner is found. So it goes on until there are two halves of the class, each having decided on its favoured speech.
4. These two speeches are then given to the whole class, with appropriate whoops of encouragement and religious fervour from their supporters.

Good fun if it isn't taken too seriously.

## IT'S IN THE BAG

### *Viewing/Presenting*

What are all the things Lester keeps in his bags? It might be illuminating to know. Ask the students to:

- (a) make a list, or
- (b) come up with some sort of visual display, or
- (c) get into groups, each group makes a 'bag', with at least one item in it per member of the group. Each person in the group has a turn to pull their item(s) out of the bag to show the rest of the class, and explain why the group thought the item might be in Lester's bag.

Every item will have a story of its own.

## STORYTELLING

### *Speaking/Listening/Reading/Writing*

1. Discuss with the class what the similarities and differences are between a
  - fable
  - fairy story
  - folk tale
  - short story
  - parable
  - anecdote

2. Follow up with one of the following exercises:

- (a) *Compare and contrast...*

Lester talks about his 'stories', but are his stories like others you know? What distinguishes them from say, a short story you might have studied? Is there a more accurate term for Lester's style of story? Discuss.

OR

- (b) Choose one of the stories that Lester or Toni tells (including Toni's story of the first time her father hit her mother), learn it and tell it to the class (without notes).

The class and teacher assess your storytelling ability.

OR

- (c) Imagine you have to tell a story to Lester. Read pp.50-54 and pp.83-86, then write your own story.

You can follow this up with (b), telling it to the class.

OR

- (d) Read Toni's story, pp.122-124. Then, write about a time when everything changed for you, something which made you see the world (or your own world) in a different way.

## SONGWRITING

### *Listening/Writing*

Find the song *Everybody Knows* by Leonard Cohen after which the original playscript of *Lester* was named. Listen to it and write down the lyrics.

Find the song *Pieces of You* by Jewel and do the same.

Either, write a short essay about how the themes of the two songs are reflected in *Lester*

OR

Write your own song, conveying some of the same themes.