Standard English Study Guide

We All Fall Down

by

Robert Cormier

Created by
Pamela Cohen B A Hons Dip Ed
Structure:

The text is in two parts – both parts begin with reference to the ‘trashers’.

Section One: objective, impersonal

Section Two: subjective – personal – the audience now knows information about the ‘trashers’.

Section one ends with Jane Jerome’s father coming home and announcing that the perpetrator of the trashing has been caught. He states: ‘he said that Jane gave him the key’ which establishes ‘the end of the world’ for Jane.

The ending is apocalyptic- foreshadows the confrontation and conflict that will arise in Section Two as the reader knows that Jane is innocent.

*******************************************************************

Section Two ends with Jane leaving Buddy and ‘ascending’ away from him- the apocalypse has come and gone and redemption has been found- Buddy as ‘fallen’ and remains so suggesting the composer does not feel the need to provide a happy ending. Again the imagery is religious- ascending and descending- heaven and hell inferences. Jane has risen above the conflict; Buddy is still enmeshed within his own experience.

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Page One:

Time and setting is established immediately:

9:02 pm – the evening of April Fools’ Day – is there significance in this time and day?

The text clearly outlines that the ‘trashers’ are in the house for 49 minutes- why 49? Why state the number?

Is there some message in here for the fallen and forgiveness?

9:48 pm: Karen Jerome arrives home

9:51: ‘Invaders’ leave the house
**Descriptions of the setting: house**

Cape Cod Cottage – American context – middle class wealth

Three television sets- middle class wealth- family are perhaps not united around one TV set- suggests some division

Two VCRs- why two? What is Cormier suggesting about wealth and the middle class?

Bathrooms up and down stairs- two story house- comfortable, large family home.

‘piano’
‘den’
‘crystal’
‘magnificent hutch’

text is dated in modern era- but is the meaning still effective?

Is the text ‘affective’ – does it evoke emotion at this point? Why or why not?
Verbs used on Page One:

Entered  Rattling
Overturned  Sending
Spray-painted  Slashed
Shit  Invade
Smashed  Smashing
Flooded  Toppled
Damaging  Performed
Pissed  Pulled
Tore  Trashed
Flushed  Crashed
Left  Broke
Slamming  Performed
Abandoned

Develop a paragraph about the time, setting and verbs used by Cormier to establish the tone for the text.

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Questions:

1. At a first reading, what age, social status and background would you ascribe to the ‘invaders’? You must use references from the text and identify any grammatical or language features used by Cormier to defend your response.

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2. Why does the composer choose to call the trashers ‘invaders’? You must use references from the text and identify any grammatical or language features used by Cormier to defend your response.

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3. Cormier uses the vulgar slang verbs ‘shit’ and ‘pissed’ in this passage? What effect do these verbs have on the reader?

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4. The timeline is quite prescriptive. What is Cormier’s purpose in establishing the time and how does it affect the reader?

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5. How do the first two paragraphs relate to the title of the text?

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6. What simile has been used in paragraph one and how does it present a cacophonous sense of disorder to the scene?

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7. What is inferred by the symbolism of the breaking of ‘every mirror in the house’?

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8. What tone is suggested when Cormier uses the euphemistic metaphor ‘they performed a special job on the piano’?

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9. How many ‘invaders were there?’

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10. What does Cormier mean by using the alliterative phrase ‘scattered and spontaneous’ to describe the vandalism of the ‘invaders’?

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11. What impact does the arrival home at 9:48 pm of Karen Jerome have on the reader?

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12. How does the composer want the reader to react when he provides the omnipotent ‘No one had every looked at her like that before’? What tone is established?

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13. What is Cormier establishing or suggesting by the verb phrase ‘abandoning the place as suddenly as they had arrived’?

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14. What did the invaders leave behind in both the literal and metaphorical senses?

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15. What has happened to Karen Jerome – only use the evidence presented in the final sentence of the paragraph beginning ‘At 9:51…’

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16. Are the abstract nouns ‘bruised’ and ‘broken’ literal or metaphorical? Are they only used to describe Karen? What verb has been used to sustain the horror of the description?

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17. Why does Cormier place a monetary value on the damage?

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18. Which text type best describes this passage? Use textual evidence to support your response.

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19. What tone is immediately established by the title of ‘The Avenger’ on page 2? What is Cormier’s purpose and intent in using this title?

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20. What effect do the verbs ‘ransacking and rampaging’ have on the reader?: What language feature is used and what effect does it have in developing the tone of the writing in this passage? P 2

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21. What verbs does Cormier use to present the characterisation of ‘The Avenger’? Explain what Cormier’s purpose is and whether the characterisation is effective in sustaining atone of suspense.

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22. What expectations has Cormier developed by introducing the character of The Avenger? How do you feel about him and his watching of events? Is his watching consistent with his title?

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23. List the language features used in this section (pages 1,2 and 3) in a TEPA chart.

Take care to evaluate:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Verbs</th>
<th>Colloquial language</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Adjectives</td>
<td>Allusion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adverbs</td>
<td>Tone</td>
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<tr>
<td>Proper Nouns</td>
<td>Slang</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Similes</td>
<td>Expletives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Metaphors</td>
<td>Numerals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rhetorical questions</td>
<td>Acronyms</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
24. What tone is established by ending this section with the simile ‘like tiny pieces of glass’ when describing the emotions and reactions of ‘The Avenger’?

25. Discuss the characterisation of Jane Jerome that is established through the verbs, adverbs that describe her actions and emotions on pages 4 and 5. Begin by determining what language defines her as a character and then discuss how Cormier wants you, as a reader, to be positioned in terms of empathy, criticism, liking or disliking this character. Always use TEPA to develop your responses.

26. How do the allusions and intertextual references date the text?

27. Do these allusions and intertextual links take anything away from the effectiveness of the ideas being presented in the text for a 21st century reader?
28. Read from page to page 8 in relation to Jane. Fill out the table below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Character: Jane Jerome</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Description, be detailed- what physical descriptions have been provided by the composer?</td>
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<td>What intellectual descriptions have been provided by the composer?</td>
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<td>What emotional descriptions have been provided by the composer?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Language forms and features or structures of texts, film techniques etc., used to describe the character – metaphors, similes, adverbs, adjectives, euphemisms, intertextuality, allusions etc?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Audience impact and effectiveness of the characterisation?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Why has the composer created this character?</td>
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<tr>
<td>- To provoke?</td>
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<tr>
<td>- To provide insight into the character’s role in the text?</td>
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<tr>
<td>- To expose …</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- To examine the impact of…?</td>
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<tr>
<td>- To highlight how the concept of ‘we all fall down impacts on individuals in terms of…?</td>
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<tr>
<td>- To present an argument for…</td>
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<tr>
<td>- To develop an understanding of…</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
After filling out the sheet analyse your work for depth of analysis and use of techniques and write a sustained paragraph that explores Jane Jerome’s purpose in the text. Questions you could address are:

What have you learned about her as a character? Has Cormier been effective in presenting her perspective to the text? Has Cormier presented a character that you can relate to and believe in? Justify your response using explicit references to the text. Type up your response and hand in to your teacher.

On page 8, Cormier introduces the character of Buddy. Complete the following questions and then compete a close study of character as for Jane Jerome.

29. What is the irony of Buddy’s breaking a mirror and in particular, why has Cormier used extended irony by having the character use the Statue of Liberty to break the mirror?

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30. List the verbs, adverbs, adjectives and abstract nouns Cormier uses to characterise Buddy, either explicitly or implicitly from pages 8-16?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Verbs</th>
<th>Adverbs</th>
<th>Adjectives</th>
<th>Abstract Nouns</th>
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<tbody>
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Create notes that demonstrates how the grammatical devices, text formatting and font, punctuation and language features such as descriptive language, similes, metaphors, allusions, expletives, colloquial and slang shape a description of Buddy.

32. Complete a character analysis paragraph of Buddy as you have done previously for Jane.

Type up the analysis and place in your folder.
33. Complete a character analysis for each of the invaders.

34. Complete a character analysis for The Avenger.

After completing your analyses of each character you will write an essay that examines the effectiveness of language in determining the characterisation of at least three characters in *We All Fall Down*.

Essay Question:

Cormier is particularly effective in his use of language to develop characterisation. How important is the composer’s use of grammatical and language features in developing an audience response?

Plan

Introduction:

Topic sentence – use language from the question and state the title of the text and the composer. Do not forget to underline or place the title of the text in italics if typing. Place the date immediately after the title and ensure you spell the composer’s name correctly and use capitalisation correctly.

Write a sentence for each character you have chosen to discuss briefly stating the purpose and effectiveness of Cormier’s use of language features to describe each character. Make sure you have a different argument or thesis for each character.

*e.g.* Cormier’s use of capitalisation effectively presents opportunities to explore the characterisation of ‘The Avenger’ as an explicit allusion to the comic book genre.

Write a concluding sentence that suggest how all three character’s you have chosen are either effective representations of characterisation in terms of audience response (and you could state what that response might be).
## Paragraph Notes:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Technique</th>
<th>Evidence</th>
<th>Purpose</th>
<th>Effectiveness in shaping meaning and providing a response to the question</th>
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</table>

## Conclusion:

Suggest how each of the character’s you have chosen have elicited a specific audience repose. Discuss why Cormier has been effective and how he has achieved his purpose in developing characters who can sustain audience interest and involvement.
35. Themes, issues and Ideas.

What themes, issues and ideas does Cormier explore in his text?

Fill out the table below and then develop notes of your chosen evidence to present your analysis of the thematic concerns presented in the text.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>Issues</th>
<th>Ideas</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Power</td>
<td>Disrespect for others and their rights</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Relationships</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Alcoholism</td>
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<tr>
<td>Growing up</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Original sin – we all fall down</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Capacity for human malevolence</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
After completing the table on themes, issues and ideas. Prepare for the following essay:

‘Distinctive ideas are at the heart of every novel’

What is a distinctive idea explored in We All Fall Down? Explain how this idea is developed through the novel.

In your response you should make close reference to the language forms, features and structures of texts used by Cormier to develop his ideas.

**Distinctive**
Part of Speech: adjective
Definition: Serving to identify or set apart an individual or group.
Synonyms: characteristic, individual, peculiar, typical, vintage

**Ideas**
Part of Speech: noun
Definition: That which exists in the mind as the product of careful mental activity.
Synonyms: concept, conception, image, notion, perception, thought

‘at the heart’: central to; the purpose for the author composing the text

**Novel:**
- a fictitious prose narrative of considerable length and complexity, portraying characters and usually presenting a sequential organization of action and scenes.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Idea</th>
<th>Distinctive qualities of the idea</th>
<th>What is the composer’s purpose in exploring or exposing this idea?</th>
<th>References where this idea is explored explicitly</th>
<th>References where this idea is explored implicitly</th>
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<tbody>
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</tbody>
</table>

Glossary of language forms, feature and structures of texts to assist you in developing a critical analysis of the textual evidence you will use in your response.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Features (Techniques/devices)</th>
<th>Structures (Technique)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Verbs</td>
<td>Prose</td>
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<tr>
<td>Adverbs</td>
<td>Prose fiction</td>
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<tr>
<td>Adjectives</td>
<td>Plot - sequence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Verb phrases</td>
<td>Sub-plot</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adverbial phrases</td>
<td>Character</td>
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<tr>
<td>Adjectival phrases</td>
<td>Characterisation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Metaphor</td>
<td>Setting – where and when</td>
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<tr>
<td>Simile</td>
<td>Point of view – does the voice change</td>
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<tr>
<td>Personification</td>
<td>Perspective</td>
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<tr>
<td>Allusion</td>
<td>Theme</td>
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<tr>
<td>Alliteration</td>
<td>Issues</td>
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<tr>
<td>Alliterative</td>
<td>Ideas</td>
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<tr>
<td>Connotation</td>
<td>Contexts</td>
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<tr>
<td>Allegory</td>
<td>Narrator</td>
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<tr>
<td>Foreshadowing</td>
<td>First person</td>
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<tr>
<td>Flashback</td>
<td>First person declarative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assonance</td>
<td>Second person</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Imagery</td>
<td>Second person accusative</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tone</td>
<td>Third person</td>
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<tr>
<td>Irony</td>
<td>Genre</td>
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<td>Humour</td>
<td>Lexicon</td>
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<td>Satire</td>
<td>Idiom</td>
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<td>Epiphany</td>
<td>Vernacular</td>
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<td>Intensifier</td>
<td>Continuity</td>
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<tr>
<td>Superlative</td>
<td>Protagonist</td>
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<td>Passive voice</td>
<td>Antagonist</td>
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<td>Active voice</td>
<td>Diction</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hyperbole</td>
<td>Sentence structure (truncated/compound)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Motif</td>
<td>Punctuation – complex or simple</td>
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<tr>
<td>Symbolism</td>
<td>Phrasing</td>
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<tr>
<td>Onomatopoeia</td>
<td>Voice</td>
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<tr>
<td>Paradox</td>
<td>Symbolism</td>
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<td>Tragic flaw</td>
<td>Cohesion</td>
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<td>Sarcasm</td>
<td>Convergence of narratives</td>
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<td>Verbal irony</td>
<td>Introspection</td>
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<td>Rising action</td>
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<td>Climax</td>
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<td>Anti-climax</td>
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<td>Tense- past, present, future</td>
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<td>Grammar</td>
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<td>Grammatical integrity</td>
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<td>Conflict</td>
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<td>Dialogue</td>
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<td>Exposition</td>
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<td>Figurative language</td>
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<td>Speaker</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Formal/informal language/tone</td>
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http://mrbraiman.home.att.net/lit.htm
Examine the development of tone in this text and how Cormier has sustained, changed or used the tone as a distinctive feature of the text. You should use your work on characterisation and on the themes, issues and ideas to respond to this question.

In what ways does the author draw you into the world of the novel?

*In your response you should make close reference to the language forms, features and structures of texts used by Cormier to develop his ideas.*

‘Ways’ – what ideas are engaged with that are relevant to the reader? What language is used to engage the reader? What linguistic strategies are employed by the composer - forms, features, structures of the texts – to engage the reader

‘draws you’ – makes it possible for you to engage with the text – entices you, makes you read on

‘into the world’ - the way the composer uses techniques and language to engage the reader in the imaginative / realistic/ believable possibilities and qualities of the plot and characterisation

**Novel:**
- a fictitious prose narrative of considerable length and complexity, portraying characters and usually presenting a sequential organization of action and scenes.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Idea that draws you into the world of the novel</th>
<th>Specific language, language devices and structures are used to engage the reader that explore the idea</th>
<th>What is the composer’s purpose in exploring or exposing this idea?</th>
<th>What is effective about the way the text/composer draws the reader in?</th>
<th>What imaginative, realistic, believable qualities does the text present that draws the reader into the world of the novel?</th>
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36. Examine the role and impact of parents in this text. What is Cormier suggesting about children in the modern world and how they are impacted on by the actions or neglect of parents?

Examine the parental relationships, using close reference to the text, of each of the following characters:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Character</th>
<th>Relationship with Mother</th>
<th>Relationship with Father or other male family member</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jane Jerome</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Buddy Walker</td>
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<td>Harry Flowers</td>
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<td>Micky Stallings</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
37. Develop a sustained discussion or dialogue between these four characters using a scenario of their being together in a counsellor’s office. The question they have been posed by the counsellor is:

How do you think your actions and reactions to society have been affected or impacted on by your parental and sibling relationships?

Write the dialogue of the conversation below. You need to ensure that you give equal voice to each character and makes use of quotes from the text to ensure your discussion is a true representation of what Cormier suggests is the relationship each character has with their parents.

Set your dialogue out as a script placing the character’s name at the beginning of each piece of dialogue with a colon as they contribute to the conversation.

e.g.

Counsellor:

Jane Jerome:

Buddy Walker:

Harry Flowers:

You must ensure that all characters interact effectively, expressing their feelings, ideas and concerns equally.

Ensure you use appropriate capitalisation, punctuation, quotes from the texts turned into dialogue etc.

You would begin by scanning the text for any interactions the characters have with their parents and noting down any dialogue or feelings expressed- either explicit dialogue or implicit thoughts.

38. Develop a similar dialogue between all the parents of each of the characters. How would the dialogue differ from that presented by the children? What concerns is Cormier raising by parents in relation to raising children in the modern world?

Type up and present both dialogues to your teacher for marking.
39. Evaluate how and why Cormier has raised this issue in his text. Do you think he is effective in representing the concerns of teenagers and parents in modern society? Write a paragraph that demonstrates an insightful understanding of Cormier’s intent in developing his criticism of parental roles in the modern world.

40. Identify two key episodes in your prescribed text.

Analyse the ways in which these key episode reflects both the ideas and the characteristics of the text as a whole.

Present your analysis on one of the following forms:

(a) A speech at a HSC study day

(b) A contribution to an online HSC Resource site

In your response you should make close reference to the language forms, features and structures of texts used by Cormier to develop his ideas.

You need to be able to develop the form of a speech that presents a close discussion of the key episode and related that key episode to the novel as a whole - making very close reference to the techniques used in the key episode and explain and analyse how it relates to the text as a whole – structurally and in terms of authorial purpose and effectiveness

You need to be able to research, identify the features and develop a response in the form of a website contribution to an online HSC Resource site- such as HSC Online – must be valuable and detailed in terms of the deconstruction of the text as a whole - structurally and in terms of authorial purpose and effectiveness

Novel:

- a fictitious prose narrative of considerable length and complexity, portraying characters and usually presenting a sequential organization of action and scenes.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Identify key episodes in the text and how it relates to the ideas and characteristics of the text as a whole</th>
<th>Identify the specific language, language devices and structures are used to engage the reader that are used in the key episodes</th>
<th>What is the composer’s purpose in developing these key episodes?</th>
<th>What specific language forms, features and structures of texts would you use to present an informative and convincing speech?</th>
<th>What specific language forms, features and structures of texts would you use to present an informative and valued contribution to a HSC Resource site – for example HSC Online?</th>
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<td>Pages 1 and 2</td>
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41. We All Fall Down

The title of the text is the core idea of Cormier’s novel. What does it mean?

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42. Who ‘falls down’ in the text?

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43. What is the biblical allusion being created by Cormier and why?

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44. How does the end of the text visually, literally and metaphorically address the concept of the novel’s title?

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________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________
What language is used throughout the text that confirms the concept of falling, lifting up, retribution and repentance being addressed by Cormier? Provide at least three examples.

Develop an essay plan to the following:

‘She stepped on the escalator and slowly ascended, not looking back, leaving him down below’. (Page 194)

In what ways do the closing lines from We All Fall Down draw together the central concerns of the novel?

In your response make detailed reference to the ideas, use of characterisation and relationships presented in key episodes of your prescribed text. You should develop an explicit discussion of how language forms, features and structures of texts have been effectively used to convey Cormier’s purpose in raising the central concerns of the novel.