

Goat

Romesh Gunsekera

Key

Pre-reading

A

1. Enough clues are given to make this identifiable as a butcher's. ("meat" "bones" "goat heads" "chicken". Could be anywhere, but 'halal' will give a clue to Islamic community.
2. Students to speculate. No correct answer.
3. Enough clues to know that she entraps men to gain their property.

B

There are no right answers. The idea of for students to work in groups to build stories that take account of what they already know of the characters and by answering the questions to give some structure to the activity. Their answers can be (and should be) as imaginative as possible as long as the narrative holds together. Encourage them to share their story with other students in the class. Do NOT ask them to write the story down: this is an oral and aural activity only.

Note: 'goat' also has the meaning of making a fool or an idiot out of someone, usually by setting them up as the fall guy. Make sure that students have noted the title of the story before they start work. If they use the glossary while constructing the story, they will get more substance; however, this is not essential and may complicate the activity.

Reading

A quick reader will take about ten minutes to read the story, most, however will take fifteen or more. One way of dealing with this is to prepare some questions to ask at key moments in the story. This allows comprehension to be checked, prediction to be stimulated and allows fast and slower readers to achieve a near parity of speed. (See suggestions below).

Another way of dealing with the situation is to play the recording of the author reading the story, with the students following along in with the text. Of course, reading aloud is another possibility, but the teacher would need to be sure that this would not create other problems for some students due to the fear of reading aloud. Many students will remain unable to follow the text if they think their 'turn' may be coming up next.

Textual intervention suggestions:

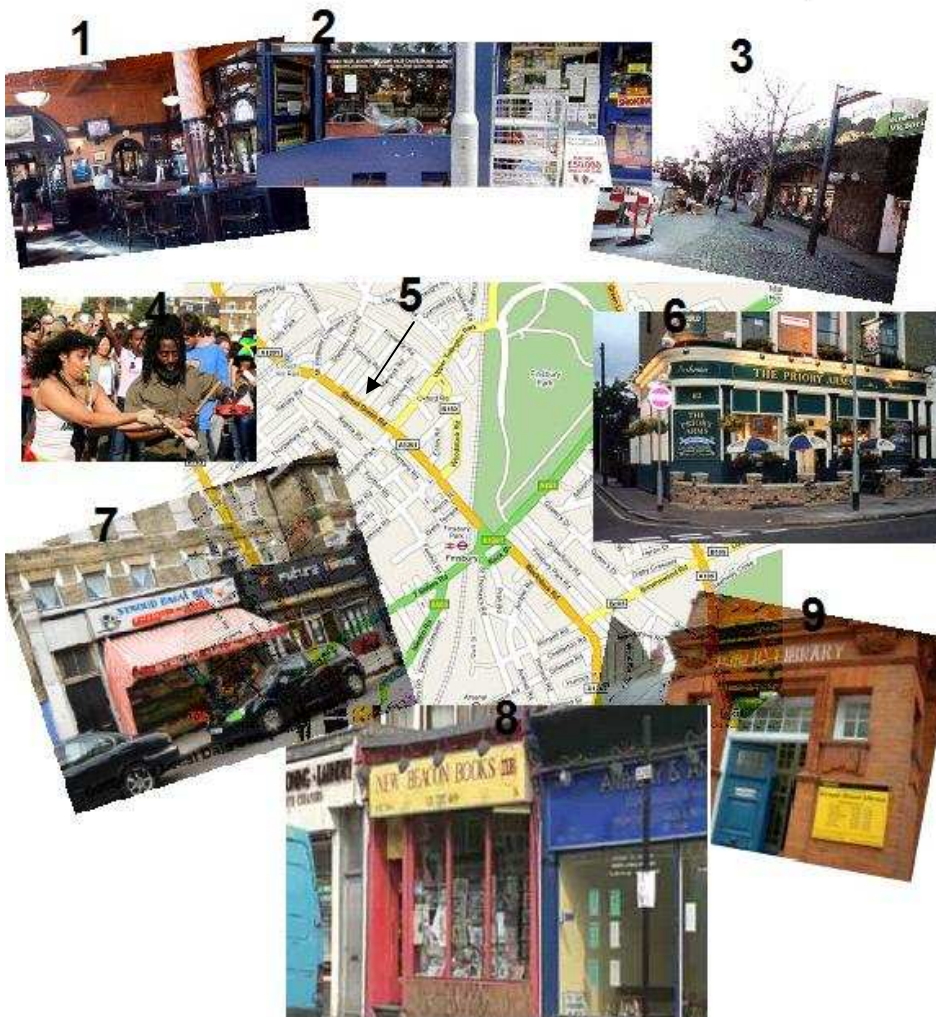
Line 53 Why did the narrator express surprise: **'She's coming to your place to eat already? A Colombo girl?'** (This would be culturally forward and improper behaviour amongst that community)

Line 99. What is the significance of the narrator having a second sip of beer? **'Yes.' I took a sip of beer. And then another.** (He knew that Byron was wrong but didn't know how to deal with it so was making some time). As, at this point, what you think the outcome will be. Is Byron being headstrong and foolish – blinded by love or infatuation?

Line 176. Why did they laugh? **He laughed and banged my knuckles with his.** (The reference to the goat and the goat curry makes a neat connection. However, within the story, it will also refer to the narrator being set up: being 'the goat'. However, the students will only discover this later).

Context

Activity 1



1. Interior of pub (final scene, waiting for Rehana) (lines 179 – 200). 2. -
3. Possibly W3 bus (line 16) 4. – 5. Stroud Green Road (1st paragraph)
6. Pub with outside tables (line 65) 7. Halal butchers (line 18) 8. New Beacon bookshop (line 1)
9. Public library (line 27/28)

Activity 2

1. With which community is Hubble Bubble club night most strongly associated? Where is it held? *Middle East / No fixed venue*
2. With which community would you most associate the Boleyn Cinema? *Asian*
3. Which community has its bands and DJ sets featured every 2nd Thursday of each month at Viva Viva? *African*
4. What will you find at 51 Pimlico Road, SW1? *Chinese restaurant*

5. Which community can offer you Poor Man's Black Velvet and Black Maria? *Irish*
6. If you found yourself eating custard tarts in Stockwell Road, which community would you have visited? *European (Portuguese especially)*
7. With which community will Londoners associate August and Notting Hill? Why? *Caribbean / Carnival*
8. With which community is Golders Green most strongly identified? *Jewish*
9. Which community has its own film festival at the Rio Cinema in December? *Turkish*
10. If you started a walk at 8.00 at Fitzroy Square, which community would you be exploring? *Latin American*

Word Work

1.

I had first met Byron at a Bhundu Boys concert at the Town and County Club back in the mid-eighties. He claimed to have been a freedom fighter in Rhodesia, pre-Zimbabwe, before getting a British Council scholarship to come to England. I never quite believed him; he didn't seem to have the physique of a fighter. But then, maybe that's why he got a scholarship. What did I know about ZAPU and ZANU? Even Mugabe always looked pretty narrow-chested to me. I had lost touch with Byron for years until a few months ago when I bumped into him at the New Beacon. He had turned into a librarian and said he worked for the London borough of Haringey.

Note use of past perfect infinitive in second line.

Questions to check understanding: 1. why does the narrator say 'I never quite believed him' instead of 'I had never quite believed him'? (*Answer: he continued not to believe it; if the past perfect was used then at some time in the past he would have started to believe Byron*). 2. Ask same question for 'and said he worked for...'