

# Cool Room 3

## Key

### Pre Reading Activities

Introduction

Q: Senior position in a cemetery in Switzerland.

Annoyed

Q The children have ice-cream – clearly in the past he has forbidden this. He sees Rita as an accomplice of the children.

Only a child (he is not: ref to 'eldest' implying at least one – younger-sibling)

Q: reference to 'potty-training'

In the story building activity, any narrative that uses the information given (including anything from the quoted texts) is valid. The teacher's task is simply to advise or help when requested: the stories must be the students' alone.

The students should be encouraged to take notes but not to write down the story word for word. They should work in small groups (4 or 5) and elect one member of the group to tell the story to the rest of the class.

Now they are ready to read – or listen to – the story 'Cool Room 3'

## Post Reading Activities

### 1 Metaphor

Rita had gradually shed her outer layers of youthful brightness and warmth, like a poppy letting go of its petals, and had hardened into something else, something unyielding - a hoarder of terrible seeds.

*(The flower metaphor is extended in reference to 'morning glory', a flower which is characterised by its bright blue petals)*

Their flimsy petals were fluttering and waving in the continuous air stream. Beckoning. He approached cautiously, as though they might explode and spit their black seeds at him. Then he pounced. And yanked out every single one of them. ....

..... He seized the poppies next to him and began to tear off their petals, dropping them out of the car window by the fistful. When he had finished, he stuck the stalks with their skull heads into the empty Henniez bottle, like trophies.

Students can speculate about Max's occupation – gardening and flowers clearly have a significant role to play in his life and he would clearly be drawn to such metaphors himself.

## 2. In Memory

1. The theme is memory and false memory, and this can lead to wishful thinking about a past that seemed better than it actually was. Clearly Max looks back on his life and regrets what it has become; the past, symbolised by his mother, was a more perfect time and he is now reminded of that by the new occupant of Cool Room 3.

2.

He nodded to himself as he pictured the latest arrival there, in Cool Room 3, a silver-haired lady with soft, peaceful features, whose relatives had ordered several bouquets of roses, lilies and irises, and a posy of marigolds for her chest. The lady looked so much like his own mother, dead now for ten years, that he'd felt compelled to add a gift of his own, a small pot of gentians - his mother's favourites. ....

Or - his fingers stopped drumming and he drew in his breath sharply - he could go up to the chapel of rest, unlock its doors, and visit Cool Room 3 with the old lady. Paying his respects, as it were. ....

Adding spice to his empty existence. And wasn't that what he was going to do anyway, by returning to the old lady in Cool Room 3? Wasn't he trying to salvage something long dead and gone? Glorifying it? His mother had died ten years ago. Why the hell couldn't he live with the living? .....

3. See 1. above. Max was clearly strengthened by what he saw as an 'alliance' between the dead woman and himself through the memory of his mother. Did this make him brave enough to do the 'stunt'?

## 3. Language Point

1. Allow variations

2. Rita had gradually ..... in the years following the birth .....
3. His mobile went shortly afterwards
4. The waves of voices abruptly separated ..... (or 'abruptly at end of sentence')
5. Max heard, all of a sudden, what .....
6. He pictured terrifying scenarios as he listened.
7. Max could tell there was ..... chalet even before he rounded .....
8. Max noticed that..... darkness, as he coasted towards his house.

2. They can all be changed to greater or lesser effect:

Constantly reminding him of the bodies in the chapel of rest, her skull had begun .....

Turning in her seat so he couldn't ..... Rita reached for the bottle .....

Dead now for ten years, his own mother had looked like the lady (*Careful!*)

Sweat pouring off him, he was beginning to feel hot again (*This is the least successful and students could justifiably say it shouldn't be done*)

The author probably chose not to do so because dramatic effect was not needed at this point, or because a similar device had just been used. Note that the author normally uses 'fronting' when the action picks up, and leaves it alone when the text is more reflective.

3. There are 20 to be found (included the 8 given above) – though some are to be found in sentence fragments which the author also uses for dramatic effect.

## 4. Hyperfiction

The hyperfiction section can only be accessed on-line. Students should access the file called 'Cool Room 3 – Hyperfiction'. This is the same text that they have already read (downloaded from the pdf) but at FOUR points in it, the text is in blue. This indicates a hyperlink where alternative versions of the story can be explored.

Two of the links [Maybe the time had come to teach them all a lesson.](#) and [Passing the spot where he had abandoned Rita and the kids,](#) take the reader to an alternative reality where another sequence of events unfolds. The other two links take the reader to a page where they are invited to work out their own alternative narratives from that point on: the first asks the reader to consider the story from Rita's point of view from the moment when Max takes off and abandons them and the second asks the reader to consider what happens immediately after the story ends. Students can choose which of the tasks they wish to work on, and they can use the alternative hypertext versions of the story as background material if they wish.

The work should be written. The editors of WordPowered would be thrilled to receive students' work on this section, which they will post on a special page.