

Reading

Thematic Overview

'Stone Cold' – Robert Swindells

Stone Cold by Robert Swindells is a gripping tale that explores the harsh realities of homelessness. It follows a teenage boy named Link, who not only faces societal neglect but also the threat of a dangerous serial killer targeting homeless individuals.

English

The book's split narrative between Link, a homeless teenager, and Shelter, a menacing ex-army officer, provides a dual perspective. This setup allows Pupils to analyse character development, unreliable narration, and themes of survival, alienation, and mental instability — all reflective of 20th-century social concerns.

Poems from the 20th century, such as *Night Mail* by W.H. Auden or *The Waste Land* by T.S. Eliot, capture urban environments and challenges. Pupils could compare the bleakness and sense of desolation in *Stone Cold* with the depictions of city life in these poems.

Art

The Pupils could examine and create sketches or models inspired by London's diverse architectural styles, particularly those associated with housing and public spaces in urban areas.

The theme of urban survival in *Stone Cold* could be paired with studies of graffiti and street art, focusing on how these art forms serve as social commentary or convey messages about life on the streets.

Geography

In *Stone Cold*, rivers symbolise the unpredictability and changes in Link's challenging life as he navigates the streets. Although not central to the plot, rivers represent the obstacles faced by homeless individuals. The flowing nature of rivers mirrors Link's unstable circumstances, highlighting his lack of support.

Extreme weather also plays a crucial role in the story, with the biting cold underscoring the harsh reality of homelessness. Link's encounters with severe weather illustrate his vulnerability, as homeless individuals often confront life-threatening conditions without adequate shelter. This theme connects to broader societal issues, such as the lack of support for those in need and the isolation that frequently accompanies homelessness, demonstrating how external forces leave them feeling powerless.

Science

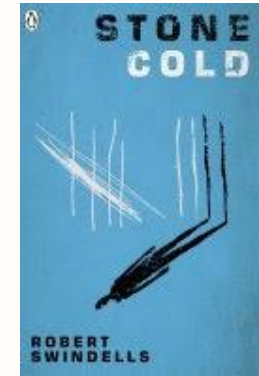
The need for warmth among those who are homeless can be a starting point for understanding combustion, fire safety, and the chemistry behind burning materials.

Food insecurity is another theme that can bridge discussions on the nutritional needs of the body, the effects of malnutrition, and the science of energy in food. This could include caloric value discussions, the biological need for nutrients, and comparing high-energy foods that would be especially important for individuals with limited food resources.

Technology

Link the tension and suspense in *Stone Cold* to the precision required in clockmaking. Pupils could learn about the mechanisms of different types of clocks, exploring how gears and springs work in a traditional mechanical clock.

Pupils might construct simple boat models, exploring materials that float and understanding the physics of buoyancy and displacement, which connects to themes of survival and independence.



History

The story illustrates the breakdown of social structures, akin to the disillusionment with the Catholic Church during the Reformation. Link becomes homeless due to family issues, highlighting society's failure to support those in need and the erosion of trust in authority. Just as reformers challenged the Church, Link embodies resistance against a system that overlooks vulnerable individuals.

During the English Civil War (1642–1651), society was sharply divided, mirroring the clear divide between the housed and the homeless in *Stone Cold*. Both narratives examine power and survival in difficult times, with Link vulnerable to those in authority, much like individuals navigating political turmoil during that period. The violence of the Civil War resonates with the dangers Link faces from the killer Shelter, whose warped sense of justice reflects the dehumanisation prevalent in times of social chaos.