

Where the River Runs Gold

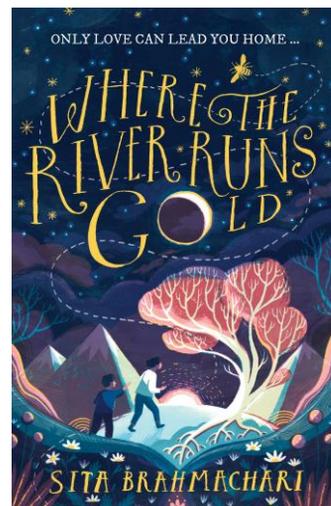
Sita Brahmachari

Introduction

Suitable for: Ages 9–11

Includes: Extracts from the text + corresponding discussion questions and activities

Themes: Climate; Justice; Stories; Love



Contents

EXTRACT 1: Climate Chaos (*taken from Chapter Two*)

Objectives: Explore the issue of Climate Change; draw a sketch of a Graffiti tree and complete a creative piece of writing inspired by the natural world.

Subjects: Literacy: Creative Writing, Geography, Science, Design, Art and Technology

EXTRACT 2: Stories (*taken from Chapter Six*)

Objectives: Explore the theme of storytelling in relation to different characters in the text; share a meaningful story with your classmates explaining its significance to you.

Subjects: Literacy: Reading for Pleasure, Drama, PSHE

EXTRACT 3: Justice (*taken from Chapter Nineteen*)

Objectives: Analyse the theme of injustice in the book and in the world today; create a 'Social Justice Recipe' listing all the ingredients that make a society fair for all.

Subjects: Citizenship, PSHE, Design, Art and Technology

EXTRACT 4: Love (*taken from Chapter Twenty-Nine*)

Objectives: Consider the relationship between love and trust in the story and in society as a whole; design a card or write a poem with the purpose of telling someone that you love them.

Subjects: Literacy: Creative Writing, Poetry, Citizenship, PSHE, Design, Art and Technology

WHERE THE RIVER RUNS GOLD

SITA BRAHMACHARI

About the book

Two children must risk everything to escape their fate and find the impossible . . . A brave, thought-provoking adventure by award-winning author, Sita Brahmachari.

Shifa and her brother, Themba, live in Kairos City with their father, Nabil. The few live in luxury, whilst the millions like them crowd together in compounds, surviving on meagre rations and governed by Freedom Fields – the organisation that looks after you, as long as you opt in.

The bees have long disappeared; instead children must labour on farms, pollinating crops by hand so that the nation can eat. The farm Shifa and Themba are sent to is hard and cruel. Themba won't survive there and Shifa comes up with a plan to break them out. But they have no idea where they are - their only guide is a map drawn from the ramblings of a stranger.

The journey ahead is fraught with danger, but Shifa is strong and knows to listen to her instincts - to let love guide them home. The freedom of a nation depends on it . . .

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Extract One: CLIMATE CHAOS (*Taken from Chapter Two*)

Shifa clung to the grey-shadow walls of their block, moving swiftly towards the compound gates, past the park with the broken swings, but as she rounded the corner she stopped in her tracks. There, towering over her on the huge wall that surrounded the compound, was an enormous painting of a cherry tree exploding into pink blossom, with the word 'Graffitree' emblazoned along the length of its trunk.

Shifa had heard about an underground movement of artists breaking ARK law by painting trees, flowers, plants and bees on walls all over the city, but she'd yet to see them for herself. She gasped at the beauty of the giant painting. If she closed her eyes and opened them just a little she could imagine that she was standing in front of a real tree. What would it smell like? Sweet? Aunt Lottie thought the Graffitree artists were likely to be 'Outlanders', or 'Foragers' as she preferred to call herself and her ever-growing band of friends. Lottie said only people with free thought could think up such a beautiful protest against the Freedom Fields Family. *If I was a forager and could paint like my brother, I would fill this city with Graffitrees,* Shifa thought.

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Extract One: CLIMATE CHAOS (*Taken from Chapter Two*)

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

Why do you think all the real trees have disappeared? Why is this frightening?

What do the Graffitrees symbolise? Explain your ideas.

Why do you think Aunt Lottie describes them as a 'beautiful protest?' What does this suggest?

How does the topic of 'Climate Chaos' in the book, relate to Climate Change on our planet today?

What lessons can we learn from the text about pollution and the natural world?

ACTIVITY: GRAFFITREES

Subjects: Creative Writing, Geography, Science, Design, Art and Technology

Close your eyes while your teacher reads out the extract of the Graffitree once again. As you are doing this, picture what Shifa's world looks like without nature and imagine seeing the colour and wonder of the painted tree for the first time. How does this make you feel?

Sketch the Graffitree from Shifa's perspective, making your drawing as bright and colourful as possible. You may wish to include the backdrop of the city's 'grey-shadow walls' to form a contrast with the beauty of the tree.

Finally, write a creative piece of writing inspired by the natural world. It could be a tree or any green space like a park or wood. You could even use the sea or a beach or any other aspect of nature that inspires you. Make your writing as descriptive as possible so that the reader can picture it as clearly as you saw the Graffitree in your mind.

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Extract Two: STORIES *(Taken from Chapter Six)*

‘Dear Papa, I think you’ll find
That no one can take away the trees that grow in
your mind.’

Their story hive had been born when their papa had revealed to them the secret they must never tell – that he had not, after all, allowed the Crows to take away all of his books. Here, their minds and hearts had travelled far across Kairos City to the times before the devastation of Hurricane Chronos. Here they had read contraband pages that they had discovered in unlikely places around the city, and with these finds their story hive had expanded into wild deserts, alien planets, raging rivers, bird and butterfly aviaries, the tallest snow-capped mountain ranges and the sweetest flowering meadows – a world away from the rules and regulations of Freedom Fields.

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Extract Two: STORIES (Taken from Chapter Six)

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

What does Themba's rhyming note mean? Why are stories so important to Themba in particular?

Why is the story hive so significant for Shifa's family? How could it get them into trouble?

Can you think of examples of different stories that are told over the course of the book? Who tells them?

Which characters don't like or don't believe in stories? Why do you think they feel this way?

How do stories help Shifa in her quest? Which story in particular do you think is most significant and why?

ACTIVITY: STORY HIVE

Subjects: Literacy: Reading for Pleasure, Drama, PSHE

Create your own Story Hive by sitting in a circle together as a class with a box in the middle. Think about all the stories that you have read or heard in your life so far. How have these stories shaped you and inspired you?

On a scrap of paper, summarise one of these stories. Try to choose one that is particularly important or memorable for you. Your stories may have been read to you, made up, or they might be past experiences told by family or friends. They could even be storylines from films or games! No need to put your name on it, keep it anonymous.

Your teacher will read out theirs as an example first to give you some ideas. When you have written down your story, place your piece of paper in the box and mix them up.

Pass the box round the circle, taking it in turns to pick out a story and read it out to the class. Briefly discuss each story, for instance, what is interesting about it? Why might it be meaningful to the person who wrote it? Why do we like hearing each other's stories? What do we learn or gain from them?

Keep the stories from your Story Hive, as they can be used to inspire creative writing tasks for homework or for another lesson later in the year. You could even mount them on the wall in the shape of a beehive!

Extract Three: JUSTICE *(Taken from Chapter 19)*

Ailish handed Shifa a misting gun. ‘They have us spray the strawberries with it to make them stay perfect for longer,’ Ailish explained. As she worked the chemical residue settled on her tongue. Shifa wrinkled her nose and pursed her lips.

Ailish laughed. ‘Watch the wind doesn’t turn or your face’ll stay like that! You’ll get used to it!’

That would be the most dangerous thing I could do, Shifa thought, get used to it. The sense of injustice that had been growing in her since she’d entered the agora was burning ever fiercer now. She cast around her fellow recruits. I’m a child, we’re all children, she reminded herself. Hot and exhausted from long hours of work and far away from home. She thought about the Paragon children who would eat these perfect strawberries, decorate their homes with birds of paradise and would never know the conditions they were grown in. If the cost of a beautiful life for one child meant enslavement for another. how could you call it freedom? Lottie had been right to have no faith in the system. The whole concept of Freedom Fields was a lie.

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Extract Three: JUSTICE (*Taken from Chapter 19*)

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

What do the words 'justice' and 'injustice' mean? Why does Shifa feel a sense of injustice so strongly at this point in the story?

How would Shifa's life be different if she was a Paragon? Give examples.

Why do you think Shifa believes that it would be '*dangerous*' to 'get used to' the injustice of her land?

Instead of accepting her situation, how does Shifa react? Why is this inspiring?

How do these issues relate to real-life injustice experienced by many people across the world today? Explain your ideas.

ACTIVITY: SOCIAL JUSTICE RECIPE

Subjects: Citizenship, PSHE, Design, Art and Technology

As a class, have a discussion about what makes a society just and fair. Think about the issues that affect Shifa when she goes to the Freedom Fields, such as education, slave labour, and living conditions. How does it make us feel when we are treated unfairly?

Using ideas from your discussion, consider society as a dish you are going to cook, like a stew or a curry. Consider all the issues you have talked about as ingredients that go into it. Put all this together to create a recipe for what gives us social justice. The first one has been done for you as an example. Now try to come up with more ideas of your own.

When you have filled in the list of ingredients, draw icons or symbols for these ingredients going into the bowl and add some colour to it!

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My Social Justice Recipe

By



Ingredients needed:

Eg. 250g of Kindness.....

A pinch of

2 table spoons of

150ml of

A good helping of

2 cans of

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Extract Four: LOVE (Taken from Chapter 29)

Above them the willow tree waved in the wind and a branch floated towards her, brushing her hand with its feathery leaves. How strange that their initials were the same as Lona's and Silas's, as if this tree was sharing a message with them. The owl that she had been told was extinct had come to sit here too. *But what is this all meant to mean?* Above them she heard the sound of light-footed animals racing through the grass. The night was alive, with running hares darting in every direction . . .

'Look for the hare in the moon, Shifa – look for kindness.'

Nabil's voice filled her mind. *In the morning I'll find a way to answer Luca's question – tell him that I want to trust him but that trust takes time to build.* Shifa watched Luca sleeping – all the hard lines in his face were smoothed away by sleep. He was right. She was lucky to have been found and given a home by someone who could truly teach her what trust and love meant.

She cupped her hands together in a skep heart. *I love you, Papa.* For now she knew she had been given a truly golden gift that Luca had never known – love.

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Extract Three: LOVE (*Taken from Chapter 29*)

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

What message do you think the tree is 'sharing' with Shifa? Explain your ideas.

Why is Shifa 'lucky' in many ways compared to Luca?

Is it possible to truly love someone if you don't trust them? Discuss your ideas.

How does love for her family drive Shifa on despite the challenges she faces?

How does Luca's character change as the story progresses? What does this tell us about the power of love and trust?

ACTIVITY: EXPRESSING LOVE

Subjects: Creative Writing, Poetry, Citizenship, PSHE, Design, Art and Technology

One of Shifa's greatest regrets throughout the book is that she doesn't tell Nabil that she loves him. Yet love is shown in many different ways by different characters. For example: there is the skip heart, there are gestures of kindness and selflessness – and, of course, love is expressed through words. With a partner, discuss the many ways that you express love on a day-to-day basis. Do you express it enough? How could you express it more often? Why is it important to do so?

Think about someone you love and why he or she is important to you. Show them that you love them by either writing a poem or creating a card to give them for an upcoming event like a birthday, mothers' or fathers' day, or a religious celebration. You could even create a combination of the two by making a card and writing a poem inside it, it's up to you...

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