

Barrington Stoke

CLASSROOM RESOURCES



WORLD BURN DOWN AND TIN BOY

Steve Cole

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PART 1 SYNOPSIS AND THEMES

SYNOPSIS AND THEMES

This guide has been produced to provide ideas for guiding readers through Steve Cole's **World Burn Down** and **Tin Boy**, two short novels with pertinent and powerful themes. The guide can be used after reading one or both books.

A synopsis is followed by quotes from the books with suggestions for discussion points designed to help readers engage with the topics the books cover. There are then questions about both books and the environmental issues they tackle. The questions are intended to further understanding of the texts and provide opportunities for classroom discussion or writing work.

We hope you enjoy using these materials with your students.

World Burn Down is an adventure story, following Carlos' journey out of the Amazon rainforest after he is kidnapped by land-grabbers in response to his mum's involvement with IBAMA. Along the way Carlos discovers the depth of destruction occurring in the Amazon and strikes up an unlikely friendship with Davi, who is alone and fending for himself after his village was destroyed. Together, Carlos and Davi must find a way to make it out of the rainforest alive ...

Tin Boy is the story of Tono, who miraculously survives a landslide in the ocean whilst digging for tin with his cousin, and starts to believe he has a superpower. Together with Kemala, the girl who helped nurse him back to health, Tono becomes 'Tin Boy': a superhero helping to save people from the mines. As their plan becomes more elaborate and more people find out about it, Tono questions whether or not he is doing the right thing.

Both **World Burn Down** and **Tin Boy** talk about very real environmental issues facing the world. In the Amazon, deforestation is a huge problem with land-grabbers pushing out indigenous tribes, like Davi's, in order to mine for tin, gold and magnesium, which then increases the strength of the wildfires. Tin mining, as seen in **Tin Boy**, is dangerous to both the people mining it, including large numbers of children, and the environment around them.

In both books, Steve Cole explores the impact of these issues on the local communities whilst highlighting the wider global issues in a truly accessible manner.

PART 2

WORLD BURN DOWN

He wondered what worse horrors lay beneath the surface of the silent lake. I've got to get out of the jungle, Carlos thought miserably. But without Davi, what chance do I stand? [page 51]

[...]

Carlos didn't talk of how much he'd missed Davi's company in those lonely, frightened days and nights on the run. How he'd lie awake wondering what had become of the boy he'd hardly understood but who had still saved his life. [page 104]

Explore the friendship between Carlos and Davi:

- How does this change throughout the book?
 - Provide at least two examples from the text.
- How do the characters help one another?
 - How does their friendship influence the actions they take throughout the book?
- What kind of impression does the author give of Davi when his character first appears?
 - Does this change? If so, how?



His whole world has burned down, thought Carlos. He's like a lost kid. Davi only came after me cos he wanted that stupid Black Panther. Now it's the only thing he's got. [page 95]

[...]

Davi pulled out his broken Black Panther and held it like a club. "Fight!" He pointed between Carlos and the figurine. "You said. Fight." [page 97]

Explore the importance of the figurine:

- What does it mean to both Davi and Carlos? What does it represent for them?
- How does this figurine inspire the characters?
 - Provide examples from the text to support your answer.
- What does Davi's attachment to the figurine tell you about him?

For Carlos it was simply something that took his mum away. Something that left him defrosting yet another meal for one in the microwave while he waited for Mum to get back. [page 12]

[...]

This missionary had built the hut as a place to help sick people with western medicine. He had found Davi, who'd been thrown out by his tribe and left to die in the forest – probably because of the way he looked. [page 57]

Explore themes of loneliness throughout the book:

- How do both Davi and Carlos handle being alone?
 - How does that change throughout the book?
- What effect does being alone have on the characters?



In the rainforest there was only a great shapeless tangle of nature. Branches and vines hung down on all sides. Butterflies flapped lazily by. Tiny jewelled hummingbirds darted past so fast they were gone before Carlos could turn his head. Every few metres something scuttled away into the undergrowth. At first he'd jumped with fright at every movement. Now he was worn down. [page 20]

[...]

Mostly, when he talked of it, he told the story as a great adventure: driving the bike cross-country, not daring to take proper tracks or roads until he was miles and miles from the mine. [page 102]

[...]

Carlos knows that it takes everyone – whoever and wherever they are, however old. Everyone has to stand up and say: "MINE. The rainforests are mine. They stand for me, they stand for life. And I will stand and fight for them." [page 109]

Explore Carlos' adventure through the rainforest:

- How does his attitude to the Amazon change?
- How does the adventure through the Amazon change Carlos?
 - In what ways does this affect his character's actions?
- How does the author portray Carlos' bravery in the rainforest? Provide three examples from the text.

Examine the quotes above:

- How does the author describe the wildness of the Amazon?
- What do the language choices tell the reader about:
 - the animals?
 - the plants?
 - the atmosphere and how it makes Carlos feel?

- Take the following words from the above quote and think of other words that you could replace them with:
 - shapeless
 - tangle
 - jewelled
 - scuttled
 - Do your word choices change the feeling or imagery that is created for the reader?
-

The Amazon rainforest was the so-called “lungs of the Earth”. For centuries it had been sucking up tons of the carbon dioxide that humans pumped into the atmosphere. But as more of the rainforest was lost, the job it did wasn’t just slowing down. It was going into reverse.

As they were destroyed, the rainforests were starting to breathe out the carbon dioxide they had held on to for so long. This meant climate change was boosted and the planet warmed faster. [page 11]

[...]

The Amazon was home to so many wonderful things: thousands of rare species, plants that could hold an entire ecosystem in their leaves, incredible animals and natural medicines that might save countless human lives. The rainforests brought diversity to the planet, so much colour and life.

[page 43]

Explore how the destruction of the Amazon is described:

- How does the description of the Amazon change throughout the book – before and after the fires Carlos witnesses?
- What kind of language is used? Provide examples from the text.
- What kind of imagery is used in these descriptions?
- How does the author convey the importance of the Amazon to the world?



More people were tackling the fire, some using eight-foot poles with car-mats on the end to try to beat out the flames in the under-brush. Others squirted water through hoses from tanks on their backs. But against the sheer crackling magnitude of the flaming inferno, they were like children using fly swats and water pistols. [page 68]

Examine the above quote:

- What techniques is the author using to convey the scale of the fire? How effective are they?
- How does this description make you feel about the destruction of the Amazon?



PART 3 TIN BOY

Yeah, Kemala knows how to find me. But I feel as if she doesn't want me to find her. [page 64]

[...]

"You'd still be lying on your back if not for me, Tono. You'd still be a nothing. I helped you back from that coma. I told you stories in your sleep, cleaned you up. I bothered with you." [page 81]

Explore the relationship between Tono and Kemala:

- How do Tono and Kemala help one another throughout the book? Provide examples from the text to support your answer
- How does their relationship change? Do you think it changes in a good way?
 - Is there an imbalance to their relationship? Does one have power over the other?
- What are the characters' motives for creating 'Tin Boy'?
 - Do you think Tono and Kemala's motivation is different? Why?

Every superhero has a story that explains how they became special. Superpowers can come from a spider bite, or some random accident, or scientific genius, or in a lightning bolt from the gods.

Whatever happens, it leaves them changed for ever. [page 32]

[...]

"We tried to spare you this, Tono, but it's better you know. Better you stop believing in impossible things, like saving people. Like superheroes." [page 102]

[...]

I pull my other hand out of my pocket. I place my red stone – my "tinkanite" – in her fingers. I suppose it has changed me, in a way. It's changed everything. [page 108]

Explore the importance of superheroes in the book:

- In what ways does the fantasy of superheroes influence Tono?
 - How do other characters use this against him?
- How important are superheroes to the different characters?
 - How does this differ between them?
 - Provide evidence from the text to support your answer.

Sand swarms about my face like mosquitoes. The wall of the ditch towers over us now, maybe three metres high. It gets harder to see. My heart is thumping, and I'm chewing the end of the tube to breathe air that tastes of rubber. And still the ditch must go deeper. I search the mud wall for a trail of tin ore – there's a line of white rocks and soil you look for. If we're lucky, there'll be lots. We aren't lucky very often. [page 8]

[...]

I'm doing it. Feelings flood into me. I'm actually doing this! I do have powers, no doubt now. I'll save these stupid thugs; I'll save myself. [page 91]

Explore the theme of bravery:

- In what ways does the author convey bravery in the text?
 - What language is used?
 - What differing scenarios show bravery?
 - Provide examples from the text to support your answer.
- How is the bravery of the miners, Kemala and Tono explored?
 - Are they brave in different ways? How is their bravery different?
 - Are there any other characters who show bravery?
 - Provide examples from the text to support your answer.



If I get money, I can pay back Rustam quickly, so he will be happy with me for once ... and imagine what my mum will say! Won't she be amazed by her boy. By Tin Boy! [page 31]

[...]

I feel crushed. No power left in me. The truth hits me like a sledgehammer and as bare as the dead dunes all around. There never was any power. Tin Boy is just Tono. Scrawny little Tono, the idiot who actually believed he could be someone incredible. [Page 96]

How does Tono change throughout the book?

- How does he feel about taking people's money?
 - How does this change?
 - Provide examples from the text to support your answer
- Why does Tono want to try and help people?
- Do you think Tono feels remorseful for playing 'Tin Boy'?
- Choose three words from the text that you think best describe how Tono is feeling.
 - Why do you think the author chose these words?
 - Do you find these words emotive?
 - How do they make you feel about Tono?



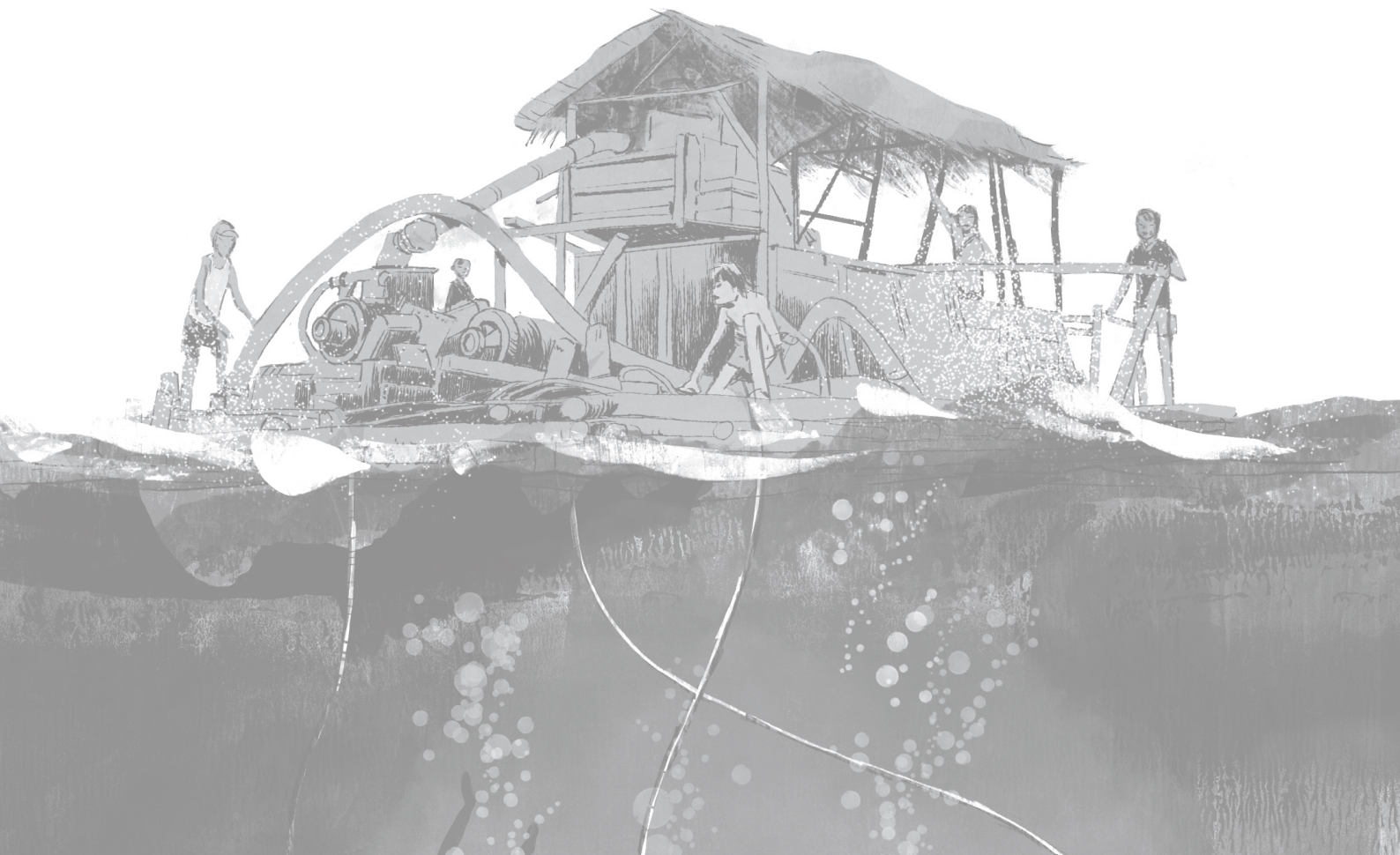
“Radiation only kills you,” Yan snaps. “Slower than a landslide but just as sure.” He coughs again, shakes his head. “We dig away at our home, and our home digs away at us. Each hurting the other a little more each day.” [page 67]

[...]

“Wouldn’t it be better if we could just shut the mines down? If we could stop destroying our home and destroying ourselves just so the big companies can make smarter smartphones that people like us will never even see?” [page 107]

Examine how the author talks about the tin mines:

- How are the mines described by the author?
- How does the author convey the fear Tono feels about going into the mine?
- In what ways does the author explore the effects of the mines on the town?
- How do the mines affect the people in the town?



PART 4 ENVIRONMENTAL QUESTIONS

These Land-Grabbers were illegally cutting their way deep into Amazonas, the part of Brazil where the world's largest areas of unbroken rainforest were found. They were farmers, loggers, miners. The statistics were crazy – an area of forest the size of a soccer pitch was lost every minute.

[page 10] - World Burn Down

[...]

“Radiation only kills you,” Yan snaps. “Slower than a landslide but just as sure.” He coughs again, shakes his head. “We dig away at our home, and our home digs away at us. Each hurting the other a little more each day.” **[page 67] - Tin Boy**

Use the following questions to discuss both books and their environmental themes. Provide examples from the books to support your answers:

In what ways do both books show the impact of humans on the environment?

- How do the books explore what humans can do to help the environment?
- How do humans destroy the environment throughout both books?

How does the author highlight the importance of the environment throughout both texts?

- Is the language used to describe the environment emotive or impactful?
- What techniques does the author use in both books to create this impact?

How does the author explore the danger the environment poses to the characters?

- Does this change throughout the books?
- What can this tell us about human impact on the environment?

In what ways can your actions help stop the spread of climate change?

- What do the characters do to help?
- Research IBAMA.
 - How do they help the Amazon?
 - What other organisations were created to help the environment? How are they doing this?
- Research tin mining in Indonesia.
 - What is the tin used for?
 - What kind of effect does tin mining have on the environment?
 - What, if anything, are people doing to try and stop tin mining in these areas?
 - What aspects of modern life are contributing to the dangerous and damaging use of these mines?

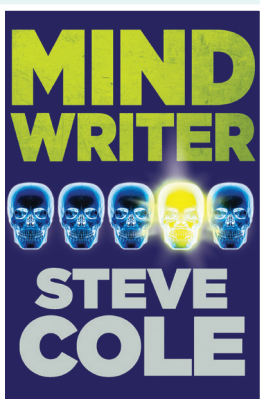


ABOUT THE AUTHOR

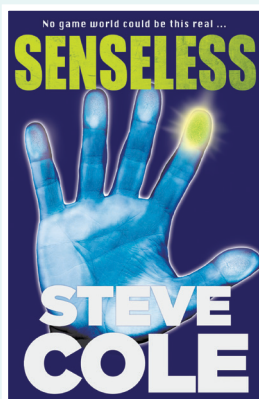


Steve Cole is a bestselling children's author. His various book series include *Z. Rex*, *Thieves Like Us*, *Doctor Who*, the three million copy selling *Young Bond* series. In other careers he has worked as an editor of books and magazines for readers of all ages. Find Steve on twitter @SteveColeBooks.

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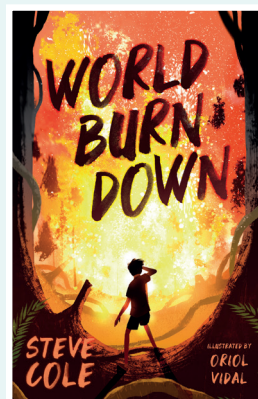
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