

UNTERRICHTS MATERIALIEN

Englisch Sek. II



Changed priorities ahead – “Loose Change” by Andrea Levy

Die Kurzgeschichte in analytischen und kreativen Aufgaben untersuchen

Survey of topics and methods

Main focus	Working with the video	Examining the main characters	Using the herringbone technique	Language and style	Examining social issues	Discussion	Working with the text	Creative writing	Further activity	Materials
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Different ways of living in London Character description and analysis 	•	•					•			Topic 1 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Two video clips from the BBC drama <i>Small Island</i>  Trailer to the movie <i>Notting Hill</i> Video clip and lyrics to the song "Streets of London" by Ralph McTell
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Following the plot with the help of the herringbone technique Examination of the language in the story 		•	•							Topic 2 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> "Herringbone" template
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The issue of homelessness in London Homelessness in "Loose Change" 				•			•			Topic 3 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Website of the homeless shelter "Nightwatch" Website of the homeless magazine "Big Issue"

Changed priorities ahead: the short story "Loose Change" by Andrea Levy

Set in the London National Portrait Gallery, the short story "Loose Change" by Andrea Levy recounts a meeting between two strangers. The unnamed first-person narrator is the grandchild of one of the early post-war immigrants and considers herself an established citizen of London. Finding herself in need of some small change, she asks the people around her for help. A young woman called Laylor is the only person who doesn't turn her back on her. In a conversation with Laylor, the narrator learns that the girl is a refugee from Uzbekistan who is forced to sleep rough in the streets of London. Initially, the narrator feels sympathy for Laylor and considers helping her and even inviting her to her home. She is reminded of the negative experiences of her Caribbean grandmother, who only survived in London with the help of a stranger. But her sympathy for Laylor changes into aversion, as she is repelled by her outward appearance and her behaviour during their encounter. In a twist of the story, the narrator abruptly leaves Laylor and abandons her original plan to help her.

Short stories as a genre

As compared to the novel, the great advantage of the short story is its brevity and its focus on the events during a short period of time. In a quickly sketched situation the short story comes to the point more or less immediately. It leaves it up to the reader to add further details, to continue the story after it has finished or to begin it before it has begun. This space enhances the imagination and inspires creative interpretation.

All of this certainly applies to the plot in "Loose Change" confronting us with the limited perspective of a first-person narrator, whose attitudes may or may not be shared by the reader. The author almost inevitably is part of this process, as Nobel Prize winner Nadine Gordimer put it in an interview: "I love to write [short] stories. It's such a wonderful form, like poetry, because it's so distilled. [...] To me a short story is like an egg: When the beginning comes to

examples of humour in the text, which the students examine as well. In a final task, the **language devices** used by the author are then described and analysed.

Topic 3 focuses on the **issue of homelessness**, in order to provide a closer understanding of the context and background against which this short story was written. A glance at "the capital's undesirables" shows students some of the more unpleasant realities of London, but also challenges them to question their own attitudes towards poor people. In the ensuing analysis and research learners **evaluate measures to fight poverty** and manage difficulties. With this knowledge at the back of their minds, students examine homelessness as portrayed in "Loose Change" and consider possible measures Laylor could take to improve her situation.

Topic 4 deals with the **issue of immigration** which is examined from different angles. Students collect push- and pull-factors for migration, and determine which of these factors led Laylor and her brother to immigrate to London. Next, students **conduct a discussion** between supporters and opponents of open borders, before working with two texts on the arrival of the Windrush in Britain that marked the starting point for mass migration. With the help of this background knowledge, students then examine the theme of immigration in "Loose Change".

Topic 5 connects **xenophobia** with social challenges. Students take a look at historical roots of xenophobia in Britain by analysing Enoch Powell's infamous "**Rivers of Blood**" speech. They scan the short story "Loose Change" for instances of xenophobia and as an optional further activity, they hold a research-based discussion about how xenophobic attitudes have influenced the British population's vote in favour of a Brexit.

Topic 6 returns to the focused interpretation of the short story itself by **analysing its structure** and locating distinct **turning points**. They are indications of twists and surprises in the narrative and can be useful in showing hidden meanings and motives of the protagonists. Further, open endings are used as a means of **creative writing**. Students are asked to either re-write the negative ending of the two women's encounter by revising the narrator's decision and allowing Laylor into her house or to compose a dialogue between Laylor and her brother after the narrator has left.