

# Lethal Deliveries

by Ken Benn

## For the teacher:

These activities are designed for students who are working at curriculum levels 4 and 5. Most of these students should be in years 9, 10 and 11 and working towards the skills needed for NCEA level 1.

Please pick and choose the activities which suit your programme and your students.

## Character Development

This activity is designed to be ongoing as the students read the novel. This replaces a plot summary activity and is intended to interrelate plot and character development. This will provide the students with a basis for writing and other activities.

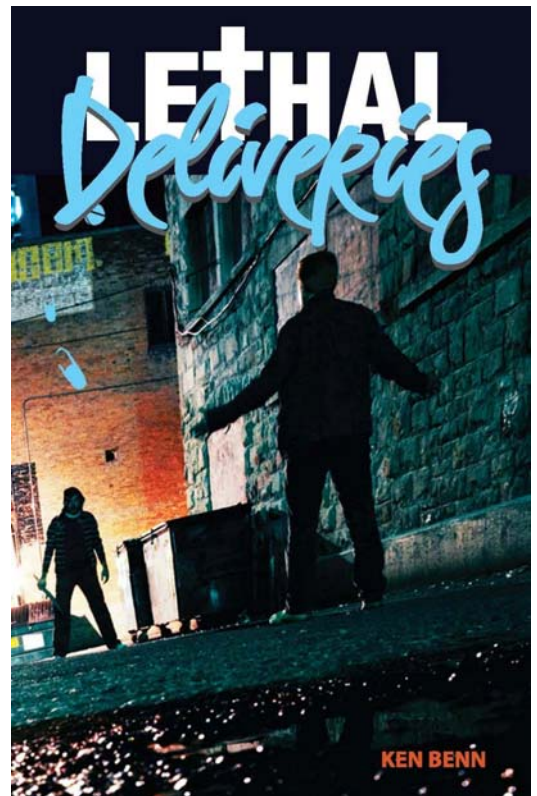
## Instructions to students:

In your workbook, set aside four pages to write character notes for Rochelle, and four pages to write notes on Jack. Divide each page into three columns, like this:

Information about Rochelle	Evidence from text	Chapter and page reference

Information about Jack	Evidence from text	Chapter and page reference

Fill in these charts as you read each chapter. You may not find information about both characters in each chapter.



## Narrative point of view

*Lethal Deliveries*, from a stylistic point of view, is driven by the narrative point of view and it is an excellent novel to use to explore with students how narrative point of view works with other stylistic elements to **create** character and **develop** plot.

For classes who are not ready to integrate this information yet, looking at narrative point of view thoroughly first may be a good starting point.

**First person narrative point of view** is used by authors to **position the reader** right with the narrator by enabling the reader to experience things at the same pace that the narrator does and see things through the narrator's eyes. This gives the reader the perspective of the narrator, something which has benefits and drawbacks. We know that first person narrative point of view is being used when we read 'I' or 'we'. In *Lethal Deliveries* the only first person narrator is Rochelle.

**Another 'device' authors can use** is to interweave the third person narrative point of view, either in the limited omniscient or the pure omniscient, with the first person narrative point of view. The reader knows that this is being used when we read the personal pronouns 'he', 'she' and 'they', as well as the names of characters. Ken Benn interweaves the limited omniscient narrative point of view with the first person narrative point of view, except in one brief chapter when he uses the omniscient.

### And the difference between the limited omniscient and the omniscient is?

The author uses the limited omniscient to position the reader close to a character or a group of characters but does not assume the eyes and voice of that character or characters. This enables the reader to be close to characters but to see things happening simultaneously about which the character(s) may not be aware. Benn uses this to take the reader into the worlds of Methsy, Jack and Walter without us losing our identification with Rochelle. It also enables the reader to know things Rochelle cannot know and sometimes to know important things before she does. This gives the reader a degree of independence from Rochelle which we otherwise would not have, and the freedom to form independent ideas of our own about characters. It is used in chapters 2,4,6,8,10,12,14,18,20,22 and 24.

The omniscient narrative point of view is sometimes referred to as the 'eye of God technique' and is used when an author does not wish to position the reader with partiality towards a character or group of characters. It gives the author the freedom to expose as much of a 360 degree view of the world of the novel and the actions of its characters as suits the development of the plot. In this case, it is used once only, in chapter 26, and is used to distance Jack's father, the Boss, and Fat Beard from any sense of family obligation the reader assumes the father and his worker should feel towards the boy. Jack is just another tool to be used.

### Activity:

In groups or individually, get students to find examples from the text to complete this grid:

Rochelle thinks she is...because...	Jack thinks Rochelle is...because...	Methsy thinks Rochelle is...because...	Walter thinks Rochelle is...because...
Rochelle thinks Jack is...because...	Jack thinks he is... because...	Methsy thinks Jack is...because...	Walter thinks Jack is ...because...
Rochelle thinks Methsy is...because...	Jack thinks Methsy is... because...	Methsy thinks he is... because...	Walter thinks Methsy is ... because...
Rochelle thinks Walter is...because...	Jack thinks Walter is ...because...	Methsy thinks Walter is ...because...	Walter thinks he is... because...



# Questions on Themes

## Family relationships

Rochelle and Jack live with their mother. Rochelle's father lives in Australia, and they have lost contact. Jack's father is in Palmerston North, but he has been violent to Jack and Rochelle's mother and is the leader of the Skull Busters gang. Rochelle makes it clear that her mother lacks both emotional and financial support. She has to make ends meet by working shifts at McDonald's. This is a single-parent family under a lot of pressure.

1. How does the family situation affect the behaviour and attitudes of Mum, Jack and Rochelle? Write down examples of their behaviour or comments which back up your answer.
2. In particular, how does the absence of a good father affect both Rochelle and Jack?
3. What does Mum offer as a parent? How does she guide, support, discipline and care for her children? Does she think she is doing a good job?
4. What does Mum think a good father should do? (See chapter 30) Do you agree with her?

Another family introduced in *Lethal Deliveries* is the Schimper family. They seem to be contrasted with Jack and Rochelle's family: this is a two-parent family with money, status and respectability in society. Are there any similarities? Do Jack and the Geek have similar predicaments? Are the contrasting features of these families surface features only?

1. Is Mr Schimper a good father? Give very specific reasons for your judgement of him. He is a *rounded* character, which means he is not all good or all bad, so your answer needs to be balanced.
2. What about Mrs Schimper? Is she a good parent?
3. How has the Geek's cancer affected the way members of the family relate to each other?

## Loyalty

What makes people loyal, supportive and trustworthy? Some of the most unlikely characters in *Lethal Deliveries* are loyal, while some characters from whom loyalty should be expected sometimes let people down.

Team players should show each other loyalty, and consider the team's needs before their own.

1. How much loyalty do the Jaguars show each other, on the rink and off it?
2. How do they react to the Geek's loyal support?
3. How does the idea of teamwork revolutionise the Jaguars' game?

There is a big focus on Jack and Rochelle's family life, since Rochelle is a narrator. This brother and sister cause each other a lot of physical and emotional pain. Yet there is a strong sense of loyalty between them, especially when the chips are down.

1. How does Jack express his loyalty for Rochelle (a) when the team returns from apologising to the Geek? (Chapter 6) And (b) when Rochelle is trapped by Fat Beard? (Chapter 25)
2. Rochelle makes an important decision based on loyalty, when she decides to accompany Methsy in the search for Jack (Chapters 19 and 21) and when she helps Methsy rescue Jack (Chapters 23 and 24). Find quotes that show her loyalty for and commitment to Jack, even putting her comfort and safety on the line.

Rochelle and Jack have two surprising adult mentors, who are loyal in spite of their low status in society: Skye and Methsy.



1. List the loyal and supportive things Skye does for Jack and Rochelle on a regular basis. Then list the extraordinary things she does to help them.
2. What remarks do both Jack and Rochelle make which show that they know Methsy is a loyal and faithful supporter?
3. List ways in which Methsy takes risks to protect the children from the world of crime and drugs.
4. In Chapter 30, when Jack has been accused of murdering Methsy, his comment is:

'I didn't do it,' Jack sighed. 'I would never have killed Methsy. Methsy looked out for us.'

What is ironic about Jack's arrest and conviction?

## Close Reading Questions

### Chapter 1

In this chapter, the author introduces us to the setting and the main characters of the novel.

1. Explain the meanings of the following words as they are used in this chapter: puck (p 5); hogged (p 7); vulnerable (p 7).
2. What does this chapter tell us about who the main characters are, and what their relationships are?
3. Explain why the rock-throwing episode occurs at night.

### Chapter 4

1. What hints are there about Methsy's physical state? Quote from the text to support your answer.
2. What hints are there about Methsy's emotional state? Quote from the text to support your answer.
3. 'His head ... his bed.' What language devices has the author used to describe Methsy's hangover? Explain why they are effective.
4. What is the tone of Phil's comments to Methsy? Explain which specific words and/or expressions convey the tone.
5. How is Phil's tone emphasised by his actions? Carefully consider the verbs used to tell us what he does.

### Chapter 21

In Chapter 21, we are nearing the climax of the book and Rochelle's descriptions of a terrifying night are vivid. At the start of this chapter, it is the beginning of the evening, but already there are suggestions of the fear she feels.

1. In paragraphs 2 and 3, the author uses 3 different verbs instead of 'walked'. List them and say what extra information they give.
2. In paragraphs 1 and 2, the author uses various language features to help us experience the sights, smells and sounds at the railway station. Name the techniques used, quote specific examples and explain how Rochelle's physical and emotional experience of the station is made clear to us in these examples. Write about 60–80 words.
3. Comment on the effectiveness of the description of the train. Mention one technique used and explain why it works well here. Write about 60 words.



## Chapter 32

In the last chapter of the book, we see Phil from Rochelle's perspective

1. How does the first paragraph convey a tone of resignation and hopelessness? Quote to explain your answer.
2. How does Rochelle's physical description of Phil and the words used by Phil convey his discomfort and lack of confidence in the situation? (paragraphs 2–6).
3. Rochelle is in control of her conversation with Phil. Quote words/expressions that show what her attitude to him is and how she ensures that she is not manipulated by him. (Paragraphs 7–10.)

## Answers:

### Chapter 1

1. puck: small, light item passed between players in inline hockey, instead of a ball used in regular hockey; hogged: kept to herself without wanting to share; vulnerable: open to attack from the opposition team.
2. Rochelle and her brother Jack are main characters. They play inline hockey. They struggle with money, and the team is a 'loser' team. Drew is one of the players. She is confident, but not a good team player. They are watched by the Geek, whom they hate. Methsy is the coach. He has a money and alcohol problem.
3. Night is needed as a cover for this illegal act, and it suggests that the characters have something to hide. There is also a suggestion of danger.

### Chapter 4

1. He has a headache – 'New explosions filled Methsy's head'. He is dizzy and feels sick – 'His head spun like a wrecking ball and his stomach filled his throat.' He is feeling physically delicate – 'Methsy winced as a manila file was slapped against his chest.'
2. He has been through a time of stress – 'But Saturday was stressful! He'd freaked out.' He is not happy about his visitor – 'His smoke changed hands and he twisted the latch with a long sigh.'
3. Simile – His head is compared to a wrecking ball. His head is the basic shape of a ball. A wrecking ball swings wildly, and he feels as though his head is swinging around because he is dizzy. Hyperbole – he feels as though he is falling a thousand metres. This is said to show how unsteady he is on his feet. Metaphor – his body is said to be 'filleted', which suggests being cut open, ready to be eaten. He feels pulled apart, physically and emotionally.
4. Phil's tone is patronising and ironic. '...I'm to have missed you desperately if you didn't visit me'; 'Didn't you shave on Wednesday morning?'; 'By the look and smell of you...'
5. Phil 'swaggered' into Methsy's room. He 'slapped' the folder onto Methsy's chest. He 'crooned' his question to Methsy.



## Chapter 21

1. 'tip-toed' – She is not wanting to make a noise; she is frightened; 'sprinted' – She is in a hurry and is desperate to keep up with Methsy; 'staggered' – the train passengers are tired.
2. Sight: metaphors are used to convey the shapes of the buildings and containers, e.g. 'The dark was cut up into all sorts of coloured geometric shapes...'; 'buildings were all dead rectangles ...' The darkness, strange lights and shapes convey Rochelle's fear and uncertainty. Smell: 'The smell of grease and oil was everywhere as if the place was sweating the stuff.' (simile) This helps to emphasise Rochelle's fear, which is probably causing her to sweat too. Sound: '...the heels of my boots sounded like a machine-gun going off.' (simile) '...some piece of machinery would unexpectedly hiss at me ...' (onomatopoeia) The machine gun sound and the hissing sound are both threatening and frightening, emphasising danger and aggression.
3. The train is personified: '...it shrugged its shoulders, gave a long sigh and settled on its haunches for the night.' This is an effective way to describe the train because the sound it makes does sound like a long sigh and it does appear to shake or shudder, which seems like a person shrugging his shoulders. The train is personified and seen like someone who is settling down to go to sleep after a demanding day. This is because it reflects the way the people around it are feeling – both the passengers and Rochelle and Methsy are exhausted. The train going to sleep shows clearly that the action at the railway station is over, and it is time to move on.

## Chapter 32

1. Rochelle and her mum 'said nothing to each other.' Their routine of work for Mum and TV for Rochelle, will continue. There is not even the possibility of giving a gift to Jack.
2. Rochelle sees Phil as 'a guy about fifty years old'. She found him a nuisance before, when he had 'lurked about'. She notices that he 'seemed unsure about what he was going to do next'. Phil pauses several times in mid-sentence during this conversation, and says meaningless things to make up for his feelings of awkwardness: 'I've been meaning to bring it around but ...'; "See you around, then.'
3. Rochelle's memory of Phil is that he 'lurked'. She regards him as an unwelcome intrusion. She does not try to make him feel comfortable, or satisfy his curiosity: when he hands her the envelope from Methsy he 'stuck around', but Rochelle decides: 'I wasn't going to open it with Phil King standing there.' Her refusal to engage with him in conversation or act the way he wants her to manipulate this encounter. Eventually he has to leave.



## Writing Activities

### Report on a social issue

There are several social issues illustrated in *Lethal Deliveries*, such as single-parent families, the problems of drugs in society today, cancer treatments available to teenagers, the importance of sporting teams for teenagers, the problems in the justice system. Research one of these and write a report on your findings. Your report can refer to incidents in the novel to illustrate the points you make, but remember to find some factual evidence as well. Use a range of resources, such as newspaper articles, non-fiction books, interviews and websites. Structure your report in this way:

- Introduction: Give a general outline of the meaning and scope of your investigation.
- Body paragraphs: Deal with one idea in each paragraph. Write a clear topic sentence. Explain your point carefully. Give well-chosen examples to illustrate your point.
- Conclusion: Summarise the main idea of each body paragraph and show the links between the ideas.

### Tough choices: A story in which a character has to make a very difficult choice

There are several characters in *Lethal Deliveries* who have to make very difficult decisions, for which there are consequences. How do they make their choices? Write a short story about such a choice made by a character in the novel. You could see this as an additional chapter in the novel, but it has to make sense as a short story which is read on its own. Make the following clear:

- What is the dilemma faced by the character? Are there moral/social obligations which guide the character?
- What are the influences on that character? Are they conflicting influences?
- What makes the character eventually make a certain choice?
- What are the consequences of that choice? These could be consequences imposed by others or by themselves.

Examples of situations to explore are:

- Phil King's decision to destroy the drug evidence given to him by Methsy
- Rochelle's decision to throw the rock through the Geek's window
- Jack's decision to refuse to apologise to the Geek
- Jack's decision to deliver drugs for his father
- Rochelle's decision to accompany Methsy when he searches for Jack
- Rochelle and Drew's decision to approach the police to defend Methsy's name
- Skye's decision to search for Rochelle and Methsy

