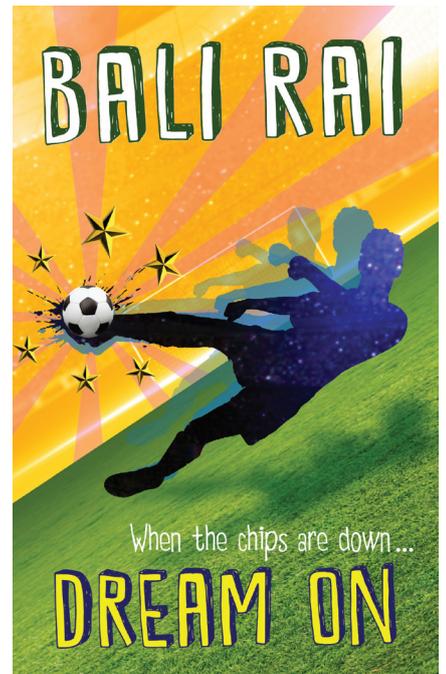
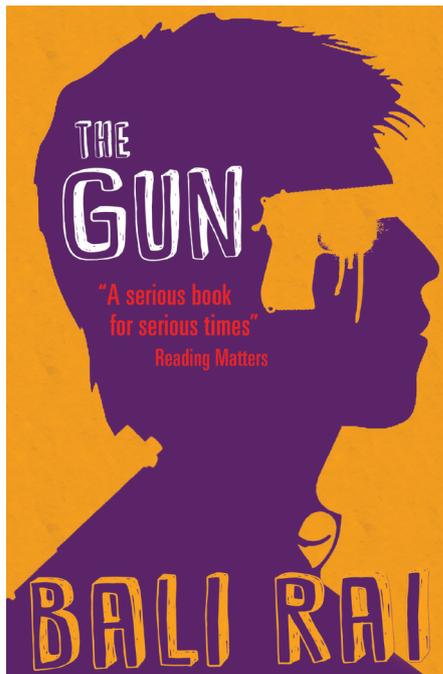
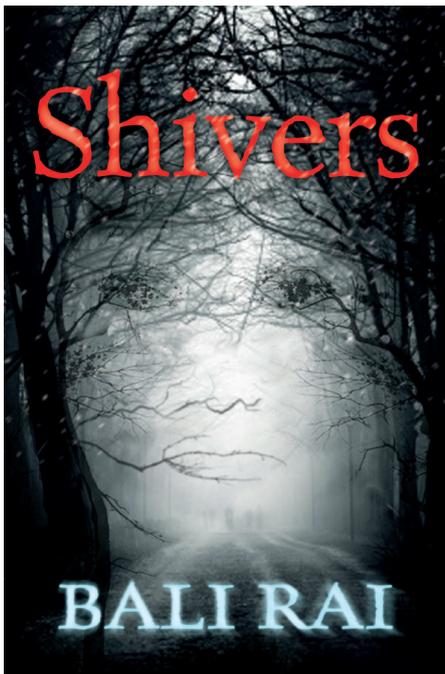


Barrington Stoke

CLASSROOM RESOURCES



Bali Rai: Author Study Guide

- PART 1 Key Features of the Author's Craft
- PART 2 Shivers
- PART 3 The Gun
- PART 4 Dream On
- PART 5 About Bali Rai

INTRODUCTION

Bali Rai is one of Barrington Stoke's reading heroes. He retains a close connection with his key readership through a packed schedule of school visits and events, and this connection shows in his novels in note-perfect renditions of young characters and their preoccupations, set against urban and UK Asian backdrops.

This guide has been compiled for teachers working with mixed-ability groups. It offers suggested discussion points for exploring elements of the author's craft, plus ideas for exploring the themes of each book and suggestions for extension activities.

PART I KEY FEATURES OF THE AUTHOR'S CRAFT

Suggestions for shared reading activities below focus on the following hallmarks of Bali Rai's style. With support, more able students may be able to track these across the three novels, each of which can be read within a lesson by confident readers.

1.1 Dialogue

Bali Rai's fiction is marked by strong and snappy dialogue that reflects the speech patterns and usages of the communities in which it is set. Most notable is the fact that young people talk like young people. The protagonist of **The Gun**, for example, utters only monosyllabic grunts and evasions when we first meet him in police custody, but is relatively verbal among his peers, where he uses street slang to fit in with the area's gang culture.

1.2 Setting

Bali Rai tends to set his fiction in urban contexts and in UK Asian communities. In addition to the flavour this lends his characters' dialogue, these settings are packed with triggers for the action that drives his (often gritty) plots, from gang rivalries to casual street crime. This feature of his writing can appeal to reluctant teen boy readers.

1.3 Narrators

Bali Rai favours first-person narrators and a stream-of-consciousness style, which add vividness and pace to his fiction. These features also help the reader make up his or her own mind about the limitations or otherwise of the narrator's perspective on events.

1.4 Character

Bali Rai's young characters often struggle with their identity either in wider cultural terms or within their own peer groups.

PART 2 SHIVERS

Sam lives in fear of the bullies on the estate where he lives with his mum. During a sudden snowstorm, he becomes afraid that they will catch him, and he tries to make a run for home. He falls, cracks his head and comes round to see a mysterious red-haired girl standing over him. The girl, Cassie, walks him home.

The next day Cassie arrives at Sam's house and they begin to hang out together. She is evasive when it comes to telling Sam about herself. Although she is clearly attached to Sam, she comes and goes as she pleases. Sam wonders what secret she is hiding, considering the possibility that she may be homeless as her appearance is so unkempt.

Sam, on the other hand, begins to open up more about his own family situation, and specifically about the fact that his family's troubles stem from his father being accused of a terrible crime. He was never convicted, but the accusations were enough to break the family up and send Sam and his Mum to the estate to seek a fresh start.

With Cassie's support, Sam stands up to the bullies. But Cassie takes things too far, engineering a situation in which one of the bullies is left for dead. Sam is arrested on suspicion of murder and although he is released due to the intervention of his lawyer uncle, he is deeply upset and angry with Cassie. Cassie wheedles her way back into his affections by telling him that she has destroyed the CCTV evidence against him and then revealing that she was badly hurt in the past by a person who got away with it. She also initiates a sexual encounter.

Cassie asks Sam to break into a flat on another estate, steal a bag and bring it to her. She makes him promise not to look inside the bag. Despite terrible misgivings, Sam does as she asks. But Cassie does not come back to the flat and Sam has a terrible nightmare in which he sees her as a rotting corpse. He opens the bag from the flat and finds a DVD of Cassie's murder. Her murderer is Sam's dad...

Shivers combines elements of traditional ghost stories with themes of the challenges of living with dark family secrets and in an unfriendly area.

2.1 Ideas for shared reading and exploring the text

Dialogue

- **Shivers** has many scenes where there is almost no narrative but instead the whole scene is in dialogue. Find examples of scenes like these and read them together. Do these scenes tell the reader enough to want to keep on reading the story?
- Look at the dialogue between Cassie and Sam in Chapter 2. Who drives the direction of the conversation – Cassie, Sam or neither?
- What is more important in **Shivers** - what the characters say or what they don't say? Why?

Setting

- Bali Rai doesn't name the place where **Shivers** is set. Does the group get a good feeling for the setting from the writing? What clues are there?
- What sort of atmosphere does the weather create for the story? Does it make the estate seem a friendlier or a less friendly place to be? Does it give a happy atmosphere, or something else?

Narrator

The narrator of a book is the person who tells the story. The two most common types of narrator are:

- First-person narrators. These are usually the main character within the story. They tell the story from their own point-of-view and they can only 'see' inside their own heads. They use the words 'I' and 'me' to refer to themselves, e.g. 'It all started when I got up on Sunday morning.'

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- Third-person narrators. It can be harder to say ‘who’ these narrators are! They tell the story from a different point of view to the point of view of the characters and they can ‘see’ inside the heads of many characters. They call the characters ‘he’, ‘she,’ and so on, e.g. ‘It all started when Catherine and John got up on Sunday morning.’
- Does **Shivers** have a first-person narrator, or a third-person narrator? How do you know?
- Why does the group think the author chose to have a first-person narrator?
- Does it make it easier or harder to see things from Sam’s point of view?
- Sam doesn’t share everything with the reader from the very beginning of the story – for example, he only explains about his dad being arrested in Chapter 4. Why does Bali Rai do this? Does he want to tease the reader, or does he have some other reason, e.g. to show that Sam doesn’t even like to think about what happened with his dad?
- There is a place in the book Sam is afraid of but he doesn’t want to explain why to Cassie. Can the group remember what the place was? What happened there? Why doesn’t Sam want to talk about it?

Character

- What does the group think about Sam? Is he a strong character, or a weak one? What is their evidence?
- Why does the group think that Cassie chooses Sam to be her friend? Is it a chance meeting, or might she have another reason or reasons for choosing him?
- What does the group think of Cassie? Is she a nice character, or not? Does she really like Sam, or is she using him? Why does she push Sam to get violent with Danny? Why does she ask him to get the DVD, and then not turn up to get it?

- In the end, does Cassie do a terrible thing to Sam, or does she do him a favour? Why?

Structure

- **Shivers** answers lots of questions Sam and the reader may have had at the very end, but it doesn't tell the reader what Sam does with this knowledge. Is this a good place to end the book, or a problem? Why? (NB there is no 'right' answer to this question).

Themes

- Sam is bullied by Danny and the others, and hurt badly. But when he and Cassie stand up to Danny, Cassie pushes things so that Danny gets hurt very badly indeed. How far can a victim go to defend his or herself before she or he becomes as bad as the bullies, or worse?
- Is it fair that people treat Sam and his mother badly for what Sam's father is supposed to have done?
- How responsible is Jonas for what happens in the story?
- What does the group think should happen to Jonas next? Should he be sent to prison for manslaughter for killing Kamal, or did he kill Kamal in self-defence? Should he be sent to prison for any other crimes? What about Binny – is it fair that only Jonas pays for their actions?

Genre

- Is this a ghost story, a story about family life, a gritty thriller or a mix of all of these?

2.2 Ideas for extension work

Retell an urban legend

The setting of **Shivers** is a modern estate. Ghost stories are often set in older houses. This is because many people's idea of a haunted place is a place with lots of history where many people have died.

Some urban legends are ghost stories. Urban legends are a type of story that grows and changes as different people tell it. Often people will swear it is true.

Research urban legends on the internet. Choose an urban legend you like and retell it with a first person narrator (in the words of a person within the story). Look at the way **Shivers** begins for ideas.

Plot a trailer

Imagine **Shivers** was going to be made into a film. What would the trailer be like?

There is a good lesson plan for trailer writing here: <http://www.google.com/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=4&cad=rja&ved=0CEAQFjAD&url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.skillsworkshop.org%2Fsites%2Fskillsworkshop.org%2Ffiles%2Fresources%2Fe3l2filmtrailerlessonplan.pdf&ei=zQ6HUIl0Lqml0QWq74G4BQ&usq=AFQjCNF8NAEJsBaC3e2mWINHbZBfrFI9aA>.

Cast a film

What actors and actresses would the group choose to play Cassie, Sam and the other characters in a film adaptation of **Shivers**? Why?

PART 3 THE GUN

The Gun is the story of Jonas, Binny and Kamal, three friends who witness a drive-by shooting. After the shooting, Jonas finds the gun discarded in an alleyway and takes it home. He doesn't tell anyone at first but then he and the others have a series of skirmishes with a gang on a neighbouring estate and he decides to show it to Binny. Jonas proposes that they use the gun to scare off the rival gang; Binny points out that the gun is a murder weapon and has been the subject of television appeals. While they are talking, Kamal arrives and asks for the gun. Jonas refuses - he knows that Kamal is a disturbed young man, having lost his father in a racist attack. But Binny cannot stand up to Kamal, and he gives him the gun instead.

When they next meet, Kamal has the gun. Ostensibly he has brought it in order to scare the rival gang. In fact, things rapidly get out of hand and the boys carry out an armed robbery. The following days are a nightmare of fear and guilt for Jonas and Binny, but Kamal cheerfully splashes the money around and Binny tells Jonas that he has carried out further robberies by himself. Eventually Kamal flips and begins to hunt his former friends. He and Jonas finally meet in a fight in Jonas's flat. The gun goes off and Kamal is killed. Jonas faces court and a potential prison sentence for manslaughter.

The Gun is a vivid and frightening portrayal of a young life dominated by gang culture. It is written and edited to be accessible to less able readers, but maintains an authentic voice with particularly strong dialogue.

3.1 Ideas for shared reading and exploring the text

Dialogue

- Look at the way that Jonas speaks to the police in the Prologue. What does this tell the reader about him, and about the way he feels about the situation he is in? Does the group think that the dialogue Bali Rai writes for Jonas is realistic for a teenage boy in this situation?
- Look at what the boys say in Chapter 1. Does the dialogue help the group understand their characters and their relationship? Who is more streetwise – Binny or Kamal? Do they want to portray themselves in any particular way, for example tough or streetwise?
- Look at the way Jonas speaks to his family in Chapter 2. Is it realistic? Does he come across differently with his mum and with Hope? Does he seem more like the Jonas in the Prologue, or the Jonas in Chapter 1, or something in between?
- Discuss dialect (the version of a language used by a particular group of speakers). Bali Rai has his characters speak in dialect at different points in **The Gun**. Look for examples of this. Does the use of dialect help to create characters and setting?

Setting

- Bali Rai doesn't explain exactly where **The Gun** is set. Does the group get a good feeling for the setting from the writing? What clues are there?
- Gun crime is quite rare in the UK. Does the group think that Bali Rai has chosen a good setting for a story about gun crime? Would the story work so well in a rural setting? Why/why not?

Narrator

The narrator of a book is the person who tells the story. The two most common types of narrator are:

- First-person narrators. These are usually the main character within the story. They tell the story from their own point-of-view and they can only 'see' inside their own heads. They use the words 'I' and 'me' to refer to themselves, e.g. 'It all started when I got up on Sunday morning.'
 - Third-person narrators. It can be harder to say 'who' these narrators are! They tell the story from a different point of view to the point of view of the characters and they can 'see' inside the heads of many characters. They call the characters 'he', 'she,' and so on, e.g. 'It all started when Catherine and John got up on Sunday morning.'
- Does **The Gun** have a first-person narrator, or a third-person narrator? How do you know?
 - Why does the group think the author chose to have a first-person narrator?
 - Does it make it easier or harder to see things from Jonas's point of view?
 - Does the group always agree with Jonas's point-of-view, or are they sometimes able to see things differently to Jonas?
 - Does the action seem more or less important or exciting when it is seen through the eyes of a person who is involved?

Character

- What does the group think about Jonas? Is he a good guy, or is he a bit dangerous? Does he get in trouble on purpose, or just because he doesn't think about what he's doing? Is he led by others, or does he mess things up himself?
- On pages 19-20, Jonas tells Binny about the gun and suggests they use it to scare the BMD Crew. He says 'That was my first mistake'. Was it his first mistake?
- Read Chapter 2 together. Hope tells Jonas that Kamal frightens her because he always seems like he is about to go crazy. After that Jonas goes out to meet Kamal, who is watching the BMD Crew who gave Kamal and Binny trouble before. Are Kamal and Jonas looking for trouble by hanging around watching the BMD Crew?
- In Chapter 2, Jonas says that Kamal is his mate and so he has to back him up. He also thinks about the bad things that happened to Kamal before he and his family came to the UK. Are Jonas and Kamal 'mates'? Are they good friends? Does Jonas really know Kamal?
- When Kamal holds up the fried chicken shop, he asks for chicken as well as money. What does this tell us about his character?
- After the robbery in the chicken shop, Jonas understands that Kamal is mad. When does the group think Kamal went mad?
- Binny is always present when things are going down, but he doesn't get involved in the same way as Jonas or Kamal. What sort of character is he? Is he quite a light-hearted character, or a serious one? Is he violent and dangerous, or just a bit of a chancer? Is he a true friend to Jonas?

Structure

- **The Gun** begins at the end – the Prologue is set after the main events of the novel. What is the effect of this? Does it make the group want to read on in order to find out what has left Jonas in a police cell? Does it spoil the ending at all that they know that the police will get involved and Jonas will end up in a cell? Would they prefer to start at the beginning, or do they like this structure? (NB there are no ‘correct’ answers to these questions).

Themes

- After Jonas tells Binny and Kamal about the gun, they spend a while playing on a Wii and pretending to be gangsters with the gun. Why do you think Bali Rai has Jonas tell the reader what they did? Is he making a link between the games they play on the Wii and the games they play with the gun? Do the boys really understand how dangerous the gun is?
- How much does the gun matter in this story, and how much would some version of the events have happened in any case? Which is more dangerous, Kamal, the gun, or the combination of the two? Is the gun key to Jonas and Binny getting involved? Would they have got involved with, say, knife crime? (NB there are no ‘right’ or ‘wrong’ answers to these questions).
- How responsible is Jonas for what happens in the story?
- What does the group think should happen to Jonas next? Should he be sent to prison for manslaughter for killing Kamal, or did he kill Kamal in self-defence? Should he be sent to prison for any other crimes? What about Binny – is it fair that only Jonas pays for their actions?

3.2 Ideas for extension work

Newspaper article

Write newspaper articles on the death of Kamal. Ensure the group knows how newspaper articles are structured:

A headline. Headlines tend to be shortened, with words like ‘the’ or ‘a’ cut out. Headlines grab the attention and don’t always explain the story.

A subtitle. Subtitles give a little more information to help readers understand the headline and decide whether to read on.

A by-line (the name of the reporter who has written the article)

The date

A summary of the main content of the article in the first paragraph.

Background information on people involved.

Direct and indirect speech. Most reporters include the words of people who witnessed events or are involved in some way, either in speech marks or summarised.

SEE OUR EXAMPLE BELOW!

SUCH A CLOSE-KNIT PAIR (headline)

Police release names of tragic mother and daughter **(subtitle)**

By Paul Anderson **(by-line)**

Monday 7th November 2013 **(date)**

Today police named the victims of the blaze that destroyed a block of flats in the Partick area of the City in the early hours of Saturday morning.

(summary of the main content of the article in the first paragraph)

Police named the victims as Susan Watson, 66, and her daughter Irene Adams, 32. Susan was a retired teacher and Irene was a nurse at the Royal Infirmary. **(background information on people involved)**

‘It’s so upsetting,’ said neighbour Lynne Adams. ‘They were such a close pair. Irene stayed over regularly with her mum to keep her company. ‘We’re all so upset’. **(direct speech)**

→

Strathclyde Fire Brigade said that they had not yet been able to establish the cause of the blaze. **(indirect speech)**

Guns and Glamour

Discuss the word glamorise with the group. Now share the following table. Discuss the way guns are portrayed by each group. Are guns glamorised by each, or not? Ask the group to think of examples in support of their answers.

GROUP	MUSICIANS	NEW REPORTERS	FILM DIRECTORS	GAME DESIGNERS	CELEBRITIES	OLDER KIDS
GLAMORISE GUNS?	YES/NO YES & NO					
EXAMPLES						

Ask the group to choose one of their examples and write a mock letter to that person asking them to reconsider the way in which they portray guns. Think about the arguments that might persuade the person to reconsider their portrayal, for example:

- The dangers of guns, for example quoting some real-life effects of gun-crime
- The dangers glamourising guns?

Fighting guns with smarts

- Use the internet to research anti-gun crime measures in your area. Do the students think these sound effective? Why/why not?
- Make your own anti-gun posters. Use a question-and-answer format for the text on the poster, e.g.:

Think a gun gets you respect?

Think again. People get respect. Guns just get fear.

PART 4 DREAM ON

When Baljit's not in school, he's working in his father's chippie-cum-Indian-restaurant. He maintains he hates the job and the abuse he takes from his classmates, but in actual fact he and his father have quite a laugh. Baljit wants to escape the chippie, but he and his father have radically different ideas of what he should do with his life. Baljit dreams about being a pro footballer. His dad wants him to become a doctor or a lawyer.

When the chance comes to play in trials for a range of scouts, Baljit decides his father will not let him take part. A visit from his uncle and his cousin Mandip provides him with a solution; Mandip tells him that she routinely pretends to be at the library when she is in fact out with her friends.

Baljit and his friends Danny and Mo concoct a story about a school science trip and head to the trials. Baljit suffers an incident of racial abuse which is not witnessed by the ref. A second incident is witnessed, however, and the offending player is sent home from the trials. Baljit and his mates acquit themselves well, although Mo is injured and knocked out of the trial. Baljit's euphoria is short-lived, however – upon returning home he falls victim to a prank by his father involving a handful of wet chip batter.

An unexpected triumph comes for Baljit before the results from the trials are in. His mate Michael's sister Hannah, a long-term crush, appears in the chip shop with her boyfriend. It is clear that there has been an argument and the boyfriend is rapidly dispatched. Hannah then asks Baljit to take her out. Baljit imagines that his parents will disapprove, but it seems that he has pre-judged them and in fact they are perfectly happy for him to date any girl he chooses.

A couple of days after the date, the boys are called in one by one to hear who caught the scouts' eye. Michael gets a second trial with Leicester City. Danny gets a range of offers, the best being place at the Arsenal Academy. Baljit himself gets a second call from all of the scouts present – the most exciting being from his heroes, Liverpool. But Liverpool need Baljit's parents consent for a medical – and Mr Ball the P.E. teacher has phoned them.

When Baljit gets home, his parents' stern countenances seem to confirm his worst fears. But Baljit's parents are delighted with their son's achievement. In fact, they have known for several days but wanted to enjoy Baljit's shock when he realised they'd found him out!

Dream On is a warm and witty tale of family and football. It is an extremely affectionate portrayal of an English/Indian family and although it touches on race issues, it does so with a light hand. Notably, Baljit receives the support of an authority figure when it matters during the trial. A key theme is the danger of second-guessing the reactions of others – Baljit does this twice to his parents, and both times is proved wrong.

4.1 Ideas for shared reading and exploring the text

Dialogue

- Discuss dialect (the version of a language used by a particular group of speakers). Various characters speak in dialect in **Dream On**. What dialect do the following characters use?

Baljit's father

Baljit's mother

Baljit

Baljit's mates

Mandip

Do any of these characters use more than one dialect, e.g. more formal speech in one setting and more informal speech in another? Or for

comedy purposes?

- Does the use of dialect help to create characters and setting?

Setting

- What does the setting of the chip shop add to the book? Does the group agree with the first thing Baljit says – that it is a rubbish place to work? What are the bad things about it? What are the good things?

Narrator

The narrator of a book is the person who tells the story. The two most common types of narrator are:

- First-person narrators. These are usually the main character within the story. They tell the story from their own point-of-view and they can only 'see' inside their own heads. They use the words 'I' and 'me' to refer to themselves, e.g. 'It all started when I got up on Sunday morning.'
 - Third-person narrators. It can be harder to say 'who' these narrators are! They tell the story from a different point of view to the point of view of the characters and they can 'see' inside the heads of many characters. They call the characters 'he', 'she,' and so on, e.g. 'It all started when Catherine and John got up on Sunday morning.'
- Does **Dream On** have a first-person narrator, or a third-person narrator? How do you know?

- Why does the group think the author chose to have a first-person narrator?
- Does it make it easier or harder to see things from Baljit's point of view?
- Does the reader always agree with the things Baljit says, does and thinks? Why/why not?

Character

- What does the group think about Baljit? Is he likable? Why/why not?
- What are Baljit's mum and dad like – are they likable characters? How much do they hold to traditional values and how much do they adapt to their surroundings?

Themes

- Baljit's mum and dad tell him to give up his football dreams and focus on finding a good career. Baljit is sure he will make a lot of money playing football one day. Who is right?
 - Baljit – he is sure to make a lot of money as he is so good
 - Baljit's parents – Baljit will never make a lot of money playing football
 - Hard to say – Baljit may or may not making money. Either way, he needs to focus on school and have a back-up plan.
- When he goes to the trial, Baljit lies to his family. Is it ever alright to lie?

- There are a number of racist incidents in the book but Baljit's dad is good at standing up for himself, and the ref stands up for Baljit when he is abused during the trial. Does the group think this is an accurate portrayal of what would really happen?

Genre

- Is this a football story, or a family story, or a mix of both?

4.2 Ideas for extension work

Write a guide to Punjabi words in the book.

Write out every word you can find and its meaning. If you are not sure of the meaning, use the internet to check.

Write a book review

Try to answer all of these questions to help you create your review of **Dream On**:

- What is **Dream On** about?
- What did you think was good about **Dream On**?
- Was there anything you didn't like about **Dream On**?
- Did **Dream On** teach you anything new or make you think about anything differently?
- Would you like to read more books by the same author?
- How many stars would you give **Dream On** out of ten? What might have made you change your mark?

Write your review out neatly in your best writing and display it on the wall or keep it in a folder with other reviews.

Want to do more with **Dream On** in the classroom?

Barrington Stoke has a full-length, differentiated study guide for this novel, priced at £10 (reduced from £20). ISBN 978-1-84299-165-7.

PART 5 ABOUT BALI RAI

Bali Rai was born and brought up in a multicultural, multi-racial area near to the centre of Leicester. He says that he had three big dreams as a child:

(1) to play for Liverpool FC

(2) to be Bob Marley

(3) to be a writer.

Bali says that the book that made him want to be a writer was *The Secret Diary of Adrian Mole* by Sue Townsend. He was 11 years old when he first read it and after that he began to practice writing almost every day.

Bali studied politics at university and then spent a few years in London. He wrote his first novel after moving back to Leicester. The novel was called *(Un) arranged Marriage* and it received brilliant reviews when it was published.

Bali continued to write both full-length novels for the publisher Random House and shorter novels for Barrington Stoke. He has also won or been short-listed for many awards, including the Bradford Boase Award, the Angus Book Award, the Leicester Book Award and the Sheffield Book Award. **Dream On** was chosen to be a Booked Up novel, which meant that free copies were given to thousands of young people all over England by the charity Booktrust. *Rani & Suki* became a set text for GCSE exams.

Bali says that it has always been his aim to write books that he and his school-mates would have wanted to read – even the ones who didn't like reading much. Nowadays he divides his time between writing and visiting schools to talk to young people about books and reading.

Even though he didn't fulfill his childhood dreams (1) and (2), Bali still likes reggae music and Liverpool FC.