Iqbal: The Novel

by Francesco D'Adamo

Summary

This novel is about the hidden reality of innocent children sold to wealthy sweatshop owners by their parents in order to pay off family debts in modern day Pakistan.

Iqbal, an actual child slave, was only four years old when his father sold him to a carpet weaver for $16 in the 1980's. This novel is told through the eyes of a young female slave, Fatima who works with Iqbal at a carpet factory, also known as a “sweatshop”. She reveals the terrible reality of being a child slave in Pakistan, working long hours, crammed into a dark, dingy, and humid room with no fresh air, with dozens of other young child slaves.

These children are either orphans or have been sold by their parents to wealthy businessmen to pay off family debts. These children do not attend school; instead they are thrust into the life of an adult, working 15 hours a day in appalling conditions.

Journal Questions

As we read the novel, you will be expected to respond to the following questions in your journal. Your responses should be detailed, written in complete sentences, and organized using proper paragraph format.

- How did these children become child slaves? Why do their parents allow this to happen?
- What is a “sweat-shop”? Why are these “sweat-shops” allowed to operate?
- How are the police involved? Why don’t the police shut the sweat shops down?
- What is the purpose of the slate above the child slaves’ beds? What is the mystery or problem with these slates?
- What happens if the children try to escape the “sweat-shops”?
- Make a list of Iqbal’s wise understandings and his actions throughout the novel. What did he know that the other child slaves did not know or didn’t want to know?
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Make a list of Iqbal’s wise understandings and his actions throughout the novel. What did he know that the other child slaves did not know or didn’t want to know? What did he do as a result of this?
KWL Chart

Before we begin reading the novel, list the details you already know about Iqbal Masih and the issue of child labour.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What I Know</th>
<th>What I want to know</th>
<th>What I have learned</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Iqbal:</td>
<td></td>
<td>Iqbal:</td>
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<tr>
<td>Child Labour:</td>
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<td>Child Labour:</td>
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</tbody>
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Map of South Central Asia

Label the countries of Pakistan, India, Nepal, Bhutan, Sri Lanka, and Bangladesh; the cities of Lahore and Islamabad; the Bay of Bengal and the Arabian Sea. Colour each country a different colour and all bodies of water blue.
Iqbal: A Novel Interview Assignment

Character Interview

Scenario: You are a reporter for an international magazine. You’ve been sent to Pakistan to tell the story of Iqbal Masih and to expose the problem of child labour.

To do so you must interview the people who knew him best. Write a question and answer style feature article featuring one of the characters from the novel.

Do not interview the two main protagonists, Fatima or Iqbal. Instead interview one of the characters the readers know less about such as Salman, Maria, Eshan Khan, Hussian Khan’s wife, or Iqbal’s father.

Steps

1. Pick a character from the novel to interview.
2. Create a minimum of 10 questions that will tell the story of Iqbal Masih and expose the problem of child labour.
3. Answer the questions the way you think the character would respond. You can also include some research and facts to help inform the reader. (Ex. how many children around the world are involved in child labour) Responses to questions should be approximately a paragraph in length.
4. Create a name for your magazine and a title for your article.
5. Format the assignment using Microsoft Publisher. Be sure to include at least one photograph with a caption underneath. (All photos must be sourced)
6. Be sure to refer to examples shown in class when completing your assignment.