

Exploring the representation of females in Peter Temple's *Truth*

Have students interrogate the representation of females in the text and examine the extent to which Temple seems to reinforce and/or challenge these archetypal representations of women. Connections could also be made to the crime genre and whether, historically, this genre has marginalised females.

In particular, consider the following factors:

- The general absence of female characters within the Homicide Division specifically and the police force in general, highlighted throughout the novel but particularly on p.236.
- The role of women as victims of violence, particularly at the hands of men, for example on p.1 and p.4; even Corin, Villani's capable and independent daughter, is 'spooked' when she thinks there's a car with two men 'hanging around' (p.21).
- The construction of mothers:
 - the absence of Villani's own mother from his childhood and the devastating impact this has on him
 - the absence of Laurie, Villani's wife, throughout much of the text; significant in light of her criticisms of Villani's parenting
 - Villani's comments that all relationships with women were influenced by your relationship with your mother
 - the role of Rose Quirk as a (grand)mother substitute for Villani, for example on pp.85-90, pp.215-216 and p.329, as well as his idealisation of his own grandmother, Stella (who brought Villani up after his mother left).
- The role of many women in the novel as supporting players, such as the TV presenter on p.50 or Vicky Hendry on pp.280-281.
- Women as shallow creatures attracted to the power implied in a police uniform, pp.228-229.
- Male characters' attitudes towards women, particularly in terms of their objectification, such as Hendry and Bricknell's comments on p.106 regarding 'the beauty-brain imbalance' and Orong's referral to the Prosilio victim as 'some hooker bitch' and other female victims as 'druggy sluts' on pp.96-97.
- Villani's semi-resistance to this stereotypical attitude, preferring 'clever' women (p.74), although he still uses Anna for sex (p.21). However, he does consider himself in love with her and considers developing this relationship later in the novel.
- Karen Mellish as the nagging Opposition Leader, for example on p.252, who is still objectified as a 'sexy headmistress' (p.350), though she fights against corruption and eventually becomes Premier – albeit in the background of the novel.
- The construction of Villani's daughters, Corin and Lizzie, in line with these archetypes; is Corin simply the maiden and Lizzie the fallen woman? Consider Villani's attitudes towards his daughters – his fierce desire to protect Corin, but his rejection of Lizzie (p.332).
- The character of Anna Markham, the journalist and sometime lover of Villani, and whether she is a more rounded or complex character than other women in the novel.