



STAND BY ME

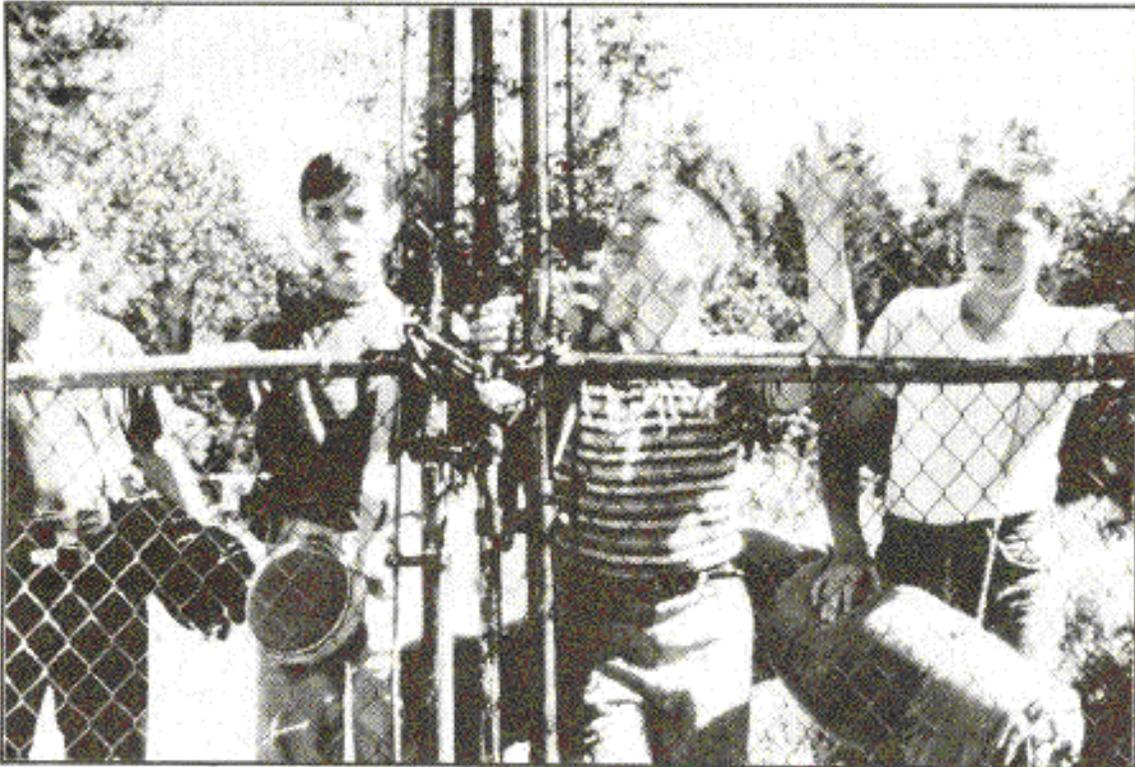
FRIENDSHIP

'Stand By Me' is about friendship, the friendship between a group of boys and in particular two of them, Gordie and Chris.

Yet the four boys seem a mixed bunch with very little in common when it comes to backgrounds. What do you think it is that binds the four of them together? At times they seem to hate each other, throwing insults around whilst later making it up. Try to give some reasons for them being friends.

When the film 'Stand By Me' opens we see the writer sitting in his car, looking out over the fields. As he sits there he remembers an episode from his youth, a time when he and three of his friends set out to look for a dead body. Obviously the hunt for the dead body is a strange experience from his past. But what other reasons do you think there might be for the writer to remember this particular experience?

Your work on 'Stand By Me' will look at the reasons why we remember certain aspects of our past and also how we might present them. In the film we are presented a picture of a group of teenagers which has been constructed by adults. We might ask how different a picture would have been created by a group of 12 year olds. Even at the age of fifteen and sixteen our view of our earlier years is probably different to the way that we saw it as we lived it. At times we find it very difficult to explain things that we are experiencing at the moment whereas things from the past are more easily put into words.



Would you say that it gives a realistic picture of friendships? Or is it simply a picture of male friendships as we might perhaps like to see them, all "buddies" growing up together? Are female friendships different to this? If asked, what would you say are the qualities of a good friend?

Think back to when you were twelve years old. Who were your friends then? Did anything happen to you that was out of the ordinary? What did you and your friends used to do together? Describe what they looked like. Try to write about this, under the title 'Friends'.

The four boys are a strange mixture of characters. Try to describe each one, giving as much detail as possible about them. They are brought together in their "gang". What types of things do you think they do together? Why do you think that people form groups or gangs? What is it about them that appeals to people?

One of the key conflicts in 'Stand By Me' is the one between the four boys and the older group led by Ace. What moments in the film do we see this conflict occurring? Why do you think the group of elder boys are bothered about the younger boys? Surely they are nothing to them? Why should they not simply ignore them? They are always trying to prove something but what are they trying to prove? Is there a difference in the way that the young boys relate to each other in their group and the way that Ace and the older boys relate to each other.

Imagine that you are a member of the group of older boys. Write either a story or a short play where you are discussing the younger group. You might wish to include ideas about why you think you should not bother getting involved with the youngsters or why you should try to put them in their place.

One of the main story lines in the film is the journey to find the dead body. Why do you think that the four boys set out to do this? It seems rather a strange thing to do. Do you think that Gordie, Chris, Teddy and Vern all have the same reasons for setting out on the journey. Try to say what you think that each boy's reason might be.

Imagine that you are one of the boys. Write a diary from the moment that it is decided to go on the journey to the moment that you return to town describing what happens and also what your feelings were at each stage of the journey.

A journey is quite a common story device in both literature and in films. Often the journey is not only from one place to another but is also a journey in search of an answer to a problem. During the journey to find the dead boy what does Gordie find out about himself and his friends that he might not have known at the start of the journey? Is he any clearer about why he set out on the journey in the first place? Is he any clearer about his friendship with Chris?

THE DEAD BROTHER

We discover early on in the film that Gordie's brother has died and that this has put a severe strain on his family. How do we see Gordie's family reacting to him in the film? How important do you think his brother was to him?

Imagine that you are Gordie. After you have found the dead boy and returned home, write a letter to your dead brother explaining what you have learned about yourself on the journey and also what you now feel about your parents, friends and also him.

Gordie obviously has problems with his parents. His elder brother did everything right while he cannot match the qualities that his parents saw in his brother. What would you say are the positive sides to Gordie's character? What is he good at? Are there any reasons for his parents to be proud of him? What reasons do his parents find to be ashamed of him?

You are one of Gordie's parents. Write a discussion between both parents as they talk about Gordie and the problems that they are having with him. You might decide that one of them tries to put across the good sides of Gordie. What might they decide to do about him?



JOURNEY ' S END

One could say that there are two ends to the journey. The first is where the boys find the body. Having found the body they decide that they will not try to get all of the publicity for finding the boy. Why do you think that they do this? Are they afraid of what their parents might say or are they simply upset by what they find? Why are they so keen not to let the elder group take the body away from them? All of the boys seem to agree that they should not admit to finding the body and that they should simply make an anonymous phone call instead.

On their arrival back in town we hear that the boys drifted apart after this escapade and on starting at their new school they never talked to each other again. Making friends is difficult but is losing friends also difficult? Why do you think that the boys drift apart? Why should Gordie and Chris still remain friends through school?

Think back to friends that you had when you were younger but are no longer friendly with. Can you remember why you were friends and also why you stopped being friends? Try to write down your memories.

At the start of this guide we asked whether the view of teenage years that 'Stand By Me' presents is one of an adult remembering what growing up was like or whether it was true to life in a way that someone of that age would describe it. Having worked through the guide, what do you think? If you were to tell a similar story what aspects of it would you stress? If you look at some of the writing that you have done, then how does it compare to the way that the story was told in the film? Does your writing stress different things?