# BlackWords Short Story Lesson Plans

# ‘The Ghost River’ by Tony Birch

The following questions are designed to support the reading and comprehension of ‘The Ghost River’ by Tony Birch. The framework used the [taxonomy of skills in reading and interpreting fiction](https://www.jstor.org/stable/1162351?seq=1#page_scan_tab_contents) designed by George Hillocks and Larry Ludlow (1984).

## Literal Level

**1. Basic Stated Information**

1. Who are the river boys?
2. What do we discover about Moses’s skills and knowledge?
3. What do the narrator and his friend Sonny want to be?

**2. Key Detail**

1. Why did the river boys ditch their regular names?
2. How did the river come to be poisoned?

**3. Stated Relationship**

1. What attitude or stance does Moses recommend be taken towards the river?
2. Why does tallboy throw a brick through a window of a house?

## Inferential Level

**4. Simple Implied Relationship**

1. How would you characterize the river boys and their lives?
2. What is the nature of Moses’s relationship with the river and with the two boys?
3. Why does Moses turn against the narrator and Sonny?

**5. Complex Implied Relationship**

1. What does it *actually* mean to be a river boy?
2. In the last line, the narrator says that the boys will return to the river ‘when it’s our time’. When do you think this will be? Why has he made this decision?
3. What is the significance of the story’s title?

**6. Author’s Generalisation**

1. What might Tony Birch say about our relationships with country?
2. What might he say about ‘growing up’?

**7. Structural Generalisation**

How does Birch position readers to feel empathy with and even respect for the river boys?