

Explore the different roles people have

ALFIE

Book extract

- My teachers wrote that I was a 'happy, confident young lad'. I have lots of friends, I do well in most subjects, and I don't get wronged half as much as some of the other kids do.
- When I get in, the house is normally empty and dark. It's so freezing that sometimes I don't even take off my coat.
- My mam is asleep on the sofa downstairs, and she doesn't wake up while I get into my uniform and slip out of the front door.

Role or responsibility

- Alfie has the role of a good student and friend.
- The role of the home in Alfie's life.
- The responsibility of getting up and making sure Alfie gets to school.

Is this as we might expect?

- Being a 'happy, confident young lad' is a very normal thing for a boy his age as is having lots of friends. However it may be unexpected that someone going through the things Alfie is experiencing that he is thought of in this way.
- Home is not playing the role in Alfie's life that it does for many people, which is a safe comforting place.
- This is often something children and young people have support with or someone checking in on. It also makes Alfie feel alone. It is maybe not what we would expect a child his age to be doing entirely for himself.

AMY

Explore the different roles people have

Book extract

- Sometimes I feel angry at my mum for even letting Malcolm into our lives in the first place. She should have chucked him out the door the first time he ever got that angry look in his eyes, long before he hurt her. Does she not want to protect her child from him?
- Nowadays he gets annoyed if he comes back and I haven't been to the shops to get our dinner yet I was doing everything right before, and now I seem to be doing everything wrong.
- When I first moved in with Dean, he would treat us to takeaways and meals out all the time. He'd bring me flowers or chocolates home with him from work and tell me I didn't need to lift a finger around the flat.
- I used to stop off at Costa for a coffee with my friends after college.

Role or responsibility

- The responsibility of a parent (Amy's mum) to protect their child.
- Amy feels responsible to make sure Dean is happy and everything is ok at home.
- Dean initially treats Amy in a kind and caring way.
- Amy has the role of a friend.

Is this as we might expect?

- Amy feels it is normal or expected for her mum to look out for her. This is also what other people tend to expect. It is one of the reasons she moved into her boyfriend's flat. However, it is also important to bear in mind that, in this situation, Amy's mum is also experiencing abuse and her partner's choice to abuse her is not her responsibility or fault. There are a range of reasons why it is really difficult to leave an abusive relationship and there are many situations where the adult victim in an abusive context will be risk-managing the family situation to protect the children. The young person experiencing may or may not fully realise this. Ultimately while it is a parental responsibility to protect their child, there are situations where both the adult and child victim need support in order for the child to be protected from the abusive person.
- While it is normal for us to want to make our loved ones happy, it isn't expected that someone would feel that they can't make any mistakes. This creates the impression that Dean's behaviour towards Amy is starting to become controlling and no-one should have to be on the receiving end of controlling behaviour. So Amy is taking on more responsibility than we would expect. Furthermore, there seems to be an assumption within Amy's relationship context that the domestic responsibilities lie with her, which is potentially quite an outdated gender stereotype of relationship responsibilities. These days we would expect household responsibilities to be more equally shared.
- Treating someone you love is something we might expect or see as normal. However Dean's behaviour changed in the relationship, it might appear to people on the outside their relationship is caring and it did make Amy think he was fulfilling the role of a boyfriend in the expected way. We need to be mindful that charming or love-bombing type behaviour can also be seen as a red flag of an abusive behaviour. This can be confusing as it may on the surface look the same as the kind of treats and care someone in a healthy relationship might show. The key here is that the behaviour changed which helps us to understand it as a strategy to win someone over rather than a purely kind and caring gesture.
- Having friends and spending time with them is something we would expect of a teenager. The fact that this is something Amy no longer does suggests there are things which are difficult at home.

Explore the different roles people have

AYESHA

Book extract

- My grades have to be good all the time... The most important thing you need to know about me is how much I love art.
- I don't have a mobile phone or a tablet, so I can't join in with the group chats that other people in my year have.
- When I came back to school after Dad was arrested, I told Mrs. Khan what had happened. She asked me if it was OK to tell some other teachers about this and make sure that my mum and I had the right support, and I said yes. Once she had spoken to Mum and Grandma, she arranged for me to see the school counsellor.
- Recently I've had a lot of worries to get down on those big pieces of paper Mrs. Khan keeps in the art classroom. I've been worrying about my Mum, and how much Dad shouts at her.
- In my culture, the father is always the head of the house. In many ways it's good, because Dad is always there to protect Mum, Amir and me, but a lot of the time he is far too strict.
- I'm not allowed to go to any after school clubs. I'm not even allowed to meet with other girls from the mosque - Dad says they listen to the wrong music and wear too much makeup. And boys? They are totally out of the question.

Role or responsibility

- The responsibility to be a good student.
- The role of being a friend and a teenager.
- The role of a teacher and school staff is to offer support if things aren't ok at home.
- The role of taking care of another person.
- The role of a father to protect their family.
- The responsibility of a young person to shape their own identity.

Is this as we might expect?

- We do expect a young person to be a good student but not in such a pressured way that does not also allow them to relax and have fun and friends.
- This is a role Ayesha would like to have which would enable her to build positive and supportive relationships with her peers. Her father's control is preventing her from being able to fulfil this role.
- This is a well-handled situation, with the teacher being respectful of the young person, their family and their wishes and needs in arranging the support Ayesha needs to process the difficult things that have happened in her home.
- We wouldn't expect a young person to be responsible for their parent's wellbeing. We would usually expect this to be the other way round, with the parent or carer wanting to make sure the young person is okay.
- It is quite an old-fashioned gender stereotype that a man should protect his family. Sometimes a fixed understanding of this role can lead to the person taking on this role equating it with power and control over what others in the family should be doing. A healthy relationship is an equal relationship rather than one where one person has more control to set the "rules" about what is or isn't allowed for the rest of the family.
- We would expect a young person to be allowed to gradually grow in independence as they get older and start to make their own choices about who they are, what their interests are and who it works for them to begin forming relationships with independently of their parents. This is not to suggest that the parents don't have an influence, but we would expect a young person to be allowed some responsibility to determine who they are or want to be.

Explore the different roles people have

CHELSEA

Book extract

- Every time Mum and Dad insulted each other, it felt like two monsters were scratching either side of me with their claws, deciding who got to take the first bite.

It was as if my parents started treating us like toys they wanted to fight over.

- I wanted to talk to my family about things that were going on at school, about my GCSE options, and boyfriends - well, girlfriends, actually. I've had a girlfriend since September, she's in my class and things are going really well. I was thinking of coming out to my parents just before they said they were splitting up. I wish none of this was going on so I could focus on her and my schoolwork instead.

- To be honest, I've started to wonder if things would just be easier if my sister and I went away for a while. If we weren't around, Mum and Dad would never have to see or speak to each other again, and the hurt would stop for everyone. If they'd never had us, they would be able to break up easily and get on with their lives.

One night, I told my little sister to stuff her favourite toys and clothes into her school bag. The next day, I skipped my last lesson, and ran down to the primary building before either Mum or Dad could arrive.

Role or responsibility

- It is a parent's role to make sure their children feel safe.
- It is a parent's role to be there to support their child.
- Chelsea is taking on the responsibility to keep her sister safe.

Is this as we might expect?

- Even if our parents may no longer want to be in a relationship with each other, we would expect them to think about how their behaviour would impact their children and not to put their children in the middle of their own disagreements.

- We might expect one or both of Chelsea's parents to make time to talk to her about things in her life rather than only focusing on the disagreement between them.

- We wouldn't usually expect a young person to have this responsibility. It is more what we might expect of a parent or carer. As they grow up, young people may be given some responsibility towards their siblings according to their age and maturity, so for instance those age 13+ might occasionally babysit a younger child. The question we need to consider is how big is this responsibility and does it feel like more than the young person in question can handle?

JAMIE

Explore the different roles people have

Book extract

- He plays rugby, he cooks boring meals for tea and he's always telling me to get off my PlayStation. He's pretty much the most normal guy you'd ever meet.
- I used to spend so much time getting people to understand how 'normal' my Dad is, that when Brandon started hitting him, I didn't really know who to turn to.
- I thought Brandon would hurt us both so badly that I called the police.

Role or responsibility

- Jamie's dad has the role of a normal dad.
- Jamie protecting his Dad's reputation as a 'normal' dad.
- Jamie felt that he needed to get help.

Is this as we might expect?

- As Jamie says, his dad is very normal! What he seems to mean by this is that he is providing him with food and keeping an eye on whether he is having an appropriate amount of screen time.
- This example shows that Jamie feels as though he cannot share what is happening because it does not fit the version of his Dad he shares with others. We would expect Jamie could be honest about his Dad.
- Calling the police shows how frightened Jamie was that Brandon would cause him and his dad serious harm. This shows his home is not a safe place for them.

Explore the different roles people have

TED

Book extract

- I should have protected my Mum better or stood up to Kyle myself.
- But now Kyle's nearly 17, and he's still really angry all the time. He's loads taller than Mum, he's got big muscles in his arms and it's much, much harder to calm him down.
- I told a teacher what was going on. The teacher was no help at all. When my brother finally got taken away by the police, I felt like he had passed on some of his anger to me.

Role or responsibility

- Ted feels he is responsible for protecting his family.
- The role of a mum to make their child behave properly.
- The role of the teacher is to offer support if things aren't ok at home.

Is this as we might expect?

- Ted is a child and we would not expect him to protect his family, he should be protected. It is important to bear in mind that, in this situation, Ted's mum is also experiencing abuse and her other son's choice to abuse her is not her fault. This a complex situation of child to parent violence where the adult victim in this context may in some way be risk-managing the family situation to protect the younger child - Ted, which he may or may not fully realise. Ultimately while it is a parental responsibility to protect their child, there are situations where both the adult and child victim need support in order for the child to be protected from the abusive person.
- Kyle should be learning how to manage his emotions independently at this age. There may be reasons why this is challenging for him and he may need support to manage himself better. There may be valid reasons why Ted and Kyle's Mum cannot "make" Kyle "behave properly" and as noted above, it is clear this is a situation where Ted's mum is a victim as well and in need of support.
- This teacher isn't helpful because they make a comment that implies Ted's mum hasn't done enough which Ted knows is unfair and is, in effect, blaming the adult victim in the situation which does not serve to help or support Ted in any concrete or practical way.