

# A SAINT IN SWINDON

by Alice Jolly

- Who is the 'saint in Swindon'? Has your idea of them changed over the course of the story?
- The characters in the story all have different opinions of the mysterious reader; they wonder who he is and what he is really doing. How did you interpret the character the first time you met him? What was your opinion of him by the end of the story?
- Throughout the story Janey, the narrator, discusses a number of books. Pick two of them that all or most of you have read. Why do you think the narrator and the mysterious reader chose those books? Does your opinion and interpretation of them differ from those of the narrator?
- How does Janey's character evolve over the course of the novel? What is her purpose?
- What is Carmen's role in the story?
- What drastic measures do people start to take when the situation gets worse? Can you see parallels with how people have acted in times of crisis in the real world?
- Why do you think everyone becomes so fascinated with the reader – to the point of trying to steal his washing?
- 'She told me then that Len had been killed by a falling bookcase.' (p. 57) What do you think this symbolises? Was it just an accident or does Len's death have a deeper meaning? And did you notice the literary reference here?
- How do you interpret the ending? Is there still hope?
- What's the purpose of reading in the story? Who reads and why? What does reading mean to you and how important is it for society?