

Lies of Silence

Brian Moore (1990)

Study questions

Chapter 1

What do we know about Michael Michael?
Why does Michael want to change his life?
What do we know about his wife Moira?
What does life with Andrea offer? What does life with Moira lack?

Social Setting

What impression of Belfast do you get from this passage?
What divisions are evident in this society?
What words convey the sense that Belfast is a damaged place?
What do you think it would be like to live in such a place? Would it depend on who you are?

Chapter 2

How does Michael's reaction to the events compare with Moira's?
Why does the portrayal of the intruders make them seem unsympathetic?

Chapter 3

Describe Michael's journey through Belfast. What is the function of the description?

"Hero"

How does Michael feel as he arrived at the hotel?
What could he see, what could he hear?
What were his thoughts about the French people? Who else did he think about?
Why, precisely, does Michael suddenly decide to phone the police?
In your opinion was it a heroic action?

Chapter 4

The narrator shows how life quickly returns to normal after a bomb attack. Do you consider this a positive, heroic response to the terrorists' action or is it indifferent and too tolerant?

Chapter 5

What does Joe and Maeve's home look like and what is Michael's attitude to it?
Look at the presentation of Joe's speech. How does this add to the idea that Michael no longer belongs here?

Chapter 6

What does Andrea possess which makes life with her so much more attractive than that with Moira?

How sympathetic are you to Michael's unfaithfulness to Moira and his love for Andrea? Base your arguments on quotes from the text.

Chapter 7

How does the attitude of Michael's father (p. 124) to the terrorists compare with that of Moira's father (p. 96)?

Do you admire Moira's outspokenness or consider it, as Michael does, to be foolhardy?

Relationships

What do Moira and Michael argue about in the Bon-Bon Tea shop?

Is Moira right to be bitter that Michael telephoned the police?

Describe the atmosphere between them.

Analyse Moira's body language during this passage.

Role play this scene in class.

Chapter 8

What signs are there of the pressure Michael is feeling?

Why does Michael consider it so dangerous that Moira might mention his sighting of one of the gunmen's faces?

What is the effect of the goodbye party on Michael?

Chapter 9

After his meeting with the priest Michael says, "I should have kept my mouth shut" (p. 150). Why did Michael speak out as he did?

How does the picture of the London cityscape differ from that of Belfast?

Chapter 10

What clues are there that the novel had to end like this?

How did the narrator build a sense of suspense throughout the final chapters?

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Further assignments

The Language of Information

This is language that is used to record facts and present information.

Write a biography of Michael Dillon, concentrate on presenting the facts of his life clearly (always give page numbers).

Compose a factual account that Moira might give the police of the night she was held captive.

You are a reporter. Write a report for a broadsheet newspaper based on the bombing of the Clarence Hotel.

Find out what is involved in being a hotel manager and write a brief job description.

Michael Dillon is murdered in the book's final episode. Write an article for a tabloid newspaper based on this atrocity.

The language of Argument

This is language presented in a logical, rational way intended to get your audience to accept your point of view.

Michael Dillon has to make a number of difficult decisions during the course of the novel. Pick one of the following examples of this and say whether you think he acted correctly or incorrectly. Write down three or four points to support either position.

- When he decides to phone in a warning about the bomb in the Clarence.
- When he decides to leave Belfast.
- When he decides to cooperate with the police in identifying Kevin McDowell.

What do you think is the difference between the argument between Moira and Michael and argument as defined above?

You are an I.R.A. "volunteer" in the Dillons' house; justify your actions to them.

Moira's friend Peg decides not to give her a job as a result of what has happened.

Make a list of the points Peg might make to Moira to justify her decision.

The language of Persuasion

This is language that is used to influence, manipulate and use any and all means to persuade others to one's point of view.

Take either visit of Fr. Connelly to Michael and examine/list the persuasive techniques he uses to try to convince Michael not to testify against his nephew, Kev. Imagine yourself in Moira's shoes and write a couple of paragraphs to counteract the priest's position.

Many characters, Michael, Moira, Andrea, Fr. Connelly all try to use persuasion at various times in the text. Imagine you are trying to convince your parents to allow you go somewhere they would rather you did not. How would you attempt to persuade them to let you go?

The language of Narration

This is language that is used to tell a story, whether the story is a short story, a novel or an autobiography.

You are Kev McDowell, the young I.R.A. volunteer who held the Dillons captive. Tell your story.

Imagine yourself caught up in a similar situation to the bombing of the Clarence. Write a story capturing the trauma of the situation.

The Aesthetic Use of Language

This is language used to heighten emotions; it delights in the beauty of words and images.

Brian Moore described some of the damage to the Clarence Hotel as "...the ceiling hanging down like the broken wing of some huge prehistoric bird. Write a descriptive passage describing the aftermath of the bomb.

Violence blighted the lives of many innocent people in this novel Write about ten lines of poetry in which you try and capture the effect that violence has on those who experience it.

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Text questions

Chapter 1

- Where is the novel set? (1)
- Who is the protagonist of the novel? (1)
- What does the décor of the bar look like? (1)
- What does Michael do? (4)
- What is the name of the hotel? (4)
- What happened last year? (3)
- Who does Michael meet at the beginning of chapter one? (2/5)
- How many years is this person Michael's junior? (3)
- How are they related to each other? (6)
- What are Michael's plans? (6)
- Why does he need a solicitor? (6)
- Where is Michael from? (5)
- Where is Andrea from? (7)
- How does Michael describe himself? (7)
- What is the name of the town? (10)
- Where exactly does Michael live? (10)
- Who are the people living in Michael's quarter (social status)? (10)
- What is his wife's name? (11)

Chapter 5

- What does the landscape look like where Michael drives past?
- Which buildings does he drive past?
- Why is Maeve Moira's first cause for her bulimia?
- How does Maeve welcome Michael?
- How does Michael feel about the appearance of the Clarence hotel on TV?
- Why does Moira not want to leave Ireland?
- What is special about the supper this night?
- What do we know about the relationship between Moira and her parents?
- What is the difference between Michael's and Moira's parents?

Sources:

http://www.tess.ie/tess/Main/Resource_LiesSilence.htm

Moore, Brian, *Lies of Silence*, Harlow, Longman, 2003.