

An analytical approach to *Crooked Letter*, *Crooked Letter* by Tom Franklin – Struggling for identity and belonging

by Rita Reinheimer-Wolf



© RAABE 2021

© forcdan/Adobe Stock

Larry Ott and Jones start their childhood and youth in a fateful way together. The two protagonists go separate ways as adults, but are confronted with each other again due to a dramatic event. It begins for both a difficult time of searching for identity and belonging.

The novel *Crooked Letter, Crooked Letter* by Tom Franklin will be analyzed in selected chapters, focusing on the characterization of the two protagonists and the development of the complex relationship between Larry and Cindy. In the center of the lesson, your students will work on various methods to explore the relevant aspects cooperatively, communicatively and creatively in the classroom.

An analytical approach to *Crooked Letter*, *Crooked Letter* by Tom Franklin – Struggling for identity and belonging

by Rita Reinheimer-Wolf

Facts	1
Notes on the material	2
Topic 1: Identity, a sense of belonging, Larry Ott and me	6
Topic 2: Who are they and where do they belong – Silas Jones and Larry Ott	11
Topic 3: Complicated relationships – Larry and Cindy	18
Topic 4: Not belonging anywhere and its consequences	22
Topic 5: All is well that ends well	28
Topic 6: Written assignment	32

Competences and skills:

The unit contains texts and tasks that can be classified as level B2/C1 (*Europäischer Referenzrahmen*). By working with the different parts of *Crooked Letter*, *Crooked Letter*, students enhance their **reading skills**. Furthermore, they practise their competences in explaining and analysing texts when working with the extracts from the novel. Students improve their **speaking and presentation skills** by presenting oral characterisations and conversations in front of the class. When answering questions on the interview video, they also train **listening and viewing skills**. Creative writing tasks focus on the **writing competence** and the **vocabulary knowledge** of the students.

Overview:

List of abbreviations:

CT Creative Task

C Comment

LVC Listening/Viewing comprehension

PR Presentation

RC Reading comprehension

T Working with a text

W Writing

D Discussion/debate

G Group work

P Working with a picture/cartoon

R Research

S Summary

VI Working with a video

Topic	Material	Methods/Skills
1: Identity, a sense of belonging, Larry Ott and me	M1	CT, T, W
2: Who are they and where do they belong? – Silas Jones and Larry Ott	M2–M4	C, P, RC, T
3: Complicated relationships – Larry and Cindy	M5–M7	C, G, RC, T, W
4: Not belonging anywhere and its consequences	M5–M7	D, G, RC, T, VI
5: All is well that ends well	M8	A, CT, D, RC, T, W
6: Written assignment	M9	A, W

Topic 2: Silas Jones and Larry Ott: who are they and where do they belong?

M2 Worksheet – *Crooked Letter, Crooked Letter*: part two and three

Pre-reading activity

1. **Think-Pair-Share:** In what way do childhood experiences influence our personality as an adult? Reflect on this question on your own, then share your thoughts with a partner. After this, talk about your ideas in a small group.

Reading comprehension

2. Read parts two and three of *Crooked Letter, Crooked Letter* (pp. 26–81). Then do the following tasks. Write down the answers.
 - a) Describe Silas's thoughts during and after the discovery of the dead body near the creek. (pp. 30/31)
 - b) Outline the connection between Larry Ott and Silas Jones as described in part two. (pp. 42–44)
 - c) Make a timeline of the major events in the two boys' childhood as narrated in part three. Illustrate each event with a caption.

Working with the text

3. What is Silas Jones like? What is Larry Ott like? Characterise one of the two protagonists based on parts two and three (pp. 26–81). Include evidence from the two parts to support your statements. You can use the grid and M3.
4. Use your smartphone to record a short presentation of your characterisation. Send your recording to your teacher or a student. Give each other feedback.

Creative task

5. Imagine that you have the chance to talk either with Larry Ott or with Silas Jones. What would you focus on in your conversation? Prepare the conversation with a partner.

M3 Language support

Character traits

Positive character traits	Explanations, definitions, synonyms
affectionate	warm-hearted
ambitious	having a strong will to succeed, to become rich, powerful etc.
confident	feeling sure about your own ability to do things and be successful
considerate	always thinking of other people's wishes and feelings, careful not to hurt or upset others; syn.: thoughtful
determined	having a strong will to continue trying to do sth. even when this is difficult
mature	having the quality of thinking and behaving in a sensible, adult manner
reliable	sb. who can be trusted to do sth. well; that one can rely on; syn.: dependable
responsible	if one can be trusted and relied on; syn.: reliable, conscientious
smart	intelligent
thoughtful	showing that you think about and care for other people; syn.: considerate
trustworthy	if one can be relied on to be good, honest, sincere; syn.: reliable, dependable

Negative character traits	Explanations, definitions, synonyms
bad-tempered	often angry; in an angry mood
cowardly	lacking courage
dishonest	intending to trick people
disrespectful	lacking respect for sb./sth.

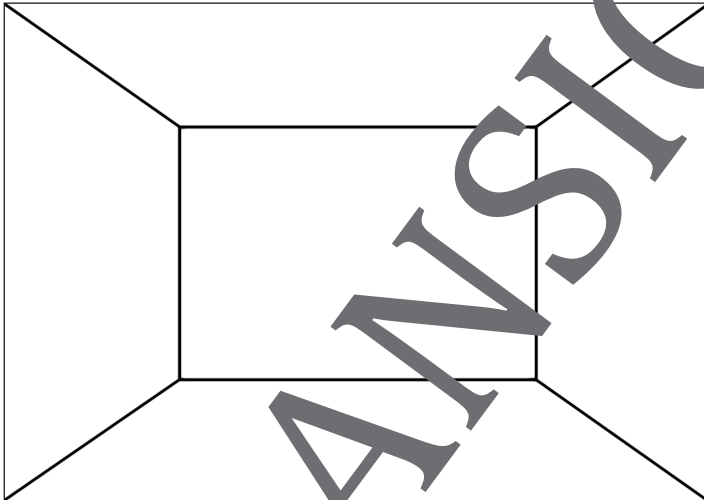
Topic 4: Not belonging anywhere and its consequences

M5 Worksheet – *Crooked Letter, Crooked Letter*: part nine

Pre-reading activity



1. In a placemat activity, discuss possible emotions and consequences of acute loneliness that an individual may experience.



Reading comprehension



2. Read part nine of the novel (pp. 195–223). Point out the most important events in this part.

Working with the text and the video interview with Tom Franklin



Explain the following passages from part nine.

“Because of Larry’s past the women who shared her room were forever the furthest gone, those who wouldn’t be aware that a perhaps murder visited, those with no family, no one to complain.” (p. 196, ll. 30–33)

Sie wollen mehr für Ihr Fach? Bekommen Sie: Ganz einfach zum Download im RAABE Webshop.



- ✓ **Über 4.000 Unterrichtseinheiten** sofort zum Download verfügbar
- ✓ **Sichere Zahlung** per Rechnung, PayPal & Kreditkarte
- ✓ **Exklusive Vorteile für Grundwerks-Abonent*innen**
 - 20% Rabatt auf Unterrichtsmaterial für Ihr bereits abonniertes Fach
 - 10% Rabatt auf weitere Grundwerke

Jetzt entdecken:
www.raabe.de