

# Need To Know

## A Bag of Questions and an Empty Book

A treatment for an afternoon play by John Doona.

**“You teach me nothing if you do not teach me who I am and how I am to live.” - Tolstoy**

1. A young girl, Lisa, carries into a lesson a newspaper article which sensationalises a real act of violence (perhaps the Bulger case). She is reading it to her friends. She asks the teacher, Patrick, for help in explaining. He fudges. There isn't time to deal with such questions. Indeed, he knows he has no answer. He has the curriculum to cover. He drives forward the lesson. Lisa begins to be awkward in the lesson. A conflict ensues.

2. A small group of teachers meet in the faculty office. It's a small windowless room ear-marked for conversion to a 'Pupil Referral Unit'. It is a private space where moaning and theorising are possible beyond the reaches of management. Patrick has been effected by the incident with Lisa. Now he comes into conflict with an arch-moaner over the students. When a senior manager, Dennis, comes in there is silence. Then idle chat. Then further conflict with Patrick over the purpose of school.

3. Later in the day, an upper-school class gets out of hand. Patrick has been made vulnerable and control slips from his hands. Damien, a 15 year old 'young bull', sees his chance. A confrontation ensues in which Damien makes personal comments.

Patrick resorts to highly aggressive vocal domination. Damien walks away from him.

4. The faculty office. Patrick is alone. A colleague, Sarah, enters. Sarah is a supply teacher. She's seen a lot of schools. She is a watcher. They discuss the event in the earlier lesson with Lisa. They are cut short by the arrival of the other staff. Patrick becomes angry.

5. Later in the week Patrick makes a point of confronting Damien on the corridor. There is a serious physical threat running between the two of them. A crowd gathers. Lisa is there. Patrick orders her away. He doesn't want her to witness his aggression. Damien tells her to stay and see. Patrick has lost control. He is afraid. Walks away. Dennis, the senior teacher, arrives. Dispersal.

6. Dennis' office. Damien is excluded over the situation. Patrick knows this isn't just. He tries to explain his own role in aggravating the situation. The Senior Teacher is unconcerned about his explanation. Procedure has now taken over. Damien is escorted from the school.

7. The school roof. Patrick has found access to the roof. From it he can see the whole school. He watches the play and shiftings of the school yard. He reflects upon the meaning of the education offered. A lyrical reflection picking up on Tolstoy. He decides he must act to explain to Damien. Students see him from the roof. They laugh and jeer him. "Don't throw yourself off sir!"

8. Later. Night. Patrick pursues the student into his home life. He wants to discuss the situation; to apologise? He is walking through the estate. Some kids recognise him and jeer. He finds Damien's house. There is a party going on. Drugs are flowing. He tries to speak to Damien's vacant parents. Then Damien. He is out of his depth. His institutional authority cuts no ice. An ugly scene. Patrick stumbles into a quiet

room. He comes across Lisa. She belongs to the same family. She has been hiding. She is scared of seeing her teacher here. She sends him away. She is shouting. Her parents come to the room. Patrick is hit and chased away.

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