The Fugitive

A novel by J M Dillard
Based on the screenplay by Jeb Stuart and David Twohy
From a story by David Twohy
Based on characters created by Roy Huggins

SUMMARY

This exciting adventure story takes place in present-day Chicago in the USA. At the beginning of the story we meet Dr Richard Kimble, a successful doctor working at an important hospital. He lives his life to a high moral standard and he expects other people to do the same.

A new drug is being tested at Dr Kimble’s hospital by a big company. But Kimble believes the results are being changed to hide evidence of the drug’s harmful side-effects. He prepares to confront a colleague, Dr Lentz, who he thinks is involved in the cover-up.

But the meeting never takes place. Kimble gets home to find his wife dying and a man with a gun in the house. Kimble sees the intruder briefly, and notices that he has an artificial arm, before the intruder knocks him out and escapes into the night.

Kimble is arrested for the murder of his wife. With no evidence to support his story, he cannot prove his innocence and he is sentenced to death. On the way to the state prison, however, Kimble escapes. He runs into the darkness, looking for the man with one arm. From now on he lives on the edge of the normal world, driven on by only one motive - to find his wife’s killer. All this time he is being chased by a police detective who is determined to put Kimble back in prison.

The film ‘The Fugitive’, made in 1993 and starring Harrison Ford as the hero, fits the whole story into two hours. The result is a very fast-moving thriller, with one exciting event following closely on another. The budget for the film with its expensive action scenes, particularly the highly realistic train crash, was enormous. Audiences already knew Harrison Ford as an adventuring hero from his earlier films such as ‘Star Wars’, ‘Blade Runner’ and ‘Indiana Jones’. He plays a similar role as the fugitive. His enemy in the film is the dark and sharp Police Detective Gerard, brilliantly played by Tommy Lee Jones, who won an Oscar for his performance.

BACKGROUND AND THEMES

The Fugitive is an action thriller with a fast-moving plot. The action starts on the first page and does not stop until the last page. It is a classic of its type and fits into a long tradition of adventure stories where wrongly accused men (and they usually are men) try to prove their innocence.

Kimble is transformed at the beginning of the story from a successful, white, middle-class professional into a penniless, homeless, jobless wanderer who has to learn to live on the edge of society. His experience becomes that of the social outcast. He has done nothing wrong, and yet people stare at him and he is not allowed to live a normal life. He has no access to money or work. He can only stay alive by stealing, borrowing money from friends, staying in miserable rooms, hiding and running.

In Kimble’s relationship with Police Detective Gerard, the story cleverly contrasts ‘justice’ and ‘the law’ and shows that they are not always the same thing. Kimble stands for justice: we know he is innocent - we were there when his wife was murdered. Detective Gerard stands for the law - if the law has found Kimble guilty, then he is guilty. And Gerard believes the law must be upheld. At one point, although Gerard knows that Kimble may be innocent, he still shoots to kill him to stop him escaping. Kimble is only saved by the strong bullet-proof glass of the prison doors. Natural justice defeats inflexible law in the end. With his determination to find his wife’s real killer, Kimble gradually wins the respect and sympathy of...
Gerard. At the end of the story, Gerard becomes Kimble’s ally and together they catch Nichols, the real culprit.

There is a political message behind the story of The Fugitive. Big business versus the ‘little person’ is always a popular theme in films and novels. Big business in this story is represented by the pharmaceutical company, Devlin-MacGregor. The development of new drugs is one of the most potentially profitable areas of human activity - imagine the profits for the company that finds a cure for AIDS, malaria or even cancer. The story suggests that Devlin-MacGregor is more concerned about profits than about any human suffering caused by its drugs. The message of the film is that there is no moral foundation to the company. Multi-national corporations have become the big power bases at the turn of the century, and are far more influential than governments. We often see governments changing their policies to suit the corporations that finance government election campaigns. So when an ordinary individual decides to take on a big corporation, he or she can usually rely on the reader’s support.

**Communicative activities**

The following teacher-led activities cover the same sections of text as the exercises at the back of the reader, and supplement those exercises. For supplementary exercises covering shorter sections of the book, see the photocopyable Student’s Activities pages of this Factsheet. These are primarily for use with class readers but, with the exception of discussion and pair/group/ work questions, can also be used by students working alone in a self-access centre.

**ACTIVITIES BEFORE READING THE BOOK**

‘The Fugitive’ was a popular TV programme long before it became a film or a book. Each week it opened with the same words. Explain that the man on the cover of the book is a fugitive - he is running away from the police. Write these questions on the board.

What is the fugitive’s name?
What is his job?
Why is he in prison?
Who murdered his wife?

Explain that you are going to read some of the opening words from the TV programme. Students do not need to understand every word. Tell them to listen for the answers to the questions.


Richard Kimble has been tried and convicted for the murder of his wife. But laws are made by men, carried out by men. And men are imperfect. Richard Kimble is innocent.

Richard Kimble . . . saw the man who killed his wife. A man with one arm. A man he had never seen before. A man who has not yet been found.’

Check answers to the questions.

**ACTIVITIES AFTER READING A SECTION**

**Chapters 1-4**

After Helen’s death, the police take Kimble to the police station. They ask him a lot of questions. Students work in groups of three. Two are policemen, the third is Kimble. They act out the conversation. The police don’t believe Kimble’s story.

**Chapters 5-8**

Choose two-line dialogues from this section. Make sure there are enough for each student to have one half of a dialogue.

Example: - I did not kill my wife!
- That’s not my problem.

Write or type them out. Cut each dialogue into two parts. Mix them up. Hand them out. Either: students walk round the class reading their line to other students until they find their other half. Or: students read out their line in turn and the person who thinks they have the other half puts up their hand and reads their line. Continue until everyone has found their pair.

**Chapters 9-11**

Students work in pairs. Ask them to talk about this question: ‘How do you think Richard Kimble will feel after Charlie Nichols is caught? Do you think he will go back to his old job at the hospital? Or will he want to start a new life in a new city?’ Compare ideas across the class.

**ACTIVITIES AFTER READING THE BOOK**

Put students into small groups. They discuss this question:

Charlie Nichols knows that RDU-90 is dangerous but he helps the drug company. Why? Describe his character.

**Glossary**

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1 Read the introduction on page iv of your book. Then answer these questions.
(a) Where does Kimble escape from?
(b) Who is Kimble looking for?
(c) Who is looking for Kimble?
(d) Which came first - the film ‘The Fugitive’ or the TV programme?
2 Work in pairs. Imagine that you are a fugitive. What is a day in your life like? Talk about your ideas.

CHAPTERS 1-4
Chapter 1
1 Answer these questions.
What ...
(a) is RDU-90?
(b) is Devlin-MacGregor?
Where ...
(c) does Dr Kimble work?
(d) is the dinner party?
2 Why does Dr Kimble want to talk to Dr Lentz?
3 Who shoots Helen?

Chapter 2
1 Look at this police report from the place of the murder. Fill in the missing words.
next to   gun   dark   body   sign   leg   arm   head
shot   blood   trying   called   name
The (a) ................................ of Helen Kimble was lying on the bed in the Kimbles’ bedroom. She was
(b) ................................ twice - once in the
(c) ................................ once in the head. The shot to the
(d) ................................ killed her. The
(e) ................................ was a .38. Dr Kimble has a
.38. Before she died, she (f) ................................ the
police on the phone. She said, ‘Richard - he’s
(g) ................................ to kill me.’ Dr Kimble’s first
(h) ................................ is Richard.
Police found Dr Kimble (i) ................................ the
body. He was crying and there was
(j) ................................. all over his clothes. Kimble
says a big man with (k) ................................. eyes and
dark hair killed his wife. He says this man has an
artificial (l) ................................. . Police found no
(m) ................................. of this man.

Chapter 3
Put these sentences in the right order.
(a) Kimble tries to help the young guard.
(b) Copeland puts a knife into the young guard’s side.
(c) The older guard shoots Copeland. He is dead.
(d) The two guards and Kimble get out of the bus.
(e) A bus is taking Kimble and Copeland to prison.
(f) The bus crashes onto its side.
(g) The train crashes into the bus. Kimble escapes into
the night.
(h) The bus is on a railway line and a train is coming.
(i) Copeland kills the bus driver with the young guard’s
gun.
(j) One of the other prisoners, called Copeland, asks for
food.

Chapter 4
Who finds what, where? Choose three things that go
together and make a sentence. Choose one thing from A,
one thing from B, and one thing from C.
Example: Some men find the young guard under the
train.
A: Kimble, Newman, Kimble, Gerard & Poole,
some men
B: the guard’s keys, a doctor’s coat, Gerard’s gun,
the empty ambulance, the young guard
C: on the floor of the side tunnel, in a hospital room,
by the railway line, in the tunnel, under the train

CHAPTERS 5-8
Chapter 5
1 Kimble cannot now live like an ordinary person. He
cannot do these ordinary things. What does he have
to do?
(a) He can’t buy hair colour, so he has to ...
(b) He can’t travel on the bus, so he has to ...
(c) He can’t sit in a café because people ...
(d) He asks a friend for help but ...
(e) When he visits another friend, he can’t go up to
the front door, so he has to ...
2 At the beginning of this chapter, Gerard says ‘Now I
know Kimble did it.’ At the end, he is not so sure.
What two things make him change his mind?

Chapter 6
1 How do you think Kimble is feeling? Circle the words.
tired, hopeful, lonely, bored, in danger, empty,
afraid, happy, nervous, in pain, in a dream
2. Work with another student.

Kimble lies on his bed in the cold, dark room. He talks to Helen in his head. What does he say to her?

One of you is Kimble. The other is Helen's ghost. Have a conversation.

Chapter 7

Put a line under the words that are wrong. There may be more than one wrong fact in each sentence.

(a) Dr Eastman tells Kimble to take the boy from the train accident to the fourth floor.
(b) Kimble takes him to the computer room on the third floor.
(c) There are 75 white, female, 35-to 40-year-old people with an artificial left arm in the Cook County area.
(d) A young man tells the police that Kimble sells drugs.
(e) Driscoll is in hospital because he's waiting for an operation.

Chapter 8

Choose the right words.

(a) The prison is a grey/red, ugly/modern building.
(b) Helen's killer is big/small and black/white.
(c) Driscoll is big/small and black/white.
(d) Kimble/Gerard runs up/down the stairs past Kimble/Gerard.
(e) Gerard sees/doesn't see Kimble's face but he knows/doesn't know it is him.
(f) At Sykes's flat, Kimble finds a photograph of/letter about Sykes on holiday in Chicago/bys the sea with Lentz.
(g) He suddenly understands that Lentz and some people at Devlin-MacGregor wanted to kill him/Helen not Helen/him.

CHAPTERS 9-11

Chapter 9

Put each name in the right place in the sentences.

(a) Kimble/Sykes/Gerard

......................... says he doesn't know

......................... but ......................... knows he is lying.

(b) Sykes/Kimble/Lentz

......................... thinks that ......................... paid

......................... to kill him.

(c) Lentz/Charlie/Kimble

......................... tells ......................... that

......................... is dead.

(d) Kimble/Gerard/Helen/Nichols

......................... thinks ......................... helped

......................... to find .........................'s killer.

(e) Kimble/Sykes

......................... wants to kill .........................

Chapter 10

1. Answer these questions.

(a) While Kimble and Kath are looking at the livers ...

(i) what is Newman doing?
(ii) what are Gerard and Poole doing?
(iii) what do you think Sykes is doing?

(b) Why doesn't Sykes shoot Kimble?

(c) Kimble made a phone call to Sykes. Why is Gerard sorry to know about the call?

(d) Who made the call from Kimble's car?

(e) Why will every policeman in Chicago be after Kimble?

2. Work in pairs. Act out the conversation that Charlie Nichols had with Sykes on Kimble's car telephone on the evening of Helen Kimble's murder.

3. In Chapter 9, Charlie Nichols tells Kimble that Lentz died in a car accident? Do you think it was really an accident? Talk to a friend.

Chapter 11

1. After the fight in the washing-room, Kimble, Gerard, Poole and Nichols write down what happened. Put the writer's name at the end of each report. Who is lying?

(a) We came into a dark, wet room. I called out. I stood between the two big washing machines. I saw a man standing in the shadows. I held my gun in front of me. Suddenly another man ran towards me with a gun. I turned and a bag of washing hit the second man. He dropped his gun.

(b) We came into a dark, wet room. I walked along under one of the lines. Suddenly something hard hit me on the back of the head.

(c) We came into a dark, wet room. I heard someone shouting 'Kimble' over by the big washing machines. I found a body on the floor. I saw a man standing by the washing-machines. He had a gun. He started walking towards me. Then another man came towards the first man. He held a gun in front of me. I called to him. He stopped and turned towards me. I pushed a bag at him. It hit him and he fell.

(d) We came into a dark, wet room. I heard someone shouting 'Kimble' over by the big washing machines. I saw a man push a bag into a woman. She fell. The man picked up the gun. Then he pointed it at me. A second man came out from behind the washing machine. He had a gun too. He pointed it at the first man. The first man pushed a bag at me. I fell.

2. Work in pairs. One of you is Kimble. The other is Gerard. Have a conversation.

Activities after reading the book

Talk with one or more other students.

Did you enjoy this book? Why?

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