

# Little Rebels Exploring Social Justice

## Needle

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A rich range of pressing social justice issues includes the treatment of young people by our welfare and criminal justice institutions and the 'adultification' of Black girls. All contained in a short form, 'reluctant reader', novella.

**Shortlisted for the 2023 Little Rebels Book Award**



**Social Justice Themes: Racism; Access; Equal Treatment; Well-being**

### Things to talk about

- The opening chapter ends with these words from the main character, Charlene: 'No, I said. It wasn't my fault and I'm not sorry'. What do you learn about Charlene in this chapter? Pay particular attention to her love of knitting. Why is this so important to her?
- The apology is an important motif in the novel. What do you understand by the term 'motif' and how is it used to convey meaning in 'Needle'?
- From the situation with the shop security guard to the separation from her beloved sister, Charlene often feels powerless. Read the first paragraph on page 38. What do you think Charlene means? What impact does this have on her?
- Charlene is very quick to anger and this emotional response peaks when Blake destroys the blanket she is knitting for her sister. Why do you think Charlene responds in this way even when it has very negative consequences for her?
- On page 78 Charlene imagines herself and Blake in court. She is highlighting the prejudice that exists in society and how this creates preconceptions. Judges are expected to treat all members of the public equally and fairly. Do you think this is possible?

### Activities

- Compare Charlene's experiences with the lawyer Roberto in chapter 4 to Shelley in chapter 9. Identify how their treatment of Charlene differs and how this influences the outcomes of those meetings.

### Extended

- The charity unicef has published a report, 'A Rights-Based Analysis of Youth Justice in the United Kingdom'. Research their findings which can be found on their website <https://www.unicef.org.uk/youth-justice-in-the-uk-a-rights-based-analysis/>

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