

PICK IT UP—AND  
KEEP IT HIDDEN.

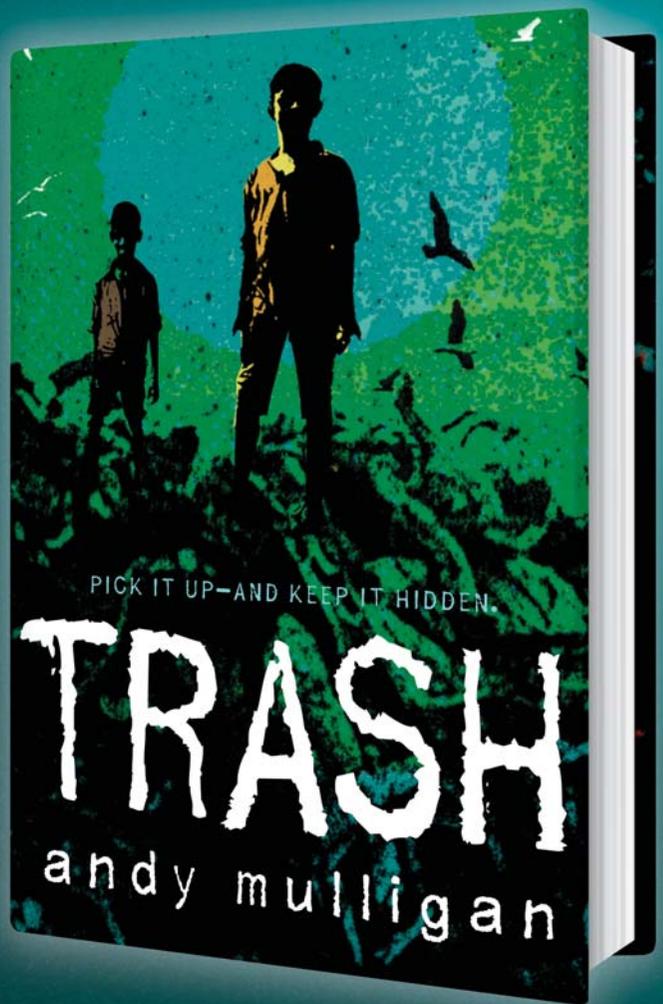
# TRASH

readers guide



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HC: 978-0-385-75214-5  
GLB: 978-0-385-75215-2  
ebook: 978-0-375-89843-3  
CD: 978-0-307-74677-1



## about the book

Raphael is a dumpsite boy. He spends his days wading through mountains of steaming trash—sifting, sorting, breathing, and sleeping next to it. Then one unlucky-lucky day, Raphael’s world turns upside down. A small leather bag falls into his hands. It’s a bag of clues, and a bag of hope. It’s a bag that will change everything. Soon Raphael and his friends Gardo and Rat are running for their lives. Wanted by the police, it takes all their quick-thinking and fast-talking to stay ahead. As the net tightens, they uncover a dead man’s mission to put right a terrible wrong. And now it’s three street boys against the world.

Andy Mulligan has written a powerful story about unthinkable poverty—and the kind of hope and determination that can transcend it. With twists and turns, unrelenting action, and deep, raw emotion, *Trash* is a heart-pounding, breath-holding novel.

## about the author

Andy Mulligan was brought up in South London. He worked as a theater director for ten years, before travels in Asia prompted him to retrain as a teacher. He has taught English and drama in Britain, India, Brazil, and the Philippines. He now divides his time between London and Manila.

# discussion questions

- Throughout the novel, Raphael, Gardo, and Rat take turns recounting their story. How does hearing the multiple perspectives of this story benefit you?
- Raphael unflinchingly shares the nature of the condition in which he and the other dumpsite boys live. What feelings does this candor evoke in you?
- During the course of the novel, Raphael, Gardo, and Rat learn that the world as they know it will never be the same. In what ways will it be better or worse for them? Have you had an experience that reshaped your life? In what ways have you changed due to this incident?
- Using the phrase, “In this story, family means . . .” discuss the issue of family in *Trash*. Explain your choices.
- Discuss the character traits that allow Raphael, Gardo, and Rat to ultimately persevere. How are these characters similar to each other? In what ways are they different? Which character are you most like?
- What role does Gabriel Olondriz play in the story? In what ways is he a catalyst for the choices made by the boys?
- Though the story takes place in an unnamed Third World country, readers are quickly drawn into the story due to Mulligan’s vivid descriptions of the setting. Discuss the relation of the novel’s setting has to the events of the story.
- What role do the relief workers such as Father Julliard and Olivia play in the lives of Raphael, Gardo, and Rat? In what ways have the lives of these adults been enriched by serving impoverished children?
- By the end of the novel, Rat states, “Jun—no longer Rat. My name is Jun-Jun.” (p. 217) What can be inferred about Rat’s new sense of self? How have Raphael and Gardo enabled this transformation?
- Predict the impact that Zepata’s deposal from government will have on this country. What types of changes (if any) do you expect to see now that he is no longer in power?
- Using the phrase, “This is a story about . . .” supply five words to describe *Trash*. Explain your choices.

# internet resources

CARE Global:

[www.careinternational.org](http://www.careinternational.org)

Integrated Regional Information Networks (IRIN) Humanitarian News & Analysis: [www.irinnews.org](http://www.irinnews.org)

International Federation of Red Cross & Red Crescent Societies: [www.ifrc.org](http://www.ifrc.org)

Médecins Sans Frontières (Doctors Without Borders): [www.msf.org](http://www.msf.org)

Oxfam International:

[www.oxfam.org/en](http://www.oxfam.org/en)

Peace Corps: [www.peacecorps.gov](http://www.peacecorps.gov)

Save the Children:  
[www.savethechildren.org](http://www.savethechildren.org)

UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs: [ochaonline.un.org](http://ochaonline.un.org)

Unicef: [www.unicef.org](http://www.unicef.org)

World Food Programme: [www.wfp.org](http://www.wfp.org)

# extension activities for the classroom

## • Where in the World are Raphael, Rat, and Gardo?

At the heart of *Trash*, layers of mystery and intrigue drive the story forward. Though the setting is never identified, readers can determine it through textual evidence. Working in small groups, divide up sections of the novel, and have students investigate where the story might be taking place. Look at geographical indicators and clues such as descriptions of first and last names, foods, and other cultural references which may hint to location. Using a digital map, have each group document and present her or his findings to the class.

## • Bad Boys, Bad Boys, Whatcha' Gonna Do?

Though the government corruption detailed in *Trash* is fictitious, there are many cases of similar events where international assistance for Third World Countries has been impeded. Assign student groups to use news resources, the Internet, and encyclopedias to research real examples of relief efforts being disrupted by political corruption. Typical cases might involve these countries: Indonesia, the Dominican Republic, and Malaysia in the 1960s; Cambodia, Bangladesh, Angola, Zaire, and Haiti in the 1970s; Lebanon, Ethiopia, Nicaragua, El Salvador, and the Philippines in the 1980s; Bosnia and Herzegovina, Colombia, Rwanda, Somalia, Sierra Leone, Iraq, and North Korea in the 1990s; and Sudan, Iraq, Zimbabwe,

Somalia, Haiti, and Democratic Republic of the Congo in the last decade. Have students create a Glogster digital poster ([www.glogster.com](http://www.glogster.com)) to summarize their findings. After sharing with the group, allow students to consider the similarities and differences between their research and the Zepata case described in the novel.

## • Lend a Helping Hand

Like in many Third World Countries, *Trash* features adult relief workers who play important roles in the lives of the impoverished children with whom they work. Using the library and Internet, have students investigate the roles of relief workers in similar circumstances. Research and consider the following:

- What types of organizations send relief workers to underdeveloped countries?
- Do they have a stated goal?
- How are they funded?
- What are typical jobs held by those providing aid?
- What's the average length of service time relief workers remain in the country where they are working?
- What are some common dangers they face?

After gathering information, have students create a digital presentation [using a program like Prezi ([www.prezi.com](http://www.prezi.com)) or Microsoft PowerPoint] and share their findings.