

Teachers' notes by
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The Shiny Guys Doug MacLeod

The Australian Curriculum Year 9

Year 9 Level Description

The English curriculum is built around the three interrelated strands of Language, Literature and Literacy. Teaching and learning programs should balance and integrate all three strands. Together the strands focus on developing students' knowledge, understanding and skills in listening, reading, viewing, speaking, writing and creating. Learning in English builds on concepts, skills and processes developed in earlier years, and teachers will revisit and strengthen these as needed.

In Years 9 and 10, students interact with peers, teachers, individuals, groups and community members in a range of face-to-face and online/virtual environments. They experience learning in familiar and unfamiliar contexts, including local community, vocational and global contexts.

Students engage with a variety of texts for enjoyment. They interpret, create, evaluate, discuss and perform a wide range of literary texts in which the primary purpose is aesthetic, as well as texts designed to inform and persuade. These include various types of media texts, including newspapers, film and digital texts, fiction, non-fiction, poetry, dramatic performances and multimodal texts, with themes and issues involving levels of abstraction, higher order reasoning and intertextual references. Students develop a critical understanding of the contemporary media, and the differences between media texts.

The range of literary texts for Foundation to Year 10 comprises Australian literature, including the oral narrative traditions of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, as well as the contemporary literature of these two cultural groups, and classic and contemporary world literature, including texts from and about Asia.

Literary texts that support and extend students in Years 9 and 10 as independent readers are drawn from a range of genres and involve complex, challenging and unpredictable plot sequences and hybrid structures that may serve multiple purposes. These texts explore themes of human experience and cultural significance, interpersonal relationships, and ethical and global dilemmas within real-world and fictional settings and represent a variety of perspectives. Informative texts represent a synthesis of technical and abstract information (from credible/verifiable sources) about a wide range of specialised topics. Text structures are more complex including chapters, headings and subheadings, tables of contents, indexes and glossaries. Language features include successive complex sentences with embedded clauses, a high proportion of unfamiliar and technical vocabulary, figurative and rhetorical language, and dense information supported by various types of graphics presented in visual form.

Students create a range of imaginative, informative and persuasive types of texts including narratives, procedures, performances, reports, discussions, literary analyses, transformations of texts and reviews.

More information on The Australian Curriculum can be found at <http://www.australiancurriculum.edu.au/>.

Source for curriculum

ACARA: Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (2011). *The Australian Curriculum v1.3: English Foundation to Year 10 Curriculum*. Retrieved April 2012, from <http://www.australiancurriculum.edu.au/English/Curriculum/F-10>

Teaching Notes

Synopsis

It is 1985 and Colin Lapsley is fifteen when he is admitted to Ward 44 (a psychiatric ward). There, he shares a room with an older patient, Len whose snoring is so irritating to Colin that he occasionally crawls under Len's bed in order to pull Len's big toe and wake him up. There is growing animosity between Len and Colin, which resurfaces from time to time throughout the story.

Colin's best friend in the Ward 44 is an older and much bigger boy, Mango. Mango has recurring dreams about being locked in *The Impossible Cupboard*, which Colin has promised to help him find, and destroy. Mango trusts Colin and the two discuss their treatment, other patients and various philosophies.

"Morning Spazzo," says Mango.

"Mental case," replies Colin.

Colin first saw *the shiny guys*; red, shiny beings in his peripheral vision, when a police officer showed him photographs of a man who police believed to be responsible for the abduction, torture and murder of Colin's younger sister, Briony. Colin's deeply seated trauma and his response to treatment forms the bulk of the rest of the narrative.

Colin recounts the moment Briony disappeared during a short walk in the Flinders Ranges, but has blanked out any memory of a third person. It is not until years later while staring at the photographs, as his parents struggle to cope with the devastation Briony's disappearance has caused, that Colin remembers the man.

The recovery of this memory fills Colin with fear, shock and confusion, yet he cannot acknowledge to his parents that he saw the man in the photographs. Ridden with sudden guilt over his sister's disappearance, Colin decides he doesn't deserve to live and his failed suicide attempt leads him to Ward 44.

Ward 44 is overseen by Doctor Parkinson. Colin sees Doctor Parkinson daily as part of his treatment, but he is distrustful of the Doctor's motives. Colin sees the doctor as ambitious and Ward 44 as his grand experiment, for which Dr. Parkinson attends conferences and writes interesting scientific papers. Colin dislikes the side effects of his medication, asking if he can have it stopped, and is terrified of receiving ECT (electro convulsive therapy). Doctor Parkinson suggests that Colin imagine a happy ending to the dreams of Briony that are plaguing him, but Colin is fixated on the new texta on Doctor Parkinson's desk. Colin's ability to remain focused is compromised, either by the medication or his condition, and he spends a great deal of his time imagining scenarios, inventing stories and engaging in petty theft.

The arrival of Anthea in the ward creates a new set of dynamics. Anthea, suffering from anorexia, and with a history of drug abuse enjoys telling her therapist tall stories about herself, about her family and soon gravitates to Colin and Mango, the only other patients in Ward 44 her own age. Mango quickly develops feelings for Anthea, and Colin vows to help him win her heart.

The nurses in Ward 44 have their own stories too, and these are hinted at by comments Colin makes. Keith is short and stocky with arms almost as big as Mango's, and unlike some of the other nurses, (Shamita and Tim among others), Keith is not 'determinably nice'. This is understandable, Colin points out, as Keith was once hit by the 'patient with too much anger'.

Other residents of the ward include alcoholic Val, who tells everyone about her alcoholism and then sets about flattering them endlessly. Val's room is full of religious imagery and Colin calls it the 'Jesus Room'. There is John, the quiet Korean kid who never speaks, although Colin can't really work out why he's there, and Jill, who has self-esteem issues. Colin calls the librarian '99' because she reminds him of the character from 'Get Smart'. Mrs. Polidori runs basket weaving classes, a craft which is still in practice on the Ward owing to the Repatriation Ward origins of the facility.

The disappearance of Len has the staff worried and embarrassed, but it is revealed that Colin has stolen one of the nurses key cards after opening a locked draw with a paperclip and bribed Len with a chocolate bar to get himself into one of the outer buildings. Len is eventually found, and Doctor Parkinson begins to deal with Colin's increasing kleptomania and plotting.

Colin's world is transformed suddenly when he is taken to visit Doctor Vendra, who assists Colin to travel to the planet *Nestor* through a door in his office, which is linked to another dimension. Colin is introduced to Doctor Maximew, a human-sized cockroach, and Doctor Vendra also reveals himself as one of the cockroach inhabitants of Nestor. These are *The Shiny Guys* Colin has been seeing in the corners of his vision. It is revealed that other inhabitants of *Nestor* have been abducting human beings in gangs, among them, Briony. Colin must find a way to stop them, and he is excited by the prospect of defeating The Shiny Guys and saving Briony. Colin is on a mission.

He reawakes in his bed and though he is sleepy, he is aware of the new contact lenses the Nestorians have implanted in his eyes which will allow him to see The Shiny Guys clearly. He enlists Mango and later Anthea to help him. He stops taking his medication, as the Nestorians agree he is better able to complete his mission without them.

Colin has actually been hallucinating following his first session of E.C.T. While going *cold turkey* away from his medication, Colin begins to collapse mentally, developing tremors, shaking, having further hallucinations and continuing to undergo further E.C.T. treatments. He grows more manic, eventually developing an escape plan. With Anthea and Mango's help, they will leave Ward 44 and destroy The Shiny Guys.

Colin is perfectly placed to organise such an escape plan, and has been secreting equipment and planning their escape via the open door where the nurses go to smoke at night on the ground floor. Dressed in stolen laundry clothes (belonging to the staff and their families), Colin, Mango and Anthea make it to the outer wall, and with a rope stolen from the gym, which they don't actually need (the wall isn't that high), they make it out and into the night.

Colin is now shaking and paranoid due to his refusal to continue with medication, something which is becoming apparent, and worrying to Mango and more so to Anthea. Together, they follow Colin and steal a car, even as Colin panics about gangs of Nestorians following them in gangs.

After a short drive, Anthea is sent to her house to gather weapons to fight the Nestorians, and Colin, who is increasingly breaking down, confesses to Mango that he saw the man who abducted Briony, and that all he could do then was to pass out, and that he never remembered until the police showed him the photographs and he could not admit it. Colin promises he would not do that to Mango, that he would look after him. When Anthea returns, she is carrying not weapons, but her cat, Simon. As rain falls, Mango decides on a safe place to sleep and rethink things and they drive away.

The three (and Simon) drive to Mango's parents' house and break into the nearby granny-flat. It is here that the mystery of the 'impossible cupboard' is solved. The make-shift Granny-flat has a space between two doors which shouldn't exist. The Impossible Cupboard. The space where Mango recounts being locked for days as a child as punishment for smashing the TV.

When Colin awakes hours later, Mango and Anthea are asleep, as he says, 'Lovers entwined'. Colin has a vision of Dr. Vendra calling him and he explains to Colin the truth of what has been happening- the repressed memory of Briony's abduction, the trauma of guilt. As Dr. Vendra transforms suddenly into Briony, Colin is forgiven, hinting at the possibility that Colin has indeed forgiven himself for what happened.

The following teachers' notes are designed for an upper middle years classroom, typically years 7-9, with differentiation and extension possibilities built in or intrinsic to each activity.

While Reading

There are numerous approaches to novel study based around group reading, teachers reading aloud, the dreaded 'round robin' style, literature circles and good old independent reading. Whichever method you choose (or methods, as multiple approaches are often an engaging and effective way to cater for academic and engagement needs in the classroom), using a double-entry or dialectical journal is a worthwhile skill for students to grasp.

DEJs are basically a page divided into two columns; one being 'Quote From the Text', the other 'My Thinking'. Depending on the focus you choose to adopt for your class/student (and using multiple foci is possible), the DEJ is a solid, summative assessment piece, which displays the thinking of each student and the chosen passages. I encourage accurate recording, use of quotation marks, page numbers.

Sample Foci:

Recording unfamiliar words:

By recording words that students have not encountered sufficiently in order to remember, students can be encouraged to use and develop the strategy of finding the meanings of words *in context*. Although this is a simple strategy, it forms a basic skill; one which equips students for future reading and thinking.

Recording interesting phrases/passages:

Students are asked to write down words, clauses, sentences or passages they find interesting, powerful, humorous etc. In the second column they detail why they chose that passage and their thoughts.

Prediction:

Students are asked to make predictions about character, plot etc. based on their reading. The trick here is to ask them to justify their thinking by explaining *why* they think something is going to happen.

Visualising:

Students record the part of the text that inspires them to visualise: See, hear, smell, touch, taste. They explain what they find easy to visualise by quoting the lines from the text and what it is they experience.

The particular focus you choose to adopt can vary with the use of a double entry journal, but other fantastic aspects of training your students to use this approach while they read become evident. Reading with a focus, a pen in hand and a journal open for use is purposeful reading. Students are engaged with their reading and not passive. Students are teaching themselves the art of note-taking;

something which we expect students to be able to do, but don't often actually train them to do.

Making Connections:

Using a DEJ to make connections uses some tried and true teaching strategies in a new form. There are a number of connections students can make, simply by recording the passage or the quote from the text and using the grid below (good idea to make a classroom poster for reference).

Readers Making Connections:

Connection	Example
Text to Self	<i>'This reminds of a time when I ...'</i>
Text to World	<i>'This reminds me of Hollywood/Alaska/Chinese acrobats ...'</i>
Text to Text	<i>'I remember a character reacting like this before' ...</i> activates prior knowledge
See http://www.busyteacherscafe.com/literacy/comprehension_strategies.html For complimentary references and downloads	

Discussion

Perhaps the most important strategy a teacher can utilise in teaching the class novel is that of encouraging discussion. So many rich and unique connections can be made through discussion, so many ideas are formed and articulated, so much happens at this stage of reading, that any novel/textual study seems incomplete without it.

There is also the notion of the hidden curriculum at work when students discuss their reading. Not only do they need to be on-track and accountable, they also listen better, learn turn-taking and get to practise reading from their notes, reinforcing their note-taking.

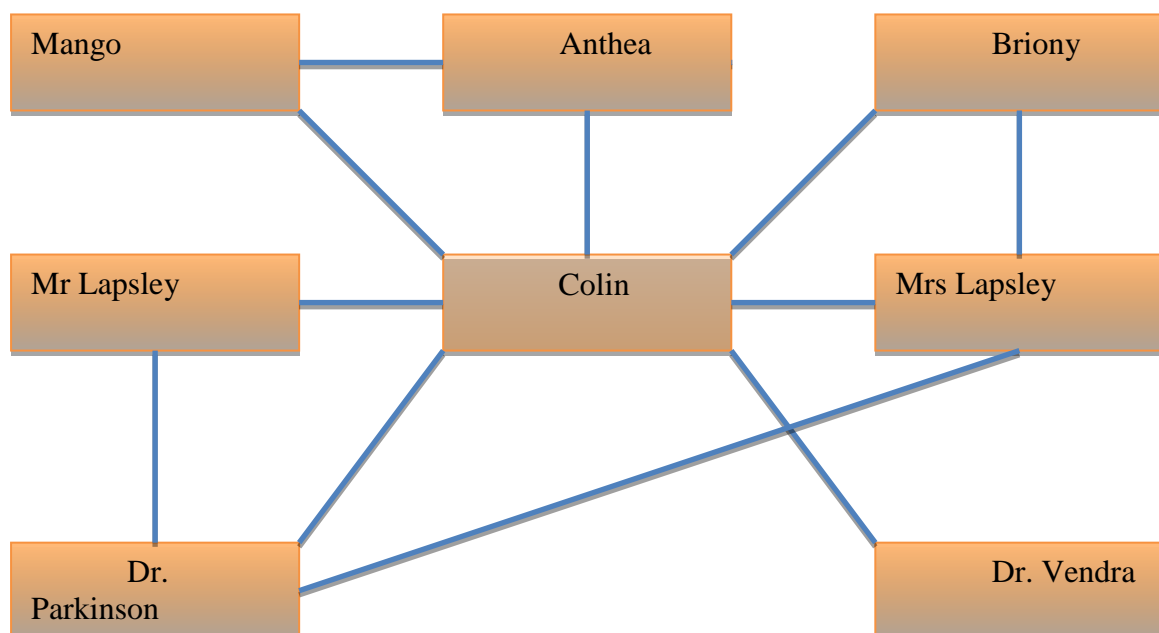
There are about a million other reasons to foster this sort of environment in the classroom, (educational research is emphatic about the benefits of speaking and listening) and almost as many ways to do so, from Socratic circles to reflection circles and so on. From the simple 'turn and talk' as we read to the prepared reflection, make sure you allow time to be built in to your planner for discussion.

Characters

The Shiny Guys is an imaginative work based on a number of themes and using **characterization** to drive the story. Colin, Anthea and Mango are utterly believable as the central characters. They are used to move the plot forward, seemingly sharing the role of protagonist, yet they are very different in terms of motivation and their own circumstances. Colin can be described as sneaky, cunning and driven. Mango is reliable, stable, strong. Anthea is street-wise, nobody's fool and caring. Each shares some characteristics with the other, and equally, each manages to differ enough to be clearly identifiable in terms of characteristics. Identifying similarities and differences is important when creating a **character analysis**. Using the templates below for each of the above characters, ask your students to choose a character and create a comparative analysis for Colin, Mango and Anthea. Use these to generate discussions and to assist students with later activities, including *Hot-Seat* activity.

Ethics: Makes just or unjust choices?	Actions: Wise or Unwise?	Motivation: Why did he/she do that?
Effects of Character's behaviour on others:	Colin Lapsley	Items Associated with Character:
Flat or Round? 2 or 3 dimensional?	Words to Describe this Character:	Physical Clues:

In a novel, the supporting characters are equally as important as the central characters in order to help to create the world the characters inhabit. Dr. Parkinson, Tim, Len, Alcoholic Val, Keith and others help to bring *Ward 44* to life. Ask your students to complete the character analysis on these characters, outlining their place in the world of *Ward 44*. Additionally, the following graphic organiser example may be useful as a guide to show how characters are linked:



Hot Seat Activity

The *Hot Seat* activity asks students to inhabit the skin of a particular character. There are many variations on this teaching strategy: students can interview each other in groups, one student can be interviewed by a 'studio audience', interested student journalists can prepare questions.

The strategy aims to immerse students in a character's world and to see 'through their eyes'. Students gain an understanding of the complexity of characters, with plenty of classroom discussion about why a character would do or say something, or even why they wouldn't, helping students to understand the importance of 'real' characters in narrative.

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1idbpG5YJ7Y&feature=autoplay&list=PLDCE545BD6618102F&lf=results_main&playnext=2

Variations:

- Hot seat a number of students as one character
- Hot seat a character and ask questions to do with real life (e.g. 'Tarzan, why did you close your store, and what were you selling?')
- Ask hot seat students about their memories
- Ask hot seat students to tell 'two truths and a lie'.
- Put students on the spot with no preparation time
- Allow students time to think about their questions and answers and to prepare
- Use both approaches.
- Write a letter to another character 'in character'.
- Write a letter home 'in character'.

The Imaginary World of Nestor (Extension Tasks- see also *Important passages and Quotes* section)

Colin's electro convulsive therapy has contributed to his dreams and hallucinations about the journeys to planet Nestor and its principal inhabitants, Drs. Vendra and Maximew. Doug MacLeod provided several clues along the way in order to let the reader in on what he was doing. How do we know Nestor is not real, prior to the revelation at the climax of the story?

Organise your students into teams with a view to getting them to do a 'quick-write'/produce a poster considering the following:

Why should Colin's hallucinations take the form of a pair of doctors? Why is Nestor the way that it is? Why is it seemingly run down, almost decrepit? Why are the Nestorians *cockroaches*?

If this is all Colin's imagination, then how does this contribute to your knowledge of Colin as a character?

What is the relationship of the world of Nestor with the world of Colin Lapsley?

Suggested Graphic Organisers:

Venn, Compare and Contrast, Concept, T-Chart.
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Themes

The Shiny Guys explores a number of intriguing themes, most notably, the formal, medical treatment and subsequent care of the mentally ill in society. Additionally, students may explore love, friendship, crime and punishment, ethics, even political correctness!

Sample Topic:

With debates constantly raging about facility versus community care and institutionalization of the mentally ill, what are the pros and cons of each model? Plan a persuasive response to one or more of the following questions, using your knowledge of the characters in *The Shiny Guys* (and real-world research) as evidence:

- A) Colin would have been better off being treated professionally at home instead of being locked up in an institution.
- B) Colin would have been fine in Ward 44 if he had kept taking his medication.
- C) ECT (electro convulsive therapy) is barbaric and should never have been used.

Useful graphic organisers:

Fact/Opinion, Compare and Contrast, Venn, Double Bubble, T-Chart, Concept Map.

Remember, in planning your persuasive response, you may agree or disagree with any question, but you must stick to your line of response!

Suggested further research:

<http://www.sane.org/information/factsheets-podcasts/445-electroconvulsive-therapy-ect>

http://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/bhcv2/bhcarticles.nsf/pages/Electroconvulsive_therapy

http://www.healthinsite.gov.au/topics/Electroconvulsive_therapy

Language requirements of persuasive essay:

The language of persuasion is important in this task. Persuasive texts aim to use language in order to subtly (and not so subtly) influence the reader. Persuasive techniques can be loosely grouped into categories, but these are ever-changing and overlapping:

Language: may be used to make **appeals** to the reader such as 'How can this be tolerated ...' and can use **inclusive** and **rhetorical** devices, 'Is this what **we** want in modern Australia?' Language can also be colourful, positive, negative, emotive or just plain **strong!**

Jargon, expert opinion, statistics and facts, use of visual stimuli (graphs, photographs, cartoons), examples and the use of strong images are other effective ways to influence the reading audience.

The structure of expository writing is also important, with five paragraphs being a strong basis for which to plan. I recommend the following steps:

Introduce students to the **writing process**, which is:

Plan Draft Revise Edit Publish Reflect

Use a graphic organiser. One example is available at:

<http://www.readwritethink.org/classroom-resources/student-interactives/essay-30063.html>

Plan, plan, PLAN! I encourage my students to write out their points in a graphic organiser, expand these into sentences using TEEL (below), and then commence writing the conclusion. I ask them to leave the introduction until **LAST!** Students who do this in this order tend to have more successful introductions and powerful conclusions, simply because they know exactly what's in their essay when they begin their intros.

T: Topic. (*All patients should choose their treatment based on information*).

E: Elaboration. (*Everyone has a right to determine their treatment*).

E: Evidence. (*Colin was terrified of ECT, and look what happened! He had hallucinations, memory loss and was confused about what was happening.*)

L: Link. Imagine the next paragraph's topic is 'ECT was considered cruel by some medical doctors'. The linking sentence could be: '*The choice of his own medical treatment was taken away from Colin, allowing him to be subject to a form*

of treatment, which could be considered as cruel and unusual punishment in some circles.'

This is how the paragraph looks in a planner:

All patients should choose their treatment based on information

Everyone has a right to determine their treatment.

Colin was terrified of ECT, and look what happened! He had hallucinations, memory loss and was confused about what was happening.

The choice of his own medical treatment was taken away from Colin, allowing him to be subject to a form of treatment, which could be considered as cruel and unusual punishment in some circles.

The next step is to continue to guide students through the writing process:

Plan Draft Revise Edit Publish Reflect

In my writing classrooms I always use peer feedback as part of the revision process, and then enjoy the 'professional dialogue', which often ensues when students are allowed to offer advice and criticism. Peer reviews form part of my rubrics for success and can be a valuable component of the reflection of each student. A sample peer review sheet is included below:

Writer's Name:	Reviewer:
Name of work:	
Ask 3 questions about this work:	
1:	(Try to ask about the content , as well as the writing)
2:	
3:	
Some suggestions for improvement:	
Writer's Plan for Success:	



Important passages and Quotes

P. 2. The inmates from Ward 44 come in all shapes and sizes. Some are old, some are young, but we are united in one respect. Our brains don't work. Or rather, they *do* work, but not in a way society finds acceptable.

What does this say about society's understanding of the term '*sanity*'? Do you think people are either sane or insane, or are there degrees in between? How '*insane*' do you have to be before you find help? What if you don't want help? Who should decide? When does the patient have the right to determine their own care?

P. 12 Maybe the shiny guys will go away if I stop blaming myself? But I'm the one who wrecked our family. My parents will never stop blaming me, so why should I?

Is Colin being too hard on himself? Is he really responsible for what happened to Briony? What could Colin do, or have done, in order to avoid his decline into depression? Do you think Colin may have developed depression anyway? To what extent are Mr. and Mrs. Lapsley also responsible?

P.24 'When we get out, I'll help you find it,' I say.
'And I'll help you to kill the shiny guys,' says Mango.
It's the same pact we always make.
'Good night spazzo,' says Mango.
'Good night, mental case.'

Is the relationship between Mango and Colin a constructive one? In other words, do you think they are helping each other by making this pact, or are they perhaps preventing each other from acknowledging the truth? What do you think about the language at use here? Is it 'ok' for Colin and Mango to use terms like 'spazzo' and 'mental case' like this? Why or why not?

A. This isn't a normal hospital is it?
Q. What makes you say that?
A. The grey pyjamas are a bit of a give away.
Q. They are Dr. Parkinson's idea. He's in charge of the ward.
A. Why do we wear them?
Q. What do you think?
A. So we're all equal?
Q. See? You're not stupid at all.

What do you think about the way Doctor Quayle speaks to Anthea? What tone is the doctor using? Is the dialogue accurate in terms of what might be said or shared in a medical discussion? Do you think dressing everyone in grey pyjamas is a good thing or not? Why? What help does Anthea need from Ward 44?

The picture on the wall has changed. It's now a Dutch landscape featuring a flood. Peasants are struggling to remain afloat, only to be dissected by the blades of homicidal windmills,
'You changed the picture,' I say.
'Actually *you* did,' Dr Vendra replies.
'But you said it wouldn't happen. There'd be no flood, the windmills wouldn't attack.'
'I said it wasn't *likely* to happen. There is a difference.'

Why does the picture in Dr Vendra's office change? Why is this significant to Colin? How is Colin reacting to the altered picture? If Colin is experiencing hallucinations, how much of what he is seeing might be real? Could some things be real, while other things are simply distorted? Why is this important to understand, especially considering how Colin sees the world?

'Come with me,' Dr Vendra says, seemingly unconcerned about the imminent crash.
'There's going to be an accident,' I say.
'It's a strong building,' says Dr Vendra. 'It won't be damaged.'
'What about the shuttle?'
'See, it's changing course. All will be well.'
But all is not well. In an effort to avoid collision, the shuttle banks sharply to the right, its hull clears the corner of the building, but its altitude continues to drop
...
'Colin we can't do anything for them,' Dr Vendra says.
'We must.'
'No. The shuttle left the path. There are designated shuttle lanes. If citizens only obey the rules, things like this won't happen.'

What is happening in this scene? What does this scene represent in terms of Colin's experience? How does this reveal Colin's state of mind and even his subconscious mind? Can you find the parallel event from Colin's past that this is referring to?

Dr Vendra and Dr Maximew are tending to me in the gloomy office. Dr Maximew is wiping the goo from my forehead, the slime that Nestorians secrete from their antennae.

What is really happening in this scene? If this a key into the workings of Colin's mind, how do you now view the world of Nestor, the Nestorians, and Drs Maximew and Vendra?