AQA

GCSE
ENGLISH LITERATURE

Paper 2 Modern texts and poetry

Wednesday 24 May 2023 Morning Time allowed: 2 hours 15 minutes

Materials

For this paper you must have:
- an AQA 16-page answer book.

Instructions
- Use black ink or black ball-point pen. Do **not** use pencil.
- Write the information required on the front of your answer book. The **Paper Reference** is 8702/2.
- Answer **one** question from **Section A**, **one** question from **Section B** and **both** questions in **Section C**.
- You must **not** use a dictionary.

Information
- The marks for questions are shown in brackets.
- The maximum mark for this paper is 96.
- AO4 will be assessed in **Section A**. There are 4 marks available for AO4 in **Section A** in addition to 30 marks for answering the question. AO4 assesses the following skills: use a range of vocabulary and sentence structures for clarity, purpose and effect, with accurate spelling and punctuation.
- There are 30 marks for **Section B** and 32 marks for **Section C**.

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There are no questions printed on this page

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Section A: Modern prose or drama

Answer **one** question from this section on your chosen text.

JB Priestley: *An Inspector Calls*

Either

0 1 How does Priestley present what life is like for women in *An Inspector Calls*?

Write about:

- what life is shown to be like for women in the play
- how Priestley presents what life is like for women.

[30 marks]
AO4 [4 marks]

or

0 2 How does Priestley present the different ways older and younger characters respond to the Inspector?

Write about:

- the different ways older and younger characters respond to the Inspector
- how Priestley presents the different ways older and younger characters respond to the Inspector.

[30 marks]
AO4 [4 marks]

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Willy Russell: *Blood Brothers*

or

0 3 How far does Russell present Mrs Johnstone and Mrs Lyons as very different kinds of mother in *Blood Brothers*?

Write about:

- what Mrs Johnstone and Mrs Lyons say and do
- how far Russell presents Mrs Johnstone and Mrs Lyons as very different kinds of mother.

[30 marks]
AO4 [4 marks]

or

0 4 How far does Russell present Edward as a likeable character in *Blood Brothers*?

Write about:

- what Edward says and does
- how far Russell presents Edward as likeable.

[30 marks]
AO4 [4 marks]

Turn over for the next question

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Alan Bennett: *The History Boys*

or

0 5 How does Bennett present the different ways Posner and Rudge respond to Hector in *The History Boys*?

Write about:

- how Posner and Rudge respond to Hector
- how Bennett presents the ways Posner and Rudge respond to Hector.

[30 marks]
AO4 [4 marks]

or

0 6 How does Bennett present different views about the purposes of education in *The History Boys*?

Write about:

- some of the views about the purposes of education that are presented in the play
- how Bennett presents these views.

[30 marks]
AO4 [4 marks]

Dennis Kelly: *DNA*

or

0 7 How does Kelly explore ideas about guilt in *DNA*?

Write about:

- what some of the characters say and do
- how Kelly presents ideas about guilt in the play.

[30 marks]
AO4 [4 marks]

or

0 8 How far does Kelly present Leah as a likeable character in *DNA*?

Write about:

- what Leah says and does
- how far Kelly presents Leah as a likeable character.

[30 marks]
AO4 [4 marks]

Turn over for the next question

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Simon Stephens: *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time*

or

0 9 How does Stephens present Christopher's experience of being a teenager in *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time*?

Write about:

- what Christopher says and does
- how Stephens presents Christopher's experience of being a teenager.

[30 marks]
AO4 [4 marks]

or

1 0 How does Stephens present Christopher wanting to be independent in *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time*?

Write about:

- examples of Christopher wanting to be independent
- how Stephens presents Christopher wanting to be independent.

[30 marks]
AO4 [4 marks]

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Shelagh Delaney: *A Taste of Honey*

or

1 1 How does Delaney present male attitudes to women in *A Taste of Honey*?

Write about:

- male attitudes to women in the play
- how Delaney presents male attitudes to women.

[30 marks]
AO4 [4 marks]

or

1 2 How far does Delaney present Jo as a likeable character in *A Taste of Honey*?

Write about:

- what Jo says and does
- how far Delaney presents Jo as a likeable character.

[30 marks]
AO4 [4 marks]

Turn over for the next question

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William Golding: *Lord of the Flies*

or

1 3 How far does Golding present Ralph as a strong character in *Lord of the Flies*?

Write about:

- what Ralph says and does
- how far Golding presents Ralph as a strong character.

[30 marks]
AO4 [4 marks]

or

1 4 How does Golding present violence and its effects in *Lord of the Flies*?

Write about:

- examples of violence and its effects in the novel
- how Golding presents violence and its effects.

[30 marks]
AO4 [4 marks]

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AQA Anthology: *Telling Tales*

or

1 5 How do writers present ideas about suffering and grief in 'Odour of Chrysanthemums' and in **one** other story from *Telling Tales*?

Write about:

- suffering and grief in the **two** stories
- how the writers present suffering and grief.

[30 marks]
AO4 [4 marks]

or

1 6 How do writers present a family in conflict in 'A Family Supper' and in **one** other story from *Telling Tales*?

Write about:

- families in conflict in the **two** stories
- how the writers present families in conflict.

[30 marks]
AO4 [4 marks]

Turn over for the next question

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George Orwell: *Animal Farm*

or

1 7 How does Orwell present the reasons for Snowball's defeat in *Animal Farm*?

Write about:

- what happens to Snowball
- how Orwell presents Snowball's defeat.

[30 marks]
AO4 [4 marks]

or

1 8 How does Orwell use what happens to the Seven Commandments to explore ideas about the revolution?

Write about:

- what happens to the Seven Commandments
- how Orwell uses the Seven Commandments to explore ideas about the revolution.

[30 marks]
AO4 [4 marks]

Kazuo Ishiguro: *Never Let Me Go*

or

1 9 How far does Ishiguro present Kathy as a likeable character?

Write about:

- what Kathy says and does
- how far Ishiguro presents Kathy as a likeable character.

[30 marks]
AO4 [4 marks]

or

2 0 How does Ishiguro present the relationship between carers and donors in *Never Let Me Go*?

Write about:

- what the carers and donors say and do
- how Ishiguro presents the relationship between the carers and donors.

[30 marks]
AO4 [4 marks]

Turn over for the next question

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Meera Syal: *Anita and Me*

or

2 1 How far does Syal present the relationship between Meena and Robert as important in *Anita and Me*?

Write about:

- what Meena and Robert's relationship is like
- how Syal presents Meena and Robert's relationship.

[30 marks]
AO4 [4 marks]

or

2 2 How does Syal use the character of Meena to explore ideas about growing up in *Anita and Me*?

Write about:

- what Meena says and does
- how Syal uses the character of Meena to explore ideas about growing up.

[30 marks]
AO4 [4 marks]

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Stephen Kelman: *Pigeon English*

or

2 3 How does Kelman present the ways people are affected by where they live in *Pigeon English*?

Write about:

- some of the ways people are affected by where they live
- how Kelman presents the ways people are affected by where they live.

[30 marks]
AO4 [4 marks]

or

2 4 How does Kelman present Harrison's relationships with his family in *Pigeon English*?

Write about:

- examples of Harrison's relationships with his family
- how Kelman presents these relationships.

[30 marks]
AO4 [4 marks]

Turn over for Section B

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Section B: Poetry

Answer **one** question from this section.

AQA Anthology: *Poems Past and Present*

Either

Love and relationships

The poems you have studied are:

Lord Byron	When We Two Parted
Percy Bysshe Shelley	Love's Philosophy
Robert Browning	Porphyria's Lover
Elizabeth Barrett Browning	Sonnet 29 – 'I think of thee!'
Thomas Hardy	Neutral Tones
Maura Dooley	Letters from Yorkshire
Charlotte Mew	The Farmer's Bride
Cecil Day-Lewis	Walking Away
Charles Causley	Eden Rock
Seamus Heaney	Follower
Simon Armitage	Mother, any distance
Carol Ann Duffy	Before You Were Mine
Owen Sheers	Winter Swans
Daljit Nagra	Singh Song!
Andrew Waterhouse	Climbing My Grandfather

2 5 Compare how poets present relationships between parents and children in 'Before You Were Mine' and in **one** other poem from 'Love and relationships'.

[30 marks]

Before You Were Mine

I'm ten years away from the corner you laugh on
with your pals, Maggie McGeeney and Jean Duff.
The three of you bend from the waist, holding
each other, or your knees, and shriek at the pavement.
Your polka-dot dress blows round your legs. Marilyn.

I'm not here yet. The thought of me doesn't occur
in the ballroom with the thousand eyes, the fizzy, movie tomorrows
the right walk home could bring. I knew you would dance
like that. Before you were mine, your Ma stands at the close
with a hiding for the late one. You reckon it's worth it.

The decade ahead of my loud, possessive yell was the best one, eh?
I remember my hands in those high-heeled red shoes, relics,
and now your ghost clatters toward me over George Square
till I see you, clear as scent, under the tree,
with its lights, and whose small bites on your neck, sweetheart?

Cha cha cha! You'd teach me the steps on the way home from Mass,
stamping stars from the wrong pavement. Even then
I wanted the bold girl winking in Portobello, somewhere
in Scotland, before I was born. That glamorous love lasts
where you sparkle and waltz and laugh before you were mine.

Carol Ann Duffy

Turn over for the next question

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There are no questions printed on this page

or

Power and conflict

The poems you have studied are:

Percy Bysshe Shelley	Ozymandias
William Blake	London
William Wordsworth	Extract from The Prelude
Robert Browning	My Last Duchess
Alfred Lord Tennyson	The Charge of the Light Brigade
Wilfred Owen	Exposure
Seamus Heaney	Storm on the Island
Ted Hughes	Bayonet Charge
Simon Armitage	Remains
Jane Weir	Poppies
Carol Ann Duffy	War Photographer
Imtiaz Dharker	Tissue
Carol Rumens	The Emigrée
John Agard	Checking Out Me History
Beatrice Garland	Kamikaze

Turn over for the next question

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2 6 Compare how poets present the effects of power in 'My Last Duchess' and in **one** other poem from 'Power and conflict'.

[30 marks]

My Last Duchess

Ferrara

That's my last Duchess painted on the wall,
Looking as if she were alive. I call
That piece a wonder, now: Frà Pandolf's hands
Worked busily a day, and there she stands.
Will't please you sit and look at her? I said
'Frà Pandolf' by design, for never read
Strangers like you that pictured countenance,
The depth and passion of its earnest glance,
But to myself they turned (since none puts by
The curtain I have drawn for you, but I)
And seemed as they would ask me, if they durst,
How such a glance came there; so, not the first
Are you to turn and ask thus. Sir, 'twas not
Her husband's presence only, called that spot
Of joy into the Duchess' cheek: perhaps
Frà Pandolf chanced to say 'Her mantle laps
Over my lady's wrist too much,' or 'Paint
Must never hope to reproduce the faint
Half-flush that dies along her throat': such stuff
Was courtesy, she thought, and cause enough
For calling up that spot of joy. She had
A heart – how shall I say? – too soon made glad,
Too easily impressed; she liked whate'er
She looked on, and her looks went everywhere.
Sir, 'twas all one! My favour at her breast,
The dropping of the daylight in the West,
The bough of cherries some officious fool
Broke in the orchard for her, the white mule
She rode with round the terrace – all and each
Would draw from her alike the approving speech,
Or blush, at least. She thanked men, – good! but thanked
Somehow – I know not how – as if she ranked
My gift of a nine-hundred-years-old name
With anybody's gift. Who'd stoop to blame
This sort of trifling? Even had you skill
In speech – (which I have not) – to make your will
Quite clear to such an one, and say, 'Just this
Or that in you disgusts me; here you miss,
Or there exceed the mark' – and if she let
Herself be lessoned so, nor plainly set
Her wits to yours, forsooth, and made excuse,
– E'en then would be some stooping; and I choose
Never to stoop. Oh sir, she smiled, no doubt,
Whene'er I passed her; but who passed without

Much the same smile? This grew; I gave commands;
Then all smiles stopped together. There she stands
As if alive. Will't please you rise? We'll meet
The company below, then. I repeat,
The Count your master's known munificence
Is ample warrant that no just pretence
Of mine for dowry will be disallowed;
Though his fair daughter's self, as I avowed
At starting, is my object. Nay, we'll go
Together down, sir. Notice Neptune, though,
Taming a sea-horse, thought a rarity,
Which Claus of Innsbruck cast in bronze for me!

Robert Browning

Turn over for Section C

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Section C: Unseen poetry

Answer **both** questions in this section.

The poem 'Scaffolding' by Seamus Heaney has not been reproduced here due to third party copyright restrictions.

2 7 . 1 In 'Scaffolding', how does the poet present the speaker's feelings about their relationship?

[24 marks]

The poem 'Yours' by Daniel Hoffman has not been reproduced here due to third party copyright restrictions.

2 7 . 2 In both 'Yours' and 'Scaffolding', the speakers describe their feelings about the strength of romantic relationships.

What are the similarities **and/or** differences between the methods the poets use to present these feelings?

[8 marks]

END OF QUESTIONS

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Surname	StemUp Model Solution
Answer booklet	Write the question number in the left-hand margin at the start of each answer.

Question number

01

Priestley presents life for women in 1912 as narrow, controlled and judged by men, whatever their class. Wealthy women are decorative and dependent, while working class women are disposable, valued only for their labour or their looks. Yet through Sheila and the unseen Eva Smith, Priestley suggests that this is not natural or fixed, and he invites his 1945 audience, many of whom had seen women work and serve throughout the war, to imagine a society in which women have a voice of their own.

At the start of the play, Sheila's life seems comfortable but strangely limited. The stage direction describes her as "very pleased with life and rather excited", and the excitement centres entirely on her engagement. Her playful complaint about Gerald, "except for all last summer, when you never came near me", hints that she already suspects his unfaithfulness, but she lets it go. When she receives the ring, her delight is almost childlike. Priestley shows that a young woman of her class is expected to find her purpose in marriage, an arrangement that also serves Birling's business hopes of a merger with Crofts Limited. Mrs Birling's advice that Sheila must get used to men who spend their time on "business", "just as I had", suggests that wives are trained to accept neglect quietly. Female experience is passed down as resignation.

Birling's attitudes make the point more sharply. His remark that clothes are "a sort of badge of their self-respect" for women is meant kindly, but it reduces women to appearance and shopping. Priestley exposes how patronising the men of the house are: Gerald and Birling repeatedly want to protect Sheila from the "unpleasant" details of the inquiry, as if she were a child. Her refusal to leave the

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room is therefore significant. By insisting on staying, she claims the right to know the truth, and Priestley quietly links her to the suffragettes who, in 1912, were demanding a political voice.

Eva Smith shows the harsher reality for women without money. She never appears, and this absence is itself a method: she is a woman who is talked about, judged and described by others but never allowed to speak. Birling sacks her for asking for higher wages, Sheila has her dismissed from Milwards out of jealousy, and both Gerald and Eric use her. Gerald describes her as "young and fresh and charming", language that sounds affectionate but makes her into something to be enjoyed, and Eric's phrase "a good sport" is even more careless. For a working class woman, Priestley suggests, every route to survival, whether work, a relationship or charity, depends on the goodwill of men or richer women. The Inspector's insistence that there are "millions and millions" of Eva Smiths turns her into a symbol of the whole class of women whose suffering went unnoticed.

Mrs Birling reveals that women can also oppress other women. Described as "a rather cold woman and her husband's social superior", she uses her position on the Brumley Women's Charity Organisation not to help but to judge. Her dismissive "Girls of that class" shows that class loyalty matters more to her than any shared experience as a woman. Arguably, she is the clearest product of a society that gives women status only through their husbands; she has absorbed its values so completely that she cannot see Eva as a fellow woman, let alone a pregnant one. Priestley makes her refusal of help the cruellest act in the play, and the dramatic irony as she unknowingly condemns her own son is devastating.

Sheila, in contrast, grows through the play. Her guilt over Milwards is immediate and sincere: she admits that if Eva had been "some miserable plain little creature"

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she would not have acted, showing that she understands how women are pitted against each other by appearance. Her shift from "Mummy" to "Mother" suggests growing maturity and distance from her parents' values. By Act Three she speaks with real authority, and her bitter remark that "you're pretending everything's just as it was before" is directed at her parents and Gerald. Her refusal to take back the ring at once signals that she will no longer accept marriage on the old terms.

Priestley therefore presents two possible futures for women. Mrs Birling represents the old order of cold respectability, Eva its victims, and Sheila the possibility of change. Writing as the welfare state was being planned, Priestley suggests that a fairer society must include women as equals, not ornaments or cheap labour, and Sheila's final clear-sightedness offers his audience a glimpse of that hope.

02 Priestley presents the Inspector as a test that divides the generations. The older characters, Mr and Mrs Birling, resist him, defend their status and finally pretend that nothing has happened, while the younger characters, Sheila and Eric, are shaken into accepting responsibility. Gerald sits uneasily between them. Through this contrast Priestley suggests to his 1945 audience that the selfish capitalist values of 1912 are entrenched in the old, but that the young are still capable of change, and that a fairer post-war society depends on them.

Before the Inspector arrives, Priestley establishes Birling's confidence through his long speeches at the dinner table. He calls himself "a hard-headed, practical man of business" and dismisses "community and all that nonsense". The dramatic irony of his predictions about the Titanic and the impossibility of war makes him ridiculous, so the audience is already suspicious of his judgement. Crucially, the Inspector's arrival interrupts Birling mid-lecture, as the doorbell cuts across his

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advice that a man must look after himself. Structurally, Priestley makes the Inspector an immediate answer to Birling's philosophy, and the lighting change in the stage directions, from "pink and intimate" to "brighter and harder", signals that comfortable illusions are about to be exposed.

Birling's response to the Inspector is defensive and aggressive. He name-drops his position as an alderman and his friendship with the Chief Constable, as if status could protect him from moral judgement, and he insists that sacking Eva Smith had "nothing whatever to do" with her death. When challenged, his concern is for scandal rather than for the girl. Even in Act Three his desperate "I'd give thousands" shows that he thinks responsibility can be bought. Mrs Birling is even more resistant. Her cold, formal speech and her refusal to accept blame show a woman who sees the Inspector as a social inferior. She treats his questions as an insult to her position and blames the father of the child, unaware that she is condemning her own son. Priestley uses this dramatic irony to show that the older generation's pride blinds them.

The younger characters react very differently. Sheila's guilt is immediate: she is visibly distressed when she sees the photograph and insists that she will never do anything like it again. Priestley gives the Inspector the explanation for this difference when he says the young are "more impressionable". Sheila soon begins to understand his methods, warning her mother that he is "giving us the rope" so that they will hang themselves. The metaphor shows her perception: she sees that lying is pointless, while her parents keep trying. Eric, too, moves from drunken awkwardness to painful honesty. His confession about Eva is hesitant and ashamed, and his furious accusation that his mother has killed her own grandchild turns the family hierarchy upside down. The son now judges the parents.

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Gerald complicates the neat division. He is young, but he belongs socially to the older generation, and Priestley presents him as more like Birling than Eric. He shows genuine feeling about Daisy Renton and leaves to walk about after his confession, which suggests that he is moved. Yet he is also the character who investigates the Inspector's identity and returns with the news that there is no Inspector Goole on the force. His eagerness to hold out the ring to Sheila again shows that he wants to return to normal. Priestley perhaps suggests that class and ambition can harden even the young, so age alone does not guarantee moral growth.

The ending is where the generational contrast becomes clearest. Once the Birlings believe the Inspector was a hoax, they relax at once. Birling mocks "the famous younger generation who know it all", and his mimicry of the Inspector shows how quickly he has returned to arrogance. Mrs Birling congratulates herself on being the only one who "didn't give in to him". Sheila and Eric, by contrast, insist that it does not matter who the Inspector was, because Eva is still dead and they all helped to kill her. Sheila's disgust that her parents have learnt nothing echoes the Inspector's final warning about "fire and blood and anguish", which for an audience that had lived through two world wars was a chilling prophecy fulfilled.

Priestley's final twist, the telephone call announcing that a real inspector is on his way, suggests that those who refuse to learn will be forced to face the consequences. The different responses of old and young are therefore central to Priestley's purpose. The older generation represents a capitalist society that cannot change, and the younger generation represents hope. By making Sheila and Eric the moral voices at the end, Priestley urges his audience to reject the values of the Birlings and build a society in which "we are members of one body".

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03

Russell presents Mrs Johnstone and Mrs Lyons as very different kinds of mother on the surface: one poor, warm and overwhelmed, the other wealthy, controlled and possessive. However, he also shows that both are driven by the same desperate love for the same child, and both are trapped by circumstances they cannot control. The contrast is therefore less about good and bad mothers than about how social class shapes what kind of mother a woman is allowed to be, which is central to Russell's critique of 1970s and 1980s Britain.

Mrs Johnstone is introduced through song, which immediately makes her sympathetic. In her opening number she remembers being told she looked like "Marilyn Monroe", and the cheerful tune contrasts with the story of a husband who has left her with seven children and another two on the way. Russell presents her as a mother whose love is generous but whose resources are not. The image of living on the "never never" and the bailiffs taking her furniture in "Easy Terms" show that poverty constantly threatens her family. When she finally agrees to give one twin away it is because she cannot see how she will feed him.

Mrs Lyons, by contrast, has everything material that Mrs Johnstone lacks. Her large house, her absent husband and her inability to have children leave her lonely, and Russell presents her longing for a child as genuine and painful. Yet her motherhood begins with manipulation. She persuades Mrs Johnstone to "give one to me" and then exploits her superstition, inventing the idea that twins parted at birth will "both immediately die" if they learn the truth. The Bible oath and the shoes on the table become symbols of how a middle class woman can use her education and power over a less educated one. Even her motherhood is, in a sense, bought.

Their scenes together sharpen the contrast. After the birth, Mrs Lyons quickly

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dismisses Mrs Johnstone, and when she later offers her money to move away, Mrs Johnstone's refusal shows that she will not trade her children for cash. Russell presents the relationship as one of employer and servant, so the deal over the babies mirrors wider class exploitation. Mrs Lyons speaks in Standard English while Mrs Johnstone's Liverpudlian dialect marks her class, and the way Mrs Lyons forbids Edward to play with Mickey shows her fear that his real roots will reclaim him.

Their parenting styles are presented in parallel. Mrs Johnstone is relaxed and forgiving with Mickey, while Mrs Lyons becomes increasingly anxious and controlling with Edward. When Edward swears at her, she slaps him, and then is horrified at herself, which reveals the strain her secret puts on her. Her decision to move the family away from the estate is driven by fear of losing him, while Mrs Johnstone's move to Skelmersdale is a hopeful "bright new day". Ironically, both moves bring the twins back together, as if fate mocks every attempt to control the children's lives.

However, Russell complicates the idea that they are completely different. Both love Edward. Mrs Johnstone's gift of the locket with her photograph shows that she never stops being his mother, and the warmth Edward feels in her presence suggests a natural bond. Mrs Lyons's love becomes possessive and finally destructive: her mental decline leads her, when her offer of money is refused, to attack Mrs Johnstone with a knife, and to tell Mickey about Edward's affair with Linda, which triggers the final tragedy. Both, too, are presented as women without husbands to support them. Mr Lyons is almost always away and Mrs Johnstone's husband has abandoned her, so Russell suggests that each is left to carry the burden of motherhood alone.

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The structure of the play reinforces how far their differences matter. The Narrator's opening question about the mother "so cruel" who has "a stone in place of her heart" seems at first to point to Mrs Johnstone, who gave a child away, but by the end the audience is less sure whom to blame. The twins' fates depend largely on the different upbringings each mother can provide: Edward goes to university, while Mickey leaves school, loses his job and turns to crime. Russell's final question about whether superstition or "class" is to blame suggests that the most important difference between the mothers is not their character but their money.

Russell therefore presents Mrs Johnstone and Mrs Lyons as very different kinds of mother only up to a point. Mrs Johnstone is warm and selfless and Mrs Lyons is controlling and eventually unstable, but both are victims of a society which decides children's futures by birth. Through their shared grief and shared guilt, Russell warns his audience that it is class, not mothering, which divides the twins.

04 Russell presents Edward as largely likeable: generous, open and affectionate, especially as a child. However, his likeability is closely tied to his privilege. The comfort that makes him kind also makes him naive, and as an adult his ease in the world becomes careless and even hurtful to Mickey. Through Edward, Russell suggests that it is easy to be pleasant when life has never tested you, and invites his audience to question a class system that rewards one twin and abandons the other.

As a child, Edward is instantly appealing. When he first meets Mickey, he offers him sweets without hesitation, a simple act that contrasts with Mickey's suspicion and reflects a boy who has never had to fight for anything. His delight at Mickey's

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rude vocabulary and his eager wish to learn the "F" word create comedy, and his polished Standard English, with words like "smashing" and "fantastic", makes him sound comically innocent beside Mickey's Liverpool dialect. The audience laughs with him, not at him. Russell's decision to have adult actors play the children adds to the humour and warmth, and Edward's enthusiasm to become Mickey's blood brother shows a boy who longs for friendship in his lonely, over protected home.

Edward's warmth towards Mrs Johnstone also makes him sympathetic. He is drawn to her without knowing why, and the dramatic irony of their scenes, where the audience knows she is his real mother, creates pathos. When she gives him the locket containing her photograph, his gratitude is touching, and his loyalty to it at school, where he refuses to remove it and is suspended for answering back to his teacher, shows a rebellious streak that makes him more human. Russell places this beside Mickey's suspension from his own school, but the parallel exposes a difference: Edward's private education will still carry him to university, while Mickey's schooling leads nowhere. The same behaviour has very different consequences depending on class.

In the teenage scenes, Edward remains kind but begins to show the limits of his understanding. He encourages Mickey to talk to Linda and seems genuinely happy for them, even though he loves her himself. This self-sacrifice is likeable. Yet when he returns from university, his inability to understand Mickey's unemployment and depression is painful. He suggests that if he were out of work he would simply enjoy his freedom, which reveals how little he grasps the shame and fear of poverty in the early 1980s, when unemployment in cities like Liverpool was rising sharply. Mickey's bitter response, that he grew up while Edward did not need to, captures the gap between them. Russell does not make Edward cruel here, but thoughtless, and the audience's sympathy shifts towards Mickey.

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Edward's later actions are more troubling. As a councillor, he uses his influence to get Mickey a job and a house, which could be seen as loyal friendship. However, it can also be seen as patronising, and Mickey's humiliation at being helped by Edward shows that charity from the privileged can wound. More seriously, his affair with Linda betrays Mickey at the moment he is most vulnerable, struggling with his addiction to antidepressants after prison. Some audiences may find Edward hard to like here. Yet Russell presents the affair with some tenderness: Linda turns to Edward because he offers her the lightness and kindness that Mickey has lost, and Edward seems to love her sincerely. His fault is not malice but a failure to see what his actions mean to someone with nothing else left.

The ending restores much of the audience's sympathy. When Mickey confronts him with a gun at the town hall, Edward seems confused and frightened, and he tries to calm his friend rather than defend himself. After Mrs Johnstone reveals that they are twins, the gun goes off as Mickey waves it in anguish, and Edward's death is presented as tragic rather than deserved. The Narrator's final question about whether superstition or "class" is to blame shifts responsibility away from Edward himself. He is a product of the Lyons household, of grammar school and university, and of a society that offered him every opportunity.

Ultimately, Russell presents Edward as likeable but flawed, and his flaws are the flaws of privilege. His childhood kindness, his loyalty to Mrs Johnstone and his genuine love for Linda and Mickey make him appealing, but his blindness to the realities of working class life makes him complicit in the inequality that destroys his brother. Russell's purpose is not to make the audience hate Edward but to make them see that, born in Mickey's place, he could have been Mickey, and that the system rather than the individual is the real villain.

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Bennett presents Posner and Rudge as the two extremes of how the boys respond to Hector. Posner, sensitive and lonely, takes Hector's love of poetry to heart and treasures it; Rudge, practical and sporty, is largely unmoved by it and sees school as a means to an end. Through this contrast, Bennett explores what education is for, and he complicates any easy judgement: the boy who absorbs Hector most completely seems least happy in later life, while the boy who ignores him thrives. Bennett leaves his audience questioning whether Hector's gift is a blessing, a burden, or both.

Posner is set apart from the start. He describes himself bluntly as Jewish, small, homosexual and living in Sheffield, a list that is comic but also painfully isolating, especially in the 1980s setting when attitudes to sexuality were often hostile. Bennett presents him as an outsider who finds in Hector's lessons a language for his feelings. His singing of popular songs in the classroom, and his willingness to join in Hector's performances and recitations, show a boy who responds emotionally and wholeheartedly. Posner's unrequited love for Dakin gives Hector's poetry real meaning for him, so literature is not a game to win but a way of understanding his own loneliness.

The most important moment between Posner and Hector is their lesson on Hardy's "Drummer Hodge". Here Bennett slows the play into intimacy, with the two characters alone on stage. Posner recites the poem by heart and Hector reflects on the young soldier buried far from home, unnamed and uncoffined. Hector then describes how the best moments in reading are when it is "as if a hand has come out and taken yours". The image of a hand reaching across time captures Hector's idea that literature offers companionship to the lonely. Crucially, the stage

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directions show Hector nearly reaching out to Posner and then holding back. Bennett creates a moment of tenderness and tension: Hector's touch, which elsewhere is inappropriate, here is withheld, and the scene becomes the clearest expression of what Hector means to Posner. For Posner, Hector is a teacher who truly sees him.

Rudge responds to Hector very differently. He is the least intellectual of the group, more interested in sport than poetry, and he treats Hector's lessons with a mixture of tolerance and bafflement. Bennett gives him the play's most deflating line about the subject when, asked by Mrs Lintott to define history, he replies that it is "just one" thing after another, with an expletive attached. The bluntness is comic, but it also punctures the grand theories of the masters. Rudge does not need Hector's poetry or Irwin's gimmicks; he has his own common sense. Where Posner wants meaning, Rudge wants results.

Bennett also uses Rudge to expose the class assumptions behind the Oxbridge race. Neither Hector nor Irwin expects much of him, yet he gains a place at Christ Church, apparently helped by the fact that his father worked there as a college servant. The irony is sharp: after all the debate about inspiration versus technique, Rudge succeeds through neither. Bennett may be satirising the idea that elite education is a pure meritocracy, while also suggesting that Rudge's straightforward honesty about himself is a strength the cleverer boys lack.

Hector's own attitude to the two boys reveals his priorities. He clearly values the boys who share his passion and responds warmly to Posner's sensitivity, while Rudge's indifference to literature places him outside Hector's world. This hints at a limitation in Hector: his idea of education, however generous, speaks most to those who are already like him.

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The structure of the play adds a final, unsettling twist. In the closing scene, Mrs Lintott reveals the boys' futures. Rudge is cheerfully successful, working in construction and apparently content. Posner, by contrast, has become isolated and troubled, still holding on to the poems and memories of Hector. The boy who responded most deeply to Hector seems to have been most damaged by life, while the one who resisted him is happy. Bennett does not simply condemn Hector, but he suggests that a sensitive pupil can be left exposed by a teacher who offers love of learning without preparing him for the world. Hector's own idea that teachers must "pass the parcel" hangs over Posner, who carries it but perhaps has no one to pass it to.

Through Posner and Rudge, then, Bennett presents two valid responses to Hector and refuses to choose between them. Posner shows the power of an education that touches the heart; Rudge shows that practical, unglamorous lives can be fulfilled without it. The contrast leaves the audience reflecting on Bennett's central question: whether education exists to enrich the self or to equip pupils to get on.

06 Bennett presents education as a battleground between competing purposes: education as a lifelong enrichment of the soul, education as a set of techniques for passing exams and getting on, and education as an honest account of the truth. These views are embodied in Hector, Irwin and Mrs Lintott, with the Headmaster representing the institution's obsession with results. Bennett does not simply declare a winner. Instead, through comedy, irony and a moving ending, he invites his audience to question an education system in 1980s Britain that was becoming increasingly driven by league tables and outcomes.

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Hector represents the idea that education is valuable for its own sake. He quotes Housman's view that "all knowledge is precious whether or not it serves the slightest human use", and his lessons are full of poetry learned by heart, songs, old films and role plays in French. Bennett presents these lessons as chaotic and joyful, and the boys' enthusiastic performances suggest that they love them, even if they mock them. Hector sees exams as the enemy of real learning, and his belief is that what students carry with them matters more than what they are tested on. His famous advice to "pass the parcel" captures his idea that education is a gift to be handed on through generations. For Hector, education should prepare pupils for life, and especially for loss and loneliness, rather than for a particular examination.

Yet Bennett does not idealise Hector. His groping of the boys on his motorbike undermines his moral authority, and his attitude to them, though affectionate, is self-indulgent. When the Headmaster confronts him, Hector's defence of his teaching becomes tangled with his own failings. Bennett perhaps suggests that the romantic ideal of education can hide a teacher's selfishness, and that inspiration alone is not enough.

Irwin represents a very different purpose: education as a means of getting on. Brought in to prepare the boys for Oxbridge entrance, he teaches them to be provocative and to argue against the obvious. His view that history "is not a matter of conviction" but "a performance" shows that he values cleverness over truth, and he encourages the boys to treat exams as a game. Bennett presents him as slick and persuasive, and the boys are clearly excited by the new tricks. However, the irony is that Irwin is himself a fraud: Dakin later discovers that he has not been honest about his own Oxford past, and the framing scenes show him as a television historian and government adviser who will defend anything if it is

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presented well. Bennett, writing in 2004, may be satirising a culture of spin, where presentation matters more than substance.

Mrs Lintott offers a third view, often ignored by the men around her. She is a competent, factual teacher who has done the groundwork that allows the boys to succeed, yet she is given little credit. Her complaint about teaching "five centuries of masculine ineptitude" and her description of history as "women following behind with the bucket" are witty but bitter. They suggest that the purpose of education should include questioning whose stories are told. Bennett uses her as a dry, ironic commentator who exposes the vanity of both Hector and Irwin, and her later role in narrating the boys' futures gives her the final word.

The Headmaster represents the institutional view that education exists to produce results. He wants Oxbridge places to raise the school's status, and he sees Hector's lessons as an embarrassment. Bennett makes him a comic figure, pompous and obsessed with appearances, reflecting the growing pressure on schools in the 1980s under the Thatcher government to compete and be measured. His attitude reduces education to a product.

The boys' reactions show the strengths and weaknesses of each view. Dakin is drawn to Irwin's performance and uses it confidently, while Posner is deeply touched by Hector's poetry. Rudge, who is unimpressed by either teacher, still gets into Oxford, which suggests that neither purpose fully explains success. The boys' attempts to blend Hector's knowledge with Irwin's tricks suggest that real education might combine both.

The ending is where Bennett's sympathies become clearest. After Hector's death, the boys' futures are revealed and many of them are successful but not fulfilled,

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having followed Irwin's path to careers in law, business and the media. Hector's final message to pass the knowledge on, "not for me, not for you, but for someone", is presented with real tenderness. Bennett seems to suggest that while education must help pupils succeed, its deepest purpose is to make them fuller human beings. By presenting multiple views through contrasting characters, humour and irony, he leaves his audience with a question rather than a simple answer: what kind of education does a society truly value?

07 Kelly explores guilt as something that spreads through a group like an infection, yet is felt very unevenly by the individuals within it. Some characters are crushed by it, others suppress it, and a few seem not to feel it at all. By showing a group of teenagers who cover up the apparent death of Adam, Kelly asks his audience whether guilt belongs to individuals or to groups, and suggests that when people hand over their consciences to a leader, responsibility becomes dangerously blurred.

The play opens with guilt in its rawest form. Mark and Jan's clipped, fragmented dialogue about Adam's death is full of repetition and unfinished sentences, as if they cannot bear to say what happened. As the story emerges, it becomes clear that the group's bullying, forcing Adam into a series of humiliating dares that ended at the grille, was a shared act. Kelly reveals this through hesitant reported speech rather than showing the event, so the audience pieces together the truth as the characters try to avoid it. From the very beginning, no one wants to own what has been done.

John Tate's response shows the first attempt to escape guilt through control. Rather than face what they have done, he tries to forbid certain words and to keep the group together by intimidation. His leadership quickly collapses, suggesting

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that fear alone cannot hold back guilt. Phil, who has sat silently eating throughout, then takes over with a calm, detailed plan to invent a stranger who abducted Adam. The contrast between Phil's long, controlled speech and the frantic fragments of the others is striking. Kelly presents Phil as someone who seems untouched by guilt, solving the problem as if it were a puzzle. Yet his plan only multiplies the group's crimes, as it leads to an innocent man being arrested.

Brian is the character most visibly destroyed by guilt. He is terrified, tearful and unable to cope, and Phil manipulates his fear by threatening him until he agrees to identify a fictional suspect to the police. Kelly shows how guilt can be exploited: the more frightened Brian becomes, the more easily he is controlled. By the end of the play, Richard reports that Brian is being kept on medication, and the image of a boy whose mind has broken under the weight of what he has seen and done is one of the most disturbing in the play. Kelly perhaps suggests that the weakest members of a group pay the heaviest price for its crimes.

Cathy, by contrast, seems to feel no guilt at all. She enjoys the attention of the police and the media, and when Adam is found alive in the woods it is Cathy who carries out Phil's instruction to kill him. Her eagerness is chilling, and by the end of the play Richard reports that she has become even more powerful and violent. Through Cathy, Kelly explores the idea that some people, freed from responsibility by a group, discover a capacity for cruelty they would never otherwise express. Her lack of guilt is presented as more frightening than Brian's breakdown.

Leah is the moral conscience of the play. Her long monologues to Phil are filled with anxious questions about human nature, and her references to bonobos and other animals raise the question of whether people are naturally violent or naturally cooperative. Leah's guilt is active rather than paralysing: she confronts Phil,

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challenges the decision to kill Adam, and is appalled by what the group becomes. Her eventual disappearance from the group, moving to another school, suggests that the only escape from collective guilt is to leave altogether. Danny, meanwhile, is more concerned that the situation might ruin his plans to become a dentist, a darkly comic detail that shows how guilt can be swallowed by self-interest.

The second half of the play deepens the sense of guilt by revealing that Adam was alive all along. His confused, damaged speech when he is found, uncertain even of who he is, makes the group's betrayal much worse, because they could have saved him. Kelly structures the play so that each new revelation pulls more characters into deeper guilt, until almost everyone is complicit in murder.

The final scene leaves guilt unresolved. Phil sits in silence in a field, refusing Richard's pleas to return, while Richard describes how the others have changed. Phil's silence could be read as indifference, but it might also suggest that, finally, he too is overwhelmed. Kelly, writing for young people through the National Theatre's Connections scheme, perhaps wanted his audience to recognise how easily they could be drawn into a group's actions. In a world where obedience to authority, as Milgram's experiments showed, can override conscience, DNA warns that guilt shared by everyone can end up being accepted by no one.

08 Kelly presents Leah as the most likeable character in DNA, but not in a simple or comfortable way. She is chatty, insecure and at times exhausting, and she is complicit in the cover up for much of the play. Yet she is also the only character who keeps asking what is right, and who finally refuses to accept what the group has become. Through Leah, Kelly suggests that goodness in a group is often awkward, anxious and isolated, and he asks his young audience whether they would

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have the courage to question the crowd.

Leah's first appearances are dominated by her monologues to Phil, who sits in near total silence, eating. This dramatic contrast is comic: Leah fills every pause, contradicts herself, apologises and then carries on, while Phil gives nothing back. Her nervous talk is endearing because it reveals vulnerability. She seems desperate for Phil's attention and approval, and her anxious questions about whether he is listening show a girl who feels invisible. Some audiences might find her irritating, but Kelly makes her humanity obvious by contrast with Phil's coldness. Phil acts as her foil: his silence makes her words seem more alive, and his emotional emptiness makes her care more striking.

Her speeches are also full of ideas. She talks about bonobos and how they resolve conflict, and she wonders about human nature and whether people are really different from animals. These reflections might seem random, but they reveal a mind that is searching for meaning and morality in a world that seems to have none. Kelly uses her as a kind of philosopher in the play, raising the question at the heart of its title: whether cruelty is in our DNA, or whether people can choose to be better.

However, Kelly does not present Leah as entirely innocent. She was part of the group when Adam was bullied, and she goes along with Phil's plan to cover up what happened. Although she questions him, she does not go to the police, and her loyalty to Phil arguably makes her complicit. Her need to belong is presented as a weakness: her fear of losing Phil's approval stops her from acting on her conscience. This makes her more realistic and more interesting than a simple heroine. She reflects the pressures that teenagers feel to fit in, especially in a group where those who resist are threatened.

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The turning point comes when Adam is found alive. Leah's horror at Phil's decision that he must be killed reveals her true moral courage. She challenges Phil directly, and in contrast to the others, who follow orders out of fear or excitement, she refuses to accept that murder is necessary. Kelly presents her as the only character who sees Adam as a person rather than a problem. Her distress is painful to watch, and it marks the moment where her likeability becomes something deeper: moral integrity in the face of overwhelming pressure.

After this point, Leah's monologues grow more desperate as she tries to provoke any reaction from Phil, as if testing whether he cares about her at all. His silence is crushing. Her eventual decision to leave the group, reported at the end of the play when Richard tells Phil that she has moved schools, can be seen as both admirable and sad. It is admirable because she refuses to remain part of something evil, but sad because her departure leaves the group without its conscience. Phil's withdrawal into silence in the final scene might suggest that her absence has affected him more than he would admit.

Kelly's structure makes Leah's development central. She begins as Phil's anxious companion and ends as the one who walks away. This journey mirrors the play's wider concern with individual freedom of thought. Writing for young performers through the National Theatre's Connections scheme, Kelly perhaps intended Leah to represent the small voice of conscience that many people silence in order to belong. Her flaws make her believable, and her eventual refusal to obey makes her admirable.

So, how far is Leah likeable? She is irritating at times, compromised by her loyalty to Phil and slow to act. Yet her warmth, her curiosity and her moral courage make

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her the most sympathetic character in the play. Kelly presents her not as a perfect heroine but as an ordinary person who, in the end, chooses to stand apart, and by doing so he challenges his audience to ask whether they would do the same.

09 Stephens presents Christopher's experience of being a teenager as a heightened version of what every adolescent goes through: the struggle to understand adults, the hunger for independence and the painful discovery that parents are fallible. Because Christopher experiences the world so differently from those around him, these ordinary teenage experiences become extraordinary, and Stephens uses this to make his audience question what "normal" adolescence really is.

From the opening scene, Christopher is a fifteen-year-old who wants to take charge of his own life. Finding Wellington dead with a garden fork through him, he decides to investigate, and his detective work becomes a kind of rebellion. Ed's instruction that he must stay out of other people's business is exactly the sort of rule a teenager is given, and Christopher, who takes rules literally, looks for loopholes rather than simply disobeying. Stephens creates gentle comedy from this, but also dramatic irony: the audience senses long before Christopher does that his questions about Wellington will lead somewhere painful for his family. Like many teenagers, he is pushing at the boundaries without realising what lies beyond them.

Stephens also presents adolescence as a time of confusion about other people. Christopher struggles to read facial expressions and cannot tell lies, so the adult world of tact, metaphor and half-truths baffles him. His scenes with neighbours, such as Mrs Alexander, show his discomfort with small talk, and the stage

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directions in moments of sensory overload, when he groans or curls into himself, make his distress physical and visible. Many teenagers feel that adults speak a code they have not yet learned; Stephens literalises this feeling. Rather than naming a specific condition, the play invites the audience to see the world as Christopher sees it, and the ensemble cast, who become trains, walls and crowds around him, turns his perception into the very fabric of the staging.

The most important turning point is Christopher's discovery of his mother's letters in Ed's room. Learning that she is alive and that his father killed Wellington destroys his trust completely. This is perhaps the most universal teenage experience in the play: the moment a child realises that a parent has lied. Ed's confession, "I killed Wellington, Christopher", is delivered with an honesty that comes far too late, and Christopher's response is to flee. Stephens makes the audience sympathise with both of them. Ed is a single father who has tried, clumsily, to protect his son, yet his deception has made Christopher feel unsafe in his own home. The tension between a teenager's need for truth and a parent's instinct to shield them lies at the heart of the play.

Christopher's journey to London in Part Two dramatises the frightening independence of adolescence. Travelling alone with his pet rat Toby, he faces crowded stations, signs and strangers, and the physical theatre of the original National Theatre production, with projections and movement, conveys how overwhelming the world feels. Yet he succeeds. By working out the Underground, finding Willesden and arriving at his mother's flat, he proves that he can cope without adult help. Stephens presents this as a coming-of-age moment, but one with a cost: his mother, Judy, is not the ideal parent he imagined, and her relationship with Roger is strained by his arrival. Christopher learns that independence does not mean that the adult world becomes simple.

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The end of the play focuses on growth rather than resolution. Christopher sits his A level maths exam and gets an A star, and he plans for a future at university and as a scientist. Ed, meanwhile, attempts to rebuild trust gradually, giving him a puppy, Sandy, and agreeing to spend time together in small steps. Christopher's final questions to Siobhan, asking whether all this means he can do anything, are full of hope, yet Siobhan's lack of a clear answer leaves the audience uncertain. Stephens perhaps suggests that this mix of ambition and uncertainty is exactly what being a teenager feels like.

Siobhan's role as narrator and mentor is significant here. By reading Christopher's own book aloud, she shows that his perspective is valued, and her patient advice contrasts with the volatility of his parents. Stephens implies that young people, especially those who do not fit society's expectations, need adults who listen rather than control.

Ultimately, Stephens presents Christopher's teenage experience as both unique and universal. His literal mind and sensory struggles make everyday situations harder, but his desire for truth, independence and a future of his own choosing connects him with every teenager in the audience. The play challenges a society that often sees difference as a problem, suggesting instead that Christopher's courage and logic are strengths that deserve recognition.

10 Stephens presents Christopher's desire for independence as the driving force of the play, transforming a story about a murdered dog into a coming-of-age drama. Christopher wants to think, act and travel for himself, but the adults around him, out of love, guilt or fear, try to control him. Stephens uses this conflict to explore

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how young people, particularly those who do not fit society's expectations, must win the right to make their own choices.

At the start of the play, Christopher's investigation into Wellington's death is his first bid for independence. He decides on his own that he will find the killer, treating it as a detective case like those in the Sherlock Holmes stories he admires. Ed's demand that he keep out of other people's business is a clear statement of adult control, and Christopher's literal response, keeping the letter of the rule while ignoring its spirit, shows a teenager testing limits. Stephens creates dramatic irony because the audience increasingly suspects that the investigation threatens Ed himself, so Christopher's independence is presented as both admirable and dangerous.

Stephens shows that Christopher's independence is tied to his need for logic and truth. He prefers prime numbers, timetables and rules because they are predictable, and he insists that he does not tell lies. The adults around him, however, rely on lies to manage him: Ed tells him his mother is dead. When Christopher discovers her letters hidden in his father's room, his whole world collapses. The stage directions here, as he reads letter after letter and withdraws into himself, make his shock visible. This moment shows why Christopher craves independence: the adults he depended on have proved untrustworthy. Ed's confession that he killed Wellington completes the betrayal, and Christopher concludes that he must leave.

The journey to London in Part Two is the play's fullest presentation of independence. Christopher has never travelled alone, yet he plans the trip, takes his father's cash card and his rat Toby, and navigates Swindon station, the train and the London Underground. The ensemble physically creates the overwhelming

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crowds, signs and announcements around him, and in the original National Theatre staging the set lit up with projected maps and words, so that the audience experiences his sensory overload. Stephens makes these scenes tense and frightening, especially when Christopher climbs down onto the track to rescue Toby, but also triumphant, because each problem he solves proves that he can manage the world on his own terms. A policeman tries to take control of the situation, yet Christopher continues regardless.

However, Stephens complicates the idea of independence by showing that it is not the same as isolation. When Christopher reaches Judy's flat, he needs her to take him back to Swindon so he can sit his A level maths exam, and his relationship with her and Roger reveals that he still depends on adults for shelter and practical help. Judy's own decision to leave the family, partly because she could not cope, suggests that adults also struggle for independence and sometimes damage others in seeking it. Stephens presents independence as a balance between freedom and support.

Siobhan is central to this balance. As his teacher and the narrator of his story, she gives advice without taking control, encouraging him to make his own decisions. Her presence suggests that young people need mentors who respect their autonomy, a quiet contrast with Ed's outbursts and Judy's absence. The fact that the play is structured as Christopher's own book, read and then performed, also gives him ownership of his story, which is perhaps the deepest form of independence.

The ending shows independence won through achievement. Christopher sits his A level maths, gets an A star, and announces his plans for university and a career as a scientist. Ed begins to rebuild trust in small, measured steps, and the gift of a

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puppy, Sandy, symbolises a new relationship based on responsibility rather than deception. Christopher's final hopeful question to Siobhan, whether all of this means he can do anything, sums up his growing confidence, though her silence leaves the answer open. Stephens even adds a coda in which Christopher explains the solution to his maths question directly to the audience, a final moment where he takes control of the stage.

Ultimately, Stephens presents Christopher's wish to be independent as both a universal teenage desire and a hard-won victory against people's low expectations of him. The play challenges audiences to recognise that independence looks different for different young people, and that the adults' role is not to control but to support.

11 Delaney presents a range of male attitudes to women in A Taste of Honey, from Peter's careless, possessive selfishness, through the Boy's affectionate but unreliable charm, to Geof's gentle devotion. Writing in 1958 as a nineteen-year-old from Salford, Delaney deliberately places women at the centre of the stage, and by showing how men treat Helen and Jo, she exposes a society in which women's security depends on men who are rarely dependable.

Peter is the clearest representation of a traditional, predatory male attitude. Younger than Helen and flashy with money, he treats her as a possession and a source of fun rather than an equal. His flirtation is crude and his humour often belittles her age, so that even his courtship carries an undertone of contempt. Towards Jo he is openly hostile, seeing her as an obstacle to his access to Helen; he wants the mother without the responsibility of the daughter. Delaney uses comedy here, as Jo and Peter trade insults, but the comedy masks something

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bleak. When Helen marries Peter, she abandons Jo, and the audience sees how a man's desire can split a family apart. Peter's attitude reflects a 1950s culture in which a man could expect a woman to fit around his wishes, while she had few alternatives if she wanted financial security.

Delaney develops this through Peter's later appearances. In the second act he arrives drunk with friends, mocking Geof and treating Jo's home as a place for his entertainment. By the end, Helen returns to Jo's flat because Peter has gone off with another woman and the marriage has collapsed. Delaney's structure is pointed: the man who promised Helen comfort leaves her with nothing, and she must fall back on the daughter she neglected. Peter's attitude is presented as disposable love, where women are valued only while they are useful or attractive.

The Boy, Jimmie, offers a softer but still unreliable male attitude. A black sailor who works as a nurse in the navy, he is tender and playful with Jo, and their scenes have a romantic, almost fairy-tale quality. He gives her a ring, which she wears on a ribbon round her neck, and he speaks of marriage. Yet he then sails away and never returns, leaving Jo pregnant and alone. Delaney is careful not to make him a villain; their relationship seems genuine, and his kindness contrasts with Peter's coarseness. However, the outcome is the same: a man enjoys a relationship with a young woman and the woman bears all the consequences. In 1950s Britain, an unmarried pregnant teenager faced shame and poverty, while the man could simply leave. The Boy's race also adds context, as interracial relationships were widely disapproved of in the year of the Notting Hill riots, and Delaney challenges her audience's prejudices by presenting him as warm and decent.

Geof offers a strikingly different model of masculinity. An art student, implied to

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be gay at a time when homosexuality was illegal in Britain, he moves in with Jo and looks after her throughout her pregnancy. He cooks, cleans, sews and even practises caring for the baby, taking on roles the 1950s saw as women's work. His attitude to Jo is protective and nurturing: he tells her that "you need somebody to love you while you're looking for somebody to love". The gentle rhythm of this line, with its repetition of "love", captures his selfless care. Unlike Peter and the Boy, Geof values Jo for herself and asks nothing in return. Even when he awkwardly proposes and tries to kiss her, he accepts her refusal without anger.

Yet Delaney does not present Geof's attitude as entirely free from the period's assumptions. He sometimes lectures Jo about how she should behave as a mother, and his desire to be needed could suggest that he, too, sees women through a role. Most poignantly, he is driven out when Helen returns, and Jo is left without the one man who treated her with respect. Delaney's ending perhaps suggests that a society hostile to gay men also robs women of the kindest form of male support.

The male characters' idiolects reinforce these attitudes. Peter's loud, mocking banter asserts control, the Boy's playful teasing suggests charm without commitment, and Geof's quieter, careful language shows consideration. Through this contrast, Delaney reveals that the problem is not men as individuals but a patriarchal culture which allows some men to take what they want and leaves women to cope alone. Her play, part of the new wave of kitchen-sink drama dominated by male writers, gives working-class women a voice to expose this inequality.

12 To a large extent, Delaney presents Jo as a likeable character: she is witty, resilient and surprisingly perceptive, and the audience sympathises with a teenage

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girl who has been let down by almost every adult in her life. However, Delaney refuses to make her a simple victim. Jo can be sharp, cruel and self-pitying, and it is precisely this mixture that makes her feel real. Delaney's purpose is to show that a working-class girl in 1950s Salford could be a complex, flawed and fully human heroine.

From the opening scene, Jo's humour wins the audience over. Arriving with Helen at a cold, shabby flat, she mocks their surroundings and her mother's habits with quick, dry remarks. Her banter is often sharper than Helen's, and Delaney uses it to show that Jo is intelligent and observant. Her humour also works as a defence: by joking about the damp, the lack of heating and Helen's drinking, Jo protects herself from the misery of her situation. The audience likes her because she refuses to be crushed.

Jo is also likeable because she is so clearly neglected. Helen frequently moves them from place to place, leaves her alone and prioritises her own pleasures. When Helen chooses Peter and leaves to marry him, Jo is abandoned at just the age when she most needs support. Peter's insults towards Jo make her situation even harder, and Delaney's portrayal of these adults treating her badly increases the audience's sympathy. Jo's artistic talent, which she dismisses and which Helen barely notices, suggests a wasted potential that makes her more poignant.

Her relationship with the Boy shows Jo's romantic, hopeful side. She is playful with him, and their scenes have a gentle tenderness. She wears his ring on a ribbon around her neck, and the image suggests both her love and her vulnerability, as the ring is hidden away like a secret. Jo's openness to a relationship with a black sailor at a time of widespread racial prejudice may also make her likeable to a modern audience, as she judges him as an individual rather

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than by society's standards.

However, Delaney also presents Jo as difficult. She can be rude and spiteful, especially to Helen, and some of her remarks are cruel even if they are understandable. When she learns she is pregnant, she becomes frightened and angry, declaring, "I don't want to be a mother. I don't want to be a woman." These short, blunt sentences reveal her terror at the life society expects of her, but her bitterness can also be directed at those trying to help. She is sometimes harsh with Geof, mocking his sexuality and taking his kindness for granted. Here, Jo reflects the homophobic attitudes of 1950s Britain, when homosexuality was illegal, which a modern audience may find uncomfortable. Delaney does not excuse this; instead, she shows a young woman whose pain often spills over onto others.

Yet Jo's relationship with Geof also reveals her best qualities. She accepts him into her home, defends him at times and comes to depend on his friendship. Their domestic scenes are some of the warmest in the play, and Jo's willingness to share her life with someone society rejects suggests a deeper tolerance beneath her teasing. Her refusal of his proposal is honest rather than cruel: she will not marry someone she does not love simply to gain respectability, which shows a stubborn integrity.

At the end of the play, Jo is left facing the future alone. Helen returns, drives Geof away, and then leaves to buy a drink after learning the baby may be black. Jo is left on stage, quietly singing a nursery rhyme she had shared with Geof. This final image makes the audience feel protective of her, as she seems both childlike and brave. Delaney suggests that Jo will survive, as she always has, through resilience and a kind of defiant hope.

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Ultimately, Jo is likeable not because she is perfect but because she is honest, funny and determined in a world that offers her very little. Delaney, writing at a time when working-class women were rarely the heroines of serious drama, presents Jo as someone whose flaws are shaped by circumstance. The audience may not always approve of her, but they are made to understand her, and that understanding is what makes her so compelling.

13

Golding presents Ralph as a strong character in a moral sense: he holds on to reason, order and decency longer than almost anyone else on the island. However, his strength as a leader is limited, as he lacks Jack's ruthlessness and Piggy's intellect, and he is shown to be vulnerable to the same savage instincts as the other boys. Golding uses Ralph to suggest that goodness alone is not enough to protect civilisation, and that even the strongest individual is fragile when society collapses.

At the start of the novel, Ralph's strength appears largely physical and instinctive. Described as "the fair boy", he is athletic and confident, and Golding notes "a mildness about his mouth and eyes that proclaimed no devil". This suggests that his strength is gentle rather than aggressive. Crucially, it is Ralph who blows the conch, the shell that calls the boys together, and he is elected chief partly because of his looks and his possession of it. Golding presents this early strength as something superficial: the boys choose him for his appearance and for the symbol he holds, not for proven ability. His early behaviour is also not wholly admirable, as he betrays Piggy's nickname to the others and mocks him with "Sucks to your ass-mar!", revealing the thoughtless cruelty of an ordinary schoolboy.

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As the novel progresses, however, Ralph develops a deeper strength of purpose. He insists on the importance of the signal fire and of building shelters, recognising that rescue depends on organisation rather than adventure. When Jack's hunters let the fire go out just as a ship passes, Ralph's fury shows his moral seriousness; he understands that hunting meat matters less than getting home. Golding uses the fire as a symbol of hope and civilisation, and Ralph's determination to keep it alight shows him as the guardian of reason. His growing friendship with Piggy is also significant: Ralph learns to value Piggy's intelligence, suggesting a strength of character that can admit his own limits.

Yet Golding also exposes Ralph's weaknesses. He struggles to think clearly in meetings, and he begins to lose his grip on what he wants to say, as if the fog of the island is invading his mind. More disturbingly, he joins in the frenzied attack on Simon in Chapter 9. Although he later admits, "That was murder", he and Piggy try to pretend they were on the outside of the dance. Earlier, in a mock hunt, Ralph had felt that "the desire to squeeze and hurt was over-mastering". Golding uses these moments to show that Ralph is not immune to the darkness he opposes. A post-war reader, aware of how ordinary people had committed atrocities in the Second World War, would recognise Golding's warning that no individual is wholly good.

Ralph's strength is tested most severely after Piggy's death. When Roger releases the rock, "the conch exploded into a thousand white fragments and ceased to exist". With the conch and Piggy destroyed, Ralph is left without the symbol of order and without his closest ally. Golding's language becomes stark and brutal, and Ralph is reduced to a hunted animal. However, even here he refuses to join Jack's tribe or abandon his values. He tries to reason with Samneric and continues to resist, showing an endurance that is a kind of quiet courage.

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The ending complicates any judgement about Ralph's strength. Fleeing the burning island, he collapses at the feet of the naval officer, who sees only a group of dirty children. Ralph weeps "for the end of innocence, the darkness of man's heart, and the fall through the air of the true, wise friend called Piggy". The tricolon shows his maturity: he alone fully understands what has happened on the island, and his tears are a sign of moral strength as well as grief. Yet the officer, himself engaged in a war, ironically reflects the same violence on a larger scale, suggesting that Ralph's values cannot save the adult world either.

Overall, Golding presents Ralph as strong in conscience and endurance, but weak in the qualities that allow leaders to dominate others. Golding, who served in the Royal Navy and taught boys at Bishop Wordsworth's School, seems to suggest that democratic, humane leadership is precious but fragile. Ralph's strength lies not in winning, but in remaining human when everything around him has turned savage.

14 Golding presents violence as something that grows naturally out of human nature once the restraints of society are removed. On the island, violence begins as play, becomes ritual and ends in murder, and its effects are devastating: it destroys innocence, silences reason and ultimately turns the boys into the very beast they fear. Writing after the Second World War, in which he served in the Royal Navy, Golding uses the novel to warn that the capacity for cruelty lies within everyone.

At the beginning, violence is presented as playful and controlled by the memory of civilisation. In Chapter 4, Roger throws stones at the little boy Henry, but he aims to miss. Golding explains that "here, invisible yet strong, was the taboo of the old life". The idea of an invisible "taboo" suggests that the rules of parents, school and

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police still restrain Roger, even in their absence. Yet the fact that he throws stones at all hints that the desire to hurt is already there, waiting for the taboo to fade. Golding's structure makes this moment chilling in hindsight, because Roger will later release the rock that kills Piggy.

Golding then shows violence becoming ritualised through hunting. The hunters' chant, "Kill the pig. Cut her throat. Spill her blood.", uses short, brutal imperatives and repetition to create a hypnotic rhythm. The chant turns killing into a group performance, and Jack's painted face becomes a mask behind which he is "liberated from shame and self-consciousness". Golding suggests that violence is easier when individuals lose their identities in a group. The killing of the sow in Chapter 8 is described in disturbing, almost sexual language, and Roger's cruelty in this scene shows violence becoming pleasure rather than necessity. The boys then place the pig's head on a stick as an offering to the beast, creating the Lord of the Flies, a symbol of the evil within them.

The effects of violence become clear in Simon's death. During a storm, the boys perform their chant, now changed to "Kill the beast! Cut his throat! Spill his blood!", and when Simon stumbles out of the forest to tell them the truth about the beast, they tear him apart. Golding writes that "there were no words, and no movements but the tearing of teeth and claws". The animal imagery shows that the boys have become beasts themselves. Ironically, Simon, the one boy who understood that the beast is inside them, is destroyed by it. The aftermath is presented with strange beauty, as his body is carried out to sea surrounded by glowing creatures, and this calm contrasts with the frenzy before, emphasising the loss of goodness.

Golding also explores the psychological effects of violence on those who take part.

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Ralph and Piggy, who joined in the dance, try to deny their involvement, although Ralph admits, "That was murder." Their shame suggests that violence corrupts even those who see themselves as civilised. Ralph had earlier felt, in a mock hunt, that "the desire to squeeze and hurt was over-mastering", showing that no character is immune.

The violence reaches its peak with Piggy's death. Roger releases the boulder "with a sense of delirious abandonment", and Piggy falls to the rocks below as "the conch exploded into a thousand white fragments and ceased to exist". The destruction of the conch, the symbol of order and democracy, alongside Piggy, the voice of reason, shows that violence has destroyed civilisation itself. Golding's description of Piggy's body twitching "like a pig's after it has been killed" links his death to the earlier pig hunts, showing how violence against animals has escalated into violence against humans.

In the final chapter, the boys hunt Ralph and set the island on fire to drive him out. The effect of violence is now total destruction: the island that once seemed a paradise burns. Ironically, it is this fire that brings rescue. The naval officer, part of an adult war, cannot see the parallel between the boys' violence and his own. Golding suggests that the boys' savagery is a small version of the violence of the adult world, and that war is simply organised cruelty.

Ultimately, Golding presents violence as the product of fear, power and the loss of social restraint, and its effects as the destruction of innocence, friendship and reason. Ralph's tears for "the darkness of man's heart" express the novel's central message: violence is not something outside humanity but within it, and civilisation is only a thin layer that can be broken.

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15

In both 'Odour of Chrysanthemums' and 'A Family Supper', suffering and grief are presented as experiences that expose the distance between people. Lawrence shows Elizabeth Bates moving from anger to the shocking realisation that she never truly knew her husband, while Ishiguro presents a family so damaged by loss that grief can barely be spoken. In both stories, death forces the living to confront the failures of their relationships.

Lawrence presents Elizabeth's suffering long before Walter's death. The opening, in which "the small locomotive engine, Number 4, came clanking, stumbling down from Selston", creates a harsh, mechanical mining landscape that dominates the lives of those within it. Elizabeth is introduced as "a tall woman of imperious mien", and her pride and resentment are clear as she waits for her husband, assuming he is drinking in the pub. Her suffering is the daily suffering of a miner's wife in early twentieth-century Nottinghamshire: poverty, worry and a marriage soured by disappointment. Lawrence, the son of a miner from Eastwood, draws on his own family's experience to present this domestic misery with sympathy and precision.

The chrysanthemums are central to Lawrence's presentation of suffering. Elizabeth tells her daughter that "it was chrysanthemums when I married him, and chrysanthemums when you was born", and that Walter came home drunk with them in his buttonhole. The repetition shows that the flowers have accompanied every stage of her marriage, both its hopes and its humiliations. Ultimately, they become flowers of death, as their scent fills the room when Walter's body is laid out. Lawrence uses this symbol to suggest that grief was present in the marriage long before death arrived.

Ishiguro's story also opens by establishing the cause of grief. Its first sentence,

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"Fugu is a fish caught off the Pacific shores of Japan", is detached and factual, yet it introduces the poison that killed the narrator's mother. The calm, informative tone sets the pattern for the whole story: the characters' suffering is hidden beneath restraint and politeness. The narrator has returned to Tokyo after years in California, and his relationship with his father is formal and strained. Their conversations are full of silences and evasions, and Ishiguro uses this understated dialogue to suggest a grief too painful to express directly.

Where Lawrence's narrative moves towards an explosion of feeling, Ishiguro's builds through quiet tension. The father speaks of his former business partner, Watanabe, who killed his family and himself after their firm collapsed, and he presents this as an act of principle. This disturbing story hangs over the supper, especially when the father serves fish and does not say what it is. Ishiguro leaves the reader uncertain whether the father intends a similar fate for his children, so grief becomes linked to the possibility of further death. The old well in the garden, linked to a ghost story the siblings remember from childhood, adds to the atmosphere of haunting, as if the mother's death has left the house filled with presences rather than open mourning.

Lawrence's climax comes when Walter's body is brought home. He has been suffocated by a fall of rock in the pit, and as Elizabeth and his mother wash his body, Elizabeth undergoes a profound change. She realises that she and her husband were separate beings who never truly met. Lawrence writes that "she knew she submitted to life, which was her immediate master. But from death, her ultimate master, she winced with fear and shame." The personification of life and death as "masters" shows that Elizabeth now understands her powerlessness. Her grief is not simply sorrow for Walter but shame at her own failure to know him. This gives the story its tragic depth: suffering leads to self-knowledge, but too

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late to change anything.

Ishiguro, by contrast, denies the reader such a clear revelation. The father seems to hope that his son might stay, but Kikuko's plans to leave for America and the narrator's own uncertainty suggest that grief will not bring the family together. The story ends in quiet unease, leaving the family's suffering unresolved. This reflects Ishiguro's interest in the restraint of Japanese culture after the war, in which honour and duty often mattered more than emotional openness.

Both writers present suffering and grief as forces that reveal hidden truths about relationships. Lawrence uses symbolism, dialect and a dramatic climax to show grief bringing painful self-awareness, while Ishiguro uses restraint, ambiguity and foreshadowing to show grief that remains locked inside. In each story, death exposes how little the characters have understood one another.

16 In 'A Family Supper' and 'Odour of Chrysanthemums', families in conflict are presented as people bound together by duty yet separated by silence, pride and disappointment. Ishiguro explores a Japanese family fractured by a mother's death, a father's failure and a son's past rebellion, while Lawrence presents a mining family torn apart by drink and resentment. In both stories, conflict is rarely shouted aloud; instead, it lies beneath the surface of ordinary domestic routines, and death brings it into the open.

Ishiguro begins with a detached account of the fugu fish, explaining that its poison has killed people, including the narrator's mother. This calm opening introduces the central source of tension: the family's grief is tangled with suspicion and unspoken blame. The narrator has returned from California after a long

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absence, and his relationship with his father is stiff and formal. Ishiguro hints at a past quarrel through references to the narrator's decision to leave and to the father's disapproval. Their dialogue is short and polite, with long pauses, and this restraint suggests that the conflict is too deep to name. Ishiguro presents a family that has lost the ability to speak openly.

The conflict between the generations is developed through Kikuko, the narrator's sister. In the garden, away from their father, she smokes and talks about her plans to go to America with her boyfriend. Her secrecy shows that the children's real lives are hidden from the father, whose traditional authority they quietly resist. The dark, quiet garden, where the children talk freely only once they are out of their father's hearing, may symbolise how much of this family's life now happens in the shadows. The old well, associated with a ghost from their childhood, adds a haunted quality, as though the past still holds the family in its grip.

The father's story about Watanabe, his former business partner, creates the most disturbing tension. After their firm failed, Watanabe killed his wife and daughters before killing himself, and the father speaks of him with admiration as a man of principle. Ishiguro uses this as foreshadowing: when the father later serves fish at supper without saying what it is, the reader wonders whether he intends to follow Watanabe's example. The father's pride and sense of honour, perhaps rooted in the values of pre-war Japan, conflict with his children's desire for independence and a modern, Westernised life. The ambiguous ending leaves the conflict unresolved; the family eats together, but whether this is reconciliation or danger is never made clear.

Lawrence's story presents a more openly bitter family conflict. Elizabeth Bates, "a

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tall woman of imperious mien", waits angrily for her husband Walter, convinced that he is drinking in the pub again. Her irritation is directed at her children too: she snaps at John and is impatient with Annie, showing how the parents' conflict affects the whole household. Lawrence's use of local dialect roots the family in the mining community, while Elizabeth's sharp, clipped commands to her children reveal how her frustration with Walter spills over onto them. Like Ishiguro, Lawrence shows conflict through ordinary domestic actions such as preparing tea and waiting by the fire.

The chrysanthemums symbolise the history of this conflict. Elizabeth explains that there were chrysanthemums at her wedding and at Annie's birth, and that Walter once came home drunk with them in his buttonhole. The flowers, beautiful yet linked to disappointment, capture the mixture of love and resentment in the marriage. Walter's mother adds a further layer of family tension, defending her son and remembering him as a lovable boy, while Elizabeth sees only a husband who has failed her.

The climax transforms the conflict. Walter has been suffocated in the pit, and as Elizabeth washes his body she realises that they were strangers who had never truly known each other. Lawrence writes that from death, "her ultimate master, she winced with fear and shame". Her shame suggests she now sees her own part in the conflict: she judged and resisted him rather than understanding him. Unlike Ishiguro's ending, Lawrence's provides a painful revelation, though it comes too late to heal the family.

Both writers present families in conflict as damaged by pride and failures of communication. Ishiguro uses restraint, ambiguity and foreshadowing to create an unsettling, unresolved tension, while Lawrence uses symbolism and a powerful

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climax to show conflict exposed by death. Together, the stories suggest that the deepest family conflicts lie not in arguments but in what is left unsaid.

17 Orwell presents Snowball's defeat not as the result of any single failing, but as the inevitable outcome of a struggle in which ideas and argument are no match for brute force, secrecy and propaganda. Through Snowball, an allegorical version of Leon Trotsky, Orwell shows how the idealism of a revolution is destroyed from within when one leader is willing to use violence and the other is not. His satire warns readers that revolutions are rarely lost in open debate; they are lost to whoever controls the dogs.

From the start, Orwell sets up the two pigs as opposites. Snowball is described as "more vivacious" than Napoleon, "quicker in speech and more inventive", while Napoleon has "a reputation for getting his own way". The contrast is telling: Snowball's strengths are intellectual and public, whereas Napoleon's are quiet and practical. Snowball throws himself into committees such as the "Egg Production Committee" and the "Wild Comrades' Re-education Committee", and Orwell's gently comic tone suggests that his schemes, however well meant, are naive. His attempt to re-educate rats and rabbits fails completely, hinting that he overestimates how easily animal nature can be reshaped. Meanwhile, Napoleon quietly takes the newborn puppies away to be educated in private. Orwell places this detail almost as an aside, so that readers, like the animals, barely notice the moment that will decide Snowball's fate.

Snowball's genuine courage is presented clearly in the Battle of the Cowshed. Having studied Julius Caesar's campaigns, he plans the defence and is wounded leading the charge, earning the title "Animal Hero, First Class". Napoleon,

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significantly, plays no visible part. This mirrors Trotsky's role as leader of the Red Army during the Russian Civil War. Yet Orwell suggests that bravery and talent are not enough. Later Squealer insists that "Bravery is not enough" and that "Loyalty and obedience are more important", a line which exposes the values of the new regime: what matters is not merit but submission.

The windmill debate is where Orwell most fully presents the reasons for Snowball's fall. Snowball is a brilliant speaker whose vision of electric light and a "three-day week" wins the animals over, while Napoleon's response to the plans is crude and contemptuous: he "lifted his leg, urinated over the plans" and left without a word. Orwell's bathos here makes Napoleon seem absurd, but it also shows that he does not need to argue. He has been "canvassing support" between meetings and has trained the sheep to interrupt with "Four legs good, two legs bad" at crucial moments. Ironically, this slogan was Snowball's own invention, a simplification of Animalism for the less intelligent animals. Orwell perhaps implies that Snowball helped to create the unthinking obedience that would destroy him, since an audience trained to chant cannot be trusted to weigh arguments.

The moment of defeat is shocking in its speed. Napoleon utters "a high-pitched whimper", and nine enormous dogs burst in and chase Snowball off the farm until he slips through a hedge "and was seen no more". The verbs of pursuit and the image of the dogs snapping at his tail transform a political debate into a hunt. Orwell structures this scene as a turning point: immediately afterwards, Napoleon abolishes the Sunday meetings, and the dogs who "wagged their tails" to him in the way they once did to Jones signal that tyranny has simply changed owners. This allegorises Stalin's use of the secret police and Trotsky's expulsion from the Soviet Union in 1929.

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Crucially, Snowball's defeat does not end with his exile. Orwell shows how Napoleon goes on defeating him in the animals' memories. Snowball is blamed for the collapse of the windmill, for broken windows and stolen corn, and Squealer claims that he was in league with Jones from the very start. The animals' confused sense that they remember Snowball's wound at the Cowshed is overwritten by repetition. Through this, Orwell satirises the Soviet rewriting of history, in which Trotsky was erased from photographs and turned into a universal traitor before his murder in Mexico in 1940.

However, Orwell does not present Snowball as a flawless hero. He agreed with the other pigs that the milk and apples should be reserved for themselves, which suggests that the corruption of the revolution began while he was still there. Orwell, a democratic socialist who had seen Soviet-backed communists turn on their allies in the Spanish Civil War, seems less interested in mourning Snowball than in warning readers. Snowball is defeated because he believes the revolution will be won by ideas, while Napoleon understands that, without the courage of ordinary animals to question their leaders, power belongs to whoever is most ruthless.

18 Orwell uses the Seven Commandments as a barometer of the revolution: when they are first painted on the barn wall they represent its highest ideals, and each secret alteration marks another stage in its betrayal. By showing the laws being rewritten under cover of darkness while the animals doubt their own memories, Orwell suggests that a revolution dies not in one dramatic moment but through the gradual corruption of language, and that those who control the written word control the truth.

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At the beginning, the Commandments embody genuine hope. Snowball paints them on the wall "in great white letters" that can be read from far away, and Orwell tells us they are meant to be "an unalterable law" by which the animals must live forever. Each rule defines the revolution against Jones: no clothes, no beds, no alcohol, no killing, and above all, "All animals are equal". The simple, absolute phrasing reflects the clarity of Old Major's dream. Yet Orwell plants small signs of weakness from the start. Snowball misspells "friend" and paints one letter the wrong way round, a comic detail which hints that even the founders of the revolution are imperfect, and that the written law is more fragile than it appears. More importantly, many animals cannot read beyond a few letters, so the Commandments are only as safe as the memories of those who cannot check them.

This vulnerability is exploited almost immediately. Snowball reduces the Commandments to the maxim "Four legs good, two legs bad" for the less intelligent animals, and although this is meant to help, it shows how easily complex principles can be replaced with a chant. The sheep later bleat the slogan to drown out debate, so a phrase that began as a summary of the revolution becomes a tool for silencing it. Orwell seems to suggest that oversimplified slogans are the first step towards propaganda.

The first open change comes when the pigs move into the farmhouse. When Clover asks Muriel to read the fourth Commandment, it now says that no animal shall sleep in a bed "with sheets". Orwell's structure here is subtle: the reader sees the trick at once, but the animals assume they must have forgotten. Squealer smooths over their doubts by asking whether they want Jones back, and this rhetorical threat, repeated throughout the novella, becomes his most powerful weapon. Fear of the past is used to justify the abuses of the present.

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The pattern repeats with increasing seriousness. After the show trials, in which animals confess to crimes and are killed by the dogs, the sixth Commandment is found to read that no animal shall kill another "without cause". Orwell allegorises Stalin's Great Purge of the 1930s, when confessions were extracted and executions justified as necessary for the state. The addition of two words is enough to make murder legal, which shows Orwell's horror at how language can be bent to excuse violence. Similarly, after the pigs discover whisky, the fifth Commandment now forbids drinking alcohol "to excess". The night before, the animals hear a crash and find Squealer sprawled at the foot of a ladder beside a pot of white paint. Only Benjamin understands, but he says nothing. Orwell's dark comedy here invites the reader to see what the animals cannot, and Benjamin's silence suggests that the intelligent who refuse to speak are complicit in tyranny.

The climax of the novella reduces the Seven Commandments to a single sentence: "All animals are equal but some animals are more equal than others". The paradox is absurd, yet it is the perfect expression of the pigs' logic. Equality has not been abolished openly; it has been redefined until it means its opposite. At the same moment, the sheep's chant becomes "Four legs good, two legs better!", and the pigs walk on their hind legs. Orwell structures the ending as a mirror of the opening, so that the ideals written at the start of the revolution are exactly reversed by its end, and the final image of animals unable to tell pig from man completes this circle.

Through the Commandments, Orwell explores how propaganda depends on two things: the control of written records by a ruling elite, and the inability or unwillingness of ordinary people to question them. As a democratic socialist who had watched the Soviet regime rewrite its own history, Orwell wanted his readers

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to recognise that the corruption of idealism is often quiet and gradual. The changing words on the barn wall are a warning that freedom is lost not only through violence, but through the slow theft of truth.

19 Ishiguro presents Kathy as largely likeable: patient, loyal and quietly perceptive, she is the steady centre of a story about lives cut tragically short. Yet he deliberately complicates our sympathy. Kathy can be guarded, occasionally spiteful and, most disturbingly, accepting of a system that will kill her. Ishiguro perhaps wants readers to like Kathy precisely so that her calm acceptance of her fate becomes more painful, forcing us to question why she never rebels.

Kathy's likeability begins with her narrative voice. The novel opens with plain, almost conversational statements: "My name is Kathy H. I'm thirty-one years old, and I've been a carer now for over eleven years." The modest tone and the missing surname immediately create sympathy, as she seems to have no full identity to claim. She speaks to the reader as "you", assuming we share her experience, which draws us into an intimate, confiding relationship. Her careful qualifications, admitting she might be remembering things wrongly, make her seem honest and self-aware rather than boastful. However, a reader might also notice a touch of pride when she mentions that she is allowed to choose her donors because of her good results, suggesting she is not without vanity.

At Hailsham, Kathy's kindness is shown most clearly through her treatment of Tommy. While others mock him and goad his tantrums, Kathy feels uneasy and later approaches him to calm him down. She becomes the person he confides in about Miss Lucy's comments that his creativity does not matter, and their friendship gives the novel its emotional core. Ishiguro uses these small, domestic

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moments to show Kathy's empathy in a world that discourages questions.

Kathy's relationship with Ruth is where Ishiguro tests our sympathy most. Kathy repeatedly protects Ruth's pride, for example when she lets Ruth's story about the pencil case pass, guessing that Miss Geraldine never gave it to her. These acts of discretion make Kathy seem generous and mature. Yet she is capable of cruelty. At the Cottages, she points out to Ruth that the gestures she has copied from the veterans actually come from a television programme, deliberately puncturing her friend's attempt to seem sophisticated. Ishiguro shows that Kathy's narrative is partly an act of self-justification, and the reader may wonder how much she softens her own faults. This makes her more realistic, and arguably more human, than an idealised heroine.

Kathy's private longing also makes her deeply sympathetic. Her treasured cassette, and her dancing alone to "Never Let Me Go" while holding a pillow as if it were a baby, is one of the novel's most moving images. Kathy innocently interprets the song as a woman being told she can never have a baby, which is heartbreaking for a character the reader later learns cannot have children. When Madame watches and weeps, Ishiguro creates a moment of dramatic irony that we only fully understand at the end. Similarly, her secret searching through magazines for her "possible", afraid that her sexual feelings reveal something shameful about her origins, presents her as vulnerable and lonely. Ruth's bitter claim that they are "modelled from trash" contrasts with Kathy's quieter, more private pain.

As a carer, Kathy becomes the novel's moral centre. She looks after Ruth through her donations and accepts Ruth's confession that she deliberately kept Kathy and Tommy apart. Kathy's willingness to forgive, rather than condemn, is admirable. When she finally becomes Tommy's carer, their brief relationship is tender, but

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Ishiguro withholds any triumph: the deferral myth is false, and Miss Emily explains that the guardians only wanted to prove the students had souls.

Ultimately, how likeable Kathy is depends on how readers judge her passivity. In the final chapter she stands at a fence in Norfolk, looking at rubbish caught on the wire, and allows herself only a brief fantasy that Tommy might appear. She then returns to her car and drives off to wherever she is supposed to be. Her restraint is admirable but also chilling, as she never thinks of escape. Writing in 2005, after the cloning of Dolly the sheep had sparked fears about scientific ethics, Ishiguro uses Kathy's gentle, accepting voice to unsettle readers. We like her because she is decent, loyal and forgiving, but her obedience reflects our own tendency to accept injustice when it is presented as normal.

20 Ishiguro presents the relationship between carers and donors as one of genuine tenderness trapped inside a system of cruelty. Carers are themselves future donors, so every act of care is shadowed by the knowledge that the carer will soon need care too. Through Kathy's calm, reflective narration, Ishiguro shows how a society has made the clones responsible for comforting each other through their own deaths, and invites readers to recognise the horror concealed by this gentle language of "care".

The relationship is introduced in the novel's opening lines, when Kathy states that she has been "a carer now for over eleven years". The plain tone presents caring as a normal job, and Kathy talks about her work almost like a nurse discussing her career, mentioning that her donors tend to stay calm and that she is allowed to choose whom she cares for. Yet the reader soon learns what she does not explain: donors give their organs until they "complete", a euphemism for dying, usually after

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the third or fourth donation. Ishiguro's restrained narrative style mirrors the euphemisms of the system itself. Words like "donor", "carer" and "complete" turn something violent into something orderly, and the reader feels disturbed precisely because Kathy does not.

The relationship between carers and donors is rooted in Hailsham, where the guardians act as the first carers. They encourage art, health and good behaviour, and their concern for the students' wellbeing seems kind. However, Miss Lucy's outburst that the students have been "told and not told" reveals that this care is incomplete and in some ways dishonest. She insists that none of them will have ordinary futures and that their lives are already set out. The guardians' care, like the carers' later on, comforts the students without ever challenging the system that will use them. Ishiguro suggests that kindness without honesty may simply make people more obedient.

Kathy's care for Ruth shows how the relationship can bring healing. When Ruth is a donor, physically weakened and frightened, Kathy cares for her despite their difficult history. The trip to see the stranded boat becomes a symbol of their situation: something abandoned, beached and slowly decaying, yet still beautiful in its way. It is here that Ruth apologises for keeping Kathy and Tommy apart and gives them Madame's address. Ishiguro uses this moment to show that the carer and donor relationship allows truth and forgiveness to emerge, as if the nearness of death removes old rivalries.

Kathy's role as Tommy's carer is the emotional centre of the novel, but it also exposes the gap between carers and donors. Although they finally become lovers, Tommy grows resentful that Kathy cannot truly understand what he is going through, and he later spends more time with other donors who share his

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experience. Eventually he asks her to stop being his carer. Ishiguro presents this as a painful but loving decision: Tommy wants Kathy to remember him as he was, not to watch him complete. The image he describes of two people holding on to each other in a river, unable to resist the current, captures their relationship perfectly. Love cannot save them, because the system is stronger than any individual bond.

The visit to Madame and Miss Emily confirms the injustice behind this relationship. The idea of a deferral for couples in love turns out to be a rumour, and Miss Emily admits that Hailsham existed to prove that the students had souls. Madame's pity, addressing them as poor creatures, reminds the reader that society sees the clones as less than human. Ironically, the carers and donors treat each other with more humanity than the outside world shows them. Ishiguro uses the dystopian genre here to hold up a mirror to our own world, where care work is often undervalued and where scientific progress, such as the cloning of Dolly the sheep in 1996, raised troubling questions about which lives are valued.

By the end, Kathy is preparing to become a donor herself, and she admits she will soon stop being a carer. The relationship is therefore cyclical: every carer becomes a donor, and every donor once cared for others. Ishiguro presents this endless cycle as both moving and horrifying. The clones' loyalty and gentleness with one another make them deeply sympathetic, yet their acceptance of this role, and their complete failure to rebel, highlight how effectively society has conditioned them. Through carers and donors, Ishiguro asks readers to consider how readily people accept injustice when it is presented as duty.

21 Although Robert appears only briefly, near the end of the novel, Syal presents

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Meena's relationship with him as one of the most important in her journey from childhood to maturity. It offers her something that her friendship with Anita never does: honesty, equality and the experience of being valued for who she really is. His death then gives her the first real grief of her life. Syal arguably uses this short relationship as a turning point, so that its importance lies less in its length than in what it changes.

The relationship begins in a moment of physical and emotional isolation. Meena breaks her leg falling from a horse and is told she must stay in hospital until Christmas, missing Sunil's birthday and a planned trip to India. Syal places this hospital stay immediately after Meena's growing unease about Anita, whom she now imagines enjoying the beating of an Indian man. The timing is significant. Separated from Tollington, Meena realises that the distance gives her a chance to end a friendship that has become morally impossible. Robert therefore enters her life at the exact moment when she needs a different kind of companion.

Syal presents their bond through a striking image: Robert is in an isolation room, and they communicate by writing notes from the other side of the glass. The glass becomes a symbol of their situation, a barrier that separates them physically but cannot stop their connection. They play games, swap facts and even invent their own secret language, learning to finish each other's sentences. This contrasts sharply with Meena's relationship with Anita, which was built on Meena's desperate attempts to impress, her lies and her willingness to follow. With Robert, communication is mutual and gentle. Syal's warm, slightly comic tone in these chapters suggests a version of first love that is innocent and safe.

The most important moment comes when Meena is finally allowed into his room in a gown and mask. Robert is delighted by her strong Black Country accent and

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admits he expected her to sound "more exotic". This is a quietly significant moment in a novel so concerned with identity. Throughout Tollington, Meena has been seen either as an outsider or as an exception, and has often wished to be someone else. Robert sees her as she is and likes her for it. When she asks if he has a girlfriend and he takes her hand, Syal captures the breathless excitement of a first romance. For a girl who has felt invisible beside Anita's glamour, this affirmation is powerful.

However, Syal deliberately makes this happiness fragile. Robert's painful tests leave him bruised and tearful, and the nurse explains how they exhaust him. When Meena leaves him a cheerful note and a copy of "To Kill a Mockingbird", a novel about prejudice and innocence, she receives no reply. Instead, a letter from his parents tells her that he has died and thanks her for making his time in hospital happy. Syal's restraint here is moving: the news arrives through a polite letter rather than a dramatic scene, mirroring the way loss often comes quietly.

Robert's death has a lasting effect on Meena. In the following chapter she is still grieving in January, and Syal shows her parents' contrasting reactions: her father understands how deeply she has been hurt, while her mother thinks she is too young to feel such grief. This tension reflects wider ideas about how adults often underestimate children's emotions. Meena herself reflects that the losses of Nanima, who returns to India, and of Robert hurt far more than anything Sam or Anita made her feel. Her grief gives her perspective. She becomes studious and focused on the eleven-plus, and when she is questioned by the police after Tracey's accident, she chooses not to take revenge on Sam or Anita, deciding instead to invest her energy in her own future.

How far, then, is the relationship important? It would be wrong to claim it

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matters more than Meena's bond with Anita or her family, which shape the whole novel and give it its title. Yet Robert acts as a catalyst. Writing about the 1960s Black Country from her own experience as a British Indian girl, Syal presents growing up as a process of learning who to trust and how to value oneself. Robert's honesty and affection show Meena what real friendship feels like, and his death completes her painful passage from innocence to experience. The relationship is brief, but it helps Meena become the confident, self-defining narrator who looks back on her childhood.

22 Syal uses Meena to explore growing up as a double journey: the universal passage from childish innocence to painful experience, and the more specific struggle of a British Indian girl working out where she belongs in a white working-class village. Through Meena's retrospective narration, Syal suggests that growing up means learning to see clearly, to recognise the flaws in those we admire, and finally to define ourselves rather than letting others define us.

From the opening, Syal presents young Meena as restless and imaginative. Her admission that she is "not really a liar" but someone "deprived of history" who turns to stories to feel she belongs reveals the central conflict of her childhood. She feels caught between the Punjabi world of her parents and the English world of Tollington, and her lies are a way of filling that gap. The adult narrator looks back with humour and affection, but also with insight, so the reader sees both the child's excitement and the adult's understanding of what she was really searching for. This dual perspective allows Syal to show growing up as a process the narrator has already survived.

Meena's friendship with Anita Rutter dominates her early adolescence. Anita is

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older, bold and glamorous, the leader of the local children, and Meena longs for her approval. Syal shows how this desire leads Meena into rebellion: she lies to her parents, adopts Anita's coarse Black Country slang, and joins in with cruelty to others. The use of dialect here is significant, as Meena's changing language reflects her attempt to fit in, while her parents' disapproval highlights the generational tension many second-generation immigrant children faced. Her longing for fish fingers and English food rather than her mother's cooking shows how she sees Englishness as something glamorous and desirable.

However, Syal shows that growing up involves discovering what lies beneath that glamour. Sam Lowbridge's racist outburst at the Spring Bank Holiday fete is a turning point. Meena realises that the village she wants to belong to does not fully accept her, and the casual prejudice of people she knows forces her to confront her identity. The later attack on an Indian man by Sam's gang, and Meena's sense that Anita would have enjoyed it, push her further away. Syal presents this as a painful but necessary loss of innocence.

The arrival of Nanima from India is equally important in Meena's development. Her grandmother's warmth and humour, and the Punjabi language they share, give Meena a new pride in her heritage. Rather than seeing her family's culture as embarrassing, she begins to value it. Syal suggests that growing up for Meena means integrating both parts of her identity instead of rejecting one of them. This is reinforced when Nanima returns to India, and Meena experiences a grief that she must hide to protect her parents.

Meena's stay in hospital after breaking her leg allows Syal to present growing up through suffering and reflection. Her friendship with Robert, conducted through notes across the glass of his isolation room, shows her the honesty and equality

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that her bond with Anita lacked. His death brings her the deepest sadness of her life. Afterwards, she becomes more serious and studious, and her father worries that she is less happy, while her mother insists that Meena is simply growing up. This disagreement captures the bittersweet nature of adolescence: maturity is gained, but something carefree is lost.

The climax at the pond shows how far Meena has developed. When Tracey falls into the water, Meena runs for help, and later, when the police question her, she resists the temptation to blame Sam or Anita and says that it was an accident. Her decision that revenge would be petty and that she should concentrate on her own future shows a moral maturity she lacked at the start. The discovery that the Big House belongs to an Indian family, the Singhs, also challenges Meena's assumptions about where Indians can belong in Tollington.

The novel ends with Meena passing the eleven-plus and her family moving away. She writes a note to Anita telling her she is leaving, but Anita never replies. Syal presents this ending as both sad and liberating. Meena realises that she can belong wherever she chooses, and that identity is something she can shape. Drawing on her own childhood in the West Midlands during the late 1960s, a time of growing racial tension, Syal uses Meena to show that growing up means not only learning about the world but finding the confidence to claim a place in it.

23 Kelman presents where people live as something that shapes, limits and sometimes destroys them. The London estate around Copenhagen House is a place of excitement and opportunity for Harrison, but also of poverty, fear and violence, and almost every character is forced to adapt to it in order to survive. By narrating through an eleven-year-old newcomer from Ghana, Kelman lets the reader see the

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estate both through innocent eyes and, at the same time, with growing dread, suggesting that a child's environment can matter more than his character in deciding his fate.

Harrison's first-person voice is Kelman's central method. His Ghanaian English and his enthusiastic slang, such as "asweh" and "hutious", make his narration funny and lively, and he notices everything about his new home: the lifts, the tower blocks, the shops and the different nationalities around him. To Harrison, London is full of wonders, and his pride in being the fastest runner in his year shows a boy who wants to fit in and succeed. Yet this innocence creates dramatic irony. The reader recognises dangers that he treats as games, so Kelman uses the gap between Harrison's perspective and ours to reveal how threatening the estate really is.

The novel opens with the murder of a boy outside Chicken Joe's, and this event shows how violence has become part of the landscape. Harrison treats the bloodstain and the police investigation with fascination, and he and Dean decide to become detectives, copying techniques from television and lifting fingerprints with sellotape. Kelman presents the boys' investigation as comic and childlike, but it also exposes how normal death has become for children on the estate. The novel echoes the real killing of Damilola Taylor in Peckham in 2000, which revealed how vulnerable young people in deprived areas could be.

The Dell Farm Crew show most clearly how the environment shapes young people. X-Fire and Killa rule through intimidation, and they pressure younger children like Harrison to prove themselves, first by setting off a fire alarm and later by dragging him into the robbery of Mr Frimpong, an old man from his church, from which he runs away. Kelman suggests that gangs offer power and belonging in a

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place where young people feel powerless. Harrison's refusal to fully join shows his moral integrity, but the consequences are frightening: the word "DEAD" is scratched onto his family's door, and the Crew robs him and Dean. The estate leaves little room for neutrality.

Lydia's experience demonstrates the pressure on teenage girls. Her friend Miquita, who is loyal to the Crew, burns Lydia's cheek with a hair straightener while asking whether she is with them or against them. This shocking moment shows how the culture of the estate turns friendship into a test of loyalty. Yet Lydia also resists, later filming the Crew's confrontation with Harrison and leading the boys to safety in the library. Kelman perhaps implies that resistance is possible, even if it is dangerous.

Kelman also explores how where people live affects immigrants in particular. Auntie Sonia burns her fingerprints to avoid being deported, and the local meat seller and his wife are arrested by immigration police. These details show that for many characters, London is not a place of security but of constant uncertainty. Harrison's family is itself divided by migration: Papa and baby Agnes remain in Ghana with Grandma Ama, and Harrison's memories of Accra are warm and vivid. The contrast between the closeness of home in Ghana and the isolation of the London estate highlights what has been sacrificed for opportunity. Mamma's long night shifts as a midwife, and her strict religious values, represent her attempt to protect her children from an environment she cannot control.

The pigeon, which speaks in occasional italic passages, offers another perspective on the estate. It observes the human world calmly and with love, and Harrison's affection for it reflects his gentleness. Kelman uses the pigeon to suggest a freedom that the humans lack: it can fly above the tower blocks, while they are

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trapped within them.

The ending reveals the full cost of the environment. On the last day of school, after Poppy kisses him, Harrison runs home in joy and is stabbed. As he dies, the pigeon reassures him that he will be going home soon, and he tries but fails to picture Agnes's face. Kelman's decision to end the novel with the death of its innocent narrator is devastating, and it forces the reader to recognise that Harrison's goodness could not protect him. Through this tragedy, Kelman presents a powerful criticism of a society that allows children to grow up in places where violence is ordinary.

24 Kelman presents Harrison's family as his greatest source of love and security, yet it is a family stretched across continents and under constant pressure from the world outside. Divided between London and Ghana, and threatened by poverty, violence and the culture of the estate, the Opokus cling to each other through phone calls, rituals and small acts of loyalty. Through Harrison's affectionate but naive narration, Kelman shows that family love is powerful, but suggests painfully that it cannot always protect a child from his environment.

The most obvious feature of Harrison's family is its division. Harrison lives on the ninth floor of Copenhagen House with Mamma and his older sister Lydia, while Papa and baby Agnes remain in Accra with Grandma Ama. Kelman presents this separation as a constant ache beneath Harrison's cheerful voice. His memories of Ghana are warm and detailed, and Papa, who owns a shop there, appears through flashbacks and telephone calls as kind, gentle and a positive role model. The fact that Harrison's father is only a voice on the phone highlights the sacrifice involved in migration: the family has chosen opportunity in London at the cost of being

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together. Harrison's hope that they will one day be reunited gives the novel much of its emotional pull, and it reflects the real experience of many migrant families, where parents work abroad and children are raised by relatives.

Harrison's relationship with Agnes is presented with particular tenderness. Because Mamma works long shifts as a midwife, she could not care for a baby in London, so Agnes stays with Grandma Ama. When Agnes develops a fever, Harrison's fear that she might die reveals how much he loves her despite the distance. Kelman returns to Agnes in the novel's final moments: as Harrison lies dying, he tries to picture her face but cannot. This heartbreaking detail suggests that the separation has cost him not only time with his sister but even the memory of her, making the family's division a central part of the novel's tragedy.

Mamma is presented as hardworking, devout and protective. Her long night shifts show the economic pressure on the family, and her strong religious values reflect her desire to keep her children safe from the estate's dangers. Harrison respects and loves her, though he often hides things from her, such as the full extent of his "investigation" and his encounters with the Dell Farm Crew. This reflects the tension between family values and the teenage culture around him: Harrison lives in two worlds, and he cannot fully share one with the other. Kelman's use of Harrison's limited understanding creates dramatic irony, as the reader sees that Mamma's protection is fragile against the forces outside their door.

Harrison's relationship with Lydia is perhaps the most realistic and complex. They squabble and tease each other like ordinary siblings, but their bond is deep. Kelman shows Lydia under heavy pressure to grow up quickly and prove her loyalty to the Crew, especially through her friend Miquita, who burns Lydia's cheek with a hair straightener. Harrison is confused when he sees Lydia bleaching clothes that

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look bloodstained, a moment which hints at her uncomfortable closeness to the gang. Yet Lydia ultimately protects him. When the Crew robs Harrison and Dean, she films the confrontation and leads them to safety in the library. The moment when Harrison and Lydia press their footprints into wet cement is especially symbolic: it suggests a wish to leave a permanent mark together in an unstable place, and their shared action shows how close they really are.

Auntie Sonia extends the family's warmth but also its vulnerability. She is generous and honest, giving gifts to the children, yet she is abused by her boyfriend Julius, who carries a bat he calls "the Persuader", and she burns off her fingerprints to avoid deportation. Through Sonia, Kelman shows that the adults in Harrison's family face their own dangers and insecurities, and that the family cannot shield everyone. Her eventual flight to escape Julius reinforces the fragility of family life for migrants without security.

Overall, Kelman presents Harrison's family as a source of love that gives him his moral strength. His refusal to fully join the Crew, his care for others and his optimism all seem rooted in the values his family has taught him. However, the novel's ending reveals the limits of that protection. Harrison is stabbed on his way home, in the place where his family hoped for a better life. Through this tragedy, Kelman suggests that the security of a loving family can be overwhelmed by social deprivation and violence, and he urges readers to recognise the cost of failing children like Harrison.

25 Both Duffy and Armitage present the relationship between parent and child as one shaped by possession and separation: love is inseparable from the knowledge that each person has a life the other cannot fully hold. In 'Before You Were Mine',

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Duffy's adult speaker looks backwards, longing to know the glamorous young woman her mother was before motherhood claimed her. In 'Mother, Any Distance', Armitage's son looks forwards, leaving home while his mother still holds on. Together the poems suggest that growing up means accepting that parents and children must, eventually, let each other be separate people.

Duffy opens with a striking reversal of time: "I'm ten years away from the corner you laugh on". The speaker measures her absence from her mother's past, so the poem begins with the child imagining a world without herself in it. The present tense of "laugh", "bend" and "shriek" makes the memory vivid and alive, as if the photograph has become a film. Armitage, by contrast, opens with direct address to the parent, "Mother, any distance greater than a single span / requires a second pair of hands". The practical language of measurement suggests a son who still needs his mother's help, yet "distance" quietly foreshadows the separation the poem is really about. Both poets therefore begin with space and time, but Duffy reaches back to before the child existed, while Armitage reaches forward to the moment the child leaves.

The idea of possession is central to both. Duffy's title and refrain, "before you were mine", has a possessive pronoun at its heart, and the speaker admits to her "loud, possessive yell" as a baby. There is a hint of guilt here: the rhetorical question "The decade ahead of my loud, possessive yell was the best one, eh?" suggests the child recognises that motherhood took away her mother's freedom. The colloquial "eh?" is affectionate and teasing, yet it carries a real sadness. Armitage presents possession from the other side. The mother is the "Anchor", the son is the "Kite", and these one-word sentences crystallise the relationship: she grounds him, but he strains to fly. The metaphor captures both the safety and the restriction of parental love. Whereas Duffy's speaker feels she has possessed her

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mother, Armitage's speaker feels possessed and gently held back.

Duffy celebrates her mother as an individual through glamorous imagery. The single-word sentence "Marilyn." compares her to Marilyn Monroe, while "the fizzy, movie tomorrows" suggests a youth full of excitement and romantic possibility in 1950s Glasgow. The mother is defiant too, facing "a hiding for the late one" from her own Ma and deciding "it's worth it". Yet the speaker's tone is tinged with envy, because she can only reach this woman through relics. The "high-heeled red shoes, relics" become almost sacred objects, and the mother's "ghost clatters toward me", an image which shows that this younger self is lost, even though the real mother is alive. Armitage uses imagery of vast space instead: the house has "acres" and "prairies", and the son will "space-walk through the empty bedrooms". The hyperbole makes leaving home feel like exploring a new world, exciting but frightening.

Structurally, both poems build towards a moment of release. Duffy's four regular five-line stanzas move from the past towards the speaker's own memories, such as being taught "the steps on the way home from Mass", where the mother is "stamping stars from the wrong pavement". The playful image suggests that even as a mother she kept some of her sparkle, and the poem ends by preserving her youth where "you sparkle and waltz and laugh". The verbs are celebratory, and the final repetition of the title quietly accepts that this woman belongs to the past. Armitage's loose sonnet form is stretched by long, enjambed lines that, like the tape measure, keep "unreeling / years between us". The volta comes at "breaking point, where something / has to give", and the final line, "to fall or fly", leaves the outcome uncertain. While Duffy's ending is joyful and still, Armitage's is suspended at the edge of risk.

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Ultimately, both poets present the parent and child relationship as loving but changing over time. Duffy writes as an adult who has gained perspective, honouring the identity her mother sacrificed, while Armitage captures the moment of growing up itself, when a child must step beyond a parent's reach. Perhaps the deepest similarity is that both speakers understand their parents more fully at the very point of separation, suggesting that love between parent and child is measured not by closeness, but by the willingness to let go.

26

Both Browning and Shelley present power as corrupting and ultimately self-defeating: the men who wield it become arrogant, controlling and cruel, and their attempts to make themselves permanent through art expose rather than glorify them. In 'My Last Duchess' the effects of power are intimate and deadly, as a Duke silences his young wife, while in 'Ozymandias' they are political and on a vast scale, as a tyrant rules a nation. Yet in both poems the final effect of power is irony, because the powerful are condemned by the very works they hoped would celebrate them.

Browning uses the form of a dramatic monologue to let the Duke reveal his tyranny through his own voice. The opening, "That's my last Duchess painted on the wall", is chilling in its casualness: the possessive "my" reduces his wife to one of his belongings, and "last" implies she is one in a series. Shelley, by contrast, frames his tyrant through layers of narration, as the speaker reports what "a traveller from an antique land" told him. This distancing technique shrinks Ozymandias, whose voice survives only as an inscription. While the Duke dominates his poem, Ozymandias is reduced to a story passed on second-hand, which already suggests that his power has faded.

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The most disturbing effect of power in 'My Last Duchess' is control over another human being. The Duke resents that his wife "liked whate'er / She looked on, and her looks went everywhere", and he cannot tolerate that she ranked his "gift of a nine-hundred-years-old name / With anybody's gift". His pride in his ancient status shows how power has made him see others' innocent pleasures as insults. The climax is delivered with horrifying understatement: "I gave commands; / Then all smiles stopped together." The euphemism hides an implied murder, and the caesura after "commands" creates a pause in which the reader realises what he has done. Shelley presents a similar contempt for others through the statue's face, with its "frown, / And wrinkled lip, and sneer of cold command". The harsh alliteration of "cold command" mirrors the Duke's "commands", and both poets suggest that absolute power breeds a cold detachment from humanity.

Both men use art to preserve their power, and both poems present this as an effect of arrogance. The Duke now controls his wife completely as a painting, since "none puts by / The curtain I have drawn for you, but I". The curtain is a symbol of his total control: alive, her smiles went to everyone, but dead, she smiles only when he allows it. Ozymandias commanded a sculptor to carve his image, and the inscription "Look on my works, ye Mighty, and despair!" uses an imperative and an exclamation to boast of his supremacy over other kings. However, Shelley turns art against the tyrant. The sculptor's "hand that mocked them" suggests that the artist saw through the king and captured his cruelty, so the statue becomes a lasting critique rather than a tribute. In a similar way, the Duke's pride in his painting reveals far more about his jealousy than he intends.

Structurally, both poets use form to explore the tension between control and its limits. Browning writes in rhyming couplets of iambic pentameter, suggesting the Duke's controlled, polished manner, yet the heavy enjambment makes the rhymes

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almost invisible, as if his composure is barely hiding obsession. Shelley's sonnet, a form linked to love, is used ironically to describe a man in love only with himself, and its irregular rhyme scheme perhaps reflects the breaking of his empire. The endings are telling. Browning finishes with the Duke pointing out "Neptune, though, / Taming a sea-horse", another symbol of domination, as he moves on to negotiate a new marriage, which implies his power will continue to destroy. Shelley ends with "Nothing beside remains" and "The lone and level sands stretch far away". The alliteration of "lone and level" creates an image of emptiness that mocks the king's boast, showing that time and nature are greater than any human ruler.

Contextually, both poets were critical of abuses of power. Shelley, a radical Romantic writing in 1818, opposed monarchy and tyranny, and his poem may be read as a warning to the powerful of his own day. Browning set his poem in Renaissance Italy, but his Victorian readers would have recognised a critique of aristocratic pride and of men's control over women in marriage. Ultimately, Browning shows the immediate, personal effect of power as murderous control, while Shelley shows its long-term effect as ruin and oblivion. Together they suggest that power may silence others for a time, but it cannot protect the powerful from judgement.

27.1 In 'Scaffolding', the speaker presents a relationship as something carefully built, which may look fragile from the outside but is secure at its core. Through an extended metaphor of masons constructing a building, the poet suggests that the early effort of a relationship eventually creates something so strong that its supports can fall away, and the speaker's feelings move from caution to calm confidence.

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The poem opens not with the relationship at all, but with the image of "Masons, when they start upon a building". Beginning with a general statement about builders gives the poem a wise, almost proverbial tone, as if the speaker is sharing a universal truth. The adjective "careful" and the verb phrase "test out" suggest patience and responsibility, implying that in the early stages of love, both partners must check that what they are building can bear weight. The second couplet develops this with a list of practical actions: "Make sure that planks won't slip at busy points, / Secure all ladders, tighten bolted joints." The imperative verbs "Make sure", "Secure" and "tighten" create a sense of effort and attentiveness. The phrase "busy points" perhaps hints at the stressful moments in a relationship, where pressure is greatest and slips are most likely.

The third couplet marks a turning point with the conjunction "And yet". Now the scaffolding "comes down when the job's done", revealing "walls of sure and solid stone". The alliteration of the sibilant "s" sounds in "sure and solid stone" makes the line feel smooth and settled, mirroring the strength and permanence of the finished building. The contrast between the temporary scaffolding and the lasting stone suggests that the anxieties and efforts of a new relationship are not the relationship itself, but a means of building something enduring.

Only in the fourth couplet does the speaker turn directly to the partner. The direct address "my dear" is tender and intimate, and it reveals that the whole poem has been a gentle message of reassurance. The speaker admits that "there sometimes seem to be / Old bridges breaking between you and me". The verb "seem" is important, implying that the damage is only apparent rather than real. The image of "bridges breaking" suggests moments of disconnection, perhaps arguments or distance, and the adjective "Old" hints that these are connections that once

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mattered but are no longer needed.

The final couplet resolves this tension. The short sentence "Never fear." is comforting and firm. The speaker accepts that "We may let the scaffolds fall", and the plural pronoun "We" emphasises that the relationship is a shared achievement. The final line, "Confident that we have built our wall", uses the past tense "have built" to show that the work is complete. The possessive "our" stresses unity, while the "wall" suggests protection and permanence.

Structurally, the poem's five neat couplets, mostly in rhyme or half rhyme such as "be" and "me" and "fall" and "wall", mirror the careful construction of the building. Each couplet is like a level of scaffolding, and the pairing of lines may reflect the two partners. The ending on a full rhyme gives a sense of closure and security. Overall, the speaker feels that love is fragile at first but, once properly built, is strong enough to survive the moments when it appears to be breaking.

27.2 Both poets use extended metaphor to present the strength of romantic love, but they draw on very different worlds. In 'Scaffolding', love is built through human effort, with "walls of sure and solid stone", suggesting a strength that is earned and constructed. In 'Yours', the speaker turns instead to the natural world, beginning "I am yours as the summer air at evening is". These similes suggest that love is natural and inevitable rather than worked for, as effortless as light on a snowcap.

Both poems also use direct address, yet the pronouns create different effects. Heaney's "my dear" and the shared "We" and "our wall" present the relationship as a partnership. Hoffman focuses on the speaker's total dependence: "Without you I'd

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be an unleafed tree" uses the bare tree to show that, without the beloved, life would be lifeless and barren, while "Your love is the weather of my being" suggests the partner shapes his whole existence.

Structurally, both poems are written in couplets, perhaps reflecting the pairing of two lovers. However, Heaney's are mostly rhymed, giving his poem a controlled, secure feel, while Hoffman's unrhymed couplets feel more like a flowing declaration. The endings differ too. Heaney concludes with the confident statement that "we have built our wall", whereas Hoffman ends with a rhetorical question, "What is an island without the sea?", implying that the two lovers are inseparable, each defined by the other.