AQA

GCSE
ENGLISH LITERATURE

Paper 2 Modern texts and poetry

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 8702/2R.
- 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 use the character of Mrs Birling to explore ideas about social class?

Write about:

- what Mrs Birling says and does
- how Priestley presents Mrs Birling.

[30 marks]
AO4 [4 marks]

or

0 2 How does Priestley use the Inspector to suggest the need for social change in *An Inspector Calls*?

Write about:

- what the Inspector says and does
- how Priestley presents the Inspector.

[30 marks]
AO4 [4 marks]

Willy Russell: *Blood Brothers*

or

0 3 How does Russell present Mickey's relationships with his mother and with Linda in *Blood Brothers*?

Write about:

- Mickey's relationships with his mother and with Linda
- how Russell presents Mickey's relationships with his mother and with Linda.

[30 marks]
AO4 [4 marks]

or

0 4 How does Russell present the effects of poverty in *Blood Brothers*?

Write about:

- the effects of poverty that are shown in the play
- how Russell presents the effects of poverty.

[30 marks]
AO4 [4 marks]

Turn over for the next question

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Alan Bennett: *The History Boys*

or

0 5 How far does Bennett present Hector as a likeable character in *The History Boys*?

Write about:

- what Hector says and does
- how far Bennett presents Hector as a likeable character.

[30 marks]
AO4 [4 marks]

or

0 6 'Hector represents education for its own sake: Irwin represents education as a way of getting on in life.'

How far do you agree with this view of *The History Boys*?

Write about:

- what Hector and Irwin say about education
- how Bennett presents Hector's and Irwin's views of education.

[30 marks]
AO4 [4 marks]

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Dennis Kelly: *DNA*

or

0 7 How does Kelly explore the dangers of peer pressure in *DNA*?

Write about:

- some of the dangers of peer pressure in the play
- how Kelly presents the dangers of peer pressure.

[30 marks]
AO4 [4 marks]

or

0 8 How does Kelly present ideas about power and control in *DNA*?

Write about:

- examples of power and control in the play
- how Kelly presents ideas about power and control.

[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 reactions to shocks and surprises in *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time*?

Write about:

- shocks and surprises that Christopher faces
- how Stephens presents Christopher's reactions to shocks and surprises.

[30 marks]
AO4 [4 marks]

or

1 0 How far does Stephens present Judy as a good mother in *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time*?

Write about:

- how Judy behaves as a mother
- how far Stephens presents Judy as a good mother.

[30 marks]
AO4 [4 marks]

Shelagh Delaney: *A Taste of Honey*

or

1 1 ‘Delaney presents relationships between men and women as difficult.’

How far do you agree with this view of *A Taste of Honey*?

Write about:

- relationships between men and women in the play
- how far Delaney presents these relationships as difficult.

[30 marks]
AO4 [4 marks]

or

1 2 Delaney said about Helen, ‘She is just a woman who enjoys life and goes about it in her own way’.

How far do you agree with this view of Helen?

Write about:

- what Helen says and does
- how Delaney presents Helen.

[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 does Golding present ideas about leadership in *Lord of the Flies*?

Write about:

- examples of leadership in the novel
- how Golding presents ideas about leadership.

[30 marks]
AO4 [4 marks]

or

1 4 How does Golding use the Littluns to explore ideas about trust and fear in *Lord of the Flies*?

Write about:

- what the Littluns say and do
- how Golding presents the Littluns.

[30 marks]
AO4 [4 marks]

AQA Anthology: *Telling Tales*

or

1 5 How do writers present characters dealing with change in 'Chemistry' and in **one** other story from *Telling Tales*?

Write about:

- what the characters dealing with change say and do in the **two** stories
- how the writers present characters dealing with change.

[30 marks]
AO4 [4 marks]

or

1 6 How do writers present ideas about identity in 'My Polish Teacher's Tie' and in **one** other story from *Telling Tales*?

Write about:

- the ideas about identity in the **two** stories
- how the writers present ideas about identity.

[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 use Squealer to explore ideas about power and control in *Animal Farm*?

Write about:

- what Squealer says and does
- how Orwell uses Squealer to explore ideas about power and control.

[30 marks]
AO4 [4 marks]

or

1 8 How does Orwell use the ending of *Animal Farm* to explore ideas about revolution?

Write about:

- what happens in the ending of *Animal Farm*
- how Orwell uses the ending of *Animal Farm* to explore ideas about revolution.

[30 marks]
AO4 [4 marks]

Kazuo Ishiguro: *Never Let Me Go*

or

1 9 How does Ishiguro present Ruth and Tommy's romantic relationship in *Never Let Me Go*?

Write about:

- what Ruth and Tommy say and do
- how Ishiguro presents Ruth and Tommy's romantic relationship.

[30 marks]
AO4 [4 marks]

or

2 0 '*Never Let Me Go* is a novel about characters trying their best to be happy in terrible circumstances.'

How far do you agree with this view?

Write about:

- what characters in the novel say and do
- how Ishiguro presents the characters.

[30 marks]
AO4 [4 marks]

Turn over for the next question

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Meera Syal: *Anita and Me*

or

2 1 How does Syal present the changes in Meena's relationship with Anita in *Anita and Me*?

Write about:

- the relationship between Meena and Anita and how it changes
- how Syal presents these changes.

[30 marks]
AO4 [4 marks]

or

2 2 How does Syal present ideas about racism in *Anita and Me*?

Write about:

- what characters say and do
- how Syal presents ideas about racism in the novel.

[30 marks]
AO4 [4 marks]

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Stephen Kelman: *Pigeon English*

or

2 3 How does Kelman present Harrison as a likeable character in *Pigeon English*?

Write about:

- what Harrison says and does
- how Kelman presents Harrison as likeable.

[30 marks]
AO4 [4 marks]

or

2 4 How does Kelman present Harrison's relationship with one or more of the female characters in *Pigeon English*?

Write about:

- Harrison's relationship with one or more of the female characters
- how Kelman presents Harrison's relationship with one or more of the female characters.

[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

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2 5 Compare how poets present powerful feelings about love in 'Neutral Tones' and in **one** other poem from 'Love and relationships'.

[30 marks]

Neutral Tones

We stood by a pond that winter day,
And the sun was white, as though chidden of God,
And a few leaves lay on the starving sod;
– They had fallen from an ash, and were grey.

Your eyes on me were as eyes that rove
Over tedious riddles of years ago;
And some words played between us to and fro
On which lost the more by our love.

The smile on your mouth was the deadest thing
Alive enough to have strength to die;
And a grin of bitterness swept thereby
Like an ominous bird a-wing...

Since then, keen lessons that love deceives,
And wrings with wrong, have shaped to me
Your face, and the God-curst sun, and a tree,
And a pond edged with greyish leaves.

Thomas Hardy

Turn over for the next question

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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

2 6 Compare how poets present the ways people are affected by conflict in 'Kamikaze' and in **one** other poem from 'Power and conflict'.

[30 marks]

Kamikaze

Her father embarked at sunrise
with a flask of water, a samurai sword
in the cockpit, a shaven head
full of powerful incantations
and enough fuel for a one-way
journey into history

but half way there, she thought,
recounting it later to her children,
he must have looked far down
at the little fishing boats
strung out like bunting
on a green-blue translucent sea

and beneath them, arcing in swathes
like a huge flag waved first one way
then the other in a figure of eight,
the dark shoals of fishes
flashing silver as their bellies
swivelled towards the sun

and remembered how he and
his brothers waiting on the shore
built cairns of pearl-grey pebbles
to see whose withstood longest
the turbulent inrush of breakers
bringing their father's boat safe

- yes, grandfather's boat – safe
to the shore, salt-sodden, awash
with cloud-marked mackerel,
black crabs, feathery prawns,
the loose silver of whitebait and once
a tuna, the dark prince, muscular, dangerous.

And though he came back
my mother never spoke again
in his presence, nor did she meet his eyes
and the neighbours too, they treated him
as though he no longer existed,
only we children still chattered and laughed

till gradually we too learned
to be silent, to live as though
he had never returned, that this
was no longer the father we loved.
And sometimes, she said, he must have wondered
which had been the better way to die.

Beatrice Garland

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Section C: Unseen poetry

Answer **both** questions in this section.

The washing never gets done

The washing never gets done.
The furnace never gets heated.
Books never get read.
Life is never completed.
Life is like a ball which one must continually
catch and hit so it won't fall.
When the fence is repaired at one end,
it collapses at the other. The roof leaks,
the kitchen door won't close, there are cracks in the foundation,
the torn knees of children's pants…
One can't keep everything in mind. The wonder is
that beside all this one can notice
the spring which is so full of everything
continuing in all directions – into the evening clouds,
into the redwing's* song and into every
drop of dew on every blade of grass in the meadow,
as far as the eye can see, into the dusk.

*redwing: a type of bird

Jaan Kaplinski

2 7 . 1 In 'The washing never gets done', how does the poet present ideas about daily life and connecting with the natural world?

[24 marks]

A Day in Autumn

It will not always be like this,
The air windless, a few last
Leaves adding their decoration
To the trees' shoulders, braiding the cuffs
Of the boughs with gold; a bird preening

In the lawn's mirror. Having looked up
From the day's chores, pause a minute,
Let the mind take its photograph
Of the bright scene, something to wear
Against the heart in the long cold.

R S Thomas

2 7 . 2 In both 'A Day in Autumn' and 'The washing never gets done', the poets present ideas about daily life and connecting with the natural world.

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

[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 uses Mrs Birling as the embodiment of upper-middle-class snobbery: a woman whose sense of social superiority is so complete that it blinds her to her own cruelty. Whereas her husband represents the selfishness of capitalism, Mrs Birling represents the rigid class prejudice that props it up, and Priestley makes her the most unrepentant member of the family so that his 1945 audience will reject everything she stands for as Britain voted for a fairer, post-war society.

Priestley establishes her class identity before she even speaks. The stage directions describe her as "a rather cold woman and her husband's social superior", and the adjective "cold" immediately signals a lack of human warmth, while "social superior" reminds us that class divides even the Birlings' own marriage. In Act One her first concern is etiquette: when Birling compliments the cook, she rebukes him with "Arthur, you're not supposed to say such things". The moment is comic, but it shows that for Mrs Birling manners matter more than people, and that servants should remain invisible. Her advice to Sheila that men "with important work to do" must spend their time on business, and that Sheila will "have to get used to that, just as I had", suggests she has accepted the limited role of an Edwardian wife, finding her power instead in status and social rules.

Her prejudice becomes dangerous in Act Two, when the Inspector reveals her role in Eva's death. As chair of the Brumley Women's Charity Organisation, she holds real power over the poor, yet she uses it to punish rather than to help. Priestley makes her language revealing: she refers repeatedly to "girls of that class" and exclaims "As if a girl of that sort would ever refuse money!". The demonstratives "that class" and "that sort" push Eva away, turning a desperate, pregnant woman

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into a type rather than a person. She was offended that the girl used the name "Mrs Birling", seeing it as a piece of impertinence, so she rejected the claim. Ironically, Eva's refusal of stolen money shows a moral integrity that Mrs Birling herself lacks. Priestley exposes the hypocrisy of an Edwardian charity system that judged the "deserving" poor by the prejudices of wealthy women.

Priestley heightens this through dramatic irony. Insisting she was "perfectly justified", Mrs Birling demands that the Inspector "Go and look for the father of the child. It's his responsibility." She insists the young man should be made an example of, unaware of what the audience is beginning to suspect. As the act closes, the realisation that she has condemned her own son is delivered through her agitated "I don't believe it. I won't believe it." The curtain falls on Eric's entrance, so her class confidence collapses at the exact moment of greatest tension. Priestley structures the scene so that her snobbery literally rebounds on her family, suggesting that the classes are bound together more closely than the wealthy like to admit.

Mrs Birling is also defined by contrast. Sheila, who once had Eva sacked out of jealousy, now calls her mother's behaviour "cruel and vile", and Eric's furious accusations in Act Three show the younger generation turning against her values. In contrast, Mrs Birling never wavers. Her line "I'm sorry she should have come to such a horrible end. But I accept no blame for it at all" is telling: the conjunction "But" cancels her sympathy, and the absolute "at all" shows a mind closed to change. When the Inspector asks if she is not even sorry now, she cannot answer in human terms. Priestley may be suggesting that class prejudice is the hardest attitude to shift because it feels, to those who hold it, like common sense.

After the Inspector leaves, her true priorities are clear. She praises herself as "the

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only one of you who didn't give in to him" and quickly rejoins her husband in worrying about scandal rather than about Eva. Once Gerald suggests the Inspector was a hoax, she is eager to return to normal, treating the evening as something to be laughed off. The final telephone call, announcing that a girl has died and an inspector is on his way, punishes this complacency by forcing the family to relive the evening.

Ultimately, Priestley uses Mrs Birling as a warning. Writing after two world wars had blurred class boundaries, he presents her snobbery as outdated and morally bankrupt, echoing the Inspector's message that "we are responsible for each other". Her refusal to learn suggests that the older, privileged generation cannot be changed, and that hope lies with young people like Sheila and Eric, and with the audience who must build the society Mrs Birling would never accept.

02 Priestley uses the Inspector as a dramatic mouthpiece for socialist ideas, a figure who exposes the selfishness of a capitalist family and insists that society must be rebuilt on collective responsibility. Set in 1912 but first performed in 1945, the play uses the Inspector to show his audience the cost of the old class system, urging them not to return to it after the Second World War.

Priestley presents the Inspector as a disruptive force from the moment he arrives. Before his entrance, Birling lectures Eric and Gerald that "a man has to mind his own business and look after himself and his own", mocking those who talk as if we were all "like bees in a hive". The doorbell interrupts this speech, so structurally the Inspector arrives as an answer to Birling's capitalist philosophy. The stage directions reinforce this shift: the lighting is "pink and intimate" until the Inspector arrives, and then "brighter and harder". The warm, rose-tinted glow of

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the dinner party symbolises the Birlings' comfortable view of themselves, while the harsh light suggests the Inspector will expose the truth beneath it. He creates "an impression of massiveness, solidity and purposefulness", and these abstract nouns give him a moral weight that the pompous Birling lacks.

The Inspector's methods dramatise the need for change. He works with "one person and one line of inquiry at a time", and this controlled structure forces each character to confront their own part in Eva's death before the next is revealed. His habit of "looking hard at the person he addresses before actually speaking" unsettles characters who are used to deference. When Birling tries to intimidate him by mentioning his friendship with the Chief Constable, the Inspector is unimpressed, and his reminder that "Public men, Mr Birling, have responsibilities as well as privileges" shows that he refuses to respect the hierarchy that protects the rich. Priestley uses this contrast between the Inspector's directness and the family's evasiveness to suggest that power and wealth should not place anyone above moral judgement.

Through the chain of events he uncovers, the Inspector shows how social class shapes ordinary lives. Eva is sacked by Birling for asking for higher wages, dismissed from Milwards because of Sheila's jealousy, kept and then discarded by Gerald, used by Eric, and refused charity by Mrs Birling. Each act seems small to the person responsible, but the Inspector links them together. When Birling complains that it would be "very awkward" if we were all responsible for everyone we had dealings with, the Inspector simply echoes "Very awkward", and the dry repetition turns Birling's excuse into an admission. His graphic description of Eva's death, which forces Birling to picture the body, refuses to let the family treat the working class as an abstraction. When Sheila protests that working girls "aren't cheap labour", Priestley shows the Inspector's influence spreading to the young,

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who become the hope for change.

The Inspector's final speech is the clearest statement of Priestley's message. He reminds them that "there are millions and millions and millions of Eva Smiths and John Smiths". The tripling of "millions" turns one victim into a symbol of the entire working class, while the common surname "Smith" suggests anonymity and ordinariness. His declaration "We don't live alone. We are members of one body. We are responsible for each other" uses short, declarative sentences that sound like a sermon, and the image of "one body" has a biblical echo, presenting socialism almost as a moral duty. Finally, he warns that if men will not learn this lesson, they will be taught it "in fire and blood and anguish". The polysyndeton slows the line and makes it apocalyptic. For a 1945 audience who had lived through two world wars, this prophecy would have felt devastatingly accurate, and Priestley clearly wants them to vote and live differently.

Yet Priestley also makes the Inspector mysterious. His name, "Goole", suggests a ghost or "ghoul", and after he leaves Gerald discovers there is no Inspector Goole on the force. Birling and Mrs Birling seize on this as an escape, but Sheila and Eric realise it makes no difference: Eva, or girls like her, still suffered. The final phone call announcing that a girl has died and an inspector is coming suggests that the Inspector represents something larger than a policeman, perhaps conscience itself, or a warning from the future. The cyclical structure implies that those who refuse to change will be made to face the same lesson again.

Overall, Priestley uses the Inspector to argue that social change is both necessary and inevitable. He divides the characters into those who learn and those who do not, and by leaving the ending unresolved he passes responsibility to the audience, who must decide which side of that divide they will choose.

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03

Russell presents Mickey's relationships with his mother and with Linda as the most loving and loyal in the play, yet he also shows them being slowly crushed by poverty and class. Both women love Mickey unconditionally, but neither can protect him from a society that denies him opportunity, and Russell uses the decline of these relationships to argue that class, not fate or superstition, destroys the Johnstone twin who stays behind.

Mickey's relationship with his mother is defined from the start by love and sacrifice. When we first meet Mrs Johnstone, she sings of her husband leaving her with "seven hungry mouths to feed", and the adjective "hungry" makes the family's poverty physical and urgent. Her decision to give away Edward, made under pressure from Mrs Lyons, means that Mickey is the twin she keeps, and this gives their bond a hidden poignancy: the audience knows, as Mickey does not, what she has already lost. Russell presents her as a warm, spirited mother whose love expresses itself in humour and song rather than money. As a child, Mickey speaks in broad Liverpudlian dialect, talking about "me mam" with an affectionate, unselfconscious openness, and his scenes with his mother are full of comic energy. Yet even here, the threat of the outside world is present: Mrs Johnstone desperately warns Mickey away from Edward and the Lyons house, fearful of Mrs Lyons and of the superstition that the twins will "both immediately die" if they learn the truth. Her protectiveness is presented as a mother's instinct, but it is also the instinct of a woman who has learned to expect punishment.

Linda's relationship with Mickey begins in childhood games and grows naturally into love. As a seven-year-old, she is fiercely loyal, defending him and joining in the play-fighting and pretend shooting that Russell uses to foreshadow the real

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gun at the end. As teenagers, Mickey is painfully shy with her, and the comedy of his inability to ask her out, while Edward urges him on, shows a sensitive, vulnerable side beneath his cheeky exterior. Russell presents Linda as a confident, assertive girl who chooses Mickey even when Edward also loves her, which makes their relationship feel genuine and equal. Her suspension from school alongside Mickey suggests that she shares his frustration with an education system that offers working-class teenagers little.

However, Russell structures the play so that Mickey's relationship with Linda begins to mirror his mother's life. Linda becomes pregnant young, they marry quickly, and they are soon struggling for money. The audience recognises the same pattern that trapped Mrs Johnstone, so Russell uses cyclical structure to suggest a lack of progress for the working class across generations. When Mickey is made redundant, the song "Miss Jones" shows Mr Lyons casually dismissing workers, and Mickey's unemployment drives him to help Sammy with the robbery that sends him to prison. Prison transforms him. Russell shows him returning silent, depressed and dependent on antidepressants, telling Linda that the tablets make him feel invisible. This is a painful reversal of the lively boy we first met, and the relationship becomes one of care rather than companionship, with Linda desperately trying to hold the family together.

Linda's turn to Edward is presented with sympathy rather than judgement. She asks him to help her find a house and a job for Mickey, so her affair grows partly out of loneliness and desperation. Russell suggests that it is Edward's wealth and status as a councillor, not his character, that allow him to give Linda what Mickey cannot. When Mrs Lyons reveals the affair to Mickey, his love turns to rage, and he takes Sammy's gun to the Town Hall.

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The dramatic ending brings both relationships to a devastating climax. Mrs Johnstone finally tells the twins the truth, and Mickey's response, "I could have been him!", shows that he now understands his whole life has been shaped by the accident of which twin she kept. His anger is directed at his mother, the person who loved him most, and this is tragic because her choice was forced by poverty. Linda, too, is present as Mickey dies. The two women who loved him are left as witnesses, and Mrs Johnstone's final song, "Tell Me It's Not True", expresses a grief that no amount of love could prevent.

Writing in the early 1980s, when unemployment in Liverpool was severe, Russell presents Mickey's relationships as a test of whether love can survive poverty. The Narrator's question about whether the cause was "what we, the English, have come to know as class" makes his answer clear. Mickey's mother and Linda never stop loving him, but Russell shows that love alone cannot overcome a society that offers working-class people so little.

04 Russell presents poverty as the hidden force that drives the whole tragedy of Blood Brothers. It is not simply a lack of money; it shapes the choices people are forced to make, how authority treats them, what education they receive and, finally, whether they live or die. By contrasting the Johnstones with the wealthy Lyons family, Russell argues that the twins' fates are decided by class rather than by superstition or chance.

From the opening, poverty is presented as the root of Mrs Johnstone's suffering. Her song "Marilyn Monroe" begins with youthful glamour and romance but quickly descends into hardship, as her husband leaves her with "seven hungry mouths to feed". The adjective "hungry" makes poverty bodily and immediate, and the cheerful

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musical form contrasts painfully with the content, suggesting a woman who has learned to make light of struggle. Russell uses telling details to show the family's position: the milkman refuses to deliver until he is paid, and the catalogue men repossess the furniture she has bought on credit. Her life is spent "livin' on the never never", and this phrase captures how debt traps the poor in a cycle that never ends.

The most important effect of poverty is that it forces Mrs Johnstone to give away one of her children. When she discovers she is having twins, she knows she cannot afford two more mouths, and Mrs Lyons exploits this desperation, persuading her that one child will have a better life in a wealthy home. Russell presents the bargain as fundamentally unequal: Mrs Lyons uses superstition and Mrs Johnstone's fear of the Welfare taking her children to control her. Poverty therefore removes her freedom of choice, and the entire plot grows from this one act. The Narrator's recurring warnings that "the devil's got your number" create a sense of foreboding, suggesting that once the poor have made a desperate bargain, the debt must eventually be paid.

Russell also shows how authority figures treat the poor differently. When Mickey and Edward are caught throwing stones with Linda, the Policeman threatens Mrs Johnstone with the courts, yet with Mr Lyons he is polite and deferential, sharing a drink and treating the incident as harmless high spirits. The same action receives different responses depending on class, and Russell uses this parallel scene to expose a society in which the law protects the wealthy. Similarly, Sammy's early behaviour, from burning down the school to his later crimes, suggests how poverty and neglect can lead young people towards criminality, though Russell never simply blames Sammy; he shows him as a product of his circumstances.

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Education is another area where poverty shapes the characters' futures. Edward goes to a private boarding school and later to university, while Mickey attends the local comprehensive, where he and Linda are suspended. Edward's world offers opportunity, while Mickey's offers only factory work. The move to Skelmersdale in "Bright New Day" seems to promise escape, and Mrs Johnstone's optimism is genuinely moving, but Russell undercuts it: the poverty simply follows them, and the family's hopes are short-lived.

In Act Two, Russell shows poverty widening into unemployment and despair. The song "Miss Jones", in which Mr Lyons casually makes workers redundant, links Mickey's fate directly to the decisions of the wealthy man who is, ironically, raising his twin brother. Without work, Mickey cannot support Linda and their child, and he agrees to help Sammy rob a petrol station. Prison leaves him depressed and dependent on medication, so material poverty becomes emotional and psychological poverty. By contrast, Edward returns from university carefree and naive, offering Mickey money and failing to understand why he refuses it. The gulf between them is no longer just financial; they no longer share a language or a set of hopes.

The ending makes Russell's message explicit. When Mrs Johnstone reveals the truth, Mickey's cry "I could have been him!" exposes how the accident of being kept by the poorer mother has defined his entire life. The Narrator's closing question, asking whether we should blame superstition or "what we, the English, have come to know as class", directly challenges the audience. The phrase "we, the English" implicates the whole nation, suggesting that class inequality is a collective responsibility.

Written in the early 1980s, when Liverpool suffered mass unemployment and

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industrial decline under Thatcher's government, Blood Brothers uses poverty to make a political point. Russell presents it as inescapable for most people, a force that strips them of choice, dignity and hope, and he wants his audience to leave the theatre questioning a system that allows two brothers with the same start in life to meet such different ends.

05 Bennett presents Hector as a character who is deeply likeable in his passion for learning and his devotion to his pupils, yet he refuses to let the audience simply admire him. Hector is funny, generous and inspiring, but he is also self-indulgent, occasionally bullying and guilty of abusing his position. Bennett's achievement is to make us love Hector while never allowing us to excuse him, and this complexity is central to his exploration of what makes a good teacher.

Much of Hector's appeal lies in his joyful, anarchic approach to teaching. His General Studies lessons are full of poetry, songs, film scenes and role-play, so that learning feels like play. The boys perform scenes from old films and act out a comic French conversation set in a brothel, and when the Headmaster bursts in they instantly transform it into a scene in a military hospital. This farce is genuinely funny, and it shows a bond of trust and mischief between Hector and the boys: they protect him, and he gives them freedom. His wide range of reference, from Hardy and Housman to Auden and old black-and-white films, makes him seem warm and eccentric, a man who believes all culture belongs to everybody.

Bennett also makes Hector likeable through his principled resistance to the exam culture of the 1980s. He describes examinations as "the enemy of education", and he insists on learning for its own sake rather than for results. The Housman line

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he quotes, "all knowledge is precious whether or not it serves the slightest human use", sums up his belief that education should enrich a whole life. For an audience who may have experienced the target-driven schooling that grew in the decades after the play's setting, Hector's idealism is attractive, and his rivalry with the cynical Headmaster, who cares mainly about league tables and Oxbridge places, positions him as the hero of the school.

His most moving moment comes in his lesson with Posner on Hardy's "Drummer Hodge". Hector speaks of the best moments in reading being those when you find a thought you believed was yours alone set down by someone else, and he describes it as if "a hand has come out and taken yours". The metaphor is tender and intimate, and in this scene Hector is at his most sympathetic: a lonely man who understands that literature can comfort the isolated, which is exactly what Posner, unhappily in love with Dakin, needs. Bennett's stage directions here have Hector almost reach out to Posner and then withdraw, which suggests he is capable of restraint and real care.

However, Bennett complicates this picture. Hector gives boys lifts on his motorbike and touches them, and although the boys treat it as a joke and speak of it with tolerance, the audience cannot share their casual attitude. The groping is a serious abuse of trust, and when the Headmaster discovers it, Hector is forced into early retirement. Bennett does not present Hector as a predator in a simple sense: the boys never seem frightened of him, and Hector himself appears ashamed and confused. Yet the play makes clear that his behaviour is wrong, and a modern audience, far more aware of safeguarding than audiences in the 1980s setting, may find it difficult to like him unreservedly. Hector can also be unkind in the classroom, hitting boys with books and mocking them, so his affection sometimes seems careless.

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Bennett uses Hector's vulnerability to restore some of our sympathy. When he breaks down in front of the boys, they do not know how to respond, and the moment exposes the sadness and loneliness behind his flamboyant performance. His teaching seems to be the place where he feels most alive and valued. Even Mrs Lintott, who sees his faults clearly, is fond of him.

Structurally, Bennett ends the play with Hector's death in a motorbike accident, and the timing makes his loss more poignant: just as Dakin has secured his reinstatement, he is killed. Mrs Lintott's closing narration and Hector's final appearance, urging the boys to "pass the parcel", invite us to remember him for what he gave rather than what he did wrong. The image of passing on knowledge "not for me, not for you, but for someone, somewhere, one day" is generous and selfless, suggesting that his value lies in the legacy he leaves in his pupils.

Overall, Bennett presents Hector as largely likeable, but conditionally so. He is the heart of the play, a teacher who inspires love of learning, yet his flaws are too serious to ignore. Perhaps this is Bennett's point: real teachers, like real people, are a mixture, and the play asks us to weigh what Hector gave his boys against the trust he betrayed.

06 To a large extent this view is accurate: Bennett sets up Hector and Irwin as opposites, one valuing knowledge for the richness it brings to a life, the other treating education as a set of techniques for winning places and success. However, the play is more subtle than a simple contrast. Hector's idealism is compromised by his own behaviour, Irwin is more conflicted than his slick methods suggest, and Bennett uses the boys' futures to question whether either approach truly prepares

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them for life.

Hector clearly represents education for its own sake. He tells the boys that examinations are "the enemy of education", and his General Studies lessons resist any practical purpose. He makes them learn poetry by heart, and his belief, borrowed from Housman, that "all knowledge is precious whether or not it serves the slightest human use" sums up his philosophy. The adjective "precious" presents knowledge as something treasured for itself, almost sacred, while "the slightest human use" dismisses the idea that learning must be useful. Bennett makes Hector's lessons playful and unpredictable, with film scenes and songs, and his teaching is designed for the long term: the boys will understand the poems later in life, when they need them. In this sense Hector's education is for the soul rather than for the CV.

Irwin, by contrast, is brought in by the Headmaster specifically to help the boys win places at Oxford and Cambridge, and his methods are about strategy. He tells them that "Truth is no more at issue in an examination than thirst at a wine-tasting or fashion at a striptease". The witty, provocative similes reduce the exam to a performance in which honesty is irrelevant, and he encourages the boys to argue the opposite of received opinion to stand out. His view that history "is not a matter of conviction. It's a performance. It's entertainment" suggests that, for him, education is about presentation rather than belief. In the context of the 1980s, with its growing emphasis on competition, league tables and results, Irwin embodies a new educational culture that the Headmaster welcomes.

Bennett uses other characters to sharpen the contrast. The Headmaster cares only about results and Oxbridge entrance, so he values Irwin and sees Hector as an embarrassment. Mrs Lintott offers a third perspective: she teaches facts

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thoroughly and dryly, and her remark that history is "women following behind with the bucket" exposes the male bias of both Hector's romanticism and Irwin's cleverness. Her presence suggests that neither man has the full answer.

However, the statement oversimplifies both men. Hector's commitment to education for its own sake is undermined by his groping of boys on his motorbike, and his lofty ideals sit uncomfortably beside this abuse of trust. Moreover, some of his teaching proves practically useful: the boys draw on his quotations and cultural knowledge in their interviews, so his "useless" knowledge helps them get on in life after all. Irwin, meanwhile, is not simply a cynical careerist. He is young, insecure and clearly drawn to the poetry and ideas he claims to treat as tools. His discussions with Hector, especially about whether the Holocaust can be taught as just another topic, show him uneasy, and Posner's discomfort at Irwin's detached approach to such a subject exposes the moral danger of treating everything as material for an argument.

Bennett's structure develops this complexity. The opening scene shows Irwin years later in a wheelchair, advising politicians on how to present controversial legislation, so his method of clever spin has led to a career in politics and television. This flash-forward immediately suggests that education as a way of getting on in life may produce success without integrity. Meanwhile, the boys' fates, revealed at the end, are mixed: Dakin becomes a tax lawyer, and Posner, Hector's most devoted pupil, ends up isolated and unhappy. Neither teacher's approach guarantees a fulfilled life.

The ending gives Hector the final word. After his death, his speech about how to "pass the parcel" is presented almost as a blessing: "Take it, feel it and pass it on. Not for me, not for you, but for someone, somewhere, one day." The selfless,

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rhythmic phrasing suggests that the true purpose of education is not personal gain but the passing of culture to future generations. Bennett appears to favour this vision, yet by placing it after we have seen Hector's flaws and Irwin's success, he leaves the audience to weigh the two.

Overall, I largely agree with the view. Hector does stand for learning as an end in itself, and Irwin for learning as a means to an end. Yet Bennett blurs the boundaries, suggesting that the best education may need both: the love of knowledge Hector inspires and the critical sharpness Irwin teaches, guided by a moral sense that neither man fully possesses.

07 Kelly presents peer pressure as a force that can turn ordinary teenagers into bullies, liars and finally killers. In DNA no single character is a monster; instead, Kelly shows how the desire to belong, combined with fear of being excluded or blamed, allows a group to commit acts that its members would never commit alone. The play becomes a disturbing study of how conscience is surrendered to the group, and Kelly wants his young audience to recognise these dangers in their own lives.

The first danger Kelly shows is that peer pressure leads to escalating cruelty. Before the play begins, Adam has been bullied in a series of increasingly dangerous dares, from humiliating tasks to being made to walk over a grille above a shaft while the others throw stones at him. Kelly never shows this directly; it is reported in fragmented, overlapping dialogue by Jan and Mark. Their opening exchange, with Jan's disbelieving "What, dead dead?", is almost comic in its repetition, yet it reveals how the group struggles to process what it has done. The abuse was driven by Adam's own desperate desire to be accepted, which shows

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that peer pressure endangers its victims as well as its perpetrators: Adam went along with every dare because he wanted to belong.

Kelly also shows how peer pressure silences dissent. John Tate, the initial leader, controls the group through intimidation, and in the first scene in the wood he bans the others from using the word "dead", as though refusing to name what happened can make it disappear. His threats keep everyone in line, yet his authority quickly collapses into panic. When Phil finally speaks, after long periods of silence, he takes control with a calm, detailed plan to frame a stranger. Kelly presents Phil's speech as a long series of instructions to individual members of the group, and the imperative structure leaves no room for discussion. Nobody refuses. Kelly suggests that in a crisis, groups are drawn to whoever offers certainty, even when that certainty is morally monstrous.

The characters' responses show the different ways individuals give in. Danny worries mainly about how the scandal will affect his plan to become a dentist, so self-interest makes him comply. Brian, the most fragile, is pressured into identifying an innocent man to the police, and his breakdown shows the psychological damage caused by being forced to act against one's conscience. Richard is eager to win Phil's approval. Cathy, by contrast, seems to enjoy the excitement, and she embraces the group's crimes with growing relish. Kelly uses this range to suggest that peer pressure works through fear, ambition and even pleasure, and that the "groupthink" it creates replaces individual judgement with loyalty to the group.

Leah is Kelly's most important foil. She talks constantly while Phil says almost nothing, and her monologues about bonobos, human nature and morality show her trying to make sense of the group's behaviour. She questions what they have done

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and asks whether they are bad people, voicing the conscience the others have abandoned. Yet even Leah does not go to the police. Kelly suggests that the pressure of belonging, and her feelings for Phil, are strong enough to trap the one person who sees clearly. Her eventual departure from the group and the town shows that resisting peer pressure may require leaving altogether.

The greatest danger comes when Adam is found alive, living in a hedge in the woods and confused about who he is. Rather than face the consequences, the group allows Phil to decide his fate, and Phil sends Cathy off with Adam to the grille. Leah's horrified protests are ignored. This is the climax of Kelly's exploration: peer pressure has escalated from bullying to an attempted cover-up and finally to murder. The structure of the play, moving between the same three locations of street, field and wood, creates a claustrophobic world with no adults, no police and no escape, reflecting the closed logic of a group under pressure.

Kelly's ending shows the lasting consequences. We hear that some characters have moved on, that Cathy has become frighteningly powerful, and that Brian is struggling, while Phil sits silently, refusing to rejoin the group despite Richard's pleas. The group has survived, but at the cost of its members' innocence.

Written for the National Theatre's Connections programme for young performers, DNA reflects real concerns about gangs, bullying and the psychology of obedience explored in experiments such as Milgram's. The title itself suggests that the urge to follow the group may be part of human nature. Kelly does not offer comfort; instead, he warns his audience that the dangers of peer pressure lie not in exceptional villains but in ordinary people who choose to go along.

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Kelly presents power and control as fragile, shifting and deeply dangerous in DNA. Power in the group does not belong to the most moral person, nor even to the loudest, but to whoever can offer certainty in a crisis, and Kelly shows how it passes from John Tate to Phil and finally to Cathy. Through this, he explores how groups surrender responsibility to leaders, and how the desire for control can grow into something chilling.

At the start of the play, power belongs to John Tate, and Kelly presents it as power through fear. He rules by intimidation, and in the first scene in the wood he insists that nobody uses the word "dead", as if he can control reality by controlling language. His threats keep the group in order, but Kelly suggests that this kind of power is brittle. John Tate is frightened himself, and his attempts to shout down the panic only increase it. Structurally, his leadership collapses within a single scene. When Phil, who has been eating silently, finally speaks, the shift is immediate and total. Kelly uses this moment to show that bullying power is weaker than calm, rational control.

Phil is the play's most disturbing figure, and Kelly presents his power through silence. In the field scenes Leah talks endlessly while Phil eats and says nothing, and this dynamic makes his rare speeches more forceful. When he outlines the plan to frame an invented postman, his speech is a sequence of precise instructions to named individuals, and the imperatives allow no debate. Phil does not need to threaten; his composure makes the others want to obey. Kelly suggests that the most effective control is psychological. Phil understands the group's fear and offers them a way out, and in return they give him total authority. His power reaches its height when Adam is discovered alive. Phil calmly decides that Adam must be silenced and sends Cathy off with him to the grille, revealing a leader willing to sacrifice a life to preserve the group's secret.

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Leah's relationship with Phil explores a more intimate form of control. She fills his silences with anxious monologues about bonobos, evolution and human nature, constantly seeking a response from him. Her questions about whether she is a good person, and whether he is listening, suggest an unequal relationship in which Phil holds emotional power simply by withholding attention. Kelly presents Leah as the group's conscience and a foil for Phil: she is talkative, morally aware and emotionally open, while he is silent, detached and pragmatic. Yet she has no real power. When she protests against the killing of Adam, she is ignored, and her eventual disappearance from Phil's life is the only way she can escape his control.

Kelly also shows how power affects those who follow. Brian is bullied into identifying an innocent man and later collapses psychologically, showing the human cost of obedience. Richard competes for Phil's approval, and Danny thinks mainly about protecting his future career as a dentist. These characters reflect what psychologists such as Milgram observed about the willingness of ordinary people to obey authority, even when it means harming others. The group effectively hands responsibility upwards, so no individual feels guilty, and this allows terrible acts to happen.

The final shift in power comes with Cathy. Initially a minor figure, she grows in confidence as the cover-up develops, clearly enjoying the drama. By the end, we hear that she has become a feared figure in the group, even rumoured to have cut off a younger pupil's finger. Cathy represents power without even Phil's cold logic: power enjoyed for its own sake. Meanwhile Phil, without Leah, withdraws entirely, refusing to return despite Richard's pleas. Kelly's structure therefore shows power as cyclical: one leader falls, another rises, and each is perhaps more dangerous than the last.

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Kelly's choice of setting reinforces these ideas. The play moves between a street, a field and a wood in an unnamed place, and there are no adults, teachers or police on stage. This absence creates a world where the teenagers must create their own hierarchy, much like the boys in Lord of the Flies, and it suggests that power structures emerge naturally when authority is removed. The title, DNA, hints that the drive to dominate and the urge to obey may be part of human nature itself, while also referring to the forensic evidence that makes Phil's plan backfire.

Written for young performers through the National Theatre's Connections programme, DNA asks its audience to consider how power operates in their own peer groups. Kelly suggests that control is most dangerous when it appears calm and reasonable, and that the real horror of the play lies not in Phil alone, but in everyone who lets him lead.

09 Stephens presents Christopher's reactions to shocks and surprises as extreme, physical and often misunderstood, because for Christopher the world is already overwhelming before anything unexpected happens. Yet the play is also structured as a journey in which each shock forces him to act more independently, so that his reactions gradually change from panic and withdrawal to determination. Through this, Stephens invites the audience to see the world from Christopher's perspective and to question how society judges people who do not respond in "normal" ways.

The play opens with a shock. The audience is confronted with Wellington lying dead in the middle of the stage with a garden fork through his side, with Christopher beside him. Starting in the middle of the crisis plunges the audience

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into Christopher's experience without preparation. His response is striking: rather than recoiling, he strokes the dog and wonders who killed him, treating the death as a puzzle to be solved. When Mrs Shears screams at him, he does not defend himself in the expected way but curls up on the grass, covering his ears. Stephens creates dramatic irony here, because the audience can see that Christopher is innocent and frightened, while Mrs Shears sees only a suspicious boy holding a dead animal.

The policeman scene develops this gap between perception and intention. When the policeman takes hold of his arm, Christopher hits him. To the policeman this is an assault, but the audience understands that Christopher cannot bear to be touched and that his reaction is instinctive rather than violent. Stephens uses this moment to show how a chaotic, unpredictable world forces Christopher into conflict with authority, and perhaps to criticise a society that reads difference as defiance. Notably, Stephens never names Christopher's condition, which encourages the audience to respond to him as an individual rather than as a label.

The greatest shock comes at the end of the first half, when Christopher discovers the letters from his mother hidden in Ed's room. He has been told that she died, and now finds that she is alive and has been writing to him. Stephens presents his reaction through his body rather than his words: he reads letter after letter, then becomes physically ill and curls up, groaning, on the floor. The repetition of the letters, read aloud by Judy as she appears on stage, layers her voice over his silent suffering, so that the audience shares the full weight of the revelation while Christopher cannot express it. When Ed then confesses, "I killed Wellington", Christopher's logic takes over: if his father could kill a dog, he could kill him. His decision to escape to London shows that the shock has broken his trust completely, but also pushes him into action.

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The journey to London is where Stephens' staging becomes most powerful. In the original National Theatre production, the stage was a grid of lights and projections, and the ensemble became the noise, signs and voices of the station. This physical theatre makes the audience feel the sensory overload that Christopher experiences, as fragments of announcements and adverts swirl around him. His reactions, counting, reciting prime numbers or holding his hands over his ears, are presented as coping strategies rather than strange behaviour. When Toby escapes onto the Underground track and Christopher climbs down to rescue him, the audience fears for his life, yet he faces the danger alone. This suggests that, although surprises still terrify him, he is developing the courage to deal with them.

Arriving at Judy's flat brings another shock, both for Christopher and for Judy, who has no idea that Ed told him she was dead. Her emotional reaction contrasts with his flat, factual explanation that he has come to live with her, which is perhaps a source of both humour and pathos. Stephens reminds us that the adults around Christopher are just as unprepared for the unexpected as he is.

By the end, Christopher has solved the murder, travelled to London alone and passed his A Level Maths. His final question to Siobhan, asking whether this means he can do anything, shows how far he has come: shocks that once made him collapse have become proof of what he can survive. Stephens therefore presents Christopher's reactions not as weaknesses, but as an honest response to a confusing world, and he challenges society's expectations of how teenagers should behave by showing a young person who copes in his own way.

10 Stephens presents Judy as a mother who loves Christopher deeply but who has, at

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times, failed him badly. She is neither a villain nor an idealised maternal figure; instead, she is a flawed, honest woman struggling with a child whose needs exhaust her. By asking the audience to judge her, Stephens perhaps exposes how impossible the traditional ideal of the "good mother" can be, especially for parents caring for a child like Christopher with little support.

For most of the first half, Judy is absent, and this absence shapes how the audience first sees her. Christopher believes she has died of a heart attack, and Ed's story makes her seem a lost, loving figure. Stephens then overturns this with the discovery of her letters. When Christopher finds them hidden in Ed's wardrobe, the audience learns at the same moment as he does that Judy is alive and that she left the family to live in London with Mr Shears. The structural placing of this revelation, at the climax of the first half, makes Judy's departure feel like a betrayal. A mother who leaves her child would have been judged particularly harshly, and arguably more harshly than a father doing the same thing, which Stephens may want the audience to question.

However, the letters also complicate any simple judgement. Stephens has Judy step onto the stage and speak them aloud, so that her own voice fills the space while Christopher reads. This staging makes her sympathetic: the audience hears her directly, not through Ed's lies. In the letters she is painfully honest. She admits that she was not a very good mother, that she lost her temper and shouted, and that Ed was more patient with Christopher than she was. Her candour suggests self-awareness and guilt rather than indifference. The fact that she keeps writing, even though she receives no replies, shows that she never stopped loving him. The dramatic irony is cruel: the audience knows that Ed has hidden every letter, so Judy's continued effort is unseen by the son she is trying to reach.

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When Christopher arrives at her flat in London, Judy's reaction is a key test. She is shocked and emotional, and her horror when she learns that Ed told Christopher she was dead shows her love clearly. Yet Stephens also shows her failing to understand him. She instinctively wants to hug him, but Christopher cannot bear to be touched, and the physical distance between them on stage reminds the audience that love alone does not make someone a good parent to Christopher. Her life with Roger Shears is also strained by Christopher's presence: the cramped flat, Roger's resentment and his drunken aggression towards Christopher create tension. Crucially, Judy chooses her son. She leaves Roger and takes Christopher back to Swindon, even though it means losing her home and relationship. This sacrifice is perhaps the clearest evidence that she is, in the end, a good mother.

Back in Swindon, Stephens presents her practical efforts. She tries to get Christopher to eat when he refuses food, and although his A Level Maths exam at first seems impossible in his distressed state, she helps make it possible for him to sit it. These ordinary acts of care are less dramatic than Ed's confession, but they suggest a mother learning, slowly, to meet Christopher on his own terms. Her relationship with Ed also shifts: the two parents are forced to share responsibility, and the audience sees that both have failed and both are trying to repair the damage.

Stephens therefore presents Judy as a good mother only in part. She abandoned Christopher, and her impatience caused him distress, yet she is honest about her faults, keeps writing to him and finally puts his needs above her own happiness. Perhaps Stephens' point is that "good" parenting is not a fixed ideal but a struggle, especially when a child's behaviour challenges conventional ideas of how children should be raised. By refusing to make Judy either saint or sinner, he asks the

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audience to replace judgement with understanding, which is exactly what Christopher himself needs from the world.

11 I largely agree that Delaney presents relationships between men and women as difficult. In A Taste of Honey, almost every male and female relationship is unequal, unstable or temporary, and women repeatedly pay the price for men's selfishness or absence. However, Delaney does not present these relationships as simply miserable: they are full of humour, desire and moments of tenderness, and the most caring relationship in the play, between Jo and Geof, succeeds precisely because it rejects the conventional roles that make the others so difficult. Writing in 1958, Delaney uses these relationships to challenge the post-war idea that marriage and a man would give a working-class woman security.

Helen's relationship with Peter is the clearest example of difficulty. From his first appearance, Peter is flashy and confident, younger than Helen and with money to spend, and their exchanges are full of flirtatious banter. Yet the comedy hides an imbalance of power. Peter shows open contempt for Jo and wants Helen without her daughter, and Helen is willing to accept this, leaving Jo alone at Christmas to marry him. Delaney suggests that for a woman of Helen's age and class, a man like Peter offers escape from poverty, but at the cost of her role as a mother. By Act Two the marriage has collapsed: Peter has drifted towards younger women and Helen returns to the shabby flat. When Peter turns up drunk and insults Geof and Jo, the audience sees that his charm was always a mask for selfishness. The relationship is difficult not only because Peter is unreliable, but because Helen depends on him economically.

Jo's relationship with the Boy appears at first to be the opposite: playful,

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affectionate and full of hope. Their dialogue is light and teasing, and his proposal, with a ring that Jo wears on a ribbon around her neck, has a fairytale quality. However, Delaney undercuts this romance. The Boy is a sailor who is about to leave, and the audience senses that his promises may not last. Their relationship is also made difficult by the racism of 1950s Britain: Helen's later horror that the baby may be black reflects the prejudice an interracial couple would have faced. When the Boy disappears from the play after Act One, Jo is left pregnant and alone. Delaney's structure, in which he simply vanishes, emphasises that it is the woman who carries the consequences.

Jo's view of men and women is shaped by Helen's past. Helen's casual account of the brief affair that produced Jo suggests that Jo herself is the result of a careless encounter, and this history of abandonment seems to repeat itself across the generations. Jo's outburst "I don't want to be a mother. I don't want to be a woman" is striking because she rejects womanhood itself. Perhaps Delaney implies that, in a society where being a woman means dependence on unreliable men, Jo's fear is completely rational.

Geof offers a different kind of relationship. He is gentle, domestic and nurturing: he tidies the flat, prepares for the baby and looks after Jo. Delaney reverses traditional gender roles, giving Geof the caring qualities expected of a mother, which Helen lacks. Jo's affectionate remark that he is "like a big sister" to her shows that their bond works because it is not sexual or possessive. However, even this relationship is difficult. Geof proposes and tries to kiss Jo, and her rejection reveals that he too wants a conventional role he cannot have. Because Geof is implied to be gay, at a time when homosexuality was illegal in Britain, he is also vulnerable, and society offers him no secure place. In the end Helen pushes him out, and Jo is left without the one man who truly cared for her.

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Delaney's methods soften the bleakness. Helen's direct asides to the audience, influenced by music hall and Joan Littlewood's Theatre Workshop production, and the sharp, witty idiolects of Helen and Jo create comedy that makes the characters resilient rather than pitiful. This mixture of comedy and pathos suggests that people keep seeking love even when it fails them.

Overall, I agree that Delaney presents relationships between men and women as difficult, since none offers lasting security, and the women are repeatedly left to cope alone. Yet the play's warmth suggests that the difficulty lies less in love itself than in a patriarchal, prejudiced society which traps both men and women in roles that make honest relationships almost impossible.

12 I agree with Delaney to a large extent: Helen is vivid, funny and defiantly herself, a woman who refuses to apologise for wanting pleasure in a society that expected women of her age and class to be respectable and self-sacrificing. However, the play also suggests that Helen's way of enjoying life has serious costs, both for Jo and for herself. Her independence is real but fragile, and Delaney arguably presents her as a woman whose pursuit of pleasure is partly an escape from poverty, loneliness and the limited choices open to her.

From the opening scene, Helen is presented as a woman who enjoys life. She arrives at the shabby Salford flat complaining about the cold and the damp, but her complaints are full of energy and humour, and she is more interested in her drink and her cold than in unpacking. The cast list describes her as "a semi-whore", a label that is blunt and perhaps provocative, yet the play itself does not condemn her. Delaney gives her a sharp, witty idiolect: she mocks Jo, mocks

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the flat and mocks herself with a quick, sardonic humour. Her direct asides to the audience, a technique influenced by music hall and by Joan Littlewood's Theatre Workshop, make her a performer who shares her enjoyment with the audience, and invite them to like her even when she behaves badly.

Helen certainly goes about life "in her own way". She has had relationships outside marriage, including the brief affair that produced Jo, and she tells Jo about it with casual frankness rather than shame. In 1958 this openness about female sexuality would have been shocking, and Delaney seems to celebrate a woman who refuses to fit the post-war ideal of the dutiful wife and mother. Her decision to marry Peter, a younger man with money, is presented as another way of grabbing pleasure while she can. In this sense, Helen anticipates later feminist ideas about women's right to independence and desire.

However, Delaney also shows the cost of this freedom. Helen's enjoyment of life often comes at Jo's expense. She moves from place to place, leaves Jo alone, and goes off to marry Peter at Christmas, abandoning her teenage daughter. She shows little interest in Jo's future, and their dialogue is full of insults. Jo's bitterness suggests that Helen's "own way" leaves her daughter emotionally neglected. The audience may find Helen funny, but they also feel the pathos of a girl brought up without real care. Delaney's mixture of comedy and pathos means that we laugh at Helen's lines while recognising the damage behind them.

Helen's relationship with Peter also complicates Delaney's comment. Although she appears to choose Peter freely, she clearly depends on him for money and security, and when the marriage fails she is forced back to Jo's flat. As a woman of a certain age in this society, with no qualifications and little income, Helen's options are limited: her attractiveness to men is perhaps her only real asset, and it is

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fading. Seen like this, her enjoyment of life looks more like a desperate attempt to hold on to youth. Peter's drunken cruelty when he comes to fetch her in Act Two reveals how little control she really has.

When Helen returns, she shows flashes of maternal feeling. She pushes Geof out and takes charge of Jo's pregnancy, and her argument that a mother should be with her daughter suggests a desire, however clumsy, to be needed. Yet the ending undermines this. When Jo tells her that the baby may be black, Helen reacts with prejudice and goes out for a drink, leaving Jo alone in labour. Delaney leaves it uncertain whether Helen will return, so the audience cannot be sure whether her care is real or merely another passing mood.

Ultimately, I agree that Helen is a woman who enjoys life and lives it on her own terms, and Delaney clearly admires her vitality and refusal to be ashamed. However, the play also presents her selfishness and her dependence on men, suggesting that her freedom is limited by the poverty and sexism of 1950s Salford. Helen is therefore both a celebration of female independence and a warning about what a society with so few choices for working-class women does to mothers and daughters alike.

13 Golding presents leadership as a struggle between two forces in human nature: the democratic, rational authority represented by Ralph and the instinctive, violent power represented by Jack. Writing in 1954, after serving in the Royal Navy during the Second World War, Golding uses the island as a microcosm of society to suggest that people are often drawn more to strength and excitement than to reason, and that civilised leadership is fragile because it depends on others choosing to follow the rules.

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At the start of the novel, leadership is decided by a democratic vote. Ralph is chosen not for his intelligence but for his appearance and the conch: Golding notes "a stillness about Ralph" that marks him out. This suggests that the boys, like many voters, are swayed by charisma and symbols of authority. The conch becomes a symbol of order, giving each boy the right to speak, and Ralph's leadership is based on cooperation, shelters and, above all, the signal fire, which represents hope of rescue and connection with the adult world. However, Golding shows from the beginning that Jack resents this outcome. His claim that he should be chief because he is "chapter chorister and head boy" reveals a belief in inherited status and hierarchy, and his choir, marching in two lines in black cloaks, already resembles a disciplined military force. Golding perhaps wants the reader to recall the uniformed movements of fascist Europe.

Through the middle of the novel, Golding presents the weaknesses of Ralph's leadership as well as its virtues. Ralph is fair and well-meaning, but he struggles to think clearly and increasingly relies on Piggy, who is the real source of reason. Piggy's intelligence, however, is undermined by his appearance, asthma and working-class dialect, so the other boys mock him. Golding suggests that society often fails to listen to its wisest voices if they lack physical power or social status. Jack, meanwhile, discovers another kind of leadership through hunting. When he paints his face, the mask allows him to be "liberated from shame and self-consciousness", and he gains authority by offering the boys excitement, meat and freedom from responsibility. His shout of "Bollocks to the rules!" during the assembly in Chapter Five marks the moment when the democratic system begins to collapse.

Golding also uses Simon to suggest a different, spiritual kind of leadership. Simon

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is quiet and kind, helping the littluns to reach fruit, and he alone understands the truth about the beast, suggesting that "maybe it's only us". Yet he cannot express himself at assemblies, and when he finally discovers that the beast is a dead parachutist, he is murdered by the frenzied boys before he can share the truth. Golding presents a bleak idea: those with moral insight are often ignored or destroyed by the crowd, perhaps echoing the fate of prophets and martyrs.

Once Jack forms his own tribe, Golding shows how leadership turns into tyranny. Jack is now simply "the Chief", sitting like an idol, and he rules through fear and ritual. He has Wilfred beaten for no stated reason, and the boys accept it. The tribe chants and dances, losing their individuality, which mirrors how dictators like Hitler used mass rallies to command loyalty. Jack's leadership also exploits the boys' fear of the beast, as he offers protection and sacrifices to it. Roger, who had once thrown stones to miss because of "the taboo of the old life", is now free to kill Piggy and smash the conch. The destruction of the conch symbolises the end of democratic order, and the hunt for Ralph shows that power without restraint leads to violence against anyone who resists.

The ending complicates the idea of leadership further. The naval officer who rescues the boys appears to be a figure of adult authority, yet he scolds them for not putting up "a better show", unaware that he himself is engaged in a war. Golding's irony suggests that the adult world is led in the same way, and the boys are rescued only into a larger conflict. Ralph's tears for "the darkness of man's heart" show that he now understands the evil that leadership must contain.

Overall, Golding presents leadership as both necessary and fragile. Ralph's democratic leadership is decent but weak, while Jack's authoritarian rule offers security through fear. Golding warns his post-war readers that the desire for a

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strong leader, and the failure to protect the weakest, can turn any society towards savagery.

14 Golding uses the littluns to show how fear spreads from the most vulnerable members of a society and how trust in leaders, adults and order collapses as that fear is exploited. At first the littluns are innocent and trusting, yet their nightmares about the beast become the force that the older boys use to gain power. Through them, Golding suggests that the weakest in society are the first to suffer when civilisation fails, and that how a group treats its most vulnerable is a measure of its humanity.

At the beginning of the novel, the littluns are presented as trusting and dependent. They gather at the sound of the conch, obeying it as they would obey a school bell or a parent, and Golding describes them as small, often naked and unable to look after themselves. Their trust in the older boys is almost total. However, Golding introduces the theme of fear very early through the boy with the mulberry-coloured birthmark, who asks what the older boys will do about the "beastie" he saw, a "snake-thing" in the woods. Ralph dismisses the idea, but the littlun's fear is not so easily removed, and it lingers among the others. Golding's choice to give the first mention of the beast to the smallest boy suggests that fear begins in the imagination of the most powerless.

This boy's fate is a turning point. When the first fire burns out of control, he disappears, and Piggy's anxious question about where the boy with the birthmark has gone receives no answer. Golding leaves the death unconfirmed, but the implication is clear: the older boys' carelessness has killed one of the people they should protect. This moment shatters the idea that the older boys can be trusted

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to keep the littluns safe, and it foreshadows the later deaths on the island.

Golding develops the littluns as a separate society with its own fears. In Chapter Four he describes how they suffer from stomach aches and "untold terrors" in the dark, crying out in their sleep and comforting one another. Their days are spent eating fruit and playing, but their nights are haunted. Golding also shows them being exploited. Roger kicks over their sandcastles and throws stones at Henry, though he still aims to miss because of "the taboo of the old life", and Henry himself is shown controlling the tiny creatures at the water's edge, delighting in his small power over things weaker than himself. Golding implies that the desire to dominate exists even in the youngest, and that trust is not natural but must be protected by rules.

The assembly in Chapter Five shows how the littluns' fear becomes public. Percival, one of the smallest boys, claims that the beast comes out of the sea, and the meeting dissolves into argument. Ralph tries to reassure everyone, and Piggy insists that there is nothing to fear unless people themselves are frightening, but the littluns' terror spreads to the older boys. Jack seizes on this, promising to hunt and kill the beast, and in doing so he presents himself as a protector. Golding shows how a leader can exploit fear to win loyalty, perhaps reflecting how dictators in the 1930s gained power by promising safety from imagined enemies.

As Jack's tribe grows, the littluns are drawn into it. They join the feasts and chants, trusting the hunters because they offer meat and the comfort of belonging. Piggy is one of the few characters who shows care for them, wanting to make a list of their names and worrying about their welfare, but his concern is mocked. When Piggy is killed and the conch is smashed, the littluns lose any protection they had. Golding presents their innocence as gradually corrupted:

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children who once played on the beach now take part in a hunt for Ralph.

At the end, Golding returns to Percival. At the assembly he had recited his name and address like a charm, but when the naval officer arrives, Percival can no longer remember it. Golding suggests that the littluns have lost not only their trust in the adult world but their sense of identity. The officer's arrival does not restore that trust, since he is himself part of a war.

Through the littluns, Golding presents fear as contagious and trust as fragile. Their vulnerability exposes how far the older boys have fallen, and Golding warns his post-war readers that a society which fails to protect its weakest members has already lost its civilisation.

15 In both 'Chemistry' by Graham Swift and 'Odour of Chrysanthemums' by D. H. Lawrence, the change that characters must deal with is caused by death, and both writers suggest that grief does not simply end a relationship but transforms how the survivors understand the past. Swift's young narrator struggles against change, trying desperately to hold together a family that is shifting around him, while Lawrence's Elizabeth Bates is forced, in a single evening, to face the truth about her marriage. Both writers present change as painful and partly unknowable, something characters must eventually accept even when they cannot fully understand it.

In 'Chemistry', Swift uses an adult narrator looking back on his childhood, which creates a sense of distance and unresolved mystery. After his father is killed in a plane crash, the boy and his mother move in with his grandfather, and the three form a fragile new family. Swift captures this balance through the model launch

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they sail on the park pond. The narrator imagines it moving along an invisible line connecting the three of them, as though the grandfather were drawing them together on a cord. This symbol suggests that the family is held together by something delicate and unseen. When the launch sinks and the grandfather's attempts to recover it bring up nothing but slime, the image prepares the reader for a further loss: the boy must accept that the world he relies on can disappear.

The arrival of Ralph is the change that the narrator cannot accept. Ralph begins as a weekend visitor and becomes "an ever more permanent lodger", a phrase whose dry irony shows the narrator's resentment and his sense of being displaced. The tension between Ralph and the grandfather grows, and the grandfather retreats to his shed, where he teaches the boy chemistry. Swift uses chemistry as an extended metaphor for change. The grandfather demonstrates how acids can change even gold, holding his dead wife's gold watch chain above a beaker, yet insists that gold is an element which is never truly lost. The message seems to be that, although things change form, something essential remains. Perhaps this is why the grieving boy wants to reverse change and restore the family as it was.

The narrator's way of dealing with change becomes dangerous. He steals nitric acid, intending to throw it in Ralph's face, not to kill him but so that his mother will no longer want him. His dream of his dead father, wet and covered in seaweed, claiming that the mother made a hole in the boat, shows how grief and jealousy distort his understanding. The next morning the grandfather is found dead from prussic acid, and the verdict is suicide. Swift never explains this death, and the mother offers only the flat explanation that he was old and ill. This silence leaves the narrator, and the reader, uncertain. The ending, where the narrator stands by the pond and sees his grandfather on the far side, smiling and waiting for the launch, suggests that he has not accepted change at all, but holds on to

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the dead through imagination.

Lawrence's 'Odour of Chrysanthemums' presents change through a very different structure. Most of the story is a slow build-up of tension as Elizabeth waits for her husband, Walter, to return from the pit. Her anger at his drinking, and her assumption that he is at the pub, make her bitter and proud. The chrysanthemums become a symbol of the changes in her marriage: she associates them with her wedding, with the birth of her child and with the first time Walter came home drunk. When the news arrives that he has been smothered by a fall of stone, the change is sudden, and Lawrence shifts the focus from expectation to revelation.

The washing of Walter's body is the climax. As Elizabeth and her mother-in-law clean him, Elizabeth realises that she and her husband had been strangers to each other, and that she had never truly known him. Unlike Swift's narrator, who resists change, Elizabeth is forced into painful self-knowledge. The ending, in which she submits to life, "her immediate master", but shrinks from death, "her ultimate master", shows her accepting change with fear and shame. In the context of early twentieth-century mining communities, where death underground was a constant threat, Lawrence suggests that women's lives were shaped by men's dangerous work and by marriages built on duty rather than understanding.

Swift's narrator clings to the past and to the hope that what is lost can be recovered, while Lawrence's Elizabeth confronts the truth that her marriage was already lost before Walter died. Together, the stories suggest that grief forces people to reinterpret their relationships, and that the hardest change of all is understanding the people we have lost.

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In both 'My Polish Teacher's Tie' by Helen Dunmore and 'A Family Supper' by Kazuo Ishiguro, identity is presented as something divided between the self a character shows the world and a hidden inheritance from family and nation. Dunmore's Carla has buried her Polish heritage and allowed her low-status job to define her, while Ishiguro's narrator returns to Japan caught between his Western life and the traditional values of his father. Both writers suggest that identity is shaped by class, culture and family, but Dunmore ends with hope that a truer self can be recovered, whereas Ishiguro leaves his characters trapped in uncertainty.

Dunmore introduces Carla through her place in the school's hierarchy. She is a part-time catering assistant who serves tea and buns to the teachers, and her first-person voice makes clear that she is almost invisible to them. Her identity is defined by what she does rather than who she is, and the snobbery of the staffroom, especially in the figure of Valerie Kenward, reinforces her sense of being looked down upon. Dunmore suggests that, in British society, class can erase individuality: Carla is reduced to a function, and she has learnt to accept this.

Her Polish identity has also been buried. Carla's father stopped her learning Polish as a child, dismissing it as useless, and this loss of language is a loss of part of herself. Dunmore presents this as a quiet tragedy of assimilation, in which a child of an immigrant family is encouraged to become ordinary and English. When the Head announces a link with teachers in Poland, Carla's decision to write to Stefan is an act of self-assertion, but she allows him to believe that she is a teacher. This deception reveals her shame about her real position, suggesting that she feels her true identity is not good enough.

Dunmore uses the letters, set apart in italics, to give Carla and Stefan distinct voices and to show a new identity growing through words. They share poetry,

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including Stefan's poem about a bird that flies down a mine shaft, becomes lost and sings until it dies. The image could symbolise Carla herself, trapped in a dark place yet still capable of song, and perhaps also the loneliness of anyone separated from their home. Through these letters she becomes someone thoughtful and confident, the person she might have been.

Dunmore builds tension when Stefan announces his visit, because Carla's two identities are about to collide. Her fear that he will see her serving tea shows how strongly she has internalised the school's judgement. Yet the ending overturns this. Stefan greets her warmly and sings a Polish song she remembers from childhood, reconnecting her with her heritage. Her simple statement, "I like your tie", is an act of courage and acceptance. Stefan's bright tie, mocked by Valerie, becomes a symbol of a warmer, freer identity that refuses English reserve and snobbery. The understated final line suggests that Carla has finally chosen to be seen as herself.

In 'A Family Supper', identity is presented more darkly. The narrator returns to Tokyo after time in California, and his relationship with his father is strained by the death of his mother, who died after eating fugu, and by the narrator's Western life. His father is a man of traditional values whose business has collapsed. His admiration for his former partner, Watanabe, who killed his family and then himself after the firm failed, suggests that he sees honour as more important than life itself. In post-war Japan, where older generations held on to codes of duty while the young looked towards America, this creates a deep gap between father and son.

Ishiguro uses restrained, formal dialogue and long silences to show how identity is suppressed. The father and son speak politely but avoid emotion, and the narrator never directly reveals his feelings. His sister Kikuko represents a generation torn

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between cultures: she smokes secretly in the garden and talks about leaving with her boyfriend, yet she still obeys her father at home. The father's model battleship, which he builds carefully, may symbolise his attachment to a lost military past and the national pride that defeat destroyed.

The supper itself creates tension because the reader fears it may be fugu, and that the father, like Watanabe, intends to kill his family. Ishiguro never confirms this, and the ending, with the father hoping that his son might stay, leaves the narrator's identity unresolved: will he return to America or stay bound by duty?

Both writers therefore present identity as shaped by family and culture, and both use first-person narrators who reveal more than they say. However, Dunmore celebrates the recovery of a lost identity, while Ishiguro suggests that identity can be a burden that ties people to the past.

17 Orwell uses Squealer to show that tyranny does not survive on violence alone: it needs language. If Napoleon's dogs are the fist of the regime, Squealer is its voice, and through him Orwell argues that the most dangerous form of control is the control of truth itself. Writing in 1945 as a democratic socialist who had watched Stalin's propaganda machine rewrite history, Orwell uses Squealer to warn his readers that a population which cannot trust its own memory can be led anywhere.

From his first appearance, Squealer is presented as a performer. Orwell describes him as a small fat pig with "twinkling eyes, nimble movements, and a shrill voice", and the others say "he could turn black into white". This hyperbole is the key to his role: he does not merely bend the truth, he inverts it. His physical habit of "skipping from side to side and whisking his tail" suggests that persuasion is a

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kind of distracting dance, and the comic image invites the reader to laugh at him. Yet the laughter is uneasy, because the animals are completely taken in. Orwell's satire works by making the propagandist ridiculous while showing how effective he is.

Squealer's first major act of manipulation comes in Chapter 3, when the milk and apples are taken by the pigs. He insists that many pigs "actually dislike milk and apples" and that they eat them only for the good of the farm, because the pigs are "brainworkers". The pseudo-scientific justification is designed to sound unanswerable to animals who cannot read. His climax is a repeated threat: "Jones would come back!" Orwell shows that Squealer controls through fear disguised as reasoning. The animals want nothing more than to avoid Jones's return, so any question about privilege becomes, in Squealer's framing, an act of disloyalty. This mirrors the way Soviet propaganda branded every critic as a counter-revolutionary.

As Napoleon's power grows, Squealer's task changes from justifying privilege to rewriting history. After Snowball is driven out, Squealer claims that the windmill was Napoleon's idea all along, and that his earlier opposition was simply "Tactics, comrades, tactics!" The repetition and exclamation replace argument with rhythm, and the animals accept it without asking anything further. Later he insists that Snowball was a traitor in league with Jones, even though the animals remember him fighting bravely at the Battle of the Cowshed. When Boxer hesitates, Squealer casts him a very ugly look, a small moment which shows that behind the charm there is always the threat of the dogs. Orwell is alluding here to Stalin's erasure of Trotsky from photographs and official records: Squealer is the pig who makes the past disappear.

Orwell's most chilling use of Squealer is in the changing of the Commandments.

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The animals find him one night sprawled beside a broken ladder with a pot of white paint, yet they cannot interpret what they have seen. The Commandments are quietly amended: "No animal shall drink alcohol to excess" and "No animal shall kill any other animal without cause". Each added phrase is tiny, but it reverses the meaning of the rule. Orwell suggests that the corruption of a revolution happens through small, almost invisible alterations to language, and that a society without literacy or memory cannot defend itself. Only Benjamin seems to understand, and his silence shows how cynicism can also enable tyranny.

Squealer's lack of conscience is clearest after Boxer's death. Although the van taking Boxer away is clearly marked as a horse slaughterer's, Squealer invents a story that the vet had bought it and not yet painted over the old name. He even sheds a performed tear as he describes Boxer's last words. The irony is savage: the most loyal worker on the farm is sold for whisky, and his death is turned into propaganda for the very leader who betrayed him. Here Orwell shows propaganda reaching its moral low point, exploiting grief itself.

At the end of the novel, Squealer is the first pig seen walking on his hind legs, and the sheep's new chant, "Four legs good, two legs better!", shows that his work is complete. The animals' minds have been so reshaped that they can no longer recognise the betrayal in front of them. Through Squealer, Orwell presents power as something maintained not only by force but by the systematic destruction of truth, a warning that extends beyond Stalin's Russia to any regime that tells its people what to remember.

18 Orwell uses the ending of Animal Farm to suggest that revolutions which concentrate power in the hands of a few do not abolish tyranny: they simply

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change the face of the tyrant. The final chapter brings the story full circle, from Manor Farm to Animal Farm and back to Manor Farm, and this cyclical structure is Orwell's bleakest judgement on the Russian Revolution. Writing as a socialist who still believed in equality, he wanted readers to see that it was not the dream of revolution that failed, but its betrayal by those who seized control of it.

The final chapter opens with a sense of erosion: "Years passed." The brevity of the sentence compresses time, and Orwell tells us that few animals now remember the Rebellion. Boxer is dead, and Clover is old. This loss of memory matters because the revolution's ideals now exist only as half-remembered stories, and the pigs control what is remembered. Orwell suggests that a revolution's values are fragile once the generation who fought for them has gone, much as the idealism of 1917 faded under Stalin.

The most shocking moment comes when the pigs emerge walking on their hind legs, led by Squealer and then Napoleon carrying a whip in his trotter. The whip is a potent symbol: it was the instrument of Jones's cruelty, and now it belongs to the leader of the revolution. The sheep, who once bleated "Four legs good, two legs bad", now chant "Four legs good, two legs better!" Orwell's satire is precise here. A single word has been changed, yet the slogan has been inverted, showing how propaganda can reverse a movement's core principle while keeping its familiar rhythm. The sheep's mindless repetition drowns out any protest before it can be voiced, reminding readers that unthinking loyalty is the foundation of dictatorship.

Orwell then reduces the Seven Commandments to a single sentence: "ALL ANIMALS ARE EQUAL BUT SOME ANIMALS ARE MORE EQUAL THAN OTHERS." The paradox is absurd, since equality cannot have degrees, but its absurdity is the point. The language of revolution survives, yet it has been emptied of meaning.

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Clover, whose eyes are failing, has to ask Benjamin to read the wall, and the fact that the cynical donkey finally breaks his silence shows that even the animal who expected nothing is moved by the scale of the betrayal. Orwell uses the illiteracy of the ordinary animals to suggest that ignorance makes a population powerless to hold its rulers to account.

The meeting between pigs and humans completes the reversal. Old Major had taught that "Man is the only creature that consumes without producing", and that no animal must ever trade or deal with humans. Now Napoleon hosts the neighbouring farmers, abolishes the word "Comrade", and announces that the farm will once again be called Manor Farm. Mr Pilkington praises the pigs for working their animals harder and feeding them less than any farm in the county, and jokes that if the pigs have their "lower animals" to deal with, the humans have their "lower classes". The parallel exposes Orwell's argument that the pigs have become a new ruling class, sharing the same interest in exploitation as the capitalists the revolution was meant to overthrow. Many readers see this dinner as an allusion to the Tehran Conference of 1943, where Stalin sat down with Churchill and Roosevelt.

Orwell then shatters the alliance. The quarrel over two aces of spades played at once shows that the friendship between tyrants is based on mutual cheating, perhaps foreshadowing the hostility between the Soviet Union and the West that was beginning as Orwell wrote. The final sentence is the novel's most famous image: the animals look "from pig to man, and from man to pig, and from pig to man again; but already it was impossible to say which was which." The repetitive, circling syntax mimics the animals' confused gaze, and the word "already" suggests the transformation happened gradually and is now complete.

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It would be too simple, however, to read the ending as an attack on revolution itself. The animals still feel a quiet pride that no human owns them, and some still believe in the dream of the Republic of the Animals, even though they know it may never come in their lifetimes. Orwell seems to preserve a fragile hope: the ideal of equality is still worth having, but it requires vigilance, education and the courage to question. The ending is therefore a warning rather than a surrender. Revolutions fail, Orwell suggests, when the people who make them stop watching the people who lead them.

19 Ishiguro presents Ruth and Tommy's romantic relationship as something performed rather than felt: a relationship shaped by Ruth's need for status and by the students' borrowed ideas of what couples should look like. Filtered through Kathy's calm, retrospective narration, it becomes the central obstacle to the love that really matters in the novel, Kathy and Tommy's, and Ishiguro uses it to show how people denied a real future cling to imitation versions of ordinary human life.

From the start, the relationship is defined by its audience. At Hailsham, Ruth and Tommy are known as a couple, and their break-ups and reunions are treated as public events that the other students discuss. Ishiguro shows that, in a closed community, romance is a form of social currency. Ruth, who invents the "secret guard" to protect Miss Geraldine and lets others believe that her pencil case was a gift from a guardian, is a character who constantly constructs stories about herself. Choosing Tommy, a boy previously mocked for his tantrums, could be read as one of these stories, a way of displaying her power over the group.

Kathy's narration is crucial to how we read the relationship. Her tone is measured and apparently easy-going, but small details reveal her pain. She frequently says

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that she cannot be sure of what she remembers, and this hesitancy suggests that we are seeing Ruth and Tommy through the eyes of someone who loved him too. Ishiguro therefore makes the reader an observer of a love triangle in which the central figure, the narrator, is the one who speaks least about her own feelings.

At the Cottages, Ishiguro shows how artificial the relationship has become. Kathy notices that Ruth copies the gestures of the veteran couples, such as touching her partner's arm as they part, and later realises that the veterans had learnt these gestures from a television programme. This layered imitation is quietly devastating: the students are copying copies, just as they themselves are copies of human originals. Their romantic lives, like their identities, seem to lack an authentic source. For a reader aware of the novel's late twentieth century setting and of the cloning debates that followed Dolly the sheep in 1996, this detail raises unsettling questions about whether love can be learnt or only imitated.

Ruth's control over Tommy is also shown through cruelty. In Norfolk and afterwards, she undermines him in front of others. When Tommy shares his theory about the Gallery and shows his imaginary animals, Ruth mocks them and claims that Kathy finds them ridiculous too, deliberately driving a wedge between Tommy and Kathy. Earlier, when the search for her "possible" fails, Ruth explodes with the bitter claim "We're modelled from trash". The outburst exposes the insecurity that drives her behaviour: if she cannot believe in her own worth, she needs to possess Tommy to feel she has something others want. Ishiguro does not present Ruth as simply villainous, but as damaged by a system which tells the students they are worthless.

The truth of the relationship is finally revealed near the end. After her first donation, Ruth travels with Kathy and Tommy to see the stranded boat in the

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marshes. There she admits that she kept Kathy and Tommy apart and that it should have been the two of them together. She gives them Madame's address so they can apply for a deferral. This confession reframes the whole relationship: Ruth seems to have known all along that Tommy's real feelings lay elsewhere. The image of the beached boat, stuck and going nowhere, works as a symbol of the students' lives and of this relationship, something that has run aground.

Ruth's apology is perhaps her most loving act, yet it comes too late. By the time Kathy and Tommy are together, Tommy has already given three donations, and Madame and Miss Emily reveal that deferrals never existed. Tommy's image of two people in a river, trying to hold on to each other while the current pulls them apart, applies to every relationship in the novel. Ishiguro uses Ruth and Tommy's romance to show what the students lose: not only their lives, but the time to discover what real love is before it is taken from them.

20 To a large extent, Never Let Me Go is a novel about characters trying to be happy in terrible circumstances: Kathy, Tommy and Ruth search for comfort, love and meaning in lives that have been designed to end in organ donation. Yet Ishiguro complicates the view. Their "best" is shaped and limited by a system which has taught them never to question their fate, so the novel is as much about the tragedy of accepting terrible circumstances as about the courage of finding happiness within them.

Hailsham initially seems like an idyll. Kathy's narration lingers on the Exchanges, the Sales, the sports pavilion and the woods, and her nostalgic tone suggests that these were genuinely happy years. Her treasured tape, with the song "Never Let Me Go", becomes a symbol of private joy; she dances alone, holding a pillow as if

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it were a baby. The children do seem to be making the best of what they have, building friendships and collecting small possessions in their treasure chests. However, Ishiguro hints that this happiness depends on ignorance. Miss Lucy tells the students that they have been "told and not told", and her outburst reveals that Hailsham's happiness has been constructed by keeping the truth just out of reach.

Ishiguro's choice of a calm, conversational narrator is key. Kathy tells her story in a gentle, digressive voice, often addressing the reader as though we share her experiences. This seemingly easy-going style makes the horror more disturbing because it is described so plainly. The terms "carers", "donors" and "completing" are euphemisms which soften death into something administrative. Kathy herself seems proud of being a good carer, and her satisfaction in her work could be seen as her trying her best to find purpose. Yet the reader may wonder whether her calm is a form of resilience or a sign of how thoroughly she has been conditioned.

At the Cottages, the characters' attempts at happiness become more desperate. Relationships, sex and the rumour of deferrals all offer ways to imagine a longer, fuller life. The trip to Norfolk shows this clearly. The students had once believed that Norfolk was the "lost corner" of England where lost things ended up, and Tommy and Kathy's discovery of a copy of her lost tape in a shop is a rare moment of pure happiness. However, the search for Ruth's "possible" ends in humiliation, and Ruth's bitter claim that they are "modelled from trash" shows how quickly hope can collapse into despair. Ishiguro suggests that happiness built on fantasies is fragile.

The rumour of deferrals is perhaps the clearest example of characters trying their best. Tommy works hard on his intricate animal drawings, hoping to prove that he

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and Kathy are truly in love. When they visit Madame and Miss Emily, though, they learn that deferrals never existed and that the Gallery existed to prove to the outside world that the students had souls at all. Miss Emily insists that the guardians gave the students their childhoods and protected them from the worst. Here Ishiguro raises a moral question: is it kinder to grant happiness through deception, or to tell the truth? The guardians' "best" is compromised by their complicity in the system.

On the other hand, it could be argued that the characters do not try their best at all, because they never attempt to escape. No one runs away, and no one rebels. Ishiguro seems deliberately to deny the reader the conventions of dystopian fiction, where characters fight back. Instead their passivity reflects how people in real life often accept injustice when it is presented as normal. Writing in 2005, amid public debate about cloning and the ethics of medical science, Ishiguro uses this passivity to ask readers how far society would go in using others for its own benefit.

The ending captures this tension. After Tommy completes, Kathy drives to Norfolk and stands by a fence covered in rubbish blowing in the wind, imagining that everything she had lost might wash up there. She allows herself a brief fantasy that Tommy might appear, but then turns back to the car to drive to "wherever it was I was supposed to be". The phrase is heartbreaking: even her grief is contained by duty. In conclusion, Ishiguro presents characters who do try to be happy, in love, art and friendship, but he also shows that the system has narrowed their idea of happiness so much that the reader is left mourning not only their deaths but the limited lives they were allowed to imagine.

21 Syal presents Meena's relationship with Anita as a journey from worship to

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disillusionment, and in doing so she charts Meena's growing understanding of herself. At first Anita represents everything Meena thinks she wants to be: English, fearless and free. By the end Meena sees Anita clearly, as a damaged girl from a broken home whose friendship cannot survive the prejudice around her. The changes in the friendship are really changes in Meena, and Syal uses them to explore what it means to grow up between two cultures in 1970s Britain.

The novel is told by an adult Meena looking back on her childhood, and this dual perspective shapes how the relationship is presented. The younger Meena's admiration is described with energy and humour, while the older narrator's ironic distance lets the reader see what the child cannot. Meena admits at the very start that she is a teller of stories, explaining that people "deprived of history" sometimes turn to mythology. Her early fascination with Anita is a kind of myth-making: Anita becomes a glamorous heroine because Meena needs her to be one.

In the early chapters, Anita is presented as the leader of the yard, older than Meena, confident and openly rude to adults. When she finally notices Meena and lets her join her gang, Meena is overwhelmed with gratitude. Syal contrasts the two girls sharply. Anita's Black Country dialect and casual swearing are thrilling to Meena, who uses them to rebel against her parents' expectations of good behaviour. Meena's willingness to lie and even steal in order to fit in shows how much power Anita has over her. Syal suggests that for a child desperate to belong in a village where her family is the only Punjabi household, friendship with the most popular girl feels like acceptance by England itself.

However, Syal hints from the beginning that the friendship is unequal. Anita is moody and unpredictable, sometimes dropping Meena in favour of other girls and

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then picking her up again. Meena's narration records these slights with comic understatement, but the reader senses her hurt. The tonal shifts between comedy and pain mirror the instability of the relationship. Syal also gives us glimpses of Anita's home: her mother, Deirdre, is neglectful and eventually leaves, and her family life is chaotic. The adult narrator invites sympathy for Anita, suggesting that her cruelty is learnt from the adults around her. In contrast, Meena's own family, though strict, is warm and loving, and as the novel progresses Meena begins to value this.

The turning point comes as Anita becomes involved with Sam Lowbridge, a young man who voices growing racist resentment in the village. At the Spring Fete, Sam's racist outburst shocks the community, and later Meena learns that Sam and his friends have attacked an Indian bank manager. Anita's excitement as she describes the attack is a moment of brutal revelation. Meena realises that the girl she adored is willing to celebrate violence against people like her own family. Syal uses this incident to show how the wider social tensions of the time, when politicians like Enoch Powell had stirred up fears about immigration, could poison even childhood friendships.

Meena's growing independence from Anita is also shaped by her grandmother, Nanima, who comes from India to stay. Through her, Meena begins to take pride in her Punjabi identity and her family's history. When Meena breaks her leg and spends a long time in hospital, she has time to reflect, away from Anita's influence, and her friendship with another patient, Robert, shows her a gentler kind of connection. Syal structures the novel so that Meena's physical recovery parallels her emotional growth.

By the end, the relationship has reversed. Meena, who once followed Anita

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everywhere, makes her own moral choices. During the crisis involving Anita's younger sister Tracey, Meena chooses to tell the truth about what she has seen, and for a narrator who began by confessing to her love of invented stories, this is significant: her loyalty now lies with honesty rather than with Anita's approval. She passes her eleven-plus and prepares to leave Tollington for grammar school, a symbolic step towards a future Anita will not share. Syal presents this ending with sadness rather than triumph. Meena does not hate Anita; she simply outgrows her. Through this changing friendship, Syal suggests that growing up means learning to see the people we idealise as they really are, and finding a sense of self that does not depend on someone else's acceptance.

22 Syal presents racism in Anita and Me as something that lives in everyday life before it explodes into violence. Through Meena's child's eye view, filtered by her adult narrating voice, racism appears first as casual words and unthinking assumptions, then as public hostility and finally as brutal assault. Syal suggests that racism grows out of ignorance, poverty and a need for scapegoats, yet she also shows the warmth and kindness that can cross racial lines, giving a balanced and humane picture of a mining village in the early 1970s.

Meena's narration is central to how racism is presented. As a young girl, she does not always recognise prejudice for what it is, and often she simply records what neighbours say. The older narrator, however, allows the reader to see the significance of these moments. The gap between the child's innocence and the adult's understanding creates irony, and Syal uses humour to disarm the reader before showing the seriousness beneath. For example, neighbours who are kind to the Kumars still speak about immigrants in general in patronising or hostile terms, and Meena's parents receive comments that reveal how they are seen as outsiders.

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Syal suggests that racism is often unconscious, hidden in the habits of polite conversation.

Meena's own responses show the damage racism can do to identity. At times she wants to reject her Punjabi heritage, wishing she could be more like the English girls around her, and she is embarrassed by her parents' differences. Syal presents this as a form of internalised racism: Meena absorbs the message that whiteness is normal and her own culture is strange. Her admiration for Anita is partly bound up with this desire to belong. The arrival of Nanima, her grandmother, helps her reclaim pride in her language and family history, and Syal suggests that knowledge of one's heritage is a defence against prejudice.

Sam Lowbridge represents the more aggressive face of racism. At the Spring Fete, he disrupts the event with a racist outburst, and Syal presents the moment as a public shock which divides the community. Sam's anger seems rooted in unemployment and resentment: he is a young man in a declining industrial village who feels left behind. Syal does not excuse him, but she shows how racism can be a reaction to social exclusion, with immigrants made scapegoats for problems they did not cause. This reflects the context of the time, when Enoch Powell's 1968 "Rivers of Blood" speech had encouraged hostility towards Commonwealth immigrants, and when the rise of skinhead culture made racist attacks more common.

The attack on the Indian bank manager is the most shocking incident. Meena learns that Sam and his friends have beaten a man simply because of his race, and Anita's gleeful retelling of the event is deeply disturbing. Syal contrasts Anita's excitement with Meena's horror, and this moment marks a turning point in their friendship. The violence also exposes how dangerous casual prejudice can become

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when it is given permission by peers. Interestingly, Sam later suggests that he does not see Meena in the same way as other Asians, implying she is somehow an exception. Syal presents this as a deeply confused form of racism: individuals can be accepted while their whole community is hated.

Syal also explores the history behind racism. Meena's parents carry memories of Partition and of the violence of the end of empire. Their stories remind the reader that Britain's relationship with India was shaped by colonial rule, and the irony is that the descendants of the colonised are now treated as unwelcome in the former imperial heartland. Meena's father, who loves poetry and music, is a dignified figure whose quiet endurance of prejudice contrasts with the crude ignorance of his attackers.

Yet Syal resists a simple picture of the village. Characters such as Mrs Worrall show genuine kindness to Meena, and many residents share the Kumars' working-class struggles. Syal suggests that communities with low incomes have more in common than they realise, and that solidarity across racial lines is possible. The novel ends with Meena leaving for grammar school, stronger and more confident in her dual identity. Through her honest, funny and painful narration, Syal presents racism as both ordinary and dangerous, rooted in fear and economic hardship, but ultimately challenged by understanding, family love and the courage to speak the truth.

23 Kelman presents Harrison Opoku as an overwhelmingly likeable character because he is innocent, curious and generous in a world that is none of these things. Narrated through his own lively voice, Harri's optimism makes the reader love him, but Kelman uses that very likeability to make a serious point: the violence of

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inner-city life does not spare even the most hopeful children. Our affection for Harri is what makes the ending so devastating, and it forces readers to care about a boy society often overlooks.

The most important method is Harri's first-person narration. An eleven-year-old boy recently arrived from Ghana, he speaks in a unique blend of Ghanaian English and London slang, using words such as "asweh" when he swears something is true and "hutious" when something scares him. This hybrid voice is funny and warm, and it shows a boy energetically absorbing a new culture without losing his old one. Kelman creates likeability through the music of his speech: his enthusiasm and his habit of describing things in his own inventive way make the reader feel as though we are listening to a real child. At the same time, the voice reflects his perspective as a young immigrant trying to make sense of a confusing new world.

Harri's response to the murder of a local boy, which opens the novel, also makes him sympathetic. The novel begins with his matter-of-fact observation, "You could see the blood", and his childish reaction combines fascination with real sorrow. He decides to investigate the murder with his friend Dean, using ideas borrowed from television crime shows, collecting "evidence" and watching suspects. The detective game is comic, but it springs from a genuine desire to put things right. Kelman uses dramatic irony here: the reader understands far better than Harri how dangerous his investigation is, and our fear for him deepens our affection.

Harri's kindness and loyalty are shown through his family relationships. He adores his Mama, who works hard as a midwife, and he speaks lovingly about his baby sister Agnes and Papa, who are still in Ghana. His relationship with his older sister Lydia is full of teasing, but he is protective of her. His innocent pride in small things, such as being one of the fastest runners in his year or drawing stripes

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onto his trainers to make them look like a famous brand, makes him endearing while also hinting at the poverty his family lives in.

Kelman also presents Harri's likeability through contrast with the other young characters. The Dell Farm Crew, led by older boys like X-Fire and Killa, represent a world of intimidation, gang loyalty and casual cruelty. Harri is drawn to them and wants their respect, as many boys his age would. Yet his unease at what he sees them do, and his instinct to look after others, show his moral centre. Kelman suggests that Harri is good not because he is untouched by temptation but because he resists it, even while trying to fit in.

The pigeon, which appears in separate italic sections, adds a magical realist commentary on Harri's character. The pigeon watches over him with tenderness, perhaps symbolising a guardian or a part of his own soul. Its voice is calmer and wiser than Harri's, and it seems to understand the dangers he faces. Through the pigeon, Kelman reminds the reader that Harri's innocence is precious and fragile, like a small bird in a hostile city. Harri feeds and loves the pigeon, and this simple kindness to a creature many people despise reveals his compassion.

The tragic ending, in which Harri is stabbed, transforms the reader's affection into grief. His hopeful voice is silenced by the very violence he tried to understand. Kelman, who was inspired in part by the real killing of ten-year-old Damilola Taylor in Peckham in 2000, uses Harri's likeability to humanise the victims of knife crime and to criticise a society that fails to protect its children. Harri is likeable not because he is perfect, but because he is a child: funny, brave, naive and full of love. In killing him, Kelman forces readers to confront the cost of losing such innocence.

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Kelman presents Harrison's relationships with the women and girls in his life as a mixture of devotion, curiosity and confusion, and through them he shows a boy caught between the loving values of his family and the harsher attitudes of the estate. Harri's relationships with his Mama and his sister Lydia reveal his tenderness and loyalty, while his crush on Poppy shows a childlike, innocent idea of romance. Set against the cynical, often aggressive attitudes to women around him, these relationships highlight Harri's goodness and make his fate even more painful.

Harri's relationship with his Mama is the emotional centre of his life. She works long hours as a midwife, and Harri speaks of her with pride and love. Kelman uses Harri's first-person voice, full of Ghanaian expressions and London slang, to show his admiration: he describes her with warmth and humour, and he wants to make her proud. Her job, bringing babies into the world, sets up a powerful contrast with the deaths on the estate, perhaps symbolising hope and new life in a hostile environment. Mama represents traditional Ghanaian values of family, faith and respect, and through her influence Harri retains a moral compass. Yet Kelman also shows the strain of her situation as an immigrant mother, working hard to keep her children safe while Papa, Agnes and their grandmother remain in Ghana. The divided family reflects the realities of migration, and Harri's longing to be reunited with them adds poignancy to his relationship with Mama.

His relationship with his older sister Lydia is more complicated. Their conversations are full of teasing and bickering, and Harri often finds her moody and secretive, in the way a younger brother sees a teenage sister. Kelman uses comedy here, but beneath the humour there is genuine love and protectiveness. As the novel progresses, Lydia is drawn into the orbit of the older girls connected to the gang, and Harri sees her being pressured and frightened. His concern for her shows his

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loyalty, while her vulnerability reveals how the violence of inner-city life threatens girls as well as boys. Kelman suggests that the estate can corrupt young people's relationships, forcing them to keep secrets from each other.

Harri's crush on Poppy Morgan is presented with great tenderness. He thinks she is beautiful and is overjoyed when she seems to like him back. Their relationship is innocent: they talk shyly and treat each other kindly, and Harri treasures every sign that she likes him, and Harri's descriptions of her are filled with wonder. Kelman captures the excitement of first love through Harri's breathless, enthusiastic voice. However, this innocence is constantly contrasted with the sexualised talk of the older boys and girls on the estate. Harri does not fully understand the crude language he hears, and the irony of his naive optimism makes the reader both smile and worry. His sweetness towards Poppy shows that, despite his environment, he still believes in kindness and respect.

The older girls, such as Miquita, represent a more threatening and confusing side of femininity for Harri. They are confident, sometimes aggressive, and connected to the gang culture around them. Harri is fascinated and slightly scared, and his reactions reveal his innocence. Kelman uses these encounters to show how young people on the estate are pushed to grow up too quickly, and how girls, too, are shaped by the cynicism and violence of their surroundings. The attitudes towards women that Harri witnesses, including the way some boys speak about girls as objects, contrast sharply with his own respectful instincts, which come from his mother and sister.

Ultimately, Harri's relationships with the female characters highlight his goodness and the tragedy of his death. His love for Mama and Lydia, and his innocent romance with Poppy, show a boy capable of deep affection. Kelman, writing partly

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in response to the killing of Damilola Taylor, uses these relationships to remind readers that victims of knife crime are not statistics but children who are loved and who love in return. Through the women around Harri, Kelman presents both the hope of family and the danger of the world outside it, and the reader is left mourning the boy who might have grown into a gentle, loving man.

25 Both Hardy and Sheers present love as a force powerful enough to change how a person sees the whole world, but they move in opposite directions. In 'Neutral Tones' the speaker's powerful feelings are bitterness and disillusionment, frozen in a memory that has shaped his view of love for ever, whereas in 'Winter Swans' a couple begin in cold silence and end in a moment of tender reconciliation. Hardy suggests that love, once it dies, leaves a permanent wound; Sheers suggests that love, though fragile, can repair itself.

Both poets use a bleak natural setting to externalise feelings that the lovers cannot express. Hardy's speaker remembers a "pond that winter day", and the season immediately signals emotional coldness. The sun is "white, as though chidden of God", a simile which drains the sun of warmth and colour, as if even the heavens disapprove of the couple. The "starving sod" uses alliteration and personification to suggest that the earth itself is deprived, perhaps mirroring a relationship that has stopped nourishing either person. Sheers opens in a similar landscape after "two days of rain", where "The clouds had given their all", a phrase that hints the couple too are emotionally exhausted after an argument. The "waterlogged earth / gulping for breath at our feet" is a more physical and anxious image than Hardy's: the personification suggests the relationship is drowning, but "gulping" also implies a struggle to survive, so there is still life in it. Hardy's nature is dead and grey; Sheers's is saturated and struggling, which prepares the reader

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for a different outcome.

The poets also present powerful feelings through the way the lovers look at, or avoid, each other. In 'Neutral Tones' Hardy uses direct address, "Your eyes on me were as eyes that rove / Over tedious riddles of years ago", and the simile makes the beloved's gaze bored and indifferent, as though the speaker is an old puzzle no longer worth solving. The bitter irony of "On which lost the more by our love" reduces their love to a contest in which both are losers. The most powerful image is the oxymoron "the deadest thing / Alive enough to have strength to die": the smile is so hollow that its only remaining energy is the energy to end. The "grin of bitterness" that sweeps across the face "Like an ominous bird a-wing" introduces an omen of doom, and the ellipsis afterwards lets that menace hang in silence. In 'Winter Swans', by contrast, the couple walk "silent and apart", and the caesura in that line physically separates them on the page. Yet Sheers shifts the focus from the lovers to the swans, which come "tipping in unison" and look "like boats righting in rough weather". The verb "righting" suggests correction and balance, as if nature is showing the couple how to recover from turbulence, and the speaker's partner points out that swans "mate for life", introducing hope and commitment.

Structure is central to the contrast. Hardy writes in four regular quatrains with an enclosed ABBA rhyme, and the poem is cyclical: the final stanza returns to the "pond edged with greyish leaves" and the "God-curst sun". This circularity suggests the speaker is trapped; the memory has become the lens through which he sees every later relationship, since "keen lessons that love deceives, / And wrings with wrong" have taught him that love is a lie. The violent verb "wrings" makes the pain physical and lasting. Sheers, however, writes in tercets that move forward through time, and he breaks the pattern at the end with a final couplet. The couple's hands come together "like a pair of wings settling after flight", so the separate

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units of the poem settle into a pair, mirroring their reunion. Where Hardy's form traps feeling, Sheers's form releases it.

Context deepens these differences. Hardy wrote 'Neutral Tones' in 1867, and it is often read as reflecting his own failed early romance and his growing loss of religious faith; the image of a sun "chidden of God" and a "God-curst sun" suggests a universe without comfort, which links the end of love to a wider Victorian crisis of belief. Sheers, writing in the twenty-first century, presents a more modern, everyday relationship in which conflict is normal and recoverable, and in which feelings are communicated through small gestures rather than grand declarations.

Ultimately, both poems show that powerful feelings about love are tied to memory and to the natural world. However, Hardy's speaker is permanently scarred by love's failure, and the neutral, colourless world he describes is the world love has left him with. Sheers, by contrast, presents love as something that can weather "rough weather" and settle again, offering the reader a hopeful counterpoint to Hardy's bitter certainty that "love deceives".

26 Both Garland and Armitage present conflict as something whose most damaging effects arrive after the fighting, not during it. In 'Kamikaze' a pilot who turns back from a suicide mission survives physically but is destroyed socially, erased by the shame of his family and community. In 'Remains' a soldier who does exactly what he is ordered to do is destroyed psychologically, haunted by guilt for a killing. Both suggest conflict damages people through the values and memories they carry home.

Both poets use the act of retelling to show that conflict outlives the moment it

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happens. 'Kamikaze' is narrated at a double distance: the daughter speaks in the third person about her mother, who is "recounting it later to her children". This layered perspective suggests that the pilot's story has become family memory, passed down like an inheritance of silence, and the speculative "she thought" and "he must have looked" remind us that no one ever heard his own account. 'Remains', by contrast, uses a first-person, conversational voice, opening "On another occasion", like one anecdote among many. The casual tone is deceptive: the poem is a dramatic monologue that slowly reveals a man who cannot stop retelling a single event. Where Garland distances us from the pilot to show how he has been shut out, Armitage traps us inside the soldier's mind to show how he cannot get out.

The poets also present the moment that changes each man. Garland interrupts the mission with a long, flowing sentence of natural imagery: the "little fishing boats / strung out like bunting / on a green-blue translucent sea". The simile of "bunting" suggests celebration and home, and the shoals "flashing silver" draw the pilot back to his childhood, when he and his brothers waited for "their father's boat safe" to return. The repetition of "safe" and the dash-interrupted correction to "grandfather's boat" show the speaker's emotion breaking into the story. Nature here represents life, family and continuity, and it is powerful enough to defeat the "powerful incantations" of imperial duty. In 'Remains', however, the decisive moment is violent and morally uncertain. The looters are "probably armed, possibly not", and the shift from "probably" to "possibly" plants the doubt that will torment the speaker. The graphic image "I see every round as it rips through his life" uses the present tense to show that the killing is replayed constantly, while the alliteration of "rips" and "round" makes it brutally physical. Both men are changed by a single moment, but Garland's pilot is changed by a vision of life, while Armitage's soldier is changed by the reality of death.

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The effects on each man are presented through contrasting forms of isolation. In 'Kamikaze' the father is ostracised: "my mother never spoke again / in his presence, nor did she meet his eyes", and the neighbours treat him "as though he no longer existed". The children are the last to reject him, but "gradually we too learned / to be silent", and the verb "learned" shows that shame is taught, a cultural value passed from adults to children. In 'Remains' the isolation is internal. The soldier claims "End of story, except not really", and the caesura marks the moment his defensive casualness collapses. The dead man is "dug in behind enemy lines", a military metaphor which suggests the memory has occupied his mind like an enemy soldier, and he admits that "the drink and the drugs won't flush him out". The final image of "his bloody life in my bloody hands" uses "bloody" as both literal and an expression of frustration, echoing Lady Macbeth's inability to wash away guilt.

Structurally, both poems end on a note of unresolved pain. Garland's final lines return to the pilot's thoughts: "he must have wondered / which had been the better way to die". The paradox suggests that a living death of shame might be worse than the honourable death he refused. Armitage builds the poem in quatrains but ends with a stark, isolated couplet, so the form shrinks and breaks as the speaker's composure does, mirroring the trauma taking hold.

Context sharpens the comparison. In Second World War Japan, kamikaze pilots were seen as embodying the samurai code of honour, so a pilot who returned would bring disgrace on his family; Garland uses this to explore how cultural pressure can turn a community against one of its own. 'Remains' comes from Armitage's collection 'The Not Dead', based on the testimony of real veterans, including a soldier who served in Iraq, and it explores post-traumatic stress disorder. Both

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poets therefore suggest that conflict's victims are not only the dead. Garland shows society punishing a man for choosing life, while Armitage shows a man punishing himself for taking one, and in both cases the conflict never truly ends.

27.1 Kaplinski presents daily life as an endless, exhausting cycle of tasks that can never be finished, yet he suggests that its true value lies not in completion but in the ability to look beyond it. The poem moves from frustration to wonder: the speaker turns away from the broken house and towards the spring, which is "so full of everything" and continues without effort, implying that connection with the natural world offers a freedom that human work never can.

The opening is built on relentless repetition. The first four lines each contain "never", and the parallel structure ("never gets done", "never gets heated", "never get read") creates a monotonous rhythm that mirrors the tedium of chores. Even "Books" become another unfinished task. The fourth line widens the idea dramatically: "Life is never completed." The end-stopped full stop gives this a blunt finality, and the irony is that the only thing complete is the sentence declaring that nothing is complete.

The poet then uses an extended simile to capture the pressure of daily life: "Life is like a ball which one must continually / catch and hit so it won't fall." The enjambment after "continually" enacts the ceaseless motion, while "catch and hit" suggests a game that can never be won, only kept going.

This sense of futility is developed through the image of house maintenance. "When the fence is repaired at one end, / it collapses at the other" presents effort as self-defeating. The asyndetic list that follows piles problems on top of one

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another, and the "cracks in the foundation" could be read metaphorically, implying that the very basis of this way of life is unstable. The list ends with "the torn knees of children's pants" and an ellipsis, as if the speaker could carry on for ever but simply gives up, though the detail of children's clothing adds a tender touch: daily life is chaotic but also full of family.

The volta comes with "One can't keep everything in mind. The wonder is". The impersonal "One" universalises the experience, and "wonder" marks a shift in tone from weariness to awe. Crucially, the speaker notices the spring "beside all this", so nature is not an escape from daily life but something that exists alongside it, waiting to be seen.

The final section contrasts sharply with the opening. Where human tasks "never get done", the spring is "continuing in all directions", suggesting effortless, ongoing growth. The anaphora of "into" expands outward from "the evening clouds" to "the redwing's song" to the tiniest detail, and the repetition of "every" in "every / drop of dew on every blade of grass" suggests nature's abundance is infinite yet perfectly complete in each part. Unlike the speaker's never-ending chores, nature's endlessness is joyful.

The last line, "as far as the eye can see, into the dusk", ends with movement into evening. Perhaps the dusk suggests the end of the working day, when the speaker can finally rest, or it hints that life itself moves towards an end. Either way, the long, flowing final sentence replaces the short, frustrated sentences of the opening. The free verse mirrors the unpredictability of life, but the poem moves from fragmentation to fluency, showing that connecting with nature can bring a sense of harmony that daily life alone cannot provide.

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27.2

Both poets present daily life as a set of chores that pull us away from nature, but their methods create different tones. Kaplinski uses relentless repetition of "never" and end-stopped lines to make daily life feel frustrating and endless, whereas Thomas mentions "the day's chores" only briefly, in a single phrase, so work is a background presence rather than a burden.

Both poets use the natural world as a contrast to human routine, but they structure the turn differently. Kaplinski delays it until "The wonder is", after long lists of domestic failures, so nature arrives as a sudden release. Thomas places nature first, and his imperatives "pause a minute" and "Let the mind take its photograph" directly instruct the reader to stop and notice, making the connection with nature a deliberate act rather than a surprise.

Their imagery also differs. Kaplinski's nature is vast and moving, with the anaphora of "into" spreading outward towards "the dusk". Thomas's is still and precious: the leaves "braiding the cuffs / Of the boughs with gold" personify the trees as finely dressed, and "gold" suggests value. Both poems end by looking ahead, but Thomas's metaphor of a memory to "wear / Against the heart in the long cold" turns nature into protection against future hardship, while Kaplinski's flowing final sentence simply lets nature continue without end.