AQA

GCSE
ENGLISH LITERATURE

Paper 1M Modern prose/drama

Time allowed: 50 minutes

Materials

For this paper you must have:

- an AQA 12-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 8702/1M.
- Answer **one** question.
- You must **not** use a dictionary.

Information

- The marks for questions are shown in brackets.
- The maximum mark for this paper is 30.

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There are no questions printed on this page

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Answer **one** question on your chosen text.

JB Priestley: *An Inspector Calls*

Either

0 1 How does Priestley use Gerald to explore ideas about responsibility?

Write about:

- what Gerald says and does
- how Priestley uses Gerald to explore ideas about responsibility.

[30 marks]

or

0 2 How far does Priestley present society as unfair in *An Inspector Calls*?

Write about:

- what can be seen as unfair in the play
- how far Priestley presents society as unfair.

[30 marks]

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Willy Russell: *Blood Brothers*

or

0 3 How far does Russell present Mrs Johnstone as a strong female character in *Blood Brothers*?

Write about:

- what Mrs Johnstone says and does
- how far Russell presents Mrs Johnstone as a strong female character.

[30 marks]

or

0 4 How does Russell use the Narrator to comment on society in *Blood Brothers*?

Write about:

- what the Narrator says
- how Russell uses the Narrator to comment on society.

[30 marks]

Turn over for the next question

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Alan Bennett: *The History Boys*

or

0 5 How does Bennett present the different ways the boys are influenced by their teachers?

Write about:

- what the boys say and do
- how Bennett presents the different ways the boys are influenced by their teachers.

[30 marks]

or

0 6 How does Bennett use the character of Mrs Lintott to explore ideas about education?

Write about:

- what Mrs Lintott says and does
- how Bennett uses Mrs Lintott to explore ideas about education.

[30 marks]

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Dennis Kelly: *DNA*

or

0 7 How does Kelly use the character of John Tate to explore ideas about good and bad leaders?

Write about:

- what John Tate says and does
- how Kelly uses John Tate to explore ideas about good and bad leaders.

[30 marks]

or

0 8 'Kelly does not present teenagers as evil; they are just ordinary people caught up in events they cannot control.'

How far do you agree with this view of *DNA*?

Write about:

- one or more of the teenager(s)
- how Kelly presents one or more of the teenager(s).

[30 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 relationship with his mother?

Write about:

- what Christopher's relationship with his mother is like
- how Stephens presents Christopher's relationship with his mother.

[30 marks]

or

1 0 'Christopher is always looking for order and truth.'

How far do you agree with this view of Christopher?

Write about:

- what Christopher says and does
- how Stephens presents Christopher.

[30 marks]

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Shelagh Delaney: *A Taste of Honey*

or

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

Write about:

- what Jo says and does
- how far Delaney presents Jo as selfish.

[30 marks]

or

1 2 'In *A Taste of Honey,* Delaney presents a bleak and depressing view of society.'

How far do you agree with this view of the play?

Write about:

- what society is like in the play
- how far Delaney presents society as bleak and depressing.

[30 marks]

Turn over for the next question

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William Golding: *Lord of the Flies*

or

1 3 How does Golding present the relationship between Ralph and Piggy?

Write about:

- what the relationship between Ralph and Piggy is like
- how Golding presents the relationship between Ralph and Piggy.

[30 marks]

or

1 4 In Chapter 5 (Beast from Water), Ralph says 'the rules are the only thing we've got'.

How does Golding explore ideas about rules and order in *Lord of the Flies*?

Write about:

- what the boys say and do
- how Golding presents ideas about rules and order.

[30 marks]

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AQA Anthology: *Telling Tales*

or

1 5 How do writers present characters behaving in unexpected ways in 'The Darkness Out There' and in **one** other story from *Telling Tales*?

Write about:

- the unexpected ways people behave in the **two** stories
- how the writers present characters behaving in unexpected ways.

[30 marks]

or

1 6 How do writers present characters learning about themselves and others in 'Invisible Mass of the Back Row' and in **one** other story in *Telling Tales*?

Write about:

- what the characters learn about themselves and others in the **two** stories
- how the writers present characters learning about themselves and others.

[30 marks]

Turn over for the next question

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George Orwell: *Animal Farm*

or

1 7 How far does Orwell present Boxer as a sympathetic character in *Animal Farm*?

Write about:

- what Boxer says and does
- how far Orwell presents Boxer as a sympathetic character.

[30 marks]

or

1 8 In Chapter 1, Old Major says, 'All men are enemies. All animals are comrades'.

How does Orwell present Old Major's speech as important to the events of *Animal Farm*?

Write about:

- the reactions to what Old Major says
- how Orwell presents Old Major's speech as important to the events of *Animal Farm*.

[30 marks]

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Kazuo Ishiguro: *Never Let Me Go*

or

1 9 In *Never Let Me Go*, Miss Emily says, 'You wouldn't be who you are today if we hadn't protected you'.

How far does Ishiguro present Miss Emily as a character who protects the students at Hailsham?

Write about:

- what Miss Emily says and does
- how far Ishiguro presents Miss Emily as a character who protects the students.

[30 marks]

or

2 0 How far does Ishiguro present characters searching for happiness in *Never Let Me Go*?

Write about:

- what one or more of the character(s) say and do
- how far Ishiguro presents character(s) searching for happiness.

[30 marks]

Turn over for the next question

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Meera Syal: *Anita and Me*

or

2 1 How does Syal present Meena as a character who learns about herself and others?

Write about:

- what Meena learns about herself and others
- how Syal presents Meena learning about herself and others.

[30 marks]

or

2 2 'Tollington is a strange and even frightening place to grow up in.'

How far do you agree with this view of Tollington in *Anita and Me*?

Write about:

- what Tollington is like
- how Syal presents Tollington.

[30 marks]

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Stephen Kelman: *Pigeon English*

or

2 3 How far does Kelman present a positive view of teenagers in *Pigeon English*?

Write about:

- one or more of the teenager(s) in the novel
- how far Kelman presents a positive view of teenager(s).

[30 marks]

or

2 4 How does Kelman present Harrison's experience of change in *Pigeon English*?

Write about:

- one or more of the change(s) that Harrison experiences
- how Kelman presents Harrison's experience of change.

[30 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 Gerald Croft to show that a sense of responsibility can be awakened but not necessarily sustained. Gerald is more sympathetic than Arthur Birling, and for a moment he seems genuinely moved by Eva Smith's fate, yet once the Inspector's authority is questioned he retreats into the comfortable assumptions of his class. Through him, Priestley warns his 1945 audience that the privileged will happily feel sorry for the poor while refusing to change the system that keeps them poor.

From the opening, Gerald is defined by status rather than conscience. The stage directions describe him as "very much the easy well-bred young man-about-town", and the adjective "easy" suggests a man who has never had to struggle or question anything. As the son of Sir George and Lady Croft, his engagement to Sheila is partly a business merger, and Birling's hope of "lower costs and higher prices" hangs over the celebration. Crucially, when Birling describes sacking Eva for leading a strike, Gerald immediately sides with him: "You couldn't have done anything else." In contrast to Eric, who protests that Birling could have kept her on, Gerald endorses the capitalist logic that workers are disposable. Priestley shows that Gerald's first instinct is loyalty to his class, not to the girl.

However, Priestley complicates this through the structure of the Inspector's interrogation. At the name "Daisy Renton" Gerald is "startled", and the stage direction cracks his polished surface. The audience then remembers Sheila's earlier jibe about "all last summer, when you never came near me", and dramatic irony builds as we realise that Gerald has been hiding an affair at the heart of the engagement. His confession is the most emotional in the play. He rescued Daisy

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from the drunken advances of Alderman Meggarty at the Palace bar, found her somewhere to live and gave her money. The Inspector even concedes that Gerald at least made her happy for a time, so Priestley gives him a degree of credit that the Birlings never earn.

Yet Gerald's language reveals the limits of his responsibility. He describes Daisy as "young and pretty and warm-hearted", a list that focuses on what she offered him, and he admits "I didn't feel about her as she felt about me." The relationship was always unequal: he had money, power and a fiancée, while she had nothing. When it suited him, he ended it, and she was left alone. Sheila's mocking image of him as "the wonderful Fairy Prince" exposes the fantasy he enjoyed of being a rescuer. Priestley is critical of Edwardian sexual hypocrisy here: respectable men like Gerald and Meggarty exploit vulnerable young women in the bars of Brumley and then return to their engagements and dinners, while the women carry all the consequences. Gerald's kindness, Priestley suggests, is a gentler form of the same exploitation.

Gerald's exit from the stage is also significant. He leaves to walk alone, and his absence means that he misses the Inspector's final speech, "We are members of one body. We are responsible for each other." Structurally, Priestley ensures that Gerald never hears the play's central moral message, which perhaps explains why he is the one who later works so hard to dismantle it.

Gerald's return in Act Three marks his moral collapse. He announces triumphantly that "That man wasn't a police officer", and it is Gerald who telephones the Infirmary to establish that no girl has died. His relief leads him straight back to his engagement: "Everything's all right now, Sheila", as he holds up the ring. The phrase "everything's all right" is deeply ironic, because nothing that he did has

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changed, only the likelihood of a scandal. Sheila's refusal, "It's too soon. I must think", shows how far she has travelled, and Priestley uses the contrast between the two young people to show that age alone does not guarantee change. Gerald, like the elder Birlings, cares about consequences for himself, not about the truth of what he did.

Ultimately, Priestley uses Gerald to show that responsibility cannot depend on whether we are caught. The final telephone call, announcing that a girl has just died on her way to the Infirmary, punishes his complacency and suggests that the Inspector's "fire and blood and anguish" will come to those who refuse to learn. Writing just after two world wars, as Britain voted for a Labour government and the welfare state, Priestley wanted his audience to reject Gerald's charming but hollow decency and to accept, like Sheila, that we are all responsible for each other.

02 Priestley presents the society of 1912 as profoundly unfair: a world in which wealth, class and gender decide who is protected and who is destroyed. Yet the play does not present this unfairness as natural or permanent. By exposing how one family's choices combine to kill Eva Smith, Priestley argues that injustice is man-made, and therefore something his 1945 audience has the power to change.

The unfairness is established before the Inspector even arrives. Birling's boast about "lower costs and higher prices" reveals a capitalist who profits by squeezing both workers and customers, and his speech that "a man has to mind his own business and look after himself and his own" turns selfishness into a philosophy. The dramatic irony of his confident predictions, that the Titanic is "unsinkable" and that war will not come, undermines his authority for an audience who lived

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through two world wars. Priestley makes the voice of the ruling class sound foolish, so that its values seem as unreliable as its prophecies. The lighting, "pink and intimate" until the Inspector arrives and then "brighter and harder", suggests that the comfort of the Birling home depends on not looking too closely at the world outside.

Eva Smith's story then becomes a case study in economic unfairness. She is sacked from Birling's works for asking for a small rise, and Birling's justification, that if you do not come down sharply on such people "they'd soon be asking for the earth", treats a living wage as greed. The Inspector's reply, "it's better to ask for the earth than to take it", reverses the accusation and suggests that the real greed belongs to the factory owners. Eric's question "Why shouldn't they try for higher wages?" voices the audience's growing sense that the workers are being punished for being reasonable. Priestley, a committed socialist, wanted his audience to see that a society without unions, minimum wages or welfare left people like Eva completely exposed.

The unfairness is also gendered. Sheila has Eva dismissed from Milwards out of jealousy, using her status as a customer to destroy a shop girl's living, and Gerald and Eric both use her for their own pleasure. Mrs Birling's contempt for "girls of that class" shows how class prejudice and misogyny combine: when Eva comes to her charity for help, pregnant and alone, she is refused partly because she called herself "Mrs Birling", which Sybil calls "gross impertinence". The irony is savage. A charity designed to help women in need becomes a tribunal of the respectable, and the woman who chairs it condemns her own grandchild. Priestley presents the institutions meant to protect the vulnerable as tools of the privileged.

Structurally, the play's chain of revelations makes the unfairness systemic rather

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than individual. Each character believes their action was small, but the Inspector links them like a series of blows, and the graphic detail that Eva "swallowed a lot of strong disinfectant" which "burnt her insides out" forces the audience to feel the physical cost of polite cruelty. By giving her the ordinary name "Eva Smith", Priestley turns her into a representative of the working class, and the Inspector makes this explicit: there are "millions and millions and millions of Eva Smiths and John Smiths". The tricolon expands one tragedy into a national one.

However, Priestley does not present society as hopelessly unfair, and this is where the question of "how far" matters. The younger generation show that attitudes can change. Sheila realises that the girls in the factory "aren't cheap labour" but "people", and Eric is horrified by his parents' refusal to accept blame. The Inspector, perhaps a mouthpiece for Priestley or a supernatural figure, insists that "We are members of one body. We are responsible for each other." This suggests that unfairness is not an inevitable feature of life, but a result of people refusing that responsibility. The circular ending, with the telephone announcing that a girl has died and an inspector is on his way, implies that society will keep being judged until it learns.

Overall, Priestley presents 1912 society as deeply unfair, especially to working-class women, but he presents that unfairness as a choice. Writing in 1945, when Britain stood on the edge of the welfare state, Priestley hoped his audience would see the Birlings' world as the past, and Sheila and Eric's conscience as the future. The play's warning of "fire and blood and anguish" is a reminder of what happens when a society refuses to change.

03 Russell presents Mrs Johnstone as a woman of remarkable emotional strength,

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resilient, warm and fiercely loving, but he also shows that her strength is no match for the poverty and class system that shape her life. She is strong in spirit but powerless in circumstance, and it is this gap between who she is and what society allows her to do that makes her the tragic heart of the play.

Russell immediately frames her through the Narrator, who invites the audience to judge "the mother, so cruel" with "a stone in place of her heart". This prologue sets the audience up to expect a villain, but what follows completely overturns that expectation. When she first appears, singing about being told she was sexier than Marilyn Monroe and then abandoned by a husband who left her for a younger woman, we see a woman worn down by men and money rather than a cruel mother. Russell therefore uses the structure of the play to challenge snap judgements about working-class women, a deliberate move in early 1980s Britain, when single mothers were often blamed for social problems.

Her strength first shows in her humour and defiance. Her exchanges with the Milkman, who refuses to deliver until she pays, are comic and lively, and her Liverpudlian dialect gives her a warmth and directness that contrasts with Mrs Lyons' stiff, middle-class speech. Even when the catalogue men come to repossess her furniture, she endures the humiliation without collapsing, and she keeps her children fed and clothed with no husband and very little money. Russell suggests that her resilience is a survival tool for women in poverty who have no one else to rely on.

However, the moment she agrees to give away one of the twins challenges the idea that she is strong. She is pressured by Mrs Lyons, who exploits her fear of social services and her superstition, and is made to swear on the Bible. Arguably, Mrs Johnstone is weak here: she is manipulated by a richer, more educated woman

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and surrenders her child. Yet it could equally be seen as an act of painful strength. She knows she cannot feed another two mouths, and she gives Edward away so that he will have what she cannot provide. Russell makes the audience feel the cost of this through her song "Easy Terms", in which her baby becomes like goods bought on credit, "only mine until / The time comes round / To pay the bill". The metaphor shows how poverty turns even motherhood into a debt, yet she sings it with tenderness rather than bitterness. Her later gift of the locket to Eddie, with a picture of herself and Mickey, shows that her love survives even when the law and money separate her from him.

Her strength is also seen in her moral courage against Mrs Lyons. When Mrs Lyons tries to bribe her to move away, Mrs Johnstone refuses the money, and when Mrs Lyons attacks her with a knife, she stands her ground. Mrs Lyons descends into paranoia and hysteria, while Mrs Johnstone remains steady. Russell inverts expectations of class: the wealthy woman is unstable, while the poor woman is grounded and dignified. The move to Skelmersdale in "Bright New Day" shows her optimism and her desire for a better life for her children, and she continues to support Mickey and Linda through unemployment, prison and depression.

Nevertheless, Russell ultimately presents her strength as limited by society. She cannot stop Mickey losing his job, cannot keep him off the tablets, and cannot prevent the final confrontation. Her desperate confession, "I couldn't afford to keep both of you", sums up the play's argument: her choices were dictated by money, not love. Mickey's devastating reply, "I could have been him!", shows that her sacrifice gave one son a life of privilege and condemned the other to poverty. The gunshots that follow destroy both of her sons, and her final song, "Tell me it's not true", returns us to the opening, suggesting that no amount of personal strength

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could have changed the ending.

In conclusion, Russell presents Mrs Johnstone as a strong female character in her love, humour and endurance, but not in her power over events. Writing during Thatcher's Britain, with mass unemployment in Liverpool, Russell uses her to show that the strongest woman can still be crushed by a system that leaves the poor with no real choices. The Narrator's final question of whether we blame superstition "or could it be what we, the English, have come to know as class?" makes clear that the fault lies with society, not with her.

04 Russell uses the Narrator as a detached, ominous chorus who forces the audience to look beyond the individual tragedy of the Johnstone twins and towards the society that produces it. He appears to speak about fate and superstition, but his final words reveal that the real force driving the play is social class. In this way, Russell turns a melodramatic story into a political argument about Britain in the 1980s.

The Narrator's opening speech immediately shapes how we view society. He asks whether the audience has heard "the story of the Johnstone twins", "Of one womb born, on the self same day", and reveals that one was kept and one given away. By giving away the tragic ending in the prologue, as the twins lie dead on stage, Russell removes suspense about what will happen and focuses the audience on why it happens. This echoes the role of the chorus in Greek tragedy, but where Greek audiences blamed the gods, Russell invites us to look for a human cause. The rhyming couplets give the speech the feel of a ballad or folk tale, suggesting a story told many times, as if this kind of tragedy is common in working-class communities.

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The Narrator also comments on how society judges the poor. He introduces "the mother, so cruel" with "a stone in place of her heart", and then invites the audience to "come judge for yourselves". The theatrical language of how she "came to play this part" reminds us that Mrs Johnstone has been cast in a role by society: the feckless working-class mother. Russell uses the Narrator to voice a prejudice that the rest of the play will dismantle, encouraging the audience to question their own assumptions about class and parenting.

Throughout the play, the Narrator's menacing refrain, "the devil's got your number", creates a sense of inevitability. It is often directed at Mrs Johnstone and Mrs Lyons after the deal is made, and the imagery of debt and collection links superstition with money. The devil comes to collect a debt in the same way that the catalogue men come to reclaim the furniture, so the Narrator subtly connects spiritual doom to economic pressure. His lists of omens, such as shoes upon the table and a broken looking glass, mock Mrs Lyons' superstition while also building tension. Russell may be suggesting that superstition is a story people tell themselves to avoid facing the real causes of suffering.

The Narrator is also unsettling because he moves among the characters but never changes. He often appears at moments of happiness, such as the move to Skelmersdale or the carefree summer of the teenagers' friendship, to remind us that time is running out. His line "who'd dare tell the lambs in spring / What fate the later seasons bring?" uses pastoral imagery to present the boys as innocent animals unaware of approaching slaughter. The metaphor of the seasons links the cycle of nature to the cycle of poverty: as the boys grow up, the different opportunities given to them by class start to show. Mickey loses his job, turns to crime and becomes dependent on tablets, while Eddie goes to university and

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becomes a councillor. The Narrator does not develop because the system he represents does not develop either.

In Act Two, the Narrator's commentary becomes darker as the economic decline of Liverpool takes hold. His presence during Mickey's unemployment and imprisonment reminds the audience that these events are not random but part of a pattern. Russell, writing during Thatcher's government, when unemployment in the city was among the highest in the country, uses the Narrator to make the personal political. He is almost a Brechtian figure, breaking the illusion of the play so that we think critically instead of simply feeling sorry for the characters.

The final speech makes this purpose explicit. After the shooting, the Narrator asks, "And do we blame superstition for what came to pass? / Or could it be what we, the English, have come to know as class?" The rhetorical question is the climax of his role. The word "we" implicates the audience, and "the English" broadens the tragedy to the whole nation. Russell rejects the idea that the twins were doomed by a curse or by fate and points instead to a society that gave one child everything and the other almost nothing.

Overall, Russell uses the Narrator to guide, unsettle and finally challenge the audience. Through his role as chorus, his repetition and his ominous imagery, the Narrator turns Blood Brothers into more than a family tragedy. He shows that the true devil in the play is inequality, and he leaves the audience with the uncomfortable responsibility of answering his final question.

05 Bennett presents the boys as caught between competing visions of what education is for. Hector teaches them to love knowledge for its own sake, Irwin teaches

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them to perform knowledge in order to win, and Mrs Lintott gives them the solid facts on which both depend. Through the boys' responses, and especially through what becomes of them, Bennett explores whether the influence of a teacher lies in exam success or in what students carry with them for the rest of their lives.

Hector's influence is the most personal and the most romantic. He insists that "all knowledge is precious whether or not it serves the slightest human use", and his lessons, full of poetry, songs, old films and role play in French, deliberately refuse to be useful. The boys respond with affection and playful mockery. They quote Housman and Hardy, act out scenes from Brief Encounter and treat his classroom as a place of freedom. Bennett shows that Hector's influence works through memory and emotion, and the boys absorb great literature almost without noticing. His teaching reaches its most tender moment in the scene with Posner and Hardy's "Drummer Hodge", where Hector describes the best moments in reading as feeling "as if a hand has come out and taken yours". The image of reaching across time suggests that Hector's real gift is connection: he teaches the boys that they are not alone.

However, Bennett complicates Hector's influence. His habit of giving boys lifts on his motorbike and touching them is treated by the boys as a running joke, and their casual tolerance perhaps suggests how much power he has over them. Bennett does not excuse him, but he does show that the boys' loyalty to him survives this, which raises uncomfortable questions about the authority teachers hold.

Irwin's influence is very different. Brought in by a Headmaster obsessed with league tables and Oxbridge places, he teaches the boys to be provocative and to argue the opposite of what is expected. He tells them that "history nowadays is

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not a matter of conviction. It's a performance. It's entertainment." The tricolon of short, blunt sentences reflects his clipped, efficient style, and the boys quickly see its value. Dakin in particular is dazzled by him, and Bennett shows that Irwin's influence is partly intellectual and partly personal, as Dakin's admiration turns into a sexual proposition. Irwin's cynical remark that truth is no more at issue in an exam "than thirst at a wine-tasting" shows how his teaching replaces truth with strategy. In the scene where the boys debate the Holocaust, Posner, who is Jewish, is uneasy about turning suffering into a clever angle, and Hector objects that some subjects should not be reduced to arguments. Bennett uses this conflict to suggest that Irwin's methods, however successful, risk detaching knowledge from morality.

The boys themselves respond in different ways, which shows that teachers do not influence everyone equally. Rudge, who openly prefers straightforward facts and sport, is the least influenced by either Hector or Irwin, yet he gets into Christ Church, partly thanks to family connections with the college. Bennett uses him to satirise the idea that Oxbridge selects purely on brilliance. Scripps, who narrates parts of the play, observes both teachers with wry detachment and becomes a journalist, combining Irwin's sense of a story with Hector's love of words. Posner, the most emotionally attached to Hector, is the boy who most absorbs his teaching, but he is also the most lonely.

Bennett uses structure to give a final verdict on these influences. After Hector's death in the motorbike accident, Mrs Lintott tells the audience what becomes of the boys. Dakin becomes a tax lawyer and Irwin becomes a television historian, suggesting that Irwin's influence produces worldly success built on performance. Posner, by contrast, lives a quiet life, still remembering everything Hector taught him. Bennett seems to suggest that Hector's influence leaves no measurable trace

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on a league table but lives on in the boys' inner lives. Hector's final words, "Pass it on, boys", insist that education is a gift to be shared rather than a qualification to be cashed in.

Set in a Sheffield grammar school in the early 1980s, at a time when education was increasingly judged by results, the play reflects Bennett's own concerns about the value placed on teachers and teaching. Overall, Bennett presents the boys as shaped by both Hector and Irwin, but he leaves the audience to judge which kind of influence matters more. The boys get into Oxford thanks to Irwin, but it is Hector who teaches them how to live.

06 Bennett uses Mrs Lintott as the play's sceptical, clear-sighted voice on education. Standing between Hector's romantic idealism and Irwin's slick exam technique, she represents a steady belief in facts, hard work and honesty. Yet she is also an outsider, a woman in a school run by men and in a subject written by men, and through her Bennett exposes how education, like history itself, often ignores those who are not at its centre.

From her first appearance with the Headmaster, Mrs Lintott is presented as the dependable professional whose work is quietly undervalued. The Headmaster acknowledges that she has given the boys the facts, but he wants something more polished to impress Oxford and Cambridge, so he brings in Irwin. Bennett satirises a system obsessed with league tables and presentation, and Mrs Lintott's dry responses suggest that she sees through it. She has done the essential groundwork, but the credit, Bennett implies, will go to the flashier male teacher. This reflects ideas about the marginalisation of women in academia and about how schools value what can be measured and displayed.

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Her conversations with Hector reveal her as his friend and confidante, but not his disciple. She is fond of him and protective, particularly after the Headmaster discovers his behaviour on the motorbike, yet she does not share his belief that knowledge should be useless. Her teaching rests on solid, chronological facts. In this sense she acts almost as a mediator in the debate about the purpose of education: she recognises that the boys need both Hector's love of learning and the concrete knowledge to pass exams. Bennett uses her to suggest that good education is neither pure inspiration nor pure strategy, but a balance.

With Irwin, Mrs Lintott is more critical. She is wary of his methods of turning history into argument for its own sake, and her ironic, understated comments puncture his self-importance. Where Irwin teaches that history is "a performance", Lintott's attitude implies that it is a record of real events and real suffering. Bennett uses this contrast to raise questions about the honesty of education: should students be taught to find the truth, or to win the argument?

The most powerful moment comes when the boys, rather casually, ask her opinion and she responds with a sharp critique of history itself. She asks whether they can imagine "how depressing it is to teach five centuries of masculine ineptitude", and declares that "History is women following behind with the bucket." The metaphor of the bucket is deliberately domestic and unglamorous, presenting women as those who clean up after men's wars and mistakes but are never recorded as having made history themselves. She goes further, describing history as "a commentary on the various and continuing incapabilities of men". Here Bennett gives her a feminist perspective that challenges the whole curriculum the boys are studying, a curriculum written almost entirely about men. It is significant that the boys, absorbed in their own ambitions, barely register what she is saying, which in

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itself proves her point.

Structurally, Bennett gives Mrs Lintott a choric role. She speaks directly to the audience at several points, commenting on events with dry humour, and at the end of the play she narrates what becomes of each boy. Her ironic summaries reveal that the Oxbridge success the school worked so hard for leads to fairly ordinary or compromised lives: Dakin becomes a tax lawyer, and Irwin a television historian. By allowing her to deliver this final verdict, Bennett finally places the overlooked woman at the centre of the story. Her detached, slightly weary tone suggests that education rarely turns out as teachers intend, and that results matter far less than the system pretends.

Mrs Lintott also connects education with social class. She is aware that the boys, from a northern grammar school, are at a disadvantage against public school candidates, and part of the play's tension comes from the question of whether they should change who they are to fit Oxbridge's expectations. Lintott's steady realism offers a quieter path: knowing your subject and keeping your integrity.

Overall, Bennett uses Mrs Lintott to explore education from the margins. She is the voice of facts, common sense and professional dedication, and she exposes the gender bias in both the school and the subject she teaches. In a play dominated by charismatic men, Bennett suggests that the most honest view of education may come from the person nobody thinks to listen to.

07 Kelly uses John Tate to expose the weakness of leadership that rests on fear rather than ideas. At the start of DNA he is the group's acknowledged leader, but his authority is based on intimidation, and when a real crisis arrives he has no

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plan to offer. Through his rapid collapse and replacement by Phil, Kelly suggests that bad leaders rule by threat, while the leaders people follow in a crisis are those who seem to provide answers, even when those answers are monstrous.

John Tate's first scene shows him trying to take control of the panic. When the group gathers after Adam's apparent death, he attempts to calm them down and insists that they must all stick together. In this sense he appears to be doing what a leader should: reassuring frightened people and preventing chaos. Kelly writes the dialogue in short, broken, overlapping lines, so that the group's fear is audible, and John Tate's attempts to impose order cut through it. The audience may initially see him as protective.

However, his method of control quickly becomes absurd and sinister. His solution to the horror of what they have done is to ban the word "dead". This is a powerful dramatic moment because it shows a leader who believes that controlling language will control reality. It is a form of denial, and Kelly perhaps invites comparison with political leaders who manage crises through slogans and censorship rather than honesty. When others slip and use the word, John Tate's response is aggressive, and the threats he makes reveal that his leadership has always relied on bullying. The other characters' nervous compliance, and the way they rush to apologise, show how much they fear him. Kelly uses this to explore the psychology of groups: teenagers, like adults, will often accept an oppressive leader if he offers the illusion of safety.

Kelly also shows that John Tate's power is fragile. As the situation grows more dangerous, he admits he is finding things "stressful", a word that sounds oddly ordinary and almost corporate amid the horror. This admission is a turning point. A leader who relies on fear cannot afford to appear vulnerable, and the moment he

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shows weakness his grip loosens. The tension in these scenes is built through long silences and Phil's conspicuous presence: Phil sits eating, saying nothing, while John Tate struggles. Structurally, Kelly sets up a power shift that the audience can sense before it happens.

When Phil finally speaks, he offers a detailed, cold-blooded plan to frame an imaginary fat postman by planting evidence in the woods. The group instantly follows him. John Tate has nothing to match this. Kelly makes the contrast clear: John Tate leads by force and personality, Phil by calm, apparent intelligence. Yet the play does not present Phil as a good leader either. His plan leads to an innocent man being arrested and, ultimately, to the murder of Adam when he is found alive. Kelly suggests that the qualities people admire in a leader in a crisis, decisiveness and certainty, can be just as dangerous as aggression when they are not guided by morality.

John Tate's disappearance from the play at a relatively early stage is significant. He simply fades from the action, and later the audience hears second-hand that he has "found God". This report is both comic and revealing. It may suggest that John Tate, unable to cope with guilt, has looked for another authority to follow, swapping the role of leader for that of follower. Alternatively, it suggests that his leadership was never really about strength at all, but about a need for certainty, which he now finds in religion. Kelly uses his fate to show that bullies are often less secure than they seem.

Kelly wrote DNA for the National Theatre Connections programme, to be performed by young people, and the play deliberately echoes the way teenagers in real schools form hierarchies and follow whoever seems strongest. Like Golding's Lord of the Flies, it asks whether people naturally drift towards authoritarian leaders. Through

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John Tate, Kelly suggests that leadership based on threats collapses under pressure, but through his replacement, he warns that the alternative may be even worse. A good leader, the play implies, would have told the truth, and none of the characters is willing to do that.

Overall, John Tate is a bad leader whose authority depends on fear and denial, and his collapse exposes how hollow that authority was. Yet Kelly uses him less as a villain than as the first stage in a disturbing pattern, showing how easily a frightened group hands its conscience to whoever promises to make the problem go away.

08 Kelly certainly presents the teenagers of DNA as ordinary: they speak in the clumsy, half-finished sentences of real young people, they worry about school, relationships and their futures, and none of them sets out to kill anyone. However, I would only partly agree that they are simply "caught up in events they cannot control". Kelly shows that the events which follow Adam's fall are chosen, step by step, by the group, and his real target is not evil monsters but the way ordinary people allow terrible things to happen when they surrender their conscience to a group.

The opening strongly supports the view that the teenagers are ordinary. The play begins in medias res, with Jan and Mark exchanging fragments of news: "Dead?" The repetition and the deadpan, overlapping dialogue are almost comic, and Kelly's demotic language, full of hesitations and interruptions, makes the characters instantly recognisable. They sound like students in any school corridor. Their fear and panic in the first scenes are believable, and the audience may feel that these are frightened children who did not mean for Adam to die. Kelly wrote the play for

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the National Theatre Connections programme, to be performed by young people, so this ordinariness is deliberate: the actors and audience are meant to see themselves in these characters.

Yet even the account of the original incident challenges the idea that they are innocent bystanders. Adam was not hurt by accident. The group had been bullying him, making him do humiliating things to prove he could belong, and they dared him to walk across a grille over a shaft before throwing stones at him. Kelly presents this cruelty through casual retelling, which is perhaps more disturbing than if it were dramatised: the teenagers seem not to recognise how serious their behaviour was. This suggests that "ordinary" teenagers are capable of real harm, and that cruelty is a group habit rather than a monstrous exception.

The characters also respond in different ways, which undermines the idea that none of them has control. Phil is the clearest example. Silent for much of the play, he eventually takes charge and devises a cold, precise plan to cover up the death by framing a fat postman who does not exist. When Adam is later found alive, living in a hedge, it is Phil who decides he must be killed, and he instructs Cathy to do it. Phil is not caught up in events; he directs them. His constant eating, a recurring stage image, suggests a disturbing calm, as if moral horror cannot touch him. It is hard to see him as merely ordinary, although Kelly perhaps suggests that his emotional detachment is the logical end point of a group that values survival over morality.

Cathy, too, seems to enjoy what happens. She becomes excited by the media attention and grows increasingly violent, and she carries out Phil's order without obvious hesitation. Kelly uses her to show that, for some people, a crisis is an opportunity for power. By contrast, Brian is shattered by guilt. He breaks down, is

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forced to identify the postman, and ends up on medication, giggling and disturbed. His suffering suggests that ordinary people can be victims of the group as well as members of it.

Leah offers another perspective. In her long, rambling monologues to the silent Phil, she talks about human nature, including the differences between chimpanzees and bonobos, and she questions what kind of people they really are. She is the moral voice of the play, constantly trying to provoke a reaction and to make Phil acknowledge what they have done. However, even Leah does not go to the police. Her eventual departure from the town, which Richard reports to Phil, suggests that she cannot live with the guilt, but also that she escapes rather than confronts it.

The ending reinforces Kelly's warning. Phil is left alone on the field, refusing to return to normal life, while the group drifts apart. John Tate has apparently found God, Brian is medicated, and Leah has gone. Kelly offers no punishment and no resolution, which suggests that the consequences of their actions remain internal and unspoken.

Overall, I agree that Kelly does not present the teenagers as evil in a melodramatic sense. They are ordinary, and that is precisely what makes the play frightening. But they are not powerless. Kelly shows that each of them chooses, through fear, loyalty or self-interest, to go along with something terrible. Rather than excusing them, the play suggests that evil is often done by ordinary people who decide that someone else is in control.

09 Stephens presents Christopher's relationship with his mother as one of absence, guilt and slow, fragile repair. Judy loves her son deeply, but she lacks the patience

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his need for stability demands, and Stephens uses her to explore an uncomfortable truth: that love alone is not enough to parent a child who experiences the world differently. Rather than offering a neat reconciliation, the play suggests that the relationship can only be rebuilt on Christopher's terms, through honesty, routine and small, trusted gestures.

For most of Part One, Judy is defined by her absence. Christopher believes what Ed has told him, that his mother died of a heart attack, and Stephens has him report this with the same flat, factual tone he uses for everything else. The effect is unsettling for the audience: there is no visible grief, only a list of details and a puzzled interest in what kind of heart condition it might have been. This could suggest that Christopher does not feel her loss, but a more sensitive reading is that he processes emotion through facts because facts are safe. The structure of the play deliberately withholds Judy from the stage, so that the audience, like Christopher, accepts her death as one more piece of information, which makes the later revelation far more shocking.

That revelation comes when Christopher finds the letters hidden in Ed's room. Stephens makes a striking dramatic choice here: Judy appears on stage and speaks the letters aloud while Christopher reads them. Her voice suddenly fills the space he has occupied alone, and the contrast in modes of expression is stark. Judy's letters are emotional, rambling and full of apology, while Christopher's speech is precise, literal and ordered. She recalls moments when she lost her temper, when she shouted, when she felt she was failing him, and she admits that she was not a good mother. These memories show the audience a relationship already strained long before she left: a loving but exhausted parent, overwhelmed by a child whose needs she could not meet. The letters make her both sympathetic and culpable, and Stephens refuses to let the audience settle on one view.

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Christopher's reaction is physical rather than verbal. He curls up on the floor and groans, unable to put into words what the discovery means. Stephens shows that the lie about his mother is devastating not simply because it hides her, but because it destroys the trust and order on which his world depends. If his father can lie about something so enormous, nothing is certain. In this sense the relationship with Judy is bound up with his relationship with truth itself.

Siobhan acts as a quiet counterpoint to Judy throughout the play. She reads Christopher's book, guides him with calm instructions and never shouts. Stephens arguably positions Siobhan as the stable, patient figure Judy could not be, and the audience is invited to compare the two women. Yet Siobhan is a teacher, not a parent, and the comparison exposes how much harder sustained care is within a family.

When Christopher finally travels to London and appears at Judy's flat in Willesden, the reunion is far from the joyful embrace a conventional drama might offer. Judy is overwhelmed, emotional and wants to hold him, but Christopher cannot bear to be hugged. Stephens instead returns to the gesture of spreading the fingers and touching hands, a form of contact Christopher can accept. This small, controlled moment is more powerful than any embrace because it shows Judy learning to love him in a way that respects his boundaries. Stephens suggests that relationships with a child like Christopher must be rebuilt through actions he can trust, not through words he may struggle to interpret.

Judy's later actions show genuine change. She leaves Mr Shears, returns to Swindon and supports Christopher in sitting his A level maths exam, which becomes the proof of what he can achieve. Her decision to put her son first

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reverses her earlier abandonment. However, Stephens avoids sentimentality: the household remains cramped, money is short and Christopher is still wary of Ed, despite the gift of a puppy. The relationship has been repaired, but it remains provisional.

Ultimately, Stephens uses Christopher's relationship with his mother to explore the pressures faced by parents of children with complex needs, an issue the original 2012 National Theatre audience might have recognised but rarely seen on stage. Judy is neither villain nor saint. She is a flawed parent whose love is real but whose patience failed. By ending with Christopher's hopeful question about whether he can do anything, Stephens implies that the stability Judy finally offers allows him to imagine a future, and that the bond between them, though damaged, is part of what makes that future possible.

10 To a large extent, Christopher is always looking for order and truth: they are the two principles through which he makes sense of a confusing world. However, Stephens complicates the statement by showing that order and truth are not the same thing, and that the more Christopher pursues the truth, the more it destroys the order he depends on. By the end of the play he is looking for something larger than either: the confidence to live in a world that will never be fully orderly or honest.

From the opening moment, Stephens establishes Christopher as a seeker of truth. The play begins with Wellington lying dead with a garden fork through him, a deliberately shocking image that launches a detective story. Christopher's decision to investigate, modelled on his hero Sherlock Holmes, frames him as someone who believes that every mystery has a logical solution. His insistence that he cannot

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tell lies reinforces this: truth for Christopher is not a moral choice but a fact about how his mind works. Stephens uses this to expose the casual dishonesty of the adults around him, who speak in metaphors, hints and half-truths. The contrast between Christopher's literal mode of expression and the evasive language of others suggests that the "normal" world is far less committed to truth than he is.

Christopher's need for order is presented just as clearly. He organises his world through rules about colours, through numbers and through routines, and Stephens shows how these structures give him comfort. When he feels overwhelmed, he counts, recites prime numbers or retreats into mathematical patterns. The play's staging reinforces this: the stage is often designed as a grid, and the ensemble moves with precise, choreographed physicality, so that the audience sees the world through his ordered perspective.

Yet Stephens structures the play so that the search for truth repeatedly threatens order. Ed forbids Christopher to continue his investigation, and Christopher's persistence leads him to the letters in his father's room. The truth he finds is devastating: his mother is alive, and his father has lied. Shortly afterwards Ed confesses that he killed Wellington. Christopher's response is not satisfaction at solving the case but terror. He reasons that if his father could kill a dog, he might kill him, and the logic that once protected him now drives him to flee. Here Stephens suggests that truth and order are in conflict: the truth has shattered the safe, predictable home that order relied upon.

The journey to London becomes a test of how Christopher copes when order disappears. Stephens presents the railway station and the Underground as a chaotic sensory overload, with the ensemble becoming a crowd of overlapping

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voices, announcements and signs. Christopher's encounters with strangers, such as the policeman at the station and the people on the train, show how threatening the world is when its rules are unwritten. Rather than finding order, he must improvise, hide and push himself beyond his limits. This challenges the view that he is "always" looking for order; at this point he is looking for safety and for his mother, and he chooses disorder to reach her.

Furthermore, Christopher is not simply a passive victim of a chaotic world. He makes choices that reveal ambition and determination. His fixation on sitting his A level maths exam is about order, but it is also about proving himself and planning a future: university, independence, a life of his own. Siobhan, who offers him calm guidance and honest answers, helps him see that he can set his own goals rather than only following rules. Stephens perhaps suggests that the people Christopher trusts are those who give him truth and structure, but that these are means to an end rather than the end itself.

The play's final moments make this clear. Having passed his exam, survived his journey and begun to rebuild trust with his father, Christopher asks Siobhan, "Does that mean I can do anything?" The question is significant because it is open rather than certain. The boy who once demanded definite answers now asks a question about possibility, and Stephens leaves it hanging, unresolved, for the audience.

In conclusion, the statement captures an essential part of Christopher, but not all of him. Stephens presents order and truth as his tools for survival in a world that often feels hostile, and he invites a 2012 audience to respect a perspective that is unique rather than deficient. However, the play's structure, a series of escalating challenges, shows Christopher learning that truth can be painful and that order

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cannot always be maintained. What he is really looking for, in the end, is the courage to face both.

11 Delaney certainly presents Jo as selfish at times: she can be cruel, demanding and careless of the people who love her. However, her selfishness is presented less as a moral failing than as a defence, learned from a mother who has always put herself first. Through Jo, Delaney explores what happens to a working-class girl left to raise herself, and she asks her 1958 audience to understand rather than condemn a young woman whose self-interest is often the only protection she has.

From the opening scene, Jo's sharp tongue suggests a self-absorbed teenager. She complains about the shabby lodgings Helen has brought her to, which the stage directions call a "comfortless flat", mocks her mother's drinking and age, and refuses to help unpack. Delaney's realistic, quick-fire dialogue, full of insults traded like a music-hall double act, makes Jo seem rude and ungrateful. Yet the comedy has an edge of pathos. Helen is constantly moving them from one lodging to another and is far more interested in her own comfort and her "fancy man" Peter than in her daughter. When Jo is ill or upset, Helen offers little sympathy. Jo's selfishness is therefore mirrored, and arguably caused, by her mother's. Delaney suggests that a child who is not cared for learns to look after herself first.

Jo's relationship with the Boy, a black sailor, shows her seeking affection rather than acting selfishly. She accepts his ring and his promise to return, and the tenderness of their scenes together reveals a lonely girl reaching for love. When Helen announces she is marrying Peter and leaving, Jo is abandoned, and the Boy's departure with his ship soon follows. Delaney structures the end of Act One around this double desertion, so that the audience sees Jo as a victim before they see her

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as selfish.

Jo's behaviour towards Geof in Act Two is where the charge of selfishness has most weight. Geof moves in, cleans, cooks, sews for the baby and listens to her moods, yet Jo often takes him for granted. She teases him about his sexuality and presses him with intrusive questions about what he does, which in a society where homosexuality was illegal until 1967 is a cruel way of exposing his vulnerability. She calls him "just like a big sister to me", a line that is affectionate but also dismissive, as though his feelings for her do not count. When he proposes marriage, she rejects him. Delaney invites the audience to feel that Jo uses Geof's kindness while giving very little back.

Her attitude to her pregnancy also seems self-centred. She declares, "I don't want to be a mother. I don't want to be a woman," and even threatens to "bash its brains out". These are shocking lines, and an audience might see them as proof of Jo's selfishness. However, Delaney presents them as the panic of a teenager facing a future she did not choose. In the 1950s, an unmarried, pregnant working-class girl expecting a mixed-race child faced stigma, poverty and judgement from every side. Jo's rejection of motherhood is also a rejection of the role of women that has failed Helen. Her selfishness here is fear.

Moreover, Jo has moments of generosity and insight that complicate the label. She depends on Geof and, in quieter moments, shows real warmth towards him, recognising that he cares for her more than anyone else has. She also shows a fierce independence, determined to work and support herself rather than depend on a man. Delaney presents her self-reliance as admirable. Her famous claim that she is "contemporary" and lives "at the same time" as herself suggests a girl insisting on her own identity in a world that keeps trying to define her.

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The ending deepens the ambiguity. Helen returns, having been thrown out by Peter, and drives Geof away. Jo is left with her mother, and when she reveals that the baby's father was black, Helen leaves for a drink, saying she will be back. Jo is left alone on stage softly singing a nursery rhyme. The moment is full of pathos: the girl who seemed so selfish is now the one left behind, waiting, as she has always been.

In conclusion, Delaney presents Jo as selfish to a limited extent. She is often thoughtless and hurtful, particularly to Geof, but the play's structure, moving through the passing months of her pregnancy and repeated abandonments, shows how she has been shaped by neglect. Writing at nineteen, Delaney wanted to give an authentic voice to working-class young women, and Jo's selfishness is part of that honesty. She is not a model of virtue, but a survivor, and the audience is left to ask whether a society that offered her so little has the right to judge her.

12 Delaney certainly presents a society that is harsh, prejudiced and unforgiving to those at the bottom of it: the poor, women, black people and gay men. However, to call the play simply "bleak and depressing" ignores its humour, energy and the moments of genuine kindness that survive within it. Delaney's purpose, writing in 1958 at the age of nineteen, was to show working-class Salford life honestly, and honesty includes both the squalor and the resilience of the people who live in it.

The settings immediately suggest a bleak world. The stage directions describe a "comfortless flat", and Jo and Helen's constant moving from one cheap lodging to another establishes a life without security. Jo's complaints about the cold, the damp and the dreary surroundings paint the city as grimy and industrial. For an

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audience used to the drawing rooms of middle-class drama, such as the plays of Terence Rattigan, this was a deliberate shock. Delaney, working with Joan Littlewood's Theatre Workshop, was part of a movement that put the realities of poverty on stage, and the squalid setting forces the audience to confront lives usually ignored.

Relationships in the play are also presented as damaged by this environment. Helen's neglect of Jo is the clearest example. She drinks, moves on whenever it suits her and abandons her daughter to marry Peter, a younger man with money. Peter himself is a drunk who sneers at Jo and later throws Helen out. Delaney uses realistic, insulting dialogue to show how love in this society is often transactional: Helen chooses Peter because he can offer her a comfortable life, not because he is kind. The Boy, too, leaves after making promises he does not keep. The structure of the play, built around repeated departures, suggests that in this world people cannot rely on anyone.

Society's prejudices make life bleaker still. Jo's pregnancy outside marriage carries heavy stigma in the 1950s, and the fact that the father is black makes her a target for the racism of the period, the same year as the Notting Hill riots. Helen's reaction to the possibility of a black grandchild, rushing out for a drink, exposes this prejudice within the family itself. Geof faces similar hostility. Homosexuality was a crime until 1967, and the mockery he suffers from Helen and Peter, and even at times from Jo, shows a society that has no place for him. Delaney's pathos is strongest here: Geof is the kindest character in the play, yet he is the one most rejected.

However, the play is far from relentlessly depressing. Its humour is one of its most striking features. The quick-fire exchanges between Jo and Helen, influenced by

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music-hall routines, are often very funny, and Helen frequently breaks the fourth wall to address the audience directly, sharing jokes and asides. The jazz music that links the scenes gives the play an energy that resists despair. Delaney seems to suggest that working-class characters are not passive victims but people with wit, spirit and the ability to laugh at their own circumstances.

There are also moments of real tenderness. The scenes between Jo and the Boy have a gentle, playful intimacy, and the relationship between Jo and Geof in Act Two offers a glimpse of an alternative kind of family. Geof cooks, cleans and prepares for the baby, and the pair share childlike games and rhymes. The image of a pregnant girl and a gay man creating a home together was radical in 1958, and it suggests that kindness can grow even in a hostile society. Delaney arguably presents this as the "taste of honey" of the title: sweetness that is brief but real.

The ending balances bleakness and hope. Helen drives Geof away, and when she learns the baby might be black she leaves to find a drink, saying she will be back. Jo is left alone on stage singing a nursery rhyme. The moment is poignant, because Jo has lost the one person who truly cared for her, yet the childlike song also hints at her endurance and at the new life about to begin. The future is uncertain rather than hopeless.

Overall, I agree that Delaney presents society as bleak in many ways: it is poor, prejudiced and unstable, and it fails the most vulnerable people in it. But the play is not depressing in tone. Through humour, music and the warmth of characters like Geof, Delaney celebrates the resilience of working-class people. Her aim was not to make the audience despair but to make them see, and to recognise that even in a hard world, people find ways to survive and to love.

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Golding presents the relationship between Ralph and Piggy as a fragile alliance between natural authority and rational intelligence, one that grows from careless mockery into genuine friendship, only to be destroyed by the savagery around it. Through their partnership, Golding suggests that civilisation needs both leadership and reason to survive, and that when the two are separated, or when the intelligent are dismissed because they are physically weak, society collapses.

Their first meeting, which opens the novel, establishes the imbalance between them. Ralph is introduced as "the boy with fair hair", athletic and confident, while Piggy is fat, asthmatic and short-sighted. Their modes of speech are pointedly contrasted. Piggy's non-standard grammar and his references to his "auntie" and her sweet shop mark him as working class, whereas Ralph's boast that his father is "a commander in the Navy" places him in the officer class. Ralph's casual "Sucks to your ass-mar!" shows his lack of interest in Piggy's vulnerability. Golding, writing in the 1950s when social class still shaped every British institution, perhaps suggests that the boys bring the snobbery of their society with them to the island.

Ralph's first act of betrayal comes almost immediately. Piggy confides that he does not care what they call him "so long as they don't call me what they used to call me at school", but Ralph reveals the nickname to the other boys. The cry of "Piggy! Piggy!" and the laughter that follows show how easily Ralph sacrifices Piggy for popularity. The nickname is also ominous: it links Piggy to the pigs the boys will later hunt and slaughter, foreshadowing his death.

Despite this, Piggy is the one who understands the significance of the conch, and he teaches Ralph how to blow it. Golding presents the relationship as one of mutual dependence from the start: Ralph has the charisma to lead, but it is Piggy

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who has the ideas. Piggy's glasses become a powerful symbol of this. They represent clear sight and scientific thought, and when they are used to light the fire they literally become the source of hope for rescue. When Jack breaks one lens in Chapter 4, Ralph's anger on Piggy's behalf suggests that their relationship is beginning to change.

By Chapter 5, Ralph begins to value Piggy openly. Golding uses free indirect narration to reveal Ralph's thoughts: "Piggy could think." Ralph recognises that Piggy "could go step by step inside that fat head of his", yet he also notes that Piggy "was no chief". This captures their relationship precisely. Ralph needs Piggy's intelligence, but Piggy's weakness and social status prevent him from leading. The two complement each other, and Golding seems to suggest that good leadership requires the humility to listen to people one might once have mocked.

Their bond deepens through shared guilt. After Simon's murder in Chapter 9, Ralph insists "That was murder", while Piggy, desperate to hold on to his belief in reason, insists it was an accident. Golding presents them as both complicit, and the moment strips away any idea that they are morally superior to the hunters. Yet it is also when they become closest, clinging to each other as the last representatives of civilised life. When Jack's tribe steals Piggy's glasses, Piggy is left helpless, and Ralph becomes his protector.

The climax of their relationship comes at Castle Rock. Piggy, holding the conch, appeals to reason with his question about whether it is better to have rules and agree, or to hunt and kill. Roger releases the boulder, and Piggy "fell forty feet" onto the rocks below, while "the conch exploded into a thousand white fragments". Golding's brutal, matter-of-fact description, and the simultaneous destruction of Piggy and the conch, suggest that reason and order die together. Ralph is left

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completely alone.

The novel's ending confirms how much Piggy meant to him. When the naval officer arrives, Ralph weeps for "the end of innocence, the darkness of man's heart, and the fall through the air of the true, wise friend called Piggy." The phrase "true, wise friend" is a final act of recognition, the respect Ralph failed to show in Chapter 1. It is significant that Piggy's real name is never revealed; even in Ralph's grief, the cruel nickname remains.

Golding's experience in the Royal Navy during the Second World War convinced him of humanity's capacity for evil, and the relationship between Ralph and Piggy shows how that evil destroys the vulnerable first. Their friendship, built slowly from contempt to respect, is perhaps the novel's only real image of civilised humanity, and its destruction is Golding's warning that reason and decency are far more fragile than we like to believe.

14 Golding presents rules and order as a thin, artificial layer over human nature: something the boys eagerly copy from the adult world, but which they abandon once fear and the thrill of power take hold. Ralph's claim that "the rules are the only thing we've got" is both a plea and a warning. Through the gradual collapse of order on the island, Golding, shaped by his experience of the Second World War, suggests that civilisation does not come naturally to human beings and must be constantly defended.

At the start of the novel, the boys are delighted to discover there are no adults on the island. Ralph stands on his head with joy, and the island seems a paradise of freedom. Yet almost immediately the boys recreate the structures they know.

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Ralph and Piggy find the conch, and its use to summon an assembly establishes it as a symbol of democratic order: whoever holds it may speak. Ralph is elected chief by vote, and rules are created for meetings, fire-keeping and shelters. Ironically, it is Jack who declares, "We've got to have rules and obey them. After all, we're not savages." The confident nationalism of his next words, that "the English are best at everything", reflects the attitudes of post-war Britain and sets up a bitter irony, since Jack will become the most savage of all.

Golding structures the novel so that order decays gradually rather than collapsing all at once. In Chapter 4, Roger throws stones at the little boy Henry but aims to miss. Golding explains that "Round the squatting child was the protection of parents and school and policemen and the law." Roger's arm is "conditioned by a civilization that knew nothing of him and was in ruins." This is one of the most important moments in the novel, because it shows that rules still restrain the boys, but only as a habit. The phrase "in ruins" reminds the reader of the atomic war raging beyond the island, implying that the adult world which created these rules has itself descended into violence.

By Chapter 5, Ralph sees order slipping away. The shelters are unfinished, the fire has been allowed to go out and the boys ignore the rules about where to go to the toilet. His insistence that "the rules are the only thing we've got" shows that he recognises their fragility. Jack's reply, "Bollocks to the rules!", is a direct challenge to authority, and Golding uses the crude language to signal the breakdown of the polite, schoolboy discipline the boys brought with them. The assembly ends in chaos, and from this point the conch begins to lose its power.

The rise of Jack's tribe shows an alternative kind of order: not democracy, but dictatorship based on fear. At Castle Rock, Jack rules through violence and ritual.

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He has Wilfred beaten for no stated reason, and the boys chant "Kill the beast! Cut his throat! Spill his blood!" The repetitive, rhythmic chant replaces discussion and reason with collective frenzy. Golding suggests that humans may crave structure, but that they will accept a brutal order if it offers protection, belonging and the excitement of the hunt.

The final stand between order and savagery comes at Castle Rock in Chapter 11. Piggy, holding the conch, asks whether it is better "to have rules and agree, or to hunt and kill". His questions present the novel's central choice in the starkest possible terms. Roger's response is to release the boulder, killing Piggy, and "the conch exploded into a thousand white fragments and ceased to exist." The simultaneous destruction of Piggy and the conch is a powerful symbol: reason and democratic order are wiped out in a single moment of violence.

The ending introduces a final irony. When the naval officer arrives, he is disappointed that "a pack of British boys" could not "put up a better show", and he compares their situation to an adventure story. Yet he is himself part of a war, with a warship waiting offshore. Golding suggests that the adults' order is no different from the boys': it is simply larger and better disguised. The rescue does not restore innocence; Ralph weeps for "the darkness of man's heart".

Golding, who served in the Royal Navy and witnessed the horrors of the war, believed that evil is innate in human beings. Lord of the Flies explores rules and order not as natural features of society but as fragile inventions that hold back this darkness. The boys' journey from the excitement of freedom to the hunting of Ralph shows how easily those rules can be broken, and Golding leaves the reader with an unsettling question: whether the adult world, with its rules, uniforms and wars, is really any more civilised.

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In both 'The Darkness Out There' by Penelope Lively and 'Korea' by John McGahern, characters who seem familiar and safe turn out to behave in shocking ways, and the young protagonists are forced to revise everything they thought they knew. Both writers use unexpected behaviour to explore the moment of growing up, when a teenager realises that the real darkness lies not in the outside world but inside the people closest to them.

Lively builds the shock of her story by first lulling the reader into the same assumptions as her narrator. Sandra sets off to help Mrs Rutter through a Good Neighbours scheme, and the old woman is presented through a series of comforting stereotypes: she is plump, chatty, fond of baking and full of praise for the young people who come to help. Her cosy cottage, with its cups of tea and cake, seems the opposite of Packer's End, the dark patch of woodland that Sandra fears because of rumours of attacks and a German plane that crashed there in the war. Lively uses this contrast between light and dark to suggest that danger is outside, in the wild places, while homes and old ladies are safe.

The story's central twist overturns this completely. Mrs Rutter, almost casually, describes how during the war she and her sister found the young German airman alive in the wreckage of his plane and chose to leave him there to die over the following nights. The horror lies as much in her tone as in her actions. She tells the story as if it were ordinary gossip, between offers of more tea, and shows no remorse. Lively's choice to keep her speech chatty and domestic makes the cruelty more chilling: the reader realises that the "nice" old lady has been capable of something monstrous. Lively challenges the stereotype that elderly women are harmless and kindly, and suggests that ordinary people, under the pressures of war

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and grief, can lose their humanity.

Kerry's reaction is the second unexpected behaviour. Earlier, Sandra has dismissed him as spotty, scruffy and uninteresting, viewing him through the narrow judgements of a teenager concerned with appearances. Yet it is Kerry who responds with moral clarity. He is furious at Mrs Rutter, refuses to stay and insists that the airman was a human being, just like anyone else. Lively uses Sandra's narrative viewpoint to show her shock at her own misjudgement: the boy she looked down on proves more mature and compassionate than she is. By the end, Sandra feels that she has stepped into a different world, where the darkness she feared at Packer's End is something inside people.

McGahern's 'Korea' also centres on a young man discovering the unexpected nature of an adult he trusts, but here it is his own father. The story is set in rural Ireland in the 1950s, during the last summer that father and son fish for eels together on the river, and the shared work first suggests closeness. The father tells his son about witnessing an execution as a young prisoner during the Irish War of Independence, a memory that reveals a vulnerable, haunted side to him.

The unexpected behaviour emerges when the son overhears his father discussing a local family whose son was killed fighting for the American army in Korea, and the large sum of money they received in compensation. The son realises that his father's eagerness for him to emigrate to America is driven partly by the prospect of profit if he is conscripted and killed. McGahern presents this revelation quietly, through the son's first-person narration, and the restraint makes it more painful. There is no dramatic confrontation; instead, the son silently re-evaluates every moment they have shared. In a society where emigration was a common and often desperate solution to poverty, McGahern exposes how economic pressure can

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corrupt even the bond between parent and child.

Both writers therefore present unexpected behaviour as a catalyst for growing up. Sandra and the son both begin with simple assumptions about adults, and both are forced to recognise that those closest to them, an old neighbour or a father, can be cold and calculating. However, Lively balances this disillusionment with Kerry's unexpected decency, offering hope that young people can see more clearly than their elders. McGahern's ending is more isolated: the son keeps his knowledge to himself, and the reader senses that the relationship with his father has been permanently altered.

In conclusion, both stories use the unexpected not simply as a twist but as a way of exploring moral understanding. Lively and McGahern show that appearances, whether of a kindly old woman or a loving father, can conceal darkness, and that the transition to adulthood involves recognising this uncomfortable truth.

16 In both 'Invisible Mass of the Back Row' by Claudette Williams and 'My Polish Teacher's Tie' by Helen Dunmore, characters who feel overlooked by the institutions around them come to a new understanding of who they are and of how others see them. Both writers use schools as small versions of society, with rigid hierarchies, and both suggest that learning about oneself means learning to value an identity that others have dismissed.

Williams immerses the reader immediately in Hortense's world. The first-person, present-tense narration plunges us into a Jamaican classroom where pupils are seated according to how highly they are valued, with favoured children at the front and the poorest and least regarded in the back row. The title itself presents these

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pupils as an "invisible mass", a crowd without individual identity. Through the use of Jamaican Creole in Hortense's voice and the more formal English of the adults, Williams shows how language itself reflects power: standard English belongs to authority, while the children's own speech is treated as inferior.

Hortense's first lessons about others come through fear and anger. When the Inspector visits and questions her, she is terrified, standing up with shaking limbs, and the episode ends with Miss Henderson punishing her. The scene reveals a school system shaped by colonialism, in which children are taught a version of history that celebrates figures like Columbus. Hortense's instinctive questioning of why Columbus came at all suggests that she is beginning to see the official story differently from the way her teachers present it. Her rage at the favoured front-row pupil, Lorna Phillips, and the planned fight outside school show her learning that the hierarchy is unjust, though at this stage her response is personal and physical rather than considered.

Williams then shifts the setting abruptly to England, where Hortense joins the parents who emigrated before her. England is cold and unwelcoming, and she realises that she must learn a new language to be accepted. Yet the most powerful discovery is that she is placed in the back row once again. She learns that the hierarchy she left behind is not unique to Jamaica: race and class shape her place in the English classroom too. However, she also finds friendship and solidarity among the other back-row pupils. When she challenges the story of Columbus again, her question now carries a deeper understanding of her people's history, and the back row's sense of shared triumph suggests a growing collective voice. Williams presents learning about oneself as an act of resistance: Hortense refuses to stay invisible.

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Dunmore's story also centres on an overlooked woman in a school, but her learning is quieter and more personal. Carla is a part-time catering assistant who serves tea to teachers in the staffroom, and she describes how the staff hardly notice her. Dunmore uses Carla's first-person voice, wry and self-deprecating, to reveal how she has accepted her invisibility. When the head teacher asks for staff to write to teachers in Poland, Carla, whose mother was Polish, answers and begins writing to Stefan. In her letters she lets him assume she is a teacher, and in doing so she reveals her own sense that who she really is would not be good enough.

When Stefan comes to visit the school, Carla fears that her pretence will be exposed. Dunmore builds tension around this, and the staffroom, where Carla has always been treated as part of the furniture, becomes the place where the quiet class snobbery of the school might humiliate her. The turning point comes when Carla sings a Polish song her mother taught her. In this moment, her heritage, which she has kept private, becomes her strength. Stefan responds warmly, recognising her for who she is rather than her job, and Carla learns that she does not need to pretend. She also learns something about others: that people like Stefan can see past status, and that the teachers' disregard says more about them than about her.

Both writers therefore present learning about oneself as bound up with heritage and recognition. Hortense's Jamaican identity and Carla's Polish roots are aspects of themselves that institutions ignore or devalue, and both characters come to see these identities as sources of pride. However, the stories differ in scale. Williams presents learning as political and collective, tied to colonialism, migration and race, while Dunmore presents it as an intimate, individual awakening within the subtle class divisions of an English school.

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In conclusion, both writers show characters who learn that being overlooked by others does not define their worth. Through first-person narration and carefully chosen settings, Williams and Dunmore suggest that self-knowledge begins when people stop accepting the place society has given them and claim a voice of their own.

17 Orwell presents Boxer as the most sympathetic character in Animal Farm, but his sympathy is deliberately double-edged. We admire his strength, honesty and selflessness, yet we are also frustrated by the blind loyalty that allows the pigs to exploit him. Through Boxer, Orwell suggests that the goodness of ordinary working people is precisely what totalitarian regimes feed upon, so our pity for him becomes an argument against the tyranny that destroys him.

From his first appearance, Orwell builds sympathy through physical description. Boxer is "an enormous beast, nearly eighteen hands high", yet his strength is paired with gentleness: he and Clover take care not to crush any small animal hidden in the straw. Orwell immediately qualifies this praise, noting that he was "not of first-rate intelligence" but "universally respected for his steadiness of character". This combination of power and simplicity is central to how far we sympathise with him. Readers warm to his innocence, but the narrator's honesty about his limited understanding prepares us for the way he will be manipulated.

After the Rebellion, Boxer's sympathetic qualities are shown through action rather than words. He arranges for a cockerel to wake him earlier than the others, and his personal motto, "I will work harder", becomes his answer to every crisis. The repetition of this short, simple sentence throughout the novella creates a sense of pathos, because each repetition comes when the farm's problems are caused not by

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laziness but by the pigs' greed and lies. Orwell based Boxer partly on the Stakhanovite workers of the Soviet Union, labourers held up by Stalin's propaganda as heroes for exceeding impossible quotas. By making his hardest worker a horse, Orwell suggests that such workers were treated as beasts of burden by a state that claimed to free them.

Boxer's bravery at the Battle of the Cowshed deepens our sympathy. When he believes he has killed the stable lad, he is distressed and says, "I have no wish to take life, not even human life." This moment of conscience sets him apart from the pigs, who later execute animals without hesitation, and it suggests that Boxer has a moral decency that the revolution's leaders lack. Ironically, his courage helps to save the farm for the very pigs who will later betray him.

However, Orwell also limits our sympathy, or at least complicates it. Boxer's second maxim, "Napoleon is always right", shows him surrendering his judgement completely. When the dogs attack him during the purges, he pins one to the ground but looks to Napoleon before letting it go, and after the executions he can only conclude that the cause "must be due to some fault in ourselves". Here Orwell makes the reader uncomfortable. Boxer is strong enough to resist, and had he turned against Napoleon the other animals might have followed, yet he chooses obedience. Perhaps Orwell wants us to see that blind loyalty, however admirable in itself, makes ordinary people complicit in their own oppression. Benjamin, who sees clearly but does nothing, acts as a foil: together they suggest that neither cynicism nor faith alone can resist tyranny.

The climax of Boxer's story is where Orwell's presentation is most powerful. After splitting his hoof and collapsing while working on the windmill, Boxer is promised a peaceful retirement, but the van that takes him away bears the words "Horse

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Slaughterer". The scene is structured for maximum shock: the animals run after the van, Benjamin finally shouts out the truth, and Boxer's kicks against the inside of the van grow weaker until they stop. The image of the strongest animal on the farm now too weak to break free is a symbol of how the regime has drained its workers of everything. Squealer's lie that Boxer died in a hospital, praising Napoleon, and the rumour that the pigs bought a case of whisky soon afterwards, turn our pity into anger.

Therefore, Orwell presents Boxer as deeply sympathetic, but not simply as a victim. His tragedy is that his best qualities, loyalty and endless labour, are the very qualities that the pigs exploit. Publishing in 1945 as a democratic socialist disillusioned by Stalinism, Orwell uses Boxer to warn readers that the honest worker who trusts without questioning will always be the first to be sacrificed.

18 Orwell presents Old Major's speech as the seed from which every later event in Animal Farm grows. It provides the ideals of the Rebellion, the language of equality and the song that unites the animals, but it also becomes the standard against which the reader measures the pigs' betrayal. By opening with this vision of a just society and ending with its complete reversal, Orwell suggests that revolutionary ideals are fragile and easily corrupted by those who seize power in their name.

Orwell gives Major an authority that makes his words feel important from the start. He is described as "a majestic-looking pig, with a wise and benevolent appearance", and the animals settle down respectfully to listen, each species finding its place in the barn. As an allegory of Karl Marx, whose ideas inspired the Russian Revolution, and arguably of Lenin too, Major is the elder statesman whose

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dream will outlive him. The fact that he dies three nights later is structurally significant: the ideas survive, but the man who could have interpreted them does not, leaving them open to manipulation.

The speech itself is a carefully crafted piece of rhetoric. Major begins with a rhetorical question about the nature of their lives and answers it with a tricolon: "our lives are miserable, laborious, and short". The blunt, three-part structure gives his argument a sense of undeniable truth. His repeated address "Comrades" is inclusive and dignified, giving lowly farm animals a status they have never had. He then identifies a single cause of their suffering: "Man is the only creature that consumes without producing." This is a simplified version of Marx's critique of capitalism, in which the owners profit from the labour of the workers, and its clear, aphoristic form makes it easy to remember and repeat. The key line, "All men are enemies. All animals are comrades", uses a balanced antithesis that divides the world neatly into us and them. Its simplicity is its power, but Orwell may also be hinting at its danger, since slogans that reduce complex politics to two sides can easily be twisted.

Orwell presents the reactions to the speech as passionate but chaotic. When the rats appear, the dogs chase them and a vote has to be taken on whether rats are comrades, a comic moment which suggests that equality is harder to practise than to proclaim. The singing of "Beasts of England" is the emotional climax: the animals sing it over and over until the whole farm is roused and Mr Jones fires his gun into the darkness. The song turns Major's abstract ideas into a shared, emotional identity, much as "The Internationale" did for socialist movements, and it shows how stirring language can mobilise a whole population.

After Major's death, Orwell shows the pigs converting the speech into the system

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of Animalism and the Seven Commandments. Major had warned that no animal must ever live in a house, sleep in a bed, drink alcohol or engage in trade, and the structure of the novella follows the pigs breaking every one of these prohibitions in turn. Each broken rule is a measure of how far the farm has travelled from Major's vision. Napoleon eventually bans "Beasts of England" and replaces it with a song praising himself, which shows that the pigs understand the power of Major's words and must silence them once they threaten their rule. Major's skull is dug up and displayed for the animals to file past, a detail that echoes the embalming of Lenin's body. The pigs claim Major's authority while abandoning his ideas, turning a revolutionary into a relic.

The ending completes this pattern. Napoleon tells the human farmers that the custom of calling one another "Comrade" is to be suppressed and that Major's skull has been buried, and he restores the name Manor Farm. Major's central distinction between men and animals collapses in the final image, where the animals look "from pig to man, and from man to pig" and find it "impossible to say which was which". The circular structure returns the farm to the tyranny of the opening, only worse.

Orwell, therefore, presents Old Major's speech as important because it is both the inspiration for the Rebellion and the evidence of its betrayal. Writing as a socialist who had seen Stalin's Soviet Union corrupt the ideals of 1917, Orwell suggests that the danger lies not in the dream itself but in a population that cannot remember it accurately and a leadership that rewrites it for its own ends.

19 Ishiguro presents Miss Emily as a protector, but only within the narrow limits of a society that never questions whether the students should exist to be harvested at

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all. She shields them from the truth and from the worst of the world outside, yet that protection also keeps them obedient and prevents them from imagining any other life. Her claim, "You wouldn't be who you are today if we hadn't protected you", is therefore both sincere and deeply troubling, and Ishiguro uses her to explore how well-meaning people can become complicit in cruelty.

Through most of the novel, Miss Emily is seen through the eyes of Kathy as a child, and the first-person retrospective narrative shapes our view of her as remote and stern. She is the head guardian, the figure the students fear in assembly and in the corridors, a figure of quiet authority whose presence alone keeps order. Yet Kathy's memories also contain hints of care: Miss Emily insists on the students' health, on their creativity and on their good behaviour, as though their wellbeing genuinely matters to her. The Hailsham regime of art lessons, the Exchanges and regular medical checks seems, on the surface, like that of a caring English boarding school. Ishiguro deliberately uses this familiar setting to lull the reader, just as the students are lulled, into a false sense of security.

The most obvious way Miss Emily protects the students is by controlling what they know. The guardians drip-feed information so that the students, in Miss Lucy's words, have "been told and not told". Miss Emily's policy is the reason they grow up without fully grasping what donations mean. Ishiguro shows the cost of this through Miss Lucy, the one guardian who rebels and tells the students plainly that they will become donors and die young. Her departure from Hailsham soon afterwards suggests that Miss Emily values the students' innocence more than their right to the truth. A reader might see this as kindness, giving children a happy childhood, or as a form of control that prepares them to accept their fate without protest.

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The structure of the novel delays our full understanding of Miss Emily until near the end, when Kathy and Tommy visit her and Madame to ask about deferrals. Here Ishiguro dramatically reverses our perspective. Miss Emily, now in a wheelchair and selling her furniture, explains that Hailsham was part of a campaign to show the public that clones could be raised humanely, and that the art in the Gallery was collected to prove the students "had souls at all". In this sense she has genuinely protected them: compared with the huge, bleak government homes where other clones were raised, Hailsham gave them education, friendship and a childhood. Her movement lost support after a scandal over a scientist's experiments, which suggests she fought for them against a hostile society.

However, Ishiguro undermines Miss Emily's protection at the very moment she explains it. She confirms that the deferral rumour was never true and that nothing can stop the donations. Her protection never extended to saving their lives. Her tone in this scene is also revealing: she speaks of the students as though they were a cause, and she is more concerned with a cabinet being carried out by the removal men than with the devastation of the two people in front of her. Madame's reaction to the students, which Kathy remembers as a kind of recoiling, as if from spiders, hints that even the guardians who campaigned for them could not quite see them as fully human. Tommy's scream in the darkened field after the visit shows the true effect of learning what Miss Emily's protection actually meant.

Ishiguro's wider purpose is to make readers question the ethics of science and the ways societies avoid looking at uncomfortable truths. Writing in 2005, not long after the cloning of Dolly the sheep in 1996, he imagines an alternative England in which convenience has triumphed over morality. Miss Emily represents the liberal

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reformer who improves conditions without challenging the system itself.

Ultimately, then, Ishiguro presents Miss Emily as protecting the students only partly. She protects their childhood, their sense of identity and their capacity for art and love, which is why Kathy is "who" she is. But she cannot, or will not, protect them from the system that kills them, and her protection may even have made them more accepting of it. The tragedy is that her version of kindness and the students' oppression are impossible to separate.

20 Ishiguro presents his characters as constantly searching for happiness, but within a world that has already decided their lives will end in donation and "completion". Their searches are small, private and often misdirected: a lost tape, a "possible", a rumoured deferral. Ishiguro's point is perhaps that the clones' longing for happiness is the clearest proof of their humanity, and that a society which ignores that longing has lost its own.

Kathy's search for happiness is quiet and largely hidden, which reflects the restrained first-person narrative. She opens with a calm statement of fact, "My name is Kathy H. I'm thirty-one years old", and seems to accept her role as a carer without complaint. Yet her memories reveal moments of intense longing. At Hailsham she treasures her tape of Judy Bridgewater's "Songs After Dark", and she dances alone to the line "Baby, baby, never let me go", imagining a baby she can hold. Ishiguro later reveals that clones cannot have children, so the scene becomes heartbreaking in hindsight: Kathy's happiness lies in a fantasy that her body can never fulfil. When the tape is lost, the students' belief that Norfolk is England's "lost corner", where lost things end up, gives her a reason to search. The search for the tape becomes a symbol of the larger search for something taken from

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them, and when Tommy helps her find a copy in Norfolk, the happiness she feels is real but bittersweet, since it is a replacement rather than the original.

Ruth's search for happiness is more outward and more desperate. At the Cottages she imitates the gestures of veteran couples copied from television, and she builds her hopes on the idea of working in an office. The trip to Norfolk to see her "possible", the woman who might be her model, shows how badly she wants a future that matches her dreams. When the woman turns out not to resemble her closely, Ruth's bitter claim that they are modelled from "trash" exposes the despair beneath her confidence. Ishiguro uses Ruth as a foil to Kathy: where Kathy hides her desires, Ruth performs them, but both are searching for an identity and a future that society refuses them. Ruth's final act, apologising for keeping Kathy and Tommy apart and giving them Madame's address, suggests that she finally seeks happiness for others rather than herself.

Tommy's search is expressed through creativity and anger. As a child he is mocked for his lack of art and has violent tantrums, and Miss Lucy's comforting words briefly make him happier. Later he draws intricate imaginary animals, hoping they will prove the depth of his love for Kathy and earn them a deferral. The deferral rumour is the novel's central example of a search for happiness: the belief that true love could buy a few extra years together. Ishiguro structures the narrative so that the visit to Madame and Miss Emily destroys this hope, and Tommy's scream in the dark field shows the agony of a search that was always doomed. His image of two people in a fast-moving river, "trying to hold onto each other", captures the way love cannot withstand the current of the system.

However, Ishiguro limits how far any character actively pursues happiness. None of them tries to escape, and the reader may be frustrated by their passivity. This is

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part of Ishiguro's purpose: the students have been conditioned since Hailsham to accept, and their searches take place within the boundaries they have been given. Writing in 2005, amid public debate about cloning after Dolly the sheep, Ishiguro uses this acceptance to reflect on how all humans, not just clones, live with mortality and often settle for small comforts rather than rebelling against their fate.

The novel ends with Kathy standing beside a fence in Norfolk, where rubbish has caught in the wire, imagining that "everything I'd ever lost since my childhood had washed up" there. The image returns to the "lost corner" idea and suggests that her search has led only to memory. She does not let the fantasy go further, and she drives off "to wherever it was I was supposed to be". The passive phrasing shows her resuming the role assigned to her.

Ishiguro therefore presents his characters as searching for happiness throughout, but finding it only in fragments: a song, a drawing, a few months together. Their searches matter because they reveal love, hope and memory in people society treats as spare parts, and the reader is left to feel the injustice that the characters themselves can barely name.

21

Syal presents Meena as a character whose growth is driven by painful discoveries about the people around her and about her own divided identity. Anita and Me is a bildungsroman told by an older Meena looking back on her childhood in Tollington, and its central journey is from wanting to be someone else to accepting, and even celebrating, who she is: a British girl of Punjabi heritage who belongs fully to neither world but is shaped by both.

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At the start of the novel, Meena's understanding of herself is restless and uncertain. The older narrator admits that she is "not really a liar", but that she learned early to turn to "mythology to feel complete". This opening confession is significant, because it frames Meena's childhood as a search for a story that explains who she is. As a young girl she lies constantly, steals money from her mother's purse to buy sweets, and longs to escape the expectations of being a "good Indian girl". The dual narrative perspective allows Syal to show both the child's confusion and the adult's understanding, so the reader learns alongside Meena while also seeing the mistakes she cannot yet see.

Much of what Meena learns about others comes through Anita Rutter. To the young Meena, Anita is glamorous, fearless and in charge of the village girls, and Meena is desperate to be accepted as her friend. Syal uses Black Country dialect in Anita's speech, which Meena eagerly copies, to show how badly she wants to belong to Tollington's white working-class world. Yet gradually Meena sees Anita's cruelty, her neglect at home after her mother leaves, and her readiness to side with Sam Lowbridge's racist gang. Meena learns that the friend she idolised is both a victim of her circumstances and a source of harm. This is a mature recognition: Syal does not allow Meena simply to condemn Anita, but to understand the poverty and lack of love behind her behaviour.

Meena also learns painful lessons about racism. Sam Lowbridge, whom she has found exciting, makes a racist outburst at the village fete, and later Meena learns that his gang has attacked an Asian man. These moments force her to see that the community she loves contains real hostility towards people like her family. In the context of the late 1960s and early 1970s, when anti-immigrant feeling was fuelled by figures such as Enoch Powell, Syal shows how casual prejudice in a small village could turn into violence. Meena's realisation that she cannot simply

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blend in, however well she speaks the local dialect, is one of the most important things she learns about herself.

The arrival of Nanima from India is a turning point. Through her grandmother's stories, warmth and language, Meena begins to value her Punjabi heritage rather than feeling embarrassed by it. Syal presents this relationship as a source of self-knowledge: Meena learns that her family's history gives her the sense of belonging she had been trying to find through Anita. Her growing appreciation of her parents also matters. She sees her father singing at the family gatherings and comes to recognise the sacrifices her parents made, and the loneliness and dignity of their lives as immigrants.

Meena's stay in hospital after falling from a horse is another stage in her learning. Away from Tollington and from Anita, she meets Robert, a boy whose illness and death teach her about vulnerability and loss. Syal uses this episode to slow the narrative down, giving Meena space to reflect and to understand that friendship can be gentle and honest rather than a contest for status.

By the end of the novel Meena has passed her eleven-plus and is preparing to leave Tollington for grammar school. The frightening events at the pond near the end, when Meena finally sees Anita and Sam clearly for who they are, show that she has learned to trust her own judgement and values. The older narrator's tone suggests affection for the village and the girl she was, but also a clear sense that she has outgrown both. Meena has learned that she does not need to choose between her two cultures, and that identity is something she can shape for herself.

Syal, therefore, presents Meena as a character who learns through conflict,

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disappointment and love. Drawing on her own childhood in a mining village near Wolverhampton, Syal uses Meena's growth to show readers how second-generation British Asians had to negotiate belonging, and she suggests that the most important lesson is self-acceptance.

22 I largely agree that Syal presents Tollington as strange and at times frightening, but only partly. Through the eyes of the young Meena, the village is also exciting, warm and full of character, and the older narrator looks back on it with obvious affection. Syal's achievement is to show that the same place can be both a home and a threat, especially for a child of the only Punjabi family in a white, working-class mining village, and she uses Tollington to explore how upbringing and environment shape identity.

Tollington seems strange partly because it is a community in decline. It is a former mining village, and Syal describes a place whose old industry has gone, leaving rows of terraced houses, a few shops and a closely knit but inward-looking population. As the novel progresses, the sense of change creeping in, as the old village begins to give way to new development, suggests that Tollington is caught between an old world and a new one. For the reader, this creates a sense of a place on the edge of disappearing, which adds to its strangeness. In the context of the late 1960s and early 1970s, when Britain's traditional industries were declining, Syal shows the economic hardship that lies behind the village's colourful surface.

To Meena, much of Tollington's strangeness lies in its people. The older narrator presents a gallery of eccentric neighbours, and Syal's use of Black Country dialect, with its distinctive "yow" for "you", makes their voices vivid and alien to the Punjabi speech of Meena's home. Mrs Worrall, kind and lonely, shows the village at

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its gentlest, while the gossiping women and the shopkeepers create a sense of a small world where everyone knows everyone else's business. For a child this can be fascinating, and Meena's eagerness to copy the local dialect suggests that she finds Tollington's strangeness attractive rather than off-putting.

However, Syal also makes Tollington genuinely frightening at key moments. The most disturbing threat comes from racism. Sam Lowbridge's racist outburst at the village fete exposes a hostility that had been hidden beneath village friendliness, and it is all the more shocking because Meena had been drawn to Sam. Later she learns that his gang has attacked an Asian man. These episodes reflect the tensions of a period when anti-immigrant feeling was openly expressed, encouraged by politicians such as Enoch Powell. For Meena, Tollington becomes frightening because it reveals that she is seen as an outsider in the only home she has known.

Anita Rutter's family also shows a darker side of Tollington. Anita's mother leaves, her younger sister Tracey is neglected, and Anita's cruelty seems to grow out of her chaotic home life. Syal uses the Rutters to suggest how poverty and lack of care can damage children. The near-drowning of Tracey at the pond late in the novel brings these fears to a climax, turning a familiar part of the landscape into a scene of danger. Here, Syal uses setting to mirror Meena's growing awareness that childhood games can have real consequences.

Yet it would be too simple to call Tollington only frightening. Meena's own home and family offer security, and the gatherings where her father sings and the aunties and uncles share food create a warm, alternative community within the village. The arrival of Nanima brings stories and love that help Meena feel rooted. Syal suggests that Tollington's frightening aspects are balanced by moments of

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real kindness from both communities, and the older Meena's affectionate tone implies that she would not wish her childhood away.

The first-person retrospective narrative is crucial to how far we agree with the statement. The child Meena experiences Tollington's strangeness with a mixture of wonder and fear, while the adult narrator can recognise both its prejudice and its charm. This double vision means the reader sees the village as complex rather than simply threatening. By the end, Meena passes her eleven-plus and prepares to leave for grammar school, which suggests that she has outgrown Tollington, but the novel's careful, loving detail shows that it has shaped her deeply.

Therefore, I agree that Tollington is presented as strange and at times frightening, especially because of the racism and neglect Meena witnesses. However, Syal also presents it as vibrant and formative. She wants readers to understand that growing up as a British Asian girl in such a place was both alienating and enriching, and that the fears and the pleasures of Tollington together made Meena who she is.

23 Kelman presents a divided view of teenagers in Pigeon English. Through Harri's innocent, funny and generous narrative voice, he celebrates the energy, loyalty and imagination of young people. Yet the older teenagers of the Dell Farm Crew show how poverty, fear and the pressure to belong can turn children into victims and perpetrators of violence. Kelman's view is therefore positive about teenagers themselves, but deeply critical of the environment that shapes them, and he asks the reader to see even the most threatening young people as products of their circumstances.

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The most positive presentation comes through Harri, the eleven-year-old Ghanaian narrator on the edge of his teenage years. His voice is bursting with optimism and wonder. He describes things he likes as "dope-fine" and peppers his speech with "Asweh" to insist that he is telling the truth, which captures his honesty and enthusiasm. Even the opening line, "You could see the blood. It was darker than you think", is told with a child's curiosity rather than horror. Kelman contrasts this voice with the grim reality of the estate, and the gap between the two makes Harri's goodness all the more striking. He wants to solve the murder of a boy stabbed outside a chicken shop, not for glory, but because he believes the dead boy deserves justice.

Harri's friendship with Dean is another positive element. The two boys play detectives, inspired by television crime shows, collecting fingerprints and evidence with comic seriousness. Kelman uses this to show the imagination and loyalty of young people, even as the reader realises how dangerous their game is. Similarly, Harri's relationship with Poppy is presented tenderly. His shy admiration and his excitement at her attention show teenage love as innocent and joyful rather than sordid.

Harri's sister Lydia offers a more complex but still largely positive picture. She is protective of Harri, argues with him like any older sibling, and dreams of a better future. However, Kelman also shows her being drawn into the cruelty of other girls, particularly Miquita, which suggests that even good teenagers are vulnerable to peer pressure. This is perhaps one of Kelman's most important points: the line between a "good" and a "bad" teenager is fragile and depends on fear and the need to fit in.

The Dell Farm Crew represent the negative side of teenage life. Boys like X-Fire

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and Killa use threats, nicknames and violence to control the estate, and the gang's world is made "hutious", to use Harri's word, by the constant possibility of stabbing. Harri is tempted by their status and attempts to prove himself to them, which shows how easily younger children can be drawn into gang culture. Kelman uses multicultural London slang throughout to make this world feel authentic and immediate. Yet he also hints at the vulnerability beneath the gang members' aggression. Their bravado seems to mask fear, and their lack of opportunity on a run-down estate leaves them few alternatives. This encourages the reader to look beyond media stereotypes of "hoodies" and feral youth that were common in Britain in the 2000s.

The pigeon's sections add another perspective. Its calm, almost spiritual voice watches over Harri and comments on human behaviour, suggesting a wider view in which these children deserve care and protection rather than condemnation. The contrast between the pigeon's tenderness and the violence of the estate reinforces Kelman's belief that the young are being failed by the adult world around them.

The tragic ending, in which Harri is stabbed after he and Lydia confront the boy they believe is the killer, is the novel's strongest challenge to a purely positive view. It shows that teenage violence is real and devastating. Yet the fact that the victim is Harri, the most innocent character in the book, turns the ending into an indictment of the circumstances rather than of young people as a group. Kelman was inspired by the murder of Damilola Taylor, a ten-year-old boy stabbed in Peckham in 2000, and the novel's ending forces readers to confront the human cost of such crimes.

Therefore, I think Kelman presents a mostly positive view of teenagers. He shows their humour, loyalty and capacity for love, while being honest about the violence

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some of them commit. Through Harri's voice he suggests that young people are not naturally dangerous, but that poverty, neglect and fear can turn childhood play into tragedy.

24 Kelman presents Harrison's experience of change as a rapid and ultimately tragic loss of innocence. Harri arrives in London from Ghana full of wonder, and much of the novel captures the excitement of a new country, new friends and new freedoms. Yet as he grows more familiar with the estate, he is changed by the violence around him, and his journey from newcomer to target suggests Kelman's anger at a society that cannot protect its most vulnerable children.

At the start of the novel, change is presented as thrilling. Harri has moved to London with his mother and older sister Lydia, while his father, grandmother and baby sister Agnes remain in Ghana. Through his first-person narration, Kelman conveys the delight of someone discovering an unfamiliar world. Ordinary things, from trainers to the tall tower blocks, are described with enthusiasm, and Harri's favourite expressions, such as "Asweh" and "dope-fine", mix Ghanaian English with London slang. The blending of these two voices is itself a method of showing change: Harri is literally learning a new language, and the reader hears him adapting to his new home within his own speech.

The murder of a boy outside a chicken shop, which opens the novel, is the event that begins Harri's darker change. Initially he approaches it as an adventure, setting out with his friend Dean to solve the crime like detectives on television. Kelman uses this to show the gap between Harri's innocence and his surroundings. The opening line, "You could see the blood. It was darker than you think", is spoken with a child's curiosity rather than fear, yet it introduces a world where

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death is close and ordinary. Over the course of the novel, Harri's games become more dangerous, and the reader watches with growing dread as his investigation brings him nearer to the killers.

Harri's relationships also change. He begins as an outsider at school but gradually finds friends, admiration for his running and the attention of Poppy, which bring him happiness and confidence. At the same time he is drawn towards the Dell Farm Crew, whose status and power impress him. His attempts to prove himself to them show how change in his new environment pushes him towards becoming the kind of boy the estate expects. Kelman suggests that the pressure to belong is one of the most powerful forces of change for young immigrants, who must negotiate the expectations of family, school and street.

His family's experience of change is equally important. His mother works long hours as a midwife, and the separation from his father and Agnes, kept alive through phone calls, adds an undercurrent of loss. Lydia becomes caught up in the cruelty of older girls, and Harri sees his sister change in ways that worry him. Kelman presents the immigrant family as resilient but strained, an accurate reflection of the pressures faced by many new arrivals in inner-city Britain in the 2000s, where poverty and overcrowding could make a fresh start difficult.

The pigeon offers a spiritual counterpoint to Harri's physical and social changes. Its italicised sections, written in a calm, reflective voice, suggest a guardian presence watching over him. Harri's kindness to the bird and his church-going reflect his faith, and Kelman explores the idea that Harri's spiritual innocence remains unchanged even as his world grows darker. This contrast heightens the pathos of the ending.

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Structurally, the most shocking change comes at the end of the novel, when Harri is stabbed after he and Lydia confront the boy they believe is the murderer. His narrative voice, which has carried us through the book, suddenly faces silence. Kelman deliberately cuts short the story of a boy who was only beginning to grow up, so that the final change is not a step towards adulthood but the loss of the future altogether. The novel was inspired by the murder of Damilola Taylor in Peckham in 2000, and the ending forces readers to feel the waste of a young life.

Overall, Kelman presents Harri's experience of change as both joyful and devastating. The excitement of a new country and the growth of friendship and love are real, but they are overwhelmed by the violence of the estate. Through Harri's hopeful voice, Kelman shows readers that the immigrant child's journey into a new culture should be one of opportunity, and he condemns the conditions that turn it into tragedy.