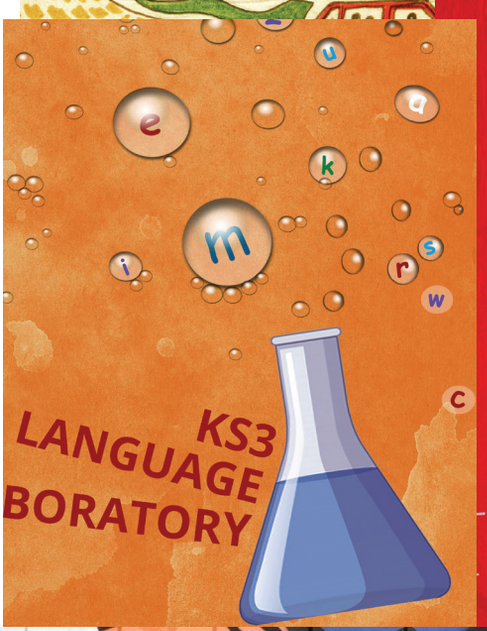
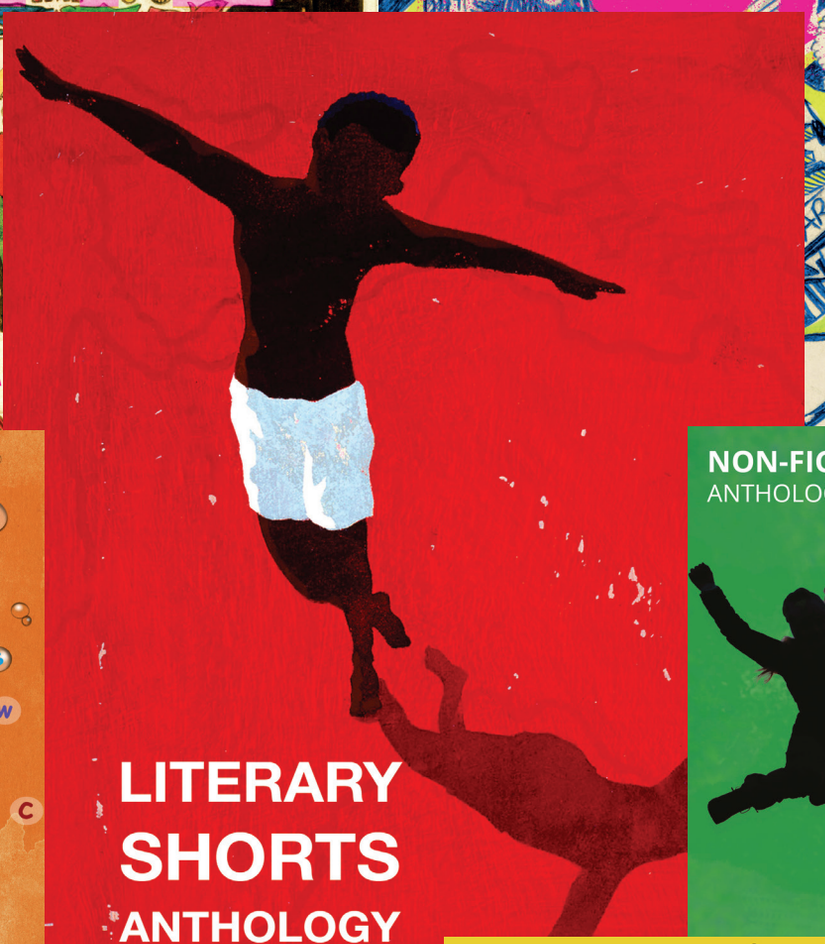
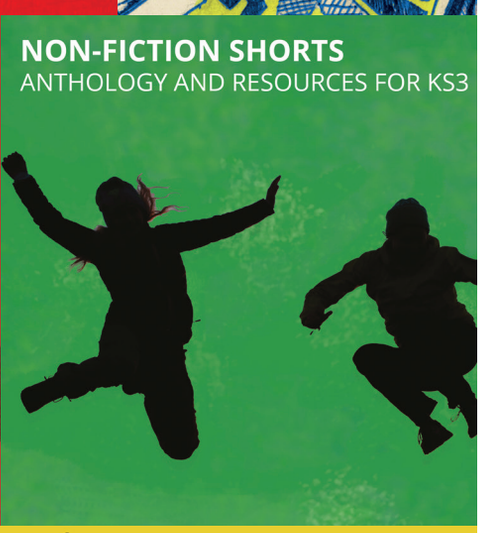

JUST
WRITE
WOULD YOU RATHER?
HOW TO SURVIVE
YES
NO
PLAY THE CAFE GAME
NAME:
A strange thing Happened
EMC LET THEM


LOOK UP
GHOSTWRITER
WRITE ON
SECRET AGENT
CULTURE


KS3
LANGUAGE
LABORATORY


LITERARY
SHORTS
ANTHOLOGY


NON-FICTION SHORTS
ANTHOLOGY AND RESOURCES FOR KS3




KS3
POETRY
PLUS

The English and Media Centre is an award-winning educational charity, working with secondary teachers and students. We publish resources and magazines, run conferences, courses and teacher training programmes, and offer advice and consultancy on all aspects of English and Media teaching.

Our resources are all written in a way that addresses students directly. This makes them perfect for young people to use if they have to work at home. We've put together a selection of full units from our KS3 Curriculum Plus package, along with activities from two writing workbooks that are designed to be used with minimal teacher input.

We're making these materials freely available, with permission to share them on school home learning platforms, because we recognise that students are likely to need access to quality texts and resources in the event of schools shutting down for an extended period of time.

We also have a number of other offers for home learning:

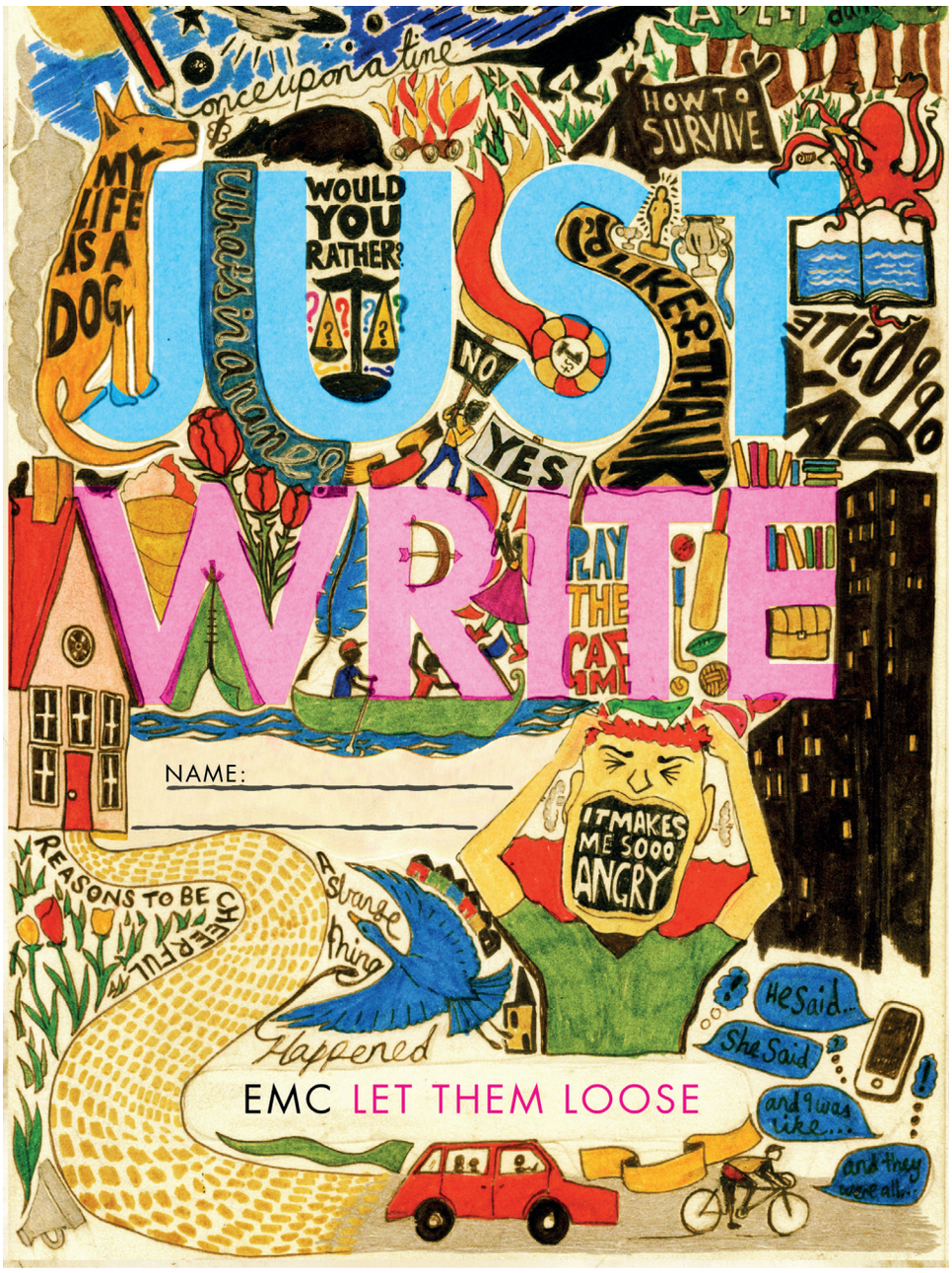
- Free GCSE revision resources. Search REVISIONOFFER at www.englishandmedia.co.uk

- Special offer for individual purchases of:

    - Just Write. Search JW£20OFFER
    - GCSE Novels and workbooks. Search GCSETEXT
    - KS3 workbooks and anthologies. Search HOMEOFFER
    - A Level handbooks and readers. Search ALTEXTHOME

www.englishandmedia.co.uk

EMC Publications



This resource comes from the English and Media Centre's publication *Just Write*, a workbook with 44 creative writing activities.

If you are interested in exploring this resource further, please visit https://www.englishandmedia.co.uk/publications/

EMC Publications

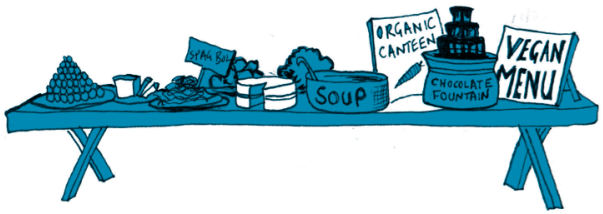
If I ruled the school...

What would you do if you were made headteacher tomorrow?

Write your first school newsletter to pupils and parents explaining some of your brilliant plans for the school.

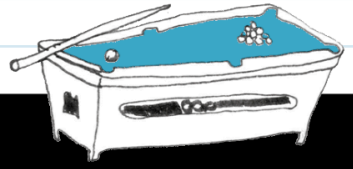
Dear Parents and Pupils,













LOOK OUT!

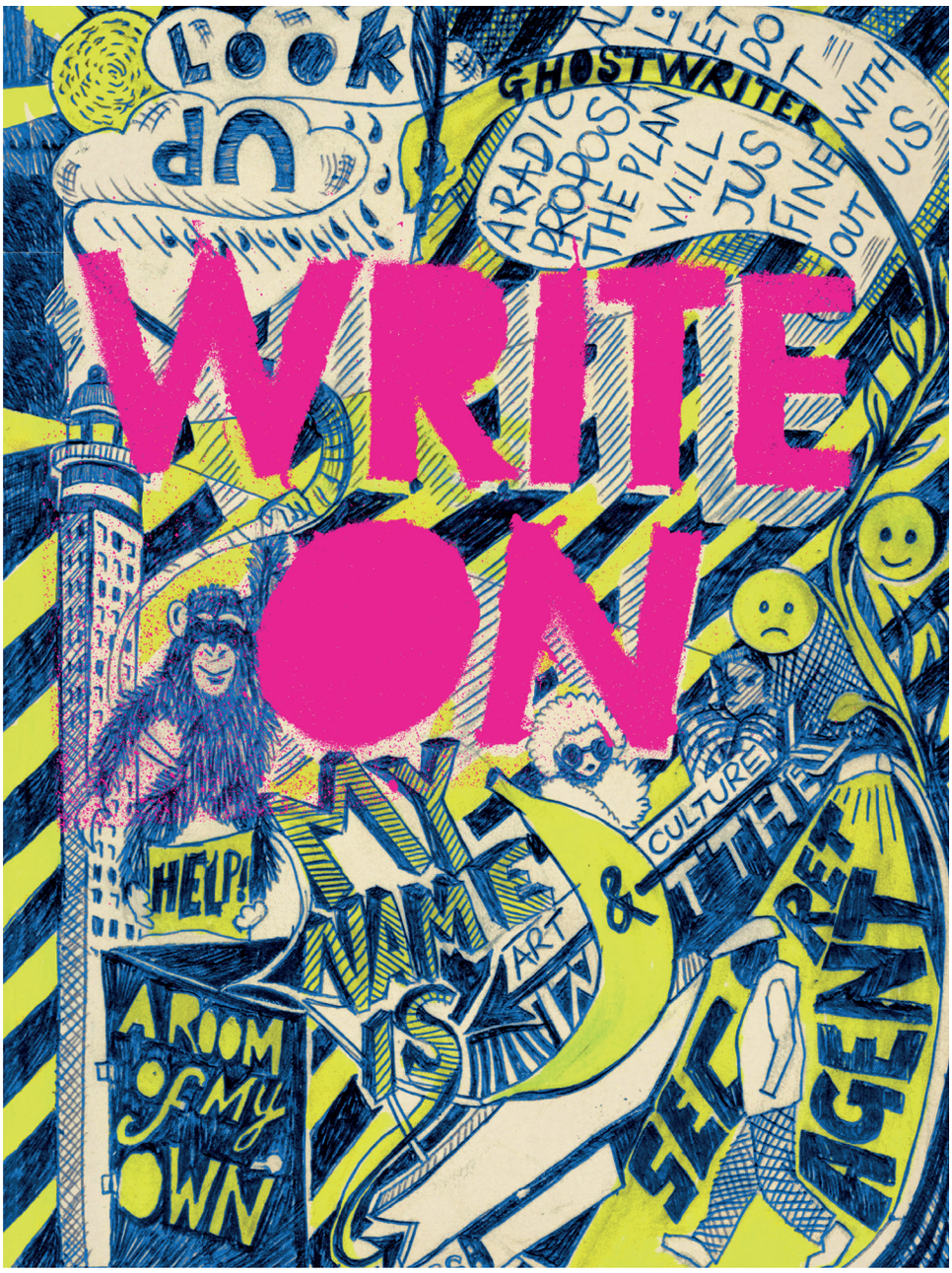


Write a story or the opening of a novel which begins with aliens invading your school.





victor william says

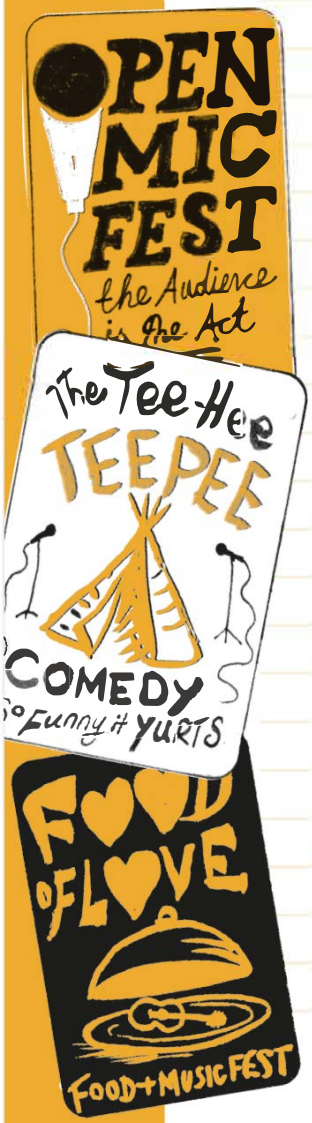


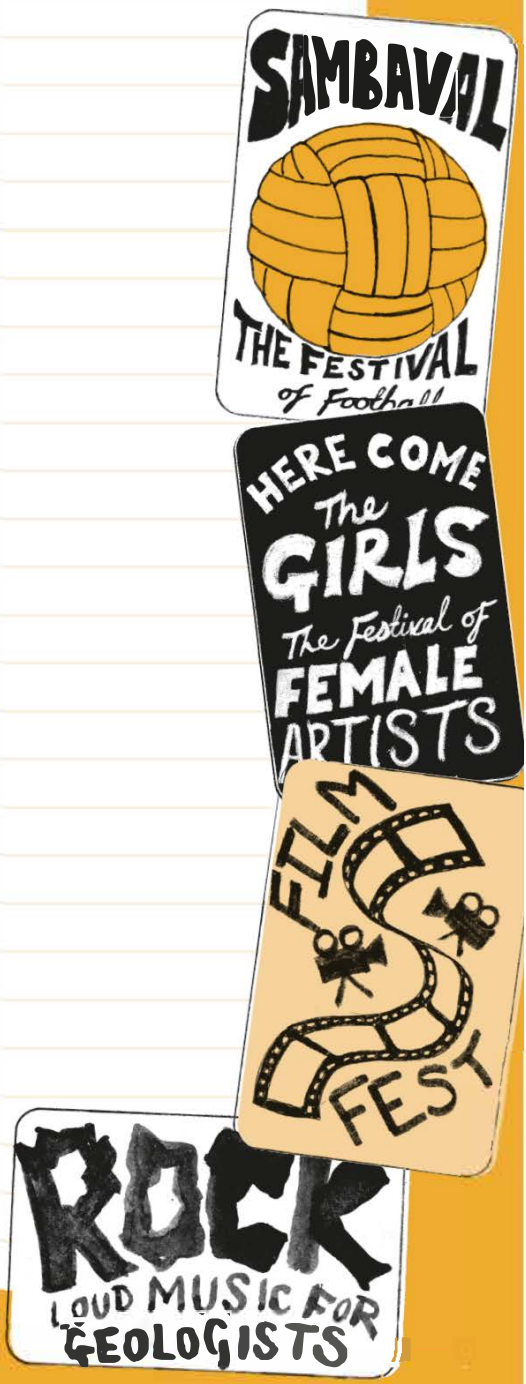
This resource comes from the English and Media Centre's publication *Write On*, a forthcoming workbook of creative writing activities.

EMC
Publications

A Festival of Your Own

Imagine you are a festival director. Write a letter to festival promoters explaining why they should fund your idea for an amazing festival (be it for music, film, books, comedy, a combination of all these things, or something else entirely).





INSPIRE

Imagine you are a leading sports coach. Write an inspirational speech to be delivered to your team or squad of elite sports competitors ahead of an important match or competition





This resource comes from the English and Media Centre's publication *Diverse Shorts*, an anthology of stories and extracts from novels, with accompanying activities.

If you are interested in exploring this resource further, please visit https://www.englishandmedia.co.uk/publications/

EMC
Publications



EMC © ENGLISH & MEDIA CENTRE, 2018



The Hate U Give, by Angie Thomas

The Hate U Give is a novel loosely based on the Black Lives Matter movement in the United States. This is a movement that campaigns against the unjust treatment of black people by the police in the U.S., particularly young black men, who are up to nine times more likely to be shot dead by police than other Americans.

Connecting to the topic

- In small groups discuss your responses to these three statements:

1. People should respect the police at all times, whatever the situation.
2. All police in the UK should carry guns. (The majority don't.)
3. The law should apply differently to the police than to the rest of the population.

- Choose one of the statements and explain what you think about it to the rest of the class.

Connecting to the story

- Write two brief accounts of what you have just read from two different perspectives:

    1. From the point of view of another police officer watching on.
    2. From the point of view of a passer-by who saw the whole thing.

- Write down your thoughts about Khalil's behaviour. For example, was he justified in behaving as he did?

Connecting to the real world

- Write down your thoughts about whether or not you think the incident you have just read could happen in this way in the real world, with reasons.
- Write down your thoughts about whether the police officer involved in this chapter should be treated as a criminal in any investigation. If he is found guilty of an offence, what should his punishment be?
- Share your thoughts round the class.



THE HATE U GIVE

ANGIE THOMAS

When I was twelve, my parents had two talks with me.

One was the usual birds and bees. Well, I didn't really get the usual version. My mom, Lisa, is a registered nurse, and she told me what went where, and what didn't need to go here, there, or any damn where till I'm grown. Back then, I doubted anything was going anywhere anyway. While all the other girls sprouted breasts between sixth and seventh grade, my chest was as flat as my back.

The other talk was about what to do if a cop stopped me.

Momma fussed and told Daddy I was too young for that. He argued that I wasn't too young to get arrested or shot.

'Starr-Starr, you do whatever they tell you to do,' he said. 'Keep your hands visible. Don't make any sudden moves. Only speak when they speak to you.'

I knew it must've been serious. Daddy has the biggest mouth of anybody I know, and if he said to be quiet, I needed to be quiet.

I hope somebody had the talk with Khalil.

He cusses under his breath, turns Tupac down, and manoeuvres the Impala to the side of the street. We're on Carnation where most of the houses are abandoned and half the streetlights are busted. Nobody around but us and the cop.

Khalil turns the ignition off. 'Wonder what this fool wants.'

The officer parks and puts his brights on. I blink to keep from being blinded.

I remember something else Daddy said. *If you're with somebody, you better hope they don't have nothing on them, or both of y'all going down.*

'K, you don't have anything in the car, do you?' I ask.

He watches the cop in his side mirror. 'Nah.'

The officer approaches the driver's door and taps the window. Khalil cranks the handle to roll it down. As if we aren't blinded enough, the officer beams his flashlight in our faces.

'Licence, registration, and proof of insurance.'

EMC © ENGLISH & MEDIA CENTRE, 2018

Khalil breaks a rule – he doesn't do what the cop wants. 'What you pull us over for?'

'Licence, registration, and proof of insurance.'

'I said what you pull us over for?'

'Khalil,' I plead. 'Do what he said.'

Khalil groans and takes his wallet out. The officer follows his movements with the flashlight.

My heart pounds loudly, but Daddy's instructions echo in my head: *Get a good look at the cop's face. If you can remember his badge number, that's even better.*

With the flashlight following Khalil's hands, I make out the numbers on the badge – one-fifteen. He's white, midthirties to early forties, has a brown buzz cut and a thin scar over his top lip.

Khalil hands the officer his papers and licence.

One-Fifteen looks over them. 'Where are you two coming from tonight?'

'Nunya,' Khalil says, meaning none of your business. 'What you pull me over for?'

'Your taillight's broken.'

'So are you gon' give me a ticket or what?' Khalil asks.

'You know what? Get out the car, smart guy.'

'Man, just give me my ticket –'

'Get out the car! Hands up, where I can see them.'

Khalil gets out with his hands up. One-Fifteen yanks him by his arm and pins him against the back door.

I fight to find my voice. 'He didn't mean –'

'Hands on the dashboard!' the officer barks at me. 'Don't move!'

I do what he tells me, but my hands are shaking too much to be still.

He pats Khalil down. 'Okay, smart mouth, let's see what we find on you today.'

'You ain't gon' find nothing,' Khalil says.

One-Fifteen pats him down two more times. He turns up empty.

'Stay here,' he tells Khalil. 'And you.' He looks in the window at me. 'Don't move.'

I can't even nod.

The officer walks back to his patrol car.

My parents haven't raised me to fear the police, just to be smart around them. They told me it's not smart to move while a cop has his back to you.

Khalil does. He comes to his door.

It's not smart to make a sudden move.

Khalil does. He opens the driver's door.

'You okay, Starr –'

Pow!

One. Khalil's body jerks. Blood splatters from his back. He holds on to the door to keep himself upright.

Pow!

Two. Khalil gasps.

Pow!

Three. Khalil looks at me, stunned.

He falls to the ground.

I'm ten again, watching Natasha drop.

An earsplitting scream emerges from my gut, explodes in my throat, and uses every inch of me to be heard.

Instinct says don't move, but everything else says check on Khalil. I jump out the Impala and rush around to the other side. Khalil stares at the sky as if he hopes to see God. His mouth is open like he wants to scream. I scream loud enough for the both of us.

'No, no, no,' is all I can say, like I'm a year old and it's the only word I know. I'm not sure how I end up on the ground next to him. My mom once said that if someone gets shot, try to stop the bleeding. But there's so much blood. Too much blood.

'No, no, no.'

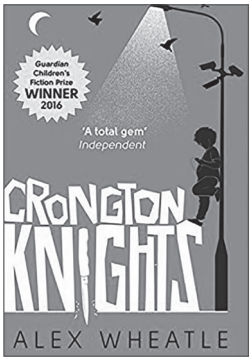
Khalil doesn't move. He doesn't utter a word. He doesn't even look at me. His body stiffens and he's gone. I hope he sees God.

Someone else screams.

I blink through my tears. Officer One-Fifteen yells at me, pointing the same gun he killed my friend with.

I put my hands up.

EMC © ENGLISH & MEDIA CENTRE, 2018



Crongton Knights, by Alex Wheatle

This extract comes from a novel about life on the fictional South Crongton council estate. The narrator, McKay, is walking with his older brother, Nesta, after they have been to the police station to report the theft of Nesta's bike. Nesta is normally in trouble with the police and would stay away from them, but he has been persuaded to turn over a new leaf by his girlfriend, Yvonne.

Connecting to the topic

Crongton Knights is part of the *Crongton* sequence. The other books written so far in the series are *Straight Outta Crongton* and *Liccle Bit*. The books have proved popular in part because they portray the lives of people who don't often feature in fiction: young, urban teenagers who speak in a distinctive dialect.

- Imagine you have been asked to write a novel based on the lives of young people in your school, or where you live. Write a paragraph or two, outlining the aspects of life that you would explore. If you like, you can come up with an outline for a story.
- Share your ideas round the class and discuss whether you think other readers would be interested in your ideas.

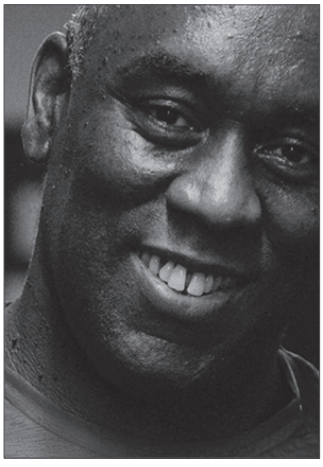
Connecting to the story

- How do you think Nesta's behaviour is portrayed in this extract? Was he provoked into acting as he did? Is there ever an excuse for this kind of behaviour? What should happen to him now? Write down your thoughts.

Connecting to the real world

In the extract you have just read, there seems to be a lot of distrust between people on the estate, particularly young people, and the police.

- Imagine a new character in *Crongton Knights*: a youth leader, who liaises between young people and the police. Script a meeting between the youth leader and a police chief, in which they discuss how to make life better for everyone on the South Crongton estate. The youth leader should mainly focus on young people, the police chief should focus on everyone else.
- Read out loud some of your scripts and use them as the basis for discussing how young people and the police can develop and maintain respectful relationships, even in difficult circumstances.



CRONGTON KNIGHTS

ALEX WHEATLE

Stop and Search

We walked back along the High Street. There were now six feds on patrol – three on either side. The Hot Rooster take-away was teasing my nostrils. Nesta was still jibber-jabbering away about Yvonne this and Yvonne that. It was funny. He hadn't said a fat zero to me about her before today. It sounds cold but I blocked him out.

A couple or so days ago Dad had bought a tray of chicken fillets that he had left in the fridge. I wanted to get back, slice and dice up a piece of prime rooster, spin some seasoning on it, chop up onions, peppers, garlic and stir-fry that mother with veg and a serious dose of Jamaican jerk. Yeah, I think there was a little bit of olive oil left to fry it in. I'd let it steam for a few minutes under some foil and get it smelling all sexy and ripe for sinking. And a pot of rice too, boiled up sweetly on the stove to go with it. Mmm. My mouth was watering big time.

'So, what do you think?' Nesta asked me as we headed towards South Crong ends.

'Think of what?' I said.

'Haven't you been listening to me, McKay? Yvonne, innit.'

'Yvonne,' I repeated. 'What about her?'

'What's a matter with you? I asked you what you think of her.'

'Oh, she seems cool,' I answered. 'But crush your balls! She has you under lock though! *Go to the fed station... Speak to your dad!*'

'No, she ain't,' Nesta argued. 'I just respect her.'

I killed another smirk.

We rolled towards the shop in the middle of our estate cos Nesta was thirsty – I hoped he would buy me a drink too. I was wondering if Nesta was gonna step back to our castle with me, when I saw flashing blue lights about a hundred metres away – not too far from the shop.

EMC © ENGLISH & MEDIA CENTRE, 2018

'Step it up, bruv,' Nesta told me. 'Something's going down.'

We hot-toed to the scene. A crowd had gathered on the pavement outside the store. A fed car was parked up and Mr Dagthorn, the forever stressed-out bald-headed owner of the place, was pointing this way and that, mauling the ears of two male feds. About thirty metres away, two other feds were dragging a hood-rat off towards their car, which they'd parked a little further along the road. Collie Vulture! His hands were cuffed behind his back. Curses spat from his mouth. His bike was abandoned on the pavement. I glanced at Nesta. He was shaking his head and spitting something dark under his breath. I spotted Boy from the Hills leaning against the shop door and bounced up to him. 'What's the score?' I asked.

'Collie jacked a bottle of tonic wine from the shop but when he jumped on his bike the feds appeared out of nowhere.'

I shook my head.

'Collie was raging. He'd promised Mr Dagthorn he'd pay him tomorrow,' Boy from the Hills added.

I rewound to earlier in the afternoon when Collie asked Yvonne for a fiver for collecting me from school. It was messed up how small dramas could turn into major blockbusters.

'I've banned him from coming in here but he's always stealing from my shop,' ranted Mr Dagthorn to the officers.

'Sweets, chocolate bars, chewing gum, porno mags – I'm sick and tired of young people robbing from me. Throw away the bloody key, I say!'

Collie heard what Mr Dagthorn said and wasted no time in biting back. 'Screw you, old man. I said I'd pay for the drink tomorrow and I would have!'

The feds tried to shove Collie into the back seat of their car. Collie put up nuff resistance. '*Get* in the car!' one of the feds ordered.

In trying to get away, Collie banged his head on the door handle. A red mark appeared across his eyebrow. Onlookers raged their disapproval. More people were starting to pay attention now; windows opened in the slabs above us. A council worker, wearing a yellow Day-Glo top, stopped sweeping the street and tuned in to the drama.

'Don't you *ever* enter my shop again,' yelled Mr Dagthorn. 'You'll probably even steal from the prison canteen!'

Someone threw a fat stone, hitting one of the fed cars on its bonnet. We all turned to see a hood-rat Usain-Bolting away from the scene towards Wareika Way.

The soles of his trainers were bright orange. I tried not to laugh, but it was well funny. The feds weren't exactly singing 'Always Look on the Bright Side of Life'. Poor Collie yelped and shrieked as they slam-dunked him hard through the car door. Nesta's expression switched.

Someone threw another stone, and blitzed the front window of Mr Dagthorn's shop. A nine or ten-year-old boy laughed as he burned off through the estate, a fed hot on his heels.

Boy from the Hills and I stepped away quickly, not wanting to get caught up in any trouble.

'Everyone *calm* down,' shouted an officer.

'You see what I have to put up with!' roared Mr Dagthorn, his hands now on his head. 'You see how much respect they have for me? Do I deserve this? If I wasn't here where would they go to get their milk for the morning? I'm just trying to make a living and *this* is how they treat me!'

Nesta approached the officers who had Collie. 'If I pay for the drink he jacked, will you let him go?'

'He's committed a crime,' a fed replied. 'We can't have everybody walking into shops and taking what they like.'

'It doesn't even cost three pound,' said Nesta. 'And Dagthorn charges fifty pence more than the supermarket – freaking t'ief! I'll pay for it and, trust me, after I spill to his sis he won't ever jack from the shop again.'

I wasn't sure if Nesta had three pound on him. My own funds were low – I only had twenty-seven pence blessing my pocket.

The fed shook his head and slammed the car door. The other officer climbed into the driver's seat and switched the ignition. Nesta slapped the window. Mr Dagthorn had stopped his ranting and was now watching my brother like everybody else.

'Nesta!' I called. He didn't hear me. The Kraken was about to be set loose. *Oh crap!*

'Can't you feds be on a freaking level?' Nesta raged, hammering the top of the fed car. 'Why arrest him for something that don't even cost three pound? Let him *go*! Nobody was hurt. He hasn't even touched the bottle. It can go back on the friggin' shelf.'

My heartbeat accelerated. The officer inside the car pushed the passenger door open. It smacked Nesta in the leg, nearly knocking him over. 'Why don't you move along!' ordered the fed to my brother. 'And go home!'

EMC © ENGLISH & MEDIA CENTRE, 2018

I could feel Nesta's rage burst. Without hesitation he ran into the fed and headbutted him dead in the chest. The officer lost his balance and fell hard on to the ground.

Someone cheered from the pavement. A girl giggled hysterically. Even the road sweeper had a smile on his face. Others stared in disbelief.

'Nesta!' I shouted again.

The feds gathered round. Two of them grabbed my bro in a hard bear hug, almost strangling him, trying to put cuffs on him. Nesta wriggled this way and that, kicked and flailed. He managed to scratch a face or two, but he was overpowered.

Everyone around me cussed the feds. A voice inside me screamed, *Don't stand up there like a pussy! Help him! Help him!*

I started off to Nesta's aid, but Boy from the Hills barged me to the ground and said, 'McKay, keep your big self still.'

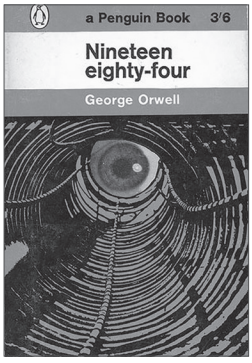
My right knee kissed the concrete.

'The feds are arresting my bro!'

'And how's your dad gonna feel when news beats him that not one but two of his boys are sinking oats in a fed cell?'

By the time I climbed to my feet, Nesta was being handcuffed. All struggle left him. His chest was heaving but he was weirdly calm. I think he was staring at me. His mouth was moving. I guessed at what he was saying. He wouldn't want me to tell Dad.

They shoved him into another car. Doors were slammed. Engines were revved. I watched as he sped away. He didn't look back. The road sweeper resumed sweeping.



1984, by George Orwell

Nineteen Eighty-Four is one of the best-known novels ever written. It is set in a brutal totalitarian regime, ruled by the symbolically named Big Brother. Under this regime, there are no elections and there is no law. Big Brother watches everything and controls everyone. The extract you are about to read comes from the very start of the novel.

Connecting to the topic

Nineteen Eighty-Four describes a 'surveillance state': the state tries to watch everything that each citizen does, in order to control them. Even though the United Kingdom is a democracy, some people still refer to it as a 'surveillance state'. This is because our movements can – and at times are – tracked to a degree that has never happened before. For example, CCTV cameras track people's movements, and we leave a 'digital footprint' when we use the internet, or mobile phone technology.

- In small groups discuss your responses to the following statements, before opening up the discussion to the class as a whole.

The principle of free speech should mean that anyone can say anything at any time and in any place.
The government should be allowed to look at your internet search history without seeking permission.
There are too many CCTV cameras in this country.

Connecting to the story

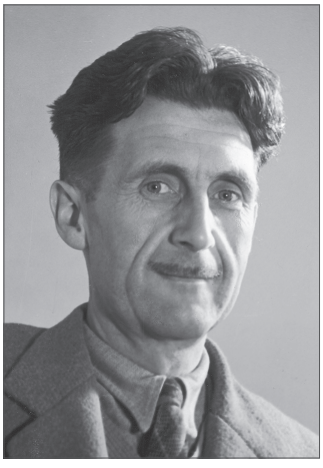
At the end of the extract you have just read, Winston Smith is about to write his first diary entry.

- In a pair, write a paragraph or two of this entry, trying to imagine Winston's feelings both about the world he lives in and about what he is doing.
- Listen to some examples of your diary entries round the class, then discuss how different Winston's experience of life is compared to the way people live in the United Kingdom today.

Connecting to the real world

- Have a go at writing a second diary entry, this one giving the thoughts and feelings Winston would have if he spent a day in the United Kingdom as it is now. You might like to focus on what he would think about the values of democracy and equality that you can find in the United Kingdom.

EMC © ENGLISH & MEDIA CENTRE, 2018



NINETEEN EIGHTY-FOUR

GEORGE ORWELL

Chapter I

It was a bright cold day in April, and the clocks were striking thirteen. Winston Smith, his chin nuzzled into his breast in an effort to escape the vile wind, slipped quickly through the glass doors of Victory Mansions, though not quickly enough to prevent a swirl of gritty dust from entering along with him.

The hallway smelt of boiled cabbage and old rag mats. At one end of it a coloured poster, too large for indoor display, had been tacked to the wall. It depicted simply an enormous face, more than a metre wide: the face of a man of about forty-five, with a heavy black moustache and ruggedly handsome features. Winston made for the stairs. It was no use trying the lift. Even at the best of times it was seldom working, and at present the electric current was cut off during daylight hours. It was part of the economy drive in preparation for Hate Week. The flat was seven flights up, and Winston, who was thirty-nine and had a varicose ulcer above his right ankle, went slowly, resting several times on the way. On each landing, opposite the lift shaft, the poster with the enormous face gazed from the wall. It was one of those pictures which are so contrived that the eyes follow you about when you move. BIG BROTHER IS WATCHING YOU, the caption beneath it ran.

Inside the flat a fruity voice was reading out a list of figures which had something to do with the production of pig-iron. The voice came from an oblong metal plaque like a dulled mirror which formed part of the surface of the right-hand wall. Winston turned a switch and the voice sank somewhat, though the words were still distinguishable. The instrument (the telescreen, it was called) could be dimmed, but there was no way of shutting it off completely. He moved over to the window: a smallish, frail figure, the meagreness of his body merely emphasised by the blue overalls which were the uniform of the Party. His hair was very fair, his face naturally sanguine, his skin roughened by coarse soap and blunt razor blades and the cold of the winter that had just ended.

Outside, even through the shut window-pane, the world looked cold. Down in the street little eddies of wind were whirling dust and torn paper into spirals,

and though the sun was shining and the sky a harsh blue, there seemed to be no colour in anything, except the posters that were plastered everywhere. The black moustachio'd face gazed down from every commanding corner. There was one on the house-front immediately opposite. BIG BROTHER IS WATCHING YOU, the caption said, while the dark eyes looked deep into Winston's own. Down at street level another poster, torn at one corner, flapped fitfully in the wind, alternately covering and uncovering the single word INGSOC. In the far distance a helicopter skimmed down between the roofs, hovered for an instant like a bluebottle, and darted away again with a curving flight. It was the police patrol, snooping into people's windows. The patrols did not matter, however. Only the Thought Police mattered.

Behind Winston's back the voice from the telescreen was still babbling away about pig-iron and the over-fulfilment of the Ninth Three-Year Plan. The telescreen received and transmitted simultaneously. Any sound that Winston made, above the level of a very low whisper, would be picked up by it; moreover, so long as he remained within the field of vision which the metal plaque commanded, he could be seen as well as heard. There was of course no way of knowing whether you were being watched at any given moment. How often, or on what system, the Thought Police plugged in on any individual wire was guesswork. It was even conceivable that they watched everybody all the time. But at any rate they could plug in your wire whenever they wanted to. You had to live – did live, from habit that became instinct – in the assumption that every sound you made was overheard, and, except in darkness, every movement scrutinised.

Winston kept his back turned to the telescreen. It was safer; though, as he well knew, even a back can be revealing. A kilometre away the Ministry of Truth, his place of work, towered vast and white above the grimy landscape. This, he thought with a sort of vague distaste – this was London, chief city of Airstrip One, itself the third most populous of the provinces of Oceania. He tried to squeeze out some childhood memory that should tell him whether London had always been quite like this. Were there always these vistas of rotting nineteenth-century houses, their sides shored up with baulks of timber, their windows patched with cardboard and their roofs with corrugated iron, their crazy garden walls sagging in all directions? And the bombed sites where the plaster dust swirled in the air and the willowherb straggled over the heaps of rubble; and the places where the bombs had cleared a larger patch and there had sprung up sordid colonies of wooden dwellings like chicken-houses? But it was no use, he could not remember: nothing remained of his childhood except a series of bright-lit tableaux, occurring against no background and mostly unintelligible.

EMC © ENGLISH & MEDIA CENTRE, 2018

The Ministry of Truth – Minitrue, in Newspeak – was startlingly different from any other object in sight. It was an enormous pyramidal structure of glittering white concrete, soaring up, terrace after terrace, three hundred metres into the air. From where Winston stood it was just possible to read, picked out on its white face in elegant lettering, the three slogans of the Party:

WAR IS PEACE

FREEDOM IS SLAVERY

IGNORANCE IS STRENGTH

The Ministry of Truth contained, it was said, three thousand rooms above ground level, and corresponding ramifications below. Scattered about London there were just three other buildings of similar appearance and size. So completely did they dwarf the surrounding architecture that from the roof of Victory Mansions you could see all four of them simultaneously. They were the homes of the four Ministries between which the entire apparatus of government was divided. The Ministry of Truth, which concerned itself with news, entertainment, education and the fine arts. The Ministry of Peace, which concerned itself with war. The Ministry of Love, which maintained law and order. And the Ministry of Plenty, which was responsible for economic affairs. Their names, in Newspeak: Minitrue, Minipax, Miniluv and Miniplenty.

The Ministry of Love was the really frightening one. There were no windows in it at all. Winston had never been inside the Ministry of Love, nor within half a kilometre of it. It was a place impossible to enter except on official business, and then only by penetrating through a maze of barbed-wire entanglements, steel doors and hidden machine-gun nests. Even the streets leading up to its outer barriers were roamed by gorilla-faced guards in black uniforms, armed with jointed truncheons.

Winston turned round abruptly. He had set his features into the expression of quiet optimism which it was advisable to wear when facing the telescreen. He crossed the room into the tiny kitchen. By leaving the Ministry at this time of day he had sacrificed his lunch in the canteen, and he was aware that there was no food in the kitchen except a hunk of dark-coloured bread which had got to be saved for tomorrow's breakfast. He took down from the shelf a bottle of colourless liquid with a plain white label marked VICTORY GIN. It gave off a sickly, oily smell, as of Chinese rice-spirit. Winston poured out nearly a teacupful, nerved himself for a shock, and gulped it down like a dose of medicine.

Instantly his face turned scarlet and the water ran out of his eyes. The stuff was like nitric acid, and moreover, in swallowing it one had the sensation of being

hit on the back of the head with a rubber club. The next moment, however, the burning in his belly died down and the world began to look more cheerful. He took a cigarette from a crumpled packet marked VICTORY CIGARETTES and incautiously held it upright, whereupon the tobacco fell out onto the floor. With the next he was more successful. He went back to the living room and sat down at a small table that stood to the left of the telescreen.

From the table drawer he took out a penholder, a bottle of ink and a thick, quarto-sized blank book with a red back and a marbled cover.

For some reason the telescreen in the living room was in an unusual position. Instead of being placed, as was normal, in the end wall, where it could command the whole room, it was in the longer wall, opposite the window. To one side of it there was a shallow alcove in which Winston was now sitting, and which, when the flats were built, had probably been intended to hold bookshelves. By sitting in the alcove, and keeping well back, Winston was able to remain outside the range of the telescreen, so far as sight went. He could be heard, of course, but so long as he stayed in his present position he could not be seen. It was partly the unusual geography of the room that had suggested to him the thing that he was now about to do.

But it had also been suggested by the book that he had just taken out of the drawer. It was a peculiarly beautiful book. Its smooth creamy paper, a little yellowed by age, was of a kind that had not been manufactured for at least forty years past. He could guess, however, that the book was much older than that. He had seen it lying in the window of a frowsy little junk-shop in a slummy quarter of the town (just what quarter he did not now remember) and had been stricken immediately by an overwhelming desire to possess it. Party members were supposed not to go into ordinary shops ('dealing on the free market', it was called), but the rule was not strictly kept, because there were various things such as shoelaces and razor blades which it was impossible to get hold of in any other way. He had given a quick glance up and down the street and then had slipped inside and bought the book for two dollars fifty. At the time he was not conscious of wanting it for any particular purpose. He had carried it guiltily home in his briefcase. Even with nothing written in it, it was a compromising possession.

The thing that he was about to do was to open a diary. This was not illegal (nothing was illegal, since there were no longer any laws), but if detected it was reasonably certain that it would be punished by death, or at least by twenty-five years in a forced-labour camp. Winston fitted a nib into the penholder and sucked it to get the grease off. The pen was an archaic instrument, seldom used even for signatures, and he had procured one, furtively and with some difficulty, simply because of a feeling that the beautiful creamy paper deserved to be written on with

EMC © ENGLISH & MEDIA CENTRE, 2018

a real nib instead of being scratched with an ink-pencil. Actually he was not used to writing by hand. Apart from very short notes, it was usual to dictate everything into the speakwrite, which was of course impossible for his present purpose. He dipped the pen into the ink and then faltered for just a second. A tremor had gone through his bowels. To mark the paper was the decisive act. In small clumsy letters he wrote:

April 4th, 1984.

He sat back. A sense of complete helplessness had descended upon him. To begin with he did not know with any certainty that this was 1984. It must be round about that date, since he was fairly sure that his age was thirty-nine, and he believed that he had been born in 1944 to 1945; but it was never possible nowadays to pin down any date within a year or two. For whom, it suddenly occurred to him to wonder, was he writing this diary? For the future, for the unborn. His mind hovered for a moment round the doubtful date on the page, and then fetched up with a bump against the Newspeak word *doublethink*. For the first time the magnitude of what he had undertaken came home to him. How could you communicate with the future? It was of its nature impossible. Either the future would resemble the present, in which case it would not listen to him: or it would be different from it, and his predicament would be meaningless.

For some time he sat gazing stupidly at the paper. The telescreen had changed over to strident military music. It was curious that he seemed not merely to have lost the power of expressing himself, but even to have forgotten what it was that he had originally intended to say. For weeks past he had been making ready for this moment, and it had never crossed his mind that anything would be needed except courage. The actual writing would be easy. All he had to do was to transfer to paper the interminable restless monologue that had been running inside his head, literally for years. At this moment, however, even the monologue had dried up. Moreover his varicose ulcer had begun itching unbearably. He dared not scratch it, because if he did so it always became inflamed. The seconds were ticking by. He was conscious of nothing except the blankness of the page in front of him, the itching of the skin above his ankle, the blaring of the music, and a slight booziness caused by the gin.

Suddenly he began writing in sheer panic, only imperfectly aware of what he was setting down. His small but childish handwriting straggled up and down the page, shedding first its capital letters and finally even its full stops:

April 4th, 1984. Last night…

Critical Literacy Questions

These questions have been developed to use with any or all of the stories and extracts in this anthology. They can also be applied to almost any other text. They are to help you develop your skills of *critical literacy*: this is a way of actively reading texts so that you can better understand how they are put together and the underlying messages that they contain.

There are nine sets of questions to match the different thematic categories explored in the anthology. You can select the set of questions that you think best matches a particular piece of writing within its category, or you can apply them across categories.

The questions are written to help you think deeply about texts, to challenge your initial responses, and to engage in the wider world. If you or your teacher want to print them off to use elsewhere, you can find copies by searching 'Diverse Shorts' at www.englishandmedia.co.uk/publications.

Freedom

Former US President, Franklin Roosevelt proposed four fundamental freedoms every person in the world should enjoy:

  - Freedom of speech
  - Freedom of religion/belief
  - Freedom from fear
  - Freedom from want.

- Thinking about the four freedoms above, consider:
  - In what ways are the characters in the story free/unfree?
  - Who in the story enjoys the most freedom? Why?
  - Who in the story has the least freedom? Why?
- What threatens the freedom of the characters in the story? Do these threats affect some characters more than others? Do the same threats exist for your own freedom?
- What, if anything, promotes or protects the freedom of the characters in the story? Is this true for you?
- Which people or organisations are responsible for promoting/protecting your freedom? Does having more freedom mean we have more responsibility? How is this shown in the story?
- Do you feel you have more/less freedom than the characters in the story? Why/why not?
- In the story, do any characters have to give up any personal freedom for the wellbeing of the community? Does this ever happen in real life? Is it a good thing?

EMC © ENGLISH & MEDIA CENTRE, 2018

Diversity and community

Thinking about the different communities represented in the story:

- Why do you think the author has chosen to write about these groups/communities?
- How are they represented? E.g. positively/negatively, strong/weak, tolerant/intolerant?
- Does the author choose to represent any groups/communities in the story which we don't often see/hear from in books, films etc.?
- Would everyone agree with the way the different people/groups/communities are represented?
- Are there any points of view lacking or not represented in the story which you think should be included? Why might the author not have included these views?
- Do you think the author might favour some groups/communities over others? How do you know? How might the story have an impact on the reader's thoughts or beliefs about certain groups/communities?
- How do the actions of different characters/groups in the story have an impact on the wellbeing of the different communities?
- Does the story contain any message about diversity and/or community? Do you agree with the message(s) in the story?

Justice

- What does this story make you think about the way the world works? Does the story suggest the author thinks the world is a place of justice and fairness or something else?
- What examples or events can we see in the story which connect to justice? Do you agree with how justice is represented in the story?
- What messages connected to justice does the story contain? Who might benefit if the message in the story is accepted? Who, if anyone, might be disadvantaged?
- What are the greatest threats to justice presented in the story? Do you think the same is true in the wider world? Do you agree with the way the author has tried to represent the world? Would anybody disagree? Why/why not?
- Are all the characters treated fairly in the story? Does the story encourage readers to challenge injustice? If so, how?
- How do the characters' choices and actions work to increase or reduce justice in their communities/the world?
- Would the world be any different if everybody read this story? If so, how? If not, why not?
- Would you like to live in the world described in the story? Does the story reflect your understanding of how the world works?

Change and action

- Does the author think the world needs to change in some way? If so, how?
- Would everybody agree with the author?
- How do the actions and choices of the characters in the story have an impact on their lives and their communities? Do the characters' actions help to change the world for the better or worse?
- How might reading this story change the way a person thinks about:
    a. Themselves
    b. Other people
    c. Society/their community
    d. The wider world?
- Does the story make you think you need to change in some way? If so, how? If not, why not?
- Do you think the world would be a better place (even in a very small way) if everybody read this story? Why/why not?
- Does the story contain any ideas/suggestions/examples for how to change the world for the better?
- Does the story contain any messages about how we should/should not to act in society?
- How might people who have read the story work to change the world for the better?

Power and control

- Who in the story has the most power? How did they get this power/where does this power come from? Do the characters in the story use their power in a positive/negative way?
- Who in the story has the least power? Why don't they have much power? What would need to change for them to become more powerful?
- Who in the story has control/who doesn't have control? Where and/or how is this represented?
- How are power and control related in the story? Are the more powerful characters more in control (over their own thoughts and actions, over others in their community, of their place in society)?
- Does the amount of power/control the different characters have shift or change at all throughout the story? Why/how does this happen?
- What might the story teach us about power and control in the real world?
- Thinking about your own experiences, do you think the representation of power and/or control in the story is realistic?

EMC © ENGLISH & MEDIA CENTRE, 2018

Identity

- How are different identities, e.g. gender, race, class etc. represented in the story? To what extent does the author present the different characters' identities as complex and multiple, i.e. consisting of many parts? Are some characters identities more complex than others? How does the author represent this?
- Do you agree with the way different identities in the story are represented?
- Are any parts of your identity represented in the story/ by the characters? Are you happy with this representation?
- What factors affect and shape the characters' identities in the story? Does the author present identity as something we are in control of or something that is decided for us?
- How are different voices presented in the story? Are any voices stronger/ weaker than others? What makes them strong/ weak?
- Is there a voice/ identity missing from the story? If you could add this voice into the story, what would it say?
- Do you think everybody would read and respond to the story in the same way? How might people's identities affect how they feel about the story?
- What, if anything, might the story suggest to the reader about the author's own identity?

Tolerance, rights and respect

- To what extent is the society represented in the story 'tolerant and respectful'? Is the story a realistic depiction of society?
- Does anything happen in the story which you don't agree with but ***would*** tolerate? Should we have to tolerate things we don't agree with? Why/why not?
- Are there any actions/events/beliefs in the story which you think ***should not be tolerated***? Why not? How do the characters in the story respond to such events? Do you agree with their response?
- Are there any views or beliefs represented in the story which you don't agree with? Are these views held by many in wider society? Is it a bad thing when people disagree in society?
- Are there any characters, groups or communities who are treated disrespectfully in the story? Where do we see this? Does this reflect real life?
- To what extent do you think the characters in the story demonstrate respect for:
    a. each other's and their rights
    b. their communities
    c. rules, laws and institutions of society (e.g. police, government etc.).
- What lessons, if any, does the story contain about how we ought to treat each other? Do you agree with these messages?

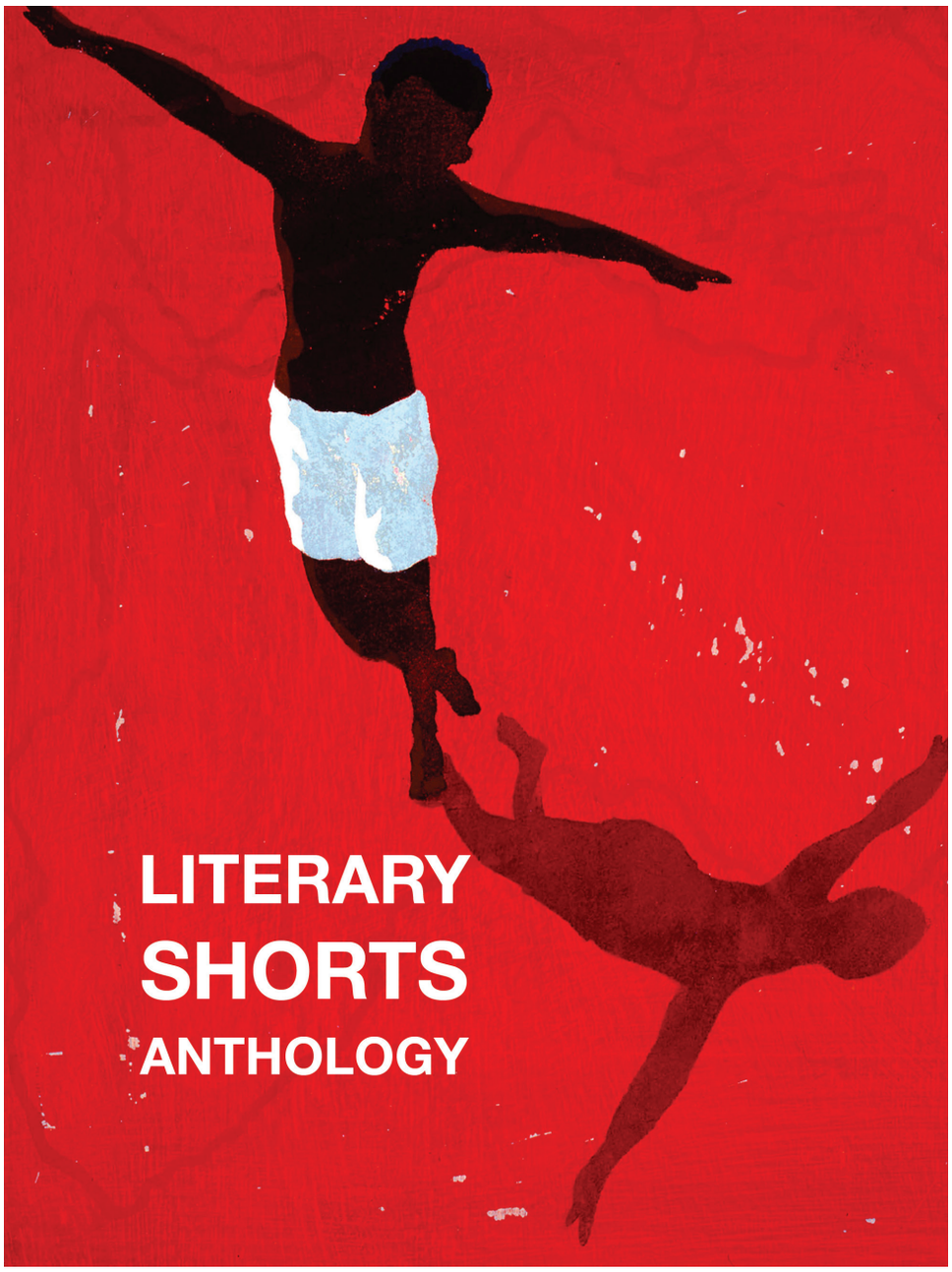
Democracy

- Think of some important features of a democratic society (e.g. freedom of speech). To what extent is the society presented in the story a 'democratic' society? How do we know?
- To what extent do the different characters in the story feel happy/content with the world? How does the author represent their feelings? Do you identify with any of these ideas/feelings?
- To what extent are the characters in the story able to express their views/ideas/ beliefs hopes/frustrations effectively?
- Are some characters in the story more able to communicate their views/ideas/beliefs etc. than others? What enables them to do this?
- Should people ever be stopped from expressing their views/beliefs?
- Within a democracy, what methods can we use to communicate our views/beliefs responsibly and effectively? Do we see any of these in the story? Is there a positive outcome?
- Who/what might stop characters in the story from expressing their views and beliefs? Does the same thing happen in our society?
- Do the views, actions and choices of the characters reflect the ways in which people think and act in the real world? If so, how? If not, how is it different?

Equality and responsibility

- Are there any issues/themes in the story connected to either rights, equality or both?
- In the story, can you see any instances of people:
  - Claiming their rights
  - Protecting/promoting the rights of others
  - Having rights denied or restricted
  - Denying the rights of others?
- How is this shown? Is it ever necessary to limit or restrict someone's rights? Why/not?
- Where can inequality be seen in the story? What form(s) does it take? Is inequality ever desirable in society? Why/not?
- In the story, who/what are the greatest threats to equality? How do we see this?
- In the story, who/what, works to promote equality? How does this happen? In your opinion, does this reflect reality?
- Thinking about your own experiences of equality/inequality, does the story match your own understanding of how the world works? Is this a good thing?
- What would need to change in the story to increase the equality for the characters? Would this make it a better or worse story?
- How would reading this story influence the way people think about equality and/or rights in society?

EMC © ENGLISH & MEDIA CENTRE, 2018



This resource comes from the English and Media Centre's publication *Literary Shorts and Literary Shorts Teacher Resource*, brilliant short stories to challenge, entertain and inspire, with activities to explore the writer's craft .

If you are interested in exploring this resource further, please visit https://www.englishandmedia.co.uk/publications/

EMC Publications

THE PARADISE CARPET

JAMILA GAVIN



Jamila Gavin (1941-) was born in India, to an English mother and an Indian father. She has written many novels for children, perhaps her best known being *Coram Boy*, a children's historical novel about Toby, saved from an African slave ship, and Aaron, the illegitimate son of the heir to a great estate.

'The Paradise Carpet' was first published in 2002.

'One knot blue, two knots yellow, three knots red, four knots green... The young boys chanted the pattern of the carpet they were weaving. Bony little fingers deftly drew the card down the thread; warp and weft... warp and weft... top to bottom, right to left... warp and weft and knot.

Behind the loom inside a dark mud hut, crouching like caged animals, sat a line of boys. With backs against a wall, their thin arms rose and fell as they drew the threads from top to bottom, right to left, warp and weft and knot. They could have been musicians plucking at strings, but these were carpet weavers whose harmonies were of the eye not the ear as, bit by bit, the glorious patterns and hues of a rich carpet emerged in the darkness. 'One knot blue, two knots yellow, three knots red, four knots green …' The boys wove their thread, prompted and guided by old Rama, the only man among them, who had the pattern pinned to an upright in front of him.

II

© English & Media Centre, 2014

'Ishwar, you're dreaming again!' bellowed a harsh voice. THWACK! The hand of the overseer struck a boy around the head.

The boy, Ishwar, faltered and nearly fell over sideways but Bharat, crouching next to him, braced his body and managed to keep his friend upright.

'Keep your mind on the job. There'll be no supper for any of you tonight until you've woven another ten inches,' threatened the man. His great shape filled the doorway and blotted out their only source of light. Then he was gone. There was low groan from the boys. Another ten inches before they would eat! That could take two hours or more, for this was the most complicated carpet they had ever woven – and the whole thing was to be completed within seven months – when an ordinary carpet took at least twelve.

A wealthy man had come along the rough track to the village in his white Mercedes. When he reached the brick house of Anoup, the carpet manufacturer, he got out like a raja, surrounded by shy jostling children and deferential elders, all of whom noted the gold rings embedded in his chubby fingers, and the chunky foreign watch just glinting beneath the cuffs of his smart suit.

'I want a carpet for my daughter's dowry,' he declared. 'She is to be married next December.' (Everyone did an instant calculation. That was only seven months away.) 'And this is the pattern I want you to weave.' II

Anoup took the piece of paper the rich man held out to him. He stared at it long and silently, then gloomily and apologetically shook his head. 'Impossible,' he said. 'I need at least twelve months to do an average carpet – but this... this... and in SEVEN months, you say... No. Impossible.'

The rich man pulled out a fat briefcase from the car. He opened it up. There was a gasp from the onlookers. No one had ever seen so much money. Great wads of it, all stapled and bound straight from the bank. 'This is what you get now – and the rest when its finished. I'm sure you can do it. Just work a little harder – and a little longer each day, eh?' He tweaked the ear of the nearest little boy.

'I... er...' Anoup hesitated.

'Take it, take it...' voices around him urged.

© English & Media Centre, 2014

Anoup's brain spun. Common sense said, don't do it... you can't do it... But the money... 'I'll do it. Your carpet will be ready on time.'

Anoup gave old Rama the pattern. 'You'd better study this,' he said.

Now Rama knew why Anoup had hesitated. The pattern was a paradise garden of strutting peacocks with sweeping tails, gold spotted deer leaping through undergrowth, squirrels coiling round tree-trunks and monkeys swinging from bough to bough; all sorts of exotic birds swooped and trilled and pecked at luscious fruit and flowers. Most extraordinary of all, was the Tree of Life, from its spreading roots at the base, rising up and up through twisting coiling branches, all the way to the top where the rays of rising sun pierced golden shafts through the leaves. It would need thread of every colour in the rainbow. 'There aren't enough hours in the day...' Rama protested softly.

'Then we will use the hours of the night too,' Anoup retorted harshly.

Ishwar stared at the bright blue square in the doorway – the blue of the sky outside. He longed to leap up and charge into the daylight and play, play, play. He had almost forgotten what the outside was like. It was two years since his mother had brought him to this village to be bonded to Anoup, for debts incurred in his grandfather's lifetime. Since then he had worked behind a loom in the dark, airless mud hut. It was like that for all of them; bonded and enslaved – even old Rama – and Ishwar knew he too would die in bondage, that the debt would never be paid off in his lifetime either.

Ishwar could hear the voices of the village children being taught under the neem tree to chorus out their times tables and their alphabet. Ishwar tried to listen and learn – but it was no use. He must chant for ever with the other carpet weavers, the colours of the thread they were weaving... one knot yellow, two knots blue, three knots red, four knots green...

The paradise garden shimmered on the loom. If he couldn't play outside, then he must roam within its green shade and splash in the stream and chase the deer and climb branch by branch up and up the Tree of Life until he reached the blue sky there on the loom. With a strange eagerness, he took up the thread and moved his card top to bottom, right to left, warp and weft and knot, as if he would weave himself into the carpet. ||

© English & Media Centre, 2014

Exactly when the seven months were over, the white Mercedes came. The villagers watched anxiously as the rich man came as before, right up to Anoup's door.

'Is it ready?'

'It is,' answered Anoup, eyeing the bulging briefcase on the back seat.

'Show it to me. You realise that if it is not exactly what I ordered, I will not take it.'

'Sir, it is exactly what you asked for in every detail,' boasted Anoup.

'I'll be the judge of that,' snorted the rich man. 'Bring it out in the daylight where I can examine it properly.'

Anoup clicked his fingers. Rama and three boys ran to the hut.

'Hey, Ishwar!' exclaimed Rama. 'Wake up, boy! Help us with the carpet.'

Ishwar was sitting in his usual place behind the loom, his head leaning against the upright. He didn't respond.

'Hurry up!' bellowed Anoup impatiently. Rama and the boys lugged the carpet outside and with almost holy reverence, unrolled it. Even the villagers gasped in amazement at the beauty and workmanship. It was a miracle. They beamed with pride.

The rich man came forward till his nose nearly touched the pile. Inch by inch he scrutinised the carpet. Suddenly, he roared with fury. 'What's this!' he shouted. 'I didn't ask for this! What kind of idiotic thing have you done here! I can't take it – not with THIS!' He dragged the carpet out of their hands and trampled it into the dust. Then leaving the villagers appalled and stunned the rich businessman got into his car and sped off at top speed.

Nobody moved. Fearful eyes turned to Anoup. He was standing as if turned to stone. At last he clicked his fingers. In horrified silence they held out the carpet. Anoup's expert eye began at the tip and scanned the carpet, as he had done twenty times each day. In his mind's eye, he wove each thread himself, He panned along the twisting branches of the Tree of Life, the glowing colours of humming birds and nightingales, dropping down through ten shades of green leaves and a dozen shades of blossoms of red, pink, purple and violet; he noted the golden fur of a deer darting through the grass, the hundred eyes of a peacock's tail shimmering near a silver

© English & Media Centre, 2014

fountain... and...?

Then Anoup's body shuddered. He shuddered so hard, they heard his teeth rattle, and the bones of his fingers clicking as he ground his knuckles into his fist. ||

'What is it?' murmured the villagers. 'What has he seen?' They surged forward. Speechless with rage, Anoup pointed to a spot deep in the undergrowth. Almost hidden among blossom and foliage, the young face of a boy peered up at the Tree of Life, an arm upstretched, ready to climb.

'Ishwar!' Rama muttered under his breath. 'It's Ishwar!'

'Ishwar!' The name was shrieked in vengeance! The villagers rushed to the hut.

The boy still leaned against the loom as if resting his aching head. Anoup strode over and kicked him. The boy slipped forward, face down, on to the earth floor. When they rolled him over, they saw he was dead.

© English & Media Centre, 2014

RESIGNED

MEG ROSOFF



Meg Rosoff (1956-) is an American writer, based in London. Best known for her young-adult novel, *How I Live Now*, which came out as a film in 2013, her work centres round the complex emotions and relationships present in young people's lives. 'Resigned', first published in 2011, is an excellent example of how her work tries to capture the experience of being a teenager.

My Mother has resigned.

Not from her job, but from being a mother. II She said she'd had enough, more than enough. In actual fact, she used what my dad calls certain good old-fashioned Anglo-Saxon words that they're allowed to use and we're not. She said we could bring ourselves up from now on, she wanted no more part in it.

She said what she did all day was the laundry, the cooking, the shopping, the cleaning, the making the beds, the clearing the table, the packing and unpacking the dish-washer, the dragging everyone to ballet and piano and cello and football and swimming, not to mention school, the shouting at everyone to get ready, the making sure everyone had the right kit for the right event, the making cakes for school cake sales, the helping with homework, the making the garden look nice, the feeding the fish we couldn't be bothered to feed, the walking the dog we'd begged to have and then ignored, the making packed lunches for school according to what we would and wouldn't eat (for those of us who have packed lunches) and then the unmaking them after school with all the things we didn't eat, the remembering dinner money (for those of us who didn't want packed lunches), and not to mention, she said, all the nagging in between.

© English & Media Centre, 2014

Here she paused, which was good because we all thought the strain of talking so fast without stopping was going to make her pass out. But quick as a flash she was off again. Dad stood grinning in the comer, by the way, like all this had nothing at all to do with him, but we knew it was just a matter of time before she remembered she was married and then the you-know-what was going to hit the you-know-who.

Mum took a deep breath.

And another thing.

She had her fingers out for this one. And there weren't enough fingers in the room to list the next set of crimes.

Who did we think took care of the bank accounts, the car insurance, the life insurance, the mortgage, the tax returns, the milk bill, the charity donations, the accountant...

Here she paused again, looking around the kitchen to make absolutely certain she had our full attention and eye contact and no one was thinking of escape – even for a minute or two – from the full force of her resentment.

II

We are not totally stupid, by the way. We read the tabloids often enough to know that between a mother giving a lecture of the fanatical nervous breakdown variety to her kids and Grievous Bodily Harm there is a very fine line indeed. *The Sun*, for instance, seems to specialise in stories along the lines of *Formerly average mum bludgeons family with stern lecture and tyre iron, then makes cup of tea*. We three kids were doing the eye contact and respectful hangdog-look thing, maintaining that pathetic silence that makes mothers feel guilty eventually, when they're done shouting. But we had to give the old girl credit, this time she showed no sign of flagging.

She took another deep breath.

... the magazine subscriptions, the dentist appointments, the birthday parties, the Christmas dinner, the presents, the nephews and nieces, the *in-laws*.

As one, we swivelled to look at Dad. Mum had stopped and was looking at Dad too, whose brain you could tell was racing with possible escape routes, excuses, mitigating circumstances, and of course the desire to be somewhere else entirely. He shot a single furtive glance at the back door,

© English & Media Centre, 2014

figured it was too far to risk making a break for it. (Mum is no slouch in the lunge-and-tackle stakes, having been a county champion lacrosse player back a hundred years ago when she was in school. We knew she hadn't forgotten all the moves due to an incident a few years ago with an attempted purse-snatching. None of us refers to it now, but word on the street is that the guy still never leaves the house.)

And, she said (glaring at me because the woman is an experienced enough mother to hear you thinking a digression about lacrosse), *and* I hope you are listening, because when I say *I am not going to do it anymore*, I mean I am not going to do it anymore. She glared at each one of us in turn – a kind of equal-opportunity glare.

And one last thing, she said, in an even scarier, quieter voice, and I risked a sideways glance to see if Francis Ford Coppola was in the wings directing this masterful performance. *From this moment on*, she continued, I am deaf to whining. Deaf to any annoying tone of voice *you three* – she shot a relatively benign look at Dad just to let him know he was off the hook on this particular issue, assuming he backed her up, that is – *can dream up*. Screaming will only be acknowledged if accompanied by bones sticking out of skin or hatchet actually *buried* in skull.

Moe was shuffling his feet a little now, and sneaking peeks at his watch because his teacher hated it when anyone was late to school.

She glared at him and he jumped to attention like someone out of the Queen's Guard.

Right, she said, surveying her troops and appearing a little calmer now. Any questions?

Nobody dared say anything, except, of course, Alec, who could smarm for England and has not lived fifteen years on this earth without picking up a trick or two along the way. He had stopped lounging against the wall, which is what he does with most of his waking hours, stood up fairly straight, plastered this sickening look of sincerity across his wily mug and said, OK, Mum, fair cop, we're with you on this. I'm only surprised you didn't make a stand a long time ago.

Then, just to prove she wasn't born yesterday either, Mum made this kind of snorting sound and rolled her eyes, indicating rejection of smarm, and said, I can't tell you how pleased I am that you approve, Alec. Now everyone

© English & Media Centre, 2014

better get a move on because school starts in twenty minutes and you are going to have to figure out how to get there.

As one, we turned to Dad, who was now trying to make himself two-dimensional and slide behind the fridge, which would have been easier if he hadn't been six-foot-four and built like a rugby scrum half. But Dad is a man who knows when to fold in poker, like when all he's got in his hand are twos, threes, and fours of different colours. He folded gracefully.

Come on then, he said in a resigned voice. Pile in. We'll leave Mum alone for now and give her some time to collect herself.

Some time to collect myself? Mum said. *Some* time *to collect myself*? How kind, how fantastically kind of you. Why, I can't think *how* to show my appreciation short of taking out a full-page ad in the *effing Financial Times*. (She practically screamed that last bit.) But, say what you will. I now have *the rest of my life* to myself, and it's you suckers who are going to have to cope.

She smiled at us then, a genuine smile, all warm and mumsy and loving, and kissed us each in turn, the way you'd kiss people who were trooping off to a firing squad.

Have a lovely day, all of you. See you later.

We hated it when she turned all nice and snatched the moral high ground out from under us. But it was getting late so we all crammed into Dad's car, elbowing and kicking and biting each other like captives in a government crocodile-breeding initiative, and headed off to be late to school.

Naturally there was a fair bit of conversation in the car about Mum's little episode.

She's bluffing, Alec said. She's probably just getting her period.

I wouldn't be so sure, smart-arse, Dad said. She didn't look like she was bluffing to me. And just a tip for later life – don't ever even *think* those words in the vicinity of a woman or you'll find yourself castrated before you can say oops.

Moe grinned and I sniggered, knowing our dear big brother's future was definitely going to be bollock-free.

© English & Media Centre, 2014

Anyway, we got to school late, and all of us got detention, except Moe, who has a professional way of looking like he's about to burst into tears. By lunchtime we'd all forgotten that we even had a mum at home, what with all the gossip and sexual harassment and who's not talking to who and have you noticed who *she's* hanging around with these days to talk about.

After school, Moe and I caught a ride home with Esther's mum, who wears flowery clothes and acts like a proper mum, asking if you're hungry and doling out crisps and having tissues with her at all times, and never screaming *shut* the bloody **** up! at her children like someone else I can think of. Not that I'd want her as my mum, due to her being an irony-free zone, not to mention harbouring a fervent wish for Esther to grow up to be a Person of Substance, an expression she actually uses in public, which explains why Esther looks so long-suffering and wants to be a flight attendant.

My mum always said she wanted me to be a ballerina, which is her idea of the world's funniest joke because I'm not exactly small and could be two ballerinas if they cut me in half and I had four legs. Moe wants to be a vet, like every other eight-year-old, and Alec just wants to get out of school, drink alcohol, go clubbing, get his driver's license, get a car, and have a girlfriend who'll let him have sex with her all the time, though not necessarily in that order.

But I'm getting off the point here. **II**

We stayed at Esther's for supper, dutifully notifying Mum so she couldn't shout that she'd gone to all the trouble to make us a nice blah blah blah with three kinds of blah blah blah on the side and we weren't there to eat it and hadn't even had the courtesy to phone.

She seemed pleased to hear that we weren't coming home for dinner, and it wasn't until I hung up that I realised she hadn't said the usual – if you're not home by seven, you're toast – but I took it as tacit and made sure Esther's mum gave us a ride home. We walked in the door at ten to seven, which I thought was a pretty good touch, just in case someone's watch might be running a few minutes fast.

Mum was on the phone when we got there, talking to her business partner, Jo. They'd had a lot of interest from America after the article that was written about them in *Country Life*, and apparently antique garden

© English & Media Centre, 2014

implements were all the rage among rich Americans who had too much money and not enough antique garden implements.

I noticed immediately that the breakfast table looked exactly the same as it had when we all left for school that morning, with dirty dishes and open jars of marmalade and crumbs everywhere, and I thought Mum was going a bit far to prove a point, given how much she hates mess of any kind, but I thought I'd better play along and so started clearing up. I shouted for Alec to come help, but he said he didn't give a monkey's whether it was cleared up or not, and since we were in charge we should be able to live in squalor if squalor was what we liked. **II**

As squalor went, this was pretty tame, and anyway I had homework to do and got distracted by Hooligan wanting to go out for a walk and since Mum wasn't giving orders anymore, I let him out in the garden and even he looked confused that no one was shouting at him to stay away from the herbaceous borders.

Hey, Moe, I hissed. Get this. And I pointed to Hoo out in the garden doing a poo the size of Mont-Saint-Michel by Mum's *Nicotiana sylvestris*, and Moe's eyes widened and we both thought, cool!

After that we forgot about Hoo and watched some television while pretending to do homework and in the commercial breaks I managed to write a whole essay entitled 'The Egyptians: Why They Became Extinct'.

After the initial shock, this new regime was turning out to be much more relaxing than life with Mussolini. Oops, did I say a fanatic Italian dictator? I meant Mum.

When Dad finally got home he looked a little grumpy about no dinner being on the table, but it wasn't long till he got the hang of things and filled a soup bowl full of Frosties and sighed really loud a few times to make sure everyone knew he wasn't thrilled about the new order. Moe looked at Dad's Frosties and, because no one said no, he had some too.

Over the next week or so, Mum moved into her office in the garden, which she'd had the foresight to make Dad build with its own shower room and enough of a kitchen to survive on. Also, as she put it, there was no way she was going to step foot in the kitchen until we four called pest control. She still came to say good night to us, a little like a fond auntie, and sometimes we hung around and did our homework in her office because

© English & Media Centre, 2014

every place in the whole house seemed to have something messing up the surfaces where you might want to put a book. And she didn't seem to mind us coming in as long as we didn't bother her or leave wrappers on the floor. Which was tricky, given that all our meals seemed to come in wrappers these days. She was on the phone a lot, and having meetings with her partner and smiling more than we'd seen in ages.

Which was great.

Only, after a few weeks of this, us kids were starting to look at each other and think, hey, fun's fun, but there are no clean clothes in the whole house and we've run out of cereal for breakfast and tea, and speaking of tea, there's only one manky box of teabags that came free from Tesco about a hundred years ago and Dad's taken to drinking instant coffee, which puts him in an even worse mood than he is naturally. Also, the dog needs brushing, the radiators make a horrible noise, and every envelope that arrives has *For Your Urgent Attention* written on it in red.

So we sat down that Saturday at what had once been the breakfast table but now looked like that exhibit at the zoo, filled with half-eaten meals and *Rattus norvegicus* probably written on a brass plaque somewhere. I noticed the two goldfish in the bowl on top of the fridge for the first time in ages, and it was clear no one else had noticed them either, considering that they had given up swimming some time ago and taken up floating on the surface. Moe was wearing the cleanest of his shirts, which had ketchup spilled down the front and a chip actually stuck to it, Dad had gone out to have breakfast alone with the newspaper at Starbucks, and Alec and I were drinking blueberry cordial, which was the only thing left to drink in the house since we ran out of teabags and the milkman stopped coming.

OK, guys, I said. I think it's time to start begging.

Moe looked annoyed. But we're doing perfectly well without any help, he said, digging into a bowl of recently thawed peas from the freezer with some week-old takeaway curry mixed in.

Alec said he was going to be sick and Moe should be taken into care, and they began to shout at each other and Alec stormed out, but I called him back because it was so obvious to all of us that something had to be done. We managed to be civil to each other long enough to write a letter setting out our terms of surrender. Here's what we wrote:

© English & Media Centre, 2014

Dearest Mum,

You were right. Even we can't live with ourselves.

If you agree to come back we will follow any rules you make with absolutely no complaining and no whining.

Promise. Cross our hearts and hope to die.

Please. We miss you so much.

Plus, we were wrong.

Love,

Your children

II

I typed the letter up on Dad's laptop, set it in a nice curly font, and after I printed it out we all signed it and drew hearts on it and so forth to suck up, and then we slipped it under the door of the studio and went back into the house and got to work.

It took all day, so it wasn't a bad thing that we didn't hear back from her right away. We scrubbed the floors and the walls, the kitchen and the bathroom, we swept off all the junk piled on every surface and separated out the bills and left them neatly stacked, and Dad paid them when he got home. Moe cleaned out the refrigerator and Alec and I went up to the shop with a lifetime's supply of pocket money and bought food – not the stuff we'd been eating all month, like chocolate breakfast bars, but proper food, like chicken parts and green beans and granary bread and cheddar cheese. We cleaned out the fishbowl and flushed both the fish down the toilet, which wasn't inhumane considering their advanced state of fatality, put clean sheets on all the beds and did about fifteen loads of laundry, and even folded it up afterwards. Alec got out the Hoover, but miracles have to end somewhere, and when the phone rang and it was his girlfriend, I ended up doing it myself.

It was a not entirely unsatisfying day, if I say so myself. Even the house itself seemed less bad-tempered, like it preferred being clean.

Well, Mum may have suspected something was up when she saw all the black rubbish bags stacked outside by the front door, or she might just have got tired of sleeping on the little daybed in the studio. Or maybe she even missed us. Who knows.

© English & Media Centre, 2014

But that night, around ten p.m., we saw lights on in the studio, and later found a handwritten note pushed through the letter box.

It read, *I'll think about it. Love, Mum.*

And I guess she thought about it all day Sunday, because it was teatime on Sunday when she finally knocked on the door like a visitor, and when we let her in, she looked around in every room, and nodded every now and then, and finally she sat down at the (immaculate) kitchen table and said, OK, I'll come back.

We all started cheering and surrounded her and hugged and kissed her, but she held up one hand and continued.

On one condition. At which point she pulled out a sheaf of papers that looked a little like the Treaty of Versailles, and handed one set to each of us, and on it was a schedule of who did what job on what day and, to be fair, she had written herself into the list occasionally too.

So this is where I'm supposed to say we all lived happily ever after, but in fact we didn't – at least, not quite in the way we expected to. ‖ Nobody really stuck to the jobs listed on the piece of paper, including Mum, because she was away a lot suddenly due to her business being so successful at last, but the good thing was she seemed to care a lot less about the house being as clean as it was before, and we learned one important lesson – not to push her past a certain point – so we did pitch in more than we ever had, with the possible exception of Alec. Then Mum really started raking in the dough and Dad quit his job and stayed home, doing most of the cooking and cleaning and gardening and seeming strangely happy about it. So in general, things worked out more or less peacefully for a while.

But a few months later, we noticed Mum was spending a lot of time talking to the young guy next door, and one day she gathered us together and said she was moving out for good. We just stood there stunned and completely freaked out, and Moe began to cry, and Mum grabbed him up in her arms and said stop crying, Moe, and come look at my new house.

Then she opened the front door, and jumped over the little wall by the front path and pulled a key out of her pocket and opened the door of the house next door. And while we were staring at her trying to figure out what had happened, she was grinning ear to ear and said I've finally sorted it.

© English & Media Centre, 2014

So that's the end of the story. Mum bought the house next door from the young guy, and though we have to take our shoes off when we go visit her, she almost never shouts at us anymore, and she never complains about the mess in our house, not ever. And when I get fed up living with Dad or if I can't stand another minute with Moe and Alec, I move in with Mum for a few weeks and we have a great time staying up late and talking and just getting on. And sometimes we rent a movie and make popcorn and invite Mum round to our house to watch it and she stays over, and we make her breakfast in the morning before she goes back to work.

And whenever anyone asks us in a polite concerned voice why we don't live with our mother, we put on mournful faces and sigh and say, Well, she just walked out on us one day, but we're pretty much resigned to it now.

And then we fall about laughing, and go and tell Mum.

© English & Media Centre, 2014

HAPPILY EVER AFTER

BARBARA BLEIMAN



Barbara Bleiman (1955-) was born in South Africa but came to England when she was just five years old. Her great-grandfather emigrated from Lithuania, in Eastern Europe, to South Africa in the early 1900s.

Her parents told her many stories about life for her ancestors in their small Jewish communities in Lithuania and Russia and later in their new home in South Africa.

'Happily Ever After', first published in 2011, is based on one of these tales from a way of life that has long since past.

This is a story that my mother told me, not once but several times, about a young girl called Bella. She was to become my great-aunt in the end but it was a close-run thing. It almost didn't happen and then, finally, it did.

Bella lived in a *shtetl* in Lithuania. She was a Jew, a peasant girl, living in a little village called Gargzdai or Gorzd, depending on who you were, on the edge of the civilised world, next to the Baltic Sea and in hearing distance of a clock that was ticking towards change – oh my God what change! – at the turn of the first decade of the already turned century. But she'd never see it herself, not with her own eyes. She would miss the blood dripping onto the snow and the tearing down of the houses, the cows lowing and the sheep bleating as they burned.

She said her prayers on the Sabbath, over the two tallow candles, and drank the sweet wine. She hid from the boys with their *talleisim*, their prayer shawls, and long curling locks, who laughed at her on their way to

© English & Media Centre, 2014

the little *shul* that squatted on the hill. She watched them as they walked along the mud track and past the dairy farm. She helped her mother with the washing, pounding it in a bucket with a washing stick, putting it through the wringer, hanging it by the fire to dry. She learnt to cook the simple food they could afford – potato soup, beetroot and swede, dark rye bread and salty fish, smoked on wood or pickled in a barrel. She sat with her sisters, sewing coarse calico cloth and darning woollen stockings, watching her father, with his prayer book, nodding, back and forth, back and forth, muttering the Hebrew prayers she didn't understand. She saw him fling out his arm in temper and bring the pan lid down with a crack when he was angry, so the table shuddered and trembled. She felt his scratchy woollen coat, when he gathered all his children in the wide shelter of his arms, to kiss them and bless them: 'Oh my pride and my joy. May the good Lord care for you and bring you children of your own.' She heard her mother singing Yiddish songs and watched her hitching her skirts to dance to the fiddle and the accordion at Purim or Shavuot and she danced with her sisters, swinging them round and round. She watched at weddings when the bride and groom were lifted in their chairs and the men clapped and sang and the women danced and laughed and the shy young bride looked out through her veil and the proud young man smashed the ritual glass and everyone shouted '*Mazel tov*, good luck, good luck. May you have health and happiness!' She saw her pimply brother becoming a man at his bar mitzvah and her doe-eyed elder sister being betrothed to Pinchas the butcher, who was twenty years older than her and had a face like an unscrubbed potato. She hid scraps of paper to write on and stole stubs of pencils to write with. She woke in the morning when the scrawny cock crowed and went to her bed when the sun slipped down below the roof of the *shul*. In short, she lived a life and she knew of no other.

***

'Who will you marry?' she asked her friend Sarah as they sat under the bilberry tree by the blacksmith's forge.

'Not Schmuly, with his smelly armpits,' said Sarah. 'Pooey Schmuly'. Not Shorty Isaac, the *mohel's* son, who helped his father with the circumcisions. Not Samuel with his knock-knees or Reuben Four-Eyes who was blind as Esra's grey-haired old dog even though he was still only sixteen. Not Rivka's skinny brother, or any of the Krasner boys; not the Milavetz brothers or the five ugly Plotkins, with their mule and their sulky faces. No no no. Not

© English & Media Centre, 2014

one of them. The girls held their noses and screwed up their faces – yuck – and laughed and laughed. They were fifteen years old and hid behind their mother's skirts when stupid boys came to the door.

And then pretty Sarah was married, just like that, to Avram, the oldest of the Plotkins. Now she had no time to sit under the bilberry tree and laugh at silly boys. She held a raw-faced baby with a runny nose under her arm as she beat the eggs for the fruit pudding, and rocked the wooden cradle with her foot as she twisted hanks of wool or sorted buttons. She was a woman with a woman's cares.

Bella wondered when she would be married and which of the Krazners or Milavetz boys or four ugly Plotkins she should hide from when they came knocking on her father's door. But none of them came and the years went by and Bella's sisters and brothers flew up and grew away and Bella was left at home, spending her evenings watching her father nodding over his prayers and her mother nodding over her knitting.

Then one cold evening, when the ice hung from the eaves and the branches of the lime tree were broken and bowed with heavy snow, there was a knock at the door. It was Moishe, the matchmaker, come with a proposition. Pa and Ma's sleepiness vanished, despite the blackness of the night and the fug of warmth from the fire. They sat up straight as wood.

'I have a match for your daughter. He's a boy, oh my God, what a boy! And what a family! And what an opportunity for the girl, who isn't, let's face it, so young any more.'

Ma opened her mouth and shut it again.

'But where does he live?' asked Ma, hoping for a *shtetl* to the south, so she could borrow a cart and go and visit, whenever she felt like it. Already Ma was thinking of the grandchildren and the *naches*, the joy they would bring, and helping to rock them and wean them and knit their coats and sing them her songs.

'Ah,' said Moishe. 'Ah.' He paused and sighed. 'I'll have that cup of warm milk that you're offering,' he said.

'Not over the hills to the North and Plungė,' said Ma. 'We couldn't accept that.'

© English & Media Centre, 2014

'No,' said Moishe. 'Not over the hills to Plungė. But a little way away,' he said, sipping on the warm milk. 'But let's not worry about that for now,' and he proceeded to tell them about the boy, Solomon Schachat, son of Samuel, grandson of Abraham, great-grandson of Chaim, who used to live in the village many, many years earlier. 'A catch,' he said, 'Money, there's plenty! A rich young man, so rich he keeps his money in a bank. She'll be drowning in it. No rough woollen coats for her from now on. Cashmere and silk, she'll be wearing. Pearls and fine jewels. Not the stink of the *shtetl* for her.'

Pa stroked his beard. 'Mmm,' he said. 'Mmm.'

'Here is a photograph,' said Moishe, at which point Bella jumped up from the bottom step where she was sitting and ran over to take a look. She saw a fine-looking young man, with a starched collar and a dark woven suit. He had bright eyes and a hint of a smile, despite the customary formal pose for the photograph.

'Yes,' she said. 'I want him.' And that was that. Pa and Ma shook hands with Moishe, Bella clapped her hands together and spun round the room, as pleased as the cow when she'd just been fed.

'So which village does he live in?' asked Ma, hugging Bella to her.

'Cape Town,' said Moishe quietly and as Ma opened her mouth to scream, 'You must give her this chance,' he said. 'Her whole life will change. She will be rich.'

And so, one early morning, before the cock crowed, or the cow was fed, before Sarah Plotkin had woken to give her fifth son his feed, || or the rabbi had woken from his bed to say his early-morning prayers, Bella was climbing into a cart that would take her to a station where she would board a steam train that would take her to Libau, where she would find a man who would escort her to the docks, where she would climb the gangplank onto a steamship, where she would spend three weeks crossing the oceans in the cheapest cabin available, being sick in the washbasin or over the side of the ship or into the bin in the cabin she shared with three other women, of various sizes and smells and dirty habits, who took out their teeth at night, or picked at the snag of a toenail, or left the door open when they sat on the toilet, and where she would wake up one morning and look out from the deck at a ruffle of land, with a flat-topped mountain that looked like a table, which she would watch approaching and feel her stomach heave like

© English & Media Centre, 2014

curdled milk pudding as she realised that somewhere on that shore was the good-looking young man to whom she would be married, and the house and family that would become her own. II

***

A month later and Bella is back on the same steamship, doing her journey in reverse, returning to Libau, back to her ma and pa and Gargzdai. She is standing on the deck watching the flat mountain turn grey and misty and the ruffle of land become a shuddery blur. What can have gone wrong? Before the ship has left the docks at Cape Town, a letter arrives for Sarah Plotkin, the only letter she has ever received in her life, the only one she will ever receive, brought to her by Pooey Schmuly who doubles as the postman when he's not helping his father in the fields. When the littlest Plotkin is off her hands, having his afternoon nap, she takes the letter into the outside shack that stands for a toilet and reads it there, where she knows she will not be disturbed by the rest of her children.

'*Oy vay, oy vay,*' Sarah whispers to herself as she sits, struggling to read the words in the little beam of light that squeezes through a crack in the wood.

Dearest Sarah,

My letter will come as a surprise. I am coming home. Please tell my ma and pa, so that I don't have to. You will want to know why, so I will tell you and you can weep for me, as I know you will because you are my dear friend.

Sarah reads on, ignoring the cries of her children arguing over their hoop and ball. Then she dries her tears on her apron, folds up the letter, runs into the house, grabs the little ones, puts on their heavy coats one by one and herds them like sheep towards Bella's house at the other side of the village.

When Sarah arrives Bella's parents are lighting candles for the Sabbath.

'She's coming home,' cries Sarah.

When Bella's ma has been revived with a small glass of wine and Bella's pa has stopped swearing and cursing and is finally calm enough to listen, she tells them the story, reading out passages from the letter as she goes.

© English & Media Centre, 2014

I was met at the docks by the whole family, all lined up – Solomon, his ma and pa, the five older sisters, their husbands and their children. I knew him straightaway from the photograph. He was fine, oh so fine and he kissed my hand.

But his family were not friendly, not at all! The parents looked me up and down and went silent. They drove me in a car to the house of a cousin. And I've been staying there on my own, waiting for Solomon to visit, waiting and waiting for the invitations to meet the nephews and nieces, the aunts and uncles, and for the rabbi to call. The cousin has been kind, telling me to be patient. Soon everything will be clear.

And now it is clear. Yesterday Solomon's mother came, with two of her sisters, all dressed in black. We sat in the parlour and she told me the decision. I am to go home. There will be no marriage. I am given no reasons.

'May they rot in hell,' says Bella's ma.

'May they shit blood and pus', says Bella's pa.

Sarah waits for the curses to subside, then continues. 'She cried and cried and begged to see Solomon but the mother refused. She said there was no point. He wasn't for her. She told Bella that they'd pay for the crossing and give her a small sum of money to cover her expenses.'

Sarah sifts the pages of the letter. ' Here,' she says, reading again:

His mother told me, 'Your parents will not be out of pocket. The next boat with a free berth sails in two weeks' time.' I cried, Sarah. How I cried. But yesterday evening there was a knock at the front door. It was Solomon. The cousin left us alone for a few minutes and he told me that he had begged for me to stay but his mother and father were determined. I must go. I asked him what I had done wrong and he told me I had done nothing. There were tears in his eyes. Then he shook my hand and hurried away.

So now I am writing this letter to you and I will hand it to the cousin and ask her to post it to you. I hope it reaches you before I do. Tell my parents that I did nothing wrong, that I have nothing to be ashamed of.

Your ever-loving friend Bella. **II**

© English & Media Centre, 2014

Bella's ma weeps loudly.

'May all Pharoah's plagues be visited upon them,' she says.

'May leeches drink them dry,' says Pa.

***

By the time Bella returned, her parents had already received another visit, from Moishe the matchmaker this time, bringing a formal letter from the Schachat father, with a large banknote enclosed. Moishe was not known for his tact or taciturnity, so the full story of why Bella had been sent home was already out all over the village and Bella was the very last to hear. Ma and Pa came to the station to meet her. They put her trunk in the cart they had borrowed and snapped the reins. As the old horse trotted slowly back down the familiar tracks, they told her the truth. And it was just as well to let her know, before she heard it from the children playing in the dirt or the silly boys off to *shul*, with their smirks and their whispers.

'Bella's legs, Bella's legs,' they laughed. 'Bella's thighs, Bella's thighs,' they shouted in the *shul* yard, 'Bella's fella likes 'em thin,' but Bella had shut herself up in her room where she wouldn't have to hear.

'How could it be?' asked Sarah, a few weeks later, when Bella had finally decided to show her face again. 'They'd seen the photo, they'd said yes.'

'Ah,' said Bella. 'In their letter to Moishe they accused him of tricking them. The photographer from Plungė had schemed with him and my parents to show just my shoulders and face. I'd bewitched their son with the beauty of my face but my legs, they said, were as thick as tree trunks.'

Sarah shifted the little Plotkin over, to let him sleep more comfortably on the other side. 'But aren't you glad Bella, to be back home with us again and away from these strangers and their cruel behaviour? I always thought a Jew is a Jew and a *shtetl* Jew never changes his ways. It's deep down in his soul. But how wrong could I be? These Jews have travelled across the oceans to another world and they have forgotten who they are.'

'Yes,' said Bella. 'You're right,' she said but her voice was sad. 'He was so fine,' she said. 'Such a smile.' She wiped away a tear and then, 'But that's all done now and we won't ever mention it again.'

And that's what Bella planned. She was all ready to forget her long

© English & Media Centre, 2014

voyage out to a foreign land and her long voyage back again. She was glad to be back with her family for the Purim festival; she looked forward to collecting bilberries to make jam. There was work to be done helping her mother and she tried to put her mind to good things – a bar mitzvah, a dance, a trip to the river with her nieces and nephews, visits to the Plotkin home. She would remain in her parents' house and she would never marry. But perhaps she could live that life, without too many regrets.

Bella was settling back to life in the *shtetl*; the little boys had grown bored of their teasing and the taste of her bilberry jam and her home-made poppy-seed cakes made it hard to carry on laughing behind her back. She was Bella, the girl they'd known all their lives, after all. The one thing that she was touchy about was the subject of marriage. Ma had raised it a few times. There was a boy in a village nearby who was turning thirty, a nice boy not a *nebbish*. What did she think? She stormed off to her room and slammed the door.

One day, when she was washing sheets in the yard, pounding them hard in the bucket to make them white, she saw Moishe the Matchmaker walking down the road. A curse came to her lips but she held it back. It wasn't his fault after all. Instead of walking on past her house, he stopped and opened the gate.

'Good day to you Bella,' he said. 'Your ma it is with whom I wish to speak.'

She stood sullen and silent and pointed the way to the front door. She wanted to shout, 'No I won't marry the boy who's turning thirty from the village down the road and I won't marry any other *grober* or *schlemiel* that you've got on your books,' but she kept her mouth shut.

She hung the washing up to dry, then took herself off to the river, to sit by the bank and think. She lay down on the grass and stayed there like that for the rest of the afternoon. As the sun finally set below the trees, she picked herself up, dusted the grass from her skirts and trudged back to her house on the other side of the village.

Ma and Pa were sitting in the kitchen waiting for her, their faces pale with worry. 'There's been a letter,' said Pa straightaway. 'They want you back.'

Bella sat on the bottom step and put her head in her hands.

© English & Media Centre, 2014

'It's the boy,' Ma said. 'He isn't happy. He's told them he wants you back. It's you he wants to marry.'

'He's pining, they say. He's losing weight. They're worried about their boy.'

Bella didn't look up.

'Of course, we said no straightaway,' said Pa. 'You're not just a parcel to be sent backwards and forwards, a piece of freight. A flat rejection we gave. So that's that.'

Bella looked up. 'The boy, you say?' she said. 'It's the boy who wants me back?'

'A three-week journey across the world and back again and they have the *chutzpah* to ask you to return? They must be *meshugeneh*, mad people! Are their heads in their *tokheses*?'

'I'm going,' she said. 'When's the next sailing from Libau?'

And that's how Bella became my great-aunt. She climbed onto a cart in the marketplace at Gargzdai that took her to the station, from where she took the steam train to Libau and crossed the oceans in a slightly more expensive cabin (negotiated by Moishe) and walked down the gangplank at Cape Town once again, to be greeted by Solomon Schachat, who bowed down and kissed her hand.

After the wedding, a small ceremony with just the family, she settled in a house in Vredehoek. My great-uncle Solly devoted himself to her. They had three children and they were happy. When she talked to the children of her life in the *shtetl* and her journey to Cape Town, there was only one voyage, no more. And they were glad, for they knew that her travels across the oceans had given them life and had carried her away from a world where her ma and pa, her brothers and sisters, her friend Sarah Plotkin and all the little Plotkins would have their houses and haystacks burned and their blood spilled in the snow.

© English & Media Centre, 2014

1. WHAT IS A STORY?

Different uses of the word ‘story’

- In pairs, discuss the questions below.
  - When and how do people use the word ‘story’ in the different ways listed below?
  - Which of the examples do you use in your everyday life?
  - Can you sort the listed phrases into two or three broad categories?
  - What do English teachers tend to mean when they talk about stories?

Made up **story**	The inside **story**	**Story** of my life	**Story** time
Fairy **story**	Love **story**	Life **story**	Usual **story**
True **story**	Newspaper **story**	Hard luck **story**	Tall **story**
Sob **story**	**Story** telling	**Ghost** story	Short **story**
The real **story**	Likely **story**	Same old **story**	**Story** book

Your definition

- On a strip of paper, or a Post-it note, write down your own definition of ‘story’.
- Share different definitions round your class and discuss any key similarities and differences. Write your own definition on a new strip of paper or Post-it note if the discussion has given you new ideas about what you think a story is.
- Display your different definitions on your classroom wall to refer to when you are doing further work on stories.

Different types of story

All of the examples on pages 16-17 can be called stories in one way or another.

- In small groups, read each in turn. Discuss in what ways each might be called a story. (You might refer to some of the ways the word is used from the previous activity.)
- Imagine you are English teachers. Choose one that you think you could teach to a class studying stories. Feed back to your class two or three reasons for your group’s decision.

© English & Media Centre, 2014

From story to short story

Story F (and possibly E) are the only ones from the examples in the 'Different types of story' activity likely to be found in an anthology of fictional stories. Story F is a very short piece of literary fiction by famous Czech writer, Franz Kafka.

- In pairs, discuss the ways this story is different to the other examples. Think carefully about:
  - the writer's choice of words
  - the tone of voice
  - the structure
  - the action
  - any message the story might have.

Six word short stories

One of the examples in the 'Different types of story' task is only six words long. Believe it or not, it is recognised as a genuine short story (and is generally thought to have been written by a very famous American writer, Ernest Hemingway, though that has never been verified). It belongs to the genre of six-word short stories.

The examples of six-word short stories on page 18 are all by well-known writers.

- In small groups complete a copy of the table on page 18. It requires you to think carefully about how six-word short stories work.
- When you have finished, choose the story your group likes best and explain why to the rest of the class.
- Working individually, write a six-word story of your own.
- Return to your groups, read out your six-word stories to each other and discuss how well they work as stories. Choose one to feed back to the rest of the class.

Why do we tell stories?

- In small groups, think of three to five answers to the question: why do we tell stories?
- Share your group's best response with the rest of the class. Discuss the different responses.
- Read the statements on page 19 about stories and short stories, some of which come from famous writers.
- Choose the statement you like best and explain your choice to the rest of the class.

Conclusions

- Complete this sentence starter: 'A great short story …'
- Display the sentences from everyone in your class alongside the definitions of the word 'story' from the activity 'Your definition' on page 14.
- Use the statements to help you think about the strengths of the different short stories you read in this collection. You might, for example, look at the list every time you finish a different story.

© English & Media Centre, 2014

DIFFERENT TYPES OF STORY

A

Main road walks to the entrance of a club and asks to be let in. Bouncer takes one look and refuses. 'Why won't you let me in?' says main road. 'Because you're a main road,' says bouncer. 'Everyone knows main roads can't go into clubs.' Country lane then comes to the entrance and asks to be let in. One look and bouncer refuses again. 'Why won't you let me in?' says country lane. 'You're a country lane,' says bouncer. 'Everyone knows country lanes can't go into clubs.' Next thin piece of pink road comes to the entrance and asks to be let in. 'Certainly,' says bouncer, and opens the door to let it through. Main road and country lane see this and are furious. 'Why does it get to go in and not us?' they say. 'Oooh!' says bouncer, drawing in breath. 'You don't want to mess around with thin pieces of pink road – they're all cycle paths!'

B

The world's biggest dog put his owner in a spin yesterday when his head got stuck in a washing machine. Hamlet, a six foot tall Great Dane, was trapped up to his neck in the Whirlpool machine for over three hours before fire officers cut him free. Said Linda Berryman, who bought Hamlet when he was a small puppy, 'He's always getting stuck. His body might be big but he doesn't seem to have the brain to match.'

C



© English & Media Centre, 2014

D

My big sister's always liked showing off so when the crew digging up the road outside our house went home and left the key in the ignition of their digger she boasted that she was going to give it a drive. She turned the ignition and the machine growled into life. It bumped up and down as she sat grinning like she'd just done the most daring thing ever. After a minute or so she turned the key to 'off'. Only it didn't turn off. The engine kept on running. That's when the smile went off her face, as she started pulling random levers. The arm of the digger began crashing up and down, then the whole thing lurched forwards. It wasn't going very fast, but it was definitely heading for traffic. It was so slow it would have taken about ten minutes to get there, but it would have caused a pile-up when it happened. So she jumped off and ran inside to get mum. She was so embarrassed when she had to say what she'd done. Mum rushed outside, jumped into the digger, reached under the seat, and pulled a red lever. The machine juddered to a halt. That's when mum told us about the time she used to work on a construction site.

E

For sale: baby shoes. Never worn.

F

When you go walking by night up a street and a man, visible a long way off – for the street mounts uphill and there is a full moon – comes running towards you, well, you don't catch hold of him, not even if he is a feeble and ragged creature, not even if someone chases, yelling, at his heels, but you let him run on.

For it is night, and you can't help it if the street goes uphill before you in the moonlight, and besides, these two have maybe started that chase to amuse themselves, or perhaps they are both chasing a third, perhaps the first is an innocent man and the second wants to murder him and you would become an accessory, perhaps they don't know anything about each other and are merely running separately home to bed, perhaps they are night birds, perhaps the first man is armed.

And anyhow, haven't you a right to be tired, haven't you been drinking a lot of wine? You're thankful that the second man is now long out of sight.

The sources of these 'stories' can be found on page 6.

© English & Media Centre, 2014

SIX-WORD SHORT STORIES BY FAMOUS WRITERS

Six-word short story	Possible genre	What could be happening beyond these lines?
See that shadow? (It's not yours.) Jim Crace	Thriller	A mysterious attacker has tracked down her victim after trailing him for several hours: she is about to pounce!
Oh, that? It's nothing. Not contagious. Augusten Burroughs		
'The Earth? We ate it yesterday.' Yann Martel		
Corpse parts missing. Doctor buys yacht. Margaret Atwood		
Bob's last message: Bermuda Triangle, Baloney. Elmore Leonard		
We kissed. She melted. Mop please! James Patrick Kelly		
They awaited sunrise. It never came. A.S. Byatt		
Found true love. Married someone else. Dave Eggers		
Tick tock tick tock tick tick Neal Stephenson		
Served the pie, watched him die. Maggie O' Farrell		
Eyeballed me, killed him. Slight exaggeration. Irvine Welsh		
With bloody hands, I say goodbye. Frank Miller		

© English & Media Centre, 2014

WHY DO WE TELL STORIES?

After nourishment, shelter and companionship, stories are the thing we need most in the world.

Philip Pullman

Stories are a way of escaping from the problems of real life.

We owe it to each other to tell stories.

Neil Gaiman

We tell stories to find out about lives different from our own.

Stories are a different kind of true.

Emma Donoghue

Stories are a way for people to think about life's important issues.

Stories help us to explore emotions in a safe environment.

Stories show us the different possible ways to use language.

Stories are entertaining and fun to read.

© English & Media Centre, 2014

3. COMPARISON CARDS: KEY FEATURES

The activities in this section are intended to help you think about the similarities and differences in the stories you have read in *Literary Shorts*.

Each group will need a set of the short story comparison cards on page 67.

General discussion

- In groups, turn the cards face down on your table. Take it in turns to pick up a card and turn it over.
- As a group, discuss how the term on the card applies to different stories you have read in *Literary Shorts*.

Take two stories

- In groups, select two stories you have read and worked on from *Literary Shorts* that you think it would be interesting to compare.
- Turn over each of your cards in turn and discuss anything that is interesting about the feature shown in relation to your two stories.
- When you have gone through all the cards, choose three of the features that you think make an interesting comparison for your two stories and feed back your reasons to your class. For example, you might choose plot because you notice that although both stories are about very different subjects, they have a very similar narrative arc.

Quick-fire comparing and contrasting

- In pairs, select two stories that you both know well and allocate one story to each person.
- In turns pick one of the feature cards. Whichever one of you picks the card should start by saying something about how that feature relates to the story you were allocated. For example, 'The setting of 'Mrs Silly' is very traditional and British in the way it shows a boarding school and an old-fashioned guesthouse'.
- The other person should respond by comparing or contrasting that point with the story they were allocated. For example, 'The setting of 'Resigned' is also traditional, in terms of the use of a family home and the introduction of the next-door neighbour', or 'In contrast, the setting for 'Two Words' is very exotic, a hot and mysterious place that could never exist in Britain'.
- Keep going with the same feature until you run out of things to say.

© English & Media Centre, 2014

Significant features

- In pairs, pick two stories from *Literary Shorts* that you know well.
- Choose three feature cards that you think would help you to compare and contrast the stories. With your partner, discuss how the features relate to your stories.
- In your pair, select the feature that seems to offer the best opportunities for comparing and contrasting.
- In your pair, write a paragraph or more, comparing and contrasting the two stories for the feature that you have selected.
- Share some of your paragraphs as a class.

Orders of significance

- In small groups, choose one story and order the feature cards in terms of how important or interesting they are in relation to the story.
- Choose another story and rearrange the features to show their importance to it.
- Discuss the similarities and differences in what is important or interesting in both stories.

© English & Media Centre, 2014

SHORT STORY FEATURE COMPARISON CARDS

Setting

When and where does the story take place? How is the setting described? What sense of place and time do you get from the story?

Ending

How does the story end? Is it a satisfying ending? Is there a twist? Is the ending left open?

Beginning

How does the story start? How does it grab your attention? What elements of the rest of the story are foreshadowed?

Suspense

How does the writer keep you wanting to read more? How much do you want to keep reading this story?

Language

What kind of language does the writer use? Does he or she rely on certain types of words? How descriptive is the writing? How does the writing bring the story to life?

Main character

Who is the main character? What is he or she like? Are you interested in them? Do you feel positive towards them? How are they described by the writer?

Plot

What is the storyline? What works particularly well in the storyline? How is it structured? How well does it make you want to read on?

Originality

What surprises you about the story? How is it different from other stories? Does it meet with or surprise your expectations?

Tone

In what tone is the story written? For example, is it funny, scary, tense, serious, formal, informal, and so on? How well does the tone suit the overall story?

Genre

Does the story fit a particular genre, such as crime, fairy-tale, romance? Does it have any ingredients that are typical of certain types of story? How does it compare with other stories of its kind?

© English & Media Centre, 2014

THE PARADISE CARPET

BY JAMILA GAVIN

BEFORE READING

Paradise 1

The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines the word 'paradise' as:

Noun

1. (in some religions) heaven as the place where the good live after death
2. the Garden of Eden
3. an ideal or idyllic place or state

Origin:

Old French *paradis*, from Greek *paradeisos* 'royal park'

- On your own, think about what 'paradise' means to you.
- Individually, write a few descriptive sentences or draw a picture to give others a sense of your idea of what a 'paradise carpet' might be like.
- Share your descriptions as a group.

DURING READING

Identifying setting

II Read as far as *…who had the pattern pinned to an upright in front of him*.

- As a class, discuss what you can guess about where the story is set and what the boys are doing.

Contrasts

II Read as far as *And this is the pattern I want you to weave*.

- On your own, find two quotations from the story, one which describes the boys and one which describes the wealthy man.
- With a partner, look together at the quotations you have collected. Help your partner to think about what effect the chosen quotations they have collected might have on the reader and fill in a chart like the one on page 158.

© English & Media Centre, 2014

Contrasts	
Quotations about the boys 1. 2.	**Quotations about the wealthy man** 1. 2.
What a reader might think and feel here 1. 2.	**What a reader might think and feel here** 1. 2.

- Together, discuss how Jamila Gavin contrasts the boys and the wealthy man.
- Prepare to feed back to the whole class, using evidence from the story to support your opinions. You could use the sentence starters, below, to help you in both your discussion and your feedback if you wish, or come up with your own ideas.
  - The boys are described as…
  - In contrast, the wealthy man is described as…
  - I think Gavin wants the reader to…
  - When I read this I thought…

© English & Media Centre, 2014

Making predictions

II Read as far as *as if he would weave himself into the carpet*.

- With a partner, discuss your impression of Ishwar so far. Find the clues in the story which made you think this.
- With a partner, discuss what you think Gavin means when she says that Ishwar 'would weave himself into the carpet'.

II Read as far as *the bones of his fingers clicking as he ground his knuckles into his fist.*

- As a class, discuss what you think might be wrong with the carpet.

Your thoughts on the ending

- Read to the end of the story.
- In pairs, discuss how the ending of the story made you feel.
- With your partner, decide whether you think the ending is happy or sad, or both.
- Feed back your thoughts as a class.

AFTER READING

Paradise 2

- Look back at the work you did on the meaning of 'paradise' which you did before reading ('Paradise 1').
- In the story, the design for the paradise carpet has an image of the 'Tree of Life'. The Tree of Life is a motif that appears in myths and religious stories across different cultures. It represents the way all life on earth is connected.
- In pairs, discuss why Gavin chose paradise, and in particular the Tree of Life, as the subject for the carpet. Be ready to explain your thinking, referring to evidence in the story to support your views. You may find it helpful to use the notes you made on contrasts in the 'during reading' tasks.
- Share your ideas as a class.

© English & Media Centre, 2014

Critical writing

- Write two or three paragraphs about an aspect of the story that you have enjoyed or found interesting, using evidence from the story to back up your points. You could choose one of the ideas below, or come up with your own idea.

How does Jamila Gavin use contrasts in the story?

You could write about the contrasts between the wealthy man and the weavers, between paradise and reality.

What do you find interesting about the way Jamila Gavin chose to end the story?

You could write about whether you think the ending is happy, or sad, open-ended (leaving you with lots of questions) or closed (with all the loose ends tied up).

Child slave labour

Although the kind of child slave labour described in 'The Paradise Carpet' has supposedly been made illegal in countries like India and Pakistan where many of the best carpets come from, in fact the practice still goes on.

- Imagine that an anti-slavery campaign group want to use the story 'The Paradise Carpet' as part of a campaign to raise awareness in schools about child slave labour in the carpet industry. They are hoping that schools will sponsor a child carpet weaver so that they can go to school and have a proper childhood.

- Working in a group of three, you are going to plan a school assembly for the campaign, using the story to help people understand the issues and persuade them to give money for sponsorship. You will also need to decide how to use the story in your assembly, for example whether you will act out the story, read extracts, or use the whole story.

- As part of your work you will need to find out about child labour in carpet making, using the information provided on pages 161-162, which you could supplement with your own research if you wish.

- Your teacher will tell you how long you have to prepare for your assembly.

- Watch some of the best presentations as a class. You could even turn them into a real school assembly!

© English & Media Centre, 2014

Child labour in the hand-made carpet industry

The UN Rights of the Child

The Convention on the Rights of the Child was adopted by the United Nations in 1989. Almost every country has now ratified the Convention. As a child you have, for example, the right:

- to sufficient food, clean water, health care, and an adequate standard of living
- to be with your family, or in the best caring environment to ensure protection from all physical, mental and other abuse
- to education
- to special care or training necessary if you have a disability or handicap
- to play.

Unfortunately, many children in the world still do not have these rights respected.

Child labour and the carpet industry: quick facts from Good Weave, an organisation that certificates rugs made without child labour

- Although it is illegal and the carpet industry says it no longer happens, children still work, as virtual slaves, in the carpet industry in South Asia. They work up to 18 hours a day making rugs by hand. These hand-knotted rugs fetch high prices in countries like the UK.
- Children aged 4-14 are kidnapped or sold and forced to work. Often they come from extremely poor families, or have lost their parents, so it seems like a good opportunity when the agent for a carpet manufacturer promises that the children will be well-looked after and given a better life in a new place. Many never see their families again, so no-one in their village finds out that this promise was a lie. Most are not allowed to attend school, so do not get the education they need to get a better job when they grow up. Some have parents who were themselves child labourers and have never known any other life.
- Due to terrible working conditions, the children are often malnourished, have poor eye sight, suffer from respiratory diseases from breathing in carpet fibres, get injuries from sharp tools and become physically deformed from spending long hours sitting at the loom.
- Given the hidden nature of child labour, it is difficult to give an exact figure, but the International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour estimates that there are 21.6 million children aged 5-14 years working in South Asia out of a total of 300 million children in this age group.
- It would cost an estimated $750 billion over a 20 year period to end child labour. However, the estimated benefit in terms of education and health is about six times that – over $4 trillion – in economies where child labour is found.

© English & Media Centre, 2014

One child's story

Iqbal Masih is probably the most famous example of a child labourer in the carpet industry. Iqbal's family was very poor and borrowed money from a local carpet manufacturer. To pay off the debt, Iqbal had to work as a carpet weaver. He was only four, but had to get up before dawn to make his way to the factory where he and the other child workers were chained to the loom so they would not escape. At the age of 10 he escaped, only to be returned by police. He escaped a second time and joined the Bonded Labour Liberation Front of Pakistan, who campaign to stop child labour.

Iqbal helped over 3,000 Pakistani children who were in bonded labour escape to freedom and he made speeches about child labour throughout the world. He was killed aged twelve. Some say he was shot by accident, some that he was murdered to stop him from speaking out about bonded labour.

Action against child labour

- An organisation called GoodWeave aims to stop child labour in the carpet industry. Their inspectors rescue children and make sure they get care and education. http://www.goodweave.org.uk
- The Anti-Slavery Society campaigns against child labour and makes undercover visits to places where carpet makers are using child labour to expose and report on the situation. http://www.anti-slaverysociety.addr.com
- Anti-Slavery International works at local, national and international levels to eliminate all forms of slavery around the world. http://www.antislavery.org
- Project Mala was founded in 1989 to provide a three year non-formal education course for children. Their aim is to help eradicate the use of child labour on the carpet weaving looms and enable working children to regain their lost childhood. http://www.projectmala.org.uk
- In 1994 the Rugmark Foundation was registered in India. To use the Rugmark, carpet exporters have to register their looms with the Foundation and they will then be checked by inspectors to ensure that child labour is not being used. However, only 100 manufacturers in India have registered. Many are waiting to see if there is any demand from consumers for Rugmark carpets. Unless people in rich countries insist on buying only rugs made without child labour, Rugmark will not have a big impact. www.rugmarkindia.org
- The organisation that helped Iqbal still exists and campaigns: the Bonded Labour Liberation Front of Pakistan. http://www.bllfpak.org/about.htm

© English & Media Centre, 2014

RESIGNED

BY MEG ROSOFF

BEFORE READING

'Resigned', as the title of the story suggests, is a key word in this short story.

- In pairs, write two or three sentences that contain the word, each using it in a different way.
- Share some examples around the class and discuss the different ways the word can be used.
- Discuss what you think a story titled 'Resigned' might be about.

DURING READING

First impressions

II Read the first two sentences of the story: *My mother has resigned. Not from her job, but from being a mother*.

- As a class, discuss your thoughts about this line as the opening to a short story.
- What do you think will happen in the rest of the story, based on this opening? For example, what will happen to the mother's family? How will the mother interact with her family?

The resignation announcement

II Read up to *no one was thinking of escape – even for a minute or two – from the full force of her resentment*.

- In pairs, list the jobs the narrator's mother announces she will no longer be doing. One of you should use this list to help you role-play the mother making her announcement. The other should listen carefully and show your reactions to what she says and the tone of voice she uses.
- On your own, write a brief announcement that explains why you are resigning from an aspect of life you would like to avoid doing. For example, resigning from household chores, or doing homework. Think carefully about the tone of voice and language needed for your particular audience. You might, for example, direct your resignation at teachers, or your family, or friends.
- As a class, listen to a selection of resignation announcements and comment on how convincing each is.

© English & Media Centre, 2014

Tone of voice

- Read up to *But I'm getting off the point here*, focusing on the tone of voice used for the first-person narrative. For example, is it serious or light-hearted, formal or informal, and so on?
- In pairs, choose a paragraph or two from this section to read out loud.
- Practise reading your section in two distinctly different tones of voice.
- As a class, hear a selection of readings, while thinking about words that you think best describe the story's overall tone of voice.

Coping without Mum

- Read up to *… since we were in charge we should be able to live in squalor if squalor was what we liked*.
- As a class, discuss your thoughts at this point about the way the family members are coping without their mother.
- On your own, complete the table on page 165 to record your ideas about how the story is likely to continue. When you have finished, share it with a partner and discuss any similarities and differences in your predictions. Share your ideas with the whole class.

Letter from Mum

- Read up to the point where the children have written a letter to their mother asking her to come home.
- On your own, write the Mum's reply, including details about:
  - her reasons for leaving in the first place
  - her decision about coming back or not
  - her conditions for coming back, or her reasons not to return.
- Share and discuss your own feelings about the mother's behaviour.

© English & Media Centre, 2014

COPING WITHOUT MUM: SOME THOUGHTS

Questions raised in reading	My ideas
What do you think the mother will do? Consider her general behaviour, career, attitude to the family.	
How messy will the house get (if at all)? What will it be like at the end of the story?	
How will different members of the family behave and take responsibility?	
How will family members have changed (if at all) by the end?	
How will the story end?	

© English & Media Centre, 2014

Challenging expectations

II Read up to *So this is where I'm supposed to say we all lived happily ever after, but in fact we didn't – at least, not quite in the way we expected to*.

- Look back at your earlier prediction about how the story would end. Do you want to change your prediction in the light of what has just been said? If so, what is your new prediction?
- As a class, discuss your ideas for possible endings.
- Read to the end of the story and decide which of the three statements below you agree with most. (Alternatively you can write one of your own.) Discuss the statements as a class and when you have finished have a show of hands to see which statement people agree with most.

A	The story shows that families can be happy, even when they have unusual living arrangements.
B	The story shows that children can cope with almost anything, even when they are let down by the adults who are supposed to look after them.
C	The story shows that mothers are the most important members of any family.

AFTER READING

Narrative voice

- As a class, discuss how convincingly you think Meg Rosoff, the writer of 'Resigned', creates a teenage voice to narrate the story.
- In pairs, look back through the story and identify a short passage that you think is an interesting example of using a teenage narrative voice. Talk about how it has been written. You might like to focus on language choices, use of full and minor sentences, and so on. You should also consider the tone used. For example, is it chatty, or formal, or funny?
- Still in your pair, write a short passage of your own as a first person monologue, that uses a distinctive voice, for example, a teacher, a police officer, a judge, a flight attendant, or a football manager.
- When you have finished, read through your work and identify what gives the writing a distinctive voice. You might consider vocabulary, particular phrases, sentence structures, levels of formality, and so on.
- Read your work to the whole class and explain how you have created a distinctive voice. Do not reveal the voice you have written in beforehand, so that people can try to work it out for themselves.

© English & Media Centre, 2014

HAPPILY EVER AFTER

BY BARBARA BLEIMAN

BEFORE READING

- As a class, discuss the kind of stories you associate with the phrase, 'Happily Ever After', which is the title of the story.
- Discuss in what ways the first paragraph, printed below, confirms or challenges your thoughts about the title.

> This is a story that my mother told me, not once but several times, about a young girl called Bella. She was to become my great-aunt in the end but it was a close-run thing. It almost didn't happen and then, finally, it did.

- In small groups, share stories that have been passed on and told time and again in your family or among people who are close to you. Do these stories share any common themes? Would any of them suit the title, 'Happily Ever After'?
- In your group, make a list of three to five elements of a good family story. Share these with the rest of the class, so that your teacher can compile a list of all your ideas that you can refer back to when you have finished reading the story.

Definitions

The following definitions will help you when reading this story:

- *Shtetl*: a small Jewish town or village in Eastern Europe
- *Shul*: also called a synagogue; a Jewish place of worship
- *Talleisim*: prayer shawls

DURING READING

Hearing a text

- In pairs, read the first two paragraphs and decide on the tone of the story. Think of this as how the paragraphs would sound if read out loud. Would they sound sad, funny, serious, cynical, dreary or something else?
- Now read the paragraphs in a voice suitable for the start of a fairy tale. What is the effect of doing this? You might like to separate the paragraphs into sentences and phrases that could belong to a fairy tale and those that could not, then read them in two different voices.

© English & Media Centre, 2014

The ingredients of descriptive writing

You might sometimes be told by teachers to add adjectives and adverbs to your writing to make it more descriptive. Certainly, these words can add flavour to your writing. Often, however, description comes from careful selection of nouns and verbs.

- In pairs, read the third paragraph closely, listing what you consider to be important nouns and verbs as you go.
- Discuss how these words build up a picture of Bella and her life. What kind of life does she live? How do the verbs and nouns work to describe this life?
- As a class, discuss the kind of life that Bella leads. How does it compare to most people's experience of life in the United Kingdom today?

Developing the narrative

II Read from *"Who will you marry?"* to *before Sarah Plotkin had woken to give her fifth son his feed*.

- As a class, discuss how many years are covered in this passage. What clues are you given that allow you to estimate the timescale?
- As a class, discuss how the lives of Sarah and Bella change over this time period. What roles do they play in shtetl life and how do these compare to the roles played by women in modern life?

Inside Bella's mind

- Write a brief journal entry for Bella at the point when she agrees to marry a man who lives thousands of miles away and who has only been seen by her in a photograph. You should include:
  - reasons she wants to leave her shtetl
  - any anxieties she has about her decision
  - what she expects from her new life.

One sentence: three weeks of detail

II In pairs, read out loud from *And so early one morning …* to *… the house and family that would become her own*. Change speakers each time there is a new piece of punctuation.

- In pairs, discuss how the punctuation makes such a long sentence possible. Why do you think the writer might have chosen to write such a long sentence to describe Bella's journey from her shtetl in Lithuania all the way to Cape Town in South Africa?
- In pairs, pick out six key moments from her journey and draw them on a storyboard, with words underneath, in a way that gets across a sense of what Bella goes through on her journey from Lithuania to South Africa. Share your storyboards around the class and talk about what a long journey like this must have been like for those on board the ship.

© English & Media Centre, 2014

‘What can have gone wrong?’

II Read from *A month later and Bella is back on the same steamship* to *Your ever-loving friend Bella*.

- As a class, discuss possible answers to the question: ‘What can have gone wrong?’
- The story’s title suggests that, in a further twist, things will go right again. In a pair, devise a happy ending for the story.
- As a class, discuss different ideas for possible happy endings and decide which one is most likely (or if the story will actually have a happy ending at all).

The final paragraph

- As a class, discuss in what ways the final paragraph is and is not a happy ending.
- As a class, discuss what links you can find between the first and last paragraphs.
- As a class, discuss the geographical and historical context set out in the second paragraph. Where is Lithuania and the Baltic Sea? Which century is being referred to? Why does the final sentence talk about blood and burning? (Your teacher might have to help you with the answers to some of these questions.)
- When you are clear about the social and historical context of the story, talk as a class about how it would be different if it was just a love story, with no mention of events in the wider world.

© English & Media Centre, 2014

AFTER READING

Exploring thoughts

- In small groups, discuss what elements of 'Happily Ever After' you liked the most.
- What elements, if any, did you dislike?
- Below is a list of some of the ingredients that went into the story. Choose the one that you think is most enjoyable, the one that is most interesting and the one that is most important (you can choose the same element for more than one category). Your group should report its choices, with reasons, to the rest of the class.

The ingredients		
Humour	**Folk-tale style**	**Love story**
Description of life in Lithuania	**Real historical events**	**An ending that is bittersweet (both happy and sad)**
Larger than life characters	**Playful language and sentence structures**	**Dialogue**

A family story

- Before reading 'Happily Ever After', your class made a list of elements that make a good family story. Now that you have finished, discuss as a class which of the elements you think apply to the story, and in what way.
- Write the start of a short story of your own, based on a story regularly told by someone in your family or someone close to you. Try to write using a distinctive tone of voice.
- When you have written a few paragraphs, team up with a partner and read each other's work. Discuss what is going well and what might be worked on further. Use what you learn from this discussion when completing the rest of your story.

© English & Media Centre, 2014



This resource comes from the English and Media Centre's publication *Poetry Plus*, an eclectic mix of poems designed to intrigue and engage, with work to develop enjoyment and understanding of poetry.

If you are interested in exploring this resource further, please visit https://www.englishandmedia.co.uk/publications/

EMC
Publications



EMC © ENGLISH & MEDIA CENTRE, 2018

LOST IN TRANSLATION

In this unit you are going to find out more about how poetry works by looking at what happens when someone tries to translate a poem into another language.

You will consider how poetry works in different languages, have a go at doing some translation yourself, and think about whether all writing is, in a way, an act of translation.

You will also write some bilingual or multilingual poetry along the way and get a chance to use any languages that you know other than English.

Your Experience of Translation

You will all have done some translating from one language into another. After all, you are all required to study a foreign language in school. So you will have translated between English and French or English and Spanish, for example.

Some of you will have a much broader experience of translation, perhaps because you speak more than one language fluently, or because you have travelled abroad.

- In small groups, discuss the following and then feedback the main points of the discussion to the whole class.
  - What other languages do you speak and write? You should include any languages you are learning or have learned at school, as well as ones you might speak at home.
  - What is it like to speak and/or write in another language?
  - When you speak or write in another language, do you find yourself translating from English into that language, or is the language simply there in your head?
  - How do other languages sound in your mouth, or look on the page, compared to English?
  - Do you ever speak or write using more than one language at the same time? Or have you heard anyone else doing this? If so, what is it like?
  - Do you ever use Google Translate, or other translation programmes? If so, what is your experience of them?

Translating Poetry – The Challenges

Translating from one language to another is not simply a question of replacing a word from one language with a different word from another. A word or phrase from one language might not have quite the same meaning or connotations in another. And some words or phrases simply do not exist in other languages. The problem is particularly acute in poetry, where the original choice of words and their placement is done with such care.

Some of the challenges faced when translating poetry are listed below.

- As a class, discuss the nature of each challenge, thinking about why it might raise problems for a translator. Can you think of any possible solutions to these challenges?

The challenges

It's hard to…

- Translate words and maintain the sound and rhythm of a poem
- Translate words where there isn't an equivalent in the other language, for example there is no French equivalent for 'cool' when it refers to something impressive; the Yiddish word ' chutzpah', which has connotations of extreme self-confidence or boldness, has no exact equivalent in English
- Translate and keep the shape of a poem
- Translate words that rhyme from one language into another
- Translate to keep the word order of the original poem
- Translate idioms from one language to another. An **idiom** is an expression that means something quite different from the actual words said, for example 'kicked the bucket' for 'died' or 'raining cats and dogs' for 'raining heavily'.

EMC © ENGLISH & MEDIA CENTRE, 2018

Partial Translations

An interesting activity to draw attention to the original language of a poem, and to start thinking about translation, is to translate only a small number of words in a poem. The example below changes five words or phrases from a poem by Emily Brontë. This was done by cutting and pasting the original poem into Google Translate, setting the translation to French, then identifying words and phrases to draw on.

- In a pair, read the two poems out loud and identify the changes. (Don't worry too much about your pronunciation but some help is given, below.)
- Try to come up with one or two things you can say about the original poem that you have noticed by reading both versions side by side.
- Try to come up with one or two things you can say about how the changes alter the effect of the poem.
- Decide which you prefer, and feedback to your class with reasons.

Fall, leaves, fall	Fall, feuilles, fall
Fall, leaves, fall; die, flowers, away; Lengthen night and shorten day; Every leaf speaks bliss to me Fluttering from the autumn tree. I shall smile when wreaths of snow Blossom where the rose should grow; I shall sing when night's decay Ushers in a drearier day. *Emily Brontë*	Fall, feuilles, fall; die, flowers, away; Lengthen night and shorten day; Every feuille speaks bliss to me Fluttering from the autumn tree. Je vais sourire when wreaths of snow Blossom where the rose should grow; Je vais chanter when night's decay Ouvre la porte to drearier day.

Pronunciations
Feuilles: fur-yi
Vais: vay
Sourire: soo-rear
Ouvre: oov-re

Writing Your Own Partial Translation

You are now going to write a partial translation of a poem yourselves. Unless you are fluent in more than one language, you will need access to Google Translate for this activity.

- Staying in your pair, identify a short poem you want to translate. This can be a poem from the Anthology (pages 169-220), or a favourite of your own. You might even use a poem that one of you has written.
- Write the English poem into Google Translate as shown below. Ideally you will have a poem that you can cut and paste from a Word file or the Internet.
- Identify a language you want to translate the poem into and select it on the right-hand box of Google Translate. Unless you are familiar with another alphabetic script, make sure you select a language that uses the same alphabet as English.
- Read both versions side by side and experiment with replacing some of the English words with ones from the other language.



- Cut and paste your final translation into a Word document next to the original.
- Write a short explanation of why you chose particular words and phrases in translation, and the effect they have on the poem. Here is an example of the kind of things you might say, looking at the English – French translation of 'Fall, leaves, Fall' from the previous activity.

> The choice of 'feuilles' instead of leaves adds to the alliterative effect of the poem, linking it strongly to 'fall' and 'flowers' in the first line, and later 'fluttering'. The phrases 'je vais sourire' and 'je vais chanter' are similarly patterned to the English 'I shall smile' and 'I shall sing'. However, I think 'je vais sourire' is more rhythmic and 'je vais chanter' (pronounced 'shontay') creates an internal rhyme in that line with 'decay'. 'ouvre la porte' on the final line literally mean 'opens the door', which I feel is a more poetic phrase than 'usher in'.
>
> I decided not to change the words at the end of a line because this would disrupt the rhyme scheme.

- Listen to a range of partial translations round the class, along with explanations of changes made.

EMC © ENGLISH & MEDIA CENTRE, 2018

Reading Different Translations

Below is a French poem. Two English translations of it are included on page 85.

- In pairs, read the French poem out loud. Do not look at the English versions at this point, even if you don't know any French. Try to come up with two interesting things you can say about this poem even if you don't understand it!
- Next read the two different translations of the French poem and discuss the following with your partner:
  - What are the differences between the two translations?
  - Do the differences change the meaning or effect of the poem?
  - Which do you prefer and why?
- Try to write your own version of the poem that improves on the two translations. You can borrow from both, change words and word order, and so on.
- Listen to a selection of your new translations round the class.
- Finally, discuss as a whole class the following question:

When translating a poem, is it more important to stick as closely as possible to the original language and form, or to write a good poem, even if the meaning of the original changes?

Les Roses de Saadi

J'ai voulu ce matin te rapporter des roses;
Mais j'en avais tant pris dans mes ceintures closes
Que les noeuds trop serrés n'ont pu les contenir.

Les noeuds ont éclaté. Les roses envolées
Dans le vent, à la mer s'en sont toutes allées.
Elles ont suivi l'eau pour ne plus revenir;

La vague en a paru rouge et comme enflammée.
Ce soir, ma robe encore en est toute embaumée…
Respires-en sur moi l'odorant souvenir.

Marceline Desbordes-Valmore

Translation 1

(This version tries to translate the language word for word as closely as possible)

I wanted this morning to bring you roses
But I had taken so many in my closed belts
That the knots which were too tight could not contain them.
The knots broke. The roses flew away
In the wind, they all went to the sea.
They followed the water never to return.
The wave appeared red and as if inflamed.
Tonight my dress is still completely embalmed…
Breathe on me the fragrant memory.

Translation 2

(This version tries to use the same rhyme scheme and rhythm as closely as possible)

I wanted this morning to bring you roses
But they were packed so tight within my hosiers
That they could not be contained.
Released, they were set in motion
Carried by wind and over ocean,
Lost to water, unretained.
The waves turned red, carrying fire.
At night my clothes still hold scent of desire…
Breathe on me sweet scent.

Marceline Desbordes-Valmore

EMC © ENGLISH & MEDIA CENTRE, 2018

Lipograms – Translating From English Into English!

A lipogram is a form of writing that deliberately avoids using a particular letter. Believe it or not a French writer called Georges Perec wrote an entire novel, *La Disparation*, without using the letter 'e'. Even more amazingly a writer called Gilbert Adair translated it into English, giving it the title *A Void*. The translation was 50 pages longer than the original!

You are now going to write a lipogram in order to 'translate' a poem into English. This task will help you to reflect on the choices available when translating, some of the challenges faced, and solutions for overcoming them.

- In pairs, 'translate' 'The Eagle', by Alfred, Lord Tennyson (below) into a poem that does not use the letter 'e'. The title of the poem is included in the task. This is very difficult to do, so feel free to be as imaginative and innovative as you like. It would be helpful to have access to a thesaurus, or to use the synonym function on a computer – try to get started without using either of these, though.
- Join up with other pairs and compare your translations.
- Discuss as a whole class the different ways that you translated the poem, the difficulties you faced, and what the process showed you about translation, language and meaning.

The Eagle

He clasps the crag with crooked hands;
Close to the sun in lonely lands,
Ring'd with the azure world, he stands.

The wrinkled sea beneath him crawls;
He watches from his mountain walls,
And like a thunderbolt he falls.

Azure = bright blue

Combining Two Versions of a Poem

A student was asked to write a poem about an oxbow lake for Geography homework. Frustrated by their initial efforts, they decided to see what would happen if they cut and pasted what they had written into Google Translate and then translated back and forth between different languages. They went from English to Spanish to Indonesian to Albanian to Persian to Esperanto and back to English again.

The results were surprising. As the student expected, the final translated version was very different from the original. But they actually preferred some of the words and phrases in the new version!

- Working in a pair, read both poems on pages 88-89 and discuss:
  - The poetic qualities of each
  - What could be done to improve them both
  - What the English translation programme might have found tricky about the original.
- Now work on your own to write a poem about an oxbow lake that you think combines the best elements of both poems. You can add in ideas of your own, but need to largely rely on these two versions. You might like to think about:
  - Rhyme
  - Rhythm and sound
  - Imagery
  - Word choice and word order
  - Meaning – do you want it to be obvious or less obvious?
- Finally, in pairs, talk about your poem and the choices you made. Make sure you consider what makes your poem a good one, and how you want readers to respond.

EMC © ENGLISH & MEDIA CENTRE, 2018

The Oxbow Lake

(Student's original version)

The Oxbow Lake
Once this was a relaxed river
Meandering through the landscape
With no urgency to deliver
A yawn's sense of direction
Now with no time to pause
It flows straight
Life has purpose, life has cause
A devotee to energy and current
The old river is sealed off
Imprisoned in an oxbow bend
A redundant, lifeless trough
A billabong.

Billabong = an aboriginal word for an oxbow lake



The Oxbow Lake

(Google Translate version)

Lake Albion
It was a quiet flow
The coast through the landscape
There is no urgent transfer
The sense of the road disappeared
Now it's not time to stop
Custom flow
Life is an object, life is the goal
Interested in energy and current
The old river was severely closed
Prisoner on the neck curve
Additional and immovable channels
Bilobang

Bilobang = a native word for the bushes of the lake

EMC © ENGLISH & MEDIA CENTRE, 2018

Using Your Home Language

This activity is for those of you who are comfortable speaking and writing languages other than English.

- First, complete one of the following writing activities:
  - Translate a poem that you like that is written in English into another language.
  - Write a 'multilingual' poem that combines English with your other language or languages.
  - Write a poem in a language other than English. Translate this into English.
- Whichever activity you chose, write a few paragraphs about the experience of writing it. You might like to think about:
  - What it feels like to use other languages in an English lesson.
  - How confident you are using a language other than English.
  - How the effect of your poetry changes when you use different languages.
- If you are pleased with your poem, you might want to read it aloud (with its translation) for other members of the class to hear.

Pulling It All Together

Look back over everything you have done during this unit and do the following things:

- Choose the poem you most enjoyed working on and write a short paragraph explaining why.
- Choose which of these statements you think best express what you have learnt about poetry by doing the translations and explain why.

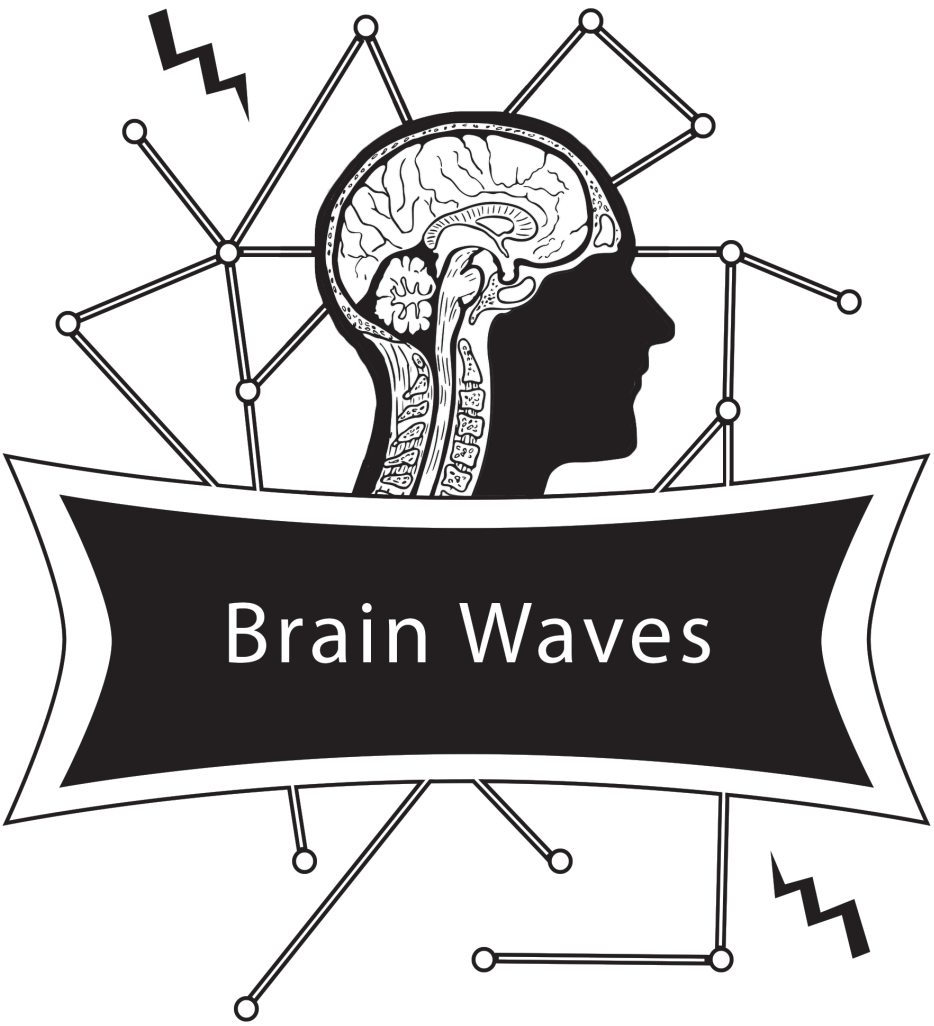
A. Every word matters, not just because of what it says but because it is part of a pattern of words that work together.
B. Sound is just as important as sense in poetry.
C. The way words look on the page makes a big difference to how you read a poem.
D. Poetry is almost impossible to translate – it's not just about using a dictionary and substituting words.
E. What goes into a poem is much more complicated than I realised before.



This resource comes from the English and Media Centre's publication *Non-fiction Shorts*, an anthology with resources for KS3.

If you are interested in exploring this resource further, please visit https://www.englishandmedia.co.uk/publications/

EMC
Publications



EMC © ENGLISH & MEDIA CENTRE, 2017

The Sleeping Teenage Brain

Reading the Text



Read the whole text on pages 82-84.

After Reading

First response

- Turn to a partner and tell them something you have learned from the text that you didn't know before.
- As a class, discuss:
  - Whether the text contained a lot of information that was new to you
  - How easy or hard it was to understand
  - Whether you enjoyed reading it
  - Whether you think Nicola Morgan has a good understanding of how a teenager might think and feel.

Teenage editors (1): looking more closely

- Get into groups of three and discuss the questions, below, to help you to look more closely at some different aspects of the text. Make notes as these will help you in the next activity: 'Teenage editors'.

» What do you think the writer's purpose is?

  – For example, to inform, educate, advise or entertain? You may think the writer has more than one purpose.

» What scientific vocabulary does the writer use?

  – For example, 'plasticity', 'neurons', 'circadian rhythms'. Does this seem to be at the right level for the typical teenage reader?

» Where is formal language used? Where is informal language used? Do you think Nicola Morgan uses the right level of formality for her teen audience?

» Why does Nicola Morgan address the reader directly, using the second person ('you')?

» Why have bullet points been used? Do they help you to read the text?

» How would you describe the tone of the writing (for example, sympathetic, informative, bossy, patronising, factual)? Do you think this is the right tone for a teenage reader?

EMC © ENGLISH & MEDIA CENTRE, 2017

Teenage editors (2): writing a report

- Imagine you have received the letter printed on page 79 from Nicola Morgan's publisher, asking you to write a report on the extract you have read.
- Working on your own and drawing on the work you have done on the text so far, come up with at least five points for your report. Write each one on a separate Post-It or a small piece of paper.
- Working in a three, pool your ideas by putting all your Post-It's or pieces of paper together and looking through them.
- Agree on the five or six strongest points and put all the others aside. Discuss what might be the best order for these ideas, moving them around on the desk to try out some different possibilities.
- Working on your own, write your report to Nicola Morgan. You may find the sentence starters, below, helpful in thinking about what to say.
    - » Overall we think that...
    - » As teenagers ourselves we...
    - » When you... we think this would... because...
    - » One particularly successful aspect of your writing is...
    - » A less successful... We think it would work better if you...
    - » Another thing you could do is...
    - » So, in your next book we would suggest...

A letter from the publisher

Dear teens,

We are very keen to expand the number of non-fiction books aimed at teenagers in our catalogue.

At the moment all the decisions about commissioning and editing our books for teenagers are made by adults. We are keen to change this by setting up a teen editorial advice board to make sure that such books have maximum appeal to our target audience. We hope you will be interested in taking part.

As we are looking to commission more books from writer Nicola Morgan, we thought that a good place to start would be by asking you for a report on an extract from one of the books of hers that we have already published, to see whether the idea of a teenage editorial board would work, and to provide some feedback to help with her next book.

Your report should be addressed directly to Nicola Morgan. Please include a mix of points about the text as a whole and about specific parts of the text.

Yours...

EMC © ENGLISH & MEDIA CENTRE, 2017

Writing for the reader

Nicola Morgan has obviously tried to imagine what her teenage audience might be thinking, for example when she says

> 'I'm afraid you won't like this one…'

Trying to get into the mind of the kind of person who might be reading your text can really help you to make good choices about things like tone, vocabulary and content.

Stage 1: choose a task

- Working with a partner, choose one of the writing tasks, below.

  A. Write a letter to your headteacher to try to persuade him or her that school should start at a later time.

  B. Write an advice leaflet for parents, explaining how they can best help their teenager to get good sleep. Be careful with this one: you are not simply repeating the advice in the chapter, you are thinking about how parents could successfully manage and discuss this sensitive topic with their child.

Stage 2: getting into the mind of your reader

- In your pair, brainstorm some ideas about what the headteacher/parent might think on this issue. For example, what might they already know or want to know? What opinions might they have?

- Drawing on your brainstorm, have a role-play conversation with your partner, taking it in turns to be the headteacher/parent. As the headteacher/parent explains their thinking, the other person should respond. For example:
  - A counter-argument on this point
  - A solution to a problem
  - Reassurance or sympathy for a worry they have.

Stage 3: moving towards writing

- With your partner, discuss how you could use your role play conversation to help with your writing. Use the questions, below, to get your discussion started.
  - What was the best tone to use when responding? For example, did more formal or more friendly work better? Were you sympathetic? How did you try to inspire confidence in your advice?
  - Did you come up with some great points that you could use in your writing?
  - Were there any effective words and phrases someone used in the conversation that you could also use in your writing?
  - What might you need to add when writing, for example some scientific vocabulary?
- Working together, without writing anything down, discuss a plan for your writing. Think about what you will include, how you will organise your ideas and what you know about the typical features of this kind of writing.
- Working individually, write your letter or leaflet, drawing on your role play and discussions to help you.

EMC © ENGLISH & MEDIA CENTRE, 2017

THE SLEEPING TEENAGE BRAIN

BY NICOLA MORGAN

This is an extract from *Blame My Brain*, a book designed to tell teenagers everything they need to know about the biology and psychology behind teenage emotions and behaviour.

The sleeping teenage brain is really working very hard.

There is evidence that your brain does a lot of its important development while you are asleep. It sounds like a wonderful new excuse for not handing in your homework: 'Well, Mr Bumble, sir, you see, I read this book where it said my brain does a whole load of really important work while I am asleep so I thought you'd be really pleased about this, and so, well, I went to sleep. But guess what? When I woke up, the piece of paper I'd left by my bed was still completely blank.'

Unfortunately, it's not quite as simple as that, but the truth is almost equally amazing. First, remember what happens in your brain when you do something or learn something, or even try to do something.

Remember that it's not the number of neurons you have that is important – it's the number of connections, and how strong those connections are. And the more times you do the same thing, or have the same thought, or recognise the same face, or understand the same piece of algebra (or even try to understand it), the more the connections between the relevant neurons increase and strengthen. This means that the next time you do it, it's a bit easier.

But the really amazing thing is that there is evidence that your sleeping brain practises the things you did while you were awake. In one study, scientists examined the brains of kittens whose brains were not yet fully developed. They found that the connections between neurons in the brain physically changed during sleep, depending on what activity the kitten did during the day. Scientists can actually look at the kitten's brain and see a difference in the number and complexity of dendrites and synapses after sleep which follows a particular activity. Similar experiments have been done on rats.

If this also happens in human brains (and brain biology often seems to follow similar patterns in other mammals), this means that if you learn your history dates one evening, your brain could be rehearsing them, strengthening those connections, while you are in REM sleep, and you will do well in the test the next day. On the other hand, if you don't get enough REM sleep, this may not happen. Also, if you spend the evening slobbing out in front of some crummy piece of reality TV, the only thing your brain will find to practise during the night will be images of people shouting at each other or walking around with bare feet making inane remarks about nothing in particular.

All this brain activity happens for adults and younger children too, but there's something which makes teenagers' brains different and is a reason why this is especially important for teenagers. One of the most defining and fascinating things about teenagers' brains is that, contrary to what scientists used to believe, it is this time in your life when your brain is doing its most radical and fundamental changing since you were 2 years old.

Scientists call this 'plasticity'. It means that your brain is changing physically, growing new abilities in new areas. And what happens to your brain as it changes can have long-term effects on how it works.

So, the scary bit is that what you do to your brain in your teenage years is very important – much more important than was realised when your parents were teenagers. And one of the best things you can do is sleep – but sleep at the right time.

That, of course, is the problem. You can't change the time school starts in the morning (though some schools in the US have done this, with some success). You can't change your circadian rhythms. You can't radically change the time your brain decides to start producing melatonin.

But there are things you can do to get the most out of your body clock and to get the best sleep you can.

[…]

How to make the most of your sleep patterns

Even though you can't stop having a teenage brain – and why would you want to? – there are things you can do to help yourself get the sleep you need when you need. You can minimise the effects of the sleep deprivation that the modern world forces on you. You still won't find that your brain does your history homework in your sleep, but you might even find you have the energy to do it yourself.

- Bright light in the morning is the best way to tell your body clock to wake up. It may sound unpleasant, but if someone opens your curtains and switches on all the lights before you need to get up, this will help.

- From lunchtime onwards, avoid coffee, tea, Coke with caffeine in (choose caffeine-free drinks) and tobacco (avoid tobacco altogether, in fact – but you know that).

- lf you are sleepy during certain times of the day, try to use those moments for active, stimulating things so you avoid falling asleep, therefore keeping your body clock on cue for sleeping at night.

- Do try to catch up at weekends – by trying to go to sleep at a sensible time on at least one of the nights, rather than by sleeping in till lunchtime, which will not help your body clock.

- Try to help your body clock by getting lots of light through the morning and darkness

EMC © ENGLISH & MEDIA CENTRE, 2017

in the evening. During the day, the more you can be outside, the more natural light you will get, helping your body clock.

- lf getting to sleep is your problem, it is even more important not to compensate by sleeping late in the morning. Practise sleep hygiene.

- A warm milky drink (not coffee or tea) can help – when milk is heated it contains a chemical which is a natural sleep inducer.

- Do not take sleeping pills to help you sleep unless a doctor prescribes them. There is nothing wrong with taking a mild herbal remedy sometimes, though you might start to think that you can't do without it, which is psychologically a bad idea. Ask your pharmacist for advice about what to choose. Contrary to popular belief, alcohol does not help you sleep.

- Lots of people find that lavender oil sprinkled on the pillow can help.

- I'm afraid you won't like this one but there's evidence that when parents set a bedtime, teenagers do get more sleep and function better next day. (And when the bedtime was set at midnight, the study showed more instances of depression than when bedtime was set at 10pm. I did say you wouldn't like it!)

The Unconscious Machinery of the Brain

Before Reading

Unconscious machinery

- With a partner, brainstorm examples of:
  - Actions which have always been unconscious, since birth (such as blinking)
  - Actions which had to be learned, but have now become unconscious (such as talking)
  - Actions which are still controlled mostly by your conscious brain (such as a sport you have recently learned to play).

Reading the Text



Read the whole text on pages 87-88.

After Reading

Sympathy and empathy: the writer in the picture

Word definitions:

Sympathy: a feeling of compassion or pity for someone else's difficulties

Empathy: putting yourself in someone else's shoes, imagining what it would be like to experience what they are going through.

- Working in a pair, you are going to create a frozen image (statue) to represent the article. One of you should take up a position as Ian, performing the tricky task of walking. The other person is going to be the writer. Together, discuss how to put the writer in the picture. For example, is the writer trying to see things through Ian's eyes? Or standing at a distance taking notes? What is his facial expression?
- As a class, take a look at some of the frozen images. The pair in the picture should not speak, but the rest of the class should comment on what they think the image suggests about the writer's attitude towards Ian's situation.
- On your own, think about whether the article makes you feel sympathy or empathy for Ian's situation. Write a few sentences explaining what you think about this.
- Share some of your ideas as a class.

EMC © ENGLISH & MEDIA CENTRE, 2017

Boxed information

- With a partner, discuss why the information about proprioception has been put in a box, using the prompts below to help you if you wish.
  - Is the information in the box different to the information in the rest of the article? How?
  - What does the information in the box add to the extract? Is it essential to understanding the rest of the extract?

Describing sentences

- With your partner, re-read the passage thinking about the way the writer uses sentences. Find an example of a sentence to fit each of the descriptions, below.

A.	A short, simple sentence sums up the paragraph.
B.	A long, multi-clause sentence adds layers of information.
C.	A complex sentence draws attention to the contrast between Ian's situation to that of most people who might be reading the article.
D.	Unusual word order makes this sentence stand out.
E.	A rhetorical question invites the reader to engage with the information in a personal way.
F.	The final clause in the sentence makes a particularly strong impression on the reader.

- On your own, choose a favourite sentence and think about why you like it. Draw on the sentence descriptions to help you to explain what it is you like, for example:

  - » Simple sentence
  - » Multi-clause sentence
  - » Unusual word order
  - » Final clause
  - » Rhetorical question
  - » Long sentence
  - » Short sentence
  - » Contrast

- Share your explanations as a class.

Your own writing

Choose one of the following writing tasks:

- Write to David Eagleman explaining how effectively you think he told Ian's story, using evidence from the text to back up your views.
- Write a piece of short fiction inspired by Ian's situation. Your story does not have to be about Ian.

THE UNCONSCIOUS MACHINERY OF THE BRAIN

BY DAVID EAGLEMAN

This extract is from *The Brain*, a best-selling book about the latest brain research, known as 'neuroscience'. The book was also made into a series for television.

The unconscious machinery of our brains is at work all the time, but it runs so smoothly that we're typically unaware of its operations. As a result, it's often easiest to appreciate only when it stops working. What would it be like if we had to consciously think about simple actions that we normally take for granted, such as the seemingly straightforward act of walking? To find out, I went to speak with a man named Ian Waterman.

When Ian was nineteen years old, he suffered a rare type of nerve damage as a result of a fierce case of gastric flu. He lost the sensory nerves that tell the brain about touch, as well as the position of one's own limbs (known as proprioception). As a result, Ian could no longer manage any of the movements of his body automatically. Doctors told him that he would be confined to a wheelchair for the rest of his life, despite the fact that his muscles were fine. A person simply can't get around without knowledge of where his body is. Although we rarely pause to appreciate it, the feedback we get from the world and from our muscles makes possible the complex movements we manage every moment of the day.

PROPRIOCEPTION

Even with your eyes closed, you know where your limbs are: is your left arm up or down? Are your legs straight or bent? Is your back straight or slumped? This capacity to know the state of your muscles is called proprioception. Receptors in the muscles, tendons and joints provide information about the angles of your joints, as well as the tension and length of your muscles. Collectively, this gives the brain a rich picture of how the body is positioned and allows for fast adjustments.

You can experience your proprioception fail temporarily if you've ever attempted to walk after one of your legs has gone to sleep. Pressure on your squeezed sensory nerves has prevented the proper signals from being sent and received. Without a sense of the position of your own limbs, simple acts like cutting food, typing, or walking are almost impossible.

EMC © ENGLISH & MEDIA CENTRE, 2017

Ian wasn't willing to let his condition confine him to a life without movement. So he gets up and goes, but the whole of his waking life requires him to think consciously about every movement his body makes. With no sense of awareness of where his limbs are, Ian has to move his body with focussed, conscious determination. He uses his visual system to monitor the position of his limbs. As he walks, Ian leans his head forward to watch his limbs as best he can. To keep his balance, he compensates by making sure his arms are extended behind him. Because Ian can't feel his feet touch the floor, he must anticipate the exact distance of each step and land it with his leg braced. Every step he takes is calculated and coordinated by his conscious mind.

Having lost his ability to walk automatically, Ian is highly cognisant of the miraculous coordination that most of us take for granted when going on a stroll. Everyone around him is moving around so fluidly and so seamlessly, he points out, that they're totally unaware of the amazing system that's managing that process for them.

If he is momentarily distracted, or an unrelated thought pops into his head, Ian is likely to fall. All distractions have to be tucked away while he concentrates on the smallest of details: the slope of the ground, the swing of his leg.

Feeding the Body and Feeding the Mind

Before Reading

Feeding the body and feeding the mind

- As a class, brainstorm everything you know about the best way to feed your body to keep it healthy.
- Now brainstorm what you think might be meant by 'feeding the mind' to keep it healthy.

Reading a Tricky Text (1)



Listen as your teacher reads the whole text on pages 92-93.

Although the text you are going to read is short, the vocabulary is challenging in places. Rather than worrying about all the words you don't understand, let these wash over you and pick up the gist of what the writer is saying.

After Reading

Reading a tricky text (2)

- On your own, complete the sentence below. Share some of your sentences around the class and discuss similarities and differences.

'This text is about...'

- On your own, add to your sentence as suggested, below. Share some of your sentences around the class and discuss similarities and differences.

'This text is about...and...'

- On your own, add to your sentence again as suggested, below. Again, share some of your sentences around the class and discuss similarities and differences.

'This text is about...and...but...'

EMC © ENGLISH & MEDIA CENTRE, 2017

Reading novels

The writer of this text was Lewis Carroll, author of the *Alice in Wonderland* novels for children.

- As a class, discuss what Carroll seems to be saying about the reading of novels. Does he seem to be suggesting that novels are always bad for the mind, or that they are a rich treat, like eating chocolate?

You are going to role play a conversation about whether people should read novels in which one of you plays the writer and the other plays a modern reader.

- With your partner, decide which of you is going to be Lewis Carroll, and which of you is going to be the modern reader. Before you start your role play, read the information, on page 91, that is relevant to your role to give you some ideas about what to say.

- Now role play the conversation between the writer, Lewis Carroll, and a modern reader.

- Drawing on your role play, write a script for the conversation. Try to make Lewis Carroll really sound like someone from the 19th century by borrowing words and phrases from the text.

Extended metaphors

When a writer takes one metaphor and uses it in several different ways over a number of sentences, this is called an extended metaphor. In these lyrics, songwriter and performer GZA compares his fluent use of words with the running of record breaking athlete Jesse Owens:

> Run on the track like Jesse Owens
> Broke the record flowin', without any knowin'
> That my wordplay run the four-hundred-metre relay
> It's on once I grab the baton from the DJ.

- Working with your partner, find some examples of extended metaphor in 'Feeding the body and feeding the mind'. What do you notice?

- Share your ideas as a class.

- For an extra challenge, see if you can write an extended metaphor of your own. If you wish you could use one of the ideas below as a starting point.

  - Compare being in love to being on a boat, at sea.
  - Compare teenage mood changes to the weather.
  - Compare learning something new to a baby bird learning to fly.

Role play conversation

If you are going to be Lewis Carroll, read the information about Victorian attitudes to the novel, below.

- On the one hand, Victorians thought novels should have a moral lesson to teach. On the other hand, violence, secrets, scandal, crime and romance tended to make a best-seller, just as they do now! The huge rise in the number of people who could read in Victorian times led to a huge rise in popular literature and most people wanted to read a 'page-turner'.
- As novels were often published in weekly or monthly sections in a magazine, each episode had to be exciting enough to make people want to buy the next chapter.
- One reason Charles Dickens, a very famous 19th-century novelist, was so successful was that he was able to combine page-turning plots with moral lessons and high quality writing.

If you are going to argue a modern position, read the recent research, below.

Reading widely for pleasure results in:

- Higher reading attainment and writing ability
- Better text comprehension and grammar and a wider vocabulary
- Positive reading attitudes, which are linked to achievement in reading
- Greater self-confidence as a reader
- Greater empathy – the ability to 'put yourself in someone else's shoes'.

And is considered to be:

- More important for children's educational success than their family circumstances.

EMC © ENGLISH & MEDIA CENTRE, 2017

FEEDING THE BODY AND FEEDING THE MIND

BY LEWIS CARROLL

This text comes from *On Corpulence*, a book about dieting published in the 1860s. Most of the book is about feeding the body, but the extract you are going to read is from a short piece at the end of the book on 'feeding the mind' by the writer of Alice in Wonderland, Lewis Carroll.

Breakfast, dinner, tea; in extreme cases, breakfast, luncheon, dinner, tea, supper, and a glass of something hot at bedtime. What care we take about feeding the lucky body! Which of us does as much for his mind? And what causes the difference? Is the body so much the more important of the two?

By no means: but life depends on the body being fed, whereas we can continue to exist as animals (scarcely as men) though the mind be utterly starved and neglected. Therefore Nature provides that, in case of serious neglect of the body, such terrible consequences of discomfort and pain shall ensue, as will soon bring us back to a sense of our duty: and some of the functions necessary to life she does for us altogether, leaving us no choice in the matter. It would fare but ill with many of us if we were left to superintend[1] our own digestion and circulation. 'Bless me!' one would cry, 'I forgot to wind up my heart this morning! To think that it had been standing still for the last three hours!' 'I can't walk with you this afternoon,' a friend would say, 'as I have no less than eleven dinners to digest. I had to let them stand over from last week, being so busy, and my doctor says he will not answer for the consequences if I wait any longer!'

Well, it is, I say, for us that the consequences of neglecting the body can be clearly seen and felt; and it might be well for some if the mind were equally visible and tangible – if we could take it, say, to the doctor, and have its pulse felt.

'Why, what have you been doing with this mind lately? How have you fed it? It looks pale, and the pulse is very slow.'

'Well, doctor, it has not had much regular food lately. I gave it a lot of sugar-plums[2] yesterday.'

'Sugar-plums! What kind?'

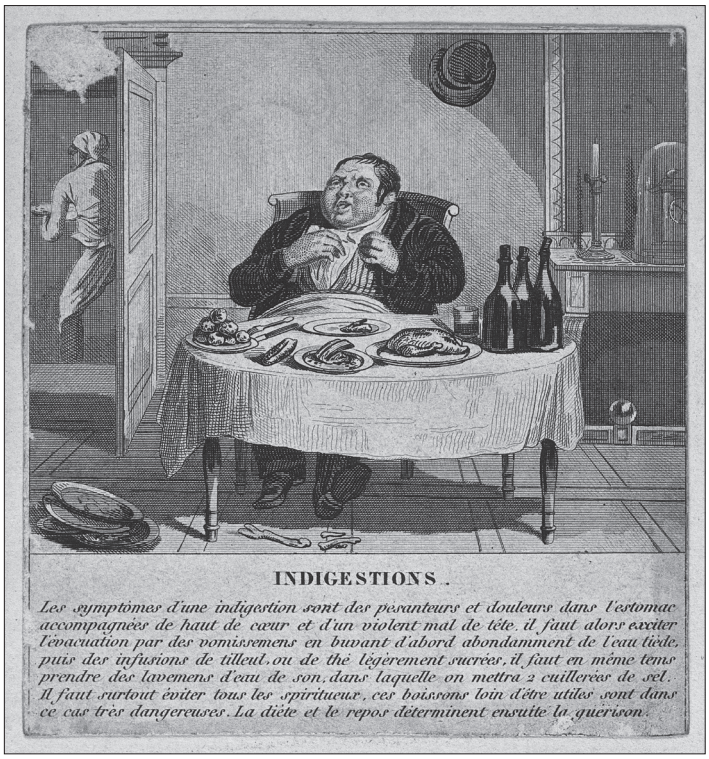
'Well, they were a parcel of conundrums, sir.'

'Ah, I thought so. Now just mind this: if you go on playing tricks like that, you'll spoil all its teeth, and get laid up with mental indigestion. You must have nothing but the plainest reading for

1 Superintend: supervise

2 Sugar-plums: crystallised plums

the next few days. Take care now! No novels on any account!'



Considering the amount of painful experience many of us have had in feeding and dosing the body, it would, I think, be quite worth our while to try and translate some of the rules into corresponding ones for the mind.

First, then, we should set ourselves to provide for our mind its proper kind of food. We very soon learn what will, and what will not, agree with the body, and find little difficulty in refusing a piece of the tempting pudding or pie which is associated in our memory with that terrible attack of indigestion, and whose very name irresistibly recalls rhubarb and magnesia[1]; but it takes a great many lessons to convince us how indigestible some of our favourite lines of reading are, and again and again we make a meal of the unwholesome novel, sure to be followed by its usual train of low spirits, unwillingness to work, weariness of existence – in fact, by mental nightmare.

Then we should be careful to provide this wholesome food in proper amount. Mental gluttony, or over-reading, is a dangerous propensity, tending to weakness of digestive power, and in some cases loss of appetite; we know that bread is a good and wholesome food, but who would like to try the experiment of eating two or three loaves at a sitting?

I have heard a physician telling his patient – whose complaint was merely gluttony and want of exercise – that 'the earliest symptom of hyper-nutrition is a deposition of adipose tissue,' and no doubt the fine long words greatly consoled the poor man under his increasing load of fat.

I wonder if there is such a thing in nature as a FAT MIND? I really think I have met with one or two: minds which could not keep up with the slowest trot in conversation; could not jump over a logical fence, to save their lives; always got stuck fast in a narrow argument; and, in short, were fit for nothing but to waddle helplessly through the world.

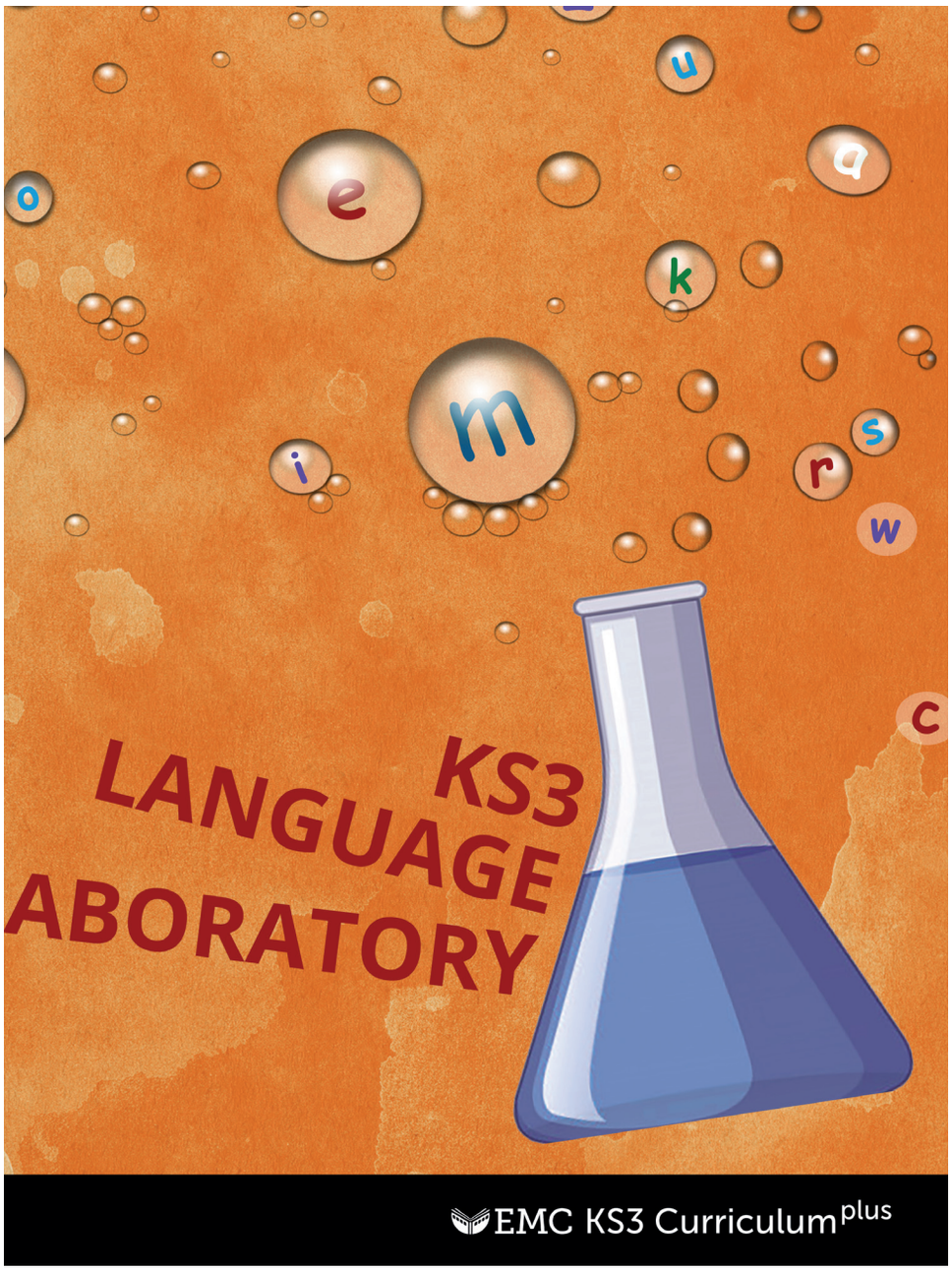
1 Magnesia: a medicine to relieve indigestion

EMC © ENGLISH & MEDIA CENTRE, 2017

Brain Waves: Comparing Texts

For this activity you will need to have read ‘The Sleeping Teenage Brain’ and ‘The Unconscious Machinery of the Brain’.

- Re-read ‘The Sleeping Teenage Brain’ on pages 82-84 and ‘The Unconscious Machinery of the Brain’ on pages 87-88.
- With a partner, see if you can come up with five points to explain how you can tell that one text is written for adults and one for children.
- Share your thinking as a class.
- Choose a section of ‘The Unconscious Machinery of the Brain’ and re-write it to make it appeal to children aged 10-11.
- Hear some of your writing around the class and discuss what changes people made to make the text suitable for a younger audience.



This resource comes from the English and Media Centre's publication *KS3 Language Laboratory*, a book to develop knowledge about language and how it works, through exploration, reflection and experiment

If you are interested in exploring this resource further, please visit https://www.englishandmedia.co.uk/publications/

EMC Publications



EMC © ENGLISH & MEDIA CENTRE, 2018

WRITERS' CHOICES

The Art of Vocabulary, Punctuation and Grammar

Writers often talk about how the blank page fills them with both joy and terror. There is joy because a blank page means that there are limitless possibilities to create something new. And there is terror because creating something new is such hard work – and rarely goes to plan!

Whether or not the experience of filling in a blank page is joyful or terrifying, it presents all writers with a series of interesting choices. Do I choose this word or that one? Do I write in this style or that? Shall I write in the first or the third person? The choices taken will have a significant impact on what a piece of writing means and what its readers think about it.

This unit will help you to think about some of the choices writers make, mainly through a close study of one writer, Alex Wheatle.

In the course of this unit you will:

- Evaluate the significance of the language choices made by well-known writers
- Reflect on the options available to you in your own writing
- Develop your awareness of what you can and can't do in your writing
- Consider the significance of small changes to writing.

One Writer's Choices



You are going to study closely the work of one writer to start this unit off. Alex Wheatle is the author of several crime novels for adults, and the *Crongton* sequence of novels for Young Adults.

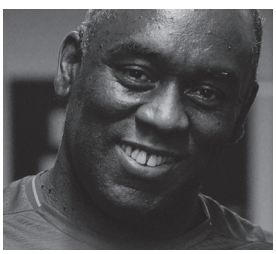
Extract from *Crongton Knights* – A Stage-by-Stage Analysis

You are going to look closely at an extract from *Crongton Knights* in three stages. First, you will think about the extract with some of your classmates; second, you will listen to the writer, Alex Wheatle contribute his own ideas; third, you will hear from your teacher.



Stage 1: Learning from each other

- Watch Alex Wheatle reading an extract from *Crongton Knights*. You should do this without having a copy of the extract in front of you. As you are watching, listen out for the interesting ways that the passage uses language, focusing on:
  - Names
  - Vocabulary choices
  - The way the setting is described
  - Tone of voice.
- When you have finished watching, join together in pairs or groups of three and compare your ideas about what you heard.
- Next, read the extract on pages 11-12 on your own.
- When you have finished, join up as a pair or small group again and annotate the text, drawing on the ideas you discussed before and adding in new ones.



Stage 2: Learning from the writer

- Watch Alex Wheatle talking about the extract from *Crongton Knights* and some of the choices he made as a writer. Add to your annotated sheet any new ideas that come from what he says.

Stage 3: Learning from your teacher

- Finally, listen to your teacher adding their own ideas about what is interesting about this piece of writing. Add in extra annotations where their ideas are new to you.

What Is Important about the Extract

- On your own reflect on your discussions and the annotations you have made.
- Use these to write a 'list' entitled '*Crongton Knights* Extract: Top 10 Points of Interest'. For example, the writer makes up really interesting names.
- Compare lists around the class.

EMC © ENGLISH & MEDIA CENTRE, 2018

Can You Recognise Alex Wheatle's Language?

- Based on studying the extract from *Crongton Knights*, decide on your own which of the pairs of sentences below come from elsewhere in Alex Wheatle's novel and which were written by someone else.
- Compare your answers with a partner and explain your reasoning. Also discuss which versions you prefer and why.

Paired extracts A

Version 1: As I washed my dish I wondered how Venetia was feeling. If I was stressed out to the max with my fam situation she must be suffering even more. I didn't have the vibe for violence any more so I switched off the DVD and crashed out on my bed.

Version 2: As I did the washing up, I wondered how Venetia was feeling. If I was anxious about my own family situation, she must have been suffering even more. I didn't have the stomach for violence any more so I switched off the DVD and lay down on my bed.

Paired extracts B

Version 1: I didn't like to admit it to anyone but being left at home on my own at night scared me to death, especially given that there had been some murders in the area. I was thinking about phoning Liccle Bit and Jonah just to hear a voice but I wanted to save my credit

Version 2: I didn't like to admit it to anyone but being left alone in our castle at night freaked the living kidneys out of me, especially with all the slayings going on in our ends. I was thinking of dinging Liccle Bit and Jonah just to hear a voice but I wanted to save my credit.

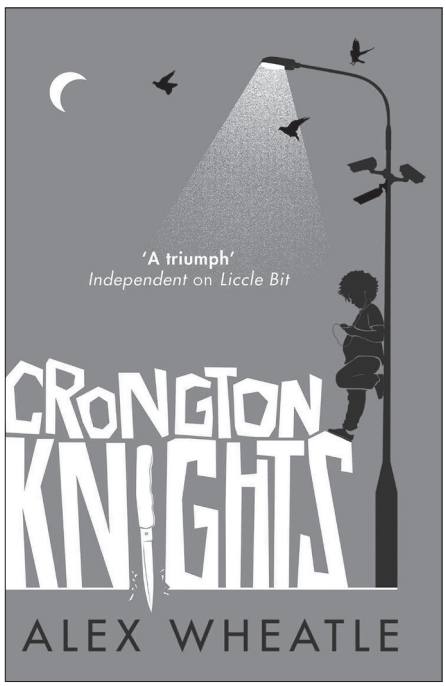
Paired extracts C

Version 1: The bros and sisters around us seemed friendly enough. One of the chicks smiled at me. The drawbridge was open. The brother standing next to me seemed a bit liquor-bombed.

Version 2: The boys and girls around us seemed friendly enough and one of the girls smiled at me. The door was open. The boy standing next to me seemed a bit drunk.

Extract from *Crongton Knights*

This extract introduces the second novel in the '*Crongton* sequence', *Crongton Knights*. It is narrated by McKay, who was also a character in the first novel, *Liccle Bit*.



My mum told me I was named after her Scottish granddad, Danny McKay. Apparently, once a year, he served food to the best golfers in the world in some top-ranking hotel by the sea. I don't love golf but Mum was proper proud of her grandpops. She wanted to keep his surname so I was branded McKay Medgar Tambo. It's not the coolest of names but it smacks the insults out of the Gateau Kid, Slop Bag and Dumpling-Butt which I had to put up with in primary school.

My maths teacher, Ms Riddlesworth, reckons I'm fourteen and fifteen-sixteenths years old. I dunno how she worked that one out. I live in Dickens House, South Crongton estate, with my seventeen-year-old brother, Nesta, and my dad. Mum died a few years ago. Pops works the twilight zone in a biscuit factory. He drives a forklift truck in the warehouse. Going by his curses, he hates his boss.

My bredrens are Lemar 'Liccle Bit' Jackson and Jonah 'Rapid' Hani. I've known them long before anyone called me a nickname.

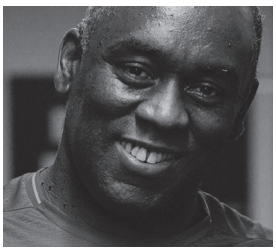
Six months ago, Liccle Bit had some serious drama with the top G of our estate, Manjaro. He couldn't quite keep out of Manjaro's way cos the crime duke is the daddy to the baby of Bit's sis, Elaine – a bonkers situation. Bit made things a trailer-load worse for himself when Manjaro manipulated him to hide a gun. It was a time when beef between North and South Crong exploded with the merkings of at least three bruvs.

Bit was ordered to return Manjaro's gun. My bredren finally came to his senses and put up resistance. Him and his gran got a beat-down for his trouble but, since that day, Manjaro went all fugitive. The feds hunted him high and search for him low. They couldn't find him. Graffiti in South Crong shouted 'Manjaro woz 'ere' and 'Manjaro woz there'. The feds and the social services offered Bit's fam a flat in Ashburton – they turned it down. Bit explained it was on the eleventh floor and in that tiny castle you couldn't swing a baby's dummy.

EMC © ENGLISH & MEDIA CENTRE, 2018

We all lived on a red alert. Feds patrolled around the tall slabs and the quiet alleyways. Teachers checked out lockers once a week. Security guards followed your steps in phone shops. Only two kids were allowed inside Footcave store at one time. The local council wanted to open a new youth club in Crongton Broadway but the residents all signed a five-hundred plus petition. Even the popping of bubblegum made us jump. Most of our parents banned any missions out of the ends after dark. After a few nerve-jangling months the graffiti began to disappear. We stopped looking over our shoulders. Things were getting on the level once more. Bruvs and sisters started to chill again, soccer games booted off in the park, summer jams pumped out of ghetto blasters. A-class chicks rolled by in their sexy denim cut-downs, big boots and check shirts – wannabe players had to smile away their put-downs. Gs spent their time smoking rockets in parked cars, balling in open-air basketball courts and counting their notes from dragon hip sales. But just a few weeks ago, a North Crong soldier got carved in the Crongton Movieworld car park. General Madoo was his name. Sixteen years old. His fam leaked tears on the 6 p.m. news. My dad and Bit's mum joined the 'Knives Take Young Lives' march to Crongton Town Hall. The mayor gave the world's most boring speech. Manjaro's name was whispered again. In North Crong, Major Worries, the King G in those ends, stirred up his crew. We became even more careful of our movements. Man! Living in Crongton has never been easy. I had no idea things were gonna get a world more dangerous …

Alex Wheatle – A Study in Writing Choice



- Watch some or all of the remaining video clips of Alex Wheatle talking about his work as a writer. You can see him responding to the questions listed below.

1. Why did you choose to become a writer?
2. Why did you choose to write Young Adult (YA) Fiction?
3. Why did you choose to set your novels in the fictional *Crongton*?
4. What choices are you going to make when writing future *Crongton* novels?
5. What choices did you make when creating McKay's voice?
6. What choices did you make about the language to use in your *Crongton* novels?
7. Why did you choose to refer to swearing in your novels without actually swearing?
8. Why did you choose to write novels containing lots of different voices?
9. How are your choices as a writer linked to your reading?

- As a whole class, discuss your thoughts about what he has to say. What do you find interesting or surprising? What do his responses tell you about the life of a writer? What do they add to what you know about the process of writing and the choices that writers can make?

- Now work as a pair or small group to invent a persona for a YA author. You should give them a name and think about their age, background, gender, interests, and so on. You should also decide what kind of books they write and give a name to their sequence of novels.

- Next take it in turns to respond in role as your fictional writer to some of the questions that Alex Wheatle answered. You might struggle with some of your answers, but you should find that ideas come into your head as you are talking. You will also need to change some of the questions to fit your own planned sequence. For example, you will not need to refer to Crongton, or McKay.

- Finally, write part of a story or novel by your fictional writer. You can continue to work in your pair or group, or opt to do some writing on your own.

EMC © ENGLISH & MEDIA CENTRE, 2018

What the Dickens! One Writer's Choices in the 19th Century



You are now going to look at the choices made by another writer, this time the famous 19th-century novelist, Charles Dickens. Dickens' writing is particularly interesting to study because he was often very experimental and playful in the way that he wrote.

Here, you will also see that choices in writing can even extend to small aspects of grammar such as punctuation.

A Focus on Punctuation

Pick up any two different editions of the same book by Charles Dickens and you might have a slightly modified reading experience: different editions are rarely punctuated in the same way. The reason for this lies with Dickens himself and the way he used punctuation.

Punctuation for Dickens was a guide to how his work should be read out loud. So as he travelled far and wide reading his novels to large crowds, he would often mark changes to the punctuation in the margins of his copies to suit the effect he wanted to have on his audience. Several versions then survived and different editors have drawn on different ones.

- With a partner, punctuate the passage from Dickens' *Great Expectations*, reproduced on page 15, in a way that would make it come to life when read out loud. It comes from the very start of the novel and introduces readers to the narrator, Pip.
- Look at how you have punctuated the passage compared to Dickens himself (see pages 16-17).
- Identify two differences between your punctuation and Dickens' and discuss how these make a difference to reading the passage.

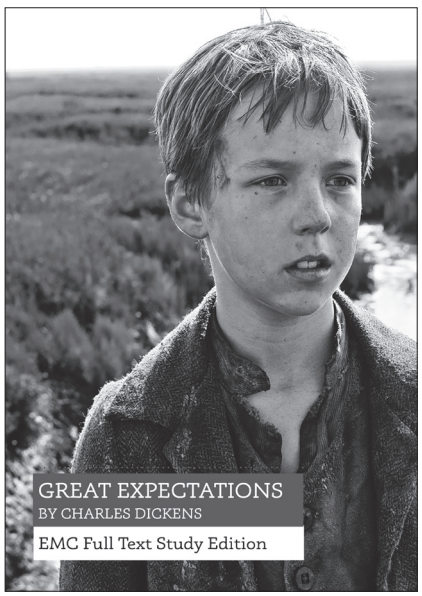


my fathers family name being pirrip and my christian
name philip my infant tongue could make of both
names nothing longer or more explicit than pip so
I called myself pip and came to be called pip I give
pirrip as my fathers family name on the authority
of his tombstone and my sister mrs joe gargery who
married the blacksmith as I never saw my father
or my mother and never saw any likeness of either
of them for their days were long before the days of
photographs my first fancies regarding what they were
like were unreasonably derived from their tombstones
the shape of the letters on my fathers gave me an
odd idea that he was a square stout dark man with
curly black hair from the character and turn of the
inscription also georgiana wife of the above I drew a
childish conclusion that my mother was freckled and
sickly

EMC © ENGLISH & MEDIA CENTRE, 2018

A Focus on Sentences

- With a partner, read the passage below, which extends the one you looked at for punctuation. Read it quite quickly and focus on looking at the sentences, rather than their actual meaning. When you have finished, complete the tasks below.
  - Find the longest sentence. How many words does it contain? What are your thoughts about this sentence?
  - Find the shortest sentence. How many words does it contain? What are your thoughts about this sentence?
  - Estimate what percentage of the sentences are over 10 words long, and what percentage are 10 words or fewer. (For example, 90% 10 words or fewer, 10% over 10 words.)



My father's family name being Pirrip, and my Christian name Philip, my infant tongue could make of both names nothing longer or more explicit than Pip. So, I called myself Pip, and came to be called Pip.

I give Pirrip as my father's family name, on the authority of his tombstone and my sister — Mrs. Joe Gargery, who married the blacksmith. As I never saw my father or my mother, and never saw any likeness of either of them (for their days were long before the days of photographs), my first fancies regarding what they were like, were unreasonably derived from their tombstones. The shape of the letters on my father's, gave me an odd idea that he was a square, stout, dark man, with curly black hair. From the character and turn of the inscription, 'Also Georgiana Wife of the Above,' I drew a childish conclusion that my mother was freckled and sickly. To five little stone lozenges, each about a foot and a half long, which were arranged in a neat row beside their grave, and were sacred to the memory of five little brothers of mine — who gave up trying to get a living, exceedingly early in that universal struggle — I am indebted for a belief I religiously entertained that they had all been born on their backs with their hands in their trousers-pockets, and had never taken them out in this state of existence.

Ours was the marsh country, down by the river, within, as the river wound, twenty miles of the sea. My first most vivid and broad impression of the identity of things, seems to me to have been gained on a memorable raw afternoon towards evening. At such a time I found out for certain, that this bleak place overgrown with nettles was the churchyard; and that Philip Pirrip, late of this parish, and also Georgiana wife of the above, were dead and buried; and that Alexander, Bartholomew, Abraham, Tobias, and Roger, infant children of the aforesaid, were also dead and buried; and that the dark flat wilderness beyond the churchyard, intersected with dykes and mounds and gates, with scattered cattle feeding on it, was the marshes; and that the low leaden line beyond, was the river; and that the distant savage lair from which the wind was rushing, was the sea; and that the small bundle of shivers growing afraid of it all and beginning to cry, was Pip.

'Hold your noise!' cried a terrible voice, as a man started up from among the graves at the side of the church porch. 'Keep still, you little devil, or I'll cut your throat!'

A fearful man, all in coarse grey, with a great iron on his leg. A man with no hat, and with broken shoes, and with an old rag tied round his head. A man who had been soaked in water, and smothered in mud, and lamed by stones, and cut by flints, and stung by nettles, and torn by briars; who limped, and shivered, and glared and growled; and whose teeth chattered in his head as he seized me by the chin.

'O! Don't cut my throat, sir,' I pleaded in terror. 'Pray don't do it, sir.'

'Tell us your name!' said the man. 'Quick!'

'Pip, sir.'

'Once more,' said the man, staring at me. 'Give it mouth!'

'Pip. Pip, sir.'

EMC © ENGLISH & MEDIA CENTRE, 2018

You are now going to compare the sentences in this passage from *Great Expectations* with those in the Alex Wheatle passage on pages 11-12.

- With your partner, look at each of these statements and decide whether or not they apply to one or both of the passages.

A. Most of the sentences are long and complex.

B. Most of the sentences are short and simple.

C. Semi-colons are used to show that a character is speaking or thinking haltingly, unsure of himself.

D. Questions arouse curiosity in the reader.

E. The sentences often involve two or more parts, joined with 'and' or 'but'.

F. Minor sentences (sentence fragments) are used for dramatic effect.

G. At tense moments the sentences become shorter and simpler.

H. Several sentences of the same length build tension.

I. Exclamations build a sense of fear.

J. A sentence uses 'and' or 'but' several times to build up layers of detail and create rhythm when reading the extract aloud.

Writing Like an Author

Now that you have had time to think about some of the vocabulary, punctuation and sentence choices made by Dickens and Wheatle, you are going to try and write in the style of one of them.

- On your own, write for about 20 minutes on the following:

  Write about a character in the first person. You can write about yourself, or a fictional character (Wheatle created McKay, Dickens created Pip). You might like to focus on the name of the character, and the setting.

- When you have finished, give yourself a chance to read through your work carefully, reflecting on the choices you have made.

- Next, in role as your chosen author (so as Wheatle, or as Dickens), explain to a partner some of your choices. You should write about:

  - Important vocabulary choices
  - How you have crafted your sentences
  - How you would describe the style of your work.



Writing Precision – The Effect of Small Changes

Writers not only choose what goes into their work, but also what gets missed out. This activity helps you to think about how important small details can be to a piece of writing. You will also get the chance to think about the impact of different word classes on a piece of writing.

- Below are two versions of a short extract from Marcus Sedgwick's novel, *Revolver*. One is the original, the other has been slightly adapted. With a partner, read version 1 and place the words into a word class chart like the one on page 20. Try to include as many words as you can, but do not worry if you can't work out which word class some belong to.
- In the chart, highlight the words that you think are most important in creating a sense of atmosphere in this short extract.
- Now read version 2. Identify any additional words and add them to the word class chart, using a different colour pen.
- Discuss with your partner how the additional words change the extract. Which do you think is the original? Which do you think is the best piece of writing? Why?

An extract from *Revolver* by Marcus Sedgwick

Version 1	Version 2
He tugged the latch and before he'd even stepped outside the cold had him, grasping him, squeezing his chest and biting his face. The wind clawed at his mouth and nose, but a hundred miles north of the Arctic Circle, Sig had learned the trick of holding his breath inside until he knew which way the wind was attacking. Still it stole up the backs of his legs and his face, finding a way in to drain him of his heat.	He tugged the latch and before he'd even stepped cautiously outside the cold had him, grasping him tightly, squeezing his chest and angrily biting his face. The wind clawed sharply at his mouth and nose, but a hundred miles north of the Arctic Circle, Sig had learned the trick of holding his breath inside until he knew which way the wind was attacking. Still it stole slowly up the backs of his legs and his face, finding a way in to slyly drain him of his heat.

EMC © ENGLISH & MEDIA CENTRE, 2018



The effect of small changes – word class chart

Pronouns	Nouns	Adjectives	Verbs	Adverbs	Other (e.g. determiners, prepositions)
he			tugged	even	before
he'd			stepped		

Making Small Changes of Your Own

- Working with the same partner, select a short extract no more than 100 words long from another novel. It can be one that you already know, or one that you select at random.
- Make 10 changes to the extract: you can add words, change words, or cut words out.
- Together, talk about the changes you have made and how they change your reading, even if in small ways. Explain which version you prefer and why.
- Write out the original extract and your new version. Exchange them with another pair.
- Try to work out which of the two extracts you have been given was the original. With your partner, jot down your thoughts, with reasons, along with your ideas about which of the versions is better and why.
- Join up as a four and discuss your thoughts.



Making Choices in Your Own Writing

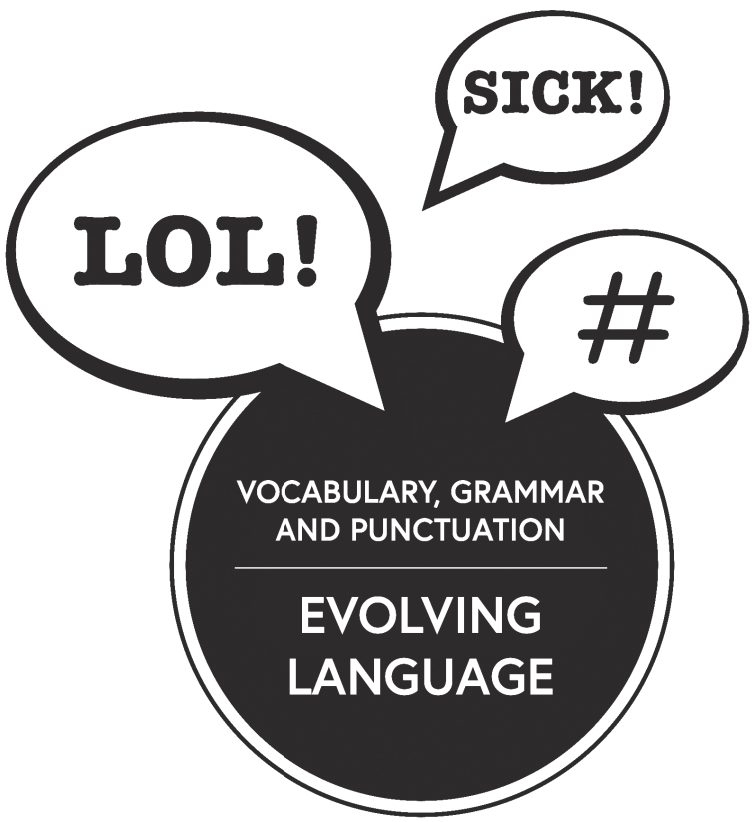
You are now going to think about the choices you make in your own writing, drawing on the ideas you have explored in this unit of work so far.

- Working with a partner, choose five interesting nouns that you have come across during the course of studying this unit of work (for example, wind, frost, guard, warehouse, truck).
- With your partner, turn the words into the start of a very basic story: 'First...; second...; then...' and so on. You should write this down.
- Next develop a plot around this basic story. You can do this by discussing 'how' and 'why' ideas about your basic story. You should annotate your basic story with your ideas.
- Now you should work on your own to turn your ideas into a short piece of narrative writing. To do this you will have to make choices about aspects of narrative such as point of view, the order you will tell things in, tone, language used, and so on. In other words, you are turning your initial ideas into a crafted story.
- Read your narratives to each other and discuss the different choices that you made.
- Reflect on your choices in a chart like the one on page 22.

EMC © ENGLISH & MEDIA CENTRE, 2018

Reflecting on writing choices

Area of focus	Reflections
Vocabulary Think about the words you decided to use and their effect.	
Sentences Think about the type and length of sentences you decided to use and their effects.	
Voice Have you used a 1st or 3rd person voice? Why? What tone have you used?	
Style Think about what is distinctive about the writing? For example, is it in a particular genre? What effect were you trying achieve?	
What I am most happy about	
What I might choose to change, why and how	



EMC © ENGLISH & MEDIA CENTRE, 2018

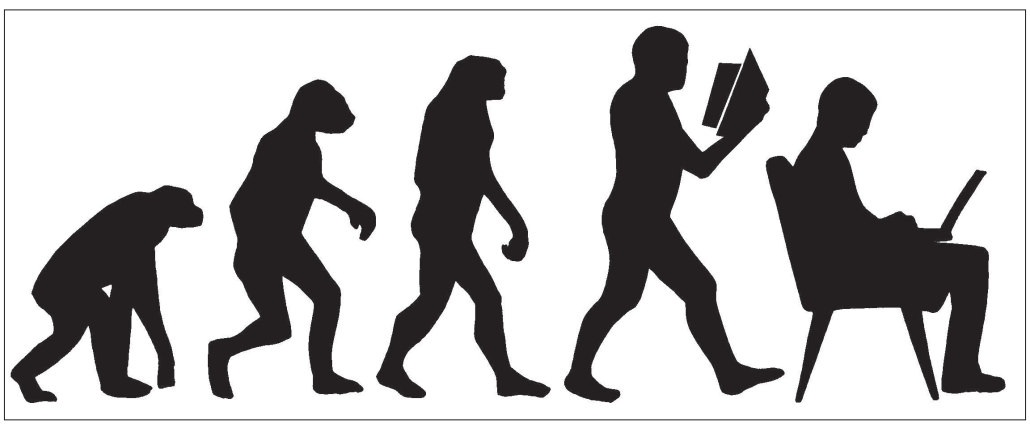
EVOLVING LANGUAGE

In this unit, you are going to explore how different aspects of language have changed over time. Specifically you are going to think about the evolution of vocabulary, grammar and punctuation. The reason? To help you learn about the very special qualities of language that place it at the heart of human existence and evolution.

To do this you will explore and experiment with aspects of punctuation, grammar and vocabulary from the past and the present, as well as thinking about how language might evolve further in the future. There will be lots of chances to play around with language, so you can think about how you yourself can have an impact on how language evolves.

In all of these activities you will take on the role of 'evolutionary linguist', an expert in thinking about what language was like in the past and what this can teach us about the present and the future.

In the Beginning Was… the Word



How on earth did human language come into being? When, why and how did people start to talk? Perhaps the greatest puzzle of all about language and evolution is trying to figure out what happened at the beginning of human history to get us all talking in the first place.

Language experts currently estimate that human speech as we know it today began to evolve between 150,000 and 350,000 years ago, with some form of language present in early human beings from between 0.6 million and 2.5 million years ago.

Below are short summaries of three theories about how human language came into being (there are many more!).

- Discuss in small groups how convincing you find each one.
- Share your ideas as a whole class.

Gestural theory

This theory relies on the fact that the parts of the brain responsible for hand and mouth movements are close together. As early humans began to use more tools, their hands were no longer free to make gestures. Consequently, they began to communicate using their mouths instead – and their brain structure allowed them to do this. Over time, these communication sounds developed into complete, complex language systems.

Putting the baby down theory

This proposes that sounds developed between early human mothers and their babies that eventually developed into a fully-fledged language system. Because humans lack hair like other primates, babies could not cling on to their mothers. So that the babies would not feel abandoned, the mothers used sounds to reassure them that everything was all right when they had been put down.

The gossip and grooming hypothesis

This is based on the idea that grooming is an important part of social life for primates as a way of maintaining good relations (so apes clean the fur, pick out the fleas and so on from other apes). As human social groups became bigger, there was no longer enough time to keep up with everybody in the group for grooming. Consequently, 'vocal grooming' evolved as an alternative way to keep in touch. It also left hands free to do other tasks. Over time the sounds used in vocal grooming evolved into language (or gossip).

Evolutionary Linguist Task 1

- In a small group, develop the introduction to a television programme exploring the beginnings of language. You should:
  - Come up with a name for your programme
  - Present each of the three theories above in your own words, adding in your own thoughts, and perhaps some form of dramatic presentation
  - If you can, provide a fourth theory of your own.

EMC © ENGLISH & MEDIA CENTRE, 2018

In the Beginning Were... Nouns

However language evolved, it is likely that most of the first words were nouns, used to name things.

As humans and language developed further, the role played by nouns became more sophisticated. You could use different nouns to name the same thing. For example, a dog might also be called a *mutt, bow-wow, fleabag, pup, puppy, hound, mongrel, pooch, cur, tail-wagger*, or *man's best friend*.

Each of these **synonyms** for dog has a different **connotation**. They all refer to a furry mammal with four legs that barks, but each has a slightly different **meaning**. For example, *fleabag* has connotations of a dog that is scruffy and not well looked after.

- In a pair or small group, discuss the different connotations of the synonyms used to describe a dog. Can you think of a similar list of words for another animal?
- Next do a whole class survey of what people call the TV remote control in their homes. Discuss why you think they are called different things by different people.

Evolutionary Linguist Task 2

You can get a sense of how important nouns are to a piece of writing by changing them in unusual ways. One way is called **Noun + 7**. This involves identifying a noun in a piece of writing, looking it up in the dictionary, then counting forward seven nouns. So the noun 'cloud' might be changed to 'clown'.

- Experiment with **Noun + 7** on the first verse of William Wordsworth's 'Daffodils' poem, included here. You need to replace each noun with one seven nouns on in the dictionary.

> I wandered lonely as a Cloud
> That floats on high o'er Vales and Hills,
> When all at once I saw a crowd
> A host of dancing Daffodils;
> Along the Lake, beneath the trees,
> Ten thousand dancing in the breeze.

You can cheat if you like and keep working through the dictionary beyond the seventh noun to find one that you particularly like.

- Each group should read out their new version and explain what it means. It might read like complete nonsense, but you should come up with a meaning for it anyway!

And Then Came... Joining Words Together

At some point in time humans developed the ability to join words together. Essentially this is the process we call **grammar**: putting words together in a system to create meaning.

Different languages put together words in different ways, or have slightly different rules of grammar. For example, some languages do not have **prepositions** (small words like *by*, *to*, *from*, *in* that indicate position or direction) but instead change the ending of nouns to do the same job. For this task you are going to concentrate only on English.

Evolutionary Linguist Task 3

The table below shows different words from different word classes.

Word class	Examples of words
Adjectives	red, good, favourite, terrible, funny, sour, fragile
Pronouns	I, you, she, he, it, we, they
Determiners	this, that, those, these, a, the, some
Nouns	house, giraffe, pencil, carriage, box, town, sky
Prepositions	from, in, to, since, at, by, on, over, under
Conjunctions	and, but, because
Verbs	write, read, listen, run, skip, roar, fall, swing
Adverbs	soon, loudly, really, fortunately, quickly, effectively

In a pair or small group, you are going to experiment with making up sentences that use words from each word class. You can change the endings of words if you like. For example, make nouns into plurals, or change the tense of verbs. Try to come up with two or three different sentences in different orders for the same set of words.

- First discuss what you know about the function of each word class. What do these words do in sentences?
- Next, discuss what you notice about the order of words in your sentences. Are there any grammatical rules for English that you must follow? For example, do adjectives always come before nouns? Where do verbs come? What about determiners?
- Finally, in your role as evolutionary linguists, decide on the order in which different word classes evolved. For example, if nouns came first, what came second, third, fourth and so on? Decide on reasons for your order and feed it back to the whole class.

EMC © ENGLISH & MEDIA CENTRE, 2018

Then Along Came... Punctuation



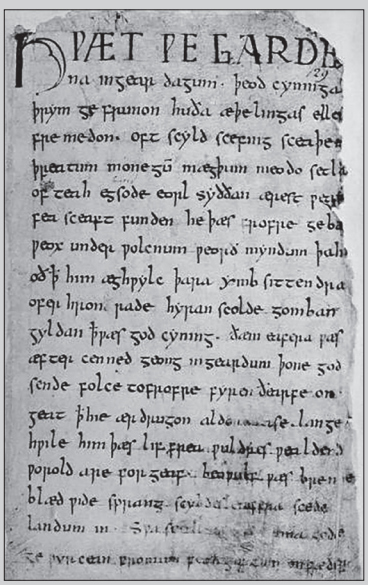
People spoke words thousands of years before they were first written down – so there was no such thing as punctuation in the early evolution of language. Punctuation is needed in written texts, though, to guide the reader through what is going on. Writers, unlike speakers, can't use gestures and change their voice to show what they mean.

This exercise explores the development of punctuation by looking at **paragraph breaks**.

You might not think of paragraphs as punctuation because a new paragraph does not require you to put a mark on the page or screen, unlike, say, a comma, or a full-stop. That has not, though, always been the case, as you will find out when you read on.

Evolutionary Linguist Task 4

- Match the dates and explanations in the left-hand column of the table on pages 73-74 with the different punctuation conventions illustrated in the right-hand one, for example 1 = C.
- Compare your decisions as a whole class, then discuss how you use paragraph breaks. Consider whether you use them in different ways for different kinds of writing. For example, do you always indent from the margin, or do you sometimes miss a line?



1. **800-1200 BCE. No paragraph breaks. Writing looped back at the end of a line in 'ox-turning' style**	A. SOME·EARLY·WRITING·SEPARATED·WORDS·USING·A·DOT·NOW·CALLED·AN·INTERPUNCT·THIS·WAS·PARTICULARLY·COMMON·IN·SOME·ROMAN·WRITING
2. **400 BCE. First paragraph breaks were horizontal lines in the margin under the text**	B. C Over time the K was replaced by a C, which stood for 'capitulum' meaning 'head', from which derived the word 'capital'.
3. **In a short period up to 200 CE Romans experimented with dots between words. Still no paragraph breaks.**	C. THISISANUNBROKENSTREAMOFCONSCIOUSNESSSTYLHTDELLACSITIFLESTINOKCABSPOOLTAHTGNITIRWFOEEOXTURNINGSTYLEBECAUSEANOXPULLINGAPLOUGHFLESTINOKCABSNRUT
4. **By the end of 200 CE a range of paragraph marks were in place. One involved putting the letter K at the start of a new paragraph**	D. WHEN PARAGRAPHS FIRST APPEARED ON THE SCENE THEY WERE INDICATED BY MARKS ON THE LEFT OF THE PAGE. THESE WERE USUALLY NOTHING MORE THAN UNDERLINING.
5. **1200 By now the letter C has replaced the letter K at the start of paragraphs**	E. The pilcrow eventually wrote itself out of existence. Paragraphs breaks became more common and, at the same time, rubricators (people who added in red text to a manuscript for emphasis) began drawing more and more elaborate pilcrows. Eventually there was not enough time to draw them in, so blank indents were left at the start of paragraph. And so the modern paragraph was born!

EMC © ENGLISH & MEDIA CENTRE, 2018

6. **Between 1200 and 1400 The C gradually turned into a symbol that looks like a back to front P, known as a pilcrow ¶.**	F. K At one time in history, some chapters, or page breaks, were marked with the letter K, which stood for 'kaput' (head). It marked the head of a new argument.
7. **From 1450 With the advent of the printing press, much more material was published and the pilcrow died out, leaving a blank indent in its place.**	G. New technology meant that indenting went out of fashion in some instances. Instead, writers used line breaks to indicate where one paragraph ended and another started.
8. **Modern times. Today many people prefer to leave a space to mark a paragraph break, rather than an indent, particularly when working on a screen. This is perhaps because there is no longer a need to conserve paper when writing.**	H. ¶ Over time the C was replaced by a ¶ sign, called a 'pilcrow'. This was used at a time when monks would produce elaborate hand-written texts. Scribes would leave a gap where a page break was needed and another monk, called a 'rubricator' because he would use red ink, would draw in the pilcrow. This is a developed form of the C for 'capitulum', with lines to the right and the letter coloured in.

BCE: Before Common Era (Year 0)

CE: Common Era

Do We Need More Punctuation?

There aren't many punctuation marks to learn about. At various points in time, however, punctuation marks have come and gone, as the pilcrow demonstrates on pages 73-74.

There have also been more recent attempts to invent new punctuation. On page 76 is an article about the **interrobang**. This was a piece of punctuation intended to combine question marks and exclamation marks. It nearly caught on and was included on some widely sold typewriter keyboards in the 1960s and 70s. You can also find it on lots of computer fonts today. Really?

- Read the 1960s newspaper article about the interrobang.
- Discuss your reactions around the class. Use the questions below to get the discussion started.
  - Do you think it was a good idea?
  - Would you like the option of using an interrobang?
  - Why do you think it didn't catch on?

Evolutionary Linguist Task 5

- Work in a pair or small group to invent a new punctuation mark. You can come up with something entirely fresh, or adapt ideas that have been tried in the past, or that are used in other countries. For example, in Spain, question marks are placed at the beginning and ending of questions; in the past attempts were made to introduce 'irony marks' to show when someone was not meaning something sincerely.
- When you have finished write two or three sentences that use your new punctuation mark. Create a short presentation to the rest of your class about why people should start using it.
- After your presentations, discuss in role as evolutionary linguists why your ideas might or might not catch on in the future.

EMC © ENGLISH & MEDIA CENTRE, 2018

We Should Have an Interrobang?

Just what did Christopher Columbus have in mind when he shouted "Land ho!" upon discovering the world's most valuable real estate?

Most historians insist that he cried "Land, ho!" but there are others who claim it was really Land ho?" says Martin Spekter, former World-Herald reporter who now has his own advertising agency in New York.

'Chances are the intrepid discoverer was both excited and doubtful,' writes Mr Spekter in Type Talks Magazine.

To prevent any further historical confusion, Mr Spekter has invented a new punctuation mark which would be a cross between an exclamation point and a question mark.

It would be called an interrobang, an exclamaquest or anything else that strikes your fancy. Mr Spekter says he is still open for suggestions on how the new mark should look.

The ingenious ex-Nebraskan feels writers of the English language need a symbol which clearly tells whether the writer is asking or telling.

As an example, Mr Spekter points to the subtle blending of question and exclamation, as in 'How do you do?'

'We all know the other fellow really doesn't want information with this salutation,' Mr Spekter says. 'He's trying to indicate a hearty interest in our wellbeing.'

'But if you write it, 'How do you do!' it makes him out a churl, a superficial type who doesn't give a hang about the other chap. There's where use of an interrobang could contribute nuance and clarity.'

Mr Spekter says advertising makes generous use of rhetorical questions and in 50 per cent of these the interrobang could be employed profitably.

'Here's a for instance: Imagine the headline, 'What? A refrigerator That Makes Its Own Ice Cubes?'

Mr Spekter explains: 'Probably the first question mark is suitable. The second might be more advantageously replaced by an exclamation point.

'But better yet – how about a single symbol that could be used in both instances?'



We Should Have an Interrobang!?

Just what did Christopher Columbus have in mind when he shouted "Land, ho!" upon discovering the world's most valuable real estate?

"Most historians insist he cried 'Land, ho!' but there are others who claim it was really 'Land ho?'" says Martin Speckter, former World-Herald reporter who now has his own advertising agency in New York.

"Chances are the intrepid discoverer was both excited and doubtful," writes Mr. Speckter in Type Talks Magazine.

To prevent any further historial confusion, Mr. Speckter has invented a new punctuation mark which would be a cross between an exclamation point and a question mark.

It would be called an interrobang, an exclamaquest or anything else that strikes your fancy. Mr. Speckter says he is still open for suggestions on how the new mark should look.

The ingenious ex-Nebraskan feels writers of the English language need a symbol which clearly tells whether the writer is asking or telling.

As an example, Mr. Speckter points to the subtle blending of question and exclamation, as in "How do you do?"

"We all know the other fellow really doesn't want information with this salutation," Mr. Speckter says. "He's trying to indicate a hearty interest in our wellbeing.

"But if you write it, 'How do you do!' it makes him out a churl, a superficial type who doesn't give a hang about the other chap. There's where use of an interrobang could contribute nuance and clarity."

Mr. Speckter says advertising makes generous use of rhetorical questions and in 50 per cent of these the interrobang could be employed profitably.

"Here's a for instance: Imagine the headline, "What? A Refrigerator That Makes Its Own Ice Cubes?"

Mr. Speckter explains: "Probably the first question mark is suitable. The second might more advantageously be replaced by an exclamation point.

"But better yet — how about a single symbol that could be used in both instances?"

Mr. Speckter informed The World-Herald he is often asked if he is serious about his interrobang.

His "cautious reply" is: "Somewhat more seriously than Elizabeth Taylor and slightly less so than Khrushchev."

—World-Herald Drawing.

What'd he say?! . . . Suggested symbols for new punctuation mark called an interrobang, exclamaquest or anything else that comes to mind.

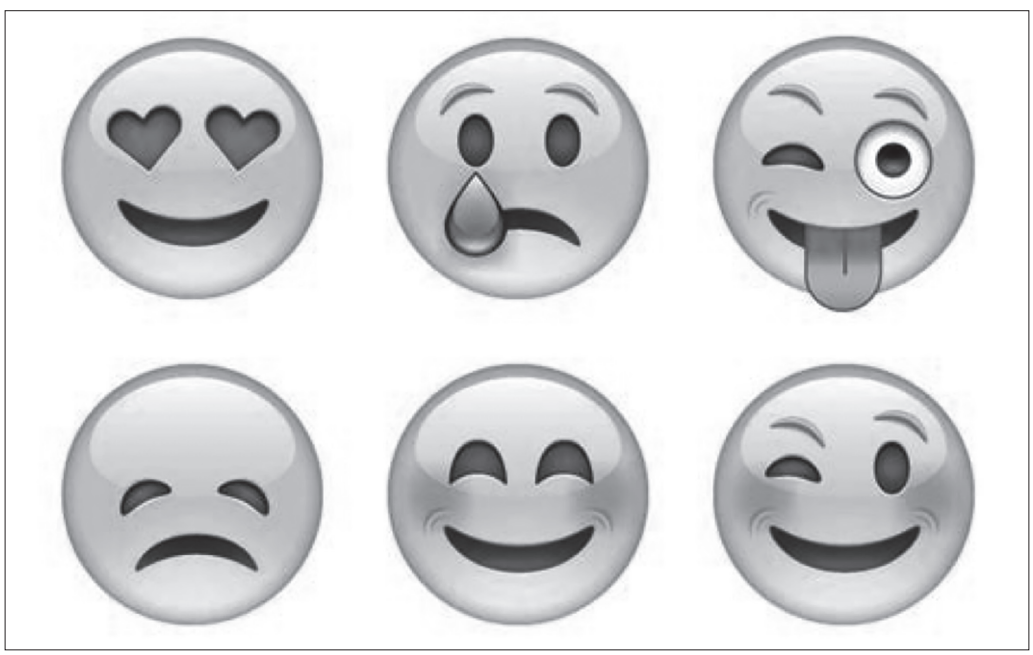
A Recent Language Development – Emojis

Emojis are a new form of communication, pictures that usually appear alongside writing on a screen.

This sequence of activities will ask you to think hard about aspects of the way we use language in writing – grammar, punctuation and semantics (the meaning of words) – through exploring and experimenting with emojis.

Do Emojis Take the Place of Words?

- Look at these emojis. On your own, translate them into words and phrases.
- Now compare with a partner, or in a small group. Did you come up with the same, or similar words and phrases?
- What do your answers suggest about the 'meaning' of emojis and whether they are like words in how they function (what they do)?



EMC © ENGLISH & MEDIA CENTRE, 2018

Are Emojis a Form of Punctuation?

- With a partner read the statements below about why we use punctuation. Read them with a partner and decide which, if any, can be applied to emojis.
- Discuss as a whole class whether or not you think emojis should be classified as a form of punctuation.

A. It can change the meaning of sentences.

B. It indicates pauses and new lines of thought.

C. It hasn't got a meaning in itself, but it can give meaning to the words that it precedes or follows.

D. It shows when something is speech, and when new speakers start speaking.

E. It indicates the tone or mood. For example, an exclamation mark indicates an exclamatory tone, a question mark signals a questioning mood, a series of dots indicates a tailing off of an idea.

F. It separates off parts of a longer, or more complex idea in a single sentence, dividing the main idea (main clause) from the additional idea (subordinate clause), using commas, dashes, colons or semi-colons.

G. It gives choices to the writer, who can use punctuation to stamp their own individual identity on their writing. Not all writers punctuate in the same way. Not all writers use punctuation in the same way in different kinds of texts.

Do Emojis Have Their Own Syntax?

Syntax is the way that words are structured into sentences, in a right order.

- With a partner, read the examples below and discuss which use syntax correctly. In other words, which make sense and why.

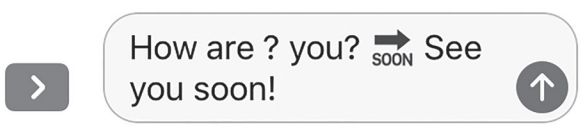
1. An is example here.
2. An example is here.
3. Here is an example.
4. Example is an here.
5. Here example an is.

- Now read the three examples of writing containing emojis on page 79.

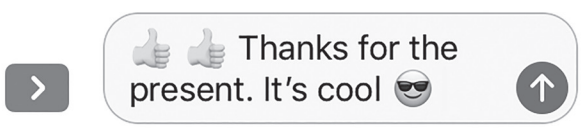
- Discuss your thoughts about the syntax of the writing. Does it appear to be completely correct, partially correct, or wrong? What are your reasons for your answers?

- Discuss as a whole class whether or not emojis have a syntax. You should consider the questions below.
  - If you use more than one emoji, is there a set order and pattern for how they should appear?
  - Should emojis that are combined with writing in a message appear in a particular place? For example, should they appear at the end of writing only, or can they appear anywhere?
  - Should emojis ever appear alongside the word or words they stand for? Or should the words be deleted?
  - Could a new user of emojis get emoji syntax wrong, or is it something you can get right instinctively?

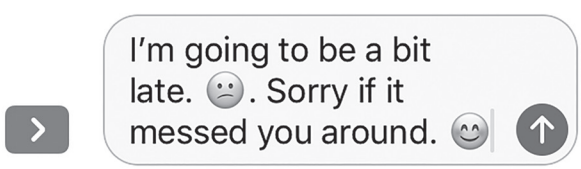
Example 1



Example 2



Example 3



Evolutionary Linguist Task 6

- With your evolutionary linguist hat on, write a paragraph or two about emojis, explaining:
  - What you think about them
  - If and how you use them
  - What you think their future is as a form of communication. For example, will new emojis emerge? Will they become an acceptable part of formal communication? Will you ever be able to use emojis in exams?

EMC © ENGLISH & MEDIA CENTRE, 2018

Experimental Rule Breakers

On pages 81 and 82 are some examples of writing that is experimental and/or breaks rules. The examples suggest that there are always new directions that language can go – that it can always evolve.

- Read them in pairs and discuss how you think they are experimental and/or break rules.

Evolutionary Linguist Task 7

- Write an experimental piece of writing of your own! You can draw on one of the examples you have looked at in this unit of work, or come up with an idea entirely by yourself, or in partnership with someone else.
- Display the experimental pieces in your classroom so that everyone can see what has been created.
- Finish by writing some notes to be displayed next to your experimental piece of writing. The notes should explain what you have done, the effect you have created, and whether or not you think what you have done will play a part in the way language works in the future.

Text 1

'Are you dating at all?'

'□'

'But you're seeing people, I'm sure. Right?'

'□'

'I don't get it. Are you ashamed of the girl? Are you ashamed of me?'

'□'

'??'

From *'A Primer for the Punctuation of Heart Disease' (short story)*, by Jonathan Safran Foer

Text 2

On my naming day when I come 12 I gone front spear and kilt a wyld boar he parbly ben the las wyld pig on the Bundel Downs any how there hadnt ben none for along time befor him nor I aint looking to see none agen. He dint make the groun shake nor nothing like that when he come on to my spear he wernt all that big plus he lookit poorly. He done the reqwyrt he ternt and stood and clatter his teef and made his rush and there we wer then. Him on 1 end of the spear kicking his life out and me on the other end watching him dy. I said, 'Your tern now my tern later.' The other spears gone in then and he wer dead and the steam coming up off him in the rain and we all yelt, 'Offert!'

From *Riddley Walker* (novel), by Russell Hoban

Text 3

He'd put a handful of dried raisins in a cloth in his pocket and at noon they sat in the dead grass by the side of the road and ate them. The boy looked at him. That's all there is, isnt it? he said.

Yes.

Are we going to die now?

No.

What are we going to do?

We're going to drink some water. Then we're going to keep going down the road.

Okay.

From *The Road*, by Cormac McCarthy

EMC © ENGLISH & MEDIA CENTRE, 2018

Text 4

This poem is inspired by John Lennon's song, 'Imagine'. If possible listen to this as a class before, or while reading the poem. The word 'imagine' in the song has been replaced each time it occurs by the word 'emoji'. Other words and phrases have also been replaced – sometimes by other words, sometimes by emojis.

Emoji

Emoji there's no language,
it's easy if you try.
No words to chose from,
it's enough to make you cry. 😢

Emoji all the people 👩👳👦👨👵
living lives like these.

Emoji there's no wording
you're able to employ.
But upon your keyboard
is a face with tears of joy. 😂

Emoji all the people 😊😐😏😕😠
looking like a cheese.

You may say they're annoying
and you're not the only one.
But I hope some day you will use them
and the 🌍 will be as one.

Emoji no expression
quite fits your current mood.
But then amongst the faces
you see one that is you. 😱

Emoji all the people
Living lives like these. 💂👼🕺👶👮

You may say they are reductionist in the way they portray
complex emotions through a trite simplification of the human condition
and you're not the only one.
But I hope some day you will join us
and the 🌍 will be as one.

Brian Bilston 📝