



**GCSE**

**ENGLISH LITERATURE**

**Higher Tier**

**UNIT 2b (Contemporary drama and  
literary heritage prose)**

**Specimen Assessment Materials**

**2 hours**

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### **ADDITIONAL MATERIALS**

Twelve page answer booklet.

### **INSTRUCTIONS TO CANDIDATES**

Answer Question 1 **and** Question 2.

Answer on **one** text in **each** question.

### **INFORMATION FOR CANDIDATES**

The number of marks is given in brackets after each question or part-question.

You are reminded that the accuracy and organisation of your writing will be assessed.

**QUESTION 1**

*Answer questions on **one** text.*

**(a) *The History Boys***

*Answer part (i) and **either** part (ii) **or** part (iii).*

*You are advised to spend about 20 minutes on part (i), and about 40 minutes on part (ii) or part (iii).*

- (i) Read the extract on the opposite page. Then answer the following question:

What does Alan Bennett's presentation of Irwin reveal about his character here? [10]

**Either,**

- (ii) Show how Alan Bennett's presentation of one of the boys creates sympathy for him. [20]

**Or,**

- (iii) How does Alan Bennett present education in *The History Boys*? [20]

*Classroom*

- IRWIN So we arrive eventually at the less-than-startling discovery that so far as the poets are concerned, the First World War gets the thumbs-down.  
We have the mountains of dead on both sides, right . . . ‘hecatombs’, as you all seem to have read somewhere . . .  
Anybody know what it means?
- POSNER ‘Great public sacrifice of many victims, originally of oxen.’
- DAKIN Which, sir, since Wilfred Owen says men were dying like cattle, is the appropriate word.
- IRWIN True, but no need to look so smug about it. What else? Come on, tick them all off.
- CROWTHER Trench warfare.
- LOCKWOOD Barrenness of the strategy.
- TIMMS On both sides.
- AKTHAR Stupidity of the generals.
- TIMMS Donkeys, sir.
- DAKIN Haig particularly.
- POSNER Humiliation of Germany at Versailles. Re-drawing of national borders.
- CROWTHER Ruhr and the Rhineland.
- AKTHAR Mass unemployment. Inflation.
- TIMMS Collapse of the Weimar Republic. Internal disorder. And . . . The Rise of Hitler!
- IRWIN So. Our overall conclusion is that the origins of the Second War lie in the unsatisfactory outcome of the First.
- TIMMS (*doubtfully*) Yes. (*with more certainty*) Yes.  
Others nod.
- IRWIN First class. Bristol welcomes you with open arms. Manchester longs to have you. You can walk into Leeds. But I am a fellow of Magdalen College, Oxford, and I have just read seventy papers all saying the same thing and I am asleep . . .
- SCRIPPS But it’s all true.
- IRWIN What has that got to do with it? What has that got to do with anything?  
Let’s go back to 1914 and I’ll put you a different case.  
Try this for size.  
Germany does not want war and if there is an arms race it is Britain who is leading it. Though there’s no reason why we should want war. Nothing in it for us. Better stand back and let Germany and Russia fight it out while we take the imperial pickings.  
These are facts.  
Why do we not care to acknowledge them? The cattle, the body count. We still don’t like to admit the war was even partly our fault because so many of our people died. A photograph on every mantelpiece. And all this mourning has veiled the truth. It’s not so much lest we forget, as lest we remember. Because you should realise that so far as the Cenotaph and the Last Post and all that stuff is concerned, there’s no better way of forgetting something than by commemorating it.  
And Dakin.
- DAKIN Sir?
- IRWIN You were the one who was morally superior about Haig.
- DAKIN Passchendaele. The Somme. He was a butcher, sir.
- IRWIN Yes, but at least he delivered the goods. No, no the real enemy to Haig’s subsequent reputation was the Unknown Soldier. If Haig had had any sense he’d have had him disinterred and shot all over again for giving comport to the enemy.
- LOCKWOOD So what about the poets, then?
- IRWIN What about them? If you read what they actually say as distinct from what they write, most of them seem to have enjoyed the war.  
Siegfried Sassoon was a good officer. Saint Wilfred Owen couldn’t wait to get back to his company. Both of them surprisingly blood thirsty.  
Poetry is good up to a point. Adds flavour.

**Turn over.**

**(b) Blood Brothers**

Answer part (i) and **either** part (ii) **or** part (iii).

You are advised to spend about 20 minutes on part (i), and about 40 minutes on part (ii) or part (iii).

- (i) Read the extract on the opposite page. Then answer the following question:

Look closely at how the characters speak and behave here. How does it create mood and atmosphere for an audience? [10]

**Either,**

- (ii) How does Willy Russell present the character of Linda to an audience throughout the play? [20]

**Or,**

- (iii) Write about the way the theme of social class is presented in *Blood Brothers*. [20]

EDWARD reaches his home and walks in. His mother hugs him and his father produces a toy gun for him. EDWARD, delighted, seizes it and 'shoots' his father, who spiritedly 'dies' to EDWARD's great amusement. EDWARD and his father romp on the floor. MRS LYONS settles herself in an armchair with a story book, calling EDWARD over to her. EDWARD goes and sits with her, MR LYONS joining them and sitting on the arm of the chair.

MRS JOHNSTONE turns and goes into her house at the end of the song.

MR LYONS gets up and walks towards the door.

EDWARD           Daddy . . . we haven't finished the story yet.

MR LYONS         Mummy will read the story, Edward. I've got to go to work for an hour.

MRS LYONS gets up and goes to her husband, EDWARD goes to the bookshelf and leafs through a dictionary.

MRS LYONS       Richard you didn't say . . .

MR LYONS         Darling, I'm sorry, but if, if we complete this merger I will, I promise you, have more time. That's why we're doing it, Jen, If we complete this, the firm will run itself and I'll have plenty of time to spend with you both.

MRS LYONS       I just – it's not me, it's Edward. You should spend more time with him. I don't want – I don't want him growing away from you.

EDWARD           Daddy, how do you spell bogey man?

MR LYONS         Ask mummy. Darling, I'll see you later now. Must dash.

MR LYONS exits.

EDWARD           Mummy, how do you spell bogey man?

MRS LYONS       Mm?

EDWARD           Bogey man?

MRS LYONS       *(laughing)* Edward, wherever did you hear such a thing?

EDWARD           I'm trying to look it up.

MRS LYONS       There's no such thing as a bogey man. It's a – a superstition. The sort of thing a silly mother might say to her children – 'the bogey man will get you'.

EDWARD           Will he get me?

MRS LYONS       Edward, I've told you, there's no such thing.

*A doorbell is heard.*

MRS LYONS goes to answer the door.

MICKEY           *(off)* Does Eddie live here?

MRS LYONS       *(off)* Pardon?

MICKEY           *(off)* Does he? Is he comin' out to play, eh?

EDWARD           *(shouting)* Mickey!

MICKEY enters pursued by MRS LYONS

MICKEY           Hi-ya, Eddie. I've got our Sammy's catapult. Y' comin' out?

**Turn over.**

**(c) *A View From The Bridge***

Answer part (i) and **either** part (ii) **or** part (iii).

You are advised to spend about 20 minutes on part (i), and about 40 minutes on part (ii) or part (iii).

- (i) Read the extract on the opposite page. Then answer the following question:

With close reference to the extract, show how Arthur Miller creates mood and atmosphere for an audience here. [10]

**Either,**

- (ii) To what extent do you feel sympathy for Eddie Carbone? [20]

**Or,**

- (iii) Show how Arthur Miller presents a range of different emotions in *A View From The Bridge*. [20]

CATHERINE *enters from bedroom.*

CATHERINE Its after three; we're supposed to be there already, Beatrice. The priest won't wait.

BEATRICE Eddie. It's her wedding. There'll be nobody there from her family. For my sister let me go. I'm goin' for my sister.

EDDIE *(as though hurt)* Look, I been arguin' with you all day already, Beatrice, and I said what I'm gonna say. He's gonna come here and apologize to me or nobody from this house is goin' into that church today. Now if that's more to you than I am, then go. But don't come back. You be on my side or on their side, that's all.

CATHERINE *(suddenly)* Who the hell do you think you are?

BEATRICE Sssh!

CATHERINE You got no more right to tell nobody nothin'! Nobody! The rest of your life, nobody!

BEATRICE Shut up, Katie! *(She turns CATHERINE around.)*

CATHERINE You're gonna come with me!

BEATRICE I can't Katie, I can't . . .

CATHERINE How can you listen to him? This rat!

BEATRICE *(shaking CATHERINE)* Don't you call him that!

CATHERINE *(clearing from BEATRICE)* What're you scared of? He's a rat! He belongs in the sewer!

BEATRICE Stop it!

CATHERINE *(weeping)* He bites people when they sleep! He comes when nobody's lookin' and poisons decent people. In the garbage he belongs!

EDDIE *seems about to pick up the table and fling it at her.*

BEATRICE No, Eddie! Eddie! *(To CATHERINE)* Then we all belong in the garbage. You, and me too. Don't say that. Whatever happened we all done it, and don't you ever forget it, Catherine. *(She goes to CATHERINE.)* Now go, go to your wedding, Katie, I'll stay home. Go, God bless you, God bless your children

**(d) *Be My Baby***

Answer part (i) and **either** part (ii) **or** part (iii).

You are advised to spend about 20 minutes on part (i), and about 40 minutes on part (ii) or part (iii).

- (i) Read the extract on the opposite page. Then answer the following question:

With close reference to the extract, show how Amanda Whittington creates mood and atmosphere for an audience here. [10]

**Either,**

- (ii) How does Amanda Whittington present the character of Matron to an audience throughout the play? [20]

**Or,**

- (iii) *Be My Baby* has been described as “intensely touching”. What features of the play may make it touching for an audience, in your opinion? [20]



*Enter* MATRON *and* MRS ADAMS. *Exit* QUEENIE.

- MRS ADAMS Mary?
- MARY Mother.
- MATRON Nearly done?
- MARY Not quite, Matron.
- MRS ADAMS Nearly done.
- MARY How was your journey?
- MRS ADAMS Rather slow.
- MARY Is Father . . .
- MRS ADAMS Glad to hear your Aunt's on the mend.  
MRS ADAMS *gets* MARY's coat *and holds it open for her.*
- MRS ADAMS I've spoken to the bank. You start a new job on Monday.
- MARY This Monday?
- MRS ADAMS City centre branch, no less.
- MARY I liked it where I was.
- MRS ADAMS We've been rather busy since you've been away. Father took the opportunity to decorate your room.
- MARY It was a girl, Mother.  
MARY *puts on her coat.*
- MRS ADAMS Button up, Mary.
- MARY I held her.
- MRS ADAMS You don't want to feel the cold.
- MARY I kept her warm 'til morning.
- MRS ADAMS Come along, Mary. You're a big girl, now.  
MARY *puts the Dansette and records on* QUEENIE's bed.
- MARY For Queenie.
- MATRON I'd rather you took it.
- MARY So she doesn't forget.
- MRS ADAMS The taxi's waiting.
- MARY I'm not ready.
- MRS ADAMS Then let me help you.
- MARY No, Mother. I'll follow you down.
- MATRON Shall I show you out?
- MARY She knows the way.
- MRS ADAMS Mary?
- MATRON It's all right. I'll bring her down.  
*Exit* MRS ADAMS.
- MATRON Well?
- MARY Not really.
- MATRON You will be.
- MARY If you say so.
- MATRON It's over, Mary. Time to go home  
MARY *hands her teddy bear to* MATRON.
- MARY For Lucy. My baby.  
MATRON *takes the teddy bear. Exit* MARY. MATRON *holds the teddy bear as 'Be My Baby' plays to blackout.*  
*The End.*

**Turn over.**

**(e) *My Mother Said I Never Should***

Answer part (i) and **either** part (ii) **or** part (iii).

*You are advised to spend about 20 minutes on part (i), and about 40 minutes on part (ii) or part (iii).*

- (i) Read the extract on the opposite page. Then answer the following question:

What does Charlotte Keatley's presentation of Jackie reveal about her feelings here?

[10]

**Either,**

- (ii) How does Charlotte Keatley present the character of Margaret to an audience in the play? [20]

**Or,**

- (iii) Show how Charlotte Keatley presents changes in women's lives during the 20th century in *My Mother Said I Never Should*. [20]

ROSIE If you were really my mum you wouldn't have been able to give me away!

JACKIE How dare you! *(She goes to hit Rosie but cannot)* You're at the centre of everything I do! *(A slight pause)* Mummy treated me as though I'd simply fallen over and cut my knee, –picked me up and said you'll be all right now, it won't show much. She wanted to make it all better. *(Quietly)* . . . She was the one who wanted it kept secret . . . I WANTED you, Rosie. *(Angrily)* For the first time in my life I took care of myself–refused joints, did exercises went to clinic. *(Pause)* "It's a girl". *(She smiles irresistibly)*– After you'd gone I tried to lose that memory. *(Pause. With effort)* Graham . . . your father. *(Silence)* He couldn't be there the day you were born, he had to be in Liverpool. He was married. *(Emphatically)* He loved me, he loved you, you must believe that! *(Pause)* He said he'd leave his wife, but I knew he wouldn't; there were two children, the youngest was only four . . . we'd agreed, separate lives. I wanted to bring you up. He sent money. *(Pause)* I took you to Lyme Park one day, I saw them together, across the lake, he was buying ice-creams, his wife was taking a photo. I think they live in Leeds now, I saw his name in the Guardian last year, an article about his photographs . . . *(Pause)* It was a very cold winter after you were born. There were power cuts. I couldn't keep the room warm; there were no lights in the tower blocks; I knew he had an open fire, it was trendy; so we took a bus to Didsbury, big gardens, pine kitchens, made a change from concrete. I rang the bell. *(She stops)* A Punjabi man answered, said he was sorry . . . they'd moved. By the time we got back to Hulme it was dark, the lift wasn't working–*(She stops)* That was the night I phoned Mummy. *(With difficulty)* Asked her. *(Pause)* I tried! I couldn't do it, Rosie. *(Pause)* It doesn't matter how much you succeed afterwards, if you've failed once. *(Pause)* After you'd gone . . . I kept waking in the night to feed you . . . A week . . . in the flat . . . Then I went back to art school. Sandra and Hugh thought I was inhuman. I remember the books that come out that winter–how to succeed as a single working mother – fairy-tales! *(Pause)* Sandra and Hugh have a family now. Quite a few of my friends do. *(Pause)* I could give you everything now. Rosie? . . .

*Pause*

ROSIE I used to hate you, only I never knew why. *(She gestures)* Sit down on the swing. I'm going to Oldham, to live with Gran – Great-Gran. Dad says I can.

*Jackie hesitates*

JACKIE I'm frightened.

**QUESTION 2**

*Answer questions on **one** text.*

**(a) *Silas Marner***

*Answer part (i) and **either** part (ii) **or** part (iii).*

*You are advised to spend about 20 minutes on part (i), and about 40 minutes on part (ii) or part (iii).*

- (i) Read the extract on the opposite page. Then answer the following question:

With close reference to the extract, show how George Eliot creates mood and atmosphere here. [10]

**Either,**

- (ii) How is the relationship between Nancy and Godfrey presented in the novel? Remember to support your answer with reference to the novel and to comment on its social, cultural and historical context. [20]

**Or,**

- (iii) How is the community of Lantern Yard important to the novel as a whole? Remember to support your answer with reference to the novel and to comment on its social, cultural and historical context. [20]

No child was afraid of approaching Silas when Eppie was near him: there was no repulsion around him now, either for young or old; for the little child had come to link him once more with the whole world. There was love between him and the child that blent them into one, and there was love between the child and the world—from men and women with parental looks and tones, to the red lady-birds and the round pebbles.

Silas began now to think of Raveloe life entirely in relation to Eppie: she must have everything that was a good in Raveloe; and he listened docilely, that he might come to understand better what this life was, from which, for fifteen years, he had stood aloof as from a strange thing, with which he could have no communion: as some man who has a precious plant to which he could give a nurturing home in a new soil, thinks of the rain and sunshine, and all influences, in relation to his nursling, and asks industriously for all knowledge that will help him to satisfy the wants of the searching roots, or to guard leaf and bud from invading harm. The disposition to hoard had been utterly crushed at the very first by the loss of his long-stored gold: the coins he earned afterwards seemed as irrelevant as stones brought to complete a house suddenly buried by an earthquake; the sense of bereavement was too heavy upon him for the old thrill of satisfaction to arise again at the touch of the newly-earned coin. And now something had come to replace his hoard which gave a growing purpose to the earnings, drawing his hope and joy continually onward beyond the money.

In old days there were angels who came and took men by the hand and led them away from the city of destruction. We see no white-winged angels now. But yet men are led away from threatening destruction: a hand is put into theirs, which leads them forth gently towards a calm and bright land, so that they look no more backward; and the hand may be a little child's.

**(b) *Pride and Prejudice***

Answer part (i) and **either** part (ii) **or** part (iii).

You are advised to spend about 20 minutes on part (i), and about 40 minutes on part (ii) or part (iii).

- (i) Read the extract on the opposite page. Then answer the following question:

Look closely at how Jane Austen presents the character of Mr. Darcy here. How does it influence the reader's attitude towards him? [10]

**Either,**

- (ii) How does Jane Austen's presentation of Mr Bennet's relationships with his daughters reflect the society in which they live? [20]

**Or,**

- (iii) How does Jane Austen present the theme of marriage in *Pride and Prejudice*? Remember to support your answer with reference to the novel and to comment on its social, cultural and historical context. [20]

Mr. Bingley had soon made himself acquainted with all the principal people in the room; he was lively and unreserved, danced every dance, was angry that the ball closed so early, and talked of giving one himself at Netherfield. Such amiable qualities must speak for themselves. What a contrast between him and his friend! Mr. Darcy danced only once with Mrs. Hurst and once with Miss Bingley, declined being introduced to any other lady, and spend the rest of the evening in walking about the room, speaking occasionally to one of his own party. His character was decided. He was the proudest, most disagreeable man in the world, and everybody hoped that he would never come there again. Amongst the most violent against him was Mrs. Bennet, whose dislike of his general behaviour, was sharpened into particular resentment, by his having slighted one of her daughters.

Elizabeth Bennet had been obliged, by the scarcity of gentlemen, to sit down for two dances; and during part of that time, Mr. Darcy had been standing near enough for her to overhear a conversation between him and Mr. Bingley, who came from the dance for a few minutes, to press his friend to join it.

‘Come, Darcy.’ said he, ‘I must have you dance. I hate to see you standing about by yourself in this stupid manner. You had much better dance.’

‘I certainly shall not. You know how I detest it, unless I am particularly acquainted with my partner. At such an assembly as this, it would be insupportable. Your sisters are engaged, and there is not another woman in the room, whom it would not be a punishment to me to stand up with.’

‘I would not be so fastidious as you are,’ cried Bingley, ‘for a kingdom! Upon my honour, I never met with so many pleasant girls in my life, as I have this evening; and there are several of them you see uncommonly pretty.’

‘*You* are dancing with the only handsome girl in the room,’ said Mr. Darcy, looking at the eldest Miss Bennet.

‘Oh! she is the most beautiful creature I ever beheld! But there is one of her sisters sitting down just behind you, who is very pretty, and I dare say, very agreeable. Do let me ask my partner to introduce you.’

‘Which do you mean?’ and turning round, he looked for a moment at Elizabeth, till catching her eye, he withdrew his own and coldly said, ‘She is tolerable; but not handsome enough to tempt *me*; and I am in no humour at present to give consequence to young ladies who are slighted by other men. You had better return to your partner and enjoy her smiles, for you are wasting your time with me.’

Mr Bingley followed his advice. Mr. Darcy walked off; and Elizabeth remained with no very cordial feelings towards him.

**(c) *A Christmas Carol***

Answer part (i) and **either** part (ii) **or** part (iii).

You are advised to spend about 20 minutes on part (i), and about 40 minutes on part (ii) or part (iii).

- (i) Read the extract on the opposite page. Then answer the following question:

With close reference to the extract, show how Charles Dickens creates mood and atmosphere here. [10]

**Either,**

- (ii) Show how Charles Dickens presents the hardships of life in 19th century London in *A Christmas Carol*. [20]

**Or,**

- (iii) How does Charles Dickens present Scrooge's changing character in *A Christmas Carol*? Remember to support your answer with reference to the novel and to comment on its social, cultural and historical context. [20]



Meanwhile the fog and darkness thickened so, that people ran about with flaring links, proffering their services to go before horses in carriages, and conduct them on their way. The ancient tower of a church, whose gruff old bell was always peeping slyly down at Scrooge out of a gothic window in the wall, became invisible, and struck the hours and quarters in the clouds, with tremulous vibrations afterwards as if its teeth were chattering in its frozen head up there. The cold became intense. In the main street, at the corner of the court, some labourers were repairing the gas-pipes, and had lighted a great fire in a brazier, round which a party of ragged men and boys were gathered: warming their hands and winking their eyes before the blaze in rapture. The water-plug being left in solitude, its overflowing sullenly congealed, and turned to misanthropic ice. The brightness of the shops where holly sprigs and berries crackled in the lamp heat of the windows, made pale faces ruddy as they passed. Poulterers' and grocers' trades became a splendid joke: a glorious pageant, with which it was next to impossible to believe that such dull principles as bargain and sale had anything to do. The Lord Mayor, in the strong-hold of the might Mansion House, gave orders to his fifty cooks and butlers to keep Christmas as a Lord Mayor's household should; and even the little tailor, whom he had fined five shillings on the previous Monday for being drunk and blood-thirsty in the streets, stirred up to-morrow's pudding in his garret, while his lean wife and the baby sallied out to buy the beef.

Foggier yet, and colder. Piercing, searching, biting cold.

**(d) *Lord of the Flies***

Answer part (i) and **either** part (ii) **or** part (iii).

*You are advised to spend about 20 minutes on part (i), and about 40 minutes on part (ii) or part (iii).*

- (i) Read the extract on the opposite page. Then answer the following question:

With close reference to the extract, show how William Golding creates mood and atmosphere here. [10]

**Either,**

- (ii) Write about the presentation of Jack in *Lord of the Flies*. Remember to support your answer with reference to the novel and to comment on its social, cultural and historical context. [20]

**Or,**

- (iii) It has been said that William Golding “knew exactly what boys of his time were like”. To what extent do you agree? [20]

The officer turned back to Ralph.

“We’ll take you off. How many of you are there?”

Ralph shook his head. The officer looked past him to the group of painted boys.

“Who’s boss here?”

“I am,” said Ralph loudly.

A little boy who wore the remains of an extraordinary black cap on his red hair and who carried the remains of a pair of spectacles at his waist, started forward, then changed his mind and stood still.

“We saw your smoke. and you don’t know how many of you there are?”

“No, sir.”

“I should have thought,” said the officer as he visualized the search before him, “I should have thought that a pack of British boys—you’re all British aren’t you?—would have been able to put up a better show than that—I mean—”

“It was like that at first,” said Ralph, “before things—”

He stopped.

“We were together then—”

The officer nodded helpfully.

“I know. Jolly good show. Like the Coral Island.”

Ralph looked at him dumbly. For a moment he had a fleeting picture of the strange glamour that had once invested the beaches. But the island was scorched up like dead wood—Simon was dead—and Jack had . . . The tears began to flow and sobs shook him. He gave himself up to them now for the first time on the island; great, shuddering spasms of grief that seemed to wrench his whole body. His voice rose under the black smoke before the burning wreckage of the island; and infected by that emotion, the other little boys began to shake and sob too. And in the middle of the, with filthy body, matted hair, and unwiped nose, Ralph wept for the end of innocence, the darkness of man’s heart, and the fall through the air of the true, wise friend called Piggy.

The officer, surrounded by these noises, was moved and a little embarrassed. He turned away to give them time to pull themselves together; and waited, allowing his eyes to rest on the trim cruiser in the distance.

(e) *Ash on a Young Man's Sleeve*

Answer part (i) and **either** part (ii) **or** part (iii).

You are advised to spend about 20 minutes on part (i), and about 40 minutes on part (ii) or part (iii).

- (i) Read the extract on the opposite page. Then answer the following question:

With close reference to the extract, show how Dannie Abse creates mood and atmosphere here. [10]

**Either,**

- (ii) How does Dannie Abse present his mother's relationship with her sons as they grew up in Cardiff in the 1930s and 1940s? [20]

**Or,**

- (iii) "A funny, sad, story." To what extent do you agree with this description of *Ash on a Young Man's Sleeve*? Remember to support your answer with reference to the text and to comment on its social, cultural and historical context. [20]

June the first was our agreement, our day of peace. It came in that year with all sunshine and the windows open and the neighbours' radio. It was tennis-players and the yellow seasick trams grinding down Cathedral Road. It was the end of a school day where we left our carved initials, hurt and momentous, in the wooden desk, and school teacher (old Knobble-knees) rubbing off chalk from the blackboard like a nasty day from the calendar. 'Mind how you cross the road,' she said. 'Please, Miss Morgan,' asked Philip, 'can I have my yo-yo back? I won't talk again during lessons.'

Keith had asked me to his house for tea, for it was our day of peace, an interlude in our constant campaign of being mean to each other, of masterful vilification. We walked hardly together for we were enemies. Suddenly Keith said, 'There'll be bananas and cream, so you can leave as soon as you've eaten 'em.' 'I like bananas and cream,' I said. Other people's houses have a strange smell. Keith Thomas's home was no exception and I was sniffing. 'What's the matter?' Keith's mother asked. 'Is there something burning?' I went very red when the others sniffed. They just stood there, Keith and his mother, heads cocked, drawing air through their nostrils. 'I can't smell anything,' she said. I could. Perhaps it was the odour of sin or the past remains of previous tenants. I ate bread and butter and jam and Welsh cakes, and Keith sniffed and sniffed louder and louder, quite ostentatiously I can tell you. 'Blow your nose, Keith,' said his mother. I tipped the tea over the tablecloth and grew redder . . .

This was all a long time ago: I was ten years high and I lived in South Wales. There everything was different, more alive somehow.

