

About a Boy

Weaker Learner Support Pack for
GCSE CCEA English Literature

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Teacher's Introduction

I hope you enjoy teaching *About a Boy* with this resource for GCSE CCEA English Literature **Unit 1: The Study of Prose, Section A: Novel**. The pack is designed specifically to support weaker learners by pitching the tasks at a level they will find accessible. As *About a Boy* is currently a set text for the CCEA English Literature specification, this resource includes cross references to the CCEA assessment objectives, which are AO1 and AO2.

The plot summary has been written as if spoken directly to the reader by the main character, Marcus. This will hopefully create an understanding of Marcus' point of view and will make the learner feel as though they are being invited into the novel.

In the section 'Before Reading the Novel', learners will focus on the themes of bullying and being cool as these are major issues for the main characters Will and Marcus. There is also an exercise on narrative point of view. This is particularly valuable as the novel has dual first-person narration which could be daunting for some pupils.

I have included a table to help learners to understand what the Assessment Objectives are and how they translate into terms they will understand. It is always vital that learners are aware of what they will gain from a piece of learning as this makes them attach value to it.

For teachers, there is a table included in the Teacher's Notes section which categorises each activity and advises about which of the AOs it covers. This can be helpful for completing department pro formas and report writing. The Teacher's Notes section also explains each activity in detail.

The format of the pack is that it can be studied as a whole or used to dip in and out of. Each 'Main Event' section has been arranged to begin with a fully written-out extract from the novel. Questions then follow to prompt responses in terms of understanding, analysis and evaluation. If your group of learners struggles with writing, then these questions can be used as the basis for discussion.

There are then activities which tie in with the extract. These cover creative and imaginative writing, character work and language skills. Full descriptions of each individual task are contained within the Teacher's Notes section.

One extract deals in detail with the attempted suicide of one of the characters. Please only use this section if you are aware that your pupils have no issues around suicide. While removing this section will avoid direct exposure to the detailed account of the subject, I would urge caution when teaching the rest of the novel as it is mentioned throughout the story.

There are specific sections on novel structure, language and character. These are very useful if an essay is being planned on the novel as they can be discussed critically.

There is a quiz on the terminology used in the novel, which is a fun way of keeping learners engaged while they study the technical aspects. A second quiz on what happens in the story is also included.

Finally, there is a mind map of the novel which can help visual learners when they come to review at the end of their study.

I hope you find this pack useful and enjoy the topic.

February 2018

Publisher's Note

Extracts from the novel have been included with permission from Penguin.

Remember!

Always check the exam board website for new information, including changes to the specification and sample assessment material.

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Exam Information

This pack is intended for students studying *About a Boy* for GCSE CCEA English Literature, examined as part of Unit 1 – The Study of Prose. The table below gives more detail about the assessment objectives that are assessed.

Literature Unit	Assessment Objectives
Unit 1: The Study of Prose Section A: Novel Students have one hour to answer from a choice of two essay questions. This is a closed book exam.	AO1: Respond to texts and ideas <i>select and evaluate relevant material and support judgements</i> AO2: Explain how language and form contribute to writers' meanings <i>analyse the language and form of texts and evaluate their effectiveness</i>

Please note that context is not assessed in this exam; therefore, the activities in this pack do not cover the novel's social, historical and cultural background.

Language Notes

About a Boy can be used as a text for Controlled Assessment tasks in GCSE English Literature. It was written to meet the requirements for English Literature, although English Language also explores:

- reading and understanding texts
- developing interpretations of writers' ideas and perspectives
- evaluation of linguistic, structural and presentational features to achieve effective communication

Assessment details:

- Unit 3, Task 2: The Study of Written Language
- Controlled Assessment: one task from the task bank. Any Literature text is suitable.

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Activities and the CCEA English Literature Assessment

Section	Activity	
Before Reading the Novel	Activity 1	
	Activity 2	
	Activity 3	
Main Event 1 – Will Forms his Plan	Activity 1	
	Activity 2	
	Activity 3	
	Activity 4	
Main Event 2 – Will Joins SPAT	Activity 1	
	Activity 2	
	Activity 3	
	Activity 4	
Main Event 3 – Fiona’s Suicide Attempt	Activity 1	
	Activity 2	
	Activity 3	
	Activity 4	
Main Event 4 – Marcus Calls Will	Activity 1	
	Activity 2	
	Activity 3	
	Activity 4	
Main Event 5 – Marcus Talks about Bullying	Activity 1	
	Activity 2	
	Activity 3	
	Activity 4	
Character	Activity 1	
	Activity 2	
	Activity 3	
	Activity 4	
Main Theme	Activity 1	
	Activity 2	
	Activity 3	
	Activity 4	
Exploring Form and Structure	Activity 1	
	Activity 2	
	Activity 3	
Language	Activity 1	
	Activity 2	
	Activity 3	
	Activity 4	
	Activity 5	

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Student Assessment Objectives

Assessment Objective	What it means
<p>AO1</p> <p>Respond to texts critically and imaginatively; select and evaluate relevant textual detail to illustrate and support interpretations.</p>	<p>This is much simpler than it sounds. It's about coming up with your own ideas about the text and being able to back them up with evidence from the text. This means that, when you write, you need to use quotes to prove the points you make. You need to find the evidence somewhere in the text. This is about the text, not the writer. You need to do well in this AO.</p>
<p>AO2</p> <p>Explain how language, structure and form contribute to writers' presentation of ideas, themes and settings.</p>	<p>This one is a little bit more difficult. It's about the methods that writers use to present their ideas. You need to explain how they use language, structure and form to communicate their ideas. We'll look at language, themes and settings in the next pack, so don't worry about these means just yet.</p>

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Teacher's Notes

Before Reading the Novel

Activity 1

This task uses brainstorming techniques to get the pupils thinking about the theme of the novel. It uses discussion and selection skills to choose the best words to make an anti-bullying poster.

Activity 2

Here, the focus is on sourcing. Pupils have to select pictures that best represent the theme of the novel. Pictures as a method of communication rather than writing can help weaker learners overcome difficulties they may have.

Activity 3

This piece of work is designed to provide a clear understanding of narrative viewpoint and construction in that it is told by two characters in alternate chapters. If the pupils know who tells a story before reading, then it will make sense to them from the outset.

Character

Activity 1

This task examines a scene in which we have a close look at the characters of Marcus and Ellie when Ellie has just smashed a shop window and has pulled out Kurt Cobain's card. The scene can be discussed and then the answers written.

Activity 2

Pupils for this task get to be newspaper reporters. This can be a simple activity or more complex depending on time frame and resources. The objective is that they should be able to write an article that would say if they were interviewed by a journalist. To do this, they will have to think about each character they choose to include in the article.

Also in the pack is a template to give pupils a model of what the article should look like. There are some real newspaper articles to help them identify certain features, such as headlines and sub-headlines.

Activity 3

This activity is also good fun, yet gets pupils thinking about what would make each character happy. Imagine that Marcus (or any other character) finds a genie in a bottle who offers to grant him three wishes.

The wishes should be written down and put in a blank envelope or box and then displayed on a wall display. There is a template provided for the wishes.

Activity 4

The student should learn how to support their own statements with proof from the text. This is a key skill to do this.

Main Event 1 – Will Forms his Plan

Activity 1

This extract comes from the point where Will is trying to impress his new girlfriend. It shows how good with kids he would be successful in dating single mothers. This is a key skill in joining SPAT, meeting Suzie, and as a result finding Marcus. It is also useful in giving a clear picture of the character.

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Activity 2

This task looks at the author's craft and lets the learners have a go at creating a text sketch. They have to let their character have a conversation but be thinking something at the same time. Spend some time discussing this and asking them to think of examples. For example talking to a baby but thinking about where they are going for tea. A full explanation of the task as well.

Activity 3

Here the focus is on vocabulary as the learners are asked to write sentences including challenging words in the extract. This develops their language skills and helps them to understand the context or use a dictionary.

Activity 4

In this discussion task, learners are asked to talk about what would happen if Angelina had her conversation. This is a fun task where they can decide whether she would still play it cool and trick him into babysitting on his own perhaps.

**Main Event 2 – Will Joins SPAT****Activity 1**

This extract looks at how Will feels as he approaches his first meeting of the single parents. The descriptions here, as well as insights into Will's personality.

Activity 2

Here the learners will study onomatopoeia. They have an explanation and then a list of words that contain sound-effect words. You can prepare this for longer beforehand if required. This requires no previous knowledge.

Activity 3

This task follows on from Activity 2, as now learners make up their own sentences using the words. You can encourage them as far as their ability allows.

Activity 4

This task asks learners to use their imagination and become a friend of Will. They write speech bubbles where he reveals that he has joined SPAT and has pretended to be a single parent. Learners must decide how they will respond and then write the conversation.

**Main Event 3 – Fiona's Suicide Attempt****Activity 1**

This extract looks at the point where Marcus, Will and Suzie come home to find Fiona. The questions focus on how the author creates a serious tone and how he shows us this.

Activity 2

This activity asks the learner to think about a time they have had a shock and to write about it. You should encourage them not to write about anything too personal but to think about general ones.

Activity 3

After having written about a shock, the learners may have found many describing words. You can encourage them to use adjectives to describe how Marcus feels following his shock. These can be written down.

Activity 4

Here, the learners use their evaluation skills to think about how they feel about the story. There are no right or wrong answers here, but learners should be encouraged to think about their own feelings.

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Main Event 4 – Marcus Calls Will

Activity 1

This extract and questions look at the first time Marcus and Will have a conversation with dialogue and helps learners to see the format of conversation within a novel where Marcus puts his plan of extending his family into action.

Activity 2

Sarcasm is sometimes difficult to understand. Here, the learners have a mini project and to find examples of it. They then bring their findings to a group discussion. This can be developed as you choose.

Activity 3

This task looks at conditional thinking. Learners have to come up with creative conditional sentences already started. This can be a fun task and they can come up with some ideas.

Activity 4

As sarcasm is usually associated with tone, this task asks learners to practise how to use tone, even though the words stay the same. They have to deliver each line of dialogue in their tone. This is a useful learning point as they will remember it if they almost always have to be first understood.

Main Event 5 – Marcus Talks about Bullying

Activity 1

This extract is a key scene because it is the point in the story when Will realises what he can do. The questions are designed to consolidate understanding of the scene in groups or (which is recommended) as a written task.

Activity 2

Here, pupils can use their imaginations to write a short story about something that happens to Marcus. This helps them to explore the feelings around change and really understand how Marcus felt. They can also write a letter to Marcus telling him how they would help him. Some ideas have been given which can be used or pupils can come up with a suggestion of their own.

Activity 3

By taking time here to think about why this scene matters, pupils are learning to think about the rest of the story as a whole. Thinking time can be lost sometimes, so here pupils can think about this scene before discussing with their group. Weaker learners can often gain more from listening rather than by writing.

Activity 4

This activity focuses on a definition. Pupils are asked to use a dictionary to look up the word 'sarcasm'. This can be a useful exercise in learning about dictionaries.

Once they have the definition and understand it, they should think up a small scene using sarcasm. This will consolidate learning and help them to learn about dialogue. We can use this for this task as they could use peer support for the dictionary part of the task and then act out their scene with their partner.

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Main Theme – Growing Up

Activity 1

This activity looks at the theme of growing up from an unusual angle. It asks pupils what characters would react if they could swap places for a day.

This will make pupils focus on what it is that the two characters have in their personalities; how much they enjoy being childish, even more so than he already is; and how much would Marcus want to be of his own and be above the petty school bullies?

This is also a good lesson in structure, as the pupils will have to work through a day from morning till night.

Activity 2

This extract has been chosen to focus on how Will has never really grown up. The extract can be used to consolidate understanding and can be used in discussion groups or (which is recommended).

Activity 3

In this activity, pupils are asked to think outside the box and imagine that Marcus is being allowed to grow up to *The Jeremy Kyle Show*. This is using a touch of poetic licence as an exercise. They should think about what Marcus would say to his Mum about not growing up, about what he wears, his haircuts, etc. They can then plan what Fiona would say to him as a script can be useful, as it provides a chance to act out the scene they have created. This will benefit from this as it can be an out-of-seat task.

Activity 4

This is a quick task which asks pupils to look at adjectives which describe Will's relationship with his family. It should be spent beforehand revising what an adjective is so that all learners are on an even footing.

Exploring Form and Structure

Activity 1

This novel has an unusual form in that two characters narrate in the first person. Pupils should look at two passages to examine the first-person view from both Will and Marcus. The passages are answered in writing but, first and foremost, should be used as discussion points.

Activity 2

Differences and similarities between the two passages, and therefore between the characters, should be highlighted. Comparing passages is a useful skill to develop at this stage.

Activity 3

In this task, pupils get to try making a train of thought. This is a natural everyday activity which they may not have stopped to consider before. They will enjoy noticing how one thought leads to another then another and so on. This is another activity which can be carried out with weaker learners.

Language

Activity 1

This extract allows pupils to examine language features and punctuation. Reading aloud would be a great benefit here, as in doing so pupils will be able to hear where sentence boundaries and pauses are placed. You could also read the passage omitting all punctuation, which would highlight the importance of punctuation.

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Activity 2

Here, pupils can examine sentence structure and learn how it can be varied to reflect character. This is then useful in helping them to see the sentence structure used in the text analysed.

Activity 3

This task explains imagery by looking at metaphor and simile. The pupils then have to identify these language features which will help them to appreciate figurative language in the text.

Activity 4

Following on from learning about language features, the pupils can consolidate their understanding by writing a description from Marcus' point of view of his first visit to Rachel's house. Help them by asking them to think about what Marcus saw, heard, thought and felt. They should use as many similes and metaphors as possible in their descriptions.

Activity 5

This is a recap exercise which asks pupils to think about language feature definitions and examples.

**End of Study Activities****Mind Map**

This mind map can be enhanced by students including quotations from the text to support their points, and to add other content to it as necessary so that they have a tidy record of their learning.

Terminology Card Game

The cards are dealt out and then players take turns at putting a card down in the correct category. If two cards that are the same appear, the first person to put their hand on the cards and say the word correctly wins them. However, as an extra challenge, in order to be able to keep the cards the person must also provide some information about the word on the card. If they cannot do this, the cards go back to the top of the pile and play continues. The winner is the last player left when all the others have no cards left.

Quiz

This is designed to be a fun comprehension exercise. Answers have been provided for each question.

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About a Boy: What is the Book About?

My name is Marcus Brewer and I am 12 years old. Life has not been easy for me since my mum and dad split up and I went from having a normal life in Cambridge to having a world turned upside down when we moved to London. This is my story.

Chapter 1

It all really began when Mum and her boyfriend Roger split up. Mum was not just a bit upset; I mean really sad. She cried and I did nothing I could do to cheer her up.

Chapter 7

The last thing I could do would be to tell her that I was at school for being... erm... well, I suppose I was different. My shoes were sensible and I sang with my eyes closed, which was least expected. So, I kept it to myself and tried to fit in.

Chapter 9

Mum's friend Suzie took me on an outing with her son. There we met a guy called Will, who was with Suzie because he was boring so I threw bread at the ducks and accidentally got mixed up for me with the park-keeper and kept me out of the park that for me before.

Chapter 9

Arriving home that day was the worst time of my life. Mum was unconscious. She had taken an overdose and tried to kill herself. Emotions flooded over me – angry, sad, scared. But the worst part out of my mind was that if mum died, I'd have no one. No more folk around me and I set out to make it happen.

Chapter 13

My first job was to get Mum and Will together. He said he didn't know anyone else who would do. Will wanted to take care of Mum but I asked if she could come. I tried to get them to go but they didn't. Will came round to our house too but then he left.

Chapter 14

Then I discovered that Will had been pretending to be a part of the single-parent group and chat up the mother. I told him and told him that I knew but I wouldn't tell Mum. Mum didn't work either, but Will let me watch *Countdown* every night about school so I kept going to visit him every afternoon. I knew what to expect when I went home so it was good.

Chapter 16

Will became my friend and helped me with what to do. He told me how not to stand out from the crowd. He let me listen to music. I became friends with Ellie, who was a huge Kurt Cobain fan.

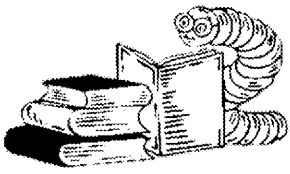
Chapter 19

Mum got a little better but then the crying started again. I tried to talk to her and to talk to me. I also had Ellie to talk to this time and my dad had realised I was not alone. I finally realised that my world had grown. I had Will and Ellie. I knew I would now never be alone.

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Before Reading the Novel

Activity 1: What is Bullying?

1. Write down five words you would associate with bullying. For example, 'fear'
 1.
 2.
 3.
 4.
 5.
2. Discuss each one in groups of three and think about how it relates to bullying
3. Now write down up to five more words and discuss them.
 1.
 2.
 3.
 4.
 5.
4. Design an anti-bullying poster using the first five words which tries to persuade

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Activity 2: What Makes Someone 'Cool'?

In this novel, Marcus is bullied for not being cool, and Will thinks he is cool but is

1. Look through newspapers or magazines and cut out three pictures which you
2. Stick each picture on a piece of A4 paper and write down why you chose it.
3. Show your 'cool cards' to your group and read out what you have written.

Activity 3: First Person / Third Person

Some stories are told in first-person narration, which means that the character speaks to the reader. For example: 'I ran all the way home bursting to tell someone my news'.
third-person narration, which is when the author speaks to the reader and tells them. For example: 'she ran all the way home, bursting to tell someone her news'.

Decide whether these sentences are written in first-person narration or third-person narration. Write 'first' or 'third' in the blank space.

1. Amy shivered at the thought of spending the night in the castle.
2. I remembered what he had told me but it was too late.
3. *Whenever I saw the stars twinkling in the sky, I made a special wish.*
4. As he ran down the stairs, Ben thought he would never catch his bus.

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Main Event 1 – Will Forms his Plan

Activity 1: Reading

Study the following extract and discuss/write down the answers.

Right. Good at what? What was he good at? This was the million-dollar question he had never been able to answer about anything. Maybe he would be good at it, though he hated them and everyone responsible for bringing them into the world. He had written John and Christine and baby Imogen off too hastily. Maybe this was his chance.

‘I don’t know. Good at kids’ things. Messing about things’.

He must be surely. Everyone was, weren’t they? Maybe he should have thought of it all the time. Maybe this was a turning point in his life!

It had to be said that Angie’s beauty was not irrelevant to his decision to have children. The long blond hair, he now knew, was accompanied by a calm face, blue eyes and extraordinarily sexy crow’s feet – she was beautiful in a very Christie-type way. And that was the point. When had he ever been out with a woman that looked like Julie Christie? People who looked like Julie Christie didn’t go out with people like him. They went out with other film stars, or peers of the realm, or Formula One drivers. What was happening here? He decided that [...] children served as a symbolic blemish, like a birthmark or obesity, which gave him a chance where previously there would have been none. Maybe children *democratized* beautiful single women.

1. How do we know in the first sentence that Will is bluffing?

.....

.....

.....

2. What does the phrase ‘million-dollar question’ mean?

.....

.....

3. Why do you think Will keeps repeating the word ‘maybe’?

.....

.....

.....

4. How did Angie’s looks help him to rethink his attitude towards children?

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5. From reading this passage, what do you think Julie Christie looked like? You can figure this out, even if you don't know who she is.

.....

.....

6. Can you find a simile (using 'like' or 'as' to compare) which Will uses to describe the children of single mothers?

.....

.....

7. Why do you think the word 'democratized' is in italics? Can you figure out why? If not, you can use a dictionary to help.

.....

.....

8. Which word in the final paragraph makes Will sound as though he is planning?

.....

9. What does this word tell us about his planned actions? Are they honest?

.....

.....

.....

10. What does Will's plan tell us about him as a person?

.....

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Activity 2: Writing

Read p. 19, where Will has his inspiration about dating single mothers. He is having his own head while listening to Angie.

Your task is to write a short scene where two people are having a conversation but one is concentrating and is thinking about something else.

Before you begin, think about who the two people are, why they are together, what is going through the mind of one of them.


Here is an example:

John agreed by nodding as his boss explained about the invoice rerun department to have to copy all the invoices by hand but what if he was? Surely his job could be done by someone else. Anybody could find out and call them together to tell them. It was far from rocket science. There was no rocket science in this. He had had enough.

'Yes, yes, they won't like it but I'll call a meeting first thing tomorrow and I'll try to sound as enthusiastic as possible but he wasn't even sure he'd be able to do it.'


Activity 3: Language

Below are some of the more unusual words and phrases from the extract. Use them in your writing. If you are unsure, use a dictionary to help you.

 **wholesome**


.....

.....

 **symbolic**


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.....

 **feminist**

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 **sympathetically**

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strategy

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responsible

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hastily

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irrelevant

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Activity 4: Discussion

Imagine that Angie was a mind reader. Discuss what her reaction would be to Wilf's mothers. Please do not swear!

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Main Event 2 – Will Joins SPAT

Activity 1: Reading

Read the extract and discuss/write the answers to the questions.

SPAT (Single Parents – Alone Together) met on the first Thursday of the month at the education centre, and tonight was Will's first time. He was almost sure he'd done it the last time too: he'd get something wrong, like the name of Postman Pat's dog, or Noddy's car (or, more crucially, the name of his own child – for some reason he'd been thinking of him as Ted, and he had only christened him Ned this morning). He'd been a fraud and frogmarched off the premises. If there was a chance of meeting his wife, however, it had to be worth a try.

The car park at the centre contained just one other vehicle, a beaten-up hatchback. According to the stickers in its window, it had been to Chessington World of Adventures, and the Towers; Will's car, a new GTi, hadn't been anywhere like that at all. Will wondered of any reason why not, apart from the glaringly obvious one, that he was a bit older, aged thirty-six and therefore had never had the desire to drive miles or park in a plastic fairy mountain on a tea-tray.

The centre depressed him. He hadn't set foot inside a place with class since he was a home-made posters for nearly twenty years, and he had forgotten that the place was disinfected. It hadn't occurred to him that he wouldn't be able to find the place. He thought he'd be led straight to it by the happy buzz of people forgetting to be getting roaring drunk, but there was no happy buzz, just the distant, mechanical hum. Finally he spotted a piece of file paper pinned to a classroom door with a name scrawled on it in felt-tip pen. The exclamation mark put him off. It was a mistake.

There was only one woman in the room. She was taking bottles – of water and supermarket-brand cola – out of a cardboard box and putting them on the centre of the room. The rest of the tables had been pushed to the back and were stacked in rows behind them. It was the most desolate party venue Will had ever seen.

1. What was Will afraid of getting wrong at the SPAT meeting?

.....

2. Why do you think he was afraid of this?

.....

.....

3. Why did he go even though he was nervous?

.....

.....

.....

4. Why did Will's car look out of place in the car park?

.....

.....

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5. How can we tell the way Will felt about school when he was younger from what he wrote about the community centre?

.....

.....

.....

6. What does the word 'desolate' mean when Will uses it to describe the venue in the dictionary.

.....

.....

7. What does the word 'scrawled' tell you about the way the word SPAT was written?

.....

.....

8. What did Will mean when he said the exclamation mark was 'trying too hard'?

.....

.....

Activity 2: Language

'but there was no happy buzz, just the distant, mournful clank'

Sound Effects

Describing sounds can be a bit tricky. Here the author uses onomatopoeia to create a sound effect. This happens because the word 'clanked' itself sounds like something metal banging into something else. The word 'buzz' usually creates the idea of background noise, but here there is none, which leaves only the silence which is only broken by the buck.

Can you identify which of the following sentences contain an example of onomatopoeia? Which do and underline the sound-effect word.

1. Gareth held his breath as the final ball popped out of the machine.
2. The DJ forgot to turn down his microphone and his complaints about the canteen were loud.
3. The sausages on the barbeque sizzled in the sunlight.
4. The librarian told the boys off for shouting and said they were only allowed to talk in a quiet voice.
5. The door closed quietly behind them after they had said their goodbyes.
6. The loud crack of the ice was terrifying and they ran before the frozen surface could break.

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Activity 3: Descriptive Writing

Now have a go at creating some examples of onomatopoeia.

Write a paragraph about a boy called Jim. Your story is about his journey to school. Use as many onomatopoeic words as possible. This should be an individual task; however, afterwards you can compare your paragraphs in a group of four to see who has the most onomatopoeic words.

Here is an example to get you started. The onomatopoeic words are in italics:

The chain on the front door rattled as Jim unlocked it. The old gate at the back creaked as he swung it open quickly, not wanting to waste a second...

Your paragraph

[illegible]

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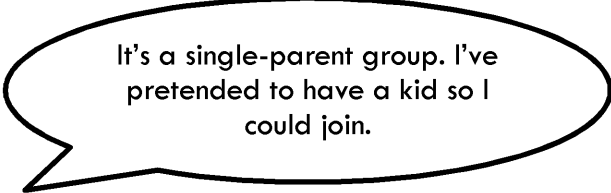


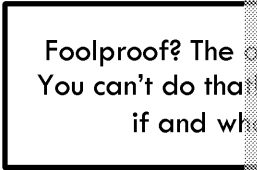
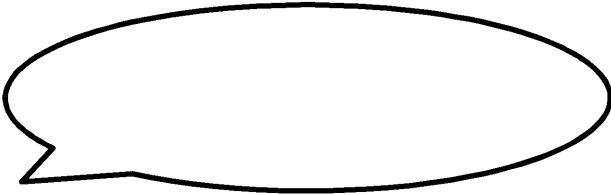

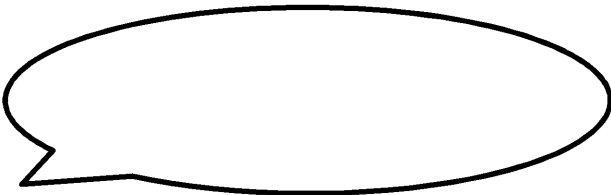

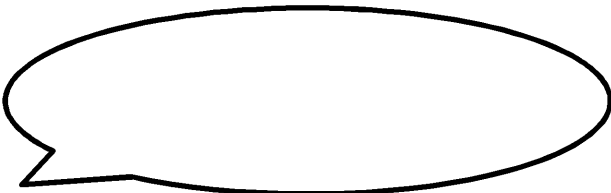

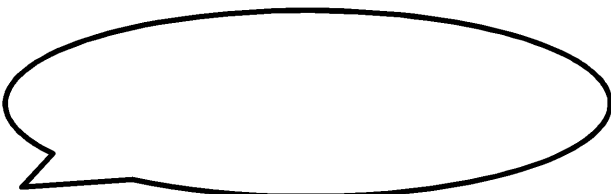



Activity 4: Creative Writing

Write a dialogue exchange between you and Will (as if you are his friend) after he has joined SPAT.

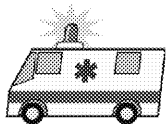
1. What would you say to him when he tells you he has joined SPAT and has invited you to join?
2. Think about whether you agree or disagree with his actions.
3. Do you think it is quite original and funny or do you think he is being dishonest?
4. Are you surprised by his actions or would you expect this type of behaviour from him?

An example is here below:

 Hey, I've just joined SPAT.	 Really?
 It's a single-parent group. I've pretended to have a kid so I could join.	 What? Why do you do that?
 So I can meet some single mothers looking for love. It's foolproof!	 Foolproof? The only way you can do that is if you're a single parent. You can't do that if you're not.
	
	
	
	

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Main Event 3 – Fiona’s Suicide Attempt

Activity 1: Reading

Read the following extract and discuss/write the answers to the questions.

He couldn’t speak. He didn’t know what to say. He didn’t cry either. It was just that. So he just stood there. But Suzie dropped the car seat and ran off screaming at her and slapping her. Suzie must have seen the empty pill bottle on the table, but Marcus didn’t spot it until later, when the ambulance men came in, just confused; he couldn’t understand why Suzie was so mad at someone who was his friend. Suzie yelled at Will to call for an ambulance and told Marcus to make sure his mum was moving now and making a terrible moaning noise that he had never wanted to hear again. Suzie was crying and then Megan started crying. The room had gone from a terrifying silence and stillness to a noisy, terrifying chaos. ‘Fiona! How could you do this?’ Suzie screamed. ‘You’ve got a kid!’ It was only then that it occurred to Marcus that this reflected badly on him. Marcus had seen some things, mostly on video at other people’s houses. He had seen another bloke’s eyes out with a kebab skewer in Hellhound 3. He had seen a man’s arm out of his nostrils in Boilerhead – The Return. He had seen arms taken off with a machete, he had seen babies with swords where their willies should be, he had seen a woman’s belly-button cut out of a woman’s belly-button. None of it had ever stopped him sleeping. He had nightmares. OK, he hadn’t seen many things in real life, but up until now it didn’t matter: shocks are shocks, wherever you find them. What got him about now wasn’t even anything very shocking, just some puke and some shouting and a girl who wasn’t dead or anything. But this was the scariest thing he’d ever seen, and he knew the moment he walked in that it would be something he’d have to live with.

1. Why do you think Marcus couldn’t speak?

.....

.....

.....

2. Why did he not cry?

.....

.....

3. How did Suzie react to the situation?

.....

.....

.....

4. Why does Suzie’s reaction confuse Marcus?

.....

.....

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5. Why does the author repeat the word 'terrifying' when he describes the atmosphere?

.....

.....

.....

6. Why is Suzie angry with Fiona?

.....

.....

.....

7. Why does Marcus think this was the scariest thing he has ever seen?

.....

.....

.....

Activity 2: Writing

In this chapter, Marcus has a shock. Write a short story about a time when you had a shock. It could be a scary shock, a lovely surprise or even an electric shock!

Describe the situation, what the shock was, and how you felt afterwards.

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal blue ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There is no handwriting or other markings on the paper.

Activity 3: Language

Marcus finds himself in an unfamiliar situation.

1. In groups of three, write five describing words (also known as adjectives) for about his mum's suicide attempt.
 1.
 2.
 3.
 4.
 5.
2. Discuss your words and how Marcus could try to make sense of them.
3. Next, draw a picture which captures each feeling. For example, *sadness* could be a growling dog. Use the template on the next page.
4. Finally, present your pictures to the class and explain what your picture shows.

Activity 4: Discussion

Shock affects people in different ways.

In groups of four, discuss the reaction of Will, Suzie and Marcus when they realise that

1. Do you agree with Suzie for yelling at Fiona?
2. What do you think Will feels about it all?
3. Do you feel sorry for Fiona or Marcus or both?

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Language

Word 1:

Word 2:

Word 3:

Word 4:

Word 5:

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Main Event 4 – Marcus Calls Will

Activity 1: Reading

Read the extract below and discuss/write the answers to the following questions

'Hi Will its Marcus'.

'Hi. Funnily enough, I was just wondering –'

'Suzie said you wanted to take me out for the day somewhere.'

'Yeah, well, that's just –'

'I'll come if my mum can come.'

'I'm sorry?'

'I'll come if you can take my mum too. And she hasn't got any money, so somewhere cheap or you'll have to treat us.'

'Right. Hey, say what you mean, Marcus. Don't beat around the bush.'

'I don't know how else to say it. We're broke. You're not. You pay.'

'It's OK. I was joking.'

'Oh. I didn't get it.'

'No. Listen, I'm quite safe, you know. I thought it might be better just y

'Why?'

'Give your mum a break?'

'Yeah well.'

Suddenly, belatedly, he got it. Giving Marcus's mum a break was what she needed over the weekend; she had spent the leisure time tipping a bottle of pills down her stomach pumped.

'I'm sorry, Marcus. I was being dim.'

'Yeah.'

'Of course your mum can come. That would be great.'

'We haven't got a car either. You'll have to bring yours.'

'Fine.'

'You can bring your little boy if you like.'

He laughed. 'Thanks.'

'That's OK,' Marcus said generously. 'It's only fair.' Sarcasm, Will was used to, but the language that Marcus found peculiarly baffling, which as far as Will was concerned, was absolutely irresistible.

'He'll be with his mum again on Saturday.'

'Fine. Come round about half-past twelve or something. You remember 31 Craysfield Road, Islington, London N1 2SF.'

'England, the world, the universe.'

'Yeah,' Marcus said blankly – simple confirmation for a simpleton.

'Right. See you then.'

1. What does the dash after the word 'wondering' tell us?

.....

.....

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2. Why is there another dash after the word 'just'?
.....
.....
3. What does Will mean when he tells Marcus not to 'beat about the bush'?
.....
.....
4. What does Will have to agree to before Marcus will go out with Will?
.....
.....
5. What is Marcus' explanation for getting straight to the point?
.....
.....
6. Look at these sentences: 'We're broke. You're not. You pay.' How does the Marcus' viewpoint?
.....
.....
7. Why does Will eventually think that Fiona should come too?
.....
.....
8. What does Will mean when he says that sarcasm is 'absolutely irresistible' be
.....
.....
9. Why does Marcus give Will his full address, including postcode?
.....
.....
10. How do we know that Will finds his address giving amusing?
.....
.....
.....

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Activity 2: Language/Group Work

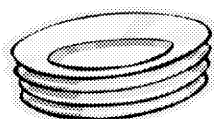
Will often uses sarcasm with Marcus. It can be difficult to define sarcasm, so this is and how it is used.

1. Write your definition of the word 'sarcasm'.
.....
.....
2. Look up the word in a dictionary and write down the definition.
.....
.....
3. Look through some old newspapers and see if you can find examples of sarcasm headlines. Cut these out and make a poster with them.
4. Think about your favourite films or television programmes. Do you know of any that use sarcasm?

All these elements should be brought together in a discussion about what sarcasm is by the poster and discussing sarcastic characters and what they say.

Activity 3: Language

In this event Marcus will only come **if** his mum can come. Finish the following sentences by writing what the IF condition will be in each situation. Use your imagination and make them as realistic as possible. An example has been done for you.



For example: Jim said he would do the dishes for a month **if** his mum came to school.
chimpanzee all the way to school.

1. I might give you the sticker you need for your collection but only **if**... ..
.....
2. Jane agreed to go to the cinema to see the horror film but only **if**... ..
.....
3. Although it would be irritating, Paul said he'd take his little sister to the shops but only **if**... ..
.....
4. Clare said the children could go to Disney World **if**... ..
.....
5. The teacher planned to give the children an extra playtime but only **if**... ..
.....
6. The farmer was going to market but only **if**... ..
.....

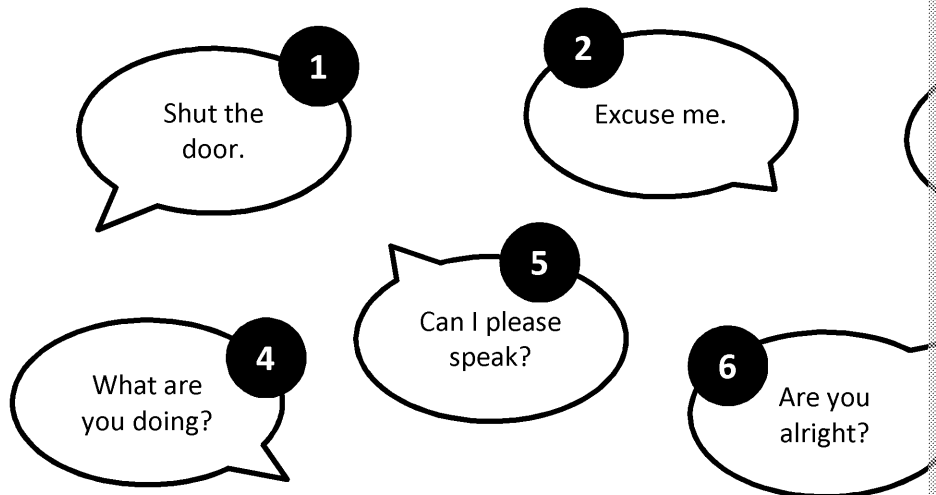
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Activity 4: Group Work / Role Play

Marcus and Will speak on the phone and Marcus misses the sarcastic tone of voice. It can be difficult to detect tone sometimes, so you are going to practise it.

Split into small groups and take turns to stand up and deliver the following lines, in as many different ways and using as many different tones of voice as you can. Try to be sad, in a panic, happy, excited or nervous.



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Main Event 5 – Marcus Talks about

This part of the story happens when Marcus has been chased to Will's door by bullies and sweets. This is the first time Will has a real look at what life is like for Marcus and that he has to help him to fit in.

Activity 1: Reading

Read the extract and discuss/write the answers.

Sometimes Marcus sounded as if he were a hundred years old and it bore the weight of it.
'It doesn't have to be life, though, does it?'
'I dunno. You tell me. I haven't done anything. I just started at a new school. I don't know why.'
'What about your old school?'
'It was different there. Not every kid was the same. There were clever ones, trendy ones and weird ones. I didn't feel different there. Here I feel different.'
'They can't be different sorts of kids here. Kids are kids.'
'So where are all the weird ones, then?'
'Maybe they start off weird, and then they get their act together. They can't see them. The trouble is, these kids can see you. You make yourself invisible.'
'So I've got to make myself invisible?' Marcus snorted at the magnitude of that. 'Is one of the machines in your kitchen an invisible machine?'
'You don't have to make yourself invisible. You just have to go in disguise.'
'What, with a moustache and stuff?'
'Yeah, right, with a moustache. Nobody would notice a twelve-year-old with a moustache, would they?'
Marcus looked at him. 'You're joking. Everyone would notice. I'd be the laughing stock of the school.'
Will had forgotten about the sarcasm thing. 'OK, no moustache, then. But you have to look like everyone else. If you wore the same clothes and haircut and glasses as everyone else, you'd fit in. Just do something about the outside.'

1. Write down / select a phrase which shows that Will has made an emotional connection with Marcus.

.....

.....

2. Write down three words to describe how Marcus feels about the bullying.

1.
2.
3.

3. What were the kids like at Marcus' old school?

.....

.....

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4. Do you think Marcus misses his old school? Why do you think this?

.....

.....

.....

5. What does Will suggest that Marcus could do so that he didn't seem different?

.....

.....

6. What does Marcus think of Will's suggestion?

.....

.....

7. How can we see that Marcus does not share Will's sense of humour?

.....

.....

.....

8. How do you feel about Will and Marcus at the end of this extract?

.....

.....

.....

.....

9. Why do you think Will decides to help Marcus with changing his appearance?

.....

.....

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Activity 2: Writing

Will tells Marcus he needs to change his appearance.

- Write a story about someone or something that changes his/her/its appearance
- Think about why they want or need to change. Or maybe they don't want to

Some ideas to get you thinking are:

- A butterfly, before and after the cocoon
- A chameleon who changes colour at the wrong time
- A teacher who wins *The X Factor* and becomes a pop star

Discuss your ideas with your teacher or a partner before you begin.

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- Think about what Marcus is admitting here to Will and indeed to himself.
- Think about what Will realises about what Marcus needs and how he might b

Will mentions that Marcus doesn't understand sarcasm.

1. Use a dictionary to find out the definition of 'sarcasm'.
2. Once you are sure of what it means, write a short script between two people sarcastic to the other. You can act these out in class or in your groups.

Jill:...and then she said yes and then she told him about her next accident running across the road when the man from two doors up had to stop. He said there could have been an accident and his wife is related to 10's brother...

Jack: You're very quiet today Jill.

Jill: Really? Well wait till I tell you...

[illegible]

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Character

When we talk about character in a novel, we mean what makes the people in the story who they are. We think about what their personality is like, why it is that way and how they get on with other people in the story.

Activity 1: Marcus and Ellie

Read the following extract and then answer the questions. These can be done in pairs. Writing down the answers will help form your notes when it comes to essay writing.

‘There, he’s out’. She sat down on the kerb outside the shop, holding Kurt’s ventriloquist’s dummy, and smiling this weird little smile to herself; meanly, meanly. He charged up the road, intending to run all the way back to London or whichever direction he was heading. After a few yards, however, his legs stopped, took a few deep breaths and went back to sit with her.

‘What did you do that for?’

‘I dunno. It just didn’t seem right, him being in there on his own.’

‘Oh Ellie.’ Once again, Marcus was left with the feeling that Ellie did just what she had to do, and that she had brought the trouble she was in upon herself. It wasn’t real, and there was enough real trouble in the world without having to add this.

1. Write down three words which you could use to describe Ellie’s feelings when she was holding the cardboard cut-out.

1.
2.
3.

2. Why do you think she has a ‘weird little smile’ on her face?

.....

.....

.....

3. How is Marcus’ reaction different from Ellie’s?

.....

.....

.....

.....

4. Write down three words which describe how Marcus is feeling at this point.

1.
2.
3.

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5. What reason does Ellie give for smashing the window and pulling Kurt out?

.....

.....

.....

6. How does her reason reflect Marcus' reasons for wanting a bigger family?

.....

.....

.....

.....

7. Why does Marcus disagree with Ellie's action?

.....

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.....

8. How do we know that Marcus has had enough of Ellie's outrageous behaviour?

.....

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Activity 2: Newspaper Reporter

Imagine you are a local newspaper reporter covering the story of the window smash you turned up at the police station when all the families and the shop owner were at the guide sheet below, then use the template provided on the next page.

- Who would you interview?
- What would they say?
- Write your article.

WHAT WILL YOUR HEADLINE BE WHAT IS YOUR SUBHEADLINE

How does your article begin?

Remember to write in columns and to include what, where, when, who, how and why.

What goes in the middle?

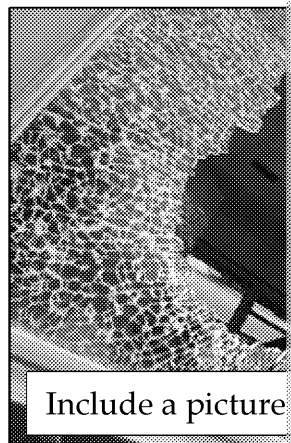
Here you should give an account of the main events.

Interviews

Try to look at some newspaper articles and see the way they use quotations from the people involved in a story. You can do this by making up what you think each character would say to the reporter.

Ending

Here, say how the matter has been resolved.



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Activity 2: Newspaper Reporter – Template

Headline

Subheading

Article

Picture

Article continued

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Activity 3: Character Motivations

If Marcus found a genie in a bottle, and had three wishes, what would he wish for?

- Do this on your own and put the answers in an envelope.
- Then your teacher will open them and decide on the top three.
- This could be put on a wall display.
- The same can be done for Will, Fiona and the minor characters too.

Use the genie wish template provided below.

_____ 's Genie Wishes



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Activity 4: Word Allocation

AO2

Discuss who each word best describes in the novel and explain why you think this is. Try to use an example from the text to **prove** your reasoning. For example: 'Marcus' mother is depressed. This is shown in Chapter 9 when she tries to kill herself by overdosing on tablets'.

Who does this word describe?	Prove it!

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Main Theme – Growing Up

One of the main themes of the novel is growing up. This can be seen even from the title the author has chosen. Which 'boy' is the story really about? Marcus is a boy who acts like an adult, and Will is an adult who acts like a boy. The title makes us think about how the characters change as they help each other with their boyhood issues.

Activity 1: Marcus and Will

Think about what would happen if Marcus and Will could swap places for a day. What would Will do as a 12-year-old for a day and what would Marcus do as a 36-year-old for a day?

- Write a diary extract for each character as they swap ages for a day.
- Think about what Will maybe missed in his own childhood as his dad was being away.
- Also, think about what Marcus would like to do when being free from the challenges of being an adult. What problems would he be able to solve by being an adult?
- These diary extracts could be put together to make a collage poster.

Marcus' Diary

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WILL'S DIARY



Activity 2: Questions

Read the extract from p. 106, paragraphs two and three. Discuss these questions and write down the answers.

Will didn't understand at first why Marcus had introduced the subject of there was a value in talking about something that didn't remind Marcus of what he was surrounded by. The triumph over nicotine addiction wasn't Marcus's triumph, that was at the moment decidedly triumph-free it was the closest he had to a triumph. Will could see how sad this was, but he could also see that it wasn't his problem. Very few people were in a position to say they had a problem, and it wasn't his problem either. Will didn't see this as a source of shame, but as a raucous celebration; to reach the age he had without encountering any serious problems was to him a record worth preserving, and though he didn't mind giving Marcus a lift, he wasn't about to embroil himself in the sorry dog's dinner that was Marcus's. What was Will to do that?

1. Will says that 'it wasn't his problem'. Which age group do you normally expect to have a problem with?

.....
2. How does Will feel about the fact that he has managed to get through life without a problem?

.....

.....

.....

.....
3. Will doesn't mind giving Marcus 'the odd can of coke'. Which word in this sentence does Will think of this as a temporary arrangement?

.....
4. Will uses a metaphor to describe Marcus' life. A metaphor is when one thing is compared to another. Can you find this metaphor and write it down?

.....

.....
5. How does this extract as a whole help you to understand the theme of growing up? What is Will trying to tell us here about Will and his attitude?

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

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Activity 3: Jeremy Kyle

The theme of growing up is something which affects Fiona, Marcus' mother. She tells him the fact that Marcus is growing up. She tells him not to be a sheep but to be individual. She tells him that he is not to be bullied.

- Imagine he decided to go on *The Jeremy Kyle Show* to tell her how he was feeling the same as other people his own age. Write the script for the show. Here is

Jeremy:

Welcome to today's show where we have ¹ Marcus who wants to grow up. Now Marcus, what problems have you

Marcus:

Well Jeremy, I think my Mum doesn't realise I'm 12

- You can act this out in your groups to bring it to life.

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Activity 4: Adjectives

1. Write five words which describe how Will is childish at the start of the novel. Write down five adjectives, which are describing words, such as 'lazy'.

1. 2.
3. 4.
5.

2. Now use the five adjectives in a sentence and use examples from the text to support your answer. Example: *'Will is lazy, which is shown in chapter x when he does y.'*

1.
2.
3.
4.
5.

1. Now do the same for Marcus. Five adjectives to describe him:

1. 2.
3. 4.
5.

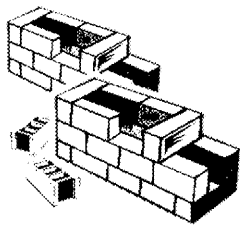
2. Use each word in a sentence.

1.
2.
3.
4.
5.

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Exploring Form and Structure



About A Boy is written from a first-person viewpoint. This means that if the character is talking to us directly. This makes us feel like we are part of the story and makes us care about the character.

However, this novel is very unusual because it shows the first person viewpoints of two characters instead of just one.

This gives us a close insight into the minds of both Will and Marcus and allows us to understand them. The fact that they narrate a chapter each creates a good balance in the novel and is very interesting.

Activity 1: Questions

Read the following extracts, one from Marcus' viewpoint and one from Will. Use them to discuss / write notes and compare the two.

And now he was a truant. He was walking down Holloway Road while... actually, they were eating their lunch but he wasn't going back. He was walking down Holloway Road (well, not Holloway Road, probably, because he was already, and lunch would go on for another thirty minutes yet) during his proper truant. He wondered whether all truants started like that, whether it was the Mrs Morrison moment which made them blow their top and leave. He saw

- 1. Why does Marcus not think he is a proper truant yet?
.....
.....
- 2. What is your opinion of being able to hear Marcus' thoughts in this way?
.....
.....
.....
- 3. How does the author make this paragraph sound like a real train of thought?
.....
.....
.....
.....

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Now here is a similar extract from Will.

The affection that Will felt was not acute enough to make him want to stop. He had discovered that it was much easier to sustain one's fondness for a person when one's foot was down, literally and metaphorically. But it was funny, seeing him in broad daylight wandering aimlessly... Something nagged at him. Why had Will had never really seen Marcus in broad daylight before. He had only seen him in the gloom of a winter afternoon. And why had he only seen him in the gloom of a winter afternoon? Because Marcus only came round after school. But it was just that Marcus should be in school now. Bollocks.

1. What does Will mean by keeping 'one's foot down, literally and metaphorically'?

.....

.....

2. Why does Will ask himself questions?

.....

.....

.....

3. What happens when he answers these questions to himself?

.....

.....

.....

4. Sentences normally do not begin with 'and' or 'because'. Why do you think that is here?

.....

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Activity 2: Similarities and Differences

What are the main differences and similarities between these two extracts? Think about the character's train of thought and how they are trying to justify something to themselves.

Similarities	Differences

Activity 3: Train of Thought

Have a go at a train of thought.

- Take it in turns to start talking about a random subject (your teacher can give you one to start off) and let your mind wander, saying what that subject makes you think of and what is connected to.
- See how long you can talk for.
- This is just for fun, but it lets you see how realistic the author is here.

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Language

When we talk about language in a novel, we mean the words and sentences the author uses. We especially look at how he paints a picture in our heads simply by the words he chooses.

Activity 1: Features and Punctuation

Read the extract below and discuss/write the answers. It may be best if your teacher or a group reads the extract aloud, as often we can identify language features more easily when we hear it out. This scene takes place when Will has just admitted to Marcus that he wants Rachel.

‘Really?’

‘Yes, really.’ Really, really. He had thought of almost nothing else since he had much to think about, apart from the word Rachel, a vague recollection of her (and a lot of foolish fantasies involving picnics and babies and tearfully kissing her and huge hotel beds) and it was a relief to bring Rachel out into the light of day. Marcus who was up there to inspect her, and even though the words he had just said felt, do her justice. He wanted Rachel to be his wife, his lover, the centre of his whole world, his girlfriend implied that he would see her from time to time, that she would have an independent existence away from him, and he didn’t want that at all.’

1. How many sentences are in this extract?
.....
2. Why has the author used such long sentences here?
.....
.....
3. Can you highlight the words inside the brackets?
.....
4. What could the words inside the brackets be described as?
.....
.....
5. Reread the paragraph, leaving out the words inside the brackets. Does it still make sense?
.....
6. How does having the brackets help you to picture how Will feels?
.....
7. The second sentence in this extract is also very long. How does this show what Will is like?
.....
.....
8. The author uses a semicolon after ‘whole world;’. What use does a semicolon have?
.....

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Activity 2: Sentence Structure

The length of sentences used by an author can reflect how a character feels in a story. Look at the following two scenes in a group. After each one, discuss how the character felt.

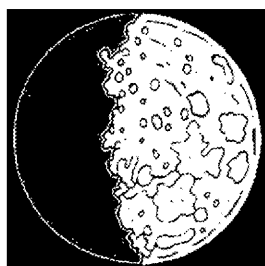
'The car was dead. The engine didn't even splutter anymore. Just nothing. I tried to start it but it wouldn't. I dashed. My footsteps were slow. Up ahead there was a light. I could get to it. The road was long. The house stood alone. Shadows filled the windows. The old gate was closed.'

'It had been sunny all day and the best part was yet to come, Kate thought as she went up the stairs, knowing that when she reached the door she would meet him. But she thought would have been gone from her life forever.'

Activity 3: Imagery

Imagery is an important feature of language. This is when the author describes something in a way that you can instantly see it in your head. The imagery is often created by using comparisons.

The moon was like a big white torch



In my garden the daffodils are like a carpet of gold.

When we use 'like' or 'as' to make a comparison, it is called a **simile**.

When we don't use 'as' or 'like' and make a comparison, it is called a **metaphor**.

In these sentences, decide which ones are similes and which are metaphors. Write 'S' for simile and 'M' for metaphor in the space after each sentence.

1. Mike ran like the wind in his school relay race.
2. If only she could get an audition, she would shine like a star.
3. The kitchen was as hot as a furnace because mum had been cooking all day.
4. She was a cute cuddly button of a baby.
5. We saw the tiger leap suddenly, like a bolt of lightning.

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Activity 4: Creative Writing

Write as if you are Marcus describing his first visit to Rachel and her son Ali. Try to use adjectives, adverbs, and metaphors as you can. Think about how he could describe Rachel, Ali, Will (the dog), and the house.

[illegible]

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Activity 5: Mix and Match

Match these features of language with their descriptions.

Simile

Metaphor

Imagery

Brackets

Semicolon

Sentence structure

How

Pict

A p

A c

Sy
in

A c

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The End

Well thanks for joining me on my journey from being lonely and different to being
suppose I'm just like anyone else my age now.

When I think back to the time we moved from Cambridge I can't believe how much
I am now. At the time I didn't think I was unhappy but things are definitely better

It's all to do with the people. Before, when I only had Mum, I was so worried that
her I would be totally alone. I knew I needed more people in my life but I could not
planned how I would come across them. If Will had not been desperate for a girl
would not have gone to the picnic with Suzie. I suppose I'm glad that he was trying
life too. I'm sure he never thought he'd end up with me before he found the girl

I'm sort of glad I was a bit different when I went to school as otherwise Ellie might
she was laughing at me at first but once we got over that we grew into real friends
she gave me the confidence I so badly needed at the time.

Mum is much better now. She has finally accepted that I'm not a mini version of
thoughts and opinions. I think she really just needed someone to listen to her too

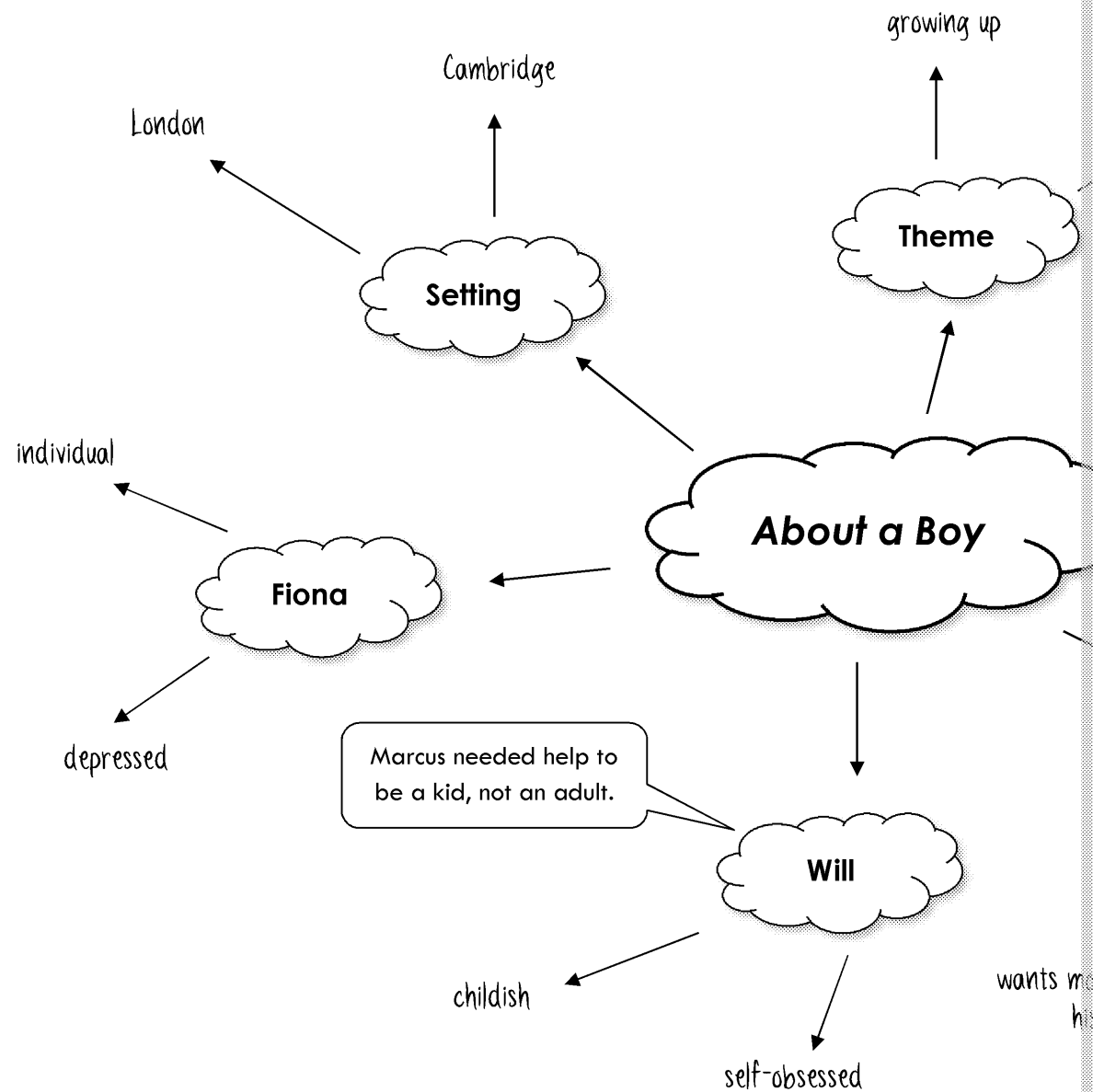
So now I'm looking to the future. Will and Rachel are happy and Dad and Lyndsay
got all the people I need now.

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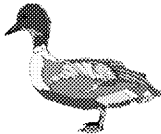



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Terminology Card Game

(Continued on the next page)

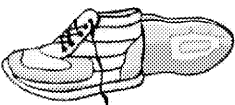

<p>first-person narrative</p>	<p>brackets</p> <p>()</p>	<p>metaphor</p>	<p>sin</p>
<p>characterisation</p>	<p>imagery</p>	<p>Will</p>	<p>Fic</p>
<p>Kurt Cobain</p>	<p>dead duck</p> 	 <p>Countdown</p>	<p>A</p>

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depression	trainers 	loneliness	family
SPAT	Ned	'Santa's Super Sleigh'	Mrs Morrison
Rachel	parents	adulthood	childhood 

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Quiz Time!

1. In which town did Marcus and his mum live before they moved to London?

.....

2. How old is Will?

.....

3. What is Fiona's job?

.....

4. What do Will's friends ask him to be for their baby?

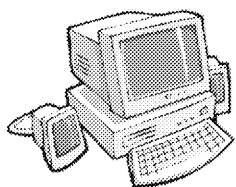
.....

5. Who is Fiona's favourite singer?

.....

6. What does Marcus do with his eyes when he sings?

.....



7. What are the names of Marcus' first two friends from school?

.....

8. What is the name of the single-parent group which Will joins?

.....

9. Why does Will join a single-parent group?

.....

10. What is the name of the famous song written by Will's father?

.....

11. Who is Suzie?

.....

12. Which film does Marcus turn off when watching it with his mother?

.....

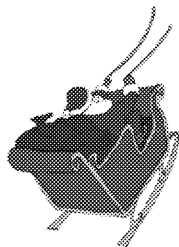
13. Which brand of trainers does Will buy for Marcus?

.....

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14. What is the date when Will hears 'Santa's Super Sleigh'?

.....

15. What is the name of Marcus' headmistress?

.....

16. Who is Ellie?

.....

17. Which singer is on Ellie's sweatshirt?

.....

18. Why does Will let Rachel think that Marcus is his son?

.....

19. Why does Marcus blindfold Ellie in the station?

.....

20. What does the owner of the shop do to Ellie when she confronts her about the

.....

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Quiz Answers

1. In which town did Marcus and his mum live before they moved to London?
Cambridge
2. How old is Will?
36
3. What is Fiona's job?
Music instructor for children with special needs
4. What do Will's friends ask him to be for their baby?
Godfather
5. Who is Fiona's favourite singer?
Joni Mitchell
6. What does Marcus do with his eyes when he sings?
Closes them
7. What are the names of Marcus' first two friends from computer club?
Nicky and Mark
8. What is the name of the single-parent group which Will joins?
SPAT
9. Why does Will join a single-parent group?
To find a girlfriend
10. What is the name of the famous song written by Will's father?
'Santa's Super Sleigh'
11. Who is Suzie?
Fiona's best friend
12. Which film does Marcus turn off when watching it with his mother?
Groundhog Day
13. Which brand of trainers does Will buy for Marcus?
Adidas
14. What is the date when Will hears 'Santa's Super Sleigh' for the first time that
19th November
15. What is the name of Marcus' headmistress?
Mrs Morrison
16. Who is Ellie?
A rebellious girl who takes Marcus under her wing
17. Which singer is on Ellie's sweatshirt?
Kurt Cobain
18. Why does Will let Rachel think that Marcus is his son?
So that he will have something in common with her
19. Why does Marcus blindfold Ellie in the station?
So that she cannot read the headlines that Kurt Cobain is dead
20. What does the owner of the shop do to Ellie when she confronts her about the
Gives her a hug

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About A Boy Essay Plan

Learning about a novel is always interesting as you meet so many characters and their lives. The best way to share the knowledge you have gained is by writing an essay. You will know that you have understood the novel and have had a think about what it means.

Some people think that to write a book review essay you simply have to retell the story. But you know what happened, but your teacher needs to see how the novel has affected you. To do this, follow the plan below.

1 → Introduction

A good introduction should say the name of the novel, the name of the author and the novel you are going to look at.

2 → Summary

In the summary, you should briefly outline the main points of the story. You should try to keep your summary as brief as possible. It can be difficult and you may have to have a few attempts before you can choose the best one.

Main Essay

The main body of your essay is made up of sections. In each section, you should answer a question. To do this you:

3 → make your point

4 → show an example of that point

5 → and then explain and evaluate it.

Another way to remember this is to think of each section as a little hamburger. The point is like the burger bun with the sesame seeds. The example of your point is written as a quotation, which is like the meat in the middle – no burger would be complete without it. The explanation/evaluation is like the bottom burger bun which holds everything together. If you forget this bit then it all falls apart.

Imagine a burger with any of these parts missing. You would be back at McDonald's asking for a refund in no time! Your essay is the same. If you forget about any of the parts which make it up it will flop.

You can have as many sections as you wish, but four is a good starting point.

6 → Conclusion

When you conclude your essay you should again remind the reader of the main points. Look back at your introduction to help you here. Then say how well you have learned along the way.

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About A Boy Sample Essay

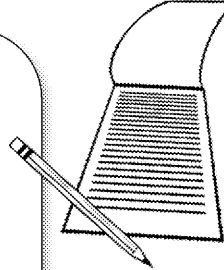
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- 1 → In the novel *About A Boy* by Nick Hornby, the character of Marcus changes from a bullying to a happy teenager. In this essay, I am going to answer the question: what caused this change? To do this I am going to look at characterisation and how the author shows that Marcus has many parts to his personality.
- 2 → *About A Boy* follows the lives of 12-year-old Marcus and 36-year-old Will. When rich singleton Will tries to seduce single mothers and ends up in a car crash, his mum, Fiona, attempts suicide. He gets to know Marcus and realises that he does not want to help. Marcus sees in Will the influence he needs to help him. Will takes no for an answer. They gradually bond and help each other to become better people.
- 3 → The character of Marcus is very vulnerable and we instantly feel sympathy for him. He has to cope with his parents splitting up, his moving to a new area and he is now at a new school as the other children have realised that he is different from them.
- 4 → 'Every time he woke up his first thought was that there must be some kind of horrible feeling.'
- 5 → Here we see that Marcus is worrying so much about his new school that he is desperate. He is desperately looking for an answer but is struggling to find it. The author shows how this situation is making him feel and we can imagine how bad it is for him.
- 3 → Although Marcus feels he has no control over his school life, he decides that he can change his life by having more people in it. This is where we see the first change in Marcus. He is more forceful when he speaks to Will to arrange a day out so that his Mum and Will can come.
- 4 → 'I'll come if you can take my mum too. And she hasn't got any money, so we'll have to go somewhere cheap or you'll have to treat us.'
- 5 → Now the reader sees that Marcus can be crafty and determined. This shows that he is more than just being the victim of bullying and a difficult home life. He hopes that he can have a better home life if he can have more people in it than just his mum.
- 3 → Later in the novel, Marcus begins to open up to Will and tackle the problem of the other kids. He eventually agrees to go with Will to buy new trainers so that they are not a target for the bullies:
- 4 → 'He looked at himself in the mirror and tried to repress a smile. "You think you look cool don't you?" said Will. "Yeah. Except now the rest of me looks all wrong."'
- 5 → Here, the author makes us feel sorry for Marcus when he uses the word 'repress' for his smile in because he has never been allowed to enjoy being a kid with his mum. He has been repressed by his mum's ideas all along and now he is still not sure if he is about fitting in. Again, this further shows that Marcus has a very complex personality.
- 3 → The biggest change for Marcus happens when he meets Ellie. She is a real friend. However she is strong and loud so no one bullies her. She takes Marcus into her world because she is amused by his oddness, but then they become real friends.
- 4 → 'He felt great. If Kurt Cobain himself had walked through the form-room doors, the mouths of his classmates couldn't have opened any wider. "What are you lot staring at? Marcus is our friend, aren't you Marcus?" Ellie and Zoe was, 'yes' was definitely the right answer here.'
- 5 → This is all Marcus needs – someone to be his friend. He has found some individuality, but with attitude. The short sentence here when the author says 'He felt great' speaks volumes for Marcus. He has been included and he can relax for the first time.
- 6 → In conclusion, it can be said that the character of Marcus goes through a journey from being the victim of bullies to a happy teenager. The author shows us his thoughts and feelings with difficulty and then opens up to allow himself to be helped. He made his life better because he was smart enough to realise that he needed their help and that he was missing from his life.

Write a brief summary of the text.



INSTRUCTIONS: Complete the text box below to show how you have achieved the learning objectives.

To develop our writing skills

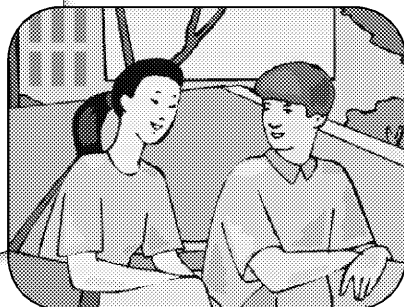
To learn how to empathise with people in other situations

Think of a character in the text, do you understand their motives? Why?

To increase our confidence in our communication skills

Write about how you have discussed this text in class and what points you raised.

Why should we study English?



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