



*Rewarding Learning*

**ADVANCED**  
**General Certificate of Education**  
**2012**

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**English Literature**

**Assessment Unit A2 2**

*assessing*

**The Study of Prose – Theme Based**

**[AL221]**

**WEDNESDAY 16 MAY, AFTERNOON**

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AL221

**RESOURCE BOOKLET**  
**FOR SECTION A ONLY**

## 1 War: *The Things They Carried*

Still, there was so much to say.

How the rain never stopped. How the cold worked into your bones. Sometimes the only thing on earth was to sit through the night and feel the cold in your bones. Courage was not always a matter of yes or no. Sometimes it came in degrees, like the cold; sometimes you were very brave up to a point and then beyond that point you were not so brave. In certain situations you could do incredible things, you could advance toward enemy fire, but in other situations, which were not nearly so bad, you had trouble keeping your eyes open. Sometimes, like that night in the shit field, the difference between courage and cowardice was something small and stupid.

The way the earth bubbled. And the smell.

In a soft voice, without flourishes, he would have told the exact truth.

“Late in the night,” he would’ve said, “we took some mortar fire.”

He would’ve explained how it was still raining, and how the clouds were pasted to the field, and how the mortar rounds seemed to come right out of the clouds. Everything was black and wet. The field just exploded. Rain and slop and shrapnel, nowhere to run, and all they could do was worm down into slime and cover up and wait. He would’ve described the crazy things he saw. Weird things. Like how at one point he noticed a guy lying next to him in the sludge, completely buried except for his face, and how after a moment the guy rolled his eyes and winked at him. The noise was fierce. Heavy thunder, and mortar rounds, and people yelling. Some of the men began shooting up flares. Red and green and silver flares, all colors, and the rain came down in Technicolor.

The field was boiling. The shells made deep slushy craters, opening up all those years of waste, centuries worth, and the smell came bubbling out of the earth. Two rounds hit close by. Then a third, even closer, and immediately, off to his left, he heard somebody screaming. It was Kiowa – he knew that. The sound was ragged and clotted up, but even so he knew the voice. A strange gargling noise. Rolling sideways, he crawled toward the screaming in the dark. The rain was hard and steady. Along the perimeter there were quick bursts of gunfire. Another round hit nearby, spraying up shit and water, and for a few moments he ducked down beneath the mud. He heard the valves in his heart. He heard the quick, feathering action of the hinges. Extraordinary, he thought. As he came up, a pair of red flares puffed open, a soft fuzzy glow, and in the glow he saw Kiowa’s wide-open eyes settling down into the scum. Briefly, all he could do was watch. He heard himself moan. Then he moved again, crabbing forward, but when he got there Kiowa was almost completely under. There was a knee. There was an arm and a gold wristwatch and part of a boot.

He could not describe what happened next, not ever, but he would’ve tried anyway. He would’ve spoken carefully so as to make it real for anyone who would listen.

There were bubbles where Kiowa’s head should’ve been.

The left hand was curled open; the fingernails were filthy; the wristwatch gave off a green phosphorescent shine as it slipped beneath the thick waters.

He would’ve talked about this, and how he grabbed Kiowa by the boot and tried to pull him out. He pulled hard but Kiowa was gone, and then suddenly he felt himself going, too. He could taste it. The shit was in his nose and eyes. There were flares and mortar rounds, and the stink was everywhere – it was inside him, in his lungs – and he could no longer tolerate it. Not here, he thought. Not like this. He released Kiowa’s boot and watched it slide away. Slowly, working his way up, he hoisted himself out of the deep mud, and then he lay still and tasted the shit in his mouth and closed his eyes and listened to the rain and explosions and bubbling sounds.

He was alone.

He had lost his weapon but it did not matter. All he wanted was a bath.

Nothing else. A hot soapy bath.

Circling the lake, Norman Bowker remembered how his friend Kiowa had died under the waste and water.

"I didn't flip out," he would've said. "I was cool. If things had gone right, if it hadn't been for that smell, I could've won the Silver Star."

A good war story, he thought, but it was not a war for war stories, nor for talk of valor, nobody in town wanted to know about the terrible stink. They wanted good intentions and good deeds. But the town was not to blame, really. It was a nice little town, very prosperous, with neat houses and all the sanitary conveniences.

*From: © The Things They Carried, Copyright 1990 by Tim O'Brien*

## 2 Women in Society: *The Illusionist*

The Illusionist by Jennifer Johnston. Unfortunately due to copyright restrictions the extract cannot be reproduced. The extract begins at the bottom of page 41, the last paragraph; the extract begins: " He came into the bathroom as I was washing my feet". The extract finishes at the top of page 44 at the end of the first paragraph on the page. It finishes with the sentence: " He was loving, cheerful, full of energy, secretive." (The Minerva edition, 1996)



### 3 The Outsider: *The Butcher Boy*

There you are again, Francie, Lord bless us you're all over the place! the women'd say I am I'd say and twirl the meat parcels across the marble top.

There you are says the amazing Father Dom sorry father can't stop to talk it was a dinner story now I reckoned with all these jobs I was important now and I had no time to waste gossiping. But especially to the likes of Roche who stopped me one day with the black bag and just stands there looking at me, out of nowhere again of course. Look Roche, I wanted to say to him, if you want to spoil things go off and spoil them on somebody else. I'm a busy man and I have things to do. I'm in charge and I have no time for fooling about and talking shite to the likes of you so go on now about your business and leave people to do their work in peace. That was what I wanted to say to black eyebrows Roche.

I was fed up of him and everything to do with him and I'd tell him that too. But I didn't and what the fuck does he do then only come over and I got a big red face on me I don't know why he just stands there. I heard you were working for Leddy.

I am, I says, what's wrong with that?

I'm not saying there's anything wrong with it I'm only asking he said.

I wanted to say: Well don't ask Roche, *Don't ask!*

Do you like it down there he says, twirl twirl the timer on his watch.

Yes I says, ten bob a week.

And what do you do with that?

I knew he was trying to trick me into saying I buy bottles of stout for da so I said: I put it in the post office Doctor.

Very wise he says.

Hmm.

What I wanted to talk to you about was your father – he was supposed to come up and see me and he never did.

O I says, was he?

Will you tell him to drop in this evening maybe or tomorrow?

Oh I will I says, I'll tell him that.

You won't forget?

No, I says. I won't and then he says it again you won't forget and I could see him looking me up and down the worst thing about that is you start thinking ah there's nothing no sweat on my forehead and that's what makes the sweat come. There was beads on my forehead. I could feel them and the more I felt them the bigger they got they felt as big as berries and that was what made me blurt out O no doctor I forgot he's gone over to England to visit Uncle Alo.

What? he says and frowns, he's *what?*

It was too late for me to take it back or turn it into a joke so I had to go on ahead with it I had to make up a whole story.

I see, he says, and he was looking me up and down twice as much now. I had to put my hand in my pocket to stop it shaking for I knew if it started he'd see it he saw fucking everything didn't he?

Then he rubs his chin and says: Right so. Well – when he gets back tell him I want to see him straight away. Its very important.

OK, doctor I said and saluted as much as to say: There's not a bother on me. But I knew by Roche that it didn't look like there wasn't a bother on me. It didn't look like that at all.

#### 4 Childhood: *Paddy Clarke Ha Ha Ha*

He parked the car facing the sea. The tide was way out so we couldn't see it. Any the engine off the wipers weren't working. The best thing about it was the noise of the rain on the roof. Ma had an idea; we could go home and have the picnic there.

—No, said Da.

He held the wheel.

—We're here now, he said,—so —

He tapped the wheel.

Ma got the straw bag up from between her feet and dished out the picnic.

—Don't get crumbs and muck all over the place, Da said.

He was talking to me and Sinbad.

We had to eat the sandwiches; there was no place to hide them. They were nice; egg. They'd gone real flat; there were no holes left in the bread. We had a can of Fanta between us, me and Sinbad. Ma wouldn't let us open it. She had the opener. She hooked it under the rim of the can and pressed once for the triangular hole for drinking out of and again, for the hole on the other side for the air to go into. After a few slugs each I could feel little bits of food in the Fanta; I could feel them when I was swallowing. The Fanta was warm.

Ma and Da said nothing. They had a flask with tea in it. There was the cup off the top of the flask and a real cup that Ma had wrapped in toilet paper. She held out the cups for Da to hold so she could pour but he didn't take them off her. He was looking straight in front of him at the rain milling down the windscreen. She didn't say anything. She put one cup down and filled it, over Catherine's head. She held it out; Da took it. It was the big cup, the one off the flask. He sipped it, then he said Thanks, like he didn't mean it.

—Can we get out?

—No.

—Why not?

—No.

—It's too wet, said Ma. — You'd catch your death out in that.

Sinbad put his hand under his arm and slammed his arm shut. It made a fart noise. Margaret, Mister O'Connell's girlfriend, had taught us how to do it. Sinbad did it again.

—Once more —, said Da.

He didn't turn around.

—See what happens.

Sinbad put his hand under his arm again. I held his arm up so he couldn't slam it; I'd get the blame. He smiled at me trying to stop him. He never used to smile at all. Even when Da was taking photographs of us, Sinbad wouldn't smile. We had to stand side by side in front of our ma — it was always the same — and Da would walk away and turn around and look at us through the camera — it was one of those box ones; my ma bought it with her first wages before she got married, before she met my da — and he'd tell us to move a bit and then he'd take ages looking down into the camera and then up at us, and then he'd notice that Sinbad wasn't smiling.

—Smile now, he'd say, to all of us first.

Smiling was easy.

—Francis, he'd say, sounding ordinary.

—Head up; come on.

Ma would put her hand on Sinbad's shoulder and still try to hold one of the babies.

—God damn it; the sun's gone behind a cloud.

But Sinbad kept his head down. And Da lost his temper. All the photographs were the same, me and Ma smiling like mad and Sinbad looking down at the ground. We held the smile for so long, they weren't really smiles any more. When Ma swapped so Da could be in the photograph Da looked like he was really smiling and Sinbad's face disappeared completely he was looking down so much.

There were no photographs this day.

Ma had the biscuits wrapped in tinfoil for each of us. That way we didn't have fights and there were no fights. I could tell from the shape of the foil what biscuits were inside. Mariettas, two together like a sandwich with butter in the middle, and the square shape on the bottom was a Polo. I'd keep the Polo till last.

Ma said something to Da. I didn't hear it. I could tell by the look on the side of her face, she was waiting for him to answer. But it was more than that, her face.

You got the Mariettas and you squeezed them together and the butter came out the holes. We called them botty bickies sometimes, because of the way the butter came out, but Ma wouldn't let us call them that.

I took the Fanta off Sinbad. He let me. It was empty, and it shouldn't have been.

I looked at Ma again. She was still looking at Da. Catherine had one of Ma's fingers in her mouth and she was biting real hard – she had a few teeth – but Ma didn't do anything about it.

Sinbad was eating his biscuits the way he always did, and I did as well. He was nibbling all around the edge till he went all the way round and the Mariettas were the same shape again, only smaller. He licked where the butter had come out of the holes. When he got to the end of his first lap he stopped. I grabbed the hand the biscuit sandwich was in and I squashed his hand in my hands and made him smash the biscuits into crumbs that were too small to rescue. That was for drinking all the Fanta.

Ma was getting out of the car. It was awkward because of Catherine. I thought we were all getting out, that it had stopped raining.

But it hadn't. It was lashing.

Something had happened; something.

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