



Oxford Cambridge and RSA

GCSE (9–1) English Language

J351/02 Exploring effects and impact

Reading Insert

Monday 12 June 2017 – Morning

Time allowed: 2 hours



You must have:

- the Question Paper

INSTRUCTIONS

- The materials in this Reading Insert are for use with the questions in Section A of the Question Paper.

INFORMATION

- This document consists of **8** pages. Any blank pages are indicated.

Details of text extracts:

Text 1

Text: *Cider with Rosie*

Author: Laurie Lee (1959)

Text 2

Text: *A Child's Christmas in Wales*

Author: Dylan Thomas (1950)

Text 1

This is an abridged and adapted extract from Laurie Lee's novel, Cider with Rosie, published in 1959, which describes his childhood. Here the narrator is describing a winter's day when he, his brothers and the village boys go out to play.

Winter was no more typical of our valley than summer. It was not even summer's opposite; it was merely that other place. And somehow one never remembered the journey towards it; one arrived, and winter was here. The day came suddenly when all details were different and the village had to be rediscovered. One's nose went dead so that it hurt to breathe, and there were jigsaws of frost on the window. The light filled the house with a green polar glow; while outside – in the invisible world – there was a strange hard silence, or a metallic creaking, a faint throbbing of twigs and wires. 5

The kitchen that morning would be full of steam, billowing from kettles and pots. The outside pump was frozen again, making a sound like broken crockery, so that the girls tore icicles from the edge of the roof for water and we drank boiled ice in our tea. 10

'It's wicked,' said Mother. 'The poor, poor birds.' And she flapped her arms with vigour.

She and the girls were wrapped in all they had, coats and scarves and mittens; some had the shivers and some drops on their noses, while poor little Phyllis sat rocking in a chair holding her sore feet like a handful of bees.

'The poor, poor birds,' Mother said again. 15

They were hopping around the windowsill, calling for bread and fats – robins, blackbirds, wood-peckers, jays, never seen together until now. We fed them for a while, amazed at their tameness, then put on our long wool scarves.

'Can we go out, Mother?'

'Well, don't catch cold. And remember to get some wood.' 20

First we found some old cocoa-tins, punched them with holes, then packed them with smouldering rags. If held in the hand and blown on occasionally they would keep hot for several hours. They were warmer than gloves, and smelt better too. In any case, we never wore gloves.

So, armed with these, and full of hot breakfast, we stepped out into the winter world. 25

It was a world of glass, sparkling and motionless. Vapours had frozen all over the trees and transformed them into confections of sugar. Everything was rigid, locked-up and sealed, and when we breathed the air it smelt like needles and stabbed our nostrils and made us sneeze.

Having sucked a few icicles, and kicked the water-butt – to hear its solid sound – and breathed through the frost on the window-pane, we ran up into the road. We hung around waiting for something to happen. A dog trotted past like a ghost in a cloud, panting his aura around him. 30

Now the winter's day was set in motion and we rode through its crystal kingdom. We examined the village for its freaks of frost, for anything we might use. We saw the frozen spring by the side of the road, huge like a swollen flower. We saw trees lopped-off by their burdens of ice, cow-tracks like pot-holes in rock, quiet lumps of sheep licking the spiky grass with their black and rotting tongues. The church clock had stopped and the weather-cock was frozen, so that both time and the winds were stilled; and nothing, we thought, could be more exciting than this. 35

Text 2

This is an abridged extract from Dylan Thomas's story, A Child's Christmas in Wales, published in 1950. The writer remembers his childhood, growing up in Swansea near the Mumbles Road. Here he is remembering a day in the snow spent with his friend, Jim.

It was on the afternoon of the day of Christmas Eve, and I was in Mrs. Prothero's garden, waiting for cats, with her son Jim. It was snowing. It was always snowing at Christmas. December, in my memory is white as Lapland, although there were no reindeers. But there were cats. Patient, cold and callous, our hands wrapped in socks, we waited to snowball the cats. Sleek and long as jaguars and horrible-whiskered, spitting and snarling, they would slide and sidle over the white back-garden walls, and the lynx-eyed hunters, Jim and I, fur-capped and moccasined trappers from Hudson Bay, off Mumbles Road, would hurl our deadly snowballs at the green of their eyes. 5

The wise cats never appeared. We were so still, Eskimo-footed arctic marksmen in the muffling silence of the eternal snows – eternal, ever since Wednesday – that we never heard Mrs. Prothero's first cry from her igloo at the bottom of the garden. Or, if we heard it at all, it was, to us, like the far-off challenge of our enemy and prey, the neighbour's polar cat. But soon the voice grew louder. "Fire!" cried Mrs. Prothero, and she beat the dinner-gong¹. 10

And we ran down the garden, with the snowballs in our arms, towards the house; and smoke, indeed, was pouring out of the dining room, and the gong was bombilating². This was better than all the cats in Wales standing on the wall in a row. We bounded into the house, laden with snowballs, and stopped at the open door of the smoke-filled room. 15

Something was burning all right; perhaps it was Mr. Prothero, who always slept there after midday dinner with a newspaper over his face. But he was standing in the middle of the room, saying, "A fine Christmas!" and smacking at the smoke with a slipper. 20

"Call the fire brigade," cried Mrs. Prothero as she beat the gong. "They won't be there," said Mr. Prothero, "it's Christmas."

There was no fire to be seen, only clouds of smoke and Mr. Prothero standing in the middle of them, waving his slipper as though he were conducting.

"Do something," he said. 25

And we threw all our snowballs into the smoke – I think we missed Mr. Prothero – and ran out of the house to the telephone box.

"Let's call the police as well," Jim said.

"And the ambulance."

"And Ernie Jenkins, he likes fires." 30

But we only called the fire brigade, and soon the fire engine came and three tall men in helmets brought a hose into the house and Mr. Prothero got out just in time before they turned it on. Nobody could have had a noisier Christmas Eve.

¹Dinner-gong = small piece of metal struck to call people to dinner

²Bombilating = vibrating

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