

9ELO 03

GCE English

Language & Literature  
Coursework

**Folder 3**

## Commentary

My coursework consists of two pieces: a short story and a speech for a TED talk. The story aims to entertain young adults, while the TED talk is targeted at adults and young adults that may have a particular interest in the topic of fostering. The topic discussed is purposefully chosen to fit with the theme of foster care fortnight, a campaign to attract potential new carers and inform them of the reality of fostering. The overall topic of my pieces is fostering, and the specific topics which I focus on through these pieces of work are the effects of fostering on the biological children, and how the emotions of being a biological child in a foster family are dealt with.

secure awareness of context factors

The theme of adoption and fostering is profuse throughout both of the stimulus texts that I read before I began to write my pieces of work. The initial idea began when reading *The Kite Runner* by Khaled Hosseini, and in particular, the point in the novel when the main character returns to his home country to adopt a child. This area of the plot inspired me to write pieces along the theme of fostering; an area I can draw on personal experiences to enable me to write my texts about. This initial idea then caused me to read my two stimulus texts, which are both heavily focused on the theme of adoption.

Influence of stimulus text

The theme of adoption is prominent throughout my own work. This includes sentences such as "taking another parent's child into your home" which makes sense in the context of fostering. The assumed knowledge of the listener emphasizes the target audience; and makes the purpose of this piece relevant to particular people. This is similar in the non-fiction piece of writing which I created. For example, "foster care fortnight", "fostering" and "foster families" are all a part of the same lexical set of vocabulary; which are used to accentuate the theme of fostering, as well as making the audience clear and concise.

clear understanding of how meaning is shaped

One of the main features of my stimulus text *Oranges are not the only fruit (Oranges)* is the use of the narrative technique. The story of *Oranges* is told through the eyes of the main character, Jeanette. I have adopted this narrative style into my fiction short story piece, *An extract from a book of memoirs comprised by children who have been affected by fostering* which I have written in a first person narrative style from the perspective of the main character, who is nameless. This narrative style is obvious to the reader because of the use of personal words such as "I'm sat in the living room of my house". The personal style is similar to that used in *Oranges*, for example, "there was only one thing I could do". The personal pronouns enable the reader to form an understanding of the character's thoughts and actions. This understanding then enables the reader to sympathise with the character as the story progresses.

The individualistic style is also used in my non-fiction piece *A TED talk about the side effects of fostering on foster families, and how to take the good with the bad*. This piece is written in the form of speech as it is a TED talk presentation. It is made personal by the use of personalized vocabulary such as "Welcome to my TED talk". This makes the audience who would be listening to the presentation feel as if the speech is more personal; as if they are having a conversation rather than being talked at. Both of my pieces have incorporated this idiosyncratic style in order to create a personalised experience when reading or hearing the pieces.

Another feature of *Oranges* which I have used to inspire my own work is the anecdotal elements of the novel. For example, the main character in *Oranges* recites Bible stories to the reader with the purpose of putting the events of the novel into a wider context. I have used anecdotes throughout both of my pieces, such as, "my Mum had been the one to open the door" which is a part of a story in the fiction piece. This part of the short story allows the context to be established through the use of imagery and descriptive

discriminating  
understanding  
of connection  
between  
stimulus text  
and own  
writing.

Appropriate  
terminology  
has been  
used  
throughout

Effective  
link between  
the texts.

vocabulary. The anecdotal style also establishes the purpose to inform and entertain, as well as allowing the reader to have a clear image in their head of what is happening in the story.

One of the anecdotal elements of my non-fiction piece is when the speech progresses onto giving examples of personal stories to reinforce the purpose of the speech; which is to make the audience aware of the effects of fostering on the family. For example, "throughout my childhood there were children coming and going" creates imagery for the listener, as well as a voice that is considerate of what is going on around them. This is easily comparable to the anecdotes used in *Oranges* such as "downstairs, they talked in low voices" which creates a sense of voice which is observant as well as anecdotal.

The other stimulus text that I used was the autobiographical memoir by Jeanette Winterson called *Why be happy when you could be normal?* (WBH). The narrative in this novel is also first-person; a style I have used in both pieces of my work. Because of this personalised style, the tone created is reflective. This is shown through sentences such as "I understood, in a very dimly lit way, that..." – which creates a considerate narrative voice. I have assimilated this style into my own: "I remember feeling tiny...but I felt tiny inside too" which presents the character as a thoughtful one; similar to Winterson.

This same technique is used in my non-fiction piece too; such as "being in a foster family isn't as much like an episode of Tracy Beaker as you'd like". This considerate tone makes the audience empathise with the speaker; making them more compassionate to what is being said in the speech. A sense of voice is created which is perceptive; which then allows the audience to be considerate of what is being said. As well as this, the language used is colloquial. The lowered register enables the audience to familiarise themselves

Discriminative analysis of how meaning has been shaped when explaining own writing

evaluative knowledge of how the audience might respond to the text.

with the speaker, while simultaneously creating a voice which the audience is able to engage with – the register is suitable for the target audience of the speech.

The register of language is similar in the short story which I have written. For example, “he’d been pulled out of the care of his parents” – the colloquial language allows the reader to engage with the character, and a familiar sense of voice is created. Also, the term “pulled out of care” is a phrase which is subject specific to the context of fostering.

secure awareness of contextual factors

Therefore, the assumed knowledge of the language creates a character that the audience can empathise with, as well as making the target audience clear. The word “pulled” also implies force; a verb which is used accentuate the emotional aspects of fostering; and creates sympathy within the reader towards the character.

Both of my pieces of work are clearly inspired by the stimulus texts which are both written by Jeanette Winterson. The narrative style of this author, as well as her use of specifically chosen language, creates a strong sense of voice which the audience can engage with. I have used her style to make my pieces successful, where the genre, purpose, target audience and language have been specifically chosen to engage the readers and listeners. Winterson’s work is captivating as well as engaging because of her tone of voice which is outstanding in her writing, an element I have clearly incorporated into my own work.

There is a clear link between the language used by Winterson and the language used in my work.

Perhaps could have focused on the style of the Ted talks used as stimulus material too, but a clear and detailed analysis of how meanings have been shaped in both of the texts. Clear and discriminating analysis of the connections between the 4 stimulus texts + own writing + contextual factors.

An extract from a book of memoirs comprised by children who have been affected by fostering

I'm sat in the living room of my house and I'm looking into the eyes of this kid stranger. ✓

We've only just met and I don't know what to say. What can you say to a child who's supposed to be becoming a part of your family when you're not actually related? ✓ *engaging opening*

It's an odd feeling to have a stranger join you. Maybe that's why I remember the day he moved in so vividly: I remember feeling tiny, probably due to the fact I was quite young, but I felt tiny inside too; like everyone and everything around me was bigger than me, and I suppose the enormity of the situation did weigh in on me, without really realising. ✓

It had been a long time coming, waiting for him to move in, and when he finally did it felt like we could stop holding our breath. My mum had been the one to open the door and when she did there was a brief moment of silence where we all stared at each other, and that moment seemed to go on forever, when in reality, it was simply seconds. The child I looked at seemed somewhat broken; you could see the hurt in his eyes and the pain in his heart. I knew at that moment I wanted to help this kid; help fix him, take away his hurt and replace it with happiness. I saw this damaged child like a farmer saw lambs in the frost, and wanted to take him in and wrap him in a blanket. ✓ *lovely simile*

Even though I was only slightly older than him, I felt decades ahead of him. He'd been pulled out of the care of his parents when his teacher worked out he was being abused, and by abused I mean beaten and starved; not just hungry but agonisingly malnourished. ✓ His eyes stuck out because his eye sockets had sunk in so far, and his bony fingers looked like they could be broken by the wind. ✓

When I go back to that moment when I'm sat in the living room of my house staring into a stranger's eyes, who would've guessed what was waiting round the corner? ✓ *adols intrigue*

My parents wanted to act like there was nothing unusual about taking another parent's child into your home and into your family, and I suppose after I while there wasn't anything weird about it. He fit in, he was easy going and easily entertained – so what wasn't there to like? A question my parents often threw at me when I started to feel a little bit left out. Our social worker told us to speak our minds, especially when it was something to do with fostering, and that's exactly what I was trying to do. But instead of following the advice of the agency, which was to have "special time" with me, it felt like they pushed even harder to make me feel like I was the one who wasn't born into this family, like I was the kid stranger and the odd one out. ✓

I miss the times when I was the only child; and this doesn't come from a place of selfishness, but from a place of disappointment and feelings of abandonment.

I miss them because he was hateful to me.

He'd pick on me at home and at school, and it was made worse when he got the other kids to join in. At least if you get bullied by a classmate you have home to be your sanctuary; but that wasn't the same with me. I had literally nowhere to hide from his torment. It got worse when I told my parents – they told me to grow a thick skin and get over it. To be grateful for what I had. But what was there to be grateful for when my foster brother was constantly torturing me? He picked away at everything I was, and everything I had. It got to the point where I wished a social worker would put me into care. Anything to get away from the suffering he caused me and the ignorance my parents suffered from.

I think that's why the day he moved out was the best day of my life. My parents were heartbroken, but I could never understand why because there was nothing even remotely charming about him. Sometimes I felt like they wished I was the foster child and that I was the one leaving and he was the one staying. But I couldn't care about my parents

when all I could focus on was my tormenter being moved away. "Not far", our social worker kept reminding us, as if that was any reassurance to me. In fact, him being "not far" only added insult to injury; they might as well have poured salt into an open wound.

He lived only a few streets away, so he was difficult to avoid, but I managed most of the time. At least my tormentor was out of my house.

If I went near the house he now lived in, I'd make sure to cross the road to the other side of the street. It was just another autumn day when I saw him for the first time since he'd left. He was getting beaten. The air was cold but when I saw his bloody face it seemed to get colder, the leaves falling around me started to drown me as they faded from orange to black. My world went spinning.

And now I'm a crossroad.

Who do I tell? If anyone? I often think back to the time we first met; the innocence in his eyes. But then I could never erase the look of absolute hatred in his eyes when he'd hurt me. When he was making me suffer, it was as if he became dead inside; his eyes dimmed and his heart hardened. Part of me thinks he's getting what he deserves – karma in its purest form; hurt someone and get hurt. But the other part of me shouts that he was once the kid getting abused. That kid was innocent. But the boy who tortured me: that kid wasn't innocent.

I don't know what to do.

Let karma get him? Tell someone and save him? But then that would mean risking my own sanity if he moves back here. It's a catch 22 and either way my stability is becoming unhinged.

One of us is going to suffer.



I'm sat in the living room of my house and I'm remembering the eyes of this kid stranger. ✓

Now I have to decide who to save.

cyclical

Particularly effective structure and  
some lovely descriptions well crafted  
Good use of carefully chosen verbs  
throughout. A range of punctuation  
would have made this easier to  
read at times and more sophisticated  
vocab. Lots of good use of metaphors  
and similes.

A TED talk about the side effects of fostering on foster families, and how to take the good with the bad

Hi everyone. Welcome to my TED talk. As it's foster care fortnight, I've come to talk to you about the effects of fostering on families, and in particular, the positive and negative effects of fostering.

Coming from a family who looked after foster children, I can say it changes you, whether it's for better or for worse is up to you. You see, fostering can be very fulfilling; it gives you a sense of purpose like nothing else. You're giving children who have gone through hell and out the other side a chance at a "normal" childhood. And I say "normal" because one person's idea of normal can be another person's abnormal. And certainly, the family life I had growing up was something many people thought was unusual. How many of you can say you are a part of a foster family?

And that's why I'm here and why foster care fortnight exists. People don't really know what fostering is. And if they don't know what fostering is, they definitely don't know what the side effects could be. When I was younger, I'd just say to my friends: "Well you know Tracy Beaker? Yeah, it's basically that" - and that was enough for people to understand. But what people don't understand is that although fostering is a very fulfilling experience, there are many side effects on the whole family.

A study was completed in southeast Iowa found that 77% of the foster carers that took part in the study were concerned about the effects of foster care on their biological children, and especially that their children could be made to feel left out of the family unit. These fears aren't unfounded. It's the same feeling people can get when a new sibling joins the family. Most people can relate to that, I'm sure. The green eyed monster comes out to play when the adults who used to fuss over you are now cooing over the

Immediate  
sense of  
purpose

deliberate  
use of  
florid  
conjunction  
to make it  
more  
speechy

use of  
statistics  
adds  
weight to  
the point

new baby. It's the same. The adults change their focus from you to the new member of the family, the difference is, they're not getting attention because they're a newborn, but because they need it. These looked after children need constant reassurance that they are in a safe place, and sometimes that can make the biological children feel ignored.

Smooth transition between paragraphs

However, this "ignorance" that can be felt by the biological children can have a positive side effect; even though the feeling of being ignored is unpleasant, there's nothing like no longer being the focal point of the family to make a kid grow up. Trust me, there's a noticeable impact. You are forced to become more independent in ways that most children won't have to until they reach their teens. And by independent, I just mean with regards to the simple things, like not being told to brush your teeth or comb your hair. I don't mean you become an adult all of a sudden - you're still a kid - but a kid that's more aware of things you could do for yourself, instead of relying on your parents for every last thing.

I give credit to the foster kids we looked after for my confidence and willingness to stand up for myself, and for what's right. When there's a child in your own home who's shouting and threatening towards you, you quickly learn how to defend yourself and deescalate a situation. My siblings, my parents and I made sure none of us were walked over - it just wasn't going to happen in our house. There are some children in the care system who can be very manipulative, and it felt like we got a large sample of those children; so we all learnt how to not be drawn into their schemes and how to stand our ground. This was a knack that was useful in the playground; no kid was going to look at me the wrong way and get away with it. And I don't mean I beat them up; I just wasn't (and I'm still not), scared of confrontation.

Appropriate use of tone.

Throughout my childhood there were children coming and going and it quickly got to the point where I wasn't even a little bit fazed by the kids who'd set up their lives in our house for a bit, before moving onto the next chapter in their lives. I was use to organised chaos, and I didn't have a problem quickly making friends with the children we looked after; a skill I could easily adopt into my social life.

Many of the biological children of foster families are similar to me in this way; as in, they weren't going to put up with any aggro. This wasn't the case for all of them though; some became very reserved and could be pushed over by a feather. Which is something I'm trying to make clear with this talk. Being a biological child in a foster family isn't as much like an episode of Tracy Beaker as you'd like. I'm lucky that I used our fostering as a platform to learn how to be assertive, but that's not the case for all children. Some feel pushed aside and replaced. So if you're a foster carer or considering it, and you have children of your own; remember that your children and their feelings must be the priority.

The biological children can end up on either ends of the spectrum – either like me, who know I am loved by my parents and was encouraged to be empathetic towards others, but a biological child could end up on the opposite extreme; a biological child who feels excluded and pushed aside. Fostering has side effects; it will change your character, but you can be in charge of how it changes you; so don't let it be negatively. As harsh as it sounds; look after yourself first. It's only going to be a fulfilling experience if both parties benefit from it. It's not all bad, but it's not all good either – so take advantage of the bad by allowing it to be an experience you can learn and grow from. There's a bit of good in everything; even if it takes a bit of digging through the rubble.

Some minor technical lapses which do not hinder the reading of this engaging piece. Strong use of speech features and anecdotes to make it

### **Bibliography**

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