

9EN0 04

GCE English Language
Coursework

Folder 4

Binge drinking

“Oona! Oona! Oona!”

The pre drinking starts as Oona’s friends surround her. “I am 18, I can’t believe it.” She screams as more gifts and cards shove into her arms. The avalanche of booze washes over them; vodka, rum and anything else you can think of is being poured down Oona’s thirsty throat. The race to get smashed and reach the night’s peak motivates Oona to carry on necking the glasses back.

With laughter bouncing off the walls, Oona and her friends are dancing so hard that beads of sweat begin to trickle down their foreheads as they stumble around the dance floor.

Half an hour later and Oona’s eyes are swimming and her vision is hazy. As Oona tries to stand still, she looks over to her left, squinting as if her vision would slowly clear if she could just focus for longer. Watching Daisy dance on her now muddied sofa she tries to make sense of Daisy’s chaotic actions. Daisy’s arms are wildly waving in the air like a juggler performing at a circus as she chants happy birthday from across the room. Oona’s ears feel blocked as if there has been a change in altitude. Muffled voices are swirling around her throbbing head whilst more shots are being tipped down her throat.

“I feel sick.” Oona mumbles whilst holding another cigarette to her mouth as she staggers outside. The ash falls to the floor; her mouth feels musty while her rough, pale tongue swirls around her teeth. She smears her hand across her lips wiping the smudged red lipstick off her face and her mouth starts to dry up like the ash tray.

Sam turns the music up so loud that Oona’s ears are vibrating. All she can see through the slit of her lids is endless bottles littering her kitchen counters.

Oona’s neighbour’s anger begins to pierce through the walls as a sudden loud thump bangs on the door. It was Sally. Oona never liked her neighbour Sally. She used to always thud on the walls when Oona was giggling too loudly with Daisy. Sally comes rushing in, her face forms creases around her eyebrows and her eyes are squinting in the foggy mist of smoke.

Oona sits in her dirty kitchen listening to the racket flooding through the house vaguely seeing Sally in the corner of her eye, frantically clearing up broken glasses on the floor.

She slowly sips some water and chuckles to herself as she sways around her chair trying not to fall off. Oona didn’t recognise these boys who are throwing food around her kitchen. The fire alarm goes off as smoke starts to fill the kitchen. Oona glances to her left. Everyone is smoking inside.

This isn’t what she had intended to happen when her birthday had started all those hours ago in the kitchen.

That morning she had woken up to the smell of bacon crisping in the oily frying pan. Oona raced downstairs in her pyjamas as if she was still a little girl to find her mum making her a special birthday breakfast. The sausages were spitting up at her as she peered into the pan and the sunny side up eggs formed like a yellow sunrise. “Happy birthday” Oona’s mum said, embracing her not so little girl into her arms.

Oona’s family started to stampede into the kitchen buried in presents. Her family’s warm enthusiasm and love made Oona feel so special.

She had opened her first present. It was an iPhone. Oona's smile stretched across her face as the wrapping paper started to pile up. Oona started to look forward to her party.

She could barely see her new iPhone now as it swam before her eyes. The dazzling lights burn through Oona's tired senses as she remains confused on her kitchen chair. Oona's breathing becomes slower and her blue tinged skin feels icy cold. Daisy rushes through the crowd to see her best friend vomiting into her pale hands. The loud noises cling to Oona's jumbled head as the ear-splitting sounds begin to create walls around her. She looks to her hand in confusion. She hears Sally shout to all the other drunk teenagers "It's time for everybody to leave, get out." All the teenagers reluctantly leave the house, treading their muddy trainers through Oona's mum's new white carpets.

Oona has fallen to the floor.

Pools begin to form in her watery eyes as they slowly flicker open. Something is hurting in her hand, it must have been when she fell. There is a large needle and a bag attached to a long metal rod pouring wee coloured liquid into her. She tries to move her arm but it is as stiff as her muffled head. Oona glances sideways not recognising the granny nylon curtains. "Where am I?" she croaks but no one is in the room to hear her. She stares down to the floor trying to focus her eyes on the little black printed dots against the white shiny floor. Oona's eyes wonder into a day dream as the sound of wheels drifts through the hallway outside her room. Oona's mum rushes into the room with Sally and Daisy running behind her. She has puffy dark bags under her eyes as if she has been up all night worrying. Her hair is messy and her trousers are all creased. "You have worried me sick Oona." Her mum whispers whilst squeezing her tightly close. "Never do that again." She said softly trying not to cry.

Oona has learnt from her mistake, and is left damaged in a hospital bed wondering if this was worth it. She continues to rest whilst gently holding her mum's hand, promising to her that this will never happen again.

'962 words'

Margaret

It was a beautiful day in Frigate. The sun powered over the crystal blue sky as the cirrus clouds barely moved. The breeze came skipping down the meadows and the birds were singing as loud as they would on a spring morning. Margaret was glad she had been woken by the birds today as she gazed out of her window her thoughts drifted into the still, silent air. The subtle breeze in the sky made Margaret feel there was movement around her again.

As Margaret delicately spread a thin layer of jam on her toast, she peered down and put her fragile hand out to stroke Oscar. "Blackcurrant's your favourite too dear Oscar." She said whilst scraping the last few bits out of the jar. Oscar was licking the jam off her hand under the table trying to get the remaining bits in his mouth. "We are going to have to get some more Oscar" she said looking at her empty cupboards.

With Oscar hovering by her feet she called up the stairs. "Darling do you want anything from the shops?" She hesitated whilst putting on her long cream cashmere coat. Margaret gently shut the door not bothering to wait for her darlings reply while she hummed under her breath.

She sat on the bus stop bench watching life go by. She glanced to her right noticing a young couple laughing and screeching as they scoffed their picnic down. "How uncivilised." She said. Margaret's darling would always bring handkerchiefs to the picnic. He would always make her howl with laughter whilst they played chess every Sunday on the village green together. He used to always woo her with buying different types of flowers from; from Lilies and Daffodils to daises and roses until he could find out which ones were her favourite.

There were a number of people out this afternoon, far more than last Saturday. It must have been because of the village fete. The sun was shining down on her head. "I hope my darling remembers where I put my sunhat." She mumbles to herself vaguely remembering losing it last Saturday.

An old couple came and sat next to her in the bus stop; only two people could share the bench so they huddled closely together whilst the old man was almost drowning in his enormous jacket. His arms were wrapped around her like he never wanted to let go. "I remember when my darling would wrap his arms around me." Margaret thought to herself as she admiringly stared at the loving man and his wife.

Margaret sat down on the bus next to a young youthful chap. Racket was pouring out of his headphones. She looked over to him as she pondered the younger generation and how she'd never heard that music before. The young boy noticed Margaret and turned his music down in consideration of the old lady he saw. She looked over to him, the way his hair curled around his ear reminded her of her darling and she looked away.

At the supermarket, she wheeled her trolley behind a Scottish man and his overly large wife wearing filthy clothing as if they had been living in a tent for two weeks. And she had been going on the whole time about how she should have worn her pink boots instead of her dirty brown ones and he remained patient and quiet as if he was used to this.

Margaret had forgotten what it was like when her darling came shopping with her. He would always hold onto the front of the trolley to stop it swerving into the shelves stuffed with food. But now Margaret had to wheel it slowly down whilst trying not to nock into people. Her darling would always reach for the items on the top shelf that Margaret couldn't reach. She would gaze in awe of her darling. His hand would always clasp around hers as he sneakily popped a bunch of flowers in the trolley without Margaret noticing. "He would do it every Saturday." Margaret said to herself as she knew he'd never let her down. "My darling would

always carry the heaviest bags and leave me to carry my favourite flowers." She muttered whilst wiping her hazy eyes with her dampened handkerchief.

Margaret sat on the bus for the rest of the bumpy journey home as the rickety bus rolled through Frigate. She had lived in Frigate all her life. "Oh look there's Linda." Margaret waved her hand and smiled but Linda didn't see her. Linda had been one of Margaret's closest friends for many years now. When they were younger they would go down to the riverside together and feed the ducks. They would only ever go on a Sunday afternoon, this is because they admired the boat man and sometimes he would offer them a boat ride if he had a spare moment. They would giggle for hours until their tummies would hurt for days. Margaret smiled to herself. "Oh how I loved when my darling would offer me those memorable boat rides." The boat man asked Margaret to dance with him the first time he lay his eyes on her. After that he would look forward to every Sunday afternoon as he knew at around 2 o'clock Margaret would come to visit. He would wear a ruffled white blouse that would half be tucked into his baggy brown trousers that had an ink stain below the left knee. Margaret grinned to herself whilst remembering her darling's flourished face forming little creases around his smile as he watched Margaret.

By the time Margaret got home after buying all of her darling's favourite foods, the evening became dull again. Margaret had remembered that it wasn't a spring morning anymore. The almost darkened sky marched over Margaret's little cottage. The hissing wind ran along the pitch black fields around her.

Margaret sat by the fire on her pale chair staring softly at the framed photographs above the dust mantel piece. She longingly gazed at the handsome man in a stylish suit while her eyes shed tears. He was looking down at a beautiful lady in a pink flowery dress as his smile stretched across his face. "My darling." She whispered in a muffled shaken voice. "how handsome you are" she added whilst her eyes continued to fill up. Sitting in the middle of Margaret and Oscar was a beautiful bunch of her favourite flowers, tulips. For now Margaret buys them for herself and puts them in the same blue vase that her darling had bought the first bunch of flowers in.

Margaret slowly felt the silence around her close in like a woollen blanket as she felt her darling silently slip away.

'1,125 words.'

Commentary

For my coursework I have written two short stories aimed at different audiences.

The first one is about an old lady called Margaret. I wanted the audience to have an emotional response to this story; therefore I created a sense of loneliness throughout by Margaret referring to her "darling husband." I wanted to imply that he could be alive so Margaret speaks about him as if he is just upstairs resting. In the story, Margaret has a cat called Oscar, and at the beginning, I used ambiguous lexis to make it unclear who Oscar was as it could have been her husband who isn't given a name in the story. "Blackcurrant's your favourite too dear Oscar."

The setting in the opening paragraph is happy and peaceful which contrasts to Margaret's implied loneliness. Personification ("The breeze came skipping down the meadows.") at the beginning, creates a light heartedness and a sense of hope. As the function of my short story is to entertain, the use of personification enables the reader to use their imagination and relate to the character. It also gives an emotional side to it that an older audience can understand.

One of my style models *Miss Brill*¹ is also about an old lady who, like Margaret, doesn't have much of a life and is delusional about her loneliness. She thinks she is important however the story ends on a really sad and depressive note. This discourse structure is similar to my piece because by the end, the audience can feel the silence in Margaret's life and the large piece missing from it: "she felt her darling silently slip away."

I used flashbacks to indicate the life that she had and how it is different to what she has now. They were also used convey how she is reminiscing about her past when "The boat man asked Margaret to dance with him the first time he lay his eyes on her." This declarative highlights a special moment because the reader then understands that her darling was the boatman. Back in Margaret's generation, being asked to dance implies love and romance which contrasts to today's world as it is rarer to be asked. The reader therefore perceives an image that Margaret is a traditional old lady. This is a similar technique to *Tears of Glass*² which refers to the memories of the character's mama in order to create an emotional response in the reader.

Margaret is very observant of other people, and enjoys watching younger couples in love. She is attentive to how people do things differently nowadays to how her and her darling did things. In the story, Margaret notices a young couple scoffing their picnic down. "How uncivilised." This term Margaret uses reveals she thinks highly of herself and she'd never be seen to scoff a picnic down. It also gives the reader a sense that Margaret gets embarrassed by that generation as she would have always used a "Handkerchief."

¹ Miss Brill, Katherine Mansfield (1920)

² Tears of Glass, Renae A. Blum (2001)

My second short story is about an 18-year-old girl called Oona and is aimed at teenagers. The function of this piece is to entertain but also inform about the dangers of binge drinking which is also relevant to the teenage audience. However, unlike Margaret, this story is intended to be humorous.

I wanted to use features such as hyperbole to show the extreme effects alcohol can have on young people. I created an over exaggerated imagery of them being buried in alcohol. I also wanted to emphasise the importance of the issue therefore I used a semantic field relating to mountains. For example: "The avalanche of booze washes over them" and "Oona's ears feel blocked as if there has been a change in altitude."

The structure differs from my other story. It starts at the party, then has a flashback to the morning of her birthday then goes back to the party and then into the hospital room. This structure creates a more interesting discourse and also implies a chaotic atmosphere which relates to Oona's drunken and disorientated night.

Because the function of my piece was to inform teenagers of the effects of drinking, I wanted to produce a hedonistic scene at the start, but then in the flashback I wanted to reveal Oona's loving family. This creates an emotional side to the story as her mum loves and nurtures Oona however Oona's aim is to get drunk on her birthday. The flashback in this story helps the readers relate to the real Oona, who lovingly cuddles into her mother's arms as if she's still a little girl.

I tried to emphasise Oona's happiness when the story has a flashback to the morning of her birthday. I also tried to keep a positive tone when writing about Oona's birthday breakfast and encourage readers to feel the warmth of her family life and how everything was perfect. "Oona's smile stretched across her face." This contrasts to how Oona feels at the party. "she smears her hand across her lips" This reemphasises the importance of the issue because of the extreme effects binge drinking can have.

I have used similes to describe Oona's imagination which allows an understanding of how she is seeing things when she is drunk. ("Daisy's arms are wildly waving in the air like a juggler performing at a circus.") This simile generates the childlike manner of Oona's imagination and also creates a comical side to the story. This is similar to *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas*³ which has numerous references to drinking and drug-taking ("Right next to me a huge reptile was gnawing on a woman's neck.") to appeal to its target audience.

In the hospital room, it gives a warm-hearted ending to my story which links to the flashback at the breakfast giving a time of calm and warmth as Oona's loving mother comes in and hugs her and whispers "never do that again." whilst holding her tears back. The intention of the ending paragraph was to make the reader sympathise with Oona's mum. I also wanted the audience to feel Oona's regret and how it wasn't worth it.

(1,047 words)

³ Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas: A Savage Journey to the Heart of the American Dream, Hunter s Thompson. (1972)

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