

GCSE ENGLISH LANGUAGE

Paper 2 Writers' viewpoints and perspectives

Insert

The two sources that follow are:

Source A: 20th Century literary non-fiction

The Other Side of the Dale

An extract from a book by Gervase Phinn, published in 1998.

Source B: 19th Century non-fiction

The Ragged School

An extract from a diary written by a teacher, published in 1849.

Please turn the page over to see the sources

Source A

This extract is from a non-fiction book called 'The Other Side of the Dale' written in 1998 by Gervase Phinn about his experiences as a School Inspector in the north of England. In the extract he describes a visit to a primary school in Crompton.

1 Sister Brendan, the Head teacher, saw my car pull up outside her office window and was at the door of the school to greet me before I had the chance to straighten my tie and comb my hair. She beamed so widely that, had she worn lipstick, I would have expected to see traces on her ears. The small school was sited in the disadvantaged centre of Crompton, a dark and
5 brooding northern industrial town. Tall black chimneys, great square, featureless warehouses, and row on row of mean terraces stretched into the valley beyond. The school was adjacent to a grim and forbidding wasteland of derelict buildings and piles of rubble, surrounded by half-demolished houses which seemed to grow upwards like great red jagged teeth from blackened gums. From the grime and dust I walked into an oasis: a calm, bright, welcoming
10 and orderly building.

11 'Good afternoon to you, Mr Phinn,' said Sister Brendan enthusiastically. 'I got your letter. We are all ready and waiting and raring to go.' She was a slight, thin-cheeked woman with tiny, dark, darting eyes and a sharp little beak of a nose. Sister Brendan looked like a small hungry blackbird out for the early worm.

15 'Good afternoon, Sister,' I replied, shaking a small cold hand.

'And did you have a pleasant journey, Mr Phinn?' she asked, her little black glittering eyes looking up into mine.

'Yes, indeed, Sister, a very pleasant journey.'

The Head teacher took me on a tour of the school, fluttering along the corridors, pointing and
20 chattering and chuckling away as we went from room to room. Children's painting and poems, posters, pictures and book jackets covered every available space. Shelves held attractive books, tables were covered in shells, models, photographs and little artefacts. Each child we passed said 'Hello,' brightly and in all the classrooms little busy bodies were reading, writing, discussing, solving problems and working at the computers.

25 'It's a hive of activity,' I remarked.

27 'Does that make me the Queen Bee?' asked Sister Brendan with a mischievous glint in her shining eyes.

It was clear that for Sister Brendan the children in her care were a source of real delight. She glided through the school, pointing out with pride a painting or a poem displayed on a corridor
30 wall, telling me about the football team and the drama group and the brass ensemble, introducing me on the tour to each teacher with a flourish. I explained to Sister Brendan the reason for my visit: to hear a selection of children read, test their spellings and look at their writing. The small head nodded like some mechanical toy.

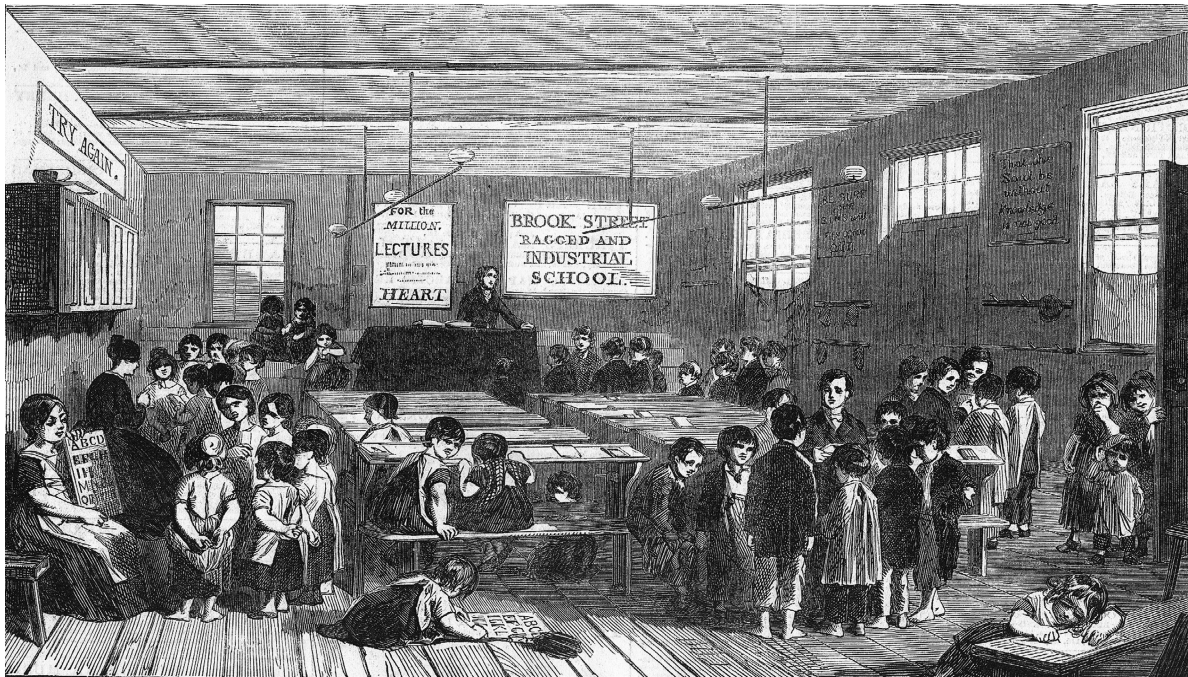
- 35 'No child leaves this school unable to read,' she boasted. 'It is the single most important skill and we work extremely hard to achieve success for every child. Most of these children have few books in their homes and many of their parents do not have the inclination nor the time to hear them read so our task is a hard one. To fail to teach a child to read, Mr Phinn, in my book, is tantamount to handicapping the child for the rest of his life. I hope you will conclude, when you have done your testing and heard the children read, that we have risen to the challenge.'
- 40 I tested a sample of twenty children in the small and attractive school library. They came one after the other, clasping their readers, bright-eyed and keen. All read with clarity and expression and when they spoke it was with enthusiasm and confidence. And I have never met such lively enquiring minds nor so many budding little philosophers in ones so young.

Turn over for Source B

Source B

Source B is taken from a diary written in 1849 by a teacher at a ragged school. Ragged schools were set up to teach children whose parents were too poor to pay for their education. The schools were often housed in unsuitable buildings in poor areas of the city.

EXTRACTS FROM THE PRIVATE DIARY OF THE MASTER OF A LONDON RAGGED SCHOOL



1 Oct. 29th 1849 –

On the way to the school this morning, it was a dismal scene . . . nothing but squalid dirt and idleness – the lanes leading to the school were full of men, women and children: shouting, gossiping, swearing, and laughing in a most discordant manner. The whole population seemed to be on the eve of a great outbreak of some kind or another, ready for anything but work . . . These lanes are a moral hell . . . We prepared the school by placing benches for the division of the scholars into four classes, and as they came tumbling and bawling up the stairs, we directed them to seats. Shortly after ten o'clock I spoke to them kindly, and then asked them to join with me in prayer.

10 No school can be possibly worse than this. Here the very appearance of one's coat is to them the badge of class and respectability, for they know very well that we are the representatives of beings with whom they have ever considered themselves at war.

I had occasion to punish a boy slightly this morning. He swore most horribly, and rushed from the school. I took little notice of this display, and sat down calmly to hear the class read. I was suddenly startled by a large stone passing my ear. If it had struck me on the head, I must have been severely hurt. I got out of the reach of stones thrown through the window, and continued the lesson. Several followed – half-a-dozen at least. He was ready in the courtyard with a brick in his hand, to have his revenge when I came out.

20 Several visitors called in the afternoon, and they had scarcely left when a most distressing
scene occurred. Two girls of twelve or thirteen years of age quarrelled. The first notice I had
of this was to see the pair boxing most viciously. Before I could get at them, they had hold of
each other's hair, and were yelling most fearfully. They fought like furies, but before we
could separate them, one had received a severe and lasting injury in the eye, and her nose
25 bled profusely. I sent her home, and went again to work, but it had not been quiet for ten
minutes when a fearful outbreak took place. Seven women rushed into the school and
outside, at least fifty women had collected. These were the mothers and friends of the girls
who had fought. Having abused me in no measured terms – they proceeded to fight.
Our boys cheered most tremendously. The women swore and shrieked. Those outside
30 responded. Never, surely, was such a noise heard before. I did not believe that human
beings resident in this city could so behave . . .

So by the help of God we must work harder. It is a post of honour. It is a forlorn hope.

Oct. 30th 1849 –

35 If possible the scholars were more unruly to-day than they were yesterday, but no serious
outbreak took place. All our copybooks have been stolen, and proofs exist that the school is
used at night as a sleeping-room. We must get a stronger door to it. I must also get a tub to
stand by the pump in the courtyard, and a piece of coarse towelling and soap. My duties
must resolve themselves into –

40 First – To see the boys and girls well washed and scrubbed
Secondly – To try to get prayers said decently
Thirdly – To give them a lesson in their duties and privileges
Fourthly – Some religious instruction
Fifthly – Reading
Sixthly – Writing
Seventhly – Arithmetic.

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