

AQA GCSE ENGLISH LANGUAGE

Paper 2: Writers' viewpoints and perspectives

SET A

Insert

The two sources that follow are:

Source A: 21st Century literary non-fiction

A newspaper article written by Paul Valley published in 2010

Source B: 19th Century non-fiction

A letter written by Oscar Wilde in 1897

Source A

Paul Vallely writes about his experience of visiting a British child prison and speaking to some of the staff. This was published in *The Independent* in 2010.

The car turns into the driveway of the large Edwardian house and I can't hide my look of surprise. I expected barbed wire and reinforced concrete, not architecture and period features. I am immediately greeted with the impression that I've been brought to a luxury spa, somewhere I would be willing to pay copious amounts of money to stay.

5 However, the car ignores the front door and sweeps on to the low, new brick-built extension hidden behind the house. My expectations suddenly become realized - the windows there are of reflective glass. Outsiders can't see in. But the occupants can see out. In the control room, where staff survey two banks of CCTV, the staff press the button to close the shutter. Only when it has clanged back into place are the car doors

10 opened. Two men get out of the back. So does the small, mousey boy who has been sitting between them.

The child is one of the 150 children in Britain today who are so violent that they have to be locked up. However, it's hard to believe looking at this boy. He stares around with a look of terror upon his face, trembling slightly at the intimidating security measures. He

15 does his best to look composed but still looks terrified. I can't help but feel a twang of sympathy towards him when I spot him wiping a tear from his eye when he thinks nobody is looking. He is no longer in control of his own life and his piteous response will do nothing to change that.

The building is one of 10 secure children's homes throughout England, which keep

20 children under lock and key, for the protection of the public. What I have recently realised is that this, sometimes, is also for the good of the children themselves. When done well, the imprisonment of children can provide respite from the abusive homes and dysfunctional situations which lead these children into crime to begin with. However, with rocketing suicide and assault rates, the success and practices of such

25 institutions are coming under fire and rightly so. This one has been applauded for its low level of re-admittance after inmates have served their full sentence and I'm interested to see if it can swing my opinion further.

The boy is shepherded into a meeting room with a long, narrow table and works of art on the walls, done by previous inmates. At the head of the table is the unit manager –

30 he appears warm and friendly but comfortably carries an air of authority. He tells me that developing the inmates' artistic skills has been a crucial part of the success at this particular prison. 'We're not here to simply lock them up, it's our duty to allow the inmates to express themselves and develop the skills that will help them find work after release. If they don't grow and develop under our watch, they'll be back here within

35 days of release.'

Rehabilitation through art – I can't hide my surprise that this is the key to the success of the prison. However, my initial scepticism completely disappears when I speak to his colleagues – I am almost convinced that time spent here is beneficial for the inmates.

- 40 The manager is a social worker with two decades of experience of detaining these children, experience that his colleagues tell me has brought about a vast improvement in the prison since he took charge. The comments I hear from everyone I speak to show their admiration of him and appreciation for him: 'he encourages the perfect balance between nurture and discipline', 'he worked tirelessly to provide the kids with
- 45 all of the art equipment.' I am told that, upon appointment, he immediately met with all front-line staff to make it clear to them that they have a responsibility to care for and nurture the inmates. The mantra is clear: the kids found themselves in here not because they're monstrous, but because they're vulnerable. If they're upset, reassure them; if they're angry, talk to them about how they could manage their anger better.
- 50 He turns his focus to the mousey boy. "We get up at 7.30," he begins. "Breakfast at 8.15. Then chores till 8.50. Then education, with lessons till 12.15, and then lunch. Then education again until 3.30, after which there is some individual or group work till 4.45. After that: homework for an hour..."
- "Homework?" says the boy, incredulously. "Can't I go on the Xbox?"
- 55 "Homework, for one hour, then after that Structured Activities – craftwork, model-making," says the manager. "Then after that maybe some time on the Xbox, if you've earned the privilege."

Turn over for Source B

Source B

Oscar Wilde was a famous writer who was sent to prison. He wrote this letter to *The Daily Chronicle* after his release in 1897 about the treatment of children in prisons.

Dear Sir, the present treatment of children is terrible, primarily from people not understanding the psychology of a child's nature. How can a defenceless, helpless child (unknowing of the evils of the world) understand a barbaric punishment inflicted by society? Their minds are solely locked in the moment, in the present – focusing only on the cruel treatment they are subjected to, unable to understand how imprisonment could lead to a better sense of consequence, moral right and wrong and of a just character.

The imprisonment of children in this current climate is one of unparalleled savagery. The child, being taken away from its parents by people whom it has never seen before and of whom it knows nothing, finds itself in a lonely, festering unpleasant and unfamiliar cell. The prison guards are not comforting and reassuring – this I have bore witness to with my own eyes. To the child, the guards of nothing more than strange, cold faces. The children are ordered about and punished by representatives of a prison system that it cannot understand. Inevitably, these juvenile prisoners become like prey to the first and most prominent emotion produced by modern prisons - the emotion of terror.

The terror of a child in prison is quite limitless. I remember once, in Reading prison, as I was going out to exercise, seeing in the dimly-lit cell right opposite my own, a frail boy - minute in stature. Two warders were talking sternly to him. In my heart, I longed to believe that perhaps they were giving him some useful advice about his behavior but I know the likelihood of this was beyond hope. One was in the cell with him, the other was standing outside. The child's gaunt face was grey and yellowish, sickly to behold. There was in his eyes the terror of a hunted animal, vulnerable and prone to attack; upon sight of this, my heart could not help but break, overwhelmed with pity and sympathy.

The next morning I heard him at breakfast time crying and begging to be let out. His cry was for his parents. From time to time, I could hear the deep voice of the warder on duty telling him to keep quiet. It quickly emerged that he was not even convicted of whatever little offence he had been charged with. He was simply on remand. This I knew by his wearing of his own clothes, which seemed neat enough. He was, however, wearing prison socks and shoes. This showed that he was a very poor boy, whose own shoes, if he had any, were in a bad state. The children who were in prison after sentencing often were treated better – those on remand only given the very basic of essentials: old, worn clothing if their own was insufficient. They were the last to be fed – often getting the worst of the scraps. They were put in the filthiest cells, with the most inadequate of bedding – barely able to warm the children against the chill. Those here for much longer sentences weren't in receipt of much better.

Justices and magistrates, an entirely ignorant class as a rule, often remand children for a week. They call this "not sending a child to prison". It is, of course, a stupid view on their part. To a little child whether he is in prison on remand for a short period of time, or after conviction for a much longer stay, is no different. To him, the horrible thing is to be there at all. In the eyes of humanity it should be a horrible thing for him to be there at all.

End of sources



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