

Part 7:

A Short Story

English Literacy & Language Development, Workshop Series 2010

Part 7: A Short Story

# 1. Introduction

This section includes a short story. We read good stories to learn about the world. We read about the experiences of fictional characters and as we explore their actions we understand our lives and ourselves better. Stories create an imaginary world based on real life. We can think about human emotions and values such as love, hate, revenge, betrayal, loyalty and much more. We study the characters and events created by the author and draw on our own lives to enable us to enjoy the story.

## Learning outcomes

By the end of this section, students will demonstrate their ability to:

* Actively and closely read a short story by accurately responding to questions;
* Complete pre-reading activities that promote an understanding of the short story;
* Produce a one-page written response to the story;
* Demonstrate an understanding of new vocabulary words; and
* Demonstrate an understanding of the literary elements such as setting, theme and character.

# 2. Learning Activities

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Icon_3.jpg | Pre Reading ActivityLearning activity 2.1:  |

Look at the title of the story below. With a partner discuss the answers to the following questions. Write your ideas down in the space provided:

1. What does “initiation” mean? Use your dictionary before discussing the answer.

|  |
| --- |
|  |
|  |
|  |
|  |
|  |

1. Give examples of initiation ceremonies from your own lives.

|  |
| --- |
|  |
|  |
|  |
|  |
|  |

1. Read the first paragraph of the story and decide where you think this story takes place. Write this down in which place the events of the story occur.

|  |
| --- |
|  |
|  |
|  |
|  |
|  |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Icon_3.jpg | Pre Reading ActivityLearning activity 2.2:  |

Matching words and meanings: With a partner, match the following words with the appropriate meaning by drawing a line between the word and its meaning.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| 1. **Vehemently**
 | 1. A. adjective; too great or beautiful to describe in words
 |
| 1. **Septuagenarian**
 | 1. B. adjective; extremely bad or annoying; terrible; morally bad and evil
 |
| 1. **Trivial**
 | 1. C. adverb; showing very strong feelings, especially anger
 |
| 1. **Incongruous**
 | 1. D. noun; an act causing pain or damage; annoyance: something or someone that causes trouble; a source of unhappiness
 |
| 1. **Retort(chemistry)**
 | 1. E. noun; a person between 70 and 79 years old
 |
| 1. **Artless**
 | 1. F. noun; a condition in a which a part of the body is not the normal shape because of injury, illness, or because it has grown wrongly
 |
| 1. **Ineffable**
 | 1. G. noun; a closed bottle with a long narrow bent spout that is used in a laboratory for heating chemicals.
 |
| 1. **Condescension**
 | 1. H. adjective; not important or serious; not worth considering
 |
| 1. **Infliction**
 | 1. I. adjective; simple, natural and honest; made without skill or art
 |
| 1. **Fallible**
 | 1. J. adjective; strange, and not suitable in a particular situation
 |
| 1. **Deformity**
 | 1. K. noun; an act of behaving towards someone as though you are more important or intelligent than they are
 |
| 1. **Diabolic**
 | 1. L. adjective; able to make mistakes or be wrong
 |

Definitions adapted from the Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary, 2005.

When you have completed the vocabulary activity read the following short story silently.

**The Initiation**

**Laurens van der Post**

HALF-WAY THROUGH MY LAST YEAR AT SCHOOL my family decided to send my brother to join me. He could have done with another six months or year at the village school because he was still backward in his studies, but my family thought it would be easier for him if he had me to introduce him to life in a great public institution and help guide his awkward paces. I was not consulted but merely told of the decision, because, I expect, my family took it for granted that I myself would like the idea. It was another instance of what everyone expected of me and I received the decision, as far as I am aware, with an ease which confirmed my place in the estimation of my elders and betters.

The year had gone well for me at school. I had never been more successful and popular both with boys and masters. I was in the first eleven, captained the first fifteen, won the Victor Ludorum medal at the annual inter-school athletics, and was first in my final form. I was head of the senior house and would have been head of the school, I think, if I had not been a year or two younger than most fellows in my form. Both masters and boys confidently predicted that at the close of the year I would be awarded the most coveted prize in the school, that for the best all-round man of the year. It was to this brilliant and crowded stage that I returned from vacation with my strange brother at my side.

We arrived the afternoon before the re-opening of the school. I don’t think I was over-sensitive as a child except, perhaps, to the reaction of people and the world to me. But as the school slowly became aware that the awkward graceless shadow at my side was indeed my brother even I could not help feeling the surprise that merged into the ineffable condescension of public pity in the atmosphere around me. More subtly still I got an inkling of the relief that can surge through the hearts of the many when they begin to suspect an infliction of fallible humanity in the lives of their popular idols. My contemporaries were surprised and for one brief moment I was able to see how ready are the mass instincts to seize an excuse for pulling down the very thing that they themselves have need of elevating. Perhaps I imagined myself to be beyond the reach of all these influences. But they had their effect on me. They could not, to put it at its lowest, make me love either myself or my brother more. I was young enough to hope that once he had gone through the various rites and the tough period of initiation which tradition prescribed for newcomers to the school, his oddness would be accepted as part of the daily scene, and that the qualities which endeared him to his family would have their chance to emerge. Yet, from the very first evening, the start was not encouraging. First impressions are important to the young and never more important than when there are initiation rites to perform.

After all, the purpose of initiation ceremonial is first, by a process of public humiliation, to make the victim aware of his inferiority and then to extract from him, through some painful form of ordeal, proof of the courage which alone can entitle him to redemption from his shameful singularity in membership of the privileged community. Moreover, I have noticed that among those to be initiated there is always one who seems to be pre-destined to bear an extra burden of ritual because he alone appears to personify most clearly the singularity that has to be humiliated and sacrificed. I use the 'appears' deliberately in my school, it was this appearance this first impression, which decided the degree in initiation that the candidate was to be forced to endure. All crowds seem to possess an instinct for determining with diabolic accuracy the most suitable sacrifice among its prospective victims. My school was no exception. Even if I had not been apprehensive I could not have helped noticing how everyone who met my brother soon found their eyes drawn in puzzled focus to the spot where his padded coat concealed his deformity.

I watched one boy after another come up to him and fire the usual questions: name, age, address, form in school, games, favourite books, hobbies and so on. My brother answered them all in that artless manner of his without concealment. Yes, his name was the same as mine: he was indeed my brother. Was that so surprising? He was eleven, and in the first form. Yes, he should probably have been out of it long ago but he was no good at books. No, he didn't play any games either. He didn't like games much and never played them unless forced to. His hobbies were music and growing things, if you could call that a hobby!

The catalogue of unorthodox answers completed, his questioners hastened away to spread the news of how strange a fish had been thrown up on the school beach in the shape of the brother of the head of the senior house. Soon I was left without doubt that he would have to bear the main burden of initiation if the school were free to have its way. Only one thing stood between my brother and such an unenviable fate: the fact that he was my brother.

Now to be fair to myself I had discussed initiation many times with my brother. He knew all there was to know about it. He knew the details by heart and even remembered some that I had forgotten. He was as ready for it, intellectually, as any newcomer could be. Also, he had great physical strength and resistance to pain. Nothing I had told him about running the gauntlet in pyjamas with the school drawn up in two long rows and hitting out hard at the runners with wet towels plaited to a fine lash-like point; about waking-up and finding some boys sitting with pillows on his head while others put a slip-knot of a fishing line round his toes and pulled at them, one by one, until they bled in a perfect circle; nothing about being made to measure the distance from school to town with his toothbrush on his half-holidays, or having to wear boot-laces instead of a tie into town, or being forced to look straight into the sun without blinking for as long as some older boy commanded, or being tied up and left on the frosty dormitory balcony all night, none of these things, I repeat, had unduly dismayed him. There was only one thing he truly feared: exposure and mockery.

When we were told he was accompanying me to school the first thing he asked was "They won't make fun of…you know…will they?" "Of course not", I'd replied vehemently. "You're going to a decent school not a village animal pen!" The relief in his eyes was so intense that I quickly looked away. Was there far back in the long tunnel of my mind a faint cackle of cock-crow? Was I really so certain? But I gave myself no chance to discover doubt and repeated firmly: "We're not at all that kind of school."

Later, on the day of our return to school, as our train came to a standstill at the platform and we got ready to leave our compartment, again his broad hand clutched my arm and he asked: "They won't - will they [[1]](#footnote-0)Ouboet?" It was on that occasion, for the first time, that I pretended not to know what his question meant. I exclaimed irritably: "Won't what?"

He was utterly taken aback. For a moment he stared speechless at me, then said in a frightened whisper: "Mock me because of - Oh God, you know what, Ouboet!"

"Oh, that!" I answered noticing how heavily he was taking it to heart and continuing as if it were all too trivial for words: "I've told you already, we're not that kind of school."

I think the question was again on his lips when I did my round of the dormitories last thing that night. But if it was he dared not ask it. He just looked at me with such eloquent apprehension that I turned away hastily and bade him a curt: "Good night."

My rounds done I went to join the heads of the other three houses in the study of the Captain of the school. I had done that walk between my house and the school many times, yet that night it felt to me as if I had never done it before. Every detail had taken to itself the mystery of all things. The moon was so bright that I could see then shadow of our greatest mountains at the end of the plain many miles away. The round white-washed stones beside the gravelled drive might have been skulls adorning the approach to a barbaric court.

The cactus in the rock-garden raising its arms high to heaven was a Maya priest, knife in hand, sacrificing to the moon. The shadows of the trees were inky pools of tidal water lying forgotten among glistening rocks, and the whole night was hissing urgently as if the moonlight were the sea and the earth an outward-bound ship parting the surf at the bar of some harbour mouth. Between the school and the distant town, night-plovers cried continuously, like gulls over the stormy Cape.

It all made such an overwhelming impression on me that I stood for a while in front of the Captain’s door, wondering. Even the stars moved as if they were sparking off messages in their own confidential code. Noticing it, I was sharply harried by the fancy, which came out at me like a watch-dog in the dark, that perhaps they really did carry some special message for me? Impatiently I dismissed the notion as clearly absurd. I was there to discuss with the Captain of the school and others the ordinary business of the term. The five of us had met, thus, on the eve of each re-assembly for the past eighteen months. The idea that there would be any extra significance on this occasion even made me impatient with the splendour of the night.

I rapped on the door and went in to be warmly welcomed by the Captain and heads of the other three houses. After a cheerfully busy hour or two the Captain said: ‘This brings us now to the little matter of tomorrow’s initiation. I take it you’ve all interviewed the newcomers in your houses. Have you any youngsters you think should be excused?’

Yes, said the man next to me, he had a boy with a weak heart who’d brought a doctor’s certificate to that effect. The next, grumblingly, said he’d got a chap who was as blind as a bat, with lenses thick enough for a septuagenarian! He’d probably better be excused all the physical rites though there was no reason why he shouldn’t be available for the rest of the fun. The third pleaded similarly for a boy still recovering from a long fever. Then came my turn. Firmly I said I had no one needing to be excused.

The Captain looked keenly at me. ‘No one?’

‘No,’ I repeated carefully veiling the surprise I felt at his question and looking him steadily in the eye. But to my amazement he didn’t leave it at that.

‘You’ve got a young brother in your house, haven’t you?’ he asked.

‘I have,’ I answered, my whole being springing to attention.

‘What about him?’ the Captain asked.

‘Well, what about him?’ I answered so sharply that the others laughed.

The Captain smiled. ‘I was merely wondering if he was all right—’

‘Of course he’s all right.’ My answer was quietly vehement yet the Captain persisted.

‘Forgive me, old chap,’ he said, almost shyly. ‘I don’t want to badger you. If you say he’s all right we all accept it. But, knowing you, we realize the last thing you’d ask for would be a special dispensation for a relation. So if you’ve any reason for wanting your brother excused tomorrow we’d none of us think of it as favouritism.’

A spontaneous murmur of applause went round the table. I found myself blushing. ‘Awfully decent of you but there’s no reason, honestly.’

‘Well, then, that’s that,’ said the Captain, evidently well satisfied with the way the claims of decency and business had been met, and he bade us a hearty good night.

On the way back I found myself upset

 and not a little sad, and I was unable to explain it to myself. It is only now that I know that between my impatient rap on the Captain’s door and the moment when it opened and shut behind me again as I stepped out into the unbelievable moonlight of that wheeling night, the master — nothing of which I have spoken previously had caught up with me and was moving fast into place.

A second example of this, if I may use so positive a phrase for so negative a phenomenon, arose next morning right at the beginning of school.

Prayers over, the Captain came up to me and said:

‘I’ve got to see the Head immediately after classes this afternoon. Would you keep an eye on things for me until I get back?’

He was referring of course, to the ‘round-up’ of newcomers which always took place on the opening day between the last class and the first prep.

‘D’you mind if I don’t?’ I asked at once.

‘Of course not.’ He paused, ‘I didn’t really think you’d want to. But as you’re head of the senior house I felt I had to ask you.’ He smiled and put a friendly hand on my shoulder before moving on.

I had a suspicion of his feeling but my intimates saw to it that I soon knew the full meaning of his words. Apparently after our conversation the Captain had told them all of my refusal to take charge of the school during the ‘round-up’, and he had explained that he was certain it was done out of respect for the traditions of the school and in order to ensure that my popular presence in a position of authority should not influence the crowd to treat my brother differently from any other unprivileged newcomer. He had even added that it was exactly what he’d expected of one with such a scrupulous sense of fair play.

Slowly that first day at school passed its peak mid-day hour. I had not seen my brother at all since early morning when I stopped an over-spirited scrummage between some older boys outside his dormitory before breakfast, until a moment or two before the school dismissed at the end of the day. There were, of course, dozens of good reasons why the head of a large house has no time for personal affairs and private consideration on the opening day of school. If anyone had accused me then of trying to avoid my brother, I could have rebutted the charge without difficulty. Today I might accept the result of my actions as proof enough of my real intention no matter how hidden it may have been from me at the time. I have no idea what my brother felt during all that busy day because we have never discussed it. In a way I can imagine it from my own experience of my first day in the same school. After all I had had to endure the start of school without a brother for comfort and a lot of good had come to me out of so elementary a test. Obviously there was a lot to be said for leaving my brother to fend for himself. True, he had his extra dimension of fear to make horror of his anxieties but, believe it or not, ever since that moment on the platform when I had refused to understand his meaning, this aspect of his problem had slipped from my memory, almost as if I had been secretly resolved not to remember it.

When finally I did see him that day, it was just after school had ended.

He was standing against a pillar close to the door of the senior Science laboratory in which my form was doing practical chemistry. He was standing very still as always when possessed by only one thought. Occasionally his eyes left the door to try and peer through the windows of the laboratory but because the light flamed and flared in the cool mauve glass he could not see anything in the shadows behind it. Obviously he was waiting for the class to come out to seize a chance of speaking to me before the ‘round-up’ which, judging by the noise coming from the quadrangle on the far side of the laboratory, was rapidly getting under way.

For a moment I felt a desperate pity. He looked so incongruous and helpless, his young arm clasped round the iron pillar for support. I knew, too, that he had no chance of seeing me. Some minutes before I had already gone to the science master and offered to stay behind after class and prepare the laboratory for the next morning’s class. The idea had come to me quite suddenly. I could pass it off as pure impulse. Yet the result deprived me of my last chance of seeing my brother before the ‘round-up’ and ensured that I was detained on duty elsewhere until it was all over.

As the laboratory door opened and the class hurried out my brother desperately searched among them to make quite certain he should not miss me from among those jostling figures. When the last one sped by him and I was not there the same look of utter finality came to his eyes as on that afternoon before crossing the dry river bed at home, when he had said tonelessly: ‘They’re after me Ouboet.’ He stood peering at the emptiness around him as if he couldn’t believe his eyes. I doubt if he saw the science master come out and shut the laboratory door almost in his face. He just stood there looking irrevocably lost while I watched him, unseen, from within, wilfully denying the validity of his need of me or of my chance of helping him. Indeed, suddenly I found my spirit hardening against him. I wished he would go and get his trivial fate over as we had all had to do before him....

Almost as I wished it an exultant shout went up nearby. There was a rush and scurry of heavy school boots: heads and faces of a crowd of young lads appeared outside the window. Whooping, jeering, screaming, tearing, they pulled my brother towards them. He stumbled. As he went down his face was like that of someone who cannot swim being swept out to sea on an unsuspected current.

I turned my back on the window thinking: ‘Well, that’s that. It’ll soon be over now, and he’ll be better for the experience.’ I began to tidy up. But I didn’t get far.

I found myself standing, a retort in hand, listening. The noise coming from the quadrangle which before had been like a great roar, now had a new subdued tone. Not that it was dying down. On the contrary it maintained itself in waves, at the same savage pitch. It was the sound of a people all of one mind — or rather of no mind at all. Yes, this united voice came before mind and its cry was filled with the strange cannibal hunger of those who have not yet lived themselves. It was the sound of diverse being made one through the same appetite, and though it issued from young throats the sound itself was old and worn threadbare with time. It was even older, I felt, than the grey old mountain looking down on the school.

I had helped at these ‘round-ups’ often enough. But this was the first time I had had to listen to it apart, and alone. It was the first time, too, that my own flesh and blood had fed its hunger. At the thought I nearly dropped the chemical retort in my hand. Swiftly I wondered what my brother could have wanted of me? What good could seeing me have done? Would my familiar brotherly face in that sea of unknown ones have made him feel that he was not quite alone in his experience? Would my awareness of his own most secret fear have made him feel, in some measure, safe against the excesses of the mob? These seemed such fantastic lines of reasoning that I told myself impatiently ‘A fat lot of good it is arguing. He’s just got to go through with it. My being there might even make it worse'.

In this way I completed my betrayal. So confident was my negation that it did not even fear drawing attention to itself by argument. But as it settled down comfortably within me, a great silence suddenly fell over the school. I knew that silence well. The victim designate, the sacrifice supreme, the symbol round which the herd ritual turned, was about to be proclaimed. Despite all my resolutions to the contrary I moved quickly to the one window which gave on the quadrangle. I looked out. My brother, hatless, dishevelled and whiter than I had ever seen him, was lifted shoulder-high by some of the bigger boys in the quadrangle. The moment the crowd saw him a fresh roar burst from it and everyone began mocking him according to their only particular gift until, in a flash, all the streams of insult and humiliation became one, and the whole crowd as my brother was carried through the crowd, began chanting derisively:

‘Why was he born so beautiful,

Why was he born at all?’

At the far end of the quadrangle were two long deep water-troughs, relics of the far pioneering days when bearded ‘boys’ rode to their classes on horseback, guns slung across their shoulders. Between the two troughs were two sets of taps, side by side, in the wall. This, by tradition, was a favourite place for sport with newcomers to the school. The taps were convenient for display, and the troughs handy for ducking. My brother was soon forced to stand on the taps and roughly pushed up against the wall, facing the crowd.

I was too far away to see his expression. I know only that, from a distance, he looked like a caricature of a schoolboy. His dark face which had gone startlingly white was all the more so by contrast with his great head of thick black hair. His nose was invisible to me, but his mouth and large black eyes showed up like three blobs of darkness in the centre of his moon-white face. His head was tilted awkwardly on one side and he looked awfully like a clown. When he was firmly in position on the water-taps one of the bigger boys climbed on to a trough beside him, held up his hand for silence and said: ‘Chaps, this newcomer has got to do something for our entertainment. What shall it be?’

After a moment several voices cried out: ‘Let him sing. He says he likes singing. Let him sing!’

‘Right!’ The speaker turned at once to my brother as if expecting him to start singing straight away. My bother, I suspect, was swallowing hard with nervousness and far from ready to sing. The speaker at once punched him with a fist on the shoulder shouting: ‘Come on, Greenie, you’ve had your orders. Sing, blast you, sing!’ Music as I have told you was peculiarly my brother’s own idiom. With the prospect of singing, even in such circumstances, his courage appeared to come back. He obeyed at once and began to sing:

"Ride, ride through the day,

Ride through the moonlight,

Ride, ride through the night

Far, far…"

The opening notes were perhaps a trifle uncertain but before the end of the first line his gift for music confidently took over. By the second line his little tune sounded well and truly launched. But he didn't realize, poor devil, that the very faultlessness of his performance was the worst thing that could have happened. The essence of his role in the proceedings was that of scapegoat. He should not only look like one but also behave accordingly. Anything else destroyed his value as a symbol and deprived the crowd of any justification for its fun. The boys, quick to feel that the clear voice singing with such unusual authority was cheating the design of it ritual uttered an extraordinary howl of disapproval.

My brother faltered. Even at my distance from the scene dismay was plain in his attitude. He tried once again to sing but the din was too much for him. So he stopped altogether, his long arms dangling like sawdust limbs at his side and stared in bewilderment from one end of the quadrangle to the other, searching wildly, so a sudden sickness in my stomach told me, for my face. At that moment the crowd felt itself again to be in command. The howl of disapproval became a roar of relieved delight and the school now began to press towards the troughs chanting joyfully:

 ‘Greenie's a liar and a cheat,

He can't sing a note,

Greenie's a fraud: drown him,

Drown him in the moat!'

For a moment my brother's white face remained outlined against the afternoon fire flaming along the red-brick quadrangle wall, his eyes ceaselessly searching the screaming, whistling mob of schoolboys. Then he vanished like the last shred of sail of a doomed ship into a grasping sea. I don't know if you have ever listened to a crowd screaming when you have been alone and divorced from the emotion which motivates it? At any time it is a sobering experience. But when the scream is directed against your own flesh and blood - At that moment my heart, my mind, my own little growth of time all seemed, suddenly to wither.

I could not see what was happening. My experience told me that my brother was being ducked vigorously in the troughs as we had all been before him. I knew the 'drown' in the chant really meant 'duck'. All the same I was extremely nervous. I watched the struggle and tumult of yelling heads and shoulders by the water-trough, wondering whether it would never end.

Then suddenly again the crowd went motionless and silent. Some of the broader shoulders by the trough heaved, an arm shot up holding aloft a damp coat and shirt, and behind it was slowly lifted my brother's gasping face and naked torso.

'Look chaps!' a voice near him rang out with curious intonation. 'Look! Greenie has a little hump on his back'.

For a second there was silence as the boys stared at my brother held dripping in their midst. Then, as if at a signal, they all began to laugh and shake and twist and turn with hysterical merriment.

I had never seen my school go to these lengths before. I stood at the window as if nailed to the floor while the merriment transformed itself into one of the favoured chants.'Greenie has a hump, hump, hump, Greenie has a hump: one two and three and Greenie has....’

Then it stopped. The noise fizzled out and the crowd in the quadrangle became uneasily still. A window on the second floor of the main building had been thrown open. The head and shoulders of the English master were learning far out of it.

'Who, might I ask,' he demanded in a voice precise and icy with anger. 'Who is in charge here this afternoon?'

'I am sir,' the head of a certain house answered contritely.

'Well, dismiss your rabble and report to me in my rooms at once,' the master told him slamming down the window. However, there was scarcely need to dismiss the school. It needed no telling that it has exceeded itself. It was dispersing of its own accord, taking my brother away with it.

I remained at the window for a while in a state of undecided agitation. I wanted to rush out and do something to make good what had just happened. I was angry and humiliated and wanted to take it out of all and sundry in the school, not excluding my brother. I wanted also to rush out and comfort my brother. But it all came back to the fact I still had a duty in the laboratory to perform. The fact of duty. I tidied up the laboratory, set up the apparatus for the next morning's experiment and in the process came to the convenient conclusion that by far the best way of helping my brother would be to make light of his experience.

It was evening before I saw him again. He was coming out of the matron's room carrying a complete change of clothing on his arm. The long corridor was lit only by the reflected flames of a sunset flickering in the tall windows over the main stairway at the far end of the landing. My brother, recognizing my steps, stood still in the open doorway. The light from the Matron's room fell sideways on his face and left the rest of him indistinct in the rising night-shadow. He stood so still that his face looked like an antique mask hanging on the door behind him. I expected him to greet me as he always did but on this occasion he just stood there, silent.

'Well,' I said, assuming the gay nonchalance that I'd decided would be good for him. 'How did you get on today?' 'Then you weren't there?' His question was flat.

'Not where?' I answered seeking respite in evasion.

 'At the round-up.' He peered hard at me in the twilight.

'Oh, there!' I replied easily. 'No, I was in the science lab most of the afternoon. Had a job for the Science master to do. In fact, I've only just finished.' I stopped. Something in his face, looking up at me out of a past and forgotten dimension of time, stopped me. We stared at each other in a silence so great that I could even hear the Matron’s alarm clock ticking on her table inside the room.

‘I see,’ he said at last with, for one so young, an odd note of finality in his voice.

‘Well, I must hurry or I’ll be late for supper.’

He walked straight past me and ran for the stairs. I was so taken by surprise that I never stopped him. I might even have followed him if the Matron, hearing my voice, hadn’t asked me in to discuss some petty matter.

I saw him again late that night. He was in bed and either asleep or pretending to be. Twenty-four hours before I would without hesitation have called him by name, softly. Now, somehow I had not the confidence to do so; and so my last natural opportunity for coming to terms with myself vanished. The school, however, did not abandon the incident with ease. For a few days I was continually being stopped by fellows with sheepish faces all muttering some sort of an apology.

On the night after the round-up at the Monitors’ meeting the Captain of the school addressed me amid a murmur of approval saying ‘I’m sure I needn’t tell you, old man, what the school feels about this afternoon. We’re horribly ashamed of letting you down, particularly seeing how you trusted us,’ and so on.

Yet no one begged my brother’s pardon. I seemed to gain in popularity by the incident, but not so my brother. To him the school behaved as if it blamed him, and not itself, for the outrage, almost as if he had tricked them into doing something which otherwise they would never ever have dreamed of doing.

As for myself, that night, just as I was about to drop asleep comforted by the warmth of my reception at the Monitors’ meeting and the Captain’s concern for my feelings, I suddenly heard my young brother’s voice saying again in a tone that I have never heard before: ‘I see.’

Instantly I was wide-awake. That was a phrase he had never used before. Always in the past, when anything went wrong between us he’d shrugged his shoulders and said, ‘It’s nothing Ouboet.’ But now a new realization followed me like a ghost across the flimsy threshold of my sleep. Dear God, had my truth always got to be my brother’s untruth. My untruth his truth? Was something of this sort implicit in the nature of all betrayal?

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Icon_3.jpg | While Reading Activity – The InitiationLearning activity 2.3:  |

1. Who said the following: (choose from the author, the Captain, the brother, the English master, or the crowd)

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ "They won't make fun of…you know…will they?"

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ "Of course he's all right."

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ "Awfully decent of you but there's no reason, honestly."

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ "Let him sing. He says he likes singing".

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ "Who is in charge here this afternoon?"

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ "Then you weren't there?"

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ "He can't sing a note"

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ "I see"

1. What is the story's theme?
2. Boys’ cruelty to boys
3. The cruelty of initiation
4. A boy's betrayal of his brother
5. Lack of discipline in a big school
6. Explain the symbolic significance of the following extract from the story:

Was there far back in the long tunnel of my mind a faint cackle of cock-crow?

[Hint: this is a reference from the Bible]

|  |
| --- |
|  |
|  |
|  |
|  |
|  |
|  |
|  |
|  |
|  |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Icon_3.jpg | While Reading Activity – The InitiationLearning activity 2.4:  |

In the following extracts from the story, identify who or what the italicised word/phrase *(word/phrase in italics)* refers to.

1. The catalogue of unorthodox answers completed, his questioners hastened away to spread the news of how strange a *fish* had been thrown up on the school beach……."

|  |
| --- |
|  |
|  |
|  |
|  |
|  |

1. All crowds seem to possess an instinct for determining with diabolic accuracy the most suitable sacrifice among *its* prospective victims.

|  |
| --- |
|  |
|  |
|  |
|  |
|  |

1. Even the stars moved as if they were sparking off messages in their own confidential code. Noticing it, I was sharply harried by the fancy, which came out at me like a watch-dog in the dark, that perhaps *they* really did carry some special message for me.

|  |
| --- |
|  |
|  |
|  |
|  |
|  |

1. "I've got to see the Head immediately after classes this afternoon. Would you keep an eye on *things* for me until I get back?"

|  |
| --- |
|  |
|  |
|  |
|  |
|  |

1. He had even added that it was exactly what he'd expected of *one* with such a scrupulous sense of fair play.

|  |
| --- |
|  |
|  |
|  |
|  |
|  |

1. The idea had come to me quite suddenly. I could pass it off as pure impulse. Yet *the result* deprived me of my last chance of seeing my brother before the round-up and ensured that I was detained on duty elsewhere until it was all over.

|  |
| --- |
|  |
|  |
|  |
|  |
|  |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Icon_3.jpg | While Reading Activity – The InitiationLearning activity 2.5:  |

Answer the following questions with your partner and write the answers in the space provided.

Setting

1. Where is the story set?

|  |
| --- |
|  |
|  |
|  |
|  |
|  |

1. How do you know this?

|  |
| --- |
|  |
|  |
|  |
|  |
|  |

1. What detailed descriptions are given in the first page to make the setting seem real? Write down only three descriptions.

|  |
| --- |
|  |
|  |
|  |
|  |
|  |
|  |
|  |
|  |
|  |
|  |
|  |
|  |
|  |
|  |
|  |

Character

1. Is there a hero in this story? Explain your answer.

|  |
| --- |
|  |
|  |
|  |
|  |
|  |

1. Is there a victim? What makes the character a victim?

|  |
| --- |
|  |
|  |
|  |
|  |
|  |

1. Are there any other important characters? Explain your answer briefly.

|  |
| --- |
|  |
|  |
|  |
|  |
|  |

Theme

1. Is there a character with a problem? What?

|  |
| --- |
|  |
|  |
|  |
|  |
|  |

1. How does the problem affect other characters in the story?

|  |
| --- |
|  |
|  |
|  |
|  |
|  |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Icon_3.jpg | While Reading Activity – The InitiationLearning activity 2.6:  |

Indicate whether the following statements are **True or False.**

1. The younger brother was not afraid of the initiation. **TRUE FALSE**
2. The other boys soon discovered that the brother **TRUE FALSE**
had many good qualities.
3. The older brother was very good at sport. **TRUE FALSE**
4. The younger brother did not want his older brother's **TRUE FALSE**
presence at the initiation ceremony.
5. The crowd participating in the initiation ceremony did **TRUE FALSE**
not know the two boys were brothers.
6. The older brother chose not to attend the ceremony. **TRUE FALSE**
7. The boys who participated in the ceremony showed **TRUE FALSE**
no regret for their actions.
8. The younger brother knew that his older brother had **TRUE FALSE**
betrayed him.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Icon_3.jpg | Post Reading Activity – The InitiationLearning activity 2.7: [20 marks] |

Use the space on the next page and write a one-page response to the story outlining the following:

1. In **paragraph 1**, give a brief description of the setting, characters and the theme of the story in one paragraph.
2. In **paragraph 2**, write a second paragraph in which you answer one of the following or both questions:
* Did you enjoy the story? Why or why not?
* Did the story teach you a lesson about life? What?

**The reading response will be assessed according to the following guidelines:**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Organisation:** Introduction, paragraphs, topic sentences, supporting sentences | 4 MARKS |
|  **Content:** Logical ideas, relevant support, convincing arguments | **8 MARKS** |
|  **Clarity:** clear sentences, easy to understand | 4 MARKS |
|  **Grammar:** spelling, concord, tense, pronouns | 4 MARKS |
|  TOTAL | 20 MARKS |

|  |
| --- |
|  |
|  |
|  |
|  |
|  |
|  |
|  |
|  |
|  |
|  |
|  |
|  |
|  |
|  |
|  |
|  |
|  |
|  |
|  |
|  |
|  |
|  |
|  |
|  |
|  |
|  |
|  |
|  |
|  |
|  |
|  |
|  |
|  |
|  |
|  |
|  |
|  |
|  |
|  |
|  |
|  |
|  |
|  |

1. An Afrikaans word for an older brother. Afrikaans is a language spoken in South Africa [↑](#footnote-ref-0)