

AQA GCSE ENGLISH LANGUAGE

Paper 1: Explorations in creative reading and writing

SET O

Insert

The source that follows is:

Source A: 20th Century prose-fiction

The Destructors by Graham Greene

An extract from a short story published in 1954

Source A

This extract is from the end of a short story by Graham Greene. The story is about a gang of boys who destroy a beautiful 200-year-old house that survived The Blitz while its owner, Mr Thomas, is away. At this point in the story, Mr Thomas has returned early and the gang locks him in the outside toilet until the destruction is finished.

5 Mike had gone home to bed, but the rest stayed. The question of leadership no longer concerned the gang. With nails, chisels, screwdrivers, anything that was sharp and penetrating they moved around the inner walls worrying at the mortar between the bricks. They started too high, and it was Blackie who hit on the damp course and realised the work could be halved if they weakened the joints immediately above. It was a long, tiring, unamusing job, but at last it was finished. The gutted house stood there balanced on a few inches of mortar between the damp course and the bricks.

10 There remained the most dangerous task of all, out in the open at the edge of the bomb site. Summers was sent to watch the road for passers by, and Mr Thomas, sitting on the loo, heard clearly now the sound of sawing. It no longer came from his house, and that a little reassured him. He felt less concerned. Perhaps the other noises too had no significance.

A voice spoke to him through the hole. "Mr Thomas."

"Let me out," Mr Thomas said sternly.

15 "Here's a blanket," the voice said, and a long gray sausage was worked through the hole and fell in swathes over Mr Thomas's head.

"There's nothing personal," the voice said. "We want you to be comfortable tonight."

"Tonight," Mr Thomas repeated incredulously.*

20 "Catch," the voice said. "Penny buns — we've buttered them, and sausage-rolls. We don't want you to starve, Mr Thomas."

Mr Thomas pleaded desperately. "A joke's a joke, boy. Let me out and I won't say a thing. I've got rheumatics. I got to sleep comfortable."

"You wouldn't be comfortable, not in your house, you wouldn't. Not now."

25 "What do you mean, boy?" but the footsteps receded. There was only the silence of night: no sound of sawing. Mr Thomas tried one more yell, but he was daunted and rebuked* by the silence — a long way off an owl hooted and made away again on its muffled flight through the soundless world.

30 At seven next morning the driver came to fetch his lorry. He climbed into the seat and tried to start the engine. He was vaguely aware of a voice shouting, but it didn't concern him. At last the engine responded and he backed the lorry until it touched the great wooden shore that supported Mr Thomas's house. That way he could drive right out and down the street without reversing. The lorry moved forward, was momentarily checked as though something were pulling it from behind, and then went on to the sound of a long rumbling crash. The driver was astonished to see bricks bouncing

- 35 ahead of him, while stones hit the roof of his cab. He put on his brakes. When he climbed out, the whole landscape had suddenly altered. There was no house beside the car-park, only a hill of rubble. He went round and examined the back of his car for damage, and found a rope tied there that was still twisted at the other end round part of a wooden strut.
- 40 The driver again became aware of somebody shouting. It came from the wooden erection which was the nearest thing to a house in that desolation of broken brick. The driver climbed the smashed wall and unlocked the door. Mr Thomas came out of the loo. He was wearing a gray blanket to which flakes of pastry adhered. He gave a sobbing cry. "My house," he said. "Where's my house?"
- 45 "Search me," the driver said. His eye lit on the remains of a bath and what had once been a dresser and he began to laugh. There wasn't anything left Anywhere.
- "How dare you laugh," Mr Thomas said. "It was my house. My house."
- "I'm sorry," the driver said, making heroic efforts, but when he remembered the sudden check to his lorry, the crash of bricks falling, he became convulsed again. One moment the
- 50 house had stood there with such dignity between the bomb sites like a man in a top hat, and then, bang, crash, there wasn't anything left — not anything. He said, "I'm sorry. I can't help it, Mr Thomas. There's nothing personal, but you got to admit it's funny."

Glossary

**incredulously = showing disbelief*

**rebuked = showing sharp disapproval of someone because of their behaviour*

End of source