

Part 1: Reading comprehension

Unit 1: Same difference

Topic outline

- **Main skills:** reading for explicit meaning; reading for implicit meaning; recognising writers' effects
- **Secondary skills:** identifying facts; summary; informative writing; narrative writing; descriptive writing
- **Outcome:** informative piece; narrative extension; * short story
- **Materials:** informative non-fiction; narrative fiction; Worksheet for Text 1B plus answers
- **Texts:** Text 1A: Two of a kind; Text 1B: January the fifth

Lesson plan

- 1 Ask students to give their reaction to the idea of identical twins, describe those they have known, say whether they would like to be one. (5)
- 2 Ask students to skim-read Text 1A. (5)
- 3 Ask students to work with a partner to re-read the text, identify the key points – being careful not to confuse facts and opinions – and make a list in their own words. (5)
- 4 Collect feedback to write list of points on board. (5)
- 5 Ask students to scan Text 1A for examples of characteristics of informative writing, and to explain why this style is appropriate for this genre. (5)
- 6 Set task: Write a half-page summary of Text 1A on the topic of twins for an encyclopaedia entry, using and re-ordering the key points on the board and writing in the style of Text 1A. Collect pieces to assess for a) use of material (15 marks), and b) style and structure (5 marks). (15)
- 7 Choose four students to read the three speaking parts and the narration in Text 1B, which is the opening of a short story. (5)
- 8 Students work in pairs to complete the worksheet on Text 1B. (30)
- 9 Go through the worksheet questions and discuss validity of answers offered or solicited. (15)

Homework task

Write a continuation and ending to the story to explain what happens at the party.

Additional tasks

Ask students to plan, draft and write their own story with twins as the main characters, to include dialogue and descriptive and figurative language to create setting and atmosphere.

Text 1A

Two of a kind

Everyone is fascinated by identical twins: they look the same – even advanced digital imaging systems sometimes fail to tell them apart – and yet they have different personalities and abilities. Literature and detective stories depend upon them for providing a plot twist or a mystery. In reality, too, there have been numerous cases of one twin impersonating the other for a joke, to escape punishment or to advance a romantic interest.

They may have the same eyes, the same hair colour, the same smile, but one will be shy and the other more outgoing, or one cleverer or funnier or kinder than the other. And this despite their having the same DNA. They do not, however, have the same fingerprints, which are believed to be determined by environmental factors.

Twins like spending time with each other – often to the exclusion of others. In fifty percent of cases, they even develop their own secret language. Furthermore, it is commonly believed that they have the ability to communicate telepathically so that, for instance, one is able to draw a picture of what the other is thinking. There have been innumerable claims that a twin has shared the physical or mental pain of the other – known as ‘crisis telepathy’ – even when they could not have known it was happening.

Monozygotic twins – who share everything before birth – usually share everything after birth too: the same tastes in food, music, sport or politics ... One might think that this could be explained by the fact that parents often give their new-born twins confusingly similar names, continue to dress them exactly alike until they are well into their teens, and generally treat them in the same way throughout their upbringing.

However, there are well-documented cases of identical twins brought up separately from birth who nonetheless made the same decisions and life choices. In the 1980s, there was the much-publicised case of the identical twin ‘Jim’ brothers. Born in Ohio USA in 1939, Jim Springer and Jim Lewis were put up for adoption as babies and raised by different couples, who happened to give them the same first name. When Jim Springer reconnected with his brother at age 39 in 1979, a string of other similarities and coincidences was discovered. Both men were six feet tall and weighed 180 pounds. Growing up, they’d both had dogs named Toy and taken family vacations on the same beach in Florida. As young men, they’d both married women named Linda, and then divorced them. Their second wives were both named Betty. They named their sons James Alan and James Allan. They’d both served as part-time sheriffs, enjoyed home carpentry projects, and suffered from severe headaches.

In August every year, thousands of twins descend on a town in Ohio called Twinsburg, named by identical twin brothers nearly two centuries ago. The Twins Days Festival is a three-day event consisting of talent shows and look-alike contests that has become one of the world’s largest gatherings of twins. There have also been other festivals in the UAE, Australia, France and Nigeria. The latter country has a large proportion of twins in its population: one in 22 births to the Yoruba people in Nigeria produces twins, identical or fraternal, which is a much higher incidence than anywhere else in the world. This has been attributed to the eating of yams, but the theory is disputed. Biomedical researchers descend on these events, regarding them as a precious opportunity to conduct surveys and experiments.

Scientists study twins in order to collect evidence for the age-old nature versus nurture debate: how much of their behaviour is hereditary and how much conditioned by their environment; what are people actually born with and what is caused by experience? Because identical twins come from a single fertilized egg that splits in two, and share virtually the same genetic code, any differences between them must be due to environmental factors. Studying the differences between identical twins to pinpoint the influence of environment, and comparing identical twins with fraternal ones to measure the role of inheritance, has been crucial to understanding the interplay of nature and nurture in determining our personalities, behaviour, and vulnerability to disease.

Text 1B

January the fifth

Peter Morton woke with a start to face the first light. Rain tapped against the glass. It was January the fifth.

He looked across a table on which a night-light had guttered into a pool of water, at the other bed. Francis Morton was still asleep, and Peter lay down again with his eyes on his brother. It amused him to imagine it was himself whom he watched, the same hair, the same eyes, the same lips and line of cheek. But the thought **palled**, and the mind went back to the fact which lent the day importance. It was the fifth of January. He could hardly believe a year had passed since Mrs Henne-Falcon had given her last children's party.

Francis turned suddenly upon his back and threw an arm across his face, blocking his mouth. Peter's heart began to beat fast, not with pleasure now but with uneasiness. He sat up and called across the table, 'Wake up.' Francis's shoulders shook and he waved a clenched fist in the air, but his eyes remained closed. To Peter Morton the whole room seemed to darken and he had the impression of a great bird swooping. He cried again, 'Wake up,' and once more there was silver light and the touch of rain on the windows.

Francis rubbed his eyes. 'Did you call out?' he asked.

'You are having a bad dream,' Peter said. Already experience had taught him how far their minds reflected each other. But he was the elder, by a matter of minutes, and that brief extra interval of light, while his brother still struggled in pain and darkness, had given him self-reliance and an instinct of protection towards the other who was afraid of so many things.

'I dreamed that I was dead,' Francis said.

'What was it like?' Peter asked.

'I can't remember,' Francis said.

'You dreamed of a big bird.'

'Did I?'

The two lay silent in bed facing each other, the same green eyes, the same nose tilting at the tip, the same firm lips, and the same premature modelling of the chin. The fifth of January, Peter thought again, his mind drifting idly from the image of cakes to the prizes which might be won. Egg-and-spoon races, spearing apples in basins of water, blind man's buff.

'I don't want to go,' Francis said suddenly. 'I suppose Joyce will be there ... Mabel Warren.' Hateful to him, the thought of a party shared with those two. They were older than he. Joyce was eleven and Mabel Warren thirteen. The long pigtails swung

superciliously to a masculine stride. Their sex humiliated him, as they watched him **fumble** with his egg, from under lowered scornful lids. And last year ... he turned his face away from Peter, his cheeks scarlet.

'What's the matter?' Peter asked.

'Oh, nothing. I don't think I'm well. I've got a cold. I oughtn't to go to the party.'

Peter was puzzled. 'But Francis, is it a bad cold?'

'It will be a bad cold if I go to the party. Perhaps I shall die.'

'Then you mustn't go,' Peter said, prepared to solve all difficulties with one plain sentence, and Francis let his nerves relax, ready to leave everything to Peter. But though he was grateful he did not turn his face towards his brother. His cheeks still bore the badge of a shameful memory, of the game of hide and seek last year in the darkened house, and of how he had screamed when Mabel Warren put her hand suddenly upon his arm. He had not heard her coming. Girls were like that. Their shoes never squeaked. No boards whined under the tread. They slunk like cats on padded claws.

When the nurse came in with hot water Francis lay tranquil leaving everything to Peter. Peter said, 'Nurse, Francis has got a cold.'

The tall starched woman laid the towels across the cans and said, without turning, 'The washing won't be back till tomorrow. You must lend him some of your handkerchiefs.'

'But, Nurse,' Peter asked, 'hadn't he better stay in bed?'

'We'll take him for a good walk this morning,' the nurse said. 'Wind'll blow away the germs. Get up now, both of you,' and she closed the door behind her.

'I'm sorry,' Peter said. 'Why don't you just stay in bed? I'll tell mother you felt too ill to get up.' But rebellion against destiny was not in Francis's power. If he stayed in bed they would come up and tap his chest and put a thermometer in his mouth and look at his tongue, and they would discover he was **malingering**. It was true he felt ill, a sick empty sensation in his stomach and a rapidly beating heart, but he knew the cause was only fear, fear of the party, fear of being made to hide by himself in the dark, unaccompanied by Peter and with no night-light to make a blessed **breach**.

From 'The End of the Party' by Graham Greene, (first published 1929).

Worksheet for Text 1B: January the fifth

- 1 Give synonyms to replace the five bolded words in the text.

- 2 Look at the direct speech in the text and give the rules for the punctuation and layout of dialogue.

- 3 Select words and phrases from the text which convey the difference in character between the twins.

- 4 What can you infer about the character of the nurse, and what is your evidence?

- 5 Explain the effect of each of these images from the text.

Rain tapped against the glass.

a night-light had guttered into a pool of water

a great bird swooping

the touch of rain

They slunk like cats on padded claws.

6 a What are the recurring images in the text?

b What is their combined effect?

7 Write a complex sentence to explain the situation so far in the short story.

8 a Say what you think is likely to happen in the story.

b Give your reasons by referring to evidence in the text.

Answers to Worksheet for Text 1B: January the fifth

1 **palled** – became uninteresting; **superciliously** – disdainfully; **fumble** – behave clumsily; **malingering** – feigning illness, pretending to be ill; **breach** – gap, break, rupture

2 New and indented line for change of speaker; inverted commas around words spoken; final punctuation within the closing inverted commas; small letter to follow unless new sentence started.

3 Peter: *It amused him; self-reliance and an instinct of protection; his mind drifting idly; prepared to solve all difficulties*

Francis: *afraid of so many things; I dreamed that I was dead; humiliated; Perhaps I shall die; nerves; leaving everything to Peter; rebellion against destiny was not in Francis's power; fear*

4 The nurse is unyielding, unsympathetic and practical; she likes to follow a strict routine. We know this because she is 'starved', she believes in the power of fresh air and her response to being told that Francis is ill is to tell Peter to lend him handkerchiefs.

5 *Rain tapped against the glass.*

Rain is a device of pathetic fallacy to give a miserable atmosphere to the story from the start. It is personified as a person trying to get into the room. This begins a recurring image of Francis' fear of being touched by someone malignant, and of the power of water to snuff out life.

a night-light had guttered into a pool of water

This is one of the images of light being drowned; 'guttered' is an unpleasant-sounding word with connotations of being brought low. Although it is dawn, and it is party day, the imagery is dark and forebodes extinction.

a great bird swooping

Large dark birds are associated in literature with predation, death and evil. Many people are afraid of birds and associate their wings with the idea of smothering and blocking out the light.

the touch of rain

A repeat of the image in the opening paragraph that rain has fingers and is capable of touching. This symbolises the sudden terror of the feel of Mabel Warren's hand upon Francis' arm last year.

They slunk like cats on padded claws.

This is another predatory image, implying creeping up on a victim and causing injury with just a touch of the claws.

6 a The recurring images are of darkness, birds, and water, all working against the light and symbol of life.

b These are all things which can touch and extinguish, an idea further reinforced by the words 'palled' and 'blocking'. Francis stayed in the dark longer at birth, and again on the morning of this story, being embroiled in a nightmare and waking up later than his brother. The effect of the imagery is to suggest that the weak and passive Francis will be vanquished by the 'masculine' girls, just as cats prey upon smaller creatures and as the hen is preyed upon by the falcon, in the name of the hostess of the party Francis fears so much. Hide and seek is a game played in the dark, closed in and trapped like being back in the womb.

7 When he wakes after a nightmare, Francis is frightened of having to go to the party that evening, because of the girls who will be there and the games he will have to play, so he claims to be ill and desperately hopes that his more confident twin will be able to get him out of going.

8 a Example answer: It is likely that Francis will be forced to go to the party and that the same thing may happen again, this time with more serious consequences because Francis has such a morbid fear this time.

b A sombre mood is created by the weather, the nightmare and the recurring imagery. The date may be ironic, as it is the eve of epiphany, which means the coming of the light. The refusal of the nurse to be accommodating suggests that Francis will not find escape or rescue, since even his sympathetic brother seems unable to help him. The references to death and increased heart beats are an indication of impending disaster.

Answers – Unit 1

3 Text 1A key points:

have close physical similarities

show different behaviour traits

have same genetic code

have different fingerprints

enjoy each other's company

often communicate in their own language

believed by some to be telepathic

sometimes claim to share emotions and physical sensations

tend to like the same things

have been known to make the same decisions although brought up independently

occur most frequently in Nigeria

are the subject of scientific study to establish relative power of genes versus environment

develop from one egg.

5 Text 1A: characteristics of informative writing

rule of three (knowledgeable and authoritative, conveys range of examples); discourse markers e.g. however, furthermore (to show change of direction of argument); use of 'one' (impersonal and universal); use of passive voice (more scientific and official); precise, concise and varied vocabulary (effective and economical means of communicating and retaining reader interest); variety of sentence structures and punctuation devices (to balance the factual nature of the content).

6 Example answer:

Encyclopedia entry

Identical twins are the product of a single fertilised egg, which means that they share DNA molecules and a genetic code – though not fingerprints – and therefore have close physical similarities. However, they often have different personalities and are the object of scientific study to determine the extent to which this is caused by external factors. It is known that they usually have the same tastes, enjoy being together, and often devise an exclusive secret language. This has led to a widespread belief that they have telepathic abilities which allow them to communicate powerful feelings and sensations to each other when apart. Studies of twins raised separately have shown an extraordinary similarity of life choices. The highest prevalence of twin births is in Nigeria, though the reason for this is still unclear.

9 See Answers to Worksheet for Text 1B.

Unit 2: The falling wall

Topic outline

- **Main skills:** comprehension; developing a response to reading
- **Secondary skills:** identifying writers' effects; complex sentences; genre transformation; interviewing
- **Outcome:** news report; *descriptive writing
- **Materials:** short story; news report structure handout
- **Text:** Text 2: Framed

Lesson plan

- 1 Choose students to each read out part of Text 2. (5)
- 2 Ask students, in pairs, to underline words and phrases which convey:
 - a the power of the water in paragraphs 1, 2 and 3.
 - b the power of the fire in paragraphs 4 and 5.
 - c the power of the wall in paragraphs 1, 3 and 5. (5)
- 3 Invite answers and comments on why the choices are effective. (10)
- 4 Ask students to join into complex sentences:
 - a the four simple sentences at the beginning of paragraph 4
 - b the four simple sentences in the final paragraph.

Ask what difference this makes to the story. (It alters the emphasis, stresses cause and effect, and speeds up the narrative pace.) (10)
- 5 Choose students to read out their answers. Discuss and evaluate as a class. (5)
- 6 Allocate roles to the students: one of the three surviving firemen to the most articulate students, reporter to the others. Ask them to use Text 2 to prepare for a press conference, the reporters each thinking of a different question, the firemen of their answers. Go around the class, prompting where necessary. (10)
- 7 Hold a press conference at which the firemen take turns to answer questions and reporters take notes of their answers. (10)
- 8 Ask students to plan a news report of the event (see the accompanying online resources for news report structure handout), including statements by an eyewitness and an official. They should use information from their press conference notes as well as Text 2. Encourage them to create additional 'factual' details such as names and ages of people and places. (15)
- 9 Elicit the features of news report style and list on the board (include short paragraphs, short sentences, short words, sensational vocabulary, statistical facts, adjective strings before the noun). Ask students to write the first two paragraphs for their report, including these features. (10)
- 10 What makes a good headline? Write examples of headlines on the board and ask students to define the characteristics of headlines. (Elicit 'telegram' language i.e. 1–6 words, short words, no articles, present tense; alliteration, assonance or puns are optional.) (5)
- 11 Ask students to suggest headlines for their own news report and, in pairs, decide on the best one. (5)

Homework task

Write the news report of the fire and collapse of the wall. Give the report a headline and a sub-heading within the report.

Additional task

Ask students to write a description of a building on fire, using similes, metaphors and multiple adjectives in their writing.

Text 2

Framed

The writer and his fire-fighting colleagues are putting out a fire in a warehouse in London, caused by an air-raid bomb, when there is an accident.

I remember it was our third job that night, and it was 3 a.m. And there we were – Len, Lofty, Verno and myself, playing a fifty-foot jet up the face of a tall city warehouse and thinking nothing at all. You don't think of anything after the first few hours. You just watch the white pole of water lose itself in the fire and you think of nothing. Sometimes you move the jet over to another window. Sometimes the orange dims to black, but you only ease your grip on the ice-cold nozzle and continue pouring careless gallons through the window. You know the fire will fester for hours yet. However, that night the blank, indefinite hours of waiting were sharply interrupted by an unusual sound. Very suddenly a long rattling crack of bursting brick and mortar perforated the moment. And then the upper half of that five-storey building heaved over towards us. It hung there, poised for a timeless second before rumbling down at us. I was thinking of nothing at all and then I was thinking of everything in the world.

In that simple second my brain digested every detail of the scene. New eyes opened at the sides of my head so that, from within, I photographed a hemispherical panorama bounded by the huge length of the building in front of me and the narrow lane on either side. Blocking us on the left was the squat pump, roaring and quivering with effort. Water throbbled from its overflow valves and from leakages in the hose. A ceaseless stream spewed down its grey sides into the gutter. To the other side of me was a free run up the alley. A couple of lengths of dead, deflated hose wound over the darkly glistening pavement. A needle of water fountained from a hole in a live hose.

Behind me, Len and Verno shared the weight of the hose. They heaved up against the strong backward drag of water pressure. All I had to do was yell 'Drop it!' and then run. We could risk the live hose snaking up at us. We could run to the right down the free alley – Len, Verno and me. But I never moved. That long second held me hypnotized, rubber boots cemented to the pavement. Ton upon ton of red-hot brick hovering in the air above us numbed all initiative.

The building was five storeys high. The top four storeys were fiercely alight. The rooms inside were alive with red fire. The black outside walls remained untouched. And thus, like the lighted carriages of a night express train, there appeared alternating rectangles of black and red that emphasized vividly the extreme symmetry of the window spacing. Orange-red colour seemed to bulge from the black framework like boiling jelly that expanded inside a thick black squared grill.

Three of the storeys, thirty blazing windows and their huge frame of black brick, a hundred solid tons of hard, deep Victorian wall, pivoted over towards us and hung flatly over the alley. The night grew darker as the great mass hung over us and the moonlight was shut out. The picture appeared static to the limited surface sense, but beyond that there was hidden movement. A wall will fall in many ways. It may sway over to the one side or the other. It may crumble at the very beginning of its fall. It may remain intact and fall flat. This wall fell as flat as a pancake. It clung to its shape through ninety degrees to the horizontal. Then it detached itself from the pivot and slammed down on top of us, cracking like automatic gunfire. The violent sound both deafened us and brought us to our senses. We dropped the hose and crouched. Afterwards Verno said that I knelt slowly on one knee with bowed head, like a man about to be knighted. Well, I got my knighting. There was an incredible noise – a thunderclap condensed into the space of an eardrum – and then the bricks and mortar came tearing and burning into the flesh of my face.

Lofty, by the pump, was killed. Len, Verno and myself they dug out. There was very little brick on top of us. We had been lucky. We had been framed by one of those symmetrical, rectangular window spaces.

Adapted from 'The Wall' by William Samsom, in Fireman Flower.

Answers – Unit 2

2a Power of the water:

fifty-foot jet – height of water and the pressure implied by jet

pole of water – height of water and its rigidity

careless gallons – amount of water, as if it was inexhaustible

water throbbed – describes pulsing effect of the bursts of water and the action of the pump

ceaseless stream spewed – emphasises unending quantity and the way it was gushing out

fountained – shows height and pressure

strong backward drag of water pressure – force of water in the hose

the live hose snaking up – like a dangerous reptile capable of rising up and striking because of the power of water inside; it sustains the metaphor begun by *live*, *dead* and *wound*

2b Power of the fire:

fiercely alight – makes it clear that the fire is violent and threatening

alive with red fire – fire has animated the building, making it dangerous and unpredictable

a night express train – the building has been turned into an unstoppable force

bulge – unpleasant word depicting how the fire moves and distorts

like boiling jelly – refers to both its extreme heat and its capacity to melt things in its path

thirty blazing windows – the fire can light up a huge expanse of building at the same time

2c Power of the wall:

a long rattling crack of bursting brick and mortar perforated the moment – the noise of the wall breaking up is like gunfire; the verb is a destructive one of making holes

building heaved over towards us – as if alive, it moved its gigantic weight to threaten the men

Ton upon ton of red-hot brick hovering in the air – an inordinate weight of fiery bricks were just hanging like a bird of prey, waiting to plunge and kill those below

pivoted over towards us – had the power to twist itself and pursue the target

a hundred solid tons – emphasises weight and density

the great mass hung over us and the moonlight was shut out – the sheer size of the falling wall created a fearful darkness overhead

slammed down on top of us – the verb is one of destructive force

cracking like automatic gunfire – noise is again mentioned; the simile again equates the wall with a deadly weapon

a thunderclap – compares the noise of the falling wall to the deafening noise of a storm overhead (sustaining the metaphor of rumbling in paragraph 1)

the bricks and mortar came tearing and burning – shows the wall's violent movement and speed, and the damage it is about to inflict