
GCSE ENGLISH LANGUAGE (8700)

Paper 2 Writers' views and perspectives

Insert

The two Sources that follow are:

Source A: 20th Century literary non-fiction

The Village that Lost its Children by Laurie Lee

An extract from an essay written in 1967, one year after a devastating landslide in the Welsh village of Aberfan.

Source B: 19th Century non-fiction

Earthquake in England

An extract from a Victorian newspaper article, published in October 1863, after an earthquake in England.

**Please turn the page over
to see the Sources**

Source A – 20th Century literary non-fiction

This is an extract from an essay written in 1967 called *The Village that Lost its Children* by Laurie Lee. Aberfan was a small mining village in Wales. In 1966, many of its people, including children at a local school, were killed when heavy rain caused a landslide.

The Village that Lost its Children

1 Few people had ever heard of Aberfan
until disaster struck it. It was just
another of the small mining villages
lying tucked away in the South Wales
5 valleys – a huddle of anonymous
terraced houses of uniform ugliness
unrelieved except for chapel and pub.

Its heart was the coal-pit, and its
environment like the others – the debris
10 of a slowly exhausting industry: a
disused canal, some decaying rail-
tracks, a river black as the Styx¹, a
general coating of grime over roofs and
gardens, and the hills above blistered
15 with a century of mining waste.



Such villages learned to accept a twilight world where most of the menfolk worked down the pits. Many died early, with their lungs full of coal-dust, and the life was traditionally grim and perilous. Disaster, in fact, was about the only news that ever came out of the valleys – the sudden explosion underground, miners entombed alive, or the silent death in the dark from gas. Wales and the world were long hardened to such news. But not to what happened in
20 Aberfan.
21

A coal-mine sends to the surface more waste than coal, and a mining village has to learn to live with it. It must be put somewhere or the mine would close, and it's too expensive to carry it far. So the tips grow everywhere, straddling the hillsides, nudging the houses like black-furred beasts. Almost everyone, from time to time, has seen danger in them, but mostly they are endured as a fact of life.
25

27 On the mountain above Aberfan there were seven such tips. The evening sun sank early behind them. To some of the younger generation they had always been there, as though dumped by the hand of God. They could be seen from the school windows, immediately below them, rising like black pyramids in the western sky. But they were not as solid as they
30 looked; it was known that several had moved in the past, inching ominously down the mountain.

What was not known however was that the newest tip, number 7, was a killer with a rotten heart. It had been begun in Easter 1958, and was built on a mountain spring, most treacherous of all foundations. Gradually, over the years, the fatal seeping of water was
35 turning Tip 7 into a mountain of moving muck.

Then one morning, out of the mist, the unthinkable happened, and the tip came down on the village. The children of Pantglas Junior School had just arrived in their classrooms and were right in the path of it. They were the first to be hit by the wave of stupefying filth which
40 instantly smothered more than a hundred of them.

The catastrophe was not only the worst in Wales but an event of such wanton and indifferent cruelty it seemed to put to shame both man and God.

Glossary

¹Styx – the Styx was a river in Greek mythology that was supposed to separate the world of the living from the world of the dead.

Turn over for Source B

Source B – 19th Century non-fiction

This is an extract from a Victorian newspaper article published in October 1863. A minor earthquake had been felt in some parts of Great Britain.

5 We have had an Earthquake. The men of science all tell us that we have every right to expect earthquakes. This country lies on the great volcanic belt. There runs under us a huge crack in the earth's crust, – who knows how deep or how wide? A few flimsy strata¹ have fallen in and now, who knows what enormous voids, what huge quantities of imprisoned gas, what seas of molten metal, there may be only a few miles below this fair surface?

The scientists tell us that there are probably many earthquakes which we do not feel. But if a small earthquake, even an imperceptible one, why not an earthquake to destroy a metropolis²?

10 But, the earth-wave has been faint, and only a feeble echo of some distant shock, for it was not everywhere, nor was it everybody that was waked by the earthquake of Tuesday, October 6. More than half the nation has to accept the word of the rest. Yet many felt it that will never forget the feeling; and many even heard it that will carry the “awful” sound in the ear to their dying day. In some places it even did damage. It upset furniture and
15 broke crockery. It displaced bricks, and even revealed a crack in a wall. We should not be surprised to hear of more serious damage. But if this much, why not more?

BRITANNIA'S³ fabled rock has been shaken from its basis. Be it only an inch or two, the ocean throne has been tilted up. Throughout the Midland counties, the earthquake appears to have been felt the most. At Birmingham walls were seen to move, and people
20 rose from their beds to see what damage had been done. At Edgbaston successive shocks were plainly felt, houses were shaken to their foundations, “a dreadful rattle” was rather felt than heard, and people woke one another to ask the meaning. Everything around was violently agitated. The houses cracked and groaned as if the timbers had been strained. The policemen on duty saw the walls vibrate, heard everything rattle about
25 them, and were witnesses to the universal terror of the roused sleepers.

In London, we are situated on a deep bed of clay, where our houses are well built, and where we are so accustomed to noises, shocks, and tremors that we are almost startled to find it calm and quiet. Noises from vast warehouses along the river banks, bathed by the muddy and dull water of the great river, while trains rush past at full speed or rumble
30 underground uttering horrible cries and vomiting waves of smoke. London: where men work in darkness, scarcely seeing their own hands and not knowing the meaning of their labour. London: a rainy, colossal city smelling of molten metal and of soot, ceaselessly streaming and smoking in the night fog. Fog which persists and assumes different hues – sometimes ashen – sometimes black. With the lighting of the fires, it soon becomes
35 yellow and pungent, irritating the throat and eyes.

Here, on this day, a large proportion of us felt a sort of shock and shiver, and the feeling of being upheaved; but very few of us could trust our own sensations, and be sure it was something out of the usual course.

40 Who can say what strange trial of shaking or upheaving, sinking, dividing, or drying up, may await us? We know by science these isles have gone through many a strange metamorphosis⁴, and science cannot assure us that there are none more to come.

Glossary

¹strata – layers of rock

²metropolis – a major city

³Britannia – Great Britain

⁴metamorphosis – change

END OF SOURCES

There is no Source material on this page

Acknowledgement of copyright-holders and publishers

Permission to reproduce all copyright material has been applied for. In some cases efforts to contact copyright-holders have been unsuccessful and AQA will be happy to rectify any omissions of acknowledgements in future papers if notified.

Source A: An extract from 'The Village that Lost its Children' by Laurie Lee. First published in Redbook (an American magazine) in 1967. Reproduced in 'I Can't Stay Long' by Laurie Lee, published by Penguin in 1975 and 1977.

Source B: An extract from 'Earthquake in England' an article dated October 6th 1863, from a newspaper archive collated by George Burgess and published on the 'nathanville' website: http://www.nathanville.org.uk/web-albums/burgess/scrapbook/science-nature/pages/Earthquake_jpg.htm