



Key Stage 3

ENGLISH LANGUAGE

Paper 2 Writers' viewpoints and perspectives
Year 8 Pack 2

Insert

The two Sources that follow are:

Source A: 21st Century non-fiction

Prison can be the right place for kids by Angela Neuslatter

An online article in *The New Statesman* magazine published in 2002.

Source B: 19th Century literary non-fiction

A letter written in 1897 from the writer, Oscar Wilde to the Editor of *The Daily Chronicle* newspaper after he had been released from prison.

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

Source A

21st Century non-fiction: an online article in *The New Statesman* magazine called *Prisons can be the right place for kids* in which the writer, Angela Neuslatter talks to young offenders about their personal experiences of being in prison.

Prison can be the right place for kids

- 1 Charmion Togba was not the kind of kid you'd have wanted on your patch¹. He says it himself. At the age of 16, he was manufacturing drugs and selling guns. But that's all changed. Today he works with children at risk, and this summer he is running rehabilitation courses funded by the Arts Council and Youth Justice Board. Reflecting on the change, he gives a big smile: "It was
5 prison that turned me around. I was angry, directionless and saw only a future in crime. The place I was sent treated me with decency and helped me see I could make different choices. It gave me the opportunity to develop in a way I wanted."

- 10 It's not what you expect to hear from someone locked up at Her Majesty's Pleasure² while still just a child - Charmion was 17 at the time and this was his second sentence. His first sentence, at the age of 16, served at Feltham Young Offender Institution (YOI), had done nothing to improve his frame of mind: "You learnt survival of the fittest, to shut up and shut down . . . I came out more not less ready to commit crimes."

- But his second sentence was served at Huntercombe YOI near Oxford, a place that is pinpointed by many radical thinkers on juvenile punishment as having a particularly humane and
15 constructive ethos and regime. It startled Charmion to find that the governor³, Paul Mainwaring, had brought in musical instruments and set up a recording studio because so many inmates⁴
17 were keen to make music. Charmion developed his recording skills, took NVQs⁵, was given a job training other inmates. Before his release, the prison helped him get funding to return on a regular basis and keep training inmates, "so I didn't have that terrible thing that trips so many
20 kids up, even if they want to stay straight⁷, of having nothing when they get out". He was also funded by the trust to start his own company, Genocis, running arts and multimedia programmes with children who risked following a similarly delinquent trajectory to his own.

- If this were an isolated case, it would be risky to hold it up as proving anything. But in the course of 18 months spent talking with children - boys and girls - in six YOIs around the country for a
25 book published earlier this year I was startled at how many said prison had given them something they needed and could not get outside: regular meals, a bed to sleep on, people who would listen to them, a chance to take stock of their lives and escape from a chaotic, drug-fuelled, out-of-control spiral that would have led them deeper into crime.

- Often they praised a particular member (or members) of staff for caring about them and giving
30 them valuable support and guidance. Education and skills training they would not, or felt they could not, get outside proved unexpectedly appealing and opened their minds to new directions.

Glossary:

patch¹ - an area you live in or are responsible for

at Her Majesty's Pleasure² - held in a British prison

governor³ - head of a public institution e.g. a prison or YOI

inmates⁴ - someone held in a prison or YOI

NVQs⁵ - a qualification in a vocational subject at a level equivalent to GCSEs or A-Levels

Prince's Trust⁶ - a charity that helps young people with training programmes, mentoring and support

stay straight⁷ - avoid committing further crimes and getting in trouble with the authorities

Turn over for Source B

Turn over ►

Source B

19th Century literary non-fiction: a letter from the writer Oscar Wilde to the Editor of 'The Daily Chronicle' newspaper about the conditions in prison for children at Reading Prison. He had been imprisoned there.

To The Editor, The Daily Chronicle, Friday 28th May 1897.

Sir, I learn with great regret, through the columns of your paper, that the warder¹ Martin, of Reading Prison, has been dismissed by the Prison Commissioners for having given some sweet biscuits to a little hungry child. I saw the three children myself on Monday preceding my release.

5 They had just been convicted and were standing in a row like frightened mice in the central hall in their pitiful prison dress, carrying their well worn sheets under their arms, previous to their being sent to the cells allotted to them.

They were quite small children, the youngest — the one to whom the warder gave the biscuits — being a tiny little chap, for whom they had evidently been unable to find clothes small enough to fit. I had, of course, seen many children in prison during the two years during which I was myself confined. Wandsworth Prison, especially, contained always a large number of children. But the

10 little child I saw on the afternoon of Monday the 17th at Reading, was tinier than any one of them. I need not say how utterly distressed I was to see these children at Reading, for I knew the treatment in store for them. Who wouldn't be? The cruelty that is practised by day and night on children in English prisons is incredible, except to those who have witnessed it and are aware of the brutality of the system.

Every child is confined to its cell for twenty-three hours out of the twenty-four. This is the appalling thing. To shut up a child in a dimly lit cell for twenty-three hours out of the twenty-four, is an example of the cruelty of stupidity. If an individual, parent or guardian did this to a child he would

20 be severely punished. The Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children would take the matter up at once. There would be on all hands the utmost detestation of whomsoever had been guilty of such cruelty. A heavy sentence would, undoubtedly, follow conviction. But our own actual society does worse itself.

Inhuman treatment by Society is to the child the more terrible because there is no appeal. A

25 parent or guardian can be moved, and let out a child from the dark lonely room in which it is confined. But a warder cannot. Most warders are very fond of children. But the system prohibits them from rendering the child any assistance. Should they do so, as Warder Martin did, they are dismissed.

Of course no child under fourteen years of age should be sent to prison at all. It is an absurdity,

30 and, like many absurdities, of absolutely tragic results. If, however, they are to be sent to prison, during the daytime they should be in a workshop or schoolroom with a warder. At night they should sleep in a dormitory², with a night-warder to look after them. They should be allowed exercise for at least three hours a day. The dark, badly ventilated, ill-smelling prison cells are dreadful for a child, dreadful indeed for anyone. One is always breathing bad air in prison. The

35 food given to children should consist of tea and bread-and-butter and soup. Prison soup is very good and wholesome.

A resolution of the House of Commons could settle the treatment of children in half-an-hour. I hope you will use your influence to have this done. The way that children are treated at present is really an outrage on humanity and common sense. It comes from stupidity.

40 Sir, your obedient servant,
Oscar Wilde
May 27th 1897

Glossary:

warder¹ - a prison guard

dormitory² - a room containing numerous beds that serves as a sleeping area

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Source A – Prison can be the right place for Kids by Angela Neuslatter © The New Statesman Magazine 2002

Source B - The Case of Warder Martin: Some Cruelties of Prison Life, Oscar Wilde, 1897

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