Chapter 8: Going Places

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Exercise 8.1 — Understanding the Text

Q1 Sophie and Jansie were class-mates and friends. What were the differences between them that show up in the story?

SOLUTION

Sophie is a dreamer who indulges in elaborate fantasies about her future — she imagines owning a boutique, becoming a manager, an actress, or a fashion designer. She is imaginative, romantic, and given to embellishing reality, as shown by her story of meeting Danny Casey. She keeps her dreams alive even when they are clearly improbable.

Jansie, by contrast, is practical and grounded. She knows that both she and Sophie are 'earmarked for the biscuit factory' and gently tries to bring Sophie back to reality: 'It's only a few months away now, Soaf, you really should be sensible.' Jansie is also described as 'gawky' and 'nosey', and Sophie fears that if she tells Jansie a secret the whole neighbourhood will soon hear it.

The central difference is between Sophie's escapist fantasy and Jansie's acceptance of their socio-economic limitations. Sophie uses imagination as a means of transcending her confined world; Jansie sees that world for what it is and tries to navigate it pragmatically.

Answer: Sophie is an incurable dreamer and fantasist; Jansie is practical, grounded, and aware of their limited circumstances.

Q2 How would you describe the character and temperament of Sophie's father?

SOLUTION

Sophie's father is a working-class man, weary from physical labour. He comes home with a 'plump face still grimy and sweat-marked from the day' and immediately scoops food into his mouth, suggesting exhaustion and a life with little leisure.

He is sceptical and dismissive of Sophie's stories. When Geoff tells him Sophie met Danny Casey, his expression is 'one of disdain'. He mutters something inaudible and asks, 'This another of your wild stories?' He warns Sophie that she is going to 'talk yourself into a load of

trouble'. This shows he has no patience for her fantasies and regards them as habitual lying.

He is also a football enthusiast, admiring Casey with genuine reverence, yet he tempers his admiration with caution about the pitfalls facing a young player. He celebrates United's victory by going to the pub. Overall, he is a gruff, unimaginative, and somewhat aggressive man, shaped by the hardships of working-class life, with little sympathy for his daughter's romantic temperament.

Answer: Sophie's father is a gruff, weary, sceptical working-class man who dismisses her stories and has little patience for her fantasies.

Q3 Why did Sophie like her brother Geoff more than any other person? From her perspective, what did he symbolise?

SOLUTION

Sophie is drawn to Geoff partly because of his silence. 'Words had to be prized out of him like stones out of the ground.' That silence, to her, is charged with mystery — it suggests that he inhabits unknown worlds she has not yet reached. She is 'jealous of his silence', because when he is not speaking he seems to be 'away somewhere, out there in the world in those places she had never been.'

Geoff is an apprentice mechanic who travels to the far side of the city every day. In Sophie's imagination, those journeys make him privy to 'exotic, interesting people' and places beyond her reach. She longs to be 'admitted more deeply into her brother's affections' and wishes he would take her with him.

From her perspective, Geoff symbolises the wider world — freedom, experience, and the unknown. He is also the one person in whom she confides her deepest fantasies first; he is her most trusted audience. She imagines riding behind him into that larger world, wearing a yellow dress with a cape that flew out behind, greeted by applause. Geoff thus represents the gateway to the life of adventure and escape that she craves.

Answer: Sophie is drawn to Geoff's mysterious silence, which she associates with the wider, unknown world beyond their cramped home; to her, he symbolises freedom and adventure.

Q4 What socio-economic background did Sophie belong to? What are the indicators of her family's financial status?

SOLUTION

Sophie belongs to a working-class family with a modest income. Several details in the story establish this clearly.

The family lives in a small, cramped room that is 'steamy from the stove and cluttered with the heavy-breathing man in his vest at the table and the dirty washing piled up in the corner'. This image conveys overcrowding and poverty. The windows are 'blacked in' by evening, adding to the sense of confinement.

Sophie and Jansie are both 'earmarked for the biscuit factory', indicating that after school the only realistic employment available to girls of their class is factory work. Geoff works as an apprentice mechanic. Their father does manual labour, coming home grimy and sweat-marked. He has little faith in education or ambition beyond what their station allows.

Sophie's mother is seen 'stooped over the sink', her 'crooked back' a physical sign of domestic drudgery. The family cannot afford the boutique or the lifestyle Sophie dreams of, and her father's reaction to her dreams — 'She thinks money grows on trees' — underlines their economic constraints.

Answer: Sophie belongs to a working-class family: they live in a small, cluttered home, both girls are destined for factory work, and her father's manual-labour life leaves no room for the ambitions Sophie harbours.

Exercise 8.2 — Talking about the Text

Q1 Sophie's dreams and disappointments are all in her mind.

SOLUTION

Sophie's meeting with Danny Casey is almost certainly a product of her imagination. The story provides no confirmation that the meeting actually took place; instead, the narrative shifts perspective when the encounter is 'recalled', moving from third-person narration to second-person ('you'), which signals a daydream or fantasy. The encounter at the canal, where she waits and he does not come, is the moment her illusion quietly dissolves.

Her dreams — owning a boutique, becoming an actress or fashion designer, meeting a celebrity — are generated entirely within her own mind as a way of escaping the bleakness of her real circumstances. When reality reasserts itself, as it does at the canal, she experiences genuine sadness and resignation: 'I have become sad, she thought. And it is a hard burden to carry, this sadness.'

Yet the disappointment, too, is internal. Nobody outside directly disproves her story; the world simply fails to confirm it. The story suggests that the inner life of fantasy and the inner life of disappointment are two sides of the same imagination — both are Sophie's alone, and both are real in their emotional consequences for her even if the external events are not.

Answer: Sophie's meeting with Danny, her aspirations, and her sadness when he does not come are all interior experiences; the story shows that her rich imagination is the source of both her dreams and her disappointments.

Q2 It is natural for teenagers to have unrealistic dreams. What would you say are the benefits and disadvantages of such fantasising?

SOLUTION

Adolescent fantasising is a well-recognised psychological phenomenon. On the positive side, dreams and imagination help young people to develop a sense of identity and aspiration. They can motivate a person to work towards goals, expand their sense of what is possible, and provide emotional relief from difficult or constrained circumstances — exactly the function Sophie's daydreams serve in her cramped, working-class home.

Fantasising can also foster creativity, empathy, and ambition. Many successful people began with what others considered unrealistic dreams. The very act of imagining a different future can be the first step towards achieving one.

However, the disadvantages are equally real. When fantasy substitutes for action rather than motivating it, as in Sophie's case, it can lead to passivity. The person may become unable to engage honestly with reality, as Sophie does when she fabricates the meeting with Casey. This can damage relationships — Sophie's credibility suffers when her story is doubted — and can set up painful disappointments, like her lonely wait by the canal.

Moreover, persistent fantasising can prevent a person from making realistic plans and

equipping themselves with the practical skills they actually need. The balance, therefore, lies in allowing dreams to inspire without letting them replace the hard work of real engagement with life.

Answer: Teenage fantasising can inspire ambition and provide emotional escape, but when it replaces realistic planning or honest engagement with reality it leads to disappointment and damaged credibility.

Exercise 8.3 — Working with Words

Q1 Explain what the following expression means: 'Words had to be prized out of him like stones out of the ground.'

SOLUTION

The expression is a simile using figurative language. To 'prize' something out means to lever it free with effort, as one would use a crowbar to extract a stone embedded in soil. Applied to Geoff, it means that getting him to speak was an extremely difficult task requiring considerable effort — he was silent and uncommunicative by nature, and any conversation had to be almost physically forced out of him.

Answer: It means Geoff was extremely taciturn and uncommunicative; drawing words from him required as much effort as levering stones out of hard ground.

Q2 Explain what the following expression means: 'Sophie felt a tightening in her throat.'

SOLUTION

This is a figurative description of a strong emotion — sadness, distress, or a feeling of being overwhelmed — that manifests as a physical sensation. When a person is about to cry or is deeply moved, the throat muscles contract, creating a constricted feeling. Sophie feels this when she looks at the cramped, steam-filled room and her mother's stooped back — the oppressiveness of her poverty-stricken surroundings moves her to a kind of wordless grief or anguish.

Answer: It describes the physical sensation of suppressed emotion — grief or distress — that Sophie feels when confronted with the dreariness of her home.

Q3 Explain what the following expression means: 'If he keeps his head on his shoulders.'

SOLUTION

This is an idiomatic expression meaning 'if he remains sensible, level-headed, and does not let success or fame go to his head.' Sophie's father uses it about Danny Casey, cautioning that the young footballer has great talent but will only fulfil his potential if he stays grounded, avoids distractions, and maintains discipline — rather than being swept away by the attention and temptations that come with fame.

Answer: It is an idiom meaning 'if he remains sensible and level-headed'; Sophie's father implies Casey must stay grounded and avoid being corrupted by fame.

Q4 Explain what the following expression means: 'On Saturday they made their weekly pilgrimage to watch United.'

SOLUTION

A 'pilgrimage' literally refers to a devout journey to a sacred place, undertaken with reverence and religious devotion. Used here figuratively, it conveys that the family's weekly trip to watch their football team United is not merely a leisure activity — it has the character of a religious ritual, undertaken with the same regularity, loyalty, and near-sacred feeling that a believer might bring to worship. It emphasises how deeply football is woven into the fabric of their lives.

Answer: It figuratively compares the family's regular trip to the football match to a religious pilgrimage, suggesting that watching United is a ritual of devotion and deep loyalty for them.

Q5 Explain what the following expression means: 'She saw... him ghost past the lumbering defenders.'

SOLUTION

To 'ghost past' someone means to move past them so quickly, silently, and effortlessly that one seems almost to pass through them like a ghost — without solid contact, without being stopped. Used here to describe Danny Casey's movement on the football field, it conveys his extraordinary speed, agility, and elusive quality. The 'lumbering defenders' (who move heavily and clumsily) form a deliberate contrast, making Casey's ghostlike passage seem all the more miraculous.

Answer: It means Casey moved past the defenders so swiftly and effortlessly that he seemed to glide through them like a ghost — conveying his exceptional speed and agility.

Exercise 8.4 — Noticing Form

Q1 The textbook draws attention to the use of present participles in sentences such as: (1) 'When I leave,' Sophie said, coming home from school, 'I'm going to have a boutique.' (2) Jansie, linking arms with her along the street, looked doubtful. (3) 'I'll find it,' Sophie said, staring far down the street. (4) Jansie, knowing they were both earmarked for the biscuit factory, became melancholy. (5) And she turned in through the open street door leaving Jansie standing in the rain. Analyse how the present participle is used in each example, and pick out five other sentences from the story in which present participles are used in the same sense.

SOLUTION

In each of the five given examples, the present participle (the '-ing' form used without an auxiliary 'be') indicates an action happening at the same time as the main verb — two simultaneous actions are compressed into one sentence.

Example 1: The main action is 'said'; the simultaneous action is 'coming home from school'. Sophie was walking home while she spoke.

Example 2: The main action is 'looked doubtful'; the simultaneous action is 'linking arms with her'. Jansie linked arms and looked doubtful at the same moment.

Example 3: The main action is 'said'; the simultaneous action is 'staring far down the street'. Sophie spoke while gazing ahead.

Example 4: The main action is 'became melancholy'; the simultaneous background state is 'knowing they were both earmarked for the biscuit factory'. Jansie's knowledge and her melancholy coexist.

Example 5: The main action is 'turned in through the open street door'; the simultaneous action is 'leaving Jansie standing in the rain'. Both happened at once.

Five other sentences from the story using present participles in the same sense:
1. 'He was kneeling on the floor in the next room tinkering with a part of his motorcycle over some newspaper spread on the carpet.' (kneeling + tinkering — simultaneous actions)
2. 'He sat frowning at the oily component he cradled in his hands, as though it were a small dumb animal and he was willing it to speak.' (sat + frowning + cradling — simultaneous)
3. 'She watched along the canal, seeing him come out of the shadows, imagining her own consequent excitement.' (seeing, imagining — simultaneous with watched)
4. 'Coming through the arcade she pictured him again outside Royce's.' (coming — simultaneous with pictured)
5. 'And afterwards you wait there alone in the arcade for a long while, standing where he stood, remembering the soft melodious voice, the shimmer of green eyes.' (standing, remembering — simultaneous with wait)

Answer: In each example the present participle denotes a simultaneous action or state alongside the main verb, allowing two actions to be expressed in one sentence rather than two.

Exercise 8.5 — Thinking about Language

Q1 The story uses informal, colloquial words such as 'chuffed' (meaning delighted or very pleased), 'nosey' (meaning inquisitive), and 'gawky' (meaning awkward, ungainly). Make a list of ten other words of this kind.

SOLUTION

The following are ten common informal or colloquial English words of the same type, with their meanings:

1. bloke — an informal word for a man (British English)
2. bonkers — informal for crazy or mad
3. knackered — informal for extremely tired or exhausted (British English)
4. skint — informal for having no money, broke (British English)
5. gobsmacked — informal for utterly astonished or shocked
6. natter — informal for chat or talk at length
7. dodgy — informal for suspicious, risky, or of poor quality
8. grub — informal for food
9. posh — informal for elegant, upper-class, or expensive
10. reckon — informal for think or believe ('I reckon it'll rain')

Answer: Ten colloquial words: bloke (man), bonkers (crazy), knackered (exhausted), skint (broke), gobsmacked (astonished), natter (chat), dodgy (suspicious), grub (food), posh (fancy/upper-class), reckon (think/believe).