

Your main commentary should be focused on *interrogation*. Other topics may also be addressed.

- On a clear, blueblack, starry night, in the city of Berlin, in the year 2003, two young people sat down to dinner. Their names were Sophie and Patrick. These two people had never met, before today. Sophie was visiting Berlin with her mother, and Patrick was visiting with his father. Sophie's mother and Patrick's father had once known each other, very slightly, a long time ago. For a short while, Patrick's father had even been infatuated with Sophie's mother, when they were still at school. But it was twenty-nine years since they had last exchanged any words.
- 5 - Where do you think they've gone? Sophie asked.
- 10 - Clubbing, probably. Checking out the techno places.
- Are you serious?
- Of course not. My dad's never been to a club in his life. The last album he bought was by Barclay James Harvest.
- Who?
- 15 - Exactly.
- Sophie and Patrick watched as the vast, brightly lit, glass-and-concrete extravagance of the new Reichstag came into view. The restaurant they had chosen, at the top of the Fernsehturm above Alexanderplatz, revolved rather more quickly than either of them had been expecting. Apparently the speed had been doubled since reunification.
- 20 - How is your mother now? Patrick asked. Has she recovered?
- Oh, that was nothing. We went back to the hotel, and she lay down for a while. After that, she was fine. Another couple of hours and we went shopping. That's when I got this skirt.
- 25 - It looks great on you.
- Anyway, I'm glad that it happened, because otherwise your dad wouldn't have recognized her.
- I suppose not.
- So we wouldn't be sitting here, would we? It must be fate. Or something.
- 30 It was an odd situation they had been thrown into. There had seemed to be a spontaneous intimacy between their parents, even though it was so long since they had known each other. They had flung themselves into their reunion with a sort of joyous relief, as if this chance encounter in a Berlin tea-room could somehow erase the intervening decades, heal the pain of their passing. That had left Sophie and Patrick floundering in a different, more awkward kind of intimacy. They had nothing in common, they realized, except their parents' histories.
- 35 - Does your father ever talk much about his schooldays? Sophie asked.
- Well, it's funny. He never used to. But I think it's all been coming back to him, lately. Some of the people he knew back then have resurfaced. For instance, there was a boy called. . .
- 40 - Harding?
- Yes. You know about him?
- A little. I'd like to know more.
- 45 - Then I'll tell you. And Dad mentions your uncle sometimes. Your uncle Benjamin.
- Ah, yes. They were good friends, weren't they?
- Best friends, I think.
- Did you know they once played in a band together?
- 50 - No, he never mentioned that.
- What about the magazine they used to edit?
- No, he never told me about that either.
- I've heard it all from my mother, you see. She has perfect recall of those days.
- 55 - How come?
- Well. . .
- And then Sophie began to explain. It was hard to know where to start. The era they were discussing seemed to belong to the dimmest recesses of history. She said to Patrick:
- 60 - Do you ever try to imagine what it was like before you were born?
- How do you mean? You mean like in the womb?
- No, I mean, what the world was like, before you came along.
- Not really. I can't get my head around it.
- But you remember how things were when you were younger. You remember John Major, for instance?
- 65 - Vaguely.
- Well, of course, that's the only way to remember him. What about Mrs Thatcher?
- No. I was only. . . five or six when she resigned. Why are you asking this, anyway?
- 70 - Because we're going to have to think further back than that. Much further. Sophie broke off, and a frown darkened her face.
- You know, I can tell you this story, but you might get frustrated. It doesn't end. It just stops. I don't know how it ends.
- 75 - Perhaps I know the ending.
- Will you tell me, if you do?