

EAE 0422 A	Sujet Jury	Sujet Candidat	Code Sujet	CLG 14
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Your main commentary should be focused on -ING forms. Other topics may also be addressed.

'Why exactly are you driving to Shetland, anyway?' she asked.

And so I began telling her about Trevor, and Guest
Toothbrushes, and Lindsay Ashworth, I told her about Lindsay's
'We Reach Furthest' campaign, about the four salesmen all setting
5 off in different directions for the extreme points of the United
Kingdom, and the two prizes we were supposed to be competing
for. And then I got sidetracked and told her about my detour to
Lichfield to see my father's flat, how eerie and desolate it had felt;
about Miss Erith, and her fascinating stories, and her sadness at
10 the passing of the old ways of life; her weird, solemn, almost
inexpressible gratitude when I had made her a gift of one of my
toothbrushes. I told Alison, too, about the bin liner full of postcards
from my father's mysterious friend Roger, which was now in the
boot of my car, and the blue ring binder full of my father's poems
15 and other bits of writing. Then I told her about driving on from
Lichfield and stopping in Kendal to see Lucy and Caroline, and how
I'd planned to get the ferry from Aberdeen the next day, but Mr
and Mrs Byrne had persuaded me to come to Edinburgh instead.

'Well, Max,' she said, holding my gaze for a few moments. 'I'm
20 glad you came, whatever the reason. It's been too long since we
saw each other—even if it's only happened because my parents
steamrollered us into it.'

I smiled back, uncertain where this was leading. Rather than
responding to everything I had just told her about my journey, it
25 felt as though Alison was getting ready to move the conversation
into a different gear altogether; but then she seemed to think
better of it. She arranged her knife and fork neatly on her plate and
said:

'We're a strange generation, aren't we?'

30 'How do you mean?'

'I mean that we've never really grown up. We're still tied to our
parents in a way that would have seemed inconceivable to people
born in the 1930s or 1940s. I'm fifty, now, for God's sake, and I
still feel that I have to ask my mother's... *permission*, half the time,
35 just to live my life the way that I want to. Somehow I still haven't

managed to get out from under my parents' shadow. Do you feel
the same?'

I nodded, and Alison went on:

'Just the other day I was listening to a programme on the radio.
40 It was about the Young British Artists. They'd got three or four of
them together and they were all reminiscing about the first shows
they'd done together—those first shows at the Saatchi Gallery,
back in the late nineties. And not only did none of them have
anything interesting to say about their own work, but the main
45 thing they talked about—apart from the fact that they'd all been
shagging each other—was how "shocking" it had been, and how
worried they were about what their parents were going to say when
they saw it. "What did your mum say when she saw that painting?"
one of them kept being asked. And I thought, you know, maybe
50 I'm wrong, but I'm sure that when Picasso painted Guernica, with
its graphic depictions of the horrors of modern warfare, the main
thing going through his mind wasn't what his mum was going to
say when she saw it. I kind of suspect that he'd gone beyond that
some time ago.'

55 'Yes—I've been thinking the same thing,' I said, eagerly. 'Take
Donald Crowhurst: he already had four kids when he set out to sail
around the world, even though he was only thirty-six. You're right,
people were so... so grown-up in those days.'

60 'What days?' Alison asked; and I realized, of course, that she
had no idea who Donald Crowhurst was.

Perhaps it was a bad idea to start telling her the story.