

**AQA** 

**GCSE**

**ENGLISH LANGUAGE**

**Paper 1 Explorations in creative reading  
and writing**

**8700/1**

**Insert**

**The source that follows is:**

**Source A: 21st Century prose-fiction**

**‘Jigs and Reels’ by Joanne  
Harris**

**An extract from a collection of  
short stories published in  
2004.**

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

**SOURCE A**

**Source A is taken from the beginning of a short story written by Joanne Harris. Mr Fisher, a teacher of English for forty years, works at St Oswald's Grammar School for Boys.**

- 1 Mr Fisher lived alone in a small terraced house in the centre of town. He did not own a car, and therefore preferred to do as much**
- 5 as he could of his weekend marking in the form room after school. Even so, there were usually two or three stacks of books and papers to take**
- 9 home on the bus.**
  
- 10 It had been a disappointing term at St Oswald's. For most of the boys in 3F, creative writing was on a par with country dancing and food technology. Oh, he'd tried to**
- 15 engage their interest. But books**

just didn't seem to kindle the same enthusiasm as they had in the old days.

Mr Fisher remembered a time –  
20 surely, not so long ago – when  
books were golden, when  
imagination soared, when the  
world was filled with stories which  
ran like gazelles and pounced like  
25 tigers and exploded like rockets,  
illuminating minds and hearts. He  
had seen it happen; had seen whole  
classes swept away in the fever. In  
those days, there were heroes; there  
30 were dragons and dinosaurs; there  
were space adventurers and  
soldiers of fortune and giant apes.  
In those days, thought Mr Fisher, we  
dreamed in colour, though films  
35 were in black and white, and good  
always triumphed in the end.

[Turn over]

Now everything was in black and white, and though Mr Fisher continued to teach with as much devotion to duty as he had forty years before, he was secretly aware that his voice had begun to lack conviction. To these boys, these sullen boys with their gelled hair and perfect teeth, everything was boring. Shakespeare was boring. Dickens was boring. There didn't seem to be a single story left in the world that they hadn't heard before. And over the years, though he had tried to stop it, a terrible disillusionment had crept over Mr Fisher, who had once dreamed so fiercely of writing stories of his own. They had come to the end of the seam, he understood. There were no more stories to be written. The magic had run out.

59 This was an uncharacteristically  
60 gloomy train of thought, and Mr  
Fisher pushed it away. Not all his  
boys lacked imagination. Alistair  
Tibbet, for instance, even though he  
had obviously done part of his  
65 homework on the bus. An amiable  
boy, this Tibbet. Not a brilliant  
scholar by any means, but there  
was a spark in him which deserved  
attention.

70 Mr Fisher took a deep breath and  
looked down at Tibbet's exercise  
book, trying not to think of the snow  
outside and the five o'clock bus he  
was now almost certain to miss.

75 Four books to go, he told himself;  
and then home; dinner; bed; the  
comforting small routine of a winter  
weekend.

But, gradually sitting there in the  
80 warm classroom with the smell of

[Turn over]

chalk and floor polish in his nostrils, Mr Fisher began to experience a very strange sensation. It began as a tightening in his diaphragm, as if a  
85 long unused muscle had been brought into action. His breathing quickened, stopped, quickened again. He began to sweat. And when he reached the end of the  
90 story, Mr Fisher put down his red pen and went back to the beginning, re-reading every word very slowly and with meticulous care.

This must be what a prospector  
95 feels when, discouraged and bankrupt and ready to go home, he takes off his boot and shakes out a nugget of gold the size of his fist. He read it again, critically this time,  
100 marking off the paragraphs with notes in red. A hope, which at first Mr Fisher had hardly dared to formulate, swelled in him and grew

**105 strong. He found himself beginning  
to smile.**

**110 If anyone had asked him what  
Tibbet's story was about, Mr Fisher  
might have been hard put to reply.  
There were themes he recognised,  
elements of plot which were vaguely  
familiar: an adventure – a quest, a  
child, a man. But to explain Tibbet's  
story in these terms was as  
115 meaningless as trying to describe a  
loved one's face in terms of nose,  
eyes, mouth. This was something  
new. Something entirely original.**

**END OF SOURCE**

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