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SCHOOLS
PROGRAMME

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The Glove: Exercises

Damien Wilkins

1.

Part A: Years 7-13

Why is it that the narrator of ‘The Glove’ doesn’t tell us more about Mike?

Part B: Years 7-13

Write a scene of:

- Last Christmas (or any other annual holiday/festival you might celebrate).
- Your first Christmas (or other annual holiday/festival). Make sure to write from the point of the view of the age you were then (you can’t use words or concepts you wouldn’t have understood!)

What’s different about the two? What details do you remember about the recent holiday that are lost in the earlier one. What tensions or dynamics do you pick up on now, that you couldn’t grasp when you were younger? Has the way you view this holiday changed? How did that change the scene?

Point of View

Point of view is your biggest advantage and your biggest limitation as a point of view writer. It should colour everything – it should inform how people or places or events are viewed, what gets noticed, what gets ignored, what references are made and what kind of metaphoric language is used. Make sure that these reference points and judgements aren’t just your own.

Tip: Don't write from the point of view of a childless mechanic, and mention Frozen. Don't have your hermit compare the stars to lighting in a club.

You need to know everything about your point of view character. For example:

- What annoys them about people?
- What are they drawn to?
- Do they read? What do they read?
- Do they like open spaces? Do they like crowds?
- What do they always carry with them?
- What hurts them most still from their past?

Point of view can't walk in and out of your story, it should be strong throughout. You need to inhabit your point of view character completely – that's what writing is.

Part C: Years 11-13

The Totaled Car

Describe the act of coming across a totaled car in a ditch, surrounded by first responders, from one of four perspectives:

- A parent who is struggling to make ends meet.
- A young woman who wants to break up with her boyfriend.
- A runaway teenager who has broken the law.
- Someone who was just diagnosed with cancer.

Their situations should inform the description.

2.

Part A: Years 7-13

Reread the scene where the narrator is first caught with his brother's glove:

‘When I got home, Mum caught me with the glove and suddenly I was saying all this stuff about missing Mike and wanting to be near something that had been his and why was the glove in the glass cabinet where it couldn't be touched and wasn't it better to let Mike's glove have a life.

‘When I started in on the speech I was just making it up. But by the time I'd finished, I was crying, and my mum went quiet and finally she said she would talk to my dad about it.’

Why does the narrator start crying? What is it he's showing us through this scene?

Show Don't Tell

This isn't a hard and fast rule. There are some things it's much quicker to tell (e.g. ‘I have worked this job for four months’). But it is crucial to show your characters' emotions, personalities, and judgements.

Damien Wilkins could have written: ‘When I started in on the speech I was just making it up. But by the time I'd finished, I was quite upset, I realised my brother's death had affected me more than I realised.’ However, as readers, we would feel much less for his narrator. Showing instead of telling makes your writing evocative, and strengthens point of view.

Part B: Years 7-13

Past Self

Think of a recent time when you were angry.

- How did it feel in your body? In your chest? In your stomach? In your throat? Did you feel it anywhere else? Hands, feet, shoulders, jaw? Try and really experience what it feels like when you're angry.
- How does the way you act change when you're angry? Is it a big change or a little one? Do you have any habits?
- Imagine you were trying to pretend you're not angry – how would your mum or partner or best friend know that you were.

Whenever you go to write 'it was embarrassing' or 'I was scared', run through this exercise, pretending you are your point of view character, while also drawing on your own experience. See if you can come up with a better way of saying that, a way that shows instead of tells.

Part C: Years 9-13

Give Me a Reason

Now, brainstorm scenarios that might make a character mad. Try to be specific as possible. Instead of saying 'their sibling losing their possession', say 'their younger sister borrowing their favourite jumper and then leaving it on a plane'.

Write this scene, interspersing the description of what it felt like to be angry yourself.

3.

Part A: Years 9-13

Emotional and Dramatic Arcs

- Something must happen and you as a character must feel something, or change in some way – make sure there is something at stake.
- Don't introduce (major) characters/threads and then leave their storyline unfinished.
- Think carefully about what you include and what you leave out.
- The ending is often implicit in the start.

What actually happens in 'The Glove'? (E.g. what is its dramatic arc)?

How do the characters change? What is felt? (E.g. what is this story's emotional arc?)

Part B: Years 9-13

Family Ritual

Think of a ritual your family has. This could be anything, from how you honour a loved one, to what you do on Easter Sunday, to the fish and chips you get on Friday nights.

- Who's likely to be there?
- Where does this ritual take place?
- How are people dressed? What are you eating or drinking?
- Is there anything bizarre about it?

Write this ritual as a scene. Try to capture the people, the place, the atmosphere and the food (if there is any). Include weird and specific details. Consider how rituals may seem normal to those who partake in them, even when they are bizarre.

Next, make someone who wasn't invited or expected turn up.

4.

Part A: Years 11-13

Images that Progress Time

Mike's baseball glove moves from the cabinet to the narrator's drawer to a game of catch. His father goes from unable to look at it, to watching it in use. The narrator fluctuates between wanting to play with it, to wanting to keep it hidden, using it only to scream into, to bringing it back out into the world.

Brainstorm images that could show the progression of time over:

- a day
- a week
- a month
- a year
- a decade

Tip: Avoid cliché such as leaves turning red and falling, or the sun coming up and going down.

Choose one of these images to fit the time-frame of a story you want to tell. In order to show the progression of time, you must repeat the image as it changes. (Try to repeat it at least three times.)