

Non-Fiction Exemplars

Autobiography Extract

London Road Primary School was a small collection of Victorian buildings, nestled cosily beside the town's larger and more modern comprehensive. To my bewildered, four-year-old eyes, it was a vast and frightening place.

Squeezed into my uncomfortable grey skirt and stiff white shirt, I tugged constantly on the unfamiliar green and gold tie as I stood in the playground, clutching my mum's hand on that first, frightening day. Around me, other small children clung to their parents, wide-eyed and fearful, waiting to be summoned through the doors of that great institution.

At nine o'clock exactly, Mrs Hargreaves arrived at the door to reception class and beckoned us forward. 'Single file, no talking,' she commanded. Meekly, we said goodbye to our parents and lined up like lambs to the slaughter. It took all my strength not to burst into tears.

Inside, the classroom was austere and forbidding. We were later to discover that Mrs Hargreaves had an aversion to electricity and very seldom allowed the overhead strip lights to be switched on. As a result, I spent the first two years of my education in a state of semi-gloom, both literally and metaphorically.

'Find your desk and sit in silence!'

Thirty trembling children wandered through the rows of desks, looking for their name, each of which had been written in a perfect, copperplate hand on small pieces of card, and then placed on the desks. Soon, most of us were sitting – save for five stragglers who found themselves standing at the front, under the gorgon's eye.

'Why are you not sitting down?'

The tallest girl, who I recognised from play group as Lisa Smith, piped up bravely.

'We can't read, Miss.'

'Idiots!' Her voice rang in our ears and the smallest boy at the front started crying.

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'was'

'four-year-old'

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'my' / 'I'

'it took all my strength'

'gorgon's eye'

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'was'

Usually written in past tense.

'four-year-old'

There is often a clue to the writer's age.

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Contains selected anecdotes from a life.

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'my' / 'I'

Written in first person.

'it took all my strength'

Highly personal account.

Direct speech added for colour.

'gorgon's eye'

Strong personal voice.