

# Personal imaginative coursework – conflict

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## Conflict

Marion had always got on with Sinead, but I'd noticed that recently things hadn't been as peachy. She was in a room, her room, flicking through old magazines. It was starting to get dark and she hadn't yet shut the curtains.

'Knock knock'. Silence. 'Knock knock'.

" Mum?"

Creak. " Why's it so dark in here? I'm going out, I'll be back later."

" I said I'd meet Mary at seven."

Sinead went over and pulled the curtains shut, tutting as she did so.

" Well you can't, I'm going out."

" I told you earlier, I can still go, we're seeing 'The Fruit Picker', you know, the one with Bobby Clampton." Marion sat down, tucking her skirt under her as she always did.

" I don't think so, fruitcake. I don't want you to OK?" Sinead said, facing her daughter.

" But you didn't tell me you were going out and I've already made plans."

" Enough. I've said no." Sinead made an annoying emphasis on the word no with her hands like she usually did before she lost her temper.

" Then tell me why." Marion was starting to get impatient but didn't want Sinead to go into one, so tried to be rational.

" Because I've said so."

" I have no problem in doing what you say as long as you give me a good reason, and so far I haven't seen one so I assume I'm still going out." As she said this, Marion went over to Sinead, noticing a helicopter circling the sky outside.

" The reason is that I want you to stay home in case your father rings."

" No, it's not, you made that up. I'll be back around ten."

" You'll be here at ten because you won't be going out. Ever."

" What, even school?" she said sarkily.

" Don't be a smart little cow. Yeah, even school."

" Don't be stupid. You can't be serious?" The worried expression on her face showed that calm composure wasn't the first thing on her mind at the moment.

" I'm deadly serious. See you later." Sinead left the door open as she left the room and a few seconds later let the front door slam. I knew she'd be OK, so I stayed with Marion.

Marion punched the bed with anger and let out a few reluctant sobs. She stood up jerkily and banged her head against the wall a few times to gather her thoughts. She stood for a moment then I followed her out of the room. I waited at the top of the stairs while she went down. She came back up with a

knife from the kitchen. We went back into her room. She sat down on the bed. As I stayed by the door I watched her pull up her sleeve.

She put the knife to her wrist and winced. I wanted to do something but I was only there to watch. " That'll show her," she muttered. She reached over to get a tissue and smeared some of the blood over the rest of her arm.

" Run" BANG. BANG.

" Now" BANG.

The light was making him see in flashes, like strobing. The night was closing in on him but everything else was breaking up.

As he turned the corner he tripped on a dustbin. He and Mark had gone in opposite directions.

" The Brits are on our tail."

" Down here"

Voices from all directions were clouding his mind. The sirens were deafening. All he could do was think about his wife and daughter back home and know they'd be OK.

It was quite a slow process as they dragged him, with a few of the others, into the back of the van, with the gunshots still roaring through the sky.

Late at night, in the depths of the Irish countryside, a man knelt down beside his bed in a dorm, alongside many other men, some only boys, and prayed.

Prayed that the Lord could give him the strength to stand by his country and  
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make him a martyr for freedom. But above all that the Lord might send someone to watch over his young wife and child in times when he could not be there. Because for him, knowing that God was watching over them meant knowing that they'd be safe even when he was too distant for his love to reach them.

Many other men had prayed that night, for the next day was the day they'd first gone out and fought what would be the beginning of an even longer war. But O'Brien's was the prayer I heard and the prayer I answered. And when he was caught, then lined up and shot by a British Army Officer and it was my turn to move on, I couldn't help staying just a little longer to make sure Sinead and Marion got through it alright.

A few hours later Marion was back with the magazines, the blood having crusted into a nice little scar. She heard a clunk from downstairs and quickly switched off the light and jumped into bed with her clothes still on. I went downstairs to check on Sinead. She'd got back later than she normally did.

She took off her coat and hung it over the banister. She walked down the hall into the kitchen and put her keys down on the table. As she scanned the contents of the fridge, forest fruit gateau, cheese, orange juice, the phone started to ring. She shut the fridge door and picked it up after three rings.

" Hello?"

" Yes, that's me."

The person on the end of the receiver was too muffled for me to hear. Sinead began fiddling with the only ring on her fingers. She paled and her shoulders tensed up. Her breathing became shallow and her chest heaved.

" I understand."

" No thank you, I'll be fine." She put down the handset and lent on the worktop for support.

She stood straight and walked through the hall and up the stairs trembling. I followed closely behind.

" Can I come in, darlin'?" her voice didn't come out as intended, it sounded too high, false. The door opened away from us, and Marion stood, looking unusually small. Sinead walked through and sat on the bed, her eyes were sunken and red. Marion stayed by the door too.

" Are you OK mum? Has something happened?"

" Come over here, love." She gestured by patting the space next to her. Marion walked slowly over, looking stiff and uncomfortable.

" What is it?" she asked. Sinead didn't look her in the eye. She gestured again and Marion sat down.

" I've just had a call from Mark. He had some news about your father."

As her eyes started pricking Marion wished she hadn't turned on the light before opening the door.

" He was caught on a job and he's been, he's been killed."

Marion lifted up her arm to wipe her eye,

" What on earth have you done to yourself?" Sinead's voice was trembling and cracking and her eyes shot with blood.

" Nothing. I - I didn't mean to."

" Oh come here, my baby." And she pulled her to her, and as they both sat there sobbing out loud, clutching each other, I went over and put my arms around them both, gently rocking them from side to side into the night, softly singing an old Irish song my mother used to sing to me:

The Minstrel Boy to the war is gone

In the ranks of death, you will find him

His father's sword he hath girded on

And his wild harp slung behind him

" Land of Song!" said the warrior bard

" Tho' all the world betrays thee

One sword, at least, they rights shall guard

One faithful harp shall praise thee!"

The Minstrel fell! But the foeman's chain

Could not bring that proud soul under

The harp he lov'd ne'er spoke again

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For he tore its chords asunder

And said " No chains shall sully thee

Thou soul of love and bravery!

Thy songs were made for the pure and free,

They shall never sound in slavery!"