

# Extracts Language and Dialogue

Following on from the forum 'Language and Dialogue', take a look at the three extracts below and think about the language tools that have been used. How long are the sentences and the paragraphs? Do you think the author does this deliberately? If so, why? Is there any dialogue (speech or conversation)? What does it show about the characters and the way they're feeling? Does it make the page look more interesting? Is there any dialect (special words or pronunciation from a particular place)? What does this show you about the characters or the setting? Is there any slang? Are there many descriptive words? Do you feel the language is clear and simple, or complicated and difficult? Think about these points, and see what ideas about language you can get from these three authors.

## 1. English Girl Eats Her First Mango

Agard, John. "English Girl Eats Her First Mango." In *Give the Ball to the Poet*, edited by George Horrell, Aisha Spencer and Morag Styles, 42. London: Commonwealth Education Trust Books, 2014.

"If I did tell she

hold this gold

of sundizzy

tonguelicking juicy

mouthwater flow

ripe with love

from the tropics

she woulda tell me

trust you to be

mellowdramatic

so I just say

taste this mango

and I watch she hold

the smooth cheeks

of the mango  
blushing yellow  
and a glow  
rush to she own cheeks  
and she ask me  
what do I do now  
just bite into it?  
and I was tempted  
to tell she  
why not be a devil  
and eat of the skin  
of original sin  
but she woulda tell me  
trust you to be  
mysterious  
so I just say  
it's up to you  
if you want to peel it  
and I watch she feel it  
as something precious  
then she smile and say  
looks delicious  
and I tell she

don't waste sweet words

when sweetness

in your hand

just bite it man

peel it with the teeth

that God give you

or better yet

do like me mother

used to do

and squeeze

till the flesh

turn syrup

nibble a hole

then suck the gold

like bubby

in child mouth

squeeze and tease out

every drop of spice

sounds nice

me friend tell me

and I remind she

that this ain't

apple core

so don't forget  
the seed  
suck that too  
the sweetest part  
the juice does run  
down to your heart  
man if you see  
the English rose  
she face was bliss  
down to the pink  
of she toes  
and when she finish  
she smile  
and turn to me  
lend me your hanky  
my fingers  
are all sticky  
with mango juice  
and I had to tell she  
what hanky  
you talking bout  
you don't know  
when you eat mango

you hanky

is your tongue

man just lick

you finger

you call that

culture

lick your finger

you call that

culture

unless you prefer

to call it

colonisation

in reverse"

This second example is part of a story by the New Zealand writer Patricia Grace. In the story, a teacher is trying to teach a high school class who think the lesson is boring. The students aren't paying attention and are talking about all sorts of other things.

## 2. The Dream Sleepers

Grace, Patricia. *The Dream Sleepers and Other Stories*. Auckland: Longman Paul, 1980.

"The bell Sir.'

'I know.'

'We don't want to be last down the canteen.'

'I've got to go home and put the meat in . . . .'

'All right, we'll have a look at those again tomorrow.'

Tomorrow there would be corridors to walk and steps to go down just as there were today. There'd be a group in the courtyard playing kick square, someone walking on the roof, and people waiting in rows in the canteen. There'd be more pie and doughnut bags to step on or over, and there'd be a swing door somewhere slamming back and forth. There'd be another message or two to read on the concrete block walls, and perhaps one to write. There was one to be written if only you could know what it was.

'So now just copy down that section into your books where it says "Our Heritage", showing all the things that have been handed down to us by the people of Ancient Greece, on page sixteen.'

'What for?'

'Why do we have to copy it down?'

'Who's that calling out? Page sixteen – if you work quickly and quietly you'll get it finished by the time the bell goes.'

'What for?'

'Why do we have to copy it down?'

'Who's that calling out? Page sixteen – if you work quickly and quietly you'll get finished by the time the bell goes.'

'What for? If we want to read about it we can read out of this book here. We don't have to write it all out.'

'I asked you not to call out, and if you have time you can draw a picture of one of these urns here, on page eighteen, or these coins at the bottom of the page . . . .'

It's a waste of time.'

'Now look I've had enough of this calling out, you're the one who's wasting time. Get started or you'll still be here when the bell goes.'

'Not me, I start work at four . . . .'

'Not me either I'm going home to get ready . . . .'

'And that boy there, Pele, get that hat off.'

'He can't Miss he's sister gave him a kina.'

'Now you heard me, get it off, you're supposed to be in uniform . . . .'

'But Miss we all haven't . . . .'

'None of us is in uniform.'

'See Juliet with her jandals on and Va with a tee shirt and Junior with a green jersey . . . .'

'Besides it's very bad manners, now get it off.'

'Who said it's bad manners?'

'Hey Pele boy you got bad manners.'

'No I hafn't, I got a Kina.'

'Hey Pele you forgot to say "Peel-eeze".'

'You forgot to say "Tha-ank you".'

'Now stop all this nonsense. None of you have got any manners whatsoever, and I'm waiting for you Pele, to get that hat off.'

'He can't Miss it's stuck on his head.'

'He's whole head'll come off Miss.'

'Hey Miss it's nearly bell time.'

'Come here Pele. I'm going to see Mr Sutton about you in a minute.'

'What for Miss?'

'For being rude and ill-mannered, now give me that hat.'

'I hafn't got it Miss.'

Because he has taken it off and passed it behind him to Juliet who passed it back to George. George toed it across to Francie who stared at the wall and passed it to Nga who passed it to Va."

### **3. Goodmornin Brother Rasta**

**Berry, James. "Goodmornin Brother Rasta." In *Give the Ball to the Poet*, edited by George Horrell, Aisha Spencer and Morag Styles, 10. London: Commonwealth Education Trust Books, 2014.**

"Good-days wash you mi brother

a-make peace possess you

and love enlightn you

a-make you givin be good

and you evermore be everybody

and you meetn of eye to eye be vision

and all you word them be word of wonderment"

Extracts one and three © Commonwealth Education Trust

Extract two © Longman Paul 1980