

МИНИСТЕРСТВО НАУКИ И ВЫСШЕГО ОБРАЗОВАНИЯ РОССИЙСКОЙ ФЕДЕРАЦИИ

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Институт филологии  
Кафедра романо-германских языков и перевода

Д. Ю. Пешкова

**“ABOUT A BOY”  
BY  
NICK HORNBY**

**Учебно-методическое пособие  
по домашнему чтению**

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Рецензенты:

Н.Б. Аброськина, старший преподаватель кафедры  
романо-германских языков и перевода  
(Елецкий государственный университет им. И.А. Бунина);

О.А. Лапина, учитель иностранных языков  
(французского и английского) МБОУ СОШ № 23 г. Ельца

**Д.Ю. Пешкова**

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Учебно-методическое пособие по домашнему чтению, написанное на основе романа современного британского автора Ника Хорнби, ориентировано на более прочное формирование различных видов коммуникативной компетенции. Пособие ставит целью выработку практических навыков во всех видах речевой деятельности, а также обогащение словарного запаса студентов. Пособие содержит дотекстовые, текстовые и послетекстовые упражнения, тесты после каждого блока заданий для усвоения лексического минимума, а также рекомендации по анализу текста.

Учебно-методическое пособие предназначено для студентов 1-3 курсов института филологии, изучающих английский язык и обучающихся по направлению подготовки 44.03.05 Педагогическое образование (с двумя профилями подготовки).

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## Nick Hornby



Nick Hornby is a prolific, contemporary English writer of novels, an essayist, a columnist and a screenwriter.

He graduated from the University of Cambridge in 1979 where he received a degree in English literature. Then he continued his studies at a teachers' training school. While working as a teacher in Cambridge and then London, Hornby began a freelance journalism career.

He wrote for different newspapers and published a collection of literary essays.

He is famous for such novels as «*About a boy*», «*High Fidelity*» and «*Fever Pitch*» that were turned into movies. Many outstanding American actors like Hugh Grant, Colin Firth, John Cusack, Jimmy Fallon, Drew Barrymore, etc. have performed in films adapted from his books. Hornby is also a famous screenwriter and did writing for the famous film «*An Education*» for which he was nominated for an Oscar Award. «*About a Boy*» fetched Hornby the E.M. Forster Awards from the American Academy of Arts and Letters.

His novel «*About a Boy*», also adapted into a film starring Hughes Grant, came out in 1998. This is a story exploring the lives of two 'boys'; Marcus, a young clumsy and queer but charming teenager, coming from a one-parent family, and Will, an easy-going and immature man in his thirties. The novel describes how their lives get intertwined and how they change themselves for the better.

### **Tell about the author of the novel.**

The title of the novel "About a Boy" refers to the song "About a Girl" by the American rock band Nirvana. The song was written by an American singer, songwriter, and musician Kurt Cobain. Being regarded as a Generation X icon, he is considered to be one of the most iconic and influential rock musicians in the history

of alternative music. One of the characters of the novel “About a Boy” is keen on Kurt Cobain and his songs. This detail helps us to plunge into the atmosphere of the novel and understand the setting properly.

**Can you guess what the novel will be about judging by the title? Is it suggestive or not? Why?**

ЕГУ им. И.А.Бунина

## **Assignment I**

### **Chapters 1-6**

#### **I. Give definitions and situations from the text for the words:**

burn the candle at both ends; strike up (a rapport); clincher; come to terms with; hilarious; make headway; fraud; come up with.

#### **II. Translate the words/words-combinations into English:**

Парень; непечённый (о хлебе); каша из кукурузной крупы; мамалыга; борода клинышком; разбрасывать; измождённый; постигать, понимать; нелогичное заключение; самодовольно; без гроша в кармане; разглагольствовать; способность, врождённый талант; опухший; провести расследование; фломастер.

#### **III. Give synonyms for the words:**

Questionnaire; hypothermia; speculation; peek over; clutter; throw; a mug of tea; baggy trousers; demented; potty; crows' feet; bestow forgiveness; withering look; overlap; infidelity; handicapped children; lousy; dearth; litany of treachery and deceit.

#### **IV. Give your situations with the following words:**

frown upon; trawl through; blush; affinity (to children); throe; repel; go round; buy time; launch into; cock up; nerdy and geeky; groovy.

#### **V. Answer the questions:**

1. What do we get to know about the major characters in the first chapter?
2. How does Marcus get on with his mother? Is there any estrangement between them?
3. What does Will Freeman consider to be his strong points?

4. Does Will have a desire to establish a family of his own? What is his attitude to children?

5. What is implied by the words: “Jessica wanted to exchange the froth and frivolity for something more solid”?

6. Has Will wholeheartedly agreed to be Imogen’s godfather?

7. Why isn’t Marcus right for schools? What is queer in his demeanour?

8. What are the reasons for which Marcus has been ridiculed and mocked at by his classmates?

9. Do you approve of the methods of upbringing of Marcus’s mother?

10. Who does Will chat up? Why has he been attracted by a single mother?

11. What makes people think that Will is “the Good Guy, the Redeemer”?

12. What relationship has Will launched into?

13. What is wrong with Marcus’s mother?

14. Does Marcus get along with other kids? Does he have the best buddies to hang around?

15. Why does the author say that Marcus’s “fame has been spreading?” How have pupils cracked jokes about him?

16. What does Marcus think of this situation at heart if he has conjured up such metaphors as “koala bears have with piranha fish”, “insults were hurled in just the same way as missiles”?

17. Is Will appropriate for a dad’s role ? What story has he thought up?

18. Does Will work like a beaver?

19. Who are the members of SPAT? What is its purpose? Has Will felt at ease there?

20. What is the setting of the novel?

## **VI. Discussion points:**

1. Give Marcus’s character sketch.

2. Can you call the situation with Marcus as bullying? Who is susceptible to be a despised victim being given a hard time?

3. Will – a killer with the ladies- what opinion is added up of him? How does he endeavour to allure single mothers? More than that, he is an antipode of a person who is as busy as a bee. Does he inspire sympathy to you?

4. Is it significant to have such communities as SPAT? The purpose of such societies as SPAT is to help people through their emotional and trying time. Self-help societies in Britain are aimed at helping people to overcome problems. They can share their difficulties, discuss important questions and find friends who understand them. Are these societies common in Russia?

**VII. Retell the chapters using the active vocabulary and words and word combinations studied.**

**Test yourself! Chapters 1-6**

**Translate the sentences. Define the words.**

1. Его **веский довод** помог **поддержать** невиновного человека.
2. Он попытался **завязать** разговор просто из любопытства.
3. Супруги **пришли к соглашению** о том, чтобы купить дом без соседей с фруктовым садом.
4. Сейчас я нахожусь на пороге своей карьеры, но мечтаю о том, как **продвинуться вперед**.
5. Ты должна гордиться тем, что **работаешь не покладая рук**.
6. Тебе стоит посмотреть этот **веселый** фильм.
7. **Мошенничество** в интернете достигло небывалых размеров.
8. Учителю необходимо **наладить контакт** с учениками.

## Assignment II

### Chapters 7-13

#### I. Translate the words:

Fiver; prod; requisite anger; wimp; cot; pervert; rounders; CV; avuncular; embellishment; contraption; malarkey.

#### II. Give definitions and find the situations in the novel:

stick up for

thespian

when it comes to the crunch

live off (the royalties)

under the weather

out of touch

take at face value

dump

grass sb up

top oneself

at sb's disposal

beat around the bush

#### III. Find the synonyms:

keep out of; get at; duvet; weedy; kill off ; cut up; get round to; strike up a sparky relationship; tetchy defensiveness; mess around; keel over; wade in; conked out.

#### IV. Define the words connected with being insane:

be nuts; go nuts; off colour; nuts; thick; barmy.

## **V. Find the English equivalents in the novel:**

Выяснять, убеждаться; неожиданно возникать, "всплыть"; умолкать; кудрявый; соблазнить кого-л; рвать, тошнить; быть отталкивающим, плохо пахнуть; бездельник, нищелюдина; бродяга; наркоман; изгой; не знать (о ком-л., чем-л.); завязывать отношения, подружиться; закон Мёрфи; закон подлости, закон бутерброда; немодный; небольшая порция салата (обычно подаваемая отдельно от основного блюда).

## **VI. Answer the questions:**

1. What hardships did Marcus face at school and at home?
2. How did Will gain his living?
3. Was Will proud of the song "Santa's Super Sleigh"? Why?
4. What did Will think of Marcus? Was it easy for him to deal with the boy?
5. What does Marcus look like?
6. Did you find Marcus's preferences in music stunning?
7. Was Marcus aware of the fact that his mother was a bit insane?
8. What outdoor activities were the members of the SPAT engaged into?
9. What was the reason for Will's boisterous behaviour?
10. Who committed a criminal offence in Regent's Park? What way out was found? Describe this hilarious for the readers and lugubrious for the protagonists scene in detail.
11. What else was the Dead Duck day marked with? Give an account of this abominable for Marcus occasion.
12. What was the audience in the waiting-room of the hospital like?
13. What was written in a suicide letter? How do you perceive the reason for such an outrageous deed?
14. Was Marcus successful at reviving his mother's spirits?
15. Was Will resourceful enough to have all things settled and be busy all day long? What occupied most of his time?
16. What benevolent intentions did Will reveal in regards to Marcus?

17. Marcus is portrayed as a straightforward person, isn't he? Was his proposal baffling?

18. Why did Marcus want his mother and Will to bond?

19. Where did Marcus, Will and Fiona go out? How did she look like? Describe in detail their appointment. Did it come up roses? Was it easy for Will and Fiona to strike up a conversation?

### **VII. Find the stylistic devices in the sentences:**

1. He already had a cast of three – Paula, Ned and his mother (who wasn't imaginary in quite the same way, having at least been alive once, although not, admittedly, recently) – and he could see that if he was going to carry this through, then there would soon be a cast of thousands.

2. They trudged towards the picnic, feeling old and beaten and found out.

3. He played ball, he blew bubbles, he burst crisp packets (a mistake – many tears, lots of irritated glances), he hid, he sought, he tickled, he dangled...

4. Marcus felt his insides turn to mush.

5. Suzie was crying, and then Megan started up too, so in seconds the room had gone from a terrifying silence and stillness to noisy, terrifying panic.

6. ... to stay afloat in the enormous ocean of time...

7. For some reason – possibly because he encountered real drama very rarely in the course of an average twentytime-unit quick-crossword-on-the-toilet day—he kept being drawn back to thinking about Marcus and Fiona, and wondering how they were.

### **VIII. Discussion points:**

1. Marcus is a pretty bright boy, isn't he? Do you agree that he is quick on his feet?

“Two wasn't enough, that was the trouble. He'd always thought that two was a good number, and that he'd hate to live in a family of three or four or five. But he could see the point of that now: if someone dropped off the edge, you weren't left on

your own. How could you make a family grow if there was no one around to, you know, help it along? He was going to have to find a way”.

Which theme is touched here?

2. What eggs people on committing suicide?

Does the song “Santa’s Super Sleigh” exist? Which songs mentioned in chapters 7-13 do you consider cool?

**IX. Retell the chapters using the active vocabulary and words and word combinations studied.**

**Test yourself! Chapters 7-13**

**Translate the sentences. Define the words.**

1. Она **приняла** ухаживания **за чистую монету** – как будто это была любовь с первого взгляда.
2. **Не ходи вокруг да около!** Я знаю, что ты живешь за счет авторских гонораров.
3. Я готов **отстаивать** твои интересы в суде.
4. Моя коллекция книг **в твоём распоряжении**.
5. Бдительный прохожий **сдал** преступников полиции.
6. **В решающий момент** важно принять правильно решение.
7. Я **плохо себя чувствую**, когда погода меняется.
8. Вы просто **не разбираетесь** в современном кинематографе.
9. Он не мог **покончить с собой**. Наверняка, это было убийство.

## Assignment III

### Chapters 14-19

#### I. Translate the words:

to force-feed vagrants; chickpeas; off you go; that's big of you; sackful; liquorice allsorts; caffeine; occupational hazard; raucous; literal-minded; molest; drinking binges; whiff; dosh; bleached hair.

#### II. Give definitions and find the situations in the novel:

to elude

to inflict oneself

on the spur of the moment

to be a truant

excruciating

cheeky

to blow one's top

#### III. Find the synonyms for these words from the novel:

good-works; flaky; pop round; poke around; implications; hack off; easy-peasy; nutter.

#### IV. Match the words/word-combinations with their translation:

1. dog's dinner	ощутимый, выраженный
2. chuck	щетина
3. slip-ons	морщины в углах глаз
4. discernible	неразбериха, беспорядок
5. stubble	необыкновенная щедрость
6. crow's feet	швырять, бросать
7. beam at	приятное ощущение, эйфория
8. munificence	обувь без шнуровки
9. natural high	приветливо улыбаться

10. go round	разжёвывать; раскладывать по полочкам
11. think for oneself	привирать
12. scowl at sb.	своя голова на плечах
13. tell fibs	устроить головомойку, критиковать
14. spell out	бросать грозный взгляд
15. have a go at sb.	заходить в гости запросто

### V. Find the English equivalents in the novel:

фильм плохого качества; курчавые или туго завитые волосы, кудри; уклончивый; личные вещи, принадлежности; любопытствовать, разыскивать; правдоподобный; падать, свалиться; выслеживать; сумасшедший, безрассудный; пятно; трудность, препятствие; звонок; утешение; несочетаемый; впутывать себя; вне себя (безумный); взаимные упрёки (обвинение); обменивать; несметное количество; шантажировать; толстовка.

### VI. Answer the questions:

1. What can you say a youth movement “hippy” except the fact that it’s “a usually young person who rejects established social customs (such as by dressing in an unusual way or living in a commune) and who opposes violence and war; *especially* : a young person of this kind in the 1960s and 1970s”?

2. Florence Nightingale, known for her merciful night rounds to help wounded soldiers, established her image as the 'Lady with the Lamp.' Find some information about this brave woman.

Why did Will consider her to be a heart of gold?

3. Why was it tormenting for Will to listen to ‘Killing Me Softly With His Song’?

4. How did Marcus thunder down deceit? How did they settle the matter?

5. How did Will react when Marcus decide to pop round him?

6. How did they get on later?

7. What was the reason for which Marcus was at Will’s digs?

8. How did it happen that the boys wanted to embed sweets into Marcus's skull?
9. What did Will call a natural high? Why?
10. Was Fiona glad that Marcus went round Will?
11. How did Marcus understand that he didn't think for himself?
12. What was Christmas for Will?
13. Did Will and Marcus come to an agreement about Marcus?
14. Whom did Marcus meet while waiting for the headmistress?
15. Why was Marcus cheeky to the headmistress?

**VII. Retell the chapters using the active vocabulary and words and word combinations studied.**

**Test yourself! Chapters 14-19**

**Translate the sentences. Define the words.**

1. Я всегда стараюсь **уклониться** от спора. Это помогает избегать конфликтов.
2. Мой брат всегда **приходит в ярость**, когда ему кто-то перечит.
3. Если ты будешь **прогуливать** занятия, ты вряд ли сдашь экзамены.
4. Зачем он **навязывает** тебе свое **общество**?
5. Бен **сразу же** признался, что он солгал.
6. **Наглое** поведение этого молодого человека возмутительно!
7. Когда у меня воспалился зуб, я едва выдержал **мучительную** боль.

## Assignment IV

### Chapters 20-25

#### I. Translate the words:

keep your hair on; roadie; my man; burrow; skewed; transpire; haul ; pillock; charades; snubbing; unreciprocated ; cipher; bouncer ; cast sb in a more flattering light; deadbeat; under the sun; glacier; beaker.

#### II. Give definitions and find the situations in the novel:

let off steam

fix sb up

In one piece

bring up

come in handy

window of opportunity

big break

lie through teeth

run-of-the-mill

#### III. Find the synonyms for these words from the novel:

bunk off; celibate; daft; knock around; annihilate; understatement; shush.

#### IV. Find the English equivalents in the novel:

почувствовать прилив нежности; сигналить; бессмыслица (чепуха); отлучаться (отходить); уклоняться от; пояснять (разъяснять); отправляться; самоуверенный (дерзкий); безумный; каламбур (странность); немногословный; отвратительный (ужаснейший); вмешиваться; клясться; ошеломлённый.

## **V. Answer the questions:**

1. Who was Kurt Cobain? Why did his name become the reason for the messing around?
2. What were Will and Marcus talking about when the boy came round him?
3. What idea struck Will in regards to a kind of help Marcus needed?
4. Why did Marcus decide to invite Ellie round? Don't you think that he was too hilarious in an attempt to have a talk with her?
5. When did Marcus's finest hour come?
6. Did the saying 'There's no such thing as bad publicity' justify itself?
7. What stylistic devices are used in this sentence: "Will wrestled with his conscience, grappled it to the ground and sat on it until he couldn't hear a squeak out of it"?
8. What does the tradition of pulling wishbones imply?
9. Was Will willing to come round Marcus and Fiona on Christmas day?
10. Who was invited at Fiona's?
11. Do you bear out the opinion that estranged couples get on well together?
12. Why was it surprising for Will that Marcus was gracious about his Christmas presents?
13. What benefit can a child have being given different presents from both parents?
14. How did they spend Christmas?
15. What happened when Suzie turned up?
16. Who did Will fall in love with?
17. How was Will going to attract Rachel's attention? What was he good at?
18. What new lie did Marcus think up again?
19. Whom did Marcus meet at Suzie's?

## VI. Discussion points.

1. **Comment upon the following proverbs and sayings. Make up situations with them.**

*do as the Romans do*      со своим уставом не ходят

*best of both worlds*      иметь и то и другое (без необходимости выбора);

и рыбку съесть – и косточкой не подавиться

2. **In the novel there is an allusion to the British custom of baking a cake with some object inside which can foretell your future:**

“...have Christmas pudding with five-pence pieces hidden in it”.

*Putting a silver coin in the pudding is another age-old custom that is said to bring luck to the person that finds it. In the UK the traditionally used coin was a silver 'six pence'. The closest coin to that now is a five pence piece!*

*The tradition seems to date back to the Twelfth Night Cake which was eaten during the festivities on the 'Twelfth Night' of Christmas. Originally a dried pea or bean was baked in the cake. A person who got it, was 'king or queen' for the night. There are records of this practice going back to the court of Edward II (early 1300s). The bean was also sometimes a silver ring of small crown. The first coins used were a Silver Farthing or penny. After WWI it became a threepenny bit and then a sixpence.*

*You might also get other items (sometimes called 'tokens' or 'favours') placed in the Christmas Pudding which also meant to have special meanings:*

- *Bachelor's Button: If a single man found it, he would be a bachelor for the following year.*

- *Spinster's/Old Maid's Thimble: If a single woman found it, she would not get married next year.*

- *A Ring: If a single person found this, he would get married in the following year. It can also mean you will be rich for the following year.*

**Are there any traditions of foretelling in Russia?**

**Making Christmas crackers** is a great way to prepare favors for that special Christmas party or event. Christmas crackers are a popular party favor in Great

Britain and Australia. They are not difficult to create and can easily be done in an afternoon. If you want to try it for this Christmas, then this page will walk you through how to make Christmas crackers step by step.

If you think that Christmas crackers are something that you can put cheese on, then you're obviously not from Great Britain or Australia and have never seen the Harry Potter movies. A Christmas cracker is a party favor, which consists of a wrapped tube filled with a paper crown or party hat, a joke or riddle and a small gift. The cracker is then pulled open to expose its contents. Not only do crackers make great gifts, they can also be used as ornaments, stocking stuffers and invitations.

**Find some information about Christmas crackers.**

**VII. Retell the chapters using the active vocabulary and words and word combinations studied.**

**Test yourself! Chapters 20-25**

**Translate the sentences. Define the words.**

1. Как ты обычно **снимаешь** нервное напряжение?
2. Давай **познакомим** мою сестру с твоим братом. У них много общего.
3. Не переживай насчет багажа. Все твои вещи находятся **в целости и сохранности**.
4. В походе мне может **пригодиться** одеяло и электроплитка.
5. Я не люблю **заводить разговор** о зарплате.
6. В любом случае надо воспользоваться этим **удобным моментом**.
7. **Переломный момент** в ее карьере произошел после повышения.
8. Этот человек **нагло лжет** и даже не краснеет!
9. Его выступление была **ничем не примечательным**.

## Assignment V

### Chapters 26-31

#### I. Translate the words:

let's-cut-the-crap; get the wrong end of the stick; psycho; mooch around;  
Unencumbered; concussed; DIY; Grout.

#### II. Give definitions and find the situations in the novel:

get together

beat yourself up

run riot

slip through sb's fingers

see eye-to-eye with

let sb loose on sth

talk sb out of sth

have/take a peek

#### III. Find the synonyms for these words from the novel:

start on sb/sth; buy time; off one's head; cry your eyes out; thump; straggly;  
snivel; pass (one's) lips; push your luck; revelation; buoyant - able to float; window  
ledge

#### IV. Match the word with the translation:

1. a catch	a) to imagine or expect something in the future, especially something good
2. in-between	b) to express excitement or interest
3. to dunk	c) a person who is considered to be very suitable for a relationship
4. harp on (about sth)	d) having the qualities of two different things

5. gerbil	e) to put a biscuit, piece of bread, etc. into a liquid such as tea, coffee, or soup for a short time before eating it
6. to get at sth	f) to talk or complain about something many times
7. to envisage	g) a small animal, similar to a mouse with long back legs, that is often kept as a pet
8. to enthuse	h) to reach or obtain something, especially something that is difficult to get
9. crumpet	i) stupid and slow to understand, or unwilling to try to understand
10. obtuse	j) a small, round cake like bread with holes in one side that is eaten hot with butter

#### **V. Find the English equivalents in the novel:**

Кошмарный; хвастливо (напоказ); подлавливать на чем-л.; остатки еды; останавливаться; дуновение; безумный; переночевать; выходить из себя; толкнуть локтем; остановиться (замереть).

#### **VI. Answer the questions:**

1. What was Will asking Marcus about? (to pretend to be his son)
2. What helped Marcus and Will create mutuality?
3. Was Ali glad to see Marcus?
4. Did Ali and Marcus get on well with each other? Why did they quarrel?
5. Why was Will worried because of the fact that Ellie had got Marcus out of trouble?
6. What was the point in Will's "fathering a child"?
7. What stylistic device is used in the sentence: "But Rachel simply sat there and waited for him to finish his mouthful, and however much he chewed and

grimaced and swallowed and choked he couldn't make a mini spring roll last forever"??

8. What was the problem with Marcus's mother? How did he feel about it: "...frightening burst of sobbing, a burst that Marcus could do nothing about, no matter how many questions he asked or hugs he gave her; and then, finally, there was the breakfast crying again, and he knew for sure that things were serious and they were in trouble"?

9. Whom did Marcus tell about his mother's crying again?

10. Whom did Marcus consider his friend? Why?

11. Why was Ellie frustrated? What happened?

12. Why did Will see no point in interfering with Fiona's privacy?

13. Why did Rachel fancy Will?

14. What did Rachel tell Will so that he "felt like the most stupid man in the world"?

15. What was Rachel's opinion the reasons for some people to take their life?

16. What happened to Marcus's father? Did Marcus feel sorry for him?

17. "Ellie was like a guided missile in school, and sometimes it felt as though she were his personal guided missile. Whenever he was with her he could point her at targets and she destroyed them, and he loved her for it". What attracted Marcus in Ellie?

18. Why were Marcus and Ellie going to Cambridge?

19. What did Marcus get to know about from the newspaper headline?

20. Why was Marcus's guided missile plan about to fail?

**VII. Retell the chapters using the active vocabulary and words and word combinations studied.**

**Test yourself! Chapters 26-31**

**Translate the sentences. Define the words.**

1. Давайте **встретимся** в пятницу и все обсудим.

2. Не **вини** себя в том, что произошло. Это была случайность.

3. Он **дал волю** фантазии и воплотил свои чувства на холсте.

4. Я **упустила** возможность устроиться на высокооплачиваемую должность.

5. Я **согласна** с тобой, что так поступать неправильно.

6. Кто **дал** ему полную **свободу** действий?

7. Родители попытались **отговорить** меня от брака.

8. Я хочу **взглянуть** на дом, который построил твой брат.

## **Assignment VI**

### **Chapters 32-36**

#### **I. Translate the words:**

a mundane social arrangement; tetchiness; apologetic; body swerve; pseud; existential; ulterior; malarkey; geezer; ventriloquist; look forward to a heart-to-heart; hennaed; avenge; kindred spirit; reconciled; exploit; contemplate; be out of sth; play truant; fumble around; circumspect; brusque; abhor; elaborate; scowl.

#### **II. Give definitions and find the situations in the novel:**

to be out of touch with smth.

all over the place

on the verge of

screw up (courage)

(bring) grist to the mill

go off the rails

give up on sb

the last straw

be lost for words

start with a clean sheet

get one's head round

out of the blue

### **III. Find the synonyms for these words from the novel:**

get the hang of sth; shove off; be cut out for sth; one liner; good call; hold down a relationship; scare sb to bits; take a while; bring the trouble upon oneself; pick up; chuck; patronize; apprehend; tatty; feisty; rebellious; mousy; ditto; knack; heartbroken; bang up; hoot; give sb a piece of one's mind; rip off; Wrong-headed; wander off; split up; tetchy; intervening; Whoop; Sagely; Scald

### **IV. Find the English equivalents in the novel:**

Происходить, получаться в результате; жить, побывать в крупном городе; в глубине души; обстоятельства; отчаяние; иметь аллергию на что-л.; страсть; сдерживать; оброненный; нести бремя отцовства; вызвать сердечный приступ; уместный вопрос; сопровождающий, сопутствующий; кнопка аварийной остановки; пить большими глотками (спиртное); бдительный, настороже; витрина; слабый, хилый; молоток; спасти из плена; обочина, бордюр; манекен, кукла; бродяга; постоянно бывать (где-л.), проводить время; неразбериха, беспорядок; сердитый, раздражительный; тяжело опускаться, садиться; морщина, складка; поддерживать, подкреплять; горе; очевидно; оскорблять; заключать сделку; неисчислимое количество; ударить лицом в грязь.

### **V. Answer the questions:**

1. Why were Rachel, Will and Fiona going to a pub?
2. Why did Will feel a rising panic?
3. What did Will learn about Fiona?
4. Whose death did they learn about?
5. Why did Marcus feel exhausted and embarrassed on the train?
6. Why did Ellie break the window of a record shop?
7. What happened when the police arrived?
8. Who was the first to come to the police office?
9. What made Marcus lose his temper?

10. What did Ellie's mother look like?
11. Did Ellie's and Marcus's mothers get on well?
12. Describe the characters' meeting at the police station.
13. What did the shop owner look like? Why was everyone bewildered?
14. What was the end of the "cardboard-cut-out affair"?
15. Is it important to create little patterns of people? Did Marcus learn to do it?
16. Is it important to create little patterns of people? Did Marcus learn to do it?
17. How did Will spend time with Rachel, Marcus and Ali?
18. How did Marcus change? How did the other characters change?

#### **VI. Discussion points.**

Marcus's mother once told him that sometimes people need opposites. Marcus made up his mind that he wouldn't like Ellie to be his girlfriend because she differed radically from him. Why do people seem to attract completely opposite people?

#### **VII. Retell the chapters using the active vocabulary and words and word combinations studied.**

#### **Test yourself! Chapters 32-36**

#### **Translate the sentences. Define the words.**

1. Он **не в курсе** дел своей семьи, потому что он живет и работает в другом городе.
2. **По всему дому** были обнаружены отпечатки преступника.
3. Амурский тигр находится **на грани** исчезновения.
4. Он **набрался храбрости** и признался в содеянном.
5. Информация о деятельности компании **дала** конкурентам **преимущество**.

6. Даже если человек **сбился с пути истинного**, его семья не должна **ставить** на нем **крест**.
7. Его грубое поведение стало **последней каплей**.
8. Я **потеряла дар речи** от его прямолинейности.
9. Никогда не поздно **начать жизнь с чистого листа**.
10. Я **не могу взять в толк**, почему он **неожиданно** вскочил и выбежал из комнаты.

### Topics for essays

One of the significant issues raised in the novel is connected with bullying. Marcus is being laughed at by his classmates. It's a great disaster for him to be an outsider. Each day at school is real torture.

Teenagers usually bully their victims at the age of 13-15. Psychological, physical and cyberbullying are harmful for teenagers' mental state which is a little bit fragile. The statistics show that teenagers that are more likely to be bullied are schoolchildren from low-income families.

**Write an essay on the point of bullying. What causes bullying? Do you agree that people who are bullying you, are insecure about who they are, and that's why they're bullying you? What should parents, teachers and children do to prevent bullying?**

*Regard some other points connected with the novel in the following review of the novel:*

**Life is not always a picnic through the example of *About a Boy* by N. Hornby**

Where have our values gone? Our society is in moral and spiritual decline. People forget about true family values, being obsessed with self-fulfillment ethics, addicted to fame, plunged themselves into their sordid and ambitious desires, striving for better quality of life. The burning issues of the day – relations between men and women, looking for a second half, upbringing, bullying, single parenthood, etc. make

the novel a great delight to read. Students usually say that the plot grabs their attention from the very first line and they read it from cover to cover. As well as our life consists of black and white stripes, the novel contains the chapters where we can't but laugh or on the contrary burst into tears, ponder over sense of life or just enjoy ourselves. Needless to say that *some books are to be tasted, others to be swallowed, and some few to be chewed and digested* and *About a Boy* is sure to be a book which refers to all these categories.

The first-year students, with whom we have been reading and discussing the novel, are enthusiastic about the plot, the theme and the characters. Some of them found themselves in the protagonist's portrayal, others ran the same difficulties at school, or came from one-parent families, or felt the generation gap problem with their parents. In spite of an opinion that some books are hobbyhorse ones, they are less controversial than others and raise less urgent or touching topics [Footpath Issue No.12 p.7-8], I can't bear to call the novel simplistic. Frankly speaking, the storyline is so gripping that you want to read a book through and through. The enthralling narrative and a teenager, opposed to the society and a deluge of problems, will always dwell with people who have once read the novel. Time and tide wait for no man. But the issues on which the author settles upon are ever-lasting.

Marcus, whose character sketch is exciting to trace, isn't right for schools. Other kids give him a hard time. The author compares these kids to sharks looking for flesh – and in our case it's a wrong kind of clothes, haircut, shoes, etc. Why is he bullied? There are a lot of queer things in his demeanour. He wears rather out-of-date clothes, his haircut isn't cute, he doesn't listen to fashionable music and sometimes he can sing a tune which he is hearing in his head. These reasons lead to the fact that Marcus is being ridiculed and mocked at by his classmates. Marcus's fame has been spreading and not only his classmates but also all students crack jokes about him. Marcus is aware of the fact that he is weird. What is more, he considers his mum to be queer too. Marcus feels at ease only at home. Being at school makes him feel uncomfortable. Singing and reading have become his way of flying away from kids, teachers and problems. School violence and aggression lead to the fact that children

hurt or frighten their classmates who are smaller or less powerful. These victims are usually different from others, or just don't have proper clothes, or they are too shy and quiet. Marcus is surprisingly even-tempered when the bullies pursue him:

*Marcus was standing on the step being bombarded with some kind of confectionery, rock-shaped and rock-hard lumps that could easily do as much damage as rocks.*

We often come across bullying at schools, colleges, at home, on the Internet, sometimes even at work. According to statistics 10% of British secondary school students are bullied more than once in any term. Bullying can range from name-calling and teasing to physical violence. Marcus comes across the following forms of bullying: nicknaming, telling other children not to be friends with someone, teasing and hitting. He wished he were "normal":

*He'd been pretending that everything was normal – difficult, yes, but normal – but now he'd let go he could see it had been everything but normal. You don't get your shoes stolen normally. Your English teacher doesn't make out you're a nutter normally. You don't get boiled sweets thrown at your head normally. And that was just the school stuff.*

What can you do if you are being bullied? The first idea which occurs to us is to tell about bullying to a form teacher or a psychologist at school. But Marcus's teachers witnessed the cases of bullying and observed it without reacting. The second way out is to speak out to parents. But as for Marcus's mother, she was too preoccupied with herself being under the weather. Students' responses about getting over bullying included keeping a diary (what/where/who/when it happened), providing teachers, tutors and parents with details and not hitting back since it make the matter worse.

Which types of students can be vulnerable? As for Marcus, he is the very same person who has become a fallen sparrow due to some traits of his character. He is silent and uncommunicative, uncertain and shy, calm and modest. The author uses a lot of word which describe a weird, odd or a plain person: *be nuts, go nuts, off colour, nuts, thick, barmy, flaky, daft, a wally, nutter, pillock, prat, wanker, twit.*

Marcus is depicted in a way which shows that he doesn't have friends, he doesn't get enough parental love, he is alone in spite of the fact that he has got a mother. His mother is prone to crying and no one knows when and why it begins and stops. Will doesn't see eye to eye with Marcus's mother about her methods of upbringing:

*All of these people came from another country, a country full of things that Will knew nothing about and had no use for ... . Marcus was the fruit of their loins.*

One can't deny that Marcus is a pretty bright boy. It becomes obvious that he is quick on his feet judging by his wise thoughts:

*Two wasn't enough, that was the trouble. He'd always thought that two was a good number, and that he'd hate to live in a family of three or four or five. But he could see the point of that now: if someone dropped off the edge, you weren't left on your own. How could you make a family grow if there was no one around to, you know, help it along? He was going to have to find a way.*

The description of the boys ready to embed sweets into Marcus's skull made the students, with whom we discussed the novel, shudder. We see that Marcus's life isn't a picnic. When Marcus encounters Will, "a good boy, the Redeemer", his life changes to the better. Marcus goes round a middle-aged man without family responsibilities and problems.

It's difficult for everyone to get through pressure, emotional and psychological abuse let alone twelve-year-old boy's sufferings. The problem of young adolescents' aggressive behaviour causes a deterioration of microclimate in the classroom and leads to lower academic achievement.

The boy reveals strength of character, inner power and strong will to overcome this hectic time. Until the moment when Marcus meets Ellie, his life doesn't seem cheerful. It goes without saying that Will did his best to take over the father role – by at least talking about important things to Marcus, trying to solve his problems or buying him new trainers. Will is on the same wavelength with Marcus:

*Don't beat around the bush ' ; 'OK, OK, keep your hair on.*

These things did Marcus a lot of good but only Ellie's authority, who was a cute senior schoolgirl, helped Marcus to survive. Marcus rose in his opinion not at the moment when he was trying to get away from the bullies or when Will made an attempt to change his looks for the better but at the moment when he acquired self-confidence. People can go too far in case of having negative self-feeling or self-appreciation. Proper self-esteem and self-actualization is the key to success.

**Let's analyze the story. You can use the plan and clichés for the analysis:**

I would like to analyze the story under the intricate/fascinating/marvelous/enchanting/gripping/amazing/thrilling/magnificent/remarkable/adorable/stunning/ admirable/embarassing title ..

The text/ story/ extract under analysis is titled...

**The author's biography.** The author of this literary work is ... . He was a notable and prolific ... writer of the ...<sup>th</sup> century. His works belong to ... genre, because his stories deal for the most part with ... . His most famous stories are: ... . Such features as endowing his protagonists with a great force of character, a profound psychological insight, reflections on the nature of human interrelations and a deep understanding of the human motives are typical of the writer. Playful stories and witty narration are also characteristic of ... peculiar style. His literary works were adored by the readers /were panned by the critics /the writer won a public recognition posthumously.

**The title.** I consider the title of the story to be rather suggestive because the plot centers round ... . I may suppose that the title is also metaphoric because the..., but we won't be able to say it for sure until we analyze the story up to the end.

**The setting.** As far as I am concerned the setting is not of great importance, because it is described implicitly. Undoubtedly, the scene is laid in ..., because the author uses some ... words: ... . We don't know what city it is, but the author points out that the action takes place in .... I admit that the story is set at the end of the ...<sup>th</sup> century, because we come across the word ... , which was typical of that century.

Moreover, the author's creative activity was connected with that time and place which proves our point of view.

**The subject** of the story may be formulated as ... . The following row of **thematic vocabulary** helps us to gain a better understanding of the topic ... .

**The message** of the literary work runs as follows: ... The idea is conveyed through the presentation of the main character's feelings. To my mind, the story teaches us to be ... The story is intended to provoke thought/ The story gives food for thought. To sum up, the moral is reflected in the proverb...

**The plot.** In my opinion, the plot of the story is rather complicated/tangled up/commonplace/trite. The basic plot of the story develops slowly towards a violently dramatic incident and an ironical conclusion. The story is devoid of insignificant details and full of philosophical digressions. The charm of the story lies in its interesting plot and exciting situation. At the same time it conveys deep thought, keen observation and sharpness of characterization. The plot structure of the story is **closed**, since all the necessary elements: **the exposition, the story, the climax and the denouement** are presented in it. The story has a(n) entertaining/ exciting/ gripping/ amusing/ enjoyable/ witty/ skillfully developed/ slow-moving/ fast-moving/ trite plot.

The exposition takes place traditionally at the beginning of the story, where the author grabs our attention from the very first line. He reflects upon ... . The author also introduces into the story ...

Later the narration gains momentum and we get to know about ... . It becomes clear that the story is characterized by gripping narrative and deep emotional impact when we observe ...

The climax of the story is rather vivid and quite unexpected, because ... . The highest point of the action creates a great emotional tension and explains nothing at once. The passage is rich with such emotionally-coloured words, as, for example, ... . The author renders ... feelings through ... .

The denouement is quite unpredictable, as ... . It turned out that ... .

The story is told in **the third person**. It allows us to regard each character's point of view.

**The composition** of the literary work is level (or straight line), because all the elements are given in their logical and chronological sequence. Narrative forms, used in the story, are the following: the exposition, the narration, the description and the dialogue.

**The characters.** The **protagonist** is ..., the **antagonist** is ..., and the **minor** character is ... . The charm of the story lies in a realistic portrayal of the characters. They are full-blooded and many-sided. The author's real central figure seems to be complex or round. The author reveals the nature of his characters through actions and description of their motives. At the beginning he was ... . The story reveals the author's great knowledge of man's inner world. He penetrates into the subtlest windings of the human heart. It shows the person's pangs if he suffers from such drawbacks as ... . The character is **portrayed dynamically**, as later he **undergoes changes** and understands ... . The author uses the **direct characterization**, because he evaluates the protagonist himself. The major character is represented through his behaviour and thoughts. We see how ... he is when he is ... . The author shows (presents) complex/ complicated/ simple/ imaginary/ realistic/ (un)convincing/ superficial/ flat/ round/ well (badly) portrayed characters. The events and descriptions in the story are seen through the main character's eyes.... is depicted through her appearance: her beauty was convincing. She was ... . The girl is worthy of our positive estimate, because she ... . She is a **flat/simple character or complex/round**. Later she... . So, the story is a remarkable insight into human character and these explicit hints for seizing the personalities of the characters promote better understanding of their actions.

**The conflict.** We may observe the **internal** conflicts within both characters ..., because .... There is an **external** conflict: a man against a man which reveals how intricate relations are between a male and a female. A collision is also based on the conflict between a set of values/man/nature and circumstances/society ... . These conflicts contribute to an accurate and complete realization of the author's message.

**The Vocabulary.** The story is full of **emotionally-coloured words** which show the author's knowledge for a deep psychological analysis of his characters:.... There are some **international** words: pedestal, egoism, charm, captain, erudition, brandy, etc. I've found such **phrasal verbs**, as: come up, come back, come over, dwell upon, drift apart, run down, rake up, reach out, etc. and idiomatic expressions: take one's cue from sb, ease one's conscience. I'd also like to mention the **proper names** Trysdale, Carruthers, Garcia, Ventomarme and the toponym Punta Redonda. There are such **synonyms**, as greatness-mightiness, accomplice-accessory, oblation-sacrifice, unbutton-remove-wrench apart, evening dress-garment-garb, vanity-conceit-pride, memory-reminiscence, tell-speak, confident-adamant, virginal-childlike, coyly-shy, note-message, etc. and **antonyms**: folly-erudition, confident-tremulous.

**The Stylistic Devices.** Now let's see how the author's intention is realized in the language of the story. The author uses a great many/ a great variety/ a large number/ quite a few/ few stylistic devices to reveal his idea/ strengthen the impression of .../ let the reader get his/her message etc...

First, some words should be said.../ we should mention such phenomenon as...Second, there are some stylistic means on the ... level that create .../ contribute to.../ emphasize.../ draw our attention to ...

The linguistic analysis of the text is also of some/ great importance as it....

The choice of vocabulary and stylistic devices is admirable.

The following stylistic devices contribute to the expressiveness of the passage.

I think/ suppose/ believe / consider etc. that the language of the literary work is bright, sated with stylistic means.

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«Елецкий государственный университет им. И.А. Бунина»

399770, г. Елец, ул. Коммунаров, 28,1