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# GCSE ENGLISH LANGUAGE (8700)

Paper 1 Explorations in creative reading and writing

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## Insert

The source that follows is:

Source A: 20<sup>th</sup> Century prose-fiction

It is an extract from the short story *Lamb to the Slaughter* by Roald Dahl published in 1953.

It tells the story of a pregnant housewife called Mary Maloney and her husband Patrick.

**Please turn the page over  
to see the source**

### Source A

Mary Maloney is six months pregnant and is waiting for her husband, a policeman, to come home from work. When Mary's husband arrives home, he has some unexpected news for her.

"Listen," he said. "I've got something to tell you."

"What is it, darling? What's the matter?"

5 He had now become absolutely motionless, and he kept his head down so that the light from the lamp beside him fell across the upper part of his face, leaving the chin and mouth in shadow. She noticed there was a little muscle moving near the corner of his left eye.

"This is going to be a bit of a shock to you, I'm afraid," he said. "But I've thought about it a good deal and I've decided the only thing to do is tell you right away. I hope you won't blame me too much."

10 And he told her. It didn't take long, four or five minutes at most, and she stayed very still through it all, watching him with a kind of dazed horror as he went further and further away from her with each word.

"So there it is," he added. "And I know it's kind of a bad time to be telling you, but there simply wasn't any other way. Of course I'll give you money and see you're looked after. But there needn't really be any fuss. I hope not anyway. It wouldn't be very good for my job."

15 Her first instinct was not to believe any of it, to reject it all. It occurred to her that perhaps he hadn't even spoken, that she herself had imagined the whole thing. Maybe, if she went about her business and acted as though she hadn't been listening, then later, when she sort of woke up again, she might find none of it had ever happened.

"I'll get the supper," she managed to whisper, and this time he didn't stop her.

20 When she walked across the room she couldn't feel her feet touching the floor. She couldn't feel anything at all – except a slight nausea and a desire to vomit. Everything was automatic now – down the steps to the cellar, the light switch, the deep freeze, the hand inside the cabinet taking hold of the first object it met. She lifted it out, and looked at it. It was wrapped in paper, so she took off the paper and looked at it again.

25 A leg of lamb

All right then, they would have lamb for supper. She carried it upstairs, holding the thin bone – end of it with both her hands, and as she went through the living – room, she saw him standing over by the window with his back to her, and she stopped.

30 "For God's sake," he said, hearing her, but not turning round. "Don't make supper for me. I'm going out."

At that point, Mary Maloney simply walked up behind him and without any pause she swung the big frozen leg of lamb high in the air and brought it down as hard as she could on the back of his head.

She might just as well have hit him with a steel club.

- 35 She stepped back a pace, waiting, and the funny thing was that he remained standing there for at least four or five seconds, gently swaying. Then he crashed to the carpet.

The violence of the crash, the noise, the small table overturning, helped bring her out of her shock. She came out slowly, feeling cold and surprised, and she stood for a while blinking at the body, still holding the ridiculous piece of meat tight with both hands.

- 40 All right, she told herself. So I've killed him.

**END OF SOURCE**