

Source A: By Ross Anderson BBC News, 10 April 2012

A child's experience of her mother going to prison

Every year thousands of children experience the trauma of separation from a mother who is sent to prison.

When Cheyenne was 13, her mum was caught trying to smuggle drugs into prison and earned herself a four-year sentence. As a result she has been moved around a lot, living with different relatives across south Wales. She is one of the growing number of children living apart from a mother locked up in prison. Cheyenne struggled to cope. "I was angry and disappointed." Cheyenne ended up living with her granddad. She didn't have a room of her own so slept in her aunt's bed or on the sofa. Her belongings were mostly strewn over the house or kept in carrier bags. 5

She had relatively few possessions, but those she prized most were letters and photos from her mother, kept in a box with an inscription on the side warning snoopers to "Stay Out". For Cheyenne, as for many people with a loved one in prison, they were treasured keepsakes. 10

"I normally get quite emotional when I get letters from my mum. I recognise the envelopes. Mum decorates the envelopes and I know her handwriting. Every year she always sends a Valentine's Day card - she always writes Mummy at the end. Never Mum. Always Mummy. "I really miss her. Some days I have my depressing days and I really break down." 15

Diana Ruthven, from the charity Action for Prisoners' Families, says it's particularly difficult for children of Cheyenne's age. "Being a teenager is a very transitional time, during which it's particularly difficult to be without your mother," she says. "In some ways, it's more difficult for teenage children to be without a parent than it is for younger children." 20

'Upsetting'

Cheyenne was entitled to an hour-long prison visit once a fortnight. But the prison was in Gloucestershire - over 50 miles from her new home in south Wales - so she only managed to visit five times in two years. Ahead of her latest visit Cheyenne experienced mixed emotions. "I am excited, nervous, scared. At least we're able to hug and kiss at this prison. At other prisons we weren't even allowed to hold hands but I did anyway and I made sure they saw it. Because at the end of the day, that's my mum." 25 30

With only an hour to catch up. There is always a lot to squeeze in. As well as chatting about hair and nails, Cheyenne has to confess that she's had problems at school. Being locked up doesn't stop mum Yasmin giving her a ticking off: "Cheyenne you've got to learn to be humble. Do as I say not as I do."

Before she knows it, the time is gone and it is time for Cheyenne to leave. "The time goes so quickly," says Cheyenne. "Leaving is the worst part. It's upsetting leaving them there, knowing you can walk out those gates but they're stuck inside." 35

Cheyenne's mother welcomed visits from her daughter, but according to Ruthven, mothers often don't want to be visited by their family. "Women sometimes don't want their children to see them in jail, so they don't have their families visit as often as men do," she said. For children missing one or both parents in prison, little support is available, she argued. "The government will only try to keep track of a child if they're at risk," she said. 40

'Better relationship'

Her mother's release is an event Cheyenne eagerly anticipates. "I am going to have a wicked life when my mum gets out. I'll be a happier person. It is hard being without your mum. I wouldn't wish it on my worst enemy." 45

Charles Dickens - A Visit to Newgate Prison (1836)

Turning to the right, we came to a door composed of thick bars, through which were discernible, passing to and fro in a narrow yard, some twenty women: the majority of whom, however, as soon as they were aware of the presence of strangers, retreated to their wards.

One side of this yard is railed off and formed into a kind of iron cage, from which the friends of the female prisoners communicate with them. In one corner of this den, was a yellow, haggard, decrepit old woman, in a tattered gown and the remains of an old straw bonnet, in deep conversation with a young girl - a prisoner, of course - of about two-and-twenty. It is impossible to imagine a more poverty-stricken object, or a creature so borne down in soul and body, by excess of misery and destitution¹, as the old woman. She was talking in that low, muffled tone of voice which tells so forcibly of mental anguish²; and every now and then burst into an irrepressible³ sharp, abrupt cry of grief, the most distressing sound that ears can hear. The girl was perfectly unmoved. Hardened beyond all hope of redemption⁴, she listened doggedly to her mother's entreaties, whatever they were: and, beyond inquiring after "Jem", and eagerly catching at the few pence her miserable parent had brought her, took no more apparent interest in the conversation than the most unconcerned spectators. 5
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A little farther on, a squalid⁵-looking woman in a slovenly, thick-bordered cap, with her arms wrapped in a large red shawl, the fringed ends of which straggled nearly to the bottom of a dirty white apron, was communicating some instructions to visitor - her daughter evidently. The girl was thinly clad, and shaking with the cold. Some ordinary word of recognition passed between her and her mother when she appeared at the bars, but neither hope, condolence⁶, regret, nor affection was expressed on either side. The mother whispered her instructions, and the girl received them with her pinched-up, half-starved features twisted into an expression of careful cunning. It was some scheme for the woman's defence that she was disclosing, perhaps; and a sullen smile came over the girl's face for an instant, as if she were pleased: not so much at the probability of her mother's freedom, as at the chance of her "getting off" in spite of her prosecutors. The dialogue was soon concluded; and with the same careless indifference with which they had approached each other, the mother turned towards the inner end of the yard, and the girl to the gate at which she had entered. 20
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The girl belonged to a class that should make men's hearts bleed. Barely past her childhood, it required but a glance to discover that she was one of those children, born and bred in neglect and vice, who have never known what childhood is: who have never been taught to love and desire a parent's smile, or to dread a parent's frown. The thousand nameless endearments of childhood, its gaiety and its innocence, are alike unknown to them. They have entered at once upon the stern realities and miseries of life, and to their better nature it is almost hopeless to appeal for some good feeling in ordinary hearts. Talk to them of parental kindness, the happy days of childhood, and the merry games of infancy and they will not understand. Tell them of hunger and the streets, beggary and stripes⁷, the gin-shop, the station-house, and the pawnbroker's, and they will understand you. 35
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1. destitution = poverty, hardship

3. redemption = improvement

5. squalid = filthy, dirty

7. stripes = hitting

2. anguish = suffering, torment

4. irrepressible = wild, out of control

6. condolence = sympathy

Q1 [AO1]. Read again **source A**, just the first paragraph.

Choose **four** statements below which are TRUE.

- Shade the boxes of the ones that you think are true
 - Choose a maximum of **four** statements.
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- a) Cheyenne's mum was imprisoned for dealing drugs.
 - b) Cheyenne has had to live all over Britain with different relatives.
 - c) There are an increasing number of women being sent to prison.
 - d) Cheyenne found it hard to cope with being apart from her mum.
 - e) Cheyenne ended up living with her grandmother.
 - f) She often had to share a room.
 - g) Cheyenne was a very untidy girl.
 - h) She had nowhere to keep her clothes.

[4 marks]

Q2 [AO1]. You need to refer to **source A** and **source B** for this question:

Use details from **both** sources. Write a summary of the **effects of life in prison** in the two texts.

[8 marks]

Q3 [AO2]. You now need to refer **only** to **source B**.

How does the writer use language to explain the **conditions of the women**?

[12 marks]

Q4 [AO3]. For this question, you need to refer to the whole of **source A** together with the whole of **source B**.

Compare how each source conveys ideas about the **relationship between the mothers and daughters**.

In your answer, you should:

- compare the different ideas
- compare the methods used to convey the ideas
- support your ideas with quotations from both texts.

[16 marks]