



**GCSE**

**ENGLISH LANGUAGE**

**Paper 1 Explorations in creative reading and writing**

**8700/1**

**Insert**

**The source that follows is:**

**SOURCE A: 21st Century prose fiction**

**‘Half of a Yellow Sun’ by Chimamanda  
Ngozi Adichie**

**An extract from the beginning of a novel  
published in 2006.**

**[Turn over]**

**SOURCE A**

This extract is taken from the opening of Chimamanda Adichie's novel 'Half of a Yellow Sun', set in Nigeria in 1960. Ugwu, a thirteen-year-old boy, is starting work as a cleaner for a university professor in the city.

1 Master was a little crazy; he had spent too many  
years reading books overseas, talked to himself in  
his office, did not always return greetings, and had  
too much hair. Ugwu's aunty said this in a low  
5 voice as they walked on the path. 'But he is a good  
man,' she added. 'And as long as you work well,  
7 you will eat well. You will even eat meat every day.'

8 Ugwu did not believe that anybody, not even this  
master he was going to live with, ate meat every  
10 day. He did not disagree with his aunty, though,  
because he was too choked with expectation, too  
busy imagining his new life away from the village.  
They had been walking for a while now, since they  
got off the lorry at the motor park, and the  
15 afternoon sun burned the back of his neck. But he  
did not mind. He was prepared to walk hours more  
in even hotter sun. He had never seen anything like  
the streets that appeared after they went past the  
university gates, streets so smooth and tarred that  
20 he itched to lay his cheek down on them. He would  
never be able to describe to his sister Anulika how  
the bungalows here were painted the colour of the  
sky and sat side by side like polite well-dressed  
men, how the hedges separating them were

25 trimmed so flat on top that they looked like tables  
26 wrapped with leaves.

His aunty walked faster, her slippers making *slap-slap* sounds that echoed in the silent street. Ugwu wondered if she, too, could feel the coal tar getting  
30 hotter underneath, through her thin soles. They went past a sign, ODIM STREET, and Ugwu mouthed *street*, as he did whenever he saw an English word that was not too long.

34 He smelt something sweet, heady, as they walked  
35 into a compound, and was sure it came from the white flowers clustered on the bushes at the entrance. The bushes were shaped like slender hills. The lawn glistened. Butterflies hovered overhead.

40 'I told Master you will learn everything very fast' his  
aunty said. Ugwu nodded attentively although she had already told him the story of how his good fortune came about: while she was sweeping the corridor in the Mathematics Department a week  
45 ago, she heard Master say that he needed a houseboy to do his cleaning, and she immediately said she could help, speaking before his typist or office messenger could offer to bring someone.

'I will learn fast, Aunty,' Ugwu said. He was staring  
50 at the car in the garage; a strip of metal ran around its blue body like a necklace.

[Turn over]

**‘Remember, what you will answer whenever he calls you is *Yes, sah!*’**

**‘Yes, sah!’ Ugwu repeated.**

**55 They were standing before the glass door. Ugwu held back from reaching out to touch the cement wall, to see how different it would feel from the mud walls of his mother’s hut that still bore the faint patterns of moulding fingers. For a brief moment,**  
**60 he wished he were back there now, in his mother’s hut, under the dim coolness of the thatch roof; or in his aunty’s hut, the only one in the village with a corrugated-iron roof.**

**His aunty tapped on the glass. Ugwu could see the**  
**65 white curtains behind the door. A voice said, in English, ‘Yes? Come in.’**

**They took off their slippers before walking in. Ugwu had never seen a room so wide. Despite the brown sofas arranged in a semi-circle, the side**  
**70 tables between them, the shelves crammed with books, and the centre table with a vase of red and white plastic flowers, the room still seemed to have too much space. Master sat in an armchair, wearing a vest and a pair of shorts. He was not**  
**75 sitting upright but slanted, a book covering his face, as though oblivious that he had just asked people in.**

**‘Good afternoon, sah! This is the child,’ Ugwu’s aunty said.**

80 Master looked up. He pulled off his glasses. 'The child?'

'The houseboy, sah. He will work hard,' his aunty said. 'He is a very good boy. Thank, sah!'

85 Master grunted in response, watching Ugwu and his aunty with a faintly distracted expression, as if their presence made it difficult for him to remember something important. Ugwu's aunty patted Ugwu's shoulder, whispered that he should do well, and turned to the door.

90 Ugwu stood by the door, waiting.

END OF SOURCE

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