

A



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
5 greetings, and had too much hair.
Ugwu's aunty said this in a low
voice as they walked on the path.
'But he is a good man,' she added.
'And as long as you work well, you
10 will eat well. You will even eat meat
11 every day.'**

**12 Ugwu did not believe that anybody,
not even this master he was going**

to live with, ate meat *every day*. He
15 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
20 for a while now, since they got off
the lorry at the motor park, and the
afternoon sun burned the back of
his neck. But he did not mind. He
was prepared to walk hours more
25 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 he itched to lay his
30 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
35 well-dressed men, how the hedges

[Turn over]

separating them were trimmed so
flat on top that they looked like
38 tables wrapped with leaves.

His aunty walked faster, her
40 slippers making *slap-slap* sounds
that echoed in the silent street.
Ugwu wondered if she, too, could
feel the coal tar getting hotter
underneath, through her thin soles.
45 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.

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

‘I told Master you will learn everything very fast’ his aunty said.

60 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

65 Department a week 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
70 office messenger could offer to bring someone.

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

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

[Turn over]

‘Yes, sah!’ Ugwu repeated.

80 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
85 patterns of moulding fingers. For a brief moment, 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,
90 the only one in the village with a corrugated-iron roof.

His aunty tapped on the glass. Ugwu could see the white curtains behind the door. A voice said, in
95 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
100 side 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
105 space. Master sat in an armchair,
wearing a vest and a pair of shorts.
He was not sitting upright but
slanted, a book covering his face,
as though oblivious that he had
110 just asked people in.

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

Master looked up. He pulled off his
glasses. ‘The child?’

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

[Turn over]

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.

Ugwu stood by the door, waiting.

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