

The following extract is taken from Andrew Motion's autobiography, In The Blood. In it he remembers an incident at school when he was told off for something he had not done.

I shook my head. Harold told tales, not me. Mrs Lucas had put everything the wrong way round.

'So?' she went on. 'Are you going to tell me now, or are you going to be stubborn and stupid?'

I shook my head again. Everything in my brain was used up. 'I'm sorry,' I said at last. 'I really am, Mrs Lucas. I don't know what you're talking about.' I wanted to go on, and tell her I wasn't a dishonest person, that Harold didn't like me. But then Mrs Lucas would think it was me who invented things. I stared down at the flower patterns in the toes of my sandals, and my grey socks wrinkling under the straps. Why could I never get them to stay smooth?

Mrs Lucas took another deep breath. 'Very well,' she said, in a big, flat voice. 'You are a stubborn child, Andrew, and I'm very disappointed. You can go now.' She dragged her chair closer to her desk, and began shuffling papers. 'I said you can go now.' It was the same hissing voice she'd used when I'd first come into the office. I hadn't changed her mind about anything.

'Thank you, Mrs Lucas.' I had no idea how my voice worked, but the words appeared anyway, and hung in the air like dust. Then I saw the door open when I touched the handle, my satchel come off its peg in the corridor, and balloon-faces bobbing on the path as I started running. There was mum ahead, in the shadows under the trees by the main road. She was gassing and didn't see me until I charged into her.

'What's the matter, what's the matter?' she said, wrapping her arms round my head so I could disappear into the dark. The buttons of her pullover pressed into my cheek. 'Please,' she said. 'How can I help you if you don't tell me?'

I shook my head again, peering round her arm into the back of the Hillman*. Kit and the dogs were in the back. I broke away and climbed into the passenger seat, ignoring Kit's questions. 'What's the matter, mum?' he asked, as she settled behind the steering wheel and crashed the car into gear. 'Why's Andrew crying? Is he in trouble?'

'No, of course he's not in trouble,' she said quietly. 'He's upset, that's all.' I let my satchel** slip onto the floor mat as we swung away from the kerb, pulled up my knees and leaned my head on them, eyes shut. I'd talk to mum soon – but not now. I wanted to turn over what happened. Either that, or push it out of my mind altogether, like a nightmare. When I glanced up, we'd reached the end of the main street, where the big lime trees in Henry Moore's garden dropped their sticky juice on the road and made it shine. Whatever had happened was already falling behind us. It didn't matter so much about Mrs Lucas. School wasn't my real life. This was. The road opening between the hedges, then the lane off the main road beside the house, and then the stable yard where the horses had left their shoe prints on the gravel.

* Hillman = a make of car

** satchel = a school bag

Read the extract opposite and then answer all the questions below, using complete sentences.

The marks at the end of each question are a guide as to how much you should write in your answers.

1. Who does the writer blame for getting him into this situation? (1)

2. Look carefully at paragraph 1.

a) Find and copy two details which show what Mrs Lucas thinks of the boy. (2)

(b) Explain what the following two quotations show you about the sort of person Mrs

Lucas is: (4)

- 'big, flat voice' (line 9)
- 'She dragged her chair closer to her desk, and began shuffling papers.' (line 10)

3. Look again at lines 14–16.

(a) Explain **in your own words** the three things the boy does immediately after he thanks Mrs Lucas. (3)

(b) What is unusual about the way these three things are described? (3)

4. Look carefully at lines 25–28.

(a) When he is in the car, what does the boy do which shows that he wants to be left alone? List three things. (3)

(b) What are the boy's reasons for not wanting to speak? (3)

5. The boy's mood begins to change in the last 6 lines, during the journey home.

(a) Write down two quotations which show the boy is feeling better. (2)

(b) Explain what each quotation shows about the boy's feelings. (4)

Choose ONE of the following writing tasks. Credit will be given for good use of vocabulary, grammar and punctuation, as well as imaginative ideas.

Write a story **beginning** with one of these lines:

- My heart sank.
- I have always hated performing.
- The holiday was a complete washout.