

William left on a Friday.

It was a balmy afternoon when William, along with several of the men from the village, left for the Front Line. With a wave and a wink to his younger brother James, he was gone.

Although James was the younger of the two brothers, he didn't look it. At eleven years old James had caught his brother up in height. And at thirteen he had overtaken him. Now, with William eighteen and James just fifteen, it was James who was the stronger, broader and more athletic of the brothers. Much to William's disapproval.

But despite their differences in appearance it was William who had been **conscripted**. Leaving James behind. It was William who had sat on a boat **navigating** the English Channel. William who now sat in the trenches in France or Belgium somewhere.

In the weeks that followed the village had felt smaller to James. Quieter. James busied himself most days, he had taken on his brother's chores at home and jobs around the village. But it was getting **tedious**. James dreamt of the adventures that William was having. Defending Britain, standing with his comrades, shoulder to shoulder, as they 'went over the top'. James longed to be with him. But he wasn't allowed. The Government had stated that 'single male citizens aged between 18 and 40 years old were **liable** to be called up for military service'. Kitchener wanted men. Not boys.

This ruled James out.

James now had a new routine. Every morning he would race his bike down the steep hill into the village, over the small bridge and grind to a halt at the front of Cripps' Grocery. After wheeling his bike around the back he would always stop and pause before he went in, standing and staring at the village hall, which on Fridays turned into a **recruitment** office for soldiers. When called up, if they hadn't already volunteered, young men would make their way to the recruiting office for their medical, where they took note of a man's height and chest measurements. They also asked their age.

But this new routine only lasted a few weeks. At first James didn't really notice them turning up. He just supposed they had blown in on the breeze or had tangled in someone's clothes to fall onto the shop floor. But as the weeks wore on more and more would appear. He would find small ones on his bicycle seat and tangled in the spokes of his wheel. He knew what they symbolised, but he hadn't realised they had been left for him. James didn't notice that people had been **taunting** him.

White feathers.

The symbol of **cowardice**. People thought James was a coward. After all, he was the broader, taller, stronger brother, why shouldn't he be on the front line alongside William? To look at, one would assume that James was the older of the two, so why was this perfect specimen of a soldier cowering in a shop in the middle of the lush green English country side? The final straw came one Thursday, James had spent the morning racing all over the village with deliveries. He was now in the shop behind the counter and he had just served a young lady. He'd been **courteous** and made sure she had everything she needed, he totalled up the goods in the bag and asked the well dressed young woman for payment. Out of her pocket, instead of her money she drew a long perfect white feather, laid it on the counter, turned and left the shop with the bag of groceries still on the counter.

The next morning James raced into the village as usual. Down the steep hill and over the bridge. But instead of pulling up outside the shop, James crossed the street to the Village hall. It was Friday, he could sign up. His heart raced, not just from the bike ride, but from the lie he was about to tell. The man in uniform took his height and chest measurement, "You're just what we're looking for," he stated. "How old are you son?"

"Eighteen," James lied.

By Suzanne Brooks

The Lie – Oral Teacher Questions

How is James described to the reader? (AF2) 'stronger, broader and more athletic' 'perfect specimen of a soldier'

Where did the white feathers first start appearing? (AF2) 'Shop floor' 'Bicycle seat, spokes'

How would you describe William's mood as he left the Village? What words give you this idea? (AF3) Happy/Jolly/Excited – 'With a wink and a smile'

How do you imagine James felt when he was handed the white feather? (AF3) Ashamed/determined/guilty

Do you think James had already considered signing up before the white feather was given to him? Use evidence from the text to support your answer. (AF3) 'It was getting tedious' 'James dreamt of adventure' 'James longed to be with him'

Why do you think the woman gave James a white feather? (AF7) It was part of a propaganda drive, women were encouraged to hand out white feathers to CONSCIENTIOUS OBJECTORS (people who refused to fight) in a bid to make them feel ashamed and guilty. They made them feel like cowards.

'White Feathers' is a two word paragraph. Describe the effect a short paragraph like this might have on the reader. (AF4) It makes the words stand out, and brings the readers attention to them. The reader can't help but notice them, much like James. In the paragraph before they were described subtly, (James hadn't really noticed them either).

How does the writer describe the weather on the day that William left? How does that affect the mood of the text? (AF5) 'Balmy afternoon' – a pleasantly sunny afternoon – evokes an image of a warm happy summers day.

There are four single sentence paragraphs in this text. Why do you think the writer has used them? Select one example and explain your answer fully. (AF6) Various answers – must be justified.

In paragraph eight the writer doesn't tell us exactly what James is finding. Why do you think that might be? (AF6) To confuse the reader, just as James would be confused.

What do white feathers symbolise? (AF2) Cowardice – being a coward because you hadn't signed up to fight for your country.

What does conscription mean? (AF7) Compulsory enlistment for state services.

How is James described to the reader? (AF2)

Where did the white feathers first start appearing? (AF2)

How would you describe William's mood as he left the Village? What words give you this idea? (AF3)

How do you imagine James felt when he was handed the white feather? (AF3)

Do you think James had already considered signing up before the white feather was given to him? Use evidence from the text to support your answer. (AF3)

Why do you think the woman gave James a white feather? (AF7)

'White Feathers' is a two word paragraph. Describe the effect a short paragraph like this might have on the reader. (AF4)

The Lie – Follow Up Work 2

How does the writer describe the weather on the day that William left? How does that affect the mood of the text? (AF5)

There are four single sentence paragraphs in this text. Why do you think the writer has used them? Select one example and explain your answer fully. (AF6)

In paragraph eight the writer doesn't tell us exactly what James is finding. Why do you think that might be? (AF6)

What do white feathers symbolise? (AF2)

What does conscription mean? (AF7)

Write the meaning of each of these words. (AF2)

conscripted _____

navigating _____

tedious _____

liable _____

recruitment _____

taunting _____

cowardice _____

courteous _____

Find at least one synonym for each of these words. (AF2)

liable _____

taunt _____

coward _____

tedious _____

courteous _____

Define each of these homophones correctly.

allowed _____

aloud _____

fought _____

thought _____

Write the meaning of each of these words. (AF2)

conscripted - compulsory enlistment for state service

navigating - sail or travel over water or a long stretch of terrain

tedious - slow paced, dull

liable - responsible by law

recruitment - the action of enlisting new people in the armed forces

taunting - provoke or challenge (someone) with insulting remarks

cowardice - lack of bravery

courteous - polite and respectful

Find at least one synonym for each of these words. (AF2)

Liable – responsible, accountable, chargeable

taunt – jibe, insult, ridicule, jeer, mock

coward – wimp, chicken, weakling, quitter

tedious – tiresome, annoying, boring, laborious

courteous – respectful, considerate gracious, well-mannered

Define each of these homophones correctly.

allowed – to have permission for something

aloud – not silent, audible

fought – engaged in war or battle

thought – the process of thinking

Find examples in the text and copy the following:

Possessive apostrophes.

A sentence with a rhetorical question:

An example of dialogue.

An example of a direct quote

What facts do you learn from the text about life during World War 1?

Possessive apostrophes

William's

Cripps'

A sentence with a rhetorical question:

Why shouldn't he be on the Front Line alongside William?

Why was this perfect specimen of a soldier covering in a shop in the middle of the lush green English country side?

An example of dialogue

"You're just what we're looking for"

"Eighteen"

An example of a direct quote

'single male citizens aged between 18 and 40 years old were liable to be called up for military service'

What facts do you learn from the text about life during World War 1?

- Men aged 18-40 were required by law to sign up to the army.
- Recruitment offices checked a mans height and chest measurements. They also carried out medicals and checked an applicants age.
- Women were encouraged to hand white feathers to conscientious objectors.
- Boys under 18 were able to lie about their age – there was very little proof of age needed.