

Task 1 – Speaking

Work in pairs. How old are the people in the pictures below? What things do you associate with each age group?



A



B



C



D

Portrait of the Artist as a Young Dog is a collection of ten autobiographical short stories in which Dylan Thomas portrays the process of maturing, from boyhood to young adulthood. These are stories about childhood fantasies and dreams, as well as tales of friendship and love in youth.

Task 2 – Vocabulary

Match the four titles to some of the words that appear in the short stories.

- | | |
|--------------------------------|---|
| 1. <i>The Peaches</i> | a. picnickers / ice-cream / beach / castles |
| 2. <i>A Visit to Grandpa's</i> | b. playground / stones / trembling / pushed |
| 3. <i>The Fight</i> | c. grass-green cart / basket / market / boots |
| 4. <i>One Warm Saturday</i> | d. visitor / floorboards / house / night |

Task 3 – Reading and speaking

Work in groups of four. Read the short story extract your teacher gives you. Tell your colleagues about:

- the narrator (who/where the person telling the story is)
- the location (where the action takes place)
- the characters (the people in the story)
- the scene (describe how you imagined it)

Task 4 – Language work

Read the extracts of the short stories again. Find examples of verbs in different past tenses.

	Past simple	Past continuous	Past perfect
<i>The Peaches</i>			
<i>A Visit to Grandpa's</i>			
<i>The Fight</i>			
<i>One Warm Saturday</i>			

Think about it

*What function does each different tense perform in a story?
Why are the auxiliary verbs (was-were/had) sometimes omitted?*

Task 5 – Speaking and writing

Work in pairs. Have you ever been in any of these situations? Can you describe at least one of them?

- Waiting for someone for a long time
- Visiting the house of a relative with whom you are not really familiar
- Getting involved in a fight at school
- Observing people on the beach or in a park

Now write a short paragraph describing one of the situations above. Use narrative verbs in the past tense.

Homework

Use your imagination! Write the first paragraph of a short story based on one of the pictures below (approx. 150 words). Use a combination of narrative tenses in your paragraph.



Short story extracts

Text A: The Peaches

The grass-green cart, with 'J. Jones, Gorsehill' painted shakily on it, stopped in the cobblestone passage between 'The Hare's Foot' and 'the Pure Drop'. It was late on an April evening. Uncle Jim, in his black market suit with a stiff white shirt and no collar, loud new boots, and a plaid cap, creaked and climbed down. He dragged out a thick wicker basket from a heap of straw in the corner of the cart and swung it over his shoulder. I heard a squeal from the basket and saw the tip of a pink tail curling out as Uncle Jim opened the public door of 'The Pure Drop.'

'I won't be two minutes,' he said to me. The bar was full; two fat women in bright dresses sat near the door, one with a dark child on her knee; they saw Uncle Jim and nudged up on the bench.

'I'll be out straight away,' he said fiercely, as though I had contradicted him, 'and you stay there quiet.'

Text B: A Visit to Grandpa's

In the middle of the night I woke from a dream full of whips and lariats as long as serpents, and runaway coaches on mountain passes, and wide, windy gallops over cactus fields, and I heard the man in the next room crying, 'Gee-up!' and 'Whoa!' and trotting his tongue on the roof of his mouth.

It was the first time I had stayed in grandpa's house. The floorboards had squeaked like mice as I climbed into bed, and the mice between the walls had creaked like wood as though another visitor was walking on them. It was a mild summer night, but curtains had flapped and branches beaten against the window. I had pulled my sheets over my head, and soon was roaring and riding in a book.

Text C: The Fight

I was standing at the end of the lower playground and annoying Mr Samuels, who lived in the house just below the high railings. Mr Samuels complained once a week that boys from the school threw apples and stones and balls through his bedroom window. He sat in a deck chair in a small square of trim garden and tried to read his newspaper. I was only a few yards from him. I was staring him out. He pretended not to notice me, but I knew he knew I was standing there rudely and quietly. Every now and then he peeped at me from behind his newspaper, saw me still and serious and alone, with my eyes on his. As soon as he lost his temper I was going home. Already I was late for dinner. I had almost beaten him, the newspaper was trembling, he was breathing heavily, when a strange boy, whom I had not heard approached, pushed me down the bank.

Text D: One Warm Saturday

In the huddle of picnicking women and their children, stretched out limp and damp in the sweltering sun or fussing over paper carriers or building castles that were at once destroyed by the tattered march of other picnickers to different pieces of the beach, among the ice-cream cries, the angrily happy shouts of boys playing ball, and the screams of the girls as the sea rose to their waists, the young man sat alone with the shadows of his failure at his side. (...) The young man, in his wilderness, saw the holiday Saturday set down before him; false and pretty, as a flat picture under the vulgar sun;

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