

FRANCIS GILBERT

School report

THE LEARNING GAME: A TEACHER'S INSPIRATIONAL STORY

Jonathan Smith *Little, Brown, 252pp, £14.99*

**BAD BOYS, BAD MEN: CONFRONTING ANTISOCIAL PERSONALITY
DISORDER**

Donald W Black and C Lindon Larson *OUP, 256pp, £9.50*

- 1 **H**aving taught for a number of years, I can easily spot the time-servers in the staffroom. There are two types: the contented and the seriously disgruntled. Usually you find a good number of discontented teachers who, through their own inertia or incompetence, have become "stuck" in inner-city state schools, but they exist in the leafy suburbs, too. They conform to certain stereotypes that we have of teachers. Their clothes have acquired the same texture as the furniture, and they constantly remind their younger colleagues that they should leave the profession as soon as they can.
- 2 The contented time-server is an altogether different and much rarer species. Often they are morally upstanding and have a genuine vocation for teaching. If they work in a school where discipline is lax, they often have a reputation for being tough; if they teach in an easier institution, they love hearing the sound of their own voice.
- 3 Jonathan Smith falls into the latter category. For more than 30 years, he taught English at Tonbridge, a public school for boys in Kent. Why he or his publishers felt that he had anything of import to say about teaching was not immediately obvious. 20, his experience of teaching is extremely limited, given that most of his career was spent lecturing to largely receptive, selected boys about his favourite writers — Wordsworth, Frost, Conrad and Larkin. Despite having such tractable pupils, Smith shows a shocking reluctance to experiment. Some of the most important research into the relationship between speaking and literacy is dismissed in a sentence: "What to some teachers is the happy buzz of teamwork to me feels too out of control, a cheerful anarchy." Even a traditionalist such as Chris Woodhead wouldn't speak about group work in these terms.
- 4 The truth, it seems, is that Smith enjoyed talking *at classes* throughout his career. Every piece of advice and anecdote in this dismal book is predicated around this notion. True, he seems to favour class discussions, but only when the teacher is guiding everything. As a consequence, much of Smith's account is about how he established the right conditions in which to hold forth. He talks about having "the Look" — a quasi-mystical glance that quietens unruly boys — and he offers a few "simple dodges" that assist with teaching.

- 5 But, like many contented time-servers, Smith is not courageous and, in his writing, has slipped into some lazy habits. There are missed opportunities in this uneasy hybrid: part teaching autobiography, part "common sense" handbook for teachers.
- 6 If Smith had been a little braver, he could have stretched its parameters further. For example, he trumpets proudly that he taught the novelist Vikram Seth, the poet Christopher Reid and the poet-publisher Vikram Jayanti. Why didn't he talk to them about what they thought of their schooldays and his teaching? It would certainly have been interesting to read about their experiences.
- 7 Ultimately, it becomes clear that even though Smith has a novelist's eye for mischief — he has written five novels and a television play — he is, like all self-respecting time-servers, not willing to question the establishment that provided him with such a happy life. At no point is he critical of the elitism and snobbery that characterises these august institutions.
- 8 Should we be surprised that a major publisher has issued such a dull, self-congratulatory book? It sadly remains the case that, despite public schools forming a small percentage of British educational establishments, most people in positions of power — newspaper editors, politicians, barristers, civil servants, professors — went to public schools. And these people still think that "real" teaching only occurs in such places.
- 9 Although Smith poses as a teacher with experience of bad behaviour, I suspect that he doesn't know what truly unruly pupils are like. The kind of aggressive antics discussed in the case studies in *Bad Boys*, *Bad Men* are much more closely tied to the excesses I have observed in inner-city classrooms.
- 10 Donald Black, a professor of psychiatry at the University of Iowa, examines what he calls "antisocial personality disorder" (ASP), drawing on new evidence from genetics and neuroscience to support his argument. He describes ASP as being a "pattern of recurrent antisocial, delinquent or criminal behaviour that begins in early childhood or early adolescence and is manifested by disturbances in many areas of life: family relations, schooling, work, military service and marriage". He cites unconvincing evidence that ASP may be genetically transmitted. He is more persuasive when arguing that afflicted men may be suffering from a deficit of the neurotransmitter serotonin, the chemical in the brain that regulates aggression.
- 11 This set me thinking about the absence of any discussion on notions such as ASP in the book written by Smith, who teaches only the affluent sons of middle-class and upper-class parents. While we shouldn't ignore new developments in neuroscience and genetics, no amount of science can dissuade me from the belief that most of our problems with dysfunctional behaviour are rooted in the rigid class structures of western society. If you are born into a materially and socially privileged class, you generally stay in it; if you are born into an underclass, it is very hard to escape.

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Tekst 6 School report

- 1p 19 Which of the following statements is/are true?
Paragraphs 1 and 2
- 1 provide the groundwork for characterising the author of one of the books under review.
 - 2 aim to introduce the subject of teaching in widely different situations.
- A only 1 is true
B only 2 is true
C both 1 and 2 are true
D neither 1 nor 2 is true
- 1p 20 Which of the following fits the gap in paragraph 3?
- A Admittedly
B However
C In fact
D Likewise
- 1p 21 Which of the following does the writer make clear about Jonathan Smith in paragraph 3?
- A Smith has been a teacher for so long that he has become cynical.
B Smith is sorry that literature gets little attention in teaching.
C Smith's teaching methods are effective with mature pupils only.
D Smith's views on teaching reflect his aversion to innovation.
- 1p 22 What is made clear about Jonathan Smith's book in paragraph 4?
- A It compares the merits of teacher-directed lessons and of group work.
B It focuses on Smith's attempts to bring out the best in each of his pupils.
C Its main topic is how to become a teacher who is the focal point of the class.
- 1p 23 "Smith is not courageous" (alinea 5)
Wat had de schrijver graag specifiek gezien in het boek van Smith?
- 1p 24 Which of the following is/are true with regard to the last sentence of paragraph 7?
- 1 It elaborates the point made in the previous sentence.
 - 2 It comments ironically on the point made in the previous sentence.
- A only 1 is true
B only 2 is true
C both 1 and 2 are true
D neither 1 nor 2 is true

- 1p 25 What is the point made in paragraph 8?
- A Many influential people in Britain wrongly think that they owe their success to their public school teachers.
 - B Smith's book confirms that education modelled on the public school produces successful people.
 - C The educated upper class wants to keep public school education the reserve of a small intellectual elite.
 - D The ruling elite in Britain tends to idealise the form of education that they themselves have had.

In *Bad Boys, Bad Men* bespreekt Donald Black onderzoeksgegevens die volgens hem "antisocial personality disorder" verklaren.

- 2p 26 Welke twee mogelijke factoren wijst hij in dit verband aan volgens alinea 10?
- 1p 27 Which of the following quotations contains the writer's main point in paragraph 11?
- A "the absence of any discussion on notions such as ASP in the book written by Smith, who teaches only the affluent sons of middle-class and upper-class parents"
 - B "we shouldn't ignore new developments in neuroscience and genetics"
 - C "no amount of science can dissuade me from the belief that most of our problems with dysfunctional behaviour are rooted in the rigid class structures of western society"
- 1p 28 Which of the following is true with regard to the books reviewed in the article?
- The reviewer
- A finds both books equally useless in view of his own experiences and insights.
 - B regards Smith's practical approach as ultimately more useful than Black's theoretical approach.
 - C thinks Black's book is more relevant to the realities of education than Smith's.
 - D values the anecdotal material in Smith's book as much as the theoretical evidence in Black's.

Bronvermelding

Een opsomming van de in dit examen gebruikte bronnen, zoals teksten en afbeeldingen, is te vinden in het bij dit examen behorende correctievoorschrift, dat na afloop van het examen wordt gepubliceerd.