

- 1 Write a critical commentary on the following extract from the novel *Kipps* by H G Wells (1866–1946).

Alfred Kipps, a very shy young man, is attending woodwork classes, led by Miss Walshingham. Just before this extract begins, he has tried to open one of the classroom windows, and in doing so has cut one of his wrists.

'You've cut your wrist,' said one of the girl friends, standing up and pointing. She was a pleasant-faced, greatly freckled girl, with a helpful disposition, and she said, 'You've cut your wrist,' as brightly as if she had been a trained nurse.

Kipps looked down and saw a swift line of scar let rush down his hand. He perceived the other man-student regarding this with magnified eyes. 'You *have* cut your wrist,' said Miss Walshingham; and Kipps regarded his damage with greater interest. 5

'He's cut his wrist,' said the maiden lady to the lodging-house keeper¹, and seemed in doubt what a lady should do. 'It's—' she hesitated at the word 'bleeding', and nodded to the lodging-house keeper instead. 10

'Dreadfully,' said the maiden lady, and tried to look and tried not to look at the same time.

'Of *course* he's cut his wrist,' said the lodging-house keeper, momentarily quite annoyed at Kipps; and the other young lady, who thought Kipps rather common, went on quietly with her wood-cutting with an air of its being the proper thing to do – though nobody else seemed to know it. 15

'You must tie it up,' said Miss Walshingham.

'We must tie it up,' said the freckled girl.

'I 'adn't the slightest idea that window was going to break like that,' said Kipps, with candour. 'Nort the slightest.' 20

He glanced again at the blood on his wrist, and it seemed to him that it was on the very point of dropping on the floor of that cultured class-room. So he very neatly licked it off, feeling at the same time for his handkerchief. 'Oh, *don't!*' said Miss Walshingham as he did so, and the girl with the freckles made a movement of horror. The giggle got the better of the boy with the gift², and celebrated its triumph by unseemly noises, in spite of which it seemed to Kipps at the moment that the act that had made Miss Walshingham say 'Oh, *don't!*' was rather a desperate and manly treatment of what was, after all, a creditable injury. 25

'It ought to be tied up,' said the lodging-house keeper, holding her chisel upright in her hand. 'It's a bad cut to bleed like that.' 30

'We must tie it up,' said the freckled girl, and hesitated in front of Kipps. 'Have you got a handkerchief?' she said.

'I dunno 'ow I managed *not* to bring one,' said Kipps. 'I—. Not 'aving a cold, I suppose some 'ow I didn't think—!' 35

He checked a further flow of blood.

The girl with the freckles caught Miss Walshingham's eye and held it for a moment. Both glanced at Kipps' injury. The boy with the gift, who had reappeared with a chastened expression from some noisy pursuit beneath his desk, made the neglected motions of one who proffers shyly. Miss Walshingham, under the spell of the freckled girl's eye, produced a handkerchief. The voice of the maiden lady could be heard in the background: 'I've been through all the technical education ambulance classes twice, and I know you go so if it's a vein, and so if it's an artery – at least you go so for one, and so for the other, whichever it may be – but ...' 40

'If you will give me your hand,' said the freckled girl; and proceeded, with Miss Walshingham's assistance, to bandage Kipps in a most businesslike way. Yes, they actually bandaged Kipps. They pulled up his cuffs – happily they were not a very frayed pair – and held his wrist and wrapped the soft handkerchief round it, and tightened the knot together. And Miss Walshingham's face, the face of that almost 45

divine Over-human, came close to the face of Kipps.

‘We’re not hurting you, are we?’ she said. 50

‘Not a bit,’ said Kipps, as he would have said if they had been sawing his arm off.

‘We’re not experts, you know,’ said the freckled girl.

‘I’m sure it’s a dreadful cut,’ said Miss Walshingham.

‘It ain’t much, reely,’ said Kipps; ‘and you’re taking a lot of trouble. I’m sorry I 55
broke that window. I can’t think what I could have been doing.’

‘It isn’t so much the cut at the time, it’s the poisoning afterwards,’ came the voice of the maiden lady.

‘Of course, I’m quite willing to pay for the window,’ panted Kipps, opulently.

‘We must make it just as tight as possible to stop the bleeding,’ said the freckled 60
girl.

‘I don’t think it’s much, reely,’ said Kipps. ‘I’m awful sorry I broke that window, though.’

‘Put your finger on the knot, dear,’ said the freckled girl.

‘Eh?’ said Kipps. ‘I mean—’ 65

Both the young ladies became very intent on the knot, and Mr Kipps was very red and very intent upon the two young ladies.

‘Mortified, and had to be sawn off,’ said the maiden lady.

‘Sawn off,’ said the lodging-house keeper.

‘Sawn *right* off,’ said the maiden lady, and jabbed at her mangled design. 70

‘*There*,’ said the freckled girl, ‘I think that ought to do . You’re sure it’s not too tight?’

‘Not a bit,’ said Kipps.

He met Miss Walshingham’s eyes and smiled to show how little he cared for wounds and pain. ‘It’s only a little cut,’ he added. 75

¹ The maiden lady and the lodging-house keeper are two of the other students in the woodwork class.

² The boy with the gift is another student.

- 2 Write a critical commentary on the following passage from *The Opposite of Fate* (2003) by Amy Tan.

The most hateful words I have ever said to another human being were to my mother. I was sixteen at the time . They rose from the storm in my chest and I let them fall in a fury of hailstones: "I hate you. I wish I were dead. ..."

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Together we knew in our hearts what we should remember, what we can forget.

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