



Exploring Junior Cycle Texts

The 14th Tale by Inua Ellams

The 14th Tale by Inua Ellams is a play included as part of the Prescribed Material for Junior Cycle English (For the student cohorts commencing Junior Cycle in 2021, 2022 and 2023 and presenting for examination in 2024, 2025 and 2026).

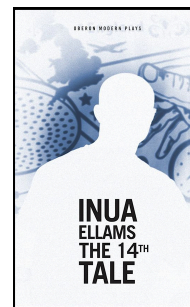


Image courtesy of
Bloomsbury

Please note:

- The following tasks might be completed over a series of lessons.
- You may like to adapt and adjust the tasks to suit your context.
- *The 14th Tale* covers themes which could be considered sensitive or controversial. You may wish to consult with our READY Framework to support you in your study.



Scan the QR code or click here to
access a Getting Started with Guide
for this Text

Before You Read... (Teacher Guidance)

Pre-reading Activities - Discussion Starters:

1. Personal Reflection

Give students time to reflect on a moment from their childhood that they feel was an important moment in shaping their outlook on life. Guide students in creating a written, oral or visual piece that they feel captures the moment.

2. Value of Storytelling

Guide students to engage in a Think-Pair-Share in which they consider:

- How are stories passed down in families or cultures?
- Why people tell stories about their past?
- Are the stories we share always completely accurate? Does that matter?

3. One Breath Storytelling

Divide your class into small groups. Allow students five minutes to write down important stories from their lives. Once time is up, inform each student that they have one breath to share a story with their group. Inform the students that they must finish speaking once they take a breath. Afterwards, give time to students to reflect on their choices regarding what they did and did not share and why.



Extract

Background to the Play:

***The 14th Tale* is a humorous play that tells of the hilarious exploits of a natural born mischief, growing from the clay streets of Nigeria to rooftops in Dublin and finally to London. In this extract, the narrator recalls a mischievous tale from his grandfather's youth.**

I'm from a long line of trouble makers. Of ash-skinned Africans, born with clenched fists and a natural thirst for battle, only quenched by breast milk. They'd suckle as if the white silk sliding between gums were liquid peace treaties written from mums. Their small thumbs would dimple the soft mounds of brown flesh, goose-pimple chests till the ceasefire of sleep would creep into eyes, they'd keep till the moon set and wake twice hungry, twice vexed, raring to go. My grandfather, six years old, tough and scatterbrained as all boys would be, once in a gathering of tribes, crawled under tables past the feet of tribal chiefs, surfaced by the serving dishes cupped his hands together, began shovelling the special treat of fried moose meat into his mouth. When the cry of 'thief! thief!' rang out, he turned, wondering who had such audacity – to find an angry line of village cooks coming his way. With his face still stained with the spiced juice of diced moose, he grabbed another handful and fled into the dark woods chased by siblings, pets and abuse.

They say he ran so fast, the ground gasped, forgot to take footprints; they lost him in the fields. But the story never left memory, was told around campfires and followed his son (my father) to secondary school where a campus-wide trend of long nicknames was maximised by a senior boy who thumbed through a textbook's index, added *Periplaneta Americana*, the most elaborate he could find, to Nevada his old title and swaggered through halls slapping younger boys for mispronouncing the names.

Inua Ellams, *The 14th Tale*, 2015, Part 5, page 2-3)

Activities Based on Extract (Teacher Guidance)

The following may be completed in written or oral format,
as individuals or as part of a group activity.

1. Language Analysis

Guide students to analyse aspects of language used in this extract. In pairs, encourage students to identify examples of hyperbole, exaggeration, wordplay or irony in the extract. Students should then discuss the impact these have on their reading of the extract.

2. Sensory Exploration

Guide students in exploring the multi-sensual imagery used by the author. Encourage students to discuss the how the use of sight, sound, smells and taste, help bring the story to life.



3. Story Mapping

Guide students to create a visual representation of this extract. Students may choose to create a comic strip, a poster, a story map etc. Students should be encouraged to present or discuss their creations to their peers.

Reflect and Respond (Teacher Guidance)

The following questions may be based on the extract included or form part of your extended study of the novel. Students may like to complete the activities individually or collaboratively.

1. Persuasion

Yield space to students to consider the statement *'mischief and rebellion are a natural part of growing up'*. Encourage students to create and deliver a speech, for or against the statement, to their peers.

2. Short Story

Guide students to create a short story centered around a mischievous character similar to the grandfather in the extract. Students may wish to write a first-person or third-person narrative.

3. Personal Response

Guide students to write a personal response about the statement: *"It is the stories we share that connect us."*

4. Cultural Context

Guide a class discussion about the traditions of storytelling in various cultures. Encourage students to explore the traditions of storytelling in a culture of their choosing. Students should be given the opportunity to share their findings with the class.

5. Perspective Writing

Guide students to write from the perspective of the grandfather in this extract. Students should write a letter or poem to be shared and read by your great grandchildren and other future generations. Your letter should provide your account of the events outlined in the extract as well as other advice and memories you would like your descendants to have long after you have passed.