

FIVE PAST TEN

Private Thomas [Tommo] Peaceful is a young soldier in the trenches during the First World War. The novel opens with these words:

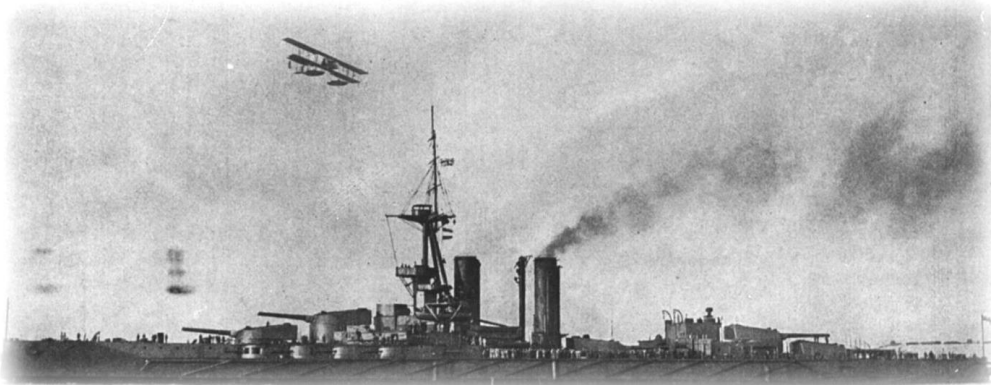


They've gone now and I'm alone at last. I have the whole night ahead of me and I won't waste a single minute of it. I shan't sleep it away. I won't dream it away either. I mustn't, because every moment will be too precious.

I want to try to remember everything, just as it was, just as it happened. I've had nearly eighteen years of yesterdays and tomorrows and tonight I want to remember as many of them as I can. I want tonight to be long, as long as my life, not filled with fleeting dreams that rush me on towards dawn. Tonight, more than any other night of my life, I want to feel alive.

The book opens with a chapter that asks you to do a lot of **speculation** (guessing). Make some intelligent guesses and answer the following questions:-

1. Why do you think the chapter opens with the time 10.05?
2. Who do you think the "They" might be?
3. Why do you think Tommo wants "tonight to be long"?



Structure of the Novel

The novel is organised with 2 story lines going on. One (with the time given in detail) tells us what is happening in the **PRESENT**, the other tells us of Tommo's **PAST**, his childhood, growing up, joining up, the events that lead up to where he is at present, a soldier in WW1.

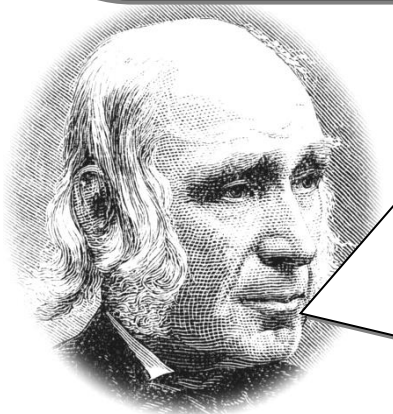
What can you remember about your past, your **first day at school**?

Fill in the table to jog your memory, then write 2-3 paragraphs about that first day, giving as much detail as possible.

How old were you?	
Where was the school?	
Who took you?	
What did the school look like?	
What was your teacher like?	
What did you do?	
What were your thoughts?	
Did you want to go back?	

FIRST DAYS AT SCHOOL

Charlie is taking me by the hand, leading me because he knows I don't want to go. I've never worn a collar before and it's choking me. My boots are strange and heavy on my feet. Charlie has told me how terrible this school-place is: about Mr Munnings and his terrible tempers and the long whipping cane he hangs above his desk.



A new boy to add to my **trials** and **tribulations**. Was not one Peaceful enough? What have I done to deserve another one? First a Charlie Peaceful and now a Thomas Peaceful. Is there no end to my **woes**? Understand this, Thomas Peaceful, that here I am your lord and master. You do what I say when I say it. You do not cheat, you do not lie, you do not **blaspheme**. You do not come to school in bare feet. Your hands will be clean. These are my **commandments**.





Yes, sir

We file in past him, hands behind our backs in two lines. "Tiddlers" into my classroom, "Bigguns" into Charlie's. I'm the littlest of the Tiddlers. Most of the Bigguns are bigger than Charlie, fourteen years old some of them. I feel so alone.

Answer these questions on the extract:-

1. Why does Tommo feel that he's choking?
2. Which sentence tells us that Tommo normally runs around in bare feet?
3. What is your impression of Mr Munnings? Look at what he says and the way he speaks. Remember to give evidence for what you say *e.g. Mr Munnings seems to dislike the Peaceful brothers because he says "What have I done to deserve another one?"*
4. Look up and write down the meaning of these words used by Mr Munnings: **trials tribulations woes blaspheme commandments**
5. Tommo went to a village school in Devon. Schools were very different in the early 1900s. **Work with a partner or on your own.** From the information on page 3 write down any differences between schools in the 1900s and schools today.

