**‘A Kestrel for a Knave’ by Barry Hines: Extract from Chapter One**

**1**There were no curtains up. The window was a hard edged block the colour of the night sky. Inside the bedroom the darkness was of a gritty texture. The wardrobe and bed were blurred shapes in the darkness. Silence.

Billy moved over, towards the outside of the bed. Jud moved with him, leaving one half of the bed empty. He snorted and rubbed his nose. Billy whimpered. They settled. Wind whipped the window and swept along the wall outside.

Billy turned over. Jud followed him and cough – coughed into his neck. Billy pulled the blankets up round his ears and whipped his neck with them. Most of the bed was now empty, and the unoccupied space quickly cooled. Silence. Then the alarm rang. The noise brought Billy upright, feeling for it in **10** the darkness, eyes shut tight. Jud groaned and hunched back across the cold sheet. He reached down side of the bed and knocked the clock over, grabbed for it, and knocked it further away.

'Come here, you bloody thing.'

He stretched down and grabbed it with both hands. The glass lay curved in one palm, while the fingers of his other hand fumbled amongst the knobs and levers at the back. He found the lever and the noise stopped. Then he coiled back into the bed and left the clock lying on its back.

'The bloody thing.'

**17** He stayed in his own half of the bed, groaning and turning over every few minutes. Billy lay with his back to him, listening. Then he turned his cheek slightly from the pillow.

'Jud?'

'What?'

'Tha'd better get up.'

No answer.

'Alarm's gone off tha knows.'

'Think I don't know?'

**25** He pulled the blankets tighter and drilled his head into the pillow. They both lay still.

'Jud?'

'What?'

'Tha'll be late.'

'O, shut it.'

**30** 'Clock's not fast tha knows.'

'I said SHUT IT.'

He swung his fists under the blankets and thumped Billy in the kidneys.

'Gi'o'er! That hurts!'

'Well shut it then.'

**35** 'I'll tell my mam on thi.'

Jud swung again. Billy scuffled away to the cold at the edge of the bed, sobbing. Jud got out, sat on the edge of the bed for a moment, then stood up and felt his way across the room to light the switch. Billy worked his way back to the centre and disappeared under the blankets.

'Set t'alarm for me, Jud. For seven.'

**40**  'Set it this en.'

'Go on, thar up.'

Jud parted Billy's sweater and shirt, and used the sweater for a vest. Billy snuggled down in Jud's place, making the springs creak. Jud looked at the humped blankets, then walked across and pulled them back, stripping the bed completely.

'Hands off cocks; on socks.'

For an instant Billy lay curled up, his hands wafered between his thighs. Then he sat up and crawled to the bottom of the bed to retrieve the blankets.

'You rotten sod, just because tha's to get up.'

'Another few weeks, lad, an' tha'll be getting up wi' me.'

**50** He walked out onto the landing. Billy propped himself up on one elbow.

'Switch t'light out, then!'

Jud went downstairs. Billy sat on the edge of the bed and re-set the alarm, then ran across the lino and switched the light off. When he got back to the bed most of the warmth had gone. He shivered and scuffled around the sheet, seeking a warm place.

**55** It was still dark outside when he got up and went downstairs. The living-room curtains were drawn, and when he switched the light on it was gloomy and cold without the help of the fire. He placed the clock on the mantelpiece, then picked up his mother's sweater from the settee and pulled it on over his shirt.

The alarm rang as he was emptying the ashes in the dustbin. Dust clouded up into his face as he dropped the lid back on and ran inside, but the noise stopped before he could reach it. He knelt down in front of the empty grate and scrunched the sheets of newspaper into loose balls, arranging them in the grate like a bouquet of hydrangea flowers. Then he picked up the hatchet, stood a nog of wood on the hearth and struck it down the centre. The blade bit and held. He lifted the hatchet with the nog attached and smashed it down, splitting the nog in half and chipping the tile with the blade. He split **65** the halves into quarters, down through eighths to sixteenths, then arranged these sticks over the paper like the struts of a wigwam. He completed the construction with lumps of coal, building them into a loose shell, so that the sticks and paper showed through the chinks. The paper caught fire with the first match, and the flames spread quickly underneath, making the chinks smoke and the sticks crack. He waited for the first burst of flames up the back of the construction, then stood up and walked into the kitchen, and opened the pantry door. There were a packet of dried peas and a half bottle of vinegar on the shelves. The bread bin was empty. Just inside the doorway, the discs of the electricity meter circled slowly in its glass case. The red arrow appeared, and disappeared. Billy closed the door and opened the outside door. On the step stood two empty milk bottles. He thumped **75** the jamb with the side of his fist.

'It's t' same every morning. I'm going to start hiding some at nights.'

He started to turn inside, then stopped, and looked out again. The garage door was open. He ran across the concrete strip and used the light from the kitchen to look inside.

'Well, of all the rotten tricks!'

**80** He kicked a can of oil the length of the garage and ran back into the house. The coal had caught fire, and the yellow flames were now emitting a slight warmth. Billy pulled his pumps on without unfastening the laces and grabbed his windcheater. The zip was broken and the material draped out behind him as he vaulted the front wall and raced up the avenue.

The sky was a grey wash; pale grey over the fields behind the estate, but darkening overhead, to charcoal away over the City. The street lamps were still on and a few lighted windows glowed the colours of their curtains. Billy passed two miners returning silently from night shift. A man in overalls cycled by, treading the petals slowly. The four of them converged, and parted, pursuing their **88** various destinations at various speeds.

**Question 1**:

Read again the first part of the source, lines 1- 17. List four things you learn about Billy

(4 marks)

**Question 2:**

Look in detail at the extract from line 17 to line 50. How does the writer use language here to present the relationship between the two brothers, Billy and Jud? You could include the writer’s choice of:

* Words and phrases
* Language features and techniques
* Sentence forms
* The use of direct speech (8 marks)

**Question 3:**

You now need to think about the whole of the source. The text is from the opening of a novel. How has the writer structured the text to interest you as a reader?

You could write about:

• what the writer focuses your attention on at the beginning

• how and why the writer changes this focus as the extract develops

• any other structural features that interest you. (8 marks)