

Title (up to 20 words) - “Lucky Escape” Strapline (up to 40 words) -

My historical fiction piece is based on the 1960s in the UK and on discos in the UK in the 1960s and its impact on youth culture and how there was a generational divide between teenagers and their parents, just as there is now a divide in the 21st century. I wrote about the swinging sixties and focused my plot on a tragedy in which there is a car crash- the car crash is a metaphorical inference to the economic issues and societal issue that were part of the sixties such as the run on the pound economy of James Callaghan and issues such as lack of free contraceptives as the illegality of abortion at the time. The car crash is a cataclysmic event in which the freedoms that the liberalising reforms of the 1960s reach a halt and a turn (a fin de siècle) of the century as Thatcherism in the 1970s commences and brings about Conservatism in the form of lax taxation and the snatching of free school milk of primary school pupils. Thus the notion of lost freedom is integral to my draft historical story- which aptly links to the lost freedom of black slaves such as Moya in Alex Weetle's "Cane Warriors" in 19th century America, albeit in a different context. The mother is a metaphor for Margaret Thatcher.

Copy (between 900 and 1000 words)

Lucky Escape:

“You are not staying here on your own. Get in the car now,” my mum said in that voice which did not allow any argument. ‘Not any longer, not without me.’ Sadly, it wasn’t a lucky escape. I sighed at her, partly disengaged, but her exasperated expression with bushy furrowed brows, reminded me that I had no choice but to comply to her command. On the one hand, there was the booming disco music from Private Radio luring me towards the crowded dancefloor and the summoning grin of my childhood friend giving me reason to ignore all else, on the other, an agitated and impatient mother who demanded obedience from her troublesome teenager. As I walked out of the lively atmosphere and into my mum’s silver Volkswagen, I had a moment of realisation. Slowly beginning to feel an uncomfortable chill run down my spine, sourness towards the back of my throat, and my sweat sticking to the palms of my hands; I knew that tonight was not going to be a lucky escape. I braced myself for the scolding of a lifetime.

I waited; I wept; I sank into the firm, solid passenger seat of the car. Ignition had turned on. Feet rooted firmly to the gas pedal of the car, mother drove us off. To my surprise however, an ever-present silence during our journey home replaced what I’d assumed would be endless shouting, questioning, and lecturing on how a young girl like myself should not be partying until

the early hours of the morning, unguarded. Awkwardness filled this atmosphere. All began to seem worse; after all, wouldn't a mother be desperate to know what caused her child to stay away from her watchful eyes at such a time? A deep sense of regret filled me greatly the moment I saw a burning blaze of wrath in her eyes as she turned to me, braking the car at the arrival of the red traffic light. And I, her foolish girl, ignited the flame in them.

Silence. That's all that filled my ears for another ten painful minutes; seemingly, it's what my mother wanted to punish me with until dawn broke out. I stared blankly and into oblivion at the wide windshield, which somewhat resembled the uncertain future I was to face, coated in a thick blanket of condensation. Ultimately, this was the expected aftermath of ceaseless hours of dancing on the flooded 12' by 12' square floor, and before I knew it, I began dozing into pure peacefulness. Peacefulness, as pleasant an experience it was, was short lived. BOOM. The sound that awakened my senses soon enough and my mother's too, shook me hard as I glanced at the side view mirror only to see what appeared to be a smoked orange burning light behind the car, a blaze. As mum pulled the car aside, we leaped out of the vehicle, only to discover a raging fire ahead of us as we turned around. Dumbfounded, I froze at the sight of the fire, grasping my mum's hand tightly, as we stood unharmed. Sure enough, we had a lucky escape. But what I had stumbled upon next was nothing short of ominous.

In the hazy surrounding, the fire was extinguished and all that remained was a fragile body that lay motionless and grounded to the wide road. Nervously approaching the body, a blistered and ash-coated face stared directly at me. Crimson blood leaked from the swollen and torn lips onto the chin and flowed to the victim's long neck. Cracked eyeballs, as frail as glass, struck with mine as I was shattered by the sight. Reaching for the hands, I felt fingertips as stiff as ice, and, a small diamond ring on a bony index finger. As I began to closely examine the ring, I noticed that it uncannily resembled the one I gifted my friend at the party. No. It just couldn't be- I thought to myself, attempting to convince myself that my friend was elsewhere, not here, alive and well, not dead. Crippled by what happened during my consciousness, I released an agonisingly painful cry before my mother gently wiped away the stream of tears that gushed down my rubicund cheeks. The wrath that had filled her eyes was replaced by the heaviness of her sympathy. "Get in the car now." my mum said in a voice which trembled with sorrow.

It was truly the luckiest yet most misfortunate escape I've had all my life. And one, which goes without saying, would never escape my memory. Gone are the days of disco and liberation as my mother and I receive a pamphlet with Thatcher on its front cover. Arthur, strapped firmly in the backseat, was eagerly sucking his Cow and Gate milk- well, there would be no more free milk for him anymore- not after Mrs Thatcher announced the end to free milk in schools. This was the car crash of our lives- the end to liberalism, the end to social freedoms and the commencement of Conservative tyranny. The cataclysmic event that bid farewell to societal prosperity and a welcome to elitist monetary policy. Into the flames went public progress as the flames of self-serving elitism had been ignited.

Thatcher, not my mother, held the steering wheel, as she abandonment the liberalising freedoms of the decade and drove us into conformity and deference.