

THE TEACHER WHO CHANGED MY LIFE

A fortnight ago I heard that the English master who taught me at school, the great Frank Miles, had died, aged 92. Although he was a teaching giant and recognised as such by former pupils and colleagues, there is just a brief mention of him on the Internet. That is exactly as he would have wanted it: modern communication methods were not for him. He only just tolerated the telephone; a telephone which rang at an inopportune moment, such as when he was marking essays or exam papers, could easily be thrown out of the window.

But when he was teaching, Frank made his inflexible views extremely plain. The classroom was his theatre. In physical presence he was quite **slight**. But to a boy of my age his reputation made him seem several times life-size. That reputation alone was enough to cause fear into the lazy and **quell** the uncontrollable. He didn't have to do anything to keep order. Lessons would begin with what a friend has described as a "ferocious, almost neurotic intensity." They could also be very funny, as long as the class was performing to the highest level.

Frank's critical remarks were annihilating. After the first homework our class ever did for him, Frank judged the standard so poor throughout the entire class that he **tore** up every incorrect composition and threw it in the bin. All except one, and I **blush** to write that the piece saved was mine. It would have been much better for me if someone else's homework had been picked.

He was highly intolerant of those who disagreed with him. By today's standards he was deeply politically incorrect and had little time for rules and regulations. In fact, in the modern bureaucratic world he would be considered a problematic teacher.

Yet he was a truly inspirational teacher who held his class in focused attention. Because, above all, he had a complete passion not only for his subject but also for education. What was most important to him was his pupils' intellectual understanding of English, and he was not afraid to reprimand them when they were failing to reach his high standards. Frank would have taught anyone who showed a **spark** of aptitude for his subject as he was determined to raise standards. He was particularly pleased when a boy who had previously had a low level could achieve spectacular results.

He was quite a peculiar man. His **mannerisms** and language lent themselves so well to imitation that the image of boys pretending to be Frank is sometimes more vivid than the memory of Frank himself.

In the restaurant, after the funeral service, we discussed the never-ending question: who was Frank? He once told me how lucky I was to come from a loving family. He had not got on with his father. Other than that, his childhood was to us a complete blank, as was his emotional life.

He lived for his pupils; if other relationships had once existed, nobody knew about them. Although he detested snobbery and money, he could be considered an elitist—but only in the sense that he expected the best from every boy he taught, whatever their background or potential.

I was lucky to come under the eyes of a classroom colossus. Sadly, Frank did not find relationships outside the classroom easy. He became a recluse in his last decade and died in a basic flat. And the tragedy is that I never told him how much he had influenced my life—and that of many others.

Text adapted from the *Daily Mail* (July 16, 2013)

slight: menut, prim / menudo, delgado

quell (to quell): apaivagar, calmar / apaciguar, calmar

tore (to tear): estripar / romper

blush (to blush): ruboritzar-se / sonrojarse

spark: espurna, mica / chispa, pizca

mannerism: peculiaritat, gest d'expressió / peculiaridad, gesto de expresión

Part 2: Writing

Choose ONE topic. Write about number 1 or 2. Minimum length: 100 words.

[4 points]

1. What makes a good teacher, according to your own experience? Write a personal narrative about the best teacher you ever had. Explain why she/he inspired you.
2. Imagine you meet one of your former primary school teachers who was important to you. Write the dialogue in which you and the teacher talk about past memories and experiences of those days.

Grammar	
Vocabulary	
Text	
Maturity	
Total	
Nota de la redacció	