Do not write outside the box

**0 3** You now need to think about the **whole** of the source.

This text is from the beginning of a short story.

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 of the source
- how and why the writer changes this focus as the source develops
- any other structural features that interest you.

**[8 marks]**

LIVEWORKSHEETS

**Source A**

This extract is from the beginning of a short story by H E Bates, set in the 1930s. Hartop and his wife own a van from which they sell produce to people in their local area, and their daughter, Alice, works with them.

A Ford motor-van, old and re-painted green with 'Jos. Hartop, greengrocer, rabbits' scratched in streaky white lettering on a flattened-out biscuit tin nailed to the side, was slowly travelling across a high, treeless stretch of country in squally November half-darkness. Rain hailed on the windscreen and periodically swished like a sea-wave on the sheaves of pink chrysanthemums* strung on the van roof.

Hartop was driving: a thin, angular man, starved-faced. He seemed to occupy almost all the seat, sprawling awkwardly; so that his wife and their daughter Alice sat squeezed up, the girl with her arms flat as though ironed against her side, her thin legs pressed tight together into the size of one. The Hartops' faces seemed moulded in clay and in the light from the van-lamps were a flat swede-colour. Like the man, the two women were thin, with a screwed-up thinness that made them look both hard and frightened.

Hartop drove with great caution, grasping the wheel tightly, braking hard at the bends, his big yellowish eyes fixed ahead, protuberantly, with vigilance. His hands, visible in the faint dashboard light, were marked on the backs with dark smears of dried rabbits' blood. The van fussed and rattled, the chrysanthemums always swishing, rain-soaked, in the sudden high wind-squalls. And the two women sat in a state of silent apprehension, their bodies not moving except to lurch with the van, their clayish faces continuously intent, almost scared, in the lamp-gloom. And after some time, Hartop gave a slight start, and then drew the van to the roadside and stopped it.

'Hear anything drop?' he said. 'I thought I heard something.'

'It's the wind,' the woman said. 'I can hear it all the time.'

'No, something dropped.'

They sat listening. But the engine still ticked, and they could hear nothing beyond it but the wind and rain squalling in the dead grass along the roadside.

'Alice, you get out,' Hartop said.

The girl began to move herself almost before he had spoken.

'Get out and see if you can see anything.'

Alice stepped across her mother's legs, groped with blind instinct for the step, and then got out. It was raining furiously. The darkness seemed solid with rain.

LIVEWORKSHEETS

'See anything?' Hartop said.

'No.'

Hartop leaned across his wife and shouted: 'Go back a bit and see what it was.' The woman moved to protest, but Hartop was already speaking again. 'Something dropped. We'll stop at Drake's Turn. You'll catch up. I know something dropped.' He let in the clutch as he was speaking and the van began to move away.

Soon, to Alice, it seemed to be moving very rapidly. In the rain and the darkness all she could see was the tail-light, smoothly receding. She watched it for a moment and then began to walk back along the road. The wind was behind her; but repeatedly it seemed to veer and smash her, with the rain, full in the face. She walked without hurrying. She seemed to accept the journey as she accepted the rain and her father's words, quite stoically. She walked in the middle of the road, looking directly ahead, as though she had a long journey before her. She could see nothing.

And then, after a time, she stumbled against something in the road. She stooped and picked up a bunch of pink chrysanthemums, and then she began to walk back with them along the road. Before very long she could see the red tail-light of the van again. It was stationary. She could also see the lights of houses, little squares of yellow which the recurrent rain on her lashes transformed into sudden stars.

When she reached the van, Mrs Hartop said: 'What was it?'

'Only a bunch of chrysanthemums.'

Hartop himself appeared at the very moment she was speaking.

'Only?' he said. 'Only? What d'ye mean by only? Eh?'

Alice stood mute. Then Hartop raised his voice.

'Well, don't stand there! Do something. Go on. Go on! Go and see who wants a bunch o' chrysanthemums. Move yourself!'

Alice obeyed at once. She picked up the flowers, walked away and vanished, all without a word.

**END OF SOURCE**

LIVEWORKSHEETS