

THE BOY I AM · BY K.L. KETTLE

CRAFT SPOTLIGHT 1 – THE OPENING

"My name is Jude Grant and I am alive" · English · GCSE AO2 · KS3–KS4 · no spoilers

Read the first page like a writer. Every craft choice here also plants a theme the whole novel will grow — so each note below names the move *and* where it leads.

My name is Jude Grant and I am alive.

Centre stage, I face the deafening crowd. And I smile.

"Tonight's final lot!" Mr Walker, Head of the House of Boys, introduces me over the theatre's loudspeakers. "Number one hundred and fifty."

Cheers from the audience smack into my chest hard, skewering skin through to stomach, stomach through to spine, spine through to sparkling scenery behind me.

Smile number one we call gracious-without-being-smarmy.

That's what I'm aiming for, to hide my locked jaw. Sweat crawls from my hairline. As I adjust my collar, cold dread snakes down my neck.

From *The Boy I Am* by K.L. Kettle, Chapter 1.

CRAFT & WHERE IT LEADS each move, and the theme it plants

"My name is Jude Grant and I am alive."

Craft: a blunt declarative first line — a name, then the barest claim to exist. **AO2 · SENTENCE FORMS**

Threads through: in a world that reduces boys to "lot one hundred and fifty", insisting on a name is the book's first act of resistance — and names carry the whole way to the end.

"Number one hundred and fifty."

Craft: a person announced as a lot number, in the auctioneer's mouth. **AO2 · WORD CHOICE**

Threads through: the book never says "sold"; numbers, "lots" and "stats" do that work, teaching us how a system hides what it's doing behind neutral words.

"Cheers... smack into my chest hard, skewering skin through to stomach..."

Craft: applause written as a physical assault — violent verbs for a "celebration". **AO2 · IMAGERY**

Threads through: control keeps arriving dressed as spectacle — auctions, shows, ceremonies — so the reader learns to distrust every glittering surface.

"Smile number one... to hide my locked jaw."

Craft: a rehearsed, numbered smile set against the fear underneath, in one breath. **AO2 ·**

CHARACTERISATION

Threads through: the catalogue of fake smiles is Jude's survival system; the gap between the mask and the truth *is* the novel, and the story is the slow closing of it.

Reading like a writer — your turn

Write a character's opening line as bold as "My name is... and I am alive." — a claim that quietly tells us what their world is trying to take from them. Then hide their real feeling behind one performed action.

For librarians & reading groups. This is the writing — a first page that is already an argument. *The Boy I Am* is Carnegie-nominated; more spotlights, reading-group kits and author visits at klkettle.com.