

THE BOY I AM · BY K.L. KETTLE

CRAFT SPOTLIGHT 3 – WRITING TO "YOU"

The second person & the whole book's grief · English · GCSE AO2 · KS3–KS4 · no spoilers

The novel's quietest, boldest choice: it is narrated *to* someone. Jude tells his whole story to Vik, his lost friend, in the second person. Here it is, doing its work inside a lesson about "merit".

"They call it a meritocracy," the head cook droned as he wrote the word *merit* on the orders board in dark-text dots. "Merit," he said.

Merit.

All us boys copied the dots down on our papers.

You scribbled in the furthest corner, saving as much of the paper as you could for your sculptures.

Every woman Above is born with a thousand merits to their name... girls would be credited merits for doing good works, helping others and passing exams. This is what they call 'showing your worth'.

From *The Boy I Am* by K.L. Kettle, Chapters 16–17. The "you" is Vik — Jude's friend, and the person he tells the whole book to.

CRAFT & WHERE IT LEADS the second person, move by move

"You scribbled in the furthest corner..."

Craft: mid-scene, the narration turns to address "you" — a specific, absent person, not the reader in general. **AO2 · NARRATIVE VOICE**

Threads through: that "you" is Vik. The whole book is spoken to him, so grief isn't a subplot — it's the frame the entire story is told inside.

"...saving paper for your sculptures."

Craft: while every other boy copies the dots, "you" quietly makes art in the margins. **AO2 ·**

CHARACTERISATION BY CONTRAST

Threads through: Vik's small refusals set up the book's central question — comply or resist — and his paper-folding becomes a motif of what a system can't flatten.

"Merit." / Merit. / ...the word merit in dark-text dots.

Craft: the word is written, said, then given a one-word paragraph — hammered in. **AO2 · REPETITION / STRUCTURE**

Threads through: the book keeps showing how a system drums a word into belief; set against "you", the cold lesson and the private memory sit in the same breath.

The effect of "you" on the reader.

Craft: second person puts *us* in the place of the one addressed — for a moment, the reader *is* the lost friend. **AO2 · READER POSITIONING**

Threads through: every scene turns intimate and haunted; we carry Vik alongside Jude, and the address itself becomes a way of keeping him alive.

Reading like a writer — your turn

Write a short passage addressed to "you" — someone absent. Then swap it into third person. Read both aloud: what does the second person do that the third can't — and *who* does it ask your reader to become?

For librarians & reading groups. The sustained second-person address is Kettle's signature move — formal daring that reads as literary craft. *The Boy I Am* is Carnegie-nominated; more spotlights at kilkettle.com.