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## EXTRACTS USED IN 'LEARNING FROM OTHER WRITERS'

*Derek Neale*

## Start Writing Fiction

### Extracts used in 'Learning from other writers'

#### Graham Greene – *Brighton Rock*

I got to think, he repeated to himself. I got to think. He opened the street door and went out. He didn't even wait to fetch his hat. His hair was thin on top, dry and brittle under the dandruff. He walked rapidly, going nowhere in particular, but every road in Brighton ended on the front. I'm too old for the game, I got to get out, Nottingham; he wanted to be alone, he went down the stone steps to the level of the beach; it was early closing and the small shops facing the sea under the promenade were closed. He walked on the edge of the asphalt, scuffling in the shingle. I wouldn't grass, he remarked dumbly to the tide as it lifted and withdrew, but it wasn't my doing, I never wanted to kill Fred. He passed the shadow under the pier, and a cheap photographer with a box camera snapped him as the shadow fell and pressed a paper into his hand. Spicer didn't notice. The iron pillars stretched down across the wet dimmed shingle holding up above his head the motor-track, the shooting booths and peep machines, mechanical models, 'the Robot Man will tell your fortune'. A seagull flew straight across towards him between the pillars like a scared bird caught in a cathedral, then swerved out into the sunlight from the dark iron nave. I wouldn't grass, Spicer said, unless I had to .... He stumbled on an old boot and put his hand on the stones to save himself: they had all the cold of the sea and had never been warmed by sun under these pillars.

Greene, G. ([1938] 1975) *Brighton Rock*, Penguin: Harmondsworth, p. 85.

#### Kate Atkinson – *Case Histories*

Victor met Rosemary when he had to go to the casualty department at Addenbrooke's, where she was a student nurse. He had tripped down some steps and fallen awkwardly on his wrist but he told Rosemary that he'd been on his bike when he was 'cut up' by a car on the Newmarket Road. 'Cut up' sounded good to his ears, it was a phrase from a masculine world he'd never managed to inhabit successfully (the world of his father), and 'the Newmarket Road' implied (untruthfully) that he didn't spend his whole life cloistered in the limited area between St John's and the maths department.

If it hadn't been for this chance hospital encounter, accidental in all senses, Victor might never have courted a girl. He already felt well on his way to middle age

and his social life was still limited to the chess club. Victor didn't really feel the need for another person in his life, in fact he found the concept of 'sharing' a life bizarre. He had mathematics, which filled up his time almost completely, so he wasn't entirely sure what he wanted with a wife. Women seemed to him to be in possession of all kinds of undesirable properties, chiefly madness, but also a multiplicity of physical drawbacks – blood, sex, children – which were unsettling and *other*. Yet something in him yearned to be surrounded by the kind of activity and warmth so missing in his own childhood, which was how, before he even knew what had happened, like opening the door to the wrong room, he found himself taking tea in a cottage in rural Norfolk while Rosemary shyly displayed a (rather cheap) diamond-chip engagement ring to her parents.

Atkinson, K. (2005) *Case Histories*, Black Swan: London, pp. 22–23.