1.1 What's the book about?

Have you seen the film *About a Boy*?

- **YES**
  Match some of the characters from the film with these pictures. What do you remember about the characters?

- **NO**
  Read about some of the characters in the story. Match them with the correct pictures above.

1 ☐ Will is a very rich young man.
2 ☐ Marcus is a boy with problems.
3 ☐ Fiona is Marcus's mum. She's often very sad.
4 ☐ Christine is a tired young mother, a friend of Will.

1.2 What happens first?

Discuss these questions. What do you think? Make notes below.

1 Look at the words in *italics* at the top of page 1. Then look at the picture on page 3. What is Will thinking?
2 Look at the picture on page 6. What are Marcus and the other pupils thinking?
3 Look at the picture on page 17. What is Marcus thinking?

Notes

A Man and a Boy

Will could see only one reason for having children.
When you were old and poor, then they could look after you.

Will Freeman was thirty-six years old and he had never had a job in his life. Sometimes he thought about working. He looked through the job advertisements in newspapers and wrote occasional letters to employers, but he was never invited to interviews.

He didn't mind. He was OK as he was. He was a **cool guy** with a cool lifestyle. He read quite a lot; he saw films in the afternoons; he went running; he cooked nice meals for himself and his friends. When he got bored, he went to Rome or New York or Barcelona for a few days.

Will didn't need to work for money because in 1938 his father had written a very successful Christmas song. Many famous singers had made recordings of this song, and each time Will's father had received **royalties**. Since his death the royalties had come to Will.

So Will had become rich without having to work at all. He was happy with his life. He lived in a nice flat in London and drove a fast car. He liked women and had lots of girlfriends, but he never got too **involved with** them. He preferred to look at other people's lives from the outside, like watching TV. If a relationship with a woman became complicated, he ended it. He wanted to keep his life simple.

In the evenings Will usually went out with friends. These were guys who worked in music shops or belonged to the same sports clubs as Will, or who were part of the same pub-**quiz** team. They weren't close friends – but they were good enough for a drink or a meal.

The evenings were fine, but Will had a lot of free time during the day because all his friends were at work. So he filled the time with different half-hour activities – reading the paper, having a bath, tidying his flat, going to the shops, watching *Countdown*. *Countdown* was an afternoon TV quiz show and it was his favourite programme. Sometimes he wondered how his friends had time to work. How could a person work and have a bath on the same day?

cool /kuːl/ (adj) an informal word for a person or thing that you like and admire
guy /gaɪ/ (n) an informal word for a man
royalties /ˈrɔɪəltiz/ (n pl) payments made to the writer of a book or a piece of music, connected to the sales of that work
be/get involved (with) /bi /ˌget ɪnˈvɒlvd wɪð, wɪθ/ to be/become part of someone's life, or part of an activity or event
quiz /kwɪz/ (n) a competition in which you have to answer questions