

# THE RED RIBBON

## LUCY ADLINGTON

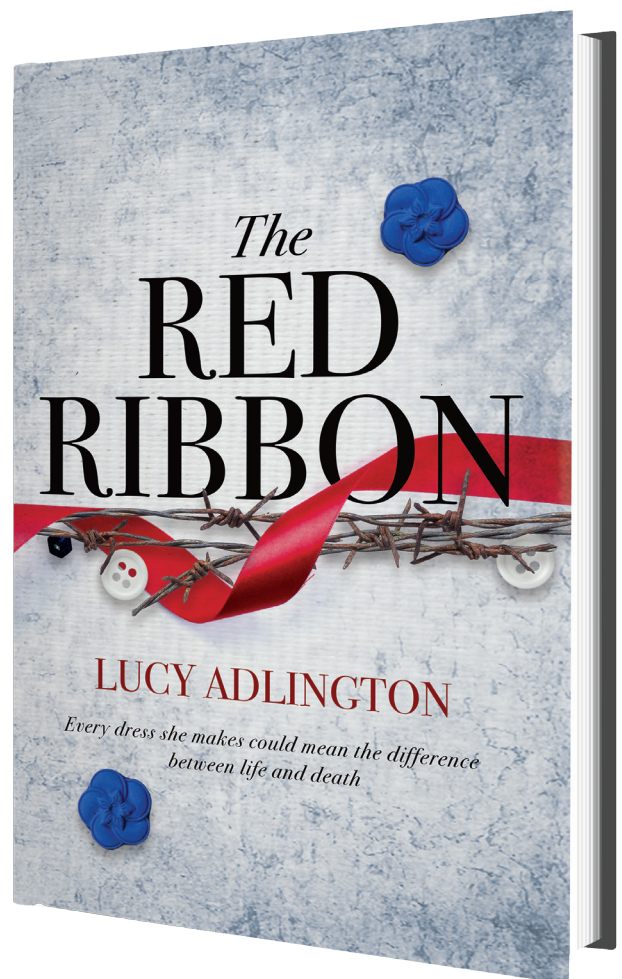
### *Creative Writing Resource Pack For KS3*

#### Dear Teachers and Librarians,

This resource pack is based on *The Red Ribbon*, a beautiful book from writer, actor and costume historian Lucy Adlington. It is a modern classic of love and friendship, set in the sewing room within the Auschwitz-Birkenau concentration camp – and it will weave a path through history for the young imaginations in your classroom. The lessons in this pack serve as a miniature scheme of work with English objectives, providing material for five or more KS3 lessons – perfect for classes studying the Holocaust or the second World War in Year 9.

The final outcome is for each student in your class to let their creative talents loose and produce some writing of their own – embroidering a story full of new colours, characters, settings and emotions. What's more, if you submit your class's creative writing to our exclusive competition by Friday 15th December, one of your students will be in with a chance of winning a class visit from Lucy Adlington herself.

So invite your students to step into a world of silks, seams, scissors, pins, hems and trimmings – a world that is as dangerous and testing as it is full of love and discovery. Their creative journey starts here . . . the final destination as yet unknown.



## *The aim*

This resource pack is designed for children aged 13–15. It is based on *The Red Ribbon* by Lucy Adlington and invites everyone in your class to go on a journey, in every sense of the word. The lessons included have been designed as sequential activities and can be taught as whole units or as individual activities. Each activity will guide pupils through a different element of creative writing – from character, to setting to sensory description – giving them the skills and confidence they need to draft, structure and write a creative piece of their own. We hope you enjoy the journey.

## *About the book*

*Rose, Ella, Marta and Carla. In another life we might all have been friends together. This was Birchwood.*

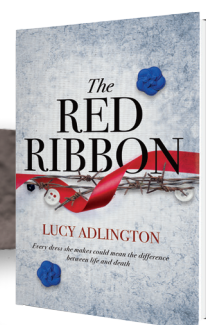
As fourteen-year-old Ella begins her first day at work she steps into a world of silks, seams, scissors, pins, hems and trimmings. She is a dressmaker, but this is no ordinary sewing workshop. Hers are no ordinary clients.

Ella has joined the seamstresses of Auschwitz-Birkenau, as readers may recognise it. Every dress she makes could mean the difference between life and death. And this place is all about survival.

Ella seeks refuge from this reality, and from haunting memories, in her work and in the world of fashion and fabrics. She is faced with painful decisions about how far she is prepared to go to survive. Is her love of clothes and creativity nothing more than collaboration with her captors, or is it a justifiable means of staying alive? Will she fight for herself alone, or will she trust the importance of an ever-deepening friendship with Rose?

**One thing weaves through the colours of couture gowns and camp mud – a red ribbon, given to Ella as a symbol of hope.**

**For anyone who has been move by *The Diary of Anne Frank* and *The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas*.**





# CREATIVE WRITING

## *Objectives*



*This resource pack provides material for six hour-long lessons that can take place during KS3 English lessons. The pack covers objectives that include but are not limited to:*

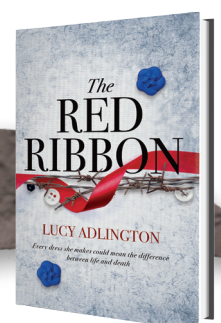
### ENGLISH

#### *Reading: comprehension*

- Develop positive attitudes to reading, and an understanding of what they read, by:
  - i. listening to and discussing a wide range of fiction
  - ii. discussing words and phrases that capture the reader's interest and imagination
- Understand what they read, in books they can read independently, by
  - i. identifying how language, structure, and presentation contribute to meaning
  - ii. drawing inferences such as inferring characters' feelings, thoughts and motives from their actions, and justifying inferences with evidence

#### *Writing: composition*

- Plan their writing by:
  - i. discussing writing similar to that which they are planning to write in order to understand and learn from its structure, vocabulary and grammar
- Draft and write by:
  - i. in narratives, describing settings, characters and atmosphere and integrating dialogue to convey character and advance the action
- Evaluate and edit by:
  - i. assessing the effectiveness of their own and others' writing and suggesting improvements





# INTRODUCTORY TASK

## *Free Writing*



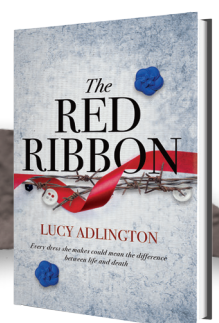
*This task is designed to help students explore ideas and write in a free and unrestricted way.*

It's time to get creative! First of all, take off your shoes (not socks too, please) – so that you feel free and comfortable. Remember, this is a private writing task and no one is ever going to read your work. Now, it's time to get started. Begin with the words: 'I remember, I remember, I remember . . .' until a thought comes into your head. As soon as it does, write it down! Continue to write, without stopping, until three minutes have passed. Don't worry – if you get writer's block, you can go back to writing 'I remember' until a new thought comes. Relax, and enjoy!



### FEEDBACK QUESTIONS

- How did you find this experience?
- Were you surprised by the thoughts that came to you as you were writing?
- Would anyone like to share their work?



# LESSON ONE

## Genre

### LEAD-IN QUESTIONS

- What does the title *The Red Ribbon* make you think about?
- In pairs, consider the words 'Red' and 'Ribbon' – what are their connotations?

### TASK 1

Look at the following genre cards. Can you come up with a definition or example of each genre type on the cards?

**FANTASY**

**DRAMA**

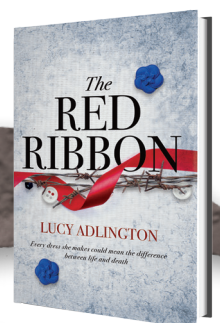
**HISTORICAL**

**HORROR**

**ADVENTURE**

**COMEDY**

Lucy Adlington's new book is called *The Red Ribbon*. Can you choose which genre you think it might fit into, based on the title?



## TASK 2

In this extract, the main character, Ella, is describing the Auschwitz-Birkenau concentration camp, which she calls 'Birchwood'.

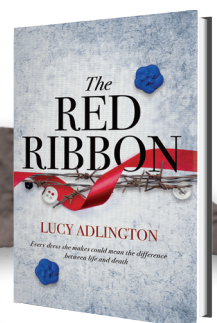
Read the extract. Can you find evidence of the following things? (Pick out words or phrases to support your ideas):

1. It is crowded
2. The food isn't very good
3. The rules are strict
4. It is dirty
5. Ella feels unsafe

## TASK 3

Refer back to your genre cards from Task 1. Now that you've read a passage from the book, can you identify a genre more confidently? Remember, a book doesn't have to fit into just one genre or category!

*I kept a lookout for Rose over supper, but she was lost among the thousands and thousands of women in striped clothing slurping soup-water from their bowls. It was sheer chance that I found her that evening, not long before lights out. Lights out was at 9 p.m. The day began at four thirty. I was in my block, up on my bunk. The barrack blocks were long, low, miserable buildings. About five hundred of us were squashed inside each block. We were wedged into damp wooden shelves, three tiers of them, reaching floor to ceiling. Each shelf was divided into bunks with rows of dirty straw mattresses. At least six to a bunk, at least two to a mattress. There was no other furniture, unless you counted the toilet buckets. That night my usual bunk-mate hadn't turned up. I didn't ask why not. Some questions you don't want answers to.*





## TASK 4

Imagine that you have to create a cover for *The Red Ribbon*. What are the criteria for a successful book cover?

### Front cover success criteria:

1. Strong, bold colours

2 .....

.....

3 .....

.....

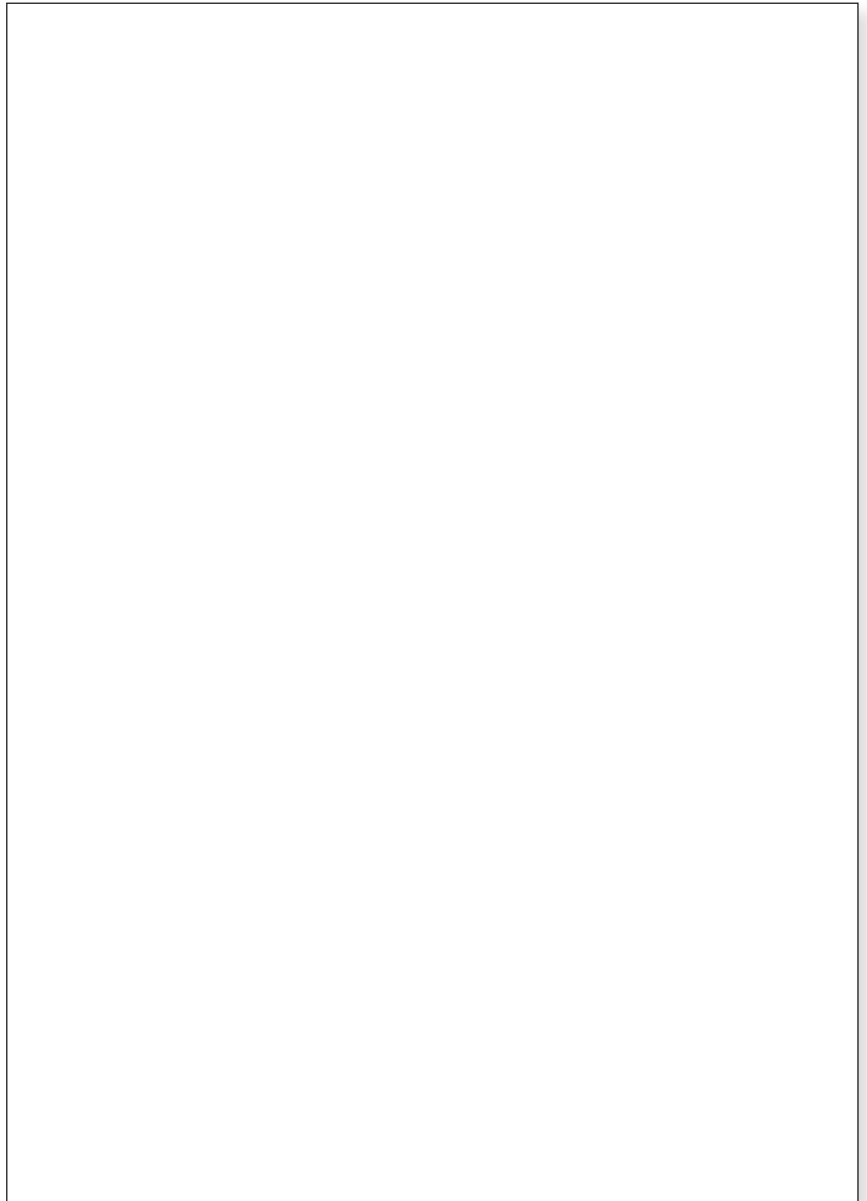
4 .....

.....

5 .....

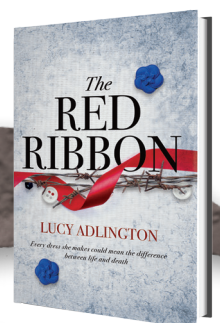
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Using everything that you have learned in this lesson, create your own cover for *The Red Ribbon*. It can be a rough sketch or, if you prefer to write, use the space to describe it. Try to explain your choices, and make sure that you refer to the success criteria above. Don't forget to share your cover with us on Twitter at [@HotKeyBooks!](https://twitter.com/HotKeyBooks)



## FOR NEXT LESSON

Bring in your own favourite item of clothing and be ready to present it to the class!



# LESSON TWO

## *Clothes*

### LEAD-IN QUESTIONS

- What is your favourite item of clothing?
- Do you think clothes are important? Why?

### TASK 1

Ella is passionate about clothes. She is a dressmaker and a seamstress, meaning that she is good at sewing and making clothes.

What is Ella saying here about clothes and identity? Do you agree?

.....

### TASK 2

1. Underline any powerful words that stand out to you.
2. Underline as many ADJECTIVES as you can.
3. Underline as many ADVERBS as you can.

### TASK 3

Can you match the following senses to a phrase in the paragraph?

SIGHT

SMELL

TASTE

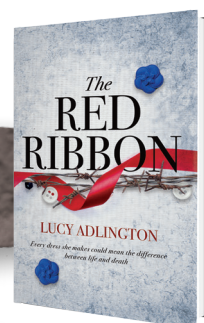
SOUND

TOUCH

*They said we'd get our clothes back after a shower. They lied. We got sack dresses with stripes. As Stripeys we ran around like herds of panicked zebras. We weren't people any more, we were numbers. They could do what they liked to us.*

*So don't tell me clothes don't matter.*

*Now there were rivers of material for my fingers to wade into. Marta had said this Carla was blonde. Out of Birchwood's brown, green grew in my mind: a good colour for blondes. I tugged at folds and bales of fabric, searching for the perfect shade. There was moss-green velvet. Silver-spangled gauze the shade of grass in moonlight. Crisp cottons with leaf prints. Satin ribbons ripe with light . . . And my favourite – an emerald silk that rippled like cool water under dappling trees.*



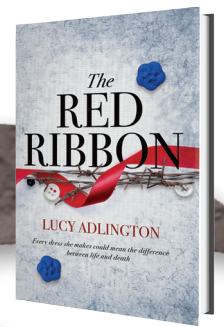
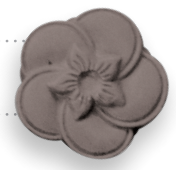




## TASK 4

Now it's your turn! Write one paragraph to describe your item of clothing. Think about the things you can see, smell, taste, hear and feel by touch. Don't forget to use powerful words, adjectives and adverbs and to use plenty of sensory description.

A series of horizontal dotted lines for writing a paragraph.



# LESSON THREE

## *Colour*

### RECAP QUESTIONS

- What is the setting of Lucy Adlington's book *The Red Ribbon*?
- What is the genre of the book?

### TASK 1

In pairs, you will be given a colour from the list below. Together, you need to consider what that colour makes you think about.

GREEN

YELLOW

RED

GREY

WHITE

PINK

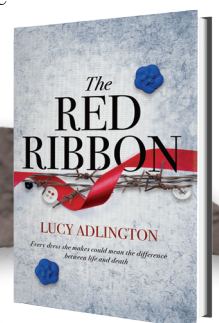
### TASK 2

Now we're going to personify your colour. This means that we're going to imagine that your colour is a person. Answer the following questions:

1. What emotions would your colour have?
2. What body language would your colour have?
3. How would your colour speak?

### TASK 3

Drama time! In groups, it's time to do some hot-seating! Each person should take it in turns to sit in the hot seat and speak, think and act in character as the colour they have just created. The other members of the group need to ask this person questions. Is anyone willing to share their performance with the whole class?!



## TASK 4

Lucy Adlington uses a colour as the chapter heading for each section of her book. Why do you think she might have done this?

Each of the sentences below comes from a different section of *The Red Ribbon*. Can you match each sentence to one of the colours above?

*Today the fabric slithered like a snake in a meadow . . . winding between weeds looking for a mouse to eat.*

*Me, I daydreamed I was eating tubs of lemon sorbet . . . buckets of lemon sorbet . . . I was bathing in lemon sorbet.*

*The dress was there, soaking up a pool of blood.*

*A machine with hand cranks, metal cogs and wooden rollers. We stared at it, stunned. Steam filled the air.*

*Several times I saw Carla passing the lines of frosted washing.*

*I'm Flora. I know – daft name for a big lump like me. I was born in the spring, and Mother had a fancy for flowers. Lucky she didn't call me Blossom, I've always thought.'*

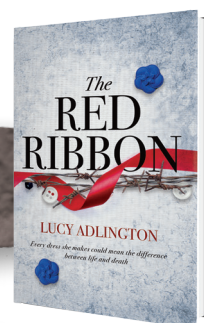
## TASK 5

Now it's your turn! Without naming your colour, you need to write a sentence that evokes it, just like in the examples above.

When you're finished, read it out to the class so that people can guess which colour you have chosen!

.....

.....



# LESSON FOUR

## *Characters*

### LEAD-IN QUESTIONS

- Who is your favourite character from a book or film?
- Why do you like this character?
- Does an interesting character always have to be good and well behaved?

### TASK 1

In *The Red Ribbon*, the characters lose their clothes and their identities; they are reduced to ‘herds of zebra’ – like animals. To emphasise this point, Lucy Adlington introduces the characters in the opening chapter as animals. Can you match the descriptions below to the right animal?

GIRAFFE | RABBIT | FROG | HEDGEHOG | SQUIRREL

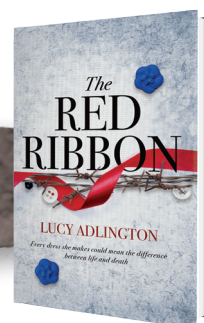
*The woman who'd come in with me just blinked and shuffled her one-shoe feet. She was pretty old – about twenty-five – and as twitchy as a . . .*

*The spring breeze blew another girl inside, one with hunched shoulders and round cheeks . . .*

*'Excuse me.' I tugged on the sleeve of a sapling-thin girl swaying past.*

*The girl bristled . . .*

*She was wide and squat with blobby skin . . .*



## TASK<sub>2</sub>

Think of your best friend in the whole wide world and complete this character profile for them:

## TASK<sub>3</sub>

Imagine your friend has just walked into the room. Using animal imagery, describe your friend in the way that Lucy Adlington first describes her characters in *The Red Ribbon*.

# CHARACTER PROFILE

**Name:**

**Age:**

**Place of birth:**

**Eye colour:**

**Hair colour:**

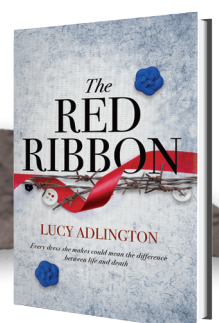
**Things they like:**

**Things they don't like:**

**Favourite activity:**

**Distinguishing features:**

**Animal that represents them:**



# LESSON FIVE

## *Dear Diary*

### TASK 1

Imagine you are in Birchwood without your family. How would you feel?

Put the emotion cards below in order from 1 – 5 (1 being the emotion you'd feel the most and 5 being the emotion you'd feel the least).

### TASK 2

There is a blank emotion card for you to add your own ideas. Is there any emotion not listed that you think you might feel?

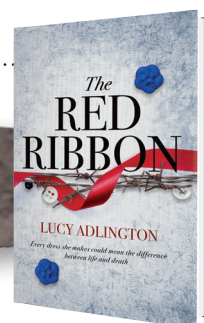
**OVERWHELMED**

**TERRIFIED**

**DETERMINED**

**SAD**

**DESPERATE**



### TASK 3

Using your emotion cards again, rank how Ella feels here by putting them in order from 1 – 5 (1 being the emotion she'd feel the most and 5 being the emotion she'd feel the least). For each card, pick out a word or phrase that shows evidence of it. There might be more than one word or phrase for each emotion. Here's an example:

SAD: 'A tear did fall then.'

Don't forget to add another emotion that you think Ella feels to the blank emotion card.

### TASK 4

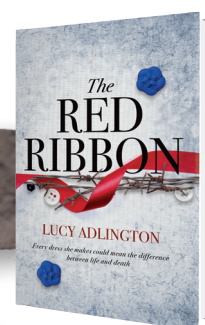
Put yourself in Ella's shoes. You are alone in Birchwood, far from your family but determined to survive for them. On the next page, write a diary entry to explain how you are feeling. Try to include things from previous lessons, for example:

- Description of clothes
- Description of setting using colour
- Description of your best friend at the camp
- Your emotions

*I didn't yet have that magic touch. Or Grandma hovering over me to help.*

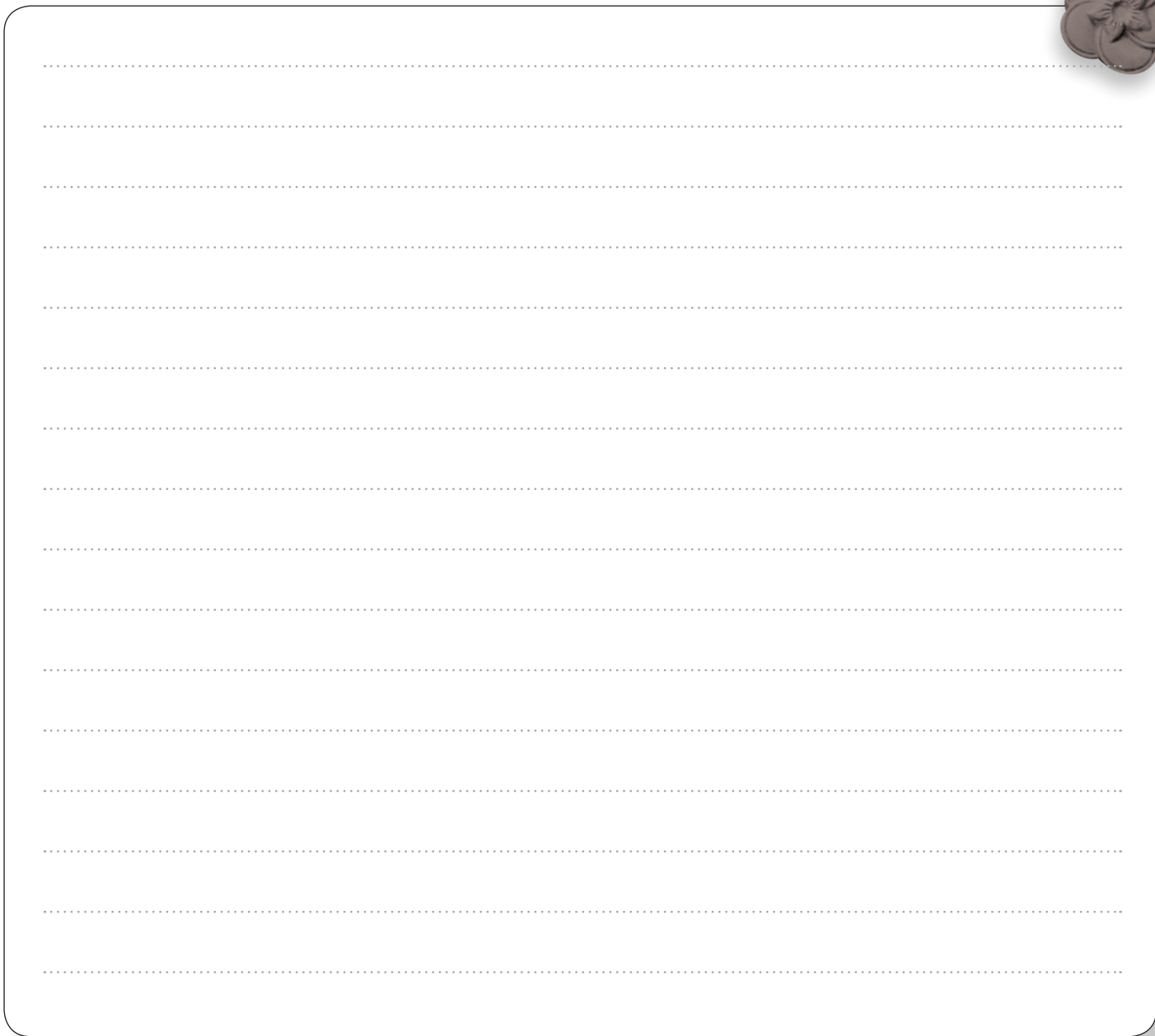
*A tear did fall then. It turned the silk a dark, poisonous green. I sniffed. No hanky. This was not a good time for memories.*

*Better just to sew, one seam, one dart at a time.*

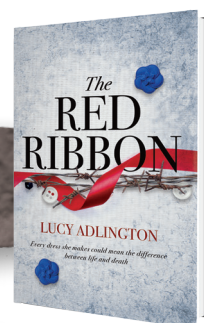




# *Dear Diary*



Don't forget to email your diary entries to us at [redribbon@hotkeybooks.co.uk](mailto:redribbon@hotkeybooks.co.uk) or send them to The Red Ribbon Competition, Hot Key Books, 80-81 Wimpole Street, Marylebone, London W1G 9RE. The closing date is Friday 15th December, so hurry, and you could be in with a chance of winning a SCHOOL VISIT from Lucy Adlington herself!





CONGRATULATIONS!

*You've completed  
The Red Ribbon creative  
writing resource pack*

Now, don't forget to hold on to everything that you've created. It might come in handy when you come to write your very own bestselling novel or design your very own clothing range! We can't wait to see your amazing creative talents at work.

**The Hot Key Books Team**

