Literacy Lowdown
To advance your wider reading

A Level students should:

- undertake wider reading.
- use factual texts and discursive / creative material.

Summary
Motherwell is a book about motherhood set against the backdrop of deindustrialisation in Scotland. It is a humorous memoir focusing on the relationship between Guardian journalist Deborah Orr and her mother, Win. The story takes you from 18 Clyde Terrace, Muirhouse, Motherwell through to the decommission of Ravenscraig steelworks ‘its buildings flattened and shovelled away, its earth decontaminated, there was just a big hole, in the town, in the shire, in so many people’s lives’ p292.

© Deborah Orr

Specification Links
I stood, years ago, on a steel bridge in Singapore and read the letters forged into the metal, telling me that this steel too had been supplied by the Lanarkshire. The world’s finest steel travelled far p 41 Urbanisation AQA 3.2.3.1. Urban change: deindustrialisation, decentralisation, rise of service economy. Negative as it may have been, this graffiti was pretty much the first indication that I noticed, really, of any form of community cohesion at all p64 Why might Regeneration be needed? Edexcel 4A.5 There are wide variations in levels of engagement in local communities. All deindustrialised towns have more than their fair share of [mental health problems]. Demolishing a town’s economy causes plenty of stress and anxiety p98 Eduqas 1.3.4 deindustrialised places

Key Quotes
That view. That stunning, dystopian panorama. A world unto itself, stretched out perfectly flat as far as the horizon, monochrome, like the telly. Except for the occasional blast of pale custard. Spikes of flame, so fast-moving that they seemed solid, roared implacably into the sky, day and night. Gas burn-off. A steelworks twice the size of Monaco. Prologue p1

Those rotting wooden monuments must have stood there, decomposing, for maybe forty years. I don’t think anyone minded. We were proud of the Lanarkshire, as a collective, as a town. It was our heritage, part of us, and it made us part of the world. The great black girders of Tate Morden in London were made at the Lanarkshire. Wedding Clipping p41

Failure to be Scottish as a problem for my mum in Motherwell, just as failure to be English had been a failure for my dad in Essex. In both places I was a chimerical beast, as oddity. Wedding Clipping p43

Grand-scale post-war modernism, two decades on from Armistice Day, was surging through Scotland and tower blocks were thrusting up into the sky. The Dolls p59

They were romantic about the Industrial Revolution, and for them the story of New Lanark was an antidote to the Marx-Stalin-Revolution-Workers themes. Silent Monitor p213