

AS ENGLISH LITERATURE A

Paper 2 Love through the ages: Prose

Friday 24 May 2024

Morning

Time allowed: 1 hour 30 minutes

Materials

For this paper you must have:

- an AQA 12-page answer book
- a copy of each of the set texts you have studied for **Section B**. These texts must **not** be annotated and must **not** contain additional notes or materials.

Instructions

- Use black ink or black ball-point pen.
- Write the information required on the front of your answer book. The **Paper Reference** is 7711/2.
- Do all rough work in your answer book. Cross through any work you do not want to be marked.
- Answer the question in Section A and **one** question from Section B.

Information

- The maximum mark for this paper is 50.
- The marks for questions are shown in brackets.
- You will be marked on your ability to:
 - use good English
 - organise information clearly
 - use specialist vocabulary where appropriate.
- In your response you need to:
 - analyse carefully the writers' methods
 - explore the contexts of the texts you are writing about
 - explore connections across the texts you have studied
 - explore different interpretations of your texts.

Section A: Unseen prose

Answer the question in this section.

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Commonwealth by Ann Patchett was published in 2016. In this extract, set in America in 1964, Bert Cousins, married to Teresa, meets Beverly Keating at the christening party for her baby daughter. Beverly's husband, Fix, has asked Bert to bring the baby back down to the party.

Examine the view that Patchett presents Bert's feelings towards Beverly as being more than casual.

Make close reference to the writer's methods in your response.

[25 marks]

He started again. "Your husband asked me to find the baby."

Finished with her work, Beverly rearranged the baby's dress and lifted her up from the table. "Well, here she is," she said. She touched her nose to the baby's nose and the baby smiled and yawned. "Somebody's been awake a long time." Beverly turned towards the crib.

"Let me take her out to Fix for a minute," he said. "Before you put her down."

Beverly Keating tilted her head slightly to one side and gave him a funny look. "Why does Fix need her?"

It was everything, the pale pink of her mouth in the darkened pink room, the door that was closed now though he didn't remember closing it, the smell of her perfume which had somehow managed to float gently above the familiar stench of the diaper pail. Had Fix asked him to bring the baby back or just to find her? It didn't make any difference. He told her he didn't know, and then he stepped towards her, her yellow dress its own source of light. He held out his arms and she stepped into them, holding out the baby.

"Take her then," she said. "Do you have children?" But by then she was very close and she lifted up her face. He put one arm under the baby, which meant he was putting his arm beneath her breasts. It wasn't a year ago she'd had this baby and while he didn't know what she'd looked like before it was hard to imagine she had ever looked any better than this. Teresa never pulled herself together. She said it wasn't possible, one coming right after the next. Wouldn't he like to introduce the two of them, just to show his wife what could be done if you cared to try. Scratch that. He had no interest in Teresa meeting Beverly Keating. He put his other arm around her back, pressed his fingers into the straight line of her zipper. It was the magic of gin and orange juice. The baby balanced between the two of them and he kissed her. That was the way this day was turning out. He closed his eyes and kissed her until the spark he had felt in his fingers when he touched her hand in the kitchen ran the entire shivering length of his spine. She put her other hand against the small of his back while the tip of her tongue crossed between his parted teeth. There was an almost imperceptible shift between them. He felt it, but she stepped back. He was holding the baby. The baby cried for a second, a single red-faced wail, and then issued a small hiccup and pressed into Cousins's chest.

"We're going to smother her," she said, and laughed. She looked down at the baby's pretty face. "Sorry about that."

The small weight of the Keating girl was familiar in his arms. Beverly took a soft cloth from the changing table and wiped over his mouth. "Lipstick," she said, then she

leaned over and kissed him again.

“You are—” he started, but too many things came into his head to say just one.

“Drunk,” she said, and smiled. “I’m drunk is all. Go take the baby to Fix. Tell him I’ll be there in just a minute to get her.” She pointed her finger at him. “And don’t tell him anything else, mister.” She laughed again.

He realized then what he had known from the first minute he saw her, from when she leaned out the kitchen door and called for her husband. This was the start of his life.

“Go,” she said.

She let him keep the baby. She went to the other side of the room and started to arrange the sleeping girls into more comfortable positions. He stood at the closed bedroom door for one more minute to watch her.

“What?” she said. She wasn’t being flirtatious.

“Some party,” he said.

“Tell me about it.”

Turn over for Section B

Turn over ►

Section B: Comparing prose texts

Answer **one** question in this section.

Either

0 2

'Literature often shows that lovers are more excited by the future than troubled by the realities of their everyday lives.'

By comparing **two** prose texts, explore the extent to which you agree with this statement.
[25 marks]

or

0 3

'In literature, lovers can never overcome social restrictions.'

By comparing **two** prose texts, explore the extent to which you agree with this statement.
[25 marks]

END OF QUESTIONS

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