
GCSE - AQA Style

ENGLISH LANGUAGE

Paper 1 Explorations in creative reading and writing

Insert

Source A: 20th Century Fiction

An extract from *The Children of Men* by P.D. James (1992).

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SOURCE A

Set in 2021, the source tells us that no human being has been able to give birth for 25 years and scientists still do not understand why. Here, Theo meets a woman as he walks through Oxford towards Magdalen College.

The Children of Men

It happened on the fourth Wednesday in January. Walking to Magdalen as was his custom, he had turned from St. John Street into Beaumont Street and was nearing the entrance to the Ashmolean Museum when a woman approached him wheeling a pram. The thin drizzle had stopped and as she drew alongside him she paused to fold back the mackintosh cover and push down the pram hood.

5 The doll was revealed, propped upright against the cushions, the two arms, hands mittened, resting on the quilted coverlet, a parody of childhood, at once pathetic and sinister. Shocked and repelled, Theo found that he couldn't keep his eyes off it. The glossy irises, unnaturally large, bluer than those of any human eye, a gleaming azure, seemed to fix on him their unseeing stare which yet horribly suggested a dormant intelligence, alien and monstrous. The eyelashes, dark brown, lay like spiders
10 on the delicately tinted porcelain cheeks and an adult abundance of yellow crimped hair sprung from beneath the close-fitting lace-trimmed bonnet.

It had been years since he had last seen a doll thus paraded, but they had been common twenty years ago, had indeed become something of a craze. Doll-making was the only section of the toy industry which, with the production of prams, had for a decade flourished; it had produced dolls for
15 the whole range of frustrated maternal desire, some cheap and tawdry but some of remarkable craftsmanship and beauty.

A middle-aged woman in well-fitting tweeds, hair carefully groomed, came up to the pram, smiled at the doll's owner and began a congratulatory patter. The first woman, simpering with pleasure, leaned forward, smoothed the satin quilted pram cover, adjusted the bonnet, tucked in a stray lock
20 of hair. The second tickled the doll beneath its chin as she might a cat, still murmuring her baby talk.

Theo, more depressed and disgusted by the charade than surely such harmless play-acting justified, was turning away when it happened. The second woman suddenly seized the doll, tore it from the coverings and, without a word, swung it twice round her head by the legs and dashed it against the stone wall with tremendous force. The face shattered and shards of porcelain fell tinkling to the
25 pavement. The owner was for two seconds absolutely silent. And then she screamed. The sound was horrible, the scream of the tortured, the bereaved, a terrified, high-pitched squealing, inhuman yet all too human, unstoppable. She stood there, hat askew, head thrown back to the heavens, her mouth stretched into a gape from which poured her agony, her grief, her anger. She seemed at first unaware that the attacker still stood there, watching her with silent contempt. Then the woman
30 turned and walked briskly through the open gates, across the courtyard and into the Ashmolean. Suddenly aware that the attacker had escaped, the doll-owner galumphed after her, still screaming, then, apparently realising the hopelessness of it, returned to the pram. She had grown quieter now and, sinking to her knees, began gathering up the broken pieces, sobbing and moaning gently, trying to match them as she might a jigsaw puzzle. Two gleaming eyes, horribly real, joined by a spring,
35 rolled towards Theo. He had a second's impulse to pick them up, to help, to speak at least a few words of comfort. He could have pointed out that she could buy another child.

tawdry: showy, but cheap and of poor quality
galumphed: moved in a clumsy, noisy manner