

ENGLISH LITERATURE A

(7712/2B)

Paper 2B: Texts in shared contexts: Modern Times: Literature from 1945 to the present day

Insert

Instructions to candidates

The material in this insert is for use with Section B of the question paper.

Section B: Answer both Question 1 and Question 2.

Recommended time for Section B: approximately 100 minutes.

Total marks for Section B: 50 marks (25 marks per question).

Beautiful Wreckage

Claire Denton

First published 2008 by Harlow and Sons

Extract context: *This extract is taken from the first section of the novel. Miriam, the narrator, is looking back on the early stages of her relationship with a man named Richard, whom she met at a party in London.*

He had a way of entering a room that made everyone in it reconsider themselves. Miriam had noticed this the first night, at the party where they met, how the geometry of conversation shifted when he moved through it, people turning fractionally, unconsciously, the way flowers will turn toward light they cannot see.

He chose her. That was how she thought of it, even later, even after everything. Not that they had found each other, or fallen -- those were words for other people, softer people -- but that he had looked across the room and chosen. She felt it as a kind of violence. She had wanted it anyway.

In the early months he called her three times a day. She learned to keep her phone face up, to answer on the second ring. Not because he asked her to. He never asked. He simply had a way of asking without asking, a way of letting his disappointment sit in a room so quietly and so heavily that she found herself rearranging things to avoid it. She told her friend Sophie that she had never felt so seen in her life.

"That is not the same as being known," Sophie said.

Miriam had not spoken to Sophie since April.

She gave up small things so gradually that she did not notice she had given them up. Thursday evenings with her sister. The running she had done since university, early mornings in the park before the city woke. She had been good at it, once. She had liked who she was at six in the morning with her headphones in and no one watching. That person seemed, now, like someone she had read about. Richard did not ask her not to run. He simply said, one Thursday morning, that he worried

when she went out alone in the dark, and looked at her with such evident and particular concern that she had found herself reassuring him. She had not gone running since October.

The apartment he found for them was beautiful. She had said so, many times, because it was true and because he liked to hear it. She stood sometimes at the floor-to-ceiling windows watching the city below and thought that this was what it felt like to have arrived somewhere. The city at that height was abstract and manageable. It did not ask anything of you. She had not yet understood that this was also what Richard preferred: that she remain, like the view, something to be looked at from above. She had not yet understood that the view was only beautiful from the inside.

She understood other things. She understood that when he said she looked tired he meant she should change her clothes. She understood that his silences after she spoke had lengths and qualities, the way music has, and that she had learned to read them the way she had once learned to read sheet music: with effort, and care, and the constant fear of a wrong note.

Section B

Answer both Question 1 and Question 2.

0 1

How does Denton present the power dynamics within a relationship in this extract?

In your response you should:

- analyse the methods the writer uses to shape meanings
- include relevant subject terminology
- consider the contexts in which the text was written and received.

[25 marks]

Recommended time: 40 minutes

0 2

In this extract, Denton suggests that love and control can be difficult to distinguish from one another. Compare how power within a relationship is presented in this extract and in one or two other texts you have studied.

In your response you should:

- make connections across the texts you have studied
- include relevant subject terminology
- consider the contexts in which texts were written and received.

[25 marks]

Recommended time: 35-40 minutes