

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).

Still Here

James Okoro

First published 2016 by Crescent Books

Extract context: *This extract is taken from the middle section of the novel. The narrator, David, is in his early fifties. He and his wife, Ruth, have been married for twenty-two years. The novel follows a single weekend in their lives.*

He woke before her, as he always did, and lay still for a while listening to her breathe. Twenty-two years of mornings and he had not grown used to the sound of it. He thought this was something he should tell her, and knew he would not.

She slept on her side, facing away. In the early years this had worried him -- that turned back, that apparent preference for elsewhere -- and he had done what young men do, read meaning into the geometry of sleep. He knew better now. He knew, for instance, that she turned toward him in the cold, and that the particular sound she made when she was almost but not quite awake was one he could not have described to anyone but would have recognised in a room of a thousand sounds. He knew which silences meant she was thinking and which meant she had finished. He had spent twenty-two years learning a language no one else spoke and it had not occurred to him until this moment, lying in the grey early light, to think of that as remarkable.

He got up carefully, the way he had learned to, and went downstairs and made tea. He put sugar in hers. She had given up sugar three years ago but he had never entirely believed in it and she had stopped correcting him. This too felt like a form of love: the small permitted fictions.

The kitchen was cold. He stood at the window while the kettle boiled and watched the garden, which was a mess this time of year, bare and waterlogged and given over to itself. He had been meaning to do something about the apple tree for months. Ruth said to leave it. She said it knew what it was doing, which was the kind of thing she said about plants and weather and children and situations he could not see a way through, and which he had learned, eventually, to believe.

She came downstairs in his jumper. She had been wearing his jumpers for as long as he could remember, so that certain of them no longer felt quite like his. She sat at the kitchen table and wrapped her hands around the mug he had ready for her and looked out at the garden with the same expression he had seen her wear at difficult pieces of music and at the sea and at their daughter's face when she was sleeping: a kind of serious attention, as though what she was looking at deserved to be looked at properly.

"It is going to rain," she said.

"I know," he said.

She looked at him then, briefly, the way she did when he had said something she had not expected. He had not expected it either. It seemed to him, standing there in his own kitchen with the tea going cold in his hands, that there were things they had been saying to each other for twenty-two years that were really about other things entirely, and that this was not a failure but a language, and that he was, on balance, grateful.

They sat with that for a while, which was enough.

Section B

Answer both Question 1 and Question 2.

0 1

How does Okoro present long-term love and intimacy 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, Okoro presents love as something built from small, accumulated habits and silences. Compare how intimacy within a long-term 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
