

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).

Before We Close

Thomas Halliday

First published 2022 by Quayside Fiction

Extract context: *This extract is taken from the final section of the novel. The narrator and her partner of eleven years are dividing their possessions after agreeing to separate. The novel traces the relationship from its beginning to its end.*

They had agreed to be civilised about it. They were civilised people. They had used the word several times in the first conversation, the one where it became clear that the conversations were going to be necessary, and it had seemed at the time like something they were both grateful for.

She was taking the books on the left side of the shelf. He was taking the right. This had been agreed without discussion, which was perhaps the last thing they agreed without discussion, and which she thought about now as she lifted down a book she did not entirely remember buying, the way you think about things when you are trying not to think about other things.

They had been together for eleven years. She was aware of this in the abstract way she was aware of the height of the ceiling or the distance to the window: a fact of the physical world that did not require her attention. She did not know how to make it concrete. She had tried, several times in recent weeks, to sum it up in some way that did justice to what it was -- not happy, not unhappy, not simple, not ordinary -- and had found that every description available to her was either too large or too small, the way photographs are never quite the thing you were trying to keep.

He made tea without asking whether she wanted any. He put hers on the table without speaking and she picked it up without speaking and they stood on opposite sides of the room with their tea and their stacks of books and she thought, without sentimentality, that this too was a form of knowing someone, this specific and unremarkable fluency, and that she would miss it in the way you miss a word in a language you are forgetting: not all at once, but gradually, in the spaces where it would have been.

The books were done. The tea was finished. Neither of them moved to begin the next thing, and in the pause between the last thing and the next thing she thought that perhaps this was what eleven years looked like, at the end: not an argument, not a door, not a word that could not be taken back, but two people standing in a room they both know, holding their empty cups, not quite ready to put them down.

Section B

Answer both Question 1 and Question 2.

0 1

How does Halliday present the ending of 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, Halliday presents the end of love not as a single moment of rupture but as something quiet and accumulated. Compare how the ending or dissolution of 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