

A Level English Literature

Unseen prose extract booklet

This booklet contains extracts and exam-style questions to help prepare you for English Literature A Level.

Extract One

***Pride and Prejudice* by Jane Austen (1775-1817) was published in 1813. The story is set in England in the early 19th Century. The novel follows the fortunes of the Bennet family and specifically the second-eldest daughter, Elizabeth. She meets the rich and arrogant Mr Darcy and they seem to take an instant dislike to each other.**

In this extract, which takes place while Elizabeth is visiting her friend, Charlotte, Darcy, reluctantly, proposes marriage to Elizabeth.

Examine the view that Austen presents Elizabeth as a strong character who will not settle for someone she does not love.

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

(25 marks)

After a silence of several minutes he came towards her in an agitated manner, and thus began, "In vain have I struggled. It will not do. My feelings will not be repressed. You must allow me to tell you how ardently I admire and love you."

Elizabeth's astonishment was beyond expression. She stared, coloured, doubted and was silent. He spoke well, but there were feelings besides those of the heart to be detailed...His sense of her inferiority – of its being a degradation – were dwelt on with a warmth...

In spite of her deeply-rooted dislike, she could not be insensible to the compliment of such a man's affection, and though her intentions did not vary for an instant, she was at first sorry for the pain he was to receive; till, roused to resentment by his subsequent language, she lost all compassion in anger.

"In such cases as this, it is, I believe, the established mode to express a sense of obligation for the sentiments avowed...But I cannot – I have never desired your good opinion, and you have certainly bestowed it quite unwillingly...I might as well enquire, why with so evident a design of offending and insulting me, you chose to tell me that you liked me against your will, against your reason, and even against your character?..."

"Could you expect me to rejoice in the inferiority of your connections? To congratulate myself on the hope of relations, whose condition in life is so decidedly beneath my own?"

Elizabeth felt herself growing more angry every moment; yet she tried to the utmost to speak with composure when she said,

"You are mistaken, Mr Darcy, if you suppose that the mode of your declaration affected me in any other way, than as it spared me the concern which I might have felt in refusing you, had you behaved in a more gentlemanlike manner."

She saw him start at this, but he said nothing, and she continued,

"You could not have made me the offer of your hand in any possible way that would have tempted me to accept it."

Again his astonishment was obvious; and he looked at her with an expression of mingled incredulity and mortification. She went on.

“From the very beginning, from the first moment I may almost say, of my acquaintance with you, your manners impressing me with the fullest belief of your arrogance, your conceit, and your selfish disdain for the feelings of others; and I had not known you a month before I felt that you were the last man in the world whom I could ever be prevailed on to marry.”

“You have said quite enough, madam. I perfectly comprehend you feeling, and have now only to be ashamed of what my own have been...” And with these words he hastily left the room...

The tumult of her mind was now painfully great. She knew not how to support herself, and from actual weakness sat down and cried for half an hour...

She continued in very agitating reflections till the sound of Lady Catherine’s carriage made her feel how unequal she was to encounter Charlotte’s observations, and hurried her away to her room.

Extract Two

***Persuasion* by Jane Austen (1775-1817) was published posthumously in 1817. The story is set in England in the early 19th Century. The novel tells the story of Anne Elliot who, eight years previously fell in love and became engaged to a naval officer, Frederick Wentworth. Her family persuade her to break off the engagement as he is poor and has no family connections. Eight years later, 27 year old Anne is unmarried and meets Wentworth again through friends. He is now well-connected, rich and has not forgiven Anne for rejecting him.**

In this extract, which takes place in the house of Anne's sister, Mary, Anne and Wentworth meet again for the first time in eight years. Also present are Mary's husband, Charles Musgrove and his two sisters, Henrietta and Louisa. Wentworth and Charles are going shooting.

Examine how Austen presents Anne's loss and her guilt about her past actions.

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

(25 marks)

Her eye half met Captain Wentworth's, a bow, a curtsy passed; she heard his voice; he talked to Mary, said all that was right, said something to the Miss Musgroves, enough to mark an easy footing; the room seemed full, full of persons and voices, but a few minutes ended it. Charles shewed himself at the window, all was ready, their visitor had bowed and was gone; the Miss Musgroves were gone too, suddenly resolving to walk to the end of the village with the sportsmen: the room was cleared, and Anne might finish her breakfast as she could.

"It is over! It is over!" she repeated to herself again and again, in nervous gratitude. "The worst is over!"

Mary talked, but she could not attend. She had seen him. They had met. They had been once more in the same room!

Soon, however, she began to reason with herself, and try to be feeling less. Eight years, almost eight years has passed, since all had been given up. How absurd to be resuming the agitation which such an interval had banished into distance and indistinctness! What might not eight years do? Events of every description, changes, alienations, removals – all, all must be comprised in it; and oblivion of the past – how natural, how certain too! It included a third part of her own life.

Alas! With all her reasoning, she found, that to retentive feelings eight years may be little more than nothing.

Now, how were his sentiments to be read? Was this like wishing to avoid her? And the next moment she was hating herself for the folly which asked the question.

On one other question which perhaps her utmost wisdom might not have prevented, she was soon spared all suspense; for after the Miss Musgroves had returned and finished their visit at the cottage she had this spontaneous information from Mary:

“Captain Wentworth is not very gallant by you, Anne, though he was so attentive to me. Henrietta asked him what he thought of you, when they went away, and he said, you were so altered he should not have known you again.”

“Altered beyond his knowledge!” Anne fully submitted, in silent, deep mortification.

Doubtless it was so; and she could take no revenge, for he was not altered, or not for the worse. She had already acknowledged it to herself, and she could not think differently, let him think of her as he would. No; the years which had destroyed her youth and bloom had only given him a more glowing, manly, open look, in no respect lessening his personal advantages. She had seen the same Frederick Wentworth.

“So altered that he should not have known her again!” These were words which could not but dwell with her...

He had thought her wretchedly altered, and in the first moment of appeal, had spoken as he felt. He had not forgiven Anne Elliot. She had used him ill, deserted and disappointed him; and worse, she had shewn a feebleness of character in doing so, which his own decided, confident temper could not endure. She had given him up to oblige others. It had been the effect of over-persuasion. It had been weakness and timidity.

Extract Three

***Wuthering Heights* by Emily Bronte (1818-1848) was published in 1847. The novel is set in Yorkshire in the late 18th and early 19th Century. The novel tells the story of Heathcliff and Catherine who share an obsessive and destructive love. However, Catherine ends up marrying a rich and well-connected man, Edgar Linton.**

In this extract, which takes place in Catherine and Edgar's house and is narrated by the servant, Nelly, Heathcliff secretly visits Catherine with the help of Nelly, after hearing she is ill, however she is pregnant.

Examine how Bronte presents Heathcliff's obsession with Catherine and the destructive nature of their relationship.

**Make close reference to the writer's methods in your response.
(25 marks)**

With straining eagerness Catherine gazed towards the entrance of her chamber. He did not hit the right room directly; she motioned me to admit him; but he found it out, ere I could reach the door, and in a stride or two was at her side, and had her grasped in his arms. He neither spoke, nor loosed his hold, for some five minutes, during which period he bestowed more kisses than ever he gave in his life before, I dare say; but then my mistress had kissed him first, and I plainly saw that he could hardly bear, for downright agony, to look into her face!

"Oh, Cathy! Oh, my life! How can I bear it?" was the first sentence he uttered, in a tone that did not seek to disguise his despair.

And now he stared at her so earnestly that I thought the very intensity of his gaze would bring tears into his eyes; but they burned with anguish, they did not melt.

"You and Edgar have broken my heart, Heathcliff! And you both come to bewail the deed to me, as if you were the people to be pitied! I shall not pity you, not I. You have killed me – and thriven on it, I think. How strong you are! How many years do you mean to live after I am gone?"

Heathcliff had knelt on one knee to embrace her; he attempted to rise, but she seized his hair, and kept him down.

"I wish I could hold you," she continued bitterly, "till we were both dead! I shouldn't care what you suffered. I care nothing for your sufferings. Why shouldn't you suffer! I do! Will you forget me – will you be happy when I am in the earth?"

"Don't torture me till I'm as mad as yourself," cried he, wrenching his head free, and grinding his teeth...Are you possessed with a devil," he pursued, savagely, "to talk in that manner to me, when you are dying? Do you reflect that all those words will be branded in my memory, and eating deeper eternally, after you have left me? You know you lie to say I have killed you; and, Catherine, you know that I could as soon forget you, as my existence!

Is it not sufficient for your infernal selfishness, that while you are at peace I shall writhe in the torments of hell?"

"I'm not wishing you greater torment than I have, Heathcliff! I only wish us never to be parted – and should a word of mine distress you hereafter, think I feel the same distress underground, and for my own sake, forgive me! Come here and kneel down again! You never harmed me in your life. Nay, if you nurse anger, that will be worse to remember than my harsh words! Won't you come here again? Do!"

She bent round to look at him; he would not permit it; turning abruptly, he walked to the fireplace, where he stood, silent, with his back towards us...

His eyes wide, and wet at last, flashed fiercely on her; his breast heaved convulsively. An instant they held asunder; and then how they met I hardly saw, but Catherine made a spring, and he caught her, and they were locked in an embrace from which I thought my mistress would never be released alive...He flung himself into the nearest seat, and on my approaching hurriedly to ascertain if she had fainted, he gnashed at me, and foamed like a mad dog, and gathered her to him with greedy jealousy. I did not feel as if I were in the company of a creature of my own species...

She put up her hand to clasp his neck, and bring her cheek to his, as he held her; while he, in return, covering her with frantic caresses, said wildly –

"You teach me now how cruel you've been – cruel and false. *Why* did you despise me? *Why* did you betray your own heart, Cathy? I have not one word of comfort – you deserve this. You have killed yourself. Yes, you may kiss me, and cry; and wring out my kisses and tears. They'll blight you – they'll damn you. You loved me – then what *right* had you to leave me? What right – answer me – for the poor fancy you felt for Linton? Because misery, and degradation, and death, and nothing that God or Satan could inflict would have parted us, *you*, of your own will, did it. I have not broken your heart – *you* have broken it – and in breaking it, you have broken mine. So much the worse for me, that I am strong. Do I want to live? What kind of living will it be when you – oh God! Would *you* like to live with your soul in the grave?"

Extract Four

***Jane Eyre* by Charlotte Bronte (1816-1855) was published in 1847. The novel is set in the north of England in the late 18th and early 19th Century. It tells the story of Jane who goes to work as a governess at Thornfield Hall for the mysterious Mr Rochester.**

In this extract, which takes place in the grounds of Thornfield Hall, Rochester has informed Jane that he is sending her away to be a governess in Ireland. She does not want to leave but believes that she must because she thinks that Rochester is engaged to Miss Ingram.

Examine how Bronte presents Jane and Rochester's relationship and her anger at being sent away in this extract.

**Make close reference to the writer's methods in your response.
(25 marks)**

"It is a long way to Ireland, Jane, and I am sorry to send my little friend on such weary travels: but if I can't do better, how is it to be helped? Are you something akin to me, do you think, Jane?"

I could risk no sort of answer by this time: my heart was full.

"Because," he said, "I sometimes have a queer feeling with regard to you – especially when you are near me, as now: it is as if I had a string somewhere under my left ribs, tightly and inextricably knotted to a similar string situated in the corresponding quarter of your little frame. And if that boisterous channel, and two hundred miles or so of land come broad between us, I am afraid that cord of communion will be snapt; and then I've a nervous notion I should take to bleeding inwardly. As for you, - you'd forget me."

"That I *never* should, sir: you know –" impossible to proceed...

"Jane, do you hear that nightingale singing in the wood? – Listen!"

In listening, I sobbed convulsively; for I could repress what I endured no longer: I was obliged to yield; and I was shaken from head to foot with acute distress. When I did speak, it was only to express an impetuous wish that I had never been born, or never come to Thornfield.

"I grieve to leave Thornfield: I love Thornfield: - I love it, because I have lived in it a full and delightful life, - momentarily at least. I have not been trampled on. I have not been petrified. I have not been buried with inferior minds, and excluded from every glimpse of communion with what it bright, and energetic, and high. I have talked, face to face, with what I reverence; with what I delight in – with an original, a vigorous, an expanded mind. I have known you, Mr Rochester; and it strikes me with terror and anguish to feel I absolutely must be torn from you forever. I see the necessity of departure; and it is like looking on the necessity of death."

"Where do you see the necessity?" he asked, suddenly.

"Where? You, sir, have placed it before me."

"In what shape?"

“In the shape of Miss Ingram; a noble and beautiful woman, - your bride.”

“My bride! What bride? I have no bride!”

“But you will have.”

“Yes; - I will! – I will!” He set his teeth.

“Then I must go: - you have said it yourself.”

“No: you must stay! I swear it – and the oath shall be kept.”

“I tell you I must go!” I retorted, roused to something like passion. “Do you think I can stay to become nothing to you? Do you think I am an automaton? – a machine without feelings? And can bear to have my morsel of bread snatched from my lips, and my drop of living water dashed from my cup? Do you think, because I am poor, obscure, plain, and little, I am soulless and heartless? – You think wrong! – I have as much soul as you, - and full as much heart! And if God had gifted me with some beauty, and much wealth, I should have made it as hard for you to leave me, as it is now for me to leave you.”

“Jane, be still; don’t struggle so, like a wild, frantic bird that is rending its own plumage in its desperation.”

“I am no bird; and no net ensnares me; I am a free human being with an independent will; which I now exert to leave you.”

“And your will shall decide your destiny,” he said: “I offer you my hand, my heart, and a share of all my possessions...I ask you to pass through life at my side – to be my second self, and best earthly companion.”

Extract Five

***Birdsong* by Sebastian Faulks (born 1953) was published in 1993. The novel is set in France and England and spans the years 1910 to 1979. It tells the story of Englishman Stephen Wraysford before, during and after World War I. Before the war Stephen goes to France to work for Rene Azaire and live with Azaire and his family.**

In this extract, which takes place at the Azaire house, Rene discovers that his wife, Isabelle, has been helping the strikers at his factory and that she has also been having an affair with Stephen.

Examine the way in which Faulks presents the marriage of Isabelle and Rene and Rene's reaction.

**Make close reference to the writer's methods in your response.
(25 marks)**

"I heard the strangest story," said Azaire abruptly.

"What was that?" said Isabelle.

"They told me that at the height of the strike someone was visiting little Lucien and was taking his parcels of food to give to the dyers' families."

"Yes, I heard that," said Stephen. "A number of sympathetic people in the town helped the strikers. There was one man in particular who wanted to be anonymous. So I was told at the factory."

"Oh dear me no," said Azaire. "This wasn't a man, this was a woman, who used to go along disguised to wherever Lebrun lives."

"The strikers had help from many sources, I expect."

"But the strangest thing about this woman was that she was married to the owner of the factory." Azaire paused and looked round the table. Isabelle was motionless.

"Now isn't that a strange thing?" said Azaire raising his glass to his lips. "I couldn't believe it when I heard it."

"I don't think it's strange," said Isabelle. "It was me."

Stephen looked at her uncomprehendingly. Azaire replaced his wine glass heavily on the table.

"But my dear – "

"I took them food because they were hungry. I had no idea of whether they should be on strike or not, but I had seen their children asking for bread, running along behind the carts bringing in vegetables to the market. I had seen them going through the dustbins in Saint-Leu and I felt sorry for them."

Isabelle's voice was surprisingly calm. She said, "I would do the same again, whether the people made cloth or shoes or anything else."

Azaire was white; his lips were a shade of pale purple as though even this soft membrane had repelled his blood.

Azaire stood up. "I discounted these rumours. I did not believe them, even though it was your name that was attached to them and I suppose I should have learned about you by now. However wilful and selfish you are I could not believe that you would ever, ever behave towards me in such a way. And you, Monsieur, you had better leave the room.

"No. Let him stay."

"Why? He's – "

"Let him stay."

A look of panic passed over Azaire's face. He tried to speak, but failed. He drank again from his glass. His imagination seemed to be supplying more appalling possibilities than his previously controlled and teasing anger could admit.

He struggled towards the worst question. He began it, "You...?" He looked towards Stephen, then down at the table. "I did not believe my wife could let me down in such a way. The further reason I would not believe the rumours was that there was another piece of tittle-tattle that went with them, which said that the lady in question was also..." He waved his hand, as though swatting the thought away. "...enjoying some liaison with Lebrun."

"Not with Lucien. With Stephen."

Azaire looked up from his seat. "With...him?"

"Yes." Stephen looked evenly back at him. "With me. I pursued your wife. I seduced her. You must hate me not her."

Isabelle was no longer able to be cold towards Azaire. The brief sentences with which she had informed him of her unfaithfulness seemed to have drained her resolve and she began to weep and to apologise to him for what she had done. Stephen listened carefully to what she said. He did not begrudge Azaire his wife's apologies but he did not want her to retreat too far.

Azaire was incapable of saying more than, "With him? Here?"

Isabelle said, "I'm sorry...so sorry, Rene. I meant you no harm. It is a passion for Stephen. It was not done to hurt you."

"This...boy, this English boy? In my house? Where? In your bed?"

"It doesn't matter, Rene. It doesn't matter where."

"It does to me. I want to know. Did you...in which room?"

"For God's sake," said Stephen.

"And your father, Monsieur Fourmentier, what can he do...? What will they say? My God, my God."

Isabelle looked at Stephen and there was fear in her eyes. Stephen could see that she had not calculated what effect her sudden honesty would have on her husband. The fear was no doubt partly for Azaire's well-being but also seemed to be for herself: there was a chance that in the crisis she might lose her resolution and follow some older code of conduct which would compel her to put herself once more at Azaire's mercy.

He was muttering to himself: "Bitch...Your father told me and I never listened. In my own house."

Stephen moved swiftly round the table and took him by the shoulders. "What can you expect from a woman you have treated as you have treated Isabelle? Did you expect her to humiliate herself for your pleasure, to sit meekly at your table in the knowledge that you

would beat her later...This is a house where everything can be heard. How can you sit there and call her names after what you've done to her?"

Extract Six

***The Time Traveller's Wife* by Audrey Niffenegger (born 1963) was published in 2003. The novel is set in the USA between the 1970s and 2053. It tells the story of Henry DeTamble who suffers from a genetic condition that causes him to time travel unpredictably. It is also the story of his marriage to artist Claire Abshire and how his condition affects their relationship.**

In this extract, which takes place just after their wedding, Claire and Henry both act as narrators as they express their thoughts and feelings about marriage.

Examine how Niffenegger presents marriage in this extract.

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

(25 marks)

March, 1994 (Clare is 22, Henry is 30)

Claire: And so we are married.

At first we live in a two-bedroom apartment in Ravenswood. It's sunny, with butter-coloured hardwood floors and a kitchen full of antique cabinets and antiquated appliances. We buy things, spend Sunday afternoons in Crate & Barrel exchanging wedding presents, order a sofa that can't fit through the doors of the apartment and has to be sent back. The apartment is a laboratory in which we conduct experiments, perform research on each other. We discover that Henry hates it when I absentmindedly click my spoon against my teeth while reading the paper at breakfast. We agree that it is okay for me to listen to Joni Mitchell and it is okay for Henry to listen to The Shags as long as the other person isn't around. We figure out that Henry should do all the cooking and I should be in charge of laundry and neither of us is willing to vacuum so we hire a cleaning service.

We fall into a routine. Henry works Tuesdays through Saturdays at the Newberry. He gets up at 7:30 and starts the coffee, then throws on his running clothes and goes for a run. When he gets back he showers and dresses, and I stagger out of bed and chat with him while he fixes breakfast. After we eat, he brushes his teeth and speeds out the door to catch the El, and I go back to bed and doze for an hour or so.

When I get up again the apartment is quiet. I take a bath and comb my hair and put on my work clothes. I pour myself another cup of coffee, and I walk into the back bedroom which is my studio, and I close the door.

I am having a hard time, in my tiny back bedroom studio, in the beginning of my married life. The space that I can call mine, that isn't full of Henry, is so small that my ideas have become small. I am like a caterpillar in a cocoon of paper; all around me are sketches for sculptures, small drawings that seem like moths fluttering against the windows, beating their wings to escape from this tiny space. Every day the ideas come more reluctantly, as though they know I will starve them and stunt their growth.

Henry: When you live with a woman you learn something every day. So far I have learned that long hair will clog up the shower drain before you can say "Liquid-Plumr"; that it is not advisable to clip something out of the newspaper before your wife has read it, even if the newspaper in question is a week old; that I am the only person in our two-person household who can eat that same thing for dinner three nights in a row without pouting; and that headphones were invented to preserve spouses from each other's musical excesses. "How can Clare listen to Cheap Trick? Why does she like The Eagles? I'll never know, because she gets all defensive when I ask her. How can it be that the woman I love doesn't want to listen to *Musique du Garrot et de la Farraille*?) The hardest lesson is Clare's solitude. Sometimes I come home and Clare seems kind of irritated; I've interrupted some train of thought, broken into the dreamy silence of her day. Sometimes I see an expression on Clare's face that is like a closed door. She has gone inside the room of her mind and is sitting there knitting or something. I've discovered that Clare likes to be alone.

Extract Seven

***I Capture the Castle* by Dodie Smith (1896-1990) was published in 1949. The novel is set in England in the 1930s. The novel tells the story of 17 year old Cassandra Mortmain and her family, who live in a crumbling castle. Her father is a struggling writer and the family are forced to sell furniture to buy food. A wealthy American family, including two unmarried brothers, Neil and Simon, inherit nearby Scoatney Hall and become their new landlords. Cassandra's older sister Rose eventually becomes engaged to Simon even though she does not love him.**

In this extract, which takes place at Scoatney Hall, Simon and Cassandra have spent the evening together while Rose is in London buying her wedding clothes.

Examine how Dodie Smith presents Cassandra's naivety in this extract and consider the view that Simon has taken advantage of her.

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

(25 marks)

He went to turn the gramophone up a little, then came back for me. I had never danced with him before and was rather nervous – I found it quite difficult that time I danced with Neil. To my surprise, it was far easier with Simon; he holds one more loosely, it seems more casual, I had a feeling of ease and lightness. After the first few seconds, I stopped worrying about the following steps – my feet took care of it on their own. The odd thing is that Neil helps one to follow far more, almost forces one too. Never did I feel any pressure from Simon's hold.

When the gramophone stopped, Simon said; "Thank you, Cassandra," still holding me in his arms, and smiling down at me.

I smiled back and said: "Thank you, too – it was lovely."

And then he bent his head and kissed me.

I have tried and tried to remember what I felt. Surely I must have felt surprised, but no sense of it comes back to me. All I can recall is happiness, happiness in my mind and in my heart and flowing through my whole body, happiness like the warm cloak of sunlight that fell round me on the tower. It was a darkness, too – and the darkness comes again when I try to recapture the moment...and then I find myself coldly separate – not only from Simon, but from myself as I was then. The figures I see in the candlelit pavilion are strangers to me. The next thing I remember quite normally is the sound of Simon laughing. It was the kindest, most gentle laugh but it startled me.

"You astonishing child," he said.

I asked what he meant.

"Only that you kiss very nicely." Then he added teasingly: "You must have had quite a lot of practice."

"I never kissed any man in my life before – " Instantly I wished I hadn't said it – for I saw that once he knew I wasn't used to kissing, yet had returned his kiss, he might guess how much it had meant to me. I pulled away from him and ran to the door, only knowing that I wanted to hide my feelings.

"Cassandra – stop!" He caught me by the arm just as I got the door open. "Oh, my dear, I'm so sorry! I ought to have known that you'd mind."

He hadn't guessed. I could see he just thought I was angry. I managed to pull myself together.

"What nonsense, Simon! Of course I didn't mind."

"You certainly didn't seem to – " He looked worried and puzzled. "But why did you run away from me like that? Good heavens, surely you weren't frightened of me?"

"Of course I wasn't!"

"Then, why - ?"

"Simon, I wasn't frightened and I didn't mind – how could I mind being kissed by anyone I'm as fond of as I am of you? But afterwards - well, just for a second, I was angry that you'd taken it for granted that you could kiss me."

He looked quite stricken. "But I didn't – not in the way you mean. Can you understand that it was a sudden impulse – because you've been so sweet all evening and because I'd enjoyed the dance, and because I like you very much?"

"And because you were missing Rose, perhaps," I put in helpfully.

He flushed and said: "I'm damned if I'll pass that – that'd be an insult to both of you. No, it was a kiss in your own right, my child."

"Anyway, we're making too much of it," I told him. "Let's forget it – and please forgive me for being so silly. Now may I hear the Bach record before I go home?"

We went on talking about music while we collected Heloise from the kitchen, and all during the drive home.

"Am I really forgiven?"

I told him of course he was. Then he gave my hand a brisk little squeeze – and the next second the door had closed behind him.

I stood absolutely still for a minute or so – then dashed upstairs, up through the bathroom tower and out on to the walls. The mist had cleared away, so I could watch the lights of the car travel slowly along the lane and turn on to the Godsend Road. Even after they vanished on the outskirts of the village I still watched on, and caught one last glimpse of them on the road to Scoatney.

Oh, I told myself that he belonged to Rose, that I could never win him from her even if I were wicked enough to try, which I never would be. It made no difference. Just to be in love seemed the most blissful luxury I had ever known. The thought came to me that perhaps it is the loving that counts, not the being loved in return – that perhaps true loving can never know anything but happiness.

Extract Eight

***Middlemarch* by George Eliot (Mary Ann Evans) (1819-1880) was published in 1872. It is set in the fictitious Midlands town of Middlemarch during 1829-1832. It focuses on the lives of the inhabitants of the town and their relationships. One of the main characters is Dorothea Brooke, who enters an unhappy marriage with the local vicar, Edward Casaubon. He dislikes her intelligence and energy and prevents her from pursuing her ambitions. She meets and later falls in love with Casaubon's cousin, Will Ladislaw.**

In this extract, which takes place in Dorothea's house, Will and Dorothea have the chance to converse. Previously, Will has been reluctant to visit because of his love for Dorothea and Casaubon's dislike of him.

Examine how Eliot presents Will's love for Dorothea and the observations readers can make about her marriage.

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

(25 marks)

In another minute he was in the library, and Dorothea was meeting him with her sweet unconstrained smile.

"Mr Casaubon has gone to the Archdeacon's," she said, at once. "Did you want to say anything particular to him?"

"No; I came to sketch, but the rain drove me in."

"I am indebted to the rain, then. I am so glad to see you." Dorothea uttered these common words with the simple sincerity of an unhappy child, visited at school.

"I really came for the chance of seeing you alone," said Will, mysteriously forced to be just as simple as she was. "I wanted to talk about things, as we did in Rome."

"Yes," said Dorothea, in her clear full tone of assent. "Sit down." Will sat down opposite her at two yards' distance. Each looked at the other as if they had been two flowers which had opened then and there. Dorothea for the moment forgot her husband's mysterious irritation against Will: it seemed fresh water at her thirsty lips to speak without fear to the one person whom she had found receptive; for in looking backward through sadness she exaggerated a past solace.

"I have often thought that I should like to talk to you again," she said immediately. "It seems strange to me how many things I said to you."

"I remember them all," said Will, with the unspeakable content in his soul of feeling that he was in the presence of a creature worthy to be perfectly loved. I think his own feelings at that moment were perfect, for we mortals have our divine moments, when love is satisfied in the completeness of the beloved object.

"I have tried to learn a great deal since we were in Rome," said Dorothea. "I can read Latin a little, and I am beginning to understand just a little Greek. I can help Mr Casaubon better

now. I can find out references for him and save his eyes in many ways. But it is very difficult to be learned; it seems as if people were worn out on the way to great thoughts, and can never enjoy them because they are too tired.”

Dorothea was led on to this bit of autobiography without any sense of making a revelation. But she had never before said anything to Will which threw so strong a light on her marriage.

“Are you not too much shut up? You already look paler. It would be better for Mr Casaubon to have a secretary.”

“Mr Casaubon cannot bear to hear of a secretary.”

“In old days I used to hear Mr Casaubon speak as if he looked forward to having a secretary. Indeed he held out the prospect of that office to me. But I turned out to be – not good enough for it.”

Dorothea was trying to extract out of this an excuse for her husband’s evident revulsion, as she said, with a playful smile, “You were not a steady worker enough.”

“No,” said Will, shaking his head backward somewhat after the manner of a spirited horse. And then, the old irritable demon prompting him to give another good pinch to the moth-wings of poor Mr Casaubon’s glory, he went on, “And I have seen since that Mr Casaubon does not like any one to overlook his work and know thoroughly what he is doing. He dislikes me because I disagree with him.”

“You must consider how sensitive he has become from the wearing effect of study. Perhaps,” she continued, getting into a pleading tone, “my uncle has not told you how serious Mr Casaubon’s illness was. It would be very petty of us who are well and can bear things, to think much of small offences from those who carry a weight of trial.”

“You teach me better,” said Will. “I will never grumble on that subject again.” There was a gentleness in his tone which came from the unutterable contentment of perceiving – what Dorothea was hardly conscious of – that she was travelling into the remoteness of pure pity and loyalty towards her husband. “Mr Brooke proposes that I should stay in this neighbourhood. He has bought one of the Middlemarch newspapers, and he wishes me to conduct that, and also to help him in other ways.”

“I should like you to stay very much,” said Dorothea, at once. There was not the shadow of a reason in her mind at the moment why she should not say so. But the next moment, Dorothea, according to a habit which was getting continually stronger, began to reflect that her husband felt differently from herself, and she coloured deeply under the double embarrassment of having expressed what might be in opposition to her husband’s feeling, and of having to suggest this opposition to Will. “But my opinion is of little consequence on such a subject.”

“The rain is quite over now. I told Mr Brooke not to call for me: I would rather walk the five miles. I shall strike across Halsell Common, and see the gleams on the wet grass. I like that.” He approached her to shake hands quite hurriedly, longing but not daring to say, “Don’t mention the subject to Mr Casaubon.” No, he dared not, could not say it. To ask her to be less simple and direct would be like breathing on the crystal that you want to see the light through. And there was always the other great dread – of himself becoming dimmed and for ever ray-shorn in her eyes.

Extract Nine

***Far from the Madding Crowd* by Thomas Hardy (1840-1928) was published in 1874. It is set in Wessex, England in the 19th Century. It tells the story of a wealthy heiress, Bathsheba Everdene who garners attention from three different suitors, the reliable Gabriel Oak, the rich farmer William Boldwood and the dashing soldier Francis Troy.**

In this extract, which is set in the woods around Weatherby, Bathsheba meets Troy and he impresses her with a display of swordsmanship.

Examine how Hardy presents Troy's power over Bathsheba and her infatuation with him.

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

(25 marks)

She waited one minute – two minutes – thought of Troy's disappointment at her non-fulfilment of a promised engagement, till she again ran along the field, clambered over the bank, and followed the original direction. She was not literally trembling and panting at this her temerity in such an errant undertaking; her breath came and went quickly, and her eyes shone with an infrequent light. Yet go she must. She reached the verge of a pit in the middle of the ferns. Troy stood at the bottom, looking up towards her.

"I heard you rustling through the fern before I saw you," he said, coming up and giving her his hand to help her down the slope.

"Now," said Troy, producing the sword, which, as he raised it into the sunlight, gleamed a sort of greeting, like a living thing; "first, we have four right and four left cuts; four right and four left thrusts. Have 'em again?" he said. "One, two -"

"How murderous and bloodthirsty!"

"They are rather deadly. Now I'll be more interesting, and let you see some loose play – giving all the cuts and points, infantry and cavalry, quicker than lightning, and as promiscuously. Mind you don't flinch, whatever you do."

"I'll be sure not to!" she said invincibly.

He pointed to about a yard in front of him. "Not just to learn whether you have pluck enough to let me do what I wish, I'll give you a preliminary test."

He flourished the sword by way of introduction...and the next thing of which she was conscious was that the point and blade of the sword were darting with a gleam towards her left side, just above her hip; then of their reappearance on her right side, emerging as it were from between her ribs, having apparently passed through her body. All was as quick as electricity.

"Oh!" she cried out in affright, pressing her hand to her side. "Have you run me through? – no, you have not! Whatever have you done?"

"I have not touched you," said Troy quietly.

"Is the sword very sharp?"

“O no – only stand as still as a statue. Now!”

In an instant the atmosphere was transformed to Bathsheba’s eyes. Beams of light caught from the low sun’s rays, above, around, in front of her, well-nigh shut out earth and heaven – all emitted in the marvellous evolution of Troy’s reflecting blade, which seemed everywhere at once. In short, she was enclosed in a firmament of light, and of sharp hisses, resembling a sky-full of meteors close at hand.

“That outer loose lock of hair wants tidying,” he said, before she had moved or spoken.

“Wait: I’ll do it for you,”

An arc of silver shone on her right side: the sword had descended. The lock dropped to the ground.

“Bravely borne!” said Troy. “You didn’t flinch a shade’s thickness. Wonderful in a woman...I am only going to kill that caterpillar settling on you. Now: still!”

It appeared that a caterpillar had come from the fern and chosen the front of her bodice as his resting place. She saw the point glisten towards her bosom, and seemingly enter it...

“There it is, look,” said the sergeant...the caterpillar was spitted upon its point.

“Why, it is magic!” said Bathsheba, amazed.

She saw him stoop to the grass, pick up the winding lock which he had severed...twist it round his fingers, unfasten a button in the breast of his coat, and carefully put it inside. She felt powerless to withstand or deny him. He was altogether too much for her...She felt like one who had sinned a great sin.

Extract Ten

***One Day* by David Nicholls (born 1966) was published in 2009. It is set in the UK and tells the story of the same day from the years 1988 to 2007.**

It focuses on the lives of Emma and Dexter who meet at University and share a close friendship. Dexter marries and has a child but they later divorce. Later in the novel, Emma and Dexter end up marrying but soon after Emma has a bike accident and dies.

In this extract, which is set in Dexter's father's house on the first anniversary of Emma's death, Dexter is struggling to cope and is drinking heavily. His father has picked him up after he is beaten up in a bar.

Examine how Nicholls presents Dexter's grief in this extract and how his father supports him.

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

(25 marks)

The next thing that he knows for sure is that he is in the back of car, curled uncomfortably on the back seat beneath a tartan blanket. He pulls it tight around him – despite the warm day he can't seem to stop shivering – and realises that it's the old picnic blanket which, along with the smell of the car's scuffed burgundy upholstery, reminds him of family days out. He sees the back of his father's head, fine silver-grey hair neatly trimmed apart from the tufts in his ears.

"Where are we going?"

"I'm taking you home. Go back to sleep."

For a moment he considers arguing: Take me back to London, I'm fine, I'm not a child. But the leather is warm against his face, he doesn't have the energy to move, let alone argue. He is woken by the sound of the wheels on the gravel of the large, sturdy family home. "In you come then," says his father. "Soup for tea!" and he walks towards the house, tossing the car keys jauntily into the air as he goes. Clearly he has decided to pretend that nothing out of the ordinary has happened, and Dexter is grateful for this. Hunched and unsteady, he clambers from the car, shrugs off the picnic blanket and follows him inside.

In the small downstairs bathroom he inspects his face in the mirror. His bottom lip is cut and swollen, and there's a large, yellow-brown bruise down one side of his face. He tries to roll his shoulders, but his back aches, the muscles stretched and torn. He winces, then examines his tongue, ulcerous, bitten at the sides and coated with a grey mould. He runs the tip of it over his teeth. They never feel clean these days, and he can smell his own breath reflecting back off the mirror. It has a faecal quality, as if something is decaying inside him. There are broken veins on his nose and cheek. He is drinking with a renewed sense of purpose, nightly and frequently during the day, and has gained a great deal of weight; his face is podgy and slack, his eyes permanently red and rheumy.

He rests his head against the mirror and exhales. In the years he was with Emma he sometimes wondered idly what life would be like if she weren't around; not in a morbid way, just pragmatically, speculatively, because don't all lovers do this? Wonder what he would be without her? Now the answer is in the mirror. Loss has not endowed him with any kind of tragic grandeur, it has just made him stupid and banal. Without her he is without merit or virtue or purpose, a shabby, lonely, middle-aged drunk, poisoned with regret and shame. An unwanted memory rises up of that morning, of his own father and his ex-wife undressing him and helping him into the bath. In two weeks' time he will be forty-one, and his father is helping him into the bath.

"Feeling better then?" His father stands behind him.

"A little."

"What's that?" He nods towards Dexter's pint glass. "Gin, is it?"

"Just water."

"Glad to hear it. I thought we'd have soup tonight, seeing as how it's a special occasion. Could you manage a tin of soup?"

"I think so."

He holds two tins in the air. "Mulligatawny or Cream of Chicken?"

So the two men shuffle around the large musty kitchen, a pair of widowers making more mess than is really necessary in warming two cans of soup.

"So is this to become an annual festival, do you think?"

"I don't know yet." Some time passes, and his father turns back to the muted TV. "I'm sorry," says Dexter.

"What for?"

"Well, you had to put me in the bath, so..."

His father smiles and glances back at him. "I really don't want to have a heart-to-heart. Do you?"

"I'd rather not."

"Well let's not then. Let's just say that I think the best thing you could do is try and live your life as if Emma were still here. Don't you think that would be best?"

"I don't know if I can."

"Well you've have to try." On the TV, his father finds what he has been looking for, and sinks further into the chair. "Ah, *The Bill*."

They sit and watch the TV in the light of the summer evening, in the room full of family photographs and to his embarrassment Dexter finds that he is crying once again, very quietly. Discreetly, he puts his hand to his eyes, but his father can hear the catching of his breath and glances over.

"Everything alright there?"

"Sorry," says Dexter.

"Not my cooking, is it?"

Dexter laughs and sniffs. "Still a bit drunk, I think."

"It's alright," says his father, turning back to the TV. "*Silent Witness* is on at nine."

