GCSE

C700U10-1A

A22-C700U10-1A

MONDAY, 31 OCTOBER 2022 – MORNING

ENGLISH LANGUAGE – Component 1

20th Century Literature Reading and Creative Prose Writing

Resource Material for use with Section A

© WJEC CBAC Ltd.

SECTION A: 40 marks

Read carefully the passage below.

The narrator of the story is a married woman. Her husband is called Ewan and she has two children called Alex and Cassandra.

My husband Ewan once shouted: 'Don't you realise I had a deprived childhood?'

It sounded a wonderful childhood to me. His mother was a painter called Lily Frears and she was a great success in her day. She had been a beautiful girl and she had been through several relationships and two marriages, stubbornly keeping her original name and her independence. Lots of people loved her but, according to Ewan, the only things she loved were her cats.

I said, 'You didn't appreciate her. She was such a free spirit.'

'I didn't want a free spirit,' he said. 'I wanted a mother.'

When I first met Lily she was still lovely. Even if she had not worn flamboyant and colourful clothes, people would have gazed with admiration in the street. She could always turn heads. She still taught, part-time, at the Central School of Art, where she was seen as a living legend, the last of an era. When I was first married to Ewan, I used to visit her in her cluttered flat and sit for hours, eating sandwiches and listening to her as the day darkened outside.

It all changed when our children were born. Alex arrived and then Cassandra. I became trapped in our house and could not get to London to see Lily. When I did, it was not the same. The children sucked the paintbrushes and tripped over cat litter trays. She was always Lily, never Granny.

My parents' house was always more tidy and comfortable than Lily's flat and the children could toddle across the safe green lawns. They loved my mother's fridge, which was always crammed. I thought of Lily's fridge, empty except for a tin of cat food and a bottle of gin. At my parents' house there was always a proper Sunday lunch with gravy. Lily had never cooked a proper meal in her life.

When Alex was three, he tried to sip the sherry and when reprimanded he said, 'Lily would let me.' My mother looked at him. 'Well, Granny doesn't.'

One hot day in June, on impulse, I took the children to see Lily.

'We shall go swimming,' she said, so we took a taxi to Hampstead Heath and walked along a grassy path. Finally, we arrived at a gate.

'I've been coming here for years. It's ladies only – the Ladies' Lake.'

Children weren't allowed so I went into the lake first and swam slowly for about half an hour. I dried myself, got dressed and walked back towards the gate. I remember thinking that the children were quiet.

Lily was sitting still and it took me a moment to realise she had an open sketchpad and was drawing Cassandra.

'Such exquisite little objects,' Lily said. 'I've always preferred them asleep.'

I smiled then I looked round. 'Where's Alex?'

Silence. Lily was drawing the mouth.

'He was here a minute ago,' she said.

'Where is he?' There was a sharpness in my voice.

'He said he was looking for bottle tops.'

I said, 'Was it just a minute?'

I looked around. On one side was a hedge and on the other stretched the meadow, full of tall grass.

'Alex?' I called.

I waited. Silence.

'Alex! Alex!'

I swung round. 'Lily, you go that way,' I barked at her as I pointed in one direction. Then

I frantically tried to unbuckle Cassandra. She woke with a yell. My hands wouldn't work. I fumbled with the pushchair buckle. Finally, I wrenched it open and grabbed her. I bundled her under one arm and plunged into the grass.

The meadow was so huge and it was bumpy too so it was difficult to run. I was stumbling over hidden potholes with Cassandra bouncing and shrieking.

'Alex! Alex!'

The sun had gone behind a cloud and the meadow looked sinister. How could I have left an old, self-absorbed lady in charge of my most precious possession? Tears blurred my eyes as I struggled through the wicked weeds which were trying to trip me up.

People stopped to stare. 'Have you seen a little boy?' I screeched. They shook their heads and I hated them for being in the wrong place, but I hated myself more.

Far away I could see Lily. I thought, 'You stupid old woman.'

If this has ever happened to you, then you will know those pictures that crowd your head. You'll know that time literally stops. How long it took I'll never remember. But when I saw Alex's small figure, he was standing beside the gate, right back at the place we'd left. He was waiting for us, my lost boy, and his face was red.

Lost boys. I pictured Ewan, a little boy in his school blazer, waiting at the school gates for a mother who never arrived.

Ewan once said, 'I never had a childhood. Know why? Because she was the child.'

I never told Ewan what had happened, although Alex in his usual matter-of-fact way complained that he'd only found two bottle tops. However, for the first time in his life, he slept for fourteen hours solid.

Eight years have passed since that day. Lily is dead now. But I remember it because this morning Alex, now twelve years old, asked about the drawing of his sister we have in the lounge, above my desk. It is a beautiful drawing of that sleeping face from a past era which I'll never forget.

Alex asked me, and I told him about that day and what happened. He couldn't remember anything about it. And for the first time I tried to tell him what Lily was like. I said that in fact she was not such a famous painter, just an artistic woman who some people loved. That she wasn't a living legend at the art school, but that they had kept her on out of kindness. That when I first met her I resented my parents and compared them in a way that did justice to neither. That idolising Lily hurt my husband because he knew the truth. That people sometimes giggled at her in the street but that I was sure others saw the striking beauty of her face.

That she was an original, completely herself, and she had time for me when nobody else noticed I needed it. And that there was nobody I would rather see walking through the door.

I said all this, and more, because I wanted Alex to know her. To idolise anyone is the worst thing one can do, because then they are lost to us.

Then I said that because of that drawing of Cassandra I might have lost him. But he pushed me away. He's like his father; he hates soppy stuff.

© WJEC CBAC Ltd.