

Kennicott Sixth Form Centre
A Level Induction Task
English Language and Literature
Summer 2020

Due date: September 2020

Induction Tasks are not optional for students; they form part of the College's formal assessment and completed tasks will assist staff in identifying the students' ability for independent study and meeting home learning deadlines.

In English Language and Literature at A level, you will be expected to both analyse literary texts and write creatively in the style of the text you are studying. Answer **both** questions 1 and 2 below.

Read the first extract, the opening to *Enduring Love* by Ian McEwan, and answer the question that follows. Question one requires you to produce an **analytical essay**.

1. How does Ian McEwan build narrative tension and create a sense of foreboding in the extract from *Enduring Love*? (600-800 words)

Extract one: Enduring Love

One

The beginning is simple to mark. We were in sunlight under a turkey oak, partly protected from a strong, gusty wind. I was kneeling on the grass with a corkscrew in my hand, and Clarissa was passing me the bottle - a 1987 Daumas Gassac. This was the moment, this was the pin prick on the time map: I was stretching out my hand, and as the cool neck and the black foil touched my palm, we heard a man's shout. We turned to look across the field and saw the danger. Next thing, I was running towards it. The transformation was absolute: I don't recall dropping the corkscrew, or getting to my feet, or making a decision, or hearing the caution Clarissa called after me. What idiocy, to be racing into this story and its labyrinths, sprinting away from our happiness among the fresh spring grasses by the oak. There was the shout again, and a child's cry, enfeebled by the wind that roared in the tall trees along the hedgerows. I ran faster. And there, suddenly, from different points around the field, four other men were converging on the scene, running like me.

I see us from two hundred feet up, through the eyes of the buzzard we had watched earlier, soaring, circling and dipping in the tumult of currents: five men running silently; towards the centre of a hundred acre field. I approached from the south east, with the wind at my back. About two hundred yards to my left two men ran side by side. They were farm labourers who had been repairing the fence along the field's southern edge where it skirts the road. The same distance beyond them was the motorist, John Logan, whose car was banked on the grass verge with its door, or doors, wide open. Knowing what I know now, it's odd to evoke the figure of Jed Parry directly ahead of me, emerging from a line of beeches on the side of the field a quarter of a mile away, running into the wind. To the buzzard Parry and I were tiny forms, our white shirts brilliant against the green, rushing towards each other like lovers, innocent of the grief this entanglement would bring. The encounter that would unhinge us was minutes away, its enormity disguised from us not only

by the barrier of time but by the colossus in the centre of the field that drew us in with the power of a terrible ratio that set fabulous magnitude against the puny human distress at its base.

What was Clarissa doing? She said she walked quickly towards the centre of the field. I don't know how she resisted the urge to run. By the time it happened - the event I am about to describe - the fall - she had almost caught us up and was well placed as an observer, unencumbered by participation, by the ropes and the shouting, and by our lack of co-operation. What I describe is shaped by what Clarissa saw too, by what we told each other in the time of obsessive re-examination that followed: the aftermath, an appropriate term for what happened in a field waiting for its early summer mowing. The aftermath, the second crop, the growth promoted by that first cut in May.

I'm holding back, delaying the information. I'm lingering in the prior moment because it was a time when other outcomes were still possible; the convergence of six figures in a flat green space has a comforting geometry from the buzzard's perspective, the knowable, limited plane of the snooker table. The initial conditions, the force and the direction of the force, define all the consequent pathways, all the angles of collision and return, and the glow of the overhead light bathes the field, the baize and all its moving bodies, in reassuring clarity. I think that while we were still converging, before we made contact, we were in a state of mathematical grace. I linger on our dispositions, the relative distances and the compass point - because as far as these occurrences were concerned, this was the last time I understood anything clearly at all.

What were we running towards? I don't think any of us would ever know fully. But superficially the answer was, a balloon. Not the nominal space that encloses a cartoon character's speech or thought, nor, by analogy, the kind that's driven by mere hot air. It was an enormous balloon filled with helium, that elemental gas forged from the hydrogen in the nuclear furnace of the stars, first step along the way in the generation of multiplicity and variety of matter in the universe, including ourselves and our thoughts.

We were running towards a catastrophe, which itself was a kind of furnace in whose heat identities and fates would buckle into new shapes. At the base of the balloon was a basket in which there was a boy, and by the basket, clinging to a rope, was a man in need of help.

Now read the second extract: the opening to the short story *Inbound* by Edith Pearlman and answer question 2. While question two requires you to **respond creatively** to the extract.

2. Your aim is now to write creatively. Choose one of the tasks below and base your answer on the extract from *Inbound* by Edith Pearlman.

Either: Re-write the narrative from the point of view of one of the other characters.

Or: Write what you think happens next from whatever viewpoint you choose; you could even create a new character. (600-800 words)

Extract Two: Inbound

On the subway Sophie recited the list of stations like a poem. Then she read the names from the bottom up. Saying something backward made it easy to remember, sealed it in.

When the family got off at the Harvard Square station she frowned at a platform sign. "Outbound?" she asked her mother.

Joanna was bending over Lily's stroller, adjusting the child's harness, so Ken answered. "Outbound in this case means away from the venter of the city," he said. "There are two sets of tracks, coextensive." He paused. Coextensive? Sophie had learned to read at three; her vocabulary at seven was prodigious; still... "They coextend," he tried. "One set of tracks carries trains outbound and the other carries them...?"

"Inbound," Sophie said. "Then when we go back to the hotel we'll go inbound. But why aren't the inbound tracks next to these ones? Yesterday under the aquarium..."

Ken inhaled deeply; for a moment Sophie regretted getting him started. "This Harvard Square station used to be the terminus," he told her, "the last stop. When the engineers enlarged the system they ran up against the sewers, so they had to separate inbound and outbound vertically." He had invented this explanation, or maybe he'd heard it somewhere. "Inbound is one level below us." That much he was sure of.

The family walked down a shallow ramp to the concourse. Sophie led the way. Her straight blond hair half covered the multicolored hump of her new backpack, a birthday gift from her parents. During their early-married travels Ken and Joanna had worn explorers' rucksacks to out-of-the-way places. After Sophie was born they travelled only to France, always with their little girl. This venture from the northern plains, across half the country, was the first family excursion since Lily's birth two years ago. "An excursion is a loop Joanna had lightly explained to Sophie. "We start from home, we end up at home."

Ken, pushing the heavy stroller and its calm passenger, kept pace with Sophie. Joanna was at his heels, swinging the diaper bag and her scuffed brown pocketbook.

On the concourse Sophie paused. "The stairs are at the left," Ken said. Sophie started toward them, her parents like friendly bears behind her. Other people on the way out pushed through unresisting turnstiles, but because of the large stroller Ken and Joanna and Sophie and Lily had to sue the gate near the token vendor's booth. The stairway to the street was broad enough to climb together. Ken and Joanna lifted the stroller between them. All four, blinking, reached the white light of Harvard Square at the same time. Lily, startled and amused by the hawkers, made her familiar gurgle.

"Mama," she said to Ken.

"Dada, darling," he returned.

"Dada."

"Sophie, Sophie, Sophie," said Sophie, dancing in front of the stroller.

"Mama," Lily said.

She was not yet able to say her sister's name, though sometimes, on the living room floor, when Sophie was helping her pick up a toy, Lily would raise her odd eyes and gaze at the older girl with brief interest.

She had Down's syndrome. At two she was small, fair and unfretful, though Ken and Joanna knew – there was little about Down's that they did not now know – that the condition was no guarantee of placidity. Lily was just beginning to crawl, and her muscle tone was improving; the doctor was pleased. In the padded stroller she could sit more or less erect.

"Lily clarifies life," Sophie had heard her father say to one of his friends. Sophie didn't agree. Clarity you could get by putting on glasses; or you could skim foam off warm butter – her mother had shown her how – leaving a thin yellow liquid that couldn't even hold crackers together. Lily didn't clarify; she softened things and made them sticky. Sophie and each parent had been separate individuals before Lily came. Now all four melted together like gumdrops left on a windowsill.