

GCSE ENGLISH LANGUAGE

Paper 1 Explorations in creative reading and writing

Insert

The source that follows is:

Source A: 21st Century prose-fiction

The Glass House by Eve Chase

An extract from the beginning of a novel written in 2020

Please turn the page over to see the source

Source A

This extract is taken from the beginning of a novel by Eve Chase. Rita has a job as a nanny, looking after the children of Walter and Jeannie Harrington. She is driving Jeannie Harrington and the children away from their London home to another house, Foxcote Manor, in the Forest of Dean.

1 The forest looks like it'll eat them alive, thinks Rita. The light's gone a weird green and
 branches are thrashing against the car's windows. She tightens her grip on the steering
 wheel. The lane narrows further. Wondering if she's missed the turning to the house or if
 4 it's around the next corner, she takes a bend too fast, and slams her foot on the brake.

5 Rita sucks in her breath, her eyes widening behind the Morris Minor's insect-spattered
 windscreen. She's not sure what she was expecting. Something smarter. More
 'Harrington'. Not *this*.

8 Behind a tall, rusting gate, Foxcote Manor erupts from the undergrowth, as if a geological
 10 heave has lifted it from the woodland floor. A wrecked beauty, the old house's windows
 blink drunkenly in the evening sunlight. Colossal trees overhang a sweep of red-tiled roof
 that sags in the middle, like a snapped spine, so the chimneys tilt at odd angles. Ivy
 12 suckers up the timber and brick-gabled façade, dense, bristling, alive with dozens of tiny
 darting birds, a billowing veil of bees. It's as far from the Harringtons' elegant London
 14 townhouse as Rita could possibly imagine.

15 For a moment no one in the car speaks. Unseen, in the trees, a woodpecker drums its
 territorial tattoo. Sweat trickles down the back of Rita's left knee. Only now does she
 17 register her hands are shaking.

18 Although she's done her best to disguise it from Jeannie and the children, she's been
 20 panicking ever since they turned on to the forest road, almost five hours after leaving
 London. It's not just the worry she'll kill her precious passengers. Every so often her
 vision has actually shuddered, disoriented by all the soaring trees, the lack of sky and the
 knowledge of quite how hard a tree trunk is when hit at fifty miles an hour. Now they've
 survived the journey, she covers her mouth with her hand. Everything's still going too fast.
 How on earth has she ended up *here*? A forest. Of all places. She hates forests.

25 It was meant to be a London nannying job.

Fourteen months ago, Rita had never been to London. But she dreamed of it longingly, the Rita she might be there, far away from Torquay, everything that had happened. And the metropolitan family – just like the Darlings in *Peter Pan** – who'd embrace her as their own. They'd live in a tall, warm house that didn't have a coin-gobbling electricity meter, 30 like Nan's bungalow did. She'd get a bedroom of her own, with a desk and a shelf, perhaps a view of the churning, thrilling city. And the mother she worked for would be... well, perfect. Someone delicate and kind and soft. Cultured. With tiny earlobes and fluttery birdlike hands. Like her own mother, whom Rita hazily remembered. Everything she'd lost in the accident. And a bit of her kept searching for.

35 On the morning of the interview, she'd gazed up at the house's sugar-white walls and cascading wisteria, and immediately known this was it. Her new home. Her new family. She could feel a tingling sensation, like the first fizz of pins and needles, as she'd knocked on the smart front door, her heart scudding beneath her best blouse that didn't look best in

40 London. Now, it's her second-best blouse, packed in the boot along with any other clothes she could salvage after the fire that tore through that London house last weekend. Even after the long cycle at the launderette, her clothes still whiff of smoke.

45 Rita glances across at Jeannie in the passenger seat. She's defiantly dressed for London, clutching a black patent handbag, as if for dear life. She looks fragile, upset. Her recent weight loss is painfully obvious in that cream crepe skirt, tightly belted, another hole in, a powder-blue cashmere twinset, and a white silk scarf, wound like a bandage around her stem-like neck. And she's wearing those sunglasses again, the tortoiseshell ones, with lenses big as jam-jar lids, she always puts on after a night of crying.

Jeannie hadn't wanted to come here. Peering up at Foxcote Manor now, Rita can't help but wonder if Jeannie was right.

* the Darlings in *Peter Pan* – a family from a well-known children's story

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