1.4 Literature: Prose Analysis: Test Pack

AQA 7712 · about 10 minutes

Total Marks

Name: _____ Date: ____ / ____ / _____

Answer ALL questions.

Cinder Row

Source written for Revision Library (original, copyright-free). An extract from an original prose narrative, composed in the tradition of British social-realist fiction for the purposes of A-level unseen prose analysis. This text is not extracted from, and does not paraphrase, any published or in-copyright novel.

1 The foundry breathed all night, and Nell had learned to breathe with it.

2 From her window at the end of Cinder Row she could see the tall stack lit orange from beneath,

3 a slow pulse against the dark, as though the town itself had a heart and had chosen,

4 for reasons she had never questioned, to keep it beating on the hill above the houses.

5 Her father worked the four-till-midnight shift, and when the hooter sounded she would count

6 the minutes it took him to walk the cinder path home, matching her breath to his footsteps

7 long before she could have heard them.

8

9 He came in that night smelling of iron and rain, and stood a moment in the doorway

10 shaking the wet from his cap, before he saw her sitting up.

11 'You should be asleep,' he said, not unkindly, and hung the cap on the nail behind the door

12 where it had hung, she supposed, every night of her life.

13 'I was counting,' she said. 'You were four minutes slower tonight.'

14 'Rain,' he said, as if that explained everything, and it did.

15

16 She had been six, or thereabouts, when she first understood that the row of houses

17 took its name not from poetry but from the cinders themselves, the grey ash that drifted

18 down from the stack on windless evenings and settled on the sills, the washing, the tops

19 of the privet hedges, until everything wore the same soft coat of forgetting.

20 Her mother, before she died, had scrubbed the step every morning as if the ash

21 were an insult that could be answered, and Nell still scrubbed it now from habit

© Revision Library | revisionlibrary.co.uk

more than hope, though she no longer believed the step could ever be truly clean.

Her father sat heavily at the table and did not speak for a while.

The clock on the mantel ticked through its small disagreements with itself,

fast on the hour, slow on the half, and neither of them had ever thought to have it mended,

because a broken clock, her father said once, was at least an honest one.

'They're closing the number three furnace,' he said at last, to the table rather than to her.

'Not this year. Maybe not next. But they're closing it.'

Nell said nothing. She thought of the stack, and its steady orange pulse,

and tried to imagine the hill gone dark, the town without its heartbeat,

and found that she could not, any more than she could imagine her own chest still.

'Will we go, then?' she asked. 'When it closes?'

Her father looked at her for a long moment, and something moved behind his eyes

that she would not have a word for until she was much older and had left the row herself,

gone looking, as young people do, for a version of home that did not smell of iron.

'This is Cinder Row,' he said, as if that were an answer, and perhaps, for him, it was enough.

'Where else would we go.'

Outside, the stack kept its patient light, indifferent to furnaces or to daughters,

and somewhere under the hill the fire that had outlived better men than her father

went on quietly consuming whatever was fed to it, and asking, in its wordless way, for more.

© Revision Library | revisionlibrary.co.uk

1 Re-read lines 1 to 14 of Cinder Row. In each part below, identify one technique the writer uses and briefly explain its effect.

(a) Identify one technique used in lines 1 to 4 to suggest that the foundry dominates the town, and briefly explain its effect. **(2)**

(b) Identify one technique used in lines 5 to 7 to suggest Nell's emotional connection to her father, and briefly explain its effect. **(2)**

(c) Identify one technique used in lines 9 to 14 to characterise Nell's father through dialogue, and briefly explain its effect. **(2)**

(d) Identify one technique used across lines 1 to 14 as a whole to establish the overall mood of the opening, and briefly explain its effect. **(2)**

(Total for Question 1 is 8 marks)

© Revision Library | revisionlibrary.co.uk

Mark scheme · 1.4 Literature: Prose Analysis: Test Pack

Question 1

(a) Identifies a valid technique with accurate textual reference, e.g. personification of the foundry ('the foundry breathed'), or extended metaphor of the heartbeat ('the town itself had a heart... to keep it beating') (oe) **B1**

(a) Gives a plausible, text-supported comment on effect, e.g. presents the foundry as a living, almost supernatural presence that controls the rhythm of the town (oe) **B1**

(a) Answer: Personification/extended metaphor: the foundry is described as breathing and having a heartbeat, presenting industry as a living organism that dominates and sustains Cinder Row.

(b) Identifies a valid technique, e.g. the counting/timing motif, or the synaesthetic image of matching breath to unheard footsteps (oe) **B1**

(b) Gives a plausible comment on effect, e.g. suggests an almost instinctive, anticipatory bond that exists independently of physical proximity (oe) **B1**

(b) Answer: The counting motif ('matching her breath to his footsteps long before she could have heard them') suggests an instinctive, deeply attuned bond between Nell and her father.

(c) Identifies a valid technique, e.g. terse/monosyllabic dialogue ('Rain,' he said), or the ritualised action of hanging the cap (oe) **B1**

(c) Gives a plausible comment on effect, e.g. presents him as a man of few words whose care is shown through habit and small routine rather than open emotion (oe) **B1**

(c) Answer: The clipped dialogue ('Rain,' he said, as if that explained everything) characterises him as reserved and undemonstrative, with affection implied through routine rather than speech.

(d) Identifies a valid technique operating across the whole opening, e.g. contrast of light and dark, or the semantic field of domestic ritual and repetition (oe) **B1**

(d) Gives a plausible comment on effect, e.g. creates an atmosphere that is simultaneously oppressive (the ever-present foundry) and comforting (settled domestic routine) (oe) **B1**

(d) Answer: The contrast between the orange-lit stack against the dark hill and the small, warm domestic scene creates a mood that is both watchful/oppressive and quietly tender.

© Revision Library | revisionlibrary.co.uk