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GCSE

ENGLISH LANGUAGE

Paper 1 Explorations in creative reading and writing

8700/1

Insert

The source that follows is:

SOURCE A:

21st Century prose–fiction

‘The Silk Factory’ by Judith Allnatt

An extract from the beginning of a novel published in 2015.

[Turn over]

SOURCE A

This extract is from the beginning of a novel by Judith Allnatt, published in 2015. It is set in a house that used to be part of a nineteenth-century silk factory. Rosie and her two children, Sam and Cara, now live in the house.

- 1 It was on their first day at the house that Rosie saw the stranger child. Standing at the sink, her hands deep in suds, Rosie was overwhelmed by the tasks that lay ahead of her. Tired after the long drive from**
5 London the evening before, she gazed vaguely at the sunlit, overgrown garden where Sam and Cara
7 were playing.

The sash window had old glass that blunted the image, wavering the straightness of fence and
10 washing line, pulling things out of shape. Sam was kneeling beside the patch of earth that Rosie had cleared for him, making hills and valleys for his matchbox cars and trucks by digging with an old
15 tablespoon, and Cara was toddling from bush to bush with a yellow plastic watering can. Through the antique glass, Rosie watched them stretch and shrink as they moved, as if she were looking through ripples. She closed her eyes, glad of a moment of calm after the trauma of the last few
20 days. Letting go of the plate she was holding, she spread her tense fingers, allowing the warmth of the water to soothe her. When she opened her eyes, another child was there.

24 Rosie had made a quick check of the unfamiliar
25 garden before letting the children go out to play.
The bottom half of the garden was an overgrown
mess, a muddle of trees and shrubs. An ancient
mulberry tree stood at the centre. Its massive
twisted branches drooped to the ground in places,
30 its knuckles in the earth like a gigantic malformed
hand. The wintry sun hung low in the sky and the
gnarled growth threw long twisted shadows across
the undergrowth within its cage. The trunk of the
tree was snarled with the tangled ivy that grew up
35 through the broken bricks and chunks of cement,
choking it. The path that led down towards the
fence at the bottom, which marked the garden off
from an orchard beyond, disappeared into a mass of
nettles and brambles before it reached the
40 padlocked door.

41 A little girl was sitting back on her heels beside a
clump of daisies that grew against the fence. She
had her back to Rosie and was holding tight to the
handle of a large wicker basket that stood on the
45 ground beside her. Cara seemed unfazed by the
girl's presence and continued to move, engrossed,
along the row of plants. Rosie bent forward to look
through the clearest of the panes and peered closer.
The child was small, maybe around eight or nine,
50 although something in the tense hunch of her
shoulders made her seem older. Her hair hung
down her back in a matted, dusty-looking plait and
she was wearing dressing-up clothes: an
ankle-length dress and pinafore in washed-out greys
55 and tans, like a home-made Cinderella* costume.

[Turn over]

Where on earth had she come from? She must be a neighbour's child but how had she got in? The wooden fences that separated the gardens between each of the houses in the terrace were high – surely
60 too high for a child to climb.

The child glanced over her shoulder, back towards the houses, a quick, furtive movement as if she were scanning the upper windows of the row, afraid of being overlooked. Rosie caught a glimpse of her
65 face, pale and drawn with anxiety, before the girl turned back and reached forward to quickly tuck a piece of trailing white cloth into the basket. Almost unconsciously, Rosie registered that the girl was
70 something animal-like in her movements: quick, like the darting of a mouse or the flit of a sparrow, some small dun creature that moves fast to blend into the background.

Something wasn't right here. She had seen distress
75 in those eyes.

Rosie turned away, dried her hands hurriedly and slipped on her flip-flops. She would go gently, raise no challenge about her being in the garden but say hello and try to find out what was the matter. Maybe
80 if she pointed out that her mother would be worrying where she was, she could persuade the girl to let her take her home.

But when she stepped outside, the child was gone.

END OF SOURCE

GLOSSARY

* **Cinderella – a poor girl from a fairy tale**

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