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**SECTION A: DRAMA****ARTHUR MILLER: *All My Sons***

**Either** \*1 Read this extract, and then answer the question that follows it:

*George:* [*breathlessly*] My life turned upside down since then. I couldn't go back to work when you left.

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*George:* [turning to CHRIS, with deliberation] I'll ask you something, and look me in the eye when you answer me.

[from Act 2]

How does Miller so powerfully convey George's mixture of guilt and anger here?

**Or †2** How does Miller vividly convey his dislike of Joe Keller's greed and dishonesty? Support your ideas with details from the writing.

**Or 3** You are Kate Keller. You have just consoled Chris at the end of the play.

Write your thoughts.

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE: *Julius Caesar*

**Either \*4** Read this extract, and then answer the question that follows it:

<i>Brutus:</i>	Boy! Lucius! Fast asleep? It is no matter; Enjoy the honey-heavy dew of slumber. Thou hast no figures nor no fantasies Which busy care draws in the brains of men; Therefore thou sleep'st so sound.	5
	<i>Enter Portia.</i>	
<i>Portia:</i>	Brutus, my lord!	
<i>Brutus:</i>	Portia, what mean you? Wherefore rise you now? It is not for your health thus to commit Your weak condition to the raw cold morning.	10
<i>Portia:</i>	Nor for yours neither. Y'have ungently, Brutus, Stole from my bed; and yesternight at supper You suddenly arose and walk'd about, Musing and sighing, with your arms across; And when I ask'd you what the matter was, You star'd upon me with ungentle looks. I urg'd you further; then you scratch'd your head And too impatiently stamp'd with your foot. Yet I insisted; yet you answer'd not, But with an angry wafture of your hand Give sign for me to leave you. So I did, Fearing to strengthen that impatience Which seem'd too much enkindled; and withal Hoping it was but an effect of humour, Which sometimes hath his hour with every man. It will not let you eat, nor talk, nor sleep; And, could it work so much upon your shape As it hath much prevail'd on your condition, I should not know you Brutus. Dear my lord, Make me acquainted with your cause of grief.	15 20 25 30
<i>Brutus:</i>	I am not well in health, and that is all.	
<i>Portia:</i>	Brutus is wise, and, were he not in health, He would embrace the means to come by it.	
<i>Brutus:</i>	Why, so I do. Good Portia, go to bed.	
<i>Portia:</i>	Is Brutus sick, and is it physical To walk unbraced and suck up the humours Of the dank morning? What, is Brutus sick, And will he steal out of his wholesome bed, To dare the vile contagion of the night, And tempt the rheumy and unpurged air To add unto his sickness? No, my Brutus; You have some sick offence within your mind, Which by the right and virtue of my place I ought to know of; and upon my knees I charm you, by my once-commended beauty, By all your vows of love, and that great vow Which did incorporate and make us one, That you unfold to me, your self, your half, Why you are heavy – and what men to-night Have had resort to you; for here have been	35 40 45 50

Some six or seven, who did hide their faces  
Even from darkness.

*Brutus:* Kneel not, gentle Portia.

*Portia:* I should not need, if you were gentle Brutus.  
Within the bond of marriage, tell me, Brutus, 55

Is it excepted I should know no secrets  
That appertain to you? Am I your self

But, as it were, in sort or limitation?

To keep with you at meals, comfort your bed,

And talk to you sometimes? Dwell I but in the suburbs 60

Of your good pleasure? If it be no more,

Portia is Brutus' harlot, not his wife.

*Brutus:* You are my true and honourable wife,

As dear to me as are the ruddy drops

That visit my sad heart. 65

*Portia:* If this were true, then should I know this secret.

I grant I am a woman; but withal

A woman that Lord Brutus took to wife.

I grant I am a woman; but withal

A woman well reputed, Cato's daughter. 70

Think you I am no stronger than my sex,

Being so father'd and so husbanded?

Tell me your counsels, I will not disclose 'em.

I have made strong proof of my constancy,

Giving myself a voluntary wound 75

Here, in the thigh. Can I bear that with patience,

And not my husband's secrets?

*Brutus:* O ye gods,

Render me worthy of this noble wife!

[Knocking within. 80

Hark, hark! one knocks. Portia, go in awhile,

And by and by thy bosom shall partake

The secrets of my heart.

All my engagements I will construe to thee,

All the charactery of my sad brows. 85

Leave me with haste.

[Exit Portia.

[from Act 2 Scene 1]

How does Shakespeare make this moment in the play so moving?

**Or †5** Explore the ways in which Shakespeare makes omens and the supernatural such a dramatic part of the play.

**Or 6** You are Antony. You are fleeing to your house just after the murder of Caesar.

Write your thoughts.

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE: *The Tempest*

**Either \*7** Read this extract, and then answer the question that follows it:

<i>Prospero:</i>	If I have too austerely punish'd you, Your compensation makes amends; for I Have given you here a third of mine own life, Or that for which I live; who once again I tender to thy hand. All thy vexations Were but my trials of thy love, and thou Hast strangely stood the test; here, afore heaven, I ratify this my rich gift. O Ferdinand! Do not smile at me that I boast her off, For thou shalt find she will outstrip all praise, And make it halt behind her.	5           10
<i>Ferdinand:</i>	I do believe it Against an oracle.	
<i>Prospero:</i>	Then, as my gift, and thine own acquisition Worthily purchas'd, take my daughter. But If thou dost break her virgin-knot before All sanctimonious ceremonies may With full and holy rite be minist'ed, No sweet aspersion shall the heavens let fall To make this contract grow; but barren hate, Sour-ey'd disdain, and discord, shall bestrew The union of your bed with weeds so loathly That you shall hate it both. Therefore take heed, As Hymen's lamps shall light you.	15           20
<i>Ferdinand:</i>	As I hope For quiet days, fair issue, and long life, With such love as 'tis now, the murkiest den, The most opportune place, the strong'st suggestion Our worser genius can, shall never melt Mine honour into lust, to take away The edge of that day's celebration, When I shall think or Phoebus' steeds are founder'd Or Night kept chain'd below.	25           30
<i>Prospero:</i>	Fairly spoke. Sit, then, and talk with her; she is thine own. What, Ariel! my industrious servant, Ariel!	35
	<i>Enter Ariel.</i>	
<i>Ariel:</i>	What would my potent master? Here I am.	
<i>Prospero:</i>	Thou and thy meaner fellows your last service Did worthily perform; and I must use you In such another trick. Go bring the rabble, O'er whom I give thee pow'r, here to this place. Incite them to quick motion; for I must Bestow upon the eyes of this young couple Some vanity of mine art; it is my promise, And they expect it from me.	40        45
<i>Ariel:</i>	Presently?	
<i>Prospero:</i>	Ay, with a twink.	

<i>Ariel:</i>	Before you can say 'come' and 'go', And breathe twice, and cry 'so, so', Each one, tripping on his toe, Will be here with mop and mow. Do you love me, master? No?	50
<i>Prospero:</i>	Dearly, my delicate Ariel. Do not approach Till thou dost hear me call.	55
<i>Ariel:</i>	Well! I conceive.	[Exit.
<i>Prospero:</i>	Look thou be true; do not give dalliance Too much the rein; the strongest oaths are straw To th' fire i' th' blood. Be more abstemious, Or else good night your vow!	60
<i>Ferdinand:</i>	I warrant you, sir, The white cold virgin snow upon my heart Abates the ardour of my liver.	
<i>Prospero:</i>	Well! Now come, my Ariel, bring a corollary, Rather than want a spirit; appear, and pertly. No tongue! All eyes! Be silent.	65
		[Soft music.

[from Act 4 Scene 1]

How does Shakespeare make this moment in the play so dramatic and satisfying?

**Or †8** How does Shakespeare make Trinculo and Stephano so entertaining? Support your answer with details from Shakespeare's writing.

**Or 9** You are Gonzalo. Prospero has just revealed his identity to you towards the end of the play.

Write your thoughts.

OSCAR WILDE: *The Importance of Being Earnest*

Either \*10 Read this extract, and then answer the question that follows it:

- Algernon:* I think that is rather mean of you, Ernest, I must say. [*Opens case and examines it.*] However, it makes no matter, for, now that I look at the inscription inside, I find that the thing isn't yours after all.
- Jack:* Of course it's mine. [*Moving to him.*] You have seen me with it a hundred times, and you have no right whatsoever to read what is written inside. It is a very ungentlemanly thing to read a private cigarette case. 5
- Algernon:* Oh! it is absurd to have a hard and fast rule about what one should read and what one shouldn't. More than half of modern culture depends on what one shouldn't read. 10
- Jack:* I am quite aware of the fact, and I don't propose to discuss modern culture. It isn't the sort of thing one should talk of in private. I simply want my cigarette case back.
- Algernon:* Yes; but this isn't your cigarette case. This cigarette case is a present from someone of the name of Cecily, and you said you didn't know anyone of that name. 15
- Jack:* Well, if you want to know, Cecily happens to be my aunt.
- Algernon:* Your aunt!
- Jack:* Yes. Charming old lady she is, too. Lives at Tunbridge Wells. Just give it back to me, Algy. 20
- Algernon:* [*Retreating to back of sofa.*] But why does she call herself little Cecily if she is your aunt and lives at Tunbridge Wells? [*Reading.*] "From little Cecily with her fondest love."
- Jack:* [*Moving to sofa and kneeling upon it.*] My dear fellow, what on earth is there in that? Some aunts are tall, some aunts are not tall. That is a matter that surely an aunt may be allowed to decide for herself. You seem to think that every aunt should be exactly like your aunt! That is absurd. For Heaven's sake give me back my cigarette case. 25
- [Follows Algernon round the room.*
- Algernon:* Yes. But why does your aunt call you her uncle? "From little Cecily, with her fondest love to her dear Uncle Jack." There is no objection, I admit, to an aunt being a small aunt, but why an aunt, no matter what her size may be, should call her own nephew her uncle, I can't quite make out. Besides, your name isn't Jack at all; it is Ernest. 35
- Jack:* It isn't Ernest; it's Jack.
- Algernon:* You have always told me it was Ernest. I have introduced you to every one as Ernest. You answer to the name of Ernest. You look as if your name was Ernest. You are the most earnest-looking person I ever saw in my life. It is perfectly absurd your saying that your name isn't Ernest. It's on your cards. Here is one of them. [*Taking it from case.*] "Mr. Ernest Worthing, B. 4, The Albany." I'll keep this as a proof that your name is Ernest if ever you attempt to deny it to me, or to Gwendolen, or to any one else. 40
- [Puts the card in his pocket.*

- Jack:* Well, my name is Ernest in town and Jack in the country, and the cigarette case was given to me in the country.
- Algernon:* Yes, but that does not account for the fact that your small aunt Cecily, who lives at Tunbridge Wells, calls you her dear uncle. Come, old boy, you had much better have the thing out at once. 50
- Jack:* My dear Algy, you talk exactly as if you were a dentist. It is very vulgar to talk like a dentist when one isn't a dentist. It produces a false impression. 55
- Algernon:* Well, that is exactly what dentists always do. Now, go on! Tell me the whole thing. I may mention that I have always suspected you of being a confirmed and secret Bunburyist; and I am quite sure of it now.
- Jack:* Bunburyist? What on earth do you mean by a Bunburyist? 60
- Algernon:* I'll reveal to you the meaning of that incomparable expression as soon as you are kind enough to inform me why you are Ernest in town and Jack in the country.
- Jack:* Well, produce my cigarette case first.
- Algernon:* Here it is. [*Hands cigarette case.*] Now produce your explanation, and pray make it improbable. [*Sits on sofa.*] 65

[*from Act 1*]

Explore how Wilde engages the interest of the audience in this early moment in the play.

**Or †11** How far does Wilde's portrayal of Gwendolen suggest that Jack Worthing is a lucky man to be marrying her? Support your views with details from Wilde's writing.

**Or 12** You are Cecily at the end of the play.

Write your thoughts.

## SECTION B: POETRY

THOMAS HARDY: *Selected Poems*

**Either** \*13 Read this poem, and then answer the question that follows it:

*Neutral Tones*

We stood by a pond that winter day,  
 And the sun was white, as though chidden of God,  
 And a few leaves lay on the starving sod;  
     – They had fallen from an ash, and were gray.

Your eyes on me were as eyes that rove 5  
 Over tedious riddles of years ago;  
 And some words played between us to and fro  
     On which lost the more by our love.

The smile on your mouth was the deadest thing 10  
 Alive enough to have strength to die;  
 And a grin of bitterness swept thereby  
     Like an ominous bird a-wing ...

Since then, keen lessons that love deceives,  
 And wrings with wrong, have shaped to me 15  
 Your face, and the God-curst sun, and a tree,  
     And a pond edged with grayish leaves.

How does Hardy make this such a powerful portrayal of disappointment in love?

**Or** †14 Explore the ways in which Hardy memorably responds to the sinking of the *Titanic* in *The Convergence of the Twain*.

**Or** †15 In what ways does Hardy make the people come vividly to life for you in **either** *The Pine Planters* **or** *No Buyers: A Street Scene*?

**SONGS OF OURSELVES: from Part 4**

**Either \*16** Read this poem, and then answer the question that follows it:

*The Planners*

They plan. They build. All spaces are gridded,  
filled with permutations of possibilities.  
The buildings are in alignment with the roads  
which meet at desired points  
linked by bridges all hang 5  
in the grace of mathematics.  
They build and will not stop.  
Even the sea draws back  
and the skies surrender.

They erase the flaws, 10  
the blemishes of the past, knock off  
useless blocks with dental dexterity.  
All gaps are plugged  
with gleaming gold.

The country wears perfect rows 15  
of shining teeth.

Anaesthesia, amnesia, hypnosis.  
They have the means.  
They have it all so it will not hurt,  
so history is new again. 20  
The piling will not stop.  
The drilling goes right through  
the fossils of last century.

But my heart would not bleed 25  
poetry. Not a single drop  
to stain the blueprint  
of our past's tomorrow.

*(by Boey Kim Cheng)*

How does Boey powerfully convey strong feelings about modern life?

**Or †17** How does the poet memorably bring to life a particular moment in **either** *Summer Farm* (by Norman MacCaig) **or** *Horses* (by Edwin Muir)?

**Or †18** Explore how the poet portrays creatures in ways which surprise you in **either** *Pike* (by Ted Hughes) **or** *Hunting Snake* (by Judith Wright).

## SECTION C: PROSE

TSITSI DANGAREMBGA: *Nervous Conditions*

Either \*19 Read this extract, and then answer the question that follows it:

It was on New Year's Eve that my uncle and my father discussed my future. The discussion took place in the house. I was obliged to eavesdrop.

'It may change her character for the worse ... these Whites, you know ... you never know,' mused Babamukuru.

'No,' agreed my father. 'How could you know with these ones? You never know. With Whites! No. You never know.'

'On the other hand,' continued my uncle, 'she would receive a first-class education.'

'Ah, ya, Mukoma, first class. First class,' my father enthused.

'I did not want her to go to that school ...' said Babamukuru.

'What for, Mukoma? Why should she go there? Your mission is first class.'

'... because of the reasons I have told you,' continued my uncle. 'But then, considering that this is a fine opportunity for the girl to receive the finest education in Rhodesia, I think she must not be denied the opportunity. I have decided to let her go.'

My father went down on one knee. Bo-bo-bo. 'We thank you, Chirandu, we thank you, Muera bonga, Chihwa' he intoned. 'Truly, we would not survive without you. Our children would not survive without you. Head of the family, princeling, we thank you.'

This is how it was settled. I was to take another step upwards in the direction of my freedom. Another step away from the flies, the smells, the fields and the rags; from stomachs which were seldom full, from dirt and disease, from my father's abject obeisance to Babamukuru and my mother's chronic lethargy. Also from Nyamarira that I loved.

The prospect of this freedom and its possible price made me dizzy. I had to sit down, there on the steps that led up to the house. Then I felt numb; then I felt better. The cost would balance. What I needed I would take with me, the rest I would discard. It would be worth it to dress my sisters in pretty clothes, feed my mother until she was plump and energetic again, stop my father making a fool of himself every time he came into Babamukuru's presence. Money would do all this for me. With the ticket I would acquire attending the convent, I would earn lots of it.

'No,' Babamukuru was saying, his face beaming to compete with the paraffin flame, 'do not thank me. It is Tambudzai who worked hard for that scholarship.'

[from Chapter 9]

How does Dangarembga make this such an amusing and satisfying moment?

**Or** †20 Explore the ways in which Dangarembga makes **one** of the female characters memorably rebellious. Support your ideas with details from Dangarembga's writing.

**Or** 21 You are Jeremiah. Babamukuru has just informed you that you are to have a church wedding.

Write your thoughts.

**ANITA DESAI: *Fasting, Feasting***

**Either** \*22 Read this extract, and then answer the question that follows it:

Proper attention. It was with a steely determination that Mama turned this upon her son as if making sure no one could accuse her of any lapse in his care or recall the reluctance with which she had borne him.

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and  
accepted the fact that he would not touch the meat Papa insisted he should  
eat: Arun was a Vegetarian.

*[from Chapter 3]*

Explore the ways in which Desai vividly conveys MamaPapa's reactions to Arun's birth here.

**Or** †23 How does Desai strikingly convey the problems within the Patton family? Support your ideas with details from the novel.

**Or** 24 You are Uma. You have just said goodbye to Arun as he leaves for the USA.

Write your thoughts.

**KIRAN DESAI: *Hullabaloo in the Guava Orchard***

**Either \*25** Read this extract, and then answer the question that follows it:

Now, this newspaper deliverer was somebody who prided himself on his perfect aim and,

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It was ridiculous for him to be the CMO when he himself was sick.

*[from Chapter 15]*

How far does Desai make you sympathise with the Chief Medical Officer here – and how far does she make you laugh at him?

**Or** †26 How does Desai make the clash of personalities between Pinky and Sampath so amusing? Support your ideas with details from the writing.

**Or** 27 You are Mr. Chawla. Your attempt to arrange a marriage for your son has been a huge public failure.

Write your thoughts.

GEORGE ELIOT: *Silas Marner*

Either \*28 Read this extract, and then answer the question that follows it:

They had to knock loudly before Silas heard them; but when he did come to the door, he showed no impatience, as he would once have done, at a visit that had been unasked for and unexpected. Formerly, his heart had been as a locked casket with its treasure inside; but now the casket was empty, and the lock was broken. Left groping in darkness, with his prop utterly gone, Silas had inevitably a sense, though a dull and half-despairing one, that if any help came to him it must come from without; and there was a slight stirring of expectation at the sight of his fellow-men, a faint consciousness of dependence on their goodwill. He opened the door wide to admit Dolly, but without otherwise returning her greeting than by moving the arm-chair a few inches as a sign that she was to sit down in it. Dolly, as soon as she was seated, removed the white cloth that covered her lard-cakes, and said in her gravest way—

‘I’d a baking yisterday, Master Marner, and the lard-cakes turned out better nor common, and I’d ha’ asked you to accept some, if you’d thought well. I don’t eat such things myself, for a bit o’ bread’s what I like from one year’s end to the other; but men’s stomichs are made so comical, they want a change—they do, I know, God help ’em.’

Dolly sighed gently as she held out the cakes to Silas, who thanked her kindly, and looked very close at them, absently, being accustomed to look so at everything he took into his hand—eyed all the while by the wondering bright orbs of the small Aaron, who had made an outwork of his mother’s chair, and was peeping round from behind it.

‘There’s letters pricked on ’em,’ said Dolly. ‘I can’t read ’em myself, and there’s nobody, not Mr. Macey himself, rightly knows what they mean; but they’ve a good meaning, for they’re the same as is on the pulpit-cloth at church. What are they, Aaron, my dear?’

Aaron retreated completely behind his outwork.

‘Oh, go, that’s naughty,’ said his mother, mildly. ‘Well, whatever the letters are, they’ve a good meaning; and it’s a stamp as has been in our house, Ben says, ever since he was a little un, and his mother used to put it on the cakes, and I’ve allays put it on too; for if there’s any good, we’ve need of it i’ this world.’

‘It’s I. H. S.’ said Silas, at which proof of learning Aaron peeped round the chair again.

‘Well, to be sure, you can read ’em off,’ said Dolly. ‘Ben’s read ’em to me many and many a time, but they slip out o’ my mind again; the more’s the pity, for they’re good letters, else they wouldn’t be in the church; and so I prick ’em on all the loaves and all the cakes, though sometimes they won’t hold, because o’ the rising—for, as I said, if there’s any good to be got, we’ve need on it i’ this world—that we have; and I hope they’ll bring good to you, Master Marner, for it’s wi’ that will I brought you the cakes; and you see the letters have held better nor common.’

Silas was as unable to interpret the letters as Dolly, but there was no possibility of misunderstanding the desire to give comfort that made itself heard in her quiet tones. He said, with more feeling than before—‘Thank you—thank you kindly.’ But he laid down the cake and seated himself absently—drearly unconscious of any distinct benefit towards which the cake and the letters, or even Dolly’s kindness, could tend for him.

‘Ah, if there’s good anywhere, we’ve need of it,’ repeated Dolly, who did not lightly forsake a serviceable phrase. She looked at Silas pityingly as

she went on. 'But you didn't hear the church-bells this morning, Master Marnier. I doubt you didn't know it was Sunday. Living so lone here, you lose your count, I daresay; and then, when your loom makes a noise, you can't hear the bells, more partic'lar now the frost kills the sound.'

55

'Yes, I did; I heard 'em,' said Silas, to whom Sunday bells were a mere accident of the day, and not part of its sacredness. There had been no bells in Lantern Yard.

[from Chapter 10]

How does Eliot make this moment in the novel so moving?

**Or** †29 How does Eliot make Nancy Cass such an impressive character for you? Support your ideas with details from the novel.

**Or** 30 You are Eppie. You have just returned from the visit to Lantern Yard with Silas.

Write your thoughts.

**SUSAN HILL: *I'm the King of the Castle***

**Either \*31** Read this extract, and then answer the question that follows it:

On the train from London, Joseph Hooper said, 'I hope you are friendly with young Charles Kingshaw, now. I have not seen you about the place together very much.'

Hooper looked up from *The Scourge of the Marsh Monster*.

'I can't help it if he locks himself up, can I? 5

'In his room?'

'Somewhere. In some room or other. I don't know.'

'That sounds to me a very strange way of going on. What is this all in aid of, what does he do?'

Hooper shrugged. 10

'Slowly, remorselessly, the huge feet carried the hulking beast forward. The stench of the marshes hung about it and the mud on its scaly hide was mud formed at the dawn of history. The blood and death it now sought were...'

'I suppose that I must speak to his mother.' 15

The trained crossed over some points.

'But then, I daresay he is a little shy. You will have to be understanding about that, Edmund, there must always be a little give and take in this sort of friendship. That is a lesson I hope that you will learn in life very quickly. He has no father, when all is said and done.' 20

Hooper looked up briefly, raising his eyebrows.

Mr. Hooper coughed, turned his face away, and shifted a little in his seat. There is no telling, he thought, perhaps he does remember something of his mother, after all. We cannot fathom the minds of young children. He was discomforted by his own lack of insight. He tried to find some clue, in his son's facial expression, as to what might be going on in his mind, but there was only a blank. He could recall nothing of himself at the same age except that he had loathed his own father. 25

But I came through, he said to himself now, I daresay that I am normal enough, that there is nothing so much wrong with me, in spite of it all. I shall not allow myself to feel guilty about it. Edmund will be like any other healthy boy. I am not to blame. 30

He watched the darkening countryside and then, after a time, returned to his magazine, more settled in his mind. He felt exonerated.

[from Chapter 4]

What do you think Hill reveals about the father and son – and their relationship – at this moment in the novel? Support your ideas with details from the writing.

**Or †32** Explore **two** moments in the novel where you think Hill's portrayal of the English countryside is particularly powerful. Support your views with details from the writing.

**Or 33** You are Mrs Kingshaw. You have accepted Mr. Hooper's proposal of marriage.

Write your thoughts.

**Turn to page 24 for Question 34.**

**from *Stories of Ourselves***

**Either \*34** Read this extract from *The Destructors* (by Graham Greene), and then answer the question that follows it:

Mike had gone home to bed, but the rest stayed. The question of leadership no longer concerned the gang. With nails, chisels, screwdrivers, anything that was sharp and penetrating they moved around the inner walls worrying at the mortar between the bricks. They started too high, and it was Blackie who hit on the damp course and realised the work could be halved if they weakened the joints immediately above. It was a long, tiring, unamusing job, but at last it was finished. The gutted house stood there balanced on a few inches of mortar between the damp course and the bricks. 5

There remained the most dangerous task of all, out in the open at the edge of the bomb-site. Summers was sent to watch the road for passers by, and Mr Thomas, sitting on the loo, heard clearly now the sound of sawing. It no longer came from his house, and that a little reassured him. He felt less concerned. Perhaps the other noises too had no significance. 10

A voice spoke to him through the hole. 'Mr Thomas.'

'Let me out,' Mr Thomas said sternly. 15

'Here's a blanket,' the voice said, and a long grey sausage was worked through the hole and fell in swathes over Mr Thomas's head.

'There's nothing personal,' the voice said. 'We want you to be comfortable tonight.' 20

'Tonight,' Mr Thomas repeated incredulously.

'Catch,' the voice said. 'Penny buns – we've buttered them, and sausage-rolls. We don't want you to starve, Mr Thomas.'

Mr Thomas pleaded desperately. 'A joke's a joke, boy. Let me out and I won't say a thing. I've got rheumatics. I got to sleep comfortable.' 25

'You wouldn't be comfortable, not in your house, you wouldn't. Not now.'

'What do you mean, boy?' but the footsteps receded. There was only the silence of night: no sound of sawing. Mr Thomas tried one more yell, but he was daunted and rebuked by the silence – a long way off an owl hooted and made away again on its muffled flight through the soundless world. 30

At seven next morning the driver came to fetch his lorry. He climbed into the seat and tried to start the engine. He was vaguely aware of a voice shouting, but it didn't concern him. At last the engine responded and he backed the lorry until it touched the great wooden shore that supported Mr Thomas's house. That way he could drive right out and down the street without reversing. The lorry moved forward, was momentarily checked as though something were pulling it from behind, and then went on to the sound of a long rumbling crash. The driver was astonished to see bricks bouncing ahead of him, while stones hit the roof of his cab. He put on his brakes. When he climbed out the whole landscape had suddenly altered. 35

There was no house beside the car-park, only a hill of rubble. He went round and examined the back of his car for damage, and found a rope tied there that was still twisted at the other end round part of a wooden strut. 40

The driver again became aware of somebody shouting. It came from the wooden erection which was the nearest thing to a house in that desolation of broken brick. The driver climbed the smashed wall and unlocked the door. Mr Thomas came out of the loo. He was wearing a grey blanket to which flakes of pastry adhered. He gave a sobbing cry. 'My house,' he said. 'Where's my house?' 45

‘Search me,’ the driver said. His eye lit on the remains of a bath and what had once been a dresser and he began to laugh. There wasn’t anything left anywhere. 50

‘How dare you laugh,’ Mr Thomas said. ‘It was my house. My house.’

‘I’m sorry,’ the driver said, making heroic efforts, but when he remembered the sudden check to his lorry, the crash of bricks falling, he became convulsed again. One moment the house had stood there with such dignity between the bomb-sites like a man in a top hat, and then, bang, crash, there wasn’t anything left – not anything. He said, ‘I’m sorry. I can’t help it, Mr Thomas. There’s nothing personal, but you got to admit it’s funny.’ 55 60

How does Greene make this such an effective ending to the story?

**Or †35** How does V. S. Pritchett make Harold’s father in *The Fly in the Ointment* particularly unpleasant for you? Support your ideas with details from the story.

**Or 36** You are Mr Donaldson in *The Custody of the Pumpkin*. You have just met Lord Emsworth and told him of your daughter’s marriage to Freddie and of their departure to the USA.

Write your thoughts.





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