

AQA

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 Glass House’ by Eve Chase

**An extract from the beginning of a novel
written in 2020**

[Turn over]

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.**
- 5 She tightens her grip on the steering
wheel. The lane narrows further.
Wondering if she's missed the
turning to the house or if it's around
the next corner, she takes a bend**
- 10 too fast, and slams her foot on the**
- 11 brake.**

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*.

18 Behind a tall, rusting gate, Foxcote Manor erupts from the undergrowth, as if a geological 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 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

[Turn over]

**35 Harringtons' elegant London
townhouse as Rita could possibly
imagine.**

**40 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 register her hands are shaking.**

**42 Although she's done her best to
disguise it from Jeannie and the
children, she's been panicking ever
45 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
50 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
55 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.

60 It was meant to be a London
nanny job.

Fourteen months ago, Rita had
never been to London. But she
dreamed of it longingly, the Rita she
65 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
70 their own. They'd live in a tall, warm
house that didn't have a
coin-gobbling electricity meter, like
Nan's bungalow did. She'd get a

[Turn over]

75 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
80 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.

85 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
90 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
95 that didn't look best in 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
100 London house last weekend. Even after the long cycle at the launderette, her clothes still whiff of smoke.

Rita glances across at Jeannie in the
105 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
110 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.
115 And she's wearing those sunglasses again, the tortoiseshell ones, with

[Turn over]

lenses big as jam-jar lids, she always puts on after a night of crying.

120 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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