

UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE INTERNATIONAL EXAMINATIONS
International General Certificate of Secondary Education

LITERATURE

0486/03

Paper 3 Alternative to Coursework

October/November 2005

1 hour

Additional Materials: Answer Booklet/Paper

READ THESE INSTRUCTIONS FIRST

If you have been given an Answer Booklet, follow the instructions on the front cover of the Booklet.
Write your Centre number, candidate number and name on all the work you hand in.
Write in dark blue or black pen in the spaces provided on the Question Paper.
Do not use staples, paper clips, highlighters, glue or correction fluid.

Answer the question.
At the end of the examination, fasten all your work securely together.

The extract below is the beginning of a story by Sylvia Plath. It tells of a young family at supper. Read it carefully.

What does Plath's writing make you feel towards each of the four members of the family, how does she portray them and the relationships between them so vividly?

In the beginning there was Alice Denway's father, tossing her up in the air until the breath caught in her throat, and catching her and holding her in a huge bear hug. With her ear against his chest, young Alice could hear the thunder of his heart and the pulse of blood in his veins, like the sound of wild horses galloping.

For Alice Denway's father had been a giant of a man. In the blue blaze of his eyes was concentrated the color of the whole overhead dome of sky, and when he laughed, it sounded as if all the waves of the ocean were breaking and roaring up the beach together. Alice worshipped her father because he was so powerful, and everybody did what he commanded because he knew best and never gave mistaken judgment.

Alice Denway was her father's pet. Ever since Alice was very little, people had told her that she favored her father's side of the family and that he was very proud of her. Her baby brother Warren favored mother's side of the family, and he was blond and gentle and always sickly. Alice liked to tease Warren, because it made her feel strong and superior when he began to fuss and cry. Warren cried a lot, but he never tattled¹ on her.

There had been that spring evening at the supper table when Alice was sitting across from her brother Warren, who was eating his chocolate pudding. Chocolate pudding was Warren's favorite dessert, and he ate it very quietly, scooping it up carefully with his little silver spoon. Alice did not like Warren that night because he had been good as gold all day, and mother had said so to father when he came home from town. Warren's hair was gold and soft too, the color of dandelions, and his skin was the color of his glass of milk.

Alice glanced to the head of the table to see if her father was watching her, but he was bent over his pudding, spooning it up, dripping with cream, into his mouth. Alice slid down in her chair a little, staring innocently at her plate, and stretched her leg out under the table. Drawing her leg back, she straightened it in a sharp, swift kick. The toe of her shoe struck one of Warren's frail shins.

Alice watched him carefully from under her lowered lashes, concealing her fascination. The spoonful of pudding halfway to his lips dropped out of his hand, tumbling streakily down his bib to the floor, and a look of surprise sprouted in his eyes. His face crumpled into a mask of woe and he began to whine. He did not say anything, but sat there meekly, tears oozing out of the corners of his shut eyes and blubbered wetly into his chocolate pudding.

'Good lord, doesn't he do anything but cry?' Alice's father scowled, lifting his head and making a scornful mouth. Alice glared at Warren in safe contempt.

'He is tired,' her mother said, with a hurt, reproving look at Alice. Bending over the table, she stroked Warren's yellow hair. 'He hasn't been well, poor baby. You know that.'

Her mother's face was tender and soft like the Madonna² pictures in Sunday school, and she got up and gathered Warren into the circle of her arms where he lay curled, warm and secure, sniffing, his face turned away from Alice and her father. The light made a luminous halo of his soft hair. Mother murmured little crooning noises to quiet him and said: 'There, there angel, it is all right now. It is all right.'

Alice felt the lump of pudding stop in the back of her throat as she was about to swallow, and she almost gagged. Working hard with her mouth, she finally got it down. Then she felt the steady encouraging level of her father's gaze upon her, and she brightened. Looking up into his keen blue eyes, she gave a clear triumphant laugh.

'Who's my girl?' he asked her fondly, tweaking at a pigtail.

'Alice is!' she cried out, bouncing in her chair.

¹ *tattled*: told tales

² *Madonna*: Mary, the mother of Jesus

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Question 1 Sylvia Plath; *Johnny Panic and the Bible of Dreams*; Faber and Faber Ltd, 1977. Copyright © Estate of Sylvia Plath and Ted Hughes.

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