



Rugby School

Sixth Form Entrance Examination

ENGLISH

Time allowed: 1 hour

Instructions to candidates:

This paper consists of 2 sections.

You must answer **1 question in section A (comprehension) and 1 question in section B (writing task)** on lined paper.

Equipment Required: **Pen.**

There are **100 marks** available in total.

Name: _____

SPECIMEN

SECTION A: COMPREHENSION (30 minutes)

The Awakening focuses on Edna Pontellier, a wife and mother whose views grate against the more orthodox attitudes of the American Deep South in the late 1800s.

Mr. Pontellier had been a rather courteous husband so long as he met a certain tacit submissiveness in his wife. But her new and unexpected line of conduct completely bewildered him. It shocked him. Then her absolute disregard for her duties as a wife angered him. When Mr. Pontellier became rude, Edna grew insolent. She had resolved never to take another step backward.

5

"It seems to me the utmost folly for a woman at the head of a household, and the mother of children, to spend in an atelier¹ days which would be better employed contriving for the comfort of her family."

"I feel like painting," answered Edna. "Perhaps I shan't always feel like it."

"Then in God's name paint! but don't let the family go to the devil. There's Madame Ratignolle; because she keeps up her music, she doesn't let everything else go to chaos. And she's more of a musician than you are a painter."

10

"She isn't a musician, and I'm not a painter. It isn't on account of painting that I let things go."

"On account of what, then?"

15

"Oh! I don't know. Let me alone; you bother me."

It sometimes entered Mr. Pontellier's mind to wonder if his wife were not growing a little unbalanced mentally. He could see plainly that she was not herself. That is, he could not see that she was becoming herself and daily casting aside that fictitious self which we assume like a garment with which to appear before the world.

20

Her husband let her alone as she requested, and went away to his office. Edna went up to her atelier—a bright room in the top of the house. She was working with great energy and interest, without accomplishing anything, however, which satisfied her even in the smallest degree. For a time she had the whole household enrolled in the service of art. The boys posed for her. They thought it amusing at first, but the occupation soon lost its attractiveness when they discovered that it was not a game arranged especially for their entertainment. The quadroon² sat for hours before Edna's palette, patient as a savage, while the house-maid took charge of the children, and the drawing-room went undusted. But the housemaid, too, served her term as model when Edna perceived that the young woman's back and shoulders were molded on classic lines, and that her hair, loosened from its confining cap, became an inspiration. While Edna worked she sometimes sang low the little air, "Ah! si tu savais!"³

25

It moved her with recollections. She could hear again the ripple of the water, the flapping sail. She could see the glint of the moon upon the bay, and could feel the soft, gusty beating of the hot south wind. A subtle current of desire passed through her body, weakening her hold upon the brushes and making her eyes burn.

30

Kate Chopin, *The Awakening* (1899)

¹ *atelier*: artist's studio

² *quadroon*: term used historically to define the ancestry of people of mixed race, here indicating that the person in question has one quarter black ancestry.

³ *Ah! Si tu savais!*: Oh, if only you knew!

Comprehension

- *Spend 5 minutes reading (and re-reading) the passage carefully, before answering the question below.*
- *Be sure to structure your work and support your points with quotations from the passage.*

(1) What are your initial impressions of Edna Pontellier in this passage? Consider who she is talking to, what she is talking about and why it is important.

(50 marks)

SECTION B: ESSAY (30 minutes)

- *Be sure to structure your work; use a varied vocabulary; use accurate spelling and punctuation. Above all, be bold and imaginative in your writing choices.*
- *You are advised to spend 5 minutes planning your response.*

Write an essay on ONE of the following titles:

(1) 'Making her eyes burn'.

Continue the story from here.

(2) Write a story entitled 'Oh, if only you knew!'.

(3) Write about a time when you did something unorthodox, and explain why this experience felt significant.

(50 marks)

Total: 100 marks

END OF EXAMINATION