

EXAMEN DE FIN D'ÉTUDES SECONDAIRES CLASSIQUES
Sessions 2023 – QUESTIONNAIRE ÉCRIT

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|--------------|---|---------|---------------|--|--|
| Date : | 25.09.23 | Durée : | 14:15 - 16:45 | Numéro candidat : | |
| Discipline : | Anglais - Analyse littéraire - texte inconnu | | Section(s) : | CA / CA-LLCO / CA-MALA / CA-MALF / CA-MAT / CA-PSYA / CA-PSYF | |

The narrator is a young girl in rural Ireland of the early 1980s. She is sent by her parents to live with the Kinsellas, who have no children of their own and will foster the girl on their small farm.

5 Early on a Sunday, after first Mass in Clonegal, my father, instead of taking me home, drives deep into Wexford toward the coast, where my mother's people came from. It is a hot August day, bright, with patches of shade and greenish sudden light along the road. We pass through the village of Shillelagh, where my father lost our red **shorthorn** in a game of forty-five, and on past the mart in Carnew, where the man who won her sold her not long afterward. My father throws his hat on the passenger seat, winds down the window, and smokes. I shake the plaits out of my hair and lie flat on the back seat, looking up through the rear window.

10 I wonder what it will be like, this place belonging to the Kinsellas. I see a tall woman standing over me, making me drink milk still hot from the cow. I see another, less likely version of her, in an apron, pouring pancake batter into a frying pan, asking would I like another, the way my mother sometimes does when she is in good humor. The man will be her size. He will take me to town on the tractor and buy me red lemonade and crisps. Or he'll make me clean out sheds and pick stones and pull **ragweed and docks** out of the fields. I wonder if they live in an old farmhouse or a new bungalow, whether they will have an outhouse or an indoor bathroom,
15 with a toilet and running water.

An age, it seems, passes before the car slows and turns in to a tarred, narrow lane, then slams over the metal bars of a cattle grid. On either side, thick hedges are trimmed square. At the end of the lane, there's a white house with trees whose limbs are trailing the ground.

"Da," I say. "The trees."

20 "What about them?"

"They're sick," I say.

"They're weeping willows," he says, and clears his throat.

25 On the housefront, tall, shiny windowpanes reflect our coming. I see myself looking out from the back seat, as wild as a **tinker's** child, with my hair all undone, but my father, at the wheel, looks just like my father. A big, loose hound lets out a few rough, halfhearted barks, then sits on the step and looks back at the doorway, where the man has come out to stand. He has a square body like the men my sisters sometimes draw, but his eyebrows are white, to match his hair. He looks nothing like my mother's people, who are all tall (...) and I wonder if we have not come to the wrong house. (...)

30 When the woman comes out, she pays no heed to the men. She is even taller than my mother, with the same black hair, but hers is cut tight like a helmet. She's wearing a printed blouse and brown, flared trousers. The car door is opened and I am taken out, and kissed.

"The last time I saw you, you were in the pram," she says, and stands back, expecting an answer.

35 "The pram's broken."

"What happened at all?"

"My brother used it for a wheelbarrow and the wheel fell off."

40 She laughs and licks her thumb and wipes something off my face. I can feel her thumb, softer than my mother's, wiping whatever it is away. When she looks at my clothes, I see my thin cotton dress, my dusty sandals through her eyes. Neither one of us knows what to say. A queer, ripe breeze is crossing the yard.

"Come on in, *a leanbh*."

(599 words)

Shortened and adapted from "Foster" by Claire KEEGAN.

Published as a short story in The New Yorker, February 15, 2010 Issue.

Glossary:

I.4 **a shorthorn:** a cow from a breed with short horns

I.13 **ragweed:** plant of the daisy family

I.13 **docks:** coarse weed

I.24 **a tinker:** (especially in the past) a person who travelled from place to place, repairing pans or other metal containers

I.42 **a leanbh:** Anglo-Irish term of endearment; my child

Analysis

1. What does the extract tell us about the narrator's upbringing and social background? (12 marks)
2. What are the narrator's expectations regarding her new home? (8 marks)
3. Comment on the use of narrative perspective. (10 marks)
4. Analyse the role of nature in the depiction of the child's experience. (8 marks)
5. What do Mrs. Kinsella's first interactions with her foster child seem to reveal? (7 marks)

Opinion

6. "A happy childhood is the worst preparation for life."
To what extent do you agree with this statement? (15 marks)