

Enduring Love

by

Ian McEwan



A level Student Workbook

by

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~ Wessex Publications ~

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USING THE WORKBOOK

This Workbook examines various aspects of ‘Enduring Love’ and you will be asked to complete Tasks on each of these as you progress through the different sections. All the Tasks are designed to help you look carefully at the novel and to come to an appreciation of its meaning and significance as a piece of literature. In addition to working in the Workbook itself, it is advisable to keep your own, fuller notes, in a *notebook* or *ring binder*. These will be an important revision aid if you are going to answer on this text in an exam.

Some of the Tasks require quite short answers and, where this is the case, a box is provided in the Workbook where you can write down your responses if you wish.



Where you see this notebook symbol though, a fuller response is required and it would be best if you write your comments or answers in your own notebook or file.

At the end of the Workbook you will find a number of specimen questions of the kind that you might find set for A-level English Literature (or an examination of similar standard). These titles and questions would also be suitable for coursework assignments on this text. If you are going to answer on this text in an exam it would be very useful to practise writing answers to several of these and have some idea of how you would tackle any of them.

Good luck with your studies.

1. IAN MCEWAN - A BRIEF BIOGRAPHY

Born 1948



Ian McEwan was born in 1948 in Aldershot, Hampshire. He spent his childhood in Singapore and North Africa where his father, a soldier, was posted.

After studying English literature at the University of Sussex and graduating in 1970, he took an MA degree at the University of East Anglia.

One of his teachers was the novelist Malcolm Bradbury who ran a creative writing course at East Anglia University until his death in 2001.

McEwan's first book, a set of short stories called 'First Love, Last Rites' was published in 1975.

First novel, 1978

In 1978 he published his first novel, 'The Cement Garden', a story about a pair of siblings who conceal the death of their mother. The 'New York Review of Books' described it as a 'shocking' and 'morbid' book which was also 'irresistibly readable'. That novel was filmed in 1993, starring Charlotte Gainsbourg and Sinéad Cusack.

HIS BIBLIOGRAPHY

- **'First Loves, Last Rites'-1975**
- **'In Between the Sheets and Other Stories'-1978**
Both feature a bizarre cast of grotesques in disturbing tales of sexual aberrance, black comedy and macabre obsession.
- **'The Cement Garden'-1978**
This tells of the incestuous decline of a family of orphaned children.
- **'The Comfort of Strangers'-1981**
This is a nightmarish novel about an English couple in Venice.

(During the 1980s he started raising his own family and his novels became less insular and sensational, more devoted to family dynamics and political intrigue.)

- **'The Child in Time'-1987**
This is centrally concerned with how kidnapping affects parents.
- **'The Innocent'-1990**
This is concerned with international espionage during the Cold War.

- **'Black Dogs'-1994**
This presents a husband and wife for whom an incident during their honeymoon reveals their moral antipathy, so they live apart.
- **'The Daydream'-1994**
Presents the imaginary world of a 10 year-old boy.
- **'Enduring Love'-1997**
- **'Amsterdam'-1998**
- **'Atonement'-2001**

This latest novel 'Atonement' has already been hailed as a 'masterwork'. It is the story of a girl who condemns a young friend of the family for a crime he did not commit. The story takes place against the background of the evacuation of Dunkirk and wartime Britain.

He has also written for TV, Radio and film including 'Imitation Game'-1980; 'The Ploughman's Lunch'-1983; and 'The Good Son'-1993.

Shocking themes

The shocking has had a prominent place in McEwan's literature - the abduction of a child in 'The Child in Time'; deviant sexual practices in 'The Comfort of Strangers'; a fatal fall from a helium balloon in 'Enduring Love'.

Private life

In 1990 McEwan's private life was hauled into the public eye when his ex-wife Penny Allen kidnapped their 13-year-old son and took him to France. The child was returned and the author retained sole custody while his ex-wife was fined for 'defamation' of his name.

He married the journalist Annalena McAfee in 1997.

Prizes and Awards

McEwan's writing has frequently been honoured. He has won the Somerset Maugham Award for 'First Loves, Last Rites'; the Evening Standard award for best screenplay for 'The Ploughman's Lunch'; the Whitbread Award for 'The Child in Time'; and the Booker Prize for 'Amsterdam'. Both the University of Sussex and the University of East Anglia have granted him honorary doctorates.

2. COMMENTARY AND CRITICISM ON McEWAN'S EARLY WORK UP TO 'ENDURING LOVE.'

'Extreme' subject matter

Over the course of his career, McEwan has explored a variety of ideas and themes. His early work exhibits an interest in the macabre, in violence and in human perversity. Despite their seemingly extreme subject matter, these works are written in a realistic style in order to convey a sense of ordinariness. McEwan said of his interest in violence, *'I don't think I'm particularly obsessed with violence, but at the same time I'm very disturbed by it. I suppose many of the things that disturb me find their way into my fiction.'* While continuing to examine humanity's capacity for cruelty and violence, McEwan broadened his outlook and began to address other issues. Many of his novels explore the idea of childhood. He also demonstrates an interest in the moral bankruptcy of politics and the potential dangers of *'conservative extremism.'*

The Child in Time

An excellent example of McEwan's use of both these themes is 'The Child in Time'. Published in 1987, 'The Child in Time' is set in a very near future. McEwan creates a highly subtle dystopia (opposite of utopia, a place where everything is bad) where the conservative trends of Thatcher's Britain are extended one degree further. The differences between this futuristic world and the present are small but telling. For example, beggars must use government-issued bowls and badges, and lack of care for the environment has caused pollution to alter the climate. McEwan believes, however, that 'Amsterdam' signals a new beginning in his career. He said, *" 'Amsterdam' is quite distinct from my novels written over the last ten-year period, which I think all belong together, beginning with 'The Child in Time' and really ending with 'Enduring Love': novels of a sort of crisis and transformation, rites of passage of great intensity for characters."*



It is useful to have a collection of background notes on the author. Use these to add to your own, as you see fit.

A critical response to McEwan's early work in Alan Massie's 'The Novel Today.'

Ian McEwan made his name with his collections of short stories distinguished for 'the assured elegance of his manner and the immature nastiness of the content'. 'The Cement Garden' (1979) and the 'Comfort of Strangers' (1981) confirmed that, 'He was a writer of macabre and disturbing imagination, able to point a sentence with enviable exactness, and adept at the evocation of atmosphere. But they also

seemed to be written too glibly, within disappointing limits . . . They depended for their effect on the reader's willingness to be shocked by their wilful distortion of human nature.'

The Child in Time

The novel 'The Child in Time', though 'a far less confident piece of craftsmanship than his first two books, being confused and uneven in the writing, nevertheless revealed a humanity and capacity to feel, and to arouse feeling, which had been absent from his earlier work.'

It is set in an England of the near future and tries to connect private dramas with public concerns. It belonged to the tradition of the 'Condition of England' novel. It offers McEwan's view of Thatcher's England, a country teeming with licensed beggars, where poverty and squalor are to be found everywhere in the midst of affluence. 'The picture owes as much to the conventions of science fiction, especially the cinema, as it does to observation or imagination but it is powerful enough even at second hand.'

His treatment of his central character is remarkable. He is a young novelist who has lost his daughter, abducted from a supermarket two years earlier. This tragedy has destroyed his marriage and led to his own descent into apathy, enlivened only by occasional moments of hope as when he sees a girl in the street who might be his daughter.

'In two scenes, one with the hero's former wife, and the other with his father, McEwan, for the first time, treats adult emotion with sympathy and understanding.'

'He remains a writer of considerable gifts who has not yet achieved a satisfactory book. There are signs in 'The Child in Time' that he may be about to do so. Yet as long as his characteristic response to the moral problems he poses is to retreat into fantasy, his promise is unlikely to be fulfilled. He is a writer whose development has been retarded by the exaggerated enthusiasm with which his immature work was received. His fiction is calculated rather than spontaneous. It suffers from a lack of energy, its ambition is curtailed.'

A further response to McEwan's early work in 'Introduction to Contemporary Fiction' Ed. Rod Mengham. (Polity Press 1999)

Part 12 Kiernan Ryan 'Sex, Violence and Complicity.'

McEwan acquired a reputation for outrageousness early on, a reputation which has 'barnacled' his books ever since. The caricature that haunts McEwan is of a novelist 'obsessed with the perverted, the depraved and the macabre; that of an inscrutable voyeur who describes abjection and obscenity with a chilling detachment. What appals is his apparent freezing of his moral faculties and his refusal to react as

decency demands to the shocking scenes staged by his own morbid imagination.'

But he sets out to vex and disturb. For Ryan, 'the results of his writings and the risks he takes are worth taking, because they are the price of his unnerving honesty about the secret ubiquity of depravity and its seductive appeal.'

McEwan complained in an interview in 1983 of being labelled as '*a chronicler of comically exaggerated psychopathic states of mind or of adolescent anxiety, snot and pimples.*'

He said even after a 'The Child in Time', which doesn't contain this element, '*Then all people write about is the absence of these . . . My work is not a monochrome of violence and horror.*'

In reality most of McEwan's fiction has seen him moving away from 'the sealed off suffocating worlds of childhood trauma, teenage alienation and secret adult obsession'. 'The Innocent' (1990) and 'Black Dogs' (1992) opened his novels out to embrace wider public and political issues; they explored the state of the nation etc., and criticised Thatcher's Britain.

Politics and fiction

But he realised that there were dangers in a crude equation of his politics with fiction. He said, '*To do so you cramp your field, you deny yourself the possibility of opening up an investigation or free inquiry.*' He continued, '*Doing so might pre-empt or exclude that rather mysterious and unreflective element that is so important in fiction . . . some elements of mystery must remain . . . I prefer a work of fiction to be self-contained, supported by its own internal struts and beams, resembling the world, but somehow immune from it.*'

At the same time he says, '*Against this I value a documentary quality, an engagement with society and its values. I like to think about the tension between the private world of individuals and the public sphere by which they are contained.*'

He says, '*The process of writing a novel is educative in two senses: as the work unfolds it teaches you its own rules, it tells how it should be written; at the same time it is an act of discovery in a harsh world of the precise extent of human worth.*'

His work seeks 'to un-seat our moral certainties and sap our confidence in knee-jerk judgements by making us recognise our involvement in what we are reading.'

The Cold War

McEwan saw the world conditioned by the mood of 'imminent catastrophe' in which people lived during the Cold War, threatened by nuclear annihilation, but warheads have not ceased to proliferate since

the fall of the Iron Curtain in 1989. This has led him to feel *'the urgency of contracting time.'*

His austere style in his early work is 'electric with tension, taut with the strain of excluding what it cannot trust itself to say.' He said, *'I like precision and clarity in sentences and I value the implied meaning, the spring, the space in between them.'*

He wishes to reflect the world, *'In which capitalist technology invades our very cells, to programme our appetites and fantasies to install the structures of addictions: to food, to sex, to drugs, to money, to violence, to voyeurism, which the market needs to survive.'* As Ryan observes, 'The pornographic and the cataclysmic waltz arm-in-arm through his novels'

Self-effacement

All but a handful of McEwan's stories are first person narratives. 'He exploits to an unusual degree the confessional possibilities built into the novel as a form since its inception. The act of confession casts us in the corresponding role of the confidante expected to share their point of view or even to shoulder their burden of shame. It is McEwan's cunning effacement of his presence, of all the signs of authorial intent, that compels our identification with his estranged soliloquists.'

McEwan is fixed in much of his fiction on children or adolescents who are about to leave the haven of infancy behind. 'What we witness is some climactic or epiphanic moment of initiation as in 'First Love, Last Rites' after which things will never be the same.'

Conversely, he is captivated by acts of withdrawal and regression as with the orphaned children in 'The Cement Garden' who preserve their deceased mother's body in the garden.

In 'The Child in Time' the glamorous politician, Charles Darke, abandons his irresistible rise and buries himself in a rural sanctuary where he dresses and acts like a carefree schoolboy.

Sentimentality

McEwan lays himself open to the charge of sentimentality by nourishing our nostalgia for the lost Eden of infancy, but 'sometimes sentimentality is the closest we can afford to get to compassion; sometimes it is the only piece of wreckage left to cling to.'

3. 'MOTHER TONGUE'

The following is a synopsis of a memoir that Ian McEwan wrote in the 'Guardian' on Saturday October 13, 2001.

Unlikely forces can make a novelist. In the memoir McEwan, brought up in a house with few books, describes how his mother's hesitancy with words influenced his approach to writing.

McEwan wrote:

'I don't write like my mother, but for many years I spoke like her, and her particular, timorous relationship with language has shaped my own.'

McEwan's mother

My mother never owned the language she spoke. Her displacement within the intricacies of English class, and the uncertainty that went with it, taught her to regard language as something that might go off in her face, like a letter bomb. A word bomb. I've inherited her wariness, or more accurately, I learned it as a child. I used to think I would have to spend a lifetime shaking it off. Now I know that's impossible and unnecessary and that you have to work with what you've got.

'Look at all them cows.' And then later, 'Look at them cows and that black one. He looks daft, dud'n he?' 'Yes he does.'

When I was eighteen, on one of my infrequent visits home, repeated conversations of this kind would edge me towards silent despair, or irritation, and eventually to a state of such intense mental suffocation, that I would sometimes make excuses and cut my visit short.

Perhaps it's a lack in me, a dwindling of the youthful fire, or perhaps it's a genuine spread of tolerance, but now I understand her to be saying simply that she is very happy for us to be out together seeing the same things. The content is irrelevant. The business is sharing.

(He remembers being on a train with his mother when she got into conversation with a lady whom she thought was of superior social standing.)

They began to talk and I remember being surprised by the change in my mother's voice. She measured out her sentences as she strained for her version of correct speech.

I was to hear the same transformation many years later, when my father was commissioned from the ranks.

Whenever some gathering in the officers' mess obliged my mother to hold a conversation with the colonel's wife, the posh voice would creep in, with its distorted vowels - yais, naice- and aitches distributed generously to make up for the ones that were dropped elsewhere. But most significantly, my mother spoke very slowly on these occasions, almost lugubriously, aware of all of the little language traps that lay ahead.

At school in Suffolk

When I was 11, I was sent from North Africa, where my father was stationed, to attend school in Suffolk. By any standards, Woolverstone Hall was a curious place, a rather successful experiment by a left-wing local authority in old-fashioned embourgeoisement. It had the trappings of a public school.

During my early teens, as my education progressed, I was purged of my mother's more obvious traits, usually by a kind of a literary osmosis. When I was 14 I was an entranced reader of the handful of novels Iris Murdoch had published, I was also reading Graham Greene. Slowly, nothink, somethink, cestificate, skelington, chimley all went, as well as the double negatives and mismatched plurals.

Sometimes I took myself in hand. I was in the first year of my sixth form when I arranged for my best friend, a rare and genuine middle-class type, to say 'did' every time I said 'done'. Very kindly he 'done' this for me. But he got into serious trouble one afternoon in a history lesson. I was earnestly delivering a prepared piece about the bold reforms of Pope Gregory the Seventh, when he loyally murmured a 'did'. The history master, a kind Welshman, became incensed by what he considered to be a display of rudeness and snobbery. To prevent my friend being ordered from the room, I had to intervene and explain our agreement.

But these adjustments of speech and writing were superficial, and relatively easy. They formed a part of that story, familiar in English biography, in which children, who received an education their parents did not, were set on a path of cultural dislocation. There are gains as well as losses, at least for a writer. Exile from your homeland, though obviously a distressing experience, can bring a writer into a fruitful, or at least a usefully problematic, relationship with an adopted language.

Writing, 1970

When I started writing seriously in 1970, I had dropped all or most of my mother's ways with words, but I still had her attitudes, her wariness, her unsureness of touch.

I would sit without a pen in my hand, framing a sentence in mind, often losing the beginning as I reached the end, and only when the thing was secure and complete would I set it down.

From the outside, this slowness and hesitancy may have looked like artistic scrupulousness, and I was happy to present it that way, or let

others do it for me. I was pleased when people spoke approvingly of the 'hard surface' of my prose; that was something I could hide behind. In fact, my method represented an uncertainty that was partly social.

My mother was in her element in a heart-to-heart. No language perils there.

Singapore

When I was six, and we were living in army quarters in Singapore, I remember how I liked to loll unobtrusively on the floor behind the sofa when my mother had a friend round. I would listen in to these roaming, intimate heart-to-hearts. Broadly, they fell into two groups-operations, and bad behaviour. How compelling and gory they were, these accounts of flesh under knife, and the aftermath. I'm sure they exerted their subliminal pull on my first short stories.

I rarely spoke up when I was in a group of boys. Intimacy was what loosened my tongue, and I was always on the lookout for the one true best friend.

His father

My father, by contrast, loved to take control in a group of friends, especially if he could make them laugh, so I was far closer to my mother in conversational style. In my first stories I wanted to get as close as possible, put my lips to the readers' inner ear. Entering a public arena for the first time, I strove - too desperately, some said - to provide lurid secrets for a set of deranged narrators. Forcing them to confess at a couple of hundred words a day and within a literary tradition, I thought I was freeing myself from my past. Writers who fictionalise their childhood, I declared in my first interviews, bored me. The business is to invent. So I invented - intimately, with the embarrassed hesitancy of the inarticulate - in my mother tongue.

In 1940 Rose, my mother, married Regimental Sergeant Major David McEwan, and the following year I was born.

My father's lack of formal education sat unhappily all his life with his ferocious intelligence. There was always an air of frustration and boredom about him. He was a kind man, but he was domineering too, with a Glaswegian working man's love of the pub - and the sergeants' mess.

My mother was always frightened of him, and so was I. When I came into early adolescence, I was like her, too tongue-tied to face down his iron certainties.

After that I drifted away, and saved my darker thoughts for my fiction where fathers, especially the one in 'The Cement Garden'- were not kindly presented.

In my twenties I was often defending, or trying to defend, Rose against David, or promoting her cause somehow. The effect on my writing was

fairly direct, though I think at the time I had no clear sense of the connection. I read 'The Female Eunuch' in 1971 and thought it was a revelation. The feminism of the 1970s spoke directly to a knot of problems at the heart of our family's life. I developed a romantic notion that if the spirit of women was liberated, the world would be healed. My female characters became the repository of all the goodness men fell short of. In other words, pen in hand, I was going to set my mother free.

At home, there was violence in the air. But there always had been. My father, I know, felt he had a right to it, and it was no one's business but his own.

He gave me as a late birthday present an Olivetti portable typewriter. The first thing I wrote on it was a letter to my father, which I gave to Rose to keep. She was to give it to him if she was threatened again. In it I told David that I loved him. I also told him that hitting Rose was a criminal act, and that if necessary I would come from England and see both the military police and his commanding officer. It turned out she destroyed the letter the week after I left.

Rose, 2001

It is springtime, 2001, and I collect Rose from the nursing home to take her out to lunch. Sometimes she knows exactly who I am, and at others she simply knows that I am someone she knows well.

I drive her round the streets of suburban west London. This is what she wants, to sit and look and point things out as we cruise from the Northolt to North Harrow to Greenford.

'Oo, I really love doing this,' she says. 'I mean, look at me, riding about like Lady Muck!'

I must hang on to the things she says, the little turns, the phrases, for soon there will be no more. No more of the mother tongue I've spent most of my life unlearning.

I can't help thinking of what she said - riding about like Lady Muck. I haven't heard that in years. Lady Muck. Where there's muck there's brass. It must have been in use in the 1930s or 1940s. I'll use it. It's right for the novel I'm finishing now. I'll have it. Then I'll always remember that she said it. I have a character just coming to life who can use her words. So thank you, Rose, for that- and all the rest.'

TASK 1

Having read the synopsis above of how his mother's hesitancy with words influenced his approach to writing, summarise the main ways in which it did so.



4. 'ENDURING LOVE' - A BRIEF SUMMARY OF THE NOVEL

Science writer, Joe Rose, is spending a day in the country with his long-time partner, Clarissa, when he witnesses a tragic accident. A balloon with a boy trapped in it is being tossed by the wind, and, in an attempt to save the child, a man is killed. As though that isn't disturbing enough, a man named Jed Parry, who has joined Joe in attempting to bring the balloon to safety, believes that something has passed between him and Joe; something that sparks in Parry a deranged, obsessive kind of love.

Soon, Parry is stalking Joe, who turns to science to try to understand the situation. Parry apparently suffers from a condition known to psychiatrists as de Clerambault Syndrome, in which the afflicted individual obsessively pursues the object of his desire until the frustrated love turns to hate and rage, thus transforming one of life's most valued experiences into pathological horror. Joe grows more and more paranoid and terrified, as his treasured relationship with Clarissa breaks under the tension of his fear. He realises that he needs to find something beyond the cold reasoning of science if this love is to be endured.

McEwan writes a tale of life intruded upon by shocks of violence. It reveals profound truths about the nature of love and of the power of forgiveness.

5. 'ENDURING LOVE' – CHAPTER BY CHAPTER

All the Tasks set on the actual novel assume a close reading and study of the Chapter on which the Task/s have been set, and of the notes I have made, which are relevant to that Chapter, before you attempt your answer.

Chapter 1

NB This Chapter is of fundamental importance to the novel and warrants the closest study

The novel opens with the narrator (it is noticeable that he, the narrator, is not named in this Chapter, nor are details of his actual occupation given) and his partner, Clarissa, about to enjoy the wine, which is part of their picnic. (McEwan has him name it as '*a 1987 Daumas Gassac.*' He constantly insists in his writing on the pinpoint accuracy of names etc.) He says '*This was the moment, this was the pinprick on the time map*', an event is about to take place that will change their lives forever.

A man is heard shouting, accompanied by a child's cry, which was enfeebled by the high wind that was blowing at the time. The narrator and four other men race in the direction of the shouting.

The narrator holds up the action, '*What idiocy to be racing into this story and its labyrinths, sprinting away from our happiness among the fresh spring grasses by the oak,*' adding to the sense that momentous events are about to happen.

As he approaches from the south-east, with the wind at his back - again the writing is very closely detailed - the narrator visualises the scene as a buzzard would see it from three hundred feet up. He details the men running with him: two farm labourers; a motorist, John Logan, who has left his car; and Jed Parry from the opposite side of the field. He gives the first suggestion that Parry is to play a large part in the events to come, '*Knowing what I know now, it's odd to evoke the figure of Jed Parry.*' To the buzzard he and Parry would have appeared as, '*Rushing towards each other like lovers, innocent of the grief this entanglement would bring.*'

He suggests that what follows will have an important '*aftermath*' for his relationship with Clarissa for she saw it too and for both of them it will be followed by '*obsessive re-examination.*'

With scientific exactitude he describes how, from the buzzard's perspective, *'the convergence of six figures in a flat green space has a comforting geometry . . . the knowable, limited plane of the snooker table.'* He himself sees the runners as *'in a state of mathematical grace'*.

Only then does he detail that they are running towards an enormous balloon, which would have enormous consequences for all of them, because they are also running towards *'a catastrophe, which itself was a kind of furnace in whose heat identities and fates would buckle into new shapes.'*

In the basket of the balloon is a boy, and clinging to a rope attached to the basket is a man in need of help.

The frantic pace changes and the narrator reveals how he and Clarissa have been separate for six weeks. In celebration for her return he arranged a picnic, which he describes in detail. He also says he had bought her the most expensive present he had ever bought, a small book, and how he had met her Boston flight at Heathrow. He had delighted in seeing the same joy in the faces of all the others like him meeting loved ones. He observes, *'Human variety can give pleasure, but so too can human sameness.'* He wonders how convincing he can be in greeting Clarissa.

An hour later they were in the Chiltern Hills near Christmas Common, *'elated by our reunion.'* They have an initial glimpse of the balloon and he remembers thinking that it was a precarious form of transport. As they walk through the woods there are the first signs of a strengthening wind as *'the branches creaked like rusted machinery.'*

While walking through the woods, Clarissa talked about the research on John Keats she had been working on in America. She feels that Keats had written a letter to the girl he was hopelessly in love with, Fanny Brawne, which he never intended to send because *'he loved her so hard.'*

The narrator says he knows little of Keats and feels he, Keats, would not have wanted to write *'precisely because he loved her so much'*. He feels that Clarissa's interest in, what are to him *'hypothetical'* letters *'had something to do with our own situation and with the conviction that love that did not find its expression in a letter was not perfect.'*

She had written him some marvellous love letters but when he tried to match hers *'all that sincerity would permit me were the facts'*. There are obvious signs of strain in a relationship between two people with such opposed responses to life. For him it *'seemed miraculous enough . . . that a beautiful woman loved and wanted to be loved by a large, clumsy, balding fellow who could hardly believe his luck.'*

They watch the buzzard, but, because of the wind, shelter in the oaks and do not see the balloon's descent. They are about to start their picnic with the wine when the shout is heard, *'it was a baritone on a rising note of fear'*.

Again, the point is established that a momentous change is about to come into their lives. *'It marked the beginning and, of course, an end.'*

The narrator mentions that their relationship of seven years was childless but apart from Clarissa's irritation at his occasional dissatisfaction with his line of work *'there was nothing so far that threatened our free and intimate existence'*.

Then they see the balloon, *'the shape of a teardrop'*, dragging a man, with his leg entwined in a rope, along the ground, while a boy was in the balloon's basket. Again, exact description outlines the movement of the balloon. At one moment *'the towering balloon wavered and tilted and tugged but the beast was tamed.'* The men succeeded in slowing the balloon down, but then the wind increased and the balloon *'ceased its innocent comical wagging'* and was jerked ten feet in the air. The boy in the balloon was terrified and unable to move. The men grabbed the ropes but the pilot was *'emotionally out of control'* and gave no lead as to what they should do, *'we were never a team'*. As the narrator says, *'No human society from the hunter-gatherer to the post industrial has come to the attention of anthropologists that did not have leaders and led.'*

With his acute scientific awareness, the narrator sees the terrified boy in a state of *'learned helplessness'*.

He *'freezes the frame'* (a cinematic device, which McEwan was used to using in his film scripts) and describes the men in a circle around the balloon, and does so, this time, in much more detail. He pictures the pilot James Gadd, his grandson in the balloon, the family doctor John Logan, the two farm labourers, and Jed Parry, who was twenty-eight, unemployed and living on an inheritance in Hampstead.

Amidst total confusion, with all of them competing with ideas as to what should be done, a sudden enormous gust lifts the balloon into the air. *'We were treading the air with all our weight in the grip of our fists'*. As is normal in such climactic moments, time stands still, *'those one or two ungrounded seconds occupy as much space in memory as might a long journey up an uncharted river'*. The narrator's first impulse is to hang on to save the boy, but this thought is followed almost instantaneously by thoughts *'in which fear and instant calculations of a logarithmic complexity were fused.'* Even at such a moment panicky rationality takes over, he is aware that someone lets go but is not aware who it is. Later, everyone claims it was not him.

All but one let go. They had broken *'that deeper covenant, ancient and automatic written in our nature - co-operation - the basis of our earlier hunting successes, the force behind our evolving capacity for language, the glue of our social cohesion.'*

But he recognises the dichotomy built into man for *'letting go was in our nature too. Selfishness is also written in our hearts. That is our mammalian conflict what to give to others, and what to keep for yourself.'*

As soon as he saw a body fall away *'altruism had no place,'* he lets go and gets away with a bruised thigh. Of the others to let go, one broke his ankle.

But for one man, John Logan, the doctor, *'the flame of altruism must have burned a little stronger.'* He is lifted high in the air.

Horrified they watch as Logan slips down the rope and eventually has to let go. *'There is no forgiveness, no special dispensation for flesh, or bravery or kindness.'*

Ruthless gravity takes over and he fell as *'a stiff little black stick'*. The narrator saying, *'I've never seen such a terrible thing as a man falling.'*

TASK 2

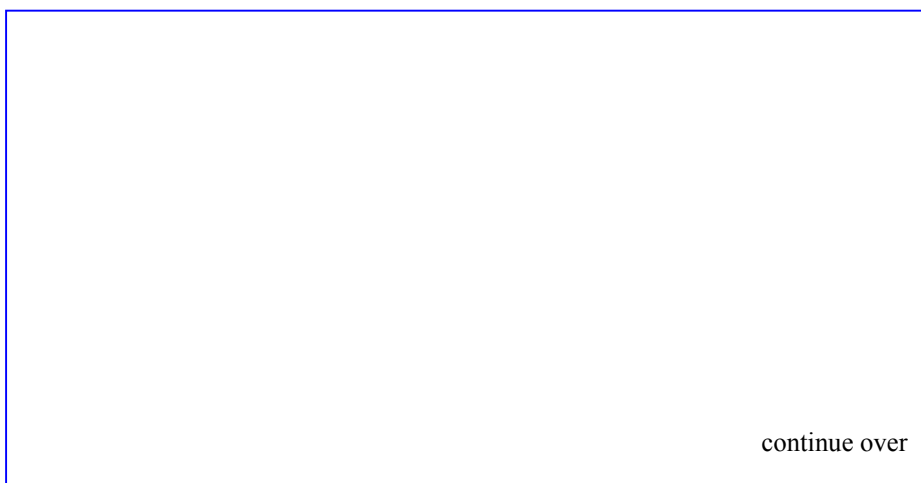
In this Chapter McEwan succeeds in creating a chilling tension. Discuss how he does this.

continue over



TASK 3

How does McEwan prepare the reader for what is to come in the novel?



continue over



Chapter 2

The chapter opens with the narrator continuing to prepare the reader for what is to come by telling of the extraordinary, and multiple, *'branchings and subdivisions'* of consequences that resulted from the catastrophe; *'such pathways of love and hatred blazed from this starting position.'*

He says his starting point was the touch of a wine bottle but this is *'as notional as a point in Euclidean geometry'*. It could have been the planning of the picnic, or the decision as to the route, or where and at what time they decided to eat. For him the cool touch of glass on skin and James Gadd's cry were *'synchronous moments that fix a transition from his delightful existence with Clarissa to the ordeal ahead'*.

He describes the sense of déjà-vu he had watching Logan hit the ground, because it recalled a recurring nightmare he had that he was in a prominent place watching a disaster as a result of which *'life was revealed as cheap'*. Logan had landed at the centre of a field of sheep and, with the complete indifference of nature, *'the nearest sheep, twenty feet away, barely looked up from its chewing.'* Clarissa comes up to him crying and loops her arms around him. He cannot cry. He can only think *'that man is dead . . . and I am alive'*.

He notices Jed Perry watching him; *'His long bony face was framed around a pained question. He looked wretched'*. Initially, he feels Parry needs comforting. He has no notion that Parry's *'pained, interrogative look was the first bloom of which I was entirely ignorant'*.

He takes out his mobile phone and is pleased to be *'in the world'* once more *'equipped, capable, connected'*.

He asks Parry to accompany him down to the body, totally unaware that *'everything, every gesture every word I spoke was being stored away, gathered and piled'*. For the first time *'obsession'* is mentioned. Clarissa tells him to slow down as a kind of euphoria has gripped him (for the first time his actual name, Joe, is used.). Fear follows the initial euphoria - he urinates against a tree.

He describes in detail the dead Logan whose *'skeletal structure had collapsed internally'* to produce *'a head on a thickened stick'*. In spite of all the scientific information he possesses, *'fear and awe still surprise us in the presence of the dead'*.

Parry follows him and calls out *'Don't touch it!'* He now looks at Parry as if for the first time. Parry is looking at him rather than the body. Joe notices his *'box-fresh'* trainers with red laces and his somewhat threatening appearance with his ponytail suggesting *'a pale Indian brave.'*

Parry tells him Clarissa is worried for him, which annoys Joe, who was *'old enough to dislike the presumption of first names.'* Moreover, by doing this Parry was claiming to know Clarissa's state of mind. When Joe says there is nothing they can do, Parry says there is something they can do together and he leaves Joe speechless by saying *'we can pray together'*. Joe is embarrassed by this, but Parry continues, *'God has brought us together in this tragedy and we have to, you know, make whatever sense of it we can'*.

Joe tries to appear light-hearted but he certainly doesn't feel so. Parry continues, *'It's like your own needs are being answered. It's got nothing to do with me, really, I'm just the messenger. It's a gift'*.

His embarrassment gone, Joe says, *'Thanks, but no.'* Parry continues with his patient understanding manner until Joe walks away but then he, Parry, has a radical change of tone and he calls sharply, *'Please have the courtesy to tell me this, what is it exactly stands in your way'*. Joe contemplates saying nothing, but then says he will not pray, *'Because, my friend, no one's listening. There is no one up there.'* Parry's response is extraordinary, *'the most joyous of smiles spreading slowly across his face.'* Joe feels it is as if he had said he was John the Baptist.

He is pleased to see the police arrive to process the tragedy because he sees them delivering him from *'the irradiating power of Parry's love and pity'*. He is fully aware this is much more threatening than he first thought.

TASK 4

In this Chapter, McEwan continues to suggest the potential danger that Jed Parry is to be to Joe. Discuss how he does this.

continue over



Chapter 3

Clarissa and Joe return home, and the unaltered nature of the house *'seemed blasphemous'* after what had happened. They had said little on the way home in the car, but now all their pent-up emotion and thoughts come in a torrent; *'there was comfort in reiteration'*. They blame the pilot, James Gadd, but this does not *'protect us for long from thoughts of all the things we should have done to avert Logan's death.'*

Joe cannot bring himself to talk about his feelings of guilt. As they try to rationalise what happened they feel *'like prisoners in a cell, running at walls, beating them back with their own heads. Slowly our prison grew larger'*. He tells Clarissa about Parry and the prayer story as comedy and she laughs in response. But they cannot avoid *'grinding the jagged edge of memories.'* Clarissa tells how she willed Logan's deliverance by angels. It seemed to her that Logan's fall was *'a challenge no angel could resist and his death denied their existence.'*

The rational, irreligious Joe wanted to ask, *'Did it need denying?'*

Logan had children whereas Clarissa was unable to have children, but slowly she had *'buried the sadness'* and made all her nephews, nieces and godchildren her surrogate family. It was a terrible sadness for her when a friend's five-day-old baby died and what was revealed was *'Clarissa's own mourning for a phantom child'*. She saw Logan as dying to prevent the kind of loss she felt she had sustained. For her the idea that Logan had died for nothing was impossible.

It was highly ironic that, in fact, the boy in the basket of the balloon, Harry Gadd, had survived. Clarissa says, *'it must mean something.'* But Joe did not like this line of thinking. He remains silent and Clarissa tells him, *'Don't worry Joe, I'm not going weird on you'*. For Joe it is simply the case that they tried to help but failed.

Clarissa responds, *'You're such a dope. You're so rational sometimes you're like a child'*. For her having seen this disaster their only response is to love each other even harder. This was not his natural response but Joe realises that she is right, that they must lose themselves in love. They do make love, and *'it served as a deliverance'*.

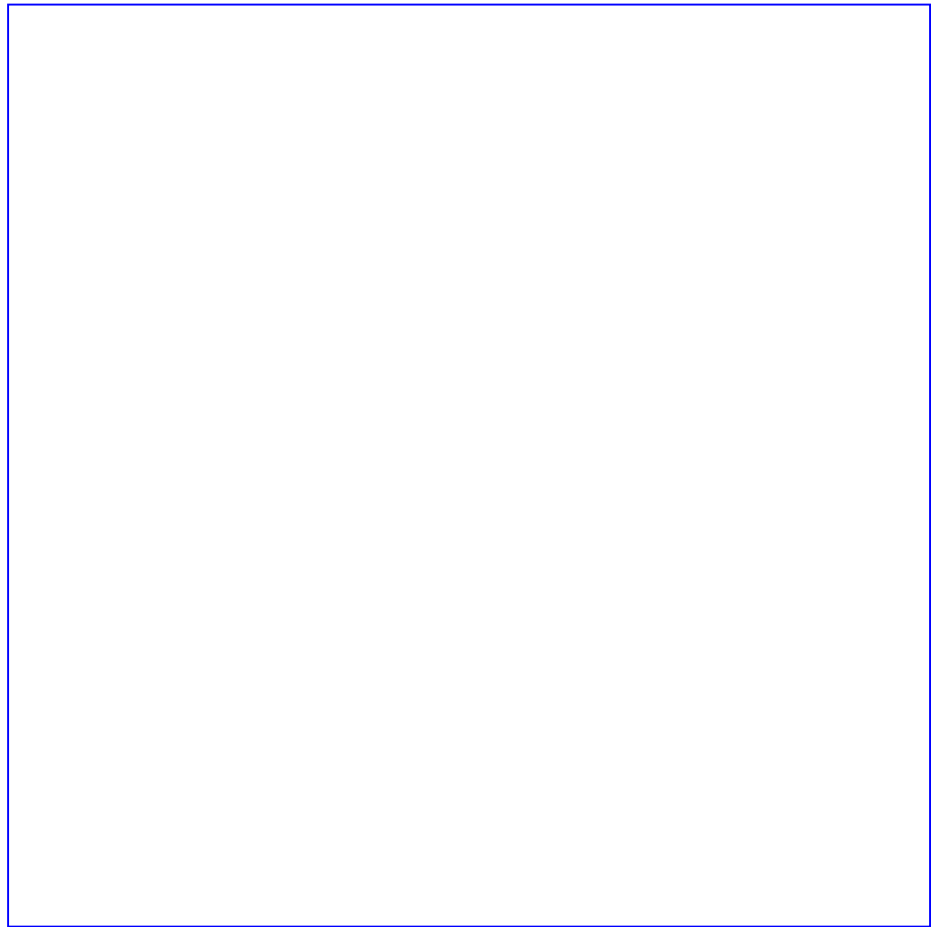
They recount their stories about fear and its results from their childhood and as Joe relaxes Clarissa is moved to say, *'The rationalist cracks at last'*. Still relaxed, they feel the need for company and invite their friends, Tony and Anne Bruce, for a Thai takeaway. They recount the events of the day to them and the Bruces leave at one in the morning.

When they are in bed, shortly after two, the phone rings and it's Jed Parry who says, *'I just wanted you to know, I understand what you're feeling, I feel it too, I love you'*.

Joe realises he has made his first serious mistake by saying to Clarissa, who asks who rang, *'It was nothing. Wrong number. Go to sleep.'*

TASK 5

Chapter one presented early indications that Joe's relationship with Clarissa has elements within it that could threaten their closeness. There are further indications of this in this Chapter. List these.



Chapter 4

Joe and Clarissa were relieved that the ordinary obligations of the day distanced the catastrophe, at least for a time.

After Clarissa left for the university, Joe settled down to work on a piece on the Hubble telescope for an American magazine. Mistakes over its design had, initially made it *'the staple of TV stand-up routines'* but the mistakes were put right and *'the twelve-billion-year-old pictures came in true and sharp.'*

But as Joe realises, *'There are certain mistakes that no quantity of astronauts can right'*, like his yesterday when he dismissed Parry's late night phone as a wrong number. The catastrophe back on his mind, he rings the police station in Oxford and learns there is to be an inquest into John Logan's death in six weeks' time and all the witnesses would be expected to attend.

He has an unsuccessful meeting with a radio talks' producer and then goes to the London Library to research some of Darwin's more obscure contemporaries. He wanted to write about *'the death of anecdote and narrative in science'*. He considers a letter written in 'Nature' dated 1904, which concluded that a dog could devise a plan and have a sense of the future. What Joe liked about this was how *'the power and attractions of narrative had clouded judgement.'*

Initially, he is comfortable in his studies but he becomes distracted, there is some movement across the room *'and then all I saw was a flash of a white shoe and something red'*. Agitated, he becomes more and more discontented with the building and its occupants. He considers the Library's science collection derisory. He objects to the assumption of the collection *'that the world could be sufficiently understood through fictions, histories and biographies.'*

Examining his feelings more closely he realises that, in fact, it's not the Library that is agitating him but his own emotional condition. He feels *'unclean, contaminated.'* He further analyses his feelings and realises *'All day I'd been afraid. Was I so obtuse, not to know fear from the start? . . . I was afraid of my fear because I did not yet know the cause'*.

He rushes out into St James Square and realises he is looking for a pair of white shoes, trainers with red laces. He finds himself right on the spot where the policewoman, Yvonne Fletcher, had been shot dead by a Libyan from a window across the road. In a totally uncharacteristic action, he returns flowers to a jam jar that a child might have left. He does this that it might bring him luck or rather protection and wonders at his own action, realising that *'on such hopeful acts of propitiation, fending off mad wild unpredictable forces, whole religions were founded.'*

TASK 6

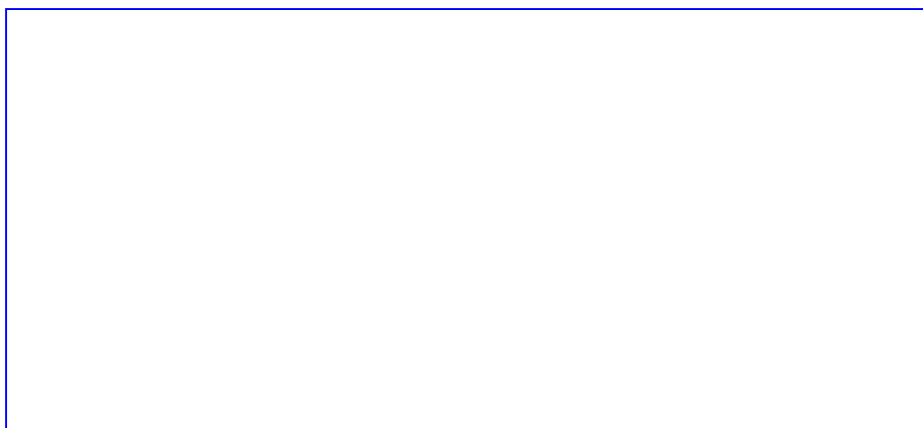
Joe attempts to 'escape' by immersing himself in science. But there are increasing signs that scientific rationalism will not be enough for him. List these signs as they appear in this Chapter.

**TASK 7**

McEwan suggests increasing anxiety and fear throughout this Chapter. Discuss how he does this.



continue over



Chapter 5

Joe returns home and realises he must tell Clarissa about Parry's phone calls. He is convinced Parry has been following him because of the trainers with the red laces.

He loses himself *'in the high-walled infinite prison of directed thought'* working on the piece he proposed to write on narrative in science. He considers the 19th century culture of the amateur *'nourished the anecdotal scientist'*, whereas modern science had become more difficult with its hard-edged theories. *'The meanderings of narrative had given way to an aesthetics of form.'* He writes for three hours but is discontented with the results. *'It wasn't written in pursuit of truth, it wasn't science. It was journalism.'*

In his continued agitated state, he is startled by the creak of a floorboard. *'There was someone at my back.'* He is terrified until he realises that it is Clarissa.

Clarissa tells him how she loves him. She is in particular need of his love at this time because she has just been with her brother, Luke, whose marriage is breaking up. They make love. *'John Logan's ghost was still in the room but it no longer threatened us'* and *'we tumbled out of our respective days like creatures shaken from a net.'*

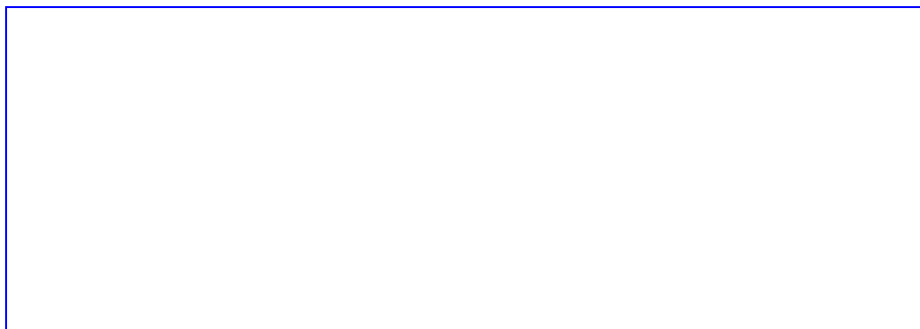
This time the phone remained silent, but only because Joe had unplugged it many hours before.

TASK 8

Joe continues to attempt to 'lose' himself in science, but this Chapter provides yet more evidence that his work is not sufficient for him. It is an *'evasion.'* Discuss that evidence.

TASK 9

Discuss the effectiveness of the image, '*like creatures shaken from a net.*'



Chapter 6

Joe is back to thinking about John Logan and how *'we had killed him'*. Rational scientist that he is, he notes that if the would-be rescuers had acted together, their combined weight would have kept the balloon on the ground. He wonders if the first person to release the rope could be blamed. He also wonders whether he should visit Mrs Logan and tell her what happened. He considers she deserved to know from a witness that her husband was a hero.

He, finally, tells Clarissa that what he had said was a wrong number was, in fact, Jed Parry calling to say he loved him.

Initially, Clarissa *'froze'* as she took this in, then she reacted with delight at the thought of Joe involved in *'a secret gay love affair with a Jesus freak! I can't wait to tell your science friends.'* When Joe says, *'There's more though'*, she jokes, *'You're getting married.'* She cannot take seriously Joe complaining that he was being followed by Parry when he had not even seen his face; his only evidence being that he had seen what he took to be Parry's shoes. Much to Joe's annoyance she concludes, *'It's a joke Joe. It's a funny story you'll be telling your friends. At worst it's a nuisance. You mustn't let it get to you.'*

She tells him he is working too hard.

Joe objects to being treated like *'some poor fellow'* and wishes to tell her more but she is late for the university and when the phone rings she goes leaving Joe to answer the call.

It's Parry on the phone saying he must speak to Joe. Joe threatens to ring the police, but when Parry says if Joe meets him once he will not bother him anymore, Joe decides he must meet him. He is shocked when Parry tells him he is, in fact, *'In the phone box at the end of the road.'*

TASK 10

Trace the increasing evidence provided by this Chapter that a rift between Joe and Clarissa is likely.

continue over



Chapter 7

Joe goes to meet Parry and, initially, finds him abject, *'no longer the Indian brave, despite the pony-tail.'* Feeling somewhat sorry for him he shakes his hand kindly.

Parry wants to go to a coffee place but Joe insists they stay where they are.

Parry complains that, *'It's all about control,'* but that Joe will not be able to keep up control over Parry, *'You love me. You love me, and there's nothing I can do but return your love.'*

Interested to know the answer, Joe asks, *'What possible reason would you have for thinking I love you?'*

Parry cries and asks Joe what he really wants him to do. Feeling suffocated Joe walks away from him but Parry runs after him. He implores Joe, *'Don't deny us . . . we've come together for a purpose.'* He wants to bring Joe to God through love, although he realises Joe's reason and logic will make this difficult.

Joe asks him what he means by love, *'Are we talking about sex? Is that what you want?'* He is amazed that he finds it so difficult to say to Parry, *'Who the fuck are you? What are you talking about?'* He realises that, in part, *'he is playing along with this domestic drama.'* Almost in spite of himself, he tells Parry, *'You'd better give me your address.'*

Joe gets into a taxi but Parry leans in and angers Joe by saying to him that he knows his problem and it is that he is too kind and, by implication, too considerate of Clarissa, he says, *'The only way is for the three of us to talk.'*

Furious, Joe wrenches the door from him and the taxi drives off.

TASK 11

On meeting Parry Joe goes through a conflicting range of emotions. Trace these as they occur in this Chapter.

continue over



Chapter 8

This Chapter tells the reader more of Joe's past. It presents him as enjoying his work while not being entirely satisfied with it.

Joe, at this stage, considers Parry to be simply *'a confused and eccentric young man.'*

More relaxed with this thought, he decides to start work on a long piece on *'the smile.'* For Joe the interest in the subject centres on the idea that the smile is genetically implanted into infants across all cultures because *'it triggers a more abundant share of parental love and affection.'*

Clarissa objects to this *'new fundamentalism'*. She feels, *'You've trapped us in our genes, and there is a reason for everything.'* For her, *'What a zoologist had to say about a baby's smile could be of no real interest. The truth of that smile was in the eye and heart of the parent, and in the unfolding love which only had meaning through time.'*

This was a repeated source of disagreement between Joe and Clarissa. Joe feels that *'What we were really talking about this time was the absence of babies from our lives.'*

In spite of his earlier solemn promise, Joe is confronted by Parry outside the apartment, who tells him that he is *'coming at this from an angle of forgiveness.'* Angered at this Joe brushes him aside and closes the door on him. But Parry continues to ring the apartment.

Joe is reduced to calling the police about being harassed. Ultimately, he is told that as he hasn't been harmed no offence has taken place. As regards Parry's attempting to bring Joe to God, he is told *'Trying to convert you is not against the law.'* Parry remains facing the building, *'as solid as a STASI agent.'*

Joe returns to thinking about his work, he is dissatisfied with it. He feels, *'All the ideas I deal in are other people's . . . I'm a parasite.'*

He goes back over his life; his seven years study for a doctorate in quantum electrodynamics; his setting up with a colleague a company which had failed; his being too old to return to theoretical quantum electrodynamics in academia; and his eventual settling for work as a scientific journalist. In his discontent he concludes, *'Now, no scientist, not even a lab technician or college porter, would ever take me seriously again.'*

In this state of discontent he returns to thinking about Parry and he discovers that he has now gone but he has sent twenty-nine messages. He receives one final message for the day which seemed to be sent

from a taxi, 'Joe. Brilliant idea with the curtains. I got it straight away.'


Joe is left to contemplate this message and how he might find his way back into research so that he '*might achieve something new*' before he is fifty.

TASK 12

Trace the evidence that this chapter provides that Joe is increasingly dissatisfied with his work.

**TASK 13**

The Chapter also extends the picture of the different approaches to life of Clarissa and Joe. Discuss how this is done.



continue over



Chapter 9

Clarissa returns to the apartment having had a very bad day at the University. On top of everything she ended the morning discovering that her appointment diary was missing. She feels she has a cold coming and worst of all, the memory of the balloon accident is back with her. The image that has been with her since the late afternoon is of Logan letting go the rope, this has left her with a feeling of *'horrificed helplessness'*.

She looks forward to arriving home, as Joe is always good at looking after her when she needs it. However, when she steps into the hall Joe *'has a wild look about him'* and immediately starts into his *'tale of harassment and idiocy'*. Behind this she feels he is expressing some kind of accusation against her.

As he has done before, when he is disturbed, he complains he has to get back into proper science. Feeling increasingly tired and ill, all she wants is to be alone, but he doesn't stop talking. He wants to be back into theoretical physics. She knows full well that he is back with this *'old frenzied ambition'* because he's upset. She realises the trouble with Joe's *'precise and careful mind is that it takes no account of its own emotional field.'*

She prepares her bath but Joe continues. Aware she is treading on potentially dangerous ground, she asks cautiously, *'Do you think it's possible that you're making too much of this man Parry? . . . He's not the cause of your agitation he's a symptom.'*

There is a *'warning chill'* when Joe asks, *'Symptom of what exactly?'*

Clarissa, in her weakened state, has let herself be drawn into Joe's mental state and his problem. She asks why he has wiped the messages off the tape? As she says, the thirty messages that he's wiped would be evidence of harassment that he could have taken to the police. They certainly would be evidence for her. Joe takes this as meaning that she doesn't believe him about Parry and his obsession.

Clarissa is reduced to saying, *'I don't know what to think . . . What I know is that I come back from a terrible day and walk straight into yours.'*

From this moment their anger with each other increases. Clarissa says, *'You were so intense about him as soon as you met him. It's like you invented him'*. To which Joe exclaims, *'I get it, I brought it down on myself. . . It's my karma. I thought even you were above this kind of new-age drivel.'* He says, *'Look there's a problem out there and all I wanted from you was your support and help.'*

Clarissa complains that the first time Parry phoned to tell Joe he loved him, '*You admitted you lied to me.*' She asks, '*What am I to think Joe?*'

Unable to cope with this highly emotional situation, Joe is reduced to shouting at her departing back as she leaves the bathroom, '*Well fuck off then.*'

He rushes out of the apartment and sees Parry waiting for him at the end of the brick path.

TASK 14

The rift between Joe and Clarissa reaches a climax in this chapter. Trace the steps, which lead up to this climax.



Chapter 10

Joe is confronted by Parry but ignores him and walks ahead. He is disturbed by the word *'curtain'* that Parry had used.

Parry catches up with Joe and accuses him of playing games with him. Parry asks him, *'Why do you keep pretending that you don't know what I'm talking about? And then the signals Joe. Why d'you keep on?'*

He becomes distraught, *'You'll come to him too because you have to. You fuck, you'll beg for mercy, you'll crawl on your stomach.'*

Joe is struck by the word *'signal'*, which Parry has used twice. He connects it with the word *'curtain'* and then he is very excited as he calls to mind *'A grand house, a famous residence in London, and the curtains in its windows used to communicate.'* This, in turn, recalls his own study and its curtains. He feels he is beginning to understand something of Parry, and this realisation makes him feel that his row with Clarissa will be an easy matter to set right, because it will prove him *'incontrovertibly right.'*

Excited, he leaves Parry crying with his hands over his face.

TASK 15

Discuss the significance of the words *'curtain'* and *'signal'* for Joe in his relationship with Parry.

Chapter 11

In his letter, Parry says he knows that it's going to be difficult for Joe but, *'The path that He sets us on is hard for a purpose. His purpose! It tests us and strengthens us, and in the long run it will bring us to even greater joy.'*

He completely misinterprets Joe's response to his first phone call, *'When you picked up the phone I heard the relief in your voice. You accepted my message in silence, but don't think I wasn't aware of your gratitude.'* He continues, *'You've seen my soul'* and now proceeds to give Joe the ordinary details of his life. How, after a difficult and lonely childhood, he eventually inherited from his mother a beautiful house in Frogal Lane. He says, at present he is, *'the King of my castle, which God has granted to me for a purpose of his own.'* He sees everything that Joe does as being a signal of his love, such as Joe touching the top of a hedge with his hands. When Parry touched the same leaves they seemed to glow.

He knows there are barriers ahead, *'Mountain ranges! The biggest of which is your denial of God'*. But he is sure Joe will, eventually, come to God, *'Just as I know that it's my purpose to bring you there.'*

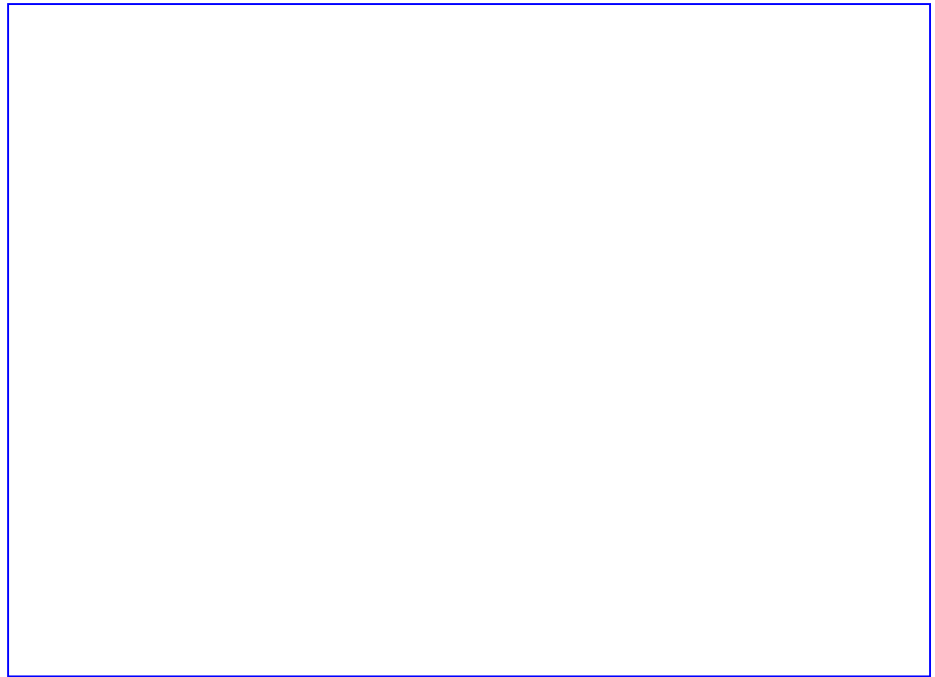
The true depth of his obsession is shown by the fact that he has covered five sheets of paper with Joe's name. He is concerned about the whole matter of Clarissa and says, *'I think it's right that you take the lead in this and let me know what you think is best.'* He wonders if perhaps they should all three sit down together and talk it through! He wants to make things less painful her.

He concludes, *'While I've been writing I've felt your presence, right by my elbow'*, and, again, showing total lack of understanding of the real situation, apologises for not having recognised Joe's love, immediately, at the bottom of the hill when they tried to rescue the boy in the balloon. *'I'll never stop saying I'm sorry. Joe will you ever forgive me?'*

TASK 16

Discuss the frightening depths of Jed Parry's obsessions that are revealed by the letter he writes, which constitutes the whole of this Chapter.

continue over



Chapter 12

Joe's sense of failure in science has not left him. To try and escape from this sense he decides to drive his car. He is doing just this on the way to Oxford to see Logan's widow, Jean.

He reflects that he has read somewhere about a curtain used as a signal and that this has some relevance to Parry but that he will have to cease pursuing his thoughts about this, actively, for the time being.

He also reflects on the fact he is having little luck with Clarissa. They were talking, however, and he had given her Parry's letter to read. He reflects how she had taken '*a slow deep breath*' when she read the section dealing with '*the whole matter of Clarissa*', but she had barely glanced at the last few lines. She had then got up suddenly and said, '*I've got to get ready for work.*'

Joe acknowledges to himself, '*there remained between us an unarticulated dispute.*' He wonders if he has given her the impression that he was secretly flattered by Parry's attention and if she '*considered Parry my fault.*'

Clarissa had said to him, '*You are so alone in all this, even when you speak to me about it . . . There's something you're not telling me. You're not speaking from the heart.*'

After Clarissa had left, Joe had remained with Parry's letter sliding it back into its '*tight little envelope as though to contain the viral spores that were invading our home.*' He had begun to wonder if Clarissa regretted her life with him, and if she had she met someone at work, a colleague or a student. With this in mind, justifying his action with the pretence that he was looking for a stapler, he had gone into Clarissa's room and read through some of her correspondence. '*Each successive act, each moment of deeper penetration was coarsening.*' Eventually, he had felt '*so loathsome*' about what he was doing he had retreated from the room, touching his pocket '*to confirm - or give the impression of confirming - the presence of the stapler.*' He had realised, '*My intrusion was a landmark in our decline and in Parry's insidious success.*'

He had heard from his professor that there was no chance of him returning to a place in his department. His professor had advised him to continue the successful career that he had already.

He is now outside Mrs Logan's house in Oxford. He had originally wanted to tell her of her husband's courage in case nobody else did it, but now, '*I was keeping a rendezvous with real grief and I was confused.*' The house is semi-detached, '*choking in fresh greenery*' deep in the heart of the north Oxford garden suburb. The house gave

off a sadness and the garden was neglected. Joe is forced to realise, *'I hadn't come to tell Mrs Logan of her husband's courage. I had come to explain, to establish my guiltlessness, my innocence of his death.'*

TASK 17

In this Chapter, Joe reaches a point in his relationship with Clarissa where he behaves in a truly shameful fashion. Discuss, briefly, how he is brought to this point.



Chapter 13

Jean Logan answers the door. She had eyes *'that were small and dry, not reddened by grief but sunk, and glazed by weariness . . . She brought to the door a warm, home-baked smell and I thought she might have been sleeping in her clothes.'*

Joe knew this kind of north Oxford interior from previous visits. *'No colours but brown and cream. No design or style, no comfort, and in winter, very little warmth. Even the light was brownish, at one with the smells of damp, coal dust and soap . . . it seemed a perfect setting for sorrow.'*

'The air was so thick that breathing was a conscious effort. There was a gas fire on, burning yellow and probably leaking carbon monoxide. That and the holed-up sorrow.'

Joe is left wondering if the sorrow had pre-dated John Logan's death.

Jean Logan hopes he hasn't come to satisfy his curiosity and she adds that she would rather not hear *'condolences, consolations, that kind of thing.'*

Bitterly, she says there are things she wants to know, *'But I don't think they're going to give me the answers. They pretend they don't even understand the questions.'* She continues, the authorities say, *'We know it's your husband, the father of your children, but we're in charge and please don't get in the way . . .'*

The mention of husband and father causes her to break down and cry in spite of herself, *'She was probably the sort of woman who hates to be seen crying'*.

Joe can do nothing but wait and as he does so he notices a tent in the garden which has collapsed, *'the first evidence of the children.'* He realises that what he is seeing is *'love and the slow agony of its destruction,'* and he imagines what it would mean to him to lose Clarissa. He determines to go back and fight for her love, *'Every thing else, Parry included, is irrelevant.'*

Then Jean Logan reveals the true source of her bitterness, *'There was someone with my husband. Did you notice? . . . There was someone in the car with John when he stopped'*. Joe says he would have remembered seeing someone if anyone had been there, but she takes little notice of this.

Logan was supposed to be in London that day and when the car had been returned to her it contained a picnic and a small silk scarf such as she had never possessed. She is convinced that, *'He was going to have a picnic with her. Somewhere in the woods'*.

Joe repeats that he saw no one with her husband but, in her deep jealousy and agonised sorrow, *'she didn't hear me.'*

She says, *'I need to know how long it was going on and what it meant . . . I simply have to find her. I have to talk to her.'*

In her agony, she concludes saying, *'If she comes near this house . . . I'll kill her. God help me, but I will.'*

TASK 18

In this Chapter McEwan creates a remarkable picture of a house of resigned sadness and of a woman driven nearly mad by grief and jealousy. Discuss how he does this.



Chapter 14

Joe is still with the Logans, meeting the two children of the household. Joe reflects how he has been good with children including an awkward godchild of Clarissa's.

Initially, the children merely stare at him *'yet another man who was not their father.'* The girl was ten and her brother some two years younger. The boy picks up on his mother saying she would kill the woman whom she suspects was having an affair with her husband. He says, *'It's completely wrong to kill people.'* This leads to a discussion of *'moral relativism'*, which is a relief from the sadness in the house and relaxes the children with Joe.

Their mother introduces them as Rachel and Leo.

She asks Joe to help her answer the questions she has about her husband's death. She says she has the phone numbers of the farm people and of Parry. Joe finds this request *'too complicated to refuse.'* He says again that John Logan was a brave man *'And he put the rest of us to shame.'*

Mrs Logan's bitterness is shown by her reply, *'The rest of you are alive.'*

She continues that her husband was a cautious man, but he did take part in strenuous outdoor activities. He disliked the fact he was forty-two and couldn't accept the fact he could no longer be best at what he did. She feels that he must have been showing off to his lover when he had hung on to the balloon, otherwise his natural caution would have held him back.

Joe tells her, *'It's just an hypothesis. You can't let yourself believe in it.'*

He watches the children play with the curtains. Leo explains, *'I'm the king and she's the queen and I only come out when she gives the signal.'*

This acts as a trigger for Joe and he remembers the case of the Frenchwoman who was convinced that King George V was in love with her and was signalling to her using the curtains in Buckingham Palace. The French psychiatrist, de Clerambault, had given his name to the syndrome she suffered from.

Joe feels that knowing the syndrome, which he feels Parry is suffering from, had given him *'A framework of prediction and it offered a kind of comfort.'*

Promising that he would phone when he had made his calls Joe leaves the Logans feeling, as he went up the path, that *'my leaving would return (the children) to their father's absence.'*

TASK 19

Describe briefly how the problem involving the two words *'curtain'* and *'signal'* is solved for Joe in this Chapter.

Chapter 15

Joe drives home from Oxford and stops in the Chilterns. He retraces his path to the point where the balloon had carried Logan into the air. He feels in doing this he is traversing his *'Stations of the Cross.'*

It takes him two hours to drive into London. When he does arrive outside the apartment Parry is waiting for him. He tries to squeeze past Parry and tells him if he doesn't let him through he will call the police. Parry insists that he read the contents of an envelope he hands to Joe.

Parry says, *'I paid a researcher and he got me all your articles. I read them last night, thirty-five of them. I've got your books too.'* Joe realises something had changed in Parry. *'There was a hardness . . . a change around the eyes.'* Parry says, *'You can be open with me. You don't have to wrap it up in code.'* Joe tells him, *'There is no code. It would be better if you accepted that you need help,'* but Parry reacts as if he had had *'a rallying cry to love. He was almost shouting his joy.'*

Joe enters the apartment wondering whether he had, in fact, been threatened. If Parry could hire a researcher so easily, he realises it would be equally easy to hire *'a few goons to thrash me within an inch of my life.'*

He senses Clarissa is in the apartment but cannot find her to begin with. Eventually, he finds her in his study, *'slumped in my swivel chair, with her back to the desk, facing the door.'*

When Joe asks why she didn't answer him, she says bitterly, *'I thought this would be the first place you would look.'*

Angrily she says, *'I've been sitting here half an hour, trying to tempt myself to open one of these drawers and take a look at your letters. And do you know, I couldn't raise the curiosity . . . If you'd asked to see my letters I'd've said yes, go-ahead, I've got nothing to hide from you.'* Joe had never seen her in such a fury before.

'You even left the drawer open so I'd know when I came in. It's a statement, a message, from you to me, it's a signal. The trouble is, I don't know what it means. Perhaps I'm being very stupid. So spell it out for me now, Joe. What is it you are trying to tell me?'

TASK 20

List what Joe sees as his *'Stations of the Cross'* as mentioned in this Chapter.

continue over



Chapter 16

Parry tells in his letter of his disgust at Joe's attitude towards God, which was revealed when he had read the thirty-five photocopied articles collected for him by the student he had hired.

He asks, *'Was I to deliver into His hands the author of these hateful pieces against Him? . . . I didn't know you wrote out of contempt.'*

He is hugely affronted that, *'You wrote about God himself. . . He is a literary character, you say, like something out of a novel.'*

He continues by asking, *'How is it possible to love God and love you at the same time?'* And concludes that the fact that he does so indicates the very strength of his faith.

He attacks Joe for thinking that science can replace God. For him, thinking that, has led to the notion that, *'We've flushed God out of this particular story . . . he's been driven to his last redoubt, among the molecules and particles of the quantum physicists.'*

He angrily dismisses this notion, *'But it doesn't work Joe.'*

He becomes more threatening realising what a task he has with Joe. *'My love for you is hard and fierce, it won't take no for an answer, and it's moving steadily towards you, coming to claim you and deliver you. In other words, my love – which is also God's love – is your fate.'*

He finds Joe's attitude towards God supremely arrogant, *'It's not only that you deny there's a God- you want to take his place. Pride like this can destroy you.'*

He knows Joe will find the course he will have to take will be very hard but *'That is how it has to be.'*

He finishes his letter with a distinctly threatening tone, *'Don't ever walk by me as if I wasn't there. Neither of us can be fooled. Never deny my reality, because in the end you'll deny yourself.'*

TASK 21

Discuss the signs of how, in the letter which makes up this Chapter, Parry is becoming more threatening and hostile.

continue over



Chapter 17

Joe and Clarissa are at a point, *'Where every thing between us was stalled . . . To her I was manic, perversely obsessed, and worst of all, the thieving invader of her private space. As far as I was concerned she was disloyal, unsupportive in this time of crisis and irrationally suspicious.'*

As Joe says, *'The unacknowledged emotion around the household in those days was shame.'*

They continued talking to each other. *'But one aspect of our lives had become absorbed into the daily routine and we could not bear to discuss it,'* that aspect being Parry.

He was sending three or four letters a week. In them it appeared to Joe, *'I spoke to him now in dreams . . . radiantly before him like a Bible prophet'*. Joe, increasingly, looked for threats in these letters. He was well aware that *'over half of all male de Clerambaults in one survey attempted violence on the subjects of their obsessions.'* Parry's letters had become routine, so did his presence outside the apartment. Nothing could destroy his faith in his purpose, *'He illuminated the world with his feelings, and the world confirmed him at every turn his feelings took.'*

Three times, Joe attempted to get him to talk, hoping by using a hidden tape recorder that he would get evidence to show that Parry had threatened him, but he would not stay.

However, Parry did leave Clarissa alone. She, alarmed at Joe's behaviour, had said to Joe, *'It's all over. It's best to admit it now. I think we are finished, don't you?'*

Joe, numbed, in a state of denial, *'felt nothing at all.'* His *'cold-blooded'* thoughts turn to Jean Logan and the promises he had made to her.

He called Toby Green, who was concerned with his own affairs, particularly his broken ankle and had little thought for Jean Logan's situation. He then contacted James Gadd, who said, *'Everything I've got to say I'll say in the Coroners Court.'* He then turned to ringing Joseph Lacey and *'he turned out to be a more focused spirit.'* He wouldn't say anything over the phone but asked Joe to come to meet him, when he would consider what more information he could give him.

When he asks Clarissa whether she thought Logan's car had two doors open, perhaps even three, she says she had seen no one apart from Logan himself.

That left Parry, and, as Joe thinks about him and doesn't reply to her comment about Logan, she says, *'You're always thinking about him. It never stops. You were thinking about him just then weren't you? Go on, tell me honestly. Tell me.'*

When Joe admits that he was, she says, *'Joe. I'm losing you. It's frightening. You need help but I don't think it can come from me.'*

When she says that she thinks there is something wrong with his mind he says, indignantly, *'There is nothing wrong with my mind.'* But he continues to go into detail about de Clerambault sufferers. This causes Clarissa to shout, *'You say he's outside, but when I go out there's no one. No one Joe.'* She says, *'I'm frightened.'*

When Joe replies, *'I am too. He could get violent,'* she can take no more and feels driven to say, *'I'm going to sleep in the children's room tonight.'*

Joe pleads with her to stay but she goes. They continue to live side by side but Joe, *'knew I was on my own.'*

TASK 22

Finally, in this Chapter Clarissa stops sleeping with Joe. Discuss what brings her to this point.

Chapter 18

Now it was settled in Clarissa's mind that Joe was *'unhinged'* she was acting more kindly towards him.

When she had left for work Joe wrapped the present he had bought for her birthday. A lunch had been planned for the day, and her godfather, Professor Kale was also to be present at this lunch.

Joe was attempting to gather from Parry's letters *'a dossier of threats'*, which he could take to the police. He was particularly alarmed by the fact that Parry seemed to enjoy *'the pleasures of the kill'* when he wrote about killing rabbits with a .22 rifle that he used to borrow.

He was also interested in the real nature of Parry's religiosity. *'His religion was dreamily vague on the specifics of doctrine, and he gave no impression of being attached to any particular church.'*

Joe reflected that, for Parry, *'God was a term interchangeable with self . . . God was undeniably 'within' rather than in his heaven, and believing in him was therefore a licence to respond to the calls of feeling or intuition.'*

Joe takes his 'evidence' to the police. A friend had advised him that his best approach was to file an official complaint about the way his previous phonecall, complaining about Parry, had been handled.

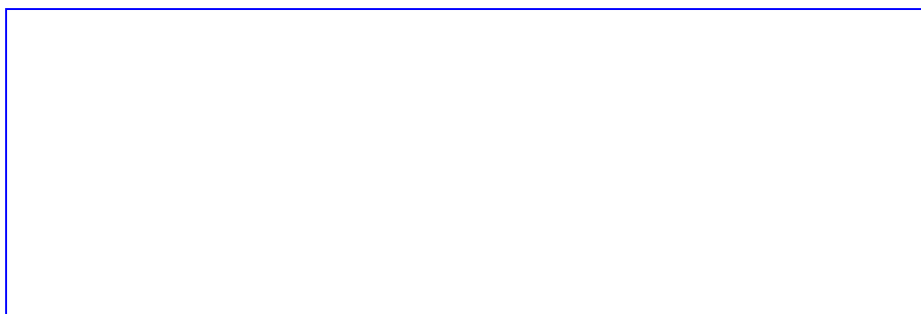
He files his complaint and an Inspector Linley hears his case. He makes it all too obvious that he cannot take Joe's complaint too seriously. As Joe has not been actively threatened he tells him that, *'As stalkers go, Mr Rose, he's a pussy cat.'* He says, as regards Parry, *'He loves his God, he loves you, and I'm sorry about that, but he hasn't broken the law.'* He can only suggest a home beat officer is sent to Joe's house who will be able *'to make some useful suggestions.'*

Somehow the effect of Linley's *'brush-off'* was *'clarifying'* for Joe. It makes him recall the very happy time he and Clarissa had enjoyed on her birthday the previous year. He realised, *'How sharply I missed our old life together, and I wondered how we would ever return to such love and fun and easy intimacy.'*

TASK 23

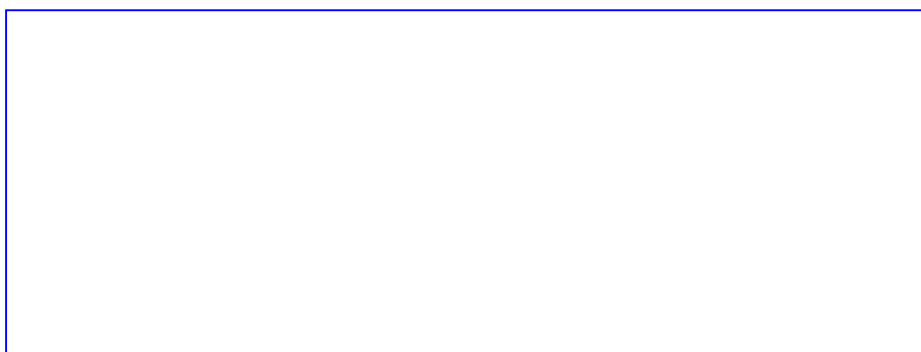
Joe considers Parry is particularly dangerous because his God is *'within'* rather than in his heaven. Discuss why he feels this to be so dangerous.

continue over



TASK 24

Discuss what effect the interview with Inspector Linley has on Joe.



Chapter 19

Clarissa, Joe and Professor Kale are at the restaurant at lunchtime to celebrate Clarissa's birthday. The professor also has something to celebrate as he has been appointed to an honorary position on the Human Genome Project.

Joe notices a middle-aged man with a young girl and an old man sitting nearby. He also registers '*a solitary diner with his back to us*', who sat some twenty feet away. Kale gives Clarissa a gold brooch and tells the story of Johann Miescher who identified DNA in 1868 but his paper was blocked by his teacher.

Joe gives Clarissa a first edition of Keats' first collection, 'Poems of 1817' and Clarissa tells the story of how Keats was famously put down by Wordsworth. Joe tells '*a genius-spurned*' story of his own, that of the publisher who turned down a novel called 'Strangers from Within', only for it to be published later, with some changes, as 'Lord of the Flies.'

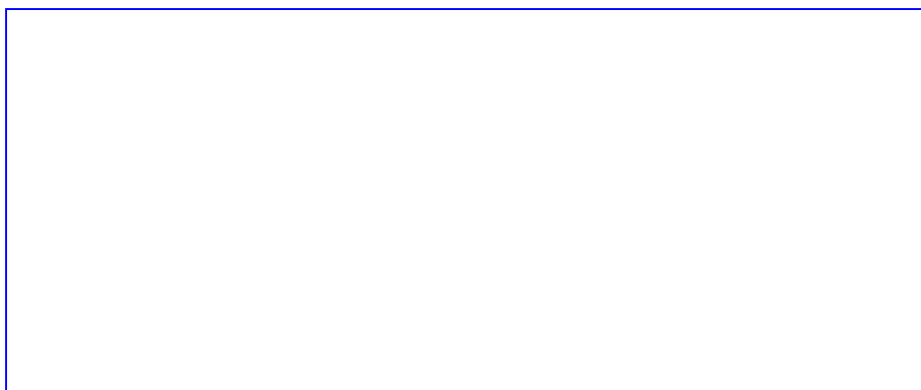
At that point two masked men appear and make for the table at which Tapp, the young girl and the old man sat. One of them fired at Tapp and was about to fire again when the solitary diner jumped to his feet and knocked the gunman's arm into the air so that he missed. The gunmen and the solitary man make their escape,

Joe is left to wonder how he could possibly have failed to recognise that the solitary man was, in fact, Parry. He also wonders how Parry could have known they would be dining in this particular restaurant at this particular time. He realises, '*It was a mistake. Nothing personal. It was a contract, and it had been bungled. It should have been me.*'

TASK 25

Trace briefly the pattern of events leading up to the shooting of Colin Tapp.

continue over



Chapter 20

Joe is waiting in Bow Street to be interviewed by the police. He and Clarissa have already gathered from the papers that Tapp was an under-secretary of state at the Department of Trade and Industry. *'He was a businessman, recently promoted from the backbenches, and was supposed to have extensive connections as well as many enemies in the Middle East.'*

Clarissa, who had clearly not seen Parry, tells Joe to just tell them what he saw, *'Don't go on about your usual stuff.'*

Joe immediately tells the interviewing officer he knows what happened. The officer, Detective Constable Wallace, clearly doesn't believe that Joe is right. He wonders why Joe had not recognised Parry straight away. He asks Joe to go through his statement in detail and then tells him that it disagrees in important details with the accounts given by Clarissa and Professor Kale. He finally tells Joe that several of the witnesses from the restaurant had heard one of the gunmen say something and most of them thought he spoke Arabic. Moreover, there had been an attempt on Mr Tapp's life in Addis Ababa eighteen months earlier.

He concludes, *'Parry isn't behind this, believe me. Although I'm not saying you don't need help.'* The help he immediately offers is that Joe should take Prozac!

Joe realises that he will get no real help from the authorities and decides he will have to contact an old acquaintance of his, John Well, a drug dealer. He was *'cast more in the type of a shopkeeper, the earnest committed purveyor of fine wines, or the busy proprietor of a delicatessen.'*

He rings Well, who thinks he wants drugs, but Joe says, *'No, Johnny. Not that. I need your help. I need a gun.'*

TASK 26

Trace why the police reject Joe's explanation of what happened and discuss what this leads Joe to do.

continue over



Chapter 21

Joe is on his way with Johnny Well to buy the gun he wants for his protection. As they drive out of London, Johnny tells him, melodramatically, he must call the gun *'the item'* and the bullets *'rounds'*.

Joe knows the people from whom he is going to buy the gun are *'ex-hippies who made it rich in coke. They had gone legal in the mid-eighties and dealt in property. Now things were not so well'*, so they were prepared to sell a gun.

Johnny further explains that, *'relative to the scene . . . these people are intellectual.'* Meaning they had lots of books.

They drive into a stereotypical twilit criminal world *'through gloomy tunnels of greenery on a high-banked single-track road'*. They arrive at *'an ugly mock-Tudor house.'* Typically, *'In front poking through the long grass and the nettles were the skeletons and entrails of half a dozen motorbikes. It looked to me like a place where crimes could be safely committed'*.

Johnny adds to the threatening and criminal atmosphere. He says, *'Don't make fun of these people. They haven't had your advantages and they're, uh, not too stable'*.

They meet the inhabitants of the house who, again, are stereotypical representatives of their kind: Steve, who had *'a shaved head and a small waxed moustache dyed with henna'*; Daisy, who was typical of the girls in English hippiedom, *'A certain kind of quiet girl who sat crossed legged at the edges, got stoned and brought the tea'*; and Xan, whose *'huge forearms were hairless and meaty'*.

Having met these odd inhabitants they all sit down to an equally odd late breakfast of porridge and slabs of toast. Joe is then overcome by an irresistible urge to laugh at Steve's moustache. The only way he can talk himself out of this potentially dangerous situation is to say he has an ammonia allergy. This, bizarrely, leads to a discussion of allergies, when all Joe really wants is to purchase the gun and go.

The ex-hippies want to know what Joe's reason is for wanting a gun, and seem pleased when he said he wants it for self-protection. *'They wanted the money and they wanted absolution'*.

He gives the money, £750, to Steve but Xan demands that Steve puts the money back on the table. Then the most extraordinary, bizarre and alarming fight begins between the two. Daisy gives the gun to Joe and tells him to go. Johnny is very anxious that they should do as she says. He doesn't want to get implicated if Xan kills Steve, as seems likely.

They make their exit and as they drive away the car phone goes. It is Parry, he tells Joe, *'I'm at your place, sitting here with Clarissa. I'm putting her on. OK? Are you there? Joe? Are you there?'*

TASK 27

Trace briefly why Joe gets involved in the bizarre world of a group of aged hippies, ex-drug dealers and ex-property dealers down on their luck.



Chapter 22

Clarissa tells Joe on the car phone that he must come straight back. *'Don't talk to anyone. Don't talk to the police.'* The monotone that she used let Joe know that the words were not hers. As Joe notes, *'she was speaking like a clock.'*

She tells him that Parry will be watching out the window and that he must not bring anyone with him.

Joe says he will do as Parry says, and adds that he loves her. He tells Parry not to hurt her. Parry's response is that, *'It's all down to you Joe.'*

Joe gets Johnny to show him how to use the gun and he uses it to fire at a tree. Johnny points out to him that, *'A tree's one thing, but it's a big deal when you point a gun at someone. Basically you're giving them permission to kill you.'* Joe's extreme anxiety is shown by the fact that he is forced to crap.

They drive into London and he drops Johnny in Streatham High Street, not before Johnny has told him, *'If you get into a collision and the cops are involved, the Browning's got nothing to do with me.'*

Cautiously, Joe enters the apartment to find Parry sitting right up against Clarissa with something suspicious protruding from his top pocket.

Parry says, *'I love you Joe, and it's wrecked my life.'*

Clarissa attempts to tell him that Joe was actually frightened of him and would have done him no harm. He dismisses this saying that neither she nor Joe understand him.

He tells Joe that he has come to ask his forgiveness for having planned his attempted killing. *'I planned it, I paid for it. If you wouldn't return my love, I thought I'd rather have you dead. It was insanity, Joe. I want you to forgive me.'*

With that he draws a knife from his top pocket and holds it right up under his own ear lobe. He begs Joe for forgiveness.

Joe tells him to drop the knife and then they can talk but he refuses.

Saying, *'How can I forgive you when you're mad?'* Joe shoots him in the right side away from Clarissa.

Parry slumps back with his hand to his shattered elbow, *'his face white and his mouth open in shock.'*

As Joe observes, *'In a world in which logic was the engine of feeling'* this was a moment when he and Clarissa should have been reconciled. But too much had happened between them, Moreover, when Clarissa had witnessed the shooting, *'She was on her feet and she was staring at the gun in my hand with an expression of such repulsion and surprise that I thought we would never get past this moment.'* Joe wonders if they really are finished.

Joe is accused of Possession of an Illicit Firearm and Malicious Wounding with Intent. He is held in custody overnight, but following a letter from Inspector Linley to the Director of Public Prosecutions no charges were ever brought against him.

TASK 28

The shooting of Parry might have had the effect of restoring Clarissa and Joe's relationship but this does not happen. Discuss briefly why this restoration does not come about.

Chapter 23

This Chapter consists of a letter summarising all Clarissa's views as to why Parry has brought about such a rift in her relationship with Joe; why it has '*Cost us so dearly*'.

TASK 29

In this chapter Clarissa sums up the reasons why the experience of Parry has '*Cost us so dearly*.' List the factors she sees involved in this cost.

Chapter 24

Ten days after the shooting Joe goes to Wallington to meet Joseph Lacey. Following their conversation he spends the morning making arrangements, and then, takes Clarissa, having told her what Lacey said, with him to Oxford. *'She wanted to be there at the conclusion.'*

On the journey they talk about what they had been doing. They were still unhappy. Joe, in particular, still thought her letter was unreasonable.

They drive to the Logans' house. Joe says to Jean Logan, *'I want you to hear this story at first hand. So I need to know where we're going to take our picnic.'* She describes a stretch of the Thames on Port Meadow. Then Joe rings one of the Oxford colleges and asks to speak to the Euler Professor of Logic.

With the children delighting in Clarissa's company, they all make their way, with their picnic, to the Thames and their picnic site. Jean Logan is highly nervous and says, *'I know I've asked to hear this, but I'm not sure I can go through with it, especially with Rachel and Leo here.'*

Joe tells her, *'You can, and anyway you have to now.'*

Joe rolls up his trousers and wades into the river to join the Logan children, who are already playing there, while they wait. Jean was telling how the children looked out for each other, when she suddenly broke off and said, *'Oh god! There she is. That must be her.'*

They are approached by a middle-aged, rather plump, man who introduces himself as James Reid, Euler Professor of Logic at the Girls' college. He also introduces the blond girl with him as Bonnie Deedes, his student. She possesses *'that blue-eyed peachiness that drew a line of descent from Marilyn Monroe.'*

He says, *'We've come to explain and apologise.'*

He spoke directly to Jean, *'You're living through this tragedy, this terrible loss, and heaven knows, the last thing you need is this extra pain. That scarf left behind in your husband's car was Bonnie's.'*

Jean says ferociously, *'Then perhaps I ought to hear it from her.'*

But Reid continues, *'She was there all right. But I was too. You see. We were together'*. He goes on to explain that, in spite of their thirty years difference in age, they were in love. They had tried to keep their relationship secret but *'We never imagined that our clumsy attempts at concealment would cause such distress, and I hope that when I've explained what happened, you'll find a way to forgive us.'*

He says they are now prepared for their relationship to become public, which will mean him resigning from his college and then he returns to explaining what happened on the day of the balloon tragedy. He and Bonnie had been planning a picnic in the Chilterns but on the way their car broke down. When Bonnie hitched a lift Dr. Logan had stopped and had gone out of his way to take them to Christmas Common. They were almost at their destination when they saw the man struggling with the balloon with the boy in it. Logan had rushed to help while he, not being physically active, had stayed put. *'Then the whole ghastly thing started to get out of hand . . . and you know the rest.'*

He explained how they panicked and fled from the scene leaving the scarf and their picnic in the car. They had finished up in a pub where they had overheard Joseph Lacey talking about the balloon tragedy. They started talking to Lacey and finished up going home with him. He had told Lacey about their problem and Lacey had advised that, as there were plenty of other witnesses, they should keep quiet for the time being. *'But he also said that if it turned out there were disagreements, or conflicting stories, then he would get in touch with me, and I could think again. So we never came forward. I know it's caused you distress, and I'm deeply, deeply sorry . . .'*

Jean can only sigh. *'Oh God.'*

Reid tries to offer her comfort, *'He was a terribly brave man . . . It's the kind of courage the rest of us can only dream about.'*

He asks her, *'Can you ever forgive us for being so selfish, so careless?'*

Jean says, angrily, *'Of course I can,'* but adds, most movingly, *'But who's going to forgive me? The only person who can is dead.'*

Reid tells her she must not think that way and this is followed by a *'breathless scrambling for forgiveness.'*

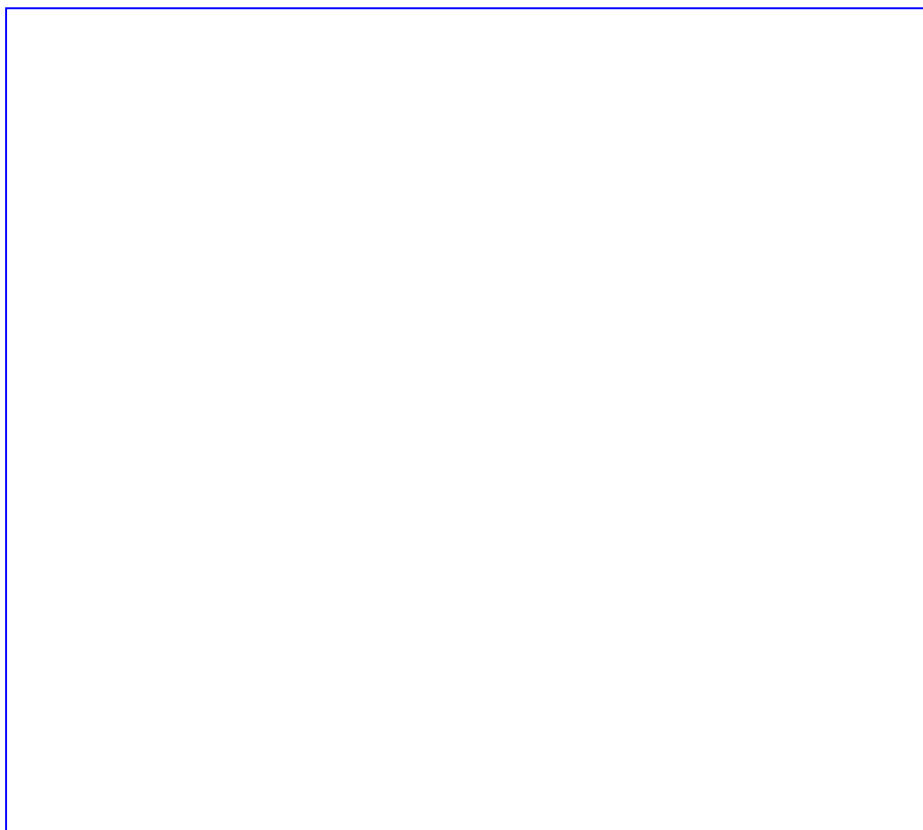
Joe says, *'I caught Clarissa's eye and we exchanged a half smile, and it was as if we were pitching in our own requests for mutual forgiveness, or at least tolerance, in there with Jean and Reid's frantic counterpoint.'*

The novel concludes with Joe walking hand in hand with the children to the little muddy beach facing the slow brown expanse of water.

So now,' Rachael said, *'Tell Leo as well. Say it again slowly, that thing about the river.'*

TASK 30

Discuss briefly whether, at the conclusion of the novel, the possibility is held out that Joe and Clarissa might resolve their differences.



Appendix 1 and Appendix 2

The novel ends with two Appendices.

de Clerambault's syndrome

Appendix 1 is written by Robert Wenn and Antonio Camia (the two surnames form an anagram of 'Ian McEwan') purporting to be from the 'British Review of Psychiatry', which details the essential elements of de Clerambault's syndrome 'A homo-erotic obsession, with religious overtones'. (No such publication exists but several commentators on the novel thought that this was an official document)

The Appendix states that in 1942 de Clerambault carefully delineated the paradigm that bears his name. A syndrome he termed 'les psychoses passionelles'.

The syndrome involves a patient, usually a woman, having '*a conviction of being in amorous communication with a person of much higher rank . . . such communication may take the form of secret signals and the deployment of phenomenal resources to meet the patient's needs. She feels that she is watching over and protecting the object of her delusion*'.

The case of a 53 year-old French woman who believed King George V was in love with her and signalled to her using the curtains in Buckingham Palace is detailed.

Recently, more male sufferers have been noted and in intrusiveness and dangerousness men predominate.

Laws to protect the victim

The tragedy involved for both patients and victims has been noted and there has been an 'explosion' of legislation to protect the victims. The tragedy for those on whom the patients fix their unwanted attention is that they suffer, at the very least, harassment and embarrassment, and at worst they may fall victim to the violent expression of resentment, jealousy or sexual desire.

McEwan then gives a '**Case History**', which, of course, is Jed Parry's (in this 'Case History', Parry is 'P'; Joe is 'R'; and Clarissa is 'M')

Parry and the syndrome

This makes important points about Parry, and answers several unresolved questions in the novel.

- Parry's early history is given in detail up to the point where he inherited his large house.
- The balloon episode is shown as having acted as a trigger for this lonely young man to feel he was answering God's purpose for him by falling in love with Joe and bringing him to God.

- He thought Joe's opening and closing of the curtains in his apartment was a signal to him.
- He believed Joe was playing with him and testing his commitment.
- He stole Clarissa's appointment book and was then able to arrange the time and place for the contract killers he hired to be in the restaurant for Clarissa's birthday lunch.
- The plan failed and, filled with remorse, he intended to kill himself in front of Joe.
- This plan failed also and he was arrested and charged with the restaurant shooting and holding Clarissa at knifepoint.
- He remained convinced that Joe loved him because he had intervened to stop him killing himself.
- He regretted his attempt on Joe's life but therapy treatment had no effect on him.
- Eventually, the court ruled he should be held indefinitely at a secure mental hospital.
- Convinced Joe loved him, he writes a letter to him every day. These are collected by the staff but not delivered in order to protect Joe.
- Those treating him concluded that the key change in the patient's life was the inheritance of his mother's house, which gave him the means to withdraw from social contact. The sudden involvement in the teamwork involved in trying to rescue the boy in the balloon seemed to trigger the syndrome, for when the drama was over he became convinced of Joe's love.
- Joe possibly represented a father figure to him, or, as a successful, socially integrated individual, Joe represented for him an ideal.
- He belonged to no particular faith, his relationship with God was personal and served as a substitute for intimate relationships.
- Criminal charges having been brought against him, and there being a strong connection between male erotomania and dangerousness, admission to a secure hospital was necessary.
- Erotomania of this kind is long lasting and is often terminated only by the patient's death.
- Victims often suffer from their experience but, in this case, Joe and Clarissa were reconciled and later successfully adopted a child.

Parry's letter

Appendix 2 is a copy of a letter written towards the end of Parry's third year after his admittance to hospital, which was purportedly sent to Dr Wenn.

In the letter Parry sees *'Our love rise above the treetops'*. He believes Joe has told him that what he is doing is right and Parry has written a thousand letters expressing his love. In spite of the conditions in the hospital he says, *'I've never felt so free. I'm soaring. I'm so happy Joe'*.

He thanks Joe for loving him and recognising what he is doing for their love.



Make notes on the above for your file.

6. DE CLERAMBAULT'S SYNDROME AND 'ENDURING LOVE'



You may find it useful to carry out your own research into de Clerambault's Syndrome and use the notes below to add to any notes you have made as a result of your own research.

McEwan uses de Clerambault's Syndrome as central to 'Enduring Love.'

His appendices to the novel, which are concerned with the syndrome, are fictional, but de Clerambault's Syndrome is an important psychiatric syndrome and it will be worth while for you to give some further consideration to it. This should provide you with a greater understanding of stalking in general, and of Parry's behaviour in the novel in particular.

Parry's "illness" compared with de Clerambault's Syndrome

Parry displays many of the classic characteristics of de Clerambault sufferers but in some respects his characteristics differ.

- He does show a real potential for violence when his love is persistently unrequited.
- Classically, de Clerambault sufferers become aware of their victims from a distance through various forms of the media (cinema, TV, newspapers etc.) Parry is different in this respect.
- Frequently sufferers' fantasies can be of an extreme sexual nature. This is not the case with Parry. The driving force for his love being the desire to bring Joe to God.
- Again, frequently, the sufferer believes the victim is communicating with him or her using a secret code that only they know the meaning of. Parry is usual in this respect.
- Usually, victims will be rich and famous. Joe is neither, but, as McEwan says in his appendix, he could have represented the ideal man for Parry.

Stalking

The recent past has shown a much greater interest in stalking and the problems and potential dangers it presents than was the case. The attitude towards it was, usually, that typified by Inspector Linley in the novel; loving someone to the point of obsession, who doesn't return that love, can be unfortunate but it is not a crime. Recently, the law has become much clearer that obsessive stalking can constitute a crime.

Forms of stalking

Stalking can be conveniently categorised into six different forms:

1. Simple obsession - the ex-partner.
2. Love obsession - love at first sight.
3. De Clerambault's Syndrome - erotomania.
4. Munchhausen's Syndrome - false victim syndrome.
5. Serial stalker - obsessed with the act of stalking.
6. Organised harassment - those with something to gain.

De Clerambault's Syndrome is a type of delusional (paranoid) disorder. Parry is typical of its sufferers in that he doesn't believe he needs treatment. He is certain that there is nothing wrong with him. He, like his fellow sufferers, is dangerous to himself and to others and needs hospitalisation. Again, as is the case for many other sufferers hospitalisation hasn't brought about his recovery.

**Psychiatrists
commenting on
'Enduring Love'**

Laura Miller, the editor of the magazine 'Salon', wrote an article on September 21st, 1999, explaining how McEwan had tricked 'the chaps in white coats', the sober editors of 'The Psychiatric Bulletin', a sister publication to the 'British Journal of Psychiatry'.

She says, at the end of his novel - as you already know - McEwan produces an Appendix which reports a case of de Clerambault's syndrome from the 'British Review of Psychiatry', written by Doctors Robert Wenn and Antonio Cania.

Neither the 'British Review of Psychiatry' nor the study's authors exist. (Again, as you will have already noted the last names of the doctors are an anagram for Ian McEwan). Both are inventions of McEwan's imagination based on his knowledge of the essential characteristics of de Clerambault's syndrome.

However, Ronan McIvor, a consultant psychiatrist at the National Hospital for Neurology and Neurosurgery in London, was tricked by McEwan. Reviewing the novel he described it as, 'Based on a published case report.'

Laura Miller continues, 'The shrinks weren't the only ones taken in'. In the USA Christopher Lehmann-Haupt, one of the daily book reviewers for the New York Times, complained that, 'When you discover at the end of the book an appendix documenting the case-history on which 'Enduring Love' is based, you think you know what is wrong. Mr McEwan has simply stuck too close to the facts and failed to allow his imagination to invent.'

7. TWO INTERVIEWS WITH IAN McEWAN ON 'ENDURING LOVE'



Make notes on the following as you see fit.

A. An abbreviated version of an interview by Dwight Garner for 'Salon' magazine.

Introduction

"Ian McEwan is contemporary fiction's black magician. In novel after novel, beginning with 'The Cement Garden (1978), his crisp, almost clinically precise prose - part Kafka, part 'Lord of the Flies'- takes you into worlds that spin with violence, sexual aberration and paranoia. In the UK, where he was among British fiction's angriest young men of the 1970s, he has long been dubbed 'Ian Macabre.'

McEwan is now 50, and the 'Macabre' label fits him less snugly. After years of exploring such subjects as sadomasochistic intrigue (in 1981's 'The Comfort of Strangers') and children who lapse into feral states (in 'The Cement Garden'), his fiction has come to seem more open and humane, while losing none of its potency. '*Not many things in life get better as you get older*', McEwan says. Writing, he implies, is one of them"

(McEwan spoke recently with 'Salon' in New York, where he was on tour for 'Enduring Love.')

(In the interview that follows all McEwan's replies to his interviewer's questions are in italics).

Let me ask you about this somewhat creepy, somewhat beautiful image that opens your new novel. There's a helium balloon falling to earth in a field, and people are rushing towards it. Was this image the genesis of the book?

No it wasn't at the beginning. I'd already gathered quite a lot of the book from different quarters. I was looking for a device to bring together complete strangers, and to bring them together in a kind of emotional heat. Something like a car accident might have been right, but I wanted something unusual. I heard this true story about a man and his son who were hauled away by a balloon they were trying to tether in some field in Germany. What immediately struck me was the dilemma of knowing that if you all hang on, you can bring this balloon down to earth. But as soon as anyone breaks rank, then madness follows. The issue is selfishness. And that seems to me to be the

underlying basic moral factor about ourselves. We're descended from generations of people who survived, who acted successfully. But who also co-operated successfully; so we clearly need to save our own skins and look out for our own interests, but we're social animals and we need other people dearly. The issue is constantly with us. I think I could place everyone I know somewhere on that scale of 0-to-10 . . . Are they slightly more self-absorbed? Some people are completely selfless; they only give. It's self-destructive, possibly.

Although I wasn't thinking about it that metaphorically at that point. I felt I was writing a novel of ideas, but I did want a very strong narrative shelter. I thought, if I'm going to do this I might as well hit the ground running. We discover these characters in this process. So it offered all kinds of possibilities, and dangers too. I knew that if I wrote a racy first chapter there's the danger of falling off. For a long time, I thought the scene of the attempted murder in the restaurant would be first. I would do it there and work the novel in a less chronological fashion. In the end, I thought: No I want a simple, clean line for this kind of thing so that it would give me the freedom to be more complicated about other things.

I think of novels somewhat in architectural terms. You have to enter at the gate, and this gate itself must be constructed in such a way that the reader has an immediate confidence in the strength of the building. I'm careful not to overload with information, but not to deny too much either.

You have sometimes been charged with being misanthropic, how do you respond to that?

I think one does get more misanthropic as one gets older. What some people would call misanthropy, others might call a kind of insouciance, almost a delight in saying what you want to say. I think that issues of mortality do become a writer's subject matter. There is no getting around it. It's coming to an end and it's extraordinary and comic and tragic.

There is a real tension in 'Enduring Love', between rationality and religious belief. The protagonist, Joe, is a science writer and a professional sceptic. He's pursued, almost romantically, by a man who is religiously obsessed. At one point a character says, 'Rationality is its own kind of innocence'. I'm wondering what you mean by that.

O, Clarissa says that. There's a certain kind of insight that she feels he's missing by sticking too closely to a method. With his organised mind he can take things too literally. There is something about Clarissa's take on the world that Joe badly needs. But I wrote the book in a spirit of investigation, rather than trying to give a lot of answers to either how people should live or whether one could live a good life by scientific method.

There's a funny moment in the book in which Joe is looking at all the novels in a library, and he thinks to himself: How dare people regard literature more highly than science.

I'm being a little provocative here. I do think that the discovery of scientific method and the achievements of inquiring scientific minds do rank with the highest artistic achievements. They rank with the work of Shakespeare, or the painting of the Sistine Chapel. It bothers me that so many people I know who value the life of the mind, and live by it, seem to live by it with one eye shut to that great triumph.

Are you at ease in the world of scientific thought? Do you take a particular interest?

Yes, a massive interest. This novel was written after a long period of reading in a number of fields in science. It wasn't ever conscious research. I'm always fascinated by the subject. I think we've been very fortunate, we've had a golden age in science, for 15 years. The number of highly literate scientists writing for an intelligent lay public is extraordinary. There's a kind of science writing that seems to bridge the gap between informing laymen but also informing other sciences. To take an immediate example, Steven Pinker's book on language certainly addresses not just lay people like myself but other scientists outside his immediate field. Similarly, my own particular intellectual hero is E.O. Wilson. He's a biologist. He wrote 'The Diversity of Light', and that was just genius. The thing that really interested me was the extent to which scientists are now trespassing into other areas.

How so?

Well, there is a subject matter, which would have been completely ruled out of court 15 years ago as a matter of scientific inquiry, and now it's central. It's called human nature. That interface between biology and social science, between biology and psychology, is increasingly clear. And by, from the other end, a new spirit perhaps in anthropology that is now exploring not how exotically different we are from each other, but how exotically similar we are. Which seems to me a really fascinating problem - to go to a hunter-gatherer tribe and discover the emotional range, the expression of emotion. Certain kinds of social institutions exist right across the board whether in Manhattan or North Kalahari. I think that tells us a great deal more about what we are than Margaret Mead ever did with her tales of mischievous young Samoans.

Do you find yourself reading scientific books in the same way you would a novel?

I have this twin hunger. I need fiction, although I find it harder to find any that really satisfies. But I nearly always have two books. At the moment, I'm reading the Ted Hughes poems and I'm finishing the latest

Updike and I'm reading Stephen Pinker's book on the brain. I do have to hump around two or three books at once.



You may find it useful to make your own notes on the following interview.

B. An abbreviated version of an interview by Eric Shoenck, the Capitola Book Cafe Events Coordinator

(As for Interview (A) all McEwan's replies to his interviewer's questions are in italics.)

Several of the reviews I've read targeted the opening scene of 'Enduring Love' as particularly compelling. Have you been hearing this from people as well?

I came across a journal entry I wrote about six months before I began working on 'Enduring Love'. My journal tends to be full of little exhortations, and it said, 'write a first chapter that would be the equivalent of a highly addictive drug'. I did want to have the reader hit the ground running . . .

So to speak

So to speak. In fact, one of the other chapters was originally the opening. It's a chapter where someone makes an attempt on the life of the narrator in a restaurant.

Which comes much later

Which now is Chapter 19. But originally was the opening. Then I thought, no, that needs to go in its correct place chronologically and we'll start somewhere else. So, yes, there always was a scheme to have something fairly arresting and, more importantly, an event that would bring fates of different characters into collision.

The randomness of fate seems to be one of the most important parts of this novel. It reminded me once again, not how fragile we are, but how fragile fate can be.

I often think that when people talk of coincidences that they're almost bound to occur because we're like so many atoms in a turbulent system or a gas under pressure. If you lead an averagely busy life, the number of people that you collide with, so to speak, is extraordinary. One could become your husband, or your wife, or, for that matter, your murderer. That random element in life is a gift to a novelist to make a pattern of it, to make some sense of it, to contest its meaning or even ask whether there's any meaning to it at all. That's part of the pleasure and unpredictability of writing a novel itself.

Often our lives seemed burdened by a daily routine, so that we don't tend to notice the special elements that might change us, delight us, or perhaps torment us.

Exactly so. But these things can have an extraordinarily powerful influence on our lives, on our fates.

This notion of randomness also takes place in the opening of the book. Can you sketch out for us what happens in the opening?

(McEwan outlines the opening to the point where the would-be helpers are all hanging on to the ropes).

They know that if they all hang on, their combined weight will bring the thing to the ground. If one lets go, it's crazy for anyone else to hang on. In this I saw a parable, a microcosm, of one of those great conflicts in our lives between altruism and that other primary necessity of looking after yourself.

At one point it's described as 'us versus me.'

This is the basis of our morality, the extent to which we will give to others and hold back for ourselves. In one person the flame of altruism burns just a little longer and that split-second forecloses his options.

This scene is so compelling. The way it is described, it stays with the reader long after the novel ends. And, so much followed from this incident, so much branching and sub-division, readers wonder, 'what is next?'

At some point in that opening, as Joe says to himself, 'the afternoon could have ended in tragedy', and been just that. It's a device to reflect upon what might lay behind our moral instincts. Also, to bring these fates into collision . . . the narrator's fate and one particular man whose suffering from a fairly rare form of psychological syndrome known as de Clerambault's syndrome.

Love and obsession intertwined horribly.

Exactly . . . a psychotic delusional state. Many of the people we call 'stalkers', men and women obsessed by a particular person, do suffer from this syndrome. One of its main features is that the sufferer thinks that the love object is the person who loves him, that this is something reciprocal. A terrible form of delusion and almost impossible to shake off.

Could you talk about the religious aspect of 'Enduring Love'? Jed, the delusional character, is after all a devout Christian.

It's a challenge for the narrator because he is a man steeped in science, in rationalism. What for him is a random meeting is for Jed a meeting ordained by God. We often talk of science and religion as being from two different spheres, not contradictory. I don't really go along with this. I think they do embrace, in some respects, mutually exclusive ideas of the world.

Jed expects Joe to resist his spiritual coercion and so everything Joe does and feels is fully accounted for - fuelling the delusion - by Jed's philosophy.

If a de Clerambault sufferer attaches himself to you and you give every clear sign that you wish him to leave or you bring in the police or court orders, the sufferer will simply see this as completely predictable, will always find a way of justifying anything you do as a fitting into the pattern ordained by his love.

The image I have is of quicksand - the more you struggle, the more it pulls you in.

Yes. I've just been a reading an account of a man whose life was ruined by a de Clerambault's sufferer. Sometimes the only solution is to start a new life with a new name in a completely different place.

Joe's partner Clarissa is not entirely sympathetic to Joe's plight. In some ways she sees him as complicit, partly to blame, for Jed's obsession.

The reader is supposed to be wondering whether he can trust this narrator, Joe.

Who is obsessed here?

Joe does react pretty strongly right from the very beginning. He's in shock from the balloon incident so everything seems twice as real. His responses are exaggerated. Clarissa has a point, though, in the end, she is wrong and Joe is right. Jed posed much more of a threat than she ever realised.

A reviewer, after praising your prose style, said that you take a 'nasty delight' in shocking your readers. Any comment?

I want my reader to be wholly engaged, gripped rather than shocked. I'm pleased when people tell me that they sat down and read 'Enduring Love' in one sitting. In that respect, writers are like jealous lovers: 'I just want you to think of me'. I've always wanted prose that has about it a great clarity. Having a scientist narrate this novel I was able to indulge my own taste for precision in what's happening. I like a sort of lambent clarity in the opening pages, which can then dissolve into mystery.

In a letter, Jed tells Joe, without an awareness of God's love you are living in a desert. It struck me as ironic, yet there is something in that assertion that rang true.

I don't know where you stand on God. For me, I don't find the statement obviously true. I find that life is rich, diverse, fabulous, and extraordinary, conceived without a God. Perhaps I'm continuing a conversation I had with myself in another novel, 'Black Dogs'. I'm very interested in belief and faith. What makes some believe and others not. Yes, Joe has a lack of emotional awareness, but the world he conceives through science is one with a sense of awe, with respect for that which we don't know. It's one that can have any amount of love in it and doesn't necessarily need a presiding God.

8. CRITICISM OF 'ENDURING LOVE'

It's early days for anything like a critical consensus to have been arrived at as regards 'Enduring Love.' But the following abbreviated critical commentaries and reviews of the novel represent a selection of the, often contradictory, comments expressed about the novel to date.

TASK 31



The commentaries and reviews give rise to a series of questions themselves. Having read the review extracts below make your own list of questions, which you feel they pose e.g., having read the extracts from Adam Mars-Jones commentary, 'Is he justified in saying 'The novel's main theme is that unreliability is an ineradicable part of what we are?''

Adam Mars-Jones

Extracts from Adam Mars-Jones commentary on 'Enduring Love. Tuesday September 7th, 1999. 'The Observer'

"The novel's central theme, that unreliability is an ineradicable part of what we are.

Rationality is a precious and precarious construct in the novel, not an instinct but an achievement, a sandcastle no sooner built than washed away by the tides of the mind.

The collapse of a couple under pressure is a recurrent McEwan theme, though he steers clear of the adulterous clichés. The couple is the smallest possible viable society; the breakdown between Joe and Clarissa is the subtlest variation yet on the theme. A lovingly maintained fabric that seemed to have no dangling threads unravels thoroughly.

Joe makes sense of Parry's infatuation by classifying it as an instance of a pathological condition, de Clerambault's syndrome, one of whose peculiarities is, ironically, that it can last indefinitely, since it isn't dependent on reciprocation. 'Enduring love' with a vengeance.

It's disappointing that a book that begins so full-throatedly should end with stacy confrontation, then case history, references and appendices.

The theme of parenting re-emerges near the end of the book but Clarissa for all her grounded emotions and insights, has a lower status than say, Julie, in 'The Child in Time'. McEwan's emotional engagement with feminism is less deferent than it once was.

McEwan can't resist equipping Joe with a full expressive panoply of language. In theory he and Clarissa occupy different worlds, in practice

he inhabits both . . . he's at his most romantic when his language claims a scientific objectivity."

**'Enduring Love'
seen as a
Romance of
Science and
Obsession**

Extracts from a reviewer writing about 'Enduring Love' as 'A Romance of Science and Obsession'

" 'Enduring Love' shows Ian McEwan at his best, combining the stark but sensitive rendering of human suffering seen in the best of his novels, with the thrilling ride of his short stories.

Clarissa and Joe both attempt to bring science and art closer together, but as the couple drift apart, art and science become increasingly separate and extreme.

Joe attempts to create an objective scientific narrative of events, but, in counterpoint, a number of letters undermine this rationality.

Art and science are two perspectives, two methods of understanding, neither of which is satisfactory on its own. The interplay between these methods makes 'Enduring Love' a clever and intriguing novel.

It is McEwan's final coup that makes this novel so stunningly original. The scientific report, which describes the events of the novel, upsets our complacency, forcing us to rethink our attitude to the whole novel.

We see the balloon incident from a number of different perspectives and in different styles. These repeated attempts to find the truth show how tenuous Joe's grasp of the situation is and how afraid he is of emotional involvement. Joe distances himself with a bird's-eye view and a geometrical description of the convergence of the men. He describes the angles of collision, expecting the result to be explainable in simple physics. But human collision has infinite possibilities . . . science cannot explain this situation, Joe's reliance on it betrays the irrationality he is so desperate to control.

Just as he saw the accident in an appropriate scientific manner, so he distances and objectifies Jed. Using his resources as a scientific journalist, he discovers that Jed's actions fit the symptom of a rare condition, de Clerambault's syndrome. Fitting Jed into a scientific category appears to give Joe knowledge, and therefore control. But knowledge can be a Pandora's box, resulting in as much evil as good.

As Clarissa points out, by defining Jed as violent it is as if Joe has made him so. Clarissa thinks Jed's obsession is a creation of Joe's imagination caused by shock and grief.

'Enduring Love' makes the reader pick their way through different and unsatisfactory versions of the truth. Science appears to give the authoritative version of truth in the report, but what actually concludes

the novel is, a love letter. Parry's pathological vision of love and religion triumphs over the cool reductionism of science.

McEwan's writing is stunning in all the genres he employs. The romantic novel he writes makes you laugh and cry, the thriller compels and disturbs, and the scientific narrative is interesting and enlightening. With a stroke of genius, McEwan combines all these modes in an exciting but sensitive story, a clever yet utterly human novel."

Canadian Review**Extracts from a Canadian review published February 7th, 1998**

"Readers who have enjoyed the haunting, suggestive quality of McEwan's fiction in the past may feel some disappointment this time out. I certainly found myself wishing that more had been left unexplained, especially with regard to the sub-plot surrounding the balloon accident.

The debate between the rational, scientific mind and the spiritual and passionate side of human nature is overdone here with Joe as a science writer with a doctorate in quantum electrodynamics and Clarissa as a Professor of Romantic poetry searching for the lost love letters of John Keats and Fanny Brawne.

Placed alongside academic types like these, the stranger of the piece only tends to draw attention away from the main narrative focus. But few readers will object. Jed Parry is one of the most memorable fiction psychos since Fowles's 'Collector', and it is his obsessive delusions that make the book come alive."

Random House Review**Extract from a Random House review of the novel**

"An underlying parable concerning the conflict between rationalism, emotionalism, and the religious adds a layer of complexity that will satisfy intellectual curiosity seekers."

Andrea C. Holland**Andrea C. Holland writes in her review of the novel**

"This may be McEwan's finest novel to date for several reasons; first the opening, which immediately draws you in - 'we were running towards a catastrophe' - but which we are not yet allowed to see. Such is McEwan's craft he deliberately parallels this initial blindness on the reader's part, with his characters' initially blinkered view of the situation.

Another good thing: the characters are complex, interesting people with believable lives in a bizarre situation. We quickly come to care what happens to them.

Then there are lovely resonances about memory and love, from whence the title comes. Take this early line: 'Lately I'd had the idea that Clarissa's interest in these hypothetical letters (of Keats) had something to do with our own situation, and with her conviction that love that did not find its expression in a letter was not perfect'. This is a gorgeous moment because every word of it becomes true in this story - but not in a way we could possibly imagine. 'Our love was just the kind to endure' says Joe of Clarissa. 'Our love was the kind meant to go on' writes Clarissa to Joe. Such tenderness at a broken, finished moment later in the novel is bittersweet - and ironic, when neither one loves with 'enduring love' like Jed Parry."

Nan Goldberg

Extracts from Nan Goldberg writing about the novel

"Joe is a typical resident of McEwan's world, a random, frightening place populated by conventionally amiable characters all proceeding nicely along their conventionally civilised 20th-century paths, until something goes terribly awry, whereupon the train not only jumps the tracks but goes hurtling on to the busy sidewalks of Main Street.

It's a wild, depressing ride, yet told in language that is almost unbearably beautiful. Recalling the moment before he and the others reached the balloon and set the tragedy in motion, Joe writes: *'We were running towards a catastrophe, which itself was a kind of furnace in whose heat identities and fates would buckle into new shapes'*. At home that night, Joe describes himself and Clarissa endlessly reliving the event, *'Leaning over the table like dedicated craftsman at work, grinding the jagged edge of memories, hammering the unspeakable into forms of words, threading single perceptions into narrative, until Clarissa returned us to the fall, to the precise moment when Logan had slid down the rope, hung there one last precious second, and let go. This was what she had to get back to, the image to which her shock had attached itself'*.

It is as if McEwan is hoping that lyricism itself might redeem the terrible randomness of life."

Sven Birketts

Sven Birketts, January 25th, 1998, 'Grand Delusion', his commentary on 'Enduring Love' from The New York Times Archives

"How many times in my years of teaching have I stood before the blackboard guiding the abhorrent chalk carefully along a 30-degree incline to explain Fretag's triangle, that indispensable construct for mapping the ideal course of the classic novel: complications of character and situation creating a 'rising action' that culminates in a climactic moment, which is followed in turn by the afterglow of denouement, the tying up of threads.

But other roads do diverge in the novel's yellow wood, one of them representing a structure quite different, in which the climactic event - most often a tragedy - takes place right at the outset, and the essential action can be described as 'falling'. The interest lies, significantly, in watching how characters act and react when the ground of the familiar has been fissured all around.

Now, with 'Enduring Love', Ian McEwan serves up a vibrant and unsettling version of the contra-Freud formula. McEwan has, in recent years, moved towards somewhat more conventional situations. But he has not lost his knack for intimating the unconventional - his dark glance reminds us that normal behaviour conceals but does not banish unsavoury truths.

The whole unfolding situation, from the balloon accident to the stalking, has begun to thrust into relief the hitherto tolerable differences in the characters, Joe and Clarissa. Joe, a science writer - a frustrated researcher become populariser - is a resolute non-believer. Clarissa, less inclined to be irritably reaching after fact, is open to implication. After the fateful afternoon, she asserts, *'It must mean something'*. Later, she adds: *'You're such a dope. You're so rational sometimes you're like a child'*.

Rational action, alas, can scarcely solve the crises that develop - either with Parry's mania or with Joe's now imperilled relationship with Clarissa. McEwan guides events to a second climactic moment - a burst of public violence - and a third, but these are peaks within the extended denouement. They are the brief explosions of action that will 'buckle' the fates and identities into new shapes by the novel's end.

Interesting and credible though Joe and Clarissa are, there is some way in which they don't seem thoroughly known, as if McEwan didn't trust that he had permission to imagine them all the way into existence. The same constraint is felt, at times, about the developing situation: it is so unusual that it seems to lack some of the hard granularity of true invention. Though it is a tour-de-force, McEwan's feat of creation and interpretation is finally less memorable in any of its specifics than is the mystery of Jed Parry and his syndrome, and the unalleviated intensity with which Parry pursues his course".

James Wood

James Wood, Johannesburg, South Africa, November 3rd, 1997, writes about 'Enduring Love' - 'Too Hard and Clean'

"This new novel is full of those lean virtues that stretch his past work: the anxious discipline of his prose style; the acute, superintendent intelligence; the thematic geometry, whereby McEwan bends each fiction into intellectual inquiry. Yet a writer this talented should be better than McEwan is.

McEwan is a good and not a great writer because he seems to lack a capacity for deep aesthetic surprise. Instead, he has become increasingly a novelist who trades in narrative surprises - secrets, disclosures, hidden symbols, and the gurgitations of the unconscious. His stories can function as symbolic code-work because they are over before we have time to resent their calculatedness. But his novels suffocate with design.

'Enduring Love' can thus be seen as the fruit of McEwan's love of fictional neatness. For it is essentially a snappy thriller, sprung on a bed of conceptual horsehair. It is clever and immensely gripping. Its protagonists have more plausibility than they would have in an actual thriller, but not much more life.

It is a pity that McEwan felt a need to serrate his plot to this blade-like acuteness. For a thicker story gets cut away in the process. McEwan wants to examine how the irrational might undermine a man's rationalism; and how two people who supposedly love and know each other- Joe and his partner Clarissa - can interpret the same experience quite differently, and quite selfishly.

'Enduring Love' swerves from consciousness and withers, like the genre to which it is related, into a game of ways and means (guns, hostages, rescue). The plot tightening steers the book away from aesthetic surprise: how can a language of real complexity compete with all this noise? In the end, this is one of those books that describes a life-changing experience and yet leaves the reader unchanged."

Leonard Chang

Leonard Chang, a fellow novelist, discusses 'Enduring Love' - 'Up, up and Away.' February 25th, 1998

"One of the most compelling novelists today, Ian McEwan has always worked in a semi-Gothic mode in which the 19th century trappings like decaying castles and maniacal laughter have given way to suburban houses and the bewildered middle class. But the pathologies of sex and death are combined and rendered artfully to often shocking effect. His strongest novels are careful studies of normalcy gone awry, of the gruesome and grotesque impinging on everyday lives, as in McEwan's newest novel, 'Enduring Love', a science writer becomes the object of an obsession.

McEwan is too good a writer to confine his story to what could become, in lesser hands, a schlocky TV movie, and it's when he slows things down and lets his characters think and interact, particularly when he lets Joe and Clarissa go through their domestic manoeuvrings, that the novel sings.

The chapters dealing with the accident, particularly Joe's guilt and how he deals with it, are the strongest and become in some ways more important than the central story of Parry's stalking.

The weakness in this novel, then, is its dependence on the central plot to propel the reader forward, even though it's clear that McEwan doesn't need to rely on it. But as we rush to the climax small jabs of doubt poke at us as we know more about the characters. Would Clarissa really react the way she does, given what we have learned about her? Would Joe and Clarissa's relationship really crumble so quickly? Are these true moments of character revelation, or are they more in service of the plot dynamics?

The ending may be slightly disappointing for readers who know what to expect from McEwan. Nevertheless, in his consummate style, McEwan has written a strong, affecting novel that yanks us through the story as forcefully as that balloon in the raging wind”.

Cressida Connolly

Cressida Connolly reviews 'Enduring Love' - 'Over-Fished Waters'

"What makes McEwan's depiction of the illness so compelling - and so alarming- is how close it seems to ordinary romantic attachment. The letters that Jed writes to Joe are like real love letters; his entreaties would be familiar to anyone who has suffered from unrequited love. It is, in fact, when Jed's behaviour is closest to what passes for normal that his presence induces the most queasy discomfort. Once he topples into Hitchcockian melodrama he becomes more ridiculous than threatening. Even his proxy attempt on Joe's life strains for credence: no self-respecting team of hired assassins would fire a gun in a crowded West End restaurant at lunch time, when the victim's home address is freely available.

The violent excesses of de Clerambault's would be enough for most novelists, but not Ian McEwan. There is the sub-plot involving the widow of the man killed in the ballooning accident, and Joe's troubled relationship with Clarissa is another central part of the book. Then there is a detailed description of Clarissa's academic work on Keats, set against the rationalism of Joe's scientific investigations. The book burgeons with coincidence, events and ideas it's like getting three novels for the price of one.

'Enduring Love' is a worthwhile attempt to view the irrational through the lens of the rational. But it is weighed down by a surfeit of scientific information. I'm all in favour of the novel of ideas, but at least let the ideas be the author's own. An author's individuality is drowned in this sea of science. Much as I enjoyed 'Enduring Love', I missed Ian McEwan.”

9. THEMES

The following is a list of the themes, which I see as most prominent and important in 'Enduring Love'.

1. The **'unreliability'** that is almost inevitable in the human condition in a time of crisis.
2. The variety and an unsatisfactory nature of the various versions of the **'truth'** presented in the novel.
3. **Forgiveness.**
4. **Couples in crisis** being stretched to the limit.
5. The completely **random and indifferent nature of fate.**
6. **Rationality** (science) as opposed to **spirituality** (the arts).
7. **'Enduring Love'.**

TASK 32

On the recording sheets provided make notes of evidence from the novel for the presence and importance of the above list of themes.

(In such a multi-faceted novel as 'Enduring Love' you may well feel that other themes are more important than those I have listed. If this is the case list these and provide your evidence for their presence and importance in the novel).

Themes in 'Enduring Love'	
Theme	Notes
'Unreliability' in a time of crisis	

The variety and unsatisfactory nature of the 'truth' in the novel	
Forgiveness	
Couples in crisis being stretched to the limit	continue over

The random and indifferent nature of fate	
Rationality (science) as opposed to spirituality (the arts)	

	continue over
Enduring Love	

10. THE CHARACTERS

The commentaries and reviews contained in part 8 of the Workbook reveal a clear disparity of views as regards the characters in 'Enduring Love', which is obvious from the following quotations:

Art and Science

"In theory he (Joe) and Clarissa occupy different worlds, in practice he inhabits both . . . he is at his most romantic when his language claims a scientific objectivity."

"Clarissa and Joe both attempt to bring science and art closer together, but as the couple drift apart, art and science become increasingly separate and extreme."

"Joe's reliance on it (science) betrays the irrationality he is so desperate to control."

" 'Enduring Love' is a clever yet utterly human novel."

"The debate between the rational, scientific mind and the spiritual and passionate side of human nature is overdone here."

"Jed Parry is one of the most memorable fiction psychos since Fowles' 'Collector' and it is his obsessive delusions that make the book come alive."

Complex characters

"The characters are complex, interesting people with believable lives in a bizarre situation. We quickly come to care what happens to them."

"Joe is a typical resident of McEwan's world . . . populated by conventionally amiable characters all proceeding nicely along their conventionally civilised twentieth-century paths, until something goes terribly awry, whereupon the train not only jumps the tracks but goes hurtling on to the busy sidewalks of Main Street."

"The interest lies, significantly, in watching how the characters act and react when the ground of the familiar has been fissured all around."

"The whole unfolding situation . . . has begun to thrust into relief the hitherto tolerable differences in the characters, Joe and Clarissa."

"Clarissa, less inclined to be irritably reaching after fact, is open to implication."

"Interesting and incredible though Joe and Clarissa are, there is some way in which they don't seem thoroughly known."

"His protagonists have more plausibility than they would have in an actual thriller, but not much more life."

Selfishness

"McEwan wants to examine how two people, who supposedly love each other, can interpret the same experience quite differently, and quite selfishly."

"In the end this is one of those books that describes a life changing experience and yet leaves the reader unchanged."

"Once Jed topples into Hitchcockian melodrama he becomes more ridiculous than threatening . . . no self-respecting team of hired assassins would fire a gun in a crowded West End restaurant at lunchtime when the victim's home address is freely available."

TASK 33

Answer this task in your notebook.

For each of the three main characters decide whether they are 'utterly human' and 'complex, interesting people with believable lives', or whether 'there is some way in which they don't seem thoroughly known' and 'don't have much life'.

(While considering Joe and Clarissa also discuss the following:

'Would Clarissa really react the way she does, given what we have learned about her?' And, 'Would Joe and Clarissa's relationship really crumble so quickly? Are these true moments of character revelation, or are they more in service of the plot dynamics?')

Bearing in mind the above, present your own views as to the nature of the characters in 'Enduring Love'.

11. ESSAY QUESTIONS

1. Discuss the suitability of the title 'Enduring Love.'
2. Clarissa feels Joe has been partly responsible for Parry's obsession and for him becoming violently dangerous. Is she justified in holding this view?
3. Is the novel marred by the melodrama of Parry's hiring would-be assassins to kill Joe in a crowded restaurant at mid-day and by the melodramatic manner in which Joe obtains a gun?
4. Discuss whether the novel is essentially concerned with stating the argument that rationalism, on its own, is not sufficient for assisting man when faced with an extreme crisis.
5. 'It starts brilliantly but tails off badly.' Several critics have said this. Do you feel this to be the case?
6. 'The characters are moulded and manipulated to meet the demands of the plot.' Discuss whether there is any validity in this statement.
7. 'The first chapter holds the promise of the whole novel.' Discuss.
8. How does science infuse the story? Discuss the different theories described and explain their importance to the novel.
9. Joe states, 'Sustained stress is corrosive of feeling. It's a great deadener.' In light of what happens in the novel in what ways is he right or wrong about this?
10. The novel ends with the children and the river. What is McEwan saying with this choice?

~ end ~