

Please write clearly in block capitals.

Centre number

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Candidate number

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Surname

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Forename(s)

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Candidate signature

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# GCSE ENGLISH LANGUAGE (8700)

Paper 1 Explorations in creative reading and writing

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Time allowed: 1 hour 45 minutes

## Materials

For this paper you must have:

- **Source A** – provided as a separate insert

## Instructions

- Answer **all** questions.
- Use black ink or black ball-point pen.
- Fill in the boxes on this page.
- You must answer the questions in the spaces provided.
- Do not write outside the box around each page or on blank pages.
- Do all rough work in this book. Cross through any work you do not want to be marked.
- You must refer to the insert booklet provided.
- You must **not** use a dictionary.

## Information

- The marks for questions are shown in brackets.
- The maximum mark of this paper is 80.
- There are 40 marks for **Section A** and 40 marks for **Section B**.
- You are reminded of the need for good English and clear presentation in your answers.
- You will be assessed on the quality of your **reading** in **Section A**.
- You will be assessed on the quality of your **writing** in **Section B**.

## Advice

- You are advised to spend about 15 minutes reading through the source and all five questions you have to answer.
- You should make sure you leave sufficient time to check your answers.

**Source A**

Alex Cold lives with his parents and two younger sisters, Andrea and Nicole, in a small American town, but when his mother becomes ill, family life changes beyond recognition.

- 1 Alexander Cold awakened at dawn, startled by a nightmare. He had been dreaming that an enormous black bird had crashed against the window with a clatter of shattered glass, flown into the house, and carried off his mother. In the dream, he had watched helplessly as it clasped her clothing in its yellow claws, flew out the same broken window, and disappeared into a sky heavy  
5 with dark clouds.
- 6 What had awakened him was the noise from the storm: wind lashing the trees, rain on the rooftop, and thunder. He turned on the light with a sensation of being adrift in a boat, and pushed closer to the bulk of the large dog sleeping beside him. He pictured the roaring Pacific Ocean a few blocks from his house, spilling in furious waves against the rocks. He lay listening to the  
10 storm and thinking about the black bird and about his mother, waiting for the pounding in his  
11 chest to die down. He was still tangled in the images of his bad dream.

Alexander looked at the clock: 6.30, time to get up. Outside, it was beginning to get light. He decided that this was going to be a terrible day, one of those days when it's best to stay in bed because everything is going to turn out bad. There had been a lot of days like that since his  
15 mother got sick; sometimes the air in the house felt heavy, like being at the bottom of the sea.

16 At breakfast Alex was not in the mood to applaud his father's efforts at making pancakes. His father was not exactly a good cook; the only thing he knew how to do was pancakes, and they always turned out like rubber-tyre tortillas. His children didn't want to hurt his feelings, so they pretended to eat them, but any time he wasn't looking, they spit them out.

20 'When's Momma going to get better?' Nicole asked, trying to spear a rubbery pancake with her fork.

'Shut up, Nicole,' Alex replied.

'Momma's going to die,' Andrea added.

'Liar! She's not going to die!' shrieked Nicole.

25 'You two are just kids. You don't know what you're talking about!' Alex exclaimed.

'Here, girls. Quiet now. Momma is going to get better,' his father interrupted, without much conviction.

Alex was angry with his father, his sisters, life in general – even with his mother for getting sick. He rushed out of the kitchen, ready to leave without breakfast.

30 Except for his father's pancakes and an occasional tuna-and-mayonnaise sandwich, no one in the family had cooked for months. There was nothing in the refrigerator but orange juice, milk and ice cream; at night they ordered in pizza or Chinese food. At first it was almost like a party, because each of them ate whenever and whatever they pleased, mainly sweets, but by now everyone missed the balanced diet of normal times.

35 Alex had realised during those months how enormous their mother's presence had been and how painful her absence was now. He missed her easy laughter and her affection, even her discipline. She was stricter than his father, and sharper. It was impossible to fool her; she could see the unseeable. He missed her music, her flowers, the once-familiar fragrance of fresh-baked cookies, and the smell of paint. It used to be that his mother could work several hours in her studio, keep the house immaculate, and still welcome her children after school with cookies.

40 Now she barely got out of bed to walk through the rooms with a confused air, as if she didn't recognise anything; she was too thin, and her sunken eyes were circled with shadows. Her canvases, which once were explosions of colour, sat forgotten on their easels, and her oil paints dried in their tubes. His mother seemed to have shrunk; she was little more than a silent ghost.

**END OF SOURCE**

0 4

Focus this part of your answer on the second half of the source from **line 16 to the end**.

A student said ‘This part of the story, set during breakfast time, shows that Alex is struggling to cope with his mother’s illness.’

To what extent do you agree?

In your response, you could:

- consider your own impressions of Alex
- evaluate how the writer shows that Alex is struggling to cope
- support your response with references to the text.

**[20 marks]**

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