

UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE INTERNATIONAL EXAMINATIONS
International General Certificate of Secondary Education

LITERATURE

0486/03

Paper 3 Alternative to Coursework

May/June 2005

Additional Materials: Answer Booklet/Paper

1 hour

READ THESE INSTRUCTIONS FIRST

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

Answer the question.

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

Read the poem below by Sharon Olds, in which she writes of her daughter in the first week after her birth.

Explore the different feelings that the poet has towards her very young baby and how the words and structure of the poem help you to share in her experience of being a mother.

To help you answer this question, you might like to consider:

- the way the poet describes the baby
- the way she describes her handling of the baby
- the mother's developing thoughts and feelings.

Her First Week

She was so small I would scan the crib a half-second
to find her, face-down in a corner, limp
as something gently flung down, or fallen
from some sky an inch above the mattress. I would
tuck her arm along her side
and slowly turn her over. She would tumble
over part by part, like a load
of damp laundry in the dryer, I'd slip
a hand in, under her neck,
slide the other under her back
and evenly lift her up. Her little bottom
sat in my palm, her chest contained
the puckered¹, moire² sacs, and her neck –
I was afraid of her neck, once I almost
thought I heard it quietly snap,
I looked at her and she swivelled her slate
eyes and looked at me. It was in
my care, the creature of her spine, like the first
chordate³, as if history
of the vertebrate⁴ had been placed in my hands.
Every time I checked, she was still
with us – someday there would be a human
race. I could not see it in her eyes,
but when I fed her, gathered her
like a loose bouquet to my side and offered
the breast, greyish-white, and struck with
minuscule scars like creeks in sunlight, I
felt she was serious, I believed she was willing to stay.

¹ wrinkled

² a shiny, silky material

³ creature with a backbone or spine

⁴ creature with a backbone or spine

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