

Comparative Study

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Summary of the Three Texts

Educated by Tara Westover

This memoir recounts the author's incredible life story in three parts. It begins in the 1990s, where Tara describes her childhood growing up with her siblings and her survivalist Mormon parents in Buck's Peak, a rural and isolated community in Idaho, America. Tara is the youngest of seven children. Her father, Gene (a pseudonym), runs a metal scrapyards and small farm at their family home. Her mother, Faye (also a pseudonym), finds work as a midwife. Gene has extreme views about religion and the state.

Tyler, one of Tara's brothers, leaves home to attend a Mormon college in Utah. Tara replaces Tyler in the family scrapyards and must deal with Gene's dangerous methods. Another brother, Shawn (a pseudonym), returns to live in the family home. He abuses Tara physically and psychologically. Tara misses Tyler and is inspired by him to explore her own educational potential. She wins a scholarship to the same Mormon college as Tyler.

Part Two deals with Tara's struggles at college, as well as her difficult relationship with her family. Tara does not fit in, even though many of the people she meets are religious. She works hard in college but finds many of the classes difficult. During the summer holidays she returns home and starts dating Charles. Charles witnesses Shawn's abuse and urges Tara to report it. Tara does not report it, and the couple break up. Back in college, Tara starts to talk about her life with the church's bishop at college. He offers her grant money to pay for college, rent and dental care. Gene has a terrible accident in the family junkyard. He is burnt in an explosion and it seems as though he will die. However, he somehow recovers, aided by Faye's herbal remedies. This leads to the Westovers opening a new family herbal medicine business, which makes them very rich. Tara is accepted to Cambridge University, England for an exchange programme, and later for postgraduate studies.

Part Three of the memoir charts Tara's experiences at Cambridge. She struggles to feel like she belongs at the prestigious university. She returns home for the holidays and discovers that Audrey (a pseudonym for her older sister) was abused by Shawn before she left home. On a later visit home, Shawn tells Tara that he plans to kill Audrey for what she has said about him. Tara confronts her parents about Shawn's abuse, but they do not believe she is telling the truth. Instead, they invite Shawn to the family home to confront Tara. He drops a bloody pocket knife into her hand, and threatens to kill her. These incidents further damage Tara's relationship with her parents, and she becomes depressed. She begins a fellowship at Harvard university. Her parents surprisingly come to visit. They believe that she has been overtaken by the devil and try to save her. Tara does not accept their 'blessings' and they leave in anger. Tara returns to Buck's Peak in a doomed attempt to fix her relationship with her parents. She is awarded her PhD and returns home once again, hoping for some sort of reconciliation. Instead, her mother refuses to meet her, because Tara does not want Gene to be present.

The memoir concludes with the family divided over their relationship with Tara. Gene, Faye, Shawn and Audrey are strongly against her being part of their family. Tara recognises that her past self and present self can still co-exist despite the alienation from her family. Most importantly,

Tara credits her formal and informal education for allowing her to grow into the scholar and citizen she is today.

Kindertransport by Diane Samuels

Act 1 Scene 1: The play opens in Germany in the late 1930s, in the months before World War Two breaks out. Helga, a German Jewish woman, is helping her 9-year-old daughter Eva to prepare for her journey as part of the Kindertransport programme. This was a programme set up to evacuate Jewish children to foster families in England. The action then switches to present-day England. Evelyn (formerly Eva) is helping her adult daughter Faith to move out. The play continues in this format, switching between pre-war Germany and modern-day England. Returning to Germany, Eva asks her mother why her friends are not leaving and why her parents are staying at home too. Back in modern-day England, Faith makes the decision to stay at home, rather than move out. Meanwhile, Helga gives Eva advice about life in England, telling her to preserve her heritage and meet other Jewish people. Faith then welcomes Lil, her grandmother, and tells her that she is looking through a box of old things – including a copy of *The Ratcatcher*, a childhood book that belonged to her mother. Helga then reads the novel to Eva. It's an unsettling tale of a town which lost all its children. The scene ends with Eva on the train travelling away from her home. She is confronted by a Nazi border guard who quizzes her about her belongings, but ultimately allows her to continue her journey to take the boat to England.

Act 1 Scene 2: Faith finds a letter written by Helga to Eva shortly after she left Germany. There is a flashback to Eva dealing with a Kindertransport organiser, who tries to tell Eva that her foster family have been delayed. However, Eva cannot understand English. Lil finally arrives and takes Eva on a train to Manchester. They get on well, despite the difficult circumstances. Faith asks Lil questions about Evelyn – she has figured out that her mother, Evelyn, was once a little girl called Eva. Faith is upset that her mother has never told her the truth about her past. She confronts Evelyn and the two have a massive row before Faith runs off. The child Eva and the adult Evelyn then argue about whether the ratcatcher is really coming; Eva is terrified while Evelyn tries to reassure her not to worry.

Act 2 Scene 1: Following their earlier argument, Evelyn refuses to talk to Faith. Lil tries to calm Evelyn down, telling her that it might be better if her daughter knows the truth about her past. Evelyn disagrees and is scared that Faith will now hate her. Eva has a panic attack on a train when she, along with other kids from the city, are evacuated to the countryside during the Second World War. Lil takes her off the train, understanding that Eva cannot be expected to leave another family home, even if only temporarily. Evelyn and Lil discuss what to do with Evelyn's old documents and photos – in the end they decide to destroy them. Evelyn then turns on Lil and calls her names. Evelyn is upset and tries to blame Lil for fostering her. A flashback scene shows the pair waiting at a train station for Eva's parents to arrive in England – but they never come. Faith is furious when she discovers that Evelyn and Lil have destroyed the old family documents. Evelyn explains that destroying the documents helps her to do something in a hopeless situation. She tells Faith the truth about her upbringing. Eva is visited by Helga, who appeals to her to go with her to America. Eva does not want to go. She feels at home in England now.

Act 2 Scene 2: Faith and Evelyn continue to disagree about what way to handle Evelyn's past.

Faith is angry that she did not know her biological grandmother, Helga. She also wants to reclaim her heritage – but Evelyn wants to move on from the past. Helga returns and appeals to Eva to come to America. In a bitter scene, Evelyn tells Helga that she never should have sent her away from Germany to England. The play ends with Faith planning a return to Germany to trace her family history. Evelyn refuses to go with her. Instead, she ends the play on stage, alone, with the shadow of the ratcatcher looming.

***The Shawshank Redemption* by Frank Darabont (Dir)**

Andy Dufresne, a banker, is wrongly convicted of the double murder of his wife and her lover. He is given two life sentences at Shawshank Prison in Maine, USA. He becomes friendly with Ellis ‘Red’ Redding, a popular prisoner who is known for smuggling objects into prison. Andy asks Red to get him a rock hammer, so he can take up his old hobby of rock collecting and shaping. The prison itself is a cruel and dangerous place. Andy is the target of sexual assaults by a gang known as ‘The Sisters’. Andy, Red and some other prisoners help to tar the roof of the prison. While carrying out the work, Andy overhears the leader of the guards, Byron Hadley, complaining about having to pay tax on his inheritance. Andy approaches Hadley and offers to help him. Hadley accepts Andy’s help and this means that Andy is favoured by the guards. The next time Andy is assaulted by ‘The Sisters’, Hadley and the guards take revenge on them, sending their leader (‘Bogs’) to a hospital.

The warden, Norton, offers Andy a position working in the prison library, because he thinks that Andy can help him, and the other guards, with financial issues. Andy accepts the position in the library and turns it from a sad, underused library into a blossoming, buzzing place.

Norton begins a program where prisoners work on infrastructure outside the prison walls. He accepts bribes from local businesses who fear that prison labour will undercut their business. Andy hides the money away in a bank account under a fake name, helping the warden launder money for many years. In 1964, an excitable young man named Tommy Williams is sent to Shawshank. It comes to light that Tommy knows the person who actually killed Andy’s wife and her lover. Andy informs the warden of the evidence and asks for support with an appeal. Norton refuses to help Andy as he does not want to lose his services. He has Tommy killed and Andy put in solitary confinement for two months.

Andy tells Red about his dreams of life outside the prison. He hopes to open a small hotel and run a fishing boat in Zihuatanejo, a Mexican coastal town. Andy tells Red that if he ever gets out of Shawshank he should go to a place in Buxton to retrieve a package buried under an oak tree.

The next day, Andy doesn’t come out of his cell for roll call, having escaped through a hole he has been digging with the rock hammer for many years. He poses as the fake person in whose name all of Norton’s money has been deposited, takes the money and flees to Mexico. In the process, he also tips the police off to Norton’s shady business dealings. When the authorities go to arrest the warden, he shoots himself.

After 40 years, Red finally makes parole and visits the place in Buxton that Andy told him about. He digs up a box full of money and a letter from Andy telling him to come to Zihuatanejo. He does and the two friends reunite.

A. General Vision and Viewpoint

Studying the general vision and viewpoint of a text is a chance to consider the way the author presents the world to an audience. It is widely agreed that there is no single interpretation of any text; it is one of the great strengths of English as a Leaving Certificate subject that students can explore, consider and formulate a personal response to the studied texts. An author's treatment of an issue or event might build or crush hopes, generate feelings of optimism or pessimism, and reinforce or challenge our assumptions about people, places, issues and periods in history. Indeed, a rounded

and reflective text might do all of these things at different stages, or possibly, all at once. Analysing distinctive aspects of texts allows us to come to some conclusions as to how an author views the world. Openings and endings are very helpful in this regard; the former sets out the author's view while the latter refines this view. In between, it is helpful to examine a variety of issues and techniques to more fully understand the author's viewpoint: key moments around issues like love and family, or the use of a variety of narrative techniques, allow readers to establish the author's viewpoint.

Educated

OPENING

The opening chapter of *Educated* presents a pessimistic and unsettling general vision and viewpoint. Tara describes how her father, Gene, wants his family to live independently of the state. He believes that the police, doctors and schools are part of a dangerous network of immorality, one which brainwashes the public into going along with unreligious ideas. Gene's anti-government opinions lead him to create a culture of intense separation from mainstream society. He takes his children out of school because he thinks: 'I may as well surrender my kids to the Devil himself as send them down the road to that school'. Gene's extreme self-reliance means that his children do not even have birth certificates, something that proves a huge barrier to them when they try to get a driver's licence or enrol in school or college. Indeed, in Tara's case, 'no one was sure when I'd been born,' she says. **Gene's unusual and controversial beliefs isolate his family from much of society and inform the author's ominous general vision and viewpoint.** This is further underlined as Tara recounts a troubling anecdote from her childhood where a local family are involved in a stand-

off with the police. Gene says that the family are 'freedom fighters' who 'wouldn't let the Government brainwash their kids in them public schools, so the Feds came after them'. He says that the FBI shot and killed one of the children and later reports that the father of that family has been shot too. The story is not accurate, but Tara has no way of checking because she has no television or radio, no way of getting news from the outside world. Following this incident, her father ramps up the family's preparation for what he calls the 'Days of Abomination'. He makes Tara and her siblings pack 'head for the hills' bags full of herbal medicines, weapons and ready-to-eat meals, in the fear that their family could be attacked by the government. 'Next time, it could be us,' he says. **Tara's recounting of this frightening anecdote establishes a pessimistic general vision and viewpoint, and leaves readers fearful for Tara's future.**

FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS

Tara's portrayal of family relationships is nuanced and layered, compelling and upsetting, and offers readers rare moments of hope alongside frequent moments of violence, heartbreak and betrayal.

Tara's recounting of her relationship with her brother Shawn is crucial in further developing what appears to be a deeply pessimistic general vision and viewpoint. Shawn is a violent, erratic and cruel person who has no respect for women. At first he seems to enjoy Tara's company. They take another sibling's truck and do deliveries all over the western United States. Shawn teaches Tara how to defend herself in a fight. However, when they return to their normal lives in Idaho, Shawn shows another side of his personality. He manipulates and controls his girlfriend, Sadie. Then he turns on Tara, demanding that she fetch him a glass of water and attacking her when she refuses. 'He grabbed a fistful of my hair, a large clump ... and dragged me into the bathroom,' she says. Shawn forces her head down the toilet 'so my nose scraped the stained porcelain'. On another occasion, Tara is woken up by 'two hands ... gripping my throat' as Shawn assaults her, again dragging her through the house by her hair. Shawn stops his attack when Tyler, another of Tara's brothers, calls into the house. **However, his bullying worsens over the years, serving to reinforce the gloomy general vision and viewpoint.** Finally, Tara confronts her parents about Shawn's abusive behaviour towards her and her sister Audrey. Tara tells them of Shawn's threat to shoot Audrey; they don't want to believe her. Tara explains that Shawn is a 'violent and manipulative man'. Her father shouts that she has no proof. Tara replies: 'You don't need proof ... you've seen it'. Gene invites Shawn to the house to answer Tara's accusations. Shawn approaches Tara, unfolds her hand, and places a knife on her palm. 'If you're smart,' he says, 'you'll use this on yourself. Because it will be better than what I'll do to you if you don't'. Faced with her brother's terrifying presence, Tara decides to lie to him, and tells him 'Dad must have misheard me' rather than confront Shawn for his years of terror. **Gene and Faye's failure to take any action against Shawn works as an endorsement for his behaviour and reiterates**

Tara's unavoidably bleak general vision and viewpoint.

Tara's relationship with Tyler lends the memoir some of its few uplifting moments and allows readers a more nuanced understanding of her general vision and viewpoint. Tyler provides a template for Tara on how to prosper outside of their highly controlled family home. She recalls how he was different to his siblings. 'While his brothers wrestled, Tyler listened to music,' she says. Later, Tyler announces his decision to go to college – a choice met with predictable resistance from his father. 'College is extra school for people too dumb to learn the first time round,' he says. Confrontations between Tyler and his father were common. Tyler wanted to study while his father wanted him to work in the family junkyard, reclaiming parts from old vehicles. Tara recalls her bother arguing that he should be able to study, but most mornings Tyler would 'surrender' to his father's wishes and slump out the door to work. However, Tyler's determination to be free shines through. 'There were other mornings ... when Dad huffed out the back door, alone'. Tyler eventually leaves home for college. Tara recalls how he 'rarely came home after that' as his father considered him to be 'building a new life for himself across enemy lines'. His determination to live the life he wanted is an inspiration for Tara. On one visit home he urges Tara to follow his path and pass the ACT (a standardised test for college entry). 'There's a world out there, Tara, and it will look a lot different once Dad is no longer whispering his view of it in your ear,' he says. Tara is inspired by Tyler and would imagine 'the classrooms where Tyler was spending his days'. Tyler's successful release from the oppressive family home gives both readers and Tara hope that a similar future is possible for her. **It is a brief, but significant, element of the memoir and adds a layer of complexity to the author's predominantly downbeat general vision and viewpoint.**

LOVE

The author's general vision and viewpoint can be better understood by examining her portrayal of love. Tara's recounting of the nascent days of her parents' relationship is uplifting and romantic, creating a general vision and viewpoint that is positive and carefree. She writes that Gene was once a young man 'bursting with energy, laughter and panache'. She also notes how her mother Faye was quietly rebellious as she rejected the expectation that she would have a quiet suburban life with a 'white picket fence'. Faye's family did not like Gene; she frequently retold the story of how her brother Lynn came to visit Gene's family one day. The Westovers were 'roughhousing the way they did after a harvest'. Lynn was horrified at their boisterous manner and aggression, but Faye explained that: 'you had to listen to *what* they were saying, not *how* they were saying it'. Tara describes her parents' wedding photograph: 'they are both intoxicated with happiness, Mother with a relaxed smile, Dad with a grin so large it pokes out from under the corners of his moustache'. She observes that 'it is difficult for me to believe that the untroubled young man in that photograph is my father'. Tara has only known him as a 'fearful and anxious' middle-aged man. **The photograph serves as a powerful symbol of the author's general vision and viewpoint when she writes about love. At once her general vision and viewpoint is hopeful and mournful; she is aware of a happier past, but troubled by a deeply unsettling present.**

Tara's relationship with Charles, a boy she meets while on summer break from college, encapsulates the tainted optimism of her general vision and viewpoint. The couple pass 'every evening together' visiting 'public parks and ice cream shops, burger joints and gas stations'. Anticipation builds before each date as Tara spends an hour 'scrubbing grime from her fingernails ... just in case that was the night Charles touched them'. Tara's exhilaration at her

new relationship is undermined, however, by the tortured secrets of her past. The abuse that she has suffered from Shawn makes her extremely uncomfortable about physical affection. She explains that the first time Charles held her hand she withdrew it 'as if I'd been burned'. **The hope that accompanies her relationship, and that readers take as a sign of her general vision and viewpoint, is frustrated by the deeply traumatic effects of Shawn's physical and emotional attacks on her.** Tara remembers that she 'couldn't let him [Charles] near me ... without shuddering as that word, my word, ripped its way into remembrance. Whore'. This terrible label has been thrown at Tara by Shawn throughout his time in the family home. 'The first time I wore lip gloss, Shawn said I was a whore,' she recalls. Tara feels inextricably linked to the word 'whore', calling it 'my word'. **Shawn's abuse has clearly had a devastating impact on her confidence and self-esteem. Also, it has a detrimental impact on her general vision and viewpoint, as an intimate relationship which should be a source of joyous optimism, instead becomes another site of inhibition, sadness and hopelessness.**

FRIENDSHIP

Tara's description of her friendships provides the memoir with notes of both optimism and pessimism. Her early friendships are barely worthy of the name. Sheltered from her peers by her protective, controlling father, Tara is unable to forge bonds and connections with young people her own age. It is in this context that she tries to get to know Maria, the daughter of the midwife that Faye works with. 'I stared hopefully at her. Besides Audrey, I hadn't met many other girls like me, who didn't go to school,' she writes. **Unfortunately, they do not strike up a friendship, and the sense of isolation that Tara feels is only reinforced, accentuating the gloomy general vision and viewpoint.**

Perhaps unsurprisingly, Tara struggles to settle

into college life. She is heavily judgemental of her first roommates, Shannon and Mary, causing inevitable rifts with them. She recalls noticing the clothes Shannon was wearing as she ‘moved to the sink and I saw the word “Juicy” written across her rear. That was more than I could take’. Though all three women are Mormon, Tara’s interpretation of her religion is stubbornly restrictive. She cannot understand how Shannon is a Mormon and sceptically asks her: ‘*You go to church?*’ Tara is slightly less dismissive of Mary, because she ‘dressed like I expected a Mormon to dress’. However, she soon demonstrates a coldness towards her, expressing her disapproval for Mary’s shopping trip on a Sunday, which Tara maintains is a violation of her religious doctrine. She actively avoids Shannon and Mary, as well as everyone else, at Sunday school. She remembers being ‘pressed into a corner, away from the other children, a precise reproduction of every Sunday school lesson from my childhood. It was the only sensation of familiarity I’d felt since coming to this place, and I relished it’. Tara’s behaviour around her roommates hampers any possibility of a friendship developing. **The author’s general vision and viewpoint, as seen in her churlish behaviour towards potential friends, is dispiriting.**

Many years later, Tara manages to develop a sense of friendship and belonging at university. She goes on a trip to Rome with some classmates and, after initial trepidation, finds a sense of belonging when she unexpectedly makes an insightful point during a philosophical discussion. ‘There was a pause while everyone checked to see who had spoken, then someone asked which text the line was from, and the conversation moved forward. For the rest of the week, I experience Rome as they did: as a place of history.’ **At this point a more rounded general vision and viewpoint emerges. Tara’s upbringing clearly affects her ability to make friends, but her education enables her to reflect on her judgemental impulses and**

accept that the diversity of human experience enriches rather than prohibits friendships. It is a thoroughly uplifting key moment, shared by author and reader alike.

SYMBOLISM

Symbolism, the use of symbols to represent ideas, is used throughout the memoir to highlight the complexity of the author’s general vision and viewpoint. One of the most frequently reoccurring images is that of the ‘Indian Princess’, a shape of a figure that can be seen in the mountain range above Buck’s Peak, overlooking Tara’s family home. At times, the mountain signifies Tara’s – and the readers’ – purest hopes. However, it frequently serves as a foreboding symbol for Tara, creating a tense atmosphere that dampens the general vision and viewpoint.

In the prologue, Tara writes that she ‘had been educated in the rhythms of the mountain’ and her father told her that ‘Nomadic Indians had watched for her appearance as a sign of spring, a signal the mountain was thawing, and it was time to come home’. The mountain, therefore, is a symbol of familiarity and tradition for Tara, and readers are at once uplifted and awestruck by her mature and hopeful general vision and viewpoint.

However, Tara has an uneasy relationship with the Princess. She returns to Buck’s Peak seeking reconciliation with her parents after rejecting her father’s offer of a ‘priesthood blessing’. Tara notices the Princess ‘bright as I’d ever seen her’ but recalls that the ‘Princess had been haunting me’. She writes that she heard the Princess calling her from across the ocean, ‘as if I were a troublesome calf who’d wandered from her herd’. She imagines the Princess in a fury with her for not coming home sooner, ‘her face contorted with rage, her stance heavy and threatening’. Finally, Tara feels that she has misunderstood the Princess, commenting that her role is not to ‘gather and confine’ her herd

by force but rather to ‘celebrate their return’. **At this point the Princess is a haunting symbol of the writer’s spiralling hopelessness, refining the general vision and viewpoint once again.** Readers will notice parallels between how Tara thinks about the Princess and how she feels about her family. The sense of belonging she had at home during her unconventional childhood has been replaced by a sense of foreboding as she seeks acceptance and forgiveness (even though she has done nothing wrong). The same can be said about her feelings towards the Princess; once a sign of familiarity but now something to be feared, she is unsure if she truly belongs in the shadow of the Princess.

ENDING

The ending of any text gives a writer a valuable opportunity to clarify their general vision and viewpoint. Tara provides notes of hope amidst a symphony of gloom as the book moves to its conclusion. She pays a high price for her choice to reject her father’s blessing and live free of his oppressive ideas. The realisation that her family relationships may be at an end plunges her into a mental health crisis. She has a number of frightening sleepwalking episodes where she wakes up in the middle of the street, completely unaware of how she got there. Her ill-health causes her to reconsider whether she should have accepted her father’s blessing. She returns home and is welcomed by her mother.

However, Tara discovers an email that her mother has sent to one of Shawn’s ex-girlfriends, claiming that Tara is not someone to be believed and that she might even be a danger to her family. Tara realizes that there is no loyalty to those who fail to conform to her father’s rules, only ‘shifting sand, shifting loyalties, shifting history’. **Tara also realises that the family she wanted to be a part of was merely an illusion; it did not offer her comfort, but emptiness. ‘I had come to reclaim that life, to save it. But there was nothing here to save, nothing to grasp,’ she writes. The author’s general vision and viewpoint is certainly pessimistic during this key moment.** Tara leaves her family home and does not speak to her father again. She is adamant that she has made the right decision by cutting ties with Gene. ‘I accepted, finally, that I had made the decision for my own sake,’ she writes. She concludes her memoir by noting how she has become a ‘new self’. **The author’s general vision and viewpoint appears hopeful and confident as the memoir draws to a close. Given the desperate circumstances that she faces, there was never going to be a happy ending for Tara. Instead, readers are left with a plausible ending, and one which ultimately foregrounds Tara’s rights to safety, free speech and opportunity.** In that sense, the general vision and viewpoint that the ending presents is, perhaps unexpectedly, life affirming and hopeful.

KEY POINTS



- The opening chapter of *Educated* presents a pessimistic and unsettling general vision and viewpoint. Tara describes how her father Gene wants his family to live independently of the state. This is further underlined as Tara recounts a troubling anecdote from her childhood, where a local family are involved in a stand-off with the police.
- Tara’s recounting of her relationship with her brother Shawn is crucial in establishing a hopeless general vision and viewpoint. Shawn is a violent, erratic and cruel person who has no respect for women. Meanwhile, Tara’s relationship with Tyler lends the memoir some of its few uplifting moments and allows readers a more nuanced understanding of her general vision and viewpoint.

- Tara's relationship with Charles, a man she meets while on summer break from college, encapsulates the tainted optimism of her general vision and viewpoint. The hope that accompanies her relationship, and that readers take as a sign of her general vision and viewpoint, is frustrated by the deeply traumatic effects of Shawn's physical and emotional attacks on her.
- Tara's description of her friendships provides the memoir with notes of both optimism and pessimism. Sheltered from her peers by her protective, controlling father, Tara is unable to forge bonds and connections with young people her own age. She actively avoids Shannon and Mary, as well as everyone else, at Sunday school. Many years later though, Tara manages to develop a sense of friendship and belonging at university.
- The author's use of symbolism highlights the shifts in her general vision and viewpoint. At times, the mountain signifies Tara's – and the readers' – purest hopes. However, it frequently serves as a foreboding symbol for Tara, creating a tense atmosphere that dampens the general vision and viewpoint.
- The memoir ends with Tara realising that the family she wanted to be a part of was merely an illusion; it did not offer her comfort, but emptiness. 'I had come to reclaim that life, to save it. But there was nothing here to save, nothing to grasp,' she writes. However, this pessimistic general vision and viewpoint is challenged when Tara notes how she has become a 'new self'. The ending ultimately foregrounds Tara's rights to safety, free speech and opportunity, and is one which readers find uplifting and hopeful.

Kindertransport and Educated

OPENING

As with the memoir, the author of the play establishes her general vision and viewpoint in the opening scenes of the text. In an incredibly poignant scene, Helga helps Eva pack her bag before escaping to England. She tries to teach Eva how to sew a button onto a coat, but Eva complains that she would rather read her favourite book. Helga replies rhetorically: 'How else will the buttons get onto your coat?' Eva does not appreciate the gravity of her situation, but Helga is gently trying to prepare her for an independent life without her mother. Helga is teaching her a skill she will need in England, one which will save her money and make her clothes last longer. Eva is too young to understand what her mother is saying. She wonders why her mother will not be able to help her. Helga tells

her: 'You have to be able to manage on your own'. Eva finally agrees to try to sew a button on a coat. Helga walks her through the process. Eva manages to get the button onto the coat. Helga tells her 'you don't need me'. Eva's innocence in this scene, as shown by her lack of understanding as to the seriousness of her departure, serves to make the general vision and viewpoint downbeat and pessimistic. **Like the memoir, the play's general vision and viewpoint in its opening scene suggests to readers that the author's outlook on the world is hopeless.** Interestingly, the opening scenes of both texts feature a parent trying to protect and nurture their child. In the memoir, Gene genuinely believes he is helping his family by isolating them from the rest of society. In the play, Helga believes she is helping her daughter by sending her to live in another country. **However, while Helga's**

intentions are good, the choices she faces are dire, and this makes the playwright's general vision and viewpoint pessimistic. The play's opening scenes suggest to readers that the author's general vision and viewpoint is realistic and unsentimental: good people are often presented with bad choices in life. The memoirist's general vision and viewpoint appears as negative; religious ideology and untreated mental health issues caused Gene to make drastic, harmful choices around his family.

FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS

The playwright's portrayal of family life helps to clarify her general vision and viewpoint. **Like the memoir, the play contains family incidents that can make a reader despair.** However, there are also relationships and bonds that are healthy and positive. The realisation that Eva's parents will not be able to join her in England is one of the play's most heart-breaking moments. It showcases the playwright's general vision and viewpoint in an uncompromising way: during World War Two children were separated from their parents in huge numbers, either by migration or death. Eva goes to the train station in Manchester to meet her parents, who are supposed to arrive from London. A guard sees Eva waiting on the platform alone and starts to ask her questions about who she is and where she comes from. Eva explains that her mother said, 'they come to me on September 9th'. The guard tells Eva: 'But, it's September 11th today'. Eva's hopes of a happy reunion with her parents start to seem naive. Lil, Eva's foster mother in England, runs up to Eva and says that 'the last train's been and gone, love' – in other words, it is obvious that her parents are not coming. Eva does not want to accept this and says: 'we cannot give up yet'. She asks Lil if they can come back tomorrow. Lil explains to Eva: 'I don't think they're coming'. Eva is adamant that her parents will come because 'they keep their promises. Always'. Lil tells Eva bluntly that 'wars break promises'. Eva

continues to cling to the hope that she will see her parents again. 'They must be coming some different way,' she says. Unfortunately, there is no hope of them escaping war-torn Germany. 'There's no way through,' says Lil. At this point Eva seems to accept that the war has stopped her parents from travelling and she says, 'I'll never see them again, will I?' Lil's unsentimental and honest assessment leaves Eva and readers in no doubt as to the playwright's downbeat general vision and viewpoint. In the memoir, family relationships have much the same effect, particularly when we consider Shawn's abuse of Tara. **In both cases, the texts explore some of the more upsetting, negative aspects of family life, and reflect the more pessimistic side of their author's general vision and viewpoints.**

In their treatment of the topic of family life, both the play and the memoir are nuanced in their general vision and viewpoint. Evelyn's relationship with her daughter, while hardly perfect, can be warm and loving and demonstrates Diane Samuel's more uplifting general vision and viewpoint. In an early scene Evelyn helps Faith prepare to move out of the family home. She is worried that her daughter will have to move into a flat that has no furniture. Evelyn searches desperately through her attic for things to offer Faith. She offers her daughter 'lights, crockery, cutlery' as well as a television. Faith explains that she does not need so many items but her mother is relentless. 'Would cups and saucers be of any use?' she asks. Evelyn wants her daughter to be comfortable in her new home, and even offers her a 'spare teapot' because 'one might break'. Evelyn, reminiscent of her own mother, is a kind and practical parent. She does not want her spare household goods to go to waste: 'They should be used rather than left to moulder in a box,' she says. The playwright's general vision and viewpoint is made more uplifting by Samuels' portrayal of Evelyn as a compassionate parent. She allows her daughter the option of changing her mind about moving out. Faith

appears reluctant to leave during this scene. She drops hints about her doubts; first by suggesting she does not need many new things, and later by saying the rent is too high. Finally, Evelyn asks if Faith is 'absolutely sure' that she does not want to move out. Faith answers 'yes' and Evelyn tells her: 'I expect you to keep your word'. This scene encapsulates much of Samuels' more optimistic general vision and viewpoint. **As with the memoir, where Tyler forges a deep, kind and compassionate connection with Tara, we see in the play that family members are willing to be flexible and loving towards each other. In both cases, a positive note is added to the authorial general vision and viewpoint.**

LOVE

The playwright's general vision and viewpoint takes on a more sombre tone when we consider her treatment of love. The most difficult intimate relationship is between Evelyn and Faith's father (not named in the play), their relationship has broken down and we do not see Evelyn's father. Instead, we learn about Evelyn's relationship with him through her conversations with Lil and Faith. Evelyn and Faith have a huge row when Faith discovers that Evelyn has hidden her German refugee childhood from her. Faith says Evelyn is an 'awful lying cow of a mother'. Lil tries to help them make up. She tells Evelyn that Faith did not mean to be so harsh. 'It's probably just leftovers from her dad going. You're here to blame,' she says. This scene shows the difficulties faced by a family when an intimate relationship breaks down. We also see that the relationship between Evelyn and Faith's father was not an entirely open one. Faith asks her mother why she never told her father about her secret past. 'Why didn't you tell Dad?' she asks. Evelyn does not apologise for keeping the extremely raw memory of her childhood escape from Germany to herself. 'Is it so wrong to want a decent, ordinary life?' she asks Faith. Evelyn's experience of leaving her parents in Hamburg

was traumatic. She wants to forget all about it and move on with a more typical life – and this leads to her not telling Faith's father the truth about her past. The audience is not given a clear explanation for the ending of their relationship. However, it is fair to say that they do not have a fully trusting or balanced relationship, and this suggests a negative general vision and viewpoint. **This contrasts with the memoir, where the nascent relationship between Gene and Faye is based on open disclosure and unconditional acceptance.** Readers get a more hopeful version of love from the memoir than the play.

The playwright's more positive general vision and viewpoint can be seen in her treatment of the relationship between Eva's parents, Helga and Werner. We do not see these characters together, however, they still come across as a happy and loving couple because they support each other during the extreme stresses and dangers of the Second World War. Helga promises Eva, on her final night in Germany, that they will meet their daughter again in England. 'Vati and I will come,' says Helga, offering Eva some reassurance at a frightening time. Eva keeps this promise in mind as she leaves Hamburg on a train to a ferry for England. 'We will see our Muttis and Vatis soon enough,' she says. Helga and Werner regularly write to their daughter. Their letters suggest that they are a contented couple. 'Vati (father) wants me to tell you that he is well and his spirits are up. Life is not so bad. We are happy enough,' writes Helga. Their relationship is ended when the Nazi regime kills Werner at a concentration camp. 'I lost your father,' Helga tells Evelyn, 'he was sick and they put him in line for the showers'. Helga explains that she is devastated by the loss of her marriage to Werner: 'I did not lose myself. Nearly, a million times over, right on the edge of life, but I held on'. The love between Eva's parents has a powerful effect on readers, as it suggest that love is possible in the most dire of circumstances. **Similarly, Tara's recounting of her relationship with Charles shows that**

love can blossom under immense strain. Both texts offer a treatment of love that is, to various degrees, positive and heart-warming.

FRIENDSHIPS

The author's outlook on life is developed further when we consider the author's treatment of friendships in the play. **Much like the memoir, the play is based around a person who has few friends.** In both cases, this serves to emphasise a sense of isolation around the principal character and contributes to a pessimistic general vision and viewpoint. Indeed the absence of friendships in the play means that the main character's closest and most significant friendship is with Lil, her foster mother. This is hardly a conventional friendship due to the age gap between the two characters, and it morphs from friendship into a more conventional parent-child relationship. Lil's immediate acceptance and care for Eva highlights a more positive aspect of the playwright's general vision and viewpoint. Lil helps Eva to settle into her new life: she meets her at a train station in London and immediately removes the label that Eva is wearing with a number and a Star of David on it. Eva is alarmed and tells her: 'I have to wear it. I hate it'. Lil reassures her: 'You don't need it on now I've come'. This is very reassuring for Eva – she is incredibly vulnerable as a young person in a country where she knows nobody, cannot speak the language, and has no idea what will happen to her parents. Lil's friendship helps Eva to feel the liberty of England, rather than the discrimination of Germany. She takes the label with the number and the Star of David off her coat and tells her: 'Over. Done. Finished. Goodbye. Yes. That's the word. Goodbye'. This is an important moment for Eva because Lil shows her that she can be free in England, not simply another number to be targeted because of her identity. Lil takes Eva by the hand and tells her 'I like you', before boarding a train to Manchester. Lil sings a song and lights a cigarette. Eva points

at the smoke, signalling that she would like to try it. Lil offers her 'a quickie' and then warmly remarks that Eva is 'out in the world two minutes and you're smoking like a chimney'. There is an instinctive bond between the characters; it feels like the start of a friendship. Lil teaches Eva to be practical, rather than idealistic. She explains to Eva that her parents will only be allowed to come to England if they accept unskilled jobs, as butlers, gardeners or cooks. Eva complains that such jobs are beneath her parents, who are from a comfortable middle-class background. Lil tells her plainly: 'Do you want them here as servants or over there? ... Simple as that'. Lil's devilish attitude helps to lighten the mood and make Eva feel loved, accepted and comfortable. Eventually, Eva changes her name to Evelyn, partly because she feels so at home in England, but also because she wants to forget about her German roots. For readers, the initial meeting between Lil and Eva is uplifting and enjoyable, and provides a welcome release from some of the play's earlier, more difficult moments when Eva is forced to leave Germany. **In the memoir, meanwhile, Tara has few real friends in life until she gets to university.** Readers of the memoir must wait a long time to see its author feel the warmth, joy and acceptance of true friendship, a delay which heightens the author's often downbeat general vision and viewpoint.

SYMBOLISM

The symbolism of the play strongly suggests that the playwright has a negative general vision and viewpoint. As with the symbolism in the memoir, the primary symbol in the play is one that begins as a sign of innocence and imagination before becoming something more sinister. In the opening scene of the play, Eva asks her mother to read 'The Ratcatcher', her favourite fairy tale. It is a story about a ratcatcher who was employed by a town to lure away its rats. The town refuses to pay the ratcatcher and so as punishment, he lures away the town's

children. The ratcatcher is a terrifying figure. He has ‘strong arms and spiky legs’ as well as ‘eyes sharp as razors’. He promises to take revenge on the town that double-crossed him. ‘I will take the heart of your happiness away,’ he says. The stage notes explain that the ratcatcher is a mythical creature, and the actor playing this part should also play the Nazi border official, the English organiser, the postman and the station guard – Eva is terrified of these characters. As a child, Eva cherishes the story for its imaginative power. On leaving home, the ratcatcher becomes symbolic of Eva’s darkest fears. Eva sees a similarity between her life and the story of the ratcatcher – like the children in the fairy tale, she feels that she was taken away from her family. The symbolism becomes even more potent and upsetting when Evelyn tells Helga that she sees her as the ratcatcher. She says that her mother has ‘his eyes, his face’ and accuses Helga of abandoning her. ‘You threw me into the sea with all your baggage on my shoulders,’ she says. The ratcatcher’s mutation from fairy tale to nightmare is also symbolic of Eva’s life; before the Nazis began persecuting Jews in Germany, Eva lived a comfortable happy life and a story such as ‘The Ratcatcher’ was simply a make-believe fable that children could innocently enjoy. The ratcatcher’s conversion into something horrifyingly real for Eva encapsulates the unimaginable horrors that faced targets of the Nazi regime’s campaign of horror and hate. Samuels’ use of symbolism reinforces a bleak general vision and viewpoint as it emphasises the loss of innocence and joy suffered by children like Eva at the outbreak of the Second World War. **The symbol of the ratcatcher works in the same way as that of the Princess in the memoir.** Cherished by Tara as a symbol of home and tradition as a child, the Princess is converted into an unsettling sign of the hostility that Tara faces at her family home. **Both the memoirist and the playwright use symbolism to convey a pessimistic general vision and viewpoint.**

ENDING

The ending of the play, like the ending of the memoir, refines the author’s general vision and viewpoint. In both cases, the authors offer readers an unsentimental view of the world. Readers will note a contrast between the two endings. The memoir allows readers the consolation that Tara has prospered, despite her incredibly challenging upbringing. The play, meanwhile, documents the many losses that Evelyn suffers both as a teenager and as a middle-aged woman. Towards the end of the play, Helga visits England to see the 17-year-old Eva – it is their first meeting since Eva was sent away. Eva explains that she has changed her name. ‘I’m called Evelyn now ... I wanted an English name,’ she says. Helga is upset because ‘Eva was the name of your great-grandmother’. Evelyn explains that she thought Helga was dead. ‘There were no letters for all those years and then I saw the newsreels and newspapers ... I thought the worst,’ she says. Evelyn also tells her mother that she has been adopted. ‘How can you be adopted if your own mother is alive for you?’ asks Helga, who offers Evelyn the chance to emigrate with her to America. Evelyn tells her simply: ‘I have a family here’. The final meeting between the two ends bitterly. Evelyn goes to say goodbye to her mother as she sets sail for America. Helga continues to call her daughter ‘Eva’ even though Evelyn has corrected her a number of times. Helga is impatient with Evelyn, telling her that she is ‘wasting a chance hardly anyone else has been given’. Evelyn tells her mother that she wishes she had died. Helga tells her daughter that she can never understand the pain she has been through: ‘I have bled oceans out of my eyes’. Evelyn tells Helga that she did not want to be saved as a child if it meant losing her parents. ‘Didn’t it ever occur to you that I might have wanted to die with you ... I never wanted to live without you and you made me. What is more cruel than that?’ The sense of hopelessness is accentuated by the rupture

between Evelyn and Faith, who is determined to learn more about her family history. Evelyn pleads with her not to investigate her heritage, but Faith is steadfast: 'I'm going to find out what everything means. Get in touch with my relatives. I want to meet them,' she says. Evelyn is totally opposed to Faith's plan, telling her daughter: 'I have nothing in common with them and neither do you'. Faith emphasises how such a journey could prove healing for the pair: 'We can do this together. It would make us closer to each other.' Evelyn refuses her offer bluntly: 'I'd rather die than go back'. The play ends with Evelyn and her daughter barely on speaking terms, viewing the world from conflicting points of view.

Evelyn wants to forget her tragic past, while Faith wants to learn about it. **As Faith exits, the stage directions note: 'The shadow of the ratcatcher covers the stage'. It is an ending which underlines the author's pessimistic general vision and viewpoint.** Another author might have made the ending more sentimental and idealistic. However, Samuels creates an ending devoid of mawkishness and full of difficult choices, frustrated hopes and broken relationships. **This contrasts with the memoir which the author concludes on a more optimistic note, stressing the independence and confidence that she has gained, despite her many losses and setbacks.**

KEY POINTS



- As with the memoir, the author of the play establishes her general vision and viewpoint in the opening scenes of the text. In an incredibly poignant scene, Helga helps Eva pack her bag before escaping to England. Eva's innocence in this scene, as shown by her lack of understanding as to the seriousness of her departure, serves to make the general vision and viewpoint downbeat and pessimistic. Like the memoir, the play's general vision and viewpoint in its opening scene suggests to readers that the author's outlook on the world is hopeless.
- The playwright's portrayal of family life helps to clarify her general vision and viewpoint. Like the memoir, the play contains family incidents that can make a reader despair, particularly when we consider Shawn's abuse of Tara. The realisation that Eva's parents will not be able to join her in England is one of the play's most heart-breaking moments. However, there are also relationships and bonds that are healthy and positive, such as Evelyn's more tender moments with her daughter. This has the same effect on the general vision and viewpoint as Tara's relationship with Tyler in the memoir.
- The playwright's general vision and viewpoint takes on a more sombre tone when we consider her treatment of love. The most difficult intimate relationship is between Evelyn and Faith's father (not named in the play). Their relationship has broken down and there is much bitterness around it. This contrasts with the memoir where the nascent relationship between Gene and Faye is based on open disclosure and unconditional acceptance.
- The playwright's more positive general vision and viewpoint can be seen in her treatment of the relationship between Eva's parents, Helga and Werner. We do not see these characters together, either. However, they still come across as a happy

and loving couple because they support each other during the extreme stresses and dangers of the Second World War. Similarly, Tara's recounting of her relationship with Charles shows that love can blossom under immense strain.

- Much like the memoir, the play is based around a person who has few friends. In both cases, this serves to emphasise a sense of isolation around the principal character and contributes to a pessimistic general vision and viewpoint. Eva's only real friend is Lil, who instinctively minds her and teaches her about the world. In the memoir, meanwhile, Tara has few real friends in life until she gets to university, reinforcing the author's downbeat general vision and viewpoint.
- The symbolism of the play strongly suggests that the playwright has a negative general vision and viewpoint. In the opening scene of the play, Eva asks her mother to read 'The Ratcatcher', her favourite fairy tale. As a child, Eva cherishes the story for its imaginative power. On leaving home, the ratcatcher becomes symbolic of Eva's darkest fears. The symbol of the ratcatcher works in the same way as that of the Princess in the memoir.
- The authors of both texts conclude with an unsentimental view of the world. Readers will note a contrast between the two endings. The memoir allows readers the consolation that Tara has prospered, despite her incredibly challenging upbringing. The play, meanwhile, documents the many losses that Evelyn suffers both as a teenager and as a middle-aged woman.

The Shawshank Redemption, Educated and Kindertransport

OPENING

The opening scenes of the film showcase what appears to be the director's deeply pessimistic general vision and viewpoint. Andy Dufresne is on trial for the double murder of his wife and her lover. He faces off against a probing, emotive prosecuting District Attorney (lawyer) who accuses Andy of following his wife and her lover home and killing them. Flashbacks from the night of the crime reveal that Andy was at the scene, with a gun and a bottle of bourbon. However, he tells the trial that he 'mostly wanted to just scare them'. Assured of his innocence, Andy is softly spoken, polite and even a little detached when questioned by the lawyer. His demeanour, and the evidence against him, leads the judge to declare: 'it chills my blood just to look at you'. **Andy is jailed for two life sentences, creating**

an initial general vision and viewpoint that is utterly devoid of hope or optimism.

Andy arrives in Shawshank along with about half a dozen other men. The inmates gather to watch the bus carrying the new prisoners pull into the prison. The atmosphere is frenzied as the prisoners try to frighten and intimidate Andy and the other new arrivals by clapping, shouting and banging on the chain-link fence. However, at the same time, Ellis 'Red' Redding and some of his friends take bets, in a good-humoured if macabre way, on which of the new convicts will be the first to have a breakdown while in prison. **The camaraderie among the prisoners is the only relief from the director's bleak general vision and viewpoint in the opening scenes.** Andy walks along a yellow line, chained to the other new inmates. They are told to turn to the right and

they are addressed by Warden Samuel Norton. He tells them they are not allowed to blaspheme and asks them if they have any questions. One convict asks: ‘when do we eat?’ Byron Hadley, captain of the prison guards, approaches the man and screams: ‘you eat when we say you eat’. Hadley then viciously strikes the convict with his baton. The prisoners are then stripped of their outside clothes and given prison uniforms, another reminder that they have surrendered control of their lives. **Like the memoir where Tara’s father infuses the family home with fear and paranoia, and the play where Eva’s mother feels forced to send her away from Germany to England, the film features a directorial general vision and viewpoint that is largely pessimistic.**

FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS

Frank Darabont’s general vision and viewpoint appears even starker when we consider his portrayal of family life in his film. Indeed, with one significant exception, family members are absent from the film. No prisoners are visited by siblings; indeed, none are even mentioned. **This contributes to the film’s almost suffocating intensity; there is little life beyond the walls of the prison. Such a notable absence suggests Darabont’s general vision and viewpoint is downbeat and lacking in optimism.** This is further refined by the only major family relationship featured in the film: Byron Hadley and his brother. Andy, Red and some of the other convicts are assigned to tar the roof of the prison license-plate factory. Andy overhears Hadley telling one of the other guards that his brother has recently died. The guard tells Hadley he is sorry to hear the news but Hadley replies curtly: ‘I ain’t. He was an asshole’. He then explains that his brother left him \$35,000 in his will and when the guard tells him that it’s great news, Hadley complains about the amount of tax he will have to pay on the inheritance. In part, this scene reflects Hadley’s grumpy, hostile personality – but it also

tells us something about the director’s general vision and viewpoint. Darabont seems to suggest that paying tax is something to be resented, even though, ironically, it is taxation that pays for public services, like prisons. Hadley’s withering dismissal of his brother’s death and his self-pitying grumbling about paying tax on his inheritance suggest a negative and pessimistic general vision and viewpoint. **The director’s vision contrasts with the memoirist’s in this regard: though family is a source of much woe for Tara, her relationship with her brother Tyler is refreshing and uplifting.** Similarly, the playwright’s general vision and viewpoint shows signs of optimism in the better moments between Evelyn and Faith, even though the playwright acknowledges the difficulty of family life when exploring Eva’s separation from her parents. **The memoir and the play take more rounded views about family life and deliver a more balanced general vision and viewpoint than the film, whose treatment of the issue is comparatively one-dimensional.**

LOVE

The director’s general vision and viewpoint appears ever more pessimistic when we consider his treatment of love in his film. Notably, this is a text with few intimate relationships. Apart from Andy, not a single prisoner mentions a partner of any kind – emphasising once again the disconnection of the prisoners from the outside world and reinforcing the director’s downbeat general vision and viewpoint. Andy’s marriage to Renee breaks down when he discovers she has been having an affair. The opening scene of the film is a flashback of Andy’s trial for the double murder of Renee and her lover, Glenn Quentin. Following the revelation of her affair, Renee had asked Andy for a divorce but he refused. This is another sign of the director’s bleak general vision and viewpoint, as Renee is trapped by Andy’s refusal to accept that she does not love him anymore. Later that day, Andy

followed the couple to Glenn's apartment with a gun. He tells the trial that he 'mostly wanted to just scare them'. **However, Frank Darabont's bleak general vision and viewpoint is further emphasised when Andy's plan goes tragically wrong.** Renee and Glenn are murdered during a robbery of Glenn's apartment on the same night that Andy was seen outside the apartment with a gun. Andy is unable to convince the jury that he is an innocent man and he is found guilty of the double murder. The director's general vision and viewpoint is hopeless as it deals with intimate relationships: Andy's marriage shows no signs of love between him and his wife, while Renee's affair inadvertently leads to her death. **Viewers will find the director's treatment of love utterly demoralising, as the only love between characters on-screen ends in tragedy.**

Interestingly, Andy blames himself for his wife's death. 'My wife used to say I'm a hard man to know. Like a closed book. Complained about it all the time,' he explains. Andy blames himself for his wife's affair and, ultimately, for her death. 'I killed her ... I didn't pull the trigger. But I drove her away. That's why she died. Because of me, the way I am,' he says. Such a view of love is heartfelt and poignant, and shows a measure of reflection and humility on the part of the director that viewers will find somewhat consoling. 'She was beautiful. I loved her. But I guess I couldn't show it enough,' Andy tells Red, again highlighting a humble and insightful view of love and relationships. Ironically, Andy's candid commentary on his marriage suggests a more hopeful general vision and viewpoint – given his wrongful conviction for her murder, it is remarkable that he assumes any responsibility for her death, even if it is in an abstract sense. **Notwithstanding this brief moment of insight, the director's general vision and viewpoint remains pessimistic when viewed alongside the memoirist's and the playwright's exploration of intimate relationships.** In the film there is none of the romance and unconditional love seen

in Gene and Faye's initial dating and subsequent marriage, nor the excitement and nervousness of Tara in her relationship with Charles. There are echoes of Evelyn's failed marriage to Faith's father, though this is counterbalanced by the love and tenderness of Helga's marriage to Werner.

FRIENDSHIPS

The friendship between Andy and Red showcases the director's more optimistic side and adds much-needed nuance to his general vision and viewpoint. Andy and Red develop a thoughtful and contemplative friendship based on mutual respect, trust and a shared curiosity about what gives life value. Tim Robbins, who plays the role of Andy, has said that part of the reason why the film is still so popular long after its release is because it is about a 'friendship between two men that doesn't involve car chases or being charming with the ladies'. He rightly notes that it is instead a film about 'a true deep friendship which lasts'. Red comments that while others in the prison 'took him [Andy] for snobby' he felt differently: 'yes, I think it would be fair to say I liked Andy from the start'. The two men support each other throughout the film, with Red helping Andy to 'get things' while Andy helps Red and the other men to look at the world differently. Andy and Red have many important, revealing conversations in prison, where each man seems to learn from the other, challenge the other and always respect the other. However, their final chat in prison is fraught with tension, though it nevertheless shows the depth of their friendship. Andy is released from two months in solitary confinement following his threat to stop working for the warden. Red meets Andy in the prison yard; Andy soon starts to talk about his plan for life after prison. He plans to 'live the rest of my life' in Zihuantanejo, a 'warm place with no memory'. Red is enchanted listening to Andy fantasise about an improbable future. He subtly smiles as Andy describes opening up a small hotel and taking his guests out fishing on the Pacific

Ocean. But Red's indulgence of Andy's fantasy ends when Andy asks Red to come with him. Red's face hardens and he bluntly tells Andy: 'I don't think I could make it on the outside ... I've been in here most of my life'. Red becomes irritated by Andy's chirpy optimism and tells Andy that he is talking about a 'pipe dream' because Mexico is 'way the hell down there and you're in here and that's the way it is'. Andy agrees with Red but then says, enigmatically: 'I guess it comes down to a simple choice: get busy living, or get busy dying'. Andy stands up and steps from the shadow into the sunlight; a gentle nudge from the director that Andy is leaving the dark spiritual world of Shawshank and planning to escape into a brighter, freer place. **This directorial flourish encapsulates the breadth of Darabont's general vision and viewpoint; through Andy and Red's friendship, the director explores dreamy hopefulness and weary pessimism, leaving viewers in a state of awe about the great depths friendship can bring to life. The director contrasts with the memoirist and the playwright in defining his general vision and viewpoint largely through the aspect of friendship.** Neither Tara Westover, nor the characters in Diane Samuels' play, have friendships which are explored in the same thought-provoking and inspiring way as Frank Darabont's film. **Indeed, both the memoir and the play are notable for the absence of true friendships, something which casts a pall of pessimism over both texts and their respective author's general vision and viewpoint.**

SYMBOLISM

Frank Darabont, like Tara Westover and Diane Samuels, uses symbolism to add depth to his general vision and viewpoint. The film is replete with symbolism, from the moment Andy is stripped of his civilian clothes on entry to prison (symbolising the end of his time as a free man) to Brooks' pet bird Jake (symbolising care, love and finally loss as Brooks lets Jake

go). However, the most powerful reoccurring symbol of the film is the rock hammer. Early in his time in Shawshank, Andy asks Red to get him a rock hammer. Red is curious as to why Andy would want such a tool. 'I'm a rock hound,' says Andy, 'or at least I was in my old life'. Andy tells Red that he wants to shape rocks that he finds in the prison yard. At this point the rock hammer symbolises Andy's education and difference: Red's reaction tells viewers that Andy's request is unusual. **Simultaneously, it highlights a more upbeat general vision and viewpoint; the director suggests that people can pursue their interests and passions, even in the confines of a prison.**

Crucially, we do not see the rock hammer again until after Andy escapes. This symbol is so powerful that the director has left it out of much of the film, so that it doesn't give away the dramatic plot twist. During the search for Andy the police found some of his clothes and 'an old rock hammer damn near worn down to the nub' symbolising Andy's determination to be free. Red comments: 'I remember thinking it would take a man six hundred years to tunnel through a wall with it. Andy did it in less than twenty'. Finally, we see Warden Norton opening his safe and pulling out the 'ledger' that Andy has been using to record the warden's accounts; Norton is planning to destroy any evidence that he has been involved in corruption. However, in place of the ledger, he finds Andy's Bible. He opens it and sees the pages hollowed out in the shape of a rock hammer. This symbolises Andy's sense of humour and also his sense of justice. It is his way of having the last laugh on the warden. **In each case, the rock hammer represents something positive and hopeful, offering the viewers a general vision and viewpoint that is subtly but unmistakably uplifting. This contrasts with the memoirist's use of the Indian Princess symbol which morphs from a symbol of comfort and belonging to one of fear and loathing. The rock hammer is also unlike the**

ratcatcher in the play which symbolises terror and casts a metaphorical as well as literal shadow over the text.

ENDING

The final scenes of the film showcase the director's general vision and viewpoint at its most optimistic. Andy's escape from Shawshank is held up by the remaining prisoners as a symbol of pure and uplifting freedom, reiterating the director's more positive general vision and viewpoint. They tell stories about Andy's various challenges to the prison system, and laugh at the times when he seemed to overcome impossible odds in his fights with the guards. Red remembers Andy with fondness but also melancholy. 'It makes me sad, though, Andy being gone. I have to remind myself that some birds aren't meant to be caged,' he says, referring to Andy's indefatigable thirst for freedom. Red shows himself to be influenced by Andy's frank, honest way of speaking to people. He faces the parole board for the third time in the film. Previously he told them what he thought they wanted to hear; this time he tells them what he really thinks when they ask him if he has been rehabilitated. 'I look back on myself the way I was, a young stupid kid who committed that terrible crime. I wanna talk to him ... I wanna try talk some sense to him ... but I can't. That kid's long gone and this old man is all that's left. I gotta live with that,' he says. It would be easy to imagine Andy saying these words, so succinctly and candidly, just as it would what he says next: 'Rehabilitated? It's just a bullshit word. So you go on and stamp your form sonny and stop wasting my time. Because to tell you the truth, I don't give a shit'. Remarkably, Red is released from prison. He struggles to adapt as a free man, and seems to be in danger of following Brooks'

doomed fate. However, before his prison escape, Andy makes Red promise that on his release he would go to a hayfield in Maine and dig up a package that Andy has left for him. Red keeps his promise to Andy and finds a box with money and a letter inviting Red to Mexico. The letter provides an epiphany for Red who recalls the words that Andy told him earlier in the film: 'get busy living or get busy dying'. 'That's goddamn right,' says Red as he returns to his guesthouse, in another memorable and uplifting scene. He buys a bus ticket for his trip to meet Andy in Mexico and his outlook on life is boundlessly positive. 'I find I'm so excited I can barely sit still or hold a thought in my head. I think it's the excitement only a free man can feel,' he says. The final scene of the film shows Red walking across a deserted beach in Mexico. He is greeted by Andy who, as promised, is restoring an old boat. The two friends embrace, free in person as they are in spirit. **The director's general vision and viewpoint, so often downbeat and hopeless, is by the end of the film refined as radiating with life-affirming optimism. Neither Tara Westover nor Diane Samuels provide such an unambiguously happy ending for their audiences and conclude their texts with many questions and doubts about the fate of their protagonists.** Tara's decision to live free of her family is portrayed as a personal triumph for her, but it is attained only after she loses most of her family. The play, meanwhile, ends with a major rupture between Evelyn and Faith, leaving viewers desolate about life, even for someone who has survived the Second World War. **Frank Darabont's general vision and viewpoint is much more certain: in the end, hope overcomes fear, good overcomes evil and friends overcome foes.**

KEY POINTS

- The opening scenes of the film showcase what appears to be the director's deeply pessimistic general vision and viewpoint, as Andy Dufresne is jailed for two life sentences for a crime he didn't commit. This creates an initial general vision and viewpoint that is utterly devoid of hope or optimism.
- The camaraderie among the prisoners is the only relief from the director's bleak general vision and viewpoint in the opening scenes. This is reinforced by Byron Hadley's violent and hostile reaction to the arrival of Andy and the other prisoners.
- Like the memoir, where Tara's father infuses the family home with fear and paranoia, and the play, where Eva's mother feels forced to send her daughter away from Germany to England, the film features a directorial general vision and viewpoint that is largely pessimistic in its early stages.
- Frank Darabont's general vision and viewpoint appear even starker when we consider his portrayal of family life in his film. Hadley's withering dismissal of his brother's death, and his self-pitying grumbling about paying tax on his inheritance suggest a negative and pessimistic general vision and viewpoint. The memoir and the play take more rounded views of family life and deliver a more balanced general vision and viewpoint than the film, whose treatment of the issue is comparatively one-dimensional.
- Viewers will find the director's treatment of love utterly demoralising, as the only love between characters on-screen – Andy's marriage to Renee – ends in tragedy. Interestingly, Andy blames himself for his wife's death and his candid commentary on his marriage suggests a more hopeful general vision and viewpoint. Given his wrongful conviction for her murder, it is remarkable that he assumes any responsibility for her death, even if it is in an abstract sense. Notwithstanding this brief moment of insight, the director's general vision and viewpoint remains pessimistic when viewed alongside the memoirist's and the playwright's exploration of intimate relationships.
- Through Andy and Red's friendship, the director explores dreamy hopefulness and weary pessimism, leaving viewers in a state of awe about the great depths friendship can bring to life. The director contrasts with the memoirist and the playwright in defining his general vision and viewpoint largely through the aspect of friendship.
- The most powerful reoccurring symbol of the film is the rock hammer, a symbol which has many meanings throughout the film. The rock hammer represents something positive and hopeful, offering the viewers a general vision and viewpoint that is subtly but unmistakably uplifting. This contrasts with the memoirist's use of the Indian Princess symbol, which morphs from a symbol of comfort and belonging to one of fear and loathing. The rock hammer is also unlike the ratcatcher in the play which symbolises terror and casts a metaphorical as well as literal shadow over the text.
- Andy's escape from Shawshank is held up by the remaining prisoners as a symbol of pure and uplifting freedom, reiterating the director's more positive general vision and viewpoint. Neither Tara Westover nor Diane Samuels provide such an unambiguously happy ending for their audiences. They conclude their texts with many questions and doubts about the fate of their protagonists.

Sample Answer A. General Vision and Viewpoint

‘Relationships between characters can influence our sense of the general vision and viewpoint of texts.’

- (a) **Discuss the extent to which your sense of the general vision and viewpoint of one text on your comparative course is influenced by one (or more) relationship(s) in the text. Support your answer with reference to the text. (30)**
- (b) **Compare the extent to which your sense of the general vision and viewpoint of two other texts on your comparative course is influenced by at least one relationship in each of these texts. Support your answer with reference to your chosen texts. (40)**

- (a) My sense of the general vision and viewpoint of Tara Westover’s non-fiction memoir *Educated* is strongly influenced by a number of key relationships in the text. The general vision and viewpoint of the text is largely negative and pessimistic when I consider Tara’s family relationships. Her upbringing was certainly atypical – along with her six siblings, she grew up in Idaho, raised by Mormon survivalist parents Faye and Gene. It is the nature of Tara’s relationship with her father, as well as with one of her brother’s, Shawn, which influenced my sense of the author’s general vision and viewpoint.

The opening chapter of *Educated* presents a pessimistic and unsettling general vision and viewpoint, particularly when I consider Tara’s relationship with her father, Gene, who wants his family to live independently of the state. He believes that the police, doctors and schools are part of a dangerous network of immorality, one which brainwashes the public into going along with unreligious ideas. Gene’s anti-government opinions lead him to create a culture of intense separation from mainstream society. Tara is not allowed to go to school because he thinks: ‘I may as well surrender my kids to the Devil himself as send them down the road to that school’. Gene’s extreme self-reliance means that his children do not even have birth certificates. Shockingly, in Tara’s case, ‘no one was sure when I’d been born,’ she says. Gene’s unusual and controversial beliefs isolate his family from much of society – but they also isolate Tara within her own family, as she struggles to accept her father’s ill-judged worldview. This informs the author’s ominous general vision and viewpoint.

This is further underlined as Tara recounts a troubling anecdote from her childhood where a local family are involved in a stand-off with the police. Gene says that the family are ‘freedom fighters’ who ‘wouldn’t let the Government brainwash their kids in them public schools, so the Feds came after them’. He says that the FBI shot and killed one of the children, and later reports that the father of that family has been shot too. The story is not accurate, but Tara has no way of checking because she has no

television or radio, no way of getting news from the outside world. Following this incident, her father ramps up the family's preparation for what he calls the 'Days of Abomination'. He makes Tara and her siblings pack 'head for the hills' bags full of herbal medicines, weapons and ready-to-eat meals, in the fear that their family could be attacked by the government. 'Next time, it could be us,' he says. Tara's relationship with Gene is clearly imbalanced; he has exercised extreme control over her and her siblings, and this creates a sense of the author's gloomy general vision and viewpoint.

Perhaps the memoir's most significant relationship is that of Tara and her brother Shawn, a violent, erratic and cruel person who has no respect for women. Shawn's abuse of Tara gives me an unmistakable sense that the authorial general vision and viewpoint is hopeless. It cannot be any other way. Shawn's treatment of Tara is so blatantly cruel, so wantonly callous and so repeatedly shocking that no reader can feel anything but sympathy for Tara, and anger at Shawn and the parents who allowed this abuse to develop and continue without reprimand.

My sense of hopelessness is accentuated by my first impression of Shawn's relationship with Tara: it was positively loving. At first, he seems to enjoy Tara's company. They take another sibling's truck and make deliveries all over the western United States. Shawn teaches Tara how to defend herself in a fight. But when they return to their normal lives in Idaho, Shawn shows another side of his personality, causing a shocking volte-face in the general vision and viewpoint. Shawn demands that Tara fetch him a glass of water, and attacks her when she refuses. 'He grabbed a fistful of my hair, a large clump ... and dragged me into the bathroom,' she says. Shawn forces her head down the toilet, 'so my nose scraped the stained porcelain'. On another occasion, Tara is woken up by 'two hands ... gripping my throat' as Shawn assaults her, again dragging her through the house by her hair. Shawn stops his attack when Tyler, another of Tara's brothers, calls into the house. However, his bullying worsens over the years, serving to reinforce the gloomy general vision and viewpoint. Finally, Tara confronts her parents about Shawn's abusive behaviour towards her and her sister Audrey. Tara tells them of Shawn's threat to shoot Audrey; they do not want to believe her. Tara explains that Shawn is a 'violent and manipulative man'. Her father shouts that she has no proof. Tara replies: 'You don't need proof ... you've seen it'. Gene invites Shawn to the house to answer Tara's accusations. Shawn approaches Tara, unfolds her hand, and places a knife on her palm. 'If you're smart,' he says, 'you'll use this on yourself. Because it will be better than what I'll do to you if you don't'. Faced with her brother's terrifying presence, Tara decides to lie to him, and tells him 'Dad must have misheard me' rather than confront Shawn for his years of terror.

This scene provides a concrete and unforgettable example of how key relationships – between Tara and Shawn and also between Tara and her parents – influenced my sense of the author's bleak, hopeless and sad general vision and viewpoint.

- (b) My sense of the general vision and viewpoint of my studied play, *Kindertransport* by Diane Samuels, as well as my studied film, *The Shawshank Redemption* directed by Frank Darabont, is influenced by key relationships in each text. Family relationships and friendship are an important influence on my sense of the authorial general vision and viewpoint in the texts.

In Diane Samuels' play, which fictionalises the real-life evacuation of Jewish children from pre-war Germany in 1938, the relationship between Eva, who is being sent to England, and her mother, Helga, who is staying in Germany, strongly influences my sense of the playwright's general vision and viewpoint. Helga helps Eva pack her bag before escaping to England. She tries to teach Eva how to sew a button onto a coat, but Eva complains that she would rather read her favourite book. Helga replies rhetorically: 'How else will the buttons get onto your coat?' Eva does not appreciate the gravity of her situation, but Helga is gently trying to prepare her for an independent life without her mother. Helga is teaching her a skill she will need in England, one which will save her money and make her clothes last longer. Eva is too young to understand what her mother is saying. She wonders why her mother will not be able to help her. Helga tells her: 'You have to be able to manage on your own'. Eva finally agrees to try to sew a button on a coat. Helga walks her through the process. Eva manages to get the button onto the coat. Helga tells her 'you don't need me'. The forced rupture in the relationship between Helga and Eva influences my sense of the general vision and viewpoint, as I found it truly dispiriting to think that the world could force a parent to have to make a choice like that: keep your child in a life-threatening situation, or exile them to a country where they know nobody, do not speak the language, and without any guarantees you will see them again.

Turning to Frank Darabont's film, the absence of enriching family relationships influenced my sense of the director's general vision and viewpoint. Darabont's film about Andy Dufresne, a man wrongly imprisoned for the killing of his wife and her lover, gives me a sense that the director's general vision and viewpoint is negative. Unlike the play, the film has no tender or poignant moments between children and their parents. No prisoners are visited by siblings; indeed, they are rarely even mentioned. This contributes to the film's almost suffocating intensity; there is little life beyond the walls of the prison. Such a notable absence suggests Darabont's general vision and viewpoint is downbeat and lacking in optimism. Indeed, the only significant family relationship mentioned is between Byron Hadley and his unnamed brother. When Andy and some of the other convicts are assigned to tar the roof of the prison license-plate factory, Andy overhears Hadley telling one of the other guards that his brother has recently died. The guard tells Hadley he is sorry to hear the news but Hadley replies curtly: 'I ain't. He was an asshole'. He then explains that his brother left him \$35,000 in his will and when the guard tells him that it's great news, Hadley complains about the amount of tax he will have to pay on the inheritance. In terms of family relationships, the director presents them as something to be endured, rather than enjoyed, as there is no love lost between Hadley and his brother. Interestingly,

my sense of the general vision and viewpoint of both texts is pessimistic, even though the characters in the respective texts display different attitudes to family life.

This leads me to a further insight about the general vision and viewpoint of these texts. In the play, Samuels portrays people who cherish family relationships, while in the film, Darabont portrays characters who find them laborious. Any bleakness in the playwright's general vision and viewpoint comes from the context of her play – the fact that a mother was forced into such a hellish choice cannot but paint the world in a sombre light. The bleakness in the director's general vision and viewpoint is therefore more pronounced – his view of relationships is downbeat and uninspiring.

My sense of the general vision and viewpoint of both authors is further influenced by how they portray friendships in their texts. Interestingly, while the play foregrounds family relationships and the film forgoes them, the opposite happens when I look at friendships. *Kindertransport* is based around a central character, Eva (later Evelyn), who has few friends. This strongly influences my sense of the author's general vision and viewpoint as it suggests that Eva was an isolated and lonely child. Indeed, Eva's closest and most significant friendship is with Lil, her foster mother. This is hardly a conventional friendship due to the age gap between the two characters, and it later morphs from friendship into a more conventional parent-child relationship. Lil's immediate acceptance and care for Eva highlights a more positive aspect of the playwright's general vision and viewpoint. Lil helps Eva to settle into to her new life: she meets her at a train station in London and immediately removes the label that Eva is wearing with a number and a Star of David on it. Eva is alarmed and tells her: 'I have to wear it. I hate it'. Lil reassures her: 'You don't need it on now I've come'. Lil's friendship helps Eva to feel the liberty of England, rather than the discrimination of Germany. She takes the label with the number and the Star of David off Eva's coat and tells her: 'Over. Done. Finished. Goodbye. Yes. That's the word. Goodbye'. This is an important moment for Eva because Lil shows her that she can be free in England, not simply another number to be targeted because of her identity. Lil takes Eva by the hand and tells her 'I like you', before boarding a train to Manchester. Lil sings a song and lights a cigarette. Eva points at the smoke, signalling that she would like to try it. Lil offers her 'a quickie' and then warmly remarks that Eva is 'out in the world two minutes and you're smoking like a chimney'. There is an instinctive bond between the characters; it feels like the start of a friendship, and this gives me a sense of the playwright's more hopeful general vision and viewpoint.

Returning to the film, the friendship between Andy and Red showcases the director's more optimistic side, and has a greater influence on my sense of his general vision and viewpoint than Eva and Lil's friendship does in the play. Andy and Red develop a thoughtful and contemplative friendship based on mutual respect, trust and a shared curiosity about what gives life value. The two men support each other throughout the film, with Red helping Andy to 'get things' while Andy helps Red and the other men to look at the world differently. Their final chat in prison is fraught with tension,

though it nevertheless shows the depth of their friendship. Andy is released from two months in solitary confinement following his threat to stop working for the warden. Red meets Andy in the prison yard; Andy soon starts to talk about his plan for life after prison. He plans to 'live the rest of my life' in Zihuantanejo, a 'warm place with no memory'. Red is enchanted listening to Andy fantasise about an improbable future. He subtly smiles as Andy describes opening up a small hotel and taking his guests out fishing on the Pacific Ocean. But Red's indulgence of Andy's fantasy ends when Andy asks Red to come with him. Red's face hardens and he bluntly tells Andy: 'I don't think I could make it on the outside ... I've been in here most of my life'. Red becomes irritated by Andy's chirpy optimism and tells Andy that he is talking about a 'pipe dream' because Mexico is 'way the hell down there and you're in here and that's the way it is'. Andy agrees with Red but then says, enigmatically: 'I guess it comes down to a simple choice: get busy living, or get busy dying'. Through Andy and Red's friendship, the director explores dreamy hopefulness and weary pessimism, leaving viewers in a state of awe about the great depths the friendship can bring to life. My sense of the director's general vision and viewpoint is, perhaps more than any other factor, influenced by his portrayal of the friendship between Andy and Red. In contrast, friendships play a comparatively small role in creating a sense of the playwright's general vision and viewpoint – more than anything, it is the circumstances of her play, the anti-Semitic horrors of pre-war Germany, that influenced my sense of her general vision and viewpoint.