**Eduqas Component 3: Approaches to Unseen Prose Appreciation**

**The Importance of Introductions**

Consider the relative strengths and weaknesses of these four candidates’ introductory paragraphs to the extract from *A Handful of Dust* in the Specimen Assessment Materials *(1918 to 1939)*

**Candidate 1**

Throughout this extract from his novel ‘A Handful of Dust’, Evelyn Waugh provides the reader with a revealing insight into the gentrified society of the 1930s, though their reaction to the affair of Brenda and John Beaver, which arguably shows a lack of morality and genuinity in the gossipy upper class society. Waugh writes in a very matter of fact, detached tone through which he explores the characters of the novel.

**Candidate 2**

In the following extract, Waugh presents through an ‘omniscient authorial voice’ society in London in the 1930s where a woman, Brenda, is having an affair while her husband Tony remains at home in the country. Waugh explores the idea of society as being fickle through how quickly society accepts Beaver once he begins the affair with a woman of higher class which is a direct contrast to his social standing previously where he was mocked and ridiculed.

**Candidate 3**

In ‘A Handful of Dust’, Evelyn Waugh uses an affair and society’s reactions to it to comment on the social order at the time. Society’s obsessive interest in it helps reflect the search for trivial idols which followed the first world war, or alternatively lends support to Davies’ suggestion that the novel is not written to inspire sympathy for society, but to comment on its ‘social and moral disintegration’. Mrs Beaver’s ideas for the ideal flat help support Davies’ interpretation; she eagerly gossips, even to her clients, and is keen to use the rise in the economies across the Atlantic if it will earn her more money. Waugh’s writing choices change a reader’s perception of both women and the sanctity of marriage; the dialogue between the two sisters builds up to the realisation that Marjorie is a hypocrite, when she started as a reader’s optimistic idea of a compassionate character, and Waugh’s choice as to how many perspectives to include for each character helps create the idea that society’s opinion, far more than the vows of marriage, made a relationship a success.

**Candidate 4**

In the extract from ‘A Handful of Dust’ written in 1934, Evelyn Waugh presents many different characters to show an archetype of 1930’s society. For example Brenda represents the new modern woman who is strong and independent. The 1930’s were a great time of change for women, seeing the first female Members of Parliament and a variety of social equality legislation. The ‘gang of gossips’ who frequently telephone Brenda for news of the affair show how superficial the society is, caring more about rumours than the principles of right and wrong. Mrs Beaver represents the materialistic and egocentric society of the time as she appears to value money over personal relations. Waugh uses many techniques typical of modernist writing, for example using the city to show isolation and loneliness and presenting the technical revolution as dehumanising.

**Reminder of Supporting Extracts:**

“…the novel is…a deep(er) indictment of contemporary civilisation because it chronicles social and moral disintegration so pervasive that the characters are unaware of it and the omniscient authorial voice reveals it primarily through implication.” Robert Murray Davis*, Introduction to the Penguin edition of ‘A Handful of Dust’,* 1997

“All fictional characters are flat. A writer can only give an illusion of depth by giving an apparently stereoscopic view of a character – seeing him from two vantage points […] I regard writing not as investigation of character, but as an exercise in the use of language, and with this I am obsessed. I have no technical psychological interest. It is drama, speech and events that interest me.” Evelyn Waugh, *Paris Review,* 1963