

TEXT ONE — NARRATIVE PROSE

Question One

Drafts

Two weeks after the funeral, Hana finally opened the study door. The room had kept her father's shape the way a coat keeps the shape of a shoulder: the leather chair angled towards the window, the lamp with its crooked shade, a mug of tea gone to a skin of grey. Nothing had been moved, and nothing had been needed. It was the neatest room in the house, and it was the most unlive in.

She meant only to find the insurance papers. Instead, she found the drawer. It was the bottom one, the one that stuck, and when she wrenched it open, a drift of paper slid forward as if it had been waiting to be asked. Letters. Dozens of them, in his small, upright hand, each one beginning with her name. Dear Hana. Dear Hana, I have been thinking. Dear Hana, I hope you are well. Not one had a stamp. Not one had been sent.

She read them standing, then sitting on the floor, her back against the cold radiator. Some stopped after a line: 'I should have rung on your birthday.' Others went on for pages and then ended mid-sentence, as though he had put down the pen to listen for something and never picked it up again. In one, he had crossed out the word 'sorry' so many times that the paper had worn through, and in its place was a small, neat hole, like a window.

Outside, the afternoon thinned to a pale gold. A neighbour's radio played something tinny and cheerful. Hana held the last letter up to the light. It was dated three days before he died, and it was only one sentence long: 'I keep starting, because I do not know how to finish.' She laughed, a short, startled sound, and then she was crying, and the study, which had kept its silence for so long, seemed to let out its breath.

She did not take the papers. She took the drawer, carried it, heavy and awkward, down the hall and set it on the kitchen table, among the cups and the unopened cards. Then she found a pen. For a long moment, she stared at the blank page. Then, in her own looping, impatient hand, she wrote: 'Dear Dad.' And, because there was no one left to read it, she did not stop.

Question One

Analyse how the writer uses setting and symbolism to develop the idea of unfinished relationships in 'Drafts'. Support your answer with evidence from the text.

Planning space (not marked)

Setting: the study as a preserved room.

Symbols: the drawer, the unsent letters, the hole where 'sorry' was.

Hana's change at the end.

Link each quotation to the idea of something left unfinished.

Question One: your response

Write your response on the lines. Use short quotations from the text as evidence.

QUESTION ONE — GUIDE AND MODEL ANSWER

Worked solution

What the question asks

You must explain how the writer uses the setting of the study and symbols such as the letters, the crossed-out word and the drawer to develop the idea of relationships left unfinished, and support your points with quotations.

What each grade looks like for this question

Grade	What the response shows
Achieved	Identifies the setting and some symbols (for example the unsent letters) and links them to an unfinished relationship, using relevant quotations.
Merit	Explains how the preserved study and the symbols build the idea of unfinished relationships, linking evidence to Hana's grief and her decision at the end.
Excellence	Analyses how the writer's choices (simile, symbol, closure imagery and structure) develop the idea perceptively, showing how the story moves from silence to the possibility of continuing the conversation.

Evidence you could use

- “the way a coat keeps the shape of a shoulder”: simile: the room keeps the shape of the absent father
- “Not one had a stamp. Not one had been sent.”: repetition emphasising the unsent letters
- “a small, neat hole, like a window”: the worn-through ‘sorry’ becomes an opening
- “I keep starting, because I do not know how to finish.”: the father’s last words sum up the theme

Model response (about 290 words, aiming at Excellence)

In ‘Drafts’, the writer develops the idea of unfinished relationships through the preserved setting of the study and through symbols of things left unsent. Together they show that grief can be the discovery of what was never said, and that it can also begin a new conversation.

The setting is established by the simile that the room has “kept her father’s shape the way a coat keeps the shape of a shoulder”. The comparison makes the room an echo of the absent man, still holding his form but empty of him. The writer adds that it is “the neatest room in the house” and “the most unlivd in”, a contrast that suggests a life carefully ordered but never fully shared. The setting therefore prepares the reader for a relationship that has been tidy on the surface and unresolved underneath.

The drawer and its letters are the central symbol. The repetition of “Not one had a stamp. Not one had been sent” uses short, parallel sentences to hammer home the father’s failure to finish what he began. The image of the word ‘sorry’ crossed out until it left “a small, neat hole, like a window” is especially perceptive. The simile suggests that the father’s apology, by being erased, has become an opening, a place through which his love and regret can still be seen.

The father’s last line, “I keep starting, because I do not know how to finish”, gives the story its theme. The structure then turns: the silent study “let out its breath”, and Hana carries the drawer to the kitchen, a warm, shared place. By writing “Dear Dad” and not stopping, she finishes what he could not. The writer thus shows that an unfinished relationship is not always an ended one.

Why this response earns Excellence

- It treats the setting and the symbols as one connected argument.
- It analyses the writer's methods (simile, repetition, contrast) and not only the content.
- It ends by linking the final scene to the theme, showing understanding of the whole text.

KEY TAKEAWAY

To analyse a symbol, say what it stands for, quote the image, and explain how it develops the idea across the whole text.

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