

Read the following extract closely and answer questions 1 and 2.

The Collector was John Fowles' first novel, a thriller, published in 1963. It begins with the narrator, a young man we later find out is called Fred, describing a young woman we later find out is called Miranda, whom he admires from a distance. This is the opening paragraph:

When she was home from her boarding-school I used to see her almost every day sometimes, because their house was right opposite the Town Hall Annexe. She and her younger sister used to go in and out a lot, often with young men, which of course I didn't like. When I had a free moment from the files and ledgers I stood by the window and used to look down over the road over the frosting and sometimes I'd see her. In the evening I marked it in my observations diary, at first with X, and then when I knew her name with M. I saw her several times outside too. I stood right behind her once in a queue at the public library down Crossfield Street. She didn't look once at me, but I watched the back of her head and her hair in a long pigtail. It was very pale, silky, like burnet cocoons. All in one pigtail coming down almost to her waist, sometimes in front, sometimes at the back. Sometimes she wore it up. Only once, before she came to be my guest here, did I have the privilege to see her with it loose, and it took my breath away it was so beautiful, like a mermaid.

(Taken from the Vintage 2004 edition.)

1. List four pieces of information you are given about the young woman in this first extract.
(4 marks)

2. How does the writer use language to refer to and describe the young woman?
(8 marks)

You could include the writer's choice of:

- words and phrases
- language features and techniques
- sentence forms.

When planning your answer think about how Fred refers to the woman e.g. 'She', 'X', 'M', 'my guest'. What are the connotations of these words?

You could also think about the references to her hair and what effect these have.

- 'very pale, silky'
- 'like burnet cocoons' (burnet – a daytime moth, it's as beautiful as a butterfly; cocoon – a silky envelope which protects the developing moth)
- 'almost to her waist'
- 'loose ... like a mermaid' (another simile).