

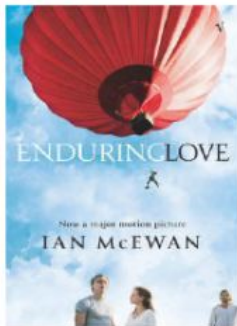
This short series of LWSs is designed around the short story *My Purple Scented Novel* by Ian McEwan



Ian McEwan, in full **Ian Russell McEwan**, (born June 21, 1948, Aldershot, England), British novelist, short-story writer, and screenwriter whose restrained, refined prose style accentuates the horror of his dark humour and perverse subject matter.

The Guardian: You suspect that even reviewers who find things not to like when a McEwan novel is finished have been gripped as they read. The bite of his plots is extraordinary. This has something to do, certainly, with those throttling crises that every reader remembers: the panicky attempt to dispose of the body in *The Innocent*; the escalating confrontation after a minor traffic accident in *Saturday*; the loss of the child in a supermarket in *The Child in Time*; the balloon in *Enduring Love*. Even the novelist's detractors admit that he does these slow-motion catastrophes, where terror erupts into the ordinary world, brilliantly.

1. Study the posters, read the plots of some films based on Ian McEwan novels. Have you seen any of them? Type in a matching title next to each description.



- A. The life of a children's book author is turned upside down when his daughter goes missing.

- B. In 1962 England, a young couple find their idyllic romance colliding with issues of sexual freedom and societal pressure, leading to an awkward and fateful wedding night.

- C. As her marriage crumbles, a judge must decide a case involving a teenage boy who is refusing a blood transfusion on religious principle. _____
- D. Two strangers become connected by a tragedy, yet one dangerously feels that the connection goes much deeper than the other is willing to admit. _____
- E. Thirteen-year-old fledgling writer Briony Tallis irrevocably changes the course of several lives when she accuses her older sister's lover of a crime he did not commit. _____

2. Listen to the first snippet from the short story. What do you think it is going to be about? Drag and drop, listen and check _____

publicly connected

earthly triumph

half-forgotten scandal

celebrated novelist

rigidly attached

obscure novelist

You will have heard of my friend the once _____ Jocelyn Tarbet, but I suspect his memory is beginning to fade. Time can be ruthless with reputation. The association in your mind is probably with a _____ and disgrace. You'd never heard of me, the once _____ Parker Sparrow, until my name was _____ with his. To a knowing few, our names remain _____, like the two ends of a seesaw. His rise coincided with, though did not cause, my decline. Then his descent was my _____. I don't deny there was wrongdoing. I stole a life, and I don't intend to give it back. You may treat these few pages as a confession.

3. Look at the options. What do you think our protagonist and his friend could have been up to at university?

wanted to be writers

shared the clothes

made love to each other's girlfriends

published our first stories in student magazines

would get drunk and fight in bars

tried to interest ourselves in a homoerotic affair

played football

read each other's stories

were ambitious

were involved in student riots

helped each other out

took holidays together

read the same subject

gave generous, savagely honest comments

visited each other's parents

Listen to the clip. How long ago did the protagonist and his friend study together at university? What title of a student magazine was given as an example?

Listen again, type in correct verbs _____



To make it fully, I must go back forty years, to a time when our lives happily and entirely overlapped, and seemed poised to run in parallel toward a shared future.

We studied at the same university,

_____ the same subject —English literature—

_____ our first stories in student magazines with names like *Knife in*

Your Eye. (But what names are like that?) We _____ ambitious. We

_____ to be writers, famous writers, even great writers. We _____ holidays

together and _____ each other's stories, _____ generous, savagely honest

comments, _____ love to each other's girlfriends, and, on a few occasions,

_____ to interest ourselves in a homoerotic affair. I'm fat and bald now, but then I

had a head of curls and was slender. I liked to think I resembled Shelley. Jocelyn was

tall, blond, muscular, with a firm jawline, the very image of the *Übermensch* Nazi.

But he had no taste for politics at all. Our affair was simply

bohemian posturing. We thought it made us fascinating.

The truth was that we were each repelled by the sight of the

other's penis. We did very little to or with each other, but we were happy to have

people think we did a lot.



Why are the pictures here?

4. Read the excerpt. Which words do you think were replaced by the synonyms in bold? Listen and fill the gaps with original words _____

None of this got in the way of our literary friendship. I don't think we were properly competitive at the time. But, looking back, I'd say that **at first** _____ I was the one who was ahead. I was the first to publish in a real, **adult** _____ literary magazine—*The North London Review*. At the end of our university career, I got a good first, Jocelyn got a second-class degree. We decided that such things were **insignificant** _____, and so they turned out to be. We moved to London and took single rooms just a few streets away from each other in Brixton. I published my second story, so it was a relief when he published his first. We continued to meet regularly, get drunk, read each other's stuff, and we began to move in the same pleasantly **oppressed** _____ literary circles. We even began at roughly the same time to write reviews for the **reputable** _____ national press.

5. Listen and fill the gaps. Spell the words out loud, explain the meaning _____

Those two years after university were the height of our _____ youth. We were growing up fast. We were both working on our first novels, and they had much in common: sex, _____, a touch of _____, some violence, some fashionable _____, and very good jokes about all the things that can go wrong between a young man and a young woman. We were happy. Nothing stood in our way.

6. Listen and read. Find in the text words for the following synonyms and definitions _____

showed reverence and adoration (v2) _____

something regarded as worthless; rubbish (n) _____

imagined or expected (v3) _____

enough or more than enough; plentiful (adj) _____

desire and determination to achieve success (n, pl) _____

abundant in supply or quantity (adj) _____

Then two things did. Jocelyn, without telling me, wrote a TV play. That sort of thing, I thought at the time, was well beneath us. We worshipped at the temple of literature. TV was mere entertainment, dross for the masses. The screenplay was

immediately produced, starred two famous actors, was passionate about a good cause—homelessness or unemployment—that I had never heard Jocelyn mention. It was a success; he was talked about, noted. His first novel was anticipated. None of that would have mattered if I had not, at the same time, met Arabella, an

English rose, ample, generous, calm, a funny girl who remains my wife even today. I'd had a dozen lovers before then, but I got no farther than Arabella. She laid on everything I needed by way of sex and friendship and adventure and variation. Such a passion was not enough in itself to stand between Jocelyn and me, or me and my ambitions. Far from it. Arabella's nature was copious, unjealous, all-embracing, and she liked Jocelyn from the start.

*"You **will have heard** of my friend the once celebrated novelist Jocelyn Tarbet."*

We can use **will** to talk about the present – to say what we think is very probably or certainly the case:

"There's somebody at the door." – "That'll be the electrician."

Don't phone them now – they'll be having dinner.

Will have... can express similar ideas about the past.

As you will have noticed, there is a new secretary in the front office.

It's no use expecting Barry to turn up. He'll have forgotten.

*"Then his descent was my **earthly triumph**."*

earthly

adjective

UK  / ˈɜːθli / US  / ˈɜːrli /

library

happening in or relating to this world and this physical life, not in heaven or relating to a spiritual life:

- his earthly existence
- earthly powers

used in questions or negatives to mean possible:

- What earthly **reason** can she have for being so horrible to you?

What other adjectives ending –ly can you remember?

Tap the link and sort out the adjectives and adverbs.