This extract is from the beginning of a novel by Judith Allnatt, published in 2015. It is set in a house that used to be part of a nineteenth-century silk factory. Rosie and her two children, Sam and Cara, now live in the house.

It was on their first day at the house that Rosie saw the stranger child. Standing at the sink, her hands deep in suds, Rosie was overwhelmed by the tasks that lay ahead of her. Tired after the long drive from London the evening before, she gazed vaguely at the sunlit, overgrown garden where Sam and Cara were playing.

The sash window had old glass that blunted the image, wavering the straightness of fence and washing line, pulling things out of shape. Sam was kneeling beside the patch of earth that Rosie had cleared for him, making hills and valleys for his matchbox cars and trucks by digging with an old tablespoon, and Cara was toddling from bush to bush with a yellow plastic watering can. Through the antique glass, Rosie watched them stretch and shrink as they moved, as if she were looking through ripples. She closed her eyes, glad of a moment of calm after the trauma of the last few days. Letting go of the plate she was holding, she spread her tense fingers, allowing the warmth of the water to soothe her. When she opened her eyes, another child was there.

Rosie had made a quick check of the unfamiliar garden before letting the children go out to play. The bottom half of the garden was an overgrown mess, a muddle of trees and shrubs. An ancient mulberry tree stood at the centre. Its massive twisted branches drooped to the ground in places, its knuckles in the earth like a gigantic malformed hand. The wintry sun hung low in the sky and the gnarled growth threw long twisted shadows across the undergrowth within its cage. The trunk of the tree was snarled with the tangled ivy that grew up through the broken bricks and chunks of cement, choking it. The path that led down towards the fence at the bottom, which marked the garden off from an orchard beyond, disappeared into a mass of nettles and brambles before it reached the padlocked door.

A little girl was sitting back on her heels beside a clump of daisies that grew against the fence. She had her back to Rosie and was holding tight to the handle of a large wicker basket that stood on the ground beside her. Cara seemed unfazed by the girl's presence and continued to move, engrossed, along the row of plants. Rosie bent forward to look through the clearest of the panes and peered closer. The child was small, maybe around eight or nine, although something in the tense hunch of her shoulders made her seem older. Her hair hung down her back in a matted, dusty-looking plait and she was wearing dressing-up clothes: an ankle-length dress and pinafore in washed-out greys and tans, like a home-made Cinderella* costume.

Where on earth had she come from? She must be a neighbour's child but how had she got in? The wooden fences that separated the gardens between each of the houses in the terrace were high – surely too high for a child to climb.

The child glanced over her shoulder, back towards the houses, a quick, furtive movement as if she were scanning the upper windows of the row, afraid of being overlooked. Rosie caught a glimpse of her face, pale and drawn with anxiety, before the girl turned back and reached forward to quickly tuck a piece of trailing white cloth into the basket. Almost unconsciously, Rosie registered that the girl was left-handed like herself, and that there was something animal-like in her movements: quick, like the darting of a mouse or the flit of a sparrow, some small dun creature that moves fast to blend into the background.





Something wasn't right here. She had seen distress in those eyes.

Rosie turned away, dried her hands hurriedly and slipped on her flip-flops. She would go gently, raise no challenge about her being in the garden but say hello and try to find out what was the matter. Maybe if she pointed out that her mother would be worrying where she was, she could persuade the girl to let her take her home.

But when she stepped outside, the child was gone.

**END OF SOURCE**

LIVEWORKSHEETS

outside the box

**0 3** You now need to think about the **whole** of the source.

This text is from the beginning of a novel.

How has the writer structured the text to interest you as a reader?

You could write about:

- what the writer focuses your attention on at the beginning of the source
- how and why the writer changes this focus as the source develops
- any other structural features that interest you.

**[8 marks]**

LIVEWORKSHEETS