

19th Century literary non-fiction

Source B

This extract is from *The Mother's Companion* (1909), a book offering practical domestic advice to women written by Mrs Brereton. This extract concerns honeymoons and the problems they might cause to young married couples.

On Honeymoons

[...]

This may seem horribly business-like and unromantic, but it is only by facing the business side of marriage fairly and squarely, and mastering it, that there is any room left for romance. Disappointment is the dragon which kills romance quicker than any other. And the girl who thinks only of the romance of marriage will grasp at the shadow and miss the substance.

5 It would be more than a boon*, in many cases, if the conventional honeymoon could be dispensed with, or at least largely curtailed. It is an artificial beginning to married life, in which the things which are really going to count later on are obscured and thrust into the background, by the false standard of living and luxury to which the young couple abandon themselves during what ought to be a probationary* period. No wonder their simple home-
10 coming, to what perhaps is only a cottage or a flat, after their luxurious stay in expensive hotels, with earning and economising instead of spending and tipping, seems, to both wife and husband, rather in the nature of coming down to earth with a thud.

15 Instead of the flat or the cottage, in which the young couple are to make love live, being associated with all their first sacred joys, it is too often associated with a vivid impression of dullness, disillusion, and meanness, in comparison with their own paternal homes, much aggravated by the palatial scale of living of the previous weeks or months. The money lavished on an extravagant wedding ceremony and lengthy wedding tour, would often make all the difference to the comfort of the home later on when the first baby arrives; and the holiday itself would, if it could still be afforded, be much more beneficial to the young mother
20 after a year or so of wedded life.

25 A reception at the house of the parents, immediately following the wedding ceremony, and, later on, an intimation* of the date when the bride would first be at home to callers, in her new home, would ensure peace and privacy for the early days of wedded life; and the being alone with one's husband, the mutual pleasure of placing all the personal treasures in such order as shall make a house into a home, the beginning to housekeep for oneself, all this is novelty enough, without the excitement or fatigue of travel. By the time the husband returns to his everyday routine of work, each has made his or her particular den, or corner of the den, a familiar haven, and both have settled down to an intimacy which is never achieved until the normal life has begun.

30 There will of course be opportunity for outings and excursions, and for indulging whatever mutual hobbies were a delight before marriage; and if the lovers are hopelessly dull during the first short month, owing to the lack of extraneous entertainment, it augurs* badly for the

many months of mutual intercourse ahead. The time will probably all too soon arrive when wifehood develops into motherhood, and *tête-à-têtes** have to be more rare.

Glossary

- * boon – something helpful or beneficial
- * probationary – a process of testing out something new
- * intimation – an indication or hint
- * augurs – to predict or indicate something about the future
- * *tête-à-têtes* – intimate conversation between two people (French for ‘head to head’)

Sample Paper 2 Section A Question 3:

03 You now need to refer only to **Source B** from **lines 6 to 16**.

How does the writer use language to describe the contrast between a honeymoon and normal life?

[12 marks]

This extract is from the chapter “Preparation for Wifehood and Motherhood” in Mrs M. A. Cloudesley Brereton’s book *The Mother’s Companion* (London, 1909) and the full text can be found online at <https://archive.org/details/b21529206/page/132/mode/2up>.

This resource is brought to you by Dr Catherine Charlwood, a former teacher, lifelong scholar and co-host of [LitSciPod: The Literature and Science Podcast](#). If you have questions, she can be contacted at catherine.charlwood@cantab.net.