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| 151015192530 | In memory it was all success, clarity, clatter. In memory, all the food they brought us first was red: the bresaola, the fat tongues of roasted peppers laid on goat's cheese, the radicchio, the white china bowl of radish coronets. When later I remembered how we had leaned in and shouted, I seemed to be remembering an underwater event.Jocelyn took from his pocket a small parcel done up in blue tissue. We drew down an imaginary silence on our table while Clarissa unwrapped her present. Perhaps that was when I glanced to my left, at the table next to ours. A man whose name I learned afterwards was Colin Tapp was with his daughter and his father. Perhaps I noticed them later. If I registered at the time the solitary diner who sat twenty feet away with his back to us, it left no trace in memory. Inside the tissue was a black box, and inside the box, on a cumulus of cotton wool was a gold brooch. Still without speaking she lifted it out and we examined it on her palm.Two gold bands were entwined in a double helix. Crossing between them were tiny silver rungs in groups of three representing the base pairs, the four-letter alphabet that coded all living things in permutating triplets. Engraved on the helical bands were spherical designs to suggest the twenty amino acids on to which the three letter codons were mapped. In the full light gathered from the table-top, it looked in Clarissa's hand more than a representation. It could have been the thing itself, ready to cook up chains of amino acids to be blended into protein molecules. It could have divided right there in her hand to make another gift. When Clarissa sighed Jocelyn's name, the sound of the restaurant surged back on us.'Oh God, it's beautiful,' she cried and kissed him.His weak yellow-blue eyes were moist. He said, 'It was Gillian's, you know. She would have loved you to have it.'I was impatient to produce my own present but we were still in the spell of Jocelyn's. Clarissa pinned the brooch on her grey silk blouse.Would I remember the conversation now if I did not know what it preceded? |
| **Guiding Questions**How does the descriptive language add to our understanding of character in this extract?How are the key themes of the work explored in this extract? |