



GCE A LEVEL

A720U30-1



O21-A720U30-1



MONDAY, 18 OCTOBER 2021 – MORNING

ENGLISH LITERATURE – A level component 3
Unseen Texts

2 hours

A720U301
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ADDITIONAL MATERIALS

A WJEC pink 16-page answer booklet.

INSTRUCTIONS TO CANDIDATES

Use black ink or black ball-point pen. Do not use pencil or gel pen. Do not use correction fluid.

Answer **one** question in Section A and **one** question in Section B.

Write your answers in the separate answer booklet provided, following the instructions on the front of the answer booklet.

Use both sides of the paper. Write only within the white areas of the booklet.

Write the question number in the two boxes in the left hand margin at the start of each answer

e.g.

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Leave at least two line spaces between each answer.

INFORMATION FOR CANDIDATES

Section A carries 50 marks and Section B carries 30 marks.

The number of marks is given in brackets at the end of each question or part-question.

You are advised to spend one hour and 15 minutes on Section A and 45 minutes on Section B.

You are reminded that assessment will take into account the quality of written communication used in your answers.

Section A: Unseen Prose

Answer **one** question in this section.

Each question consists of an unseen prose passage and supporting extracts. You must use the supporting extracts to answer the question.

In your response, you are required to:

- analyse how meanings are shaped
- demonstrate understanding of the significance and influence of the contexts in which literary texts are written and received
- show how different interpretations have informed your reading of the unseen passage.

Either,

Period 1880–1910

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Analyse the following complete short story by the American journalist and writer of short stories Ambrose Bierce, which was published in 1905.

You must use the supporting extracts which follow the short story to help you consider contexts and different interpretations. [50]

A Wireless Message

In the summer of 1896 Mr. William Holt, a wealthy manufacturer of Chicago, was living temporarily in a little town of central New York, the name of which my memory has not retained. Mr. Holt had had “trouble with his wife,” from whom he had parted a year before. Whether the trouble was anything more serious than “incompatibility of temper,” he is probably the only living person that knows: he is not addicted to the vice of confidences. Yet he has related the incident herein set down to at least one person without exacting a pledge of secrecy. He is now living in Europe.

One evening he had left the house of a brother whom he was visiting, for a stroll in the country. It may be assumed—whatever the value of the assumption in connection with what is said to have occurred—that his mind was occupied with reflections on his domestic infelicities and the distressing changes that they had wrought in his life.

Whatever may have been his thoughts, they so possessed him that he observed neither the lapse of time nor whither his feet were carrying him; he knew only that he had passed far beyond the town limits and was traversing a lonely region by a road that bore no resemblance to the one by which he had left the village. In brief, he was “lost.”

Realizing his mischance, he smiled; central New York is not a region of perils, nor does one long remain lost in it. He turned about and went back the way that he had come. Before he had gone far he observed that the landscape was growing more distinct—was brightening. Everything was suffused with a soft, red glow in which he saw his shadow projected in the road before him. “The moon is rising,” he said to himself. Then he remembered that it was about the time of the new moon, and if that tricky orb was in one of its stages of visibility it had set long before. He stopped and faced about, seeking the source of the rapidly broadening light. As he did so, his shadow turned and lay along the road in front of him as before. The light still came from behind him. That was surprising; he could not understand. Again he turned, and again, facing successively to every point of the horizon. Always the shadow was before—always the light behind, “a still and awful red.”

Holt was astonished—“dumbfounded” is the word that he used in telling it—yet seems to have retained a certain intelligent curiosity. To test the intensity of the light whose nature and cause he

could not determine, he took out his watch to see if he could make out the figures on the dial. They were plainly visible, and the hands indicated the hour of eleven o'clock and twenty-five minutes. At that moment the mysterious illumination suddenly flared to an intense, an almost blinding splendor, flushing the entire sky, extinguishing the stars and throwing the monstrous shadow of himself athwart the landscape. In that unearthly illumination he saw near him, but apparently in the air at a considerable elevation, the figure of his wife, clad in her night-clothing and holding to her breast the figure of his child. Her eyes were fixed upon his with an expression which he afterward professed himself unable to name or describe, further than that it was "not of this life."

The flare was momentary, followed by black darkness, in which, however, the apparition still showed white and motionless; then by insensible degrees it faded and vanished, like a bright image on the retina after the closing of the eyes. A peculiarity of the apparition, hardly noted at the time, but afterward recalled, was that it showed only the upper half of the woman's figure: nothing was seen below the waist.

The sudden darkness was comparative, not absolute, for gradually all objects of his environment became again visible.

In the dawn of the morning Holt found himself entering the village at a point opposite to that at which he had left it. He soon arrived at the house of his brother, who hardly knew him. He was wild-eyed, haggard, and gray as a rat. Almost incoherently, he related his night's experience.

"Go to bed, my poor fellow," said his brother, "and—wait. We shall hear more of this."

An hour later came the predestined telegram. Holt's dwelling in one of the suburbs of Chicago had been destroyed by fire. Her escape cut off by the flames, his wife had appeared at an upper window, her child in her arms. There she had stood, motionless, apparently dazed. Just as the firemen had arrived with a ladder, the floor had given way, and she was seen no more.

The moment of this culminating horror was eleven o'clock and twenty-five minutes, standard time.

Supporting Extracts:

The Gothic tradition in American literature "offers us characters who may be encountering the supernatural or may only be experiencing the projections of their own worst selves, their most base and uncontrollable prejudices and desires... Sometimes explicitly and sometimes implicitly, they draw upon and explore the social anxieties of their time: the cultural dominance of white men, the immigration of diverse and often mistrusted people, the possibility that Americans are fundamentally incapable of manifesting, in Abraham Lincoln's words, "the better angels of our nature"—indeed, the possibility that such angels are our own wishful delusions".

Learner.org. 2021. Gothic Undercurrents: Ambiguity and Anxiety in the Nineteenth Century. [online] Available at: <https://www.learner.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/american-passages-unit06ig-GOTHIC-UNDERCURRENTS.pdf>

Ambrose Bierce stories don't fall neatly into categories. They are not weird fiction. They are not science fiction. They are not really satires though they attack, by implication, Bierce's society. They are, however, extreme examples of the barbs of irony forestalling any specific emotional effect on the reader. Their plots are straightforward enough and full of black humor. It's their narrators and what Bierce wants us to think of them that are not so straightforward.

Marzaat, 2014. Reading Bitter Bierce: Two Grotesque Narrators. [online] MarzAat. Available at: <https://marzaat.wordpress.com/2014/12/21/reading-bitter-bierce-two-grotesque-narrators/>

Period 1918–1939

Or,

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Analyse the following passage from *Vera* by Elizabeth von Arnim, published in 1921. In this extract, the young Lucy reflects upon her recent marriage to the widower, Everard Wemyss.

You must use the supporting extracts which follow the passage to help you consider contexts and different interpretations. [50]

Marriage, Lucy found, was different from what she had supposed; Everard was different; everything was different. For one thing she was always sleepy. For another she was never alone. She hadn't realised how completely she would never be alone, or, if alone, not sure for one minute to the other of going on being alone. Always in her life there had been intervals during which she recuperated in solitude from any strain; now there were none. Always there had been places she could go to and rest in quietly, safe from interruption; now there were none. The very sight of their room at the hotels they stayed at, with Wemyss's suitcases and clothes piled on the chairs, and the table covered with his brushes and shaving things, for he wouldn't have a dressing-room, being too natural and wholesome, he explained, to want anything separate from his own woman—the very sight of this room fatigued her. After a day of churches, pictures and restaurants—he was a most conscientious sightseer, besides being greatly interested in his meals—to come back to this room wasn't rest but further fatigue. Wemyss, who was never tired and slept wonderfully—it was the soundness of his sleep that kept her awake, because she wasn't used to hearing sound sleep so close—would fling himself into the one easy-chair and pull her on to his knee, and having kissed her a great many times he would ruffle her hair, and then when it was all on ends like a boy's coming out of a bath, look at her with the pride of possession and say, 'There's a wife for a respectable British business man to have! Mrs. Wemyss, aren't you ashamed of yourself?' And then there would be more kissing,—jovial, gluttonous kisses, that made her skin rough and chapped.

'Baby,' she would say, feebly struggling, and smiling a little wearily.

Yes, he was a baby, a dear, high-spirited baby, but a baby now at very close quarters and one that went on all the time. You couldn't put him in a cot and give him a bottle and say, 'There now,' and then sit down quietly to a little sewing; you didn't have Sundays out; you were never, day or night, an instant off duty. Lucy couldn't count the number of times a day she had to answer the question, 'Who's my own little wife?' At first she answered it with laughing ecstasy, running into his outstretched arms, but very soon that fatal sleepiness set in and remained with her for the whole of her honeymoon, and she really felt too tired sometimes to get the ecstasy she quickly got to know was expected of her into her voice. She loved him, she was indeed his own little wife, but constantly to answer this and questions like it satisfactorily was a great exertion. Yet if there was a shadow of hesitation before she answered, a hair's-breadth of delay owing to her thoughts having momentarily wandered, Wemyss was upset, and she had to spend quite a long time reassuring him with the fondest whispers and caresses. Her thoughts mustn't wander, she had discovered; her thoughts were to be his as well as all the rest of her. Was ever a girl so much loved? she asked herself, astonished and proud; but, on the other hand, she was dreadfully sleepy.

Any thinking she did had to be done at night, when she lay awake because of the immense emphasis with which Wemyss slept, and she hadn't been married a week before she was reflecting what a bad arrangement it was, the way ecstasy seemed to have no staying power. Also it oughtn't to begin, she considered, at its topmost height and accordingly not be able to move except downwards. If one could only start modestly in marriage with very little of it and work steadily upwards, taking one's time, knowing there was more and more to come, it would be much better she thought. No doubt it would go on longer if one slept better and hadn't, consequently, got headaches. Everard's ecstasy went on. Perhaps by ecstasy she really meant high spirits, and Everard was beside himself with high spirits.

Wemyss was indeed the typical bridegroom of the Psalms, issuing forth rejoicing from his chamber. Lucy wished she could issue forth from it rejoicing too. She was vexed with herself for being so stupidly sleepy, for not being able to get used to the noise beside her at night and go to sleep as naturally as she did in Eaton Terrace, in spite of the horns of taxis. It wasn't fair to Everard, she felt, not to find a wife in the morning matching him in spirits. Perhaps, however, this was a condition peculiar to honeymoons, and marriage, once the honeymoon was over, would be a more tranquil state. Things would settle down when they were back in England, to a different, more separated life in which there would be time to rest, time to think; time to remember, while he was away at his office, how deeply she loved him. And surely she would learn to sleep; and once she slept properly she would be able to answer his loving questions throughout the day with more real élan.

Supporting Extracts:

"The degree of economic and sexual independence achieved by women during the Edwardian era outstripped and rendered obsolete the 'traditional narrative forms' which had on the whole consigned them to dependence; the result was a 'Modernism of content' which...is certainly evident in the 'marriage problem' novels which to some extent dominated serious Edwardian fiction... Maud Churton Braby, a novelist and author of marital advice books, was not alone in observing a 'spirit of strange unrest' among married women. She advocated better sex education for girls, a 'preliminary canter' (of a chaste description) for women before marriage, and 'wild oats for wives' (wild but chaste, that is). She points out that, while these novels exposed and tested particular marriages, they did not question the institution itself."

Trotter, D., 1995. Costume Codes. *London Review of Books*, (Vol. 17 No. 1).

"The author has produced a remarkable novel because she has had the courage to override a tiresome literary convention. She has insisted that there is no real reason why a book should not be just as tragic as it is comic. By the unsentimental justice of its values, by its refusal to make Wemyss less of a comedian because he is murderous or less of a murderer because he is comic, *Vera* achieves a peculiar, poignant effect."

West, R., 1983. Introduction. In von Arnim, *Vera*. London: Virago.

Section B: Unseen Poetry

Answer **one** question in this section.

In your response you are required to analyse how meanings are shaped.

Either,

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Analyse in detail the following poem.

[30]

My father carries me across a field

My father carries me across a field. It's night and there are trenches filled with snow. Thick mud. We're careful to remain concealed	1
From something frightening I don't yet know. And then I walk and there is space between The four of us. We go where we have to go.	5
Did I dream it all, this ghostly scene, The hundred-acre wood where the owl blinked And the ass spoke? Where I am cosy and clean	
In bed, but we are floating, our arms linked Over the landscape? My father moves ahead Of me, like some strange, almost extinct	10
Species, and I follow him in dread Across the field towards my own extinction. Spirits everywhere are drifting over blasted	15
Terrain. The winter cold makes no distinction Between them and us. My father looks round And smiles then turns away. We have no function	
In this place but keep moving, without sound, Lost figures who leave only a blank page Behind them, and the dark and frozen ground	20
They pass across as they might cross a stage.	

George Szirtes

Or,

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Analyse in detail the following poem.

[30]

To A Dead Lover

The dark is thrown Back from the brightness, like hair Cast over a shoulder. I am alone,	1
Four years older; Like the chairs and the walls Which I once watched brighten With you beside me. I was to waken Never like this, whatever came or was taken.	5
The stalk grows, the year beats on the wind. Apples come, and the month for their fall. The bark spreads, the roots tighten. Though today be the last Or tomorrow all, You will not mind.	10 15
That I may not remember Does not matter. I shall not be with you again. What we knew, even now Must scatter And be ruined, and blow Like dust in the rain.	20
You have been dead a long season And have less than desire Who were lover with lover; And I have life—that old reason To wait for what comes, To leave what is over.	25

Louise Bogan

END OF PAPER