



GCE A LEVEL

A720U30-1



S25-A720U30-1



WEDNESDAY, 11 JUNE 2025 – 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 gel pen or 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, for example

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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 passage taken from the opening of the first story in *Six Women*, a collection of short stories written by Victoria Cross and published in 1906.

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

Listless and despondent, feeling that he hated everything in life, Hamilton walked slowly down the street. The air was heavy, and the sun beat down furiously on the yellow cotton awnings stretched over his head. Clouds of dust rose in the roadway as the white bullocks shuffled along, drawing their creaking wooden carts, and swarms of flies buzzed noisily in the yellow, dusty sunshine. Hamilton went on aimlessly; he was hot, he was tired, his eyes and head ached, he was thirsty; but all these disagreeable sensations were nothing beside the intense mental nausea that filled him, a nausea of life. It rose up in and pervaded him, uncontrollable as a physical malady. In vain he called upon his philosophy; he had practised it so long that it was worn out. Like an old mantle from the shoulders, it fell from him in rags, and he was glad. He felt he hated his philosophy only less than he hated life—hated, yet desired as the man hates a mistress he covets, and has never yet possessed. “Never had anything, never done anything, never felt anything decent yet,” he mused.

He was an exceptionally handsome and attractive individual, and though in reality forty years of age, he had the figure, the look, and air of twenty-eight. Masses of black hair, without a white thread, waved above a beautifully cut and modelled face, of which the clear bronze skin, with its warm colour in the cheeks, was not the least striking feature. He was about six feet or a little over in height, and had a wonderfully lithe, well-knit figure, and a carriage full of grace and dignity. A bright, charming smile that came easily to his face, and an air of absolute unconsciousness of his own good looks, completed the armoury of weapons Venus¹ had endowed him with for breaking hearts. But Hamilton neglected his vocation: he broke none. He got up early, and slaved away at his duties for the Indian Civil Government in his office all day, and went to bed dead tired at night, with nothing but a dreary consciousness of duty done and more duty waiting for him the following day, as a sleeping companion.

Hamilton's life had been ruined by an early and an unsuccessful marriage. At twenty, when full of the early, divine fires of life, he had married a girl of his own age and rank, dazzled by the beauty she then, in his eyes, possessed, and in that amazing blindness to character that make women view men with wondering contempt. His blindness, however, ended with the ceremony. On his wedding-night the woman, who, it must be admitted, had acted her part of loving submissiveness, of gentle devotion, admirably, mocked at him and his genuine, ardent passion.

How well he had always remembered her words to him as they stood face to face in the chilly whiteness of an English bridal chamber in midwinter! “It's no use, dear, I don't want any of this sort of thing. It seems to me coarse and stupid, and I don't want the bother of a dozen babies. I married because I wanted the position of a married woman, and a nice presentable man to go about with in society. Besides, things were not satisfactory at home, and I wanted a man to keep

me, and all that. But I don't see why you should get into such a state of mind about it. I will keep house, and be perfectly good and amiable, and we can go about together, of course; only I want to keep my own room."

And how well he remembered her as she stood there, shattering his life with her cold, light words—a tall, slim girl, in her white dinner dress! She had been very fair then, with a quantity of soft flaxen hair, which shortly after she had taken to dyeing—a thing he had always hated. She had a small, heart-shaped face, so light in colour as to suggest anæmia, with a high, thin nose, of which the nostrils were excessively pinched together, a short upper lip, and a thick, quite colourless mouth, small when closed, when she laughed opening wide far back to her throat, showing, as it seemed, an infinite quantity of long, narrow, white, wolf-like teeth.

How hideous she had suddenly appeared to him in those moments, seen through the dark waves of passion she rolled back upon him! In the hot, rosy glow she had deliberately conjured up before his eyes of love and love returned he had thought her beautiful. Now, as she took the veil from her mean, base mind, it fell also from her beauty, and he saw her ugly, as she really was, body and soul. Stunned and amazed, loathing his own folly, his own blindness, condemning these more than he did her cruelty, Hamilton blamed himself at once, more than her, for the position he now found himself in. And patiently he tried to understand it, to find the clue, if possible, to remedy it. He reasoned long and gently with her, but she, knowing well the generous nature she had to deal with, yielded not an inch. Hamilton was not the man to use force or violence. The passions of the body, divested of their soul, were nothing to him. On that night she struck down within him all desire for or interest in her. He left her at last, and withdrew to another room, where he sat through the remaining hours of the night, looking into the face of his future.

Shortly after, he had left for India, the corpse of dead passion within his breast. He made a confidant of no one, told no one of his secret burden, remitted half his pay regularly to his wife with that obedience to custom and duty as the world sees it, with that quiet dutifulness that is so astounding to the onlooker, but characteristic of so many Englishmen, and threw himself into his work, avoiding women and personal relations with them. Such a life as this invariably calls down the anger of Venus, and Hamilton had worn out by now the patience of the goddess.

As he walked on, the sound of some tom-toms dulled by distance came to his ears. He hesitated at a crossing where a side alley led down towards the bazaar, then without thought or intention walked down the turning, the music growing louder as he advanced.

¹ Venus: in Roman mythology, Venus is the goddess of love.

Supporting Extracts:

"Before 1914 divorce was rare; it was considered a scandal, confined by expense to the rich, and by legal restrictions requiring proof of adultery or violence to the truly desperate. In the first decade of the 20th century, there was just one divorce for every 450 marriages."

Gavin Thompson, Oliver Hawkins, Aliyah Dar, Mark Taylor (2012) *Divorce since 1900*, Available at: <https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/research/olympic-britain/housing-and-home-life/split-pairs/>

"Victorians stood for a sense of stability and self-complacency, for conformity with custom and established order and a consciousness of dignity. But in the late Victorians a note of revolt against the deadening effects of convention had been struck."

Jackiey Ash (2021) *Transition from Victorian Era to Modernism*, Available at: <https://www.englishliterature.info/2021/04/transition-victorian-to-modernism.html>

"Through her allusions and metaphors, Victoria Cross clearly demonstrates her willingness to challenge the taboos of late Victorian society and point the way towards a more explicit analysis of human relationships in literature as the twentieth century progressed."

Summary of critical remarks by several hands. Anon.

Period 1918–1939

Or,

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Analyse the following passage from the opening to the novel *The Judge* by Rebecca West, published in 1922.

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

CHAPTER I

I

It was not because life was not good enough that Ellen Melville was crying as she sat by the window. The world, indeed, even so much of it as could be seen from her window, was extravagantly beautiful. The office of Mr. Mactavish James, Writer to the Signet¹, was in one of those decent grey streets that lie high on the northward slope of Edinburgh New Town, and Ellen was looking up the side-street that opened just opposite and revealed, menacing as the rattle of spears, the black rock and bastions of the Castle against the white beamless glare of the southern sky. And it was the hour of the clear Edinburgh twilight, that strange time when the world seems to have forgotten the sun though it keeps its colour; it could still be seen that the moss between the cobblestones was a wet bright green, and that a red autumn had been busy with the wind-nipped trees, yet these things were not gay, but cold and remote as brightness might be on the bed of a deep stream, fathoms beneath the visitation of the sun.

At this time all the town was ghostly, and she loved it so. She took her mind by the arm and marched it up and down among the sights of Edinburgh, telling it that to be weeping with discontent in such a place was a scandalous turning up of the nose at good mercies. Now the Castle Esplanade, that all day had proudly supported the harsh, virile sounds and colours of the drilling regiments, would show to the slums its blank surface, bleached bone-white by the winds that raced above the city smoke. Now the Cowgate and the Canongate would be given over to the drama of the disorderly night; the slum-dwellers would foregather about the rotting doors of dead men's mansions and brawl among the not less brawling ghosts of a past that here never speaks of peace, but only of blood and argument. And Holyrood, under a black bank surmounted by a low bitten cliff, would lie like the camp of an invading and terrified army... She stopped and said, "Yon about Holyrood's a fine image for the institution of monarchy." For she was a Suffragette, so far as it is possible to be a Suffragette effectively when one is just seventeen, and she spent much of her time composing speeches which she knew she would always be too shy to deliver. "There is a sinister air about palaces. Always they appear like the camp of an invading army that is uneasy and keeps a good look-out lest they need shoot. Remember they are always ready to shoot..."

She interrupted herself with a click of annoyance. "I see myself standing on a herring-barrel and trying to hold the crowd with the like of that. It's too literary. I always am. I doubt I'll never make a speaker. 'Deed, I'll never be anything but the wee typist that I am..." And misery rushed in on her mind again. She fell to watching the succession of little black figures that huddled in their topcoats as they came down the side-street, bent suddenly at the waist as they came to the corner and met the full force of the east wind, and then pulled themselves upright and butted at it afresh with dour faces. The spectacle evoked a certain local pride, for such inclemencies were just part of the asperity of conditions which she reckoned as the price one had to pay for the dignity of living in Edinburgh; which indeed gave it its dignity, since to survive anything so horrible proved one good rough stuff; fit to govern the rest of the world. But chiefly it evoked desolation. For she knew none of these people. In all the town there was nobody but her mother who was at all aware of her.

It was six months since she left John Thompson's Ladies' College in John Square, so by this time the teachers would barely remember that she had been strong in Latin and mathematics but weak in French, and they were the only adult people who had ever heard her name. She wanted to be tremendously known as strong in everything by personalities more glittering than

these. Less than that would do: just to see people's faces doing something else than express resentment at the east wind, to hear them say something else than "Twopence" to the tram-conductor. Perhaps if one once got people going there might happen an adventure which, even if one had no part in it, would be a spectacle. It was seventeen years since she had first taken up her seat in the world's hall (and it was none too comfortable a seat), but there was still no sign of the concert beginning.

"Yet, Lord, I've a lot to be thankful for!" breathed Ellen. She had this rich consciousness of her surroundings, a fortuitous possession, a mere congenital peculiarity like her red hair or her white skin, which did the girl no credit. It kept her happy even now, when from time to time she had to lick up a tear with the point of her tongue, on the thin joy of the twilight.

Really the world was very beautiful. She fell to thinking of those Saturdays that she and her mother, in the days when she was still at school, had spent on the Firth of Forth. Very often, after Mrs. Melville had done her shopping and Ellen had made the beds, they packed a basket with apples and sandwiches (for dinner out was a terrible price) and they took the tram down the south spurs to Leith or Grantown to find a steamer. Each port was the dwelling-place of romance. Leith was a squalid pack of black streets that opened out on a high brick wall delightfully surmounted by mast-tops, and from every door there flashed the cutlass gleam of the splendid sinister. Number 2, Sievering Street, was an opium den. It was a corner house with Nottingham lace curtains and a massive brown door that was always closed. You never would have known it, but that was what it was.

¹ Writer to the Signet: a legal officer in Scotland.

Supporting Extracts:

"Painters inspired West ... with the desire to replicate and even to surpass the effects they had achieved on canvas in her very different medium of language. By studying them, she felt that she could learn to paint with words."

Stetz, Margaret Diane. 'Rebecca West and the Visual Arts' *Tulsa Studies in Women's Literature*, vol. 8, no. 1, 1989, pp. 43–62. JSTOR, Available at: <https://doi.org/10.2307/463879>

"Rebecca West wrote her way into the major cultural dilemmas of the twentieth century: suffrage, socialism, women's employment, sexual liberation... She grappled constantly with the laws of patriarchy..."

Scott, Bonnie Kime. 'Refiguring the Binary, Breaking the Cycle: Rebecca West as Feminist Modernist' *Twentieth Century Literature*, vol. 37, no. 2, 1991, pp. 169–91. JSTOR, Available at: <https://doi.org/10.2307/441845>

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]

Sonnet LXIII: The Gossamer

O'er faded heath-flowers spun, or thorny furze,
 The filmy Gossamer is lightly spread;
 Waving in every sighing air that stirs,
 As Fairy fingers had entwined the thread:
 A thousand trembling orbs of lucid dew 5
 Spangle the texture of the fairy loom,
 As if soft Sylphs, lamenting as they flew,
 Had wept departed Summer's transient bloom:
 But the wind rises, and the turf receives
 The glittering web: — So, evanescent, fade 10
 Bright views that Youth with sanguine heart believes:
 So vanish schemes of bliss, by Fancy made;
 Which, fragile as the fleeting dews of morn,
 Leave but the wither'd heath, and barren thorn!

Charlotte Smith

Or,

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Analyse in detail the following poem.

[30]

Sonnet 54

Of this worlds theatre in which we stay,
 My love like the spectator idly sits
 Beholding me that all the pageants play,
 Disguising diversely my troubled wits.
 Sometimes I joy when glad occasion fits, 5
 And mask in mirth like to a comedy:
 Soon after when my joy to sorrow flits,
 I wail and make my woes a tragedy.
 Yet she, beholding me with constant eye,
 Delights not in my mirth nor rues my smart: 10
 But when I laugh she mocks, and when I cry
 She laughs and hardens evermore her heart.
 What then can move her? if nor mirth nor moan,
 She is no woman, but a senseless stone.

Edmund Spenser

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