



Oxford Cambridge and RSA

**Monday 22 May 2023 – Morning**

**AS Level English Language and Literature (EMC)**

**H074/02** The language of literary texts

**Time allowed: 1 hour 30 minutes**



**You must have:**

- the OCR 12-page Answer Booklet

**INSTRUCTIONS**

- Use black ink.
- Write your answer to each question in the Answer Booklet. The question numbers must be clearly shown.
- Fill in the boxes on the front of the Answer Booklet.
- Answer **one** question in Section A and **one** in Section B.

**INFORMATION**

- The total mark for this paper is **50**.
- The marks for each question are shown in brackets [ ].
- This document has **20** pages.

**ADVICE**

- Read each question carefully before you start your answer.

## Section A

## The language of prose

Charlotte Brontë: *Jane Eyre*  
 F Scott Fitzgerald: *The Great Gatsby*  
 Chinua Achebe: *Things Fall Apart*  
 Arundhati Roy: *The God of Small Things*  
 Ian McEwan: *Atonement*  
 Jhumpa Lahiri: *The Namesake*

Answer **one** question from **Section A** on your **chosen prose text**.

You should spend about **45 minutes** on this section.

### 1 Charlotte Brontë: *Jane Eyre*

Write about the ways in which Charlotte Brontë tells the story in this extract.

In your answer you should:

- explore the narrative techniques used in the extract
- consider the extract in the context of the novel as a whole and its genre. [25]

And was Mr. Rochester now ugly in my eyes? No, reader: gratitude, and many associations, all pleasurable and genial, made his face the object I best liked to see; his presence in a room was more cheering than the brightest fire. Yet I had not forgotten his faults; indeed, I could not, for he brought them frequently before me. He was proud, sardonic, harsh to inferiority of every description: in my secret soul I knew that his great kindness to me was balanced by unjust severity to many others. He was moody, too; unaccountably so; I more than once, when sent for to read to him, found him sitting in his library alone, with his head bent on his folded arms; and, when he looked up, a morose, almost a malignant, scowl blackened his features. But I believed that his moodiness, his harshness, and his former faults of morality (I say *former*, for now he seemed corrected of them) had their source in some cruel cross of fate. I believed he was naturally a man of better tendencies, higher principles, and purer tastes than such as circumstances had developed, education instilled, or destiny encouraged. I thought there were excellent materials in him; though for the present they hung together somewhat spoiled and tangled. I cannot deny that I grieved for his grief, whatever that was, and would have given much to assuage it.

Though I had now extinguished my candle and was laid down in bed, I could not sleep for thinking of his look when he paused in the avenue, and told how his destiny had risen up before him, and dared him to be happy at Thornfield.

'Why not?' I asked myself. 'What alienates him from the house? Will he leave it again soon? Mrs. Fairfax said he seldom stayed here longer than a fortnight at a time; and he has now been resident eight weeks. If he does go, the change will be doleful. Suppose he should be absent spring, summer, and autumn: how joyless sunshine and fine days will seem!'

I hardly know whether I had slept or not after this musing; at any rate, I started wide awake on hearing a vague murmur, peculiar and lugubrious, which sounded, I thought, just above me. I wished I had kept my candle burning: the night was drearily dark; my spirits were depressed. I rose and sat up in bed, listening. The sound was hushed.

I tried again to sleep; but my heart beat anxiously: my inward tranquillity was broken. The clock, far down in the hall, struck two. Just then it seemed my chamber-door was touched; as if fingers had swept the panels in groping a way along the dark gallery outside. I said, 'Who is there?' Nothing answered. I was chilled with fear.

## 2 F Scott Fitzgerald: *The Great Gatsby*

Write about the ways in which F Scott Fitzgerald tells the story in this extract.

In your answer you should:

- explore the narrative techniques used in the extract
- consider the extract in the context of the novel as a whole and its genre.

[25]

One afternoon late in October I saw Tom Buchanan. He was walking ahead of me along Fifth Avenue in his alert, aggressive way, his hands out a little from his body as if to fight off interference, his head moving sharply here and there, adapting itself to his restless eyes. Just as I slowed up to avoid overtaking him he stopped and began frowning into the windows of a jewellery store. Suddenly he saw me and walked back, holding out his hand.

‘What’s the matter, Nick? Do you object to shaking hands with me?’

‘Yes. You know what I think of you.’

‘You’re crazy, Nick,’ he said quickly. ‘Crazy as hell. I don’t know what’s the matter with you.’

‘Tom,’ I enquired, ‘what did you say to Wilson that afternoon?’

He stared at me without a word, and I knew I had guessed right about those missing hours. I started to turn away, but he took a step after me and grabbed my arm.

‘I told him the truth,’ he said. ‘He came to the door while we were getting ready to leave, and when I sent down word that we weren’t in he tried to force his way upstairs. He was crazy enough to kill me if I hadn’t told him who owned the car. His hand was on a revolver in his pocket every minute he was in the house –’ He broke off defiantly. ‘What if I did tell him? That fellow had it coming to him. He threw dust into your eyes just like he did in Daisy’s, but he was a tough one. He ran over Myrtle like you’d run over a dog and never even stopped his car.’

There was nothing I could say, except the one unutterable fact that it wasn’t true.

‘And if you think I didn’t have my share of suffering – look here, when I went to give up that flat and saw that damn box of dog biscuits sitting there on the sideboard, I sat down and cried like a baby. By God it was awful –’

I couldn’t forgive him or like him, but I saw that what he had done was, to him, entirely justified. It was all very careless and confused. They were careless people, Tom and Daisy – they smashed up things and creatures and then retreated back into their money or their vast carelessness, or whatever it was that kept them together, and let other people clean up the mess they had made ...

I shook hands with him; it seemed silly not to, for I felt suddenly as though I were talking to a child. Then he went into the jewellery store to buy a pearl necklace – or perhaps only a pair of cuff buttons – rid of my provincial squeamishness forever.

### 3 Chinua Achebe: *Things Fall Apart*

Write about the ways in which Chinua Achebe tells the story in this extract.

In your answer you should:

- explore the narrative techniques used in the extract
- consider the extract in the context of the novel as a whole and its genre.

[25]

It was late afternoon before Nwoye returned. He went into the *obi* and saluted his father, but he did not answer. Nwoye turned round to walk into the inner compound when his father, suddenly overcome with fury, sprang to his feet and gripped him by the neck.

'Where have you been?' he stammered.

Nwoye struggled to free himself from the choking grip.

'Answer me,' roared Okonkwo, 'before I kill you!' He seized a heavy stick that lay on the dwarf wall and hit him two or three savage blows.

'Answer me!' he roared again. Nwoye stood looking at him and did not say a word. The women were screaming outside, afraid to go in.

'Leave that boy at once!' said a voice in the outer compound. It was Okonkwo's uncle, Uchendu. 'Are you mad?'

Okonkwo did not answer. But he left hold of Nwoye, who walked away and never returned.

He went back to the church and told Mr Kiaga that he had decided to go to Umuofia, where the white missionary had set up a school to teach young Christians to read and write.

Mr Kiaga's joy was very great. 'Blessed is he who forsakes his father and his mother for my sake,' he intoned. 'Those that hear my words are my father and my mother.'

Nwoye did not fully understand. But he was happy to leave his father. He would return later to his mother and his brothers and sisters and convert them to the new faith.

As Okonkwo sat in his hut that night, gazing into a log fire, he thought over the matter. A sudden fury rose within him and he felt a strong desire to take up his machet, go to the church and wipe out the entire vile and miscreant gang. But on further thought he told himself that Nwoye was not worth fighting for. Why, he cried in his heart, should he, Okonkwo, of all people, be cursed with such a son? He saw clearly in it the finger of his personal god or *chi*. For how else could he explain his great misfortune and exile and now his despicable son's behaviour? Now that he had time to think of it, his son's crime stood out in stark enormity. To abandon the gods of one's father and go about with a lot of effeminate men clucking like old hens was the very depth of abomination. Suppose when he died all his male children decided to follow Nwoye's steps and abandon their ancestors? Okonkwo felt a cold shudder run through him at the terrible prospect, like the prospect of annihilation. He saw himself and his father crowding round their ancestral shrine waiting in vain for worship and sacrifice and finding nothing but ashes of bygone days, and his children the while praying to the white man's god. If such a thing were ever to happen, he, Okonkwo, would wipe them off the face of the earth.

Okonkwo was popularly called the 'Roaring Flame'. As he looked into the log fire he recalled the name. He was a flaming fire. How then could he have begotten a son like Nwoye, degenerate and effeminate? Perhaps he was not his son. No! he could not be. His wife had played him false. He would teach her! But Nwoye resembled his grandfather, Unoka, who was Okonkwo's father. He pushed the thought out of his mind. He, Okonkwo, was called a flaming fire. How could he have begotten a woman for a son? At Nwoye's age Okonkwo had already become famous throughout Umuofia for his wrestling and his fearlessness.

He sighed heavily, and as if in sympathy the smouldering log also sighed. And immediately Okonkwo's eyes were opened and he saw the whole matter clearly. Living fire begets cold, impotent ash. He sighed again, deeply.

**4 Arundhati Roy: *The God of Small Things***

Write about the ways in which Arundhati Roy tells the story in this extract.

In your answer you should:

- explore the narrative techniques used in the extract
- consider the extract in the context of the novel as a whole and its genre.

**[25]**

© Arundhati Roy, *The God of Small Things*, pp. 308–309, HarperCollins, 1998. Link to material: [https://books.google.co.uk/books?id=IUf0AgAAQBAJ&printsec=frontcover&dq=The+God+of+Small+Things&hl=en&newbks=1&newbks\\_redir=0&sa=X&redir\\_esc=y#v=onepage&q=The%20God%20of%20Small%20Things&f=false](https://books.google.co.uk/books?id=IUf0AgAAQBAJ&printsec=frontcover&dq=The+God+of+Small+Things&hl=en&newbks=1&newbks_redir=0&sa=X&redir_esc=y#v=onepage&q=The%20God%20of%20Small%20Things&f=false). Item removed due to third party copyright restrictions.

**5 Ian McEwan: *Atonement***

Write about the ways in which Ian McEwan tells the story in this extract.

In your answer you should:

- explore the narrative techniques used in the extract
- consider the extract in the context of the novel as a whole and its genre. **[25]**

© Ian McEwan 'Atonement', pp. 261–263, 2016. Penguin Books. Link to material: [https://books.google.co.uk/books?id=MV9hAwAAQBAJ&printsec=frontcover&dq=atonement&hl=en&newbks=1&newbks\\_redir=0&sa=X&redir\\_esc=y#v=onepage&q=atonement&f=false](https://books.google.co.uk/books?id=MV9hAwAAQBAJ&printsec=frontcover&dq=atonement&hl=en&newbks=1&newbks_redir=0&sa=X&redir_esc=y#v=onepage&q=atonement&f=false). Item removed due to third party copyright restrictions.

**6 Jhumpa Lahiri: *The Namesake***

Write about the ways in which Jhumpa Lahiri tells the story in this extract.

In your answer you should:

- explore the narrative techniques used in the extract
- consider the extract in the context of the novel as a whole and its genre. **[25]**

© Jhumpa Lahiri, *The Namesake*, pp. 52–53, Houghton Mifflin Harcourt Publishing, 2019. Link to material: [https://books.google.co.uk/books?id=Nx-vY7ac1OcC&printsec=frontcover&dq=The+Namesake&hl=en&newbks=1&newbks\\_redir=0&sa=X&redir\\_esc=y#v=onepage&q=The%20Namesake&f=false](https://books.google.co.uk/books?id=Nx-vY7ac1OcC&printsec=frontcover&dq=The+Namesake&hl=en&newbks=1&newbks_redir=0&sa=X&redir_esc=y#v=onepage&q=The%20Namesake&f=false). Item removed due to third party copyright restrictions.

## Section B

## The language of poetry

William Blake  
 Emily Dickinson  
 Seamus Heaney  
 Eavan Boland  
 Carol Ann Duffy  
 Jacob Sam-La Rose

Answer **one** question from **Section B** on your **chosen poetry text**.

You should spend about **45 minutes** on this section.

### 7 William Blake

Compare the ways Blake uses language and poetic techniques in ‘**The Ecchoing Green**’ (*Innocence*) and ‘**Nurse’s Song**’ (*Innocence*).

Support your answer with reference to relevant contextual factors.

[25]

#### The Ecchoing Green

The Sun does arise,  
 And make happy the skies.  
 The merry bells ring,  
 To welcome the Spring.  
 The sky-lark and thrush,  
 The birds of the bush,  
 Sing louder around,  
 To the bells chearful sound,  
 While our sports shall be seen  
 On the Ecchoing Green.

Old John with white hair  
 Does laugh away care,  
 Sitting under the oak,  
 Among the old folk.  
 They laugh at our play,  
 And soon they all say,  
 Such such were the joys,  
 When we all girls & boys,  
 In our youth time were seen,  
 On the Ecchoing Green.

Till the little ones weary  
 No more can be merry  
 The sun does descend,  
 And our sports have an end:  
 Round the laps of their mothers,  
 Many sisters and brothers,  
 Like birds in their nest,  
 Are ready for rest:  
 And sport no more seen,  
 On the darkening Green.



**Nurse's Song**

When the voices of children are heard on the green  
And laughing is heard on the hill,  
My heart is at rest within my breast  
And everything else is still

Then come home my children, the sun is gone down  
And the dews of night arise  
Come come leave off play, and let us away  
Till the morning appears in the skies

No no let us play, for it is yet day  
And we cannot go to sleep  
Besides in the sky, the little birds fly  
And the hills are all covered with sheep

Well well go & play till the light fades away  
And then go home to bed  
The little ones leaped & shouted & laugh'd  
And all the hills echoed

## 8 Emily Dickinson

Compare the ways Dickinson uses language and poetic techniques in **'He fumbles at your Soul'** and **'My Life had stood – a Loaded Gun'**.

Support your answer with reference to relevant contextual factors.

[25]

### **He fumbles at your Soul**

He fumbles at your Soul  
 As Players at the Keys  
 Before they drop full Music on –  
 He stuns you by degrees –  
 Prepares your brittle Nature  
 For the Ethereal Blow  
 By fainter Hammers – further heard –  
 Then nearer – Then so slow  
 Your Breath has time to straighten –  
 Your Brain – to bubble Cool  
 Deals – One – imperial – Thunderbolt –  
 That scalps your naked Soul –

When Winds take Forests in their Paws –  
 The Universe – is still –

**My Life had stood – a Loaded Gun**

My Life had stood – a Loaded Gun –  
In Corners – till a Day  
The Owner passed – identified –  
And carried Me away –

And now We roam in Sovereign Woods –  
And now We hunt the Doe –  
And every time I speak for Him –  
The Mountains straight reply –

And do I smile, such cordial light  
Upon the Valley glow –  
It is as a Vesuvian face  
Had let its pleasure through –

And when at Night – Our good Day done –  
I guard My Master's Head –  
'Tis better than the Eider-Duck's  
Deep Pillow – to have shared –

To foe of His – I'm deadly foe –  
None stir the second time –  
On whom I lay a Yellow Eye –  
Or an emphatic Thumb –

Though I than He – may longer live  
He longer must – than I –  
For I have but the power to kill,  
Without – the power to die –

## 9 Seamus Heaney

Compare the ways Heaney uses language and poetic techniques in 'Death of a Naturalist' and 'Churning Day'.

Support your answer with reference to relevant contextual factors.

[25]

### Death of a Naturalist

All year the flax-dam festered in the heart  
 Of the townland; green and heavy-headed  
 Flax had rotted there, weighted down by huge sods.  
 Daily it sweltered in the punishing sun.  
 Bubbles gargled delicately, bluebottles  
 Wove a strong gauze of sound around the smell.  
 There were dragonflies, spotted butterflies,  
 But best of all was the warm thick slobber  
 Of frogspawn that grew like clotted water  
 In the shade of the banks. Here, every spring  
 I would fill jampotfuls of the jellied  
 Specks to range on window-sills at home,  
 On shelves at school, and wait and watch until  
 The fattening dots burst into nimble-  
 Swimming tadpoles. Miss Walls would tell us how  
 The daddy frog was called a bullfrog  
 And how he croaked and how the mammy frog  
 Laid hundreds of little eggs and this was  
 Frogspawn. You could tell the weather by frogs too  
 For they were yellow in the sun and brown  
 In rain.

Then one hot day when fields were rank  
 With cowdung in the grass the angry frogs  
 Invaded the flax-dam; I ducked through hedges  
 To a coarse croaking that I had not heard  
 Before. The air was thick with a bass chorus.  
 Right down the dam gross-bellied frogs were cocked  
 On sods; their loose necks pulsed like sails. Some hopped:  
 The slap and plop were obscene threats. Some sat  
 Poised like mud grenades, their blunt heads farting.  
 I sickened, turned, and ran. The great slime kings  
 Were gathered there for vengeance and I knew  
 That if I dipped my hand the spawn would clutch it.

## Churning Day

A thick crust, coarse-grained as limestone rough-cast,  
 hardened gradually on top of the four crocks  
 that stood, large pottery bombs, in the small pantry.  
 After the hot brewery of gland, cud and udder,  
 cool porous earthenware fermented the buttermilk  
 for churning day, when the hooped churn was scoured  
 with plumping kettles and the busy scrubber  
 echoed daintily on the seasoned wood.  
 It stood then, purified, on the flagged kitchen floor.

Out came the four crocks, spilled their heavy lip  
 of cream, their white insides, into the sterile churn.  
 The staff, like a great whiskey-muddler fashioned  
 in deal wood, was plunged in, the lid fitted.  
 My mother took first turn, set up rhythms  
 that slugged and thumped for hours. Arms ached.  
 Hands blistered. Cheeks and clothes were spattered  
 with flabby milk.

Where finally gold flecks  
 began to dance. They poured hot water then,  
 sterilized a birchwood bowl  
 and little corrugated butter-spades.  
 Their short stroke quickened, suddenly  
 a yellow curd was weighting the churned-up white,  
 heavy and rich, coagulated sunlight  
 that they fished, dripping, in a wide tin strainer,  
 heaped up like gilded gravel in the bowl.

The house would stink long after churning day,  
 acrid as a sulphur mine. The empty crocks  
 were ranged along the wall again, the butter  
 in soft printed slabs was piled on pantry shelves.  
 And in the house we moved with gravid ease,  
 our brains turned crystals full of clean deal churns,  
 the plash and gurgle of the sour-breathed milk,  
 the pat and slap of small spades on wet lumps.

## 10 Eavan Boland

Compare the ways Boland uses language and poetic techniques in 'Anorexic' and 'Woman in Kitchen'.

Support your answer with reference to relevant contextual factors.

[25]

### Anorexic

Flesh is heretic.  
My body is a witch.  
I am burning it.

Yes I am torching  
her curves and paps and wiles.  
They scorch in my self denials.

How she meshed my head  
in the half-truths  
of her fevers

till I renounced  
milk and honey  
and the taste of lunch.

I vomited  
her hungers.  
Now the bitch is burning.

I am starved and curveless.  
I am skin and bone.  
She has learned her lesson.

Thin as a rib  
I turn in sleep.  
My dreams probe

a claustrophobia  
a sensuous enclosure.  
How warm it was and wide

once by a warm drum,  
once by the song of his breath  
and in his sleeping side.

Only a little more,  
only a few more days  
sinless, foodless.

I will slip  
back into him again  
as if I have never been away.

Caged so  
I will grow  
angular and holy

past pain  
keeping his heart  
such company

as will make me forget  
in a small space  
the fall

into forked dark,  
into python needs  
heaving to hips and breasts  
and lips and heat  
and sweat and fat and greed.

### **Woman in Kitchen**

Breakfast over, islanded by noise,  
she watches the machines go fast and slow.  
She stands among them as they shake the house.  
They move. Their destination is specific.  
She has nowhere definite to go:  
she might be a pedestrian in traffic.

White surfaces retract. White  
sideboards light the white of walls.  
Cups wink white in their saucers.  
The light of day bleaches as it falls  
on cups and sideboards. She could use  
the room to tap with if she lost her sight.

Machines jigsaw everything she knows.  
And she is everywhere among their furor:  
the tropic of the dryer tumbling clothes.  
The round lunar window of the washer.  
The kettle in the toaster is a kingfisher  
swooping for trout above the river's mirror.

The wash done, the kettle boiled, the sheets  
spun and clean, the dryer stops dead.  
The silence is a death. It starts to bury  
the room in white spaces. She turns to spread  
a cloth on the board and irons sheets  
in a room white and quiet as a mortuary.

## 11 Carol Ann Duffy

Compare the ways Duffy uses language and poetic techniques in 'You' and 'Wintering'.

Support your answer with reference to relevant contextual factors.

[25]

### You

Uninvited, the thought of you stayed too late in my head,  
 so I went to bed, dreaming you hard, hard, woke with your name,  
 like tears, soft, salt, on my lips, the sound of its bright syllables  
 like a charm, like a spell.

### Falling in love

is glamorous hell; the crouched, parched heart  
 like a tiger ready to kill; a flame's fierce licks under the skin.  
 Into my life, larger than life, beautiful, you strolled in.

I hid in my ordinary days, in the long grass of routine,  
 in my camouflage rooms. You sprawled in my gaze,  
 staring back from anyone's face, from the shape of a cloud,  
 from the pining, earth-struck moon which gapes at me

as I open the bedroom door. The curtains stir. There you are  
 on the bed, like a gift, like a touchable dream.



## Wintering

All day, slow funerals have ploughed the rain.  
We've done again  
that trick we have of turning love to pain.

Grey fades to black. The stars begin their lies,  
nothing to lose.  
I wear a shroud of cold beneath my clothes.

Night clenches in its fist the moon, a stone.  
I wish it thrown.  
I clutch the small stiff body of my phone.

Dawn mocks me with a gibberish of birds.  
I hear your words,  
they play inside my head like broken chords.

\*

The garden tenses, lies face down, bereaved,  
has wept its leaves.  
The Latin names of plants blur like belief.

I walk on ice, it grimaces, then breaks.  
All my mistakes  
are frozen in the tight lock of my face.

Bare trees hold out their arms, beseech, entreat,  
cannot forget.  
The clouds sag with the burden of their weight.

The wind screams at the house, bitter, betrayed.  
The sky is flayed,  
the moon a fingernail, bitten and frayed.

\*

Another night, the smuggling in of snow.  
You come and go,  
your footprints like a love letter below.

Then something shifts, elsewhere and out of sight,  
a hidden freight  
that morning brings in on a tide of light.

The soil grows hesitant, it blurts in green,  
so what has been  
translates to what will be, certain, unseen,

as pain turns back again to love, like this,  
your flower kiss,  
and winter thaws and melts, cannot resist.

## 12 Jacob Sam-La Rose

Compare the ways Sam-La Rose uses language and poetic techniques in ‘Turning Darker Still’ and ‘Speechless’ Section III.

Support your answer with reference to relevant contextual factors.

[25]

### Turning Darker Still

*I stumbled about, dazed, the music beating hysterically in my ears.  
It was dark.*

RALPH ELLISON,  
*The Invisible Man*

There's rider in a desert, seeking water.  
He is his own horse, a saddle on his back.  
There's nothing but the walking, one step  
after another towards a laughing horizon.

The sky wants him to fix a grin on his face.  
Bare his white teeth. *Why aren't you smiling?*  
*Why wear that dark face all day long? Take it off.*  
The sun, a spotlight. Under its attention, he glowers,

turns darker still. Becomes his own shadow.  
*Take it off. Step into the light.*  
He learns to sleep while walking. Dreams  
of oceans, cool and black. Keeps on stepping.

The air rises in welts. He doesn't know  
what water looks like, but will when he sees it.  
Step by barefoot step, the sand is white and burning.  
The sun fingers his hair without asking,

the light, too much to bear. His throat is parched.  
Cracked. And there's no one here to talk to.  
The sand gets everywhere. Between his toes.  
Under his tongue. In his ears.

## Speechless

III

1990. Mandela is free, poll tax protestors riot  
in the streets. The kids I know listen to Nirvana, Pearl Jam  
and N's with A's, wondering if it will ever be cool

to throw the N word around like a casual slap  
on the back. I'm not supposed to say I'm angry.  
I don't know where it comes from. It's a lump

of coal, a black gloved fist in my pocket. I'm the shadow  
in the corner of every room, the single dark cloud  
and everyone suggests making a smile from my frown.

The autobiography of Malcolm X dog-eared  
in my school bag, everyone's fingers in my hi-top fade  
and I don't have a chip on my shoulder

but I feel like an ink blot on a blank page and I know  
I'm not supposed to talk back. *No* is inked out from  
the lexicon of polite exchange between mother and son,

and a friend says *it's best if you don't give it lip  
when they pick you up in the street*. If you're smart,  
you know when to stay silent. Each of the boys

I'm close to tells stories of brothers disappearing  
into the backs of police vans to reappear with fresh,  
dark bruises and I don't know how to say I'm angry

so I turn up the volume until my mother jabs a broomstick  
at the kitchen ceiling beneath my bedroom floor,  
and I know she just doesn't understand bass,

how it's best when it's physical, reaching deep down,  
resounding like an *hallelujah* or *amen* in one of God's houses.  
And I don't really dance anymore. I stand by the speakers,

know all the words, spit them out like devotions  
to something I believe in. The kids I know  
think they know about Compton and West Side

and fighting the power and drive-bys  
and I'm right there with them,  
though I've once held a gun in my hand,

just for a few short seconds,  
and rejected its cold, dead weight.

**END OF QUESTION PAPER**

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