



Oxford Cambridge and RSA

Wednesday 15 May 2019 – Morning

AS Level English Language and Literature (EMC)

H074/02 The language of literary texts

Question Paper

Time allowed: 1 hour 30 minutes



You must have:

- the OCR 12-page Answer Booklet
(OCR12 sent with general stationery)

INSTRUCTIONS

- Use black ink.
- Answer **one** question from Section A and **one** question from Section B.
- Write your answers to each question on the Answer Booklet.
- Write the number of each question you have answered in the margin.

INFORMATION

- The total mark for this paper is **50**.
- The marks for each question are shown in brackets [].
- This document consists of **24** pages.

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 **this section** 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]

“God pardon me!” he subjoined ere long; “and man meddle not with me: I have her, and will hold her.”

“There is no one to meddle, sir. I have no kindred to interfere.”

“No—that is the best of it,” he said. And if I had loved him less I should have thought his accent and look of exultation savage: but, sitting by him, roused from the nightmare of parting—called to the paradise of union—I thought only of the bliss given me to drink in so abundant a flow. Again and again he said, “Are you happy, Jane?” And again and again I answered, “Yes.” After which he murmured, “It will atone—it will atone. Have I not found her friendless, and cold, and comfortless? Will I not guard, and cherish, and solace her? Is there not love in my heart, and constancy in my resolves? It will expiate at God’s tribunal. I know my Maker sanctions what I do. For the world’s judgment—I wash my hands thereof. For man’s opinion—I defy it.”

But what had befallen the night? The moon was not yet set, and we were all in shadow: I could scarcely see my master’s face, near as I was. And what ailed the chesnut tree? it writhed and groaned; while wind roared in the laurel walk, and came sweeping over us.

“We must go in,” said Mr Rochester: “the weather changes. I could have sat with thee till morning, Jane.”

“And so,” thought I, “could I with you.” I should have said so, perhaps, but a livid, vivid spark leapt out of a cloud at which I was looking, and there was a crack, a crash, and a close rattling peal; and I thought only of hiding my dazzled eyes against Mr Rochester’s shoulder.

The rain rushed down. He hurried me up the walk, through the grounds, and into the house; but we were quite wet before we could pass the threshold. He was taking off my shawl in the hall, and shaking the water out of my loosened hair, when Mrs Fairfax emerged from her room. I did not observe her at first, nor did Mr Rochester. The lamp was lit. The clock was on the stroke of twelve.

“Hasten to take off your wet things,” said he; “and before you go, good-night—good-night, my darling!”

He kissed me repeatedly. When I looked up, on leaving his arms, there stood the widow, pale, grave, and amazed. I only smiled at her, and ran up stairs. “Explanation will do for another time,” thought I. Still, when I reached my chamber, I felt a pang at the idea she should even temporarily misconstrue what she had seen. But joy soon effaced every other feeling; and loud as the wind blew, near and deep as the thunder crashed, fierce and frequent as the lightning gleamed, cataract-like as the rain fell during a storm of two hours’ duration, I experienced no fear, and little awe. Mr Rochester

came thrice to my door in the course of it, to ask if I was safe and tranquil: and that was comfort, that was strength for anything.

Before I left my bed in the morning, little Adèle came running in to tell me that the great horse-chesnut at the bottom of the orchard had been struck by lightning in the night, and half of it split away.

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]

The next day was broiling, almost the last, certainly the warmest, of the summer. As my train emerged from the tunnel into sunlight, only the hot whistles of the National Biscuit Company broke the simmering hush at noon. The straw seats of the car hovered on the edge of combustion; the woman next to me perspired delicately for a while into her white shirtwaist, and then, as her newspaper dampened under her fingers, lapsed despairingly into deep heat with a desolate cry. Her pocket-book slapped to the floor.

‘Oh, my!’ she gasped.

I picked it up with a weary bend and handed it back to her, holding it at arm’s length and by the extreme tip of the corners to indicate that I had no designs upon it – but every one near by, including the woman, suspected me just the same.

‘Hot!’ said the conductor to familiar faces. ‘Some weather! ... Hot! ... Hot! ... Hot! ... Is it hot enough for you? Is it hot? Is it ...?’

My commutation ticket came back to me with a dark stain from his hand. That any one should care in this heat whose flushed lips he kissed, whose head made damp the pyjama pocket over his heart!

... Through the hall of the Buchanans’ house blew a faint wind, carrying the sound of the telephone bell out to Gatsby and me as we waited at the door.

‘The master’s body?’ roared the butler into the mouthpiece. ‘I’m sorry, madame, but we can’t furnish it – it’s far too hot to touch this noon!’

What he really said was: ‘Yes ... Yes ... I’ll see.’

He set down the receiver and came toward us, glistening slightly, to take our stiff straw hats.

‘Madame expects you in the salon!’ he cried, needlessly indicating the direction. In this heat every extra gesture was an affront to the common store of life.

The room, shadowed well with awnings, was dark and cool. Daisy and Jordan lay upon an enormous couch, like silver idols weighing down their own white dresses against the singing breeze of the fans.

‘We can’t move,’ they said together.

Jordan’s fingers, powdered white over their tan, rested for a moment in mine.

‘And Mr Thomas Buchanan, the athlete?’ I inquired.

Simultaneously I heard his voice, gruff, muffled, husky, at the hall telephone.

Gatsby stood in the centre of the crimson carpet and gazed around with fascinated eyes. Daisy watched him and laughed, her sweet, exciting laugh; a tiny gust of powder rose from her bosom into the air.

‘The rumour is,’ whispered Jordan, ‘that that’s Tom’s girl on the telephone.’

We were silent. The voice in the hall rose high with annoyance: ‘Very well, then, I won’t sell you the car at all ... I’m under no obligations to you at all ... and as for your bothering me about it at lunch time, I won’t stand that at all!’

‘Holding down the receiver,’ said Daisy cynically.

‘No, he’s not,’ I assured her. ‘It’s a bona-fide deal. I happen to know about it.’

Tom flung open the door, blocked out its space for a moment with his thick body, and hurried into the room.

‘Mr Gatsby!’ He put out his broad, flat hand with well-concealed dislike. ‘I’m glad to see you, sir. ... Nick ...’

‘Make us a cold drink,’ cried Daisy.

As he left the room again she got up and went over to Gatsby and pulled his face down, kissing him on the mouth.

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]

Then they came to the tree from which Okonkwo's body was dangling, and they stopped dead.

'Perhaps your men can help us bring him down and bury him,' said Obierika. 'We have sent for strangers from another village to do it for us, but they maybe a long time coming.'

The District Commissioner changed instantaneously. The resolute administrator in him gave way to the student of primitive customs.

'Why can't you take him down yourselves?' he asked.

'It is against our custom,' said one of the men. 'It is an abomination for a man to take his own life. It is an offence against the Earth, and a man who commits it will not be buried by his clansmen. His body is evil, and only strangers may touch it. That is why we ask your people to bring him down, because you are strangers?'

'Will you bury him like any other man?' asked the Commissioner.

'We cannot bury him. Only strangers can. We shall pay your men to do it. When he has been buried we will then do our duty by him. We shall make sacrifices to cleanse the desecrated land.'

Obierika, who had been gazing steadily at his friend's dangling body, turned suddenly to the District Commissioner and said ferociously: 'That man was one of the greatest men in Umuofia. You drove him to kill himself; and now he will be buried like a dog ...' He could not say any more. His voice trembled and choked his words.

'Shut up!' shouted one of the messengers, quite unnecessarily.

'Take down the body,' the Commissioner ordered his chief messenger, 'and bring it and all these people to the court.'

'Yes, sah,' the messenger said, saluting.

The Commissioner went away, taking three or four of the soldiers with him. In the many years in which he had toiled to bring civilization to different parts of Africa he had learnt a number of things. One of them was that a District Commissioner must never attend to such undignified details as cutting down a hanged man from the tree. Such attention would give the natives a poor opinion of him. In the book which he planned to write he would stress that point. As he walked back to the court he thought about that book. Every day brought him some new material. The story of this man who had killed a messenger and hanged himself would make interesting reading. One could almost write a whole chapter on him. Perhaps not a whole chapter but a reasonable paragraph, at any rate. There was so much else to include, and one must be firm in cutting out details. He had already chosen the title of the book, after much thought: *The Pacification of the Primitive Tribes of the Lower Niger*.

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]

Sorrow, however, was still two weeks away on that blue cross-stitch afternoon, as Margaret Kochamma lay jet-legged and still asleep. Chacko, on his way to see Comrade K. N. M. Pillai, drifted past the bedroom window like an anxious, stealthy whale intending to peep in to see whether his wife (*Ex-wife, Chacko!*) and daughter were awake and needed anything. At the last minute his courage failed him and he floated fatly by without looking in. Sophie Mol (*A wake, A live, A lert*) saw him go.

She sat up on her bed and looked out at the rubber trees. The sun had moved across the sky and cast a deep house-shadow across the plantation, darkening the already dark-leafed trees. Beyond the shadow, the light was flat and gentle. There was a diagonal slash across the mottled bark of each tree through which milky rubber seeped like white blood from a wound, and dripped into the waiting half of a coconut shell that had been tied to the tree.

Sophie Mol got out of bed and rummaged through her sleeping mother's purse. She found what she was looking for – the keys to the large, locked suitcase on the floor, with its airline stickers and baggage tags. She opened it and rooted through the contents with all the delicacy of a dog digging up a flowerbed. She upset stacks of lingerie, ironed skirts and blouses, shampoos, creams, chocolate, Sellotape, umbrellas, soap (and other bottled London smells), quinine, aspirin, broad spectrum antibiotics. 'Take everything,' her colleagues had advised Margaret Kochamma in concerned voices. 'You never know.' Which was their way of saying to a colleague travelling to the Heart of Darkness that:

(a) Anything Can Happen To Anyone.

So

(b) It's Best to be Prepared.

Sophie Mol eventually found what she had been looking for. Presents for her cousins. Triangular towers of Toblerone chocolate (soft and slanting in the heat). Socks with separate multi-coloured toes. And two ballpoint pens – the top halves filled with water in which a cut-out collage of a London streetscape was suspended. Buckingham Palace and Big Ben. Shops and people. A red double-decker bus propelled by an air-bubble floated up and down the silent street. There was something sinister about the absence of noise on the busy ballpoint street.

Sophie Mol put the presents into her go-go bag, and went forth into the world. To drive a hard bargain. To negotiate a friendship.

A friendship that, unfortunately, would be left dangling. Incomplete. Flailing in the air with no foothold. A friendship that never circled around into a story, which is why, far more quickly than ever should have happened, Sophie Mol became a Memory, while The Loss of Sophie Mol grew robust and alive. Like a fruit in season. Every season.

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]

A taste for the miniature was one aspect of an orderly spirit. Another was a passion for secrets; in a prized varnished cabinet, a secret drawer was opened by pushing against the grain of a cleverly turned dovetail joint, and here she kept a diary locked by a clasp, and a notebook written in a code of her own invention. In a toy safe opened by six secret numbers she stored letters and postcards. An old tin petty cash box was hidden under a removable floorboard beneath her bed. In the box were treasures that dated back four years, to her ninth birthday when she began collecting: a mutant double acorn, fool's gold, a rain-making spell bought at a funfair, a squirrel's skull as light as a leaf.

But hidden drawers, lockable diaries and cryptographic systems could not conceal from Briony the simple truth: she had no secrets. Her wish for a harmonious, organised world denied her the reckless possibilities of wrongdoing. Mayhem and destruction were too chaotic for her tastes, and she did not have it in her to be cruel. Her effective status as an only child, as well as the relative isolation of the Tallis house, kept her, at least during the long summer holidays, from girlish intrigues with friends. Nothing in her life was sufficiently interesting or shameful to merit hiding; no one knew about the squirrel's skull beneath her bed, but no one wanted to know. None of this was particularly an affliction; or rather, it appeared so only in retrospect, once a solution had been found.

At the age of eleven she wrote her first story – a foolish affair, imitative of half a dozen folk tales and lacking, she realised later, that vital knowingness about the ways of the world which compels a reader's respect. But this first clumsy attempt showed her that the imagination itself was a source of secrets: once she had begun a story, no one could be told. Pretending in words was too tentative, too vulnerable, too embarrassing to let anyone know. Even writing out the *she saids*, the *and thens*, made her wince, and she felt foolish, appearing to know about the emotions of an imaginary being. Self-exposure was inevitable the moment she described a character's weakness; the reader was bound to speculate that she was describing herself. What other authority could she have? Only when a story was finished, all fates resolved and the whole matter sealed off at both ends so it resembled, at least in this one respect, every other finished story in the world, could she feel immune, and ready to punch holes in the margins, bind the chapters with pieces of string, paint or draw the cover, and take the finished work to show to her mother, or her father, when he was home.

Her efforts received encouragement. In fact, they were welcomed as the Tallises began to understand that the baby of the family possessed a strange mind and a facility with words. The long afternoons she spent browsing through dictionary and thesaurus made for constructions that were inept, but hauntingly so: the coins a villain concealed in his pocket were 'esoteric', a hoodlum caught stealing a car wept in 'shameless auto-exculpation', the heroine on her thoroughbred stallion made a 'cursory' journey through the night, the king's furrowed brow was the 'hieroglyph' of his displeasure. Briony was encouraged to read her stories aloud in the library and it surprised her parents and older sister to hear their quiet girl perform so boldly, making big gestures with her free arm, arching her eyebrows as she did the voices, and looking up from the page for seconds at a time as she read in order to gaze into one face after the other, unapologetically demanding her family's total attention as she cast her narrative spell.

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]

At the end of the breakwater, there was a field of yellow reeds to the right, and dunes beyond, and the ocean behind it all. He had expected his father to turn back, but still they had continued, stepping onto the sand. They walked along the water to the left, heading toward the lighthouse, past rusted boat frames, fish spines as thick as pipes attached to yellow skulls, a dead gull whose feathery white breast was freshly stained with blood. They began to pick up small, faded black stones with white stripes running around them, stuffing them into their pockets so that they drooped on either side. He remembers his father's footprints in the sand; because of his limp, the right toe of his shoe was always turned outward, the left straight ahead. Their shadows that day were unnaturally slender and long, leaning in toward each other, the late afternoon sun at their backs. They paused to regard a cracked wooden buoy painted blue and white, shaped like an old parasol. The surface was wrapped with thin brown strands of seaweed and encrusted with barnacles. His father lifted and inspected it, pointing to a live mussel underneath. Finally they stood by the lighthouse, exhausted, surrounded by water on three sides, pale green in the harbor, azure behind. Overheated from the exertion, they unzipped their coats. His father stepped away to urinate. He heard his father cry out—they had left the camera with his mother. "All this way, and no picture," he'd said, shaking his head. He reached into his pocket and began to throw the striped stones into the water. "We will have to remember it, then." They looked around, at the gray and white town that glowed across the harbor. Then they started back again, for a while trying not to make an extra set of footsteps, inserting their shoes into the ones they had just made. A wind had picked up, so strong that it forced them to stop now and then.

"Will you remember this day, Gogol?" his father had asked, turning back to look at him, his hands pressed like earmuffs to either side of his head.

"How long do I have to remember it?"

Over the rise and fall of the wind, he could hear his father's laughter. He was standing there, waiting for Gogol to catch up, putting out a hand as Gogol drew near.

"Try to remember it always," he said once Gogol had reached him, leading him slowly back across the breakwater, to where his mother and Sonia stood waiting. "Remember that you and I made this journey, that we went together to a place where there was nowhere left to go."

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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 **this section** 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 ‘Nurse’s Song’ (*Experience*) and ‘The Clod and the Pebble’ (*Experience*).

Support your answer with reference to relevant contextual factors.

[25]

Nurse’s Song

When the voices of children are heard on the green,
And whisperings are in the dale,
The days of my youth rise fresh in my mind,
My face turns green and pale.

Then come home my children, the sun is gone down,
And the dews of night arise.
Your spring and your day are wasted in play,
And your winter and night in disguise.

The Clod and the Pebble

'Love seeketh not itself to please,
Nor for itself hath any care,
But for another gives its ease,
And builds a Heaven in Hell's despair.'

So sang a little Clod of Clay,
Trodden with the cattle's feet,
But a Pebble of the brook
Warbled out these metres meet:

'Love seeketh only self to please,
To bind another to its delight,
Joys in another's loss of ease,
And builds a Hell in Heaven's despite.'

8 Emily Dickinson

Compare the ways Dickinson uses language and poetic techniques in 'It was not Death, for I stood up' and 'The Soul has Bandaged moments'.

Support your answer with reference to relevant contextual factors.

[25]

It was not Death, for I stood up

It was not Death, for I stood up,
And all the Dead, lie down –
It was not Night, for all the Bells
Put out their Tongues, for Noon.

It was not Frost, for on my Flesh
I felt Siroccos – crawl –
Nor Fire – for just my Marble feet
Could keep a Chancel, cool –

And yet, it tasted, like them all,
The Figures I have seen
Set orderly, for Burial,
Reminded me, of mine –

As if my life were shaven,
And fitted to a frame,
And could not breathe without a key,
And 'twas like Midnight, some –

When everything that ticked – has stopped –
And Space stares all around –
Or Grisly frosts – first Autumn morns,
Repeal the Beating Ground –

But, most, like Chaos – Stopless – cool –
Without a Chance, or Spar –
Or even a Report of Land –
To justify – Despair.

The Soul has Bandaged moments

The Soul has Bandaged moments –
 When too appalled to stir –
 She feels some ghastly Fright come up
 And stop to look at her –

Salute her – with long fingers –
 Caress her freezing hair –
 Sip, Goblin, from the very lips
 The Lover – hovered – o'er –
 Unworthy, that a thought so mean
 Accost a Theme – so – fair –

The soul has moments of Escape –
 When bursting all the doors –
 She dances like a Bomb, abroad,
 And swings upon the Hours,

As do the Bee – delirious borne –
 Long Dungeoned from his Rose –
 Touch Liberty – then know no more,
 But Noon, and Paradise –

The Soul's retaken moments –
 When, Felon led along,
 With shackles on the plumed feet,
 And staples, in the Song,

The Horror welcomes her, again,
 These, are not brayed of Tongue –

9 Seamus Heaney

Compare the ways Heaney uses language and poetic techniques in 'Anahorish' and 'The Toome Road'.

Support your answer with reference to relevant contextual factors.

[25]

Anahorish

My 'place of clear water',
the first hill in the world
where springs washed into
the shiny grass

and darkened cobbles
in the bed of the lane.
Anahorish, soft gradient
of consonant, vowel-meadow,

after-image of lamps
swung through the yards
on winter evenings.
With pails and barrows

those mound-dwellers
go waist-deep in mist
to break the light ice
at wells and dunghills.

The Toome Road

One morning early I met armoured cars
In convoy, warbling along on powerful tyres,
All camouflaged with broken alder branches,
And headphoned soldiers standing up in turrets.
How long were they approaching down my roads
As if they owned them? The whole country was sleeping.
I had rights-of-way, fields, cattle in my keeping,
Tractors hitched to buckrakes in open sheds,
Silos, chill gates, wet slates, the greens and reds
Of outhouse roofs. Whom should I run to tell
Among all of those with their back doors on the latch
For the bringer of bad news, that small-hours visitant
Who, by being expected, might be kept distant?
Sowers of seed, erectors of headstones...
O charioteers, above your dormant guns,
It stands here still, stands vibrant as you pass,
The invisible, untoppled omphalos.

10 Eavan Boland

Compare the ways Boland uses language and poetic techniques in 'This Moment' and 'The Pomegranate'.

Support your answer with reference to relevant contextual factors.

[25]

This Moment

A neighbourhood.
At dusk.

Things are getting ready
to happen
out of sight.

Stars and moths.
And rinds slanting around fruit.

But not yet.

One tree is black.
One window is yellow as butter.

A woman leans down to catch a child
who has run into her arms
this moment.

Stars rise.
Moths flutter.
Apples sweeten in the dark.

The Pomegranate

The only legend I have ever loved is
 the story of a daughter lost in hell.
 And found and rescued there.
 Love and blackmail are the gist of it.
 Ceres and Persephone the names.
 And the best thing about the legend is
 I can enter it anywhere. And have.
 As a child in exile in
 a city of fogs and strange consonants,
 I read it first and at first I was
 an exiled child in the crackling dusk of
 the underworld, the stars blighted. Later
 I walked out in a summer twilight
 searching for my daughter at bed-time.
 When she came running I was ready
 to make any bargain to keep her.
 I carried her back past whitebeams
 and wasps and honey-scented buddleias.
 But I was Ceres then and I knew
 winter was in store for every leaf
 on every tree on that road.
 Was inescapable for each one we passed.
 And for me.

It is winter
 and the stars are hidden.
 I climb the stairs and stand where I can see
 my child asleep beside her teen magazines,
 her can of Coke, her plate of uncut fruit.
 The pomegranate! How did I forget it?
 She could have come home and been safe
 and ended the story and all
 our heart-broken searching but she reached
 out a hand and plucked a pomegranate.
 She put out her hand and pulled down
 the French sound for apple and
 the noise of stone and the proof
 that even in the place of death,
 at the heart of legend, in the midst
 of rocks full of unshed tears
 ready to be diamonds by the time
 the story was told, a child can be
 hungry. I could warn her. There is still a chance.
 The rain is cold. The road is flint-coloured.
 The suburb has cars and cable television.
 The veiled stars are above ground.
 It is another world. But what else
 can a mother give her daughter but such
 beautiful rifts in time?
 If I defer the grief I will diminish the gift.
 The legend will be hers as well as mine.
 She will enter it. As I have.
 She will wake up. She will hold
 the papery flushed skin in her hand.
 And to her lips. I will say nothing.

11 Carol Ann Duffy

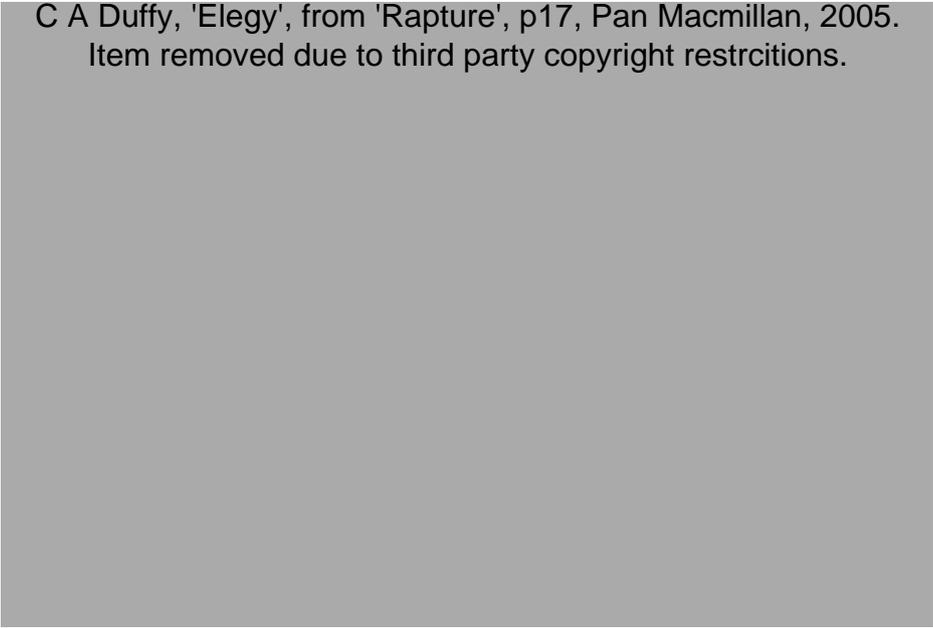
Compare the ways Duffy uses language and poetic techniques in 'Elegy' and 'Over'.

Support your answer with reference to relevant contextual factors.

[25]

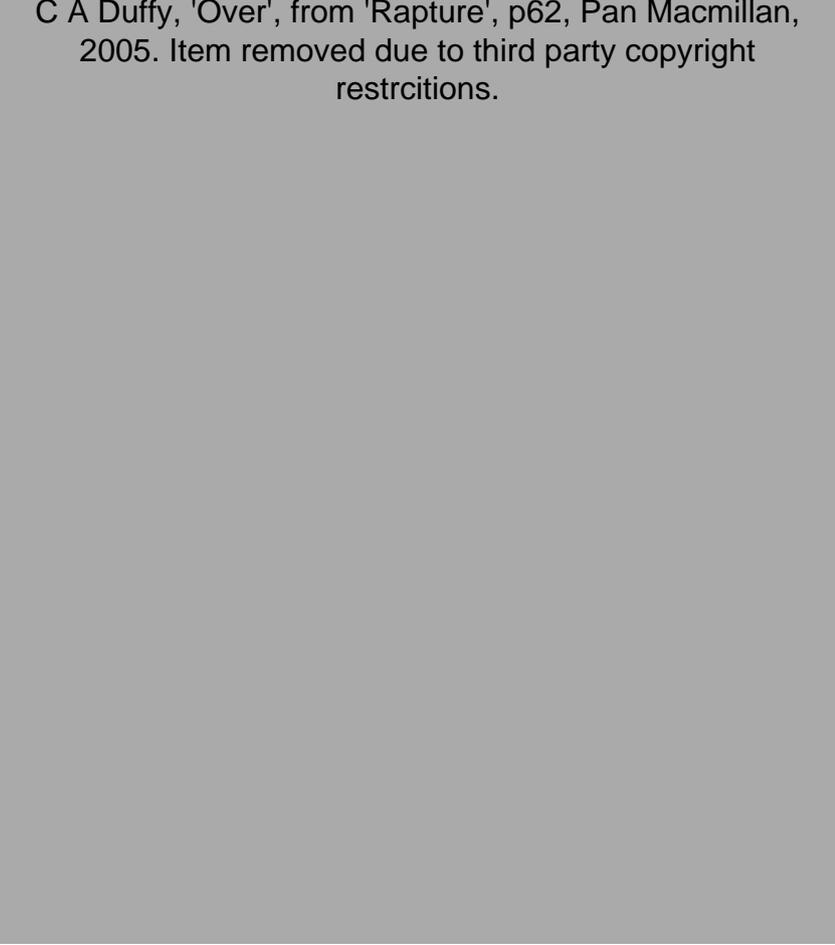
Elegy

C A Duffy, 'Elegy', from 'Rapture', p17, Pan Macmillan, 2005.
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Over

C A Duffy, 'Over', from 'Rapture', p62, Pan Macmillan, 2005. Item removed due to third party copyright restrictions.



12 Jacob Sam-La Rose

Compare the ways Sam-La Rose uses language and poetic techniques in 'An Undisclosed Fortune' and 'Speechless' Section V.

Support your answer with reference to relevant contextual factors.

[25]

An Undisclosed Fortune

My mother's fond of the story in which
she sucks the mucus from my tiny nostrils
so I can breathe. I tried to coax

a poem from it: pictured her, breathing
life back into me like a god. The poem failed,
but came back to me while watching *E.R.*,

a resident sprayed with a patient's
pancreatic ooze, another's fingers wrapped
around a heart to coax spent muscle into

systole, diastole. I hear the same whisper
facing myself in the mirror, channelled
through the single grey hair I know is there

but lose track of, the bruise on my hip
that came from nowhere but had me limping
for days: reminders that each day is a coin

from an undisclosed fortune, that while
I've never held my lover's heart in my hands,
never had to stem loosed and wayward blood,

or force breath back into place,
one day, it might come to this.

From Speechless

V

The windows look out on open school grounds
and already, before I've begun to speak
or even know their names, they're out there

on the pitch, or up in the clouds – anywhere
but here. Their teachers have said that this
is a valuable opportunity to learn

but ask the boy face down on the desk
as if its surface is a requisite for breathing,
or the three girls squealing something

I don't understand, and the rest of them
proclaiming boredom, a preference for
the Rock Club project up the hall,

Hangman, anything other than poetry
because poetry means writing, and writing
is *long, man* – so say the ones that can be bothered

to speak. *We're the dumb kids, sir,*
says one. *Why did they give you to us?*

Before the end of this lesson, the girl that lacks
patience to raise her hand before speaking
will compare herself to a broken slot machine

in the basement of a pub, inside out
and forgotten in the widening fissure
between her parents.

The boy with a desk for a face
will write of depression in a black
and beautiful light, detailing a warm,

dark pool that whispers your name.
I'll scribe for a boy who will refuse to write,
ask questions and write his answers down:

Bangladesh, a red Honda generator,
how there's nothing like family,
nothing like home, regardless of heat

when the air-con kicks out.
I'll cherish the look on his face
when I read back his words and see

a clean, unarguable flame behind his eyes,
how he's never heard himself sound like this before
and never thought it could sound so good.

END OF QUESTION PAPER

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