



GCSE

C700U10-1A



MONDAY, 4 NOVEMBER 2019 – MORNING

ENGLISH LANGUAGE – Component 1
20th Century Literature Reading and Creative Prose Writing

Resource Material for use with Section A

SECTION A: 40 marks

Read carefully the passage below.

In this story, the narrator meets by chance a woman he first met a long time ago.

1 I caught sight of her at a play and I went over during the interval and sat beside her. It was a long time since I had last seen her and I hardly recognised her. She addressed me brightly.

5 'Well, it's been many years since we met. Do you remember? You asked me to lunch.'
Did I remember?

It was twenty years ago. In those days I was living in a tiny flat in London, earning barely enough money to survive. She had read a book of mine and had written to me about it. She said she was passing through London and wanted to have a little chat with me. She was spending Thursday morning in the city and would I like to take her to lunch at the Grand?

The Grand was so far beyond my means that I had never even thought of going there. But I was flattered and I was too young to have learned to say no to a woman. I had eighty pounds to last me the rest of the month but I thought if I cut out coffee for the next two weeks I could manage well enough.

15 When she arrived, she was not as young as I expected and she was imposing in appearance rather than attractive. She gave me the impression of having more teeth than were necessary for any practical purpose. I was startled when the menu arrived as the prices were a good deal higher than I had hoped. But she reassured me.

'I never eat anything for lunch,' she said.

20 'Oh, don't say that,' I said generously.

'I never eat more than one thing. I think people eat too much these days. A little fish perhaps. I wonder if they have any lobster.'

I gulped at the thought of how much it would cost. I asked the waiter apprehensively and, yes, they had a beautiful lobster. I ordered it for my guest and the waiter asked if she would like something while it was being cooked.

25 'No,' she answered. 'I never eat more than one thing. Unless you have a little smoked salmon.'

My heart sank. I knew I could not afford smoked salmon but I told the waiter to bring some and for myself I chose the cheapest dish on the menu and that was a lamb chop.

30 'I think you are unwise to eat meat for lunch,' she said. 'I don't believe in overloading my stomach.'

Then came the question of drink.

'I never drink anything for lunch,' she said.

'Neither do I,' I answered promptly.

35 'Except white wine,' she added as though I had not spoken. 'These white wines are so light.'

'What would you like?' I asked, still polite but not exactly enthusiastic.

She flashed a smile and said, 'My doctor won't let me drink anything but champagne.'

40 I think I turned rather pale but I ordered half a bottle and mentioned casually that my doctor had absolutely forbidden me to drink champagne. I ordered water.

She ate the lobster and the smoked salmon and talked about literature and music. I wondered what the bill would come to. When my lamb chop arrived she made her disapproval very clear.

45 'I see that you are in the habit of eating a heavy lunch. I'm sure it's a mistake. You should follow my example and just eat one thing. I'm sure you'd feel better for it.'

'I am only going to eat one thing,' I said, as the waiter returned with the menu.

She waved him aside.

50 'No. I never eat anything for lunch. Just a bite. I eat as an excuse for conversation and I couldn't possibly eat anything more unless you have some giant asparagus. I'd be sorry to leave London without having some of them.'

My heart sank. They were horribly expensive. My mouth had often watered at the sight of them in shops.

A happy smile spread over the face of the waiter and he assured us that they had some so large and splendid that it was a miracle.

55 'I'm not in the least hungry,' my guest sighed, 'but if you insist I don't mind having asparagus.'

I ordered them.

'Aren't you going to have any?' she asked.

'No, I never eat asparagus,' I replied.

60 'I know there are people who don't like them. The fact is, you ruin your appetite with all the meat you eat.'

Panic seized me. It was not a question of how much money I would have for the rest of the month but whether I could pay the bill. It would be so embarrassing to find myself ten pounds short and have to borrow from my guest. I could not bring myself to do that.

65 The only thing would be to leave my watch and say I would come back and pay later.

The asparagus appeared and they were enormous, succulent and appetising. I watched the woman thrust them down her throat in large mouthfuls. At last she finished.

'Coffee?' I asked.

70 'Just a coffee and an ice cream,' she answered. I was past caring now so I ordered two coffees and an ice cream for her.

'You know, there's one thing I thoroughly believe in,' she said as she devoured the ice cream. 'One should always get up from a meal feeling one could eat a little more.'

'Are you still hungry?' I asked faintly.

'Oh, no, I'm not hungry. You see, I don't eat lunch. I was talking about you.'

75 Then a terrible thing happened. The waiter approached carrying a basket of huge peaches. Surely they were not in season? God alone knew what they would cost.

Casually, my guest took one. 'You see, you've filled your stomach with a lot of meat and you can't eat any more. But I've just had a snack so I shall enjoy a peach.'

80 The bill came and I had just enough to pay it and leave a quite inadequate tip. Her eyes rested on the two pounds I had left for the waiter and I knew she thought that I was mean. However, when I walked out of the restaurant I had the rest of the month before me and not a penny in my pocket.

'Follow my example,' she said as we shook hands, 'and never eat more than one thing for lunch.'

86 But I have had my revenge at last. I do not believe that I am a spiteful man but I would merely point out that today she weighs twenty-one stone.

W. Somerset Maugham