
INTERNATIONAL A-LEVEL ENGLISH LITERATURE

Unit 4a Literary representations

Specimen paper

07:00 GMT

Time allowed: 2 hours 30 minutes

Materials

For this paper you must have:

- an OxfordAQA 12-page Answer Book

Instructions

- Use black ink or black ball-point pen.
- Do all rough work in your answer book. Cross through any work you do not want to be marked.
- You must answer all questions. There is **one** question in Section A and **one** question in Section B.

Information

- The maximum mark for this paper is 50.
- The marks for questions are shown in brackets.
- You will be marked on your ability to:
 - use good English
 - organise information clearly
 - analyse carefully the writers' methods
 - use specialist vocabulary where appropriate.

Section A: Prose

01

Read the following extract carefully. It is the opening of the novel *If Nobody Speaks of Remarkable Things* by Jon McGregor, first published in 2002.

Write an analysis of this extract, in which you focus on the significance of the representation of city life.

[25 marks]

If you listen, you can hear it.

The city, it sings.

If you stand quietly, at the foot of a garden, in the middle of a street, on the roof of a house.

It's clearest at night, when the sound cuts more sharply across the surface of things, when the song reaches out to a place inside you.

It's a wordless song, for the most, but it's a song all the same, and nobody hearing it could doubt what it sings. And the song sings the loudest when you pick out each note.

The low soothing hum of air-conditioners, fanning out the heat and the smells of shops and cafes and offices across the city, winding up and winding down, long breaths layered upon each other, a lullaby hum for tired streets.

The rush of traffic still cutting across flyovers, even in the dark hours a constant crush of sound, tyres rolling across tarmac and engines rumbling, loose drains and manhole covers clack-clacking like cast-iron castanets.

Road-menders mending, choosing the hours of least interruption, rupturing the cold night air with drills and jack-hammers and pneumatic pumps, hard-sweating beneath the fizzing hiss of floodlights, shouting to each other like drummers in rock bands calling out rhythms, pasting new skin on the veins of the city.

Restless machines in workshops and factories with end-less shifts, turning and pumping and steaming and spark-ing, pressing and rolling and weaving and printing, the hard crash and ring and clatter lifting out of echo-high buildings and sifting into the night, an unaudited product beside the paper and cloth and steel and bread, the packed and the bound and the made.

Lorries reversing, right round the arc of industrial parks, it seems every lorry in town is reversing, backing through gateways, easing up ramps, shrill-calling their presence while forklift trucks gas and prang around them, heaping and stacking and loading.

And all the alarms, calling for help, each district and quarter, each street and estate, each every way you turn has alarms going off, coming on, going off, coming on, a hammered ring like a lightning drum-roll, like a mes-meric bell-toll, the false and the real as loud as each other, crying their needs to the night like an understaffed orphanage, babies waawaa-ing in darkened wards.

Sung sirens, sliding through the streets, streaking blue light from distress to distress, the slow wail weaving urgency through the darkest of the dark hours, a lament lifted high, held above the rooftops and fading away, lifted high, flashing past, fading away.

And all these things sing constant, the machines and the sirens, the cars blurring hey and rumbling all headlong, the hoots and the shouts and the hums and the crackles, all come together and rouse like a choir, sinking and rising with the turn of the wind, the counter and solo, the harmony humming expecting more voices.

So listen.

Listen, and there is more to hear.

The rattle of a dustbin lid knocked to the floor.

The scrawl and scratch of two hackle-raised cats.

The sudden thundercrash of bottles emptied into crates. The slam-slam of car doors, the changing of gears, the hobbled clip-clop of a slow walk home.

The rippled roll of shutters pulled down on late-night cafes, a crackled voice crying street names for taxis, a loud scream that lingers and cracks into laughter, a bang that might just be an old car backfiring, a callbox calling out for an answer, a treeful of birds tricked into morning, a whistle and a shout and a broken glass, a blare of soft music and a blam of hard beats, a barking and yelling and singing and crying and it all swells up all the rumbles and crashes and bangings and slams, all the noise and the rush and the non-stop wonder of the song of the city you can hear if you listen the song

and it stops

in some rare and sacred dead time, sandwiched between the late sleepers and the early risers, there is a miracle of silence.

Glossary:

callbox: public telephone box

castanets: usually wooden or plastic hand-held musical instruments

drills etc: machines or tools for road mending

hackles: hairs on the back of the neck

lullaby: soothing song sung to babies

mesmeric: gripping, hypnotic

shifts: periods of work

tarmac: a road covering

unaudited: not checked or inspected.

Turn over for Section B

Section B: Poetry**0 2**

Read carefully the following poem, 'Aunt Julia', by Norman MacCaig, published in 1968.

In this poem, the poet remembers his Aunt Julia, who lived on a small island off the west coast of Scotland, in an area called the Western Isles. She lived and worked as a crofter, someone who farmed a small piece of farmland attached to a house.

Write an analysis of this poem, in which you focus on the significance of the representation of the old woman.

[25 marks]

Aunt Julia spoke Gaelic
very loud and very fast.
I could not answer her —
I could not understand her.

She wore men's boots
when she wore any.
— I can see her strong foot,
stained with peat,
paddling with the treadle of the spinningwheel
while her right hand drew yarn
marvellously out of the air.

Hers was the only house
where I've lain at night
in the absolute darkness
of a box bed, listening to
crickets being friendly.

She was buckets
and water flouncing into them.
She was winds pouring wetly
round house-ends.
She was brown eggs, black skirts
and a keeper of threepennybits
in a teapot.

Aunt Julia spoke Gaelic
very loud and very fast.
By the time I had learned
a little, she lay
silenced in the absolute black
of a sandy grave
at Luskentyre. But I hear her still, welcoming me
with a seagull's voice
across a hundred yards
of peatscapes and lazybeds
and getting angry, getting angry
with so many questions
unanswered.

Glossary:

cricket: type of small, largely nocturnal grasshopper

flouncing: moving in a jerky, agitated manner

Gaelic: Celtic language, spoken in the Scottish Highlands and islands

Luskentyre: small settlement in the Scottish island of South Harris

peat: dark brown, compressed plant material, often used as compost

threepenny bit: historical coin worth three pence

treadle: a foot pedal used to drive a small machine

yarn: spun thread used for eg weaving.

END OF QUESTIONS

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