OXFORD

INTERNATIONAL
AQA EXAMINATIONS

INTERNATIONAL GCSE
ENGLISH LITERATURE

Paper 2A Poetry and Unseen texts

Monday 13 May 2019 07:00 GMT Time allowed: 2 hours 15 minutes

Materials

For this paper you must have:
- an Oxford International AQA Examinations 16-page answer book
- a clean copy of the Oxford International AQA Poetry Anthology *People and Places*.

Instructions
- Use black ink or black ball-point pen.
- Do **not** use pencil.
- Write the information required on the front of your answer book.
- Answer **one** question from Section A.
- Answer the question in Section B **and** the question in Section C.
- For Section A, you must have a clean copy of the Oxford International AQA Poetry Anthology *People and Places* in the examination room. The text must **not** be annotated and must **not** contain additional notes or materials.

Information
- The marks for questions are shown in brackets.
- There are 30 marks available for each section.
- The maximum mark for this paper is 90.

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Section A: Poetry Anthology: People and Places

Answer **one** question from Section A.

Either

0 1 Read the poem below.

Answer the question that follows.

London

I wander through each chartered street,
Near where the chartered Thames does flow,
And mark in every face I meet
Marks of weakness, marks of woe.

In every cry of every man,
In every infant's cry of fear,
In every voice, in every ban,
The mind-forged manacles I hear:

How the chimney-sweeper's cry
Every black'ning church appalls,
And the hapless soldier's sigh
Runs in blood down palace walls.

But most through midnight streets I hear
How the youthful harlot's curse
Blasts the new-born infant's tear,
And blights with plagues the marriage hearse.

William Blake

Write about the ways that poets present places in *London* and **one** other poem from *People and Places*.

[30 marks]

or

0 2 Write about **one or more** poems from *People and Places* in which you admire the ways that language and structure are used. Explain why you admire the writing.

[30 marks]

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Section B: Unseen poetry

Answer Question 3.

0 3 Read the poem below.

Answer the question that follows.

Evans

Evans? Yes, many a time
I came down his bare flight
Of stairs into the gaunt kitchen
With its wood fire, where crickets sang
Accompaniment to the black kettle's
Whine, and so into the cold
Dark to smother in the thick tide
Of night that drifted about the walls
Of his stark farm on the hill ridge.

It was not the dark filling my eyes
And mouth appalled me; not even the drip
Of rain like blood from the one tree
Weather-tortured. It was the dark
Silting the veins of that sick man
I left stranded upon the vast
And lonely shore of his bleak bed.

R.S. Thomas

How does the poet present *Evans*?

[30 marks]

Turn over for Section C

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Section C: Unseen prose

Answer Question 4.

0 4 In this passage from *The Adventure of the Speckled Band* by Arthur Conan Doyle, Helen Stoner is describing to Sherlock Holmes the night of her sister's death.

Read the passage below and then answer the question that follows.

> The wind was howling outside, and the rain was beating and splashing against the windows. Suddenly, amidst all the hubbub of the gale, there burst forth the wild scream of a terrified woman. I knew that it was my sister's voice. I sprang from my bed, wrapped a shawl round me, and rushed into the corridor. As I opened my door I seemed to hear a low whistle, such as my sister described, and a few moments later a clanging sound, as if a mass of metal had fallen. As I ran down the passage my sister's door was unlocked, and revolved slowly upon its hinges. I stared at it horror-stricken, not knowing what was about to issue from it. By the light of the corridor lamp I saw my sister appear at the opening, her face blanched with terror, her hands groping for help, her whole figure swaying to and fro like that of a drunkard. I ran to her and threw my arms round her, but at that moment her knees seemed to give way and she fell to the ground. She writhed as one who is in terrible pain, and her limbs were dreadfully convulsed. At first I thought that she had not recognized me, but as I bent over her she suddenly shrieked out in a voice which I shall never forget, "Oh, my God! Helen! It was the band! The speckled band!" There was something else which she would fain have said, and she stabbed with her finger into the air in the direction of the Doctor's room, but a fresh convulsion seized her and choked her words.

Describe the atmosphere that Conan Doyle creates in this extract. How does he create this atmosphere by the ways that he writes?

[30 marks]

END OF QUESTIONS

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Surname	StemUp Model Solution
Answer booklet	Write the question number in the left-hand margin at the start of each answer.

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01

In both "London" and Seamus Heaney's "Storm on the Island", places are never simply backdrops: they are forces that press in on the people who live there. Blake presents the capital as a man-made prison, a city whose suffering is created by the powerful, while Heaney presents a bare Atlantic island where the threat comes from nature itself. What unites them, I think, is that each poet reveals the gap between how a place is supposed to feel and how it is actually experienced, so that London, the heart of an empire, becomes a place of "woe", and the island home that should shelter its people leaves them "bombarded by the empty air".

Blake's London is defined first by control. The repetition of "chartered" in the opening lines, applied to both the "street" and the "Thames", suggests that every part of the city has been mapped, owned and licensed for profit. Even the river, a natural thing that should flow freely, has been claimed. Writing in 1794, in the shadow of the French Revolution and the growth of commerce, Blake seems to be attacking a society in which property rights matter more than people. The pun on "mark", used first as a verb meaning to notice and then as a noun in "Marks of weakness, marks of woe", implies that the city physically scars its inhabitants, and the alliterative "w" sounds create a weary, mournful tone.

The second stanza turns the place into a soundscape of pain. The anaphora of "In every" builds a relentless list, so that the reader feels that no one escapes. The most powerful image is "The mind-forged manacles", which suggests that London's chains are psychological as well as political: people have been taught to accept their oppression. Blake's tight structure supports this. The four quatrains with their regular ABAB rhyme and steady iambic rhythm feel as rigid and inescapable as

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the city they describe, almost like the march of the "hapless soldier".

Blake then links the place to its institutions. The "black'ning church" is literally stained by industrial soot, but it is also morally blackened because it ignores the child labourers it should protect. The image of the soldier's sigh that "Runs in blood down palace walls" is shocking because sound becomes blood, implying that the monarchy is guilty of the deaths of those who fight for it. The final stanza's "midnight streets" move us to the darkest point, and the oxymoron "marriage hearse" suggests that the city corrupts even love and new life, since the "harlot's curse" spreads disease from one generation to the next. London is presented as a place where innocence is destroyed at birth.

Heaney's island, by contrast, opens in a tone of quiet confidence: "We are prepared". The collective voice of the islanders, with its conversational asides such as "you know what I mean", makes the place feel like a close community speaking directly to a visitor. They "build our houses squat", "Sink walls in rock and roof them with good slate", and the solid monosyllables mimic the sturdiness of their homes. Yet the landscape is presented as barren: the "wizened earth" produces no hay, and there are "no trees, no natural shelter". The personification "wizened" makes the land old and shrivelled.

As the poem progresses the confidence erodes. The sea, which "You might think" is company, "spits like a tame cat / Turned savage". The simile is unsettling because it takes something domestic and familiar and reveals its wildness, just as the island itself, home to these people, turns against them. The enjambment across the line break enacts the sudden switch from tame to savage. Heaney then shifts into military language: the wind "dives / And strafes invisibly", "Space is a salvo", and the people are "bombarded". The island becomes a battlefield. Some readers

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link this to the tensions in Northern Ireland, noting the closeness of the title to "Stormont", the seat of its government, which would make the islanders' anxious waiting a political as well as a natural image.

Structurally the two poems work in opposite ways. Blake's strict quatrains suggest a place that is fixed and controlled, whereas Heaney writes in a single block of blank verse, which feels like the islanders huddled together against the storm, with no stanza breaks to offer relief. Both poems end on a powerful final image, but Blake's is one of corruption, while Heaney's is a paradox: "it is a huge nothing that we fear". The fear is of emptiness itself.

Ultimately, both poets present places as revealing something about the people who live in them. Blake's London exposes a society that has chained its own citizens, and he angrily blames those in power. Heaney's island exposes human vulnerability: however well prepared we think we are, the place we call home can become hostile. I find Heaney's ending the more unsettling, because while Blake names his enemies, Heaney's islanders are left fearing something they cannot see.

02 The two poems from People and Places whose writing I most admire are Ted Hughes's "Wind" and Imtiaz Dharker's "Blessing". Both are about the overwhelming power of nature over human beings, yet they produce opposite feelings: Hughes makes a storm terrifying, while Dharker makes a burst water pipe feel like a religious miracle. What I admire in both is the way each poet makes language and structure do the work of the weather itself, so that the reader does not just understand the force of wind or water but feels it.

Hughes's opening line is one of the most striking in the anthology: "This house has

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been far out at sea all night". The metaphor transforms a solid house on a Yorkshire hillside into a ship tossed on the ocean, instantly conveying isolation and danger. The perfect tense "has been" tells us the ordeal has lasted for hours. The second line, "The woods crashing through darkness, the booming hills", piles up violent sounds, and the onomatopoeia of "crashing" and "booming" means the landscape itself seems to roar. Hughes then describes "Winds stampeding the fields", a verb that turns the wind into a herd of panicking animals.

What I admire most is Hughes's use of enjambment. The poem is written in unrhymed quatrains, a form that might seem orderly, but sentences constantly break over the ends of lines and even across stanza breaks, as if the wind is tearing through the structure of the poem itself. When daylight comes, "wind wielded / Blade-light, luminous black and emerald, / Flexing like the lens of a mad eye." The alliteration of "wind wielded" is harsh and weapon-like, while the simile of the "mad eye" suggests nature is not just powerful but insane and watchful. The colours are oddly beautiful, so awe and fear exist together.

The speaker's attempt to venture outside reveals how small humans are. The wind "dented the balls of my eyes", a physical, almost painful image, and "The tent of the hills drummed and strained its guyrope". This extended metaphor makes the solid landscape fragile, as if it could "bang and vanish with a flap" at any moment. I find the image of the "black- / Back gull bent like an iron bar slowly" brilliant because the line break physically splits the bird's name, and the slow, heavy simile makes the reader feel the immense pressure. Hughes uses the same idea of breaking point when the house "Rang like some fine green goblet in the note / That any second would shatter it". The delicacy of the goblet contrasts with the massive stone house, reminding us how near destruction it is.

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The ending is admirable for its quietness. The family sit "deep / In chairs" and "cannot entertain book, thought, / Or each other". The list ends with the most human loss of all: the storm has severed their connection to one another. The final image, "Hearing the stones cry out under the horizons", personifies even the stones, so the poem closes not with relief but with continuing fear.

"Blessing" uses structure in a completely different but equally skilful way. The first stanza is just two short lines: "The skin cracks like a pod. / There never is enough water." The brevity and the full stops mirror scarcity itself; the poem, like the land, is parched. The second stanza slows the reader down with the imperative "Imagine the drip of it", inviting us to share the people's longing. The onomatopoeic "drip" and "small splash" are tiny sounds, and the metaphor "the voice of a kindly god" shows how precious water has become, linking it to faith.

Then the structure suddenly opens out. The third stanza is long and rushes forward with enjambment, imitating the water when "The municipal pipe bursts". Dharker's metaphor "silver crashes to the ground" presents water as treasure, and the "roar of tongues" suggests both the noise of the water and a crowd speaking in excitement. The religious language becomes stronger as the people form "a congregation", and the list "brass, copper, aluminium, / plastic buckets" captures the frantic variety of containers, and of people, rushing to catch the gift.

The final image is the most moving: the children "screaming in the liquid sun" as "the blessing sings / over their small bones." The phrase "liquid sun" beautifully fuses water and light, but "small bones" quietly reminds us of their poverty and fragility. Set in a Mumbai slum, the poem celebrates joy while hinting at injustice, since a burst pipe is "the sudden rush / of fortune" rather than something people can rely on.

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Ultimately, I admire both poems because their structures embody their subjects: Hughes's broken lines are battered like the house, and Dharker's expanding stanzas flood like the water. Of the two, Hughes's writing impresses me more for its sustained intensity, but Dharker's poem lingers longer because of the tenderness hidden in its final words.

03 R.S. Thomas presents Evans as a man defined by isolation: a dying farmer whose bleak, remote home seems to mirror the darkness gathering inside his body. Yet the poem is as much about the speaker as about Evans. Thomas, a priest in rural Wales, seems to write from the position of a visitor who has tried to help many times and who feels a quiet guilt at leaving the sick man alone. Evans himself never speaks or acts in the poem; he is seen only through the speaker's memory, which makes him seem even more passive, stranded and abandoned.

The poem opens abruptly with a question and answer: "Evans? Yes, many a time". This conversational opening creates the sense that someone has asked the speaker about Evans, and that the name immediately triggers vivid, painful memories. The phrase "many a time" suggests repeated visits, so the speaker has known Evans and his home well. However, it also suggests that the visits have become routine, and that each one ended the same way, with the speaker leaving.

Thomas presents Evans largely through his surroundings. The "bare flight / Of stairs" and the "gaunt kitchen" are stripped of comfort. The adjective "gaunt" is usually used of a thin, ill person, so the personification transfers Evans's sickness onto the house, as though the building is wasting away with him. There are small signs of life, the "wood fire, where crickets sang", yet even this domestic warmth

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is undercut by "the black kettle's / Whine". The enjambment that separates "kettle's" from "Whine" makes the reader pause and then hear a complaining, mournful sound, so even the music of the house slides into a kind of lament.

The movement of the first stanza is downwards and outwards: the speaker comes "down" the stairs, through the kitchen and "into the cold / Dark". After the opening question, the stanza unfolds as one long sentence, with line after line run on, which mimics the speaker being drawn out of the house and swallowed by the night. The verb "smother" and the metaphor of the "thick tide / Of night" make the darkness feel suffocating and physical, like water rising "about the walls". The farm is described as "stark" and placed "on the hill ridge", which emphasises how exposed and remote Evans is. There are no neighbours, no lights, no community: his whole world is this isolated farm.

The second stanza shifts from description to reflection, and this is where Thomas reveals what truly disturbs the speaker. He uses a structure of rejection: "It was not the dark", "not even the drip / Of rain". By dismissing the frightening landscape, the speaker builds tension towards the real horror. The simile "rain like blood" and the image of "the one tree / Weather-tortured" are violent and suggest suffering; the single tree, bent and broken by the weather, becomes a symbol of Evans himself, alone and battered by forces he cannot resist. The hyphenated compound "Weather-tortured" is isolated at the start of a line and followed by a full stop, so it lands heavily.

The climax is the metaphor "the dark / Silting the veins of that sick man". "Silting" suggests mud slowly settling and blocking a river, so Evans's illness is presented as a gradual, unstoppable clogging of his blood. The darkness outside and the darkness within have merged: the night that drifted round the farm has

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entered his body. It is significant that the poet does not name him here but calls him "that sick man", which creates distance, as though the speaker cannot bear to face him directly, or perhaps as though illness has already removed his individuality.

The final image is the most poignant. The speaker admits he "left" Evans "stranded upon the vast / And lonely shore of his bleak bed". The sea imagery returns, presenting the bed as a desolate beach where Evans has been washed up and abandoned. The adjectives "vast", "lonely" and "bleak" pile up a sense of emptiness, while the alliteration of "bleak bed" slows the ending down to a heavy close. The verb "left" places responsibility on the speaker, suggesting guilt: he could walk away into the night, but Evans could not.

Thomas therefore presents Evans as a figure of pity, a lonely man dying in a harsh, unforgiving place, but he also presents the limits of human help. The speaker is appalled not by nature but by his own helplessness in front of a slow death. I find the poem deeply moving because its tight, controlled structure, two stanzas that move from outside to inside, mirrors the way the speaker's attention moves from the landscape to the man, and the reader is left, like the speaker, unable to forget Evans.

04 Conan Doyle creates an atmosphere of mounting terror and mystery in this extract, moving from the chaos of a violent storm to the horror of a young woman's death, and leaving the reader, like Holmes, with a puzzle that seems to defy explanation. Because the story is told by Helen Stoner, who lived through the night, the fear feels immediate and personal, yet Conan Doyle also carefully plants strange clues, the whistle, the clang and the "speckled band", so that the

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atmosphere is both frightening and intriguing.

The passage begins with pathetic fallacy. The wind "was howling" and the rain "was beating and splashing against the windows". The verb "howling" personifies the wind as a wild animal or a creature in pain, which anticipates the sister's scream, while "beating" suggests violence and attack, as though the house itself is under siege. The continuous verb forms create a sense of noise that will not stop. This is a typical Gothic setting, a dark night and a remote house in a storm, and it immediately prepares the reader for something terrible.

The adverb "Suddenly" marks a sharp shift, and the scream that "burst forth" is described as "wild" and belonging to "a terrified woman". The verb "burst" makes the sound explosive, cutting through the storm. Interestingly, Helen at first describes it impersonally as "a terrified woman", before the short, simple sentence "I knew that it was my sister's voice." The brevity of this sentence creates a moment of dreadful recognition, and the atmosphere shifts from general fear to personal horror.

Conan Doyle then accelerates the pace through a series of quick verbs: Helen "sprang", "wrapped" a shawl round her and "rushed" into the corridor. The list of actions in one sentence mimics her panic and urgency, and the reader is swept along with her. At the same time, the writer introduces eerie sounds: "a low whistle" and "a clanging sound, as if a mass of metal had fallen." These details are strange and unexplained. The whistle is quiet and sinister in contrast to the roar of the storm, and Helen tells us it is "such as my sister described", which hints that her sister had heard it before and adds to the sense of a hidden, repeated threat. The phrase "seemed to hear" introduces uncertainty, so the reader cannot be sure what is real, which deepens the mystery.

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The image of the door is particularly chilling. It "revolved slowly upon its hinges", and the slowness contrasts with Helen's frantic running, creating suspense as though time has stopped. Helen admits she "stared at it horror-stricken, not knowing what was about to issue from it." The vague verb "issue" suggests that something monstrous or unknown could emerge, and Conan Doyle deliberately delays revealing what is there.

When the sister appears, Conan Doyle uses a list of three phrases to describe her: "her face blanched with terror, her hands groping for help, her whole figure swaying to and fro like that of a drunkard." The list builds from her face to her whole body, showing how fear and pain have taken over her completely. "Blanched" suggests she is drained of colour, almost ghostlike, while "groping" shows helplessness, as if she is blind or lost. The simile "like that of a drunkard" is disturbing because it suggests she has lost control of her own body, perhaps hinting at poison. Seen "By the light of the corridor lamp", she emerges from darkness like a figure in a nightmare.

The description of her collapse is visceral. She "writhed" and her limbs "were dreadfully convulsed". These verbs create an atmosphere of physical agony and helplessness; Helen can only hold her as "her knees seemed to give way". The climax is her final cry: "Oh, my God! Helen! It was the band! The speckled band!" The exclamation marks and short, broken phrases convey desperation and terror, and the repetition of "band" emphasises the clue without explaining it. The phrase is mysterious because it means nothing to Helen or the reader, which turns horror into an enigma.

Finally, Conan Doyle withholds the answer. The sister "stabbed with her finger into

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the air in the direction of the Doctor's room", a violent verb that suggests accusation, but "a fresh convulsion seized her and choked her words." The personified convulsion seems to silence her deliberately. This cliffhanger leaves the atmosphere tense and unresolved, and Helen's comment that it was a voice "which I shall never forget" shows how deeply the night still haunts her.

Overall, Conan Doyle combines a Gothic setting, fast-paced action, strange sounds and graphic physical detail to create an atmosphere that is terrifying, confusing and suspenseful. Most effectively, he ensures that every frightening detail is also a clue, so the reader is drawn, like Holmes, into the mystery of what the "speckled band" could be.