OXFORD
INTERNATIONAL
AQA EXAMINATIONS

INTERNATIONAL GCSE
ENGLISH LITERATURE

Paper 2B Poetry

Monday 13 May 2019 07:00 GMT Time allowed: 1 hour 30 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.
- 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 60.

stemup.co.uk

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]

stemup.co.uk

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]

END OF QUESTIONS

stemup.co.uk

There are no questions printed on this page

Copyright information

For confidentiality purposes, acknowledgements of third-party copyright material will be published in a separate booklet rather than including them on the examination paper or support materials. This booklet is published after each examination series and is available for free download from www.oxfordaqaexams.org.uk after the live examination series.

Permission to reproduce all copyright material has been applied for. In some cases, efforts to contact copyright-holders may have been unsuccessful and Oxford International AQA Examinations will be happy to rectify any omissions of acknowledgements. If you have any queries please contact the Copyright Team, AQA, Stag Hill House, Guildford, GU2 7XJ.

Copyright © 2019 Oxford International AQA Examinations and its licensors. All rights reserved.

stemup.co.uk

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

Question number

01

In both "London" and Seamus Heaney's "Storm on the Island", place is never simply scenery: it is a force that presses in on the people who live there. Blake presents London as a man-made prison, where human institutions crush the innocent, while Heaney presents an island community besieged by nature. What makes the comparison interesting is that each poem locates the true threat somewhere unexpected: for Blake it is inside the human mind, and for Heaney it is in "a huge nothing", the empty air itself.

Blake's speaker opens by wandering "through each chartered street", and the verb "wander" suggests aimless freedom that is instantly contradicted by "chartered". The repetition of the word for the "chartered Thames" is bitterly ironic: even a river, the most natural and free-flowing part of a city, has been mapped, owned and sold. Writing in the 1790s, as commerce and property rights expanded and the revolution in France made the English establishment nervous, Blake presents a city where everything has been turned into a possession. The place is defined by control.

The people of this city carry the place in their bodies. The speaker will "mark in every face I meet / Marks of weakness, marks of woe", and the pun on "mark" as both noticing and scarring suggests that London physically brands its inhabitants. The relentless anaphora of "In every cry of every man, / In every infant's cry of fear" makes the suffering universal and inescapable, and the regular iambic tetrameter and ABAB rhyme reinforce this: the steady, unbroken beat feels like the trudge of the speaker's feet, or like the machinery of the city that never stops. The climax of the second stanza, "The mind-forged manacles I hear", is

Question number

perhaps the most important line for Blake's presentation of place. The manacles are not iron but "mind-forged", so London's prison is partly psychological: people accept their oppression. The place becomes a state of mind.

Blake then fixes this oppression to specific landmarks. The "black'ning church" is blackened literally by soot but also morally, because it profits from the child labour of the chimney-sweeper while doing nothing to help. Similarly, the soldier's "sigh / Runs in blood down palace walls", a surreal image which makes the monarchy literally stained with the blood of those who die for it. The buildings of power are therefore presented as guilty places. The final stanza moves to "midnight streets", the darkest point in time and place, and the oxymoron "marriage hearse" fuses love and death, suggesting that disease spreads from the streets into the home, so that nowhere in London is safe. The poem ends on the word "hearse", leaving the city as a place of death.

Heaney's island at first seems the opposite: a place of community and resilience. The opening "We are prepared: we build our houses squat" is confident and collective, and the first-person plural creates a voice of shared endurance. The heavy monosyllables of "Sink walls in rock and roof them with good slate" make the houses feel as solid as the land. Yet this pride is quietly undermined. The land is a "wizened earth", aged and barren, and the speaker's insistence that there are "no stacks / Or stooks that can be lost" turns poverty into a kind of defence, which is both admirable and rather bleak.

Heaney's form presents the place differently from Blake's. Instead of tight rhyme, he uses blank verse and heavy enjambment, so lines like "when it blows full / Blast" spill over the line break exactly as the gale spills over the island. The conversational "as you see" and "you might think" draw the reader in as a visitor,

Question number

and the place turns hostile as the sea, once imagined as "company", "spits like a tame cat / Turned savage". The simile is unsettling because it takes something domestic and makes it wild, much as the storm invades the safety of the home.

The most striking presentation of place comes with the military lexis of "strafes", "salvo" and "bombarded". Published in 1966, on the edge of the Troubles, the poem has often been read as a metaphor for Northern Ireland, a place under siege where people "just sit tight". The final line, "Strange, it is a huge nothing that we fear", reveals that the danger is invisible, like Blake's "mind-forged manacles". Both poets, then, suggest that the most frightening thing about a place is not what we can see but the pressure it exerts on the mind. However, where Blake's London is condemned as a human creation, Heaney's island is endured with grim stoicism, and the poem's quiet dignity offers a hope that Blake's furious city denies.

02 The two poems from People and Places whose language and structure I most admire are Imtiaz Dharker's "Blessing" and Wilfred Owen's "Futility". At first they seem to have little in common: one is a celebration of water in a poor community, the other a soldier's lament for a dead comrade. Yet both are about the life-giving power of nature, and in both the poet shapes the poem so that its structure enacts its meaning. Dharker builds from scarcity to an outpouring of joy, whereas Owen moves from fragile hope to despairing questions. Dharker opens "Blessing" with a short, harsh line: "The skin cracks like a pod." The simile is so effective because it blurs the boundary between the human body and the parched land, as though the people themselves are drying out like seed cases. The second line, "There never is enough water", is a flat, plain statement, and the inverted word order of "never is" gives it the weight of a permanent fact. These two end-stopped lines are as sparse and dry as the place they describe.

Question number

The second stanza then slows the reader down with the imperative "Imagine the drip of it". Dharker makes us imagine water rather than see it, which mirrors the people's longing. The sounds are delicate, "the small splash, echo / in a tin mug", with the short lines and sibilance making each drop feel precious. The metaphor "the voice of a kindly god" introduces the religious language that runs throughout the poem, beginning with the title itself. Water becomes something sacred, a gift from above, and I find this moving because it makes us see an ordinary resource through the eyes of those who are denied it.

The structural turn comes in the long third stanza, and this is what I admire most. When "The municipal pipe bursts, / silver crashes to the ground", the language suddenly becomes loud and violent, and the metaphor "silver" shows that, to these people, water is as valuable as precious metal. The stanza is a single surging sentence full of enjambment and lists: "pots, / brass, copper, aluminium, / plastic buckets, / frantic hands". The sentence spills down the page just as the water spills from the pipe, and the asyndetic list conveys the desperate rush of the crowd. The religious imagery returns in "a roar of tongues" and "a congregation", suggesting that the people gather as if for worship. The final stanza celebrates the "naked children / screaming in the liquid sun", a beautiful image in which water and light merge. Yet Dharker ends with "the blessing sings / over their small bones", and the word "bones" is a quiet reminder of fragility and poverty. The joy is real but brief, because the pipe has burst by accident, and that ambivalence is why the poem stays with me.

"Futility" works in the opposite direction. Owen, writing in 1918, opens with a gentle command, "Move him into the sun", and the soft, tender tone suggests that the speaker still hopes the dead soldier might wake. The sun is personified as a

Question number

kind presence that "awoke him once, / At home, whispering of fields half-sown". The memory of rural England, and the image of unfinished sowing, hints at a life cut short before it could be completed. The first stanza ends with quiet faith: "The kind old sun will know."

The second stanza destroys that faith, and I admire how Owen's structure carries this shift. The two stanzas are each seven lines long, as if hope and despair are balanced against each other, but the second is made almost entirely of questions. Owen widens the scale to the whole of creation: the sun "Woke once the clays of a cold star", perhaps recalling the creation of Adam from clay. The rhetorical question "Was it for this the clay grew tall?" is devastating because it asks whether all of evolution, or all of God's creation, was meant to end in a frozen corpse in France. The phrase "fatuous sunbeams" is shocking after "kind old sun"; the same force is now foolish and pointless.

Owen's use of half-rhyme adds to this unsettled effect. Pairings such as "seeds" and "sides", or "star" and "stir", almost match but not quite, so the poem never settles into the comfort of full rhyme. Its final line, "To break earth's sleep at all?", is a dying fall: short, unanswered and ending on a question mark that leaves the reader in the same despair as the speaker.

Both poems, then, show how structure can carry feeling. Dharker's poem opens out into a flood, while Owen's narrows into silence, and both remind us that nature can give life but cannot guarantee it. I admire them because, by the end of each, the shape of the poem has made me feel its meaning before I have fully explained it.

Question number

03

R.S. Thomas presents Evans as a man who is almost entirely swallowed by his surroundings: poor, isolated and dying, he is seen only through the eyes of a visitor who leaves him behind. What is striking is that Evans never speaks or acts in the poem. He is defined by his house, by the darkness around it and finally by his illness, so that the poem becomes as much about the speaker's helpless guilt as about Evans himself.

The poem opens with a question, "Evans?", as if the speaker has just been asked about him and is searching his memory. The reply "Yes, many a time" suggests repeated visits, so the speaker knows Evans well, perhaps as a doctor, a minister or a neighbour; Thomas was himself a priest in rural Wales, and the poem may reflect that kind of pastoral duty. Yet the first person voice keeps us at a distance from Evans. We learn about him through what the speaker sees, hears and feels, which mirrors Evans's isolation: even in a poem named after him, he is on the edges.

Thomas presents Evans first through his home. The "bare flight / Of stairs" and the "gaunt kitchen" suggest poverty and emptiness. "Gaunt" is especially effective because it is usually used of a thin, starved human face, so the house seems to share the emaciated body of its owner. There is a small moment of warmth in the "wood fire, where crickets sang", but even this is undercut by the "black kettle's / Whine", a sound of complaint that hints at pain. The enjambment across "kettle's / Whine" makes the reader pause on the line break, drawing out the thin, sorrowful noise.

The first stanza is a single long sentence, and this structure carries the speaker, and the reader, steadily out of the house "into the cold / Dark". The capital letter of "Dark", pushed onto a new line, makes the darkness seem vast and almost a

Question number

presence in its own right. Thomas then uses the metaphor of the sea: the speaker goes out "to smother in the thick tide / Of night that drifted about the walls / Of his stark farm on the hill ridge." "Smother" suggests suffocation, while "tide" and "drifted" make the night seem to rise around the farm like water around a rock. The adjective "stark" reinforces the harsh, exposed position of the farm on the "hill ridge", far from any neighbours. Evans's world is presented as a small island of life in a hostile landscape.

The second stanza turns from description to reflection, and here Thomas uses negative structures to build suspense. "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." The simile "like blood" and the compound "Weather-tortured" are deeply melancholy: even the single tree is suffering, its isolation echoing Evans's own. "Weather-tortured" might suggest that the landscape itself inflicts pain, just as hard rural life has worn down the farmer. By telling us what did not appal him, the speaker delays the real horror, and the full stop after "Weather-tortured" creates a pause before the revelation.

That revelation is the poem's most powerful metaphor: "It was the dark / Silting the veins of that sick man". "Silting" suggests sediment clogging a river, so the darkness of the outside world is now imagined inside Evans's body, slowing his blood. The external night and his internal illness merge, and the dark becomes an image of death. The phrase "that sick man" is interesting, because the speaker no longer uses his name; illness seems to have reduced him to a body, or perhaps the speaker is distancing himself from what he feels.

The final image returns to the sea. The speaker says he "left stranded upon the vast / And lonely shore of his bleak bed". "Stranded" presents Evans as

Question number

shipwrecked, abandoned by the tide of life, and the enjambment after "vast" isolates the word to stress the emptiness around him. The adjectives "lonely" and "bleak" make his bed a desolate shore where he must face death alone. The verb "left" places responsibility on the speaker, and I think this is where the poem's real feeling lies: a sense of guilt that he can walk away into the night while Evans cannot.

Overall, Thomas presents Evans as a figure of loneliness and decline, inseparable from the poor, harsh landscape he farms. Through sparse, dark vocabulary, the extended imagery of tide and shore, and the controlled two-stanza structure that moves from the house to the sick man's veins, the poet makes us feel both pity for Evans and the speaker's uneasy awareness that he could not save him.