GCSE

3720UB0-1

S19-3720UB0-1

ENGLISH LITERATURE

UNIT 2a
(Literary heritage drama and contemporary prose)
HIGHER TIER

THURSDAY, 23 MAY 2019 – MORNING

2 hours

SECTION A

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Othello	2 - 3
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ADDITIONAL MATERIALS

A WJEC pink 16-page answer booklet.

INSTRUCTIONS TO CANDIDATES

Use black ink or black ball-point pen. Do not use pencil or gel pen. Do not use correction fluid.
Answer **both** Section A and Section B. Answer on **one** text in each section.
Write your answers in the separate answer booklet provided.
Use both sides of the paper. Write only within the white areas of the booklet.
Write the question number in the two boxes in the left hand margin at the start of each answer,

e.g. | **2** | **1** | .

Leave at least two line spaces between each answer.

INFORMATION FOR CANDIDATES

Section A: 30 marks Section B: 30 marks
You are advised to spend your time as follows: Section A – about one hour
Section B – about one hour

The number of marks is given in brackets after each question or part-question.
You are reminded that the accuracy and organisation of your writing will be assessed.

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SECTION A

Answer questions on **one** *text.*

Othello

Answer **1 1** *and* ***either*** **1 2** ***or*** **1 3** *.*

You are advised to spend about 20 minutes on **1 1** *, and about 40 minutes on* **1 2** *or* **1 3** *.*

1 1 Read the extract on the opposite page. Then answer the following question:

Look closely at how Iago and Emilia speak and behave here. What does it reveal about them to an audience at this point in the play? [10]

Either,

1 2 'Othello is his own worst enemy.' How far do you agree with this statement? Remember to support your answer with reference to the play and comment on its social, cultural and historical context. [20]

Or,

1 3 How does Shakespeare present the importance of trust in the play *Othello*? Remember to support your answer with reference to the play and comment on its social, cultural and historical context. [20]

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Enter Iago

IAGO How now? What do you here alone?

EMILIA Do not you chide; I have a thing for you.

IAGO You have a thing for me? It is a common thing–

EMILIA Ha!

IAGO To have a foolish wife.

EMILIA O, is that all? What will you give me now
For that same handkerchief?

IAGO What handkerchief?

EMILIA What handkerchief?
Why, that the Moor first gave to Desdemona,
That which so often you did bid me steal.

IAGO Hast stolen it from her?

EMILIA No, faith; she let it drop by negligence,
And to th'advantage I being here took't up.
Look, here it is.

IAGO A good wench! Give it me.

EMILIA What will you do with't, that you have been so earnest
To have me filch it?

IAGO *[Snatching it]* Why, what's that to you?

EMILIA If it be not for some purpose of import,
Give't me again. Poor lady, she'll run mad
When she shall lack it.

IAGO Be not acknown on't:
I have use for it. Go, leave me. *[Exit* Emilia
I will in Cassio's lodging lose this napkin
And let him find it. Trifles light as air
Are to the jealous confirmations strong
As proofs of holy writ. This may do something.
The Moor already changes with my poison:
Dangerous conceits are in their natures poisons,
Which at the first are scarce found to distaste
But, with a little act upon the blood,
Burn like the mines of sulphur. I did say so.

Enter Othello

Look where he comes! Not poppy nor mandragora,
Nor all the drowsy syrups of the world,
Shall ever medicine thee to that sweet sleep
Which thou owed'st yesterday.

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Turn over.

Much Ado About Nothing

Answer **1 4** *and* ***either*** **1 5** ***or*** **1 6** *.*

You are advised to spend about 20 minutes on **1 4** *, and about 40 minutes on* **1 5** *or* **1 6** *.*

1 4 Read the extract on the opposite page. Then answer the following question:

Look closely at how the characters speak and behave here. What does it reveal about them to an audience at this point in the play? [10]

Either,

1 5 How does Shakespeare present the character of Beatrice to an audience throughout the play? Remember to support your answer with reference to the play and comment on its social, cultural and historical context. [20]

Or,

1 6 'Friendship is very important in *Much Ado About Nothing.*' How far do you agree with this statement? Remember to support your answer with reference to the play and comment on its social, cultural and historical context. [20]

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CLAUDIO Stand thee by, Friar. [*To* Leonato] Father, by your leave,
Will you with free and unconstrained soul
Give me this maid, your daughter?

LEONATO As freely, son, as God did give her me.

CLAUDIO And what have I to give you back whose worth
May counterpoise this rich and precious gift?

DON PEDRO Nothing, unless you render her again.

CLAUDIO Sweet Prince, you learn me noble thankfulness.
There, Leonato, take her back again.
Give not this rotten orange to your friend!
She's but the sign and semblance of her honour.
Behold how like a maid she blushes here.
O, what authority and show of truth
Can cunning sin cover itself withal!
Comes not that blood as modest evidence
To witness simple virtue? Would you not swear–
All you that see her–that she were a maid,
By these exterior shows? But she is none.
She knows the heat of a luxurious bed.
Her blush is guiltiness, not modesty.

LEONATO What do you mean, my lord?

CLAUDIO Not to be married,
Not to knit my soul to an approved wanton.

LEONATO Dear my lord, if you in your own proof
Have vanquish'd the resistance of her youth
And made defeat of her virginity–

CLAUDIO I know what you would say. If I have known her,
You will say she did embrace me as a husband,
And so extenuate the forehand sin.
No, Leonato,
I never tempted her with word too large,
But as a brother to his sister show'd
Bashful sincerity and comely love.

HERO And seem'd I ever otherwise to you?

CLAUDIO Out on thy seeming! I will write against it.
You seem to me as Dian in her orb,
As chaste as is the bud ere it be blown.
But you are more intemperate in your blood
Than Venus or those pamper'd animals
That rage in savage sensuality.

HERO Is my lord well that he doth speak so wide?

LEONATO Sweet Prince, why speak not you?

DON PEDRO What should I speak?
I stand dishonour'd, that have gone about
To link my dear friend to a common stale.

LEONATO Are these things spoken, or do I but dream?

DON JOHN Sir, they are spoken, and these things are true.

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Turn over.

An Inspector Calls

Answer **1 7** *and* ***either*** **1 8** ***or*** **1 9** *.*

You are advised to spend about 20 minutes on **1 7** *, and about 40 minutes on* **1 8** *or* **1 9** *.*

1 7 Read the extract on the opposite page. Then answer the following question:

Look closely at how the Inspector speaks and behaves here. What does it reveal about him to an audience at this point in the play? [10]

Either,

1 8 How does Priestley present the character of Sheila to an audience throughout the play? Remember to support your answer with reference to the play and comment on its social, cultural and historical context. [20]

Or,

1 9 For which character in *An Inspector Calls* do you have the greatest sympathy? Show how Priestley creates sympathy for your chosen character. Remember to support your answer with reference to the play and comment on its social, cultural and historical context. [20]

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INSPECTOR *(taking charge, masterfully)* Stop!
They are suddenly quiet, staring at him.
And be quiet for a moment and listen to me. I don't need to know any more. Neither do you. This girl killed herself – and died a horrible death. But each of you helped to kill her. Remember that. Never forget it. (*He looks from one to the other of them carefully.*) But then I don't think you ever will. Remember what you did, Mrs Birling. You turned her away when she most needed help. You refused her even the pitiable little bit of organized charity you had in your power to grant her. Remember what you did–

ERIC *(unhappily)* My God – I'm not likely to forget.

INSPECTOR Just used her for the end of a stupid drunken evening, as if she was an animal, a thing, not a person. No. you won't forget. (*He looks at* SHEILA.)

SHEILA *(bitterly)* I know. I had her turned out of a job. I started it.

INSPECTOR You helped – but didn't start it. (*Rather savagely, to* BIRLING.) You started it. She wanted twenty-five shillings a week instead of twenty-two and sixpence. You made her pay a heavy price for that. And now she'll make you pay a heavier price still.

BIRLING *(unhappily)* Look, Inspector – I'd give thousands – yes, thousands–

INSPECTOR You're offering the money at the wrong time. Mr Birling. (*He makes a move as if concluding the session, possibly shutting up notebook, etc. Then surveys them sardonically.*) No, I don't think any of you will forget. Nor that young man, Croft, though he at least had some affection for her and made her happy for a time. Well, Eva Smith's gone. You can't do her any more harm. And you can't do her any good now, either. You can't even say 'I'm sorry, Eva Smith.'

SHEILA (*who is crying quietly*) That's the worst of it.

INSPECTOR But just remember this. One Eva Smith has gone – but there are millions and millions and millions of Eva Smiths and John Smiths still left with us, with their lives, their hopes and fears, their suffering and chance of happiness, all intertwined with our lives, and what we think and say and do. We don't live alone. We are members of one body. We are responsible for each other. And I tell you that the time will soon come when, if men will not learn that lesson, then they will be taught it in fire and blood and anguish. Good night.

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Turn over.

Hobson's Choice

Answer **2 0** *and* ***either*** **2 1** ***or*** **2 2** *.*

You are advised to spend about 20 minutes on **2 0** *, and about 40 minutes on* **2 1** *or* **2 2** *.*

2 0 Read the extract on the opposite page. Then answer the following question:

Look closely at how the characters speak and behave here. What does it reveal about them to an audience? [10]

Either,

2 1 How does Brighouse present the character of Maggie to an audience throughout the play? Remember to support your answer with reference to the play and comment on its social, cultural and historical context. [20]

Or,

2 2 For which character in *Hobson's Choice* do you have the greatest sympathy? Show how Brighouse creates sympathy for your chosen character. Remember to support your answer with reference to the play and comment on its social, cultural and historical context. [20]

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HOBSON Good morning, Mrs Hepworth. What a lovely day! *(He places chair for her.)*

MRS. H *(sitting)*: Morning, Hobson. *(She raises her skirt.)* I've come about those boots you sent me home.

HOBSON *(kneeling and fondling her foot)*: Yes, Mrs Hepworth. They look very nice.

MRS. H Get up Hobson. *(He scrambles up, controlling his feelings.)* You look ridiculous on the floor. Who made these boots?

HOBSON We did. Our own make.

MRS. H Will you answer a plain question? Who made these boots?

HOBSON They were made on the premises.

MRS. H *(to Maggie)*: Young woman, you seemed to have some sense when you served me. Can you answer me?

MAGGIE I think so, but I'll make sure for you, Mrs Hepworth. *(She opens trap and calls.)* Tubby!

HOBSON You wish to see the identical workman, madam?

MRS. H I said so.

HOBSON I am responsible for all work turned out here.

MRS. H I never said you weren't.

TUBBY WADLOW *comes up trap. A white-haired little man with thin legs and a paunch, in dingy clothes with no collar and a coloured cotton shirt. He has no coat on.*

TUBBY Yes, Miss Maggie? *(He stands half out of trap, not coming right up.)*

MRS. H Man, did you make these boots? *(She rises and advances one pace towards him.)*

TUBBY No, ma'am.

MRS. H Then who did? Am I to question every soul in the place before I find out?

TUBBY They're Willie's making, those.

MRS. H Then tell Willie I want him.

TUBBY Certainly ma'am. *(He goes down trap and calls)* Willie!

MRS. H Who's Willie?

HOBSON Name of Mossop, madam. But if there is anything wrong I assure you I'm capable of making the man suffer for it. I'll –

WILLIE MOSSOP *comes up trap. He is a lanky fellow, about thirty, not naturally stupid but stunted mentally by a brutalized childhood. He is a raw material of a charming man, but, at present, it requires a very keen eye to detect his potentialities. His clothes are an even poorer edition of Tubby's. He comes half-way up trap.*

MRS. H Are you Mossop?

WILLIE Yes, mum.

MRS. H You made these boots?

WILLIE *(peering at them):* Yes, I made them last week.

MRS. H Take that.

WILLIE, *bending down, rather expects 'that' to be a blow. Then he raises his head and finds she is holding out a visiting card. He takes it.*

MRS. H See what's on it?

WILLIE *(bending over the card)*: Writing?

MRS. H Read it.

WILLIE I'm trying. *(His lips move as he tries to spell it out.)*

MRS. H Bless the man. Can't you read?

WILLIE I do a bit. Only it's such a funny print.

MRS. H It's the usual italics of a visiting card, my man. Now listen to me. I heard about this shop, and what I heard brought me here for these boots. I'm particular about what I put on my feet.

HOBSON I assure you it shall not occur again, Mrs Hepworth.

MRS. H What shan't?

HOBSON *(crestfallen)*: I – I don't know.

MRS. H Then hold your tongue. Mossop, I've tried every shop in Manchester, and these are the best-made pair of boots I've ever had. Now, you'll make my boots in future. You hear that, Hobson?

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A Taste of Honey

Answer **2 3** *and* ***either*** **2 4** ***or*** **2 5** *.*

You are advised to spend about 20 minutes on **2 3** *, and about 40 minutes on* **2 4** *or* **2 5** *.*

2 3 Read the extract on the opposite page. Then answer the following question:

How does Shelagh Delaney present the relationship between Jo and Boy here? [10]

Either,

2 4 How does Delaney present the relationship between Helen and Jo to an audience in *A Taste of Honey*? Remember to support your answer with reference to the play and comment on its social, cultural and historical context. [20]

Or,

2 5 For which character in *A Taste of Honey* do you have the greatest sympathy? Show how Delaney creates sympathy for your chosen character. Remember to support your answer with reference to the play and comment on its social, cultural and historical context. [20]

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JO: When shall we get married?

BOY: My next leave? It's a long time, six months.

JO: It'll give us a chance to save a bit of money. Here, see …this ring … it's too big; look, it slides about … And I couldn't wear it for school anyway. I might lose it. Let's go all romantic. Have you got a bit of string?

BOY: What for?

JO: I'm going to tie it round my neck. Come on, turn your pockets out. Three handkerchiefs, a safety pin, a screw! Did that drop out of your head? Elastic bands! Don't little boys carry some trash. And what's this?

BOY: Nothing.

JO: A toy car! Does it go?

BOY: Hm hm!

JO: Can I try it? *[She does.]*

BOY: She doesn't even know how it works. Look, not like that.

[He makes it go fast.]

JO: I like that. Can I keep it?

BOY: Yes, take it, my soul and all, everything.

JO: Thanks. I know, I can use my hair ribbon for my ring. Do it up for me.

BOY: Pretty neck you've got.

JO: Glad you like it. It's my schoolgirl complexion. I'd better tuck this out of sight. I don't want my mother to see it. She'd only laugh. Did I tell you, when I leave school this week I start a part-time job in a bar? Then as soon as I get a full-time job, I'm leaving Helen and starting up in a room somewhere.

BOY: I wish I wasn't in the Navy.

JO: Why?

BOY: We won't have much time together.

JO: Well, we can't be together all the time and all the time there is wouldn't be enough.

BOY: It's a sad story, Jo. Once, I was a happy young man, not a care in the world. Now! I'm trapped into a barbaric cult …

JO: What's that? Mau-Mau?

BOY: Matrimony.

JO: Trapped! I like that! You almost begged me to marry you.

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SECTION B

Answer questions on **one** *text.*

Paddy Clarke Ha Ha Ha

Answer **2 6** *and* ***either*** **2 7** ***or*** **2 8** *.*

You are advised to spend about 20 minutes on **2 6** *, and about 40 minutes on* **2 7** *or* **2 8** *.*

2 6 Read the extract on the opposite page. Then answer the following question:

How does Roddy Doyle create mood and atmosphere here? Refer closely to the extract in your answer. [10]

Either,

2 7 How is the character of Paddy's Ma important to the novel as a whole? [20]

Or,

2 8 'Childhood is shown as a time of cruelty in *Paddy Clarke Ha Ha Ha*.' How far do you agree with this statement? [20]

My da rubbed his finger across the autograph.

George Best had great handwriting. It slanted to the right; it was long and the holes were narrow. There was a dead-straight line under the name, joining the G and the B, all the way to the T at the end and a bit further. It finished with a swerve, like a diagram of a shot going past a wall.

–Was he in the shop? I asked my da.

–Who?

–George Best, I said.

Worry began a ball in my stomach but he answered too quickly for it to grow.

–Yes, he said.

–Was he?

–Yes.

–Was he; really?

–I said he was, didn't I?

That was all I needed, for certain. He didn't get annoyed when he said it, just calm like he'd said everything else, looking right at me.

–What was he like?

I wasn't trying to catch him out. He knew that.

–Exactly like you'd expect, he said.

–In his gear?

That was exactly what I'd have expected. I didn't know how else George Best would have dressed. I'd seen a colour picture of him once in a green Northern Ireland jersey, not his usual red one, and it had shocked me.

–No, said Da. –He–, a tracksuit.

–What did he say?

–Just–

–Why didn't you ask him to put my name on it?

I pointed to George Best's name.

–As well.

–He was very busy, said my da.

–Was there a huge queue?

–A huge one.

That was good; that was right and proper.

–Was he in the shop just for the day only? I asked

–That's right, said my da. –He had to go back to Manchester.

–For training, I told him.

–That's right.

A year after that I knew that it wasn't George Best's real autograph at all; it was only printing and my da was a liar.

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Turn over.

Heroes

Answer **2 9** *and* ***either*** **3 0** ***or*** **3 1** *.*

You are advised to spend about 20 minutes on **2 9** *, and about 40 minutes on* **3 0** *or* **3 1** *.*

2 9 Read the extract on the opposite page. Then answer the following question:

How does Robert Cormier create mood and atmosphere here? Refer closely to the extract in your answer. [10]

Either,

3 0 How is the character of Nicole Renard important to the novel as a whole? [20]

Or,

3 1 'Not one of the characters in *Heroes* is actually presented as heroic.' How far do you agree with this statement? [20]

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I wear a scarf that covers the lower part of my face. The scarf is white and silk like the aviators wore in their airplanes back during the First World War, over the battlefields and trenches of Europe. I like to think that it flows behind me in the wind when I walk but I guess it doesn't.

There's a Red Sox cap on my head and I tilt the cap forwards so that the visor keeps the upper part of my face in shadow. I walk with my head down as if I have lost money on the sidewalk and am looking for it.

I keep a bandage on the space where my nose used to be. The bandage reaches the back of my head and is kept in place with a safety pin.

There are problems, of course.

My nose, or I should say, my caves, runs a lot. I don't know why this should happen and even the doctors can't figure it out but it's like I have a cold that never goes away. The bandage gets wet and I have to change it often and it's hard closing the safety pin at the back of my head.

I am wearing my old army fatigue jacket.

So, I am well covered up, face and body, although I don't know what I am going to do when summer comes and the weather gets hot. Right now, it's March, cold and rainy, and I will worry about summer when it gets here and if I am still around.

Anyway, this gives you an idea of what I look like when I walk down the street. People glance at me in surprise and look away quickly or cross the street when they see me coming.

I don't blame them.

I have plenty of money.

I received all this back pay when I was discharged from Fort Delta. The back pay accumulated during the time I spent in battle in France and then in the hospitals, first in France, then in England.

My money is in cash. Hundred dollar bills and twenties and tens. The smaller bills I keep in my wallet but the rest of the money is stashed in my duffel bag which is always with me, slung over my shoulder. I am like the Hunchback of Notre Dame, my face like a gargoyle and the duffel bag like a lump on my back.

I am staying in the attic tenement in Mrs Belander's three-decker on Third Street. She finally answered the door after I had been knocking for a while, and regarded me with suspicion, not recognizing me. This was proof that the scarf and the bandage were working in two ways: not only to hide the ugliness of what used to be my face, but to hide my identity.

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Never Let Me Go

Answer **3 2** *and* ***either*** **3 3** ***or*** **3 4** *.*

You are advised to spend about 20 minutes on **3 2** *, and about 40 minutes on* **3 3** *or* **3 4** *.*

3 2 Read the extract on the opposite page. Then answer the following question:

How does Ishiguro create mood and atmosphere here? Refer closely to the extract in your answer. [10]

Either,

3 3 How is the character of Kathy important to the novel as a whole? [20]

Or,

3 4 For which character in *Never Let Me Go* do you have the greatest sympathy? Show how Ishiguro creates sympathy for your chosen character. [20]

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We came in to find the woman we'd been following talking to a much older woman with silver hair, who seemed to be in charge of the place. They were sitting on either side of a small desk near the door, and apart from them, the gallery was empty. Neither woman paid much attention as we filed past, spread out and tried to look fascinated by the pictures.

Actually, preoccupied though I was with Ruth's possible, I did begin to enjoy the paintings and the sheer peacefulness of the place. It felt like we'd come a hundred miles from the High Street. The walls and ceilings were peppermint, and here and there, you'd see a bit of fishing net, or a rotted piece from a boat stuck up high near the cornicing. The paintings too – mostly oils in deep blues and greens – had sea themes. Maybe it was the tiredness suddenly catching up with us – after all, we'd been travelling since before dawn – but I wasn't the only one who went off into a bit of a dream in there. We'd all wandered into different corners, and were staring at one picture after another, only occasionally making the odd hushed remark like: 'Come and look at this!' All the time, we could hear Ruth's possible and the silver-haired lady talking on and on. They weren't especially loud, but in that place, their voices seemed to fill the entire space. They were discussing some man they both knew, how he didn't have a clue with his children. And as we kept listening to them, stealing the odd glance in their direction, bit by bit, something started to change. It did for me, and I could tell it was happening for the others. If we'd left it at seeing the woman through the glass of her office, even if we'd followed her through the town then lost her, we could still have gone back to the Cottages excited and triumphant. But now, in that gallery, the woman was too close, much closer than we'd ever really wanted. And the more we heard her and looked at her, the less she seemed like Ruth. It was a feeling that grew among us almost tangibly, and I could tell that Ruth, absorbed in a picture on the other side of the room, was feeling it as much as anyone. That was probably why we went on shuffling around that gallery for so long; we were delaying the moment when we'd have to confer.

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About A Boy

Answer **3 5** *and* ***either*** **3 6** ***or*** **3 7** *.*

You are advised to spend about 20 minutes on **3 5** *, and about 40 minutes on* **3 6** *or* **3 7** *.*

3 5 Read the extract on the opposite page. Then answer the following question:

How does Nick Hornby present Will here? [10]

Either,

3 6 Marcus changes throughout the novel. How does Hornby present these changes? [20]

Or,

3 7 'In *About a Boy* the adults behave like children and the children try to behave like adults.' How far do you agree with this statement? [20]

SPAT (Single Parents – Alone Together) met on the first Thursday of the month in a local adult education centre, and tonight was Will's first time. He was almost sure that tonight would be his last time, too: he'd get something wrong, like the name of Postman Pat's cat, or the colour of Noddy's car (or, more crucially, the name of his own child – for some reason he couldn't stop thinking of him as Ted, and he had only christened him Ned this morning), and he'd be exposed as a fraud and frogmarched off the premises. If there was a chance of meeting someone like Angie, however, it had to be worth a try.

The car park at the centre contained just one other vehicle, a beaten-up B-reg 2CV which had, according to the stickers in its window, been to Chessington World of Adventure and Alton Towers; Will's car, a new GTi, hadn't been anywhere like that at all. Why not? He couldn't think of any reason why not, apart from the glaringly obvious one, that he was a childless single man aged thirty-six and therefore had never had the desire to drive miles and miles to plunge down a plastic fairy mountain on a tea-tray.

The centre depressed him. He hadn't set foot inside a place with classrooms and corridors and home-made posters for nearly twenty years, and he had forgotten that British education smelt of disinfectant. It hadn't occurred to him that he wouldn't be able to find the SPAT party. He thought he'd be led straight to it by the happy buzz of people forgetting their troubles and getting roaring drunk, but there was no happy buzz, just the distant, mournful clank of a bucket. Finally he spotted a piece of file paper pinned to a classroom door with the word SPAT! scrawled on it in felt-tip pen. The exclamation mark put him off. It was trying too hard.

There was only one woman in the room. She was taking bottles – of white wine, beer, mineral water and supermarket brand cola – out of a cardboard box and putting them on to a table in the centre of the room. The rest of the tables had been pushed to the back; the chairs were stacked in rows behind them. It was the most desolate party venue Will had ever seen.

'Have I come to the right place?' he asked the woman.

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Turn over.

Resistance

Answer **3 8** *and* ***either*** **3 9** ***or*** **4 0** *.*

You are advised to spend about 20 minutes on **3 8** *, and about 40 minutes on* **3 9** *or* **4 0** *.*

3 8 Read the extract on the opposite page. Then answer the following question:

How does Owen Sheers create mood and atmosphere here? Refer closely to the extract in your answer. [10]

Either,

3 9 How is the character of Sarah important to the novel as a whole? [20]

Or,

4 0 '*Resistance* is a moving story of unexpected love and friendship.' How far do you agree with this statement? [20]

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‘George! George, you lazy bastard! Get up!’

His father. His father who had slept, snoring all night while he was out running messages. His father who now thought his 21-year-old son was a lazy good for nothing as well as a coward, always yawning, tripping over his boots and knocking things over.

He got out of bed, nausea swelling through his belly. His eyelids felt lined with sandpaper.

‘I’m coming! Be down now in a minute!’

Dropping to his knees he reached under the bed. He pulled out some bags of old clothes, a train set he’d had as a boy. Then he put his arm deep under again, his head resting on the mattress, like a farmer feeling for the hooves of a lamb in the womb. His fingers groped about the knots and cracks of the wooden floorboards before touching the smoother polish of the case. He drew it out. It was long and narrow, like the cue cases of the snooker players he’d seen waiting at the bus stop to go into the club in town. Flicking the latches with his thumbs he opened the lid slowly, as if it was a music box, pulled away the oily rag inside and lifted out the rifle. He tested its mechanism, the slide of the bolt, the trigger weight, then took a narrow brush from inside the case and pulled it through the barrel. Resting it across his knee he fitted the telescopic sight and silencer, then lifted the stock to his shoulder. With one elbow resting on the bed he bent his head to the eyepiece of the scope. The cross hairs wavered for a moment, the view through the telescopic sight swinging from half, to crescent, to full moon before coming to rest on the pencil mark he’d drawn on the far wall of his bedroom. He held them there, counting in his head. One thousand, two thousand, three thousand, four thousand. Relaxing his thumb he squeezed his finger until he felt the click of the trigger. The cross hairs trembled slightly as if shaken in a breeze, but kept their bearing on the pencil mark on the wall. He breathed out slowly, just as he’d been instructed. Not by Atkins, who didn’t like guns, he knew that now, but as the other man from British Intelligence had taught him. The other man who’d also come to visit George one day that long hot summer four years ago.

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