

READ THESE INSTRUCTIONS FIRST

Answer **either** question 1 **or** question 2 in Section A: Analysis.

Answer **one** questions from Section B: Composition.

Write your answers to **each** question on a **separate sheet of paper**.

You are advised to spend 45 minutes on Section A and 45 minutes on Section B.

Both sections carry equal marks.

Section A: Analysis

Answer **either** Question 1 **or** Question 2

Either

Question 1

Read carefully the following poem (overleaf). The poet, revisiting her homeland, describes the darkness of an evening when the electricity has failed.

How does the poet's language portray the scene so vividly?

To help you answer this question, you might consider:

- how the poet describes the behaviour of various people in the darkness
- the ways in which she contrasts darkness and light
- how she encourages you to feel about the scene she describes

Blackout

Blackout is endemic¹ to the land.
People have grown sixthsense
and sonic ways, like bats,
emerging out of shadows
into the light of their own flesh.

But the car headlamps coming towards us
make it seem we're in some thirdworld² movie,
throwing up potholes and houses exaggeratedly,
the fresh white painted and grey ramshackle
blending into snug relief.

And inside, the children are still hovering,
hopeful moths around the flickerless Box³,
immune to the cloying stench of toilets
that can't be flushed. The children,
all waiting on electric-spell to come
and trigger a movie, the one featuring America,
played out endlessly in their heads.

While back outside, coconut vendors decapitate
the night, husky heads cutlashed off⁴
in the medieval glow of bottle lamps.

And everywhere there are flittings
and things coming into being,
in a night where footfall is an act of faith –
A group of young girls huddled in a questionable doorway;
The sudden dim horizontal of an alleyway;
And the occasional generator-lit big house,
obscenely bright – hurting the soft iris⁵ of darkness
in the worn-out movie, slow reeling

Under the endless cinema of the skies.

¹ Endemic—present everywhere within a country

² Thirdworld—of a less economically developed country

³ Box—(slang) television

⁴ Cutlashed off—removed with a large, sharp knife

⁵ Iris—aperture admitting light into a camera or the eye

Or

Question 2

Read carefully this opening section from a novel. The narrator is on a train crossing the border into Germany. He is sharing a train compartment with a stranger.

How does the writer make the stranger such an intriguing character?

To help you answer this question, you might consider:

- how the writer describes the stranger's unusual appearance and movements
- how he portrays the developing relationship between the narrator and the stranger

My first impression was that the stranger's eyes were of an unusually light blue. They met mine for several blank seconds, vacant, unmistakably scared. Startled and innocently naughty, they half reminded me of an incident I couldn't quite place; something which had happened a long time ago, to do with the upper fourth form classroom. They were the eyes of a schoolboy surprised in the act of breaking one of the rules. Not that I had caught him, apparently, at anything except his own thoughts: perhaps he imagined I could read them. At any rate, he seemed not to have heard or seen me cross the compartment from my corner to his own, for he started violently at the sound of my voice; so violently, indeed, that his nervous recoil hit me like repercussion. Instinctively I took a pace backwards.

It was exactly as though we had collided with each other bodily in the street. We were both confused, both ready to be apologetic. Smiling, anxious to reassure him, I repeated my question:

"I wonder, sir, if you could let me have a match?"

Even now, he didn't answer at once. He appeared to be engaged in some sort of rapid mental calculation, while his fingers, nervously active, sketched a number of flurried gestures round his waistcoat. For all they conveyed, he might equally have been going to undress, to draw a revolver, or merely to make sure that I hadn't stolen his money. Then the moment of agitation passed from his gaze like a little cloud, leaving a clear blue sky. At last he had understood what it was that I wanted:

"Yes, yes. Er—certainly. Of course."

As he spoke he touched his left temple delicately with his finger-tips, coughed, and suddenly smiled. His smile had great charm. It disclosed the ugliest teeth I had ever seen. They were like broken rocks.

"Certainly," he repeated. "With pleasure."

Delicately, with finger and thumb, he fished in the waistcoat pocket of his expensive-looking soft grey suit, extracted a gold spirit-lighter. His hands were white, small, and beautifully manicured.

I offered him my cigarettes.

"Er—thank you. Thank you."

"After you, sir."

"No, no. Please."

The tiny flame of the lighter flickered between us, as perishable as the atmosphere which our exaggerated politeness had created.

Section B: Composition

Questions 3, 4, 5 and 6

Write about 350 to 450 words on **one** of the following questions.

Up to 13 marks are available for the content and structure of your answer, and up to 12 marks for the style and accuracy of your writing.

Descriptive Writing

3 Describe a river as it flows from its source high on a mountain.

OR

4 Describe a visit to an art gallery or museum.

OR

Narrative Writing

5 Write a story with the title, 'The Missed Opportunity'.

OR

6 Write a story that begins, 'He had to go back to the place where it had all started...'