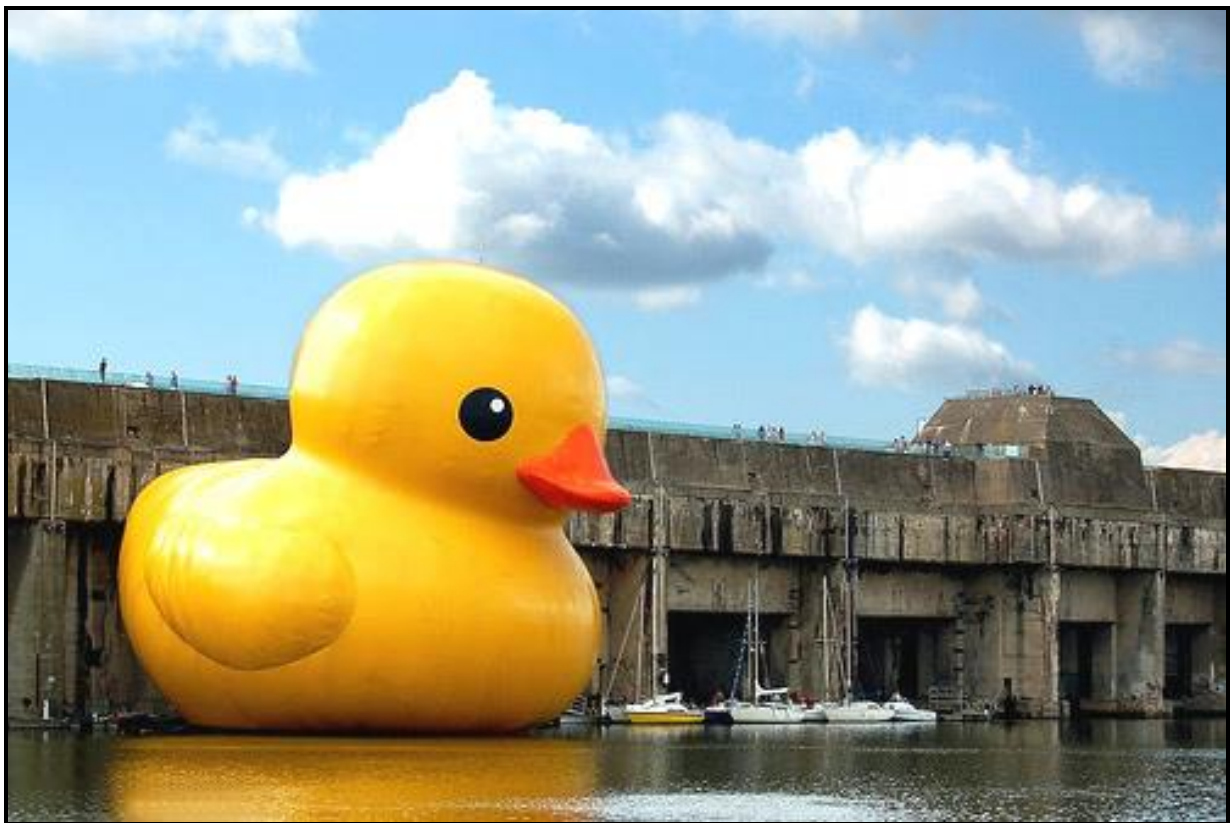


GCSE English Language
**Paper 1: Creative Reading
& Writing**



Name: _____ (2018-19)

Contents

<i>Practice Paper 1.1 – 'Jaws'</i>	4
<i>Practice Paper 1.1 – Questions</i>	6
<i>Practice Paper 1.2 – 'Coram Boy'</i>	7
<i>Practice Paper 1.2 – Questions</i>	9
<i>Practice Paper 1.3 – 'The Birds'</i>	10
<i>Practice Paper 1.3 – Questions</i>	12
<i>Practice Paper 1.4 – 'Frankenstein'</i>	13
<i>Practice Paper 1.4 – Questions</i>	15
<i>Practice Paper 1.5 – 'Life of Pi'</i>	16
<i>Practice Paper 1.5 – Questions</i>	18
<i>Practice Paper 1.6 – 'A Thousand Splendid Suns'</i>	19
<i>Practice Paper 1.6 – Questions</i>	21
<i>Practice Paper 1.7 – 'The Girl with All the Gifts'</i>	22
<i>Practice Paper 1.7 – Questions</i>	24
<i>Practice Paper 1.8 – 'The Snow Child'</i>	25
<i>Practice Paper 1.8 – Questions</i>	27



Practice Paper 1.1 – ‘Jaws’

The following extract is from ‘Jaws’ by Peter Benchley. It was first published in 1974 and adapted into a very successful film in 1975. The story is about a great white shark that preys upon a popular seaside town until three men set off on a voyage to kill it.

In this passage, the men are at sea on a fishing boat, hunting the shark. Matt Hooper, a marine biologist, is underwater in a shark-proof cage, hoping to take some photos of the creature.

Carried by the tide, one of the small white squid slipped between the bars of the cage and fluttered in Hooper’s face. He pushed it out of his way.

Hooper glanced downwards, started to look away, then snapped his eyes down again. Rising at him from the darkling blue – slowly, smoothly – was the shark. It rose with no apparent
5 effort, an angel of death gliding towards an appointment foreordained.

He stared, enthralled, impelled to flee but unable to move. As the fish drew nearer, he marvelled at its colours: the flat brown-greys seen on the surface had vanished. The top of the immense body was a hard ferrous grey, bluish where dappled with streaks of sun. Beneath the lateral line, all was creamy, ghostly white.

10 Hooper wanted to raise his camera, but his arm would not obey. In a minute, he said to himself, in a minute.

The fish came closer, silent as a shadow, and Hooper drew back. The head was only a few feet from the cage when the fish turned and began to pass before Hooper’s eyes – casually, as if in proud display of its incalculable mass and power. The snout passed first, then the jaw,
15 slack and smiling, armed with row upon row of serrated triangles. And then the black, fathomless eye, seemingly riveted upon him. The gills rippled – bloodless wounds in the steely skin.

Tentatively, Hooper stuck a hand through the bars and touched the flank. It felt cold and hard, not clammy but smooth as vinyl. He let his fingertips caress the flesh – past the
20 pectoral fins, the pelvic fins, the thick, firm claspers – until finally (the fish seemed to have no end) they were slapped away by the sweeping tail.

The fish had moved off to the limit of Hooper’s vision – a spectral silver-grey blur tracing a slow circle. Hooper raised his camera and pressed the trigger. He knew the film would be worthless unless the fish moved in once more, but he wanted to catch the beast as it
25 emerged from the darkness.

Through the viewfinder he saw the fish turn towards him. It moved fast, tail thrusting vigorously, mouth opening and closing as if gasping for breath. Hooper raised his right hand to change the focus. Remember to change it again, he told himself, when it turns.

But the fish did not turn. A shiver travelled the length of its body as it closed on the cage. It struck the cage head on, the snout ramming between two bars and spreading them. The snout hit Hooper in the chest and knocked him backwards. The camera flew from his hands and the mouthpiece shot from his mouth. The fish turned on its side and the pounding tail forced the great body further into the cage. Hooper groped for his mouthpiece but couldn't find it. His chest was convulsed with the need for air.

The fish slid backwards out of the cage and turned sharply to the right in a tight circle. Hooper reached behind his head, found the regulator tube, and followed it with his hand until he located the mouthpiece. He put it in his mouth and, forgetting to exhale first, sucked for air. He got water, and he gagged and choked until at last the mouthpiece cleared and he drew an agonized breath. It was then that he saw the wide gap in the bars and saw the giant head lunging through it. He raised his arms above his head, grasping at the escape hatch.

The fish rammed through the space between the bars, spreading them still further with each thrust of its tail. Hooper, flattened against the back of the cage, saw the mouth reaching, straining for him. As the fish thrust again, he saw with the terror of doom that the mouth was going to reach him.



Practice Paper 1.1 – Questions

Q1. List **four** things we learn about the shark's body (from anywhere in the text).*

(4 marks)

Q2. Look in detail at **lines 3 to 21**. How does the writer use language here to describe the shark?

(8 marks)

Q3. Now consider the **whole** extract. How has the writer structured it to interest you as a reader?

(8 marks)

Q4. Now focus on **line 29 to the end**. A student said about this section: *"It's very dramatic. The writer shows us how powerful the shark is and how helpless Hooper is."* To what extent do you agree?

(20 marks)

Q5. Either

Write a description suggested by this picture:



Or

Write a story in which someone is taken by surprise.

(24 marks for content and organisation
16 marks for technical accuracy)
(40 marks)

*Q1 normally asks you to focus on the first few lines of the text only.

Practice Paper 1.2 – ‘Coram Boy’

The following extract is from ‘Coram Boy’ by Jamila Gavin. It was first published in 2000, but is set in the 1700s. One of the story’s main characters is a troubled young man called Meshak. He and his father, Otis, travel around England in a mule-drawn wagon, selling pots, pans and other household goods. They also collect abandoned children (“brats”) and sell them as slaves.

At the beginning of this passage, Meshak and his dog, Jester, are in the back of the wagon as it enters the city of Gloucester.

Meshak didn’t need eyes to know they had entered Gloucester. Despite the constant thud of rain on the canvas covering, he heard the swell of sound. It came towards them like a distant wave and then crashed over them; an overwhelming cacophony of babble, all the stuff of humans and their animals and their livelihoods. He had been dozing, lying with his face still
5 partly buried in Jester’s fur, relishing the sounds of the city while not yet ready to face it. He didn’t even open the flap when he heard the wagon and the mules’ hooves clattering over cobblestones; not when he smelt the stench of open sewers and foraging pigs, and the manure of horses and mules, and wet straw intermingled with women’s perfume and polished leather and charcoal fires and grilled fish. He knew without looking, by the heavy
10 smell of beer and the raucous sounds of fiddling and singing, that they had entered the courtyard of the Black Dog Inn.

No good getting too excited yet. There were jobs to be done: the wagon unhitched, the mules unloaded, water pumped, hay gathered, stable space negotiated...

“I want to piss,” whimpered a child.

15 Oh yes, and the brats seen to. He would have to rope them all together so they wouldn’t run away, and lead them out of the far gate to relieve themselves in all that rain and mud, and then go to the kitchen and get them some gruel. It reminded him of how hungry he was.

It was still raining. Girls in bonnets and shawls slopped across the yard to and from the kitchen, fetching and carrying water for the cook, or chickens for the slaughter, and buckets
20 of swill and scrapings for the animals. Young lads, eager to make a few pennies, rushed forward to grab the bridles and lead the mules to the barns, clamouring to offer their services. Otis selected three of them, yelled out orders, and then made for the door of the inn. “See to things. I’ll be inside,” he yelled, leaving Meshak squelching about in the yard, ankle-deep in mud and manure.

25 Meshak ‘saw to things’ as he always did, but began to feel his stomach tightening with hunger, especially with the smell of roast beef coming from the kitchen. He was almost tempted to eat the gruel dolloped out from the kitchen for the brats, though just looking at it made him want to puke. He was sure even the pigs wouldn’t eat it. But the brats fell upon it. He took the wagon and children into a barn to stay for the night. As he closed the huge

30 wooden doors, one of the brats called out plaintively, 'Can't we have a light, mister?' Meshak didn't bother to answer and, pulling the doors to, dropped the great latch and locked them into the pitch, rat-scuttling darkness.

He went to look for Otis and pushed his way into the dark inn with Jester at his heels. The atmosphere was choking with smoke and stuffiness. In a corner by the roaring fire, red-faced
35 musicians and sailors, entwined with young women, jigged and sang, glad to be on dry land after months at sea. Others played cards and, in a further room, serious gambling was going on.

Meshak squinted through the haze and at last discovered his father deep in conversation with a naval man. These days, Otis made more from selling boys on to the ships than
40 anything else. They would sell the three other boys he had just brought in.

Meshak managed to squeeze himself on to the bench next to Otis, who grabbed a passing barmaid. 'Hey, darling!' He pulled her down on his knee, causing ale to splash out of the four tankards she was carrying, two in each hand.

'Now look what you've made me do,' she giggled. As it was Otis, she wasn't cross. 'Good to
45 see you, Otis,' she purred.

He burrowed into her neck and then murmured, 'Is Mrs Peebles in her parlour?'

The barmaid tut-tutted with exaggerated disappointment and wriggled off his knee. 'Why is it you always fancy her more than me?' she pouted.

"Cos she's prettier!' He slapped her bottom and they both laughed.



Practice Paper 1.2 – Questions

Q1. Read again **lines 1 to 11**. List **four** things we learn from this part of the text about the city of Gloucester.

(4 marks)

Q2. Look in detail at **lines 18 to 32**. How does the writer use language here to describe the courtyard of the Black Dog Inn?

(8 marks)

Q3. Now consider the **whole** extract. How has the writer structured it to interest you as a reader?

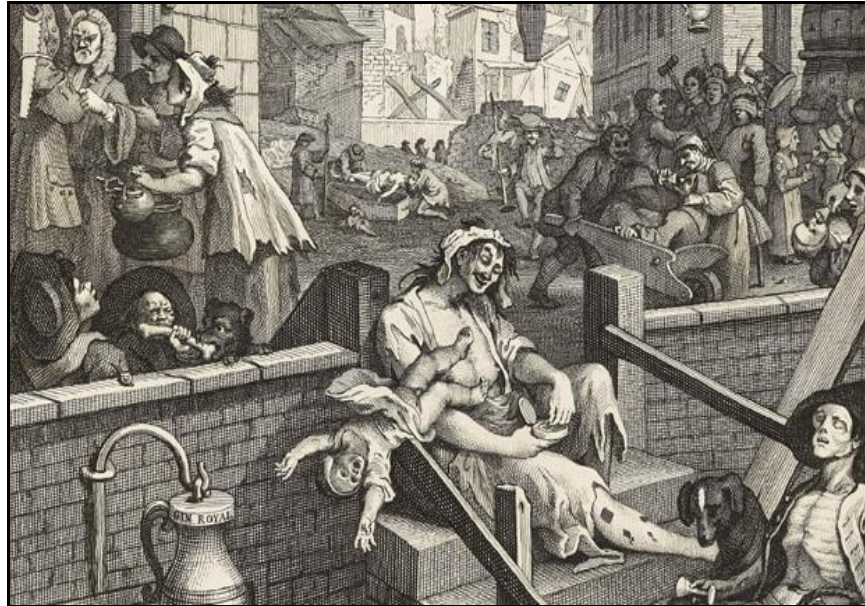
(8 marks)

Q4. Now focus on **line 33 to the end**. A student said about this section: *“The writer makes us feel as if we are there in the Black Dog Inn, in the company of the characters.”* To what extent do you agree?

(20 marks)

Q5. Either

Write a description suggested by this picture:



Or

Write a story about a place where someone feels uncomfortable.

(24 marks for content and organisation
16 marks for technical accuracy)
(40 marks)

Practice Paper 1.3 – ‘The Birds’

The following extract is from ‘The Birds’ by Daphne du Maurier. It was first published in 1952 and adapted into a popular horror film in 1963.

In this passage (the very beginning of the novel), a part-time handyman, Nat Hocken, notices a large number of birds behaving strangely around the Cornish peninsula where he lives and works.

On December the third, the wind changed overnight and it was winter. Until then the autumn had been mellow, soft. The leaves had lingered on the trees, golden-red, and the hedgerows were still green. The earth was rich where the plow had turned it.

5 Nat Hocken, because of a wartime disability, had a pension and did not work full-time at the farm. He worked three days a week and they gave him the lighter jobs: hedging, thatching, repairs to the farm buildings.

10 Although he was married with children, his was a solitary disposition; he liked best to work alone. It pleased him when he was given a bank to build up or a gate to mend at the far end of the peninsula, where the sea surrounded the farmland on either side. Then, at midday, he would pause and eat the pasty that his wife had baked for him and, sitting on the cliff’s edge, would watch the birds.

15 Autumn was best for this, better than spring. Great flocks of them came to the peninsula, restless, uneasy, spending themselves in motion; now wheeling, circling in the sky, now settling to feed on the rich, new-turned soil; but even when they fed, it was as though they did so without hunger, without desire. Restlessness drove them to the skies again.

Black and white, jackdaw and gull, mingled in strange partnership, seeking some sort of liberation, never satisfied, never still. Flocks of starlings, rustling like silk, flew to fresh pasture, driven by the same necessity of movement, and the smaller birds, the finches and the larks, scattered from tree to hedge as if compelled.

20 Nat watched them and he watched the sea birds too. Down in the bay they waited for the tide. They had more patience. Oystercatchers, redshank, sanderling and curlew watched by the water’s edge; as the slow sea sucked at the shore and then withdrew, leaving the strip of seaweed bare and the shingle churned, the sea birds raced and ran upon the beaches. Then that same impulse to flight seized upon them too. Crying, whistling, calling, they skimmed the placid
25 sea and left the shore. Make haste, make speed, hurry and begone; yet where and to what purpose? The restless urge of autumn, unsatisfying, sad, had put a spell upon them and they must flock and wheel and cry; they must spill themselves of motion before winter came.

30 “Perhaps,” thought Nat, munching his pasty by the cliff’s edge, “a message comes to the birds in autumn, like a warning. Winter is coming. Many of them perish. And like people who, apprehensive of death before their time, drive themselves to work or folly, the birds do likewise.”

Nat remarked upon it when hedging was finished for the day. "Yes," said the farmer, "there are more birds about than usual; I've noticed it too. And daring, some of them, taking no notice of the tractor. One or two gulls came so close to my head this afternoon I thought they'd knock my cap off! As it was, I could scarcely see what I was doing when they were overhead and I had the sun in my eyes. I have a notion the weather will change. It will be a hard winter. That's why the birds are restless."

Nat, tramping home across the fields and down the lane to his cottage, saw the birds still flocking over the western hills in the last glow of the sun. No wind, and the grey sea calm and full. Campion in bloom yet in the hedges, and the air mild. The farmer was right, though, and it was that night the weather turned. Nat's bedroom faced east. He woke just after two and heard the wind in the chimney. Not the storm and bluster of a south-westerly gale, bringing the rain, but east wind, cold and dry. It sounded hollow in the chimney and a loose slate rattled on the roof. Nat listened and he could hear the sea roaring in the bay. Even the air in the small bedroom had turned chill: a draft came under the skirting of the door, blowing upon the bed. Nat drew the blanket round him, leaned closer to the back of his sleeping wife and stayed wakeful, watchful, aware of misgiving without cause.

Then he heard the tapping on the window. There was no creeper on the cottage walls to break loose and scratch upon the pane. He listened and the tapping continued until, irritated by the sound, Nat got out of bed and went to the window. He opened it, and as he did so something brushed his hand, jabbing at his knuckles, grazing the skin. Then he saw the flutter of the wings and it was gone, over the roof, behind the cottage.

It was a bird; what kind of bird he could not tell. The wind must have driven it to shelter on the sill.

He shut the window and went back to bed but, feeling his knuckles wet, put his mouth to the scratch. The bird had drawn blood. Frightened, he supposed, and bewildered, the bird, seeking shelter, had stabbed at him in the darkness. Once more he settled himself to sleep.



Practice Paper 1.3 – Questions

Q1. Read again **lines 4 to 11**. List **four** things we learn from this part of the text about Nat Hocken.

(4 marks)

Q2. Look again at **lines 12 to 31**. How does the writer use language here to describe the birds and their behaviour?

(8 marks)

Q3. Now consider the **whole** extract. How has the writer structured it to interest you as a reader?

(8 marks)

Q4. Now focus on **line 32 to the end**. A student said about this section: *“The writer really builds suspense and hints at something sinister yet to come in the story.”* To what extent do you agree?

(20 marks)

Q5. Either

Write a description suggested by this picture:



Or

Write a story about a place where daily life is interrupted by something unusual.

(24 marks for content and organisation
16 marks for technical accuracy)
(40 marks)

Practice Paper 1.4 – ‘Frankenstein’

The following extract is from ‘Frankenstein’ by Mary Shelley. It was first published in 1818. The story is about a young scientist, Victor Frankenstein, who uses electricity to bring his own creation (an eight-foot-tall man) to life. He constructs this ‘person’ using the body parts of the dead.

In this passage, Frankenstein describes his experience of bringing the being to life.

It was on a dreary night of November that I beheld the accomplishment of my toils. With an anxiety that almost amounted to agony, I collected the instruments of life around me that I might infuse a spark of being into the lifeless thing that lay at my feet. It was already one in the morning; the rain pattered dismally against the panes and my candle was nearly burnt
5 out when, by the glimmer of the half-extinguished light, I saw the dull yellow eye of the creature open; it breathed hard and a convulsive motion agitated its limbs.

How can I describe my emotions at this catastrophe or how delineate the wretch whom with such infinite pains and care I had endeavoured to form? His limbs were in proportion and I had selected his features as beautiful. Beautiful! – Great God! His yellow skin scarcely
10 covered the work of muscles and arteries beneath; his hair was of a lustrous black and flowing; his teeth of a pearly whiteness; but these luxuriances only formed a more horrid contrast with his watery eyes that seemed almost of the same colour as the dun white sockets in which they were set, his shrivelled complexion and straight black lips.

The different accidents of life are not so changeable as the feelings of human nature. I had
15 worked hard for nearly two years, for the sole purpose of infusing life into an inanimate body. For this I had deprived myself of rest and health. I had desired it with an ardour that far exceeded moderation; but now that I had finished, the beauty of the dream vanished, and breathless horror and disgust filled my heart. Unable to endure the aspect of the being I had created, I rushed out of the room and continued a long time traversing my bedchamber,
20 unable to compose my mind to sleep.

I started from my sleep with horror; a cold dew covered my forehead, my teeth chattered and every limb became convulsed: when, by the dim and yellow light of the moon, as it forced its way through the window shutters, I beheld the wretch – the miserable monster whom I had created. He held up the curtain of the bed; and his eyes, if eyes they may be
25 called, were fixed on me. His jaws opened and he muttered some inarticulate sounds while a grin wrinkled his cheeks. He might have spoken, but I did not hear; one hand was stretched out, seemingly to detain me, but I escaped and rushed downstairs. I took refuge in the courtyard belonging to the house which I inhabited, where I remained during the rest of the night, walking up and down in the greatest agitation, listening attentively, catching and
30 fearing each sound as if it were to announce the approach of the demoniacal corpse to which I had so miserably given life.

Oh! No mortal could support the horror of that countenance. A mummy again endued with animation could not be so hideous as that wretch. I had gazed on him while unfinished; he was ugly then, but when those muscles and joints were rendered capable of motion, it became a thing such as even Dante could not have conceived.

I passed the night wretchedly. Sometimes my pulse beat so quickly and hardly that I felt the palpitation of every artery; at others, I nearly sank to the ground through languor and extreme weakness. Mingled with this horror, I felt the bitterness of disappointment; dreams that had been my food and pleasant rest for so long a space were now become a hell to me, and the change was so rapid, the overthrow so complete!

Morning, dismal and wet, at length dawned and I discovered to my sleepless and aching eyes the church of Ingolstadt, white steeple and clock, which indicated the sixth hour. The porter opened the gates of the court, which had that night been my asylum, and I issued into the streets, pacing them with quick steps as if I sought to avoid the wretch whom I feared every turning of the street would present to my view. I did not dare return to the apartment which I inhabited, but felt impelled to hurry on, although drenched by the rain which poured from a black and comfortless sky.

I continued walking in this manner for some time, endeavouring, by bodily exercise, to ease the load that weighed upon my mind. I traversed the streets, without any clear conception of where I was, or what I was doing. My heart palpitated in the sickness of fear and I hurried on with irregular steps, not daring to look about me:

“Like one who, on a lonely road,
Doth walk in fear and dread,
And, having once turned round, walks on,
And turns no more his head;
Because he knows a frightful fiend
Doth close behind him tread.”



Practice Paper 1.4 – Questions

Q1. Read again **lines 1 to 13**. List **four** things we learn from this part of the text about Frankenstein’s creation.

(4 marks)

Q2. Look in detail at **lines 14 to 31**. How does the writer use language here to describe Frankenstein’s reaction to his creation?

(8 marks)

Q3. Now consider the **whole** extract. How has the writer structured it to interest you as a reader?

(8 marks)

Q4. Now focus on **line 32 to the end**. A student said about this section: *“It is so gripping and intense, and really makes me want to read on.”* To what extent do you agree?

(20 marks)

Q5. Either

Write a description suggested by this picture:



Or

Write a story in which something didn’t turn out the way it was expected.

(24 marks for content and organisation
16 marks for technical accuracy)
(40 marks)

Practice Paper 1.5 – ‘Life of Pi’

The following extract is from ‘Life of Pi’ by Yann Martel. It was first published in 2001.

In this passage, a young man named Pi is stranded at sea. He and his family were on a ship, transporting zoo animals from India to North America, but the vessel encountered a storm and began to sink. He is now hanging mid-air on an oar that he has wedged into the bow (the front) of a lifeboat.

The elements allowed me to go on living. The lifeboat did not sink. Richard Parker kept out of sight. The sharks prowled but did not lunge. The waves splashed me but did not pull me off.

I watched the ship as it disappeared with much burbling and belching. Lights flickered
5 and went out. I looked about for my family, for survivors, for another lifeboat, for anything that might bring me hope. There was nothing. Only rain, marauding waves of black ocean and the flotsam of tragedy.

The darkness melted away from the sky. The rain stopped.

I could not stay in the position I was in forever. I was cold. My neck was sore from
10 holding up my head and from all the craning I had been doing. My back hurt from leaning against the lifebuoy. And I needed to be higher up if I were to see other lifeboats.

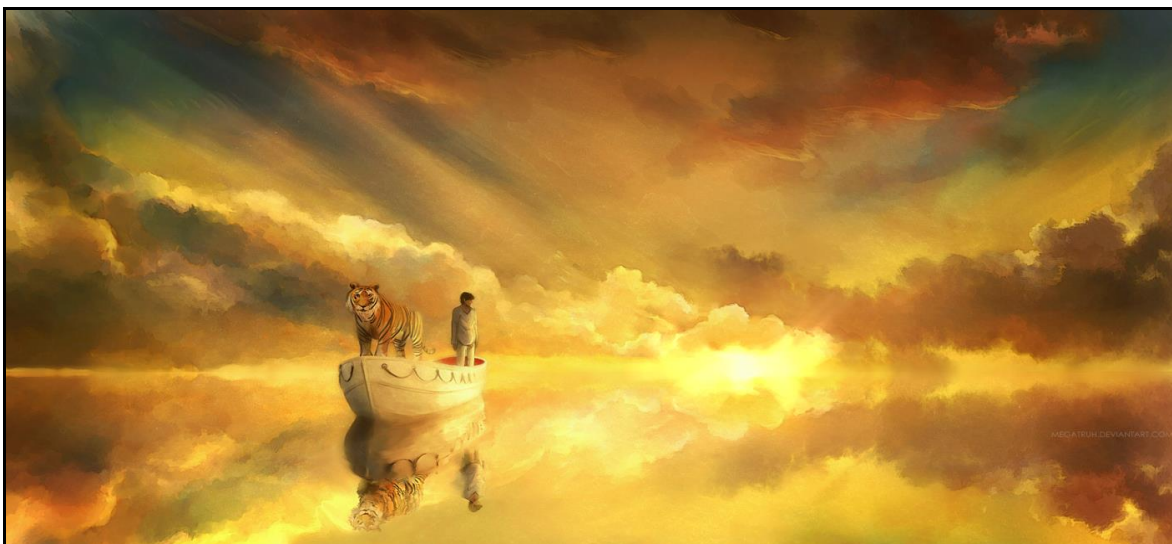
I inched my way along the oar till my feet were against the bow of the boat. I had to proceed with extreme caution. My guess was that Richard Parker was on the floor of the lifeboat beneath the tarpaulin, his back to me, facing the zebra, which he had no doubt
15 killed by now. Of the five senses, tigers rely the most on their sight. Their eyesight is very keen, especially in detecting motion. Their hearing is good. Their smell is average. I mean compared to other animals, of course. Next to Richard Parker, I was deaf, blind and nose-dead. But at the moment he could not see me, and in my wet condition could probably not smell me, and what with the whistling of the wind and the hissing of the sea as
20 waves broke, if I were careful, he would not hear me. I had a chance so long as he did not sense me. If he did, he would kill me right away. *Could he burst through the tarpaulin?* I wondered.

Fear and reason fought over the answer. Fear said ‘Yes’. He was a fierce, 450-pound carnivore. Each of his claws was as sharp as a knife. Reason said ‘No’. The tarpaulin was
25 sturdy canvas, not a Japanese paper wall. I had landed upon it from a height. Richard Parker could shred it with his claws with a little time and effort, but he couldn't pop through it like a jack-in-the-box. And he had not seen me. Since he had not seen me, he had no reason to claw his way through it.

I slid along the oar. I brought both my legs to one side of it and placed my feet on the
30 gunnel. The gunnel is the top edge of a boat; the rim, if you like. I moved a little more till
my legs were on the boat. I kept my eyes fixed on the horizon of the tarpaulin. Any
second now, I expected to see Richard Parker rising up and coming for me. Several times
I had fits of fearful trembling. Precisely where I wanted to be most still – my legs – was
where I trembled most. My legs drummed upon the tarpaulin. A more obvious rapping
35 on Richard Parker's door couldn't be imagined. The trembling spread to my arms and it
was all I could do to hold on. Each fit passed.

When enough of my body was on the boat, I pulled myself up. I looked beyond the end
of the tarpaulin. I was surprised to see that the zebra was still alive. It lay near the stern
where it had fallen, listless, but its stomach was still panting and its eyes were still
40 moving, expressing terror. It was on its side, facing me, its head and neck awkwardly
propped against the boat's side bench. It had badly broken a rear leg. The angle of it was
completely unnatural. Bone protruded through skin and there was bleeding. Only its slim
front legs had a semblance of normal position. They were bent and neatly tucked against
its twisted torso. From time to time it shook its head and barked and snorted. Otherwise
45 it lay quietly.

It was a lovely animal. Its wet markings glowed brightly white and intensely black. I was
so eaten up by anxiety that I couldn't dwell on it; still, in passing, as a faint after-thought,
the queer, clean, artistic boldness of its design and the fineness of its head struck me. Of
greater significance to me was the strange fact that Richard Parker had not killed it. In
50 the normal course of things he should have killed the zebra. That's what predators do:
they kill prey. In the present circumstances, where Richard Parker would be under
tremendous mental strain, fear should have brought out an exceptional level of
aggression. The zebra should have been properly butchered.



Practice Paper 1.5 – Questions

Q1. Read again **lines 1 to 11**. List **four** things we learn from this part of the text about Pi and his situation.

(4 marks)

Q2. Look in detail at **lines 12 to 28**. How does the writer use language here to describe the threat presented by Richard Parker?

(8 marks)

Q3. Now consider the **whole** extract. How has the writer structured it to interest you as a reader?

(8 marks)

Q4. Now focus on **line 29 to the end**. A student said about this section: *“I like the way the writer captures such a strange and difficult situation. It’s very convincing.”* To what extent do you agree?

(20 marks)

Q5. Either

Write a description suggested by this picture:



Or

Write a story about a dangerous, unpredictable situation.

(24 marks for content and organisation
16 marks for technical accuracy)
(40 marks)

Practice Paper 1.6 – ‘A Thousand Splendid Suns’

The following extracts are from ‘A Thousand Splendid Suns’ by Khaled Hosseini. It was first published in 2007. Much of the story is set in Kabul, the capital of Afghanistan, when it was taken over by the Taliban (a militant Islamic group) in the mid-1990s.

The following two passages are set in a women’s hospital, Rabia Balkhi. A young woman named Laila is about to give birth. She is with her husband, Rasheed, and co-wife, Mariam.

The waiting room at Rabia Balkhi was teeming with women in burqas and their children. The air stank of sweat and unwashed bodies; of feet, urine, cigarette smoke and antiseptic. Beneath the idle ceiling fan, children chased each other, hopping over the stretched-out legs of dozing fathers.

Mariam helped Laila sit against a wall from which patches of plaster shaped like foreign countries
5 had slid off. Laila rocked back and forth, hands pressing against her belly.

“I’ll get you seen, Laila jo. I promise.”

“Be quick,” said Rasheed.

Before the registration window was a horde of women, shoving and pushing against each other. Some were still holding their babies. Some broke from the mass and charged the double doors that
10 led to the treatment rooms. An armed Talib guard blocked their way and sent them back.

Mariam waded in. She dug in her heels and burrowed against the elbows, hips and shoulder blades of strangers. Someone elbowed her in the ribs and she elbowed back. A hand made a desperate grab at her face. She swatted it away. To propel herself forward, Mariam clawed at necks, at arms and elbows, at hair, and, when a woman nearby hissed, Mariam hissed back.

15 Mariam saw now the sacrifices a mother made. Decency was but one. She thought ruefully of Nana, of the sacrifices that she too had made. Nana, who could have given her away, or tossed her in a ditch somewhere and run. But she hadn’t. Instead, Nana had endured the shame of bearing a *harami*; had shaped her life around the thankless task of raising Mariam and, in her own way, of loving her. And, in the end, Mariam had chosen Jalil over her. As she fought her way with impudent
20 resolve to the front of the melee, Mariam wished she had been a better daughter to Nana. She wished she’d understood then what she understood now about motherhood.

She found herself face-to-face with a nurse who was covered head to toe in a dirty grey burqa. The nurse was talking to a young woman whose burqa headpiece had soaked through with a patch of matted blood.

25 Inside the old, dingy operating room, Laila lay on a gurney bed as the doctor scrubbed her hands in a basin. Laila was shivering. She drew in air through her teeth every time the nurse wiped her belly with a cloth soaked in a yellow-brown liquid. Another nurse stood at the door. She kept cracking it open to take a peek outside.

30 The doctor was out of her burqa now and Mariam saw that she had a crest of silvery hair, heavy-lidded eyes, and little pouches of fatigue at the corners of her mouth.

“They want us to operate in burqa,” the doctor explained, motioning with her head to the nurse at the door. “She keeps watch. She sees them coming; I cover.”

35 She said this in a pragmatic, almost indifferent, tone, and Mariam understood that this was a woman far past outrage. Here was a woman, she thought, who had understood that she was lucky to even be working; that there was always something, something else, that they could take away.

There were two vertical, metallic rods on either side of Laila’s shoulders. With clothespins, the nurse who’d cleansed Laila’s belly pinned a sheet to them. It formed a curtain between Laila and the doctor.

40 Mariam positioned herself behind the crown of Laila’s head and lowered her face so their cheeks touched. She could feel Laila’s teeth rattling. Their hands locked together.

Through the curtain, Mariam saw the doctor’s shadow move to Laila’s left, the nurse to the right. Laila’s lips had stretched all the way back. Spit bubbles formed and popped on the surface of her clenched teeth. She made quick, little hissing sounds.

The doctor said, “Take heart, little sister.”

45 She bent over Laila.

Laila’s eyes snapped open. Then her mouth opened. She held like this, held, held, shivering, the cords in her neck stretched, sweat dripping from her face, her fingers crushing Mariam’s.

Mariam would always admire Laila for how much time passed before she screamed.



Practice Paper 1.6 – Questions

Q1. Read again **lines 1 to 10**. List **four** things we learn from this part of the text about the waiting room.

(4 marks)

Q2. Look in detail at **lines 11 to 21**. How does the writer use language here to describe Mariam?

(8 marks)

Q3. Now consider the **whole** extract. How has the writer structured it to interest you as a reader?

(8 marks)

Q4. Now focus on **line 25 to the end**. A student said about this section: *“The writer really helps us to experience everything the characters are going through. It’s very moving.”* To what extent do you agree?

(20 marks)

Q5. Either

Write a description suggested by this picture:



Or

Write a story about a person or group of people under pressure.

(24 marks for content and organisation
16 marks for technical accuracy)
(40 marks)

Practice Paper 1.7 – ‘The Girl with All the Gifts’

The following extract is from ‘The Girl with All the Gifts’ by M.R. Carey. It was first published in 2014, but is set in the future, 20 years after a period known as “the Breakdown”. This is when a terrible virus turned most of the population into flesh-eating zombies (“hungries”) and society completely collapsed.

In this passage, a group of survivors is making its way on foot through the English countryside.

They’re moving now through a burn shadow, another artefact of the Breakdown. Before the government fell apart entirely, it passed a whole series of badly thought-out emergency orders, one of which involved chemical incendiaries sprayed from helicopter gunships to create cauterised zones that were guaranteed free from hungries. Uninfected civilians were
5 warned in advance by sirens and looped messages, but a lot of them died anyway because they weren’t free to move when the choppers flew in.

The hungries, though, they ran ahead of the flame-throwers like roaches when the light goes on. All the incendiaries could do was to move them on a few miles in one direction or another, and in some cases to destroy infrastructure that might have saved a lot of lives.
10 Luton Airport, for instance. That got torched with about forty planes still on the ground, so when the next memo came round – about evacuating the uninfected to the Channel Islands using commercial carrier fleets – all the army could do was shrug its collective shoulders and say, “Yeah, we wish.”

The buildings on this part of their route are foreshortened stumps, not so much burned
15 down as rendered into tallow. The monstrous heat of the incendiaries melted not just metal but brick and stone. The ground they’re walking on carries a thin black crust of grease and charcoal, the residue of organic materials that burned and sublimed, took to the air and settled again wherever the hot winds of combustion took them.

The air has a sour, acid tang to it. After ten minutes or so, your breath is rasping in your
20 throat and there’s an itchy feeling in your chest that you can’t scratch because it’s inside you.

It’s more than twenty years on and still nothing grows here, not even the hardiest and most bad-ass of weeds. Nature’s way of saying she’s not stupid enough to be caught like that twice over.

25 Sergeant Parks hears the kid asking Justineau what happened here. Justineau makes heavy weather of the question, even though it’s an easy one. *We couldn’t kill the hungries, so we killed ourselves. That was always our favourite party trick.*

The burn shadow goes on for mile after mile, oppressing their spirits and draining their stamina. It’s past time they stopped, grabbed some rest and rations, but nobody is keen to
30 sit down on this tainted ground. By unspoken consensus, they press on.

It's really sudden when they reach the edge of it, but the shadow has one more miracle to show them. Over the space of a hundred steps they go from black to green, from death to hectic life, from dry-baked limbo to a field of massive thistles and dense hollyhocks.

35 There was a house here on the borderland that burned but didn't fall. And against its rear wall there are heat shadows where something living collapsed against the hot brick and burned with different colours, different Breakdown products. Two of them, one large and one small, painted in deep black against the grey-black of their surroundings.

40 An adult and a child, arms thrown up as though they were caught in the middle of an aerobics workout. Fascinated, the kid measures herself against the smaller shape. It fits her pretty well.

45 They stop and eat, setting their faces against the dead zone they've just crossed. Sergeant Parks has brought some of the tins from the kitchen in Wainwright House with him in his pack. Miss Justineau, Dr Caldwell and the soldiers eat cold sausage and beans and cold Scotch broth. The kid eats something called Spam, which is a bit like the meat she had the night before, but not so nice.



Practice Paper 1.7 – Questions

Q1. Read again **lines 1 to 13**. List **four** things we learn from this part of the text about the period called ‘the Breakdown’.

(4 marks)

Q2. Look in detail at **lines 14 to 30**. How does the writer use language here to describe the conditions in the countryside?

(8 marks)

Q3. Now consider the **whole** extract. How has the writer structured it to interest you as a reader?

(8 marks)

Q4. Now focus on **line 31 to the end**. A student said about this section: *“The writer paints a vivid picture of life after a major catastrophe. He makes it feel very realistic.”* To what extent do you agree?

(20 marks)

Q5. Either

Write a description suggested by this picture:



Or

Write a story about a life-changing event.

(24 marks for content and organisation
16 marks for technical accuracy)
(40 marks)

Practice Paper 1.8 – ‘The Snow Child’

The following extract is from ‘The Snow Child’ by Eowyn Ivey. It was first published in 2012, but is set in 1920. The story is about a woman, Mabel, and her husband, Jack, who have moved to the wilderness of Alaska to start a new life.

Wolverine River, Alaska, 1920

Mabel had known there would be silence. That was the point, after all. No infants cooing and wailing. No neighbour children playfully hollering down the lane. No pad of small feet on wooden stairs worn smooth by generations, or clackety-clack of toys along the kitchen floor. All those sounds of her failure and regret would be left behind, and in their place there
5 would be silence.

She had imagined that, in the Alaska wilderness, silence would be peaceful, like snow falling at night, air filled with promise but no sound, but that was not what she found. Instead, when she swept the plank floor, the broom bristles scratched like some sharp-toothed shrew nibbling at her heart. When she washed the dishes, plates and bowls clattered as if they
10 were breaking to pieces. The only sound not of her making was a sudden ‘caw, cawww’ from outside. Mabel wrung dishwater from a rag and looked out the kitchen window in time to see a raven flapping its way from one leafless birch tree to another. No children chasing each other through autumn leaves, calling each other’s names. Not even a solitary child on a swing.

15 There had been the one. A tiny thing, born still and silent. Ten years past, but even now she found herself returning to the birth to touch Jack’s arm, stop him, reach out. She should have. She should have cupped the baby’s head in the palm of her hand and snipped a few of its tiny hairs to keep in a locket at her throat. She should have looked into its small face and known if it was a boy or a girl, and then stood beside Jack as he buried it in the Pennsylvania
20 winter ground. She should have marked its grave. She should have allowed herself that grief.

It was a child, after all, although it looked more like a fairy changeling. Pinched face, tiny jaw, ears that came to narrow points; that much she had seen and wept over because she knew she could have loved it still.

Mabel was too long at the window. The raven had since flown away above the treetops. The
25 sun had slipped behind a mountain and the light had fallen flat. The branches were bare, the grass yellowed grey. Not a single snowflake. It was as if everything fine and glittering had been ground from the world and swept away as dust.

November was here and it frightened her because she knew what it brought: cold upon the valley like a coming death, glacial wind through the cracks between the cabin logs. But most
30 of all, darkness. Darkness so complete, even the pale-lit hours would be choked.

- She entered last winter blind, not knowing what to expect in this new, hard land. Now she knew. By December, the sun would rise just before noon and skirt the mountaintops for a few hours of twilight before sinking again. Mabel would move in and out of sleep as she sat in a chair beside the woodstove. She would not pick up any of her favourite books; the pages
- 35 would still be lifeless. She would not draw; what would there be to capture in her sketchbook? Dull skies, shadowy corners. It would become harder and harder to leave the warm bed each morning. She would stumble about in a walking sleep, scrape together meals, and drape wet laundry around the cabin. Jack would struggle to keep the animals alive. The days would run together, winter's stranglehold tightening.
- 40 All her life she had believed in something more; in the mystery that shape-shifted at the edge of her senses. It was the flutter of moth wings on glass and the promise of river nymphs in the dappled creek beds. It was the smell of oak trees on the summer evening she fell in love, and the way dawn threw itself across the cow pond and turned the water to light.
- 45 Mabel could not remember the last time she caught such a flicker.



Practice Paper 1.8 – Questions

Q1. Read again **lines 15 to 23**. List **four** things we learn from this part of the text about Mabel’s baby.

(4 marks)

Q2. Look in detail at **lines 1 to 14**. How does the writer use language here to describe Mabel’s life in Alaska?

(8 marks)

Q3. Now consider the **whole** extract. How has the writer structured it to interest you as a reader?

(8 marks)

Q4. Now focus on **line 24 to the end**. A student said about this section: *“The writer makes it very clear how Mabel is feeling. Her emotions are reflected by the Alaskan setting.”* To what extent do you agree?

(20 marks)

Q5. Either

Write a description suggested by this picture:



Or

Write a story about losing something valuable.

(24 marks for content and organisation
16 marks for technical accuracy)
(40 marks)