



Section 1: Prose

Introduction:

Examinations involving unseen texts can be a daunting prospect and, to be successful, learners need to change focus from a memory-driven test to one involving the creative application of skills and knowledge developed in the course of studying other texts.

As with any physical journey into the unknown, the process starts with preparation, planning and the right equipment. The following guide offers an approach to work on unseen texts and extracts designed to help learners establish a productive, confidence-boosting routine which will apply whatever materials are chosen for comment and appreciation.

In addition, there is the opportunity to examine and evaluate responses from other students of English Literature and to develop critical analytical skills using the subject's "toolbox".

It is helpful to divide your approach to the analysis of unseen prose texts into three stages:

Stage 1: Reading

Stage 2: Reflecting

Stage 3: Responding

Each of these stages requires the application of a specific set of skills which eventually combine to produce a successful essay.

Stage 1: Reading

At the beginning of the examination, the priority is **careful, open-minded** reading of the unseen extract. The main skills involved here are:

- **Timing** (you must understand your personal reading speeds well in advance of any examination.)
- **Focusing** (It is vital to be mentally uncluttered and single-minded: keep your attention firmly focused upon the text and don't worry about how you will eventually be writing.)
- **Interpretation** (This is where you engage with the main shaping characteristics of the extract such as sub-genre; surface meaning; tone of voice; characterization and understand them in the light of your whole experience of reading prose.)



An essential part of your preparation is to have some idea of your own **close reading speed**. Remember that this is much slower than 'scan' reading. Use the digital resource to time yourself as you read the following extract closely.

In this late 19th century novel, the author introduces a central character.

When Farmer Oak smiled, the corners of his mouth spread till they were within an unimportant distance of his ears, his eyes were reduced to chinks, and diverging wrinkles appeared round them, extending upon his countenance like the rays in a rudimentary sketch of the rising sun.

His Christian name was Gabriel, and on working days he was a young man of sound judgment, easy motions, proper dress, and general good character. On Sundays he was a man of misty views, rather given to postponing, and hampered by his best clothes and umbrella: upon the whole, one who felt himself to occupy morally that vast middle space of Laodicean neutrality which lay between the Communion people of the parish and the drunken section,—that is, he went to church, but yawned privately by the time the congregation reached the Nicene creed, and thought of what there would be for dinner when he meant to be listening to the sermon. Or, to state his character as it stood in the scale of public opinion, when his friends and critics were in tantrums, he was considered rather a bad man; when they were pleased, he was rather a good man; when they were neither, he was a man whose moral colour was a kind of pepper-and-salt mixture.

Since he lived six times as many working-days as Sundays, Oak's appearance in his old clothes was most peculiarly his own—the mental picture formed by his neighbours in imagining him being always dressed in that way. He wore a low-crowned felt hat, spread out at the base by tight jamming upon the head for security in high winds, and a coat like Dr. Johnson's; his lower extremities being encased in ordinary leather leggings and boots emphatically large, affording to each foot a roomy apartment so constructed that any wearer might stand in a river all day long and know nothing of damp—their maker being a conscientious man who endeavoured to compensate for any weakness in his cut by unstinted dimension and solidity.

Mr. Oak carried about him, by way of watch, what may be called a small silver clock; in other words, it was a watch as to shape and intention, and a small clock as to size. This instrument being several years older than Oak's grandfather, had the peculiarity of going either too fast or not at all. The smaller of its hands, too, occasionally slipped round on the pivot, and thus, though the minutes were told with precision, nobody could be quite certain of the hour they belonged to. The stopping peculiarity of his watch Oak remedied by thumps and shakes, and he escaped any evil consequences from the other two defects by constant comparisons with and observations of the sun and stars, and by pressing his face close to the glass of his neighbours' windows, till he could discern the hour marked by the green-faced timekeepers within. It may be mentioned that Oak's fob being difficult of access, by reason of its somewhat high situation in the waistband of his trousers (which also lay at a remote height under his waistcoat), the watch was as a necessity pulled out by throwing the body to one side, compressing the mouth and face to a mere mass of ruddy flesh on account of the exertion required, and drawing up the watch by its chain, like a bucket from a well.

But some thoughtful persons, who had seen him walking across one of his fields on a certain December morning—sunny and exceedingly mild—might have regarded Gabriel Oak in other aspects than these. In his face one might notice that many of the hues and curves of youth had tarried on to manhood: there even remained in his remoter crannies some relics of the boy. His height and breadth would have been sufficient to make his presence imposing, had they been exhibited with due consideration. But



there is a way some men have, rural and urban alike, for which the mind is more responsible than flesh and sinew: it is a way of curtailing their dimensions by their manner of showing them. And from a quiet modesty that would have become a vestal, which seemed continually to impress upon him that he had no great claim on the world's room, Oak walked unassumingly and with a faintly perceptible bend, yet distinct from a bowing of the shoulders. This may be said to be a defect in an individual if he depends for his valuation more upon his appearance than upon his capacity to wear well, which Oak did not.

(Thomas Hardy, Far from the Madding Crowd, 1874)

A first reading of a passage of this length is likely to take between 2 and 4 minutes. However, the important thing to know is how long it takes YOU so that any adjustments can be made to your examination strategy.

Hint: Part of the close focus in your reading will involve addressing obscure vocabulary which might not be explained in a footnote. Attempt to use the context of the sentence and the overall passage to make a common-sense deduction. If this is impossible, you would be best advised to select only clearly understood material from the passage to support your critical appreciation.

Test Yourself

Can you work out the meaning of the following terms from the context of the passage?:

- Laodicean
- Nicene Creed
- Unstinted
- Fob
- Vestal

Discussion

1. **How far would an understanding of any of them be crucial to an appreciation of Hardy's techniques in this passage?**

The last aspect of the first reading of a passage involves making decisions about the broad framework, context and scope of the extract. **(You will be making detailed observations and annotations at the next stage of the process.)**

Your first observations of this passage would probably include the following:

- Third person, omniscient narrator
- Rural setting
- Character portrait of a farmer matching many stereotypes in terms of dress and physical appearance but hints at greater complexity
- Mixture of tones – neutral; amused; sympathetic; satirical; puzzlement at apparent contradictions.



A list such as this one would indicate that you had read with understanding and appreciation and would be ready for the more detailed work required at **Stage 2**.

Stage 2: Reflection and Annotation

In Stage 1 you identified **WHAT** is in the passage. You now have to address **HOW** Hardy has achieved what your reading has revealed to you.

The work you do now will dictate the quality of what you write at Stage 3 where the emphasis will have to be upon **ANALYSIS** rather than description or commentary.

The following is not an exhaustive list but an indication of the approach needed:

- Focused starting point for description (smile) – simile of rising sun. (**See the annotated version of the extract below with connected images and observations in yellow highlighter.**) What is the accumulative effect of these over the passage as a whole in establishing Oak's appearance and what can be deduced from it?
- How does Hardy design the progression of ideas and images? What is the effect upon the reader's feelings for Gabriel?
- In what ways do the concluding observations adjust or qualify any impressions formed earlier?
- How is Gabriel's more complex inner life revealed? (**See the series of red highlights.**) What is the significance of phrases such as "hampered by his best clothes"?
- How does Hardy reveal his attitudes towards the rural community and traditions – **look at the connected series of images and observations highlighted in green.**
- How does Hardy make specific words, phrases or observations humorous? **Think about: incongruity; surprise; slapstick.**

As you reflect upon the passage in this way, you will generate purposeful annotation which will help you to spot patterns in the work and, at the next stage, allow you to organize your response in a way that is not tied to a chronological treatment. By noting the relationships between images you will be able to offer much more authoritative observations about Hardy's technique which do not rely upon list making. This is one of the markers of a sophisticated approach which is expected for the higher mark bands.

Hint: While there are no rules for approaches to written plans, a simple, bulleted list or mind-map should be all that you need in addition to judicious annotation to launch the final stage of your work. Students are advised to practise and perfect an effective planning technique.



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Hint: While there are no hard and fast rules, it is vital not to underestimate the need for planning time. Students work in different ways but by the end of Stage 2, you will probably have used up several minutes of the total time available for the examination. Practice and your personal reading speed will guide you as to exactly how much time you need. While you must obviously leave enough time to write your response you are advised not start until you are fully prepared.”

Stage 3: Written Response

Having clarified your thinking and designed the shape of your response, for the remainder of the examination you should be focused exclusively upon expressing your ideas analytically. In order to do this successfully, you must be quite sure that you recognize the differences between 3 kinds of writing:

- **Descriptive**
- **Commentary on meaning**
- **Critical analysis and evaluation**

Some examples:

Descriptive:

Thomas Hardy tells his readers about a farmer called Gabriel Oak and we see him described in several locations – in the local church, looking through his neighbours’ windows and walking across his fields.

Comment: This would be a very poor start because it says nothing about how Hardy has written and it undermines the literary qualities of the piece by implying that Gabriel Oak is a real farmer as opposed to Hardy’s imaginative presentation of a character.

Commentary on Meaning:

When Thomas Hardy introduces the reader to Gabriel Oak he shows us that he is a cheerful person with the mention of his smiles and we are given a vivid picture of Oak’s “countenance” before Hardy goes on to show us other aspects of his appearance.

Comment: This is a little better because there is a hint that the character, Gabriel Oak is an artifact and there is the start of an implicit point about technique in the mention of Hardy’s sequencing of information.

Critical Analysis and Evaluation:

Our immediate impressions of the character of Gabriel Oak are governed by Hardy’s playful introduction. When he smiles, we are told, his mouth and ears almost join in a clown-like grin which is then amplified by the use of a simile comparing his appearance to the sun and emphasising the warmth, simplicity and benevolence of the character. However, although the playful approach is still evident in Hardy’s



use of “rudimentary sketch” as he describes Oak’s features (suggesting something naïve or childlike which might charm readers) there is also a teasing invitation to underestimate the character in light of the strengths and virtues which are revealed later in the passage.

Comment: This writing is entirely focused upon HOW Hardy writes and the possible effects upon his readers. It is what is expected at A level and quite distinct from the two examples above it.

Discussion

1. **Consider the sample responses above in detail and be sure that you have understood the differences between them.**

Practice:

1. **Write two or three short paragraphs in the style of the third example above looking at a different aspect of Hardy’s writing.**



Section 2: Working with additional materials

Some examinations include contextualizing and critical materials with unseen extracts so that you can demonstrate your skills in responding to AOs 3 and 5 and well as AOs 1 and 2. Any materials of this sort will be supplied for the purpose of **illuminating some aspect or aspects of the literary extract and should not be treated in isolation.**

Hint: the contextualizing materials will help you to enter the world of the passage and could be read first but some students might prefer to leave them until after the first reading of the prose extract. Whichever choice is made, please remember that the additional materials are there simply to illuminate the passage and, while you will need to make reference to them in your answer, they shouldn't become the main focus of your attention.

Supporting materials

1. A History of The Women's Institute

The Women's Institute Movement in Britain started in 1915, under the auspices of the Agricultural Organisations Society (AOS). The catalyst was the meeting, in February 1915, of AOS Secretary John Nugent Harris and Canadian, Madge Watt, who was to be given the role of setting up Women's Institutes in Britain. The AOS was formed in 1901 to help farmers set up co-operatives, as a way of revitalising the failing farming industry. John Nugent Harris had tried **to get the AOS to involve women who played an important, often unpaid, role in agriculture but had no training and no say in what was going on.** Madge Watt had been closely involved with the Women's Institute in British Columbia assisting the Provincial Department of Agriculture to form Women's Institutes. Now she had come to live in England she was keen to extend the WI Movement to Britain. The first WI was formed at Llanfairpwll, Anglesey in September 1915. John Nugent Harris and Madge Watt decided that Women's Institutes were just what was needed **to revitalise rural communities and to involve women in producing more food for the war-torn country.** John Nugent Harris persuaded a somewhat reluctant AOS to appoint Madge Watt, at first for just 6 months, as an Organiser to try set up Women's Institutes. Colonel Stapleton Cotton, a Vice Chairman of AOS and Chairman of the North Wales branch of AOS, invited Madge Watt to come **and speak at a conference on June 15th at Bangor University College and he and his wife were so impressed by what Madge had to say that they invited her, the very next day, to meet women from their village, Llanfairpwll on Anglesey. At this meeting the women decided that they would like to start a WI. Mrs Stapleton Cotton became the first WI President, a post she held until her death in 1924.** Encouraged by this enthusiastic response Madge Watt went on to form further Women's Institutes, at first also in Wales at Cefn, and Trefnant, both in Denbigshire, in October 1915, and then in England at Singleton, Sussex (W) and Wallisdown Dorset in November 1915.

(www.thewi.org.uk)



2. Extract from Introduction to Wordsworth Edition of *The Rainbow*.

During the writing of *The Rainbow*, Lawrence described it as “like a novel in a foreign language”, foreign I think because he knew it was unlike any other in the history of the British novel, and because the ideas developed in it required a special vocabulary for their utterance. The language of the novel is both new yet also familiar, new in the representation of the inner consciousness of its characters and familiar through Lawrence’s call on the rhythms and phrases known to us from the Bible from which the central symbol of the rainbow and the associated symbol of the flood derives. Indeed the novel is saturated with biblical allusions and references, and the idea of what constitutes religion for the individual is one of its themes. I think Lawrence’s sense of the novel’s ‘foreignness’ is commonly experienced by readers as we seek to understand it. At one level it yields familiar pleasures, as in his handling of the Midlands landscape of its setting, where the rural world of the Brangwens’s farm abuts on the industrial landscape of the coal mine, in the realization of striking scenes and in the sharply drawn individuality of its characters. However, these pleasures come in conjunction with a set of ideas commonly called Lawrence’s ‘metaphysic’ and these contribute to the novel’s originality and to the difficulties of reading it.

(From: *The Rainbow* (1915) Wordsworth Edition © Wordsworth Editions 1995;
Introduction © Lionel Kelly 2001.)

Unseen prose extract

In this early twentieth century novel, the author introduces us to his characters, the Brangwens, who are farmers in the English Midlands.

The Brangwens had lived for generations on the Marsh Farm, in the meadows where the Erewash twisted sluggishly through alder trees, separating Derbyshire from Nottinghamshire. Two miles away, a church-tower stood on a hill, the houses of the little country town climbing assiduously up to it. Whenever one of the Brangwens in the fields lifted his head from his work, he saw the church-tower at Ilkeston in the empty sky. So that as he turned again to the horizontal land, he was aware of something standing above him and beyond him in the distance.

There was a look in the eyes of the Brangwens as if they were expecting something unknown, about which they were eager. They had that air of readiness for what would come to them, a kind of surety, an expectancy, the look of an inheritor.

They were fresh, blond, slow-speaking people, revealing themselves plainly, but slowly, so that one could watch the change in their eyes from laughter to anger, blue, lit-up laughter, to a hard blue-staring anger; through all the irresolute stages of the sky when the weather is changing.

Living on rich land, on their own land, near to a growing town, they had forgotten what it was to be in straitened circumstances. They had never become rich, because there were always children, and the patrimony was divided every time. But always, at the Marsh, there was ample.

So the Brangwens came and went without fear of necessity, working hard because of the life that was in them, not for want of the money. Neither were they thriftless. They were aware of the last halfpenny, and instinct made them not waste the peeling of their apple, for it would help to feed the cattle. But heaven and earth was teeming around them, and how should this cease? They felt the rush of the sap



in spring, they knew the wave which cannot halt, but every year throws forward the seed to begetting, and, falling back, leaves the young-born on the earth. They knew the intercourse between heaven and earth, sunshine drawn into the breast and bowels, the rain sucked up in the daytime, nakedness that comes under the wind in autumn, showing the birds' nests no longer worth hiding. Their life and interrelations were such; feeling the pulse and body of the soil, that opened to their furrow for the grain, and became smooth and supple after their ploughing, and clung to their feet with a weight that pulled like desire, lying hard and unresponsive when the crops were to be shorn away. The young corn waved and was silken, and the lustre slid along the limbs of the men who saw it. They took the udder of the cows, the cows yielded milk and pulse against the hands of the men, the pulse of the blood of the teats of the cows beat into the pulse of the hands of the men. They mounted their horses, and held life between the grip of their knees, they harnessed their horses at the wagon, and, with hand on the bridles, drew the heaving of the horses after their will.

In autumn the partridges whirred up, birds in flocks blew like spray across the fallow, rooks appeared on the grey, watery heavens, and flew cawing into the winter. Then the men sat by the fire in the house where the women moved about with surety, and the limbs and the body of the men were impregnated with the day, cattle and earth and vegetation and the sky, the men sat by the fire and their brains were inert, as their blood flowed heavy with the accumulation from the living day.

The women were different. On them too was the drowse of blood-intimacy, calves sucking and hens running together in droves, and young geese palpitating in the hand while the food was pushed down their throttle. But the women looked out from the heated, blind intercourse of farm-life, to the spoken world beyond. They were aware of the lips and the mind of the world speaking and giving utterance, they heard the sound in the distance, and they strained to listen.

It was enough for the men, that the earth heaved and opened its furrow to them, that the wind blew to dry the wet wheat, and set the young ears of corn wheeling freshly round about; it was enough that they helped the cow in labour, or ferreted the rats from under the barn, or broke the back of a rabbit with a sharp knock of the hand. So much warmth and generating and pain and death did they know in their blood, earth and sky and beast and green plants, so much exchange and interchange they had with these, that they lived full and surcharged, their senses full fed, their faces always turned to the heat of the blood, staring into the sun, dazed with looking towards the source of generation, unable to turn round.

But the woman wanted another form of life than this, something that was not blood-intimacy. Her house faced out from the farm-buildings and fields, looked out to the road and the village with church and Hall and the world beyond. She stood to see the far-off world of cities and governments and the active scope of man, the magic land to her, where secrets were made known and desires fulfilled. She faced outwards to where men moved dominant and creative, having turned their back on the pulsing heat of creation, and with this behind them, were set out to discover what was beyond, to enlarge their own scope and range and freedom; whereas the Brangwen men faced inwards to the teeming life of creation, which poured unresolved into their veins.

(D H Lawrence, *The Rainbow*, Wordsworth Edition 1995)



Discussion

1. **In what ways do the shaded areas in the contextual and critical materials illuminate sections of the extract which are similarly shaded (yellow for critical comments; green for contextualizing material)?**
2. **How far have the yellow shaded areas of the extract helped you to understand the meaning of the critic's term "metaphysic"?**
3. **Which additional areas of the extract might be shaded green or yellow and for what reasons?**

1. Practise writing some brief responses which incorporate critical views into your appreciation of the extract.

Example:

The Brangwen men are presented as disconnected from the established Christian church which is "standing above him and beyond him in the distance." Lawrence's use of "above" and "beyond" clearly demonstrates men's alienation from the civilised ways of the church of England. Instead, as Kelly points out, Lawrence has explored "what constitutes religion for the individual" in the farming men who are devoted to a kind of fertility cult, worshipping the simple sensuality of the natural world which surrounds them and which they held between "the grip of their knees."

2. Do the same with the contextual materials.

Example:

The frustrations and yearning of the Brangwen women as they seek "another form of life" is echoed by the immediate success of the Women's Institute (launched in Britain in the same year as Lawrence's novel was published) which gave women opportunities to "revitalize" the farming industry as well as to explore boundaries beyond the gates of their farms.

3. Explore some of the ways in which you might combine the contents of the two examples above so as to create a single paragraph of analytical writing which addresses AO3 and AO5 as well as AO1 and AO2.
4. By examining other aspects of the extract and choosing your own examples, practice your skills of combining both critical and contextual material in the same paragraph while keeping the emphasis firmly upon literary critical analysis.

Hint: As you become more ambitious in writing of this sort, you will be more dependent upon a clear plan and well-annotated text in order to keep your response fluent and coherent.



Section 3

In this section you will find 3 more extracts of prose which can be used for exam practice.

Extract A

In addition to offering opportunities for a full analysis, each extract might be used to focus upon different characteristics of prose fiction and the writer's craft. After each extract there are suggestions for discussion.

"Hillo, William!" She was at the station after all, standing just as he had imagined, apart from the others, and—William's heart leapt—she was alone.

"Hallo, Isabel!" William stared. He thought she looked so beautiful that he had to say something, "You look very cool."

"Do I?" said Isabel. "I don't feel very cool. Come along, your horrid old train is late. The taxi's outside." She put her hand lightly on his arm as they passed the ticket collector. "We've all come to meet you," she said. "But we've left Bobby Kane at the sweet shop, to be called for."

"Oh!" said William. It was all he could say for the moment.

There in the glare waited the taxi, with Bill Hunt and Dennis Green sprawling on one side, their hats tilted over their faces, while on the other, Moira Morrison, in a bonnet like a huge strawberry, jumped up and down.

"No ice! No ice! No ice!" she shouted gaily.

And Dennis chimed in from under his hat. "Only to be had from the fishmonger's."

And Bill Hunt, emerging, added, "With whole fish in it."

"Oh, what a bore!" wailed Isabel. And she explained to William how they had been chasing round the town for ice while she waited for him. "Simply everything is running down the steep cliffs into the sea, beginning with the butter."

"We shall have to anoint ourselves with butter," said Dennis. "May thy head, William, lack not ointment."

"Look here," said William, "how are we going to sit? I'd better get up by the driver."

"No, Bobby Kane's by the driver," said Isabel. "You're to sit between Moira and me." The taxi started.

"What have you got in those mysterious parcels?"

"De-cap-it-ated heads!" said Bill Hunt, shuddering beneath his hat.

"Oh, fruit!" Isabel sounded very pleased. "Wise William! A melon and a pineapple. How too nice!"

"No, wait a bit," said William, smiling. But he really was anxious. "I brought them down for the kiddies."

"Oh, my dear!" Isabel laughed, and slipped her hand through his arm. "They'd be rolling in agonies if they were to eat them. No"—she patted his hand—"you must bring them something next time. I refuse to part with my pineapple."

"Cruel Isabel! Do let me smell it!" said Moira. She flung her arms across William appealingly. "Oh!" The strawberry bonnet fell forward: she sounded quite faint.

"A Lady in Love with a Pineapple," said Dennis, as the taxi drew up before a little shop with a striped blind. Out came Bobby Kane, his arms full of little packets.

"I do hope they'll be good. I've chosen them because of the colours. There are some round things which really look too divine. And just look at this nougat," he cried ecstatically, "just look at it! It's a perfect little ballet."

But at that moment the shopman appeared. "Oh, I forgot. They're none of them paid for," said Bobby, looking frightened. Isabel gave the shopman a note, and Bobby was radiant again. "Hallo, William! I'm sitting by the driver." And bareheaded, all in white, with his sleeves rolled up to the shoulders, he leapt into his place. "Avanti!" he cried...



After tea the others went off to bathe, while William stayed and made his peace with the kiddies. But Johnny and Paddy were asleep, the rose-red glow had paled, bats were flying, and still the bathers had not returned. As William wandered downstairs, the maid crossed the hall carrying a lamp. He followed her into the sitting-room. It was a long room, coloured yellow. On the wall opposite William someone had painted a young man, over life-size, with very wobbly legs, offering a wide-eyed daisy to a young woman who had one very short arm and one very long, thin one. Over the chairs and sofa there hung strips of black material, covered with big splashes like broken eggs, and everywhere one looked there seemed to be an ash-tray full of cigarette ends. William sat down in one of the arm-chairs. Nowadays, when one felt with one hand down the sides, it wasn't to come upon a sheep with three legs or a cow that had lost one horn, or a very fat dove out of the Noah's Ark. One fished up yet another little paper-covered book of smudged-looking poems... He thought of the wad of papers in his pocket, but he was too hungry and tired to read. The door was open; sounds came from the kitchen. The servants were talking as if they were alone in the house. Suddenly there came a loud screech of laughter and an equally loud "Sh!" They had remembered him. William got up and went through the French windows into the garden, and as he stood there in the shadow he heard the bathers coming up the sandy road; their voices rang through the quiet.

(Katherine Mansfield, *Marriage a la Mode* 1922)

Discussion

1. **How does the author present William as a victim in this extract?**
2. **How are our opinions of the other characters shaped?**
3. **In what ways does the authorial voice suggest an attitude towards the behaviour and values of the characters?**



Extract B

In this early twentieth century short story, the author presents the lives of children in a Dublin suburb.

NORTH RICHMOND STREET, being blind, was a quiet street except at the hour when the Christian Brothers' School set the boys free. An uninhabited house of two storeys stood at the blind end, detached from its neighbours in a square ground. The other houses of the street, conscious of decent lives within them, gazed at one another with brown imperturbable faces.

The former tenant of our house, a priest, had died in the back drawing-room. Air, musty from having been long enclosed, hung in all the rooms, and the waste room behind the kitchen was littered with old useless papers. Among these I found a few paper-covered books, the pages of which were curled and damp: *The Abbot*, by Walter Scott, *The Devout Communicant* and *The Memoirs of Vidocq*. I liked the last best because its leaves were yellow. The wild garden behind the house contained a central apple-tree and a few straggling bushes under one of which I found the late tenant's rusty bicycle-pump. He had been a very charitable priest; in his will he had left all his money to institutions and the furniture of his house to his sister.

When the short days of winter came dusk fell before we had well eaten our dinners. When we met in the street the houses had grown sombre. The space of sky above us was the colour of ever-changing violet and towards it the lamps of the street lifted their feeble lanterns. The cold air stung us and we played till our bodies glowed. Our shouts echoed in the silent street. The career of our play brought us through the dark muddy lanes behind the houses where we ran the gauntlet of the rough tribes from the cottages, to the back doors of the dark dripping gardens where odours arose from the ashpits, to the dark odorous stables where a coachman smoothed and combed the horse or shook music from the buckled harness. When we returned to the street, light from the kitchen windows had filled the areas. If my uncle was seen turning the corner we hid in the shadow until we had seen him safely housed. Or if Mangan's sister came out on the doorstep to call her brother in to his tea we watched her from our shadow peer up and down the street. We waited to see whether she would remain or go in and, if she remained, we left our shadow and walked up to Mangan's steps resignedly. She was waiting for us, her figure defined by the light from the half-opened door. Her brother always teased her before he obeyed and I stood by the railings looking at her. Her dress swung as she moved her body and the soft rope of her hair tossed from side to side.

Every morning I lay on the floor in the front parlour watching her door. The blind was pulled down to within an inch of the sash so that I could not be seen. When she came out on the doorstep my heart leaped. I ran to the hall, seized my books and followed her. I kept her brown figure always in my eye and, when we came near the point at which our ways diverged, I quickened my pace and passed her. This happened morning after morning. I had never spoken to her, except for a few casual words, and yet her name was like a summons to all my foolish blood.

Her image accompanied me even in places the most hostile to romance. On Saturday evenings when my aunt went marketing I had to go to carry some of the parcels. We walked through the flaring streets, jostled by drunken men and bargaining women, amid the curses of labourers, the shrill litanies of shop-boys who stood on guard by the barrels of pigs' cheeks, the nasal chanting of street-singers, who sang a come-all-you about O'Donovan Rossa, or a ballad about the troubles in our native land. These noises converged in a single sensation of life for me: I imagined that I bore my chalice safely through a throng of foes. Her name sprang to my lips at moments in strange prayers and praises which I myself



did not understand. My eyes were often full of tears (I could not tell why) and at times a flood from my heart seemed to pour itself out into my bosom. I thought little of the future. I did not know whether I would ever speak to her or not or, if I spoke to her, how I could tell her of my confused adoration. But my body was like a harp and her words and gestures were like fingers running upon the wires.

One evening I went into the back drawing-room in which the priest had died. It was a dark rainy evening and there was no sound in the house. Through one of the broken panes I heard the rain impinge upon the earth, the fine incessant needles of water playing in the sodden beds. Some distant lamp or lighted window gleamed below me. I was thankful that I could see so little. All my senses seemed to desire to veil themselves and, feeling that I was about to slip from them, I pressed the palms of my hands together until they trembled, murmuring: "O love! O love!" many times.

At last she spoke to me. When she addressed the first words to me I was so confused that I did not know what to answer. She asked me was I going to Araby. I forgot whether I answered yes or no. It would be a splendid bazaar, she said; she would love to go.

"And why can't you?" I asked.

While she spoke she turned a silver bracelet round and round her wrist. She could not go, she said, because there would be a retreat that week in her convent. Her brother and two other boys were fighting for their caps and I was alone at the railings. She held one of the spikes, bowing her head towards me. The light from the lamp opposite our door caught the white curve of her neck, lit up her hair that rested there and, falling, lit up the hand upon the railing. It fell over one side of her dress and caught the white border of a petticoat, just visible as she stood at ease.

"It's well for you," she said.

"If I go," I said, "I will bring you something."

(James Joyce, *Araby*, from *The Dubliners*, 1914)

Discussion

1. Consider some of the ways in which the author creates atmosphere in this extract.
2. Is the presentation of childhood convincing? How would you support your view?
3. Consider some of the ways in which the author has used metaphor.



Extract C

In this early 20th century novel, the author presents a marriage in crisis, Mr Hurstwood having developed an interest in another woman, Carrie.

As a matter of fact, no man as clever as Hurstwood—as observant and sensitive to atmospheres of many sorts, particularly upon his own plane of thought—would have made the mistake which he did in regard to his wife, wrought up as she was, had he not been occupied mentally with a very different train of thought. Had not the influence of Carrie's regard for him, the elation which her promise aroused in him, lasted over, he would not have seen the house in so pleasant a mood. It was not extraordinarily bright and merry this evening. He was merely very much mistaken, and would have been much more fitted to cope with it had he come home in his normal state.

After he had studied his paper a few moments longer, he felt that he ought to modify matters in some way or other. Evidently his wife was not going to patch up peace at a word. So he said: "Where did George get the dog he has there in the yard?" "I don't know," she snapped.

He put his paper down on his knees and gazed idly out of the window. He did not propose to lose his temper, but merely to be persistent and agreeable, and by a few questions bring around a mild understanding of some sort.

"Why do you feel so bad about that affair of this morning?" he said, at last. "We needn't quarrel about that. You know you can go to Waukesha if you want to." "So you can stay here and trifle around with some one else?" she exclaimed, turning to him a determined countenance upon which was drawn a sharp and wrathful sneer.

He stopped as if slapped in the face. In an instant his persuasive, conciliatory manner fled. He was on the defensive at a wink and puzzled for a word to reply.

"What do you mean?" he said at last, straightening himself and gazing at the cold, determined figure before him, who paid no attention, but went on arranging herself before the mirror.

"You know what I mean," she said, finally, as if there were a world of information which she held in reserve—which she did not need to tell.

"Well, I don't," he said, stubbornly, yet nervous and alert for what should come next. The finality of the woman's manner took away his feeling of superiority in battle.

She made no answer.

"Hmph!" he murmured, with a movement of his head to one side. It was the weakest thing he had ever done. It was totally unassured.

Mrs. Hurstwood noticed the lack of colour in it. She turned upon him, animal-like, able to strike an effectual second blow.

"I want the Waukesha money to-morrow morning," she said.

He looked at her in amazement. Never before had he seen such a cold, steely determination in her eye—such a cruel look of indifference. She seemed a thorough master of her mood—thoroughly confident and determined to wrest all control from him. He felt that all his resources could not defend him. He must attack.

"What do you mean?" he said, jumping up. "You want! I'd like to know what's got into you to-night."



“Nothing’s got into me,” she said, flaming. “I want that money. You can do your swaggering afterwards.” “Swaggering, eh! What! You’ll get nothing from me. What do you mean by your insinuations, anyhow?” “Where were you last night?” she answered. The words were hot as they came. “Who were you driving with on Washington Boulevard? Who were you with at the theatre when George saw you? Do you think I’m a fool to be duped by you? Do you think I’ll sit at home here and take your ‘too busys’ and ‘can’t come,’ while you parade around and make out that I’m unable to come? I want you to know that lordly airs have come to an end so far as I am concerned. You can’t dictate to me nor my children. I’m through with you entirely.”

“It’s a lie,” he said, driven to a corner and knowing no other excuse.

“Lie, eh!” she said, fiercely, but with returning reserve; “you may call it a lie if you want to, but I know.”

“It’s a lie, I tell you,” he said, in a low, sharp voice. “You’ve been searching around for some cheap accusation for months, and now you think you have it. You think you’ll spring something and get the upper hand. Well, I tell you, you can’t. As long as I’m in this house I’m master of it, and you or any one else won’t dictate to me—do you hear?”

He crept toward her with a light in his eye that was ominous. Something in the woman’s cool, cynical, upper-handish manner, as if she were already master, caused him to feel for the moment as if he could strangle her.

She gazed at him—a pythoness in humour.

“I’m not dictating to you,” she returned; “I’m telling you what I want.”

The answer was so cool, so rich in bravado, that somehow it took the wind out of his sails. He could not attack her, he could not ask her for proofs. Somehow he felt evidence, law, the remembrance of all his property which she held in her name, to be shining in her glance. He was like a vessel, powerful and dangerous, but rolling and floundering without sail.

“And I’m telling you,” he said in the end, slightly recovering himself, “what you’ll not get.”

“We’ll see about it,” she said. “I’ll find out what my rights are. Perhaps you’ll talk to a lawyer, if you won’t to me.”

It was a magnificent play, and had its effect. Hurstwood fell back beaten. He knew now that he had more than mere bluff to contend with. He felt that he was face to face with a dull proposition. What to say he hardly knew. All the merriment had gone out of the day. He was disturbed, wretched, resentful. What should he do?

“Do as you please,” he said, at last. “I’ll have nothing more to do with you,” and out he strode.

(From *Sister Carrie* by Theodore Dreiser, 1900)

Discussion

1. How does the narrator’s tone differ from that of his characters? How does Dreiser achieve this and what is the effect of these differences?
2. How is tension created in this scene?
3. How effective is the imagery and figurative language?