
A-level

ENGLISH LITERATURE A

(7712/2B)

Paper 2B: Texts in Shared Contexts: Modern Times: Literature from 1945 to the Present Day

2015

Morning

Time allowed: 2 hours 30 minutes

For this paper you must have:

- an AQA 12-page answer booklet
- a copy of the Modern Times Question Paper Insert
- a copy of each of the set texts you have studied for this paper. These texts must **not** be annotated and must **not** contain additional notes or materials.

Instructions

- Write the information required on the front of your answer book. The **Examining Body** for this paper is AQA. The **Paper Reference** is 7712/2B.
- Read all of the questions. Then choose **either** Option 1, Option 2 **or** Option 3. Answer **one** question from Section A and **both** questions from Section B from your chosen option. You must answer questions from **only one** option.
- Do all rough work in your answer book. Cross through any work that you do not want to be marked.

Information

- The marks for questions are shown in brackets.
- The maximum mark for this paper is 75.
- You will be marked on your ability to:
 - use good English
 - organise information clearly
 - use specialist vocabulary where appropriate.
- In your response you need to:
 - analyse carefully the writers' methods
 - explore the contexts of the texts you are writing about
 - explore connections across the texts you have studied
 - explore different interpretations of your texts.

Option 1

Section A: Poetry Set Text

Answer **one** question in this section.

***Feminine Gospels* – Carol Ann Duffy**

Either

0	1
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‘The title of the collection suggests Duffy’s agenda is to challenge traditional male ideas about the “gospel truth”.’

Examine this view.

[25 marks]

or

0	2
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Examine the view that this collection ‘excludes men as subjects and makes no attempt to engage them as readers’.

[25 marks]

***Skirrid Hill* – Owen Sheers**

or

0	3
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‘In *Skirrid Hill* relationships are frail, fragile, falling apart.’

Examine this view of Sheers’ presentation of relationships in the collection.

[25 marks]

or

0	4
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Sheers prefaces *Skirrid Hill* with a quotation from T.S.Eliot.

Examine the significance of Sheers’ choice of this preface for his collection.

[25 marks]

Option 1

Section B: Drama and Prose Contextual Linking

Read the insert. Answer **both** questions in this section.

Read the insert carefully. It is taken from *Brick Lane*, a novel by Monica Ali published in 2003. 18-year-old Nazneen has moved from Bangladesh to Britain to become the wife of Chanu, an older man. Having no prior experience of Britain and very little knowledge of the English language, Nazneen spends her time in their small flat looking out across a housing estate.

Answer **both** questions.

0	5
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Explore the significance of isolation in this extract. Remember to include in your answer relevant detailed analysis of the ways that Ali shapes meanings.

[25 marks]

0	6
---	---

‘Modern literature shows isolated characters as being profoundly damaged.’

Compare the significance of isolation in **two** other texts you have studied. Remember to include in your answer reference to how meanings are shaped in the texts you are comparing.

You must use **one** drama text and **one** prose text in your response.

[25 marks]

Option 2

Section A: Drama Set Text

Answer **one** question in this section.

***A Streetcar Named Desire* – Tennessee Williams**

Either

0	7
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‘Primarily, this play presents a clash between two cultures, not two individuals.’

Examine this view of *A Streetcar Named Desire*.

[25 marks]

or

0	8
---	---

Examine the view that *A Streetcar Named Desire* fails because the relationship between Stella and Stanley is ‘inconceivable’.

[25 marks]

***Top Girls* – Caryl Churchill**

or

0	9
---	---

‘Churchill presents a cynical, negative critique of powerful women.’

Examine this view of *Top Girls*.

[25 marks]

or

1	0
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Examine the view that the character of Dull Gret is insignificant within the play as a whole.

[25 marks]

Option 2

Section B: Prose and Poetry Contextual Linking

Read the insert. Answer **both** questions in this section.

Read the insert carefully. It is taken from *Brick Lane*, a novel by Monica Ali published in 2003. 18-year-old Nazneen has moved from Bangladesh to Britain to become the wife of Chanu, an older man. Having no prior experience of Britain and very little knowledge of the English language, Nazneen spends her time in their small flat looking out across a housing estate.

Answer **both** questions.

1	1
---	---

Explore the significance of isolation in this extract. Remember to include in your answer relevant detailed analysis of the ways that Ali shapes meanings.

[25 marks]

1	2
---	---

‘Modern literature shows isolated characters as being profoundly damaged.’

Compare the significance of isolation in **two** other texts you have studied. Remember to include in your answer reference to how meanings are shaped in the texts you are comparing.

You must use **one** prose text and **one** poetry text in your response, at least **one** of which must be a text written post-2000.

[25 marks]

Option 3

Section A: Prose Set Text

Answer **one** question in this section.

***Waterland* – Graham Swift**

Either

1	3
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Examine the view that the 'Fenland landscape' is the most compelling character in this novel.

[25 marks]

or

1	4
---	---

'Graham Swift presents history as being as much about the private as the public.'

Examine this view of *Waterland*.

[25 marks]

***The Handmaid's Tale* – Margaret Atwood**

or

1	5
---	---

'In Gilead, men are victims too.'

Examine this view of Atwood's presentation of male characters in *The Handmaid's Tale*.

[25 marks]

or

1	6
---	---

Examine the view that, in *The Handmaid's Tale*, Atwood's primary concern is sexual violence against women.

[25 marks]

Option 3

Section B: Drama and Poetry Contextual Linking

Read the insert. Answer **both** questions in this section.

Read the insert carefully. It is taken from *Brick Lane*, a novel by Monica Ali published in 2003. 18-year-old Nazneen has moved from Bangladesh to Britain to become the wife of Chanu, an older man. Having no prior experience of Britain and very little knowledge of the English language, Nazneen spends her time in their small flat looking out across a housing estate.

Answer **both** questions.

1	7
---	---

Explore the significance of isolation in this extract. Remember to include in your answer relevant detailed analysis of the ways that Ali shapes meanings.

[25 marks]

1	8
---	---

‘Modern literature shows isolated characters as being profoundly damaged.’

Compare the significance of isolation in **two** other texts you have studied. Remember to include in your answer reference to how meanings are shaped in the texts you are comparing.

You must use **one** poetry text written post-2000 and **one** drama text in your response.

[25 marks]

END OF QUESTIONS

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A-LEVEL ENGLISH LITERATURE A 7712/2B

Paper 2B: Texts in Shared Contexts: Modern Times: Literature from 1945 to the Present Day

SPECIMEN INSERT

Six months now since she'd been sent away to London. Every morning before she opened her eyes she thought, if I were the wishing type, I know what I would wish. And then she opened her eyes and saw Chanu's puffy face on the pillow next to her, his lips parted indignantly even as he slept. She saw the pink dressing table with the curly-sided mirror, and the monstrous black wardrobe that claimed most of the room. Was it cheating? To think, I know what I would wish? Was it not the same as making the wish? If she knew what the wish would be, then somewhere in her heart she had already made it.

The tattoo lady waved back at Nazneen. She scratched her arms, her shoulders, the accessible portions of her buttocks. She yawned and lit a cigarette. At least two thirds of the flesh on show was covered in ink. Nazneen had never been close enough (never closer than this, never further) to decipher the designs. Chanu said the tattoo lady was Hell's Angel, which upset Nazneen. She thought the tattoos might be flowers, or birds. They were ugly and they made the tattoo lady more ugly than was necessary, but the tattoo lady clearly did not care. Every time Nazneen saw her she wore the same look of boredom and detachment. Such a state was sought by the sadhus who walked in rags through the Muslim villages, indifferent to the kindness of strangers, the unkind sun.

Nazneen thought sometimes of going downstairs, crossing the yard and climbing the Rosemead stairwell to the fourth floor. She might have to knock on a few doors before the tattoo lady answered. She would take something, an offering of samosas or bhajis, and the tattoo lady would smile and Nazneen would smile and perhaps they would sit together by the window and let the time pass more easily. She thought of it but she would not go. Strangers would answer if she knocked on the wrong door. The tattoo lady might be angry at an unwanted interruption. It was clear she did not like to leave her chair. And even if she wasn't angry, what would be the point? Nazneen could say two things in English: sorry and thank you. She could spend another day alone. It was only another day.

She should be getting on with the evening meal. The lamb curry was prepared. She had made it last night with tomatoes and new potatoes. There was chicken saved in the freezer from the last time Dr Azad had been invited but had cancelled at the last minute. There was still the dal to make, and the vegetable dishes, the spices to grind, the rice to wash, and the sauce to prepare for the fish that Chanu would bring this evening. She would rinse the glasses and rub them with newspaper to make them shine. The tablecloth had some spots to be scrubbed out. What if it went wrong? The rice might stick. She might over-salt the dal. Chanu might forget the fish.

It was only dinner. One dinner. One guest.

She left the window open. Standing on the sofa to reach, she picked up the Holy Qur'an from the high shelf that Chanu, under duress, had specially built. She made her intention as fervently as possible, seeking refuge from Satan with fists clenched and fingernails digging into her palms. Then she selected a page at random and began to read.

To God belongs all that the heavens and the earth contain. We exhort you, as we have exhorted those to whom the Book was given before you, to fear God. If you deny Him, know that to God belongs all that the heavens and earth contain. God is self-sufficient and worthy of praise.

The words calmed her stomach and she was pleased. Even Dr Azad was nothing as to God. To God belongs all that the heavens and the earth contain. She said it over a few times, aloud. She was composed. Nothing could bother her.
