

Sample exam papers

Component 1: 20th-century literature reading and creative prose writing (1 hour 45 minutes)

SECTION A: 40 marks

Read the passage below carefully. Then answer all the questions that follow.

The story is about twins, Lewis and Benjamin who have lived all their life together on an isolated farm called The Vision. In this passage, the brothers are given a surprise by their nephew Kevin for their 80th birthday.

Kevin's present had not yet arrived. It would be ready, he said, at ten, and it was an hour's drive away.

Benjamin blinked. 'And where would that be?'

'A surprise,' Kevin grinned at Theo. 'It's a mystery tour.'

'We canna go till we fed the animals.'

'The animals are fed,' he said; and Theo was staying behind to keep an eye of the place.

'Mystery tour' suggested a visit to a stately home; so the twins went upstairs and came down in starched white collar, and their best brown suits. They checked their watches with Big Ben, and said they were ready to go.

'Whose is the car?' asked Benjamin, suspiciously.

'Borrowed,' said Kevin.

- 10 When Lewis got into the back seat, Eileen's terrier took a nip at his sleeve.

He said, 'Angry little tiddler, ain't he?' – and the car lurched off down the track.

They drove through Rhulen and then up among some stumpy hills where Benjamin pointed out the sign to Bryn-Draenog. He winced every time Kevin came to a corner. Then the hills were less rocky; the oak trees were larger, and there were half-timbered manors painted black and white. In Kington High Street, they got stuck behind a delivery van, but soon they were out among fields of red Hereford cattle; and, every mile or so they passed the gates of a big red-brick country house.

'Is it Croft Castle we're going?' Benjamin asked.

'Perhaps,' said Kevin.

'Quite a distance, then?'

- 20 'Miles and miles,' he said and, half a mile further, turned off the main road. The car bounced down a stretch of bumpy tarmac. The first thing Lewis saw was an orange wind-sock: 'Oh my! It's an aerodrome!'

A black hangar came into view, then some Nissen huts, and then the runway.

Benjamin seemed to shrivel at the sight of it. He looked frail and old, and his lower lip was trembling: 'No. No. I'd not go in a plane.'

'But, Uncle, it's safer than driving a car ...'

'Aye! With your driving, maybe! No, No ... I'd never go in a plane.'

The car had scarcely stopped moving before Lewis had hopped out and was standing on the tarmac, stupefied.

Ranked on the grass were about thirty light aircraft – Cessnas mostly, belonging to members of the West Midlands Flying Club. Some were white. Some were brightly coloured. Some had stripes, and all of their wingtips quivered as if they were itching to be airborne.

- 30 The wind was freshening. Patches of shadow and sunlight raced one another down the runway. On the control tower, an anemometer whirled its little black cups. On the far side of the airfield was a line of swaying poplars.

'Breezy,' said Kevin, his hair blowing over his eyes.

A young man in jeans and a green bomber jacket shouted, 'Hi, Kev!' and strolled over dragging his boot-heels across the asphalt.

'I'm your pilot.' He grasped Lewis by the hand. 'Alex Pitt.'

'Thank you very much.'

'Happy birthday!' he said, turning to Benjamin. 'Never too late to take up flying, eh?' Then, pointing to the Nissen huts, he asked them to follow. 'One or two formalities,' he said, 'and we're off!'

'Aye, aye, sir!' said Lewis, thinking that was what you said to a pilot.

[...]

- 40 'Not today,' Kevin said. 'I'm flying with my uncles.'

The pilot ushered them into the Briefing Room, where Lewis greedily examined the notice-board, the maps marked with airlines, and a blackboard covered with an instructor's scribbles.

A black labrador then bounded out of the air-controller's office, and rested its paws on Benjamin's trousers. In the animal's appealing stare, he seemed to see a warning not to go. He felt dizzy, and had to sit down.

The pilot put three printed forms on the blue formica table – one ... two ... three ... and asked the passengers to sign.

'Insurance!' he said. 'In case we land in a field and kill some old farmer's cow!'

Benjamin gave a start, and almost dropped the ball point pen.

'Don't you scare my uncles,' Kevin bantered.

'Nothing could scare your uncles,' said the pilot, and Benjamin was aware that he had signed.

- 50 Eileen and the terrier waved at the flying party as they walked across the grass towards the Cessna. There was a broad brown stripe down the length of the fuselage, and a much thinner stripe along the wheel-spats. The plane's registration number was G-BCTK.

'TK stands for Tango Kilo,' Alex said. 'That's its name.'

'Funny name,' said Lewis.

Alex then began the external checks, explaining each one in turn. Benjamin stood forlornly by the wingtip, and thought of all the crashes in Lewis's scrapbook.

But Lewis seemed to think he was Mr Lindbergh.

He crouched down. He stood on tiptoe. His eyes were glued to the young man's every movement. He watched how to check the landing gear, to make sure of the flaps and ailerons, and how to test the warning horn that beeped if the plane was about to stall.

- 60 He noticed a slight dent in the tail-fin.

'Probably a bird,' said Alex.

'Oh!' said Benjamin.

His face fell even further when the time came to board. He sat in the back seat and, when Kevin fastened his safety-belt, he felt more trapped and miserable than ever.

Lewis sat on the pilot's right, trying to make sense of all the dials and gauges.

'And this one?' he ventured. 'Joystick, I suppose?'

The plane was a trainer and had dual controls.

Alex corrected him: 'We call it the control column nowadays. One for me and one for you if I faint.'

- 70 There was a hiccough from the back seat but Benjamin's voice was drowned by the rattle of the propeller. He closed his eyes as the plane taxied out to the holding-point.

'Tango Kilo checks completed,' the pilot radioed. Then, with a touch of throttle, the plane was on the runway.

'Tango Kilo leaving circuit to the west. Estimate return forty-five minutes. Repeat, forty-five minutes.'

'Roger, Kilo,' a voice came back over the intercom.

'We take off at sixty!' Alex bawled into Lewis's ear – and the rattle rose to a roar.

By the time Benjamin opened his eyes again, the plane had climbed to 1,500 feet.

Down below there was a field of mustard in flower. A greenhouse flashed in the sun. The stream of white dust was a farmer fertilizing a field. Woods went by, a pond coated with duckweed, and a quarry with a team of yellow bulldozers. He thought a black car looked a bit like a beetle.

- 80 He still felt a little nauseous, but his fists were no longer clenched. On ahead was the Black Hill and clouds streaming low over the summit. Alex climbed the plane another thousand feet, and warned them to expect a bump or two.

'Turbulence,' he said.

The pines on Cefn Hill were blue-green and black-green in the varied light. The heather was purple. The sheep were the size and shape of maggots, and there were inky pools with rings of reed around them. The plane's shadow moved up on a herd of grazing ponies, which scattered in all directions.

For one terrible moment, the cliffs above Craig-y-Fedw came rushing up to meet them. But Alex veered off and eased down into the valley.

'Look!' cried Lewis. 'It's The Rock!'

And there it was – the rusty stockade, the pool, the broken roof, and Meg's white geese in a panic!

90 And there, on the left, was The Vision! And there was Theo!

'Aye! It's Theo all right!' Now it was Benjamin's turn to be excited. He pressed his nose against the window and peered down at the tiny brown figure, waving its hat in the orchard, as the plane flew low on its second circuit, and dipped its wings.

Five minutes later, they were out of the hills and Benjamin was definitely enjoying himself.

Alex then glanced over his shoulder at Kevin, who winked.

He leaned across to Lewis and shouted, 'It's your turn.'

'My turn?' He frowned.

'To fly.'

100 Gingerly, Lewis laid his hands on the control column and strained, with his good ear, to catch each word of the instructor. He pulled towards him, and the nose lifted. He pushed, and it fell away. He pressed to the left, and the horizon tilted. Then he straightened up and pressed to the right.

'You're on your own now,' said Alex, calmly, and Lewis made the same manoeuvres, on his own.

And suddenly he felt – even if the engine failed, even if the plane took a nosedive and their souls flew up to Heaven – that all the frustrations of his cramped and frugal life now counted for nothing, because, for ten magnificent minutes, he had done what he wanted to do.

'Try a figure-of-eight,' Alex suggested. 'Down on the left! ... That's enough! ... Now straighten up! ... Now down on the right! ... Easy does it! ... Good! ... Now another big loop and we'll call it a day.'

Not until he had handed back the controls did Lewis realize that he had written the figures eight and zero in the sky.

110 They were coming in to land. They saw the runway approaching, first as a rectangle, then a trapeze, then as a sawn-off pyramid, as the pilot radioed his 'finals' and the plane touched down.

'Thank you very much,' said Lewis, shyly smiling.

'It was my great pleasure,' Alex said, and helped the twins step down.

From *On the Black Hill* by Bruce Chatwin

1.1 Read lines 1–20 (Kevin's present ... to ... bumpy tarmac.)

List five things you learn about the car journey in these lines.

[5]

1.2 Read lines 20–49 (The first thing Lewis saw ... to ... aware that he had signed.)

What impressions does the writer create of Benjamin and Lewis in these lines?

[10]

You must refer to the language used in the text to support your answer, using relevant subject terminology where appropriate.

1.3 Read lines 50–76 (Eileen and the terrier waved ... to ... 1,500 feet.)

How does the writer show Benjamin's fear in these lines?

[5]

You must refer to the language used in the text to support your answer, using relevant subject terminology where appropriate.

1.4 Read lines 77–94 (Down below there was a field ... to ... definitely enjoying himself.)

How does the writer show the joy and wonder of the flight in these lines?

[10]

You should write about:

- what happens in these lines to build excitement and drama
- the writer's use of language and structure to create excitement and drama
- the effects on the reader.

You must refer to the text to support your answer, using relevant subject terminology where appropriate.

1.5 Consider the whole extract.

'This was a brilliant birthday present for the twins.' How far do you agree with this view?

[10]

You should write about:

- your own thoughts and feelings about the experience
- how Lewis and Benjamin are presented
- how the pilot and the plane journey are presented
- how the writer has created these thoughts and feelings.

You must refer to the text to support your answer.

SECTION B: 40 marks

In this section you will be assessed for the quality of your **creative prose writing** skills.

24 marks are awarded for communication and organisation; 16 marks are awarded for vocabulary, sentence structure, spelling and punctuation.

You should aim to write about 450–600 words.

[40]

Choose **one** of the following titles for your writing:

Either

a) A day I won't forget.

or

b) Write about a time when you had to look after something or someone.

or

c) Write a story that begins:

'Don't turn around,' the voice behind me said.

or

d) Write a story that ends:

Finally, I had to admit, that I had made the wrong choice.