Year 10
English Literature
Unseen Poetry Booklet

1 hour on each pair of poems
20 marks
SECTION B

Spend about 1 hour on this section. Think carefully about the poems before you write your answer.

In the first of the following poems, ‘Looking into the Field’, the narrator describes a moment in the life of a farmer. In the second, ‘Hatching’, the narrator describes a moment of birth.

Write about both poems and their effect on you. Show how they are similar and how they are different.

You may write about each poem separately and then compare them, or make comparisons where appropriate in your answer as a whole.

You may wish to include some or all of these points:
* the content of the poems – what they are about;
* the ideas the poets may have wanted us to think about;
* the mood or atmosphere of the poems;
* how they are written – words and phrases you find interesting, the way they are organised, and so on;
* your responses to the poems.

Looking into the Field

From the five corners of the field
they lift their heads and move towards him.
This is the man who brings food.
His collie presses against the window
of the Land Rover and leaves a nose-round watermark.
He walks to the four stiff legs of a dead sheep
and bends to grasp fistfuls of tight wool.
Lifting from his knees he pulls and rolls
the ewe upright, setting the legs kicking again.
Tubful of life, she bleats and waddles to new grass.
The field has been put to rights and as he walks back
his flock return to their grass and the first autumn leaves.
Four disappointed crows flap into the sky she’d
stared up through like a cloudy blue tunnel.

Tony Curtis

Hatching

His night has come to an end and now he must break
The little sky which shielded him. He taps
Once and nothing happens. He tries again
And makes a mark like lightning. He must thunder,
Storm and shake and break a universe
Too small and safe. His daring beak does this.

And now he is out in a world of smells and spaces.
He shivers. Any air is wind to him.
He huddles under wings but does not know
He is already shaping feathers for
A journey into the sky. His solo flight
Will bring the sun upon his back! He’ll bear it,
Carry it, learn the real winds, by instinct
Return for food and, larger than his mother,
Avid for air, harry her with his hunger.

Elizabeth Jennings
Names
by Wendy Cope

She was Eliza for a few weeks
when she was a baby—
Eliza Lily. Soon it changed to Lil.
Later she was Miss Steward in the baker’s shop
And then ‘my love’, ‘my darling’, Mother.
Widowed at thirty, she went back to work
As Mrs Hand. Her daughter grew up,
Married and gave birth.
Now she was Nanna. ‘Everybody
Calls me Nanna,’ she would say to visitors.
And so they did—friends, tradesmen, the doctor.
In the geriatric ward
They used the patients’ Christian names.
‘Lil,’ we said, ‘or Nanna,’
But it wasn’t in her file
And for those last bewildered weeks
She was Eliza once again.

In Oak Terrace
by Tony Connor

Old and alone, she sits at nights,
Nodding before the television.
The house is quiet now. She knits,
rises to put the kettle on,
watches a cowboy’s killing, reads
the local Births and Deaths, and falls
asleep at ‘Growing stock-piles of war-heads’.
A world that threatens worse ills
fades. She dreams of life spent
in the one house: suffers again
poverty, sickness, abandonment,
a child’s death, a brother’s brain
melting to madness. Seventy years
of common trouble; the kettle sings.
At midnight she says her silly prayers,
And takes her teeth out, and collects her night-things.
SECTION B

Spend about 1 hour on this section. Think carefully about the poems before you write your answer.

In the first of the following poems, ‘The Moth’s Plea’, the moth expresses its feelings about its life and identity. In the second, ‘Weasels’, the narrator describes and expresses his feelings about weasels.

Write about both poems and their effect on you. Show how they are similar and how they are different.

You may write about each poem separately and then compare them, or make comparisons where appropriate in your answer as a whole.

You may wish to include some or all of these points:
- the content of the poems – what they are about;
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- your responses to the poems.

Weasels

They are only scrap for, a furrier
Or trimming for a lady’s wrap.
But before they end on a heap
They are awful in the fields and streams.
Red-brown and nine inches long.
They eat mice and moles and frogs;
Rooks, crows and owls are nothing to them.
Weasels will get through a bush or hedge
For thrush and blackbird eggs.
And swim a mile when they sniff dead fish.

My granddad saw one
Wipe out a granary of rats
And then look around to see
If he had missed any.
Before he enjoyed his huge supper.
Once, in America, a hawk was found
With a weasel’s skull locked to its throat.
Even when chased by a fox
They may stop to kill a chicken.
Weasels like rabbits, too
And go deep into the dark burrows.
In Carmarthen they have hunted in packs
Scampering behind the poor scared hares
Lolloping in the moonlight.
They will also attack a man
If trapped – single and alone.
They jump for the neck.

Weasels will live anywhere smelly
Inside a maggoty sheep carcase
Or a rotted tree-stump,
A crumbled wall crevice or a fish hole
In the riverbank. Their innocent babies
Nest tight at the back of the holes.

Elizabeth Jennings

The Moth’s Plea

I am a disappointment
And much worse.
You hear a flutter, you expect a brilliance of wings,
Colours dancing, a bright
Flutter, but then you see
A brown, bedraggled creature
With a shamefaced, unclean look
Darting upon your curtains and clothes,
Fighting against the light.
I hate myself. It’s no wonder you hate me.

I meddle among your things,
I make a meal out of almost any cloth,
I hide in cupboards and scare
Any who catch me unaware.
I am your enemy – the moth.

You try to keep me away
But I’m wily and when I do
Manage to hide, you chase me, beat me, put
Horrible-smelling balls to poison me.
Have you ever thought what it’s like to be
A parasite,
Someone who gives you a fright,
Who envies the rainbow colours of the bright
Butterflies who hover round flowers all day?
Oh please believe that I do understand how it feels
To be awake in and be afraid of the night.

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John Tripp

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Wind

This house has been far out at sea all night,
The woods crashing through darkness, the booming
hills,
Winds stampeding the fields under the window
Floundering black a stride and blinding wet

Till day rose; then under an orange sky
The hills had new places, and wind welded
Blade-light, luminous black and emerald,
Flexing like the lens of a mad eye.

At noon I scaled along the house-side as far as
The coal-house door. Once I looked up -
Through the brunt wind that dented the balls of my
eyes
The tent of the hills drummed and strained its guy-
rope,

The fields quivering, the skyline a grimace,
At any second to bang and vanish with a flap;
The wind flung a magpie away and a black-
Back gull bent like an iron bar slowly. The house

Rang like some fine green goblet in the note
That any second would shatter it. Now deep
In chairs, in front of the great fire, we grip
Our hearts and cannot entertain book, thought,

Or each other. We watch the fire blazing,
And feel the roots of the house move, but sit on,
Seeing the window tremble to come in,
Hearing the stones cry out under the horizons.

Ted Hughes

Hurricane

Under low black clouds
the wind was all
speedy feet, all horns and breath,
all bangs, howls, rattles,
in every hen house,
church hall and school.

Roaring, screaming, returning,
it made forced entry, shoved walls,
made rifts, brought roofs down,
hitting rooms to sticks apart.

It wrung soft banana trees,
broke tough trunks of palms.
It pounded vines of yams,
left fields battered up.

Invisible with such ecstasy –
with no intervention of sun or man –
everywhere kept changing branches.

Zinc sheets are kites.
Leaves are panic swarms.
Fowls are fixed with feathers turned.
Goats, dogs, pigs,
all are people together.

Then growling it slunk away
from muddy, mossy trail and boats
in hedges: and cows, ratbats, trees,
fish, all dead in the road.

James Berry
SECTION B

Spend about 1 hour on this section. Think carefully about the poems before you write your answer.

In the first of the following poems, ‘The Railway Modeller’, the narrator (Pugh) describes a man (her husband) and his hobby. In the second, ‘The Railway Clerk’, a man expresses his feelings about his life and work.

Write about both poems and their effect on you. Show how they are similar and how they are different.

You may write about each poem separately and then compare them, or make comparisons where appropriate in your answer as a whole.

You may wish to include some or all of these points:
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• your responses to the poems.

The railway modeller

He’s spent all week creating the best part of a village; sculpting the paper strata of its hills, painting them green, growing small metal trees with a teased-out fluff of foliage. Then he built half-timbered card houses, secured them where they belonged and stood back to be sure it was right.

Now he must add the people: so minute, they take more work than anything. He uses a make-up brush tapered to a hair for touching their white plastic into life with flesh-tones, bright splashes, uniform blue and grey…. It takes hours to make an individual, if it’s done with love,

but he doesn’t mind the time spent in his shed, a sufficient universe, and nothing brings a branch line alive like people. Working down on the track, picks raised, or waiting on a paper bench for a train they can’t board, they turn the scene to a frozen photograph.

It’s a shame he can’t, with all his love, move the frame on…. The background radio intrudes news headlines into his thought: today in Parliament the talking fellows were voting on whether to punish men with death. His brush carefully strokes in blond hair; perfects another passenger.

The Railway Clerk

It isn’t my fault.
I do what I’m told
But still I am blamed.
This year, my leave application
Was twice refused.
Every day there is so much work
And I don’t get overtime.
My wife is always asking for more money.
Money, money, where to get money?
My job is such, no one is giving bribe,
While other clerks are in fortunate position, and no promotion even because I am not graduate.

I wish I was bird.

I am never neglecting my responsibility,
I am discharging it properly,
I am doing my duty,
But who is appreciating/
Nobody, I am telling you.

My desk is too small,
the fan is not repaired for two months,
three months.
I am living far off in Borivali,
My children are neglecting studies,
How long this can go on?

Nissam Ezekiel

Sheenagh Pugh

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Write about the poems and their effect on you, considering similarities and differences between them. You may wish to consider:

- Content - what they are about
- Ideas the poets may have wanted us to think about
- Mood and atmosphere
- Words and phrases you find interesting
- Your personal response to the poems

Nettles by Vernon Scannell
My son aged three fell in the nettle bed.
'Bed' seemed a curious name for those green spears,
That regiment of spite behind the shed:
It was no place for rest. With sobs and tears
The boy came seeking comfort and I saw
White blisters beaded on his tender skin.
We soothed him till his pain was not so raw.
At last he offered us a watery grin,
And then I took my billhook, honed the blade
And went outside and slashed in fury with it
Till not a nettle in that fierce parade
Stood upright any more. And then I lit
A funeral pyre to burn the fallen dead,
But in two weeks the busy sun and rain
Had called up tall recruits behind the shed:
My son would often feel sharp wounds again.

"For a Five-Year-Old," by Fleur Adcock
A snail is climbing up the window-sill
into your room, after a night of rain.
You call me in to see, and I explain
that it would be unkind to leave it there:
It might crawl to the floor; we must take care
that no one squashes it. You understand,
and carry it outside, with careful hand,
to eat a daffodil.

I see, then, that a kind of faith prevails:
your gentleness is moulded still by words
from me, who have trapped mice and shot wild birds,
from me, who drowned your kittens, who betrayed
your closest relatives, and who purveyed
the harshest kind of truth to many another.
But that is how things are: I am your mother,
and we are kind to snails.