

Answer **either** Question 1 **or** Question 2.

EITHER

- 1 Read carefully the following poem about a woman who lives on an isolated hill, behind a hedge of hawthorn. (Hawthorn is a thorny plant with white flowers.)

How does the poet's writing make you feel about the woman and the way she lives?

To help you answer this question you might consider:

- the ways in which she describes the woman
- the ways in which she describes the hawthorn hedge
- how the poet's language makes you feel about the woman's life.

The Hawthorn Hedge

How long ago she planted the hawthorn hedge —
she forgets how long ago —
that barrier thorn across the hungry ridge;
thorn and snow.

It is twice as tall as the rider on the tall mare
who draws his reins to peer
in through the bee-hung blossom. Let him stare.
No one is here.

Only the mad old girl from the hut on the hill,
unkempt¹ as an old tree.
She will hide away if you wave your hand or call;
she will not see.

Year-long, wind turns her grindstone² heart and whets³
a thornbranch like a knife,
shouting in winter “Death”; and when the white bud sets,
more loudly, “Life”.

She has forgotten when she planted the hawthorn hedge;
that thorn, that green, that snow;
birdsong and sun dazzled across the ridge —
it was long ago.

Her hands were strong in the earth, her glance on the sky,
her song was sweet on the wind.
The hawthorn hedge took root, grew wild and high
to hide behind.

¹*unkempt*: uncombed, untidy

²*grindstone*: a revolving stone disc used for sharpening blades

³*whets*: sharpens

OR

- 2 Read carefully the following extract from a novel. Robyn has just returned from a tour of a factory led by Vic Wilcox, the Managing Director. Robyn is a lecturer in English Literature and her special interest is novels written about factory conditions.

How does the writer convey to you Robyn's feelings during her visit?

To help you answer this question you might consider:

- the conversations between Robyn and Vic
- how the factory is described by the writer
- how he vividly conveys Robyn's feelings about the factory and towards Vic.

'Well – what did you make of it?' Vic Wilcox demanded, an hour or so later, when they were back in his office after what he had referred to as 'a quick whistle round the works'¹.

Robyn sank down on to a chair. 'I thought it was appalling,' she said.

'Appalling?' He frowned. 'What d'you mean, appalling?'

'The noise. The dirt. The mindless, repetitive work. The ... everything. That men should have to put up with such brutalizing conditions –'

'Now just a minute –'

'Women, too. I did see women, didn't I?' She had a blurred memory of brown-skinned creatures vaguely female in shape but unsexed by their drab, greasy overalls and trousers, working alongside men in some parts of the factory.

'We have a few. I thought you were all for equality?'

'Not equality of oppression.'

'*Oppression?*' He gave a harsh, derisive laugh. 'We don't force people to work here, you know. For every unskilled job we advertise, we get a hundred applicants – more than a hundred. Those women are glad to work here – go and ask 'em if you don't believe me.'

Robyn was silent. She felt confused, battered, exhausted by the sense-impressions of the last hour. For once in her life, she was lost for words, and uncertain of her argumentative ground. She had always taken for granted that unemployment was an evil, a weapon against the working class; but if this was employment then perhaps people were better off without it. 'But the noise,' she said again. 'The dirt!'

'Foundries are dirty places. Metal is noisy stuff to work with. What did you expect?'

What *had* she expected? Nothing, certainly, so like the satanic mills of the early Industrial Revolution. Robyn's mental image of a modern factory had derived mainly from TV commercials and documentaries: deftly edited footage of brightly coloured machines and smoothly moving assembly lines, manned by brisk operators in clean overalls, turning out motor cars or transistor radios to the accompaniment of Mozart² on the sound track. At Pringle's³ there was scarcely any colour, not a clean overall in sight, and instead of Mozart there was a deafening demonic cacophony⁴ that never relented. Nor had she been able to comprehend what was going on. There seemed to be no logic or direction to the factory's activities. Individuals or small groups of men worked on separate tasks with no perceptible relation to each other. Components⁵ were stacked in piles all over the factory floor like the contents of an attic. The whole place seemed designed to produce, not goods for the outside world, but misery for the inmates. What Wilcox called the machine shop had seemed like a prison, and the foundry seemed like hell.

'What exactly is a foundry?' Robyn had said, as they reached a small, scarred wooden door in the corrugated-iron wall. Wilcox halted, his hand on the door. He stared at her incredulously.

'I told you I didn't know anything about ...' She was going to say 'industry', but it occurred to her that this admission would come oddly from an expert on the Industrial Novel. 'This sort of thing,' she concluded. 'I don't suppose *you* know a lot about literary criticism, do you?'

Wilcox grunted and pushed open the door to let her through. 'A foundry is where you melt iron or other metal and pour it into moulds to make castings⁶. Then in the machine shop we mill and grind them and bore holes in them so that they can be assembled into more complex products, like engines. Are you with me?'

'I think so,' she said coldly. They were walking along a broad corridor between glass-partitioned offices, lit by bleak fluorescent strip lighting, where sallow-faced men in shirt-sleeves stared at computer terminals or pored over sheets of printout.

'This is production control,' said Wilcox. 'I don't think there'd be much point in trying to explain it to you now.'

Some of the men in the offices looked up as they passed, nodded to Wilcox and eyed Robyn curiously. Few smiled.

He pushed through another battered-looking swing door and held it open for her. She plunged into the noise as into a tank of water.

¹ *whistle round the works*: [slang] quick tour of the factory

² *Mozart*: a composer of classical music

³ *Pringle's*: the name of the factory

⁴ *cacophony*: harsh discordant noise

⁵ *components*: smaller parts of a machine

⁶ *castings*: metal parts for machines

Copyright Acknowledgements:

Question 1

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Question 2

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