

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

EITHER

1 Read the poem on the opposite page carefully.

How does the poet's writing give you a strong impression of the experience of the surfers?

To help you answer this question, you might consider:

- how he describes the surfers and the beach
- how his writing recaptures the excitement of surfing a wave
- how he reflects on what the experience might mean to the surfers.

Surfers

September evenings they are here after work,
The light banished from the sky behind,
An industrial sunset oiling the sea.
I watch them emerge from the last wave,
Young men and girls grinning like dolphins
In their rubbers,¹ surf-riders swept
Suddenly onto this table of dark sand
And thrift,² the coastline's low moraine.³

And back again to the conflict with water,
Wiping salt-stiffened hair from their eyes,
The flimsy boards pitching like driftwood⁴
On the swell, flattening with the ebb.⁵
Theirs, briefly, is a perilous excitement
When the current lifts them high
And they stand erect on roofs of water,
Balanced on the summit of a wave.

And there they glide, untouchable,
The moment of flight and their bodies'
Instinctive mastery lasting until
They are somersaulted into the foam
And they creep to shore exhausted,
Barefoot, wincing with the discriminate
Steps of thieves, aware perhaps
Of something they might have won, or stolen.

¹ *rubbers*: rubber wet-suits

² *thrift*: sea-shore plants

³ *moraine*: the debris left behind by the sea

⁴ *driftwood*: wood carried by the current of the water

⁵ *ebb*: the tide flowing back

OR

- 2 Read carefully this extract from a novel. George Smiley is investigating the death of Mrs Rodes, who was found murdered in the conservatory of her house, near Carne school. He sets off back towards his hotel, walking past this house, at a distance.

How does the writer convey to you Smiley's growing sense of unease?

To help you answer this question, you might consider:

- how the description makes the house and its surroundings appear sinister
- how the writing captures Smiley's moment of fear
- why the encounter with the woman is so dramatic and disturbing.

Smiley set off along the road again, back towards the town. After walking for about ten minutes he stopped and looked again towards the Rodes' house a hundred yards across the playing fields. It lay in the shadow of a small coppice¹ of fir trees, dark and secret against the white fields. A narrow lane led towards the house; there was a brick pillar-box² on one corner and a small oak sign-post, quite new, pointed along the lane, which must, he decided, lead to the small village of Pylle. The legend upon the sign was obscured by a film of snow, and Smiley brushed it away with his hand, so that he could read the words 'North Fields', done in a contrived suburban Gothic script. The snow in the lane was untrodden; obviously more had fallen recently. There could not be much traffic between Pylle and Carne. Glancing quickly up and down the main road he began making his way along the lane. The hedge rose high on either side, and soon Smiley could see nothing but the pale sky above him, and the straggling willow wands reaching towards it. Once he thought he heard the sound of a footstep, close behind him, but when he stopped he heard nothing but the furtive rustle of the laden hedges. He grew more conscious of the cold: it seemed to hang in the still damp of the sunken road, to clutch and hold him like the chill air of an empty house. Soon the hedge on his left gave way to a sparse line of trees, which Smiley judged to belong to the coppice he had seen from the road. The snow beneath the trees was patchy, and the bare ground looked suddenly ugly and torn. The lane took him in a gradual curve to the left and, quite suddenly, the house stood before him, gaunt and craggy in the moonlight. The walls were brick and flint, half obscured by the mass of ivy which grew in profusion across them, tumbling over the porch in a tangled mane.

He glanced toward the garden. The coppice which bordered the lane encroached almost as far as the corner of the house, and extended to the far end of the lawn, screening the house from the playing fields. The murderer had reached the house by a path which led across the lawn and through the trees to the lane at the farthest end of the garden. Looking carefully at the snow on the lawn, he was able to discern the course of the path. The white glazed door to the left of the house must lead to the conservatory³... And suddenly he knew he was afraid – afraid of the house, afraid of the sprawling dark garden. The knowledge came to him like an awareness of pain. The ivy walls seemed to reach forward and hold him, like an old woman cosseting⁴ an unwilling child. The house was large, yet dingy, holding to itself unearthly shapes, black and oily in the sudden contrasts of moonlight. Fascinated despite his fear, he moved towards it. The shadows broke and reformed, darting swiftly and becoming still, hiding in the abundant ivy, or merging with the black windows.

He observed in alarm the first involuntary movement of panic. He was afraid, then suddenly the sense joined in one concerted cry of terror, where sight and sound and touch could no longer be distinguished in the frenzy of his brain. He turned round and ran back to the gate. As he did so, he looked over his shoulder towards the house.

A woman was standing in the path, looking at him, and behind her the conservatory door swung slowly on its hinges.

For a second she stood quite still, then turned and ran back towards the conservatory. Forgetting his fear, Smiley followed. As he reached the corner of the house he saw to his astonishment that she was standing at the door, rocking it gently back and forth in a thoughtful, leisurely way, like a child. She had her back to Smiley, until suddenly she turned to him and spoke, with a soft Dorset drawl⁵, and the childish lilt of a simpleton:

‘I thought you was the Devil, Mister, but you got no wings.’

¹ *coppice*: small patch of trees

² *pillar-box*: a box for posting letters

³ *conservatory*: garden-room attached to house

⁴ *cossetting*: petting or pampering

⁵ *Dorset drawl*: a regional accent, spoken slowly

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