

Answer **one** question, **either** Question 1 **or** Question 2.

Either 1 Read carefully poem A and poem B.

Compare the ways in which the poets strikingly convey to you their reactions to a snail and its journey.

In your answer you should comment closely on the effects of language, style and form and how contexts are suggested by the writing.

To help you answer this question, you might consider:

- how they describe the snail and the trail it leaves
- the different ways in which they show you its movement
- their different responses to the snail.

POEM A

In the following poem, the poet describes a snail moving at night.

Considering the Snail

The snail pushes through a green
 night, for the grass is heavy
 with water and meets over
 the bright path he makes, where rain
 has darkened the earth's dark. He
 moves in a wood of desire, 5

pale antlers barely stirring
 as he hunts. I cannot tell
 what power is at work, drenched there
 with purpose, knowing nothing. 10
 What is a snail's fury? All
 I think is that if later

I parted the blades above
 the runnel¹ and saw the thin
 trail of broken white across
 litter, I would never have
 imagined the slow passion
 to that deliberate progress. 15

¹ *runnel*: small stream or gutter

POEM B

In the following poem, the poet describes a snail, its shell, and its movements from evening to morning.

The Snail

Veined and lustrous, ringed with pearl and azure,
With amber flecked, and orange and black,
Marvellous is the house of his abiding,
The curved, frail mansion on his glistening back.

Trekking from clump to clump of yellowing grasses, 5
On yielding mounds of pale, wind-patterned sand,
He leaves a path of silver as the night falls
And the grey twilight wavers from the land.

Then the salt spray from seaward, the moon shining 10
Through crystalline beads of dew on root and stem;
Beetles and worms and fluttering moths and spiders,
Blind, thrusting moles, and blind bats over them.

He goes his way, with quivering horns advancing 15
To green, alluring grasses, gravely intent,
Shrinking when rabbits scurry past to warren
And foxes sidle by with careless scent.

Dawn shows an oasis of grass and nettles;
In viscous¹ joy he feeds and climbs and clings...
His house is ringed with azure, pearl and amber,
Perched high in leafage where the young sap sings. 20

¹ *viscous*: sticky

[Total: **40 marks**, including **7 marks** for spelling, punctuation and grammar.]

- Or 2 Read carefully Prose Extract A and Prose Extract B, both from the openings of American short stories.

Compare the very different ways in which these writers begin their short stories.

In your answer you should comment closely on the effects of language, style and form and how contexts are suggested by the writing.

To help you answer this question, you might consider:

- the ways in which they introduce their settings
- how they interest you in individual characters and the narrative voice
- what is unusual about the ways in which each extract is written.

PROSE EXTRACT A

In the following extract, the narrator has moved to a small town after a disappointment in love.

A PLACE

O I have sailed the seas and come ...

to B ...

a small town fastened to a field in Indiana. Twice there have been twelve hundred people here to answer to the census. The town is outstandingly neat and shady, and always puts its best side to the highway. On one lawn there's even a wood or plastic iron deer.

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You can reach us by crossing a creek. In the spring the lawns are green, the forsythia¹ is singing, and even the railroad that guts the town has straight bright rails which hum when the train is coming, and the train itself has a welcome horning sound.

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Down the back streets the asphalt crumbles into gravel. There's Westbrook's, with the geraniums, Horsefall's, Mott's. The sidewalk shatters. Gravel dust rises like breath behind the wagons. And I am in retirement from love.

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WEATHER

In the Midwest, around the lower Lakes, the sky in the winter is heavy and close, and it is a rare day, a day to remark on, when the sky lifts and allows the heart up. I am keeping count, and as I write this page, it is eleven days since I have seen the sun.

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MY HOUSE

There's a row of headless maples behind my house, cut to free the passage of electric wires. High stumps, ten feet tall, remain, and I climb these like a boy to watch the country sail away from me. They are ordinary fields, a little more uneven than they should be, since in the spring they puddle. The topsoil's thin, but only moderately stony. Corn is grown one year, soybeans another. At dusk starlings darken the single tree—a larch—which stands in the middle. When the sky moves, fields move under it. I feel, on my perch, that I've lost my years. It's as though I were living at last in my eyes, as I have always dreamed of doing, and I think then I know why I've come here: to see, and so to go out against new things—oh god how easily—like air in a breeze. It's true there are

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moments—foolish moments, ecstasy on a tree stump—when I’m all but gone, scattered I like to think like seed, for I’m the sort now in the fool’s position of having love left over which I’d like to lose; what good is it now to me, candy ungiven after Halloween?

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A PERSON

There are vacant lots on either side of Billy Holsclaw’s house. As the weather improves, they fill with hollyhocks. From spring through fall, Billy collects coal and wood and puts the lumps and pieces in piles near his door, for keeping warm is his one work. I see him most often on mild days sitting on his doorsill in the sun. I notice he’s squinting a little, which is perhaps the reason he doesn’t cackle as I pass. His house is the size of a single garage, and very old. It shed its paint with its youth, and its boards are a warped and weathered gray. So is Billy. He wears a short lumpy faded black coat when it’s cold, otherwise he always goes about in the same loose, grease-spotted shirt and trousers. I suspect his galluses² were yellow once, when they were new.

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¹ *forsythia*: ornamental shrub

² *galluses*: trouser braces

PROSE EXTRACT B

In the following extract, the narrator describes young American soldiers, fighting far from home.

The things they carried were largely determined by necessity. Among the necessities or near-necessities were P-38 can openers, pocket knives, heat tabs, wristwatches, dog tags, mosquito repellent, chewing gum, candy, cigarettes, salt tablets, packets of Kool-Aid¹, lighters, matches, sewing kits, Military Payment Certificates, C rations, and two or three canteens of water. Together, these items weighed between 15 and 20 pounds, depending upon a man’s habits or rate of metabolism. Henry Dobbins, who was a big man, carried extra rations; he was especially fond of canned peaches in heavy syrup over pound cake. Dave Jensen, who practiced field hygiene, carried a toothbrush, dental floss, and several hotel-sized bars of soap he’d stolen on R&R² in Sydney, Australia. Ted Lavender, who was scared, carried tranquilizers until he was shot in the head outside the village of Than Khe in mid-April. By necessity, and because it was SOP³ they all carried steel helmets that weighed 5 pounds including the liner and camouflage cover. They carried the standard fatigue jackets and trousers. Very few carried underwear. On their feet they carried jungle boots—2.1 pounds—and Dave Jensen carried three pairs of socks and a can of Dr Scholl’s foot powder as a precaution against trench foot. Until he was shot, Ted Lavender carried six or seven ounces of premium dope, which for him was a necessity. Mitchell Sanders, the RTO⁴, carried condoms. Norman Bowker carried a diary. Rat Kiley carried comic books. Kiowa, a devout Baptist, carried an illustrated New Testament that had been presented to him by his father, who taught school in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma. As a hedge against bad times, however, Kiowa also carried his grandmother’s distrust of the white man, his grandfather’s old hunting hatchet. Necessity dictated. Because the land was mined and booby-trapped, it was SOP for each man to carry a steel-centered, nylon-covered flak jacket, which weighed 6.7 pounds, but which on hot days

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seemed much heavier. Because you could die so quickly, each man carried at least one large compress bandage, usually in the helmet band for easy access. Because the nights were cold, and because the monsoons were wet, each carried a green plastic poncho that could be used as a raincoat or groundsheet or makeshift tent. With its quilted liner, the poncho weighed almost two pounds, but it was worth every ounce. In April, for instance, when Ted Lavender was shot, they used his poncho to wrap him up, then to carry him across the paddy, then to lift him into the chopper that took him away.

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- 1 *Kool-Aid*: a soft drink mix
- 2 *R&R* (military term): rest and recuperation
- 3 *SOP* (military term): Standard Operational Practice
- 4 *RTO* (military term): Radio Telephone Operator

[Total: **40 marks**, including **7 marks** for spelling, punctuation and grammar.]

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