

Fifth Year English First Language Exam

5 En A, B and C: Oddy, Sanger and Linehan

Instructions to Candidates

The exam will last for 2 hours and 15 minutes

Answer all the questions from Section A and one question from Section B

Each section carries 50 marks

Read all the questions carefully before you start to write

Take note of the marks available for each question

Remember that marks will be awarded for the quality of your language as well as for the content of your answers

Return all the answer papers and this paper at the end of the exam

Section A

Read the following passage and then answer the questions set on it, *using your own words as far as possible*.

Bill Masen, a biologist, wakes in hospital the morning after a strange meteorite shower. It was a spectacular sight but everyone who saw it (and that was the majority of the population) has been left permanently blind!

When a day that you happen to know is Wednesday starts off by sounding like Sunday, there is something seriously wrong somewhere.

I felt that from the moment I woke. And yet, when I started functioning a little more smartly, I became doubtful. After all, the odds were that it was I who
5 was wrong, and not everyone else - though I did not see how that could be. I went on waiting, tinged with doubt. But presently I had my first bit of objective evidence - a distant clock struck what sounded to me just like eight. I listened hard and suspiciously. Soon another clock began, on a loud, decisive note. In a leisurely fashion it gave an indisputable eight. Then I knew things were awry.

10 The way I came to miss the end of the world - well, the end of the world I had known for close on thirty years - was sheer accident: like a lot of survival, when you come to think of it. In the nature of things a good many somebodies are always in hospital, and the law of averages had picked on me to be one of them a week or so before. It might just as easily have been the week before that
15 - in which case I'd not be writing now: I'd not be here at all. But chance played it not only that I should be in hospital at that particular time, but that my eyes, and indeed my whole head, should be wreathed in bandages - and that's why I have to be grateful to whoever orders these averages. At the time, however, I was only peevish, wondering what in thunder went on, for I had been in the
20 place long enough to know that, next to the matron, the clock is the most sacred thing in a hospital.

Without a clock the place simply couldn't work. Each second there's someone consulting it on births, deaths, doses, meals, lights, talking, working, sleeping, resting, visiting, dressing, washing - and hitherto it had decreed that
25 someone should begin to wash and tidy me up at exactly three minutes after 7 a.m. That was one of the best reasons I had for appreciating a private room. In a public ward the messy proceeding would have taken place a whole unnecessary hour earlier. But here, today, clocks of varying reliability were continuing to strike eight in all directions - and still nobody had shown up.

30 Much as I disliked the sponging process, and useless as it had been to suggest that the help of a guiding hand as far as the bathroom could eliminate it, its failure to occur was highly disconcerting. Besides, it was normally a close forerunner of breakfast, and I was feeling hungry.

Probably I would have been aggrieved about it any morning, but today,
35 this Wednesday, May 8, was an occasion of particular personal importance. I was doubly anxious to get all the fuss and routine over because this was the day they were going to take off my bandages.

I groped around a bit to find the bell push and let them have a full five seconds' clatter, just to show what I was thinking of them.

40 While I was waiting for the pretty short-tempered response that such a peal ought to bring, I went on listening.

45 The day outside, I realized now, was sounding even more wrong than I had thought. The noises it made, or failed to make, were more like Sunday than Sunday itself - and I'd come round again to being absolutely assured that it was Wednesday, whatever else had happened to it.

50 Why the founders of St. Merry's Hospital chose to erect their institution at a main-road crossing upon a valuable office site, and thus expose their patients' nerves to constant laceration, is a foible that I never properly understood. But for those fortunate enough to be suffering from complaints unaffected by the wear and tear of continuous traffic, it did have the advantage that one could lie abed and still not be out of touch, so to speak, with the flow of life. Customarily the west-bound busses thundered along trying to beat the lights at the corner; as often as not a pig-squeal of brakes and a salvo of shots from the silencer would tell that they hadn't. ... And every now and then there
55 would be an interlude: a good grinding bump, followed by a general stoppage - exceedingly tantalizing to one in my condition, where the extent of the contretemps had to be judged entirely by the degree of profanity resulting.

60 But this morning was different. Disturbingly, because mysteriously, different. No wheels rumbled, no busses roared, no sound of a car of any kind, in fact, was to be heard; no brakes, no horns, not even the clopping of the few rare horses that still occasionally passed; nor, as there should be at such an hour, the composite tramp of work-bound feet.

The Day of The Triffids, John Wyndham (1951)

1. Comment on the setting of this extract from the science fiction novel *The Day of The Triffids*.
4 marks
2. Explain the meaning of the following words or phrases as used in the passage: *awry* in line 9, *disconcerting* in line 32, *forerunner* in line 33 and *beat the lights* in lines 52 & 53?
4 marks
3. In lines 55 & 56 what has caused *a general stoppage* and why was this *exceedingly tantalizing* to someone *in my condition*?
4 marks
4. How did it come about that Bill Masen escaped the blindness that afflicted everybody else?
4 marks
5. Why in lines 20 & 21 does the narrator say that 'next to the matron, the clock is the most sacred thing in a hospital'?
4 marks

6. What was the normal early morning routine for Bill Masen in hospital and why was the narrator 'doubly anxious' to get it over with on this particular day?

5 marks

7. In lines 38 & 39, why did Bill Masen feel it was necessary 'to find the bell push and let them have a full five seconds' clatter'? What does this action tell us about his state of mind at this stage in the extract?

5 marks

8. In the beginning of this extract the narrator is convinced there is something strange going on. What different reasons does he give the reader throughout the whole extract to justify this feeling?

10 marks

9. Comment on the style of this extract from *The Day of The Triffids*. Be sure to include John Wyndham's use of narrator, description and tone.

10 marks

Total - 50 marks

Please turn the page for Section B

Section B

Write between 500 and 700 words on ONE of the following:

EITHER

1. Write on **ONE** of the following creative topics:
 - i) Continue Bill Masen's story, keeping as close as possible to John Wyndham's style. You do not have to conclude the story.
 - ii) Imagine that you are a character in a science fiction novel. Write about a frightening situation in which you found yourself during the course of the story.

OR

2. Write an essay on **ONE** of the following topics:
 - i) Do you look forward to a settled and secure family life when you are in your early thirties, or would you prefer a life of adventure and excitement? Describe the life which you think will suit your temperament.
 - ii) City life is becoming more and more impossible. Discuss
 - iii) When you study books and films you are really studying human psychology. Discuss

OR

3. Write a speech for or against **ONE** of the following motions:
 - i) Riches do not bring happiness.
 - ii) To play well you must play to win.
 - iii) School vacations are far too long.
 - iv) The death penalty is the only way to deal with violent criminals.

50 marks