

AQA GCSE English Language

SET A

Paper 1 Explorations in creative reading and writing

Paper 2 Writers' viewpoints and perspectives

Insert

Paper 1 (page 2):

- **Source text — 20th Century fiction**

An extract from the short story *El Dorado: A Kansas Recessional* by Willa Cather.

Paper 2 (pages 3-4):

- **Source A — 21st Century non-fiction**

A newspaper article called *Is the journey really better by train?*
by Martin Bright and Vanessa Thorpe.

- **Source B — 19th Century literary non-fiction**

An extract from *The Innocents Abroad*, a travel writing book by Mark Twain.

Acknowledgements

Paper 1, Source text: Abridged and adapted text from El Dorado: A Kansas Recessional, by Willa Cather

Paper 2, Source A: Copyright Guardian News & Media Ltd 2016

Paper 2, Source B: Abridged and adapted text from The Innocents Abroad, by Mark Twain

Paper 1 Source text — 20th Century fiction

This extract is from the opening of a short story by Willa Cather, which was published in 1901. In this section the author describes the Solomon Valley in Kansas, a state of the USA, and the old man who lives there.

El Dorado: A Kansas Recessional

5 PEOPLE who have been so unfortunate as to have travelled in western Kansas will remember the Solomon valley for its unique and peculiar desolation. The river is a churning, muddy little stream, that crawls along between naked bluffs*, choked and split by sand bars, and with nothing whatever of that fabled haste to reach the sea. Though there can be little doubt that the Solomon is heartily disgusted with the country through which it flows, it makes no haste to quit it. Indeed, it is one of the most futile little streams under the sun, and never gets anywhere. Its sluggish current splits among the sand bars and buries itself in the mud until it literally dries up from weariness and ennui**, without ever reaching anything.

10 Beyond the river with its belt of amber woodland rose the bluffs, ragged, broken, covered with shaggy red grass and bare of trees, save for the few stunted oaks that grew upon their steep sides. They were pathetic little trees, that sent their roots down through thirty feet of hard clay bluff to the river level. They were as old as the first settler could remember, and yet no one could assert that they had ever grown an inch. They seldom, if ever, bore acorns; it took all the nourishment that soil could give just to exist. There was a sort of mysterious kinship between those trees and the men who lived, or tried to live, there. They were alike in more ways than one.

15 Across the river stretched the level land like the top of an oven. It was a country flat and featureless, without tones or shadows, without accent or emphasis of any kind to break its vast monotony. It was a scene done entirely in high lights, without relief, without a single commanding eminence to rest the eye upon. The flat plains rolled to the unbroken horizon vacant and void, forever reaching in empty yearning toward something they never attained.

20 Near the river was a solitary frame building, low and wide, with a high sham front***, like most stores in Kansas villages. Over the door was painted in faded letters, "Josiah Bywaters, Dry Goods, Groceries and Notions." In front of the store ran a straight strip of ground, grass grown and weedy, which looked as if it might once have been a road. Here and there, on either side of this deserted way of traffic, were half demolished buildings and excavations where the weeds grew high, which might once have been the sites of houses. For this was once El Dorado, the Queen City of the Plains, the Metropolis of Western Kansas, the coming Commercial Center of the West.

25 Whatever may have been there once, now there were only those empty, windowless buildings, that one little store, and the lonely old man whose name was painted over the door. Inside the store, on a chair tilted back against the counter, with his pipe in his mouth and a big gray cat on his knee, sat the proprietor. His appearance was not that of the average citizen of western Kansas, and a very little of his conversation told you that he had come from civilization somewhere. He was tall and straight, with an almost military bearing, and an iron jaw. He was thin, but perhaps that was due to his diet. His cat was thin, too, and that was surely owing to its diet, which consisted solely of crackers and water, except when now and then it could catch a gopher; and Solomon valley gophers are so thin that they never tempt the ambition of any discerning cat. If Colonel Bywaters's manner of living had anything to do with his attenuation****, it was the solitude rather than any other hardship that was responsible. He was a sort of "Last Man." The tide of emigration had gone out and had left him high and dry, stranded on a Kansas bluff. He was living where the rattlesnakes and sunflowers found it difficult to exist.

40 The only human faces the Colonel ever saw were the starved, bronzed countenances of the poor fellows who sometimes passed in wagons, plodding along with their wives and children and cook stoves and feather beds, trying to get back to "God's country." They never bought anything; they only stopped to water their horses and swear a little, and then drove slowly eastward. Once a little girl had cried so bitterly for the red stick candy in the window that her father had taken the last nickel out of his worn, flat pocketbook. But the Colonel was too kind a man to take his money, so he gave the child the money and the candy, too; and he also gave her a little pair of red mittens that the moths had got into, which last she accepted gratefully, though it was August.

Glossary

* bluffs — steep cliffs or banks

** ennui — boredom

*** sham front — a store front that's taller than the store itself

**** attenuation — thinness

Is the journey really better by train?

The TGV* network now has a fast route to Marseilles. Vanessa Thorpe raced by train and Martin Bright by plane to the south of France. Who was first there — and who enjoyed it more?

Martin Bright — by plane

Three and a half hours into my journey to the south of France and I was still on British soil. The plane from Stansted had been delayed by 45 minutes and although I was still confident of beating the time taken to get to Marseilles on the TGV, I felt like I'd spent my whole morning travelling just to stand still.

5 However you look at it, airports are a rubbish place to spend even a second of your holiday and you can't concentrate on a book or genuinely relax over a croissant and coffee when you are waiting for a delayed flight. The whole point of flying is that it is supposed to be fast. With my frustration measured out in an ever-growing pile of Sunday supplements, I began to daydream about lying back in a comfy TGV seat with a big headrest and view of French vineyards.

10 We boarded the bee-yellow Buzz plane at about 11.30 amid assurances that we should be able to make up some time on the flight. The cabin crew were patient with niggles about the temperature being too cold (or too hot), seat cushions that had come free of their fastenings, seat backs that wouldn't go upright, and tables and arm rests that were awkward to use.

15 By now, I'd given up hope of lunch in Marseilles. But the in-flight salad (£3 extra) wasn't bad and it was clear that even this delayed flight was going to get me to Marseilles in good time. We touched down at 2.30pm, and after picking up a hire car I was on the road by three, just six hours after I left home.

There is no way of making the journey part of the holiday when you fly to the south of France, but it does get you there with hours to spare over the train. Thoughts of Stansted faded after I'd checked in to a hotel and had a glass or two in a café. I felt perfectly relaxed.

Vanessa Thorpe — by train

20 Train travel makes its initial appeal direct to my vanity. Somehow, no matter how organised I try to be, no matter how smart my luggage is or how freshly washed my hair, I always leave even the shortest aeroplane journey sallow, unkempt and out of control. Whether it is the scramble for the passport at the bottom of the bag, deciding what to pack away in the hold or the unpleasant paradox of seemingly having hours to wait and yet no time to relax, being 'processed' by an airport has always sapped my spirits and left me feeling a hostage to fortune.

25 So it was with visions of remaining neatly coiffed and accoutred** that I arrived at the Eurostar terminus at London's Waterloo ready to take the new train all the way to the South of France in record time — a promised six hours 50 minutes to Marseilles. I'd left my north London flat at the congenial hour of 11.30am so was easily able to check in for my 12.27pm departure ahead of the scary 20-minute cut-off point.

30 There is, we all know, a degree of stress involved in travelling anywhere, no matter how enticingly sunny the destination and easy the route, which is why the idea of a flying bed has always been one of my favourite fantasies. In the case of Eurostar, the sweaty palms and jolting starts to the traveller's heart are most likely to be caused by not finding the right escalator up to the right bit of the platform for the right coach of the train. Apart from that, once aboard, it really is fine to sit back and read, sleep, eat or drink — or all three. In the end it is pretty close to a flying bed really, except with nice scenery and a buffet service.

35 I pulled into Marseilles at 9.30pm, French time, half an hour late, but I was by now so relaxed that I scarcely noticed the delay. The journey from my door had taken me nine hours, but I felt as refreshed as if I had been lounging around on a sofa all day.

40 Travelling this way, I decided, connects you to the place you are going to in a way that is uniquely satisfying. Watching the landscape unravel, it is much easier to take pleasure in the differences. Arriving anywhere by plane is, in contrast, often disorienting and leaves you with aching ears and ballooned feet.

Of course, it still takes quite a bit longer to go by train, but you are on the move in the right direction the whole time, which I like. And I'd nearly finished my book.

Glossary

* TGV — a type of high-speed train

** coiffed and accoutred — having hair and clothes arranged well

Paper 2, Source B — 19th Century literary non-fiction

In 1867, the American author Mark Twain travelled from New York to the Middle East, stopping at several other destinations along the way. This text is an extract from a travel writing book he wrote about his trip.

5 It is hard to make railroading pleasant in any country. It is too tedious. Stagecoaching* is infinitely more delightful. Once I crossed the plains and deserts and mountains of the West in a stagecoach, from the Missouri line to California, and since then all my pleasure trips must be measured to that rare holiday frolic. Two thousand miles of ceaseless rush and rattle and clatter, by night and by day, and never a weary moment, never a lapse of interest! The first seven hundred miles a level continent, its grassy carpet greener and softer and smoother than any sea and figured with designs fitted to its magnitude — the shadows of the clouds. Here were no scenes but summer scenes, and no disposition inspired by them but to lie at full length on the mail sacks in the grateful breeze and dreamily smoke the pipe of peace — what other, where all was repose and contentment? In cool mornings, before the sun was fairly up, it was worth 10 a lifetime of city toiling and moiling to perch in the foretop with the driver and see the six mustangs** scamper under the sharp snapping of the whip that never touched them; to scan the blue distances of a world that knew no lords but us; to cleave the wind with uncovered head and feel the sluggish pulses rousing to the spirit of a speed that pretended to the resistless rush of a typhoon! But I forgot. I am in elegant France now. It is not meet that I should make too disparaging comparisons between humdrum travel on a railway and that royal summer flight across a continent in a stagecoach. I meant in the beginning to say that railway journeying is tedious and tiresome, and so it is — though at the time I was thinking particularly of a dismal fifty-hour pilgrimage between New York and St. Louis. Of course our trip through France was not really tedious because all its scenes and experiences were new and strange.

20 The cars*** are built in compartments that hold eight persons each. The seats and backs are thickly padded and cushioned and are very comfortable; you can smoke if you wish; there are no bothersome peddlers****; you are saved the infliction of a multitude of disagreeable fellow passengers. So far, so well. But then the conductor locks you in when the train starts; there is no water to drink in the car; there is no heating apparatus for night travel; if a drunken rowdy should get in, you could not remove a matter of twenty seats from him or enter another car; but above all, if you are worn out and must sleep, you must sit up and do it in naps, with cramped legs and in a torturing misery that leaves you withered and lifeless the next day.

30 In France, all is clockwork, all is order. They make no mistakes. Every third man wears a uniform, and whether he be a marshal of the empire or a brakeman, he is ready and perfectly willing to answer all your questions with tireless politeness, ready to tell you which car to take, yea, and ready to go and put you into it to make sure that you shall not go astray. But the happiest regulation in French railway government is — thirty minutes to dinner! No five-minute boltings of flabby rolls, muddy coffee, questionable eggs, and pies whose conception and execution are a dark and bloody mystery to all save the cook that created them! No, we sat calmly down and munched through a long table d'hote***** bill of fare, then paid the trifle it cost and stepped happily aboard the train again, without once cursing the railroad company.

Glossary

- * stagecoaching — travelling in a covered horse-drawn wagon
- ** mustangs — wild horses
- *** cars — railway carriages
- **** peddlers — travelling salesmen
- ***** table d'hote — a set menu with a fixed price