

GCSE English Language

Paper 1 Explorations in creative reading and writing

This extract comes from the opening of the novel Run, Rabbit by John Updike. It introduces us to the novel's main character, nicknamed Rabbit, who at 26 suddenly panics about growing up and tries to escape his adult life.

Boys are playing basketball around a telephone pole with a backboard bolted to it. Legs, shouts. The scrape and snap of Keds on loose alley pebbles seems to catapult their voices high into the moist March air blue above the wires. Rabbit Angstrom, coming up the alley in a business suit, stops and watches, though he's twenty-six and six three. So tall, he seems an unlikely rabbit, but the breadth of white face, the pallor of his blue irises, and a nervous flutter under his brief nose as he stabs a cigarette into his mouth partially explain the nickname, which was given to him when he too was a boy. He stands there thinking, the kids keep coming, they keep crowding you up.

His standing there makes the real boys feel strange. Eyeballs slide. They're doing this for themselves, not as a show for some adult walking around town in a double-breasted cocoa suit. It seems funny to them, an adult walking up the alley at all. Where's his car? The cigarette makes it more sinister still. Is this one of those going to offer them cigarettes or money to go out in back of the ice plant with him? They've heard of such things but are not too frightened; there are six of them and one of him.

The ball, rocketing off the crotch of the rim, leaps over the heads of the six and lands at the feet of the one. He catches it on the short bounce with a quickness that startles them. As they stare hushed he sights squinting through blue clouds of weed smoke, a suddenly dark silhouette like a smokestack against the afternoon spring sky, setting his feet with care, wiggling the ball with nervousness in front of his chest, one widespread white hand on top of the ball and the other underneath, jiggling it patiently to get some adjustment in air itself. The cuticle moons on his fingernails are big. Then the ball seems to ride up the right lapel of his coat and comes off his shoulder as his knees dip down, and it appears the ball will miss because though he shot from an angle the ball is not going toward the backboard. It was not aimed there. It drops into the circle of the rim, whipping the net with a ladylike whisper. "Hey!" he shouts in pride. "Luck," one of the kids says.

Keds = a type of trainers

Section A: Reading

1. Read the first paragraph again.

List four things we learn about the scene of the appearance of Rabbit Angstrom.
(4 marks)

2. Look in detail at the second paragraph.

How does the writer use language here to describe the alley? You could include the writer's choice of:

- words and phrases
- language features and techniques
- sentence forms.

(8 marks)

3. You now need to think about the whole of the Source.

This text is from the opening of a novel.

How has the writer structured the text to interest you as a reader? You could write about:

- what the writer focuses your attention on at the beginning
- how and why the writer changes this focus as the Source develops
- any other structural features that interest you.

(8 marks)

4. Focus this part of your answer on the second half of the source.

A reviewer wrote 'This part of the text, where the writer describes Rabbit taking the basketball shot, feels more tense- as if he has something to prove.' To what extent do you agree?

In your response, you could:

- consider your own impressions of the basketball game
- evaluate how the writer shows that Rabbit cares about making the shot
- support your response with references to the text

(20 marks)

Section B: Writing

5. A magazine has asked for contributions for their creative writing page.

Either:



Write a description of a football fan as suggested by this picture (picture of a football fan).

Or

Write a story that begins with the sentence: 'As the household awoke slowly from their slumber, and the rooms creaked into life, they could not have anticipated just how different that day would be in comparison to the other 364 of that year.'

(24 marks for content and organisation and 16 marks for technical accuracy) [40 marks]