

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

EITHER

1 Read carefully the poem opposite in which the poet visits her father's grave with her daughter.

How does the poet's writing movingly portray this event?

To help you answer this question, you might consider:

- the way the poet describes her daughter's preparations
- her descriptions of what her daughter does at the graveside
- how she shows their different responses to the visit.

The Flowers

After lunch my daughter picked
handfuls of the wild flowers
she knew her grandfather liked best
and piled them in the basket of her bicycle,
beside an empty jam-jar and a trowel;
then, swaying like a candle-bearer,
she rode off to the church
and, like a little dog, I followed her.

She cleared the grave of nettles
and wild parsley,¹ and dug a shallow hole
to put the jam-jar in. She arranged
the flowers to look their best
and scraped the moss from the stone,
so you could see whose grave
she had been caring for.
It didn't take her long – no longer
than making his bed in the morning
when he had got too old to help her.

Not knowing how to leave him,
how to say good-bye, I hesitated
by the rounded grave. *Come on,*
my daughter said, *It's finished now.*
And so we got our bicycles and rode home
down the lane, moving apart
and coming together again,
in and out of the ruts.

¹ *nettles and wild parsley: weeds*

OR

- 2** Read carefully the extract opposite which is the beginning of a novel set in the past. Peter Claire, a young Englishman who plays the lute (a stringed instrument like a guitar), has just arrived in Denmark. He has been summoned to play for the King in his palace.

How does the writing vividly convey Peter's thoughts and feelings to you?

To help you answer this question, you might consider:

- how the writer portrays Peter's growing anxiety
- her descriptions of what Peter sees in the darkness
- what is unusual and disturbing about the scene which develops in the palace.

A lamp is lit.

Until this moment, when the flame of the lamp flares blue, then settles to steady yellow inside its ornate globe, the young man had been impressed by the profound darkness into which, upon his late-night arrival at the palace of Rosenborg, he had suddenly stepped. Tired from his long sea journey, his eyes stinging, his walk unsteady, he had been questioning the nature of this darkness. For it seemed to him not merely an external phenomenon, having to do with an actual absence of light, but rather as though it emanated from within him, as if he had finally crossed the threshold of his own absence of hope.

Now, he is relieved to see the walls of a panelled room take shape around him. A voice says: 'This is the *Vinterstue*. The Winter Room.'

The lamp is lifted up. Held high, it burns more brightly, as though sustained by purer air, and the young man sees a shadow cast onto the wall. It is a long, slanting shadow and so he knows it is his own. It appears to have a deformity, a hump, occurring along its spine from below the shoulder-blades to just above the waist. But this is the shadow's trickery. The young man is Peter Claire, the lutenist, and the curvature on his back is his lute.

He is standing near a pair of lions, made of silver. Their eyes seem to watch him in the flickering gloom. Beyond them he can see a table and some tall chairs. But Peter Claire is separate from everything, cannot lean on any object, cannot rest. And now, the lamp moves and he must follow.

'It may be', says a tall gentleman, who hurries on, carrying the light, 'that His Majesty, King Christian, will command you to play for him tonight. He is not well and his physicians¹ have prescribed music. Therefore, members of the royal orchestra must be ready to perform at all times, day and night. I thought it best to advise you of this straight away.'

Peter Claire's feelings of dismay increase. He begins to curse himself, to berate² his own ambition for bringing him here to Denmark, for taking him so far from the places and people he had loved. He is at the end of his journey and yet he feels lost. Within this arrival some terrifying departure lies concealed. And suddenly, with peculiar speed, the lamp moves and everything in the room seems to rearrange itself. Peter Claire sees his shadow on the wall become elongated, stretching upwards for a few seconds towards the ceiling before being swallowed by the darkness, with no trace of it remaining.

Then the end of a corridor is reached and the gentleman stops before a door. He knocks and waits, putting a finger to his lips and leaning close against the door to listen for the command from within. It comes at last, a voice deep and slow, and Peter Claire finds himself, in the next minute, standing before King Christian, who is sitting in a chair in his night-shirt. Before him, on a small table, is a pair of scales and by these a clutch of silver coins.

¹ *physicians*: doctors

² *berate*: scold angrily

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