



**Advanced skills
Set 13**

The Write Tribe

PAPER 2 TECHNIQUES SECTION B



Section B

[20 Marks]

Text 2

The narrator is an elderly man who is sitting in a small eating house in Britain while waiting for his landlord to arrive for him to renew the lease on the house he has been renting from the latter. While waiting, he is visited by a strange being. Read it carefully and answer Questions 5 – 13.

1 It was a chilly November afternoon. I had just eaten an unusually hearty dinner and was sitting alone in the dining-room, trying to halt my lulling senses from drifting away into dreamland. I tried gulping from a mug of coffee I had requested sent to me which completely failed to produce its stimulant effect, In despair, I picked up a stray newspaper in the hope that a mental stimulant would perk me up but after having carefully perused the columns of "Houses to let", "Dogs lost", and then the columns of "Wives and apprentices runaway", I was not much improved. Finally, I attacked with great resolution the editorial matter, and reading it from beginning to end without understanding a syllable, conceived the possibility of its being Chinese, and so re-read it from the end to the beginning, but with no more satisfactory result. 10

2 I was about to toss the paper away in passionate disgust when I felt my attention somewhat aroused by a paragraph that read as follows -

"The avenues to death are numerous and strange. A London paper mentions the decease of a person from a singular cause. He was playing at 'puff the dart'. Having placed the needle at the wrong end of the tube, and drawing his breath strongly to 15 puff the dart forward with force, drew the needle into his throat. It entered the lungs, and in a few days killed him."

That really got me going and I fell into a great rage, one without a switch; one I could not understand.

3 "This thing," I exclaimed, "is a poor hoax – the invention of some pitiable 20 penny-a-liner, of some wretched concocter of accidents. These fellows knowing the excessive gullibility of the majority of their readers, set their wits to imagine all sorts of improbable possibilities, of 'odd' accidents as they term them, but to a reflecting intellect like mine, it seems evident at once that the marvellous increase recently in these 'odd accidents' is by far the oddest accident of all. For my own part, I intend to 25 believe nothing from now on that has anything of the 'singular' about it."

4 "My God, then, what a fool you are for that!" replied one of the most remarkable voices I ever heard. At first, I took it for a rumbling in my ears, but upon second thought, I considered the sound as what comes from an empty barrel beaten with a big stick. I am by no means naturally nervous, so that I felt nothing of trepidation, 30 but merely uplifted my eyes with a leisurely movement and looked carefully around the room for the intruder. I could not, however, perceive any one at all. I immediately suspected that the voice had to belong to someone who was playing an impudent trick on me that was as clichéd as conjuring rabbits out of a hat.

5 "Humph!" resumed the voice as I continued my survey, "you must be blind then 35
for not seeing me as I am sitting here right at your side!"

Hearing this, I immediately looked before my nose, and there confronting me at the table sat a person, nondescript, although not indescribable. His body was a bottle, and the head resembled a tissue box with a hole in the middle. Through this hole, which seemed puckered up like the mouth of a very precise old maid, the creature was 40 emitting certain rumbling and grumbling noises which he evidently took for intelligible talk. They made no sense to me at all.

"You are a drunken vagabond," said I, "and I shall ring the bell and order the hotel staff to kick you into the street." The fellow laughed at this. The laughter racked my ears like an explosion of steam whistles, making me grab my ears and grimace in pain. 45

6 "Ring the bell," he replied, attempting a grin with his little villainous mouth. But when I tried to do so, the ruffian reached across the table deliberately, and hitting me a tap on the forehead with the neck of one of the long bottles, knocked me back into the armchair. I was ashamed to admit that a few tears sprang to my eyes.

5. At the beginning of this text, the narrator is described as being unsuccessful in his struggle to keep awake. Explain how the language used in paragraph 1 supports this description.

Support your ideas with three details from paragraph 1. [3]

6. In paragraph 2 (line 11) 'I was about to toss the paper away in passionate disgust when I felt my attention somewhat aroused by the paragraph....'

Identify the word or phrase in the given sentence which suggests:

(i) strong disdainful attitude _____ [1]
(ii) awakened _____ [1]

7. At the end of paragraph 2, (line 18), the phrase 'That really got me going and I fell into a great rage, a fury without a switch button, it seemed.'

(i) Which phrase/word suggests that the narrator's anger was like a machine? [1]

(ii) Why does the writer describe the narrator's anger in this way? [1]

8. In paragraph 3 (line 21), 'These fellows knowing the extravagant gullibility of the majority of their readers, set their wits to imagine all sorts of improbable possibilities...'

What is unusual about the phrase 'improbable possibilities'? [1]

9. The narrator uses similes like 'like the mouth of a very precise old maid' (line 40) and 'like an explosion of steam whistles' (line 45).

What do these similes suggest about how the narrator viewed the strange visitor? [2]

Similes	Narrator's view
like the mouth of a very precise old maid	
like an explosion of steam whistles	

10. From paragraph 2 (line 13), 'The avenues to death are numerous and strange. A London paper mentions the decease of a person from a singular cause'.

(i) What does the writer mean by 'the avenues to death are numerous and strange'? Explain in your own words. [1]

(ii) Why does the writer use the word 'singular' to describe the cause? Explain in your own words. [1]

11. (i) From paragraph 3 (line 23), '... but to a reflecting intellect like mine...'

Why does the writer describe the narrator as one who had a 'reflecting intellect'? [1]

(ii) From paragraph 3, according to the narrator, what could motivate a reporter to concoct stories? Give evidence to support your answer. [1]

12. In paragraph 5 (line 43) 'You are a drunken vagabond,' said I, 'and I shall ring the bell and order the hotel staff to kick you into the street.'

Give two pieces of evidence from paragraph 5 to show that the narrator might have been drunk himself instead. [2]

13. The structure of the text reflects the main feelings the narrator experienced as he sat there in the eating house waiting for his landlord's arrival. Complete the flow chart by choosing one word from the box to summarise the main feeling described in each part of the text. There are some extra words in the box you do not need to use. [4]

Narrator's feelings

Desperate	wary	calm	delusional
agitated	revengeful	disdainful	

Flow Chart

