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English Language and Literature

Advanced

Paper 2: Varieties in Language and Literature

Source Booklet

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SECTION A: Unseen Prose Non-fiction Texts

Society and the Individual

Text A

This is the text of a charity appeal, produced by the Irish Guide Dogs for the Blind in 2017. It takes the form of an open letter from the mother of a child with autism. It was distributed as a supplement inside a weekend newspaper. The printed letter included a number of photographs of the child, named Skye, with her dog, named Yolo, that are not included here.

Dear Friend,

My name is Karen. A mum with a little girl who has autism.

Ever since our Assistance Dog joined our family, amazing things have happened. So I've wanted to do something special to say thank you to Irish Guide Dogs for the incredible difference Yolo has made to Skye.

And now I have that chance ... by writing this letter to **you**.

I'm also hoping that as you read it, you'll be moved to help me create another beautiful relationship between a child with autism and a heroic Assistance Dog, just like the one my little girl shares with Yolo.

And it won't cost you a fortune – in fact you can become an Assistance Dog supporter for just €25! And you won't believe the amazing impact of your gift.

Please let me tell you a little bit more – first about Skye. She's my little angel. But she lives in a world that's just a little bit different to yours and mine. It's kind of like, you and I understand our world, and Skye understands hers. But we can't understand hers, and she can't understand ours, even though they overlap.

Of course, that's not really a problem for you and me. Because the world is full of people just like us.

But it is a problem for Skye. Because she's all alone.

Before Yolo came along, Skye would never actually speak with anyone. In fact, she never spoke a word until she was three. She was afraid of going anywhere that wasn't familiar or that had loud noises or lights.

If we were out shopping and somebody spoke with her or made eye contact with her, she would fall apart. And, like most children with autism, she would bolt the instant you let go of her hand.

I suppose she felt trapped, and overwhelmed. But she couldn't tell me what she was feeling, because she didn't have a way to explain her fears, her feelings or her needs to me.

That's what daily life was like – constantly terrified for your child's safety. Constantly stressed. And constantly confronted by people who look at you like you're the worst parent in the world because your child is having a meltdown.

'Another dysfunctional family day out,' as my older daughter Megan used to joke. But the truth is, we stopped going anywhere as a family.

I don't know if you have any kind of experience with autism, but I do know this ... if you can send a gift of €25 today, you can change everything for a family that's waiting for an Assistance Dog.

And I know that, because everything changed for us when Yolo came along.

That's why your gift today is so important.

You see, it takes two years to train an Assistance Dog. The lifetime cost of breeding, training and supporting one is €38,000! These amazing dogs are provided free of charge to families, and with no government support for the Assistance Dogs programme, every cent has to come from big-hearted donors like you.

Right from day one, Yolo calmed Skye. He grounded her. Gave her something wonderful to focus on that was all hers. And I guess the world she lives in didn't seem so scary anymore.

These days Skye doesn't have a problem with strangers, or with eye contact. Her communication has improved beyond anything we could have imagined. And I know it's all down to Yolo – day by day he is unlocking the world for her. And on top of all that, he's brought us together as a family too. What an amazing dog!

With a generous gift of €25, you'll be helping to bring a real hero into the life of a child who desperately needs one.

Please will you be a hero too, by sending €25 to help bring forward another amazing Assistance Dog like Yolo for another child like Skye today?

Thank you so much,

Karen Jones

Love and Loss

Text B

These are the opening paragraphs from David Hallberg's memoir A Body of Work: Dancing to the Edge and Back, in which the American classical ballet dancer recounts his battle to recover from a serious injury.

I remember what it feels like to dance. To move so freely that my body releases and creative intuition takes over, leading me beyond the worry of executing technique to a realm where nothing exists but the movement, the music, the emotions. I miss those memories of freedom, but they are embedded in my mind and body. I can replay them whenever I wish.

I think of the ballroom scene in *Romeo and Juliet*. She is seated, plucking a lute, while I dance for her, spinning, boldly flirting, an unapologetic intruder at the ball, unable to contain my magnetic attraction to this enchanting stranger as destiny binds us. Finally, the other guests leave the ballroom and we are alone, face-to-face, longing, gazing. We dance, playfully and innocently for the moment, but with an undercurrent that will soon reveal itself as tempestuous passion.

When the scene is over, I dash offstage. I pant in the wings, out of breath. I slip out of the heavy, sweat-drenched velvet tunic I've danced in for the past forty-five minutes and wipe my face on a towel to remove what is left of my stage makeup. I put on a flowing white shirt, which clings to my still-damp body. My dresser drapes a floor length brown cape over my shoulders. My lungs burn; I desperately fill them with air in preparation for bounding onstage again.

All around me, the anticipation is palpable. I feel it backstage: from the dancers watching in the wings, from the stage manager cueing the lights in a hushed tone, from the musicians in the orchestra pit caressing their instruments as they play the hypnotic Prokofiev score.

The scene changes. Juliet's balcony appears in the distance. The audience waits in the piercing silence. The stillness, the soundless stage shrouded in dim lights, creates an atmosphere that is alien, unique, almost unearthly. I stand there, awaiting my entrance, eyes closed, seeking to break free from nerves.

When the first notes of the pas de deux begin, I open my eyes. My Juliet is there, on her balcony, bathed in moonlight. The sight of her gives me strength, arouses me emotionally and physically. Erases all doubt and fear. I move toward her, beckon to her, enfold her, as we speak with our bodies in ways far more profound than mere words. It is love, I am convinced. Both real and staged. The lines are blurred. There are no boundaries. We dance as one person, one thought, nothing held back. No gesture ruled out, as long as it is truthful.

Moments like this are worth it all. The doubt. The sacrifice. The injuries. The scrutiny. The burden of expectation. Those moments of living so intensely and fully on the stage are why I danced. Now, each day, I face one towering question: will I ever experience that euphoria again?

* * *

The lengthy time I've been injured seems like a purgatorial dream from which I cannot wake. My life as a dancer seems distant, like another lifetime. Moscow. The stages I danced on. The partners I loved. The prime shape I was in. Circling the world once, twice, three times each year. I can't let myself remember too much; when I do, it invokes despair and a knife-sharp pain of loss. It forces me to face what still seems unthinkable: that I no longer have the ability to be the dancer I was, the person I am meant to be. To answer my calling.

I'm locked in a desperate fight. A fight with my body, which does not work for me anymore. And the longer I go on fighting, setback after setback, month after month, I lose, in a very slow but inexorable way, the ability to envision myself back on the stage.

Glossary

purgatorial – relating to Purgatory, a place of punishment in Christian theology

pas de deux – dance term

Encounters

Text C

This extract is taken from the introduction to Whitley Strieber's Communion: A True Story – Encounters with the Unknown, first published in 1987.

This is the story of one man's attempt to deal with a shattering assault from the unknown. It is a true story, as true as I know how to describe it.

To all appearances I have had an elaborate personal encounter with intelligent nonhuman beings. But who could they be, and where have they come from? Are unidentified flying objects real? Are there goblins or demons ... or visitors?

At first, I thought I was losing my mind. But I was interviewed by three psychologists and three psychiatrists, given a battery of psychological tests and a neurological examination, and found to fall within the normal range in all respects. I was also given a polygraph by an operator with thirty years' experience and I passed without qualification. I had been indifferent to the whole issue of unidentified flying objects and extraterrestrials; I had viewed them as a false unknown, easily explainable as misperceptions or hallucinations. Now what was I to think?

The visitors marched right into the middle of the life of an indifferent skeptic without a moment's hesitation.

Later I found a large number of people who have had experiences similar to mine. Most of them were mentally stable. They did not cluster in any particular population group, but formed a cross section of American society. I have met, among many others, a scientist, a policeman, and a federal officer who have had encounters.

In my case there were witnesses, and physical aftereffects that are hard to ignore. Either what is happening is that visitors are actually here, or the human mind is creating something that, incredibly, is close to a physical reality. Whatever it is, it is not presently understood by science. I know how it feels and looks to be with these visitors.

I know how they sound when they talk and what it looks and smells like in their places. I know how they act and how they appear. I may even know something about why they are here and what they want from us.

Seeming encounters with nonhuman beings are not new; they have a history dating back thousands of years. What is new, in this latter part of the twentieth century, is that the encounters have taken on an intensity never before experienced by humankind.

Something is happening, and intellectually well-grounded people need not shun it. Instead, the unknown can be faced with clear and open curiosity. When this is done something strange happens: the unknown changes. The enigmatic presence of the human mind winks back from the dark, and a little progress toward real understanding is made.

I suffered with this experience. Others suffered, and are still suffering. It is essential that effective support be developed to aid those who have it. The scoffing has to stop.

I look up toward the night sky, visible through two high arches above my office windows. Almost all the way to the top of the arches the clouds glow with Manhattan's light. At the pinnacle there is darkness, and it draws me. I'm not only scared and upset, frankly I'm also curious. I want to know what's going on out there. As I watch, the night sky grows a little darker.

People who face the visitors report fierce little figures with eyes that seem to stare into the deepest core of being. And those eyes are asking for something, perhaps even demanding it.

Whatever it is, it is more than simple information. The goal does not seem to be the sort of clear and open exchange that we might expect. Whatever may be surfacing, it wants far more than that. It seems to me that it seeks the very depth of the soul; it seeks communion.

Glossary

skeptic – a philosopher who doubts something that many other people believe in

enigmatic – mysterious; difficult to understand

Crossing Boundaries

Text D

In this extract from A People's Manifesto for Wildlife, a 2018 document published online, Chris Packham calls on every individual or group that works with or cares about wildlife to come together to protect it.

"Between 1970 and 2013, 56% of UK species declined... of the nearly 8,000 species assessed using modern criteria, 15% are threatened with extinction. ... this suggests that we are among the most nature-depleted countries in the world."

"Of the 218 countries assessed for 'biodiversity intactness', the UK is ranked 189, a consequence of centuries of industrialisation, urbanisation and overexploitation of our natural resources."

State of Nature Report, 2016

It's horrifying. Depressing. Disastrous. And yet somehow we have grown to accept this as part of our lives – we've normalised the drastic destruction of our wildlife.

To our shame, we are careless with our language. We say that 'we've lost 97% of our flower rich meadows since the 1930s' or that 'we've lost 86% of the Corn Bunting population'. We speak of 'a loss of 97% of our Hedgehogs'. Loss, lost . . . as if this habitat and these species have mysteriously disappeared into the ether, as if they've accidentally vanished. But they haven't – they've been destroyed.

Our lazy, self-excusing terminology is representative of our chronic acceptance of such appalling catastrophes. We share these shocking statistics amongst ourselves like a vicious game of top trumps – to the extent that they have lost their meaning. We've forgotten that they are a death toll, that they are the dwindling voices of vanished millions, a tragic echo of a recent time of plentiful life.

It's time to wake up. We must rouse ourselves from this complacent stupor, because we are presiding over an ecological apocalypse and precipitating a mass extinction in our own backyard. But – vitally – it is not too late. There is hope we can hold to, and there is action we can take.

In July this year I conducted a UK Bioblitz and with the help of 785 recorders and 13 recording centres our team clocked up a notable 4828 different species. Lots of exciting plants, animals and fungi – but also lots of passionate, energetic, skilful, imaginative and creative conservationists. Some were in gardens, some in community wildlife areas, others on wildlife-friendly farms or big flashy nature reserves – all were making a difference in their own important and impressive ways. We have plenty of tools in the conservation box – we can rebuild, restore, reinstate or reintroduce. But we have one collective handicap – we are shying away from seeing the bigger picture. Too often we distract ourselves with projects which work, but which are too small to stop the rot. Another successful dormouse re-introduction is great, but it's not going to help redress the degradation of our landscape. We know the bigger issues we need to deal with, and we must summon the courage to face them and fight to fix them. Together.

So all you farmers, foresters, reserve wardens, teachers, students and children, all of you 'ologists', scientists, artists, writers and bloggers, you activists, volunteers, gardeners, can everyone please see that this is not your last chance to make a difference – it's ours. The UK's conservation community cannot be selfish. We must let bygones be bygones, all put our egos back in the box and forget about corporate strategies or 'our competitors'. We

do not all have to agree about all the details – but we must agree on a shared agenda. We must stand shoulder-to-shoulder with all of those who care enough to take some action and be part of making a difference.

OUR wildlife needs US – and it needs YOU more than ever.

Download the Manifesto

Click the download symbol and save it to your computer. If the colour version doesn't download on your device you can try downloading from here.

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Source information

Text A: adapted from a leaflet published by the Irish Guide Dogs for the Blind, 2017

Text B: adapted from David Hallberg, *A Body of Work: Dancing to the Edge and Back* (New York, Touchstone, 2017)

Text C: adapted from *Whitley Strieber's Communion: A True Story – Encounters with the Unknown* (New York, Avon Books, 1987).

Text D: adapted from 'A People's Manifesto for Wildlife', posted online at <https://www.chrispackham.co.uk/a-peoples-manifesto-for-wildlife>

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