

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

EITHER

- 1 Read carefully the poem opposite. The poet remembers how she used to visit her grandmother and the antiques shop which she owned.

How does the poet strikingly convey her memories of her grandmother to you?

To help you answer this question, you might consider:

- how the poet portrays the grandmother and her relationship with her
- how she describes her grandmother's room
- how she conveys her feelings about her grandmother's death.

My Grandmother

She kept an antique shop¹—or it kept her.
Among Apostle spoons² and Bristol glass,
The faded silks, the heavy furniture,
She watched her own reflection in the brass
Salvers³ and silver bowls, as if to prove
Polish was all, there was no need of love.

And I remember how I once refused
To go out with her, since I was afraid.
It was perhaps a wish not to be used
Like antique objects. Though she never said
That she was hurt, I still could feel the guilt
Of that refusal, guessing how she felt.

Later, too frail to keep a shop, she put
All her best things in one long narrow room.
The place smelt old, of things too long kept shut,
The smell of absences where shadows come
That can't be polished. There was nothing then
To give her own reflection back again.

And when she died I felt no grief at all,
Only the guilt of what I once refused.
I walked into her room among the tall
Sideboards and cupboards—things she never used
But needed; and no finger-marks were there,
Only the new dust falling through the air.

¹ *antique shop*: a place where old, sometimes quite valuable items are sold

² *Apostle spoons*: spoons with images of Christ's disciples on the handles

³ *Salvers*: serving trays

OR

- 2 Read carefully the following extract from a short story. Some amateur actors are arriving at a distant town to perform a play but have gone to the wrong place.

How does the writer create a sense of tension and unease?

To help you answer this question, you might consider:

- how the writer conveys the actors' problems on the way to the Hall
- the way she describes their encounters with the local and the policeman
- how the writing conveys the actors' impressions of the town and its people.

They stumbled round the Polyclinic¹, humpy in the dark with their props and costumes. 'A drain!' someone shouted, 'Look out!' 'Drain ahead!' They were all talking at once.

The others waiting in the car stared out at them; the driver leaned over his window: 'All right?'

They gesticulated, called out together.

'– Can't hear. Is it OK?' shouted the driver.

Peering, chins lifted over bundles, they arrived back at the car again. 'There's nobody there. It's all locked up.'

'Are you sure it was the Polyclinic?'

'Well, it's very nice, I must say!'

They stood around the car, laughing in the pleasant little adventure of being lost together.

A thin local who had been watching them suspiciously from the dusty-red wash set afloat upon the night by the one street light, came over and mumbled, 'I take you ... You want to go inside?' He looked over his shoulder to the location gates.

'Get in,' one young girl nudged the other towards the car. Suddenly they all got in, shut the doors.

'I take you,' said the boy again, his hands deep in his pockets.

At that moment a light wavered down the road from the gates, a bicycle swooped swallow-like upon the car, a fat police-boy in uniform shone a torch. 'You in any trouble there, sir?' he roared. His knobkerrie² swung from his belt.

'No, but we've come to the wrong place—'

'You having any trouble?' insisted the police-boy. The other shrank away into the light. He stood hands in pockets, shoulders hunched, looking at the car from the street light.

'We're supposed to be giving a play – concert – tonight, and we were told it would be at the Polyclinic. Now there's nobody there,' the girl called impatiently from the back seat.

'Concert, sir? It's in the Hall, sir. Just follow me.'

Taken over by officialdom, they went through the gates, saluted and stared at, and up the rutted street past the Beer Hall, into the location. Only a beer-brazen face, blinking into the car lights as they passed, laughed and called out something half-heard.

Driving along the narrow, dark streets, they peered white-faced at the windows, wanting to see what it was like. But, curiously, it seemed that although they might want to see the location, the location didn't want to see them. The rows of low two-roomed houses with their homemade tin and packing-case lean-tos³ and beans growing up the chicken wire, throbbed only here and there with the faint pulse of a candle; no one was to be seen. Life seemed always to be in the next street, voices singing far off and shouts, but when the car turned the corner – again, there was nobody.

The bicycle wobbled to a stop in front of them. Here was the Hall, here were lights, looking out like sore eyes in the moted⁴ air, here were people, more part of the dark than the light, standing about in straggling curiosity. Two girls in flowered headscarves stood with their arms crossed leaning against the wall of the building; some men cupped their hands over an inch of cigarette and drew with the intensity of the stub-smoker.

The amateur company climbed shrilly out of their car. They nearly hadn't arrived at all! What a story to tell! Their laughter, their common purpose, their solidarity before the multifarious⁵ separateness of the audiences they faced, generated once again that excitement that so often seized them. What a story to tell!

¹ *Polyclinic*: community clinic

² *knobkerrie*: short wooden stick used as a weapon

³ *lean-tos*: shacks

⁴ *moted*: dust-filled

⁵ *multifarious*: widely varying

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