

Sample Answer – Unseen Fiction

Read the following extract carefully and then answer the questions which follow. The extract (in edited form) is taken from *The Pupil* by Caro Fraser.

Background to the extract: *Anthony Cross has a holiday job as a porter in Spitalfields market in London.*

Wednesday was not going well for Anthony Cross. His day had begun at 4 a.m., and it was now nearly nine. It had been drizzling steadily since the first grey shadows of dawn had crept over the city, and the lanes and alleyways around Spitalfields market were glistening with rain and vegetable refuse. The great steel barn of the fruit market echoed with the shouts of porters, the whinings of forklift trucks, the crashing of crates and the tramp of feet.

While Anthony hauled crates and tallied sacks of onions, Mr Mant, his boss, would emerge regularly from the cracked wooden den that he called his office and shuffle across to the café with his little stainless steel teapot. There it would be filled, and Mr Mant, small and dark and bent and unwashed, would make his way back to the office with his tea and doughnut. He never offered to share his tea with Anthony.

It was the mere fact of the steady rain that made Anthony's life so miserable. Wheeling the heavy handcart, with its iron-rimmed wheels, in and out of the market, he had become drenched. There was nothing waterproof he could wear without sweating horribly, and now he could feel the damp seeping in under his jersey, through his shirt and into his skin, blotting and chilling him. The rain made the cobbles slippery, and a treacherous film of muck and rotten vegetable matter lay everywhere. Anthony's working gloves had become sodden and unmanageably heavy, forcing him to discard them, and now his hands were chafed from tiny splinters on the sides of the raw wooden pallet. Anthony pondered the dreadful possibility of spending one's entire life as a market porter. With a sigh, he turned to his final distasteful task of the morning, the disposal of five rotten bags of potatoes.

Suddenly he heard the voice of his friend Len in the distance. " 'Allo, Tone," Len said nonchalantly. "Fancy some grub?"

Anthony's mouth watered at the thought of a mushroom omelette and fried bread, washed down by a large cup of hot, sweet coffee. He nodded and they set off through the rain to the café. Len's great ambition in life, ever since he had first come to work at the market at the age of sixteen, had been to drive a forklift truck. He regarded Anthony with a mix of admiration (for his obvious intelli-

gence) and pity (for his inability to appreciate the finer things in life, such as Millwall Football Club). Their discussions were normally limited to cars and television programmes.

Len was watching Anthony speculatively as he mopped up the last of his mushroom omelette. “Ow long more are you working ’ere, then, Tone?” Anthony looked up. “I don’t know. Not much longer. Until I finish my apprenticeship for becoming a barrister.” Len’s interest slipped away from Anthony and his career, and moved on to more immediate interests. “You fancy coming to a disco in Hackney tonight?” Anthony shook his head; he had never yet accepted one of Len’s invitations, but he was touched that Len continued to issue them. “I can’t. I’ve got to go to see my father,” he said. And then sighed, thinking of his father and wishing that he could go to Hackney, after all.

QUESTION ONE (30)

Answer **two** of the following questions. Each question is worth **15 marks**.

1. Why does Anthony dislike his holiday job in the market so much?

Support your answer by reference to the extract.

2. If you were to choose to be friendly with either Anthony or Len, which of the two would you choose and why? Support your answer by reference to the extract.

3. Do you think the writer of the above extract brings the London market to life? Support your answer by reference to the extract.

1. Why does Anthony dislike his holiday job in the market so much?

Support your answer by reference to the extract.

- Look at the evidence in the text. Are the descriptions of the job positive or negative?
- Underline any descriptive words or phrases which tell you about Anthony's impression of his holiday job. (*miserable, drenched, sweating horribly, splinters, dreadful possibility of spending one's life as a market porter etc.*)
- As the question is worth 15 marks, you will need at least three well-supported points in your answer.
- You may refer to the text or quote from it to support your points.

- Planning your answer:- *early start, rain, cold*

unfriendly boss

physically demanding

would hate to do it forever

wants to be a barrister

Sample answer:

Anthony dislikes his holiday job in the market because it is tedious and physically demanding. We can see this from the opening paragraph where we learn that he has been working in the steady drizzle since 4 a.m. The descriptions of the noise, the rain and the vegetable refuse make it clear that this is not a pleasant working environment for him.

Mr. Mant, Anthony's boss, contributes to Anthony's misery by regularly walking past with tea and doughnuts which he plans to eat in his own office, never offering any to his employee, who has to work on without a break.

Not only does Anthony have to work in the rain, which seeps under his clothes, 'blotting and chilling him', but he has to do very physically demanding tasks, such as hauling crates and wheeling a heavy handcart in and out of the market. He cannot even wear his gloves, which are 'sodden and unmanageably heavy' from the rain, so his hands are soon rubbed raw by the splintery wood on the pallet.

There seems to be nothing about the job itself which appeals to Anthony, indeed he ponders the 'dreadful possibility of spending one's life as a market porter'. There is no relief for him in his morning's work; his last 'distasteful task' is the disposal of five bags of rotten potatoes.

As we learn later in the extract that Anthony is on his way to becoming a barrister, I think it is obvious that he would not enjoy this holiday job, which is so far removed from his chosen career.

2. If you were to choose to be friendly with either Anthony or Len, which of the two would you choose and why? Support your answer by reference to the extract.

- This is a question about character and it is also looking for a personal response.
- It would be easier to choose Anthony as a potential friend because we know a little bit more about him than we do about Len.
- Remember, focus on who you would be friendly with and why, don't go off the point and start explaining why you wouldn't choose the other character.
- Use words which describe character, (see the list on page 22).

- Planning your answer:- *Anthony- hard worker,*
intelligent
liked by Len – chats about things Len enjoys

Sample answer:

Having read this extract carefully, I would choose Anthony as a friend. He seems to be a hard worker, uncomplainingly doing all the unpleasant jobs in the market and working long hours to earn some money during his holidays. I admire this dedication to his career: he is clearly willing to do whatever it takes to get through his training to be a barrister.

Anthony seems to be intelligent, a trait I would value in a friend. Even Len, with whom he doesn't have much in common, admires him for this 'obvious intelligence'. Yet there is no hint in the extract that the ambitious Anthony looks down on Len, whose greatest ambition in life is to drive a forklift truck. Indeed, the pair seem to get on very well. Len affectionately abbreviates Anthony's name to 'Tone', asks him to have breakfast with him and repeatedly invites him to a disco in Hackney, even though Anthony always refuses. Though Anthony and Len are quite different, Anthony is happy to chat about things Len enjoys, such as cars and television programmes. I think this shows that Anthony is a likeable, sensitive character who doesn't patronise people.

At the end of the extract, we learn that Anthony has to visit his father and from the fact that he sighs and wishes he could go to the disco instead, we can infer that he is not looking forward to the evening. However, he shows loyalty to his father by planning to visit him regardless of his own feelings and by saying nothing negative about him to Len.

All of these characteristics - ambition, a willingness to work hard, intelligence, sensitivity and loyalty combine to make Anthony someone I would definitely choose as a friend.

3. Do you think the writer of the above extract brings the London market to life? Support your answer by reference to the extract.

- This is a question about style. Look at the language used in the extract.
- You should use some literary terms in your answer.
- It would be a good idea to use plenty of quotes to support your answer. References would not be appropriate in this instance.
- Planning your answer: *dreary images and negative descriptions, onomatopoeia...*

Sample answer

The descriptions the writer uses in this extract really succeed in bringing the market to life. Spitalfields market does not seem a very cheerful place and the dreariness of it is emphasised by the image of the alleyways and lanes 'glistening with rain and vegetable refuse'. Even dawn, when it comes, is full of 'grey shadows' which reinforces the gloominess of the setting.

As well as the visual images, the writer vividly describes the sounds of the early morning work in the market, using onomatopoeic words such as 'whining', 'crashing' and 'tramp'.

When the writer describes the working conditions: the cobbles made slippery by the rain, the 'treacherous film of muck and rotten vegetable matter', the chilling rain and the 'heavy handcart, with its iron-rimmed wheels', I can just imagine how uncomfortable it must feel to be doing Anthony's job.

Even the boss, Mr. Mant, is depicted in a negative way, he is 'small and dark and bent and unwashed', adding to the overall effect of a grim, dreary workplace as he shuffles to and from the 'cracked wooden den that he called his office'.

All of these descriptions of a gloomy, grey place filled with rotten vegetable waste, loud, harsh noises and relentless cold rain create a very vivid picture of Spitalfield market in the early morning.