

General Certificate of Education
June 2006
Advanced Level Examination



**ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE
(SPECIFICATION A)
Unit 6 Language in Context**

NTA6

Wednesday 28 June 2006 1.30 pm to 4.00 pm

For this paper you must have:

- a 12-page answer book

Time allowed: 2 hours 30 minutes

Instructions

- Use blue or black ink or ball-point pen.
- Write the information required on the front of your answer book. The *Examining Body* for this paper is AQA. The *Paper Reference* is NTA6.
- Answer **both** questions.
- Do all rough work in the answer book. Cross through any work you do not want marked.

Information

- The maximum mark for this paper is 200.
- Question 1 carries 150 marks and Question 2 carries 50 marks.
- You are reminded of the need for good English and clear presentation in your answers. All questions should be answered in continuous prose. Quality of Written Communication will be assessed in all answers.

Advice

- You should spend 1 hour 45 minutes answering Question 1 and 45 minutes answering Question 2.

Answer **both** questions.

- 1 Read the three texts printed on the following pages. These texts are linked by their common subject matter, insects.

Text A is an opening to a novel.

Text B is an extract from a non-fiction text.

Text C is an extract from a piece of spontaneous speech.

Compare all three texts, commenting on the ways in which the writers and the speaker express their feelings about insects.

In your analysis you should consider the following:

- the writer's or speaker's choice of vocabulary, grammar and style
- the ways in which attitudes and values are conveyed to the intended audiences
- any other aspects which you consider important in your reading of these texts.

- 2 What approaches have you used in analysing and comparing these texts and how have these approaches helped you to appreciate the texts?

END OF QUESTIONS

Text A

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Turn over ►

Text B

This non-fiction text is an extract from Iain Banks's travel book Raw Spirit, an account of his travels around his native Scotland.

The highland midge (there are other types, but let's stick to the main culprit) is a tiny little winged insect with the ability, en masse, to ruin evenings, days, weeks and entire holidays for human beings. They are, basically, microscopic vampires; newly impregnated females need a drink of blood to nourish the next generation of midges, and they seem to have a preference for large mammals, especially large mammals with not much hair. Us, in other words.

Really they're feeble, fragile little things, unable to fly faster than about six miles an hour – so a modest breeze sends them to ground, and running away, if you can, is surprisingly effective – plus they're damaged by bright sunlight, so tend to avoid that too. Despite such weaknesses they have a powerful negative effect on the tourist trade of the west of Scotland and on the quality of life of most people who live there. They'd ruin the summer for the rest of Scotland too if they could, but they're only really happy where the land receives more than about 1250 millimetres of rain per year, and in Scotland that basically means the side that faces out into the prevailing westerly airstream.

They breed best in peaty, acidic soil with lots of standing water, they love still, overcast days and balmy evenings and they tend to appear between the end of May and the start of September. And they are, collectively, voracious. The Highlanders of old had an especially horrendous punishment which consisted of stripping the convicted person naked and leaving them staked out overnight during the midge season. A midge will only take about a ten millionth of a litre with each bite, so even after a few tens of thousands of bites the victim was never going to be bled to death, but they did, allegedly, stand a very good chance of going mad. Anybody who has ever been subject to a sustained midge attack for even a few minutes – especially when they start to get into your eyes and up your nose – will sympathise.

There are, however, two saving graces, one for people who only visit the Highlands for short periods, the other for everybody. The first is that it's the body's own reaction to the midge bite that distresses rather than the bite itself, and that reaction takes two or three days to develop, so if you're only on the west coast for a weekend you may never notice the damn things. The second is that some wonderful person has invented a midge trap that actually appears to work. This device wafts out carbon dioxide – which is what the midge homes in on, thinking it's the exhaled breath of a big, juicy mammal – then a sort of modified vacuum cleaner sucks the little bastards into an extremely fine mesh net. This can clear a significant area of even a really badly midge-infested site and could even, conceivably, just possibly, let people in Highland hotels and back gardens sit outside of an evening. If this all works in the real world and not just under controlled conditions, the inventor deserves to become a multi-millionaire and have statues erected to him or her from Stranraer to Ullapool.

Anyway, Glenfinnan is midge central. We went out one evening years ago and left a light on and a window open at the McFarlanes' house; when we came back there were so many midges on the angles between the walls and the ceiling it was as though somebody had taken a can of black spray paint and sprayed slowly from one corner to the next. We all just stood and stared, aghast, until Aileen – unknowingly anticipating this new midge-hoovering device – got the vacuum cleaner out and removed the little horrors that way.

Actually midges would drive you to strong drink too, for the anaesthetic effect if nothing else. I've even heard of people smearing whisky onto their skin to act as a short-lived deterrent to the little fiends, though it has to be pointed out that a) it had better be a blend¹, b) this should only be done under conditions of extreme desperation, and c) there's little proof it works.

¹ A cheaper form of whisky

Text C

This is part of a conversation where an adult recalls two incidents involving insects.

Key

(.)	micropause
(1.0)	pause in seconds
::	elongation of sound
<u>underlining</u>	emphasis on a particular word
<i>italics</i>	non-verbal sound

Some words have been spelled to reflect their pronunciation

erm (.) well I can remember two (.) particular (.) insect (.) erm (0.5) thingies (.) the first i::s (.) when I was small an' at school (1.0) this boy (.) that I used to sit next to (.) one day he came in one day (.) an' he was scratchin' at his arm (.) all the time (.) right through the day (1.0) so's eventually I says (.) what's a matter with you I says (1.0) I got an itch on me arm he says (1.0) well stop scratchin' at it I says (1.0) well I can't he says (.) it's really bad (1.0) let's have a look says I (.) an' he showed me an' it was really really bad (.) dead red (1.0) an' the skin was kinda (.) kinda (.) kinda (1.0) black in the middle o' all this this (.) redness (1.0) anyways (.) he went to the doctor the next day (1.0) an' d'you know what it were (2.0) a beetle had erm (3.0) burrowed under his skin and was layin' eggs (.) an' that's what caused the the (.) itch (4.0) oh yeah (.) an' the other one I heard about was on the radio (.) this bloke (1.0) erm well (.) he bought a a (.) cheese plant (.) from the supermarket like (.) an' he noticed (.) when he watered it the (.) it kinda (1.0) squeaked (1.0) an' this went on an' on an' on (1.0) each time he watered that plant it squeaked (1.0) so he had a look at it (.) couldn't see owt¹ wrong with it (.) or anythink (.) so he supposes it must be the (1.0) roots (1.0) expandin' or something (3.0) anyhow he's watchin' a programme on the telly one night (.) an' it's about plants (.) an' them erm (.) respondin' to humans an' all that (.) so he gets in touch (.) an' they take his call on the programme itself (1.0) an' the guy on the telly says he's never heard of of a a (1.0) cheese plant talkin' before (.) an' he asks the bloke (.) to describe (1.0) exactly what happens (.) an' when the plant (*laughs*) talks (2.0) so the man that owns the plant tells him (.) that it squeaks (1.0) but only when he waters it (2.0) so the bloke on the telly (.) asks him (.) if he can lift the plant out of the pot it's in (.) but really carefully like (2.0) an' he does (.) an' when he gets it out of the pot he says (.) bloody hell (1.0) an' the bloke on the telly says (.) what's a matter (.) an' the bloke says (1.0) there's a bloody great spider in the bottom of the pot (.) an' loads of little uns too (2.0) well it turns out (.) it was a tarantula (.) a female (.) with twenty-seven babies (0.5) an' that's what was squeakin' (.) when the plant was watered

¹ owt – dialect word for 'anything'

END OF TEXTS

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Text C: Extract from a conversation.

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