

AQA GCSE ENGLISH LANGUAGE

Paper 1: Explorations in creative reading and writing

SET N

Insert

The source that follows is:

Source A: 20th Century prose-fiction

The Beast With Five Fingers by W.F. Harvey

An extract from a short story published in 1928

Source A

This extract is from the beginning of a short story by W.F. Harvey. In this part of the story, Eustace Borlsover is visiting his elderly uncle, Adrian, and notices something strange happening with Adrian's hand.

When he was fifty years old Adrian Borlsover lost his sight. In a wonderfully short time he adapted himself to the new conditions of life. He quickly learned to read Braille*. So marvellous indeed was his sense of touch, that he was still able to maintain his interest in botany*. The mere passing of his long supple fingers over a flower was
5 sufficient means for its identification, though occasionally he would use his lips. I have found several letters of his among my father's correspondence; in no case was there anything to show that he was afflicted with blindness, and this in spite of the fact that he exercised undue economy in the spacing of lines. Towards the close of his life,
10 Adrian Borlsover was credited with powers of touch that seemed almost uncanny. It has been said that he could tell at once the colour of a ribbon placed between his fingers. My father would neither confirm nor deny the story.

Two years before his death Adrian Borlsover developed, unknown to himself, the not uncommon power of automatic writing. Eustace made the discovery by accident:
15 Adrian was sitting reading in bed, the forefinger of his left hand tracing the Braille characters, when his nephew noticed that a pencil the old man held in his right hand was moving slowly along the opposite page. He left his seat in the window and sat down beside the bed. The right hand continued to move and now he could see plainly that they were letters and words which it was forming.

"Adrian Borlsover," wrote the hand, "Eustace Borlsover, Charles Borlsover, Francis
20 Borlsover, Sigismund Borlsover, Adrian Borlsover, Eustace Borlsover, Saville Borlsover. B for Borlsover. Honesty is the Best Policy. Beautiful Belinda Borlsover."

"What curious nonsense!" said Eustace to himself.

He left his uncle at the end of October with a promise to return early in December. It seemed to him quite clear that the old man's power of automatic writing was
25 developing rapidly, and for the first time he looked forward to a visit that would combine duty with interest.

But on his return he was at first disappointed. His uncle, he thought, looked older. He was listless, too, preferring others to read to him and dictating nearly all his letters. Not until the day before he left had Eustace an opportunity of observing Adrian Borlsover's
30 new-found ability.

The old man, propped up in bed with pillows, had sunk into a light sleep. His two hands lay on the coverlet, his left hand tightly clasping his right. Eustace took an empty manuscript-book and placed a pencil within reach of the fingers of the right hand. They snatched at it eagerly. Almost immediately it began to write.

35 "Blundering* Borlsovers, unnecessarily unnatural, extraordinarily eccentric, culpably* curious."

"Who are you?" asked Eustace in a low voice.

"Never you mind," wrote the hand of Adrian.

"Is it my uncle who is writing?"

40 "O my prophetic* soul, mine uncle!"

"Is it anyone I know?"

"Silly Eustace, you'll see me very soon."

"When shall I see you?"

"When poor old Adrian's dead."

45 "Where shall I see you?"

"Where shall you not?"

Instead of speaking his next question, Eustace wrote it: "What is the time?"

50 The fingers dropped the pencil and moved three or four times across the paper. Then, picking up the pencil, they wrote: "Ten minutes before four. Put your book away, Eustace. Adrian mustn't find us working at this sort of thing. He doesn't know what to make of it, and I won't have poor old Adrian disturbed. Au revoir!"

Adrian Borlsover awoke with a start.

Glossary

**Braille = a form of written language for blind people, in which characters are represented by patterns of raised dots that are felt with the fingertips*

**botany = the study of plants*

**blundering = making careless mistakes*

**culpably = deserving to be held responsible for a mistake or something bad*

**prophetic = accurately predicting the future*

End of source