
AQA GCSE ENGLISH LANGUAGE

Paper 2: Writers' viewpoints and perspectives

SET M

Insert

The two sources that follows are:

Source A: 20th Century non-fiction

Blackpool Pleasure Beach

An extract from a travel journal from the 1950s

Source B: 19th Century non-fiction

Sketches by Boz by Charles Dickens

An extract from a collection of short pieces of writing

Source A

Source A is an extract from a published travel journal from the 1950s. The author describes his nostalgic visit to Blackpool Pleasure Beach, reflecting on how the experience has changed over time.

I returned to Blackpool Pleasure Beach last summer, a place I hadn't seen since my childhood holidays in the Thirties. The train ride up the coast was a different kind of journey now, quiet and slick, not the rattling affair of my youth. But the moment I saw the skyline of steel rollercoasters, my heart gave a familiar lurch, and a wave of memories washed over me. I remembered it as a dizzying world of wonder, a place that ran on the thrumming power of steam and the shouts of the showmen. The air was thick with the scent of hot oil and candyfloss, a cloying but comforting perfume. The rides were built of wood and iron, each one a creaking, groaning spectacle with a personality all its own. The Grand National, its crown jewel, was a roaring, rattling monster that promised to throw you to the sky and back down again with a shuddering, violent grace.

There was a frantic, raw energy to it all. The showmen's shouts, their mouths wide as they bellowed over tinny megaphones, were a part of the show. They were ringmasters in a chaotic circus, a chorus of wild-eyed men coaxing you to witness a spectacle or to brave a ride that looked genuinely dangerous. It was all noise and spectacle and a thrill that felt genuinely earned, a reward for your bravery in the face of such raw, untamed excitement. The fear was real, a gut-lurching sensation that left you breathless and exhilarated. And when the ride came to a stop, the feeling of solid ground beneath your feet was as much a part of the experience as the ride itself.

Now, it's a different world entirely. The showmen's bark is gone, replaced by a monotone* loudspeaker issuing safety instructions. The scent of hot oil has been sanitised by the faint smell of hot dogs and clean concrete. The wooden monsters are gone, replaced by sleek, steel machines, painted in bold, primary colours and humming with the silent efficiency of electricity. The queues are orderly, a long, shuffling line of people staring at their shoes or into the small, lit screens in their hands. The thrill they offer is no longer a gut-lurching fear but a calculated, controlled adrenaline rush. It's safe, predictable, and clean. The terror is gone, replaced by a momentary sensation of G-force.

I watched a family stand at the exit of one of the towering steel coasters, their faces placid*. They had just travelled at speeds unthinkable in my youth, yet there was no whoop of triumph, no shared look of relief. They were here for the ride, not the show. The wonder is gone, and so is the shared, human experience of it. It's all just fun now, an individual act of consumption rather than a communal act of bravery. I couldn't help but feel a deep sense of loss. We have gained in efficiency and safety, but we have lost the raw, unpredictable magic that made those old fairs and rollercoasters feel truly alive.

Glossary

**monotone* = a sound that stays on the same note

**placid* = calm and peaceful

Source B

Source B is an extract from *Sketches by Boz* by Charles Dickens, a collection of short pieces about London life in the 1830s. This extract describes an annual Easter event of a 3-day celebration in Greenwich where Londoners from all classes mingled.

Five minutes' walking brings you to the fair; a scene calculated to awaken very different feelings. The entrance is occupied on either side by the vendors of gingerbread and toys: the stalls are gaily lighted up, the most attractive goods profusely disposed, and unbonneted young ladies, in their zeal for the interest of their employers, seize you by the coat and induce you to purchase half a pound of the real spice nuts. Occasionally you pass a deal table, on which are exposed pennyworths of pickled salmon (fennel included), in little white saucers: oysters, with shells as large as cheese-plates, and divers specimens of a species of snail (*wilks*, we think they are called), floating in a somewhat bilious-looking green liquid. Cigars, too, are in great demand; gentlemen must smoke, of course, and here they are, two a penny, in a regular authentic cigar-box, with a lighted tallow candle* in the centre.

Imagine yourself in an extremely dense crowd, which swings you to and fro, and in and out, and every way but the right one; add to this the screams of women, the shouts of boys, the clanging of gongs, the firing of pistols, the ringing of bells, the bellowings of speaking-trumpets, the squeaking of penny dittos*, the noise of a dozen bands, with three drums in each, all playing different tunes at the same time, the hallooing of showmen, and an occasional roar from the wild-beast shows; and you are in the very centre and heart of the fair.

This immense booth, with the large stage in front, so brightly illuminated with variegated* lamps, and pots of burning fat, is 'Richardson's', where you have a melodrama (with three murders and a ghost), a pantomime, a comic song, an overture, and some incidental music, all done in five-and-twenty minutes.

**Glossary**

**pennyworths = something that can be bought for a penny*

**tallow candle = a type of candle made from hard, rendered animal fat*

**penny dittos = a fairground attraction*

**variegated = a variety of*

End of sources



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