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# AQA GCSE ENGLISH LANGUAGE

**Paper 2:** Writers' viewpoints and perspectives

**SET N**

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## Insert

The two sources that follows are:

Source A: 20th Century non-fiction

*A Haunted Life*

An extract adapted from a newspaper article

Source B: 19th Century non-fiction

*Nellie Bly and the Ghost by Nellie Bly*

An extract from a newspaper article written in 1894

**Source A**

Source A is an extract adapted from an online newspaper article in which the writer interviews Danny Robins, a podcast presenter and playwright, who investigates paranormal experiences.

Danny Robins has never seen a ghost and it troubles him even if, he says, he is torn “between wanting proof, and yet being terrified by what that would mean.” Instead, he lives vicariously\* through the people who tell him their ghost stories.

5 Robins has become Britain’s most famous collector of paranormal experiences; his podcast, *The Battersea Poltergeist* was a huge hit, and his latest, *The Witch Farm*, is a creepy investigation into a haunted remote farmhouse in Wales. This week sees the launch of his book, *Into the Uncanny*, which investigates four new cases, including spirits that were unleashed when a man dug up his back garden, and a poltergeist who, rather than the violent havoc usually associated with such phenomena, liked to stack crockery neatly. To me, I say, that’s much scarier than plates smashing, or even kitchen knives flying through the air. Robins agrees: “When you know that there is no way any other human being could have done that, it becomes terrifying.”

15 Robins has always been fascinated with ghosts. He grew up in Newcastle, where his mother was a teacher and his father a university lecturer. “They were definitely products of the 60s — they became vegetarian, atheists, left-wing. They were very thoughtful and questioning, but belief was just not a part of our household.” Robins is the sceptic who wants to believe; I’m the same, although I don’t really believe in ghosts. Except...his tales are so compelling, and his witnesses usually so rational and skeptical. For example, take Ken, a geneticist who recounted to Robins a terrifying event that happened in his halls of residence when he was a student.

25 One of the cases that sticks with Robins most is the woman who was convinced she saw her friend who had just died. A few years later, at a schlocky\* medium\* show she had been dragged to and didn’t remotely believe in, the medium caught up with her as she was leaving and said that she couldn’t tell her this on stage, but that she had a message for her. “She said the exact words that this friend had said to her,” says Robins. “It’s one of the ones I found hardest to explain. For me, that woman was the epitome\* of the person who did not believe in ghosts, didn’t want to believe, and yet she felt like she’d had this experience that she couldn’t explain.”

30 In an age of mistrust, Robins is careful to choose which stories to include and what information to cross-reference, and seeks out other witnesses. “You spend several hours with somebody, or sometimes several days, and you believe them. Ultimately, I trust these people, and I hope that my audience trusts me that I’ve made the right judgement.”

**Glossary**

*\*vicariously = experiencing something through another person*

*\*schlocky = cheap or trashy*

*\*medium = a person who attempts to communicate with spirits*

*\*epitome = a perfect example*

## Source B

Source B is taken from an article written by female journalist Nellie Bly, which was published in The New York World in 1894. In it, Nellie describes her experience of spending the night in a supposedly haunted house in New Jersey.

Afraid of ghosts? Oh, no! Not!! Why, I was wildly eager to see one, and as for living in a haunted house, I just longed for a chance. I laughed at those who believed in them and sneered at those who feared them. I did not hide my disrespect for ghosts, and oh I was brave, dreadfully brave.

5 But that was before I spent a night alone in the haunted Minton house in New Jersey. This house, very old and dilapidated\*, stands alone, surrounded by hills and wild woods. The nearest habitation is a mile distant across fields that none but a spirit could cross, and heaven knows how far it is off by road. Now, in this house, I was to stay all night alone and watch for the spirit of a young and beautiful girl that, so legend says, was murdered there  
10 and buried in the cellar.

People who have lived in the house solemnly swear to having heard all kinds of strange and terrifying noises, and to having seen, in the darkness, a little waxen\* hand that beckoned them. None of them ever dared to follow. This hand would apparently open and close the cellar door, for often, when people were sitting in the kitchen with bright lights, the  
15 latch would lift and that door would open and shut, and an invisible form would seem to pass through. This was more than human nerves could stand, and tenant after tenant had to give up and move away.

Now, it was to this desolate\*, wild place that I had promised to go and spend a night alone — to watch for the ghost, to investigate every strange noise I heard and, if I saw anything,  
20 fancied or real, to speak to it.

Had I the courage to do it?

I was sincere at first, when I said I had, but the more I thought about the thing the less courage I had. I pictured the possibilities in all horrible aspects. I could see myself sitting in that empty house, knowing that screams would have to be louder than a fog-horn to reach  
25 the nearest neighbour. Where would be my courage then? What could I say or do to help myself? Nothing!

Was it worth it — to prove that there were no ghosts?

I was not afraid of ghosts, at least I thought so. I did not believe in them, but I did fear my imagination, my nerves. I feared myself.

## Glossary

*\*dilapidated = in a state of disrepair or ruin*

*\*waxen = having a smooth, pale or translucent surface like wax*

*\*desolate - uninhabited*

**End of sources**