

GCSE English Language
Paper 1 Explorations in creative reading and writing

This extract comes from the detective novel 'Cuckoo's Calling' by Robert Galbraith. This is the beginning of the novel which describes a street where a crime is being investigated after the death of a young, female celebrity.

The buzz in the street was like the humming of flies. Photographers stood massed behind barriers patrolled by police, their long-snouted cameras poised, their breath rising like steam. Snow fell steadily on to hats and shoulders; gloved fingers wiped lenses clear. From time to time there came outbreaks of desultory clicking, as the watchers filled the waiting time by snapping the white canvas tent in the middle of the road, the entrance to the tall red-brick apartment block behind it, and the balcony on the top floor from which the body had fallen.

Behind the tightly packed paparazzi stood white vans with enormous satellite dishes on the roofs, and journalists talking, some in foreign languages, while soundmen in headphones hovered. Between recordings, the reporters stamped their feet and warmed their hands on hot beakers of coffee from the teeming café a few streets away. To fill the time, the woolly-hatted cameramen filmed the backs of the photographers, the balcony, the tent concealing the body, then repositioned themselves for wide shots that encompassed the chaos that had exploded inside the sedate* and snowy Mayfair street, with its lines of glossy black doors framed by white stone porticos and flanked by topiary shrubs. The entrance to number 18 was bounded with tape. Police officials, some of them white-clothed forensic experts, could be glimpsed in the hallway beyond.

The television stations had already had the news for several hours. Members of the public were crowding at either end of the road, held at bay by more police; some had come, on purpose, to look, others had paused on their way to work. Many held mobile telephones aloft to take pictures before moving on. One young man, not knowing which was the crucial balcony, photographed each of them in turn, even though the middle one was packed with a row of shrubs, three neat, leafy **orbs, which barely left room for a human being.

A group of young girls had brought flowers, and were filmed handing them to the police, who as yet had not decided on a place for them, but laid them self-consciously in the back of the police van, aware of camera lenses following their every move.

The correspondents sent by twenty-four-hour news channels kept up a steady stream of comment and speculation around the few sensational facts they knew.

"...no sign yet that they are moving the body, which has led some to speculate..."

"...no word on whether she was alone when she fell..."

"...teams have entered the building and will be conducting a thorough search."

A chilly light filled the interior of the tent. Two men were crouching beside the body, ready to move it, at last, into a body bag. Her head had bled a little into the snow. The face was crushed and swollen, one eye reduced to a pucker, the other showing as a sliver of dull white between distended lids. When the sequined top she wore glittered in slight changes of light, it gave a disquieting impression of movement, as though she breathed again, or was tensing muscles, ready to rise. The snow fell with soft fingertip plunks on the canvas overhead.

**Sedate = calm, serious*

***Orbs = round spheres*

Section A: Reading

1. Read the first paragraph again.

List four things we learn about the street.

(4 marks)

2. Look in detail at the second paragraph.

Behind the tightly packed paparazzi stood white vans with enormous satellite dishes on the roofs, and journalists talking, some in foreign languages, while soundmen in headphones hovered. Between recordings, the reporters stamped their feet and warmed their hands on hot beakers of coffee from the teeming café a few streets away. To fill the time, the woolly-hatted cameramen filmed the backs of the photographers, the balcony, the tent concealing the body, then repositioned themselves for wide shots that encompassed the chaos that had exploded inside the sedate and snowy Mayfair street, with its lines of glossy black doors framed by white stone porticos and flanked by topiary shrubs. The entrance to number 18 was bounded with tape. Police officials, some of them white-clothed forensic experts, could be glimpsed in the hallway beyond.

How does the writer use language here to describe the people in the street? You could include the writer's choice of:

- words and phrases
- language features and techniques
- sentence forms.

(8 marks)

3. You now need to think about the whole of the Source.

This text is from the opening of a novel.

How has the writer structured the text to interest you as a reader? You could write about:

- what the writer focuses your attention on at the beginning
- how and why the writer changes this focus as the Source develops
- any other structural features that interest you.

(8 marks)

4. Focus this part of your answer on paragraph three and below.

A student, having read this section of the text, said, 'This part of the text presents the people in the street as having a good time. This contrasts with the very depressing description of the body.'

In your response, you could:

- consider your own impressions of the people in the street
- evaluate how the writer contrasts their description with the description of the body
- support your response with references to the text

(20 marks)

Section B: Writing

5. A magazine has asked for contributions for their creative writing page.

Either:

Write a description of a street at night as suggested by this picture.



Or

Write a story that begins with the sentence: 'The buzz in the street was like the humming of flies.'

(24 marks for content and organisation and 16 marks for technical accuracy) [40 marks]