



National
Qualifications
2023

X824/77/12

**English
Textual Analysis**

WEDNESDAY, 10 MAY

2:30 PM – 4:00 PM

Total marks — 20

Attempt **ONLY** Part A **OR** Part B **OR** Part C **OR** Part D.

PART A — POETRY — 20 marks

Attempt the question.

PART B — PROSE FICTION — 20 marks

Attempt the question.

PART C — PROSE NON-FICTION — 20 marks

Attempt the question.

PART D — DRAMA — 20 marks

Attempt the question.

Write your answers clearly in the answer booklet provided. In the answer booklet, you must clearly identify the question number you are attempting.

Use **blue** or **black** ink.

Before leaving the examination room you must give your answer booklet to the Invigilator; if you do not, you may lose all the marks for this paper.



* X 8 2 4 7 7 1 2 *

TEXTUAL ANALYSIS — 20 marks

Your answer should take the form of a CRITICAL ANALYSIS appropriately structured to meet the demands of your selected question.

Attempt ONLY Part A OR Part B OR Part C OR Part D.

PART A — POETRY

Read carefully *Sticklebacks* (2014) by John Burnside and then answer the question that follows it.

*Sticklebacks*¹

- If only something else had been so real
we might have left them in the Fitty Burn,
the males electric blue
and crimson, females
5 silver in the flank
and wall-eyed,
when they slithered through our fingers;
- but summers were always for hunting, a garland of bees
trapped in a Kilner jar, the hum of it
10 gorgeous to the hand, all life and rage
made abstract; redpolls
lured into a homemade
box-trap for my cousin's backyard
aviary, their throats and crowns
- 15 the rose-red of the Zephirine Drouhin
in our grandmother's pit-town garden
at Crosshill.
When fair days came, we stood
like herons, knee deep in the silt
20 and slither of the rockpools, dip-nets
poised to gather in the shining wisps
- of wrasse and weever,² distant, nameless lives
that paled to nothing
in the noonday sun,
25 just as the lunties³ died in their chicken-wire frames
and the sticklebacks dimmed in their jars till we grew dismayed
and would surely have given them back
if we'd only known how,
- come to a stop in an acre
30 of willow herb, dusk on the way
and the colours of everything, grassweed and Himalayan
balsam, butterflies
and lily beetles failing in the grey
that came to find us, calling us by name,
35 anchor and limit, singling us out for the dark.

¹*Sticklebacks*: a species of small freshwater fish

²*wrasse and weever*: other kinds of small freshwater fish

³*lunties*: linnets (small song birds)

Question

Discuss how Burnside uses aspects of the natural world to engage your interest in the central thematic concerns of this poem.

[Turn over

OR

PART B — PROSE FICTION

Read carefully the short story *A Visit of Charity* (1941) by Eudora Welty and then answer the question that follows it.

A Visit of Charity

It was mid-morning — a very cold, bright day. Holding a potted plant before her, a girl of fourteen jumped off the bus in front of the Old Ladies' Home, on the outskirts of town. She wore a red coat, and her straight yellow hair was hanging down loose from the pointed white cap all the little girls were wearing that year. She stopped for a moment beside one of the prickly dark shrubs with which the city had beautified the Home, and then proceeded slowly toward the building, which was of whitewashed brick and reflected the winter sunlight like a block of ice. As she walked vaguely up the steps she shifted the small pot from hand to hand; then she had to set it down and remove her mittens before she could open the heavy door.

'I'm a Campfire Girl . . . I have to pay a visit to some old lady,' she told the nurse at the desk. This was a woman in a white uniform who looked as if she were cold; she had close-cut hair which stood up on the very top of her head exactly like a sea wave. Marian, the little girl, did not tell her that this visit would give her a minimum of only three points in her score.

'Acquainted with any of our residents?' asked the nurse. She lifted one eyebrow.

'With any old ladies? No — but — that is, any of them will do,' Marian stammered. With her free hand she pushed her hair behind her ears, as she did when it was time to study Science.

The nurse shrugged and rose. 'You have a nice *multiflora cineraria* there,' she remarked as she walked ahead down the hall of closed doors to pick out an old lady.

There was loose, bulging linoleum on the floor. Marian felt as if she were walking on the waves, but the nurse paid no attention to it. There was a smell in the hall like the interior of a clock. Everything was silent until, behind one of the doors, an old lady of some kind cleared her throat like a sheep bleating. This decided the nurse. Stopping in her tracks, she first extended her arm, bent her elbow, and leaned forward from the hips — all to examine the watch strapped to her wrist; then she gave a loud double-rap on the door.

'There are two in each room,' the nurse remarked over her shoulder.

'Two what?' asked Marian without thinking. The sound like a sheep's bleating almost made her turn around and run back.

One old woman was pulling the door open in short, gradual jerks, and when she saw the nurse a strange smile forced her old face dangerously awry. Marian, suddenly propelled by the strong, impatient arm of the nurse, saw next the side-face of another old woman, even older, who was lying flat in bed with a cap on and a counterpane drawn up to her chin.

'Visitor,' said the nurse, and after one more shove she was off up the hall.

Marian stood tongue-tied; both hands held the potted plant. The old woman, still with that terrible, square smile (which was a smile of welcome) stamped on her bony face, was waiting . . . Perhaps she said something. The old woman in bed said nothing at all, and she did not look around.

Suddenly Marian saw a hand, quick as a bird claw, reach up in the air and pluck the white cap off

her head. At the same time, another claw to match drew her all the way into the room, and the next moment the door closed behind her.

‘My, my, my,’ said the old lady at her side.

40 Marian stood enclosed by a bed, a washstand and a chair; the tiny room had altogether too much furniture. Everything smelled wet — even the bare floor. She held on to the back of the chair, which was wicker and felt soft and damp. Her heart beat more and more slowly, her hands got colder and colder, and she could not hear whether the old women were saying anything or not. She could not see them very clearly. How dark it was! The window shade was down, and the only door was shut. Marian looked at the ceiling . . . It was like being caught in a robbers’ cave, just
45 before one was murdered.

‘Did you come to be our little girl for a while?’ the first robber asked.

Then something was snatched from Marian’s hand — the little potted plant.

‘Flowers!’ screamed the old woman. She stood holding the pot in an undecided way. ‘Pretty flowers,’ she added.

50 Then the old woman in bed cleared her throat and spoke. ‘They are not pretty,’ she said, still without looking around, but very distinctly.

Marian suddenly pitched against the chair and sat down in it.

‘Pretty flowers,’ the first old woman insisted. ‘Pretty — pretty . . .’

55 Marian wished she had the little pot back for just a moment — she had forgotten to look at the plant herself before giving it away. What did it look like?

‘Stinkweeds,’ said the other old woman sharply. She had a bunchy white forehead and red eyes like a sheep. Now she turned them toward Marian. The foggiess seemed to rise in her throat again, and she bleated, ‘Who — are — you?’

To her surprise, Marian could not remember her name. ‘I’m a Campfire Girl,’ she said finally.

60 ‘Watch out for the germs,’ said the old woman like a sheep, not addressing anyone.

‘One came out last month to see us,’ said the first old woman.

A sheep or a germ? wondered Marian dreamily, holding on to the chair.

‘Did not!’ cried the other old woman.

‘Did so! Read to us out of the Bible, and we enjoyed it!’ screamed the first.

65 ‘Who enjoyed it!’ said the woman in bed. Her mouth was unexpectedly small and sorrowful, like a pet’s.

‘We enjoyed it,’ insisted the other. ‘You enjoyed it — I enjoyed it.’

‘We all enjoyed it,’ said Marian, without realizing that she had said a word.

70 The first old woman had just finished putting the potted plant high, high on the top of the wardrobe, where it could hardly be seen from below. Marian wondered how she had ever succeeded in placing it there, how she could ever have reached so high.

‘You mustn’t pay any attention to old Addie,’ she now said to the little girl. ‘She’s ailing today.’

‘Will you shut your mouth?’ said the woman in bed. ‘I am not.’

‘You’re a story.’

- 75 ‘I can’t stay but a minute — really, I can’t,’ said Marian suddenly. She looked down at the wet floor and thought that if she were sick in here they would have to let her go.

With much to-do the first old woman sat down in a rocking chair — still another piece of furniture! — and began to rock. With the fingers of one hand she touched a very dirty cameo pin on her chest. ‘What do you do at school?’ she asked.

- 80 ‘I don’t know . . .’ said Marian. She tried to think but she could not.

‘Oh, but the flowers are beautiful,’ the old woman whispered. She seemed to rock faster and faster; Marian did not see how anyone could rock so fast.

‘Ugly,’ said the woman in bed.

- 85 ‘If we bring flowers —’ Marian began, and then fell silent. She had almost said that if Campfire Girls brought flowers to the Old Ladies’ Home, the visit would count one extra point, and if they took a Bible with them on the bus and read it to the old ladies, it counted double. But the old woman had not listened, anyway; she was rocking and watching the other one, who watched back from the bed.

- 90 ‘Poor Addie is ailing. She has to take medicine — see?’ she said, pointing a horny finger at a row of bottles on the table, and rocking so high that her black comfort shoes lifted off the floor like a little child’s.

‘I am no more sick than you are,’ said the woman in bed.

‘Oh, yes you are!’

‘I just got more sense than you have, that’s all,’ said the other old woman, nodding her head.

- 95 ‘That’s only the contrary way she talks when *you all* come,’ said the first old lady with sudden intimacy. She stopped the rocker with a neat pat of her feet and leaned toward Marian. Her hand reached over — it felt like a petunia leaf, clinging and just a little sticky.

‘Will you hush! Will you hush!’ cried the other one.

Marian leaned back rigidly in her chair.

- 100 ‘When I was a little girl like you, I went to school and all,’ said the old woman in the same intimate, menacing voice. ‘Not here — another town . . .’

- 105 ‘Hush!’ said the sick woman. ‘You never went to school. You never came and you never went. You never were anything — only here. You never were born! You don’t know anything. Your head is empty, your heart and hands and your old black purse are all empty, even that little old box that you brought with you you brought empty — you showed it to me. And yet you talk, talk, talk, talk, talk all the time until I think I’m losing my mind! Who are you? You’re a stranger — a perfect stranger! Don’t you know you’re a stranger? Is it possible that they have actually done a thing like this to anyone — sent them in a stranger to talk, and rock, and tell away her whole long rigmarole? Do they seriously suppose that I’ll be able to keep it up, day in, day out, night in, night out, living in the same room with a terrible old woman — forever?’
- 110

Marian saw the old woman’s eyes grow bright and turn toward her. This old woman was looking at her with despair and calculation in her face. Her small lips suddenly dropped apart, and exposed

a half circle of false teeth with tan gums.

‘Come here, I want to tell you something,’ she whispered. ‘Come here!’

115 Marian was trembling, and her heart nearly stopped beating altogether for a moment.

‘Now, now, Addie,’ said the first old woman. ‘That’s not polite. Do you know what’s really the matter with old Addie today?’ She, too, looked at Marian; one of her eyelids drooped low.

‘The matter?’ the child repeated stupidly. ‘What’s the matter with her?’

120 ‘Why, she’s mad because it’s her birthday!’ said the first old woman, beginning to rock again and giving a little crow as though she had answered her own riddle.

125 ‘It is not, it is not!’ screamed the old woman in bed. ‘It is not my birthday, no one knows when that is but myself, and will you please be quiet and say nothing more, or I’ll go straight out of my mind!’ She turned her eyes toward Marian again, and presently she said in the soft, foggy voice, ‘When the worst comes to the worst, I ring this bell, and the nurse comes.’ One of her hands was drawn out from under the patched counterpane — a thin little hand with enormous black freckles. With a finger which would not hold still she pointed to a little bell on the table among the bottles.

130 ‘How old are you?’ Marian breathed. Now she could see the old woman in bed very closely and plainly, and very abruptly, from all sides, as in dreams. She wondered about her — she wondered for a moment as though there was nothing else in the world to wonder about. It was the first time such a thing had happened to Marian.

‘I won’t tell!’

135 The old face on the pillow, where Marian was bending over it, slowly gathered and collapsed. Soft whimpers came out of the small open mouth. It was a sheep that she sounded like — a little lamb. Marian’s face drew very close, the yellow hair hung forward.

‘She’s crying!’ She turned a bright, burning face up to the first old woman.

‘That’s Addie for you,’ the old woman said spitefully.

Marian jumped up and moved toward the door. For the second time, the claw almost touched her hair, but it was not quick enough. The little girl put her cap on.

140 ‘Well, it was a real visit,’ said the old woman, following Marian through the doorway and all the way out into the hall. Then from behind she suddenly clutched the child with her sharp little fingers. In an affected, high-pitched whine she cried, ‘Oh, little girl, have you a penny to spare for a poor old woman that’s not got anything of her own? We don’t have a thing in the world — not a penny for candy — not a thing! Little girl, just a nickel — a penny — ’

145 Marian pulled violently against the old hands for a moment before she was free. Then she ran down the hall, without looking behind her and without looking at the nurse, who was reading *Field & Stream* at her desk. The nurse, after another triple motion to consult her wrist watch, asked automatically the question put to visitors in all institutions: ‘Won’t you stay and have dinner with us?’

150 Marian never replied. She pushed the heavy door open into the cold air and ran down the steps.

Under the prickly shrub she stooped and quickly, without being seen, retrieved a red apple she had hidden there.

Her yellow hair under the white cap, her scarlet coat, her bare knees all flashed in the sunlight as she ran to meet the big bus rocketing through the street.

155 'Wait for me!' she shouted. As though at an imperial command, the bus ground to a stop.

She jumped on and took a big bite out of the apple.

Question

Write a detailed analysis of this story. In your response you should consider:

- the significance of the title
- mood and atmosphere
- the significance of the ending
- any other literary devices you consider to be important.

OR

PART C — PROSE NON-FICTION

Read carefully *Minor Venetians*, an extract from *Venice* (1960) by travel writer Jan Morris, and then answer the question that follows it.

Minor Venetians

The Venetians love their children, sometimes with a sickly intensity. Venetian fathers carry their babies with unashamed delight, and Venetian mothers show signs of instant cardiac crisis if little Giorgio ventures within six feet of the water. Venetian children are exquisitely, if sometimes rather ludicrously dressed: the minutest little baby girls have pocket handkerchiefs tied under
5 their chins, as head-scarves, and even the waxen Christ-children of the churches, lapped in tinsel tawdry, sometimes wear lace-embroidered drawers.

It is not altogether an easy city for children to live in. It has no dangerous traffic and few unspeakable rascals; but Venice is inescapably urban, and only lucky children with gardens, or with parents indulgent enough to take them to the distant park, have somewhere green to play.
10 Blithe but pathetic are the groups of urchins to be found entertaining themselves, in hot dry squares or dripping alleyways, with their inexplicable Venetian games — the most popular is governed by the accuracy with which a child can throw the old rubber heel of a shoe, but is so hedged about with subtleties and qualifications that for the life of me I have never been able to master the rules. The State schools of Venice are excellent and lavishly staffed, but they generally
15 occupy tall, dark, overheated buildings, heavily decorated with potted plants. There are no playing fields or yards, and even the mid-morning break (or so my own children lugubriously assure me) is celebrated indoors, with a biscuit or an orange at a blank brown desk.

And in the afternoons, when school is over — children under ten only go in the mornings — and their mothers take them for a breath of air along the quayside, dauntingly spotless are those
20 infants' clothes, unscuffed their polished shoes, neat their gloves and impeccable their hair, as they stroll sedately along the quay, beside the dancing lagoon. In the winter months there is a fair on the Riva degli Schiavoni, near St Mark's, with the usual assembly of roundabouts, bumper-cars, swings and candy-floss men, revolving colourfully against a background of ships' funnels and riggings. All the apparatus of gaiety is there, with a tang of the sea as well, but I have never
25 wandered through that fairground without being struck by the pathos of it all, so restrained do the children seem to be, so ardently delighted by every bump of the merry-go-round. Many Venetians seem to work their children very hard, loading them with homework, foreign languages and mathematics, to sustain the family honour, or get them into universities, and keeping them up late at night. Little Venetians often seem old beyond their years, and frighteningly well-informed.
30 When the Doge's Palace was burnt in 1479, the only record left of Petrarch's inscriptions upon the walls was the notebook of Marin Sanudo, who had taken the trouble to copy them down when inspecting the palace at the age of eight. (He went on to write a history of the world in fifty-five volumes.)

But not all Venetian children are solemn or scholastic. Venetian working-class women often raise
35 their children with a bluff common sense: a single open-handed smack on the face from a benevolent washer-woman instantly and permanently cured my elder son of the unpleasant habit of spitting. In the summer dog-days a stream of mudlarks, as in an old-fashioned Hollywood musical, throw themselves contrapuntally across your path into the canals, and some tomboys can be seen most afternoons up to their thighs in the mud-flats of the inner lagoon. Rumbustious
40 gangs of boys parade the Zattere, fighting each other with great wooden bludgeons or rapiers, or racing about on rollerskates; and I remember with affection a group of children who climbed one afternoon to the canvas roof of a water-bus stop on the Grand Canal, and who were tumbling about in the sunshine on its taut elastic surface like so many small acrobats, to the bewilderment

and consternation of the passengers waiting underneath. The little girls of Venice are over-dressed
45 but often adorable; and the more bedraggled the urchin, the more familiar he will be to the
English visitor, for as you clamber down the social ladder, away from the grand palaces towards
the tenements, so the children get scruffier, and more at ease, and less subdued, and more
rough-and-tumble, until at last, among the shabby homes of the poor districts, you find boys and
50 girls so blue-eyed, fair-haired, cocky, friendly and unkempt that you may imagine yourself home
in your own garden, hopelessly summoning Henry to wash his hands for tea, or disengaging Mark
from his collection of earthworms.

Even more, I sometimes think, do the Venetians love their animals. I have never seen one
ill-treated in Venice. Even in Roman days the people of the Veneto were so kindly to their beasts
that they were repelled by the bloody circus spectacles of their day, and preferred chariot races.
55 There are very few mortal children in the pictures of the Venetian masters, but nearly every
painter has portrayed birds and beasts, from the budgerigars of Carpaccio's *Two Courtesans* to
the fine big retriever who stands in the foreground of Veronese's *Feast in the House of Levi*. A
multitude of little dogs prances through Venetian art, a menagerie of lions, camels, dragons,
peacocks, horses and rare reptiles. I once went to an exhibition in Venice that consisted of some
60 fifty portraits, all by the same artist, all meticulously executed, all very expensive, and all of the
same cat.

Venice is one of the world's supreme cat-cities, comparable in my experience only with London
and Aleppo. It is a metropolis of cats. Now and again the sanitary authorities have conducted a
cat-hunt, to sweep away vagrants and scavengers: but so fond are the Venetians of their cats,
65 even the mangiest and scabbiest of them, that these drives have always ended in ignominious
failure, and the animals, spitting and scratching, have been hidden away in back yards and boxes
until the hygiene men have gone. The population of cats thus increases each year. Some lead an
eerily sheltered existence, and are rarely allowed out of doors, only appearing occasionally, like
nuns, upon confined and inaccessible balconies. Many more are only half-domesticated, and live
70 on charity, in old drain-pipes from which sympathetic citizens have removed the grilles, under the
seats of laid-up gondolas, or in the tangled recesses of overgrown gardens. You may see them any
morning wolfing the indigestible entrails, fish-tails and *pasta*, wrapped in newspapers, which
householders have laid down for them: and on most winter afternoons an old lady arrives to feed
the cats of the Royal Gardens, near St Mark's, while a man in a sweeping overcoat so manipulates
75 the flow of a nearby drinking fountain that a jet of water is projected into a declivity among the
paving-stones, forming a cat's basin or bath.

They are odd and sometimes eccentric animals. Although they are constantly eating, and often
turn up their whiskers fastidiously at a mess of spaghetti lying on a doorstep, they seldom grow
fat: the only fat cats in Venice (except at Christmas, when they all seasonably swell) are the
80 rat-catchers of the churches. They are never harshly treated, and are often positively molly-coddled,
but they are usually very timid. They hardly ever climb trees. They do not answer to 'puss, puss',
but if you go to the statue of Giuliano Oberdan, at the end of the Public Gardens, and make a
noise something like 'chwerk, chwerk', there will be a threshing of tails among the shrubbery, as of
fishes flailing in a net, and a small multitude of cats will bound out of the bushes to greet you. At
85 a *trattoria* on the Rio del Ponte Lungo, on Giudecca, there used to be a small white cat with one
yellow eye, and one blue: this may remind otologists, so I learnt from a letter in *The Lancet*, of the
white forelock and heterochromia of Wardenburg's syndrome, and the cat was probably deaf, and
a reluctant hunter. It was very probably of Saracen descent, born of a Crusader's booty, for such
asymmetrical cats are particularly common in the Levant.

90 Venetian cats often lead a kind of communal life, uncharacteristic of the species, lazing about in
each other's company, and sometimes dashing down a back-alley with four or five companions,
like soft grey wolves, or greyhounds. Sometimes a brave nonconformist, swept off his feet by such
a pack, dares to express the opinion that the hygiene men were right — there are too many cats
in Venice. In 1947 Daniele Varè, 'the laughing diplomat', put a complaint about them into one of
95 the old denunciation boxes. 'There Are' (so said his deposition) 'Too Many Cats In The Sestiere Of

Dorsoduro': but there the paper remains, for nowadays those old receptacles are not emptied from one century to another.

One Venetian cat became an international celebrity. He lived in the 1890s at a coffee shop opposite the main door of the Frari church, and until recently, if you had a cup of coffee among the frescoes of its front room, you would find that he was still not forgotten. Nini was a white tom who was so skilfully exploited by his owner, partly in the interests of trade, partly of charity, that it became the smart thing for visitors to Venice to call upon him: and if you asked the barman nicely he would bring out a big album from beneath his espresso machine, dust it reverently down, and let you look at Nini's visitors' book. Among his callers were Pope Leo XIII, the Tsar Alexander III, the King and Queen of Italy, Prince Paul Metternich, the Negus Menelik Salamen, and Verdi, who scribbled a few notes from Act III of *La Traviata* (first performed, disastrously, at the Fenice). When Nini died, in 1894, poets, musicians and artists all offered their fulsome condolences, now stuck in the book, and a sculptor did a figure of the animal, which used to stand on the wall beside the shop. 'Nini!' said one obituary tribute. 'A rare gem, most honest of creatures!' Another spoke of 'an infinite necessity for tears'. He was 'a gentleman, white of fur,' said a third, 'affable with great and small'. There was a gloomy funeral march in the book, and a long Ode On The Death of Nini: and Horatio Brown, the English historian of Venice, who spent much of his time in the State Archives of the Frari, around the corner, ended a poem with the lines:

115 *Yours was indeed a happy plight,
 For down the Frari corridors,
 The ghosts of ancient senators
 Conversed with you the livelong night.*

It was all done in a spirit of dead-pan satirism that was essentially Venetian, and you had to look very hard in the eye of the barman, as he wrapped the book in brown paper and put it carefully away, to detect a distant thin flicker of amusement.

For myself, I love the cats of Venice, peering from their pedestals, sunning themselves on the feet of statues, crouching on dark staircases to escape the rain, or gingerly emerging into the daylight from their fetid subterranean lairs. Shylock defined them as 'necessary and harmless', and Francesco Morosini, one of the great fighting Doges, thought so highly of them that he took one with him on his victorious campaigns in the Peloponnese. There are few more soothing places of refuge than a Venetian garden on a blazing summer morning, when the trees are thick with green, the air is heavy with honeysuckle, and the tremulous water-reflections of the canals are thrown mysteriously upon the walls. The rear façade of the palace before you, with its confusion of windows, is alive with gentle activity. On the top floor an elderly housekeeper lowers her basket on a string, in preparation for the morning mail. From a lower window there issues the harsh melody of a housemaid's song as she scrubs the bathroom floor. In the door of the ground-floor flat a girl sits sewing, in a black dress and a demure white apron, with a shine of polished pans from the kitchen lighting her hair like a halo. From the canal outside comes a pleasant buzz of boats, and sometimes the throaty warning cry of a bargee. On a neighbouring roof-garden an artist stands before his easel, brush in one hand, coffee cup in the other.

And dotted all about you in the grass, in attitudes statuesque and contented, with their tails tucked around them and their eyes narrowed in the sunshine, one licking his haunches, one biting a blade of grass, one intermittently growling, one twitching his whiskers — all around you sit the cats of the garden, black, grey or obscurely tabby, like bland but scrawny guardians.

Question

Discuss some of the ways by which the writer makes their attitude towards these 'Minor Venetians', and towards Venice itself, clear to the reader.

OR

PART D — DRAMA

Read carefully the extract from *Juno and the Paycock* (1924) by Seán O'Casey and then answer the question that follows it.

In 1921 the Irish Free State was created. In Ireland, there were those who were satisfied with this (Free Staters) and those who were unhappy with this (the Republicans or 'Diehards'), and this led to the Irish Civil War of 1922–23.

The play is set in 1922 in a tenement in Dublin during the Irish Civil War.

Characters in this extract:

'CAPTAIN' JACK BOYLE

MRS JUNO BOYLE: his wife

MARY: their daughter

JOHNNY: their son

'JOXER' DALY: a neighbour and friend of the 'Captain'

JERRY DEVINE: a neighbour

Act One

- The living-room of a two-room tenancy occupied by the Boyle family in a tenement house in Dublin. Left, a door leading to another part of the house; left of door a window looking into the street; at back a dresser; farther right at back, a window looking into the back of the house. Between the window and the dresser is a picture of the Virgin; below the picture, on a bracket, is a crimson bowl in which a floating votive light is burning. Farther to the right is a small bed partly concealed by cretonne hangings strung on a twine. To the right is the fireplace; near the fireplace is a door leading to the other room. Beside the fireplace is a box containing coal. On the mantelshelf is an alarm clock lying on its face. In a corner near the window looking into the back is a galvanised bath. A table and some chairs. On the table are breakfast things for one. A teapot is on the hob and a frying-pan stands inside the fender. There are a few books on the dresser and one on the table. Leaning against the dresser is a long-handled shovel — the kind invariably used by labourers when turning concrete or mixing mortar. JOHNNY BOYLE is sitting crouched beside the fire. MARY with her jumper off — it is lying on the back of a chair — is arranging her hair before a tiny mirror perched on the table. Beside the mirror is stretched out the morning paper, which she looks at when she isn't gazing into the mirror. She is a well-made and good-looking girl of twenty-two. Two forces are working in her mind — one, through the circumstances of her life, pulling her back; the other, through the influence of books she has read, pushing her forward. The opposing forces are apparent in her speech and her manners, both of which are degraded by her environment, and improved by her acquaintance — slight though it be — with literature. The time is early forenoon.*
- 20 MARY: (looking at the paper) On a little by-road, out beyant Finglas, he was found.
- (MRS BOYLE enters by door on right; she has been shopping and carries a small parcel in her hand. She is forty-five years of age, and twenty years ago she must have been a pretty woman; but her face has now assumed that look which ultimately settles down upon the faces of the women of the working-class; a look of listless monotony and harassed anxiety, blending with an expression of mechanical resistance. Were circumstances favourable, she would probably be a handsome, active and clever woman.)
- 25 MRS BOYLE: Isn't he come in yet?

MARY: No, mother.

30 MRS BOYLE: Oh, he'll come in when he likes; struttin' about the town like a paycock with Joxer, I suppose. I hear all about Mrs Tancred's son is in this mornin's paper.

MARY: The full details are in it this mornin'; seven wounds he had — one entherin' the neck, with an exit wound beneath the left shoulder-blade; another in the left breast penethratin' the heart, an' . . .

35 JOHNNY: (*springing up from the fire*) Oh, quit readin', for God's sake! Are yous losin' all your feelin's? It'll soon be that none of you'll read anythin' that's not about butcherin'! (*He goes quickly into the room on the left.*)

MARY: He's gettin' very sensitive, all of a sudden!

40 MRS BOYLE: I'll read it myself, Mary, by an' by, when I come home. Everybody's sayin' that he was a Diehard — thanks be to God that Johnny had nothin' to do with him this long time . . . (*Opening the parcel and taking out some sausages, which she places on a plate.*) Ah, then, if that father o' yours doesn't come in soon for his breakfast, he may go without any; I'll not wait much longer for him.

MARY: Can't you let him get it himself when he comes in?

45 MRS BOYLE: Yes, an' let him bring in Joxer Daly along with him? Ay, that's what he'd like an' that's what he's waitin' for — till he thinks I'm gone to work, an' then sail in with the boul' Joxer, to burn all the coal an' dhrink all the tea in the place, to show them what a good Samaritan he is! But I'll stop here till he comes in, if I have to wait till tomorrow mornin'.

VOICE OF JOHNNY INSIDE: Mother!

MRS BOYLE: Yis?

50 VOICE OF JOHNNY: Bring us in a dhrink o' wather.

MRS BOYLE: Bring in that fella a dhrink o' wather, for God's sake, Mary.

MARY: Isn't he big an' able enough to come out an' get it himself?

55 MRS BOYLE: If you weren't well yourself you'd like somebody to bring you in a dhrink o' wather. (*She brings in drink and returns.*) Isn't it terrible to have to be waitin' this way! You'd think he was bringin' twenty poun's a week into the house the way he's going on. He wore out the Health Insurance long ago, he's afther wearin' out the unemployment dole, an', now he's thryin' to wear out me! An' constantly singin', no less, when he ought always to be on his knees offerin' up a Novena for a job!

60 MARY: (*tying a ribbon fillet-wise around her head*) I don't like this ribbon, Ma; I think I'll wear the green — it looks better than the blue.

MRS BOYLE: Ah, wear whatever ribbon you like, girl, only don't be botherin' me. I don't know what a girl on strike wants to be wearin' a ribbon round her head for, or silk stockin's on her legs either; its wearin' them things that make the employers think they're givin' yous too much money.

MARY: The hour is past now when we'll ask the employers' permission to wear what we like.

65 MRS BOYLE: I don't know why you wanted to walk out for Jennie Claffey; up to this you never had a good word for her.

MARY: What's the use of belongin' to a Trades Union if you won't stand up for your principles? Why did they sack her? It was a clear case of victimisation. We couldn't let her walk the streets, could we?

70 MRS BOYLE: No, of course yous couldn't — yous wanted to keep her company. Wan victim wasn't enough. When the employers sacrifice wan victim, the Trades Unions go wan betther be sacrificin' a hundred.

MARY: It doesn't matther what you say, Ma — a principle's a principle.

75 MRS BOYLE: Yis; an' when I go into oul' Murphy's tomorrow, an' he gets to know that, instead o' payin' all, I'm goin' to borry more, what'll he say when I tell him a principle's a principle? What'll we do if he refuses to give us any more on tick?

MARY: He daren't refuse — if he does, can't you tell him he's paid?

MRS BOYLE: It's lookin' as if he was paid, whether he refuses or no.

80 (JOHNNY *appears at the door on left. He can be plainly seen now; he is a thin delicate fellow, something younger than MARY. He has evidently gone through a rough time. His face is pale and drawn; there is a tremulous look of indefinite fear in his eyes. The left sleeve of his coat is empty, and he walks with a slight halt.*)

85 JOHNNY: I was lyin' down; I thought yous were gone. Oul' Simon Mackay is thrampin' about like a horse over me head, an' I can't sleep with him — they're like thunder-claps in me brain! The curse o' — God forgive me for goin' to curse!

MRS BOYLE: There, now; go back an' lie down again an' I'll bring you in a nice cup o' tay.

JOHNNY: Tay, tay, tay! You're always thinkin' o' tay. If a man was dyin', you'd thry to make him swally a cup o' tay! (*He goes back.*)

90 MRS BOYLE: I don't know what's goin' to be done with him. The bullet he got in the hip in Easter Week was bad enough; but the bomb that shatthered his arm in the fight in O'Connell Street put the finishin' touch on him. I knew he was makin' a fool of himself. God knows I went down on me bended knees to him not to go agen the Free State.¹

MARY: He stuck to his principles, an', no matter how you may argue, Ma, a principle's a principle.

VOICE OF JOHNNY: Is Mary goin' to stay here?

95 MARY: No, I'm not goin' to stay here; you can't expect me to be always at your beck an' call, can you?

VOICE OF JOHNNY: I won't stop here be meself!

100 MRS BOYLE: Amn't I nicely handicapped with the whole o' yous! I don't know what any o' yous ud do without your Ma. (*To JOHNNY*) Your father'll be here in a minute, an' if you want anythin', he'll get it for you.

JOHNNY: I hate assin' him for anythin' . . . He hates to be assed to stir . . . Is the light lightin' before the picture o' the Virgin?

MRS BOYLE: Yis, yis! The wan inside to St. Anthony isn't enough, but he must have another wan to the Virgin here!

105 (JERRY DEVINE *enters hastily. He is about twenty-five, well set, active and earnest. He is a type, becoming very common now in the Labour Movement, of a mind knowing enough to make the mass of his associates, who know less, a power, and too little to broaden that power for the benefit of all. MARY seizes her jumper and runs hastily into room left.*)

JERRY: (*breathless*) Where's the Captain, Mrs Boyle, where's the Captain?

110 MRS BOYLE: You may well ass a body that: he's wherever Joxer Daly is — dhrinkin' in some snug or another.

115 JERRY: Father Farrell is just afther stoppin' to tell me to run up an' get him to go to the new job that's goin' on in Rathmines; his cousin is foreman o' the job, an' Father Farrell was speakin' to him about poor Johnny an' his father bein' so idle so long, an' the foreman told Father Farrell to send the Captain up an' he'd give him a start — I wondher where I'd find him?

MRS BOYLE: You'll find he's ayther in Ryan's or Foley's.

JERRY: I'll run round to Ryan's — I know it's a great house o' Joxer's. (*He rushes out.*)

MRS BOYLE: (*piteously*) There now, he'll miss that job, or I know for what! If he gets win' o' the

¹The Irish Free State, created in 1921, was the result of an uprising launched by Republicans during the Easter Week of 1916 in Dublin. The uprising was centred in one of the central streets of Dublin — O'Connell Street.

word, he'll not come back till evenin', so that it'll be too late. There'll never be any good got out
120 o' him so long as he goes with that shouldher-shruggin' Joxer. I killin' meself workin', an' he
sthрутtin' about from mornin' till night like a paycock!

(The steps of two persons are heard coming up a flight of stairs. They are the footsteps of CAPTAIN BOYLE and JOXER. CAPTAIN BOYLE is singing in a deep, sonorous, self-honouring voice.)

BOYLE: Sweet Spirit, hear me prayer! Hear . . . oh . . . hear . . . me prayer . . . hear, oh, hear . . .
125 Oh, he . . . ar . . . oh, he . . . ar . . . me . . . pray . . . er!

JOXER (*outside*) Ah, that's a darlin' song, a daaarlin' song!

MRS BOYLE: (*viciously*) Sweet spirit hear his prayer! Ah, then, I'll take me solemn affeydavey,² it's
not for a job he's prayin'! (*She sits down on the bed so that the cretonne hangings hide her from
the view of those entering.*)

130 (*CAPTAIN BOYLE comes in. He is a man of about sixty; stout, grey-haired and stocky. His neck is
short, and his head looks like a stone ball that one sometimes sees on top of a gate-post. His
cheeks, reddish-purple, are puffed out, as if he were always repressing an almost irrepressible
ejaculation. On his upper lip is a crisp, tightly cropped moustache; he carries himself with the upper
part of his body slightly thrown back, and his stomach slightly thrust forward. His walk is a slow,
135 consequential strut. His clothes are dingy, and he wears a faded seaman's cap with a glazed peak.*)

BOYLE: (*to JOXER, who is still outside*) Come on, come on in, Joxer; she's gone out long ago, man.
If there's nothing else to be got, we'll furrage out a cup o' tay, anyway. It's the only bit I get in
comfort when she's away. 'Tisn't Juno should be her pet name at all, but Deirdre of the Sorras,³
for she's always grousin'.

140 (*JOXER steps cautiously into the room. He may be younger than CAPTAIN BOYLE but he looks a lot
older. His face is like a bundle of crinkled paper; his eyes have a cunning twinkle; he is spare and
loosely built; he has a habit of constantly shrugging his shoulders with a peculiar twitching
movement, meant to be ingratiating. His face is invariably ornamented with a grin.*)

JOXER: It's a terrible thing to be tied to a woman that's always grousin'. I don't know how you stick
145 it — it ud put years on me. It's a good job she has to be so ofen away, for (*with a shrug*) when the
cat's away, the mice can play!

BOYLE: (*with a commanding and complacent gesture*) Pull over to the fire, Joxer, an' we'll have a
cup o' tay in a minute.

JOXER: Ah, a cup o' tay's a darlin' thing, a daaarlin' thing — the cup that cheers but doesn't . . .

150 (*JOXER'S rhapsody is cut short by the sight of MRS BOYLE coming forward and confronting the two
cronies. Both are stupefied.*)

MRS BOYLE: (*with sweet irony — poking the fire, and turning her head to glare at JOXER*) Pull over
to the fire, Joxer Daly, an' we'll have a cup o' tay in a minute! Are you sure, now, you wouldn't like
an egg?

155 JOXER: I can't stop, Mrs Boyle; I'm in a desperate hurry, a desperate hurry.

MRS BOYLE: Pull over to the fire, Joxer Daly; people is always far more comfortabler here than
they are in their own place.

(*JOXER makes hastily for the door.*)

BOYLE: (*stirs to follow him; thinks of something to relieve the situation — stops, and says suddenly*)
160 Joxer!

JOXER: (*at door ready to bolt*) Yis?

BOYLE: You know the foreman o' that job that's goin' on down in Killesther, don't you, Joxer?

JOXER: (*puzzled*) Foreman — Killesther?

²*affidavit*: a sworn statement

³*'Deirdre of the Sorrows'*: a figure from Irish mythology who fled Ireland with a true love.

- BOYLE: (*with a meaning look*) He's a buttty o yours, isn't he?
- 165 JOXER: (*the truth dawning on him*) The foreman at Killesther — oh yis, yis. He's an oul' buttty o' mine — oh, he's a darlin' man, a daarin' man.
- BOYLE: Oh, then, it's a sure thing. It's a pity we didn't go down at breakfast first thing this mornin' — we might ha' been working now; but you didn't know it then.
- JOXER: (*with a shrug*) It's better late than never.
- 170 BOYLE: It's nearly time we got a start, anyhow; I'm fed up knockin' round, doin' nothin'. He promised you — gave you the straight tip?
- JOXER: Yis. "Come down on the blow o' dinner," says he, "an' I'll start you, an' any friend you like to brin' with you." "Ah," says I, "you're a darlin' man, a daaarin' man."
- BOYLE: Well, it couldn't come at a betther time — we're a long time waitin' for it.
- 175 JOXER: Indeed we were; but it's a long lane that has no turnin'.
- BOYLE: The blow-up for dinner is at one — wait till I see what time it 'tis. (*He goes over to the mantelpiece, and gingerly lifts the clock.*)
- MRS BOYLE: Min' now, how you go on fiddlin' with that clock — you know the least little thing sets it asthray.
- 180 BOYLE: The job couldn't come at a betther time; I'm feelin' in great fettle, Joxer. I'd hardly believe I ever had a pain in me legs, an' last week I was nearly crippled with them.
- JOXER: That's betther an' betther; ah, God never shut wan door but He opened another!
- BOYLE: It's only eleven o'clock; we've lashins o' time. I'll slip on me oul' moleskins afther breakfast, an' we can saunther down at our ayse. (*Putting his hand on the shovel.*) I think, Joxer, we'd betther
- 185 bring our shovels?
- JOXER: Yis, Captain, yis; it's betther to go fully prepared an' ready for all eventualities. You bring your long-tailed shovel, an' I'll bring me navvy.⁴ We mighten' want them, an', then agen, we might: for want of a nail the shoe was lost, for want of a shoe the horse was lost, an' for want of a horse the man was lost — aw, that's a darlin' proverb, a daaarin' . . .
- 190 (*As JOXER is finishing his sentence, MRS BOYLE approaches the door and JOXER retreats hurriedly. She shuts the door with a bang.*)
- BOYLE: (*suggestively*) We won't be long pullin' ourselves together agen when I'm working for a few weeks.
- (*MRS BOYLE takes no notice.*)
- 195 BOYLE: The foreman on the job is an oul' buttty o' Joxer's; I have an idea that I know him meself. (*Silence*) . . . There's a button off the back o' me moleskin trousers. . . . If you leave out a needle an' thread I'll sew it on meself. . . . Thanks be to God, the pains in me legs is gone, anyhow!
- MRS BOYLE: (*with a burst*) Look here, Mr Jackie Boyle, them yarns won't go down with Juno. I know you an' Joxer Daly of an oul' date, an' if you think you're able to come it over me with them
- 200 fairy tales, you're in the wrong shop.

Question

Discuss the presentation of tensions between the characters as revealed in this extract.

[END OF QUESTION PAPER]

⁴navvy: type of pickaxe

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