

GCSE (9-1)

Examiners' report

ENGLISH LANGUAGE

J351

For first teaching in 2015

J351/02 November 2018 series

Version 1

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Introduction

Our examiners' reports are produced to offer constructive feedback on candidates' performance in the examinations. They provide useful guidance for future candidates. The reports will include a general commentary on candidates' performance, identify technical aspects examined in the questions and highlight good performance and where performance could be improved. The reports will also explain aspects which caused difficulty and why the difficulties arose, whether through a lack of knowledge, poor examination technique, or any other identifiable and explainable reason.

Where overall performance on a question/question part was considered good, with no particular areas to highlight, these questions have not been included in the report. A full copy of the question paper can be downloaded from OCR.

Paper J351/02 series overview

J351/02 is one of two examined components for the new GCSE (9-1) English Language examination which was first examined in June 2017. Each of the components follows a similar structure and tests the same assessment objectives but J351/02 assesses candidates' response to fiction texts whereas J351/01 assesses their response to non-fiction texts. The other difference is that in Question 2 of J351/01 candidates must synthesise information from two texts, a skill which is not tested in J351/02.

Candidates should prepare for this examination by practising how to read unseen literary texts with confidence and understanding. Candidates should learn how to select and interpret relevant details from the text and identify and explain features of language and structure. They must be able to identify similarities and contrasts between the texts and evaluate the impact of each text on a reader.

This session was only the second time that this component has been examined in November following first examination in 2017. In this session candidates' responses showed a clearer understanding of the demands of each question. This suggests that centres have paid careful attention to earlier examiners' reports. In previous sessions candidates' responses to Questions 2 and 4 have shown some uncertainty about the requirements of each task. In this session, on the other hand, most candidates organised their responses to these questions much more successfully.

This component of the series worked very well. Most of the candidates had been thoroughly prepared for the exam and knew and could demonstrate what they had to do. Centres should be congratulated on the continuing confidence and ability candidates show with Question 4. They could still score more heavily on Question 2 and Question 3.

The examiners' team enjoyed reading some lively and thoughtful essays in Section B.

Section A overview

Almost all candidates scored full marks for Question 1; did well on Question 4 but could do better on Question 2 and Question 3. The point was again demonstrated that if the passages had been read as thoroughly as they had been by the start of Question 4 the marks for Questions 2 and 3 would have been higher. Too many candidates say good things about the passages in Question 4, which could have scored them better marks in Questions 2 and 3.

Stronger candidates understand the word 'structure' and are able to recognise ways, sometimes subtle ways, in which writers develop moods, characters and go on to incorporate these features in their own writing. It is critical for candidates to realise that structure is about very much more than alleged 'long' and 'short' sentences.

The paper was accessible for all abilities and facilitated the required range of differentiation.

Question 1(a)

Question 1 is about **Text 1**, *Jamaica Inn* by Daphne du Maurier.

1 Look again at lines 1–8.

(a) Identify **two** words or phrases that show Mary is trying not to be heard.

.....
..... [2]

The favourite responses were 'crept' and 'trod gently' or variations of these. Both answers are tantamount to saying the same thing, so it was pleasing to see that candidates did not ignore one of them. 'Lighten her weight' was also popular, as was 'third step from the top creaked'. Very few candidates made the error of offering overlong or incorrect quotations.

Exemplar 1

(a) Identify **two** words or phrases that show Mary is trying not to be heard.

.....
.....
.....
..... [2]

Question 1(b)

(b) Identify **one** detail about the clock which makes it frightening.

.....
..... [1]

The most common responses were 'slow chocking tick' followed by 'husky breathing', 'shadowy outline' and 'jarred upon the silence'. Very few candidates did not get a mark here.

Exemplar 2

(b) Identify **one** detail about the clock which makes it frightening.

“husky breathing” ~~the clock shouldn’t~~ 
~~it’s not a person~~ A clock shouldn’t breathe. [1]

Question 1(c)

(c) Explain how this detail shows Mary is afraid.

..... [1]

This presented greater difficulties for many candidates. They were asked 'how this detail shows Mary is afraid' and it invited circular answers, which depended on what the candidate had said in response to 1b. For example, 'the clock sounded loud because it sounded loud'. Examiners were instructed to credit any reasonable response here and most gained what was sometimes a free mark. Quotations were not credited.

Exemplar 3

(c) Explain how this detail shows Mary is afraid.

Mary is paranoid as she is bringing objects surrounding her to life  [1]

Question 2

Question 2 is about **Text 1**, *Jamaica Inn* by Daphne du Maurier.

2 Look again at lines 21–32.

How does the writer use language and structure to present Mary's increasing terror?

You should use relevant subject terminology to support your answer.

.....
.....

[6]

The question was generally well answered by a number of candidates although there were several descriptive responses, which could not move beyond Level 1. Almost all saw Mary Yellan's youth, vulnerability and susceptibility to imagination.

Too many candidates went to material which was outside the set lines (and in Q3) which cannot be credited. They should take note of the set lines and, perhaps mark them up on the text. The set lines will NOT necessarily be the opening lines.

A popular response was to refer to 'her forehead wet now with perspiration' and take it as a manifestation of fear and then to go on and link it the final paragraph 'go clammy with sweat' making a structural and linguistic point at once. Other frequently made points were about the threatening nature of the 'splintered fragments' the cry of 'common murder' and the 'arms and legs..... as though with lead'.

The way to a successful answer is to start with examples of language and structure, then go on, and explore the ways in which they have been presented and the ways in which they work. Much less conducive to gaining marks is the 'technique' of feature spotting where candidates attempt to spot examples of a pre-prepared list of rhetorical devices. This is unhelpful because it rarely leads to exploration of effects and often scores nothing on that account. Even less helpful is the use of subject terminology that is confused or has not been understood. Some candidates attempted to locate asyndeton and polysyndeton but completely mixed them up. Others wrote about adjectives and adverbs without knowing what they were or what they did. Other examples of confusion included 'hyperbole' and 'emotive language'. Teachers and candidates are advised that there is no mark or premium simply for the use of literary critical terminology with no or at best very tenuous link to the text and task.

The best answers saw that what is being crafted here (as in Q3) was a series of distortions of sense experience where one or two of these are made to over-compensate for the absence of others. Many of these also saw that there is a darker driving force here: Mary is driven by a 'demon' of curiosity and the hall was 'black as a pit': driving her on to the terrifying sensation of possessing limbs, which have been immobilised.

Exemplar 4

~~The author uses~~ describes how Mary was feeling

The author creates the atmosphere by describing details using adjectives that belong to the semantic field of fear. ~~and~~ ~~one~~ ~~as~~ ~~it~~ By describing the fragments as 'splintered' ~~and~~ by an 'unsteady hand' the author shows the reader that Mary unconsciously tied ^{unpleasant} the two of them to an event that took place before.

The author uses repetition to highlight ^{the} stranger's strong disagreement ('no, and no again'), 'I'll not be ... I'll break' or repeating the word 'murder' - 'that's murder ... it's common murder'

To ~~use~~ describe how Mary's ^{fear} despair slowly rises ~~throught~~ through the scene the author ~~describ~~ writes about her feelings - at first only 'her hands and her forehead were ^{now} wet with perspiration' and 'she could hear nothing but the loud ~~beating~~ ^{now} of her heart' but at the end of the scene ^{now} the author describes Mary's terror ~~and~~ ~~where~~ has risen - not only was she 'clammy with sweat' but her 'arms and legs were weighted suddenly, as though with lead'. The author chose the comparison to ~~use~~ suggest that the terror the character felt was so big, that she couldn't move.

[6]

Level 5: 5/6 marks. There is a clear sense of the impact of 'splintered' and 'unsteady hand', which shows the past and present context of the moment of fear. The points on repetition as effective structure are well supported and the disproportion and dislocation of sense experiences develop the emphasis on fear successfully.

A Level 6 6/6 answer would have needed more which specifically interrogates language detail for example further consideration of the effects of 'loud beating of her heart'.

Question 3

Question 3 is about **Text 2**, *The Woman in Black* by Susan Hill.

3 Look again at lines 1–20.

Explore how the writer uses language and structure to make the actions of Spider the dog so striking and significant.

Support your ideas by using relevant subject terminology.

[12]

The key point here was to see that the reactions of the dog mirror and determine the reactions of the narrator in a way, which is unfettered by natural human caution. So they are 'striking and significant' in themselves but also in rousing the narrator to action and therefore developing the dimensions of fear of the unknown.

Few responses of lower ability assumed that both of them were frightened by Spider (the dog's name). Higher ability responses focused on the narrator's strained sense of hearing and the effects of his striving to interpret what he thought he could hear. This lent itself well to a consideration of the ways in which suspense is aroused and developed.

Some candidates thought that the speaker was 'Susan Hill' although it states very clearly that it is 'He'. The message given in the summer report about reading the introduction to questions and passages needs repetition here.

There were many linguistic effects to note here. Yes, there is some 'asyndetic listing' the effects of which gain the marks. However, there is also the use of rhyme, assonance and alliteration to comment on. Not to mention much about closed and unclosed doors.

There were some very clear structural points which candidates were able to locate in the passage which mark its progress from first arousal to 'heart beat uncomfortably' and from silence to 'growling and grumbling'. 'At first.... And then.... And every so often....'In the end' all mark the development of the passage's structure very clearly. They also bookend the growth of the emphasis on the obscured sense of sound to the exclusion of other senses.

Strong candidates saw the writer's apparent repudiation of classic horror tropes 'There were no footsteps. No creaking floorboards' was actually a means of intensifying the suspense rather than diluting it.

Exemplar 5

Support your ideas by using relevant subject terminology.

[12]

The author creates ~~the atmosphere~~ of silence, ~~existing~~ describing every sound in a very detailed way and emphasizing that it was not only 'very quiet' but also 'very still'. By using the adjective 'very' instead of ~~superlative~~ of using the word's superlative form only enhances how ~~is~~ silent the scene is. By having the dog ~~tense~~ ~~anxious~~, which the writer achieves by telling the reader that ~~its~~ body was ~~tense, as if ready to spring~~, the author manages to tie the dog's behaviour with the character's (and also the readers') feelings.

The phrase 'conscious only of the dog and the prickling of my own skin' forces the reader to focus on the dog, even more and at the same time, it again describes the silence, which the author later writes about as 'ominous and dreadful'.

~~The author ties together the dog and the silence while~~
~~describing~~ ~~The author uses the~~

The author lets the reader's imagination to imagine what the sound was - not telling the reader ~~what~~ it is, only what it is not - 'no footsteps, no creaking floorboards'. The only description of the noise is that it's 'muffled'. The author uses the dog as a carrier - by making it confused and baffled - ~~as~~ "snuffling along", "taking a pace backwards" and cocking her head, listening; the author makes the reader feel all those feelings of fear and confusion.

100.

12/12 marks, Level 6. A concise and confidently authoritative response which is subtle and perceptive in equal measure. It gets the point of the description of the dog's behaviour exactly right in its literary context and links that to its impact on the reader. The comments on comparative v superlative v repetition for effect are subtly made, again showing sophisticated understanding. The effects of the negatives (repudiation of the gothic tropes) are intelligently analysed. Overall the triangular relationship between reader- characters/events- writer are skilfully dealt with.

Question 4

Question 4 is about **Text 1, Jamaica Inn and Text 2, The Woman in Black**.

4 'Both texts present characters' increasing fear in new surroundings.'

How far do you agree with this statement?

In your answer you should:

- discuss the different responses of the characters to their new surroundings
- explain how each description presents the increasing power of fear
- compare the different ways writers present the characters' feelings.

Support your response with quotations from **both** texts.

[18]

Candidate performance on this question continues to improve and this paper was no exception to that. What is needed here is a direct answer to the question, which evaluates the application of the statement to the passages within a comparative structure. For almost all candidates here the answer was a straightforward 'yes' with some qualifications. More confident responses started with something like 'yes but in very different ways': promising some comparative analysis.

Few candidates now fail to make any attempt to compare but those who don't get a very low, if any mark for AO3.

Stronger answers gave very well organised accounts of the ways in which the writers deployed gothic horror imagery, often starting with the different uses of 'footsteps' and 'creaking floorboards' as noted above. Other successful answers compared the growing coalescence of the senses in text one, which features the growing capacity for sight and sound and the continued focus on sound in text 2. In text 1 Mary is 'wet with perspiration.... clammy with sweat': on the other hand the narrator in text 2 is 'paralysed, frozen'; 'constricted begun to shiver': opposite images used for the same effect.

Almost all candidates at least started to explore the differences in the effects achieved by the third person narrative in text 1 as opposed to the first person narrative in text 2. Mary Yellan is increasingly afraid of what is becoming known while the narrator in the second passage remains in terror of the unknown. A common observation was that Mary was alone at the outset but moving into a hostile environment whereas in text two the narrator is reassured by the presence of the dog (rather than vice versa).

Hill doesn't get as far as the satanic images noted in text 1 above: perhaps because of the focus on the reactions of the dog. Both passages have much about heartbeats, which provided solid grounds for comparison and, in better answers evidence for the ways in which sense experiences become confused.

Exemplar 6

Support your response with quotations from both texts.

[18]

LNK I partially agree with this statement because while both characters experience increasing fear, Mary experiences a ~~the~~ greater change in her response to her **EVAL** surroundings than the narrator in 'The Woman in Black'.

LNK Both characters' lack of awareness of their surroundings is **DEV** portrayed. To begin with, both descriptions are vague & unspecified, creating a sense of mystery. Mary is described to have heard "voices" & "footsteps". These vague words could lead to them to ~~knowing~~ referring to anybody's voices & footsteps. Unusually, this lack of description is effective. Like the characters, the reader is unaware of what is to come. "It was a faint noise." 'Faint' reflects this lack of clarity.

This is an example of a response that gets full marks for this task: AO3 6/6; AO4 12/12.

AO3: a detailed interwoven comparison, which explores the writers' ideas and perspectives and how they are conveyed. This is a particularly good example of what is meant by 'interwoven'. The response has been very thoroughly planned. It combines both new points about the writers' ideas and perspectives as well as re-cycling material from Questions 2 and 3.

AO4: a sustained critical evaluation demonstrating a perceptive and considered response to the statement and a full explanation of the impact of the texts. This response is very well aware of what is required and gets off on exactly the right note.

Comments are supported by apt, skilfully selected and integrated textual references: not only do we get clear insights into the similarities and differences between the texts and the ways in which they are written but the whole piece is structured in a dynamic and strategic way. Note the comparisons of 'demon' and 'moonlight', which reflect a confident, grasp of genre; the ways the conclusions of each passage are linked and the lack of visual clarity they share.

Section B overview

Candidates responded to both titles with Q5 the marginally more popular choice.

Better essays showed deliberate, conscious attempts to plan and structure work for a series of effects and moved to a thoughtful and effective conclusion. They were often supported by detailed and authentic imagery and dialogue. However, for dialogue to work well it needs to be punctuated very accurately: this was not always the case. Some candidates struggle to use tenses consistently and accurately; others strive to use inappropriately 'ambitious' vocabulary. This makes for less rather than more precision.

Weaker work was often far too long, unfinished and dealing with topics and areas of experience way beyond anything candidates might have actually thought or felt. There was much in this category that was derivative and unoriginal.

Time spent planning, checking and shaping written work is a recipe for higher marks.

Some candidates need to improve their handwriting to give themselves a better chance of a fair assessment.

Question 5

5 *The Taste of Fear*

Use this as the title for a story.

In your writing you should:

- choose a clear viewpoint
- describe the setting
- explore your characters' thoughts and feelings about being afraid.

[40]*

Unfortunately, there were many candidates who eschewed choosing moments when they had experienced fear in favour of succumbing to the invitation to copy well-worn genres and themes: abandoned houses, ghosts, monsters, frightening forests, asylums and empty schools that happened to be adjacent to their houses and so on. Gothic horror fiction is much more difficult to produce than it looks, perhaps.

Exemplar 7

The Taste of Fear

Fear. Fear had never been a substantial part of my life. I was well looked after throughout my childhood and thus this primal emotion was never needed in my survival; fear was not in accordance to the lifestyle that I lived. I never watched scary movies, my mother was a housewife so I always had her guidance accompanying me and I was never pushed to face obstacles that frightened me. This may be, perhaps, the causal actions from my parents' behalf which led to forming the naïve philosophy which guided my utterances until today.

Today, I had my first real taste of fear. I am 16 years old (although I am not in denial of my unquestionable youth) and it is rather peculiar that I have never travelled home, alone, in the night. My parents, acting on their own compassionate and yet somewhat overprotective beliefs, have continually ~~sheltered~~ myself to and from, for instance, any parties that I would attend. However, today's social gathering was quite a distance from home and my parents were ~~even~~ catching a flight to Rome for a weekend holiday. Therefore I was, therefore, instructed to stay home for the weekend and under no circumstances allowed to attend this particular social event. I did not listen.

At supper time, around 7pm, I embarked upon my journey and it was simple enough. I ~~re~~searched the route at home and the directions were simple enough. A small alleyway had to be crossed and a bus would take me ^{there} home. The alleyway was full ~~of~~ with colour and nature and reminded of ~~found~~ ^{my} memories of me and my mother taking scrolls around our area as a child. And so I travelled to the party with no issue and the night proceeded to unfold dissimilarly to the numerous parties I have attended - until. Until the night was over and it was time for me to return home.

I thought I was already frightened on the bus home. I had no idea of what was ~~to~~ to come. I got off the empty, ~~empty~~ and ~~luminous~~ bus and started to scroll through the alleyway which had transformed. It was colourless, soulless and unsettling. It was as if no innocent memories had taken place here. Amidst my ~~confusion~~ ^{confusion} a hooded figure began to walk in my direction and fast. My heart began to pound and the sound of its incessant beating ~~beat~~ was massively apparent in my ears and became a soundtrack for the events that followed.

What the hooded figure did tonight took seconds and nonetheless had an enormous existential effect on me. He advanced in my direction and seemed united with the dark  Without a word, this ^{masked} maled, malvolent and monstrous being grabbed me by the scruff of the neck and ~~drived~~ me into the wall. He dug his beastly hands into my pockets, took what he found and darted away back into his darkness 

The world is no longer blue skies and rainbows but rather black clouds and thunder. The world is no longer accompanied by the song track of birds chunting in the trees. Instead I am bewilfered and bombarded by the same beating in my ears as a symptom of what was a completely petrified state. My new nihilistic and disgusted view of the world was no ~~longer~~ doubt shaped by the taste of fear. 

25/40 marks, AO5 16 marks, AO6 9 marks, cusp of Level 2/3. This was one of the relatively few responses to this task that made a completely honest and authentic attempt to address fear as it had been personally and actually experienced and how it had affected the candidate in reality. Rather than fictionally and derivatively, a pitfall many other candidates failed to eschew. It describes and evokes a complete change in worldview and an effectively orchestrated structure to match.

The expression and vocabulary are appropriately ambitious although there are lapses in accuracy as a result.

Exemplar 8

It was two in the morning. As we ~~were~~ parked on the ~~dark~~ road, I ~~quietly~~ ~~but~~ ~~cautiously~~ drove along the desolate, narrow road, secluded and hidden by the tall, dark appearance ~~of the trees~~ ~~of the trees~~ of the towering trees, the pitch black silhouette of ~~the~~ an abandoned house crept into view. There were no other houses in sight, no cars on the road, no sign of anybody. Suddenly, ~~our~~ our car stopped. We were in the middle of the road, not too far from the house, however I ~~secretly~~ could hear the beating of my heart pounding louder and louder, as if it wanted to jump out. Without saying a word, I ~~secretly~~ glanced at my best friend and we apprehensively opened the doors and stepped out.

sharp
The air was bitter with cold, the atmosphere was
brilliantly silent and the only source of light was
the ghostly glow of the moon, ~~as~~ as it emitted light
onto the trees and bushes, ~~decreasing~~ casting ~~an~~
ominous shadows that danced and flickered onto
the ground. Carefully, I scanned the area, but it
was so dark ^{that} my visibility was low and ~~nothing~~
I could see nothing useful. The only thing was that
abandoned house. I looked at my friend. Fearful
to make a noise, I looked at my friend and ~~the~~
nodded. We were going to the ~~old~~ ~~decaying~~ ~~ruins~~ ~~area~~.

Frantically, I shot up, shouted his name and received no reply. Although, I was frightened, I was determined to find him. I had to. * Quickly, I searched the landing and found nothing. I searched nearby rooms and also found nothing. I decided to go downstairs.

At that moment, as I came to the top of the staircase, I froze with panic. My knees buckled and I couldn't move. Standing at the bottom of the stairs was the most terrifying thing I had ever seen . . .

AO5: Level 6 the form is deliberately adapted to position the reader showing a sophisticated control of purpose and effect. Tone, style and register are ambitiously selected and deployed to enhance the purpose of the task. There is a skilfully controlled overall structure with paragraphs and grammatical features used to support coherence and cohesion and achieve a range of effects. This essay is very unusual, because it takes the derivative, corny and clichéd and turns it into something, which is dynamic, original and compelling.

AO6: Level 4. An ambitious range of sentence structures is used to shape meaning and create impact. Accurate punctuation is used to enhance clarity and achieve particular effects. Vocabulary is precise and subtle, expressing complex ideas with clarity. Spelling of irregular and ambitious words is accurate with very occasional lapses. The technical features of the piece quite clearly enhance the piece making it more than it otherwise might have been.

Question 6

6 Write about a time when you were exploring a particular place.

You could write about:

- the details which made your exploration memorable
- your thoughts and feelings about exploring that place
- the way you feel about that experience now.

[40]*

More essays were successful on this topic because more candidates took it as a cue to re-imagine and recast their own experiences in fictional form. Some charming memories of places visited in the past were freshly brought to life. This is always a much surer route to effective and successful writing.

Exemplar 9

took
 take
 feet
 feet

I took my shoes off, remembering that my granny used to tell me off for bringing sand and mud into her Alhambra, into the place she cherished. I made my way into the living room and stopped by the staircase. Something that seemed so gigantic to me then now was just an ordinary staircase. I felt like as if I were Alice in ~~underland~~ ✓; as if the world was changing around me. I could picture myself very clearly, a four-year-old, chubby girl in her pink dress staring at the stairs. Behind me - my great-grandmother, in front of me - the enormous staircase, that made me feel as if I were a tiny little animal. ✓

I felt my eyes water again. Something that was so special to me then, now was just an ordinary object.

I turned around - I see my great-grandmother sitting on her chair. I walk towards her, pass by my uncle's old bedroom. I try to speak to her, but we don't understand each other. I didn't know that something was wrong with her then, but now my greatest fear is that this illness can sense my day be passed on to me.

This beat brings me back to reality. I walked onto the balcony, my grandmother's watchpoint. I stood ^{mood} stand on the balcony and ~~see~~ ^{see} myself on the playground. ✓

24/24 marks, AO5 24 marks, AO6 16 marks. This was one of the best essays written in this session. It fits the top level descriptors for each AO very closely.

The overall structure and attention to detail are superbly adapted to create specific and highly original effects. Tone, style and register are deployed to consciously enhance the task's high ambition. It is cohesive, coherent and gripping.

It is written to a very high standard of accuracy and authenticity. The vocabulary is exceptionally wide and well selected.

Exemplar 10

About a month ago, my grandmother took me round a nearby stately home. I had not been told about this until the day before I went. As a result, I was pretty excited because I have a strong passion about visiting stately homes and I hadn't been to one for a good few months mostly because of my GCSEs which I think was an obstacle. 

After we got our tickets, and bought a guidebook, we walked over to the house. It was a large house. It featured a central square block with two wings jutting out of curved corridors. The entrance was at the bottom level of the central block, below a balcony with some swirling steps leading the ground. The balcony was raised by some pretty pink pillars.  Here, we met our tour guide, who

would be explaining the history of the house and the purpose behind each room. We would be going in to. We are in a group of around 17 people, including me, my grandmother and the tour guide. Our first room was the entrance hall. It was dark. The fireplace was lit by with a fake fire. The guide said "This is an artificial fire because we can't use a real fire due to safety regulations and to stop damage to the house". Wood panelling adorns the room with paintings of partridges engraved. What really stood out in the room was the big oak fireplace. I asked "why does the fireplace look like that?" The guide said "That fireplace came from a bed from the 1600s and judging by its appearance, it looked to ~~of~~ been older than the house which was built in the 1700s.

After the entrance hall, we climbed the main staircase up to the first floor. This section was like going through a woodland.

This is because it had wood paneling at the bottom of the stairs and the silk that covered the top part of the staircase was dark green. The large portraits in their gleaming gold frames served as a reminder that we were in a house and not a woodland.

The room at the top of the staircase was a lovely panelled room that contained a bust that was ~~so~~ white it was practically a tooth. My grandmother asked who the bust was of. The guide told us that the bust was of Queen Victoria who had spent the night at the house during the 19th century. The guide then took us upstairs to the second floor of the house to see where Queen Victoria slept.

The staircase we took to climb the second floor was very narrow. It was very dark. It was a servants staircase. Servants' staircases often have this appearance and are no way as smart as the staircases guests use. It led into a blue square. It was surrounded

by.....staircases.....and.....bedrooms.....
which.....were.....mostly.....for.....guests.....
Queen.....Victoria's.....bedroom.....was.....one.....
of.....these.....bedrooms.....It.....had.....ice.....
white.....wallpaper.....and.....blue.....furniture.....
It.....was.....Antarctica.....One.....item.....in.....the.....
room.....caught.....my.....attention:.....a.....clock.....
which.....seems.....to.....have.....a.....bit.....of.....
a.....stag.....slapped.....onto.....it.....The.....guide.....
had.....said....."The.....stag's.....head.....was.....not.....
made.....at.....the.....time.....of.....the.....clock.....
and.....that.....apparently.....it.....was.....taken.....
from.....another.....piece.....of.....furniture....."

After the bedrooms, we went back downstairs to the first floor. This time we went down the guest staircase to the first floor which had a fancy flower theme to it. This floor was the area where the principal rooms were located. One of these rooms was the drawing room. It featured a crystal chandelier and its ceiling was painted with ivy. It was furnished ^{or} ~~by~~ traditional drawing room.

The drawing room and the dining room that followed on

both had turquoise wallpaper. The table in the dining room was very nicely laid and featured some very pretty plates. Unfortunately, one of those plates ~~was~~ was neatly broken. One of the visitors had pointed it out to the guide who had not noticed it before. He said "Thank you for letting me know about that. I will have to report that." ^

After the dining room, we walked along the curved corridor that I tasked about earlier.

7/40 marks, AO5: 17 marks, cusp of Level 4/5; AO6 10 marks, Level 3

This is a much more straightforward narrative taken at a lively and engaging pace and with an accumulation of authentic, convincing detail. Significantly it avoids almost all the melodramatic, derivative pitfalls so many other candidates thought that they needed.

There is an attractive personal perspective and tone that are sustained throughout. There is a solid linear organisation and structure. It is not obviously ambitious but accurate and modestly sure of itself.

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