

Candidate 2

Texts used: B/D (Practice paper 2018)

The extract from *Bleak House* and the poem 'The Deserted Village' present poverty and the effect of money in two very different lights; one focusing on the impact it has on humans, the other on nature.

The past beauty of the village is revealed through the earthy, beautiful and naturalistic nouns "glade" and "bowers", both reminiscent of children's fantasy games and the innocence of the children. The "charm" of the past is further reinforced by the 'AABB' rhyme scheme, initially adding a tone of togetherness and gentility. Yet, when coupled with the destructive verbs of "fled" and "sunk", a sense of unease creeps in, contrasting the rhyme. The poem suggests that "wealth" has inflicted this terrible poverty on the entirety of "England", not only this single isolated village. The breathy 'h' in "wholesome" mirrors the all-encompassing nature of the poverty that has struck nature and small "hamlets" because of the increase in wealth. In contrast, *Bleak House* reveals the plight of the poverty-stricken humans who have scarcely enough money to support themselves, and the struggle they face due to the fiscal scarcity. The "opening" of the door at the start of the passage is symbolic of how society had intentionally blinded themselves to the poverty surrounding them, by "lock[ing]" the two children in. The subsequent unravelling of the depths of poverty that the children face in their day to day lives suggests that once the metaphorical door of poverty is "open" for all to see, the depths are finally comprehended. Whilst the poem evokes images of children playing in "bowers", *Bleak House* represents the realistic situation for poverty-stricken children. Despite Charley being a "very little girl" in stature, she is referred to as having "womanly" characteristics, because poverty has made her grow up and mature beyond her years, taking the youthful childhood bloom from her, and leaving her "white and wrinkled". These two adjectives suggest ageing and elderliness, a dark irony considering Charley is barely old enough to look after herself, let alone her two siblings. Furthermore, the child-like adverb "playing" conflicts

with “washing”, the former linking to innocence, youth and vitality, the latter an adult’s job creating the evident image that poverty has brushed Charley’s childhood aside.

Ironically, an increase in wealth for the former inhabitants of the ‘Deserted Village’ has resulted in the desolation and ultimate neglect of nature. The unkempt and uncared for regions where the children played are hinted at with “the long grass” suggesting at an uncultivated and deserted playground.

Furthermore, walls which humans often build, thinking they are concrete, solid and will always keep nature out, is “mouldering”, adding a notion of death and decay into the once exuberant scene. Yet, fleeting and ephemeral things in the grand scheme of the universe, such as “princes and Lords” and the potential for “wealth” have become more solid and valuable to the people who used to live here, throughout the whole poem there are negative connotations surrounding the semantic field of gentry, whilst the “peasants” are described as “bold”. This suggests that the writer believes it is best to be rich in the surrounding of vitalised nature, instead of the worldly and temporal lure of “wealth”. The disdain with riches and wealth, and the desire for it is revealed in the enjambment between “train” and “usurp”. The slight pause at the end of “train” adds a hint of suspense, but also emphasises the relentlessness of the “train of trade” which has so altered the natural surroundings, changing it from the once “smiling” village. This pace is further reinforced in the poem with the anaphora of “and”, making a list out of the many changes wrought to the environment.

Dickens’ use of dialogue in Bleak House is interesting, because much of it comes from the boy, who appears to take the role of looking after his little sister, and being locked in a “poor” room into his stride. The use of call and response, with the narrator and his guardian asking the questions and the boy answering once again portraying a wisdom and an “air of age”, despite his tender years.

Furthermore, the reference to Emma as a “burden” is a metaphor for both the physical and mental struggle that Charley is facing, one that she should not

have had to assume due to her age. Lastly, the division between Charley and the younger two siblings is revealed via the plural pronoun "their" likening Emma and the boy together in their helplessness and ultimate reliance on Charley. This is further emphasised at the end of the passage, all "three children standing close together, yet "two" rely firmly on the "third", highlighting the unfairness of poverty in making Charley grow up so much beyond her years. This fragility of poverty and destitution hanging in the balance is made clear in both pieces of literature perhaps being best concluded with the noun "breath", hinting at the delicacy and easy ability of poverty.