



Wellingborough
School
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SAMPLE PAPER

ENGLISH LITERATURE SCHOLARSHIP EXAMINATION 16+

Candidate Number:

Time:

- 1 ½ hours

Instructions to Candidates:

- This paper allows for 30 minutes reading time and one hour for you to write your response to the question.

Information for Candidates:

- You are reminded of the need for good English and clear presentation in your answers. You should answer your question in continuous prose. Quality of language will be assessed.

Read the following introduction and the two passages.

Question:

Answer all parts of the question.

- (a) Each extract uses a first person narrator, Jane Eyre and Antoinette/Bertha. Write about some of the differences between the accounts of these two narrators.

You should include in your answer:

- how you respond to Bertha and Jane;
- each writer's presentation of her heroine.

- (b) Compare the ways in which madness is presented in each of the two extracts.

JANE EYRE/WIDE SARGASSO SEA

Introduction

In *Jane Eyre* by **Charlotte Brontë**, first published in 1847, Bertha Rochester is the mad wife of Mr Rochester. She is hidden in the third storey of Thornfield Hall, and has a 'keeper': Grace Poole. Jane, the governess in the household, is unaware of the existence of this first wife, but attributes the various mysterious manifestations to the servant Grace Poole. The first extract describes the aftermath of an attack by Bertha on her brother Richard Mason. In the second extract, Jane has been prevented from marrying Mr Rochester by a last minute intervention at the wedding itself. Mr Rochester takes her at last to see his mad wife. Jane is the narrator.

Jane Rhys in *Wide Sargasso Sea*, first published in 1966, re-examines the story largely from Bertha's point of view. In her novel, 'Bertha' is actually Antoinette, re-named Bertha by Rochester. The novel describes Antoinette Mason's childhood, courtship and marriage to Rochester in the West Indies. Rochester eventually brings Antoinette/Bertha to Thornfield Hall, his house in England. This extract is set in Thornfield Hall, just after the attack on Richard Mason. 'Mrs Eff' is Mrs Fairfax, the housekeeper. The narrator of this extract from the novel is 'Bertha'.

Jane Eyre
Extract 1

I saw a room I remembered to have seen before; the day Mrs Fairfax showed me over the house: it was hung with tapestry; but the tapestry was now looped up in one part, and there was a door apparent, which had then been concealed. This door was open; a light shone out of the room within: I heard thence a snarling, snatching sound, almost like a dog quarrelling. Mr Rochester, putting down his candle, said to me. "Wait a minute," and he went forward to the inner apartment. A shout of laughter greeted his entrance; noisy at first, and terminating in Grace Poole's own goblin hal ha! She then was there. He made some sort of arrangement, without speaking: though I heard a low voice address him: he came out and closed the door behind him.

"Here, Jane!" he said; and I walked round to the other side of a large bed, which with its drawn curtains concealed a considerable portion of the chamber. An easy-chair was near the bed-head: a man sat in it, dressed with the exception of his coat; he was still; his head leant back; his eyes were closed. Mr Rochester held the candle over him; I recognised in his pale and seemingly lifeless face – the stranger, Mason: I saw too that his linen on one side, and one arm, was almost soaked in blood.

"Hold the candle," said Mr Rochester, and I took it; he fetched a basin of water from the washstand: "Hold that," said he. I obeyed. He took the sponge, dipped it in and moistened the corpse-like face: he asked for my smelling-bottle, and applied it to the nostrils. Mr Mason shortly unclosed his eyes; he groaned. Mr Rochester opened the shirt of the wounded man, whose arm and shoulder were bandaged: he sponged away blood, trickling fast down.

"Is there immediate danger?" murmured Mr Mason.

"Pooh! No – a mere scratch. Don't be so overcome, man: bear up! I'll fetch a surgeon for you now, myself: you'll be able to be removed by morning, I hope. Jane," he continued.

"Sir?"

"I shall have to leave you in this room with this gentleman, for an hour, or perhaps two hours; you will sponge the blood as I do when it returns: if he feels faint, you will put the glass of water on that stand to his lips, and your salts to his nose. You will not speak to him on any pretext – and – Richard – it will be at the peril of your life if you speak to her: open your lips – agitate yourself – and I'll not answer for the consequences."

Again the poor man groaned: he looked as if he dared not move: fear, either of death or of something else, appeared almost to paralyse him. Mr Rochester put the now bloody sponge into my hand, and I proceeded to use it as he had done. He watched me a second, then saying, "Remember! – No conversation," he left the room. I experienced a strange feeling as the key grated in the lock, and the sound of his retreating step ceased to be heard.

Here then I was in the third storey, fastened into one of its mystic cells; night around me; a pale and bloody spectacle under my eyes and hands; a murderess hardly separated from me by a single door: yes – that was appalling – the rest I could bear; but I shuddered at the thought of Grace Poole bursting out upon me.

I must keep to my post, however. I must watch this ghastly countenance – these blue, still lips forbidden to unclose – these eyes now shut, now opening, now wandering through the room, now fixing on me, and ever glazed with the dullness of horror. I must dip my hand again and again in the basin of blood and water, and wipe away the trickling gore. I must see the light of the unsnuffed candle wane on my employment; the shadows darken on the wrought, antique tapestry round me, and grow black under the hangings of the vast old bed, and quiver strangely over the doors of a great cabinet opposite – whose front, divided into twelve panels, bore, in grim design, the heads of the twelve apostles, each enclosed in its separate panel as a frame; while above them at the top rose an ebon crucifix and a dying Christ.

According as the shifting obscurity and flickering gleam hovered here or glanced there, it was now the bearded physician, Luke, that bent his brow; now St John's long hair that waved; and anon the devilish face of Judas, that grew out of the panel, and seemed gathering life and threatening a revelation of the arch-traitor – of Satan himself – in his subordinate's form.

Amidst all this, I had to listen as well as watch: to listen for the movements of the wild beast or the fiend in yonder side den. But since Mr Rochester's visit it seemed spell-bound: all the night I heard but three sounds at three long intervals, – a step creak, a momentary renewal of the snarling, canine noise, and a deep human groan.

Then my own thoughts worried me. What crime was this, that lived incarnate in this sequestered mansion, and could neither be expelled nor subdued by the owner? – What mystery, that broke out, now in fire and now in blood, at the deadliest hours of night? What creature was it, that, masked in an ordinary woman's face and shape, uttered the voice, now of a mocking demon, and anon of a carrion-seeking bird of prey?

Extract 2

"You know this place, Mason," said our guide; "she bit and stabbed you here."

He lifted the hangings from the wall, uncovering the second door: this, too, he opened. In a room without a window, there burnt a fire, guarded by a high and strong fender, and a lamp suspended from the ceiling by a chain. Grace Poole bent over the fire, apparently cooking something in a saucepan. In the deep shade, at the further end of the room, a figure ran backwards and forwards. What it was, whether beast or human being, one could not, at first sight, tell: it grovelled, seemingly, on all fours; it snatched and growled like some strange wild animal: but it was covered with clothing; and a quantity of dark grizzled hair, wild as a mane, hid its head and face.

"Good-morrow, Mrs Poole!" said Mr Rochester. "How are you? And how is your charge to-day?"

"We're tolerable, sir, I thank you," replied Grace, lifting the boiling mess carefully on to the hob: "rather snappish, but not 'rageous."

A fierce cry seemed to give the lie to her favourable report: the clothed hyena rose up, and stood tall on its hind feet.

"Ah, sir, she sees you!" exclaimed Grace: "you'd better not stay."

"Only a few moments, Grace: you must allow me a few moments."

"Take care then, sir! – for God's sake, take care!"

The maniac bellowed: she parted her shaggy locks from her visage, and gazed wildly at her visitors. I recognised well that purple face, – those bloated features. Mrs Poole advanced.

"Keep out of the way," said Mr Rochester, thrusting her aside: "she has no knife, now, I suppose? and I'm on my guard."

"One never knows what she has, sir: she is so cunning: it is not in mortal discretion to fathom her craft."

"We had better leave her," whispered Mason.

"Go to the devil!" was his brother-in-law's recommendation.

"Ware!" cried Grace. The three gentlemen retreated simultaneously. Mr Rochester flung me behind him: the lunatic sprang and grappled his throat viciously, and laid her teeth to his cheek: they struggled. She was a big woman, in stature almost equalling her husband, and corpulent besides: she showed virile force in the contest – more than once she almost throttled him, athletic as he was. He could have settled her with a well-planted blow; but he would not strike: he would only wrestle. At last he mastered her arms; Grace Poole gave him a cord, and he pinioned them behind her: with more rope, which was at hand, he bound her to a chair. The operation was performed amidst the fiercest spectators: he looked at them with a smile both acrid and desolate.

"That is *my wife*," said he. "Such is the sole conjugal embrace I am ever to know – such are the endearments which are to solace my leisure hours! And *this* is what I wished to have" (laying his hands on my shoulder): "this young girl, who stands so grave and quiet at the mouth of hell, looking collectedly at the gambols of a demon. I wanted her just as a change after that fierce ragout. Wood and Briggs, look at the difference! Compare these clear eyes with the red balls yonder – this face with that mask – this form with that bulk; then judge me, priest of the gospel and man of the law, and remember, with what judgement ye judge ye shall be judged! Off with you now. I must shut up my prize."

(Charlotte Brontë)

Wide Sargasso Sea

One morning when I woke I ached all over. Not the cold, another sort of ache. I saw that my wrists were red and swollen. Grace said, "I suppose you're going to tell me that you don't remember anything about last night."

"When was last night?" I said.

"Yesterday."

"I don't remember yesterday."

"Last night a gentleman came to see you," she said.

"Which of them was that?"

Because I knew that there were strange people in the house. When I took the keys and went to the passage I heard them laughing and talking in the distance, like birds, and there were lights on the floor beneath.

Turning a corner I saw a girl coming out of her bedroom. She wore a white dress and she was humming to herself. I flattened myself against the wall for I did not wish her to see me, but she stopped and looked round. She saw nothing but shadows, I took care of that, but she didn't walk to the head of the stairs. She ran. She met another girl and the second girl said, "Have you seen a ghost?" – "I didn't see anything but I though I felt something." – "That is the ghost," the second one said and they went down the stairs together.

"Which of these people came to see me, Grace Poole?" I said.

He didn't come. Even if I was asleep I would have known. He hasn't come yet. She said, "It's my belief that you remember much more than you pretend to remember. Why did you behave like that when I had promised you would be quiet and sensible? I'll never try and do you a good turn again. Your brother came to see you."

"I have no brother."

"He said he was your brother."

A long long way my mind reached back.

"Was his name Richard?"

"He didn't tell me what his name was."

"I know him," I said, and jumped out of bed. "It's all here, it's all here, but I hid it from your beastly eyes as I hide everything. But where is it? Where did I hide it? The sole of my shoes? Underneath the mattress? On top of the press? In the pocket of my red dress? Where, where is this letter? It was short because I remembered that Richard did not like long letters. Dear Richard please take me away from this place where I am dying because it is so cold and dark."

Mrs Poole said, "It's no use running around and looking now. He's gone and he won't come back – nor would I in his place."

I said, "I can't remember what happened. I can't remember."

"When he came in," said Grace Poole, "he didn't recognise you."

"Will you light my fire," I said, "because I'm so cold."

"This gentleman arrived suddenly and insisted on seeing you and that was all the thanks he got. You rushed at him with a knife and when he got the knife away you bit his arm. You won't see him again. And where did you get that knife? I told them you stole it from me but I'm much too careful. I'm used to your sort. You got no knife from me. You must have bought it that day when I took you out. I told Mrs Eff you ought to be taken out."

"When we went to England," I said.

"You fool," she said, "this is England."

"I don't believe it," I said, "and I never will believe it."

(That afternoon we went to England. There was grass and olive-green water and tall trees looking into the water. This, I thought, is England. If I could be here I could be well again and the sound in my head would stop. Let me stay a little longer, I said, and she sat down under a tree and went to sleep. A little way off there was a cart and horse – a woman was driving it. It was she who sold me the knife. I gave her the locket round my neck for it.)

Grace Poole said, "So you don't remember that you attacked this gentleman with a knife? I said that you would be quiet. "I must speak to her," he said. Oh he was warned but he wouldn't listen. I was in the room but I didn't hear all he said except "I cannot interfere legally between yourself and your husband." It was when he said "legally" that you flew at him and when he twisted the knife out of your hand you bit him. Do you mean to say that you don't remember any of this?"

I remember now that he did not recognise me. I saw him look at me and his eyes went to first one corner and then to another, not finding what they expected. He looked at me and spoke to me as though I were a stranger. What do you mean something happens to you like that? Why are you laughing at me? "Have you hidden my red dress too? if I'd been wearing that he'd have known me."

"Nobody's hidden your dress," she said. "It's hanging in the press."

She looked at me and said, "I don't believe you know how long you've been here, you poor creature."

"On the contrary," I said, "only I know how long I have been here. Nights and days and days and nights, hundreds of them slipping through my fingers. But that does not matter. Time has no meaning. But something you can touch and hold like my red dress, that has a meaning. Where is it?"

She jerked her head towards the press and the corners of her mouth turned down. As soon as I turned the key I saw it hanging, the colour of fire and sunset. The colour of flamboyant flowers. "If you are buried under a flamboyant tree," I said. "your soul is lifted up when it flowers. Everyone wants that."

She shook her head but she did not move or touch me.

The scent that came from the dress was very faint at first, then it grew stronger. The smell of vetiver and fragipanni, of cinnamon and dust and lime trees when they are flowering. The smell of the sun and the smell of the rain.

(Jean Rhys)