

Higher Half-Hour Homework

*A selection of short
RUAE Exercises and Answer Keys
to help you with your preparation for
Higher English*



1. Incredible Hulk

The passage below is taken from a collection of pieces from Clive James' television column in "The Observer. Here James considers the impact made on the viewer by "The Incredible Hulk", an American television series in which the mild, inoffensive David Banner is transformed into a raging green giant when provoked by villainy or injustice.

Hulk has the standard body-builder's physique, with two sets of shoulders one on top of the other and wings of lateral muscle that hold his arms out from his sides as if his armpits had piles. He is made remarkable by his avocado complexion, eyes like plovers' eggs and the same permanently exposed lower teeth displayed by Richard Harris when he is acting determined, or indeed just acting.

- 5 Given a flying start by the shock effect of his personal appearance, Hulk goes into action against the heavies, flinging them about in slow motion. Like Bionic Woman, Six Million Dollar Man and Wonderwoman, Hulk does his action numbers at glacial speed. Emitting slow roars of rage, Hulk runs very slowly towards the enemy, who slowly attempt to make their escape. But no matter how slowly they run, Hulk runs more slowly. Slowly he picks them up, gradually bangs their heads together, and with a
10 supreme burst of lethargy throws them through the side of a building.

- Hardly have the bricks floated to the ground before Hulk is changing back into spindly David Banner, with a sad cello weeping on the soundtrack. One thinks of Frankenstein's monster or the Hunchback of Notre Dame. One thinks of King Kong. One thinks one is being had. Why can't the soft twit cut the soul-searching and just enjoy his ability to swell up and clobber the foe? But David is in quest of "a way to
15 control the raging spirit that dwells within him". Since the series could hardly continue if he finds it, presumably he will be a long time on the trail.

- If you took the violence out of American television there wouldn't be much left, and if you took the American television out of British television there wouldn't be much left of that either. Without imported series, our programme planners couldn't fill their schedules. Whether schedules ought to be filled is
20 another question. As things stand, American series have to be bought in. Nearly all of them are violent to some degree. But those who believe that violence on television causes violence in real life should take consolation from the fact that most of the violence in American series is on a par with the Incredible Hulk torpidly jumping up and down on the langorously writhing opponents of freedom and justice.

- It's British programmes that show life's dark underside. In American programmes, however full of
25 crashed cars and flying bodies, the values remain unswervingly wholesome.

Questions

- (a) By considering any two examples from paragraph 1 (lines 1-4), show how James uses exaggeration to obtain a comic effect (2)
- (b) Throughout paragraph 2 (lines 5-10) the ideas of violent action and slow motion are brought together. Explain, referring to the author's choice of words, why you found any one combination of these ideas particularly effective. (2)
- (c) Demonstrate that the sentence "Hardly have the bricks. ... weeping on the sound-track" (lines 11-12) provides a link between paragraph 2 (lines 5 -10) and paragraph 3 (lines 11-16). (2)
- (d) In line 16 Clive James quotes the makers of "The Incredible Hulk" as follows: "'a way to control the raging spirit that dwells within him'".

In what ways does James poke fun at the apparent seriousness of this claim in the whole of paragraph 3 (lines 11-16)? (3)

- (e) In the last two paragraphs (lines 17-25), Clive James becomes more serious.

What does the expression "life's dark underside" (line 26) suggest to you about the nature of violence on British television compared with "most of the violence in American series" (lines 23-24)? (3)

Total 12 marks

Exercise 1: Answer Key

- (a) By considering any two examples from paragraph 1 (lines 1-4), show how James uses exaggeration to obtain a comic effect (2)

Reference to **and comment** on any **TWO** of the following:

two sets of shoulders one on top of the other + comment (1)
wings of lateral muscle + comment (1)
as if his armpits had piles + comment (1)
avocado complexion + comment (1)
eyes like plovers' eggs + comment (1)
permanently exposed lower teeth + comment (1)

Reference alone without appropriate comment = ½ for each to a **maximum** of 1 mark,

- (b) Throughout paragraph 2 (lines 5-10) the ideas of violent action and slow motion are brought together. Explain, referring to the author's choice of words, why you found any one combination of these ideas particularly effective. (2)

Acceptable combinations, from which you need only **quote and comment on one**, are:

Action numbers at glacial speed / slow roars of rage/ runs very slowly towards the enemy/ slowly attempt to make their escape/ no matter how slowly they run/ Hulk runs more slowly/ gradually bangs their heads together/ supreme bursts of lethargy

For the full two marks, you **must comment on the paradox or contradiction** in each combination as part of the explanation of its effectiveness. **Simply quoting an example is worth nothing.**

- (c) Demonstrate that the sentence "Hardly have the bricks. .. weeping on the sound-track" (lines 11-12) provides a link between paragraph 2 (lines 5 -10) and paragraph 3 (lines 11-16). (2)

Bricks floated **reflects back** to the list of contradictions in paragraph 2 = 1

Changing back into spindly David Banner **OR** reference to the *sad cello weeping on the soundtrack* **projects forward** to the content of the rest of paragraph 3 = 1

- (d) In line 16 Clive James quotes the makers of "The Incredible Hulk" as follows: "'a way to control the raging spirit that dwells within him'". In what ways does James poke fun at the apparent seriousness of this claim in the whole of paragraph 3 (lines 11-16)? (3)

You should have made a comparison between the **pompous, inflated language** of the programme makers (1) quoted in the question and the **pejorative, deflating, dismissive colloquial** language used by Clive James in the rest of this paragraph (1) of which you should have **quoted at least one example** (1).

Or you could have mentioned how **anticlimax/ bathos** (1) in the **three sentences in lines 12 – 13** (*One thinks of ... being had.*) **or the last sentence of the paragraph** (*Since the series ... trail.*)(1) **debunked or mocked the serious tone of the quotation** (1)

- (f) In the last two paragraphs (lines 17-25), Clive James becomes more serious.

What does the expression "life's dark underside" (line 26) suggest to you about the nature of violence on British television compared with "most of the violence in American series" (lines 23-24)? (3)

You should have explained how "life's dark underside" suggests that British programmes convey the genuine/real nastiness, squalor, seediness (1) of everyday life (1) as opposed to the abstract ideas of justice and freedom or the fantasy/ fairytale elements (1) of the American product.

If you were clever enough to notice and comment on the **ironic use of wholesome** to describe violence, you deserve at least two marks.

Total = 12 marks

2. Capital City

The description of Edinburgh which follows has been taken from "The Expedition of Humphrey Clinker", a novel by Tobias Smollett which was published in 1771.

The city stands upon two hills, and the bottom between them; and, with all its defects, may very well pass for the capital of a moderate kingdom. It is full of people, and continually resounds with the noise of coaches and other carriages, for luxury as well as commerce. As far as I can perceive, here is no want of provisions. The beef and mutton are as delicate here as in Wales; the sea affords plenty of good fish; the bread is remarkably fine; and the water is excellent, though I'm afraid not in sufficient quantity to answer all the purposes of cleanliness and convenience; articles in which, it must be allowed, our fellow-subjects are a little defective. The water is brought in leaden pipes from a mountain in the neighbourhood, to a cistern on Castlehill, from whence it is distributed to public conduits in different parts of the city. From these it is carried in barrels, on the backs of male and female porters, up two, three, four, five, six, seven, and eight flights of stairs, for the use of particular families. Every storey is a complete house, occupied by a separate family and the stair being common to them all, is generally left in a very filthy condition; a man must tread with great circumspection to get safe housed with unpolluted shoes. Nothing can form a stronger contrast, than the difference betwixt the outside and inside of the door; for the good women of this metropolis are remarkably nice in the ornaments and propriety of their apartments, as if they were resolved to transfer the imputation from the individual to the public. You are no stranger to their method of discharging all their impurities from their windows at a certain hour of the night, as the custom is in Spain, Portugal, and some parts of France and Italy—a practice to which I can by no means be reconciled; for notwithstanding all the care that is taken to remove this nuisance every morning by break of day, enough still remains to offend the eyes, as well as other organs of those whom use has not hardened against all delicacy of sensation...

As to the surprising height of their houses, it is absurd in many respects; but in one particular light I cannot view it without horror; that is, the dreadful situation of all the families above, in case the common staircase should be rendered impassable by fire in the lower storeys. In order to prevent the shocking consequences that must attend such an accident, it would be a right measure to open doors of communication from one house to the other, on every storey, by which the people might fly from such a visitation.

Questions

- (a) Demonstrate how, in the very first sentence of the passage (lines 1-2), the narrator indicates that he has certain doubts and reservations about Scotland's capital city. (2)
- (b) "two, three, four, five, six, seven, and eight flights of stairs" (lines 9-10)
- Why do you think the writer chose to write the above rather than, say, "up to eight flights of stairs"? (1)
- (c) "... for notwithstanding all the care that is taken to remove this nuisance every morning by break of day, enough still remains to offend the eyes, as well as other organs of those whom use has not hardened against all delicacy of sensation." (lines 18-20)
- Rewrite the above in modern prose. Certain words and phrases you will wish to change. The structure, too, may be altered, but you must retain the sense of the quotation. (4)
- (d) Quote **four** expressions from the last paragraph (lines 21-26) which, in your opinion, have been used deliberately by the author to help convey a particular strength of feeling. (2)

Total 9 marks

Exercise 2: Answer Key

- (a) Demonstrate how, in the very first sentence of the passage (lines 1-2), the narrator indicates that he has certain doubts and reservations about Scotland's capital city. (2)

You should have quoted “with all its defects” (½) and “may well pass” (½) and gone on to explain how these expressions show that the writer isn’t convinced (1).

- (b) "two, three, four, five, six, seven, and eight flights of stairs" (lines 9-10)
Why do you think the writer chose to write the above rather than, say, “up to eight flights of stairs”? (1)

It emphasises the number of flights OR the height of the building OR the effort required to climb the stairs (1)

- (c) “ ... for notwithstanding all the care that is taken to remove this nuisance every morning by break of day, enough still remains to offend the eyes, as well as other organs of those whom use has not hardened against all delicacy of sensation.” (lines 19-22)
Rewrite the above in modern prose. Certain words and phrases you will wish to change.
The structure, too, may be altered, but you must retain the sense of the quotation. (4)

Key expressions that you should have converted into your own words are:

Notwithstanding all the care (In spite of/ Despite the efforts) (1); *to remove this nuisance by the break of day* (to get rid of/ clean up the mess before morning)(1); *enough still remains to offend the eyes* (what is left looks awful)(1); *other organs whom use has not hardened against all delicacy of sensation* (and smells awful if you are not inured/used to it.)(1)

- (d) Quote **four** expressions from the last paragraph (lines 23-28) which, in your opinion, have been used deliberately by the author to help convey a particular strength of feeling. (2)

You should have quoted any four of these for ½ mark each:

Absurd; horror; dreadful; shocking; visitation.

Total 9 marks

3. Thicker than Water

If breath is the most recognisable sign of life, pinkness has always been regarded as one of the most reliable indications of health. We instinctively associate redness with vitality, and automatically assume that anyone with a ruddy complexion or red lips is vigorous and robust. The vital importance of blood has always seemed self-evident; from the earliest times man was aware that “this pure cleare lovely and amiable juyce is the special thing that conserveth every living creature in his being and ... that this treasure of life must most carefully be conserved because it is of all humours the most excellent and wholesome”.

For such reasons blood has always been regarded as a form of natural wealth: a rich liquid asset settled on each individual as a birthright, a priceless deposit which can neither be spent nor accumulated, only lost or dispersed through injury or ill-health. There are no plutocrats, only paupers. Adequacy is abundance.

Medicine took a great leap forward when William Harvey discovered the way in which this precious substance circulated and recirculated through the body of the living individual. Unlike the wealth of a miser which accumulates without its doing any useful work, the value of blood can be exploited only if it is kept ceaselessly on the move. It is useless when stationary, but it is beyond price as long as it visits and revisits every part of the body. How does this treasure work? In what currency are its transactions conducted? What are its denominations? Such questions would have made no sense to Harvey, for the value of blood was self-evident, and since he regarded it as indivisible the very suggestion that it might have denominations would have seemed absurd. But if you take a spot of normal blood, spread it in a thin film and examine the slide under a microscope, you can immediately see that the fluid has a texture. It is not just a uniform pink substance: there are millions of tiny pink particles. And if you flood the slide with a special stain, the picture immediately springs into sharp relief. The field is crowded with flat pink discs, all of which are the same size, shape and colour. Blood, it seems, is a population, and the redness is confined to the millions of cells that crowd the field from side to side - the featureless, yellow fluid in between is quite empty.

From *The Body in Question* by Jonathan Miller

Questions

- (a) Examine carefully the first sentence and by referring to **structure** and **word-choice** say why you think it is effective as an opening sentence to Jonathan Miller's chapter on "Blood". (2)
- (b) Read again the last sentence in paragraph 1, lines 3-7.
- (i) By quoting and commenting on any language feature, show that the quotation dates from "the earliest times". (1)
- (ii) Give **three** reasons why you think Miller has included this quotation. (For one of your reasons you should bear in mind how the passage develops **after** the quotation.) (3)
- (c) "There are no plutocrats, only paupers. Adequacy is abundance" (lines 10-11).
- (i) Choose one of these two sentences and say what is unusual about it. (1)
- (ii) Why are these sentences appropriate within the context of the second paragraph? (2)
- (d) The word "But" in line 19 signals a change in language. Choose any language feature after the "But" and show how it contrasts with what has gone before. (3)

Total 12 marks

Exercise 3: Answer Key

- (a) Examine carefully the first sentence and by referring to **structure** and **word-choice** say why you think it is effective as an opening sentence to Jonathan Miller's chapter on "Blood". (2)

(½) mark for identifying a feature of **structure** e.g. two opposing/ contrasting statements OR use of antithesis; plus (½) for a sensible comment, perhaps indicating the part blood plays in healthy life.
(½) mark for a quotation of an effective word or phrase e.g. "pinkness", "always been", "most reliable", "indications of health", etc. plus (½) mark for sensible comment on its relevance to blood.

- (b) Read again the last sentence in paragraph 1, lines 3-7.

- (i) By quoting and commenting on any language feature, show that the quotation dates from "the earliest times". (1)

(½) mark for an appropriate quotation + (½) for explanation of how words quoted indicate the age of the whole quotation (e.g. "cleare"/"juyce" are spelt in an old-fashioned way (1)/ "conserveth" has a now disused verb ending (1)/ "the vocabulary such as "his being" is old-fashioned (1), etc.

- (ii) Give **three** reasons why you think Miller has included this quotation. (For one of your reasons you should bear in mind how the passage develops **after** the quotation.) (3)

You should have suggested any **THREE** of the following for **one mark each**:

- because he likes it/ appreciates it,
- because it illustrates/proves his point about the vital importance of blood,
- because it exemplifies his point about "earlier times",
- because it provides the link in the word "treasure" with the following paragraph about "natural wealth",
- because it introduces the extended metaphor/central image/ comparison developed in the next paragraph.

- (c) "There are no plutocrats, only paupers. Adequacy is abundance" (lines 10).

- (i) Choose one of these two sentences and say what is unusual about it. (1)

If you chose sentence one,

you might have commented on the unusual nature of **the structure**. Words are missed out in the second clause (i.e. "there are") to give the whole sentence more impact. (1)
OR the **antithesis/ contrast** between *plutocrats* (rich and powerful) and *paupers* (poor and weak)(1)
OR the **alliteration** (1)
OR the appropriateness of the metaphor (1)

In sentence two, you might have explained the **paradox/ contrast** between *adequacy* and *abundance*.(1)

OR the **alliteration** (1)
OR the **impact** of the short, pithy sentence (1)

- (ii) Why are these sentences appropriate within the context of the second paragraph? (2)

They **continue or sum up** (1) the **ideas in the earlier part of the sentence** (about wealth/ riches/ assets that can't be increased or used to buy things) (1)

- (d) The word "But" in line 19 signals a change in language. Choose any language feature after the "But" and show how it contrasts with what has gone before. (3)

If you identified an appropriate language feature (e.g. word choice, register, use of second person, beginning sentences with conjunctions, the use of the conditional tense/ constructions, the differences in sentence structures, etc.) you would get 1. You'd gain another ½ for a quotation of /direct reference to the feature you identify. You'd get another 1 for explaining how the feature you select was different before the "But", and another ½ for a direct reference quotation to show this. Total, three.

Total marks 12

4 Waking

Waking up begins with saying *am* and *now*. That which has awoken then lies for a while staring up at the ceiling and then down into itself until it has recognised I, and therefrom deduced I *am*, *I am now*. *Here* comes next, and is at least negatively reassuring: because *here*, this morning, is where it had expected to find itself; what's called *at home*.

But *now* isn't simply now. *Now* is also a reminder one whole day later than yesterday, one year later than last year.

- 5 Every *now* is labelled with its date, rendering all past *nows* obsolete, until - later or sooner – perhaps - no, not perhaps - quite certainly: It will come.

Fear tweaks the vagus nerve. A sickish shrinking from what waits, somewhere out there, dead ahead.

- 10 But meanwhile the cortex, that grim disciplinarian, has taken its place at the central controls and has been testing them, one after another; the legs stretch, the lower back is arched, the fingers clench and relax. And now, over the entire intercommunication-system, is issued the first general order of the day: UP.

Obediently the body levers itself out of bed-wincing from twinges in the arthritic thumbs and the left knee, mildly nauseated by the pylorus in a state of spasm and shambles naked into the bathroom, where its bladder is emptied and it is weighed; still a bit over 150 pounds, in spite of all that toiling at the gym! Then to the mirror.

- 15 What it sees isn't so much a face as the expression of a predicament. Here's what it has done to itself, here's the mess it has somehow managed to get itself into, during its fifty-eight years; expressed in terms of a dull harassed stare, a coarsened nose, a mouth dragged down by the corners into a grimace as if at the sourness of its own toxins, cheeks sagging from their anchors of muscle, a throat hanging limp in tiny wrinkled folds. The harassed look is that of a desperately tired swimmer or runner; yet there is no question of stopping. The creature we are watching will struggle on and on until it drops. Not because it is heroic. It can imagine no alternative.

- 20 Staring and staring into the mirror, it sees many faces within its face-the face of the child, the boy, the young man, the not-so-young man - all present still, preserved like fossils on superimposed layers, and, like fossils, dead. Their message to this live dying creature is: Look at us - we have died - what is there to be afraid of?

It answers them: But that happened so gradually, so easily. *I'm afraid of being rushed.*

- 25 It stares and stares. Its lips part. It starts to breathe through its mouth. Until the cortex orders it impatiently to wash, to shave, to brush its hair. Its nakedness has to be covered. It must be dressed up in clothes because it is going outside, into the world of the other people; and these others must be able to identify it. Its behaviour must be acceptable to them.

Obediently, it washes, shaves, brushes its hair; for it accepts its responsibilities to the others. It is even glad that it has its place among them. It knows what is expected of it.

- 30 It knows its name. It is called George.

Christopher Isherwood: *A Single Alan*

Questions

- (a) This extract breaks some of the generally accepted conventions of written English (e.g. punctuation, grammar, style, etc.).
- (i) Show clearly in what way any one such example is unusual. (1)
 - (ii) Show what the effect is. (1)
- (b) Read carefully paragraphs 3, 4, 5 and 6 (lines 7-23).
- (i) Demonstrate how the author's use of medical words, the meanings of which might be lost on the reader, is nevertheless appropriate in this context. (2)
 - (ii) during its fifty-eight years ..." (line 15). Show how the author establishes the idea that the man is conscious of the effects of ageing. (2)
- (c) "... preserved like fossils on superimposed layers" (lines 21). Comment fully on the appropriateness of this image within the context. (2)
- (d) "... live dying creature" (line 22). Why is the apparent contradiction appropriate in terms of the passage? (2)
- (e) From your reading of paragraph 4, (l. 8 – 10), indicate how the author creates the impression of the body as a machine. (2)
- (f) This extract is from the opening pages of a novel. Examine the extract as a whole and show why, in your opinion, it is or is not effective in terms of engaging the reader's interest. In other words, why might the reader want, or not want, to read on? (4)

Total 16 marks

Exercise 4: Answer Key

- (a) This extract breaks some of the generally accepted conventions of written English (e.g. punctuation, grammar, style, etc.).

(i) Show clearly in what way any one such example is unusual. (1)

You might have mentioned: the use of italics and explained why this is unusual (1), or
the use of dashes and why this is unusual (1), or
the use of capital letter after a colon and why this is unusual (1), or
the use of “it” and why this is unusual (1), or
the use of the block capitals after the colon (1)

But if you just gave an example without an explanation of why it went against the normal “rules”, you would score nothing.

(ii) Show what the effect is. (1)

The effect must, of course relate to your chosen “breach” of the rules. E.g. the italics are used where ordinary type would normally be to emphasise the words/ suggest quotations (1). The dashes suggest the hesitancy of the thought process (1). Capital letter on “It” after the colon suggesting a proper noun, adding import to the pronoun (1). Block capitals to suggest the commanding tone (1).

(b) Read carefully paragraphs 3, 4, 5 and 6 (lines 7-23).

- (i) Demonstrate how the author’s use of medical words, the meanings of which might be lost on the reader, is nevertheless appropriate in this context. (2)

You should have given **two** of the following:

Creates a detached view (1); a clinical view (1); gives the impression of or emphasises aging (1); sees himself as a specimen (1); to be analysed (1).

- (ii) “..... during its fifty-eight years ...” (line 15).

Show how the author establishes the idea that the man is conscious of the effects of ageing. (2)

Your answer has to come from lines 7 – 23, remember. You might have referred to “wincing from twinges... left knee” (l. 11)(½)/ “mildly nauseated ... spasm” (l. 11 – 12) (½)/ awareness of overweight, despite workouts (½)/ almost all of paragraph 6 (½) BUT you’d have quote **two** AND show how they establish the writer’s **awareness** of growing old.to gain two marks.

- (c) “... preserved like fossils on superimposed layers” (line 21). Comment fully on the appropriateness of this image within the context. (2)

You should have picked up on how preserved, fossils and superimposed layers suggest aspects of ageing. Meaning + relevance to context = 2

- (d) “ ... live dying creature” (line 22). Why is the apparent contradiction appropriate in terms of the passage? (2)

The writer, now that his youth is gone, sees himself as dying – both physically and spiritually (1) while, at the same time being clinically alive (1). You must suggest the clinical notion of “alive” and the simultaneous awareness of approaching death. 1 + 1

- (e) From your reading of paragraph 4 (l. 8 – 10) indicate how the author creates the impression of the body as a machine. (2)

You should quote and explain the relevance of any two from: “central controls”/ idea of cortex in control/ the automatic response of the legs, etc./the “intercommunication system”

- (f) This extract is from the opening pages of a novel. Examine the extract as a whole and show why, in your opinion, it is or is not effective in terms of engaging the reader’s interest. In other words, why might the reader want, or not want, to read on? (4)

This is a type of question which often crops up. It’s very “open-ended”. You get the chance to give your opinion. You must always, however, support any points you make with direct, quoted evidence from the text.

Here you’d be expected to cite and comment on two features that a reader might like to see developed. Did you? Or two features that you found unattractive and would put you off. Remember the evidence though. Point (1) + evidence (1) X two + 4.

Total 16 marks