

On December the third, the wind changed overnight, and it was winter. Until then the autumn had been mellow, soft. The leaves had lingered on the trees, golden-red, and the hedgerows were still green. The earth was rich where the plow had turned it.

Nat Hocken, because of a wartime disability, had a pension and did not work full time at the farm. He worked three days a week, and they gave him the lighter jobs: hedging, thatching, repairs to the farm buildings.

Although he was married, with children, his was a solitary disposition; he liked best to work alone. It pleased him when he was given a bank to build up or a gate to mend at the far end of the peninsula, where the sea surrounded the farmland on either side. Then, at midday, he would pause and eat the pasty that his wife had baked for him and, sitting on the cliff’s edge, would watch the birds. Autumn was best for this, better than spring. In spring the birds flew inland, purposeful, intent; they knew where they were bound; the rhythm and ritual of their life brooked no delay. In autumn those that had not migrated overseas but remained to pass the winter were caught up in the same driving urge, but because migration was denied them, followed a pattern of their own. Great flocks of them came to the peninsula, restless, uneasy, spending themselves in motion; now wheeling, circling in the sky, now settling to feed on the rich, new-turned soil; but even when they fed, it was as though they did so without hunger, without desire. Restlessness drove them to the skies again.

Black and white, jackdaw and gull, mingled in strange partnership, seeking some sort of liberation, never satisfied, never still. Flocks of starlings, rustling like silk, flew to fresh pasture, driven by the same necessity of movement, and the smaller birds, the finches and the larks, scattered from tree to hedge as if compelled.

Nat watched them, and he watched the sea birds too. Down in the bay they waited for the tide. They had more patience. Oystercatchers, redshank, sanderling, and curlew watched by the water’s edge; as the slow sea sucked at the shore and then withdrew, leaving the strip of seaweed bare and the shingle churned, the sea birds raced and ran upon the beaches. Then that same impulse to flight seized upon them too. Crying, whistling, calling, they skimmed the placid sea and left the shore. Make haste, make speed, hurry and begone; yet where, and to what purpose? The restless urge of autumn, unsatisfying, sad, had put a spell upon them, and they must flock, and wheel, and cry; they must spill themselves of motion before winter came.

“Perhaps,” thought Nat, munching his pasty by the cliff’s edge, “a message comes to the birds in autumn, like a warning. Winter is coming. Many of them perish. And like people who, apprehensive of death before their time, drive themselves to work or folly, the birds do likewise.”

The birds had been more restless than ever this fall of the year, the agitation more marked because the days were still. As the tractor traced its path up and down the western hills, the figure of the farmer silhouetted on the driving seat, the whole machine and the man upon it, would be lost momentarily in the great cloud of wheeling, crying birds. There were many more than usual; Nat was sure of this. Always, in autumn, they followed the plow, but not in great flocks like these, nor with such clamour.

Nat remarked upon it when hedging was finished for the day. “Yes,” said the farmer, “there are more birds about than usual; I’ve noticed it too. And daring, some of them, taking no notice of the tractor. One or two gulls came so close to my head this afternoon I thought they’d knock my cap off! As it was, I could scarcely see what I was doing when they were overhead and I had the sun in my eyes. I have a notion the weather will change. It will be a hard winter. That’s why the birds are restless.”

Nat, tramping home across the fields and down the lane to his cottage, saw the birds still flocking over the western hills, in the last glow of the sun. No wind, and the grey sea calm and full. Campion in bloom yet in the hedges, and the air mild. The farmer was right, though, and it was that night the weather turned. Nat’s bedroom faced east. He woke just after two and heard the wind in the chimney. Not the storm and bluster of a sou’westerly gale, bringing the rain, but east wind, cold and dry. It sounded hollow in the chimney, and a loose slate rattled on the roof. Nat listened, and he could hear the sea roaring in the bay. Even the air in the small bedroom had turned chill: A draft came under the skirting of the door, blowing upon the bed. Nat drew the blanket round him, leaned closer to the back of his sleeping wife, and stayed wakeful, watchful, aware of misgiving without cause.

Then he heard the tapping on the window. There was no creeper on the cottage walls to break loose and scratch upon the pane. He listened, and the tapping continued until, irritated by the sound, Nat got out of bed and went to the window. He opened it, and as he did so something brushed his hand, jabbing at his knuckles, grazing the skin. Then he saw the flutter of the wings and it was gone, over the roof, behind the cottage.

It was a bird; what kind of bird he could not tell. The wind must have driven it to shelter on the sill.

***The Birds* by Daphne Du Maurier**

*‘The Birds’ is a horror story by British writer Daphne du Maurier, first published in her 1952 collection, The Apple Tree. It is the story of a farmhand, his family, and his community that are attacked by flocks of birds and seabirds in kamikaze fashion.*

**Section A: Reading**

Answer all questions in this section.

You are advised to spend 45 minutes on this section.

01 Read again the first part of the source, **lines 4 to 7.**

 List **four** things from this part of the text that we learn about Nat Hocken.

**[4 marks]**

1. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
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4. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

02 Look in detail at this extract from **lines 14 to 21** of the source.

 How does the writer use languagehere to describe the birds?

 You could include the writer’s choice of:

* words and phrases
* language features and techniques
* sentence forms.  **[8 marks]**

Great flocks of them came to the peninsula, restless, uneasy, spending themselves in motion; now wheeling, circling in the sky, now settling to feed on the rich, new-turned soil; but even when they fed, it was as though they did so without hunger, without desire. Restlessness drove them to the skies again.

Black and white, jackdaw and gull, mingled in strange partnership, seeking some sort of liberation, never satisfied, never still. Flocks of starlings, rustling like silk, flew to fresh pasture, driven by the same necessity of movement, and the smaller birds, the finches and the larks, scattered from tree to hedge as if compelled.

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| Candidate Answer | Which Band? |
| The writer describes the birds as arriving in ‘great flocks’, saying the are both ‘restless’ and ‘uneasy.’ The use of these adjectives creates a sense of foreboding, as if the birds themselves are waiting for something dark and sinister to occur. This juxtaposes the stereotypical image of birds as carefree creatures that soar through the air, an image du Maurier herself references with the simile ‘starlings, rustling like silk.’ The noun ‘silk’ connotes softness and delicacy, presenting these birds as anything but a threat. Silk itself can ripple, much like the movements of flocks of birds, a beautiful image now tainted by the fact they are ‘restless.’ Du Maurier may be doing this to make her readers feel uncertain of what these birds will do; indeed their movements seen unpredictable through du Maurier’s constant repetition of the adverb ‘now’, implying the birds are everywhere at once. |  |
| The writer describes the birds as arriving in ‘great flocks’ which shows there are a lot of them. She also says they are ‘restless’ and ‘uneasy’ which means that something has probably disturbed them or maybe even angered them as they are not calm and peaceful. The writer then creates a striking image of ‘black and white’ birds flying together, ‘mingled in strange partnership, seeking some sort of liberation.’ This is an odd image. ‘Liberation’ suggests freedom and escape, yet the verb ‘seeking’ implies that the birds do not think they are free despite the fact that nothing is keeping them restrained. Perhaps this is the source of their restlessness but this creates a sense of unease because nothing is keeping them imprisoned. The repetition of the adverb ‘never’ shows how the birds are desperate to keep moving; perhaps they are afraid of keeping still.  |  |
| The writer says the birds are ‘restless’ and ‘uneasy’ which shows that they cannot keep still because the are ‘uneasy’. They keep on ‘wheeling’ and ‘circling’ the sky which shows they are flying around. They are all mixed up together because all the jackdaws and the gulls are flying around together. It also says the ‘birds’ are ‘scattered.’ This is an adjective. There are lots of birds here which can be quite scary. The colours of the birds are also described as being ‘black and white’. The writer also talks about ‘smaller birds’ which shows they are different sizes. The birds are probably quite loud if there are lots of them flying around together which shows how noisy the can be. The writer says they are ‘never still’ which shows they never stop flying around. |  |
| The writer describes the birds using the adjectives ‘restless’ and ‘uneasy’ which shows that something is bothering the birds. Usually birds are carefree and can fly away from danger but they so not fly away here so they remain ‘uneasy’. The verbs ‘wheeling’ and ‘circling’ shows how the birds can fly around freely and easily. The writer repeats the word ‘now’ to show how the birds are everywhere else. This is seen in the quotation ‘now wheeling, circling in the sky, now settling to feed on the rich, new-turned soil.’ It is like the birds cannot keep still. The birds are described as moving in ‘great flocks’ which shows how many of them there are. It means they could all be dangerous together. The adjective ‘great’ shows that maybe the sight of them is very impressive because if something is ‘great’ it is usually positive and exciting to look at.  |  |

Your answer:

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03 You now need to think about the **whole** of the source**.**

How has the writer **structured** the text to **interest you as a reader**?

You could write about:

• what the writer focuses your attention on at the beginning

• how and why the writer changes the focus as the extract develops

• any other structural features **[8 marks]**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Candidate Answer | Which Band? |
| The extract begins with a description of the time of year. We are then introduced to a new character called Nat. Nat has a ‘wartime disability’ and doesn’t work all the time. We learn lots of information about him. He likes to look at the birds. We know this because it says he ‘would watch the birds’. Perhaps the writer does this because we know the story is going to be about birds so it is introducing them to the reader. There are lots of them which means the story could be scary. The writer focuses on Nat who finishes for the day and he thinks the birds are ‘restless’ because there is going to be a ‘hard winter’. The writer talks about the weather again. The last line could be on a line by itself because it is important. It talks about a bird and we know birds are going to be important because of the title of the story. |  |
| The writer begins by establishing a sense of time and place. We are told it is ‘December’ so the writer is already creating a dark, bleak tone. We are introduced to a new character, Nat Hocken, and du Maurier zooms in on his solitary and lonely nature. This could interest the reader because it portrays him as mysterious and somewhat secretive. He clearly likes the birds; they are part of his daily routine which would imply he prefers to spend his time with them rather than other people. The writer shifts the focus to the movements of the birds; du Maurier initially presents them as peaceful creatures, saying they were ‘rustling like silk’, perhaps to shock the reader when the birds begin to display odd, threatening behaviour later on in the extract. This threatening behaviour ends the extract with a line in a paragraph by itself, perhaps to show its importance.  |  |
| The writer creates a dark tone at the beginning by telling us how the story is set in December. The writer then shifts our focus to the main character, Nat, drawing particular attention to his ‘solitary disposition.’ The writer creates a peaceful tone by zooming in on the movements of the birds and says they ‘rustled like silk.’ Silk is soft so the movements of the birds are soft. This interests the reader because this is an effective simile. The writer then uses speech to interest us as this gives as more clues as to the type of character Nat is. He says the word ‘perhaps’ which shows he likes to ask questions. He is a curious character. The writer then zooms in to the birds again to show how they are growing ‘restless’ which will make the reader wonder why and perhaps make them fear for Nat. |  |
| The writer begins by establishing a cold, somewhat bleak tone by telling us that the month is ‘December’. This coincides with the sense of threat that du Maurier includes later on in her story when describing the actions of the birds. Du Maurier shifts our attention to the main character; we see how Hocken is solitary yet his loneliness is focused upon to show how he has some sort of affinity with the birds. The juxtaposition of the birds moving together as opposed to Nat’s loneliness not only shows the reader that Nat is outnumbered but also that they provide him with some sort of comfort. We are told how he ‘would watch the birds’, suggesting that he knows their movements, their ‘ritual’ and as such can identify when something is wrong. Perhaps this is why du Maurier decides to zoom in on the actions of the birds immediately after telling us that Nat is familiar with them. The fact they are ‘restless’ begins to create a sense of fear. |  |

Your answer:

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04 Focus this part of your answer on the second half of the source, from **line 22 to the end.**

A student, having read this section of the text said, “The writer contrasts the normal actions of Nat with the strange actions of the birds to create tension and a sense of foreboding.”

To what extent do you agree?

You could write about:

* your own impressions of Nat and the birds in the text
* evaluate how the writer has created these impressions
* support your opinions with reference to the text

**[20 marks]**

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|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Candidate Answer | Which Band? |
| I agree and disagree with the statement because I think there are times when Nat’s life is normal and the birds are acting strangely and there are also times when I think maybe Nat’s life isn’t normal. Nat likes to watch the birds from the quotation, ‘Nat watched them’ which shows how he has a routine but his routine is ruined when he notices that there were more birds than usual. They are ‘restless’. This is an adjective which could show how the birds are not their usual selves. This creates tension because we don’t know what the birds may try and do next. I also disagree with the statement because Nat’s life isn’t normal at the end of the extract because a bird attacks him. The quotation ‘what kind of bird he could not tell’ creates tension because we don’t know what kind of bird has attacked him but this is why I agree and disagree. |  |
| I agree with the statement. In the extract Nat watches the seabirds because he likes birds. He watches them every day and it is normal for him to watch the birds. The birds are acting strangely while Nat is eating a pasty. Nat starts speaking to show his thoughts and feelings. The writer uses description to show what Nat and the others at the farm usually do. They so this in the quotation, ‘there are more birds about that usual’ which shows Nat knows what normal is and the birds aren’t normal. Nat then goes home and goes to sleep but in the middle of the night he can hear a tapping at the window and so he goes to have a look but a bird pecks at him before flying away. This shows the statement is correct because it would be normal for someone to check what was knocking at the window but not normal for it to be a bird. |  |
| I agree with the student. We can clearly determine why the statement has been made because of the writer’s prominent use of juxtaposition, contrasting the mundane tasks of Nat’s everyday life with the ‘restless’ agitation of the birds he is seemingly familiar with. Du Maurier structures her text around Nat’s familiarity with the birds, a familiarity soon shattered when he watches them fly away, ‘to what purpose?’. The use of a rhetorical question is interesting here and highlights the contrast which in turn creates tension. Nat, in his cyclical routine, clearly knows his purpose: to look after his family and work at the farm. The purpose of the birds, however, is more obscure, creating tension as an unclear purpose equates to unpredictability, making the birds seem threatening and creating a sense of foreboding. The reader’s inability to understand the birds and their movements compared to the relatable actions of Nat create a sense of uncertainty. |  |
| The statement is correct and I agree with it. It is clear the writer is juxtaposing the normality of Nat’s life, zooming in on everyday, somewhat mundane tasks like, ‘munching his pasty’ and the way he ‘watched the sea birds’, perhaps to create the sense that life for him is cyclical; there is never anything different. This, then, has a greater impact on the reader when du Maurier shifts our attention to the fact that the birds ‘were more restless than ever this fall of year.’ The adjective ‘restless’ begins to create a dark and ominous tone. The adjective implies that something is not quite right which would contrast Nat’s routine of working at the farm , eating lunch and going home, a routine seemingly established from years of doing the same thing. ‘Restless’ as an adjective connotes agitation which is most likely why the student voices the idea that something that goes against the norm creates tension; change can be unexpected and can create suspense. |  |

Your answer: 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**Section B: Writing**

You are advised to spend 45 minutes on this section.

Write in full sentences.

You are reminded of the need to plan your answer.

You should leave enough time to check your work at the end.

 05 You have been asked to write a creative piece of writing for a new school magazine.

**Either:** write a description as suggested by this picture.

**Or:** Write the beginning of a story that includes a character who is in a frightening situation.

**[24 marks for content and organisation; 16 marks for technical accuracy]**



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