Time allowed: 1 hour 30 minutes.
You should spend at least 30 minutes reading and annotating the passages and in preparing your answer.

The following poems and extracts from longer prose and prose texts are all linked by the theme of memory. They are arranged chronologically by date of publication. Read all the material carefully, and then complete the task below.

(a)	'Memory, a Poem' (1733), a poem by Laetitia Pilkington	*page 4*
(b)	'The Poplar-Field' (1784), a poem by William Cowper	*page 5*
(c)	From *Roundabout Papers* (1860-61), magazine articles by William Makepeace Thackeray	*page 6*
(d)	From *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* (1962), a play by Edward Albee	*page 7*
(e)	'Poetry Failure' (2002), a poem by Mark Halliday	*page 8*
(f)	From *Ancient Light* (2012), a novel by John Banville	*page 9*

Task:

Select two or three of the passages (a) to (f) and compare and contrast them in any ways that seem interesting to you, paying particular attention to distinctive features of structure, language and style. In your introduction, indicate *briefly* what you intend to explore or illustrate through close reading of your chosen passages.

This task is designed to assess your responsiveness to unfamiliar literary material and your skills in close reading. Marks are not awarded for references to other texts or authors you have studied.

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(a) 'Memory, a Poem' (1733), a poem by Laetitia Pilkington

IN what recesses of the brain
Does this amazing power remain,
By which all knowledge we attain?

What art thou, Memory? What tongue can tell,
What curious artist trace thy hidden cell,
Wherein ten thousand different objects dwell?

Surprising storehouse! in whose narrow womb
All things, the past, the present, and to come,
Find ample space, and large and mighty room.

O falsely deemed the foe of sacred wit!
Thou, who the nurse and guardian art of it,
Laying it up till season due and fit.

Then proud the wond'rous treasure to produce,
As understanding points it, to conduce
Either to entertainment, or to use.

Nor love nor holy friendship, without thee,
Could ever of the least duration be;
Nor gratitude, nor truth, nor piety.

Where thou art not, the cheerless human mind
Is one vast void, all darksome, sad and blind;
No trace of anything remains behind.

The sacred stores of learning all are thine;
'Tis only thou record'st the faithful line;
'Tis thou mak'st human-kind almost divine.

And when at length we quit this mortal scene,
Thou still shalt with our tender friends remain,
And time and death shall strike at thee in vain.

Lord, let me so this wond'rous gift employ,
It may a fountain be of endless joy,
Which time, or accident, may ne'er destroy.

Still let my faithful Memory impart,
And deep engrave it on my grateful heart,
How just, and good, and excellent Thou art.

(b) 'The Poplar-Field' (1784), a poem by William Cowper.

THE Poplars are fell'd, farewell to the shade
And the whispering sound of the cool colonnade,
The winds play no longer and sing in the leaves,
Nor Ouse[1] on his bosom their image receives.

Twelve years have elapsed since I last took a view
Of my favourite field, and the bank where they grew,
And now in the grass behold they are laid,
And the tree is my seat that once lent me a shade!

The black-bird has fled to another retreat
Where the hazels afford him a screen from the heat,
And the scene where his melody charm'd me before,
Resounds with his sweet-flowing ditty no more.

My fugitive years are all hasting away,
And I must e'er long lie as lowly as they,
With a turf on my breast and a stone at my head
E'er another such grove shall arise in its stead.

'Tis a sight to engage me if anything can
To muse on the perishing pleasures of Man;
Though his life be a dream, his enjoyments, I see,
Have a Being less durable even than he.

[1] A river; there are several rivers in England named the Ouse.

(c) From *Roundabout Papers* (1860-61), magazine articles by William Makepeace Thackeray.

When I come to look at a place which I have visited any time these twenty or thirty years, I recall not the place merely, but the sensations I had at first seeing it, and which are quite different to my feelings to-day. That first day at Calais; the voices of the women crying out at night, as the vessel came alongside the pier; the supper at Quillacq's and the flavour of the cutlets and wine; the red-calico canopy under which I slept; the tiled floor, and the fresh smell of the sheets; the wonderful postilion in his jack-boots and pigtail;—all return with perfect clearness to my mind, and I am seeing them, and not the objects which are actually under my eyes. Here is Calais. Yonder is that commissioner I have known this score of years. Here are the women screaming and hustling over the baggage; the people at the passport-barrier who take your papers. My good people, I hardly see you. You no more interest me than a dozen orange-women in Covent-Garden, or a shop book-keeper in Oxford Street. But you make me think of a time when you were indeed wonderful to behold—when the little French soldiers wore white cockades in their shakos—when the diligence was forty hours going to Paris; and the great-booted postilion, as surveyed by youthful eyes from the coupé, with his *jurons*, his ends of rope for the harness, and his clubbed pigtail, was a wonderful being, and productive of endless amusement. You young folks don't remember the apple-girls who used to follow the diligence up the hill beyond Boulogne, and the delights of the jolly road? In making continental journeys with young folks, an oldster may be very quiet, and, to outward appearance, melancholy; but really he has gone back to the days of his youth, and he is seventeen or eighteen years of age (as the case may be), and is amusing himself with all his might. He is noting the horses as they come squealing out of the post-house yard at midnight; he is enjoying the delicious meals at Beauvais and Amiens, and quaffing *ad libitum*[1] the rich table-d'hôte wine[2]; he is hail-fellow with the conductor, and alive to all the incidents of the road. A man can be alive in 1860 and 1830 at the same time, don't you see? Bodily, I may be in 1860, inert, silent, torpid; but in the spirit I am walking about in 1828, let us say;—in a blue dress-coat and brass buttons, a sweet figured silk waistcoat (which I button round a slim waist with perfect ease), looking at beautiful beings with gigot sleeves and tea-tray hats under the golden chestnuts of the Tuileries, or round the Place Vendome, where the *drapeau blanc*[3] is floating from the statueless column. Shall we go and dine at "Bombarda's," near the "Hotel Breteuil," or at the "Cafe Virginie?"—Away! "Bombarda's" and the "Hotel Breteuil" have been pulled down ever so long. They knocked down the poor old Virginia Coffee-house last year. My spirit goes and dines there. My body, perhaps, is seated with ever so many people in a railway-carriage, and no wonder my companions find me dull and silent.

1. ad libitum – *freely*
2. table-d'hôte – *table wine, house wine*
3. drapeau blanc – *white flag*

(d) From *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* (1962), a play by Edward Albee

GEORGE. Uh … Bourbon *is* right.
NICK. Uh … yes, Bourbon.
GEORGE. *(At the bar, still.)* When I was sixteen and going to prep school, during the Punic Wars, a bunch of us used to go into New York on the first day of vacations, before we fanned out to our homes, and in the evening this bunch of us used to go to this gin mill owned by the gangster-father of one of us — for this was during the Great Experiment, or Prohibition, as it is more frequently called, and it was a bad time for the liquor lobby, but a fine time for the crooks and the cops — and we would go to this gin mill, and we would drink with the grown-ups and listen to the jazz. And one time, in the bunch of us, there was this boy who was fifteen, and he had killed his mother with a shotgun some years before — accidentally, completely accidentally, without even an unconscious motivation, I have no doubt, no doubt at all — and this one evening this boy went with us, and we ordered our drinks, and when it came his turn he said, I'll have bergin … give me some bergin, please … bergin and water. Well, we all laughed … he was blond and he had the face of a cherub, and we all laughed, and his cheeks went red and the color rose in his neck, and the assistant crook who had taken our order told people at the next table what the boy had said, and then they laughed, and then more people were told and the laughter grew, and more people and more laughter, and no one was laughing more than us, and none of us more than the boy who had shot his mother. And soon, everyone in the gin mill knew what the laughter was about, and everyone started ordering bergin, and laughing when they ordered it. And soon, of course, the laughter became less general, but it did not subside, entirely, for a very long time, for always at this table or that someone would order bergin and a new area of laughter would rise. We drank free that night, and we were bought champagne by the management, by the gangster-father of one of us. And, of course, we suffered the next day, each of us, alone, on his train, away from New York, each of us with a grown-up's hangover … but it was the grandest day of my … youth. *(Hands Nick a drink on the word.)*
NICK. *(Very quietly.)* Thank you. What … what happened to the boy … the boy who had shot his mother?
GEORGE. I won't tell you.
NICK. All right.
GEORGE. The following summer, on a country road, with his learner's permit in his pocket and his father on the front seat to his right, he swerved the car, to avoid a porcupine, and drove straight into a large tree.
NICK. *(Faintly pleading.)* No.
GEORGE. He was not killed, of course. And in the hospital, when he was conscious and out of danger, and when they told him that his father *was* dead, he began to laugh, I have been told, and his laughter grew and he would not stop, and it was not until after

they jammed a needle in his arm, not until after that, until his consciousness slipped away from him, that his laughter subsided … stopped. And when he was recovered from his injuries enough so that he could be moved without damage should he struggle, he was put in an asylum. That was thirty years ago.

NICK. Is he … still there?

GEORGE. Oh, yes. And I'm told that for these thirty years he has … not … uttered … one … sound. *(A rather long silence: five sec-*

(e) 'Poetry Failure' (2002), a poem by Mark Halliday

Poetry Failure

BY MARK HALLIDAY

For example, I wrote my first poem in 1976 about being in the Vermont house
after my mother's death; she died the year before;
she loved that house. My father said he kept having moments
of thinking she must have just stepped outside for a minute
to weed the garden or to walk just a little way
along Prospect Street, for a few minutes only and now
almost now she'd be coming back, we'd hear the screen door,
Bev would be back and saying something casual about—

about the cats, Daphne and Chloe, or about Mrs. Yamokofsky next door
or about the pear tree, "or a colored stone she found."
That was the phrase that ended my poem in 1976:
"or a colored stone she found." The phrase rang slightly false
but I wanted it—the "ound" and "one" sounds sounded profound
and in 1976 "stone" was still a word guaranteed poetic.
But did my mother ever pick up colorful stones?
Wasn't that more something I did fifteen years earlier?
In the poem I was trying to turn my ironic mother into
an ideal figure certified sweet like a child.

But what could I make her say? Something very sly and wry?
The poetry would be in her voice, the way of her voice being
hers—voice of my mother—whether the words were about
the cats or Mrs. Yamokofsky or potatoes to peel for mashing.
Not *your* mother. *My* mother. Poetry of her
saying in her Bev way "those potatoes" or "Mrs. Yamokovsky"
or "Daphne's gone down by the Black River
but if we feed Chloe I'm sure she'll be back."
And my father and Kimbo and me just going "Yeah" or "In a minute"
because this was all just life.

(f) From *Ancient Light* (2012), a novel by John Banville

Billy Gray was my best friend and I fell in love with his mother. Love may be too strong a word but I do not know a weaker one that will apply. All this happened half a century ago. I was fifteen and Mrs. Gray was thirty-five. Such things are easily said, since words themselves have no shame and are never surprised. She might be living still. She would be, what, eighty-three, eighty-four? That is not a great age, these days. What if I were to set off in search of her? That would be a quest. I should like to be in love again, I should like to fall in love again, just once more. We could take a course of monkey-gland injections, she and I, and be as we were fifty years ago, helpless in raptures. I wonder how things are with her, assuming she is still of this earth. She was so unhappy then, so unhappy, she must have been, despite her valiant and unfailing cheeriness, and I dearly hope she did not continue so.

What do I recall of her, here in these soft pale days at the lapsing of the year? Images from the far past crowd in my head and half the time I cannot tell whether they are memories or inventions. Not that there is much difference between the two, if indeed there is any difference at all. Some say that without realising it we make it all up as we go along, embroidering and embellishing, and I am inclined to credit it, for Madam Memory is a great and subtle dissembler. When I look back all is flux, without beginning and flowing towards no end, or none that I shall experience, except as a final full stop. The items of flotsam that I choose to salvage from the general wreckage—and what is a life but a gradual shipwreck?—may take on an aspect of inevitability when I put them on display in their glass showcases, but they are random; representative, perhaps, perhaps compellingly so, but random nonetheless