**William Holman Hunt in response to the Pearson Specification**

1. **How is he Pre-Raphaelite?**  
  
a. A founding member of the PRB. He and Millais rejected the rigid and formulaic teachings of the Royal Academy. They wanted to create works which were ‘honest’, true to nature and had genuine messages to convey.

b. Holman Hunt, Millais and Rossetti shared a deep interest in medieval subjects and also the works of artists from before (pre) Raphael.  
  
c. His works contain moral messages, symbolism.

d. A follower of Ruskin. Holman Hunt wanted his works to appear as authentic as possible so there was accurate depictions of nature, figures, settings etc.

e. Attention to detail in all his works. He found specific sites to suit the location of his subjects- travelling to the Holy Land for ‘*The Shadow of Death*’, Hastings for ‘*Our English Coasts*’ or the countryside of Surrey for ‘*The Hireling Shepherd*’.

f. Depicted literary scenes, events from medieval history in his work- all popular subjects for the PRB.

2. **How is he avant-garde?**  
  
a. Painted outdoors, at a time when this was rare for artists.

b. Rejected the idealised figures of academic art- eg we see the coarse-featured shepherd in ‘*The Hireling Shepherd*’, his face sunburnt, his hair wiry and his hands rough and blemished.

c. Applied paint to a wet white ground- giving an intense appearance to the colours in his work. Traditionally artists painted onto a red or brown ground.

d. Broke away from the teachings of the Royal Academy to paint subjects which had a ‘genuine message’ to convey.

**3. How does he reject academic conventions?**

1. Shows real, unidealised figures and settings. Follows Ruskin’s advice regarding nature; ’rejecting nothing, selecting nothing’.
2. Looks to the work of artists such as Van Eyck, Fra Angelico, Van Der Weyden from before Raphael for inspiration rather than High Renaissance artists. Looks at Northern Renaissance painters specifically rather than the Italian artists which were advocated in the Royal Academy.
3. All forms within his works are clearly outlined. This often gave his compositions a naive or ‘stiff' appearance- typical of Northern Renaissance art. It breaks with the Academy’s tendency to soften forms and softly light a subject for aesthetic effect.

**4. How was he influenced by cultural/social factors?**

1. The ‘Muscular Christianity’ movement is shown through the figure of Christ in ‘*The Shadow of Death’*. Thomas Carlyle’s views on Christianity, work and society would also be crucial to Holman Hunt’s work.
2. The writings of John Ruskin were crucial to his artistic development.
3. A revival in medieval subjects, found in the poetry of Tennyson, would inspire many of Holman Hunt’s paintings.
4. Victorian Britain’s passion for spreading Christianity around the Empire would encourage Holman Hunt to travel to the Holy Land to paint scenes and locations relating to the life of Christ.
5. The theme of the ‘fallen woman’, popular with artists and writers of that time was also a common issue in Victorian society. His painting ‘*The Awakening Conscience*’ deals specifically with this subject.

**5. How was he influenced by political factors?**

1. Fears of potential invasion from France inspired *‘Our English Coasts (Strayed Sheep)*’.
2. The issue of the clergy not appealing to the public inspired ‘*The Hireling Shepherd*’.

**6. How was he influenced by technological factors?**

1. The recent invention of tubes of paint allowed him to work outdoors.
2. Train travel allowed him to find locations in the countryside and away from London for his depictions of rural life and landscapes.
3. Mass production prints of his works allowed his Christian ‘message’ to be spread to households across Britain and the Empire.

**7. How each chosen specified artist was influenced by two other artists.**

1. Van Eyck’s ‘*Arnolfini Portrait*’ came to the National Gallery in the early 1840s. This led to a revival in the interest of Northern Renaissance, Flemish and Early Renaissance art and artists- all of which profoundly influenced the Pre-Raphaelites. They admired the ‘honest’ and accurate depictions of figures and settings shown in works such as the ‘*Arnolfini Portrait*’ and would also experiment in oil painting as artists such as Van Eyck had done. Such paintings were richly coloured with intense levels of detail and accurate depictions of real people- all of which the Pre-Raphaelites referenced.
2. The Nazarenes were a group of early 19th Century German artists who were led by Friedrich Overbeck. They relocated to Rome and formed a Brotherhood who emulated Early Renaissance Christian art.
3. John Everett Millais, founding member of the PRB. Both artists worked alongside each other creating works such as ‘*Ophelia*’ and ‘*The Hireling Shepherd*’. They made excursions into the English countryside to find locations and subjects suitable for their work.

**8. Significance of location and setting.**

a. His works shown annually at the Royal Academy Exhibition. This was the most important art exhibition of the year in Britain and gave artists exposure to the public. Huge crowds attended. Works typically were academic in style and thus the avant-garde style of the Pre-Raphaelites would initially cause a huge scandal and public outcry.

**9. The extent to which each chosen specified artist typifies the style and country from which they come.**

1. His subjects deal with issues typical of Victorian society- fallen women, Christian beliefs, nationalism, medieval and literary subjects relating to England and Britain.
2. Studied at the Royal Academy- the pre-eminent venue for the study of art in Victorian Britain.
3. Regularly engaged in theoretical and critical debate with leading thinkers of the period including Thomas Carlyle and Ruskin.
4. Founding member of the first avant-garde movement in Victorian Britain.
5. Deeply Christian in belief, saw his work as having the means to instruct and ‘ennoble’ the viewer- a typically Victorian attitude.

**10. Materials, Techniques and Processes.**

1. Working methodically with oil painting to create scenes and figures as realistically as possible- showing the influence of Van Eyck’s working process.
2. Colour applied to a wet white ground- this made the colours more vibrant and intense, giving the paintings the appearance of stained glass or illuminated manuscripts.
3. Painted outdoors (en plein air), a new method at this time and made possible by recently invented tubes of oil paint.

**11. Detailed knowledge and understanding of at least one critical text that discusses the chosen specified artists: their works, contribution and influences.**

a. Carol Jacobi (art historian): “Hunt and Millais rejected the decorous, generalised manner derived from the sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Old Masters, searching instead for alternative models of art. Their bright palettes and archaic settings reflected an interest in the “primitives”, artists of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries”.

b. The art critic Frederic George Stephens wrote in 1860 that Hunt was “the first figure painter who gave the true colour of sun-shadows, made them partake of the tint of the object in which they were cast, and deepened such shadows to pure blue”.

c. Holman Hunt’s obituary in the Times: “none of them ever worked more strenuously or more successfully than he to inspire his fellow man with lofty ideals, and to wed beauty to religion”.

d. Holman Hunt (in his autobiography *Pre-Raphaelitism and the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood*): “We studied attentively the works of John (Jan) and Hubert Van Eyck; the exquisite delicacy of the workmanship and the unpretending character of the invention made us feel we could not overestimate the perfection of the painting”.

e. Holman Hunt (in his autobiography *Pre-Raphaelitism and the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood*): “The works of the Van Eycks showed the first achievements of perfect realisation of natural form and colour”.

f. John Ruskin (in his pamphlet *Pre-Raphaelitism*): “It is hardly necessary to point out the earnestness or humility in the works of William Hunt; but it may be so to suggest the high value they possess as records of English rural life.……Who is there who does not sympathise with him in the simple love with which he dwells on the brightness and bloom of our summer fruits and flowers?

g. John Ruskin (in his pamphlet *Pre-Raphaelitism*): “The man is created an observer and an imitator; and his function is to convey knowledge to his fellow-men, of such things as cannot be taught otherwise than ocularly. For a long time this function remained a religious one: it was to impress upon the popular mind the reality of the objects of faith, and the truth of the histories of the Scripture, by giving visible form to both. That function has now passed away, and none has as yet taken its place. The painter has no profession, no purpose. He is an idler on the earth, chasing the shadows of his own fancies”.

1. John Ruskin (in *Modern Painters*): “Go to Nature in all singleness of heart….rejecting nothing, selecting nothing, and scorning nothing”.   
     
   j. The Pre-Raphaelite doctrine stated they should :   
     
   “have genuine ideas to express”  
     
   “ Study Nature attentively, so as to know how to express them”  
     
   “Sympathise with what is direct and serious and heartfelt in previous art, to the exclusion of what is conventional and self-parading and learned by rote”  
     
   “Produce thoroughly good pictures and statues”.