



GCSE ENGLISH LANGUAGE

Paper 2 Writers' viewpoints and perspectives

Insert

The two sources that follow are:

Source A: 21st Century literary non-fiction

The Accidental Countryside by wildlife writer, Stephen Moss

An extract from a book, published in 2020

Source B: 19th Century non-fiction

The Life of the Fields by Richard Jefferies

An extract from a book, published in 1884

Please turn the page over to see the sources

Source A

Source A is an extract from *The Accidental Countryside*, by wildlife writer, Stephen Moss, published in 2020. Here, he writes about the peregrine falcon, a bird of prey.

- 1 The peregrine falcon sits far above the ground like an emperor gazing down upon his kingdom. He is, without question, the top predator in this neck of the woods. Or perhaps I should say, in this corner of the city. For on a fine spring day, this particular peregrine is perched on the roof of Tate Modern, the contemporary art gallery in the very heart of London. He sits perfectly upright, occasionally turning his head from side to side as his piercing black eyes, fringed with custard-yellow, search for any movement below. Down there, the humans go about their business unaware of the drama about to unfold above their heads. A moment later, and a movement in the far distance – three or four hundred metres away – catches the peregrine's eye. A flock of pigeons, and one bird at the back seems to be struggling to keep up with its companions. With a flick of his wings the falcon is gone.
- 11 He powers through the air, the breeze passing over his feathers with hardly a ruffle. He rises higher and higher until almost out of view. Then he stops, turns and folds his wings before plummeting. Like a guided missile, he homes in on the straggler, eyes fixed on the target, diving at almost 180 miles an hour, yet still the pigeon is unaware of its fate. At the last possible moment, the peregrine changes his body shape once again. Pulling back on his wings, he brakes momentarily, at the same time extending his feet towards his victim and, just before impact, extrudes talons sharp as switchblades. With an explosive crack like a rodeo whip, he grabs the pigeon. Upwards into the sea-blue sky he swoops, his plunder hanging beneath him: more food to carry back to his hungry chicks waiting in their nest, high on the topmost ledge of a skyscraper.

- You wouldn't, perhaps, expect to find the fastest living creature on the planet in the centre of one of the world's busiest cities. The peregrine falcon's decline had begun during the Second World War, when shooting them was officially permitted to stop them killing pigeons carrying vital messages. After the war, things went from bad to worse because of the indiscriminate use of pesticides. The UK peregrine population plunged to fewer than 400 pairs. These retreated to prime sites in the north and west: rocky crags in the uplands, and high cliffs along remote coasts. The peregrine was very much a bird of wild places, not the urban jungle.

- How things have changed. Today there are more than thirty breeding pairs of peregrines in London alone. Passers-by rarely look up, so seldom notice them; but they are there. On and around Tate Modern, the Houses of Parliament, Battersea Power Station and many other famous London landmarks, you can see peregrines: roosting, nesting and occasionally hunting for their favourite food, often guarded by volunteers with telescopes happy to point out this incredible bird. It's a great way to introduce city-dwellers to the wonders of the wild.

- Peregrines have moved into our cities in such numbers for a simple reason: we have created the perfect conditions for them. Peregrines need high cliffs or crags, where they can build their nests and survey their territory; we have erected tall buildings that serve just as well. They need food; our cities provide it in a whole suite of different birds of different sizes, a buffet of birds laid out beneath them. And they need to be safe. They can find this safety in cities because our relationship with these birds has changed beyond recognition. Instead of persecuting them, we provide protection, with teams of dedicated watchers scrutinising their nests twenty-four hours a day.

What an extraordinary journey the peregrine has taken: from a symbol of all things wild and remote, to a resident of our largest and busiest city, and many others up and down the UK. Its story symbolises the resilience, adaptability and ability of wild creatures to take advantage of
45 new and unexpected circumstances. As we enter the most critical period for Britain's wildlife in our long history, they will need those qualities in abundance.

Turn over for Source B

Turn over ►

Source B

Source B is an extract from *The Life of the Fields* by Richard Jefferies, published in 1884. Here, Jefferies writes about life in the countryside and a brook, which is a small stream.

- 1 The brook has forgotten me, but I have not forgotten the brook. Many faces have been mirrored since in the flowing water, many feet have waded in the sandy shallow. I wonder if any one else can see it in a picture before the eyes as I can, bright, and vivid as trees suddenly shown at night by a great flash of lightning. All the leaves and branches and the birds at roost
5 are visible during the flash. It is barely a second; it seems much longer. Memory, like the lightning, reveals the pictures in the mind. Every curve, and shore, and shallow is as familiar now as when I followed the winding stream so often.

- The life of the meadows seemed to crowd down towards the brook in summer, to reach out and stretch towards the life-giving water. There, the buttercups were taller and closer together, nails
10 of gold driven so thickly that the true surface was not visible. Countless small roots drew up the richness of earth like miners in the darkness, throwing their petals of yellow ore above them.

- Hidden in those bushes and tall grasses, high in the trees and low on the ground, there were the nests of happy birds. In the hawthorns blackbirds and thrushes built, and the fledglings* fluttered out into the flowery grass. Down among the stalks of the flowering plants, where the
15 grasses were knotted together, the nettle-creeper concealed her treasured eggs. Up in the ash trees and willows, here and there, wood-pigeons built. If there was a hollow in the oak a pair of starlings chose it, for there was no advantageous nook that was not seized on. Like the flowers and grass, the birds were drawn towards the brook. They built by it; they came to it to drink; in the evening a lark trilled in a hawthorn bush.

- 20 Morning and evening, the country girls came down to fetch water; their path was worn through the mowing-grass, and there was a flat stone set into the bank as a step to stand on. Always the little children came with them; they too loved the brook like the grass and birds. They wanted to see the fishes dart away and hide in the green reeds, and float again and pass away out of sight. Where there was pasture, cattle came to drink, and horses, restless horses, stood
25 for hours by the edge under the shade of the ash trees. With what joy the spaniel plunged in, straight from the bank out among the reeds – you could mark his course by seeing their tips bend as he brushed them swimming. All life loved the brook.

- Far down away from roads and villages, there was a small orchard on the very bank of the stream, and just before the grass grew too high to walk through, I looked in to speak to its
30 owner. He was busy with his spade at a strip of garden, and grumbled that the hares would not let it alone, with all that stretch of grass to feed on. Nor would the rooks; and the moorhens ran over it, and the water-rats burrowed; the wood-pigeons took the peas, and there was no rest from them all. While he talked and talked, I thought how little the apple tree in blossom before us cared who saw its glory. The branches were in bloom everywhere, at the top as well as at
35 the side; at the top where no one could see them but the swallows. They did not grow for human admiration; that was not their purpose; that is our affair only – we bring the thought to the tree.

Glossary

*fledglings – baby birds

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