GCSE

C700U10-1A

A18-C700U10-1A

ENGLISH LANGUAGE – Component 1
20th Century Literature Reading and Creative Prose Writing

MONDAY, 5 NOVEMBER 2018 – MORNING

Resource Material for use with Section A

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SECTION A: 40 marks

Read carefully the passage below.

This passage is about Samuel Hamilton and his wife, Liza. They emigrated from Ireland to America in the nineteenth century.

Young Samuel Hamilton came to America from the north of Ireland and so did his wife. He was the son of farmers, neither rich nor poor, who had lived on one farm and in one stone house for many hundreds of years. The Hamiltons were intelligent and well-educated people and, as is so often true in that green country, they were related to very great people and very small people so that one cousin might be a lord and another cousin might be a beggar. And of course they were descended from the ancient kings of Ireland, as every Irishman is.

Why Samuel left the stone house and green acres of his ancestors I do not know. He was totally honest, so trouble with the police was not the reason, but there was a whisper in the family that it was love that drove him out of Ireland. Whether he left because of a too successful love, or heartbroken because of an unsuccessful love I do not know. We always preferred to think it was the former. Samuel had good looks and charm and it is hard to imagine that any girl refused him.

He came to America full of energy and invention. His hands were clever and he was a good blacksmith and carpenter. He was forever inventing a new way of doing an old thing better and quicker but in his whole life he never had any talent for making money.

I don't know what directed his steps to the Salinas Valley but he brought with him his tiny Irish wife, Liza, who was a hard and humourless woman. I think there must have been another girl printed in his heart for he was a man of love and she was not a woman to show her feelings.

When Samuel and Liza came to the Salinas Valley, all the good land was taken and they were forced to farm in the barren hills. Samuel built his house with his own hands, and he built a barn and a blacksmith shop but their land was harsh and dry. There were no springs and the crust of topsoil was so thin that even grass struggled to exist. Even in reasonably good years there was so little feed that the cattle were thin from running about looking for enough to eat. From their barren hills the Hamiltons could look down and see the richness of the land in the bottom of the valley and the greenness around the Salinas river. However, Samuel found quite soon that even if he had ten thousand acres of this hill country he could not make a living without water.

His clever hands made a machine to bore for water on the land of luckier men. He also invented and made a threshing machine and he moved through the farms in the valley at harvest time, threshing the grain his own farm would not grow. In his blacksmith shop he sharpened and mended tools and shod horses. Men from all over the valley brought him tools to mend and it was a bad day when three or four men were not standing around watching him work. Besides, they loved to hear Samuel talk of the world and events outside the valley and they brought whisky too. Out of sight of the kitchen window and the disapproving eye of Mrs Hamilton, they drank from the bottle and listened to Samuel's hammer and his talk. They called him a comic genius and carried his stories carefully home, and they wondered how the stories spilled out on the way home for they never sounded the same when they repeated them in their own kitchens.

Samuel should have been rich from his work, but he had no gift for business. His customers, always pressed for money themselves, promised payment after harvest, and then after Christmas and then after – until at last they forgot it. Samuel had no gift for reminding them. And so the Hamiltons remained poor.

The children came along as regularly as the years. The overworked doctors in the county did not often get to the ranches for a birth and Samuel delivered all his own children. He tied the cords neatly, spanked the bottoms to get them breathing and cleaned up the mess. When his youngest was born with some obstruction, Samuel put his mouth to the baby's mouth and blew air in and sucked it out until the baby could take over for

himself. Samuel's hands were so good and so gentle that neighbours from twenty miles away would call on him to help with a birth. And he was equally good with mare, cow or woman.

Samuel had no equal for soothing and bringing quiet to a frightened child. It was the sweetness of his voice and the tenderness of his soul. Men coming to his blacksmith shop to talk and listen dropped their cursing for a while, not from any restraint but automatically, as though this was not the place for it.

Liza Hamilton was a very different kettle of Irish. Her head was small and round and it held small, fixed convictions. She was set on her course even though the angels of God argued against it. She had a code of morals that pinned down and beat the brains out of nearly everything that was pleasant to do.

Liza was a good plain cook and her house – it was always her house – was fiercely brushed and washed. Having her children did not hold her back very much – she had to be careful for two weeks at the most and then life went on as normal.

Liza had a finely developed sense of sin. Idleness was a sin, as was card playing, which to her was a kind of idleness. She was suspicious of fun whether it involved dancing or singing or even laughter. She felt that people having a good time were wide open to the devil. And this was a shame, for Samuel was a laughing man, but I guess he was wide open to the devil. His wife protected him whenever she could.

She wore her hair always pulled tight back and tied in a hard knot. Since I can't remember how she dressed, it must have been that she wore clothes that matched herself exactly. She had no spark of humour and only occasionally a sharp blade of cutting wit. She frightened us grandchildren because she had no weakness. She suffered bravely and uncomplainingly through life, convinced that that was the way her God wanted everyone to live. She felt that rewards came later.

John Steinbeck

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