2.6 Literature: Modern Prose Essay (themes only): 2-hour Pack

AQA 8702 · about 120 minutes

Total Marks

Name: _____ Date: ____ / ____ / _____

Answer ALL questions.

The Visitor

Extract written for Revision Library (original, copyright-free). An original piece of modern prose written for revision practice only; not derived from any published or past-paper text.

The kettle had been boiled four times since breakfast, and still Mum hadn't sat down.

'She'll want proper tea,' Mum said, not for the first time, lining up cups that did not match. 'Not the bags. The leaves. In the pot with the chip in the spout, because that's the one Nani always used.'

I did not remind her that Nani had not been in this kitchen for eleven years. I did not remind her of anything, in fact, because Mum's hands were shaking slightly, and there is a particular kind of quiet you learn to keep around a person whose hands are shaking.

Outside, a taxi pulled up in front of our house on Marigold Close, engine idling in the thin Tuesday light. I watched from behind the net curtain as the driver opened the boot and a small, upright woman in a green cardigan stepped out and stood very still, looking up at the pebble dashed front of our house as though she were reading something written there.

'Priya. Door.' Mum's voice had gone somewhere high and tight.

I opened it before the bell rang.

Nani's eyes found mine straight away, skipping past Mum entirely, and she said my name the way nobody else said it, with the stress falling in the wrong place, in the right place, in the place I had almost forgotten was possible.

'You have your father's chin,' she said, 'and my mother's ears. Nobody tells you these things, and then one day there is no one left who can.'

I did not know what to do with a sentence like that, so I carried her case inside instead.

Mum hovered in the kitchen doorway, tea towel wound tight around one hand. 'You didn't say what train you'd got. I'd have come to the station.'

'I am not so old that I cannot find a taxi, Kavita.'

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Something crossed Mum's face then, quick as a bird's shadow over grass, and I understood, in the way you understand things without being told, that this sentence was not really about a taxi at all. It was about a girl who had once got on a plane instead of finishing university, and a mother who had not come to the airport to see her off, and twenty years of silence that had somehow both healed and not healed at all.

Nani settled herself at the kitchen table without being asked, in the chair that faced the garden, and looked around the room as if she were checking it against a photograph in her memory. 'Same table,' she said. 'Different family sitting at it.'

'We're still the same family,' Mum said quietly.

'Are you.' It was not really a question.

I busied myself with the teapot, the one with the chip in the spout, and poured three cups, and nobody spoke while I did it, and the silence was not empty the way silences usually are in our house. It was full, the way a held breath is full, of everything that was about to be said, or almost said, or said badly and then said again, better, later, over more cups of tea than anyone in that kitchen could yet imagine.

I set a cup in front of each of them and sat down in the third chair, the one that faced neither the garden nor the door, and waited to find out which family I was actually in.

1 List four details we learn about Nani (Priya's grandmother) in this extract.

(Total for Question 1 is 4 marks)

2 Identify two quotations from the extract that suggest the relationship between Mum and Nani is strained.

(Total for Question 2 is 2 marks)

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3 Explain how the writer's word choice in the opening paragraph ('The kettle had been boiled four times since breakfast, and still Mum hadn't sat down') presents Mum's feelings before Nani arrives.

(Total for Question 3 is 4 marks)

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4 Explain how the writer presents Priya's feelings towards her mother in the sentence 'there is a particular kind of quiet you learn to keep around a person whose hands are shaking'.

(Total for Question 4 is 4 marks)

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5 Explain how the writer presents the idea of home in the description of the kitchen table and its chairs.

(Total for Question 5 is 6 marks)

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6 Explain the effect of the simile 'quick as a bird's shadow over grass' in this extract.

(Total for Question 6 is 6 marks)

7 Explain how the writer presents Nani's character through her words 'You have your father's chin, and my mother's ears. Nobody tells you these things, and then one day there is no one left who can.'

(Total for Question 7 is 8 marks)

8 Analyse how the writer presents the theme of silence in the extract as a whole.

(Total for Question 8 is 10 marks)

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9 Analyse how the writer's structural choices build tension around family conflict across the extract as a whole.

(Total for Question 9 is 10 marks)

10 Write about how the writer presents ideas about cultural and generational identity in this extract.

(Total for Question 10 is 12 marks)

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11 Write about how the possibility of reconciliation is suggested in this extract.

(Total for Question 11 is 12 marks)

12 Explain how tension between Mum and Nani is created through their exchange about the taxi and the station.

(Total for Question 12 is 8 marks)

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13 Explore the significance of the teapot 'with the chip in the spout' in this extract.

(Total for Question 13 is 8 marks)

14 Write about how the writer presents family relationships as complicated by the past in this extract, and comment on why stories about migration and separated families remain relevant to readers today.

(Total for Question 14 is 15 marks)

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15 'Home is not simply a place; it is the people we are willing to make room for.'

Using this statement as a starting point, write about how the writer explores the idea of home in this extract.

(Total for Question 15 is 20 marks)

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16 Starting with this extract, write about how the writer presents the theme of belonging and identity, and evaluate the extent to which contemporary readers might relate to a story about family, migration and generational change.

In your response you should discuss:
- how the writer presents ideas about belonging and identity in this extract
- how the writer's methods create meaning
- the extent to which contemporary readers might relate to this kind of family story

(Total for Question 16 is 30 marks)

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Mark scheme · 2.6 Literature: Modern Prose Essay (themes only): 2-hour Pack

Question 1

she is wearing a green cardigan (oe)	**B1**
she has not visited/been in the kitchen for eleven years	**B1**
she arrives by taxi (not by train being met, or has travelled alone)	**B1**
any other valid detail, e.g. she is small and upright / she sits facing the garden / she notices Priya's chin and ears / she used to live in or know this house	**B1**

Answer: Any four of: wears a green cardigan; has not been in the kitchen for eleven years; arrives alone by taxi; is described as small and upright; sits in the chair facing the garden; recognises features passed down through the family.

Question 2

one valid quotation showing strain, e.g. 'You didn't say what train you'd got. I'd have come to the station.'	**B1**
a second, different valid quotation, e.g. 'Are you.' It was not really a question.	**B1**

Answer: Any two of: 'You didn't say what train you'd got. I'd have come to the station.'; 'I am not so old that I cannot find a taxi, Kavita.'; 'Different family sitting at it.'; ''Are you.' It was not really a question.'

Question 3

Level 2 Clear explanation: identifies relevant word choices (e.g. 'four times', 'still ... hadn't') and explains a clear effect, such as restlessness, nervous repetition or anxious anticipation, with an appropriate quotation. **3-4**

Level 1 Simple explanation: makes a simple or general comment on the language (e.g. 'she is busy' or 'she is nervous') with little development or supporting quotation. **1-2**

Indicative content:

- the repeated, precise number 'four times' suggests obsessive, needless repetition, hinting at nervous energy rather than practical necessity
- 'still Mum hadn't sat down' uses the adverb 'still' to suggest restlessness that has built up over time, before the visitor has even arrived
- the domestic, ordinary action of boiling a kettle is made to feel charged and symbolic, foreshadowing the emotional weight of the reunion

Question 4

Level 2 Clear explanation: identifies the shift to present tense/generalisation ('there is', 'you learn') and explains its effect, such as suggesting practised, habitual carefulness or protectiveness, supported by quotation. **3-4**

Level 1 Simple explanation: comments generally that Priya is being careful or quiet, with little reference to specific language. **1-2**

Indicative content:

- the shift from the specific past-tense narrative into a general present-tense truth ('there is ... you learn to keep') suggests this is a learned, repeated behaviour rather than a one-off reaction
- 'a particular kind of quiet' implies Priya has a whole vocabulary of silences she can distinguish between, showing emotional sensitivity
- 'whose hands are shaking' focuses on a small physical detail rather than naming an emotion directly, showing how closely Priya watches her mother

Question 5

Level 3 Clear, relevant explanation: analyses how specific details (the table, the chairs facing garden/door/neither) present ideas of home as both familiar and unsettled, using well-chosen quotation. **5-6**

Level 2 Some explanation: identifies relevant details about the table or chairs and offers a generally appropriate comment on home, with some quotation. **3-4**

Level 1 Simple, limited explanation: makes a simple point about the setting with little or no supporting detail. **1-2**

Indicative content:

- 'Same table ... Different family sitting at it' presents home as a physical constant that cannot hold the same meaning once relationships have changed
- Nani chooses the chair facing the garden, suggesting she is looking outward/backward to what she remembers, rather than at the people in the room
- Priya's final chair, facing 'neither the garden nor the door', symbolically places her between the two women, belonging fully to neither position
- the ordinary domestic object of the table becomes a way of measuring time and change without needing to state it directly

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Question 6

Level 3 Clear, relevant explanation: analyses the simile's imagery (speed, lightness, fleeting nature) and links it precisely to Mum's suppressed emotion, using well-chosen quotation. **5-6**

Level 2 Some explanation: identifies the simile suggests something brief or hard to catch, with a generally appropriate link to Mum's feelings. **3-4**

Level 1 Simple, limited explanation: notes that something quick happens, with little development. **1-2**

Indicative content:

- the natural, fleeting image of a shadow passing over grass suggests an emotion that appears and vanishes almost too quickly to name
- the gentleness of the image contrasts with the depth of feeling being suppressed, suggesting Mum is practised at hiding strong emotion
- the simile is drawn from nature rather than the domestic setting of the kitchen, briefly widening the scene and giving the moment a sense of significance
- it prepares the reader for the narrator's following explanation of the buried history behind Mum's reaction

Question 7

Level 4 Convincing, well-supported explanation: analyses how Nani's dialogue presents her as direct, aware of mortality and concerned with family continuity, using precise, well-integrated quotation and subject terminology. **7-8**

Level 3 Clear explanation: explains Nani's character using relevant quotation, with a clear point about family/continuity/mortality. **5-6**

Level 2 Some explanation: makes a generally appropriate point about Nani with some supporting quotation. **3-4**

Level 1 Simple, limited explanation: makes a simple, undeveloped comment about Nani with little or no quotation. **1-2**

Indicative content:

- Nani speaks about Priya's physical features as inherited evidence of a family line, presenting her as someone preoccupied with legacy and continuity
- 'Nobody tells you these things, and then one day there is no one left who can' introduces an awareness of mortality and lost time, suggesting Nani feels the urgency of the visit
- the directness of her speech, unsoftened by small talk, presents her as blunt and unsentimental on the surface, though the content is emotionally loaded
- she speaks to Priya as an equal capable of understanding weighty ideas, rather than as a child, suggesting she sees Priya as someone worth being honest with

Question 8

Level 4 Convincing, well-structured analysis: tracks how silence is presented in different forms across the whole extract, with judicious, well-integrated quotation and confident use of subject terminology. **9-10**

Level 3 Clear analysis: explains at least two different presentations of silence with relevant quotation and clear links between them. **6-8**

Level 2 Some analysis: identifies one or two moments of silence with some supporting quotation, though links between them may be limited. **3-5**

Level 1 Simple, limited analysis: makes a simple, undeveloped point about silence with little or no quotation. **1-2**

Indicative content:

- the narrator's own protective silence ('I did not remind her ... I did not remind her of anything') is presented as a considered, deliberate choice rather than an absence of words
- 'a particular kind of quiet you learn to keep' generalises this silence into a learned family skill, suggesting silence has long been used as a way of managing difficult emotions in this household
- the silence at the tea-pouring is described paradoxically as 'not empty' but 'full', reversing expectations of silence as absence and presenting it instead as charged with unspoken meaning
- the extract ends on unresolved silence and uncertainty ('waited to find out which family I was actually in'), suggesting silence has not yet been broken by the honest conversation the reader senses is coming
- different characters use silence differently: Nani's 'Are you.' is a silencing challenge, while Priya's silence is watchful and interpretive, showing silence can be both a weapon and a form of care

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Question 9

Level 4 Convincing, well-structured analysis: tracks structural choices (opening focus, shifts in perspective, pacing of dialogue, the ending) across the whole extract, explaining precisely how each builds tension, with judicious quotation. **9-10**

Level 3 Clear analysis: identifies at least two structural features and explains their effect on tension, with relevant quotation. **6-8**

Level 2 Some analysis: identifies one or two structural features with some supporting quotation, though explanation of effect may be limited. **3-5**

Level 1 Simple, limited analysis: makes a simple, undeveloped point about structure with little or no quotation. **1-2**

Indicative content:

- the extract opens in medias res with domestic detail (the kettle) before Nani has even arrived, building anticipation and establishing Mum's anxiety before the source of tension is revealed
- the narrative viewpoint of Priya, watching 'from behind the net curtain', creates a filter of observation that delays direct interaction and heightens suspense before the two women meet
- the pacing slows around the doorstep meeting, giving Nani's dialogue room to land, before speeding up again into short, clipped exchanges once Mum and Nani are face to face
- the extract withholds full explanation of the past (the plane, the twenty years) until partway through, releasing information gradually to build the reader's understanding alongside rising tension
- the ending resists resolution, closing on Priya's uncertainty rather than an answer, which leaves tension unresolved and open, encouraging the reader to want to know what happens next

Question 10

Level 4 Convincing, well-structured response: sustained analysis of how generational/cultural identity is presented through several methods across the whole extract, with judicious quotation and confident subject terminology. **10-12**

Level 3 Clear response: explains how generational/cultural identity is presented through at least two methods, with relevant quotation. **7-9**

Level 2 Some response: identifies relevant moments relating to generational/cultural identity with some supporting quotation. **4-6**

Level 1 Simple, limited response: makes a simple, undeveloped point with little or no quotation. **1-3**

Indicative content:

- the pronunciation detail, Nani saying Priya's name 'with the stress falling in the wrong place, in the right place', presents identity as something that can be pronounced in more than one valid way, suggesting cultural identity is layered rather than singular
- the backstory of 'a girl who had once got on a plane instead of finishing university' presents an inter-generational rift caused by choices about tradition, education and independence, suggesting each generation defines identity differently
- Nani's directness and formality (using 'Kavita' rather than an affectionate term) contrasts with the more hesitant, observational voice of Priya, suggesting a generational shift in how emotion is expressed
- Priya, as the youngest generation, is positioned as an inheritor of features and stories from both older women, suggesting identity is built cumulatively across generations rather than fixed at birth
- small domestic rituals (the specific teapot, the seating arrangement) act as unspoken carriers of cultural memory, passed down without needing to be explained in words

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Question 11

Level 4 Convincing, well-structured response: sustained analysis of how reconciliation is suggested through several details/methods across the whole extract, with judicious quotation and confident subject terminology. **10-12**

Level 3 Clear response: explains how reconciliation is suggested through at least two details/methods, with relevant quotation. **7-9**

Level 2 Some response: identifies relevant moments suggesting possible reconciliation with some supporting quotation. **4-6**

Level 1 Simple, limited response: makes a simple, undeveloped point with little or no quotation. **1-3**

Indicative content:

- the narrator's aside that twenty years of silence had 'somehow both healed and not healed at all' presents reconciliation as partial and ongoing rather than a single completed event
- the shared act of making and pouring tea, using Nani's own teapot, offers a wordless gesture of welcome that suggests reconciliation may happen through ritual and care rather than confrontation
- Mum's quiet insistence, 'We're still the same family,' shows a deliberate, hopeful choice to assert continuity even while Nani challenges it, suggesting Mum is actively working towards reconciliation
- the final image of held-breath silence being 'full' rather than empty, containing everything 'about to be said, or almost said, or said badly and then said again, better, later', explicitly promises future conversation and gradual repair
- Priya's position as an attentive, silent witness suggests she may act as a bridge between the two older women in whatever reconciliation follows

Question 12

Level 4 Convincing, well-supported explanation: analyses how short, clipped dialogue and subtext create tension beneath a surface disagreement about practical arrangements, using precise, well-integrated quotation. **7-8**

Level 3 Clear explanation: explains how the dialogue creates tension, with relevant quotation and a clear sense of the disagreement's real meaning. **5-6**

Level 2 Some explanation: identifies tension in the exchange with some supporting quotation, though the deeper meaning may be only partly explored. **3-4**

Level 1 Simple, limited explanation: notes that the characters disagree, with little supporting detail. **1-2**

Indicative content:

- Mum's line about the station is phrased as a practical concern, but its tightness ('You didn't say what train you'd got') hints at hurt feelings about being excluded
- Nani's reply, 'I am not so old that I cannot find a taxi, Kavita,' uses Mum's first name rather than an affectionate term, creating distance, and defends her independence rather than addressing the emotion behind the comment
- the narrator's direct statement that 'this sentence was not really about a taxi at all' confirms to the reader that ordinary dialogue is carrying a much larger, unspoken argument
- short, clipped sentence structures throughout the exchange mirror the guardedness of both characters, neither willing to say directly what they mean

Question 13

Level 4 Convincing, well-supported exploration: analyses the teapot as a symbol of memory, continuity and ritual, tracking its significance across the extract with precise, well-integrated quotation. **7-8**

Level 3 Clear exploration: explains the teapot's symbolic significance with relevant quotation. **5-6**

Level 2 Some exploration: makes a generally appropriate point about the teapot's importance with some supporting quotation. **3-4**

Level 1 Simple, limited exploration: notes that the teapot is mentioned, with little development. **1-2**

Indicative content:

- the teapot is specifically 'the one Nani always used', making it a physical link to a past that Mum is careful to preserve, suggesting respect and a wish to please
- its imperfection, the chip in the spout, suggests something old, used and imperfect that has nonetheless been kept and valued, mirroring the imperfect but enduring family relationship
- the teapot reappears at the moment tea is finally poured, marking a small ritual of hospitality that allows the three women to sit together without yet having to speak fully about the past
- the object survives across the 'eleven years' Nani has been away, making it a symbol of continuity set against the extract's wider theme of change and distance

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Question 14

Level 4 Convincing, critical response: sustained, perceptive analysis of how the past complicates the present relationships, with judicious quotation and confident terminology; contextual point about migration/separated families integrated fully and convincingly. **12-15**

Level 3 Clear, relevant response: explains how the past complicates family relationships through relevant quotation; makes a clear, appropriate contextual point. **8-11**

Level 2 Some, generic response: identifies relevant moments with some quotation; makes a generic or partly relevant contextual comment. **4-7**

Level 1 Simple, limited response: makes a simple, undeveloped point with little or no quotation; little or no contextual comment. **1-3**

Indicative content:

- the unresolved backstory, 'a girl who had once got on a plane instead of finishing university, and a mother who had not come to the airport to see her off', shows how a single past decision continues to shape present-day interactions twenty years later
- the narrator's phrase 'twenty years of silence that had somehow both healed and not healed at all' presents the past not as fixed history but as something still actively affecting the present, resisting a simple explanation
- small present-day exchanges (about the taxi, about the table) are shown to be loaded with old meaning, so ordinary conversation becomes a site where the past resurfaces without being directly named
- stories of migration and family separation remain relevant to contemporary readers because international travel, study and work regularly separate families across countries and generations, making this experience widely shared in modern Britain
- such stories allow readers to consider how personal choices intersect with family expectation and cultural change across generations, a tension that recurs across many different communities and time periods, giving the extract's specific family a wider resonance

Question 15

Level 4 Compelling, critical response: sustained, sophisticated engagement with the statement; judicious, precisely selected quotation including embedded quotation; perceptive analysis of language, form and structure with consistently precise subject terminology; contextual understanding woven fully into the argument. **16-20**

Level 3 Clear, well-structured response: sustained, clear engagement with the statement across the extract; well-chosen quotation; explains effects of language and structure with accurate subject terminology; relevant context clearly shown. **11-15**

Level 2 Some, generic response: attempts to engage with the statement with some relevant quotation; comments on language/structure with limited subject terminology; some awareness of context. **6-10**

Level 1 Simple, limited response: simple or narrative response with limited textual reference; simple or no comment on language/structure; little or no awareness of context. **1-5**

Indicative content:

- agree: the extract supports the statement, as the unchanged physical house and table are shown to be insufficient for home on their own, 'Same table ... Different family sitting at it', suggesting home depends on relationships, not bricks and furniture
- agree: Priya's final chair, facing 'neither the garden nor the door', shows that being physically present in a house does not guarantee a settled sense of belonging, reinforcing that home is about people and relationships, not location
- agree: the ritual of preparing tea in Nani's own teapot represents an active choice to make room for her, a small but deliberate act of welcome that enacts the statement's idea directly
- qualify: the specific, named setting (Marigold Close, the pebble dashed front, the net curtain) shows the writer does still root identity and memory in a particular physical place, suggesting place and people cannot be entirely separated
- qualify: Nani's own comment, 'Same table ... Different family sitting at it', could be read as showing she values the physical continuity of the house as much as the people, complicating a simple people-over-place reading
- context: modern British families are frequently spread across distance through migration, study and work, so this exploration of who is made room for, and how, speaks to a widely shared contemporary experience of reconstructing home after separation

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Question 16

Level 4 Compelling, critical evaluation: sustained, sophisticated evaluation of belonging and identity across the whole extract; judicious, precisely selected references including embedded quotation; perceptive analysis of language, form and structure with consistently precise subject terminology; contextual understanding of migration and generational change woven seamlessly into the argument.	**25-30**
Level 3 Critical, exploratory evaluation: exploratory, critical response with a clear line of argument sustained across the extract; judicious range of references; analyses effects of language, form and structure with precise subject terminology; contextual factors integrated fully where relevant.	**17-24**
Level 2 Detailed, well-structured evaluation: consistently clear, detailed evaluation of belonging and identity; well-chosen range of references; explains effects of language, form and structure with subject terminology used accurately; understanding of relevant context clearly shown.	**9-16**
Level 1 Simple or clear evaluation: simple or clear response with some relevant reference; some comment on language/structure with limited or accurate use of subject terminology; some or little awareness of context.	**1-8**

Indicative content:

- belonging and identity are presented as unresolved and actively negotiated rather than fixed: Priya's symbolic chair facing 'neither the garden nor the door' and her closing question about 'which family I was actually in' both resist a settled answer
- identity is presented as inherited but also chosen: Nani's comment about Priya's chin and ears roots identity in bloodline, while the pronunciation of Priya's name 'with the stress falling in the wrong place, in the right place' shows identity can hold more than one valid form at once
- methods: the writer uses a first-person retrospective narrator to filter events through Priya's careful, watchful perspective, allowing the reader to notice tensions the adult characters do not say aloud
- methods: dialogue is used sparingly and precisely, so that ordinary lines about taxis and tables carry disproportionate emotional weight, a technique that rewards close reading of subtext
- methods: structure withholds full explanation of the past until midway through the extract and refuses a neat resolution at the end, mirroring the theme's own refusal of easy answers
- evaluation: contemporary readers, particularly in a country shaped by ongoing migration and international mobility, are likely to find aspects of this story recognisable, such as generational disagreement, distance between family members, and the difficulty of returning to a relationship after long separation
- evaluation, counter-view: some readers might feel the extract's very specific cultural and family details limit universal relatability, though the underlying themes of family estrangement and reconciliation are arguably broad enough to transcend the specific setting
- evaluation: the extract's deliberately unresolved ending invites readers to supply their own experience of family reconciliation (or its absence), which is likely to increase rather than limit its relevance to a wide contemporary audience

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