

Language Paper 2 – Practice Exam Paper

Source A:

Source A is taken from *The Guardian* newspaper and is an article about the historical context of the film *The Greatest Showman*, based loosely on the life of P.T. Barnum, who curated a 'freakshow' circus.

Hugh Jackman's new film celebrates PT Barnum – but let's not airbrush history

The actor has painted the protagonist of *The Greatest Showman* as a cheerleader for outsiders, but the 19th-century impresario found fame by exploiting circus 'freaks'.

Everyone loves a good circus movie, and everyone loves Hugh Jackman. His forthcoming PT Barnum musical, *The Greatest Showman*, looks to be a timely celebration of outsidership and inclusivity, with its bearded women, tattooed men, little people and conjoined twins. "His belief was what makes you different makes you special," Jackman has said of Barnum. "You can be discriminated for that but if you own up to it and we start to embrace everybody then it can be what makes life special and fantastic."

The problem is, the real-life PT Barnum was not exactly a crusader for social justice. Like many pedlars of 19th-century "freakshows", Barnum was more interested in exploiting people than empowering them. He exhibited "Strange and savage tribes" along with exotic animals, usually consisting of bewildered indigenous people or fake ones in costumes (his "Circassian Beauties" were given fake Afro hairstyles using beer). He also exhibited African-Americans with birth defects, affirming their racial "inferiority", and one of his earliest "hits" was Joice Heth, a blind, partially paralysed slave who Barnum claimed was 161 years old (she was half that). When Heth died, Barnum held a public autopsy and charged spectators to watch. Something tells me we won't see Jackman doing that.

Unsurprisingly, Donald Trump has been frequently likened by political pundits to Barnum. A professional fibber with a penchant for loud rhetoric, fake news and racial prejudice? He doesn't play down the comparison.

Circuses and "freaks" have inspired some of cinema's greatest, strangest films: David Lynch's *The Elephant Man*; Jodorowsky's *Santa Sangre*; Alexei Balabanov's *Of Freaks and Men*. The best of them recognise that the sideshow is a distorted mirror of its audience; none more so than Tod Browning's magnificent *Freaks*, made in 1932 and cast with genuine "freaks". Many of them – like Johnny Eck, "The Half-Boy" and Prince Randian, "The Human Torso" – were former Barnum employees. Browning, an ex-circus performer, shocked audiences by portraying them as sympathetic humans rather than victims or monsters.

The real monster of the piece is the beautiful trapeze artist, who feigns love for a dwarf to get her hands on his inheritance, and is fatefully accepted into the freaks' unified community as "one of us".

If *The Greatest Showman* is a cheerleader for outsiders, and atoning for the sins of the sideshow, that can only be good, but let's not airbrush history. Barnum and his colleagues were the problem, not the solution. They created and perpetuated ethnic stereotypes and cordoned off a swath of humanity as "different". To really do Barnum's story justice, they would be better off making a horror movie.

Source B: *Source B is taken from P.T. Barnum's autobiography and discusses his discovery of 'Tom Thumb'. In 1842 Barnum discovered one of his most famous and profitable attractions, a diminutive child of five, named Charles Stratton. Barnum successfully persuaded the boy's mother to allow him to exhibit her son and brought him to New York. Barnum declared his attraction as being eleven year's old and gave him the name "Tom Thumb."*

I had heard of a remarkably small child in Bridgeport; and by my request my brother brought him to the hotel. He was the smallest child I ever saw that could walk alone. He was not two feet in height, and weighed less than sixteen pounds. He was a bright-eyed little fellow, with light hair and ruddy cheeks, was perfectly healthy, and as symmetrical as an Apollo. He was exceedingly bashful, but after some coaxing he was induced to converse with me, and he told me that he was the son of Sherwood E. Stratton, and that his own name was Charles S. Stratton. After seeing him and talking with him, I at once determined to secure his services from his parents and to exhibit him in public.

He was only five years old, and to exhibit a dwarf of that age might provoke the question, 'How do you know that he is a dwarf?' Some license might indeed be taken with the facts, but even with this advantage I really felt that the adventure was nothing more than an experiment, and I engaged him for the short term of four weeks at three dollars per week, all charges, including traveling and boarding of himself and mother, being at my expense.

They arrived in New York on Thanksgiving Day, December 8, 1842, and Mrs. Stratton was greatly astonished to find her son heralded in my Museum bills as GENERAL TOM THUMB, a dwarf of eleven years of age, just arrived from England!

This announcement contained two deceptions. I shall not attempt to justify them, but may be allowed to plead the circumstances in extenuation*. The boy was undoubtedly a dwarf, and I had the most reliable evidence that he had grown little, if any, since he was six months old; but had I announced him as only five years of age, it would have been impossible to excite the interest or awaken the curiosity of the public. The thing I aimed at was, to assure them that he was really a dwarf - and in this, at least, they were not deceived.

It was of no consequence, in reality, where he was born or where he came from, and if the announcement that he was a foreigner answered my purpose, the people had only themselves to blame if they did not get their money's worth when they visited the exhibition. I had observed. . . the American fancy for European exotics; and if the deception . . . has done anything toward checking our disgraceful preference for foreigners, I may readily be pardoned for the offense I here acknowledge.

***Extenuation** – justification

Section A: Reading

Question 1

Read again the first part of Source A from lines 1 to 15. Choose four statements below which are true.

- A. 'The Greatest Showman' is a musical
- B. PT Barnum fought for social justice
- C. Barnum's shows empowered people
- D. Barnum's show exhibited people
- E. Barnum's show exhibited animals
- F. Barnum's show included people with birth defects
- G. Barnum performed autopsies
- H. Donald Trump was friends with Barnum

[4 marks]

Question 2

You need to refer to Source A and Source B for this question.

The sources describe different people exhibited in Barnum's shows.

Use details from both sources to write a summary of the differences between the people described in each Source.

[8 marks]

Question 3

You now need to refer only to Source B from lines 1 to 12.

How does the writer use language to describe 'Tom Thumb' and Barnum's reaction to him?

[12 marks]

Question 4

For this question, you need to refer to the whole of Source A, together with the whole of Source B.

Compare how the writers convey their different attitudes to Barnum's circus and acts.

In your answer, you could:

- compare their different attitudes
- compare the methods the writers use to convey their different attitudes
- support your response with references to both texts.

[16 marks]

Section B: Writing

You are advised to spend about 45 minutes on this section. Write in full sentences. You are reminded of the need to plan your answer. You should leave enough time to check your work at the end.

'Everyone is different, and it is important to encourage people to feel comfortable in being themselves. We should aim to create a society in which differences are not only accepted but embraced'

Write an article for your school newspaper to explain your point of view on this topic.

(24 marks for content and organisation
16 marks for technical accuracy)

[40 marks]