**Prose Study Assessment Guidance**

**CANDIDATE A: HIGH BAND 5 RESPONSE**

**Explore how Forster and Jones present the relationship between Man and Nature in *Howard’s End* and *The Dig.***

**Looking at some extracts from this response, we can see how a very confident candidate meets high Band 5 criteria in all the AOs.**

**The Task**

This is quite a wide-ranging topic and some candidates might benefit from a qualifying adjective to narrow the focus a little, such as the ‘destructive’ or ‘restorative’ relationship between Man and Nature. However, this candidate is well served by the looser wording as it allows her to develop her own sophisticated and nuanced argument; as outlined in her excellent introduction, she will explore connections between the ways in which both writers demonstrate the complexity of this relationship and is clearly able to handle a multi-faceted approach. This once again underlines **the importance of careful task-setting** and ensuring that the wording of the title allows each candidate every chance to fulfil his or her individual potential.

The choice of texts also helps the candidate here, as both novels have sufficient literary heft and challenge to support sophisticated conceptual interpretations and detailed critical analysis. The novels are distinct enough in style, theme and context that the candidate can explore and develop important differences while focusing on a concern which is central to both in addressing the task.

1. **The Introduction: establishing a clear direction for the argument**

Both ‘Howard’s End’ and ‘The Dig’ explore the struggle between the forces of Man and Nature, a relationship which, as Forster and Jones reveal, is inescapably interconnected. In both texts, Man is initially seen as the dominant power, invading and exploring the weaker natural environment. However, the ‘progress’ Man envisages in *Howard’s End* and Man’s ‘intervention’ and destruction of Nature in *The Dig* is presented as being short-lived, since Nature’s fateful power of natural selection ultimately determines the outcome of both texts, beyond Man’s control, eventually establishing itself as the greater power. Crucially, Forster’s and Jones’ final presentation of Man and Nature contrasts; Forster suggests promise for the future, in which Man restores the traditional, interdependent relationship with Nature in a pastoral setting, whereas Jones’ outlook is more bleak, foreshadowing no reconciliation or co-operation, only loss and come-uppance for Man as Nature regains power.

This is a good example of how a **carefully worded introduction** can help the candidate make a confident start. The emphasis here is on **AO1** and **AO4**, giving a clear overview of the main argument and linking both texts to the task and each other from the outset. There is a keen awareness of the texts’ complexities and of the writers behind them, shaping their material to influence the reader and convey subtle meaning. A fundamental similarity between the texts is outlined first but then the candidate goes on to a highlight a key difference, suggesting she knows exactly where she is going in the essay and the direction of the argument is clear. In overview, connections between the texts are being used ***productively***, to forward the argument, and to ***illuminate,*** to shed light on each other.

There is no need yet to include textual support or detailed development of the points made by addressing **AO2** as we hope these will be fleshed out the main body. However, the confident focus on the authors hints at a secure literary appreciation at the heart of this response, that this is a candidate who will tackle ‘presentation’ head-on, and that the main thrust of the essay will be on ***analysing and evaluating*** ***how*** the writers’ conscious choices have conveyed their themes.

1. **First paragraph of main body: establishing AO2 as the cornerstone**

Initially, both Forster and Jones present Man as having supremacy over Nature; Forster presents industrial progress as the force which initially dominates the natural, rural environment. Throughout the early part of the novel, Forster ironically illustrates the persistence of urbanisation through the extended metaphor of the sea, describing the ‘grey tides of London’ and its ‘continual flux’ with ‘bricks and mortar rising and falling with the restlessness of the water in a fountain’. ‘Continual’ and ‘restlessness’ imply Man’s relentless force on Nature, with ‘continual flux’ and ‘tides’ possibly symbolising the rural to urban migration prevalent during the period, which had swollen Greater London’s population to over seven million people by 1911[[1]](#footnote-1), depleting rural areas. Forster’s use of sea-related imagery also relates to Britain’s naval power, which facilitated its global supremacy and colonial authority, further signifying the invasiveness of Man on his surroundings. Forster also presents the destructive power of Man over Nature through the increasing use of new technology such as motor-cars which replace the traditional, more natural possessions, including the pony at Howard’s End. In Mr Wilcox’s car, Margaret’s view of the scenery gets ‘congealed’ and ‘heaved and merged like porridge’, the glutinous simile implying the incompatibility of technology with the surrounding landscape, or even that technology blinds Man to the natural world.

As promised, the candidate uses AO2 as a springboard for the other AOs, focusing first on one text in some detail to develop the point outlined in the topic sentence, making sure that claims are well-supported with direct textual reference, before moving onto the other novel. The three apt quotations given as evidence of the extended sea metaphor ensure the claim is **not merely asserted.** This then makes the suggested connection with two contextual influences more convincing and shows that the **relationship between context and text is secure**, especially when linked with the tentative ‘*possibly’*, as a brief nod to **AO5**. **AO2** is to the fore, supported by **AO3**; the background detail about London’s population influx is specific and relevant, used creatively to enhance an interpretation of Forster’s language choices, thereby supporting a **literary appreciation**. Consideration of contextual influences and alternative readings arises out of **AO2**: the candidate **begins with the text** and stops to comment on the most important words and devices, **evaluating their effects** and explaining ***how*** they convey meaning.

Concise and precise expression, along with confident use of appropriate terminology, also demonstrates the candidate’s own ***flair*** with language, as in the succinct analysis of Forster’s ‘*glutinous simile implying the incompatibility of technology with the surrounding landscape’*.

1. **Engaging with other interpretations: AO5 integrated with AO2**

Cambridge author Rachel Haworth appropriately suggests that in *Howard’s End* Forster illustrates ‘a direct relation between urbanisation and the difficulties experienced in forming and sustaining human relationships’[[2]](#footnote-2), a view frequently reflected in Forster’s didactic commentary. For instance, Forster’s narrator describes motor cars making the ‘roads…more difficult to cross’ and that ‘human beings heard each other speak with more difficulty’ and ‘breathed less of the air, and saw less of the sky’. The word ‘human beings’ strips Man of any materialistic possessions or status, highlighting that Man is ultimately a product of nature; however, the image of breathing ‘less…air’ and seeing ‘less…sky’ generates contrast, implying man-made technology separates Man from Nature and the natural desire to communicate. More specifically, Forster’s metaphor or Henry Wilcox’s ‘fortress’ head similarly implies his Imperialistic, arrogant mind-set prevents him from making any sincere outward connections; ‘fortress; is suggestive of defence, as if he is trying to resist Nature’s influence. In relation to Nature’s powerlessness, Forster comments that ‘the binding force that [trees and meadows and mountains] once exercised on character must be entrusted to Love alone’, implying that ‘Love’ is the only natural element left in modern Man capable of ‘sustaining human relationships’. This idea ultimately provides the text’s hopeful ending, whereby through Helen and Leonard’s *love*-affair the future of Man and Nature’s relationship becomes more hopeful.

The candidate ***makes productive use*** of another reading of the text to move the argument on, demonstrating clearly how this critic’s overview has informed her own interpretation. She makes evident her understanding of the view in the way she develops and expands upon what the critic wrote, using it as a way to explore Forster’s language and prose technique. Her thorough knowledge of the text allows her to move confidently from close analysis of particular words or devices to an overview of the novel’s structure. This is evidence of an ***autonomous reader*** who can discuss other reader’s conceptual interpretations supported by close, well-informed reference to the text.

In a later extract, we can see just still further evidence of this ***mature discussion*** of other views when the candidate considers Jones’ presentation of man’s negative influence on nature in *The Dig* and has the ***confidence*** to take issue with one view in arguing a more nuanced case:

Jones additionally presents interference from ‘other people’ into rural life as a challenge to Man’s close relationship with Nature, similar to the disruption caused by the Wilcoxes’ ‘progress’ in Howard’s End. Jones details the intrusion of ‘paperwork…and form filling’ into Daniel’s farm; since the bureaucracy ‘confused’ and ‘crippled’ them, Jones suggests the intrusion complicates Daniel’s relationship with the animals, threatening his traditional ties with Nature. Daniel’s struggle for independence may reflect Wales’ struggle for legislative independence; currently most law is still subject to Westminster,[[3]](#footnote-3) with devolution in 1998 only enabling limited self-government.[[4]](#footnote-4) England’s political influence therefore illustrates an external power’s capability of causing complications, comparable to Man’s influence on Nature. Critic Jon Day accordingly suggests ‘the old rhythms … of agricultural life have given way to bureaucracy’.[[5]](#footnote-5) ‘Given way’, however, suggests Daniel’s connections with Nature have been completely severed, which seems unconvincing as Daniel continues to recognise ‘the sweetness of what he does’, suggesting Man’s instinctive ties to Nature still survive, despite ‘modernisation’. Jones extends the intrusion to an invasion by ‘other people’ on the landscape, with English agricultural bureaucracy imposing a ‘forced tidiness and management’ which Daniel resents; ‘tidiness’ reflects a clearly clinical and man-made control restricting Nature. Daniel also observes the Welsh land ‘taking on …an Englishness’, indicating a foreign manipulation and conversion which Nature cannot prevent, echoing the rich history of Anglo-Welsh wars between the fifth and fifteenth centuries which defined Wales as an invaded country.[[6]](#footnote-6) Interestingly, the sense of invasion and interference is also comparable to the Wilcoxes’ imperialism, whereby colonialism imposes ‘Englishness’ on ‘subordinate’ communities. Jones’ use of war-related imagery continues the theme of invasion; the landscape looks ‘battle shocked’ and ‘trodden over’ with ‘damaged’ ‘hedges’ emphasising Nature’s defeat in the conflict between the two powers.

The ability to interweave the assessment objectives so seamlessly is often a key indicator of high Band 5 achievement, especially when the candidate roots all claims and ideas so firmly in the text, as we see here. In the following extract, we see how a critical view linking *Howard’s End* to a contextual reading is developed by the candidate, who uses the idea to **return to consideration of the text**, rather than looking outwards to the period and overloading the point with too much extraneous contextual detail:

Critic Paul Delany labels Henry Wilcox as a ‘self-deceiving Social Darwinist, who speaks complacently of ‘the battle of life’,[[7]](#footnote-7) a true representation given Henry’s elitist attitude to the poor, disregarding the ‘Social Question’ Helen promotes. Social Darwinism emerged as a popular theory in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, extending Nature’s laws of natural selection to sociology[[8]](#footnote-8); Forster obviously embeds Social Darwinism in the Wilcoxes who believe ‘the poor are poor, and one’s sorry for them’, expressing the laissez-faire capitalism many Social Darwinists supported. Delany’s acknowledgement of Henry’s ‘self-[deceit]’ and ‘[complacency]’ accurately reflects the ultimate outcome for Henry, in which his self-assured life is finally realised to be nothing but ‘panic and emptiness’ in the closing chapters. Nonetheless, through the Wilcoxes’ association with the tough reality of Nature, Forster perhaps suggests that Imperialist Man is accepted, and needed, by Nature; Forster signifies this by the fact the Wilcoxes’ money had ironically saved Howard’s End in the past. Forster comments that the ‘Imperial’ was ‘another type whom Nature favours’, indicating that their ‘[destruction]’ is needed as part of life, a concept which is also reflected in The Dig.

We know just enough about Social Darwinism here to help us consider how this prevailing idea might have influenced Forster’s presentation of Henry Wilcox in particular: the focus is still on literary appreciation of *Howard’s End,* not on 19th Century social theory. The candidate has demonstrated mature and confident understanding of the relationship between text and context.

1. **Illuminating Connections: enhanced understanding achieved through viewing the texts in light of each other**

At the end of the text, Jones further illustrates Nature’s power over Man through the ability to reclaim the landscape. Daniel observes the ‘ground…beginning to burst with growth’ and ‘spears of grass’ coming up ‘against the clay’. The imagery of natural growth ‘[bursting]’ literally suggests Nature can overcome the ‘tidiness and management’, the words ‘spears’ and ‘against’ indicating a war against Man. ‘Compact nettle[s]’ are described to be rising up ‘every here and there’, foreshadowing a gradual invasion by Nature, demonstrating that Man’s work can only be temporary. Nature’s physical dominance in *Howard’s End* may **be less hopeful**, since although ‘Evie’s rookery’ is left in ‘remains’, London’s ‘red dust’ has not yet been erased from the horizon. Nature’s power continues to culminate until the end of The Dig when the Big Man’s power is explicitly reduced: instead of being ‘gruff’ and ‘feared’, the man is ‘stunned’ and ‘trapped against [a] wall’, resembling the badger in the badger baiting pit. This reversal of power arguably indicates an inevitable revenge of Nature on Man, illustrating that Nature’s power is superior in the long run.

In *Howard’s End,* the natural selection process is implicitly presented; it is Ruth Wilcox’s (the character most tied to Nature) will for a ‘spiritual heir’ to Howard’s End which is naturally ‘selected for’ and fulfilled, despite initial opposition from the materialistic-minded Henry and Charles Wilcox. Firstly, Forster foreshadows the demise of Man through presenting the Wilcox power as temporary and nothing but ‘panic and emptiness’, collaborating Haworth’s view that ‘physical strength and strength of character are explored as means of …deterioration’.[[9]](#footnote-9) Forster presents the Wilcoxes’ weakness from the start of the text through their ‘hay fever’ which causes them to ‘have to stop’ utilising the garden for ‘croquet’ ad ‘callisthenic exercises’, metaphorically illustrating Nature’s retaliation to being controlled and put to use for Man’s purposes.

The candidate links the texts with increasing authority and confidence as the argument develops. The use of **explicit and implied comparatives** indicates an enhanced understanding of the texts through simultaneous study and the textual support prevents any assertion so that the connections made are convincing. The use of **tentative language** when making a link also shows a mature appreciation of the possible ambiguity we would expect in texts of such quality.

Later in the text, Forster uses Leonard’s death, induced by Charles Wilcox, as the trigger to the ultimate downfall of Man. Since Forster comments that it was ‘against all reason that [Charles] should be punished’, it seems fateful and beyond the Wilcoxes’ power that he is ‘sentenced to three years’ imprisonment’, demonstrating Man’s lack of power and arguably a similar element of natural come-uppance to that of the Big Man in *The Dig.* Forster uses the ‘scandal’ surrounding Charles to finally diminish Henry Wilcox’s conceited authority; the ‘fortress’ image of superiority finally ‘[gives] way’, as if, metaphorically, he has been defeated by Nature’s power urging him to connect. .... Paul Delany comments that ‘Forster upholds the principle of inheritance, but according to poetic rather than formal justice’,[[10]](#footnote-10) reflecting Forster’s plan for Nature’s eventual triumph of ‘poetic’ justice over Man. Unlike in *The Dig,* Nature does not employ explicitly brutal means, but does influence the death of Ruth Wilcox and Leonard Bast. Ruth Wilcox’s death is comparable to Daniel’s wife since Forster implies a sense of Nature’s natural selection influence. The reader is also suddenly confronted with ‘The funeral was over’, making Mrs Wilcox’s death abrupt like that of Daniel’s wife, demonstrating the relative helplessness of Man over Nature’s decision over life and death. However, contrasting with Jones, Forster soon symbolically suggests hope for Ruth Wilcox, through ‘one of the church-yard elms’ being ‘[pollarded]’ at the funeral. Here, due to her association with Howard’s End’s ‘wych-elm’, the elm appears to symbolise Mrs Wilcox. Since pollarding stimulates new growth, Forster arguably foreshadows the future nature-affiliated generation which Ruth Wilcox ultimately fosters through bequeathing Howard’s End to Margaret.

1. **The Conclusion: summing up the argument**

It can therefore be seen that in both texts, although Man is initially more powerful over Nature, whether through ‘progress’ as in *Howard’s End* or brute force in *The Dig,* the underlying connections which draw the two forces closer are not permanently threatened. Whilst both Forster and Jones use these connections to foreshadow and facilitate Nature’s comeback, overcoming Man’s self-assured and destructive power, the two texts’ concluding presentation of Man and Nature’s relationship differ radically. Forster’s idyllic, pastoral answer to the text’s underlying question ‘Who shall inherit England?’ contrasts with Jones’ despondent, but perhaps more realistic outlook, which suggests that in reality Man and Nature’s relationship can never fully be harmonious.

The final paragraph is used to sum up the sophisticated, conceptual argument the candidate has developed in the main body of the essay. The final sentence shows impressive ***flair and creative engagement*** grounded in thorough knowledge and understanding of both novels and a mature appraisal of a fundamental difference between them. Reaching the end of the essay we are fully convinced by the candidate’s argument as the detailed textual support and analytical approach throughout have made a solid case.

Although we are examining here only extracts from the full response, it is obvious that the key descriptors for **Band 5 achievement** apply here: ***sophisticated; creative; confident; fully engaged; demonstrating flair; perceptive; productive; able to discuss with maturity and make illuminating connections; autonomous; independent.***

1. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)