**The following material is intended to support teachers in their marking and understanding of the expectations of the NEA task. You are encouraged to use it for departmental standardisation purposes. However, the material must not be shared with candidates, under any circumstance.**

**Component 4: Prose Study**

**Candidate A: High Band 5**

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

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.

Initially, 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. Contemporary Charles Masterman’s ‘The Condition of England’ (1909) closely echoes Forster’s concern that materialistic Man ‘separates [England] into two divergent parts’: the ‘hastily created’ urban city and the ‘rural England crumbling into ruin’[[2]](#footnote-2). Contextually, therefore, the contrast between the ‘amazing advance’ [[3]](#footnote-3) of the materialistic Man and ‘rural England’ was highly prevalent culturally, illustrating the significance of Man’s power over Nature and traditional rural life. Forster further presents materialistic Man, represented by the Wilcoxes, as able to overpower the ‘natural’ interaction between people, suggesting Man is no longer accountable or concerned with his natural origins, which strive to make people ‘connect’. 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’[[4]](#footnote-4), 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.

Whilst Forster creates a spatial divide between the ‘creeping’ urban London and the declining rural country, Jones contrasts the Big Man (a badger digger) and the sheep-farmer Daniel to foreground Man’s brutal influence over Nature. Jones’ structure of *The Dig* more explicitly presents Man as the initially dominant power than is portrayed in *Howard’s End*, with the ‘big man’ in the opening chapter shown to be making an attacked ‘sow badger’ look like road-kill. Jones’ visceral descriptions of the man ‘kick[ing] the head so it lay exposed’ creating a ‘mix of blood and milk’ stresses Man’s extreme and intentional violence, with the juxtaposition of ‘blood and milk’ contrasting Man’s desire for violence against Nature’s failed desire for life. Furthermore, the fact that the ‘badger’s teats were …swollen with milk’ metaphorically suggests that Man has the power to inhibit Nature’s role as a reproducer. It is therefore clear that Man’s power here is more obviously brutal than the gradually changing geographic supremacy in *Howard’s End*. According to the Badger Trust, 9,000 badgers are killed in badger baiting in the UK every year[[5]](#footnote-5), exemplifying Man’s cruelty as portrayed by Jones. The society states the going rate per badger captured is £500[[6]](#footnote-6), interestingly the same figure the Big Man collects for the ‘forty-pound badger’, highlighting that money incentivises brutality. During the badger-baiting scene, Jones extends the Big Man’s primitive brutality to the ‘gangness of…the group of men’ who had a ‘hungry cruelty’, ‘gang’ and ‘group’ demonstrating Man’s collective violence against the single victim of Nature, with ‘hungry’ indicating a more intentional desire to harm than the Wilcoxes’ comparatively civilised progress.

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,[[7]](#footnote-7) with devolution in 1998 only enabling limited self-government.[[8]](#footnote-8) 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’.[[9]](#footnote-9) ‘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.[[10]](#footnote-10) 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. Furthermore, Jones demonstrates the power of Man’s disruption through the removal of the ‘cast iron’ ‘shard’ which Daniel ‘mythologised as a child’, illustrating Man’s power to remove something so integral to the land. Jones uses the simile ‘tearing a bone from a socket’ to highlight the pain and ‘wrongness’ Man is able to inflict on Nature.

Despite the initial dominance of Man over Nature, both Forster and Jones suggest connections between the two forces throughout *Howard’s End* and *The Dig*, connections which gradually foreshadow the demise of Man’s power. In *Howard’s End*, the Wilcoxes’ ‘converted farm’, Howard’s End, is central to bridging the relationship between Man and Nature. In the first chapter, Helen writes: ‘the house is covered in a vine’ and has a ‘big wych-elm…leaning a little over [it]’, indicating its inextricable connection with Nature. ‘Covered’ and ‘leaning’ could suggest a sense of protection and permanence, or, alternatively, Nature’s dominance over the house. However, Helen’s reference to the ‘boundary between garden and meadow’ metaphorically indicates a Man-induced control in the scene. Due to her affiliation with Howard’s End, Ruth Wilcox is also used to highlight the connection between Man and Nature. In the first chapter, she is seen ‘smelling hay and looking at flowers’ and ‘trailing noiselessly’ in the garden, clearly comfortable and immersed in Nature. The fact that she ‘walked off the lawn to the meadow’ symbolically suggests she is able to break the man-induced ‘boundary’ on Nature; through her actions, Forster seemingly foreshadows the transition made during the text, whereby Man eventually moves to being affiliated with Nature. In the final scene, ‘the big meadow’ is cut, and Helen and Margaret ‘sit…where the lawn merged into the field’; here ‘merged’ suggests that the ‘boundary’ has been overcome. Forster further presents Man and Nature as relatable through the Wilcoxes’ ‘survival of the fittest’ mentality, ironically so, since this natural selection mechanism ultimately triggers their fall from power. Critic Paul Delany labels Henry Wilcox as a ‘self-deceiving Social Darwinist, who speaks complacently of ‘the battle of life’,[[11]](#footnote-11) 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[[12]](#footnote-12); 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.*

Jones likewise presents connections between Man and Nature throughout *The Dig*. Ironically, despite the Big Man’s ‘unflinching savagery’[[13]](#footnote-13), he has an ‘intimate relationship with his dogs and the countryside he maps by setts’, as described by critic Patrick Barkham[[14]](#footnote-14), a view supported through the Big Man’s desire to create a ‘breed of very sought after and envied dogs’, linking him with Nature’s role as a reproducer in a clearly ‘intimate relationship’. Furthermore, by referring to him impersonally as the ‘Big Man’, Jones is able to dissociate him from the rest of humanity, illustrating he is more akin to a primitive existence. Jones generates a sense of connection with nature for both the Big Man and Daniel through his language; Barkham reviews *The Dig* as a ‘sensuous depiction of the connections’ between Man and Nature.[[15]](#footnote-15) Jones’ uncensored writing creates a mood of realistic intimacy between the characters and their surroundings, from viscerally detailing the Beulah’s ‘wet sack of birth’ and ‘vital fluid’ to the ‘feminine curves of the hills’. Jones’ choice to write in English was to ‘avoid the over-wrought, emotional prose’ and ‘verbal flamboyance’ of Welsh writing[[16]](#footnote-16), conveying his desire to use language economically in order to present the realities of rural life. In contrast, Forster’s style appears elaborate and excessive; however, this enables his more didactic approach, commenting on the ‘condition of England’ throughout. Unconventionally, Jones often intermittently omits speech marks, hence making the dialogue inseparable from the setting, allowing a closer relationship with Nature, whereas *Howard’s End’s* format remains traditional: Forster had not embraced the Modernist movement unlike other contemporaries in the Bloomsbury group, such as Woolf.[[17]](#footnote-17) Jones’ frequent attention to the senses further reflects a raw relationship with Nature; Daniel ‘knew the mammalian power’ of his wife’s ‘essential smell’, and his ‘mind felt round his land’. Whilst Daniel’s role as a sheep farmer could be to ‘improve the return on the farm’, seemingly distancing Daniel from Nature due to financial priorities, Jones yet indicates Daniel’s relationship with Nature is of greater emotional and physical concern. Jones even demonstrates that Daniel ignores objective and financial common-sense in believing that ‘even the weakest could make it’, exemplified when he sentimentally ‘husbanded’ a weak ‘black lamb’. To Daniel, the lamb’s anatomy is an ‘understood geography, familiar and mammal’, the word ‘mammal’ emphasising the parallel between Man and other animals in Nature, with ‘understood’ evoking a sense of integral knowledge, demonstrating Daniel’s mind is connected with Nature on an ‘ancient’ level. Sheep were among the first animals to be domesticated in history, around 8000 BC[[18]](#footnote-18), and in Wales sheep husbandry existed before the Roman conquest, reflecting the ‘far back’ ‘instinct’ Jones presents[[19]](#footnote-19). Daniel therefore appears complicit with Forster’s image of the old agricultural Man, in keeping with Nature unlike the Imperialist. Daniel’s ‘instincts’ extend to his relationship with his surrounding environment, resenting the damage and ‘management’ done by ‘other people’, particularly the ‘removal’ of the ‘shard’ which he ‘[disagrees]’ with ‘emotionally’, recognising a ‘wrongness and a loss to it being out of the ground’. Jon Day suggests that ‘Daniel feels no proprietorship over the farm on which he grew up, merely a deep-rooted and passive sense of belonging’. [[20]](#footnote-20) This view highlights the parallel between Daniel and Ruth Wilcox concerning their bond with their property, which is deeper than the legal sense of ‘proprietorship’ exploited by Henry and Charles Wilcox. It can therefore be seen that in both texts, there are links which draw Man closer to Nature.

As the connections between Man and Nature develop in both Howard’s End and *The Dig*, Nature eventually gains supremacy over Man, primarily through its method of ‘survival of the fittest’. Although the method is employed differently in both texts, Man experiences a come-uppance comparable to losing to a fitter power in both. In *The Dig*, Jones demonstrates that Nature exercises a cruel and destructive influence, a more explicit form of natural selection than in *Howard’s End.* Jones first presents Nature’s dominance over Man when Daniel’s wife is killed when a ‘horse kicked her’. Since Jones presents Daniel’s wife as being ‘smaller’ like a ‘child’ and needing ‘rest’, it is inferred that she is relatively weak. Her weak nature therefore makes her death appear to be caused by the natural selection programming of Nature, demonstrating Nature’s brutal power over Man’s existence according to the survival of the fittest. The death of Daniel’s wife ironically links to the killing of the sow badger, as it is revealed that she was ‘pregnant’, like the sow badger ‘swollen with milk’; Jones uses this parallel to illustrate that Nature has the same ability to prevent reproduction, with Man presented as the helpless power. The destructive power of Man is again mirrored in Nature more explicitly when Daniel tries to deliver a still-born lamb, which he finds to be severely ‘malformed’. The occurrence was something ‘he did not recognise and neither did the ewe’, ironically emphasising how it was unnatural and wrong, foregrounding Nature’s ability to be just as destructive as the Big Man. Reviewer Evie Wyld argues ‘the violence is never gratuitous; it remains in service to the characters’[[21]](#footnote-21), a view which does not accurately depict Jones’ presentation of Nature’s violence, which is overwhelmingly damaging, especially given Daniel’s ‘massive devastation’ at his wife’s death. Whilst Jones does not present the long-term consequences of Nature’s violence, the Big Man in contrast clearly profits from the violence he inflicts, supporting Wyld’s view. 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’.[[22]](#footnote-22) 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. Furthermore, Forster questions: ‘but what was the quality of the men born?’ reflecting the prevalent social concern regarding Man’s physical degeneration. In 1899, one third of all men enlisted for the Boer War were rejected on medical grounds,[[23]](#footnote-23) highlighting the deterioration of Man and foreshadowing his inability to maintain his Imperialistic ambitions. 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. Along with the demise of Man’s masculine power, Forster presents a sense of Natural will which acts through fate and ‘survival of the fittest’; it is Mrs Wilcox’s will which eventually survives, and not the Imperialist Wilcoxes. Paul Delany comments that ‘Forster upholds the principle of inheritance, but according to poetic rather than formal justice’,[[24]](#footnote-24) 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. In turn, the fact that Leonard died of ‘natural causes’ from ‘heart disease’ indicates that his physical weaknesses, caused by life in the city, were selected against by Nature, for it is the level-headed Margaret, the new Mrs Wilcox, (and ultimately the classless baby of Helen and Leonard) whom Nature chooses to inherit Howard’s End and the future of England. Clearly, this illustrates the power of Nature over the seemingly strong but temporary power of Man, with Helen’s closing words ‘It’ll be such a crop of hay as never!’ hopeful of a future in harmony with Nature.

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.

WORD COUNT: 3569



1. http://www.20thcenturylondon.org.uk/timeline/1910-1919 [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. MASTERMAN, C.F.G.: *The Condition of England*, (1909) Faber and Faber [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. MASTERMAN, C.F.G.: *The Condition of England*, (1909) Faber and Faber [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. http://www.english.cam.ac.uk/cambridgeauthors/class-and-culture-in-howards-end/ [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. http://www.badger.org.uk/crime-and-the-law [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. http://www.badger-watch.co.uk [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. http://www.gov.wales [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. http://www.assembly.wales/en/abthome/role-of-assembly:how-it-works [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. http://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/books/fictionreviews/TheDig-by-Cynan-Jones-review-html [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. http://www.gov.wales [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. *EM Forster: Contemporary Critical Essays,* (1993), Palgrave Macmillan [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. DICKENS, Peter: *Social Darwinism: Linking Evolution Thought to Social Theory*, (2000), OUP [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. Melissa Harrison http://www.ft.com/cms [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. https://www.theguardian.com/books/2014/jan/15/dig-cynan-jones-review-patrick-barkham [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. https://www.theguardian.com/books/2014/jan/15/dig-cynan-jones-review-patrick-barkham [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. https://www.newwelshreview.com [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. http://www.online-literature.com/periods/bloomsbury.php [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. <http://www.historyworld.net/wrldhis/PlainText>Histories.asp [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. BELL, Simon and Gemma. *Introduction and History of Sheep Farming in the UK* (2001) [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. http://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/books/fictionreviews/10563255/The-Dig-by-Cynan-Jones-review-html [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. http://www.nytimes.com/2015/05/17/books/review/the-dig-by-cynan-jones.html [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
22. http://www.english.cam.ac.uk/cambridgeauthors/class-and-culture-in-howard’s-end/ [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
23. <http://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/intermediate2/history/cradletothe>grave/liberalreforms/revision/3 [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
24. *E.M. Forster: Contemporary Critical Essays, (1995*), Palgrave Macmillan [↑](#footnote-ref-24)