Introduction

This is a complete pack to help students prepare for the synoptic paper. It models one of the formats used in previous examinations. It consists of:

- a pre-release pack based on an extract of Virginia Woolf’s *Mrs Dalloway* and three pieces of secondary material
- a question paper involving the comparison of two short poems about London with the *Mrs Dalloway* extract
- a series of additional tasks designed for students to work on in class to develop their critical thinking about secondary sources.

Due to copyright issues, teachers will need to access some of the items in the pack separately, but links are provided to sources of these.
Pre-release material

- You are permitted to make brief annotations on the pre-release material. Such annotation should amount to no more than cross references and/or the glossing of individual words or phrases. Highlighting and underlining are permitted.

- You are not permitted to bring any additional written material with you into the examination.

- Your teacher is not permitted to discuss the pre-release material with you before the examination.

You must bring this material with you to the examination.
Item 1
The opening of Mrs Dalloway by Virginia Woolf, from “Mrs Dalloway said she would
buy the flowers herself” to “She stood for a moment, watching the omnibuses in
Piccadilly”.

Full e-text available for free download at

Item 2
The entries from A Writer’s Diary by Virginia Woolf for the dates 30 August 1923,
19 June 1923 and 15 October 1923. These are available at
http://www.filmeducation.org/secondary/TheHours/thehours-4.pdf
The title of Mrs Dalloway was originally ‘The Hours’.

Item 3
Some notes about Virginia Woolf and Mrs Dalloway by Michael Cunningham. This
document was available on the internet when the film version of his novel The Hours
was being promoted. It is no longer to be found. This is a slightly edited version.

When Woolf wrote MRS. DALLOWAY, she was living with her husband Leonard in the
suburbs of London. She was prone to unpredictable fits of the blackest imaginable
depression, at a time when the standard treatment was the pulling of teeth.

About all anyone could tell about her depressions was that excitement seemed to bring them
on. She and Leonard agreed that a suburb was appropriately devoid of excitement. By the
time she wrote MRS.DALLOWAY, they had lived in Richmond for almost eight years, and she
was beginning to believe that death from madness brought on by over-stimulation was
preferable to death from boredom. She was determined to move back to London, even if it
meant risking losing her mind.

Leonard feared for her health, her sanity, her life. Eventually, however, they returned to the
city. Virginia did, in fact, suffer more frequent and severe bouts of depression in London, but
she also entered her most productive period.

One of her depressions descended on her as the world prepared to fight World War II, and
the sense of everything falling apart was too much for her. While she and Leonard were at
their country house, she drowned herself.

She insisted on going into London, into what she considered the heart of life, knowing what it
would probably do to her. It fed her art, it made her as intensely happy as it did anything else.
She ultimately chose death, but she first chose life, and was willing to suffer the
consequences.
Item 4

Read ‘Some Attributes of Modernist Literature’ by Professor John Lye, fully and freely available from [http://www.brocku.ca/english/courses/2F55/modernism.html](http://www.brocku.ca/english/courses/2F55/modernism.html). (We are unable to reproduce the full article for reasons of copyright.)

Pay particular attention to the following headings. You may wish to make notes in the box below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Perspectivism</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Impressionism</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- A re-structuring of literature and the experience of reality it re-presents
- The (re)presentation of inner (psychological) reality
- The use of interior or symbolic landscape
- Time is moved into the interior as well
- The appearance of various typical themes
Exam material

1. Read the two previously unseen poems, ‘London’ and ‘Upon Westminster Bridge’. Compare the ways in which the two poets in their poems, and the novelist Virginia Woolf in the given extract from her novel *Mrs Dalloway*, present London.

2. Look again at item 2 in the pre-release material. To what extent would you agree with the critical assessments Virginia Woolf makes of her novel?

3. Michael Cunningham looks at some biographical issues related to the writing of *Mrs Dalloway*. Professor John Lye presents some of the significant features of modernist literature. To what extent do you find these two extracts useful when you are reading the text?

4. Comment on some other contexts and/or approaches to reading novels which help you to find meanings in them.
‘Upon Westminster Bridge’ was written by William Wordsworth. He was born in 1770 and the collection from which this poem was taken was published in 1807. A copy of the poem can be accessed here http://www.bartleby.com/101/520.html.

Upon Westminster Bridge  
Sept. 3, 1802

Earth has not anything to show more fair:  
Dull would he be of soul who could pass by  
A sight so touching in its majesty:  
This City now doth like a garment wear

The beauty of the morning: silent, bare,  
Ships, towers, domes, theatres, and temples lie  
Open unto the fields, and to the sky,  
All bright and glittering in the smokeless air.

Never did the sun more beautifully steep  
In his first splendour valley, rock, or hill;  
Ne’er saw I, never felt, a calm so deep!

The river glideth at his own sweet will:  
Dear God! the very houses seem asleep;  
And all that mighty heart is lying still!

‘London’ was written by William Blake. He was born in 1757 and the collection from which this poem is taken was published in 1794. A copy of this poem can be accessed here: http://rpo.library.utoronto.ca/poem/184.html.

London

I wander thro’ each charter’d street,  
Near where the charter’d Thames does flow,  
And mark in every face I meet  
Marks of weakness, marks of woe.

In every cry of every Man,  
In every Infant’s cry of fear,  
In every voice, in every ban,  
The mind-forg’d manacles I hear.

How the Chimney-sweeper’s cry  
Every black’ning Church appals;  
And the hapless soldier’s sigh  
Runs in blood down Palace walls.

But most thro’ midnight streets I hear  
How the youthful Harlot’s curse  
Blasts the new born Infant’s tear,  
And blights with plagues the Marriage hearse.
Additional critical thinking tasks

Task 1

Read Item 3, ‘Some notes about Virginia Woolf and Mrs Dalloway’ by Michael Cunningham.

Below is a 100 word summary of the key arguments in this text. Sort them out into the correct logical order – this is not necessarily the order in which the points appear in the original text. Note this order in the boxes below, e.g. 1=C.

<p>| | | | | | | | | | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>London was exciting.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>But she was also enormously creative in this period of her life.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>But her art was the greater for the risks she was prepared to take.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>So for the sake of her health, she and her husband moved to the suburbs.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td>So she persuaded her husband that they should move back to central London.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>She did kill herself eventually.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G</td>
<td>Virginia Woolf suffered from severe depression at a time when this was not well understood.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H</td>
<td>Consequently, she suffered more frequent and severe bouts of depression.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>However, she was bored to death there.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J</td>
<td>This was brought on by excitement.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Now consider how Cunningham’s argument informs your reading of the extract from Mrs Dalloway. Consider its relationship both to the ideas raised about the individual, society, and London, and to Virginia Woolf’s choices of literary technique. Make detailed notes of your ideas.
**Task 2**

Read Item 4, ‘Some Attributes of Modernist Literature’ by Professor John Lye. Consider what evidence there is in the extract from *Mrs Dalloway* to support each of the attributes identified in this item. Make notes in the table, expanding the rows as required.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Perspectivism</strong></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The locating of meaning from the viewpoint of the individual.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The use of narrators located within the action, experiencing it from a personal, particular perspective.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The use of many voices, contrasts and contestations of perspective.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Impressionism</strong></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Emphasis on the process of perception and knowing.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The use of devices to present more closely the texture or process or structure of knowing and perceiving.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Re-structuring of literature and the experience of reality it represents</strong></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Experience presented as layered, allusive and discontinuous, not cause and effect, sequential, developmental.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The use of fragmentation and juxtaposition, motif, symbol, allusion.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>The (re)presentation of inner (psychological) reality</strong></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Including the ‘flow’ of experience, through devices such as stream of consciousness.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The use of interior or symbolic landscape

The world is moved ‘inside’, structured symbolically or metaphorically.

Time is moved into the interior as well

Time becomes psychological time or symbolic time, not the ‘historical’ or railway time of realism.

Time moves backwards and forwards, with events of different times juxtaposed.

The appearance of various typical themes

E.g. question of the reality of experience itself; the search for a ground of meaning in a world without God; the critique of the traditional values of the culture; the loss of meaning and hope in the modern world and an exploration of how this loss may be faced.

Now consider how Professor Lye’s analysis informs your reading of the extract from *Mrs Dalloway*. Consider its relationship both to the ideas raised about the individual, society, and London, and to Virginia Woolf’s choices of literary technique. Make detailed notes of your ideas.
Task 3

Re-read items 3 & 4 and your notes produced in response to them. Then consider the following question:

*To what extent do you find these two extracts useful when you are reading the text?*

Note your points in the table below, making sure you comment both on what you found useful/unhelpful and why. Use the first row to evaluate Item 3, and the second row to evaluate Item 4.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Very useful</th>
<th>Quite useful</th>
<th>Quite unhelpful</th>
<th>Very unhelpful</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Now write a paragraph or two summarising your answer to the question.
Task 4

Consider the final question: what other contexts and/or approaches to reading novels have helped you to develop your understanding of meanings?

Note your points in the table below. You do not have to cover all of the contexts – just choose those which you have used in your reading of novels. You can draw on novels you have read for GCSE, AS, A2, and in your own private reading where you have found contextual material helpful.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of context or approach to reading novels</th>
<th>Novels you have read where this context or approach helped</th>
<th>How it helped the development of your understanding of meanings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The context of period or era, including social, historical, political and cultural processes.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The context of the writer’s biography and/or milieu.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The context of the work in terms of other works of literature, including works by the same author.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The different contexts for a work established by its critical reception over time.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The context of a passage in terms of the work from which it is taken, a part-to-whole context.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The literary context, including issues of genre and period-specific styles.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The language context, including relevant and significant stylistic developments.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>