



How Many Miles to Babylon
English Past Exam Questions
Ordinary Level

2013

Paper 2 – Section 1 – Question D

D HOW MANY MILES TO BABYLON? – Jennifer Johnston

Answer **all** of the questions.

1. (a) Describe one horrible experience that Alec endures in the war-zone. (10)
- (b) Why do you think Major Glendinning dislikes Alec?
Support your answer with reference to the novel. (10)
2. Give one reason why you did or did not enjoy studying Jennifer Johnston's novel, *How Many Miles to Babylon?*. Support your answer with reference to the novel. (10)
3. Answer **ONE** of the following: [Each part carries 30 marks]
 - (i) 'Alec's wealthy background does not save him from unhappiness.'
Do you agree with the above statement? Give reasons for your answer, based on your knowledge of the text.

OR

- (ii) Write a piece about the friendship between Alec and Jerry, explaining why you think this friendship is so important in the novel. Support your answer with reference to the text.

OR

- (iii) Imagine you are a soldier in Alec and Jerry's regiment. Write a letter home in which you give a brief account of what happened to both Alec and Jerry at the end of the story. Your letter should include your views on what happened to each character. Your response should be based on your knowledge of the novel.

2012

Paper 2 – Section 1 – Question F

F HOW MANY MILES TO BABYLON? – Jennifer Johnston

Answer **all** of the questions.

1. (a) Alec's mother tells him that Fredrick Moore might not be his father. Describe the effect this news has on Alec. (10)
- (b) In your opinion, why does Jerry decide to join the British Army? Support your answer with reference to the text. (10)
2. Explain what you find most interesting about Major Glendinning. (10)

3. Answer **ONE** of the following: [Each part carries 30 marks]

- (i) 'Alicia Moore is a difficult character to like.'

Do you agree with this statement? Base your answer on your knowledge of the novel.

OR

- (ii) You have been asked to give a talk to your class on the following topic: 'The Ireland we read about in Jennifer Johnston's novel, *How Many Miles to Babylon*, is not at all like the Ireland of today.' Write the text of the talk you would give. You are free to agree or disagree with the statement. Your answer should be based on your knowledge of the novel.

OR

- (iii) Which one of following statements do you think best describes Jennifer Johnston's novel, *How Many Miles to Babylon*?

- It is a story about war.
- It is a story about social class.
- It is a story about relationships.

Explain your answer with reference to the text.

2011

Paper 2 – Section 1 – Question D

D HOW MANY MILES TO BABYLON? - Jennifer Johnston

Answer **all** of the questions.

1. (a) Describe an occasion, in the early part of the novel, which reveals the close friendship between Alec and Jerry. (10)
- (b) Do you think that the relationship between Alec and his mother was good or bad? Give one reason for your answer. (10)
2. What is your opinion of Frederick Moore, Alec's father? Explain your answer. (10)
3. Answer **ONE** of the following: [Each part carries 30 marks]
 - (i) 'During the course of the novel Alec learns many bitter lessons: about people, social position, duty, friendship, etc.'
Do you agree with this statement? Give reasons for your answer based on your reading of the novel.

OR

- (ii) Write an article about Jennifer Johnston's *How Many Miles to Babylon?* for your school magazine in which you consider whether the novel is relevant to young people today.

OR

- (iii) Imagine you are Jerry and you have been condemned to death. Write a final letter to be sent to your mother.
You might write about your experiences in France, memories of your youth in Ireland, your friendship with Alec, your search for your father, your regrets, etc.

2008

Paper 2 – Section 1 – Question D

C HOW MANY MILES TO BABYLON? - Jennifer Johnston

Answer **all** of the questions.

1.
 - (a) Alec admits that he lacked ‘team spirit’.
Do you think that he would have been a more successful person if he had been sent to school? Explain your answer. (10)
 - (b) Describe what happened on the last evening/night before Alec and Jerry joined the army. (10)
2. Describe a pleasant **or** a disturbing event in the novel and explain why you found it so. (10)
3. Answer **ONE** of the following: [Each part carries 30 marks]
 - (i) Major Glendinning has been asked to write a report recording his opinion of Alec Moore after Alec has been executed.
Write that report.

OR
 - (ii) “*How Many Miles to Babylon?* is a great read.”
Write an article for a magazine, in which you support or oppose the above view of the novel.

OR
 - (iii) Imagine that you are **either** Alec **or** Jerry. Write the letter that you would send to **either** your mother **or** father describing your war experience.

2006

Paper 2 – Section 1 – Question D

B HOW MANY MILES TO BABYLON? – Jennifer Johnston

Answer **all** of the questions.

1. (a) Describe what life is like for Alec living at home with his mother and father. Support your views with reference to the novel. (10)
- (b) *“We had great times.”*
What, in your view, are the great times Alec and Jerry had together? Explain your answer. (10)

B (Continued)

2. Do you understand why Alec shot Jerry? Explain your answer. (10)
3. Answer **ONE** of the following: [Each part carries 30 marks]
 - (i) Imagine that Alicia, Alec’s mother, kept a diary. Write the diary entry she might have written on the day Alec went away to enlist in the army.

OR

- (ii) In the beginning of the novel, Alec says –

“I love no living person.”

From your reading of the novel, do you think that this is true?
Explain your answer with reference to the text.

OR

- (iii) *“It is every young man’s duty to fight for his country.”*

Based on your reading of the novel, write out the speech that you would make in response to this statement.