

# Engelsk A

Studentereksamen

Gammel ordning

2. delprøve

kl. 9.00 - 14.00

Torsdag den 31. maj 2018 kl. 9.00 - 14.00

#### Answer either A or B

## A – Fiction

Write an analytical essay (900-1200 words) in which you analyse and interpret Samuel Wilkes' short story "Self Defense".

Part of your essay must focus on the narrative technique and on the relationship between Daniel and the narrator.

#### **Text**

Samuel Wilkes, "Self Defense", 2014...... page 2

## B – Non-fiction

Write an analytical essay (900-1200 words) in which you analyse and comment on David Joy's essay "Digging in the Trash".

Part of your essay must focus on how the writer uses personal experiences and on the themes explored in the text.

#### **Text**

David Joy, "Digging in the Trash", 2017..... page 7

Teksternes ortografi og tegnsætning følger forlæggene. Trykfejl er dog rettet. Opsætningen følger ikke nødvendigvis forlæggene. Dog følges forlægget nøje, hvor opsætningen på den ene eller anden måde indgår i opgaven.

### A – Fiction

Samuel Wilkes is an American writer who lives in Alabama, where many of his stories take place.

#### Samuel Wilkes

## Self Defense

We shot out of Nashville shortly after midnight, pushing the limits of a Camaro owned by Daniel's buddy, Stuart. He knew we were taking his car, but would later deny it when questioned. Daniel and I set out on I-65 heading south through Alabama towards the Gulf of Mexico. This was our trip to start anew – new life, new ways, no chains, and no obligations. The road was ours, just two headlights rolling down the empty highway.

Thirty minutes in I started singing "Me and Bobby McGee." It fit our situation too damn perfectly. Daniel shot me an annoyed look though, so I casually faded out. I never knew how he would react to certain things. At first I thought he might join in the chorus, as he was known to do sometimes, but so far he remained oddly silent. I could tell he was thinking about our future. I could tell he was thinking about a lot of things. Years of prison straight into an unsettled freedom can do a number on the senses. Even when the leash is gone it's hard not to feel as if it's still there. Near the Alabama state line, he finally spoke up:

"What's the first thing you want? Beer or sex?"

I was taken off guard and not exactly sure what he was getting at with regard to sex, but quickly responded nonetheless, "Beer."

Daniel agreed, so we stopped at the next available twenty-four hour gas station. It was the only store open at the exit. Two parking lot lights flickered, all the others were dead. Daniel liked the looks of the situation.

- "You want any particular kind?"
  - "No, as long as it's cold," I said casually.
  - "Stay here," he said, tapping a wink in the dark.

I never saw the clerk, but I did notice one other customer in the store roaming around. I wondered if Daniel spoke to him or just went about his business. He handled situations 25 so well. Much better than me.

As he returned with the beer the flickering lights created a strobe effect. He appeared to walk in slow motion. I felt like I was watching a Tarantino<sup>2</sup> film, with a bass drum beating in sync to his every cool step. He rode the rhythm naturally. He controlled everything. And that was fine. I surrendered to his control.

As he opened the Camaro the frigid air hit my face. He handed me the Budweiser and we returned gliding down I-65.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> "Me and Bobby McGee": a country song

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> Quentin Tarantino: (b. 1963) American film director

"Cheers to a new start without chains," I toasted, holding up my can.

"To opening new doors," Daniel said, taking a swig.

I could see a flash of his sinister smile and thin brown eyes as we passed under an interstate light. We sucked down three beers each and started feeling loose for the first time in years. Stuart's radio didn't work, so silence rode in the car with us. I didn't like to initiate conversation unless I knew Daniel was in the mood to talk. Over the years we had talked about nearly everything under the sun; we no longer had need for words. So near the Athens¹ exit I tried another round of "Me and Bobby McGee." This time Daniel winked his right eye and laughed. This time I had approval.

I've always considered myself to be a heterosexual male. But strange things happen when you're confined with another person for years. Bonds form that one would ordinarily not think plausible. It's hard to put in words, but it was there. Daniel always knew I was his; he had picked me and stood up for me. I could honestly say I loved the man. But I'd never actually said it out loud. I wish I would've told him that night.

"So what now, partner? We got our beers."

Daniel smiled and rubbed his black stubble, "Let's see, I know there's a dirt hole of a strip club in Decatur where we might round up some pussy."

"Now you're talking!" I said enthusiastically to hide any sign of disappointment.

Shortly after 2:00 a.m. we pulled up to the Green Duck. A neon leg kicked above our heads, waving us into the hole. Daniel winked and finished off his beer. I followed suit. He then reached across my lap to the glove box. I watched as he pulled out an envelope fat with cash.

"Stuart left it for us," he said.

"How much?"

"Enough," he smiled, fanning the bills.

Inside, three men sat in clouds of smoke as the dancers trounced around the stage like old mules. Even though I hadn't been with a woman in years, I wasn't too excited after seeing this lot. Daniel didn't hesitate. He immediately made friends with a bartender and started dropping hints for action with one of the busty girls. Johnny Cash's<sup>2</sup> "Ring of Fire" was playing. I thought that to be an odd song for a pole dance, but then again they didn't seem to care about much at the ol' Duck. Before I could finish my first whiskey, Daniel and two women in thongs floated my way.

"Norman, meet Twinkle," he said, grinning wide.

"Hello," I said, suddenly nervous.

Twinkle was strictly business and lacked any fake pleasantries. I didn't mind, I was ready to get it over with.

I watched my pale hand slide down her indifferent shoulder. But I couldn't feel her. It was as if I was watching a porno starring myself; a mere outside observer. [...]

Twinkle was confident in her job and quickly took control of the process. I could feel

<sup>1</sup> a town in Alabama

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> Johnny Cash: (1932-2003) American musician

her now, but I remained detached in some way. I wondered if Daniel was having the same awkward experience. But I should've known that he wasn't. I should've known he was dominating the situation. To know Daniel, one must understand that he was a man of extremes. The type of guy that smoked his cigarettes well past the filter line every time, crushing the cotton with his thick fingers. [...]

I finished quickly and thanked Twinkle for her patience; a little joke that I hoped would churn up a smile, but didn't. I returned to the bar and sipped on a whiskey. Now they were playing Tupac's<sup>1</sup> "2 of Amerikaz Most Wanted," which I thought was more fitting. My mind gradually drifted into another realm until Daniel came out fifteen minutes later. His face looked new; his strut looked new. [...] In that moment Daniel sat on top of the world.

Soon as we were back in the Camaro he spilled all the foul sexual details. I couldn't care less and he obviously couldn't care less about my awkward experience, but I acted interested anyway. I couldn't bring him down if I tried. Well, until we reached Cullman.

85 As I read the green mile-marker sign for that goddamn city, Daniel spoke up with a different tone to his voice, breaking a ten minute silence.

"Norman, afraid we got us a problem."

I rose from the headrest, "What do you mean?" Several scenarios ran through my mind in that third of a second.

90 "Almost out of gas."

"And?" I said as I fell back to the headrest, it all seeming trivial enough. "Are there no gas stations left in this part of Alabama?"

"No smartass, we're out of money."

"What?" I perked up again. "Already?"

"Yea, already! Sex ain't cheap, Norman," he snapped.

"I know, Daniel. I know," I said defensively. "But if I'd known we were spending it all on that, I wouldn't have —"

"Goddammit!" he yelled, slapping the wheel with a hint of mad laughter underneath. I couldn't look at him. I was too confused.

"Wait," I paused, with my mind untangling, "if that money was in the glove box, how did you buy those beers?"

"Norman, you know damn well I just walked out with those beers. Hell, the clerk wasn't even behind the counter."

I hated when he stressed my name like I was a child. My head fell back to the headrest. I knew right then nothing had changed. There was no new start. I began to hear the front tire whine on the white line. He was thinking too hard, his hands were unsteady.

"Reach behind your seat and grab that bag," he demanded sharply.

More money, I had hoped, stacks of twenties with a note from Stuart saying "good luck on your new start, guys." But no, it contained only what I feared this exodus would lead to.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> Tupac Shakur: (1971-96) American rapper

"Should be two .40 calibers in there. Least that's what I told Stuart to leave us," he said as I peered inside.

I pulled out the clips.

"They fully loaded?" he asked impatiently.

"Yea," I replied, finding it suddenly hard to swallow.

"They hollow-points<sup>1</sup>?"

"Yea."

"We're set," he grinned.

I could tell he was patting Stuart on the back in his mind, thanking him for a job well done. I could tell he wished Stuart was in the car instead of me. He always thought I was a bitch. Hell, let's be honest, that's why he picked me in the first place. I'd always been his bitch. Just his property to do with as he pleased.

"Only a few hours left 'til sunrise. I'm thinking we take this here next exit and find the first nice house we see close to the interstate. Get some gas money and hop back on the road."

I slid lower in my seat not wanting to give a reply. I had hoped his past wouldn't be necessary with our new start. I had hoped. But I also knew it was inevitable. Daniel was drawn to it like a rutting buck to a doe's scent.

He took the deserted exit without needing or wanting my reply. Even if I had protested, he would've talked me into it. He always did. I looked for signs of life while the Camaro slid silently down the country road. New stars appeared as the blanket of night grew darker.

Daniel pointed across my face to an old two-story plantation house with four columns. He killed the engine before I could suggest differently.

"Here's to new doors opening for us," he winked, pulling back the slide of the pistol. I couldn't fake a smile.

The house stood amongst a dry field that held nothing but dirt and overnight ice. The closest neighbor sat over a hundred yards down the empty road. As we walked across the field, I watched my breath in the cold rural air. I wished I was a teenager, coon hunting with my dad. I wished a lot of things – anything to take me from my reality. I could only hear my thoughts and the dead leaves crackling under our feet in the hushed predawn. Daniel turned to me every so often and nodded. But I could no longer see his thin brown eyes in the dark. The moon hid that night – a new moon I'm told. Though nothing at that point seemed new to me. The old familiar tracks were before us and our train was running down the same damned line.

We entered the old house through the back screen porch. The den held ticking antique clocks, homemade pottery, plastic candies, and stuffed mallards. I could smell the years lived. The dining room was unfortunately modest, with no fine china or silver set out on display. They didn't have anything we could use. I realized at that point our operation wasn't going to be easy. The sweat from my palms started dripping onto my pistol.

DONG!

"Oh shit!" I yelled as Daniel grabbed me.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> hollow-points: a kind of ammunition that is designed to create more damage than ordinary bullets

DONG!

DONG!

160

DONG!

Every old clock in the house had just chimed the arrival of 4:00 a.m.

Daniel angrily pressed his finger to my mouth as if I intentionally forgot to be quiet. I couldn't help myself though. My nerves were rattled. My pistol shook.

"Bedroom," he whispered, motioning for me to follow.

I couldn't stop him. I didn't try. I merely fell in line.

Each step down the hallway creaked softly on the worn hardwoods. All the doors stood shut. Daniel chose the last one since it seemed to be the master. I could not see, but sensed that he looked back to wink before gently opening the bedroom door.

"Take another step and I shoot," an unseen elderly voice warned from the darkness of the room, as if God himself had spoken.

"Now, now old man, we ain't here to hurt nobody, just tell me where your safe is and we'll be on our way," Daniel said stepping forward.

I heard a soft click before the shotgun blast pierced the night and threw pieces of

Daniel's head on the wall. I remember seeing the explosion of red tissue inches from
my face and hearing the thud of his lifeless body against the floorboards as I turned to
run. Daniel, with all his contradictions and charm, was gone in that split second. So,
then too, I was gone. I knocked over a table of pottery and tore the screen door off the
rusted hinges. I ran, crying and stumbling, through the dirt. Everything turned upside
down so quickly. The crickets and frogs seemed louder like they were trying to alert
the neighborhood. I felt as if in a drunken dream, yet simultaneously awake and sober.
Bawling like a toddler all the way, I eventually made it to the Camaro and collapsed.
After taking three deep breaths, I cranked the old piece and drove it as far as it would
take me – which was only about thirty miles. In my panicked state I completely forgot
about our gas issue. I wasn't cut out to be alone.

The Alabama State Troopers caught me around 6:00 a.m. at a Waffle House begging for coffee and hash browns. By then I was tired of running anyway. I had long since given up. I already knew where those old tracks led. Later I learned through testimony that the old man and his wife heard us break in well before the damn clocks scared me into yelping. So, I was glad to know it wasn't all my fault. I wished Daniel would've known that at least. I wished he would've known a lot of things that I could've told him. Just open my mouth and make the words – that easy. Might've changed things, but probably not. My cellmate was dead before the Tennessee State Penitentiary even knew we had escaped that night. So, in hindsight, we actually had a good head start on our path to a new life. Just had to go waste all our gas money on love we could've had for free. Love that he had the whole five and a half years while we shared that cell together. Then again, I've learned that love and sex can be two completely different things.

## B – Non-fiction

David Joy (b. 1983) is an American writer who grew up in North Carolina. The essay is from the online magazine *The Bitter Southerner*, July 2017.

#### David Joy

# Digging in the Trash

We drove there on birthdays and holidays. Past farm ponds colored chocolate milk. Past yellow fields of oat grass that waved and flickered in sunlight like heads of windblown hair. Gravel crunched under tires as we eased along a dirt road just a few minutes from where we lived to the trailer where my grandfather survived.

My grandfather, or what was left of
him, was worn down and wiry. Hair
slicked back, his eyes were the same pale
blue color of his work shirts. He wore a
pair of Dickies¹ dirtied at the knees. His
veins rose from his arms like tree roots,
tattoos aged almost green in his skin. For
lack of a better way of putting it, the old
man had a look like he could strangle
the life out of you. The fact of the matter
was there was more to that look than just
words.

When I was growing up, my grandfather was married to a crazy-haired woman named Dez who named all her daughters after flowers – Rose,

25 Lily, Daisy, a whole garden of kids. Dez might've been as close to wicked as I've ever known in this world, but for reasons that escaped most folks, my grandfather always found his way back to her. One

30 time they were fighting about God-

knows-what and she loaded the shotgun, walked him out into the front yard, pulled the trigger, and peppered his back with bird shot. My uncle went to see him while the doctor was still picking the pellets out of his spine. When the law walked in and asked the old man if he wanted to press charges he just shook his head. The officer asked what he was going to do when he got out of the hospital, where he'd go, and my grandfather said simply, "I'm gonna go home."

He paused and added, "And I'm gonna kill the bitch."

In the end, he didn't kill her, and deep down it's because in some incomprehensible way he loved her. One of his deepest truths was that he was a horrible alcoholic and he knew how bad he was without her. Ultimately, my grandfather knew she was the only one who could keep a bottle out of his hand and so despite what she did to him, he always came back because in that single way she was what kept him from drowning.

To say my grandfather was tough as nails would be to sell him short. As a kid, he slit his femoral artery on a rusted pipe diving into a river, should've bled out, but didn't. He fought on the front lines in World War II, smoked and drank all

<sup>1</sup> brand of workwear

his life, walked away from countless car wrecks, survived cancer time and time again, even when doctors cut out his tongue. [...]

The thing about it is, I'm not talking about men being like cats, having nine lives. The way my grandfather did it wasn't like that at all. What I'm talking about are people being too mad at this world to lie down and die. That was him in a nutshell. His survival was a matter of stubbornness and anger. His survival was a matter of looking bitterly at the hand he'd been dealt and saying, "Sorry, boys, but I ain't done playing."

My father didn't have it easy growing up. Some of his earliest memories are in a one-bedroom shack he called the rat house where he was afraid to go to sleep because he was terrified the rats would gnaw his feet off while he dreamed. He remembers scrounging around for cans of vienna sausages to fight off stomach pangs, killing squirrels to keep from starving. He was only five or six, but life was a matter of survival.

Eventually my dad was raised by his

90 aunt, his father's sister, who took him in
as her own the way it happens so often
where I come from. Still, if you were to
ask my father to this day to recall his dad,
he wouldn't tell you stories about his old

95 man kicking him out on the side of the
road or giving him presents only to horsetrade them away soon as he was drunk
at the bar. What my father would say is
that his daddy was a fine carpenter and

100 was hell with a twenty-gauge¹ come rabbit
season. He'd tell you stories like how his
old man could talk to animals. [...]

between my dad and his father, there's a 105 line from a Maurice Manning<sup>2</sup> poem that always eats me up. Even conjuring the words to my mind, I find my eyes filling with tears. The line reads, "I loved the helpless people I loved." That's the truth of it. That's why my dad will never say a cross word about his father, because despite all his faults, it was his daddy. It was his daddy we went to see every time we rode back into that trailer park, the rest of us dreading being dragged there. It was his daddy he laid in the ground when the old man finally decided to die, and that's exactly what my father said as he stood there with his eyes glassed over at 120 the grave, Dez not even bothering to get out of the car.

When I think about the relationship

"He was my daddy," my father said. Just those four words. Nothing else.

Nowadays, I make my living as a full-125 time novelist. I write about fathers and sons. I write about friendship. I write about poverty and hopelessness, addiction and violence. I had a novel come out a few weeks back, The Weight Of This 130 World [...]. The Associated Press praised the pacing and prose, and noted how trailers and churches dot my landscape. A part of me couldn't understand why that was noteworthy, but I guess it seems 135 strange to people on the outside. What I hope they see too, though, is that this is a place sopping wet with raw emotion, a landscape drenched with humanity. It is all I know and it is beautiful.

So often people hear that word "trailer" and their minds follow with "trash." Maybe it was growing up going

<sup>1</sup> twenty-gauge: a type of shotgun

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> Maurice Manning: (b. 1966) American poet

to my grandfather's or maybe it was growing up with a trailer park just across the road, but as a child I don't remember ever thinking that I was better than the kids I played with because I lived in a house and they lived in trailers. [...]

The kids I grew up with came to know 150 truths that don't reach most people until they're adults if they ever reach them at all. There's a poem by one of my favorite writers, the Kentucky poet Rebecca Gayle Howell<sup>1</sup>, titled "My Mother Told 155 Us Not To Have Children," and in that poem she has a line where she asks, "Is gentleness a resource of the privileged?" She answers, "In this respect, my people were poor. / We fought to eat and fought 160 each other because // we were tired from fighting. We had no time / to share. Instead our estate was honesty, // which is not tenderness." And maybe that's all I've ever really known: honesty. Maybe that's 165 all any of us knew.

The other day I was watching a *BBC* interview about poverty in Baltimore. One of the people being interviewed said something that really struck me.

170 He looked into the camera deadpan and beaten and he said, "Desperation is a way of living." When he said that, I couldn't help but think, maybe it's not just gentleness that's a resource of the privileged. Maybe hope is a resource of the privileged, and maybe that's what people don't get about the kids I grew up with, about the characters I write about in my novels.

I get asked all the time why my characters aren't hopeful. What I say again and again is this: It's hard to be

hopeful when you're worried about your next meal, when the only thought to ever cross your mind is how you're going to make it through the day. [...]

I get the same kind of questions about addiction. People don't understand what would push someone to drugs like 190 methamphetamine or heroin. They don't understand what would make a man drink like my grandfather. The reason they can't understand it is because they've never been that low. When all you've got is a 195 twenty-dollar bill, twenty dollars doesn't ward off eviction notices. Twenty dollars doesn't get you health insurance. Twenty dollars doesn't make a car payment. Twenty dollars doesn't even keep the 200 lights on. But twenty dollars can take you right out of this world for just a little while. Just a minute. Just long enough to breathe. That's what every single addict I've ever known really wanted: just a 205 second to breathe. [...]

Just as I'm asked about hope and drug use, I'm always asked about violence — why is there so much violence in my work — and for me violence is tied directly to <sup>210</sup> this idea of being heard.

Over and over again I watched the kids I grew up with explode because no one would take the time to hear them. Sometimes when no one will listen all you can do to be heard is to make them feel you, a sort of now-do-you-hear-me plea when you just can't take anymore. I lost my first friend to suicide when I was eighteen years old. I lost the next one almost a year later to the day. I've lost six friends to suicide altogether and I'm only thirty-three years old. When I think about why, I think about listening. I wonder

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> Rebecca Gayle Howell: (b. 1975) American poet

what would've happened if I'd just been there to open my hands, if I'd just been there to say, "Pour yourself onto me. I'm here."

I dedicated this last book to a friend I grew up with named Paco. He had strawberry-blond hair, a face that glowed like sunrise, and could absolutely skin an electric guitar. [...]

After 9/11, Paco joined the Marine Corps and served multiple deployments 235 to Iraq. There are pictures of him standing in the moon dust over there, cigarette dangling in his teeth, holding up an M-249 SAW machine gun like he's Kerry King<sup>1</sup> playing a B.C. Rich<sup>2</sup> 240 guitar for Slayer. There's another photo of prisoners they'd taken, on their knees, hands bound at their backs, black sacks over their faces, Paco standing between them with his thumbs up like The Fonz<sup>3</sup>. I 245 don't know what all Paco saw on the front lines of combat or how it affected him. But what I do know is that when he came home, one day he walked into his house, shot his brother, shot his father, and killed 250 himself. What I do know is that when the news told the story, I watched how they stripped my friend of his humanity like he was trash. [...]

Maybe that's why what I read in a

255 trade review recently struck me so hard.

The reviewer didn't like my book, and
that's all right. [...] This is what got me,
though. He wrote that I should "leave the
peeling trailers, come down out of the

260 hollers<sup>4</sup>, and try writing about *people* for

But what he misses is this. These 265 are people who just like everyone else experience happiness, sadness, fear, anger, surprise, and disgust. These are people who love and hate, people who cry their eyes out when they lose someone 270 close, people who cry their eyes out when they laugh so hard they keel over, people who'd sell the last thing they had to put food on the table, people who work eighty hours a week to break even. 275 These are people who'd strangle the life out of a man who dared stand in front of their children and say a word like trash like he had any idea what their life was worth. When I think about my family, 280 my father and grandfather, when I think about all the boys I grew up with, all the ones who ended it, when I think about the hopeless, the addicts, the violence, I again remember that line from Maurice 285 Manning. I loved the helpless people I loved, and maybe that's why I can't sit back while someone spits in their faces.

As I write this essay, I find that I'm tired. I'm tired of standing by silently
while privileged people in privileged places strip those less fortunate of their humanity. I'm tired of living in a place where men like my grandfather and Paco are shipped off to front lines to die for profit margins. I'm tired of an America where all the folks I've ever loved are dismissed as *trash*, where people are reduced to something subhuman simply because of where they live. I'm tired of having to explain it. I'm just goddamn tired. [...]

a change." [...] I'm not sure what he thinks men like my grandfather [...] are, other than to use his own words, "trailer trash."

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> Kerry King: (b. 1964) American guitarist in the band Slayer

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> B.Č. Rich: brand of guitars

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> The Fonz: character in an American sitcom

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> come down out of the hollers: stop complaining

A friend of mine sent me an article recently from *The New Yorker*<sup>1</sup> titled, "Doomsday Prep for the Super-Rich." It was basically an essay about how some of the richest people in America have been preparing for some sort of societal breakdown. I guffawed at the thought when I read it, not at the idea of America collapsing, but at the idea they think they'll be the ones to survive. I laughed at the boldness, at the arrogance.

I've never been a betting man and the truth is I don't have much money to lay down, but what I'll leave you with is this. While all the privileged have been coasting through life so often on the backs of my people, we've been surviving. Survival is not new to us. As

the man from Baltimore said, Desperation is a way of life. So if the time comes and there are bets to be made, I'd think long and hard about where you slide your chips. If I were you, I'd try to imagine
my grandfather waking up off that bed, staring God right dead in His eyes as he'd done a dozen times before, and saying with a sly grin spread across his lonely face, "Sorry, boys, but I ain't done
playing."

I'd think about all of us in trailers, the lot of us, the trash, and if all I had were a dollar to my name, that's the bet I'd make.

(2017)

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> The New Yorker: American magazine

#### Anvendt materiale (til brug for Copydan):

"Dear Deirdre". *The Sun* website, September 2017, viewed September 2017. (www.thesun.co.uk) Samuel Wilkes. "Self Defense". *On the Premises* website, November 2014, viewed October 2017. (www.onthepremises.com)

David Joy. "Digging in the Trash". *The Bitter Southerner* website, July 2017, viewed October 2017. (www.bittersoutherner.com)