

GCSE ENGLISH LANGUAGE

Paper 2 Writers' viewpoints and perspectives

Insert

The two sources that follow are:

Source A: 21st Century non-fiction

How I beat my insomnia

An extract from an article written in 2016 by journalist Arifa Akbar

Source B: 19th Century literary non-fiction

A sleepless night

An extract from an article written in 1872 by journalist Fanny Fern

Please turn the page over to see the sources

Source A

Source A is an extract from a newspaper article written in 2016 by journalist Arifa Akbar about her experience of insomnia, which is when a person has difficulty sleeping.

1 Now, I am about to say something that I never thought I would: I had a good night's sleep last night. And the night before that. All week in fact, I have tipped into bed, my mind restless for one shuddering moment before I turn to lie flat on my back and repeat a well-rehearsed script, at which point my thoughts drop off into dark velvety sleep.

5 A full night's sleep could never have happened a few years ago. I am 44 now but, until my
6 late 30s, I had insomnia that clung on from childhood and progressively beat me down.

It began when I was ten — I would deliberately keep myself awake to pick over the day. It would take me five or six hours to get to sleep and, even then, it would be interrupted. My immune system was shot. I lived on the edge of my nerves. I fought it with remedies from
10 the herbal to the hard stuff, but it just seemed to get worse.

Two decades into the insomnia, at the age of 30, I was waking up — if I had fallen asleep at all — with sore eyes, itchy skin and a high-pitched sense of mental hysteria, which, at its worst, made me feel as though my life was unravelling.

15 I felt as if I had tried every known cure going — and there are plenty, given almost a third of us admit to being sleep deprived. I tried giving up coffee, sugar and heavy dinners. Still awake. Baking at 3am. Still awake and getting fatter. Hypnosis, which did nothing at all. In desperation I bought a therapeutic electromagnetic mattress to 'recalibrate my energy field'. It just gave me a stiff back. Sleeping pills knocked me out for a few days, then the insomnia crept back.

20 So when I came across a magazine article mentioning AT (Autogenic Training – a form of self-hypnosis and an apparent fix for insomnia, formulated by a German psychiatrist in the 1930s), scepticism kicked in. I took the article to my doctor anyway — what harm was there in running it past him?

25 That is how I found myself sitting with 11 strangers, memorising a script to focus on our bodies from limb to limb, and then our organs, like a strange, verbal body scan. I was told to repeat the exercise three times a day, for 15 minutes each time — ideally in a quiet spot, sitting back on a chair or lying down.

30 It looked like I was merely resting with my eyes closed, but in my head I was repeating sentences: 'My right arm is heavy and warm', 'my heartbeat is calm and regular' and 'my neck and shoulders are heavy and warm'.

The script had to be followed in a certain order, and repeated three times. There was nothing more to it than that. And so I started chanting. To myself, that is, silently, three times a day.

35 A few weeks into my course, I began to feel something. My insomnia hadn't disappeared but I began to feel calmer, brighter, and less wired all the time. I felt my memory get sharper. I didn't have to write constant reminders to myself or search for the right words while speaking as I'd become used to doing.

My insomnia, at my most tormented, was excruciatingly noisy. I could feel my brain rev up in the night and start to chatter, sorting out things I hadn't given it time to reflect on. Self-hypnosis began to turn down the noise.

Then it happened. Around Week Four, sleep came like a welcome black tide, knocking me out suddenly. It felt miraculous. I was overjoyed, but suspicious. This had happened before and insomnia had always returned with a vengeance.

But the insomnia hasn't come back. I still think of self-hypnosis as some form of magic, despite the science. I fear the spell will break and the insomnia will creep back one day.

And so I carry on repeating the script — and, so far, it carries on working its magic.

Turn over for Source B

Source B

Source B is an extract taken from a magazine article written in 1872 by American journalist Fanny Fern. Here, she writes about her experience of being unable to sleep.

1 You know what it is to lie awake at night, I suppose, while every human creature in the house is sleeping, with perspiration standing in drops on your forehead; with twitching fingers, and kicking toes, and glaring eyes; with disgust at the distant tap, tap, tap, of feet on the sidewalk; planning your revenge tomorrow (should you survive to see it) upon the
5 owner of that blind across the street, which has been flapping to and fro all night, and yet never dropped on somebody's head, as you hoped it might, so that you were saved from the noisy nuisance.

In vain have you tried saying the Multiplication Table; in vain have you repeated poetry by the yard, or counted to one hundred; in vain have you done any of the foolish things
10 recommended in such cases. Two o'clock has just struck, and no sleep has followed. Well—if you can't sleep, you won't sleep, that's all. You'll just get up, and strike a light and read. You do it; but the fire is low, and cold shivers run up and down your back-bone. Three o'clock! You're hungry! Yes—that must be it. You'll go to the cupboard and get a bit of cold chicken. Good heavens! It's gone! Those lumpish, snoring wretches have devoured it
15 before going to bed!

You walk to the window. It is some comfort that the stars have to wink all night as well as you. Good! You're glad of it. Four o'clock! Gracious! How will you feel to-morrow? Suppose you should run from the top of the stairs to the bottom, as fast and as loud as you could, and wake up the whole family. And as the vision of terrified night-gowns appears in your
20 mind, you start grinning like a maniac; then laughing hysterically; then crying outright; and the next thing you know it is eight o'clock in the morning, and coffee and rolls are awaiting your arrival.

23 And as to mosquitoes. Ah! You too must have suffered. You have lain, hour after hour, listening to that never-ceasing war-song, till you were as nervous as a cat. You have turned
25 over; you have lain on your side, lain on your back, lain on your face. You have doubled your fists up under your arm-pits, and twisted your feet into hard knots under your night-clothes, to no avail. You have then fallen back on your dignity and the pygmy-ness of your tormentors, and folded your arms resolutely over your chest, and looked fiercely up to the ceiling... And yet, at that very moment, an "owdacious" bite has sent you flying, with a
30 smothered exclamation, into the middle of the floor, bewailing the day you were born.

Next day you get a mosquito net. What a fool not to think of it before. You drape it round your bed. It looks safe. You explore it carefully that night before getting in, that there is no treacherous hole left for the enemy. You put out the light, and oh! blissful happiness, listen to their howl of rage outside, and fall asleep. Next morning you wake with a splitting
35 headache. Can it be the confined air of the net? Horrible! You spend that day nursing your head and your anger.

That night you refuse to gasp under a net, for all the mosquitoes that ever swarmed. You even light your gaslight defiantly, open the windows, and sneer at the black demons as they buzz in for their nocturnal raid. You sit and read—occasionally boxing your own ears—till
40 the small hours, and then—to bed; only to dash frantically against the wall, throw your pillows at the enemy, laugh hysterically, and rise at daylight a bleary-eyed, spotted, dismal wretch!

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