

CBSE CLASS X

English Language & Literature (184)

ANSWER KEY

From previous CBSE Board Exam questions

Code: LV2VA2 Questions: 13 Maximum Marks: 43 Generated: 2026-06-15 13:05

SELECTIONS USED

Source	Previous-year board
Subject	English Language & Literature
Lessons	The Midnight Visitor
Year	2022-2026
Questions selected	13

Composition — Types: 11 Short · 2 literature_extract

Q1.

[3]

Who was Henry? What role did he play in Ausable's plan? (The Midnight Visitor)

Previously asked in: 2024 2/3/1 Q9 (ii)

♦ The Midnight Visitor

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Model Answer

Henry was the waiter at the hotel whom Ausable had already ordered drinks from before returning to his room with Fowler.

Henry played a crucial role in Ausable's plan. When Max was threatening them with a pistol, Ausable calmly told Max that the knocking at the door was the **police**, sent to protect an important report. This made Max panic and step out of the window onto the supposed balcony — which did not exist. As Max fell to his death, the door opened to reveal Henry, simply delivering the drinks Ausable had ordered.

Thus, Henry's timely arrival, though innocent, was cleverly used by Ausable to outwit and eliminate Max.

Source: *The Midnight Visitor, Max's Confrontation and the Balcony Story*

Explanation

Examiners expect three things here: (1) **who Henry was** — the waiter, (2) **his role** — he arrived at the door at the right moment, and (3) **how Ausable used this** — by pretending it was the police, forcing Max onto the non-existent balcony. Many students forget to connect Henry's arrival to Ausable's lie about the police — that link is the key point that earns full marks. Keep the answer factual and text-based; do not add opinions.

Q2.

[3]

Examine the witty strategy used by Ausable in emerging as a super spy. (The Midnight Visitor)

Previously asked in: 2025 2/6/1 Q9 (i)

♦ The Midnight Visitor

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Model Answer

Ausable's witty strategy lies in his remarkable presence of mind. When Max threatens him with a gun, Ausable cleverly fabricates a story about a non-existent balcony outside his window, making Max believe intruders use it to enter his room. He then announces that the knocking at the door is the "police" he had summoned. A panicked Max jumps onto the "balcony" to hide — only to fall to his death, as no balcony exists. The knocking was merely a waiter delivering drinks. Thus, Ausable outwits Max using pure quick thinking and bluff.

Source: *The Midnight Visitor*, Chapter 3

Explanation

Examiners look for **three clear points** in a 3-mark answer:

1. The fake balcony story (the main trick).
2. The fake police announcement (the trigger).
3. The outcome — Max jumps to his death; there is no balcony.

Avoid retelling the whole story. Focus on *how* the strategy works — it is based on **fabrication + presence of mind**, not physical action. The word "witty" in the question signals you must highlight the cleverness of the plan, not just narrate events.

Q3.

[3]

Mention how Ausable was always one step ahead of everyone. (The Midnight Visitor)

Previously asked in: 2026 2/1/1 Q9 II

♦ The Midnight Visitor

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Model Answer

Ausable was always one step ahead because of his sharp presence of mind and quick thinking. When Max threatened him with a pistol, Ausable cleverly invented the story of a balcony outside his window — which did not exist — to make Max believe he could escape onto it. He also fabricated the arrival of the police, making Max panic and jump out of the window onto the "balcony." In reality, the knock was only the waiter Henry delivering drinks. Thus, Ausable used quick wit and calm composure to outsmart Max completely.

Source: *The Midnight Visitor*, Chapter 3

Explanation

Examiners look for **two key tricks** Ausable used: (1) the fake balcony story and (2) the fake police arrival. Mention that there was **no real balcony**, causing Max to fall. Also note Ausable's **calm and composure** throughout — this shows he was always one step ahead mentally. Avoid retelling the whole story; focus on how these clever moves show his superiority over Max.

Q4.

[3]

Why was Fowler interested in meeting Ausable ? (The Midnight Visitor)

Previously asked in: 2026 2/4/1 Q9 (i)

♦ The Midnight Visitor

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Model Answer

Fowler was a young, romantic writer who was deeply fascinated by the world of espionage and secret agents. He had read thrilling stories of spies and imagined them as mysterious, daring figures involved in danger and adventure. He wanted to meet Ausable to witness the exciting, dramatic life of a real secret agent — mysterious figures, pistol shots, and dark-eyed beauties passing secret messages. He hoped that meeting Ausable would give him material and firsthand experience of the spy world for his writing.

Source: *The Midnight Visitor*, Opening section

Explanation

The question asks **why** Fowler wanted to meet Ausable — focus on his identity (a writer), his romantic/imaginative nature, and his expectations. Ausable himself explains this directly in the passage: "You were told that I was a secret agent... You wished to meet me because you are a writer, young and romantic." Examiners expect you to mention all three key points: Fowler is a writer, he is young and romantic, and he expected the glamorous spy-world. Avoid just saying "he was curious" — be specific.

Q5.

[3]

How did Ausable get rid of Max without using a weapon. (The Midnight Visitor)

Previously asked in: 2023 2/4/1 Q9 (b)

♦ The Midnight Visitor

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Model Answer

Ausable used his presence of mind and quick thinking to outwit Max without any weapon.

When Max held them at gunpoint, Ausable cleverly invented a story about a non-existent balcony outside his window. He described it convincingly, saying it belonged to the next apartment. When there was a knock at the door, Ausable pretended it was the police. Fearing arrest, Max stepped out of the window onto what he believed was the balcony — but there was no balcony. He fell to his death, while the "police" turned out to be only a waiter delivering drinks.

Source: *The Midnight Visitor*, Footprints without Feet

Explanation

- The question asks **how** Ausable got rid of Max — focus on the two tricks: (1) the fake balcony story and (2) the fake police knock.
- Examiners expect both elements to be mentioned for full 3 marks.
- Avoid retelling the whole story; stick to the method/trick used.
- Key phrase to include: "**presence of mind**" — it shows you understand the theme.

Q6.

[3]

Describe Ausable's fabricated tale regarding the balcony. (The Midnight Visitor)

Previously asked in: 2025 2/4/1 Q9 III

♦ The Midnight Visitor

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Model Answer

Ausable cleverly invented a story about a balcony outside his window to trap Max. He claimed the room once formed part of a larger apartment, and the adjoining room's balcony now extended beneath his window. He added that it could be accessed from an empty room two doors down, and that someone had already used it the previous month. He blamed the management for failing to block it off. This convincing, detailed story made Max believe the balcony existed, so when cornered, Max jumped out of the window onto it — but there was no balcony, and he fell to his death.

Source: *The Midnight Visitor, Max's Confrontation and the Balcony Story*

Explanation

- The examiner wants **three elements**: what the fabricated story was, how Ausable made it believable (detail about the old apartment layout, the previous intruder, management's failure), and its outcome (Max jumps to his death).
- Avoid just retelling the whole plot — focus on **the balcony tale specifically**.
- The word "fabricated" is key: make clear Ausable **invented** it on the spot as a trap.
- Quoting or paraphrasing Ausable's exact explanation (two rooms, extended balcony, two doors down) earns full marks for detail.

Q7.

[3]

Describe Max as a secret agent.

Previously asked in: 2023 2/5/1 Q9 (a)

♦ The Midnight Visitor

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Model Answer

Max is a secret agent and an adversary of Ausable. He is slender, slightly less than tall, with features suggesting the crafty, pointed countenance of a fox. He carries a small automatic pistol and is cunning and menacing. He has broken into Ausable's room to steal an important report about new missiles. He is cautious but can be fooled, as Ausable's false balcony story tricks him into jumping to his death.

Source: *The Midnight Visitor, Chapter 3*

Explanation

The question asks specifically about **Max**, not Ausable. Examiners expect: his physical appearance (slender, fox-like), his weapon (pistol), his motive (stealing the missile report), and his fate (tricked by the balcony story). All three marks are covered by these four points. Do not confuse Max with Ausable or spend words on Ausable's description.

Q8.

[3]

One should never judge a book by its cover. Explain with reference to Ausable and how he outwits Max with his presence of mind.

(The Midnight Visitor)

Previously asked in: 2024 2/5/1 Q9 (i)

♦ The Midnight Visitor

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Model Answer

Ausable is fat, wheezy, and unimpressive — far from the typical image of a sharp, dashing spy. Yet appearances are deceptive. When Max threatens him at gunpoint, Ausable calmly invents a fictitious balcony outside his window, making it sound completely real with convincing details about the room's history. He then fabricates the arrival of "police" at the door. Believing both stories, Max steps onto the non-existent balcony to hide and falls to his death. Ausable's sharp mind and calm composure defeat an armed enemy without a single weapon — proving one should never judge a book by its cover.

Source: *The Midnight Visitor*, Chapter 3

Explanation

- **3 marks = ~3 key points:** (1) Ausable's unimpressive appearance, (2) the fake balcony story, (3) the fake police — leading to Max's fall.
- Examiners want you to **link the proverb explicitly** to Ausable's appearance vs. his actual skill.
- Do **not** retell the whole story — focus on the contrast and the two tricks (balcony + police).
- End with a conclusion that ties back to the question's proverb — this earns the final mark.

Q9.

[3]

Despite his unusual appearance, Ausable's presence of mind helped him get rid of Max.
Comment with reference to the story 'The Midnight Visitor'.

Previously asked in: 2024 2/4/1 Q9 (iii)

♦ The Midnight Visitor

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Model Answer

Ausable was fat, wheezy, and far from the typical image of a dashing secret agent. Yet when Max threatened him at gunpoint, Ausable used sharp presence of mind to outsmart him.

He calmly fabricated a convincing story about a non-existent balcony outside his window, complete with a logical explanation. When knocking was heard at the door, he coolly claimed it was the police he had summoned for protection. A panicked Max stepped onto the "balcony" to hide — and fell to his death, as no balcony existed.

Ausable's ability to think quickly, stay composed, and turn circumstances to his advantage proved more powerful than any weapon.

Source: *The Midnight Visitor*, Chapter 3

Explanation

- Examiners look for **two key tricks**: the balcony lie and the fake police — mention both.
- Connect his **unusual appearance** (fat, wheezy) to the contrast with his sharp mind — this directly addresses the question's phrasing.
- Avoid retelling the entire story; focus on **how** presence of mind worked.
- 3-mark answers need a brief intro + 2 clear points + a concluding line — that's the ideal structure here.

Q10.

[3]

How did Ausable get rid of Max?

(The Midnight Visitor)

Previously asked in: 2025 2/2/1 Q9 (i)

♦ The Midnight Visitor

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Model Answer

Ausable used his presence of mind and quick thinking to get rid of Max. When Max held them at gunpoint, Ausable cleverly invented a story about a balcony outside his window. When a knock came at the door, Ausable told Max it was the police. Afraid of being caught, Max stepped out of the window onto the supposed balcony — but there was no balcony. He fell from the sixth floor. The knock was actually Henry, a waiter, delivering drinks Ausable had ordered earlier.

Source: *The Midnight Visitor*, Chapter 3

Explanation

- The answer must cover **three key steps**: (1) the fake balcony story, (2) the fake police knock, and (3) Max jumping to his death — each earns roughly 1 mark.
- Do not say Ausable "killed" Max directly; say Max fell because there was no balcony — this is accurate to the text.
- Mentioning Fowler or Henry briefly shows full reading comprehension but keep it tight.

Q11.

[3]

Ausable displayed a remarkable presence of mind combined with a good sense of humour to handle Max. Justify. (The Midnight Visitor)

Previously asked in: 2026 2/3/1 Q9 (ii)

♦ The Midnight Visitor

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Model Answer

Ausable demonstrated remarkable presence of mind when he invented a fictional balcony to trap Max. Despite being caught off guard by an armed spy, he calmly and convincingly described the non-existent balcony as belonging to the adjacent apartment, giving detailed reasons for its presence. His sense of humour showed in his irritated complaints about the "nuisance" balcony. He then fabricated the arrival of police, forcing Max to jump onto the balcony — which did not exist. This cool, quick thinking eliminated the threat without violence.

Source: *The Midnight Visitor*, Chapter 3

Explanation

Examiners look for **two distinct qualities** — presence of mind AND humour — with textual evidence for each. Key points:

- **Presence of mind**: inventing the balcony story with convincing details; fabricating the police knock.
- **Humour**: his mock-irritated grumbling about the balcony, his casual attitude under threat.
- Do not just retell the plot — **link events explicitly to the traits** mentioned in the question.

Q12.

[5]

"It's not my balcony," Ausable said with extreme irritation. "It belongs to the next apartment." He glanced explanatorily at Fowler. "You see," he said, "this room used to be part of a large unit, and the next room — through that door there — used to be the living room. It had the balcony, which extends under my window now. You can get onto it from the empty room two doors down — and somebody did, last month. The management promised to block it off. But they haven't."

Read the following extract and answer the questions:

- (i) What was the management supposed to do regarding the balcony? [1]
- (ii) Which of the following was the reason that irritated Ausable about the balcony? [1]
- A its size and layout
B its location relative to his apartment
C its accessibility from the neighbouring unit
D its maintenance by the apartment management
- (iii) How does Ausable's detailed explanation of the balcony's history and current accessibility contribute to the atmosphere of suspense or tension in the story? Answer in about 40 words. [2]
- (iv) Fill in the blank with the correct word from the brackets. The reference to 'last month' and 'now' adds to a sense of _____ (reconciliation/mystery). [1]

Previously asked in: 2025 2/3/1 Q6(b)

♦ The Midnight Visitor

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Model Answer

- (i) The management was supposed to block off the balcony so that no one could access Ausable's room through it.
- (ii) C — its accessibility from the neighbouring unit.
- (iii) Ausable's detailed explanation makes the balcony seem real and credible. By mentioning that someone had already used it "last month" and that the management failed to block it, he creates a sense of ongoing danger and vulnerability. This raises tension, as it suggests the room is not fully secure.
- (iv) The reference to 'last month' and 'now' adds to a sense of **mystery**.
-

Explanation

- (i) Direct retrieval from the passage: "The management promised to block it off."
- (ii) Ausable's irritation is specifically about the balcony being reachable from an empty room two doors down — i.e., its accessibility from a neighbouring unit (C). Do not confuse with maintenance (D), which is secondary.
- (iii) Examiners want you to connect the *fabricated detail* with *dramatic/narrative effect* — the story sounds convincing precisely because it is specific, which makes Max believe it, creating deadly suspense.
- (iv) The past reference ("last month") and present vulnerability ("now") build an atmosphere of **mystery** — not reconciliation, which has no relevance here.

Q13.

[5]

Ausable did not fit any description of a secret agent Fowler had ever read. Following him down the musty corridor of the gloomy French hotel where Ausable had a room, Fowler felt let down. It was a small room, on the sixth and top floor and scarcely a setting for a romantic adventure. Ausable was, for one thing, fat, very fat. And then there was his accent. Though he spoke French and German passably, he had never altogether lost the American accent he had brought to Paris from Boston twenty years ago. "You are disappointed," Ausable said wheezily over his shoulder.

Read the given extract and answer the questions:

- (i) Which of the following describes how Fowler felt on seeing Ausable for the first time? [1]
- (A) excited and happy
(B) indifferent and disgusted
(C) surprised and disappointed
(D) envious and in awe
- (ii) How did the hotel's atmosphere influence Fowler's mood? [2]
- (iii) Fill in the blank with the correct word from the bracket: Ausable's reaction on seeing how Fowler felt shows that he was _____. (observant/ embarrassed) [1]
- (iv) In what way does Ausable defy the typical spy image? [1]

Previously asked in: 2026 2/5/1 Q6(A)

♦ The Midnight Visitor

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Model Answer

- (i) (C) surprised and disappointed
- (ii) The hotel had a musty corridor and a gloomy atmosphere, and Ausable's room was small and on the sixth floor — scarcely a setting for a romantic adventure. This dull, uninspiring environment deepened Fowler's sense of disappointment, making him feel that his expectations of an exciting spy world would not be met.
- (iii) Ausable's reaction shows that he was **observant**. Without Fowler saying a word, he immediately said, "You are disappointed," proving he noticed and read his guest's feelings accurately.
- (iv) Ausable defies the typical spy image because he was very fat and spoke with a thick American accent he had never lost — unlike the sharp, mysterious secret agents Fowler had read about.

Source: *The Midnight Visitor*, Opening/Introduction section

Explanation

- (i) The extract clearly states Fowler "felt let down" — that is disappointment; "surprised" fits because Ausable was nothing like what he expected.
- (ii) 2-mark answers need two clear points developed briefly: the physical description of the hotel AND its effect on Fowler's mood.
- (iii) "Observant" is the correct pick — Ausable noticed Fowler's feelings without being told; he was not embarrassed, he chuckled.
- (iv) Quote or closely paraphrase the text: fat + American accent = opposite of the classic spy image. Keep it to one line for 1 mark.

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