

Section A Sample Answer

Q. Write two contrasting pieces (between 300–450 words each), the first about the behaviour of a comedian performing in public and the second about the same comedian's rather different private personality. In your writing, create a sense of character and mood.

The comedian performing in public

A wave of laughter rippled through the audience and hidden in the wings, Jake Roberts glared murderously at his colleague who, on stage, continued to charm the spectators with his animated gesticulation and clever articulation. His heart sank with the realisation that he had to top this new standard of brilliant comedy if he wished to keep his job. Every act of humour he performed was a test and that night was the biggest test of his talent for it decided whether the next letter he received would be one of promotion or expulsion.

The determination and enthusiasm with which he had prepared for that night's act faded away with every round of applause his colleague received. Albeit the air conditioned ambience, beads of sweat made an appearance in the creases on his forehead. He brushed cold, clammy hand to remove evidence of his bubbling anxiety that would be easily captured in high definition by the constant flashes of light on both sides of the stage.

He glanced at the plethora of high-ranking officials of multi-national companies who guffawed while their wives chortled at the jokes aimed at people of other professions and economic classes. The casual insults made Jake's blood boil and hatred rose in him like lava frothing in a volcanic vent; hatred for their attitude and hatred for the nature of his job in such situations. He remembered how he had always been the 'class clown'; how he could make someone smile on their worst day. He was gifted with a unique sense of humour and way with words. All he was now was an entertainer—someone people called when they wanted to be amused. It was all an act.

The walls of the auditorium were grey, decked with seventeenth-century tulip bulbs ordered all the way from the Netherlands but all he saw was scarlet. Before he could erupt, Jake reigned in his raging emotions and breathed in the aroma of jasmine air-freshener. On his cue, he plastered a smile on his face though his eyes were still shadowed and turbulent by the disgust he felt and his nerves were stretched tight like piano wires. Strolling onto the stage, he spread out his arms.

"Friends, Romans, businessmen...lend me your wallets!"

The comedian's private personality

The yellow, plastic chairs creaked as Jake Roberts and his wife Nora settled into them. Despite the uncomfortable seats with their tape-wrapped hand-rests that probably belonged in a King Tutankhamun exhibit, the tiny wooden stage was the only thing Jake noticed and fixed his gaze upon.

The other parents in the audience fidgeted as they waited impatiently for the Head Teacher to finish her speech- a monotonous monologue whose script had not changed for the last decade. The fans rotated crankily overhead, speeding up randomly like an athlete who has suddenly realised he was just a few meters away from the finish line. There were a few air conditioners and they huffed and puffed cool air into the school gym like an obese man on the treadmill training to become a marathon runner.

The audience was in the dark and the intermittent flashes of light were only phone screens being unlocked to check for WhatsApp messages. Two rows ahead of Jake, a beefy man removed his leather shoes to feel more comfortable, but his unlaundered socks made everyone else uncomfortable. Yet, Jake would not want to be anywhere else.

A round of bored applause swept through the small audience and the sense of relief at the end of this long wait was tangible in the atmosphere. Jake sat up straighter and watched keenly as his twelve-year old daughter glided onto the stage in a sweeping, pink gown and a golden tiara on her head. Queen Elizabeth fretted about how she needed some entertainment to spice up her dull life. An aura of royalty with just a hint of arrogance was perfectly enacted and Jake felt his chest swell up with pride.

Nora's soft, warm hand covered his and he felt the warmth spread through his entire being like sunlight finally bathing a town that had seen endless rainy days. He glanced at her twinkling eyes and expression of mingled pride and joy that mirrored his own.

He mimed the lines as his little girl recited them on stage, a smile etching its way on his face. His mind wondered back to the days leading up to this function- his daughter had looked up to her daddy for advice on acting. The quality time they had spent together in the rehearsals that followed could not be bought by the world's riches and yet it was most precious to Jake.

At the end of her act, Jake and his wife leaped up from their chairs while the rest of the audience clapped approvingly in awe of the girl's performance. This was the applause Jake always wanted to hear.