GENERAL

aqa chemistry a level exam style questions answers chapter 11

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Introduction

Preparing for the AQA Chemistry A Level examination can feel like navigating a dense forest of equations, mechanisms, and theoretical concepts. Among the 16 chapters that form the core syllabus, Chapter 11 stands out as a pivotal point where students transition from basic organic chemistry to more complex reaction mechanisms and synthesis strategies. Whether you're a student looking for targeted practice or a tutor seeking resource material, this article will serve as a comprehensive guide to mastering Chapter 11. We'll unpack the key themes, present authentic exam style questions, and provide detailed answers that reflect the depth and clarity expected in the AQA assessment.

Understanding Chapter 11: The Core Themes

Chapter 11 of the AQA A Level Chemistry specification focuses on **Organic Reaction Mechanisms and Synthesis**. It builds on the foundations laid in earlier chapters—such as functional groups, stereochemistry, and basic reaction types—and introduces the logic behind how molecules transform during chemical reactions. Below is a concise breakdown of the main topics students must grasp:

1. Nucleophilic Substitution (SN1 & SN2)

- Mechanistic steps: attack, transition state, leaving group departure.
- Factors influencing rate: substrate structure, solvent, nucleophile strength, temperature.
- Predicting stereochemical outcomes (retention vs inversion).

2. Elimination Reactions (E1 & E2)

- Distinguishing between unimolecular and bimolecular pathways.
- Role of bases and ;" €ydrogen abstraction.
- Regioselectivity and stereochemistry of alkenes formed.

3. Electrophilic Aromatic Substitution (EAS)

- Mechanism: arenium ion intermediate, resonance stabilization.
- Activating vs deactivating substituents.
- Ortho/para vs meta orientation rules.

4. Radical Reactions

- Generation of radicals via homolytic bond cleavage.
- Propagation and termination steps.
- Applications in polymerisation and halogenation.

5. Synthesis Planning

- Retrosynthetic analysis: breaking down target molecules into simpler precursors.
- Choosing appropriate functional group interconversions.
- Balancing yield, selectivity, and practicality.

Common Exam Questions for Chapter 11

Examiners at AQA look for a blend of conceptual understanding and practical application. Typical questions revolve around mechanism explanations, predicting reaction outcomes, and designing synthetic routes. Below are representative question types you'll encounter:

1. Explain the difference between an SN1 and an SN2 reaction, citing key factors that influence each pathway.
2. Predict the product of a given elimination reaction, including stereochemical considerations.
3. Illustrate the mechanism of an electrophilic aromatic substitution and discuss how substituents affect regioselectivity.
4. Provide a step by step retrosynthetic analysis for a target molecule.
5. Describe the role of radicals in a polymerisation reaction and outline the propagation steps.

Exam Style Questions & Answers

Question 1: Nucleophilic Substitution Mechanisms

Question:2 Bromopropane is reacted with sodium ethoxide in ethanol. Describe the mechanism that occurs, identify the rate determining step, and predict the stereochemical outcome of the product.

Answer 1

2 Bromopropane is a secondary alkyl halide. Sodium ethoxide is a strong nucleophile and a good base. In an SN2 mechanism, the nucleophile attacks the electrophilic carbon from the backside, forming a pentavalent transition state. The leaving group, Br {, departs simultaneously. The rate determining step is the formation of the transition state where bond breaking and bond forming occur concurrently.

Because the reaction proceeds through an SN2 pathway, the stereochemistry at the carbon bearing the halogen is inverted. 2 Bromopropane is chiral; the product, 2 ethoxypropane, is the enantiomer of the starting material. This inversion is a hallmark of SN2 reactions.

Question 2: Elimination – E2 Reaction

Question:1 Bromo 2 pentene is treated with potassium tert butoxide in acetone. Predict the major product and explain the stereochemical outcome.

Answer 2

The reaction proceeds via an E2 elimination. The strong, non nucleophilic base abstracts a ;" €ydrogen anti periplanar to the leaving group. In 1 bromo 2 pentene, the ;" €ydrogens are on the 2 and 3 positions. The anti periplanar geometry favours removal of the hydrogen on the 2 carbon, leading to the formation of 1 pentene as the major product.

Because the double bond is formed in a concerted step, the stereochemistry of the product is defined by the geometry of the transition state. In this case, the resulting alkene is predominantly the **E isomer** due to steric hindrance between the larger substituents on the double bond.

Question 3: Electrophilic Aromatic Substitution

Question: Benzene is subjected to chlorination using Cl , and FeCl ƒ. Identify the electrophile, outline the mechanism, and determine the most likely position of the chlorine substituent.

Answer 3

FeCl ƒ acts as a Lewis acid catalyst, generating the electrophile **Cl**z from Cl ,. The mechanism involves the following steps:

1. FeCl ƒ coordinates to Cl ,, polarising the Cl–Cl bond and forming Cl z.
2. The benzene ring donates electron density to form a <2 6ö× ÆPx (arenium ion).
3. Resonance stabilises the arenium ion, and the negative charge is delocalised.
4. Deprotonation restores aromaticity, yielding chlorobenzene.

Chlorine is a deactivating, meta directing group. Consequently, the chlorine atom will most likely attach to the meta position relative to any existing substituents (if none are present, chlorobenzene is the product).

Question 4: Radical Halogenation

Question: Explain the radical mechanism for the chlorination of methane using chlorine gas under UV light. Identify the initiation, propagation, and termination steps.

Answer 4

Initiation: UV light supplies energy to break a Cl–Cl bond homolytically, generating two chlorine radicals.

Propagation: A chlorine radical abstracts a hydrogen atom from methane, forming HCl and a methyl radical. The methyl radical then reacts with another Cl , molecule, producing chloromethane and a new chlorine radical, thereby sustaining the chain.

Termination: Two radicals combine to form a stable product, e.g., two methyl radicals give ethane, or a chlorine radical and a methyl radical give chloromethane. The termination steps reduce the number of radicals, ending the chain reaction.

Question 5: Retrosynthetic Analysis

Question: Provide a retrosynthetic route to synthesize 4 hydroxy 2 methylbenzaldehyde starting from commercially available 4 hydroxybenzaldehyde.

Answer 5

Step 1: Protect the phenolic hydroxyl group by converting it into a methyl ether (e.g., using methyl iodide and K ,CO ƒ). This yields 4 methoxybenzaldehyde.

Step 2: Perform a Friedel–Crafts alkylation with methyl chloride in the presence of AlCl ƒ to introduce a methyl group at the 2 position, producing 2 methyl 4 methoxybenzaldehyde.

Step 3: Demethylate the methoxy group using BBr ƒ to regenerate the phenolic hydroxyl, giving the target 4 hydroxy 2 methylbenzaldehyde.

This route demonstrates the strategic use of protecting groups, alkylation, and selective demethylation to achieve the desired substitution pattern.

Question 6: Reaction Conditions and Selectivity

Question:3 bromobut-2-ene is reacted with a strong base in a polar aprotic solvent. Discuss the expected reaction pathway and the factors that influence the product distribution.

Answer 6

The reaction is predisposed towards an E2 elimination due to the presence of a good leaving group (Br) and a strong base. The polar aprotic solvent (e.g., DMSO) stabilises the base and enhances its nucleophilicity, favouring a concerted elimination.

Key factors influencing product distribution include:

- Base strength – A stronger base increases the rate of hydrogen abstraction.
- Solvent polarity – Polar aprotic solvents do not solvate anions well, allowing the base to remain highly reactive.
- Substrate substitution – The presence of the alkene limits the formation of a stable carbocation, so SN1 is unlikely.

The major product will be 1 butene, with a minor amount of 2 butene if anti periplanar geometry is not strictly maintained.

Question 7: Synthesis of an Aspirin Analogue

Question: Outline a synthetic route to produce acetylsalicylic acid (aspirin) starting from salicylic acid. Highlight key reagents and conditions.

Answer 7

Step 1: Activate the carboxyl group of salicylic acid by converting it into an acid chloride using thionyl chloride (SOCl ,). The reaction yields acetyl chloride and HCl as by products.

Step 2: Perform a nucleophilic acyl substitution by adding the acid chloride to a solution of salicylic acid in anhydrous pyridine. The pyridine acts as a base, scavenging the HCl produced and facilitating the formation of acetylsalicylic acid.

Step 3: Isolate the product via recrystallisation from ethanol, ensuring removal of residual reagents.

These steps mirror the industrial synthesis of aspirin and illustrate the practical application of acid chloride chemistry.

Study Tips for Mastering Chapter 11

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