

RAFFLES INSTITUTION

2014 YEAR 6 PRELIMINARY EXAMINATION

HIGHER 1

LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

8811/01

Paper 1 Reading Literature

Monday 15 September 2014

3 hours

1330 – 1630

Additional Materials: Answer Paper

Set texts may be taken into the examination room. They may bear underlining or highlighting. Any kind of folding or flagging of papers in texts (e.g. use of post-its, tape flags or paper clips) is not permitted.

READ THESE INSTRUCTIONS FIRST

Write your name and CT group on all the work you hand in.
Write in dark blue or black pen on both sides of the paper.
Do not use staples, paper clips, highlighters, glue or correction fluid.

Answer **three** questions, one from each of Sections A, B and C.
You are reminded of the need for good English and clear presentation in your answers.

At the end of the examination tie your answer sheets to each section securely.
Hand in your answers separately.
All questions in this paper carry equal marks.

Section A

1

- Either (a)** Write a critical commentary on the following poem, paying attention to ways in which your response is shaped by the poet's language, form and style.

MIRROR

I am silver and exact. I have no preconceptions.

Whatever I see, I swallow immediately

Just as it is, unmisted by love or dislike.

I am not cruel, only truthful –

The eye of a little god, four-cornered.

5

Most of the time I meditate on the opposite wall.

It is pink, with speckles. I have looked at it so long

I think it is a part of my heart. But it flickers.

Faces and darkness separate us over and over.

Now I am a lake. A woman bends over me,

10

Searching my reaches for what she really is.

Then she turns to those liars, the candles or the moon.

I see her back, and reflect it faithfully.

She rewards me with tears and an agitation of hands.

I am important to her. She comes and goes.

15

Each morning it is her face that replaces the darkness.

In me she has drowned a young girl, and in me an old woman

Rises toward her day after day, like a terrible fish.

Sylvia Plath (1932-1963)

- Or (b) Write a critical commentary on the following poem, paying attention to ways in which your response is shaped by the poet's language, form and style.

AFTER A TIME

After a time, all losses are the same.
One more thing lost is one thing less to lose;
And we go stripped at last the way we came.

Though we shall probe, time and again, our shame,
Who lack the wit to keep or to refuse, 5
After a time, all losses are the same.

No wit, no luck can beat a losing game;
Good fortune is a reassuring ruse:
And we all go stripped the way we came.

Rage as we will for what we think to claim, 10
Nothing so much as this bare thought subdues:
After a time, all losses are the same.

The sense of treachery—the want, the blame—
Goes in the end, whether or not we choose, 15
And we go stripped at last the way we came.

So we, who would go raging, will go tame
When what we have can no longer use:
After a time, all losses are the same;
And we go stripped at last the way we came.

Catherine Davis (1924-2002)

Section B

EDITH WHARTON: *THE AGE OF INNOCENCE*

2

- Either (a)** 'To the boy, no doubt, the episode was only a pathetic instance of vain frustration, of wasted forces.'

Consider this statement in the light of your study of the novel as a whole.

- Or (b)** Write a critical commentary on the following passage, relating it to the presentation of Ellen, here and elsewhere in the novel.

This was the man from whom Madame Olenska was avowedly flying: the question was whether she had fled because his importunities displeased her, or because she did not wholly trust herself to resist them; unless, indeed, all her talk of flight had been a blind, and her departure no more than a manoeuvre.

Archer did not really believe this. Little as he had actually seen of Madame Olenska, he was beginning to think that he could read her face, and if not her face, her voice; and both had betrayed annoyance, and even dismay, at Beaufort's sudden appearance. But, after all, if this were the case, was it not worse than if she had left New York for the express purpose of meeting him? If she had done that, she ceased to be an object of interest, she threw in her lot with the vulgarest of dissemblers: a woman engaged in a love affair with Beaufort 'classed' herself irretrievably. 5 10

No, it was worse a thousand times if, judging Beaufort, and probably despising him, she was yet drawn to him by all that gave him an advantage over the other men about her: his habit of two continents and two societies, his familiar association with artists and actors and people generally in the world's eye, and his careless contempt for local prejudices. Beaufort was vulgar, he was uneducated, he was purse-proud: but the circumstances of his life, and a certain native shrewdness, made him better worth talking to than many men, morally and socially his betters, whose horizon was bounded by the Battery and the Central Park. How should any one coming from a wider world not feel the difference and be attracted by it? 15 20

Madame Olenska, in a burst of irritation, had said to Archer that he and she did not talk the same language; and the young man knew that in some respects this was true. But Beaufort understood every turn of her dialect, and spoke it fluently: his view of life, his tone, his attitude, were merely a coarser reflection of those revealed in Count Olenski's letter. This might seem to be to his disadvantage with Count Olenski's wife; but Archer was too intelligent to think that a young woman like Ellen Olenska would necessarily recoil from everything that reminded her of her past. She might believe herself wholly in revolt against it; but what had charmed her in it would still charm her, even though it were against her will. 25 30

Thus, with a painful impartiality, did the young man make out the case for Beaufort, and for Beaufort's victim. A longing to enlighten her was strong in him; and there were moments when he imagined that all she asked was to be enlightened. 35

That evening he unpacked his books from London. The box was full of things he had been waiting for impatiently; a new volume of Herbert Spencer, another collection of the prolific Alphonse Daudet's brilliant tales, and a novel called 'Middlemarch,' as to which there had lately been interesting things said in the reviews. He had declined three dinner invitations in favour of this feast; but though he turned the pages with the sensuous joy of the book-lover, he did not know what he was reading, and one book after another dropped from his hand. Suddenly, among them, he lit on a small volume of verse which he had ordered 40

because the name had attracted him: "The House of Life." He took it up, and found himself plunged in an atmosphere unlike any he had ever breathed in books; so warm, so rich, and yet so ineffably tender, that it gave a new and haunting beauty to the most elementary of human passions. All through the night he pursued through those enchanted pages the vision of a woman who had the face of Ellen Olenska; but when he woke the next morning, and looked out at the brownstone houses across the street, and thought of his desk in Mr Letterblair's office, and the family pew in Grace Church, his hour in the park of Skuytercliff became as far outside the pale of probability as the visions of the night.

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Chapter 15

[Turn over

GRAHAM SWIFT: *Waterland*

3

Either (a) 'While the men dominate the narrative of *Waterland*, it is the women who really exert the most influence.'

Discuss.

Or (b) Write a critical commentary on the following passage, paying particular attention to its style and the significance of curiosity both here and elsewhere in the novel.

25. Forget the Bastille

Hey, this is good. This is juicy. Forget the Bastille. Forget the March of History. Let's have more of this. So he really put an eel in her—? And your brother had a big—? And. How big exactly? Come on, tell us—

Prurient mutterings around the class. Exchange of leers. Judy Dobson and Gita Khan in the front row cross their legs feminine-defensive, experiencing, no doubt, inside their knickers, navy blue or otherwise, uncomfortable sensations; but up top all are eager and pricked ears.

5

So old over-the-hill, lost-in-the-past Cricky can let it all hang out. Doesn't mind admitting that he once —

So he really means it. He's really going to teach what he damn well likes. Really intends to chuck out the syllabus...

10

Only Price looks wary, only Price looks begrudging. Because I've won them over, by unfair methods? Because I've licensed subversion?

(Class-mates beware! See what he's trying to do. See the old dodge he's trying to accomplish. That he — is one of you. The king is but a man, the tyrant is but flesh and blood. Do not be fooled by this sop to common humanity. And beware this other trick he's simultaneously playing. Distracting your insurrectionary impetus, diverting your revolutionary zeal by indulging in lewd talk and appeals to your idle curiosity—)

15

Now who's the rebel round here?

20

But supposing it's not like that, Price. Supposing it's the other way round. Supposing it's revolutions which divert and impede the course of our inborn curiosity. Supposing it's curiosity — which inspires our sexual explorations and feeds our desire to hear and tell stories — which is our natural and fundamental condition. Supposing it's our insatiable and feverish desire to know about things, to know about each other, always to be sniff-sniffing things out, which is the true and rightful subverter and defeats even our impulse for historical progression. Have you ever considered that why so many historical movements, not only revolutionary ones, fail, fail at heart, is because they fail to take account of the complex and unpredictable forms of our curiosity? Which doesn't want to push ahead, which always wants to say, Hey, that's interesting, let's stop awhile, let's take a look-see, let's retrace — let's take a different turn? What's the hurry? What's the rush? Let's *explore*.

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Consider that in every era of history, no matter how world-shaking its outward agenda, there has been no lack of curious people — astronomers and botanists, fossil-hunters and Arctic voyagers, not to mention humble historians — for whose spirit of stubborn and wayward inquiry we should not be ungrateful. Consider that the study of history is the very opposite, is the very counteraction of making it. Consider your seventeen-year-old history teacher, who while the Struggle for Europe reaches its frantic culmination, while we

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break through in France and the Russians race for Berlin, spares little thought for these Big Events (events of a local but still devastating nature having eclipsed for him their importance) and immerses himself instead in research work of a recondite and obsessive kind: the progress of land reclamation (and of brewing) in the eastern Fens, the proceedings of the Leem Navigation and Drainage Board, the story, culled from living memory and from records both public and intensely private, of the Crick and Atkinson families. 45

And what a strange and curious tale that turned out to be...

Yes, there's something – is there a name for it? – that doesn't care two hoots about History or what the history books call History. 50

And even while Price tells us where History's got to, even while we pool our nuclear nightmares, you can still find time–

So you're curious. So you're curious. You'd skip the fall of kings for a little by-the-way scurrility. The let me tell you

26. About the Eel 55

[Turn over

4

Or (b) Write a critical commentary on the following passage, relating it to attitudes to suffering, here and elsewhere in the play.

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To mix thyself with our high state of floods, 35
 Being no eminent courtier, but one
 That for the calmest and fresh time o'th'year
 Dost live in shallow rivers, rank'st thyself
 With silly smelts and shrimps? And darest thou
 Pass by our dog-ship without reverence?' 40
 'Oh', quoth the salmon, 'sister be at peace:
 Thank Jupiter we both have passed the net,
 Our value never can be truly known
 Till in the fisher's basket we be shown.
 I'th'market then my price may be the higher 45
 Even when I am nearest to the cook, and fire'.
 So to great men the moral may be stretched:
 'Men oft are valued high, when th'are most wretched'.
 But come, whither you please: I am armed 'gainst misery,
 Bent to all sways of the oppressor's will. 50
 'There's no deep valley, but near some great hill'.

Exeunt.

Act 3, Scene 5

[Turn over

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE: *Twelfth Night*

5

Either (a) 'In *Twelfth Night* disguise is nothing more than a device to drive the comic plot.'

Discuss the significance of disguise and deception in *Twelfth Night*.

Or (b) Write a critical commentary on the following extract, paying particular attention to the portrayal of Malvolio here, and elsewhere in the play.

<i>Olivia:</i>	Go call him hither. <i>As Maria goes to call him, enter Malvolio, cross-gartered and wearing yellow stockings</i> I am as mad as he, If sad and merry madness equal be. How now, Malvolio!	
<i>Malvolio:</i>	Sweet lady, ho, ho!	5
<i>Olivia:</i>	Smil'st thou? I sent for thee upon a sad occasion. Sad, lady? I could be sad. This does make some obstruction in the blood, this cross-gartering, but what of that? If it please the eye of one, it is with me as the very true sonnet is, 'Please one, and please all'.	10
<i>Olivia:</i>	Why, how dost thou, man? What is the matter with thee?	
<i>Malvolio:</i>	Not black in my mind, though yellow in my legs. It did come to his hands, and commands shall be executed. I think we do know the sweet roman hand.	15
<i>Olivia:</i>	Wilt thou go to bed, Malvolio?	
<i>Malvolio:</i>	'To bed? Ay, sweetheart, and I'll come to thee.' <i>He kisses his hand</i>	
<i>Olivia:</i>	God comfort thee. Why dost thou smile so, and kiss thy hand so oft?	20
<i>Maria:</i>	How do you, Malvolio?	
<i>Malvolio:</i>	At your request? Yes, nightingales answer daws.	
<i>Maria:</i>	Why appear you with this ridiculous boldness before my lady?	
<i>Malvolio:</i>	'Be not afraid of greatness'— 'twas well writ.	25
<i>Olivia:</i>	What mean'st thou by that, Malvolio?	
<i>Malvolio:</i>	'Some are born great'—	
<i>Olivia:</i>	Ha?	
<i>Malvolio:</i>	'Some achieve greatness'—	
<i>Olivia:</i>	What sayst thou?	30
<i>Malvolio:</i>	'And some have greatness thrust upon them.'	
<i>Olivia:</i>	Heaven restore thee.	
<i>Malvolio:</i>	'Remember who commended thy yellow stockings'—	
<i>Olivia:</i>	'Thy yellow stockings'?	
<i>Malvolio:</i>	'And wished to see thee cross-gartered.'	35
<i>Olivia:</i>	'Cross-gartered'?	
<i>Malvolio:</i>	'Go to, thou art made, if thou desir'st to be so.'	
<i>Olivia:</i>	Am I made?	
<i>Malvolio:</i>	'If not, let me see thee a servant still.'	
<i>Olivia:</i>	Why, this is very midsummer madness.	40
	<i>Enter a Servant</i>	

- Servant:* Madam, the young gentleman of the Count Orsino's is returned. I could hardly entreat him back. He attends your ladyship's pleasure.
- Olivia:* I'll come to him. *Exit Servant* 45
 Good Maria, let this fellow be looked to. Where's my cousin Toby? Let some of my people have a special care of him, I would not have him miscarry for the half of my dowry.
- Exeunt Olivia and Maria, severally* 50
- Malvolio:* Oh ho, do you come near me now? No worse man than Sir Toby to look to me. This concurs directly with the letter, she sends him on purpose, that I may appear stubborn to him, for she incites me to that in the letter. 'Cast thy humble slough', says she, 'be opposite with a kinsman, surly with servants, let thy tongue tang arguments of state, put thyself into the trick of singularity', and consequently sets down the manner how, as a sad face, a reverend carriage, a slow tongue, in the habit of some sir of note, and so forth. I have limed her, but it is Jove's doing, and Jove make me thankful. And when she went away now, 'let this fellow be looked to'. Fellow!—not 'Malvolio', nor after my degree, but 'fellow'. Why, everything adheres together that no dram of a scruple, no scruple of a scruple, no obstacle, no incredulous or unsafe circumstance—what can be said?—nothing that can be can come between me and the full prospect of my hopes. Well, Jove, not I, is the doer of this, and he is to be thanked. 65

Act 3, Scene 4

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