

# YISHUN JUNIOR COLLEGE PRELIMINARY EXAMINATION 2014

**LITERATURE IN ENGLISH  
HIGHER 2**

**9748/03**

Paper 3 The Individual and Society in Literature

**Thursday 21 August 2014  
3 hours**

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 pages in texts (e.g. use of post-its, tape flags or paper clips) is not permitted.



## **READ THESE INSTRUCTIONS FIRST**

Write your name and CTG 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, hand in each of your three answers **separately**.

All questions in this paper carry equal marks.

This document consists of **6** printed pages and **1** blank page.

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## SECTION A

Answer one question in this section.

1

**Either (a)** Comment critically on the poem below by Stephen Spender (1909-1995), paying particular attention to ways in which it comments on social injustice and relating it to the theme of the individual and society in literature.

**An Elementary School Classroom in a Slum**

Far far from gusty waves these children's faces.  
 Like rootless weeds the torn hair round their paleness.  
 The tall girl with her weighed-down head. The paper-  
 Seeming boy with rat's eyes. The stunted unlucky heir  
 Of twisted bones, reciting a father's gnarled disease, 5  
 His lesson from his desk. At back of the dim class  
 One unnoted, mild and young: his eyes live in a dream,  
 Of squirrels' game, in tree room, other than this.

On sour cream walls, donations. Shakespeare's head,  
 Cloudless at dawn, civilized dome riding all cities. 10  
 Belled, flowery, Tyrolese valley<sup>1</sup>. Open-handed map  
 Awarding the world its world. And yet, for these  
 Children, these windows, not this world, are world,  
 Where all their future's painted with a fog,  
 A narrow street sealed in with a lead sky, 15  
 Far far from rivers, capes, and stars of words.

Surely, Shakespeare is wicked, and the map a bad example  
 With ships and sun and love tempting them to steal--  
 For lives that slyly turn in their cramped holes  
 From fog to endless night? On their slag<sup>2</sup> heap, these children 20  
 Wear skins peeped through by bones, and spectacles of steel  
 With mended glass, like bottle bits in slag.  
 Tyrol is wicked; map's promising a fable:  
 All of their time and space are foggy slum.  
 So blot their maps with slums as big as doom. 25

Unless, governor, teacher, inspector, visitor,  
 This map becomes their window and these windows  
 That open on their lives like crouching tombs  
 Break, O break open, till they break the town  
 And show the children to the fields and all their world 30  
 Azure on their sands, to let their tongues  
 Run naked into books, the white and green leaves open  
 The history theirs whose language is the sun.

<sup>1</sup> A picturesque valley located either in Tyrol in Austria, or South Tyrol in Italy.

<sup>2</sup> Stony waste matter.

- Or (b)** The following passage is from Charles Portis' novel 'True Grit' (1968), which is set in the 1870s, shortly after the Civil War. It tells the story of a fourteen-year-old girl's quest to avenge her father. In the passage, this girl, Mattie Ross, tells of how her father was killed by his hired worker, Tom Chaney, while on a trip to buy some ponies.

Write a critical appreciation of the passage, relating its themes and style to the topic of the individual and society.

Papa had right around two hundred and fifty dollars in his purse as I had reason to know since I kept his books for him. Mama was never any good at sums and she could hardly spell cat. I do not boast of my own gifts in that direction. Figures and letters are not everything. Like Martha I have always been agitated and troubled by the cares of the day but my mother had a serene and loving heart. She was like Mary and had chosen "that good part."<sup>1</sup> The two gold pieces that Papa carried concealed in his clothes were a marriage gift from my Grandfather Spurling in Monterey, California. 5

Little did Papa realize that morning that he was never to see us or hold us again, nor would he ever again harken to the meadowlarks of Yell County trilling a joyous anthem to spring. 10

The news came like a thunderclap. Here is what happened. Papa and Tom Chaney arrived in Fort Smith and took a room at the Monarch boardinghouse. They called on Stonehill at his stock barn and looked over the ponies. It fell out that there was not a mare in the lot, or a stallion for that matter. The Texas cow-boys rode nothing but geldings for some cow-boy reason of their own and you can imagine they are no good for breeding purposes. But Papa was not to be turned back. He was determined to own some of those little brutes and on the second day he bought four of them for one hundred dollars, bringing Stonehill down from his asking price of one hundred and forty dollars. It was a good enough buy. 15 20

They made plans to leave the next morning. That night Tom Chaney went to a barroom and got into a game of cards with some "riffraff" like himself and lost his wages. He did not take the loss like a man but went back to the room at the boardinghouse and sulked up like a possum. He had a bottle of whiskey and he drank that. Papa was sitting in the parlor talking to some drummers. By and by Chaney came out of the bedroom with his rifle. He said he had been cheated and was going back to the barroom and get his money. Papa said if he had been cheated then they had best go talk to the law about it. Chaney would not listen. Papa followed him outside and told him to surrender the rifle as he was in no fit state to start a quarrel with a gun in his hand. My father was not armed at that time. 25 30

Tom Chaney raised his rifle and shot him in the forehead, killing him instantly. There was not more provocation than that and I tell it as it was told to me by the high sheriff of Sebastian County. Some people might say, well, what business was it of Frank Ross to meddle? My answer is this: he was trying to do that short devil a good turn. Chaney was a tenant and Papa felt responsibility. He was his brother's keeper. Does that answer your question? 35

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<sup>1</sup> Mattie refers to the book of Luke (chapter 10, verses 38-42) in the Bible, which tells the story of two sisters, Martha and Mary. When Jesus visited them, Martha was caught up in the duties of service. She complained to Jesus that Mary was not helping her, only to be told that Mary had chosen the better thing to be concerned about.

Now the drummers did not rush out to grab Chaney or shoot him but instead scattered like poultry while Chaney took my father's purse from his warm body and ripped open the trouser band and took the gold pieces too. I cannot say how he knew about them. When he had finished his thieving he raced back to the end of the street and struck the night watchman at the stock barn a fierce blow to the mouth with his rifle stock, knocking him silly. He put a bridle on Papa's horse Judy and rode out bareback. Darkness swallowed him up. He might have taken the time to saddle the horse or hitched up three spans of mules to a Concord stagecoach and smoked a pipe as it seems no one in that city was after him. He had mistaken the drummers for men. "The wicked flee when none pursueth."<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Mattie quotes from the book of Proverbs (chapter 28, verse 1) in the Bible, which contains the wise sayings of Solomon regarding life and human nature. Solomon is a king known for his wisdom and wealth.

**SECTION B**

**Answer one question in this section, using two texts that you have studied.  
The texts used in this section cannot be used in Section C.**

**2**

**Either a)** “Nature versus Nurture”.

Compare the extent to which society impacts identity in **two** texts you have studied on the individual and society in literature.

**Or b)** Comment critically on the presentation and significance of inequality in the societies of **two** texts you have studied for the topic of the individual and society in literature.

## SECTION C

Answer one question in this section, using one text that you have studied.  
The text used in this section cannot be used in Section B.

Philip Larkin: *Collected Poems*

3

Either (a) “Desire is always the presence of absence.”

Discuss the individual’s experience of desire in his social environment. You should refer to at least **two** poems from your selection.

Or (b) Examine Larkin’s poetic presentation of the individual’s struggle with belonging and estrangement in his social setting. You should refer to at least **two** poems from your selection.

Tennessee Williams: *A Streetcar Named Desire*

4

Either (a) Comment critically on how *A Streetcar Named Desire* presents the idea of denial and its impact on both the individual and society.

Or (b) Discuss the ways in which *A Streetcar Named Desire* portrays gender relations, and relate it to the theme of the individual and society in literature.

William Shakespeare: *Othello*

5

Either (a) “Myself will straight aboard, and to the state  
This heavy act with heavy heart relate.” (Act 5.2)

Examine how the playwright makes use of the relationship between private and public selves in *Othello*, relating it to the theme of the individual and society in literature.

Or (b) How does Shakespeare’s depiction of the Venetians in *Othello* contribute to your understanding of social relationships between the individual and society?

End of Paper