

# YISHUN JUNIOR COLLEGE PRELIMINARY EXAMINATION 2014

**LITERATURE IN ENGLISH**

**8811/01**

Paper 1 Reading Literature

**Monday 18 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 **7** printed pages.

## SECTION A

1

**Either (a)** Write a critical commentary on the following poem by Sylvia Plath (1932 – 1963), paying particular attention to ways in which your response is shaped by the poet's language, style and form.

**Insomniac**

The night is only a sort of carbon paper,  
 Blueblack, with the much-poked periods of stars  
 Letting in the light, peephole after peephole ---  
 A bonewhite light, like death, behind all things.  
 Under the eyes of the stars and the moon's rictus 5  
 He suffers his desert pillow, sleeplessness  
 Stretching its fine, irritating sand in all directions.

Over and over the old, granular movie  
 Exposes embarrassments--the mizzling days  
 Of childhood and adolescence, sticky with dreams, 10  
 Parental faces on tall stalks, alternately stern and tearful,  
 A garden of buggy rose that made him cry.  
 His forehead is bumpy as a sack of rocks.  
 Memories jostle each other for face-room like obsolete film stars.

He is immune to pills: red, purple, blue --- 15  
 How they lit the tedium of the protracted evening!  
 Those sugary planets whose influence won for him  
 A life baptized in no-life for a while,  
 And the sweet, drugged waking of a forgetful baby.  
 Now the pills are worn-out and silly, like classical gods. 20  
 Their poppy-sleepy colors do him no good.

His head is a little interior of grey mirrors.  
 Each gesture flees immediately down an alley  
 Of diminishing perspectives, and its significance  
 Drains like water out the hole at the far end. 25  
 He lives without privacy in a lidless room,  
 The bald slots of his eyes stiffened wide-open  
 On the incessant heat-lightning flicker of situations.

Nightlong, in the granite yard, invisible cats  
 Have been howling like women, or damaged instruments. 30  
 Already he can feel daylight, his white disease,  
 Creeping up with her hateful of trivial repetitions.  
 The city is a map of cheerful twitters now,  
 And everywhere people, eyes mica-silver and blank,  
 Are riding to work in rows, as if recently brainwashed. 35

- Or (b) Write a critical commentary on the following poem by Louis MacNeice (1907 – 1963), paying particular attention to ways in which your response is shaped by the poet's language, style and form.

### Meeting Point

Time was away and somewhere else, There were two glasses and two chairs And two people with the one pulse (Somebody stopped the moving stairs): Time was away and somewhere else.	5
And they were neither up nor down; The stream's music did not stop Flowing through heather, limpid brown, Although they sat in a coffee shop And they were neither up nor down.	10
The bell was silent in the air Holding its inverted poise - Between the clang and clang a flower, A brazen calyx of no noise: The bell was silent in the air.	15
The camels crossed the miles of sand That stretched around the cups and plates; The desert was their own, they planned To portion out the stars and dates: The camels crossed the miles of sand.	20
Time was away and somewhere else. The waiter did not come, the clock Forgot them and the radio waltz Came out like water from a rock: Time was away and somewhere else.	25
Her fingers flicked away the ash That bloomed again in tropic trees: Not caring if the markets crash When they had forests such as these, Her fingers flicked away the ash.	30
God or whatever means the Good Be praised that time can stop like this, That what the heart has understood Can verify in the body's peace God or whatever means the Good.	35
Time was away and she was here And life no longer what it was, The bell was silent in the air And all the room one glow because Time was away and she was here.	40

## SECTION B

Kazuo Ishiguro: *The Remains of the Day*

2

- Either a)** 'A journey of self-discovery'. How far do you think this is a helpful description of the novel?
- Or b)** Write a critical appreciation of the following passage, relating it to the presentation of work and propriety, here and elsewhere in the novel.

She put her vase down on the table in front of me, then glancing around my pantry again said: 'If you wish, Mr Stevens, I might bring in some more cuttings for you.'

'Miss Kenton, I appreciate your kindness. But this is not a room of entertainment. I am happy to have distractions kept to a minimum.'

'But surely, Mr Stevens, there is no need to keep your room so stark and bereft of colour.'

'It has served me perfectly well this far as it is, Miss Kenton, though I appreciate your thoughts. In fact, since you are here, there was a certain matter I wished to raise with you.'

'Oh, really, Mr Stevens.'

Yes, Miss Kenton, just a small matter. I happened to be walking past the kitchen yesterday when I heard you calling to someone named William.'

'Is that so, Mr Stevens?'

'Indeed, Miss Kenton. I did hear you call several times for "William". May I ask who it was you were addressing by that name?'

'Why, Mr Stevens, I should think I was addressing your father. There are no other Williams in this house, I take it.'

'It's an easy enough error to have made,' I said with a small smile. 'May I ask you in future, Miss Kenton, to address my father as "Mr Stevens"? If you are referring to him to a third party, then you may wish to call him "Mr Stevens senior" to distinguish him from myself. I'm most grateful, Miss Kenton.'

With that I turned back to my papers. But to my surprise, Miss Kenton did not take her leave.' Excuse me, Mr Stevens,' she said after a moment.

'Yes, Miss Kenton.'

'I am afraid I am not quite clear what you are saying. I have in the past been accustomed to addressing under-servants by their Christian names and saw no reason to do otherwise in this house.'

'A most understandable error, Miss Kenton. However, if you will consider the situation for a moment, you may come to see the inappropriateness of someone such as yourself talking "down" to one such as my father.'

'I am still not clear what you are getting at, Mr Stevens. You say someone such as myself, but I am as far as I understand the housekeeper of this house, while your father is the under-butler.'

'He is of course in title the under-butler, as you say. But I am surprised your powers of observation have not already made it clear to you that he is in reality more than that. A great deal more.'

'No doubt I have been extremely unobservant, Mr Stevens. I had only observed that your father was an able under-butler and addressed him accordingly. It must indeed have been most galling for him to be so addressed by one such as I.'

'Miss Kenton, it is clear from your tone you simply have not observed my

father. If you had done so, the inappropriateness of someone of your age and standing addressing him as “William” should have been self-evident to you.’

‘Mr Stevens, I may not have been a housekeeper for long, but I would say that in the time I have been, my abilities have attracted some very generous remarks.’ 45

‘I do not doubt your competence for one moment, Miss Kenton, But a hundred things should have indicated to you that that my father is a figure of unusual distinction from whom you may learn a wealth of things were you prepared to be more observant.’ 50

I am most indebted to you for your advice, Mr Stevens. So do please tell me, just what marvellous things might I learn from observing your father?’

‘I would have thought it obvious to anyone with eyes, Miss Kenton.’

‘But we have already established, have we not, that I am particularly deficient in that respect.’ 55

‘Miss Kenton, if you are under the impression you have already at your age perfected yourself, you will never rise to the heights you are no doubt capable of. I might point out, for instance, you are still often unsure of what goes where and which item is which.’ 60

‘This seemed to take the wind out of Miss Kenton’s sails somewhat. Indeed, for a moment, she looked a little upset. Then she said:

‘I had a little difficulty on first arriving, but that is surely only normal.’

‘Ah, there you are, Miss Kenton. If you had observed my father who arrived in this house a week after you did, you will have seen that his house knowledge is perfect and was so almost from the time he set foot in Darlington Hall.’ 65

‘Miss Kenton seemed to think about this before saying a little sulkily:

‘I am sure Mr Stevens senior is very good at his job, but I assure you, Mr Stevens, I am very good at mine. I will remember to address your father by his full title in future. Now, if you would please excuse me.’ 70

Day Two – Morning  
Salisbury

## SECTION C

Arthur Miller: *All My Sons*

3

**Either (a)** Miller presents his female characters as “ably waging fierce war on the domestic battlefield”. How far do you agree with this statement?

**Or (b)** Write a critical commentary on the passage below, paying close attention to the presentation of faith and certainty here and elsewhere in the play.

Chris George	Are you through now? <i>(surging up at him)</i> I'm not through now! <i>(Back to Ann.)</i> Dad was afraid. He wanted Joe there if he was going to do it. But Joe can't come down ... He's sick. Sick! He suddenly gets the flu! Suddenly! But he promised to take responsibility. Do you understand what I'm saying? On the telephone you can't have responsibility! In a court you can always deny a phone call and that's exactly what he did. They knew he was a liar the first time, but in the appeal they believed that rotten lie and now Joe is a big shot and your father is the patsy. <i>(He gets up.)</i> Now what're you going to do? Eat his food, sleep in his bed? Answer me; what're you going to do?	5  10
Chris George Chris Ann George	What're you going to do, George? He's too smart for me, I can't prove a phone call. Then how dare you come in here with that rot? George, the court - The court didn't know your father! But you know him. You know in your heart Joe did it.	15
Chris George Chris Ann	<i>(whirling him around)</i> Lower your voice or I'll throw you out of here! She knows. She knows. <i>(to Ann)</i> Get him out of here, Ann. Get him out of here. George, I know everything you've said. Dad told me that whole thing in court, and they -	20
George Ann	<i>(almost a scream)</i> The court did not know him, Annie! Shhh! - But he'll say anything, George. You know how quick he can lie.	25
George Chris George Chris George	<i>(turning to Chris, with deliberation)</i> I'll ask you something, and look me in the eye when you answer me. I'll look you in the eye. You know your father - I know him well. And he's the kind of boss to let a hundred and twenty one cylinder heads be repaired and shipped out of his shop without even knowing it?	30  35
Chris George	He's that kind of boss. And that's the same Joe Keller who never left his shop without first going around to see that all the lights were out.	
Chris George	<i>(with growing anger)</i> The same Joe Keller. The same man who knows how many minutes a day his workers spend in the toilet.	40
Chris	The same man.	

George	And my father, that frightened mouse who'd never buy a shirt without somebody along - that man would do such a thing on his own?	45
Chris	On his own. And because he's a frightened mouse this is another thing he'd do - Throw the blame on somebody else in court but it didn't work, but with a fool like you it works!	
Ann	<i>(deeply shaken)</i> Don't talk like that!	
Chris	<i>(sits facing George)</i> Tell me, George. What happened? The court record was good enough for you all these years, why isn't it good now? Why did you believe it all these years?	50
George	<i>(after a slight pause)</i> Because you believed it... That's the truth, Chris. I believed everything, because I thought you did. But today I heard it from his mouth. From his mouth it's altogether different than the record. Anyone who knows him, and knows your father, will believe it from his mouth. Your Dad took everything we have. I can't beat that. But she's one item he's not going to grab. <i>(He turns to Ann)</i> Get your things. Everything they have is covered with blood. You're not the kind of girl who can live with that. Get your things.	55
Chris	Ann... You're not going to believe that, are you?	
Ann	<i>(goes to him)</i> You know it's not true, don't you?	
George	How can he tell you? It's his father. <i>(To Chris)</i> None of these things ever even cross your mind?	60
Chris	Yes, they crossed my mind. Anything can cross your mind!	
George	<i>He knows, Annie. He knows!</i>	65
Chris	The voice of God!	
George	Then why isn't your name on the business? Explain that to her!	
Chris	What the hell has that got to do with - ?	70
George	Annie, why isn't his name on it?	
Chris	Even when I don't own it!	
George	Who're you kidding? Who gets it when he dies? <i>(To Ann)</i> Open your eyes, you know the both of them, isn't that the first thing they'd do, the way they love each other? - J. O. Keller and Son? <i>(Pause. Ann looks from him to Chris)</i> I'll settle it. Do you want to settle it, or are you afraid to?	75
Chris	What do you mean?	
George	Let me go up and talk to your father. In ten minutes you'll have the answer. Or are you afraid of the answer?	80
Chris	I'm not afraid of the answer. I know the answer. But my mother isn't well and I don't want a fight here now.	
George	Let me go to him.	
Chris	You're not going to start a fight here now.	
George	<i>(To Ann)</i> What more do you want! <i>(There is a sound of footsteps in the house).</i>	85
Ann	<i>(turns her head suddenly toward house)</i> Someone's coming.	
Chris	<i>(to George, quietly)</i> You won't say anything now.	

End of Paper