



VICTORIA JUNIOR COLLEGE, SINGAPORE

Higher 2

LITERATURE IN ENGLISH PRELIMINARY EXAMINATION

9748/03

Paper 3 The Individual and Society in Literature

September 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 text (e.g. use of post-its, tape flags or paper clips) is not permitted.

READ THESE INSTRUCTIONS FIRST

Write your class and name 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, fasten the essays separately and label them accurately.

All questions in this paper carry equal marks.

This document consists of **6** printed pages.

Section A

Answer one question in this section

1

Either (a) The following extract is from Anita Desai's *Baumgartner's Bombay*, detailing the experience of Hugo Baumgartner in India during the Second World War. He is the son of a Jewish merchant and was born and raised in Berlin. He was made to travel to India due to the onset of the war when Berlin was no longer safe for Jews. Farrokh is the owner of a café in Bombay.

Write a critical commentary of the following passage, relating it to the theme of the individual and society in literature.

He had lived in this land for fifty years – or if not fifty then so nearly as to make no difference – and it no longer seemed fantastic and exotic; it was more utterly familiar now than any other landscape on earth. Yet the eyes of the people who passed by glanced at him who was still strange and unfamiliar to them, and all said: *Firanghi*, foreigner. For the Indian sun had not been good to his skin, it had not tanned and roasted him to the colour of a native. What was the colour of a native anyway? To begin with, everyone had seemed to him 'dark' but after all these years he separated them into boot-black like the juice-*wallah*¹ with his oranges and pith and pulp, sallow yellow like Farrokh in his tubercular café, dusky chocolate, coffee-bean, tea-leaf, peanut-shell, leprous purple, shade merging into shade till all blurred into brown. He was none of these: his face blazed like an over-ripe tomato in the sun on which warts gathered like flies. His hair would not turn dark; it stood out around the bald centre like a white ruff, stained somewhat yellow. Even if he had used hair-dye and boot-polish, what could he have done about his eyes? It was not that they were blue – far from it; his mother, holding him on her knee and clapping hands in a game, had called them 'dark eyes, *dunkele Augen*', but Indians did not seem to think them so. Their faces sneered '*firanghi*, foreigner', however good-naturedly, however lacking in malice. Still, the word, the name struck coldly and he winced, hunching his shoulders and trying to avoid the contact he knew they hated because contact contaminated. Accepting – but not accepted; that was the story of his life, the one thread that ran through it all. In Germany he had been dark – his darkness marked him the Jew, *der Jude*. In India he was fair – and that marked him the *firanghi*. In both lands, the unacceptable. Perhaps even where his cats were concerned, he was that – man, not feline, not theirs. He nodded thoughtfully; *ja*, the cats, they always knew. Still, it was a long time since he had felt so acutely aware of his outlandishness. It had come to him at some moments, in a drenching of terror that he could remember even now, but for a long time it had not been as it was today. Today he was disturbed in a new way. Strangely, his over-familiarity with the scene had served to wipe out its colours, its effects, leaving it dull, unworthy of notice. On it was imposed an image with a marvelous sharpness – the image of the boy, the sick boy slumped across the table. He did not know why. He was not concerned about him, why should he be? What did the boy mean to him with his filthy yellow curls and his ridiculous silver bracelet? There was no reason why he should be stirred by his fairness or his filth, or his misfortune. Let Farrokh boot him out on the street to make his way to the docks, to the railway station, to the consulate, or even go back to Goa² for another round of

¹ *Wallah* is a person who is associated with a particular work or who performs a specific duty or service.

² Goa is a state in India.

hashish³. If things were worse, let the police deal with him, or call an ambulance. Baumgartner would not involve himself with any of it, Baumgartner knew better than to do that. Then why should he continue to think of that fallen head, that helpless posture when there was so much to distract him, so much colour and sound and business and life to demand his attention?

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Well, he knew. He might try to hurry away and rid himself of the fact but it was there: the boy was German, was he not? Yes, that was it. A German from Germany. He had sensed, he had *smelt* the German in him like a cat might smell another and know its history, its territory. Farrokh had told him nothing – to Farrokh they were just *firanghi*. No one had mentioned Germany – and had not needed to; one German could tell another always. In the camp, they had looked at each other covertly, and not only was German-ness stamped like a number on each, but further information as well – that one was a Jew, another Aryan. The looks they had exchanged had been the blades of knives slid quickly and quietly between the ribs, with the silence of guilt.

40

³ Hashish is the flowering tops and leaves of Indian hemp smoked, chewed, or drunk as a narcotic and intoxicant.

- Or (b) Write a critical appreciation of the following poem, *The Chimney Sweeper* by William Blake, relating it to the theme of the individual and society in literature.

The Chimney Sweeper

When my mother died I was very young,
And my father sold me while yet my tongue
Could scarcely cry " 'weep! 'weep! 'weep! 'weep!"
So your chimneys I sweep, and in soot I sleep.

There's little Tom Dacre, who cried when his head,
That curled like a lamb's back, was shaved; so I said,
"Hush Tom, never mind it, for when your head's bare,
You know that the soot cannot spoil your white hair." 5

And so he was quiet, and that very night,
As Tom was a-sleeping he had such a sight! 10
That thousands of sweepers, Dick, Joe, Ned, and Jack,
Were all of them locked up in coffins of black;

And by came an Angel, who had a bright key,
And he opened the coffins and set them all free;
Then down a green plain, leaping, laughing they run,
And wash in a river and shine in the Sun. 15

Then naked and white, all their bags left behind,
They rise upon clouds, and sport in the wind.
And the angel told Tom, if he'd be a good boy,
He'd have God for his father and never want joy. 20

And so Tom awoke; and we rose in the dark,
And got with our bags and our brushes to work.
Though the morning was cold, Tom was happy and warm;
So if all do their duty, they need not fear harm.

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)** With detailed reference to **two** texts you have studied, compare and contrast the presentation of self-knowledge in relation to the theme of the individual and society.
- Or (b)** Critically examine society's persecution of deviance in **two** texts you have studied, relating your response more generally to the theme of the individual and society.

Section C

**Answer one question in this section, on 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) Write a critical commentary on the presentation of fear in Larkin's poetry. You should refer in detail to **two** or **three** poems.

Or (b) 'What else can I answer . . . At the end of another year?' (*Toads Revisited*)

Discuss Larkin's presentation of the individual's lack of choice. You should refer in detail to **two** or **three** poems.

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE: *Othello*

4

Either (a) Critically examine the presentation of prejudice in the play in relation to the theme of the individual and society.

Or (b) "What may you be? Are you of good or evil?" (Act 5 Scene 1)

Critically examine Shakespeare's presentation of the difficulty in determining a man's true character.

WOLE SOYINKA: *Death and the King's Horseman*

5

Either (a) "Life is honour. It ends when honour ends." (Scene 1)

Discuss the presentation of honour in the play.

Or (b) Critically examine the role and function of women in *Death and the King's Horseman*.

End of Paper