

**Temasek Junior College**  
**English Literature Prelim Examinations Answer Scheme**  
**H2 Paper 1**

**Section A:**

**1a) “The Trout” and “The Night Toad”**

Suggested Points for Discussion:

<b>Imagery</b>
Poem A uses the personification of the trout and the characterisation of the man as a deity to critique the hypocrisy behind the man’s self-importance and his disregard for the trout, while Poem B uses the personification of the toad and the ironic characterisation of humans as animals to underscore the cruelty of human encounters with animals in nature.
<b>Choice of Diction</b>
Both poems use contrasting choice of diction associated with motion and stillness to highlight the vulnerability of the trout and toad in the face of an intrusive human force. The choice of diction associated with motion ‘parted’, ‘ease’ and ‘tilt’ evoke a sense of caution that reveals the calculated movements of the persona in A as he plots to trap the trout. Juxtaposed against the choice of diction ‘lay’ and ‘dream’, tension is generated as the trout seems somewhat oblivious to the advances of the persona. <b>In contrast</b> , the choice of diction associated with stillness – ‘dead’, ‘quiet’ – is used in B to highlight the skilful manner in which the toad has camouflaged himself as he is ‘almost a dead leaf’ that ‘sits so quietly’ to the point that one can ‘hardly see him’. When juxtaposed against the choice of diction associated with motion – his ‘pumping’, ‘quick’ breath – the toad’s vigilance is emphasised, suggesting that underlying the stillness lies an awareness of an impending danger, also suggested by the ominous image of the ‘dead leaf’
<b>Form</b>
Topic Sentence: Written in regular quatrains, form is used in Poem A to create a sense of control that mirrors the deliberate movements of the human as a predator to catch the trout, his prey. In contrast, the free verse of Poem B accentuates the shifting predator-prey dynamics in the encounter between man and the toad.

**1b) “My Father is Shrinking” and “Climbing My Grandfather”**

<b>Imagery</b>
The use of corporeal imagery in both poems portray the effects of ageing. However, in Poem A, the persona observes the debilitating process of her father “shrinking” and weakening before her eyes, which invites sympathy for the old and their plight. In Poem B however, these corporeal images convey instead a sense of strength that marks the grandfather who is vital and looms instead as someone formidably powerful in the eyes of the child persona.
<b>Tone</b>
In Poem A, there is a contemplative tone which increases in sorrow and poignancy as the persona notes the gradual yet startling changes as her father lessens, literally and figuratively due to old age. In contrast, the contemplative tone in B exposes the childlike wonderment and great admiration of the persona for his grandfather who remains undimmed by old age.
<b>Form</b>
Both poems are written in free verse. However, Poem A seems to be far more regular and thus is noticeably different from B. Poem A’s attempt at establishing a structure is reflective of the persona’s desire to prevent her father’s shrinking, control she wishes she had but painfully, does not. This can be seen from the increasing lines across stanzas as well which run contrary to the degeneration, the lessening of her father. In Poem B, the frequent use of caesura disrupts the rhythm of the lines, reflecting the laborious effort of climbing his grandfather, whom he likens to a mountain whose “summit” he wishes to reach.

## **Section B**

**2a) “This is a novel which offers as a solution, growth, balance and tolerance”. How far do you agree with this statement in light of Wharton’s narrative concerns in *The Age of Innocence*?**

General Comments and Points for Discussion:

- Two possible structures: You could either state one (massive) problem and demonstrate how Balance+Tolerance leads to genuine Growth and thus, we arrive at the solution to whatever problem first articulated

OR

- You can demonstrate how Growth, Balance and Tolerance are EACH solutions to various problems
- Please do not answer the question entirely in the negative. Because of the way the quote is phrased, you cannot simply state the consequences if there

is no growth, balance or tolerance. You will not be addressing the “as a solution” part of the quote. You can bring it up in the course of developing your argument but you **MUST** eventually get to the benefits of growth/balance/tolerance if you want to fully answer the question.

- Change as a solution to the stagnancy of society in terms of accepting “new blood” and “new money” such as foreigners (Beaufort) and those who are different (Ellen and Mrs Lemuel Struthers). They introduce new ways of doing things, new types of acquaintances and experiences beyond New York’s narrow social pyramid.
- Tolerance as a solution to the irrational fear of the foreigner and foreign things, and difference For example, the society’s tolerance and gradual assimilation of that which is different will result in more growth for the individual as well. Or the tolerance of prominent individuals to difference is what results in society as a whole, gradually learning to accept that difference.
- Balance as a solution to the conflict between personal desires and social duty. While there is space for personal desires (e.g. Ellen and Newland can continue to exist in each other’s lives, Ellen’s refusal to return to Olenski), it needs to be mitigated by social duty as well/not fulfilled at the expense of duty to society (only together if they are apart, Ellen does not seek a divorce after realising how much scandal it would bring to her family). Newland eventually giving up Ellen because May is pregnant would be a good example as well.

**2b) Write a critical commentary on the following extract, relating to Wharton’s narrative style here and elsewhere in the novel.**

Main issues presented here via narrative techniques:

- -Struggle with reality/the need to carry out one’s social duty, specifically in a marriage with a dutiful spouse (personal desires vs. social duty)
- -Function of May and Archer: carrying out one’s social duties even though they may be tedious or dull in contrast with the refusal to do so/attempt to escape social duties (May’s industrious devotion vs. Archer’s loss of control and cruel selfishness)
- -Wharton’s use of setting as a reminder that one must come back to real things and reality, as opposed to focusing on imagined worlds beyond one’s world (in an attempt to avoid reality. Significantly, Newland is leaning out into darkness—doesn’t that remind you about Ellen’s comment about needing to look at the Gorgon and that doing so will prevent one from living in/looking at “blessed darkness”?)

- -the use of the light to highlight/draw attention to what Newland ought to be doing/which holds May up as a good example of spousal devotion and doing one's duty. You can combine this with the symbols of the betrothal sapphire and the "broad" gold wedding band which also serve as reminders of the commitment he made to May
- -the use of free indirect discourse which reveals Newland's narrative perspective that is flawed and which in turn, highlight his shortcomings (ironic because he is so focused on May's that he cannot see his own). Here, you can mention the literary allusion i.e. reading Michelet and how this functions as a warning sign about the reliability of Newland's perspective on matters
- -use of free indirect discourse which reveals the omniscient narrator's perspective which then presents May's devotion to what she perceives as her duty to Newland. Also the omniscient narrator's commentary on Newland's failure to grasp the "enormity" of standing there looking at May and wishing she were dead; also see the comment on his "sick soul".

### **Section C**

#### **3a) Write an essay on Webster's presentation of sexual desire in *The Duchess of Malfi*.**

General Comments and Points for Discussion:

- Sexual desire in itself is not immoral. You need to define the ways in which sexual desire is presented and link it up to Webster's agenda.
- Sexual desire which is taboo/forbidden/unnatural which should be curbed but left unrestrained, leads to jealousy and revenge. Ferdinand would be the example to use.
- Sexual desire that is unrestrained and focused on self-gratification which can then be defined as lust and associated with immorality. Several nobles, including the Cardinal and Ferdinand, do not control their lust and this leads to their downfall. They also in turn corrupt others because of their own corrupted desires (lust).
- Men's misogyny and hypocrisy exposed via the common perception of women's desires as merely being base, animalistic lust which then warrants guiding and controlling women with a firm hand.
- Sexual desire that is pure and legitimately fulfilled within the bounds of a marriage. This highlights the Duchess' purity and nobility, and questions the legitimacy of the brothers' revenge. Sexual desire as a reflection of genuine love and affection—contrast Julia's appreciation of Bosola's form with the Duchess' admiration of Antonio's character.

**3b) Write a critical commentary on the following extract, relating it to Webster's use of dramatic technique here and elsewhere in the play.**

Possible Points:

1. The dialogue between the pilgrims challenges the conventions of a revenge tragedy by highlighting the impassive state of divine order in the world of Malfi.
  - Character function of the pilgrims
  - Skeptical / doubtful tone towards the act of banishment as a just punishment (Lines 30 – 44)
  - The ease with which the Pope falls prey to the Cardinal's 'instigation' simply based on the 'forehearing of her looseness' (Lines 33 – 39)
  - The tone of resignation towards the absence of divine punishment: 'Fortune makes this conclusion general, all things do help th' unhappy man to fall' (Lines 49 – 50)
2. Webster makes use of dramatic irony to reveal the corruption of religious authority within the state of Malfi.
  - The juxtaposition between the exultant lyrics of the song and the dialogue between the pilgrims creates dramatic irony – revealing the corruption underlying the 'noble ceremony' which is depicted on stage
  - The Cardinal's accusation of the Duchess in the previous scene (Act 3 Scene 3) – 'doth she make religion her riding-hood to keep her from the sun, and tempest' rings hollow in this scene as the audience sees the Cardinal himself using 'religion [as his] riding-hood'.
  - The Cardinal's scheming plans in the previous scene (Act 3 Scene 3) – 'I will instantly solicit the state of Ancona to have them banished' – is manifest in his manipulation of the Pope (Lines 33 – 39)
  - Juxtaposition between 'a goodlier shrine', 'a noble ceremony' with the Cardinal's violent removal of the Duchess' wedding ring (Lines 40-44)
3. The setting of the scene at the shrine of our lady of loretto and the dumbshow both serve to reveal Webster's critique of how sacred places, vestments and ornaments have become mere tools for the Cardinal's performance of honour and bravery, exposing the extent of his religious hypocrisy and how appearance belies reality.
  - Emphasis on performative elements of the dumbshow i.e. 'ceremony', 'performed', 'dumb-show', 'music', 'habit of a soldier'
  - Juxtaposition between 'very solemn music' and the glorified, exultant lyrics of song i.e. 'lay aside all those robes lie by thee; crown thy arts with arms: they'll beautify thee'