

**TEMASEK JUNIOR COLLEGE  
PRELIMINARY EXAMINATIONS  
2014**

**Higher 2 Literature**

**9748/02**

**Paper 2      Victorian Literature**

**Time            3 hours**

**INSTRUCTIONS TO ALL CANDIDATES**

Answer **three** questions; one from each of the sections.

**INFORMATION FOR CANDIDATES**

All questions in this paper carry equal marks.

You are reminded of the need for good English and clear presentation in your answers.

You are advised to spend an hour on each question.

Please begin each question on a fresh sheet of paper.

Please submit your scripts to each question separately.

## SECTION A

Answer one question in this section.

1

**Either (a)** Write a critical appreciation of the following poem by Dora Sigerson Shorter (published 1898), relating its concerns to key features of the period.

### The Vagrant Heart

O to be a woman! to be left to pique and pine, 1  
When the winds are out and calling to this vagrant heart of mine.  
Whisht! it whistles at the windows, and how can I be still ?  
There! the last leaves of the beech-tree go dancing down the hill.  
All the boats at anchor they are plunging to be free— 5  
O to be a sailor, and away across the sea!  
When the sky is black with thunder, and the sea is white with foam,  
The gray-gulls whirl up shrieking and seek their rocky home,  
Low his boat is lying leeward, how she runs upon the gale,  
As she rises with the billows, nor shakes her dripping sail. 10  
There is danger on the waters—there is joy where dangers be—  
Alas! to be a woman and the nomad's heart in me.

Ochone<sup>1</sup>! to be a woman, only sighing on the shore—  
With a soul that finds a passion for each long breaker's roar,  
With a heart that beats as restless as all the winds that blow— 15  
Thrust a cloth between her fingers, and tell her she must sew;  
Must join in empty chatter, and calculate with straws—  
For the weighing of our neighbour—for the sake of social laws.  
O chatter, chatter, chatter, when to speak is misery,  
When silence lies around your heart—and night is on the sea. 20  
So tired of little fashions that are root of all our strife,  
Of all the petty passions that upset the calm of life.  
The law of God upon the land shines steady for all time;  
The laws confused that man has made, have reason not nor rhyme.

O bird that fights the heavens, and is blown beyond the shore, 25  
Would you leave your flight and danger for a cage to fight no more?  
No more the cold of winter, or the hunger of the snow,  
Nor the winds that blow you backward from the path you wish to go?  
Would you leave your world of passion for a home that knows no riot?  
Would I change my vagrant longings for a heart more full of quiet? 30  
No!—for all its dangers, there is joy in danger too:

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<sup>1</sup> An exclamation of regret.

On, bird, and fight your tempests, and this nomad heart with you!

The seas that shake and thunder will close our mouths one day,  
The storms that shriek and whistle will blow our breaths away.  
The dust that flies and whitens will mark not where we trod.  
What matters then our judging? we are face to face with God.

35

**Or (b)** The following passage is taken from the novel *Middlemarch* (1874) by George Eliot. Write a critical appreciation of it, relating its concerns to key features of the period.

There was a general impression, however, that Lydgate was not altogether a common country doctor, and in Middlemarch at that time such an impression was significant of great things being expected from him. 1

He had been left an orphan when he was fresh from a public school. His father, a military man, had made but little provision for three children, and when the boy Tertius asked to have a medical education, it seemed easier to his guardians to grant his request by apprenticing him to a country practitioner than to make any objections on the score of family dignity. He was one of the rarer lands who early on get a decided bent and make up their minds that there is something particular in life which they would like to do for its own sake, and not because their fathers did it. Most of us who turn to any subject we love remember some morning or evening hour when we got on a high stool to reach down an untried volume, or sat with parted lips listening to a new talker, or for very lack of books began to listen to the voices within, as the first traceable beginning of our love. Something of that sort happened to Lydgate. He was a vigorous animal with a ready understanding, but no spark had yet kindled in him an intellectual passion. But, one vacation, a wet day sent him to the small home library to hunt once more for a book which might have some freshness for him: in vain! unless he took down a dusty row of volumes with grey-paper backs and dingy labels – the volumes of an old Cyclopaedia which he had never disturbed. It would at least be a novelty to disturb them. The page he opened on was under the heading of Anatomy, and the first passage that drew his eyes was on the valves of the heart. He was not much acquainted with valves of any sort, but he knew that *valvae* were folding doors, and through this crevice came a sudden light startling him with his first vivid notion of finely adjusted mechanism in the human frame. A liberal education had of course left him free to read the indecent passages in the school classics, but beyond a general sense of secrecy and obscenity in connection with his internal structure, had left his imagination quite unbiased, so that for anything he knew his brains lay in small bags at his temples, and he had no more thought of representing to himself how his blood circulated than how paper served instead of gold. But the moment of vocation had come, and before he got down from his chair, the world was made new to him by a presentiment of endless processes filling the vast spaces planked out of his sight by that wordy ignorance which he had supposed to be knowledge. From that hour Lydgate felt the growth of intellectual passions. 5 10 15 20 25 30

We are not afraid of telling over and over again how a man comes to fall in love with a woman and be wedded to her, or else be fatally parted from her. Is it due to an excess of poetry or of stupidity that we are never weary of describing what King James called a woman's 'makdom and her fairnesse', never weary of listening to the twanging of the old Troubadour strings, and are comparatively uninterested in that other kind of 'makdom and fairnesse' which must be wooed with industrious thought and patient renunciation of small desires? In the story of this passion, too, the development varies: 35 40

sometimes it is the glorious marriage, sometimes frustration and final parting. And not seldom the catastrophe is bound up with the other passion, sung by the Troubadours. For in the multitude of middle-aged men who go about their vocations in a daily couse determined for them much in the same way as they tie their cravats, there is always a good number who once meant to shape their own deeds and alter the world a little.

45

His scientific interest soon took the form of a professional enthusiasm: he had a youthful belief in his bread-winning work, not to be stifled by that initiation in makeshift called his 'prentice days; and he carried to his studies in London, Edinburgh and Paris, the conviction that the medical profession as it might be was the finest in the world; presenting the most perfect interchange between science and art; offering the most direct alliance between intellectual conquest and the social good.

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## 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)** “The Victorian Period was an Idealistic Age.”

Compare and contrast the ways in which two writers of the period present ideals and idealism in their work.

**Or (b)** Compare and contrast the ways in which two writers of the period explore experiences of empowerment and disempowerment.

## 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.

CHARLOTTE BRONTE: *Jane Eyre*

3

- Either (a)** How far do you agree that the novel is concerned with Jane 'being trained in conformity to her position and prospects' (Volume 1 Chapter 4)?
- Or (b)** In what ways and with what effects does Bronte make use of parallels between Jane and Bertha in the novel?

G.B. SHAW: *Mrs Warren's Profession*

4

- Either (a)** 'The characters are less interesting than the ideas.'  
How far do you agree with this comment on the play?
- Or (b)** The play has been described as a justification of the world of work.  
Discuss Shaw's methods and effects in the light of this view.

OSCAR WILDE: *Lady Windermere's Fan*

5

- Either (a)** The play's subtitle is: 'A play about a good woman.'  
How far do you agree with this description?
- Or (b)** '... lies, masquerades and masks...'  
Discuss the importance of these features in the play.

END OF PAPER