



2014 Preliminary Examination II Pre-University 3

Literature in English Higher 2

9748/03

Paper 3 The Individual and Society in Literature

22 Sept 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, admission number and class on all the work you hand in.
Write in dark blue or black pen on both sides of the paper.
Do not use paper clips, highlighters, glue or correction fluid.

Answer **all** the questions, one from each section.
You are reminded of the need for good English and clear presentation in your answers.

At the end of the examination, fasten the answers to Section A, B and C **together**.
All questions in this paper carry equal marks.

This question paper consists of 6 printed pages.

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Section A

Answer one question in this section.

1

Either (a) The following poem is by Tan Jwee Song.

Write a critical appreciation of the poem, relating it to the theme of the individual and society in literature.

Filial Piety

The old man was dead And they must fast array For it's duty to display Their filial piety No time to waste, Children, wife, sons, all Quickly donned the ready black cloth And were taught to cry	5
The hall was dressed with condolences The coffin was heaped with sympathy The joss papers were burnt with gusto accompanied by a wailing symphony	10
Many gestured their last respects Many sobbed their sad regrets Many mourned their heartfelt loss With cards, mah-jong and dice-tossed.	15
Good sons did good deeds; They performed the ceremony According to their needs. Their old man's death was too deep for tears so they could list rituals with minds precise and clear.	20
Uncles should offer roasted pigs aunties should come with big baked cakes sisters should wail their very best and their husbands must buy the paper chests.	25
They buried him at a shaded spot for future comfort they thought. They bore his soul back home in a much cumbersome pot.	
The episode was over, his face hung mockingly on the altar; only his two lonely candle flames remained to weep his years of pain.	30

Or (b) The extract below is from the play *The Importance of Being Earnest* (1895) by Oscar Wilde.

In the scene below, Jack is being interviewed as a prospective suitor for Lady Bracknell's daughter, Gwendolen.

Write a critical appreciation of the extract, relating it to the theme of the individual and society in literature.

LB: [*Sitting down.*] You can take a seat, Mr. Worthing. [*Looks in her pocket for note-book and pencil.*]

J: Thank you, Lady Bracknell, I prefer standing.

LB: [*Pencil and note-book in hand.*] I feel bound to tell you that you are not down on my list of eligible young men, although I have the same list as the dear Duchess of Bolton has. We work together, in fact. However, I am quite ready to enter your name, should your answers be what a really affectionate mother requires... 5

J: I have a country house with some land, of course, attached to it, about fifteen hundred acres, I believe; but I don't depend on that for my real income. In fact, as far as I can make out, the poachers are the only people who make anything out of it. 10

LB: A country house! How many bedrooms? Well, that point can be cleared up afterwards. You have a town house, I hope? A girl with a simple, unspoiled nature, like Gwendolen, could hardly be expected to reside in the country... Ah good. What number?

J: 149.

LB: [*Shaking her head.*] The unfashionable side. I thought there was something. However, that could easily be altered. 15

J: Do you mean the fashion, or the side?

LB: [*Sternly.*] Both, if necessary, I presume... Are your parents living?

J: I have lost both my parents.

B: To lose one parent, Mr. Worthing, may be regarded as a misfortune; to lose both looks like carelessness. Who was your father? He was evidently a man of some wealth. Was he born in what the Radical papers call the purple of commerce, or did he rise from the ranks of the aristocracy? 20

J: I am afraid I really don't know. The fact is, Lady Bracknell, I said I had lost my parents. It would be nearer the truth to say that my parents seem to have lost me . . . I don't actually know who I am by birth. I was . . . well, I was found. 25

LB: Found?!

J: The late Mr. Thomas Cardew, an old gentleman of a very charitable and kindly

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disposition, found me, and gave me the name of Worthing, because he happened to have a first-class ticket for Worthing in his pocket at the time. Worthing is a place in Sussex. It is a seaside resort. 30

LB: Where did the charitable gentleman who had a first-class ticket for this seaside resort find you?

J: [*Gravely.*] In a hand-bag.

LB: A hand-bag?! 35

J: [*Very seriously.*] Yes, Lady Bracknell. I was in a hand-bag—a somewhat large, black leather hand-bag, with handles to it—an ordinary hand-bag in fact.

LB: In what locality did this Mr. James, or Thomas Cardew come across this ordinary hand-bag?

J: In the cloak-room at Victoria Station. It was given to him in mistake for his own. 40

LB: The cloak-room at Victoria Station?

J: Yes. The Brighton line.

LB: The line is immaterial. Mr. Worthing, I confess I feel somewhat bewildered by what you have just told me. To be born, or at any rate bred, in a hand-bag, whether it had handles or not, seems to me to display contempt for the ordinary decencies of family life that reminds one of the worst excesses of the French Revolution. And I presume you know what that unfortunate movement led to? As for the particular locality in which the hand-bag was found, a cloak-room at a railway station might serve to conceal a social indiscretion—has probably, indeed, been used for that purpose before now—but it could hardly be regarded as an assured basis for a recognised position in good society. 45 50

Jack: May I ask you then what you would advise me to do? I need hardly say I would do anything in the world to ensure Gwendolen's happiness.

LB: I would strongly advise you, Mr. Worthing, to try and acquire some relations as soon as possible, and to make a definite effort to produce at any rate one parent, of either sex, before the season is quite over. 55

J: Well, I don't see how I could possibly manage to do that. I can produce the hand-bag at any moment. It is in my dressing-room at home. I really think that should satisfy you, Lady Bracknell.

LB: Me, sir! What has it to do with *me*? You can hardly imagine that I and Lord Bracknell would dream of allowing our only daughter—a girl brought up with the utmost care—to marry into a cloak-room, and form an alliance with a *parcel*? Good morning, Mr. Worthing! 60

[LADY BRACKNELL *sweeps out in majestic indignation.*]

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) 'It doesn't matter what *you* want. It is what *they* want.'

In the light of this comment, compare the ways in which **two** texts you have studied present individuals negotiating between their personal desires and societal expectations.

Or (b) With reference to **two** texts that you have studied, critically examine how the individual is shown often to be helpless against the greater society.

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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.**

NATHANIEL HAWTHORNE: *The Scarlet Letter*

3

Either (a) 'A dramatic, moving depiction... of passion and human frailty.'

Discuss the novel in light of this comment.

Or (b) Critically examine the presentation of the Puritan society in *The Scarlet Letter*, and its significance to the concerns of the novel.

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE: *Othello*

4

Either (a) "He hath a daily beauty in his life/ That makes me ugly." (Iago: Act 5, Scene 1)

Discuss how an individual's perception of self can cause harm, with reference to characters in the play.

Or (b) Critically examine the social world of the play, and how it affects its characters and their actions.

TENNESSEE WILLIAMS: *A Streetcar Named Desire*

5

Either (a) 'I don't know how much longer I can turn the trick.' (Blanche: Scene 5)

Discuss the notion of performance in *A Streetcar Named Desire*, with relation to the presentation of Blanche.

Or (b) Critically examine the presentation of the women in *A Streetcar named Desire*, and how they contribute to the concerns of the play.