

**Temasek Junior College**  
**English Literature Prelim Examinations Answer Scheme**  
**H2 Paper 2**

**Section A**

**1a) “A Vagrant Heart”**

**Thematic concerns:**

- Women’s desire to escape the confines of social conventions
- Sense of women’s restlessness, longing, and an adventurous spirit challenges expectations of female passivity and subservience (represented by the archetypal Angel in the House)
- “Vagrant” (nomadic, transient, without a settled home) in contrast to the idea of a woman’s heart as providing loving stability in the home; the woman’s place at the centre of the domestic sphere

**Suggested points of discussion**

- Images of nature as wild, in turmoil and in upheaval reflect women’s restlessness and inner turmoil – winds, storm, gale, tempest, “sky black with thunder and sea white with foam”, “a heart that beats as restless as all the winds that blow”, “seas that shake and thunder”, “long breaker’s roar”
- Metaphors of confinement, restriction and entrapment – the boats at anchor and the caged bird
- Metaphor of boats at anchor emphasizes the desire to break away from the confining restrictions of the female role
- Metaphor of the caged bird representing both security as well as entrapment; sense of defiance and aggression (“fights the heavens and is blown beyond”; “fight your tempests”)
- Subversion of images that are usually used to represent femininity – pastoral images of nature which usually romanticise women’s beauty and docility are subverted into images of tumultuous nature that reflect women’s turmoil
- Images of adventure and the natural world contrast with images of home and domesticity in stanza 2. These are also images which illustrate female passivity and conventional role/domestic duty (“thrust a cloth”, “sew”, “calculate with straws”)
- Tone and choice of diction in stanza 2: “for the sake of social laws” – bitterness in the persona’s tone; “laws” repeated in the last 2 lines of the stanza, reflecting the unjustified nature of “man’s laws” (“laws of God .. shines steady”/ “laws confused that man has made”)
- This is evoked again in the final 2 lines of the poem (“what matters then our judging? We are face to face with God”), suggesting the futility of man’s laws and judgements; suggesting also that the real authority over women is God, not man and his meaningless laws
- Repetition of the imperative “must” shows the necessity and social pressure of conforming to conventions

- Repetition of the word “chatter” in stanza 2 emphasizes the trivial, meaningless nature of women’s gossip; contrast with “silence lies around your heart”; the repetition in “chatter chatter chatter” evokes a tone of frustration and bitterness
- Repetition of “dangers” throughout the poem; dangers presented as adventure, something which the persona longs for rather than fears (“there is joy in danger too”)
- Use of rhetorical questions in stanza 3 – creates a sense of longing and of self-questioning
- “World of passion” – desire for self-determination, for heightened experiences and emotion; “passion” not typically associated with conventional femininity, which emphasizes a repression of passion (docility, chastity, etc)
- Rhyme and rhythm – use of rhyming couplets and regular meter, almost a staccato beat, creates a jaunty, energetic, vigorous rhythm and pace, reflecting the persona’s energy, vigour, restlessness

## 1b) “Middlemarch”

### Thematic concerns

- Science vs. the liberal arts; attitude of wonderment and awe towards science (medicine, biology)
- Awakening of intellectual passions
- Self-determination; pursuing the path of one’s choice
- Note that this passage marks the introduction of a character.

### Suggested points of discussion

#### Self-determination

- Orphan figure – blank slate
- Deviation from his father’s career as a military man
- “He was one of the rarer lads 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.”
- “began to listen to the voices within, as the first traceable beginning of our love” – focus on the phrase “voices within”
- “good number who once meant to shape their own deeds and alter the world a little.”
- There is a suggestion of Lydgate’s idealism here (“meant to ... alter the world a little”; “youthful belief in his bread-winning work”, “conviction that the medical profession as it might be was the finest in the world”)

#### Awakening of intellectual passions

- Presented as a moment of enlightenment – “through this crevice came a sudden light startling him”, “the world was made new to him”
- Elevated to “a moment of vocation”
- Comparison of romantic passions and intellectual passions in paragraph 2 – suggests the loftiness of intellectual passions in comparison with romantic feelings

(“due to an excess of poetry or stupidity ... comparatively uninterested in that other kind of ‘makdom and fairness’ which must be wooed with industrious thought”)

### Science vs. the liberal arts: the wonderment inspired by scientific knowledge

- The knowledge of liberal arts is presented as vague, fanciful, and unhelpful in illuminating Lydgate's understanding of the body and the world; the knowledge of science is presented as wondrous, inspiring, precise, enlightening
- “finely adjusted mechanism in the human frame” vs. “secrecy and obscenity”, “his brains lay in small bags at his temples”
- Liberal arts education described as “wordy ignorance” and “supposed to be knowledge”; “left his imagination quite unbiased”
- “the world was made new to him”, “presentiment of endless processes filling the vast spaces planked out of his sight”

### Section B

#### **2a) 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.**

- Wilde and Shaw both reflect the disillusionment of the late Victorian period. They challenge and satirize ideals and idealism by undercutting idealistic perceptions of social institutions, gender role and morality.
- Defining ideals and idealism:
  - Ideal Victorian femininity – Angel in the House
  - Idealised marriage – based on love, fidelity, assumption of patriarchal dominance/female subservience in the roles of husband and wife
  - Moral idealism – Rigid, Puritanical morals; traditional moral standards which were characterised by rigidity, prudishness, ideals of ‘good’ and ‘bad’
  - Idealised gender roles – patriarchal dominance, female subservience

#### **Possible points of discussion**

- Challenge Victorian ideals of gender roles (male supremacy and female passivity/subservience) through the subversion of the traditional dynamic in their presentation of relationships between men and women.
- Juxtaposition of romantic characters against cynical characters to underscore the changing attitudes of the Victorian era between traditional idealism and modern cynicism.
- Challenge male idealisation of women as the Angels in the House in their presentation of female characters (link to Fallen Woman and New Woman archetypes).
- Disillusionment about marriage challenges society's idealised perceptions of marriage as a social institution

- Undercut moral idealism through critiquing traditional moral codes as rigid and irrelevant in the context of changing social mores
- Challenge the idealisation of the family by illustrating the breakdown of the family/ changing perception of conventional roles within the family (parental authority, children's duty, conventional roles of mother, wife and daughter)

**2b) Compare and contrast the ways in which two writers of the period explore experiences of empowerment and disempowerment.**

- Better essays will be able to discuss the terms concurrently where relevant (e.g. the empowerment of women in their relationships with the men is emphasized through the presentation of male disempowerment).
- Relevant concepts should be addressed – marginalisation/outsider status of the Fallen Woman (disempowerment), New Woman (empowerment), gender role reversal (empowerment/disempowerment).

**Suggested points of discussion**

- Empowerment of women and the consequent disempowerment of men, shown through gender role reversals
- Empowerment of women through knowledge/secrets
- The disempowerment of women in marriage
  - The objectification of women; women's (economic & social) dependence on men
- Women are presented as empowered when they reject their passive roles within marriage
- Disempowerment of the Fallen Women
- Empowerment of the Fallen Women as they use their wit and intelligence to regain their social positions and economic power
- Disempowerment of parental figures/figures of conventional authority

**Section C**

**3a) 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)?**

**Possible approaches:**

1. Raising 3 separate points in answering the question:

In *Jane Eyre*, Bronte depicts how Jane is trained in conformity to her position as she presents how Jane internalises the conventional perception that beauty is an indicator of one's prospects in marriage. However, Bronte presents how Jane is not trained in conformity to her position and prospects through her demonstration of Jane's struggle to attain social mobility by actively seeking financial independence, and through her characterisation of Jane as an unconventional woman who challenges conventions of female subservience to men.

2. Presenting 2 nuanced points that deconstruct the key words in the question:

While Jane's education in Lowood allows her to be trained in conformity to her position as a woman as she learns how to control her excessive passions, it does not allow her to be trained in conformity to her prospects as a member of the Lower Class as she learns skills which facilitate her entry into the Middle Class as a Governess. Additionally, Bronte does not always challenge the idea of Jane being trained in conformity to her position and prospects as her attempts to marry Rochester are restricted by her position as a Middle Class Governess. While Jane does manage to better her prospects with gender equality in her relationship with Rochester, challenging her inferior position as a woman, she is only able to marry Rochester after becoming a member of the Upper Class, ultimately conforming to the notion of marriage being bound by social position.

**Possible points:**

- Bronte does not always challenge the idea of Jane being trained in conformity to her position and prospects as her attempts to marry Rochester are restricted by her position as a Middle Class Governess. While Jane does manage to achieve gender equality in her relationship with Rochester, challenging her inferior position as a woman, she is only able to marry Rochester after becoming a member of the Upper Class, ultimately conforming to the notion of marriage being bound by social position.
- In juxtaposing Jane with Blanche Ingram, Bronte presents how Jane is able to surpass a member of the Upper Class in terms of morality, despite her position as a Middle Class governess.
- Bronte acknowledges the importance of having a degree of restraint by presenting Jane as one who controls her passions. In doing so, Jane is indeed taught to have a measure of conformity to her position and prospects as a woman in Victorian society.
- Bronte endorses the protagonist Jane as an individual capable of independent judgment who works towards a betterment of her prospects despite forces that compel her to conform.

**3b) In what ways and with what effects does Bronte make use of parallels between Jane and Bertha in the novel?**

**Possible approaches:**

1. Raising 3 separate points in answering the question:

The parallels position Bertha as Jane's doppelganger which ominously forewarns Jane's devastation should she fail to curb her excessive passions. Bertha and Jane both also face parallel circumstances of being oppressed by patriarchal superiority, with Bronte critiquing this imposition of patriarchal authority. Additionally, Bertha's suffering at the hands of Rochester parallels Jane's suffering in her relationship with St John, highlighting the harm colonial ambitions can bring to others.

2. Presenting a cohesive argument that answers the question:

Bronte creates parallels between Jane and Bertha as both are characterised as being passionate women. However, while Bronte critiques the need for women to control their emotions and abide by social conventions of being restrained, she also critiques the display of excessive passions. To reconcile this, Bronte parallels the failed marriage between Bertha and Rochester and the happy union between Jane and Rochester to reveal her agenda that a balance between passion and restraint is most ideal.

**Possible points:**

- Bronte's use of Gothic parallels between Bertha and Jane serves to create an atmosphere of tension and fear to warn of the horrific dangers of excessive passions.

- Bronte uses the parallel positions between Jane and Bertha as the wife-to-be and the secret wife of Rochester respectively, to advocate a necessary balance between social duty and personal desire.
- Bronte uses the parallel of marriage between Jane and Bertha to Rochester to reconcile her critique of both extremes – being excessively passionate or excessively restrained.
- Bronte presents both characters' parallel refusals to conform to gender norms through their subversion of power dynamics with Rochester, ultimately advocating gender equality.
- Bronte parallels the two women's sufferings due to the colonial ambitions of men, highlighting the harm that colonial ideology could inflict.
- Bronte uses parallels between Jane and Bertha to amplify the sense of sympathy for both women in their unjust predicaments and oppression by men who perceive them as the 'Other' who does not belong in British society.
- Bronte uses the parallels between Jane and Bertha to emphasize the dichotomy between external and internal beauty.