



**SERANGOON JUNIOR COLLEGE
JC2 PRELIMINARY EXAMINATION 2015**

ENGLISH LITERATURE

**HIGHER 1 8811/01
PAPER 1: READING LITERATURE**

TUESDAY 18 AUGUST 2015 3 HOURS

**TIME: 1300 – 1600
VENUE: HALL**

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 papers in texts (e.g. the use of post-its, tape flags or paper clips) is not permitted.

INSTRUCTIONS TO CANDIDATES

Write your name, civics group on every answer sheet.

Write in dark blue or black pen on both sides of the paper.

You may use a soft pencil for any diagrams or graphs.

Do not use staples, paper clips, highlighters, glue or correction fluid.

Write your answers on the separate answer paper provided.

Answer **three** questions.

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

At the end of the examination, fasten all your work securely together.

All questions in this paper carry equal marks.

This question paper consists of 6 printed pages and 0 blank pages. [Turn over]

Section A
Answer one question in this section

1

- Either** **(a)** Write a critical commentary on the following poem, considering in detail ways in which your response is shaped by language, style and form.

The Fence

Then one day the gray rags vanish
 and the sweet wind rattles her sash.
 Her secrets bloom hot. I'm wild for everything.
 My body is a golden armor around my unborn child's body,
 and I'll die happy, here on the ground. 5
 I bend to the mixture of dirt, chopped hay,
 grindings of coffee from our dark winter breakfasts.
 I spoon the rich substance around the acid-loving shrubs.
 I tear down last year's drunken vines,
 pull the black rug off the bed of asparagus 10
 and lie there, knowing by June I'll push the baby out
 as easily as seed wings fold back from the cotyledon.
 I see the first leaf already, the veined tongue
 rigid between the thighs of the runner beans.
 I know how the shoot will complicate itself 15
 as roots fill the trench.
 Here is the link fence, the stem doubling toward it
 and something I've never witnessed.
 One moment the young plant trembles on its stalk.
 The next, it has already gripped the wire. 20
 Now it will continue to climb, dragging rude blossoms
 to the other side
 until in summer fruit like green scimitars,
 the frieze of vines, and then the small body
 spread before me in need 25
 drinking light from the shifting wall of my body,
 and the fingers, tiny stems wavering to mine,
 flexing for the ascent.

Louise Erdrich

- Or (b) Write a critical commentary on the following poem, considering in detail ways in which your response is shaped by language, style and form.

The River in March

Now the river is rich, but her voice is low.
It is her Mighty Majesty the sea
Travelling among the villages incognito.

Now the river is poor. No song, just a thin mad whisper.
The winter floods have ruined her. 5
She squats between draggled banks, fingering her rags and rubbish.

And now the river is rich. A deep choir.
It is the lofty clouds, that work in heaven,
Going on their holiday to the sea.

The river is poor again. All her bones are showing. 10
Through a dry wig of bleached flotsam she peers up ashamed
From her slum of sticks.

Now the river is rich, collecting shawls and minerals.
Rain brought fatness, but she takes ninety-nine percent
Leaving the fields just one percent to survive on. 15

And now she is poor. Now she is East wind sick.
She huddles in holes and corners. The brassy sun gives her a
headache.
She has lost all her fish. And she shivers.

But now once more she is rich. She is viewing her lands. 20
A hoard of king-cups spills from her folds, it blazes, it cannot be
hidden.
A salmon, a sow of solid silver,

Bulges to glimpse it.

Ted Hughes

Section B

Answer one question in this section

2

Either (a) “Stevens’ obsession with professionalism causes his relationships to be marked with pessimism and lacking in moral values.” Is this a fair assessment of Stevens’ relationships in the novel?

Or (b) Write a critical commentary on the following passage, paying attention to the significance of bantering here and elsewhere in the novel.

I had been rather pleased with my witticism when it had first come into my head, and I must confess I was slightly disappointed it had not been better received than it was. I was particularly disappointed, I suppose, because I have been endeavouring to add this skill to my professional armoury so as to fulfill with confidence all Mr Farraday’s expectations with respect to bantering. 5

For instance, I have of late taken to listening to the wireless in my room whenever I find myself with a few spare moments – on those occasions, say, when Mr Farraday is out for the evening. One programme I listen to is called *Twice a Week or More*, which is in fact broadcast three times each week, and basically comprises two persons making humorous comments on a variety of topics raised by readers’ letters. I have been studying this programme because the witticisms performed on it are always in the best of taste and, to my mind, of a tone not at all out of keeping with the sort of bantering Mr Farraday might expect on my part. Taking my cue from this programme, I have devised a simple exercise which I try to perform at least once a day; whenever an odd moment presents itself, I attempt to formulate three witticisms based on my immediate surroundings at that moment. Or, as a variation on this same exercise, I may attempt to think of three witticisms based on the events of the past hour. 10 15

You will perhaps appreciate then my disappointment concerning my witticism yesterday evening. At first, I had thought it possible its limited success was due to my not having spoken clearly enough. But then the possibility occurred to me, once I had retired, that I might actually have given these people offence. After all, it could easily have been understood that I was suggesting the landlord’s wife resembled a cockerel – an intention that had not remotely entered my head at the time. This thought continued to torment me as I tried to sleep, and I had half a mind to make an apology to the landlord this morning. But his mood towards me as he served breakfast seemed perfectly cheerful and in the end I decided to let the matter rest. 20 25

But this small episode is as good an illustration as any of the hazards of uttering witticisms. By the very nature of a witticism, one is given very little time to assess its various possible repercussions before one is called to give voice to it, and one gravely risks uttering all manner of unsuitable things if one has not first acquired the necessary skill and experience. There is no reason to suppose this is not an area in which I will become proficient given time and practice, but, such as the dangers, I have decided it best, for the time being at least, not to attempt to discharge this duty in respect of Mr Farraday until I have practised further. 30 35

Section C

Answer one question in this section

3

Either (a) "Suffering ennobles the spirit." To what extent is the above statement applicable to the play?

Or (b) Write a critical commentary on the following extract, relating it to the wider concerns of the play.

DUCHESS	There needs small conjuration, when your finger May do it: thus - is it fit? <i>She puts the ring on his finger. He kneels.</i>	
ANTONIO	What said you?	
DUCHESS	Sir,	5
	This goodly roof of yours, is too low built, I cannot stand upright in't nor discourse, Without I raise it higher. Raise yourself, Or, if you please, my hand to help you: so. <i>She raises him.</i>	10
ANTONIO	Ambition, madam, is a great man's madness, That is not kept in chains and close-pent rooms But in fair lightsome lodgings, and is girt With the wild noise of prattling visitants Which makes it lunatic beyond all cure. Conceive not I am so stupid but I aim Whereto your favors tend: but he's a fool, That being a-cold, would thrust his hands i'th' fire To warm them.	15
DUCHESS	So now the ground's broke, You may discover what a wealthy mine I make you lord of.	20
ANTONIO	O, my unworthiness!	
DUCHESS	You were ill to sell yourself. This dark'ning of your worth is not like that Which tradesmen use i'th' city: their false lights Are to rid bad wares off; and I must tell you, If you will know where breathes a complete man - I speak it without flattery - turn your eyes, And progress through yourself.	25
ANTONIO	Were there nor heaven nor hell, I should be honest: I have long served virtue And ne'er ta'en wages of her.	30
DUCHESS	Now she pays it. The misery of us that are born great, We are forced to woo because none dare woo us: And as a tyrant doubles with his words And fearfully equivocates, so we Are forced to express our violent passions In riddles and in dreams, and leave the path Of simple virtue, which was never made To seem the thing it is not. Go, go brag You have left me heartless; mine is in your bosom,	35
		40

	I hope 'twill multiply love there. You do tremble. Make not your heart so dead a piece of flesh To fear more than to love me. Sir, be confident, What is't distracts you? This is flesh and blood, sir; 'Tis not the figure cut in alabaster Kneels at my husbands tomb. Awake, awake, man! I do here put off all vain ceremony, And only do appear to you a young widow That claims you for her husband, and like a widow, I use but half a blush in't.	45
ANTONIO	Truth speak for me: I will remain the constant sanctuary Of your good name.	55
DUCHESS	I thank you, gentle love. And 'cause you shall not come to me in debt, Being now my steward, here upon your lips I sign your <i>Quietus est.</i> (<i>She kisses him</i>) This you should have begged now. I have seen children oft eat sweetmeats thus, As fearful to devour them too soon.	60
ANTONIO	But for your brothers?	
DUCHESS	Do not think of them: All discord without this circumference, Is only to be pitied, and not fear'd. Yet, should they know it, time will easily Scatter the tempest.	65
ANTONIO	These words should be mine, And all the parts you have spoke, if some part of it Would not have savoured flattery.	70

END OF PAPER