

YISHUN JUNIOR COLLEGE PRELIMINARY EXAMINATION 2015

LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

8811/01

Paper 1 Reading Literature

Monday 17 August 2015
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 and CTG on all the work you hand in.

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

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

Answer **three** questions, one from each of Sections A, B and C.

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

At the end of the examination, hand in each of your three answers **separately**.

All questions in this paper carry equal marks.

SECTION A

1

Either (a) Write a critical commentary on the following poem by David Holbrook (1923 - 2011) paying particular attention to ways in which your response is shaped by the poet's language, style and form.

Unholy Marriage

POLICE ARE SEEKING TO IDENTIFY THE PILLION RIDER
WHO WAS ALSO KILLED

Her mother bore her, father cared
And clothed her body, young and neat.
The careful virgin had not shared
Cool soft anointment of her breast
Or any other sweet, 5
But kept herself for best.

How sweet she would have been in bed,
Her bridegroom sighing in her hair,
His tenderness heaped on her head,
Receiving benediction from her breast 10
With every other fair
She kept for him, the best.

Who she is now they do not know
Assembling her body on a sheet.
This foolish virgin shared a blow 15
That drove her almost through a stranger's breast
And all her sweet
Mingles with his in dust.

Unwilling marriage, her blood runs with one
Who bought for a few pounds and pence 20
A steel machine able to 'do a ton',
Not knowing at a ton a straw will pierce a breast:
No wheel has built-in sense,
Not yet the shiniest and best.

And so, 'doing a ton', in fog and night 25
Before he could think, Christ! or she could moan
There came a heavy tail without a light
And many tons compressed each back to breast
And blood and brain and bone
Mixed, lay undressed. 30

Anointed only by the punctured oil
Poured like unleashed wind or fire from bag
Sold by some damned magician out to spoil
The life that girded in this young girl's breast
Now never to unfurl her flag 35
And march love's happy quest.

Her mother hears the clock; her father sighs,
Takes off his boots: she's late tonight.
I hope she's a careful virgin: men have eyes
For cherished daughters growing in the breast. 40
Some news? They hear the gate
A man comes: not the best.

- Or (b)** Write a critical commentary on the following poem by Sharon Olds (born 1942), paying particular attention to ways in which your response is shaped by the poet's language, style and form.

I Go Back to May 1937

I see them standing at the formal gates of their colleges, I see my father strolling out under the ochre sandstone arch, the red tiles glinting like bent plates of blood behind his head, I	5
see my mother with a few light books at her hip standing at the pillar made of tiny bricks, the wrought-iron gate still open behind her, its sword-tips aglow in the May air, they are about to graduate, they are about to get married, they are kids, they are dumb, all they know is they are innocent, they would never hurt anybody.	10
I want to go up to them and say Stop, don't do it—she's the wrong woman, he's the wrong man, you are going to do things you cannot imagine you would ever do, you are going to do bad things to children, you are going to suffer in ways you have not heard of, you are going to want to die. I want to go up to them there in the late May sunlight and say it, her hungry pretty face turning to me, her pitiful beautiful untouched body,	15 20
his arrogant handsome face turning to me, his pitiful beautiful untouched body, but I don't do it. I want to live. I take them up like the male and female paper dolls and bang them together at the hips, like chips of flint, as if to strike sparks from them, I say Do what you are going to do, and I will tell about it.	25

TURN OVER FOR SECTION B.

SECTION B

Kazuo Ishiguro: *The Remains of the Day*

2

Either a) 'Indeed – why should I not admit it? – at that moment, my heart was breaking' (Day Six – Evening). In the light of this statement, to what extent does Stevens regret his own actions or beliefs?

Or b) Write a critical appreciation of the following passage, relating it to the presentation of truth, here and elsewhere in the novel.

For a little time, the focus of attention left me and I was able to remain silent. Then, seizing what seemed a suitable moment, I rose to my feet, saying: 'Please excuse me. It has been a most enjoyable evening, but I really must now retire.'

'Such a pity you have to retire already, sir,' Mrs Smith said. 'The doctor's only just arrived.'

5

Mr Harry Smith leaned across his wife and said to Dr Carlisle: 'I was hoping the gentleman would have a few words to say about your ideas on the Empire, Doctor.' Then turning to me, he went on: 'Our doctor here's for all kinds of little countries going independent. I don't have the learning to prove him wrong, though I know he is. But I'd have been interested to hear what the likes of yourself would have to say to him on the subject, sir.'

10

Yet again, Dr Carlisle's gaze seemed to study me. Then he said: 'A pity, but we must let the gentleman go off to bed. Had a tiring day, I expect.'

'Indeed,' I said, and with another small laugh, began to make my way round the table. To my embarrassment, everyone in the room, including Dr Carlisle, rose to their feet.

15

'Thank you all very much,' I said smiling. 'Mrs Taylor, I did enjoy a splendid supper. I wish you all a very good night.'

There came a chorus of, 'Good night, sir,' in reply. I had almost left the room when the doctor's voice caused me to halt at the door.

20

'I say, old chap,' he said, and when I turned, I saw he had remained on his feet. 'I have a visit to make in Stanbury first thing in the morning. I'd be happy to give you a lift up to your car. Save you the walk. And we can pick up a can of petrol from Ted Hardacre's on the way.'

'That is most kind,' I said. 'But I don't wish to put you to any trouble.'

25

'No trouble at all. Seven thirty all right for you?'

'That would be most helpful indeed.'

'Right then, seven thirty it is. Make sure your guest's up and breakfasted for seven thirty, Mrs Taylor.' Then turning back to me, he added: 'So we can have our talk after all. Though Harry here won't have the satisfaction of witnessing my humiliation.'

30

There was laughter, and another exchange of good nights before I was at last allowed to ascend to the sanctuary of this room.

I trust I need hardly underline the extent of the discomfort I suffered tonight on account of the unfortunate misunderstanding concerning my person. I can only say now that in all honesty, I fail to see how I might reasonably have prevented

35

the situation developing as it did; for by the stage I had become aware of what was occurring, things had gone so far I could not have enlightened these people without creating much embarrassment all round. In any case, regrettable as the whole business was, I do not see that any real harm has been done. I will, after all, take my leave of these people in the morning and presumably never encounter them again. There seems little point in dwelling on the matter. 40

However, the unfortunate misunderstanding aside, there are perhaps one or two other aspects to this evening's events which warrant a few moments' thought – if only because otherwise they may come to niggle one throughout the coming days. For instance, there is the matter of Mr Harry Smith's pronouncements on the nature of 'dignity'. There is surely little in his statements that merits serious consideration. Of course, one has to allow that Mr Harry Smith was employing the word 'dignity' in a quite different sense altogether from my own understanding of it. Even so, even taken on their own terms, his statements were, surely, far too idealistic, far too theoretical, to deserve respect. Up to a point, no doubt, there is some truth in what he says: in a country such as ours, people may indeed have a certain duty to think about great affairs and form their opinions. But life being what it is, how can ordinary people truly be expected to have 'strong opinions' on all manner of things – as Mr Harry Smith rather fancifully claims the villagers here do? And not only are these expectations unrealistic, I rather doubt if they are even desirable. There is, after all, a real limit to how much ordinary people can learn and know, and to demand that each and every one of them contribute 'strong opinions' to the great debates of the nation cannot, surely, be wise. It is, in any case, absurd that anyone should presume to define a person's 'dignity' in these terms. 50 55 60

Day Three – Evening
Moscombe, near Tavistock, Devon

SECTION C

Arthur Miller: *All My Sons*

3

Either (a) “George was an excellent emotional catalyst, and drew out the complexity of the other characters.”

How far do you agree with this assessment of George Deever?

Or (b) Write a critical commentary on the passage below, paying close attention to how Arthur Miller creates dramatic tension, here and elsewhere in the play.

Keller: Exactly what's the matter? What's the matter? You got too much money? Is that what bothers you?

Chris: [*with an edge of sarcasm*] It bothers me.

Keller: If you can't get used to it, then throw it away. You hear me? Take every cent and give it to charity, throw it in the sewer. Does that settle it? In the sewer, that's all. You think I'm kidding? I'm tellin' you what to do, if it's dirty then burn 5 it. It's your money, that's not my money. I'm a dead man, I'm an old dead man, nothing's mine. Well, talk to me! What do you want to do!

Chris: It's not what I want to do. It's what you want to do.

Keller: What should I want to do? [*CHRIS is silent.*] Jail? You want me to go to jail? If 10 you want me to go, say so! Is that where I belong? Then tell me so! [*Slight pause.*] What's the matter, why can't you tell me? [*Furiously.*] You say everything else to me, say that! [*Slight pause.*] I'll tell you why you can't say it. Because you know I don't belong there. Because you know! [*With growing emphasis and passion, and a persistent tone of desperation.*] Who worked for 15 nothin' in that war? Did they ship a gun or a truck outa Detroit before they got their price? Is that clean? It's dollars and cents, nickels and dimes; war and peace, it's nickels and dimes, what's clean? Half the goddam country is gotta go if I go! That's why you can't tell me.

Chris: That's exactly why. 20

Keller: Then... Why am I bad?

Chris: I know you're no worse than most men but I thought you were better. I never saw you as a man. I saw you as my father. [*Almost breaking.*] I can't look at you this way, I can't look at myself!

He turns away, unable to face KELLER. ANN goes quickly to MOTHER, 25 takes letter from her and starts for CHRIS. MOTHER instantly rushes to intercept her.

Mother: Give me that!

Ann: He's going to read it! [*She thrusts letter into CHRIS'S hand.*] Larry. He wrote it to me the day he died. 30

Keller: Larry!

Mother: Chris, it's not for you. [*He starts to read.*] Joe... go away...

Keller: [*mystified, frightened*] Why'd she say, Larry, what – ?

Mother: [*desperately pushes him toward alley, glancing at CHRIS*] Go to the street, Joe, go to the street! [*She comes down beside KELLER.*] Don't, Chris... 35 [*Pleading from her whole soul.*] Don't tell him.

Chris: [*quietly*] Three and one half years... talking, talking. Now you tell me what you must do... This is how he died, now tell me where you belong.

Keller: [*pleading*] Chris, a man can't be a Jesus in this world!

Chris: I know all about the world. I know the whole crap story. Now listen to this, and 40
 tell me what a man's got to be! [Reads.] "My dear Ann:..." You listening? He
 wrote this the day he died. Listen, don't cry... Listen! 'My dear Ann: it is
 impossible to put down the things I feel. But I've got to tell you something.
 Yesterday they flew in a load of papers from the States and I read about Dad 45
 and your father being convicted. I can't express myself. I can't tell you how I
 feel – I can't bear to live any more. Last night I circled the base for twenty
 minutes before I could bring myself in. How could he have done that? Every
 day three or four men never come back and he sits back there doing
 business... I don't know how to tell you what I feel... I can't face anybody... I'm
 going out on a mission in a few minutes. They'll probably report me missing. 50
 If they do, I want you to know that you mustn't wait for me. I tell you, Ann, if I
 had him there now I could kill him –' [KELLER *grabs letter from CHRIS'S*
hand and reads it. After a long pause.] Now blame the world. Do you
 understand that letter?

Keller: [*speaking almost inaudibly*] I think I do. Get the car. I'll put on my jacket. [*He 55*
turns and starts slowly for the house. MOTHER rushes to intercept him.]

Mother: Why are you going? You'll sleep, why are you going?

Keller: I can't sleep here. I'll feel better if I go.

Mother: You're so foolish. Larry was your son too, wasn't he? You know he'd never 60
 tell you to do this.

Keller: [*looking at letter in his hand*] Then what is this if it isn't telling me? Sure, he
 was my son. But I think to him they were all my sons. And I guess they were,
 I guess they were. I'll be right down. [*Exits into house.*]

Act 3