

TEMASEK JUNIOR COLLEGE PRELIMINARY EXAMINATIONS 2015

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 answer to each question separately.

SECTION A

Answer one question in this section.

1

Either (a)

Write a critical commentary on the following poem by Charles Kingsley published in 1849, relating its themes and style to key features of the Victorian period.

The World's Age

Who will say the world is dying? 1
Who will say our prime is past?
Sparks from Heaven, within us lying,
Flash, and will flash till the last.
Fools! who fancy Christ mistaken; 5
Man a tool to buy and sell;
Earth a failure, God-forsaken,
Anteroom of Hell.

Still the race of Hero-spirits
Pass the lamp from hand to hand; 10
Age from age the Words inherits—
'Wife, and Child, and Fatherland.'
Still the youthful hunter gathers
Fiery joy from wold and wood;
He will dare as dared his fathers 15
Give him cause as good.

While a slave bewails his fetters;
While an orphan pleads in vain;
While an infant lisps his letters,
Heir of all the age's gain; 20
While a lip grows ripe for kissing;
While a moan from man is wrung;
Know, by every want and blessing,
That the world is young.

- Or (b) In this extract taken from *Dombey and Sons* (1848) by Charles Dickens, Dombey, a successful businessman, is returning home, having just received news of his young son's untimely death. Dombey's grief is worsened by the fact that he hoped his young son would one day inherit his prospering business.

Write a critical appreciation of the extract, relating your reading to the style and concerns of the Victorian period.

During the bustle of preparation at the railway, Mr. Dombey walked up and down the platform. He barely observed that in the course of these walks, he attracted the attention of a working man who was standing near the engine, and who touched his hat every time he passed; for Mr. Dombey habitually looked over the vulgar herd, not at them. At length, however, this man stepped before them as he turned round, and pulling his hat off, and keeping it off, ducked his head to Mr. Dombey. 1 5

He was dressed in a canvas suit abundantly besmeared with coal-dust and oil, and had cinders in his whiskers, and a smell of half-slaked ashes all over him. In short, he was Mr. Toodle, professionally clothed.

'I shall have the honour of stokin' of you down¹, Sir,' said Mr. Toodle. 'Beg your pardon, Sir. I hope you find yourself a coming round?' 10

Mr. Dombey looked at him, in return for his tone of interest, as if a man like that would make his very eyesight dirty.

'Scuse the liberty, Sir,' said Toodle, seeing he was not clearly remembered, 'but my wife Polly, used to work for your family--' 15

'Your wife wants money, I suppose,' said Mr. Dombey, putting his hand in his pocket, and speaking (but that he always did) haughtily.

'No thank'ee, Sir,' returned Toodle, 'I can't say she does. I don't.'

Mr. Dombey was stopped short, and awkwardly: with his hand in his pocket. His attention was arrested by Mr Toodle turning his oilskin cap round and round in his hands. 20

'We lost one babby,' observed Toodle, 'there's no denyin.'

'Lately,' added Mr. Dombey, looking at the cap.

'No, Sir, up'ard of three years ago, but all the rest is hearty.'

To think of this presumptuous raker among coals and ashes going on before there, with his sign of mourning! To think that he dared to enter, even by a common show like that, into the trial and disappointment of a proud gentleman's secret heart! To think that this lost child, who was to have divided with him his riches, and his projects, and his power, and allied with whom he was to have shut out all the world as with a double door of gold, should have let in such a herd to insult him with their knowledge of his defeated hopes! 25 30

He found no pleasure or of relief in the journey. Tortured by these thoughts he carried monotony with him, through the rushing landscape, and hurried headlong, not through a rich and varied country, but a wilderness of blighted plans and gnawing jealousies. The very speed at which the train was whirled along, mocked the swift course of the young life that had been borne away so steadily and so 35

¹ Stoking the fire to power the steam engine of the train that Dombey is taking

inexorably to its foredoomed end. The power that forced itself upon its iron way--its own--defiant of all paths and roads, piercing through the heart of every obstacle, and dragging living creatures of all classes, ages, and degrees behind it, was a type of the triumphant monster, Death.

40

Away, with a shriek, and a roar, and a rattle, from the town, burrowing among the dwellings of men and making the streets hum, flashing out into the meadows for a moment, mining in through the damp earth, booming on in darkness and heavy air, bursting out again into the sunny day so bright and wide; away, with a shriek, and a roar, and a rattle, through the fields, through the woods, through the corn, through the hay, through the chalk, through the mould, through the clay, through the rock, among objects close at hand and almost in the grasp, ever flying from the traveller, and a deceitful distance ever moving slowly within him: like as in the track of the remorseless monster, Death!

45

Louder and louder yet, it shrieks and cries as it comes tearing on resistless to the goal: and now its way, still like the way of Death, is strewn with ashes thickly.

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Everything around is blackened. There are dark pools of water, muddy lanes, and miserable habitations far below. There are jagged walls and falling houses close at hand, and through the battered roofs and broken windows, wretched rooms are

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seen, where want and fever hide themselves in many wretched shapes, while smoke and crowded gables, and distorted chimneys, and deformity of brick and mortar penning up deformity of mind and body, choke the murky distance. As Mr. Dombey looks out of his carriage window, it is never in his thoughts that the monster who has brought him there has let the light of day in on these things: not made or caused them.

60

All things looked black, and cold, and deadly upon him, and he on them. He found a likeness to his misfortune everywhere. There was a remorseless triumph going on about him, and it galled and stung him in his pride and jealousy, whatever form it took: though most of all when it divided with him the love and memory of his lost boy.

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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 Age was a period of repression.”

Compare the work of two writers that you have studied in light of your understanding of this comment.

Or (b) Compare the ways in which any two writers of the period present illusion and disillusionment in their work.

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)** Examine the role and function of Jane as an orphan figure in the novel.
- Or (b)** In what ways, and with what effects, is *Jane Eyre* a gothic fairy-tale?

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

4

- Either (a)** In what ways, and with what effects, does the play implicate society as a whole in the business of prostitution?
- Or (b)** Discuss the presentation of male 'respectability' in the play.

OSCAR WILDE: *Lady Windermere's Fan*

5

- Either (a)** It has been said that 'Lady Windermere moves from innocence to understanding as the play proceeds.'
- Consider the ways in which the play dramatises this development.
- Or (b)** In what ways, and with what effects, is the idea of 'truth' explored in the play?

END OF PAPER