

YISHUN JUNIOR COLLEGE PRELIMINARY EXAMINATION 2015

LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

9748/01

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 comparison of the following poems, paying close attention to ways in which form, style and language contribute to each poet's portrayal of the subject matter.

A This Room

This room is breaking out
of itself, cracking through
its own walls
in search of space, light,
empty air.

5

The bed is lifting out of
its nightmares.
From dark corners, chairs
are rising up to crash through clouds.

This is the time and place
to be alive:
when the daily furniture of our lives
stirs, when the improbable arrives.
Pots and pans bang together
in celebration, clang
past the crowd of garlic, onions, spices,
fly by the ceiling fan.
No one is looking for the door.

10

15

In all this excitement
I'm wondering where
I've left my feet, and why

20

my hands are outside, clapping.

Imtiaz Dharker (born 1954)

B unmaking rooms

somewhere in december i awake to find us with the sun in our mouths coagulating like yolk. our bodies folded into jilted corners, eyes still papered with a dream grown hazy by morning.	5
 you angle yourself for some light, propping your head up against mottled wallpaper swirls, each arabesque gliding ghost-like in a film of ungreeting strangers.	10
 the city outside writhes like the back of a lawless viper; the windows engulf us in borderless white. it is so bright the coffee trickles down your chin like mercury. so bright words are put to shame, scattering under furniture like pearls in this winter room where memory and glass sweep our spaces.	15 20 25

Leon Yuchin Lau (born 1992)

Or (b) Write a critical comparison of the following poems, paying close attention to ways in which form, style and language contribute to each poet's presentation of the death of a child.

**A A Refusal To Mourn The Death, By Fire,
Of A Child In London**

Never until the mankind making
Bird beast and flower
Fathering and all humbling darkness
Tells with silence the last light breaking
And the still hour 5
Is come of the sea tumbling in harness

And I must enter again the round
Zion of the water bead
And the synagogue of the ear of corn
Shall I let pray the shadow of a sound 10
Or sow my salt seed
In the least valley of sackcloth to mourn

The majesty and burning of the child's death.
I shall not murder
The mankind of her going with a grave truth 15
Nor blaspheme down the stations of the breath
With any further
Elegy of innocence and youth.

Deep with the first dead lies London's daughter,
Robed in the long friends, 20
The grains beyond age, the dark veins of her mother,
Secret by the unmourning water
Of the riding Thames.
After the first death, there is no other.

Dylan Thomas (1914 – 1953)

B On The Death Of A Child

The greatest griefs shall find themselves inside the
smallest cage.
It's only then that we can hope to tame their rage,

The monsters we must live with. For it will not do
To hiss humanity because one human threw 5
Us out of heart and home. Or part

At odds with life because one baby failed to live.
Indeed, as little as its subject, is the wreath we give -

The big words fail to fit. Like giant boxes
Round small bodies. Taking up improper room, 10
Where so much withering is, and so much bloom.

D.J. Enright (1920 – 2002)

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 35
 say now that in all honesty, I fail to see how I might reasonably have prevented
 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 40
 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.

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 45
 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 50
 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 55
 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 60
 these terms.

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, 5 that's all. You think I'm kidding? I'm tellin' you what to do, if it's dirty then burn 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 and your father being convicted. I can't express myself. I can't tell you how I 45 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 tell you to do this. 60

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

End of Paper