



MERIDIAN JUNIOR COLLEGE
JC2 Preliminary Examination
Higher 1

H1 LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

8811/01

Paper 1: Reading Literature

15 September 2016

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

READ THESE INSTRUCTIONS FIRST

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, fasten all your work securely together.

All questions in this paper carry equal marks.

This document consists of **7** printed pages and **1** blank page.

Candidates must fill in this section		Examiner's Use only	
Name		Question No.	Total Score
		1 ()	25
		2 ()	25
		3 ()	25
		TOTAL:	75

Section A

1

- EITHER (a) Write a critical commentary on the following poem paying close attention to the ways in which your response is shaped by the poet's language, style and form.**

A Lesson for This Sunday

The growing idleness of summer grass
 With its frail kites of furious butterflies
 Requests the lemonade of simple praise
 In scansion gentler than my hammock swings
 And rituals no more upsetting than a 5
 Black maid shaking linen as she sings
 The plain notes of some Protestant hosanna¹—
 Since I lie idling from the thought in things—

Or so they should, until I hear the cries
 Of two small children hunting yellow wings, 10
 Who break my Sabbath² with the thought of sin.
 Brother and sister, with a common pin,
 Frowning like serious lepidopterists.
 The little surgeon pierces the thin eyes.
 Crouched on plump haunches, as a mantis prays 15
 She shrieks to eviscerate its abdomen.
 The lesson is the same. The maid removes
 Both prodigies from their interest in science.
 The girl, in lemon frock, begins to scream
 As the maimed, teetering thing attempts its flight. 20
 She is herself a thing of summery light,
 Frail as a flower in this blue August air,
 Not marked for some late grief that cannot speak.

The mind swings inward on itself in fear
 Swayed towards nausea from each normal sign. 25
 Heredity of cruelty everywhere,
 And everywhere the frocks of summer torn,
 The long look back to see where choice is born,
 As summer grass sways to the scythe's design.

Derek Walcott (1930 -)

[Turn over]

¹ The word "Protestant" refers to Protestantism, a major branch of Christianity. A hosanna is a religious expression of adoration, praise and joy.

² A day set aside for rest and religious worship, usually observed on Sunday by Christians.

OR

- 1 (b) Write a critical commentary on the following poem paying close attention to the ways in which your response is shaped by the poet's language, style and form.

My Grandmother's Love Letters

There are no stars tonight
 But those of memory.
 Yet how much room for memory there is
 In the loose girdle of soft rain.

There is even room enough 5
 For the letters of my mother's mother,
 Elizabeth,
 That have been pressed so long
 Into a corner of the roof
 That they are brown and soft, 10
 And liable to melt as snow.

Over the greatness of such space
 Steps must be gentle.
 It is all hung by an invisible white hair.
 It trembles as birch limbs webbing the air. 15

And I ask myself:

"Are your fingers long enough to play
 Old keys that are but echoes:
 Is the silence strong enough
 To carry back the music to its source 20
 And back to you again
 As though to her?"

Yet I would lead my grandmother by the hand
 Through much of what she would not understand;
 And so I stumble. And the rain continues on the roof 25
 With such a sound of gently pitying laughter.

Hart Crane (1899-1932)

[Turn over

Section B

EDITH WHARTON: *The Age of Innocence*

2

EITHER (a) Discuss the presentation of loss in *The Age of Innocence*.

OR (b) Write a critical commentary on the following passage, paying particular attention to the presentation of family life here and elsewhere in the novel.

No one in the Mingott set could understand why Amy Sillerton had submitted so tamely to the eccentricities of a husband who filled the house with long-haired men and short-haired women, and, when he travelled, took her to explore tombs in Yucatan instead of going to Paris or Italy. But there they were, set in their ways, and apparently unaware that they were different from other people; and when they gave one of their dreary annual garden-parties every family on the Cliffs, because of the Sillerton-Pennilow-Dagonet connection, had to draw lots and send an unwilling representative. 5

"It's a wonder," Mrs. Welland remarked, "that they didn't choose the Cup Race day! Do you remember, two years ago, their giving a party for a black man on the day of Julia Mingott's thé dansant? Luckily this time there's nothing else going on that I know of—for of course some of us will have to go." 10

Mr. Welland sighed nervously. "'Some of us,' my dear—more than one? Three o'clock is such a very awkward hour. I have to be here at half-past three to take my drops: it's really no use trying to follow Bencomb's new treatment if I don't do it systematically; and if I join you later, of course I shall miss my drive." At the thought he laid down his knife and fork again, and a flush of anxiety rose to his finely-wrinkled cheek. 15

"There's no reason why you should go at all, my dear," his wife answered with a cheerfulness that had become automatic. "I have some cards to leave at the other end of Bellevue Avenue, and I'll drop in at about half-past three and stay long enough to make poor Amy feel that she hasn't been slighted." She glanced hesitatingly at her daughter. "And if Newland's afternoon is provided for perhaps May can drive you out with the ponies, and try their new russet harness." 20

It was a principle in the Welland family that people's days and hours should be what Mrs. Welland called "provided for." The melancholy possibility of having to "kill time" (especially for those who did not care for whist or solitaire) was a vision that haunted her as the spectre of the unemployed haunts the philanthropist. Another of her principles was that parents should never (at least visibly) interfere with the plans of their married children; and the difficulty of adjusting this respect for May's independence with the exigency of Mr. Welland's claims could be overcome only by the exercise of an ingenuity which left not a second of Mrs. Welland's own time unprovided for. 25 30

"Of course I'll drive with Papa—I'm sure Newland will find something to do," May said, in a tone that gently reminded her husband of his lack of response. It was a cause of constant distress to Mrs. Welland that her son-in-law showed so little foresight in planning his days. Often already, during the fortnight that he had passed under her roof, when she enquired how he meant to spend his afternoon, he had answered paradoxically: "Oh, I think for a change I'll just save it instead of spending it—" and once, when she and May had had to go on a long-postponed round of afternoon calls, he had confessed to having lain all the afternoon under a rock on the beach below the house.

"Newland never seems to look ahead," Mrs. Welland once ventured to complain to her daughter; and May answered serenely: "No; but you see it doesn't matter, because when there's nothing particular to do he reads a book."

"Ah, yes—like his father!" Mrs. Welland agreed, as if allowing for an inherited oddity; and after that the question of Newland's unemployment was tacitly dropped.

Nevertheless, as the day for the Sillerton reception approached, May began to show a natural solicitude for his welfare, and to suggest a tennis match at the Chiverses', or a sail on Julius Beaufort's cutter, as a means of atoning for her temporary desertion. "I shall be back by six, you know, dear: Papa never drives later than that—" and she was not reassured till Archer said that he thought of hiring a run-about and driving up the island to a stud-farm to look at a second horse for her brougham. They had been looking for this horse for some time, and the suggestion was so acceptable that May glanced at her mother as if to say: "You see he knows how to plan out his time as well as any of us."

Section C

William Shakespeare: *Hamlet*

3

- EITHER (a)** Consider the role and significance of royalty in *Hamlet*.
- OR (b)** Write a critical commentary on the following passage, paying particular attention to the use of dialogue here and elsewhere in the play.

HAMLET	Up from my cabin, My sea-gown scarfed about me, in the dark Groped I to find out them; had my desire. Fingered their packet, and in fine withdrew To mine own room again; making so bold, My fears forgetting manners, to unseal Their grand commission; where I found, Horatio— O royal knavery!—an exact command, Larded with many several sorts of reasons Importing Denmark's health and England's too, With, ho! such bugs and goblins in my life, That, on the supervise, no leisure bated, No, not to stay the grinding of the axe, My head should be struck off.	5
HORATIO	Is't possible?	
HAMLET	(<i>giving him a paper</i>) Here's the commission: read it at more leisure. But wilt thou hear me how I did proceed?	15
HORATIO	I beseech you.	
HAMLET	Being thus benetted round with villains,-- Ere I could make a prologue to my brains, They had begun the play—I sat me down, Devised a new commission, wrote it fair: I once did hold it, as our statists do, A baseness to write fair, and labour'd much How to forget that learning; but, sir, now It did me yeoman's service: wilt thou know Th' effect of what I wrote?	20
HORATIO	Ay, good my lord.	
HAMLET	An earnest conjuration from the King, As England was his faithful tributary, As love between them like the palm should flourish, As peace should still her wheaten garland wear And stand a comma 'tween their amities, And many such-like 'as'es of great charge, That, on the view and know of these contents, Without debatement further more or less, He should the bearers put to sudden death, Not shriving-time allowed.	25
HORATIO	How was this sealed?	30
		35

HAMLET	Why, even in that was heaven ordinant. I had my father's signet in my purse, Which was the model of that Danish seal; Folded the writ up in form of th' other, Subscribed it, gave't th' impression, placed it safely, The changeling never known. Now, the next day Was our sea-fight; and what to this was sequent Thou know'st already.	40 45
HORATIO	So Guildenstern and Rosencrantz go to't.	
HAMLET	Why, man, they did make love to this employment. They are not near my conscience. Their defeat Does by their own insinuation grow. 'Tis dangerous when the baser nature comes Between the pass and fell incensèd points Of mighty opposites.	 50
HORATIO	Why, what a king is this!	

Act 5, Scene 2

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