



RIVER VALLEY HIGH SCHOOL
ADVANCED LEVEL
YEAR 6 PRELIMINARY EXAMINATIONS 2
HIGHER 1

LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

8811/1
13 September
3 hours

Paper 1 Reading Literature

Set texts may be taken into the examination room. Only underlining, highlighting or the use of vertical lines in the margins is permitted. Nothing else should be written in the texts. Any kind of folding or flagging of pages in texts (e.g. use of post-its, tape flags or paper clips) is also not permitted.

READ THESE INSTRUCTIONS FIRST

Write your name and class on all the work you hand in.
Write in dark blue or black on both sides of the paper.
Do not use staples, paper clips, highlighters, glue or correction fluid.

Answer **THREE** questions, **one** from **each** section.

Start each answer on a fresh piece of paper.

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 carry equal marks.

This document consists of **9** printed pages.

[Turn over

SECTION A
Answer one question from this section.

1 Either

- (a) Write a critical commentary on the following poet's presentation of music through language, style, and form.

Piano and Drums

When at break of day at a riverside
I hear jungle drums telegraphing
the mystic rhythm, urgent, raw
like bleeding flesh, speaking of
primal youth and the beginning, 5
I see the panther ready to pounce,
the leopard snarling about to leap
and the hunters crouch with spears poised;

And my blood ripples, turns torrent,
topples the years and at once I'm 10
in my mother's lap a suckling;
at once I'm walking simple
paths with no innovations,
rugged, fashioned with the naked
warmth of hurrying feet and groping hearts 15
in green leaves and wild flowers pulsing.

Then I hear a wailing piano
solo speaking of complex ways
in tear- furrowed concerto;
of far- away lands 20
and new horizons with
coaxing diminuendo¹, counterpoint²,
crescendo. But lost in the labyrinth
of its complexities, it ends in the middle
of a phrase at a daggerpoint. 25

And I lost in the morning mist
of an age at a riverside keep
wandering in the mystic rhythm
of jungle drums and the concerto.

Gabriel Okara (1921 -)

¹ A decrease in loudness in a piece of music

² Relationship between voices that are harmonically interdependent yet independent in rhythm and contour

Or

- (b) Write a critical commentary on the following poem, considering in detail ways in which the poet's style and technique have shaped your understanding.

Merlion

"I wish it had paws," you said,
"It's quite grotesque the way it is,
you know, limbless; can you
imagine it writhing in the water,
like some post-Chernobyl nightmare? 5
I mean, how does it move? Like a
torpedo? Or does it shoulder itself
against the currents, gnashing with frustration,
its furious mane bleached
the colour of a drowned sun? 10
But take a second look at it,
how it is poised so terrestrially,
marooned on this rough shore,
as if unsure of its rightful
harbour. Could it be that, 15
having taken to this unaccustomed limpidity,
it has decided to abandon the seaweed-haunted
depths for land? Perhaps it is even ashamed
(But what a bold front!)
to have been a creature of the sea; look at how 20
it tries to purge itself of its aquatic ancestry,
in this ceaseless torrent of denial, draining
the body of rivers of histories, lymphatic memories.
What a riddle, this lesser brother of the Sphinx.
What sibling polarity, how its sister's lips are sealed 25
with self-knowledge and how its own jaws
clamp open in self-doubt, still
surprised after all these years."

"Yet...what brand new sun can dry
the iridescent slime from the scales 30
and what fresh rain wash the sting of salt
from those chalk-blind eyes?"

A pause.

"And why does it keep spewing that way?
I mean, you know, I mean..." 35

"I know exactly what you mean," I said,
Eyeing the blond highlights in your black hair
And your blue lenses the shadow of a foreign sky.
"It spews continually if only to ruffle
its own reflection in the water; such reminders
will only scare a creature so eager to reinvent itself."

40

Another pause.

"Yes," you finally replied, in that acquired accent of yours,
"Well, yes, but I still do wish it had paws."

Alfian Bin Sa'at (1977 -)

SECTION B
Answer one question from this section.

Edith Wharton: *The Age of Innocence*

2

- Either** a) Discuss the functions and effects of the motif of silence in the novel.
- Or** b) Comment on how Wharton develops Archer and May's relationship in the following passage, paying attention to how the writer's concerns and style are typical of this passage and elsewhere in the novel.

The Newland Archers were on their way home, after a three months' wedding-tour which May, in writing to her girlfriends, vaguely summarised as "blissful."

They had not gone to the Italian Lakes: on reflection, Archer had not been able to picture his wife in that particular setting. Her own inclination (after a month with the Paris dressmakers) was for mountaineering in July and swimming in August. This plan they punctually fulfilled, spending July at Interlaken and Grindelwald, and August at a little place called Etretat, on the Normandy coast, which someone had recommended as quaint and quiet. Once or twice, in the mountains, Archer had pointed southward and said: "There's Italy"; and May, her feet in a gentian-bed, had smiled cheerfully, and replied: "It would be lovely to go there next winter, if only you didn't have to be in New York."

But in reality travelling interested her even less than he had expected. She regarded it (once her clothes were ordered) as merely an enlarged opportunity for walking, riding, swimming, and trying her hand at the fascinating new game of lawn tennis; and when they finally got back to London (where they were to spend a fortnight while he ordered HIS clothes) she no longer concealed the eagerness with which she looked forward to sailing. In London nothing interested her but the theatres and the shops; and she found the theatres less exciting than the Paris cafes chantants where, under the blossoming horse-chestnuts of the Champs Elysees, she had had the novel experience of looking down from the restaurant terrace on an audience of "cocottes," and having her husband interpret to her as much of the songs as he thought suitable for bridal ears.

Archer had reverted to all his old inherited ideas about marriage. It was less trouble to conform with the tradition and treat May exactly as all his friends treated their wives than to try to put into practice the theories with which his untrammelled bachelorhood had dallied. There was no use in trying to emancipate a wife who had not the dimmest notion that she was not free; and he had long since discovered that May's only use of the liberty she supposed herself to possess would be to lay it on the altar of her wifely adoration. Her innate dignity would always keep her from making the gift abjectly; and a day might even come (as it once had) when she would find strength to take it altogether back if she thought she were doing it for his own good. But with a conception of marriage so uncomplicated and incurious as hers such a crisis could be brought about only by something visibly outrageous in his own conduct; and the fineness of her feeling for him made that unthinkable. Whatever happened, he knew, she would always be loyal, gallant and unresentful; and that

pledged him to the practice of the same virtues.

All this tended to draw him back into his old habits of mind. If her simplicity had been the simplicity of pettiness he would have chafed and rebelled; but since the lines of her character, though so few, were on the same fine mould as her face, she became the tutelary divinity of all his old traditions and reverences. Such qualities were scarcely of the kind to enliven foreign travel, though they made her so easy and pleasant a companion; but he saw at once how they would fall into place in their proper setting. He had no fear of being oppressed by them, for his artistic and intellectual life would go on, as it always had, outside the domestic circle; and within it there would be nothing small and stifling--coming back to his wife would never be like entering a stuffy room after a tramp in the open. And when they had children the vacant corners in both their lives would be filled. 40 45

All these things went through his mind during their long slow drive from Mayfair to South Kensington, where Mrs. Carfry and her sister lived. Archer too would have preferred to escape their friends' hospitality: in conformity with the family tradition he had always travelled as a sight-seer and looker-on, affecting a haughty unconsciousness of the presence of his fellowbeings. Once only, just after Harvard, he had spent a few gay weeks at Florence with a band of queer Europeanised Americans, dancing all night with titled ladies in palaces, and gambling half the day with the rakes and dandies of the fashionable club; but it had all seemed to him, though the greatest fun in the world, as unreal as a carnival. These queer cosmopolitan women, deep in complicated love-affairs which they appeared to feel the need of retailing to every one they met, and the magnificent young officers and elderly dyed wits who were the subjects or the recipients of their confidences, were too different from the people Archer had grown up among, too much like expensive and rather malodorous hot-house exotics, to detain his imagination long. To introduce his wife into such a society was out of the question; and in the course of his travels no other had shown any marked eagerness for his company. 50 55 60

SECTION C

Answer one question from this section.

William Shakespeare: *Hamlet*

3

- Either** (a) Write an essay that discusses Shakespeare's exploration of the theme of death in *Hamlet*.
- Or** (b) Write a critical commentary on the following extract, paying attention to its effects on the audience.

CLAUDIUS Follow her close; give her good watch,
I pray you.
Exit HORATIO
O, this is the poison of deep grief; it springs 75
All from her father's death. O Gertrude, Gertrude,
When sorrows come, they come not single spies
But in battalions. First, her father slain:
Next, your son gone; and he most violent author
Of his own just remove: the people muddied, 80
Thick and unwholesome in their thoughts and whispers,
For good Polonius' death; and we have done but greenly,
In hugger-mugger to inter him: poor Ophelia
Divided from herself and her fair judgment,
Without the which we are pictures, or mere beasts: 85
Last, and as much containing as all these,
Her brother is in secret come from France;
Feeds on his wonder, keeps himself in clouds,
And wants not buzzers to infect his ear
With pestilent speeches of his father's death; 90
Wherein necessity, of matter beggar'd,
Will nothing stick our person to arraign
In ear and ear. O my dear Gertrude, this,
Like to a murdering-piece, in many places
Gives me superfluous death. 95
A noise within

GERTRUDE Alack, what noise is this?

CLAUDIUS Where are my Switzers? Let them guard the door.
Enter another Gentleman
What is the matter?

GENTLEMAN Save yourself, my lord:
The ocean, overpeering of his list,

Eats not the flats with more impiteous haste
Than young Laertes, in a riotous head, 100
O'erbears your officers. The rabble call him lord;
And, as the world were now but to begin,
Antiquity forgot, custom not known,
The ratifiers and props of every word,
They cry 'Choose we: Laertes shall be king!'- 105
Caps, hands, and tongues, applaud it to the clouds-
'Laertes shall be king! Laertes king!'

GERTRUDE How cheerfully on the false trail they cry! *A noise*
within
O, this is counter, you false Danish dogs! 110

CLAUDIUS The doors are broke.
Enter LAERTES, armed; Danes following

LAERTES Where is this king? Sirs, stand you all without.

DANES No, let's come in.

LAERTES I pray you, give me leave.

DANES We will, we will.

LAERTES I thank you: keep the door.
[Exeunt Followers and Messenger]
O thou vile king, 115
Give me my father!

GERTRUDE Calmly, good Laertes.

LAERTES That drop of blood that's calm proclaims me bastard,
Cries cuckold to my father, brands the harlot
Even here, between the chaste unsmirched brow
Of my true mother.

CLAUDIUS What is the cause, Laertes, 120
That thy rebellion looks so giant-like?
Let him go, Gertrude; do not fear our person:
There's such divinity doth hedge a king,
That treason can but peep to what it would,
Acts little of his will. Tell me, Laertes, 125
Why thou art thus incensed. Let him go, Gertrude.
Speak, man.

LAERTES	Where is my father?	
CLAUDIUS	Dead.	
GERTRUDE	But not by him.	
CLAUDIUS	Let him demand his fill.	
LAERTES	How came he dead? I'll not be juggled with: To hell, allegiance! vows, to the blackest devil! Conscience and grace, to the profoundest pit! I dare damnation. To this point I stand, That both the worlds I give to negligence, Most thoroughly for my father.	130
CLAUDIUS	Who shall stay you?	135
LAERTES	My will, not all the world: And for my means, I'll husband them so well, They shall go far with little.	
CLAUDIUS	Good Laertes, If you desire to know the certainty Of your dear father's death, is't writ in your revenge, That, swoopstake, you will draw both friend and foe, Winner and loser?	140
LAERTES	None but his enemies.	
CLAUDIUS	Will you know them then?	
LAERTES	To his good friends thus wide I'll ope my arms; And like the kind life-rendering pelican, Repast them with my blood.	145
CLAUDIUS	Why, now you speak Like a good child and a true gentleman. That I am guiltless of your father's death, And am most sensible in grief for it, It shall as level to your judgment 'pear As day does to your eye.	150

END OF PAPER