

**YISHUN JUNIOR COLLEGE  
2016 JC2 ENGLISH LITERATURE  
PRELIMINARY EXAMINATION**

**LITERATURE IN ENGLISH**

**8811/01**

Paper 1 Reading Literature

**Tuesday 16 August 2016  
0800 – 1100h  
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 section.

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

At the end of the examination, hand in your answer to each question **separately**.

All questions in this paper carry equal marks.

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

## SECTION A

1

**Either (a)** Write a critical commentary on the following poem by B. H. Fairchild (born 1942) paying particular attention to ways in which your response is shaped by the poet's language, style and form.

**Old Men Playing Basketball**

The heavy bodies lunge, the broken language  
of fake and drive, glamorous jump shot  
slowed to a stutter. Their gestures, in love  
again with the pure geometry of curves,

rise toward the ball, falter, and fall away. 5  
On the boards their hands and fingertips  
tremble in tense little prayers of reach  
and balance. Then, the grind of bone

and socket, the caught breath, the sigh, 10  
the grunt of the body laboring to give  
birth to itself. In their toiling and grand  
sweeps, I wonder, do they still make love

to their wives, kissing the undersides 15  
of their wrists, dancing the old soft-shoe  
of desire? And on the long walk home  
from the VFW<sup>1</sup>, do they still sing

to the drunken moon? Stands full, clock 20  
moving, the one in army fatigues  
and houseshoes says to himself, *pick and roll*,  
and the phrase sounds musical as ever,

radio crooning songs of love after the game,  
the girl leaning back in the Chevy's front seat  
as her raven hair flames in the shuddering  
light of the outdoor movie, and now he drives,

gliding toward the net. A glass wand 25  
of autumn light breaks over the backboard.  
Boys rise up in old men, wings begin to sprout  
at their backs. The ball turns in the darkening air.

VFW<sup>1</sup>: Veterans of Foreign Wars

- Or (b)** Write a critical commentary on the following poem by Howard Nemerov (1920 – 1991). Pay close attention to ways in which language, style and form contribute to the portrayal of the written language.

### Writing

The cursive crawl, the squared-off characters  
 these by themselves delight, even without  
 a meaning, in a foreign language, in  
 Chinese, for instance, or when skaters curve  
 all day across the lake, scoring their white  
 records in ice. Being intelligible, 5  
 these winding ways with their audacities  
 and delicate hesitations, they become  
 miraculous, so intimately, out there  
 at the pen's point or brush's tip, do world 10  
 and spirit wed. The small bones of the wrist  
 balance against great skeletons of stars  
 exactly; the blind bat surveys his way  
 by echo alone. Still, the point of style  
 is character. The universe induces 15  
 a different tremor in every hand, from the  
 check-forgers to that of the Emperor  
 Hui Tsung<sup>1</sup>, who called his own calligraphy  
 the 'Slender Gold.' A nervous man  
 writes nervously of a nervous world, and so on. 20

Miraculous. It is as though the world  
 were a great writing. Having said so much,  
 let us allow there is more to the world  
 than writing: continental faults are not  
 bare convoluted fissures in the brain. 25  
 Not only must the skaters soon go home;  
 also the hard inscription of their skates  
 is scored across the open water, which long  
 remembers nothing, neither wind nor wake.

---

<sup>1</sup> Emperor Hui Tsung: He was the eighth emperor of the Song dynasty in China, known for talents in poetry, painting, calligraphy and music.

## SECTION B

KAZUO ISHIGURO: *The Remains of the Day*

2

**Either a)** "All a child's life depends on the ideal it has of its parents." (E.M. Forster)

Consider Ishiguro's portrayal of the father-son relationship in *The Remains of the Day* in the light of this statement.

**Or b)** Write a critical commentary on the following passage, relating it to the presentation of suppression and subordination, here and elsewhere in the novel.

As I recall, I was rung for late one night - it was past midnight - to the drawing room where his lordship had been entertaining three gentlemen since dinner. I had, naturally, been called to the drawing room several times already that night to replenish refreshments, and had observed on these occasions the gentlemen deep in conversation over weighty issues. When I entered the drawing room on this last occasion, however, all the gentlemen stopped talking and looked at me. Then his lordship said:

5

"Step this way a moment, will you, Stevens? Mr Spencer here wishes a word with you."

The gentleman in question went on gazing at me for a moment without changing the somewhat languid posture he had adopted in his armchair. Then he said:

10

"My good man, I have a question for you. We need your help on a certain matter we've been debating. Tell me, do you suppose the debt situation regarding America is a significant factor in the present low levels of trade? Or do you suppose this is a red herring and that the abandonment of the gold standard is at the root of the matter?"

15

I was naturally a little surprised by this, but then quickly saw the situation for what it was; that is to say, it was clearly expected that I be baffled by the question. Indeed, in the moment or so that it took for me to perceive this and compose a suitable response, I may even have given the outward impression of struggling with the question, for I saw all the gentlemen in the room exchange mirthful smiles.

20

"I'm very sorry, sir," I said, "but I am unable to be of assistance on this matter."

I was by this point well on top of the situation, but the gentlemen went on laughing covertly. Then Mr Spencer said:

"Then perhaps you will help us on another matter. Would you say that the currency problem in Europe would be made better or worse if there were to be an arms agreement between the French and the Bolsheviks?"

25

"I'm very sorry, sir, but I am unable to be of assistance on this matter."

"Oh dear," said Mr Spencer. "So you can't help us here either."

There was more suppressed laughter before his lordship said: "Very well, Stevens. That will be all." 30

"Please, Darlington, I have one more question to put to our good man here," Mr Spencer said. "I very much wanted his help on the question presently vexing many of us, and which we all realize is crucial to how we should shape our foreign policy. My good fellow, please come to our assistance. What was M. Laval really intending, by his recent speech on the situation in North Africa? Are you also of the view that it was simply a ruse to scupper the nationalist fringe of his own domestic party?" 35

"I'm sorry, sir, but I am unable to assist in this matter."

"You see, gentlemen," Mr Spencer said, turning to the others, "our man here is unable to assist us in these matters." 40

This brought fresh laughter, now barely suppressed.

"And yet," Mr Spencer went on, "we still persist with the notion that this nation's decisions be left in the hands of our good man here and to the few million others like him. Is it any wonder, saddled as we are with our present parliamentary system, that we are unable to find any solution to our many difficulties? Why, you may as well ask a committee of the mothers' union to organize a war campaign." 45

There was open, hearty laughter at this remark, during which his lordship muttered: "Thank you, Stevens," thus enabling me to take my leave.

While of course this was a slightly uncomfortable situation, it was hardly the most difficult, or even an especially unusual one to encounter in the course of one's duties, and you will no doubt agree that any decent professional should expect to take such events in his stride. I had, then, all but forgotten the episode by the following morning, when Lord Darlington came into the billiard room while I was up on a step-ladder dusting portraits, and said: 50

"Look here, Stevens, it was dreadful. The ordeal we put you through last night." 55

I paused in what I was doing and said: "Not at all, sir. I was only too happy to be of service."

"It was quite dreadful. We'd all had rather too good a dinner, I fancy. Please accept my apologies."

"Thank you, sir. But I am happy to assure you I was not unduly inconvenienced." 60

Day Three – Evening  
Moscombe, Near Trivestock, Devon

## SECTION C

ARTHUR MILLER: *All My Sons*

3

**Either a)** "The living are haunted by the dead, whom they seek to exorcise with a simple denial of reality."

How far do you agree with this reading of *All My Sons*?

**Or b)** Write a critical commentary on the following passage, relating it to how loyalty is presented, here and elsewhere in the play.

- Chris:* [with admiration] Joe McGuts.
- Keller:* [now with great force] That's the only way you lick'em is guts. [To ANN.] The worst thing you did was to move away from here. You made it tough for your father when he gets out. That's why I tell you, I like to see him move back right on this block. 5
- Mother:* [pained] How could they move back?
- Keller:* It ain't gonna end *till* they move back! [To ANN.] Till people play cards with him again, and talk with him, and smile with him – you play cards with a man you know he can't be a murderer. And the next time you write him I like you to tell him just what I said. [ANN *simply stares at him.*] You hear me? 10
- Ann:* [surprised] Don't you hold anything against him?
- Keller:* Annie, I never believed in crucifying people.
- Ann:* [mystified] But he was your partner, he dragged you through the mud.
- Keller:* Well, he ain't my sweetheart, but you gotta forgive, don't you? 15
- Ann:* You, either, Kate? Don't you feel any – ?
- Keller:* [to ANN] The next time you write Dad –
- Ann:* I don't write him.
- Keller:* [struck] Well, every now and then you –
- Ann:* [a little shamed, but determined] No, I've *never* written to him. Neither has my brother. [To CHRIS.] Say, do you feel this way, too? 20
- Chris:* He murdered twenty-one pilots.
- Keller:* What the hell kind a talk is that?
- Mother:* That's not a thing to say about a man.
- Ann:* What else can you say? When they took him away I followed him, went to him every visiting day. I was crying all the time. Until the news came about Larry. Then I realized. It's wrong to pity a man like that. Father or no father, there's only one way to look at him. He knowingly shipped out parts that would crash an airplane. And how do you know Larry wasn't one of them? 25
- Mother:* I was waiting for that. [Going to her.] As long as you're here, Annie, I want to ask you to never to say that again. 30
- Ann:* You surprise me. I thought you'd be mad at him.

*Mother:* What your father did had nothing to do with Larry, Nothing.  
*Ann:* But we can't know that.  
*Mother:* [*striving for control*] As long as you're here! 35  
*Ann:* [*perplexed*] But, Kate –  
*Mother:* Put that out of your head!  
*Keller:* Because –  
*Mother:* [*quickly to KELLER*] That's all, that's enough. [*Places her hand on her head.*] Come inside now, and have some tea with me. [*She turns and goes up steps.*] 40  
*Keller:* [*to ANN*] The one thing you –  
*Mother:* [*sharply*] He's not dead, so there's no argument! Now come!  
*Keller:* [*angrily*] In a minute! [*MOTHER turns and goes into house.*] Now look, Annie – 45  
*Chris:* All right, Dad, forget it.  
*Keller:* No, she dasn't feel that way. Annie –  
*Chris:* I'm sick of the whole subject, now cut it out.  
*Keller:* You want her to go on like this? [*To ANN.*] Those cylinder heads went into P-40s only. What's the matter with you? You know Larry never flew a P-40. 50  
*Chris:* So who flew those P-40s, pigs?

Act 1

End of Paper