



VICTORIA JUNIOR COLLEGE, SINGAPORE

Higher 1

LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

8811/01

PRELIMINARY EXAMINATIONS

Paper 1 Reading Literature

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

READ THESE INSTRUCTIONS FIRST

Write your class and name 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, fasten the essays separately and label them accurately.

All questions in this paper carry equal marks.

This document consists of **7** printed pages.

Section A

1

- Either (a)** Write a critical commentary of the following poem, considering in detail ways in which your response is shaped by the writer's language, style and form.

Siren¹ Song

This is the one song everyone
would like to learn: the song
that is irresistible:

the song that forces men
to leap overboard in squadrons
even though they see the beached skulls 5

the song nobody knows
because anyone who has heard it
is dead, and the others can't remember.

Shall I tell you the secret
and if I do, will you get me
out of this bird suit? 10

I don't enjoy it here
squatting on this island
looking picturesque and mythical 15

with these two feathery maniacs²,
I don't enjoy singing
this trio, fatal and valuable.

I will tell the secret to you,
to you, only to you.
Come closer. This song 20

is a cry for help: Help me!
Only you, only you can,
you are unique

at last. Alas
it is a boring song
but it works every time. 25

Margaret Atwood (b. 1939)

¹ *Siren*: The Sirens are mythological creatures who were beautiful yet dangerous, who lured seamen to their deaths with their enchanting music and voices. Their appearance combined women and birds in various ways. Later depictions show them as beautiful women, whose bodies were seductive as well.

² *Feathery maniacs*: allusion to the Harpies, who are Mythological monsters with a bird's body and a woman's face. They have also been depicted as beautiful women with wings, and as three sisters.

Working with one eye closed or heads buried under their drapes, they focus to preserve the drowned shell-hole, the salient's rubble of dead, the bleached bones of sepoys torn from the earth.

Their stills haunt us: a stretcher piled with skulls
 at Cold Harbour, graves in a barren wood
 that in one hour's carnage lost its name
 to history and the world's memory of death.

The worst has happened, they confirm the worst:
but show us too the makeshift hospital, 10
the sad errand of the hospital van
among the ruins. Also enough of sky
to suggest the infinity of angles,

that behind sandbags, under the hostile towers
someone is finding time for a wry note
on bowel movements, an entry that affirms
the loved salience of what is always there:
flower of Auschwitz, bird of the Western Front

Frank Ormsby (b. 1947)

Section B

KAZUO ISHIGURO: *The Remains of the Day*

2

Either (a) 'The novel is as much about the personal and the private as it is about the public and political.'

How far do you agree with this comment?

Or (b) Write a critical commentary on the following passage, relating it to Stevens's relationship with his father, here and elsewhere in the novel.

The next day, the discussions in the drawing room appeared to reach a new level of intensity and by lunchtime, the exchanges were becoming rather heated. My impression was that utterances were being directed accusingly, and with increasing boldness, towards the armchair where M. Dupont sat fingering his beard, saying little. Whenever the conference adjourned, I noticed, as no doubt his lordship did with some concern, that Mr Lewis would quickly take M. Dupont away to some corner or other where they could confer quietly. Indeed, once, shortly after lunch, I recall I came upon the two gentlemen talking rather furtively just inside the library doorway, and it was my distinct impression they broke off their discussion upon my approach. 5

In the meantime, my father's condition had grown neither better nor worse. As I understood, he was asleep for much of the time, and indeed, I found him so on the few occasions I had a spare moment to ascend to that little attic room. I did not then have a chance actually to converse with him until that second evening after the return of his illness. 10

On that occasion, too, my father was sleeping when I entered. But the chambermaid Miss Kenton had left in attendance stood up upon seeing me and began to shake my father's shoulder. 15

'Foolish girl!' I exclaimed. 'What do you think you are doing?'

'Mr Stevens said to wake him if you returned, sir.'

'Let him sleep. It's exhaustion that's made him ill.'

'He said I had to, sir,' the girl said, and again shook my father's shoulder. 20

My father opened his eyes, turned his head a little on the pillow, and looked at me.

'I hope Father is feeling better now,' I said.

He went on gazing at me for a moment, then asked: 'Everything in hand downstairs?'

'The situation is rather volatile. It is just after six o'clock, so Father can well imagine the atmosphere in the kitchen at this moment.' 25

An impatient look crossed my father's face. 'But is everything in hand?' he said again.

'Yes, I dare say you can rest assured on that. I'm very glad Father is feeling better.'

With some deliberation, he withdrew his arms from under the bedclothes and gazed tiredly at the backs of his hands. He continued to do this for some time.

'I'm glad Father is feeling so much better,' I said again eventually. 'Now really, I'd best be getting back. As I say, the situation is rather volatile.' 30

He went on looking at his hands for a moment. Then he said slowly: 'I hope I've been a good father to you.'

I laughed a little and said: 'I'm so glad you're feeling better now.'

'I'm proud of you. A good son. I hope I've been a good father to you. I suppose I haven't.' 35

'I'm afraid we're extremely busy now, but we can talk again in the morning.'

My father was still looking at his hands as though he were faintly irritated by them.

'I'm so glad you're feeling better now,' I said again and took my leave.

On descending, I found the kitchen on the brink of pandemonium, and in general, an extremely tense atmosphere amongst all levels of staff. However, I am pleased to recall that by the time dinner was served an hour or so later, nothing but efficiency and professional calm was exhibited on the part of my team. 40

Day Two – Morning

Section C

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE: *Hamlet*

3

Either (a) Discuss the role and significance of loyalty in *Hamlet*.**Or (b)** Write a critical commentary on the following passage, relating it to the theme of justice, here and elsewhere in the play.

OSRIC: Young Fortinbras, with conquest come from Poland,
To th' ambassadors of England gives
This warlike volley.

HAMLET: O I die, Horatio,
The potent poison quite o'er-crows my spirit.
I cannot live to hear the news from England, 5
But I do prophesy the election lights
On Fortinbras, he has my dying voice;
So tell him, with th' occurrences more and less
Which have solicited. The rest is silence.

[Dies

HORATIO: Now cracks a noble heart. Good night sweet prince, 10
And flights of angels sing thee to thy rest.
Why does the drum come hither?

*Enter FORTINBRAS with Drum and colours, the ENGLISH
AMBASSADORS, and others*

FORTINBRAS: Where is this sight?

HORATIO: What is it ye would see?

If aught of woe or wonder, cease your search.

FORTINBRAS: This quarry cries on havoc. O proud death, 15
What feast is toward in thine eternal cell,
That thou so many princes at a shot
So bloodily hast struck?

FIRST

AMBASSADOR: The sight is dismal,
And our affairs from England come too late.
The ears are senseless that should give us hearing, 20
To tell him his commandment is fulfilled,
That Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are dead.
Where should we have our thanks?

HORATIO: Not from his mouth,

Had it th' ability of life to thank you;
 He never gave commandment for their death. 25
 But since, so jump upon this bloody question,
 You from the Polack wars, and you from England,
 Are here arrived, give order that these bodies
 High on a stage be placed to the view,
 And let me speak to the yet unknowing world 30
 How these things came about; so shall you hear
 Of carnal, bloody, and unnatural acts,
 Of accidental judgments, casual slaughters,
 Of deaths put on by cunning and forced cause,
 And, in this upshot, purposes mistook 35
 Fall'n on the inventors' heads. All this can I
 Truly deliver.

FORTINBRAS: Let us haste to hear it,
 And call the noblest to the audience.
 For me, with sorrow I embrace my fortune.
 I have some rights of memory in this kingdom, 40
 Which now to claim my vantage doth invite me.

HORATIO: Of that I shall have also cause to speak,
 And from his mouth whose voice will draw on more.
 But let this same be presently performed,
 Even while men's minds are wild, lest more mischance 45
 On plots and errors happen.

FORTINBRAS: Let four captains
 Bear Hamlet like a soldier to the stage,
 For he was likely, had he been put on,
 To have proved most royal: and for his passage,
 The soldiers' music and the rite of war 50
 Speak loudly for him.
 Take up the bodies – such a sight as this
 Becomes the field, but here shows much amiss.
 Go, bid the soldiers shoot.

[*Exeunt marching, after which a peal of ordnance is shot off*

Act 5 Scene 2

END OF PAPER