

**TEMASEK JUNIOR COLLEGE
PRELIMINARY EXAMINATIONS
2016**

Higher 1 Literature

8811

Paper 1 Reading Literature

Time 3 hours

INSTRUCTIONS TO ALL CANDIDATES

Answer **three** questions; one from each of the sections.

INFORMATION FOR CANDIDATES

All questions in this paper carry equal marks.

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

You are advised to spend an hour on each question.

Begin each question on a fresh sheet of paper.

Submit your answer to each question separately.

This paper 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, imagery and form.

I am like a Slip of Comet

I am like a slip of comet,
Scarce worth discovery, in some corner seen
Bridging the slender difference of two stars,
Come out of space, or suddenly engender'd
By heady elements, for no man knows; 5
But when she sights the sun she grows and sizes
And spins her skirt out, while her central star
Shakes its cocooning mists; and so she comes
To fields of light; millions of travelling rays
Pierce her; she hangs upon the flame-cased sun, 10
And sucks the light as full as Gideon's fleece¹:
But then her tether calls her; she falls off,
And as she dwindles shreds her smock of gold
Between the sistering planets, till she comes
To single Saturn, last and solitary; 15
And then she goes out into the cavernous dark.
So I go out: my little sweet is done:
I have drawn heat from this contagious sun:
To not ungentle death now forth I run.

Gerard Manley Hopkins (1844-1889)

¹ In the Bible, Gideon promises God to lay out sheep fleece in sacrifice if God would save Israel.

Or (b) 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.

Blackberry-Picking

Late August, given heavy rain and sun For a full week, the blackberries would ripen. At first, just one, a glossy purple clot Among others, red, green, hard as a knot. You ate that first one and its flesh was sweet	5
Like thickened wine: summer's blood was in it Leaving stains upon the tongue and lust for Picking. Then red ones inked up and that hunger Sent us out with milk cans, pea tins, jam-pots Where briars scratched and wet grass bleached our boots.	10
Round hayfields, cornfields and potato-drills We trekked and picked until the cans were full, Until the tinkling bottom had been covered With green ones, and on top big dark blobs burned Like a plate of eyes. Our hands were peppered	15
With thorn pricks, our palms sticky as Bluebeard's ² .	

We hoarded the fresh berries in the byre.
But when the bath was filled we found a fur,
A rat-grey fungus, glutting on our cache.
The juice was stinking too. Once off the bush
The fruit fermented, the sweet flesh would turn sour.
I always felt like crying. It wasn't fair
That all the lovely canfuls smelt of rot.
Each year I hoped they'd keep, knew they would not.

Seamus Heaney (1939-2013)

² A fairy-tale character who murdered six of his wives and kept their corpses hidden in a room in his castle, which he forbade his seventh wife to enter.

SECTION B

EDITH WHARTON: *The Age of Innocence*

2.

Either (a) Discuss the significance of art in *The Age of Innocence*.

Or (b) Write a critical commentary on the following passage, relating it to the relationship between Newland and Ellen, here and elsewhere in the novel.

Dr. Carver bowed himself out, and Mrs. Manson, with a sigh that might have been either of regret or relief, again waved Archer to a seat.

"Ellen will be down in a moment; and before she comes, I am so glad of this quiet moment with you."

Archer murmured his pleasure at their meeting, and the Marchioness continued, in her low sighing accents: "I know everything, dear Mr. Archer—my child has told me all you have done for her. Your wise advice: your courageous firmness—thank heaven it was not too late!"

The young man listened with considerable embarrassment. Was there any one, he wondered, to whom Madame Olenska had not proclaimed his intervention in her private affairs?

"Madame Olenska exaggerates; I simply gave her a legal opinion, as she asked me to."

"Ah, but in doing it—in doing it you were the unconscious instrument of—of—what word have we moderns for Providence, Mr. Archer?" cried the lady, tilting her head on one side and drooping her lids mysteriously. "Little did you know that at that very moment I was being appealed to: being approached, in fact—from the other side of the Atlantic!"

She glanced over her shoulder, as though fearful of being overheard, and then, drawing her chair nearer, and raising a tiny ivory fan to her lips, breathed behind it: "By the Count himself—my poor, mad, foolish Olenski; who asks only to take her back on her own terms."

"Good God!" Archer exclaimed, springing up.

"You are horrified? Yes, of course; I understand. I don't defend poor Stanislas, though he has always called me his best friend. He does not defend himself—he casts himself at her feet: in my person." She tapped her emaciated bosom. "I have his letter here."

"A letter?—Has Madame Olenska seen it?" Archer stammered, his brain whirling with the shock of the announcement.

The Marchioness Manson shook her head softly. "Time—time; I must have time. I know my Ellen—haughty, intractable; shall I say, just a shade unforgiving?"

"But, good heavens, to forgive is one thing; to go back into that hell—" 35

"Ah, yes," the Marchioness acquiesced. "So she describes it—my sensitive child! But on the material side, Mr. Archer, if one may stoop to consider such things; do you know what she is giving up? Those roses there on the sofa—acres like them, under glass and in the open, in his matchless terraced gardens at Nice! Jewels—historic pearls: the Sobieski emeralds—sables—but she cares nothing for all these! Art and beauty, those she does care for, she lives for, as I always have; and those also surrounded her. Pictures, priceless furniture, music, brilliant conversation—ah, that, my dear young man, if you'll excuse me, is what you've no conception of here! And she had it all; and the homage of the greatest. She tells me she is not thought handsome in New York—good heavens! Her portrait has been painted nine times; the greatest artists in Europe have begged for the privilege. Are these things nothing? And the remorse of an adoring husband?" 40 45 50

As the Marchioness Manson rose to her climax her face assumed an expression of ecstatic retrospection which would have moved Archer's mirth had he not been numb with amazement.

He would have laughed if any one had foretold to him that his first sight of poor Medora Manson would have been in the guise of a messenger of Satan; but he was in no mood for laughing now, and she seemed to him to come straight out of the hell from which Ellen Olenska had just escaped. 55

"She knows nothing yet—of all this?" he asked abruptly.

Mrs. Manson laid a purple finger on her lips. "Nothing directly—but does she suspect? Who can tell? The truth is, Mr. Archer, I have been waiting to see you. From the moment I heard of the firm stand you had taken, and of your influence over her, I hoped it might be possible to count on your support—to convince you ..." 60

"That she ought to go back? I would rather see her dead!" cried the young man violently. 65

"Ah," the Marchioness murmured, without visible resentment. For a while she sat in her arm-chair, opening and shutting the absurd ivory fan between her mittened fingers; but suddenly she lifted her head and listened. 70

"Here she comes," she said in a rapid whisper; and then, pointing to the bouquet on the sofa: "Am I to understand that you prefer *that*, Mr. Archer? After all, marriage is marriage ... and my niece is still a wife..."

Chapter 17

SECTION C

JOHN WEBSTER: *The Duchess of Malfi*

3.

Either (a) “The world of Malfi is inevitably perverse.”
How far do you agree with this comment on *The Duchess of Malfi*?

Or (b) Write a critical commentary on the following passage, relating it to the dramatic effects created, here and elsewhere in the play.

DELIO	Yond's the Cardinal's window. This fortification Grew from the ruins of an ancient abbey, And to yond side o'th'river lies a wall, Piece of a cloister, which in my opinion Gives the best echo that you ever heard, So hollow and so dismal and withal So plain in the distinction of our words That many have supposed it is a spirit That answers.	5
ANTONIO	I do love these ancient ruins. We never tread upon them but we set Our foot upon some reverend history, And questionless, here in this open court Which now lies naked to the injuries Of stormy weather, some men lie interred Loved the church so well, and gave so largely to't, They thought it should have canopied their bones Till doomsday; but all things have their end: Churches and cities, which have diseases like to men, Must have like death that we have.	10 15 20
ECHO	<i>Like death that we have.</i>	
DELIO	Now the echo hath caught you.	
ANTONIO	It groaned, methought, and gave A very deadly accent.	
ECHO	<i>Deadly accent.</i>	25
DELIO	I told you 'twas a pretty one: you may make it A huntsman, or a falconer, a musician, Or a thing of sorrow.	
ECHO	<i>A thing of sorrow.</i>	
ANTONIO	Ay, sure, that suits it best.	30
ECHO	<i>That suits it best.</i>	
ANTONIO	'Tis very like my wife's voice.	
ECHO	<i>Ay, wife's voice.</i>	
DELIO	Come, let us walk farther from't.	

	I would not have you go to th'Cardinal's tonight: Do not.	35
ECHO	<i>Do not.</i>	
DELIO	Wisdom doth not more moderate wasting sorrow Than time: take time for't, be mindful of thy safety.	
ECHO	<i>Be mindful of thy safety.</i>	40
ANTONIO	Necessity compels me. Make scrutiny throughout the passes Of your own life; you 'll find it impossible To fly your fate.	
ECHO	<i>O fly your fate.</i>	45
DELIO	Hark: the dead stones seem to have pity on you And give you good counsel.	
ANTONIO	Echo, I will not talk with thee, For thou art a dead thing.	
ECHO	<i>Thou art a dead thing.</i>	50
ANTONIO	My Duchess is asleep now, And her little ones, I hope sweetly: oh heaven Shall I never see her more?	
ECHO	<i>Never see her more.</i>	
ANTONIO	I marked not one repetition of the echo But that: and on the sudden a clear light Presented me a face folded in sorrow. Your fancy merely.	55
DELIO		
ANTONIO	Come, I'll be out of this ague; For to live thus is not indeed to live: It is a mockery and abuse of life. I will not henceforth save myself by halves, Lose all, or nothing.	60
DELIO	Your own virtue save you! I'll fetch your eldest son, and second you: It may be that the sight of his own blood Spread in so sweet a figure, may beget The more compassion.	65
ANTONIO	How ever, fare you well. Though in our miseries Fortune have a part, Yet in our noble suff'rings she hath none. Contempt of pain—that we may call our own.	70

Exeunt.

Act 5, Scene 3

END OF PAPER