

**TEMASEK JUNIOR COLLEGE  
PRELIMINARY EXAMINATIONS  
2017**

**Higher 2 Literature**

**9748/01**

**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.

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**This paper consists of 8 printed pages**

## SECTION A

1.  
**Either (a)** Write a critical comparison of the following poems, considering in detail ways in which imagery, language and form contribute to each poet's portrayal of the relationship between parent and child.

**A** **Fingers in the Door**

Careless for an instant I closed my child's fingers in the jamb.  
She held her breath, contorted the whole of her being,  
foetus-wise, against the burning fact of the pain.  
And for a moment I wished myself dispersed in a hundred thousand  
pieces among the dead bright stars. 5  
The child's cry broke, she clung to me,  
and it crowded in to me how she and I were  
light-years from any mutual help or comfort.  
For her I cast seed into her mother's womb;  
cells grew and launched itself as a being: 10  
Nothing restores her to my being,  
or ours, even to the mother who within her  
carried and quickened, bore, and  
sobbed at her separation, despite all my envy,  
nothing can restore. 15  
She, I, mother, sister, dwell dispersed among dead bright  
stars: We are there in our hundred thousand pieces!

David Holbrook

**B** **First Thanksgiving**

When she comes back, from college, I will see  
the skin of her upper arms, cool,  
matte, glossy. She will hug me, my old  
soupy chest against her breasts,  
I will smell her hair! She will sleep in this apartment, 5  
her sleep like an untamed, good object,  
like a soul in a body. She came into my life the  
second great arrival, after him, fresh  
from the other world—which lay, from within him,  
within me. Those nights, I fed her to sleep, 10  
week after week, the moon rising,  
and setting, and waxing—whirling, over the months,  
in a slow blur, around our planet.  
Now she doesn't need love like that, she has  
had it. She will walk in glowing, we will talk, 15  
and then, when she's fast asleep, I'll exult

to have her in that room again,  
behind that door! As a child, I caught  
bees, by the wings, and held them, some seconds,  
looked into their wild faces,  
listened to them sing, then tossed them back  
into the air—I remember the moment the  
arc of my toss swerved, and they entered  
the corrected curve of their departure.

20

Sharon Olds

**Or b)** Write a critical comparison of the following poems, considering in detail ways in which language, style and form contribute to each poet's portrayal of the new year.

**A** **To the New Year**

With what stillness at last  
you appear in the valley  
your first sunlight reaching down  
to touch the tips of a few  
high leaves that do not stir 5  
as though they had not noticed  
and did not know you at all  
then the voice of a dove calls  
from far away in itself  
to the hush of the morning 10

so this is the sound of you  
here and now whether or not  
anyone hears it this is  
where we have come with our age  
our knowledge such as it is 15  
and our hopes such as they are  
invisible before us  
untouched and still possible

W. S. Merwin

**B** **Snowfall**

Particulate as ash, new year's first snow falls  
upon peaked roofs, car hoods, undulant hills,  
in imitation of motion that moves the way

static cascades down screens when the cable  
zaps out, persistent & granular with a flicker 5  
of legibility that dissipates before it can be

interpolated into any succession of imagery.  
One hour stretches sixty minutes into a field  
of white flurry: hexagonal lattices of water

molecules that accumulate in drifts too soon 10  
strewn with sand, hewn into browning  
mounds by plow blade, left to turn to slush.

Ravi Shankar

## SECTION B

### EDITH WHARTON: *The Age of Innocence*

2.

**Either (a)** Consider Wharton's presentation of the unfamiliar in *The Age of Innocence*.

**Or (b)** Write a critical commentary on the following passage, relating it to the portrayal of evolution, here and elsewhere in the novel.

"Men like you—" how Archer had glowed at the phrase! How eagerly he had risen up at the call! It was an echo of Ned Winsett's old appeal to roll his sleeves up and get down into the muck; but spoken by a man who set the example of the gesture, and whose summons to follow him was irresistible. 5

Archer, as he looked back, was not sure that men like himself *were* what his country needed, at least in the active service to which Theodore Roosevelt had pointed; in fact, there was reason to think it did not, for after a year in the State Assembly he had not been re-elected, and had dropped back thankfully into obscure if useful municipal work, and from that again to the writing of occasional articles in one of the reforming weeklies that were trying to shake the country out of its apathy. It was little enough to look back on; but when he remembered to what the young men of his generation and his set had looked forward—the narrow groove of money-making, sport and society to which their vision had been limited—even his small contribution to the new state of things seemed to count, as each brick counts in a well-built wall. He had done little in public life; he would always be by nature a contemplative and a dilettante; but he had had high things to contemplate, great things to delight in; and one great man's friendship to be his strength and pride. 10 15 20

He had been, in short, what people were beginning to call "a good citizen." In New York, for many years past, every new movement, philanthropic, municipal or artistic, had taken account of his opinion and wanted his name. People said: "Ask Archer" when there was a question of starting the first school for crippled children, reorganising the Museum of Art, founding the Grolier Club, inaugurating the new Library, or getting up a new society of chamber music. His days were full, and they were filled decently. He supposed it was all a man ought to ask. 25

Something he knew he had missed: the flower of life. But he thought of it now as a thing so unattainable and improbable that to have repined would have been like despairing because one had not drawn the first prize in a lottery. There were a hundred million tickets in *his* lottery, and there was only one prize; the chances had been too decidedly against him. When he thought of Ellen Olenska it was abstractly, serenely, as one might think of some imaginary beloved in a book or a picture: she had 30 35

become the composite vision of all that he had missed. That vision, faint and tenuous as it was, had kept him from thinking of other women. He had been what was called a faithful husband; and when May had suddenly died—carried off by the infectious pneumonia through which she had nursed their youngest child—he had honestly mourned her. Their long years together had shown him that it did not so much matter if marriage was a dull duty, as long as it kept the dignity of a duty: lapsing from that, it became a mere battle of ugly appetites. Looking about him, he honoured his own past, and mourned for it. After all, there was good in the old ways. 40

His eyes, making the round of the room—done over by Dallas with English mezzotints, Chippendale cabinets, bits of chosen blue-and-white and pleasantly shaded electric lamps—came back to the old Eastlake writing-table that he had never been willing to banish, and to his first photograph of May, which still kept its place beside his inkstand. 45

There she was, tall, round-bosomed and willowy, in her starched muslin and flapping Leghorn, as he had seen her under the orange-trees in the Mission garden. And as he had seen her that day, so she had remained; never quite at the same height, yet never far below it: generous, faithful, unwearied; but so lacking in imagination, so incapable of growth, that the world of her youth had fallen into pieces and rebuilt itself without her ever being conscious of the change. This hard bright blindness had kept her immediate horizon apparently unaltered. Her incapacity to recognise change made her children conceal their views from her as Archer concealed his; there had been, from the first, a joint pretence of sameness, a kind of innocent family hypocrisy, in which father and children had unconsciously collaborated. And she had died thinking the world a good place, full of loving and harmonious households like her own, and resigned to leave it because she was convinced that, whatever happened, Newland would continue to inculcate in Dallas the same principles and prejudices which had shaped his parents' lives, and that Dallas in turn (when Newland followed her) would transmit the sacred trust to little Bill. And of Mary she was sure as of her own self. So, having snatched little Bill from the grave, and given her life in the effort, she went contentedly to her place in the Archer vault in St. Mark's, where Mrs. Archer already lay safe from the terrifying "trend" which her daughter-in-law had never even become aware of. 50 55 60 65 70

(Chapter 34)

## SECTION C

### JOHN WEBSTER: *The Duchess of Malfi*

3.

**Either (a)** 'The weakest arm is strong enough that strikes  
With the sword of justice.' (Act V Scene II)

Examine the presentation of justice in *The Duchess of Malfi* in light of your understanding of the above quote.

**Or (b)** Write a critical commentary on the following extract, commenting on the presentation of greatness, here and elsewhere in the play.

DUCHESS CARIOLA	My laurel is all withered. Look, madam, what a troop of armed men Make toward us. <i>[Enter BOSOLA with a guard with vizards]</i>	
DUCHESS	Oh they are very welcome: When Fortune's wheel is over-charged with princes The weight makes it move swift. I would have my ruin Be sudden. [To BOSOLA] I am your adventure, am I not?	5
BOSOLA DUCHESS BOSOLA	You are. You must see your husband no more. What devil art thou that counterfeits heaven's thunder? Is that terrible? I would have you tell me Whether is that note worse that frights the silly birds Out of the corn, or that which doth allure them To the nets? You have harkened to the last too much.	10
DUCHESS	O misery: like to a rusty o'er-charged cannon, Shall I never fly in pieces? Come: to what prison?	15
BOSOLA DUCHESS BOSOLA DUCHESS	To none. Whither then? To your palace.	
DUCHESS	I have heard that Charon's boat serves to convey All o'er the dismal lake, but brings none back again.	20
BOSOLA DUCHESS	Your brothers mean you safety and pity. Pity?	
DUCHESS	With such a pity men preserve alive Pheasants and quails, when they are not fat enough To be eaten.	25
BOSOLA DUCHESS BOSOLA DUCHESS	These are your children? Yes. Can they prattle? No:	
DUCHESS	But I intend, since they were born accursed,	30

BOSOLA Curses shall be their first language.  
 Fie, madam.  
 Forget this base, low fellow.  
 DUCHESS Were I a man  
 I'd beat that counterfeit face into thy other. 35  
 BOSOLA One of no birth.  
 DUCHESS Say that he was born mean:  
 Man is most happy when 's own actions  
 Be arguments and examples of his virtue.  
 BOSOLA A barren, beggarly virtue. 40  
 DUCHESS I prithee who is greatest, can you tell?  
 Sad tales befit my woe: I'll tell you one.  
 A salmon as she swam unto the sea  
 Met with a dog-fish who encounters her  
 With this rough language: 'Why art thou so bold 45  
 To mix thyself with our high state of floods,  
 Being no eminent courtier, but one  
 That for the calmest and fresh time o'th'year  
 Dost live in shallow rivers, rank'st thyself  
 With silly smelts and shrimps? And darest thou 50  
 Pass by our dog-ship without reverence?'  
 'Oh', quoth the salmon, 'sister, be at peace:  
 Thank Jupiter we both have passed the net,  
 Our value never can be truly known  
 Till in the fisher's basket we be shown. 55  
 I'th'market then my price may be the higher  
 Even when I am nearest to the cook, and fire'.  
 So to great men the moral may be stretched:  
 'Men oft are valued high, when th'are most wretched'.  
 But come, whither you please: I am armed 'gainst misery, 60  
 Bent to all sways of the oppressor's will:  
 'There's no deep valley, but near some great hill.'

[Exeunt]

(Act III Scene V)

**END OF PAPER**