



MERIDIAN JUNIOR COLLEGE
JC2 Preliminary Examination
Higher 2

H2 LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

9748/03

Paper 3 The Individual and Society In Literature

19 Sep 2017

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

READ THESE INSTRUCTIONS FIRST

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 all your work securely together.
All questions in this paper carry equal marks.

This document consists of 7 printed pages.

Candidates must fill in this section		Examiner's Use only	
Name		Question No.	Total Score
		1 ()	25
		2 ()	25
Registration No.	Class	3 ()	25
		TOTAL:	75

Section A

Answer one question in this section.

1

Either (a) The passage below is from the novel *Heartland* (1999) by Darren Shiau.

Write a critical analysis of the passage, relating its theme and style to the topic of the individual and society.

Sham was the only one among his friends who lived in the east. The heartlanders of the east in Marine Parade and Bedok always prided themselves in having a unique character. They called it the cooler side of the island. Though mocked at whenever they proclaimed their individuality, the truth was that there was a difference to the ubiquitous heartlands which no one could deny.

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The southern estates, like Queenstown and Tanglin Halt, had a dour austerity that came with age. Quiet and peaceful, most were results of the first phase of high-rise developments after the HDB took over from the SIT in the sixties. They were no populated with old, conservative residents. Facelifts like the kaleidoscopic rainbow hues dripping down blocks at Outram Park were artificial lines of gaiety, not unlike the clap-along merriment young volunteers try to induce in the residents of the old folks' homes. The northern estates of Woodlands and Yishun, by comparison, were awkward with age. With brand-new libraries, community centres and playgrounds, and occupied by childless newlyweds and young upgraders, they resembled new uniforms, immaculate and smart, but with collars too stiff from too few washes.

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The heart of the heartlands had to be the big, landlocked, densely populated regions of Ang Mo Kio and Tao Payoh, where, through its arteries of bus interchanges and hawker centres, the crowds flowed and interacted incessantly. Moving. Buying. Eating. Talking. In the lorongs and the avenues, deceptively similar to outsiders, the river of life meandered, branched, converged, eroding the façade to a worn but radiant sheen.

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Yet, the east had a character all its own. The network of estate roads was eased by the smooth balm of the ECP, the kampong calmness sealed in by slow-paced, low-rise Katong and Geylang. The east had a relaxed air. But most importantly, it was near the sea – the salt in the air and the seafood eateries, like the unfailing pull of the tide, were an unconscious comfort to a nation of islanders.

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Sham decided he would buy fish for Audrey. Then all he needed was a nice glass bowl to put them in.

He passed a small girl, her tiny legs straddling a joyride. The faded swan, beak chipped with greyness, was bobbling mechanically to The More We Get Together. One hand gripped the iron handle and the other clutched a twenty-cent coin – three more minutes of bliss. She gave Sham a smile so genuine he could only smile back. Her mother was gossiping inside the hair salon behind. Joint tenant with an Indian barber, with its rotating and spiraling blue-and-red-bar, the salon tried to distinguish itself with a French name and, some years later, a London-trained sign.

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The fish shop gurgled with lighted tanks. Sham always enjoyed looking at the tacky but charming plastic contraptions on display: divers, mermaids, castles and even shipwrecks! He liked the humour of the underwater kingdoms. The colourful guppies, angel fish and tilapia were busy darting about their tiny realms. At the end of the shop were the expensive lone arowana and flocks of koi, their aimless swimming made serious by their price. Sham remembered his childhood days wading through the monsoon drains, feet caked with silt, scooping for fish in the murky waters with used jam jars. Floods meant nothing to little boys lost in their little worlds of discovery. When the tide was low, they would gather under the bridge and compare their fish all afternoon.

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Sham chose a dozen angel fish and a packet of fish food from a tray next to the tadpole box. As the owner was returning his change, Sham noticed Horlicks bottles lining a shelf separated by pieces of cardboard. Fighting fish. Sham had always wanted to own one as a

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child. He moved nearer to peer into the dark water. The fish was still, unmoving, yet seething with energy. Like an ancient silat warrior outside his ring, at peace, but ready to fight for its life at its owner's fancy.

Then, Sham saw his face again.

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It was like a glistening image of a phantom at once in front and behind the fish, stretched outwards by the curve of the jar.

- Or (b) The extract below is from the play *The Entertainer* (1957) by John Osborne. Archie Rice is a music hall performer, a performing tradition dying out in England. He performs on stage before leaving with his wife, Phoebe.

Write a critical commentary on the following passage, relating it to the theme of the individual and society in literature.

ARCHIE: Life's funny though, isn't it? It is – life's funny. It's like sucking a sweet with the wrapper on. Oh, well, we're all the in fertilizer business now, I suppose. Well, I'd rather have a glass of beer any day – I would. You don't believe me, but I would. You think I'm gone, don't you? Go on, say it, you think I'm gone. You think I'm gone, don't you? Well, I am. What's the matter, you feeling cold up there? Before I do go, ladies and gentlemen, I should like to tell you a little story, a little story. This story is about a man, just a little, ordinary man, like you and me, and one day he work up and found himself in paradise. Well, he looks up, you see, and he sees a feller standing next to him. It turns out that this feller is a saint or something. Anyway, he's on the welcoming committee. And the feller says to him – the Saint – says to him: 'Well,' he says, 'you're now in Paradise.' 'Am I?' he says. 'You are,' says the Saint. 'What's more, you have earned yourself eternal happiness.' 'Have I?' he says. 'You most certainly have,' says the Saint. 'Oh, you're well away,' he says. 'Can't you hear the joyful multitudes? Why, everyone is singing, everyone is joyful. What do you say, my son?' So the little man took a look around him at all the multitudes of the earth, spread out against the universe. So he says to the Saint: 'Well, can I get up where you're standing, and take a proper look?' So the Saint says: 'Of course you can, my son' and makes way for him. And the little man stood up where the Saint was and gazed up at the sight around him. At all the Hosts of Heaven, and all the rest of it. 'All the wonder and the joy of eternity is round about you,' said the Saint. 'You mean, this is all eternity and I'm in Paradise?' 'This is so, my son. Well, what have you to say?' So the little man looks around again for a bit, and the Saint says: 'Well, my son?' 'Well,' he says, 'I've often wondered what I'd say if this ever happened to me. I couldn't think somehow.' And the Saint smiled at him kindly and says again: 'And what do you say, my son?' 'Only one thing I can say,' says the little man. And he said it! Well, the Saint looked as if he had been struck across the face by some great hand. The Hosts stopped singing and all the Angels hid their faces, and for a tiny splash in eternity there was no sound at all in Paradise. The Saint couldn't speak for a while, and then he threw his arms round the little man, and kissed him. And he said: 'I love you, my son. With all my soul, I shall love you always. I have been waiting to hear that word ever since I came here.' He's there with his little hook, I can see him. Oh, well, I have a go, don't I? I 'ave a go.

(The cloth goes up, revealing a dark bare stage. The music starts up softly, and ARCHIE RICE stands on the stage in a little round world of light, and swaggers gently into his song:)

Why should I care
Why should I let it touch me,
Why shouldn't I sit down and cry
To let it pass over me?

(He begins to falter a little)

Why should –
Why should I let it get me –
What's the use of despair?

(He stops and stares ahead of him. The music goes on, then he picks up.)

If they see that you're blue
They'll look down on you.

(He stares up, then goes on.)

So why should I bother to care?

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(PHOEBE appears L. holding raincoat and hat.)

Why should I care.

Why should I let it touch me,

Why shouldn't I? –

(He stops, the music goes on, as he walks over to PHOEBE, who helps him on with his coat, and gives him his hat. He hesitates, comes back down to the floats.) 55

You've been a good audience. Very good. A very good audience. Let me know where you're working tomorrow night – and I'll come see YOU.

(He walks upstage with PHOEBE. The spotlight is hitting the apron, where ARCHIE had been standing. The orchestra goes on playing: 'Why should I care'; suddenly, the little world of light snaps out, the stage is bare and dark. ARCHIE RICE has gone. There is only the music. Curtain.) 60

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Section B

**Answer one question in this section, using two texts that you have studied.
The texts used in this section cannot be used in Section C.**

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- Either** **(a)** Compare how two authors you have studied present social forces shaping individual identity.
- Or** **(b)** Compare how two texts you have studied present individuals' experience of loss in society.

Section C

**Answer one question in this section, using one text that you have studied.
The text used in this section cannot be used in Section B.**

NATHANIEL HAWTHORNE: *The Scarlet Letter*

3

- Either** **(a)** In what ways, and with what effects, does Hawthorne explore the importance of reputation to individuals in the novel?
- Or** **(b)** How does the portrayal of Chillingworth's role in his community contribute to the theme of the individual and society in the novel?

F. SCOTT FITZGERALD: *The Great Gatsby*

4

- Either** **(a)** In what ways, and with what effects, does Fitzgerald present violence in the novel?
- Or** **(b)** Discuss how *The Great Gatsby* explores misrepresentation in relation to the theme of the individual and society.

TENNESSEE WILLIAMS: *A Streetcar Named Desire*

5

- Either** **(a)** In what ways, and with what effects, does Williams explore relationships between women in a society dominated by men?
- Or** **(b)** How far, and in what ways, does the final scene present a fitting conclusion to themes of the individual and society explored in the play?