



**SERANGOON JUNIOR COLLEGE
JC2 PRELIMINARY EXAMINATION 2017**

ENGLISH LITERATURE

**HIGHER 2 9748/03
PAPER 3: The Individual and Society**

FRIDAY 15 SEPTEMBER 2017

3 HOURS

TIME: 0800 – 1100

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. the use of post-its, tape flags or paper clips) is not permitted.

INSTRUCTIONS TO CANDIDATES

Write your name, civics group on every answer sheet.

Write in dark blue or black pen on both sides of the paper.

You may use a soft pencil for any diagrams or graphs.

Do not use staples, paper clips, highlighters, glue or correction fluid.

Write your answers on the separate answer paper provided.

Answer **three** questions.

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 question paper consists of 7 printed pages and 1 blank page. [Turn over]

Section A
Answer one question in this section

1

Either

- (a)** The poem which follows (published in 1977) was written by Singaporean poet, Edwin Thumboo.

Write a critical appreciation of the poem, considering ways in which the poet uses form, language and structure to present the theme of the individual and society.

The Way Ahead

We were to speak, to chat,
 Involve our several minds on how
 To frame a City.
 We were asked, judiciously, to talk of beauty
 In a town, how the town would change, 5
 Turn supple, rugged, yet acceptable.

There were the four of us,
 A Professor, much travelled and artistic,
 A Senior Civil Servant who knew the way ahead,
 The Town Planner and I; I? 10
 The average man, the man-in-the-street,
 Feeling nervous, struggling to free
 Practicalities from dreams,
 Leaving a small remainder hopefully sensible.

The Professor favoured China-town, not surprisingly. 15
 His thinking was crowded, bred by city living.
 The teeming interchange of word and gesture,
 The odour of ordinary lives,
 Intimacies overdone or underdone,
 Privacy come to grief, private grief made public, 20
 Were seen as energies of a proper order,
 As breaking the loneliness of man.
 It had the right perspective, he said,
 In the middle of tourist China-town.
 The flats were fine, but parcelled out too neatly. 25

The Town Planner took a different view.
 Intricacies of change were based on principles;
 A flat in the sun was to be had by everyone,
 A spaciousness, part of the better deal,
 Politics, economics, the re-deployment of custom, 30
 Clan and tribe. Impulses of a national kind
 Gave common rights. There has been talk of heritage.
 There should be change, a reaching for the sky,
 Brightening the City's eye, clearing the patches
 From the shoulders of her hills, 35
 For regiments of flats.

What could I say? Or think?

A city is the people's heart,
 Beautiful, ugly, depending on the way it beats.
 A City smiles the way its people smile. 40
 When you spit, that is the city too.
 A City is for people, for living,
 For walking between shadows of tall buildings
 That leave some room, for living.
 And though we rush to work, appointments, 45
 To many other ends, there must be time to pause,
 Loosen the grip of each working day,
 To make amends, to hear the inner self
 And keep our spirits solvent.
 A City should be the reception we give ourselves, 50
 What we prepare for our posterity.

The City is what we make it,
 You and I. We are the City.
 For better or for worse.

Edwin Thumboo

- Or (b) The following extract is taken from the novel, *The Old Wives' Tale* (1908), written by Arnold Bennett. It deals with the lives of two very different sisters, Constance and Sophia Baines. Here, Constance's husband, Samuel, has recently passed away and she is dealing with the aftermath of her loss.

Write a critical commentary on the passage, relating your discussion to the theme of the individual and society.

This was the first Monday after Samuel's funeral. Existence in the house had been resumed on the plane which would henceforth be the normal plane. Constance had put on for tea a dress of black silk with a jet brooch of her mother's. Her hands, just meticulously washed, had that feeling of being dirty which comes from roughening of the epidermis caused by a day spent in fingering stuffs. She had been 'going through' Samuel's things, and her own, and ranging all anew. It was astonishing how little the man had collected, of 'things,' in the course of over half a century. All his clothes were contained in two long drawers and a short one. He had the least possible quantity of haberdashery¹ and linen, for he invariably took from the shop such articles as he required, when he required them, and he would never preserve what was done with. He possessed no jewellery save a set of gold studs, a scarf-ring, and a wedding-ring; the wedding-ring was buried with him. Once, when Constance had offered him her father's gold watch and chain, he had politely refused it, saying that he preferred his own--a silver watch (with a black cord) which kept excellent time; he had said later that she might save the gold watch and chain for Cyril when he was twenty-one. Beyond these trifles and a half-empty box of cigars and a pair of spectacles, he left nothing personal to himself. Some men leave behind them a litter which takes months to sift and distribute. But Samuel had not the mania for owning. Constance put his clothes in a box to be given away gradually (all except an overcoat and handkerchiefs which might do for Cyril); she locked up the watch and its black cord, the spectacles and the scarf-ring; she gave the gold studs to Cyril; she climbed on a chair and hid the cigar-box on the top of her wardrobe; and scarce a trace of Samuel remained!

By his own wish the funeral had been as simple and private as possible. One or two distant relations, whom Constance scarcely knew and who would probably not visit her again until she too was dead, came--and went. And lo! the affair was over. The simple celerity² of the funeral would have satisfied even Samuel, whose tremendous self-esteem hid itself so effectually behind such externals that nobody had ever fully perceived it. Not even Constance quite knew Samuel's secret opinion of Samuel. Constance was aware that he had a ridiculous side, that his greatest lack had been a lack of spectacular dignity. Even in the coffin, where nevertheless most people are finally effective, he had not been imposing--with his finicky little grey beard persistently sticking up.

The vision of him in his coffin--there in the churchyard, just at the end of King Street!--with the lid screwed down on that unimportant beard, recurred frequently in the mind of the widow, as something untrue and misleading. She had to say to herself: 'Yes, he is really there! And that is

¹ Haberdashery - men's clothing

² Celerity - speed

why I have this particular feeling in my heart." She saw him as an object pathetic and wistful, not majestic. And yet she genuinely thought that there could not exist another husband quite so honest, quite so just, quite so reliable, quite so good, as Samuel had been. What a conscience he had! 45
 How he would try, and try, to be fair with her! Twenty years she could remember, of ceaseless, constant endeavour on his part to behave rightly to her! She could recall many an occasion when he had obviously checked himself, striving against his tendency to cold abruptness and to sullenness, in order to give her the respect due to a wife. What loyalty was his! How 50
 she could depend on him! How much better he was than herself (she thought with modesty)!

His death was an amputation for her. But she faced it with calmness. She was not bowed with sorrow. She did not nurse the idea that her life was at an end; on the contrary, she obstinately put it away from her, dwelling on 55
 Cyril³. She did not indulge in the enervating voluptuousness of grief. She had begun in the first hours of bereavement by picturing herself as one marked out for the blows of fate. She had lost her father and her mother, and now her husband. Her career seemed to be punctuated by interments. 60
 But after a while her gentle commonsense came to insist that most human beings lose their parents, and that every marriage must end in either a widower or a widow, and that all careers are punctuated by interments. Had she not had nearly twenty-one years of happy married life? (Twenty- 65
 one years--rolled up! The sudden thought of their naive ignorance of life, hers and his, when they were first married, brought tears into her eyes. How wise and experienced she was now!) And had she not Cyril? Compared to many women, she was indeed very fortunate.

³ Cyril – Constance's son

Section B

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

2

Either (a) Comment on the ways in which two texts you have read present the individual's relationship with society as ironic.

Or (b) "I think, therefore I am."

Comment on the ways in which characters in two texts you have studied define themselves in relation to their social environments.

Section C

Answer one question in this section.

MAXINE HONG KINGSTON: *THE WOMAN WARRIOR*

3

Either (a) “Every step towards selfhood requires sacrifice.” In light of this quote, comment on the notion of sacrifice in *The Woman Warrior*.

Or (b) How is the individual’s interaction with society defined by tradition and culture?

PHILIP LARKIN: From *Collected Poems*

4

Either (a) Comment on the treatment of the relationship between the private and the public in Larkin’s poetry, relating your discussion to topic of the individual and society.

Or (b) ‘Larkin’s writing is steeped in nihilism.’
Is this an apt evaluation of Larkin’s poetry?

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE: *Othello*

5

Either (a) In what ways and with what effects does Shakespeare use dichotomy to explore the relationship between the individual and society?

Or (b) “Tis in ourselves that we are thus or thus.” (Iago, Act 1 Scene 3)
Comment on the extent to which Iago’s philosophy dominates the world of the play.

END OF PAPER