



**NANYANG JUNIOR COLLEGE
JC2 PRELIMINARY EXAMINATION
2017**

LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

9748/03

Paper 3 The Individual and Society in Literature

Thursday, 20th 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 pages in texts (e.g. use of post-its, tape flags or paper clips) is not permitted.

READ THESE INSTRUCTIONS FIRST

Write your CT 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.

Please begin each question on a fresh sheet of paper.

At the end of the examination, fasten your work according to sections.

All questions in this paper carry equal marks.

SECTION A

Answer one question in this section.

1

Either

- (a) The following extract is from the play *My mother said I never should* (1988) by Charlotte Keatley. The scene takes place in 1951. Margaret, a 20 year-old girl living in Manchester, is looking forward to her new life in London and marriage with Ken. She converses with her mother, Doris, while they are keeping the laundry. Jack is Margaret's father and Doris's husband.

Write a critical appreciation of the extract, paying particular attention to the ways in which it explores the theme of individual and society.

- Margaret:* I can't wait to live in London! [*No reply.*] Ken says he can get a job there. He's frightfully clever.
They balloon the sheet up into the air.
- Margaret:* I'm in love, Mother.
Distant rumble of thunder. Doris looks up at the sky. 5
- Doris:* It's not going to hold. [*Pause.*]
They pull diagonals to stretch the sheet.
- Margaret:* And I'm going to learn to type! Ken says it will be helpful if we need a second income. [*As they shake the sheet.*] Typing's far more useful than all those stupid school certificates. I'll get a *proper* job. 10
- Doris:* What do you call running a home? [*Looks up at the sky.*] I knew we were in for a storm.
- Margaret:* I'm not wasting my life.
- Doris:* [*angry*] Thank you Margaret! [*They fold the sheet lengthwise.*] Pull! [*Margaret pulls so hard that Doris lets go and they jerk back from each other.*] 15
- Doris:* There's no need to snatch it out of my hands! There see, now you've spoiled it all.
- Margaret:* Well you can pick it up again, can't you [*Pause. Doris picks it up, they resume folding.*] I'm not going to have a family, babies and all that. Ken and I have decided. 20
- Doris:* [*distant rumble of thunder*] It will break, soon.
They fold the sheet lengthwise.
- Doris:* And what makes you so sure you can keep Mother Nature at bay?
They close in chest to chest and Margaret gives her corners to Doris, who folds the sheet in half and half again.. 25
- Margaret:* [*grandly*] There's THINGS you can get... I've heard about them.
- Doris:* I'm not talking about that. [*Cradles folded sheet.*] I'm talking about the *desire*... for little arms reaching up and clinging round your neck. [*She buries her face in the sheet, then holds it out to Margaret to do likewise.*] Smell: lavender. From the beds, there. Mother Nature is very hard to fight. It's not just a question of rubber things or what have you. 30
- Margaret:* 'Little arms clinging'...There, see, that's what I don't want. That's the difference between our generations. Mother.
- Doris:* Well, I'm glad to know you've worked it out, Margaret. Can you sort out Father's socks, please? 35
- Margaret:* [*picking the socks off the grass and pairing them*] You want a nice snapshot for the family album don't you? Proof, to show the neighbours. Well I'm going to be different! Women did so much during the war: there's nothing to stop us now.
- Doris:* Ha! 40

Margaret: You think I'm being selfish, don't you?
Doris: I felt a few drops, then. [*Pause*] What makes you think I wanted children?
Margaret: Mother!
Doris: I had a job once. I know it was only teaching, but... [*Pause. To stop herself.*] there's an odd maroon one over there, on the grass. [*Pause. Warning Margaret.*] Of course, Father has absolutely no idea. One would never... tell him. [*Pause.*] There wasn't any choice, then; so I don't know whether it was my need – to love him, if you know what I mean... or his desire – for a son. [*Long pause. Doris bends and picks up a sock.*] Horrible colours he likes. Not my choice, maroon... Not my choice at all... [*Pause*] 45
Margaret: The garden is always so lovely, Mother. May I take a cutting, off one of your geraniums, to London with me?
Doris: Oh Margaret... why does it have to be London? [*Sound of raucous car horn, which repeats.*] Oh I do wish people wouldn't do that! Brings down the tone of the neighbourhood!
Margaret: It's Ken! He's bought an Austin Healey- it's got a folding roof – you must come and see! I said to honk and I'd move Father's car into the garage so Ken can back into the drive – I'll have a lot of cases to load into the boot. 50
Doris: That nice Graham next door. All those trips he took you on, to the ornamental gardens at Bellevue.
Margaret: Yes, Mother. Well, I'm *not* going to be a Manchester dentist's wife. 60
Doris: I must say, Jack asked my mother before there was any talk of weddings.

Or

(b) The following extract is taken from *You Alone Are Dancing* (first published in 1990) by Brenda Flanagan. This story is set in Santabella, a fictitious Caribbean Island and traces the challenges facing a young couple named Beatrice and Sonny. Sonny has received a prestigious scholarship to study in the U.S. but has withheld this information from Beatrice.

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

The neighbours would watch them walk down the hill and they would shake their heads and tell each other, 'Dat girl will get big belly soon. Mark my words. Why she have to hang out wid boys so?'

Beatrice knew what they were saying. She knew too, why she liked Sonny's company. Sonny shared her dreams, he wanted to go away, to explore the world, to make something of himself. When he spoke about these things, he put lyrics to the melodies she held in her heart, the ones she couldn't bring herself to say even to him because she knew, deep down, that young women did not dream such dreams. Why was she different from the young women on the hill, she often wondered. Why couldn't she settle for being a seamstress, or for planting garden besides a husband? Years later she would think that maybe she had been foolish to dream a life beyond Rosehill, beyond Santabella. Maybe she would have been happier, safer within the limited boundaries that life had set for her. But on those nights that she and Sonny walked and talked, she had no such doubts. In Sonny's words her dreams came alive, and the verse of the poem she had read somewhere came back to her:

*The woods are lovely, dark and deep
And I have promises to keep
And miles to go before I sleep.*

She could not recall the poet's name, but she held onto the words for dear life, just as she held onto Sonny's words. But the time came when Sonny's talk had changed, when he'd lost hope in a future that would take him beyond Santabella's boundaries.

'Is Moko¹, ' he told her. 'How I could leave him? He depending on me to take care of him. I thinking about staying with Mister Maxwell in the pharmacy.'

Beatrice wanted to scream at him; she wanted to demand that he not give up because if he did, what would she have?

'Moko wouldn't stand in your way,' she told him.

'But who going to look after him? I not ungrateful, girl.'

'But that's not what you want, Sonny.'

'We always talking 'bout what I want,' he said. 'What you want to do with your life? What you going to do after you sit exams?'

She wanted to tell him then: she wanted to tell him about the poems and stories she wrote in copybooks that she hid in a box under her bed because whoever heard about a Santabella girl being a writer?

'Girl, you gone Toco², or what?' Sonny laughed. 'I ask you a question. How come you never want to tell me what you want to do? Tante³ spending all this money on education for you; I know she wants you to become a nurse.'

'I hate hospitals,' she laughed. 'And I can't stand the sight of blood.'

'So what use you going to put your education to?'

She hesitated. 'If I tell you, you have to promise not to laugh at me,' she said.

Sonny put his index fingers together to make a cross and kissed it. 'If I lie, meh mother die,' he swore and Beatrice, still not quite believing him, said quietly, 'I want to be a...a...wr....a reporter.'

Sonny watched her seriously. 'For newspapers?'

She nodded. 'Sort of.'

Sonny got up and walked away from her. She watched him, angry with herself for telling him, wondering if he was laughing, but when he came back to sit beside her on the bridge, he was serious. 45

'Uh.....hummm,' he added. 'So that's why you always writing in those copybooks. What you reporting on so much, girl?' And then she heard the laughter in his question and it made her angry. 50

'I never laugh at you Sonny! I listen to you all these years. You ever hear me laugh? 50

'Is not laugh I laughing, girl,' he tried to apologise. 'Is just that reporters have to be all over the place, night and day. How you going to have children.'

'You have my life plan out for me, Sonny? You have me married and settle down on this hill?' 55

'Sometimes I feel as if I don't know you, Beatrice,' he said, shaking his head. 'All these years I talking to you, and I still feel as if I don't know you. You so quiet...'

'I not quiet, Sonny,' she said. 'You just never have time to listen to anybody but yourself. You think you is the only one with big dreams?' And she got up and walked away from him. 60

In the house, smoke curled up into the celotex⁴ and the mosquitos had stopped singing. Beatrice went back inside and sprinkled water on the smoking bush. Then she set the bucket on the back steps and went to turn down Reme's bed. She wondered if Sonny had gotten a ride. If he had, he should be nearing Rosehill and Moko. He hadn't even told his own father. So why should she have expected him to tell her? Reme⁵ had always said she was stupid, too trusting. She tried to banish her mother's voice from her head. No. Sonny deserved to win. He did win, and she was happy for him. She was glad, though, that she hadn't told him that she had applied for the scholarship too. 65

¹ Moko – Sonny's father

² Toco- In Creole (Caribbean Language), means "child"

³ Tante – in Creole, respectable address of elders (female); refers to Beatrice's mother

⁴ Celotex – installation panels to keep mosquitoes out

⁵ Reme – Beatrice's mother

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.**

2

Either (a) ‘Society both nurtures and destabilises the individual.’
With this comment in mind, compare the ways in which two texts
you have studied present society’s influence upon the individual.

Or (b) Compare the ways in which two of the texts you have studied
depict individuals as alienated from their social environment.

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.

MAXINE HONG KINGSTON: *The Woman Warrior*

3

Either (a) Explore the significance of silence in *The Woman Warrior* and how it relates to Kingston's wider depiction of the individual and society in the novel.

Or (b) Examine Kingston's treatment of the tension between individuals and their communities in *The Woman Warrior*.

BOEY KIM CHENG: *Clear Brightness*

4

Either (a) In what ways, and with what effects, does Boey Kim Cheng use memories in his exploration of the relationship between the individual and society? You should refer to at least two poems from your selection.

Or (b) How, and with what effects, do Boey Kim Cheng's poems explore the individual's sense of loss amidst a changing society? You should refer to at least two poems from your selection.

TENNESSEE WILLIAMS: *A Streetcar Named Desire*

5

Either (a) How far, and in what ways, does the society of Williams's play render women vulnerable and disempowered?

Or (b) Discuss how Williams presents self-delusion in the play, and what it demonstrates about the individual's relationship with society.

END OF PAPER