

UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE INTERNATIONAL EXAMINATIONS
General Certificate of Education
Advanced Subsidiary Level and Advanced Level

LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

9695/07

Paper 7 Comment and Appreciation

May/June 2006

2 hours

Additional Materials: Answer Booklet/Paper

READ THESE INSTRUCTIONS FIRST

If you have been given an Answer Booklet, follow the instructions on the front cover of the Booklet.
Write your Centre number, candidate number and name on all the work you hand in.
Write in dark blue or black pen.
Do not use staples, paper clips, highlighters, glue or correction fluid.

Answer **two** 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.

- 1 Write a critical commentary on the following passage, taken from the story *Gypsy* by Anita Desai (born in 1937). Pat and David are American, visiting India for the first time; David has enjoyed Bombay and Delhi, but Pat has found these cities unbearable, so they have decided on a trip to the hills.

At the airlines office, the man could only find them seats on the plane to Manali, in the Kulu Valley. To Manali they went. Not, however, by plane, for there were such fierce sandstorms sweeping through Delhi that day that no planes took off, and they went the three hundred miles by bus instead. The sandstorm did not spare the highway or the bus – it tore through the cracked windows and buried passengers and seats under the yellow sand of the Rajasthan desert. The sun burnt up the tin body of the bus till it was a great deal hotter inside than out in the sun. Pat sat stone-still, as though she had been beaten unconscious, groping with her eyes only for a glimpse of a mango grove or an avenue of banyans, instinctively believing she would survive only if she could find and drink in their dark, damp shade. David kept his eyes tightly shut behind his glare glasses. Perspiration poured from under his hair down his face, cutting rivers through the map of dust. The woman in the seat behind his was sick all the way up the low hills to Bilaspur. In front of him a small child wailed without stop while its mother ate peanuts and jovially threw the shells over her shoulder into his lap. The bus crackled with sand, peanut shells and explosive sounds from the protesting engine. There was a stench of diesel oil, of vomit, of perspiration and stale food such as he had never believed could exist – it was so thick. The bus was long past its prime but rattled, roared, shook and vibrated all the way through the desert, the plains, the hills, to Mandi where it stopped for a tea-break in a rest house under some eucalyptus trees in which cicadas trilled hoarsely. Then it plunged, bent on suicide, into the Beas river gorge.

After one look down the vertical cliff-side of slipping, crumbling slate ending in the wild river tearing through the narrow gorge in a torrent of ice-green and white spray, David's head fell back against the seat, lolled there loosely, and he muttered 'This is the end, Pat, my girl, I'm afraid it's the end.'

'But it's cooler,' fluted a youthful voice in a rising inflection, and David's head jerked with foolish surprise. Who had spoken? He turned to his wife and found her leaning out of the window, her strings of hair flying back at him in the breeze. She turned to him her excited face – dust-grimed and wan but with its eyes alive and observant. 'I can feel the spray – *cold* spray, David. It's better than a shower or air-conditioning or even a drink. Do just feel it.'

But he was too baffled and stunned and slain to feel anything at all. He sat slumped, not daring to watch the bus take the curves of that precarious path hewn through cliffs of slate, poised above the river that hurtled and roared over the black rocks and dashed itself against the mountainside. He was not certain what exactly would happen – whether the overhanging slate would come crashing down upon them, burying them alive, or if they would lurch headlong into the Beas and be dashed to bits on the rocks – but he had no doubt that it would be one or the other. In the face of this certainty, Pat's untimely revival seemed no more than a pathetic footnote.

To Pat, being fanned to life by that spray-spotted breeze, no such possibility occurred. She was watching the white spray rise and spin over the ice-green river and break upon the gleaming rocks, looking out for small sandy coves where pink oleanders bloomed and banana trees hung their limp green flags, exclaiming with delight at the small birds that skimmed the river like foam – feeling curiosity, pleasure and amusement stir in her for the first time since she had landed in India.

- 2 Write a critical comparison of these two poems. In different ways, the two poets express their amazement and delight at the coming of the new season of spring.

Seed

The first warm day of spring
 and I step out into the garden from the gloom
 of a house where hope had died
 to tally the storm damage, to seek what may
 have survived. And finding some forgotten 5
 lupins I'd sown from seed last autumn
 holding in their fingers a raindrop each
 like a peace offering, or a promise,
 I am suddenly grateful and would
 offer a prayer if I believed in God. 10
 But not believing, I bless the power of seed,
 its casual, useful persistence,
 and bless the power of sun,
 its conspiracy with the underground,
 and thank my stars the winter's ended. 15

Paula Meehan (b.1955)

i thank You God for most this amazing

i thank You God for most this amazing
 day: for the leaping greenly spirits of trees
 and a blue true dream of sky; and for everything
 which is natural which is infinite which is yes

(i who have died am alive again today, 5
 and this is the sun's birthday; this is the birth
 day of life and of love and wings: and of the gay
 great happening illimitably earth)

how should tasting touching hearing seeing
 breathing any – lifted from the no 10
 of all nothing – human merely being
 doubt unimaginable You?

(now the ears of my ears awake and
 now the eyes of my eyes are opened)

e e cummings (1894–1962)

- 3 Write a critical commentary on the following extract from *The Crucible* (1952) by Arthur Miller. John Proctor is a North American farmer in the seventeenth century, who has recently been unfaithful to his wife Elizabeth, but is trying hard to win back her trust and love. It is early evening as he returns to the farmhouse where Elizabeth is preparing supper.

He glances about the room as he comes toward the fireplace, then halts for an instant as he hears her singing. He continues on to the fireplace, leans the gun against the wall as he swings a pot out of the fire and smells it. Then he lifts out the ladle and tastes. He is not quite pleased. He reaches to a cupboard, takes a pinch of salt, and drops it into the pot. As he is tasting again, her footsteps are heard on the stair. He swings the pot into the fireplace and goes to a basin and washes his hands and face. ELIZABETH enters. 5

- ELIZABETH: What keeps you so late? It's almost dark.
- PROCTOR: I were planting far out to the forest edge. 10
- ELIZABETH: Oh, you're done then.
- PROCTOR: Aye, the farm is seeded. The boys asleep?
- ELIZABETH: They will be soon. [*And she goes to the fireplace, proceeds to ladle up stew in a dish.*]
- PROCTOR: Pray now for a fair summer. 15
- ELIZABETH: Aye.
- PROCTOR: Are you well today?
- ELIZABETH: I am. [*She brings the plate to the table, and, indicating the food*] It is a rabbit.
- PROCTOR [*going to the table*]: Oh, is it! In Jonathan's trap? 20
- ELIZABETH: No, she walked into the house this afternoon; I found her sittin' in the corner like she come to visit.
- PROCTOR: Oh, that's a good sign walkin' in.
- ELIZABETH: Pray God. It hurt my heart to strip her, poor rabbit. [*She sits and watches him taste it.*] 25
- PROCTOR: It's well seasoned.
- ELIZABETH [*blushing with pleasure*]: I took great care. She's tender?
- PROCTOR: Aye. [*He eats. She watches him.*] I think we'll see green fields soon. It's warm as blood beneath the clods.
- ELIZABETH: That's well. 30
- [*PROCTOR eats, then looks up.*]
- PROCTOR: If the crop is good I'll buy George Jacob's heifer. How would that please you?
- ELIZABETH: Aye, it would.
- PROCTOR [*with a grin*]: I mean to please you, Elizabeth. 35
- ELIZABETH [*it is hard to say*]: I know it, John.
- [*He gets up, goes to her, kisses her. She receives it. With a certain disappointment, he returns to the table.*]
- PROCTOR [*as gently as he can*]: Cider?
- ELIZABETH [*with a sense of reprimanding herself for having forgot*]: Aye! [*She gets up and goes and pours a glass for him. He now arches his back.*] 40

PROCTOR: This farm's a continent when you go foot by foot droppin' seeds in.

ELIZABETH [*coming with the cider*]: It must be.

PROCTOR [*drinks a long draught, then putting the glass down*]: You ought to bring some flowers in the house. 45

ELIZABETH: Oh, I forgot! I will tomorrow.

PROCTOR: It's winter in here yet. On Sunday let you come with me, and we'll walk the farm together; I never see such a load of flowers on the earth. [*With good feeling he goes and looks up at the sky through the open doorway.*] Lilacs have a purple smell. Lilac is the smell of nightfall, I think. Massachusetts is a beauty in the spring! 50

ELIZABETH: Aye, it is.

[There is a pause. She is watching him from the table as he stands there absorbing the night. It is as though she would speak but cannot. Instead, now, she takes up his plate and glass and fork and goes with them to the basin. Her back is turned to him. He turns to her and watches her. A sense of their separation rises.] 55

PROCTOR: I think you're sad again. Are you?

ELIZABETH [*she doesn't want friction, and yet she must*]: You come so late I thought you'd gone to Salem this afternoon. 60

PROCTOR: Why? I have no business in Salem.

ELIZABETH: You did speak of going, earlier this week.

PROCTOR [*he knows what she means*]: I thought better of it since.

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