

**CAMBRIDGE INTERNATIONAL EXAMINATIONS**

**Pre-U Certificate**

## **MARK SCHEME for the May/June 2014 series**

### **9779 PRINCIPAL COURSE FRENCH**

**9779/04**

Paper 4 (Topics and Texts), maximum raw mark 60

This mark scheme is published as an aid to teachers and candidates, to indicate the requirements of the examination. It shows the basis on which Examiners were instructed to award marks. It does not indicate the details of the discussions that took place at an Examiners' meeting before marking began, which would have considered the acceptability of alternative answers.

Mark schemes should be read in conjunction with the question paper and the Principal Examiner Report for Teachers.

Cambridge will not enter into discussions about these mark schemes.

Cambridge is publishing the mark schemes for the May/June 2014 series for most IGCSE, Pre-U, GCE Advanced Level and Advanced Subsidiary Level components and some Ordinary Level components.

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### **Part I: Cultural Topics**

Candidates are to attempt one question from Part I: Cultural Topics and will write their answers in the Target Language as these texts/films are to be studied primarily in cultural context (be it historical, political, social) as well as a literary/cinematic one.

Answers are to be marked out of 30 according to the criteria below:

- 20 for Content [AO3: 10 marks, AO4: 10 marks]
- 10 for Language [AO2]

This paper is intended to test candidates' knowledge and understanding of a topic and their ability to use this knowledge to answer questions in a clear and focused manner. A sophisticated literary approach is not expected (although at the highest levels it is sometimes seen), but great value is placed on evidence of a first-hand response and thoughtful, personal evaluation of what candidates have studied. Candidates may have been encouraged to depend closely on prepared notes and quotations: quotation for its own sake is not useful, though it will not be undervalued if used appropriately to illustrate a point in the answer. This applies to films as well as literary texts. Texts and notes may not be taken into the examination.

Candidates will not tend to show **all** the qualities or faults described in any one mark-band. Examiners will attempt to weigh all these up at every borderline, in order to see whether the work can be considered for the category above.

Examiners will take a positive and flexible approach and, even when there are obvious flaws in an answer, reward evidence of knowledge and especially any signs of understanding and careful organisation. In the marking of these questions, specific guidelines will be given for each question, agreed by the examination team.

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**Part I: Cultural Topics – Content**

|              |                     |   |
|--------------|---------------------|---|
| <b>18–20</b> | <i>Excellent</i>    | Excellent ability to organise material in relation to the question. Comprehensive knowledge of both texts/films. Ability to look beyond the immediate material and to show good understanding of underlying themes.   |
| <b>15–17</b> | <i>Very good</i>    | A thoughtful and well-argued response to the question. Thorough knowledge of both texts/films. Detailed understanding and illustration of thematic and comparative issues.  |
| <b>12–14</b> | <i>Good</i>         | A well-argued response to the question. Equally sound knowledge of both texts/films. Good understanding and illustration of the thematic and comparative issues.  |
| <b>9–11</b>  | <i>Satisfactory</i> | A mainly relevant response to the question. Shows fair knowledge of texts/films. Some understanding and illustration of the thematic and comparative issues AND/OR good understanding of texts/films, but lacking detail. Stronger on one text/film than the other. |
| <b>5–8</b>   | <i>Weak</i>         | An uneven OR basic response to the question. Shows some knowledge and understanding of the texts/films. Includes some relevant points, but development and illustration are limited. Contains padding AND/OR has some obvious omissions OR is largely narrative.    |
| <b>1–4</b>   | <i>Poor</i>         | Little attempt to answer the question. Poor knowledge and understanding of the texts/films. Insubstantial with very little relevance.   |
| <b>0</b>     |                     | No rewardable content.  |

**Part I: Topics – Language**

|            |                     |  |
|------------|---------------------|--|
| <b>10</b>  | <i>Excellent</i>    | Almost flawless. Excellent range of vocabulary and complex sentence patterns. Good sense of idiom.   |
| <b>8–9</b> | <i>Very good</i>    | Highly accurate. Wide range of vocabulary and complex sentence patterns. Some sense of idiom.  |
| <b>6–7</b> | <i>Good</i>         | Generally accurate. Good range of vocabulary and some complex sentence patterns.   |
| <b>4–5</b> | <i>Satisfactory</i> | Predominantly simple patterns correctly used and/or some complex language attempted, but with variable success. Adequate range of vocabulary, but some repetition. |
| <b>2–3</b> | <i>Weak</i>         | Persistent errors. Simple and repetitive sentence patterns. Limited vocabulary.  |
| <b>1</b>   | <i>Poor</i>         | Little evidence of grammatical awareness. Very limited vocabulary.   |
| <b>0</b>   |                     | No rewardable language.  |

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## Indicative Content

Questions are open to interpretation and, therefore, the following notes are not intended to be prescriptive but to give an indication of some of the points which could be made in response to each question. They are by no means exhaustive.

### 1 LA FRANCE PENDANT LA GUERRE (1939–45)

- A « Pendant la guerre, l'égoïsme et la soif d'argent des Français représentaient un plus grand danger pour la France que les soldats ennemis. » Jusqu'à quel point êtes-vous d'accord ? »**

*Film: Lucie Aubrac (Berri)*

The question serves not to equate the dangers of Nazi invasion and French national characteristics, but rather to invite candidates to take issue with the seamier side of individuals' behaviour during the Occupation and to consider the dangers presented by the occupying army. Of course, resistance to the Occupation was not tolerated by the Nazis, and those engaged in resistance or subversion were usually shot. Thus the resistance movement portrayed in the film operated generally at great personal cost and self-sacrifice. However, there were elements whose patriotism was weaker than others, and who sold out to the enemy through collaboration and/or betrayal. Self-interest also asserted itself through the black market. The Film examines the activities of a group of Resistance fighters in the Lyon area. Thus Aubrac's first and second arrests, both at meetings of Resistance leaders, were as a result of betrayal, and this treachery leads too to the arrest in Paris of the coordinator of the resistance movement and in Lyon to Jean Moulin. Later Aubrac's (Jewish) parents are arrested and deported, illustrating a willingness of some to betray the existence of Jews to the Nazi authorities. Some candidates may discuss the role of Mme Aubrac in securing her husband's release from captivity, enabling both of them to join De Gaulle in London. This would be evidence to undermine the statement in the question.

*Némirovsky, Tempête en juin (from Némirovsky, Suite française)*

The book concentrates on the early days of the war, before the German soldiers have completely overrun the country, thus the emphasis is on the reaction of individuals and families to the early bombs and destruction and the worsening economic situation.

The chaos of the invasion and beginning of the Occupation surprised many of the characters who are self-absorbed and continue to act as if order and society would continue as before. A number of them reveal a lack of perspective, and demonstrate surprising arrogance/egotism, e.g. Corte and Florence, feelings of social superiority and wealth, e.g. Mme Pericand; Charles Langelet demonstrates a fanatical avoidance of the real world, and gets killed (perhaps symbolically) at the moment when he returns to Paris and tries to resume his former lifestyle. Hubert Pericand has youthful and naïve ideas about defeating the advancing armies, but realises that defeat is inevitable when he discovers the shortage of guns and ammunition amongst the soldiers he tries to help. Theft and exploitation (Corbin, Corte) become the norm.

A strange twist of fate sees Philippe Pericand, whose priestly vocation is in some doubt, murdered by the very orphans he is trying to rescue.

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*Dutourd, Au bon beurre*

The satirical novel concentrates on French behaviour and attitudes during the Occupation. At the forefront are greed, treachery and opportunism of those who target first and foremost financial gains during the Occupation. There is ample illustration of rivalry, division and betrayal; behaviour is motivated by political or personal expediency; (e.g. the depiction of those who forge Resistance identities at the end of the war (e.g. Legrandier, Delahausse). Collaboration with the Germans is both passive and active. Aspects indicate the widespread support of the Vichy régime. (e.g. En 1942...l'esprit de résistance n'était pas fort répandu et la plupart des Français acceptaient le gouvernement de Vichy. p244). Personal privation (e.g. food shortages) or exploitation (e.g. Léonie) and Anti-Semitism could also be mentioned.

**B Les personnages, jusqu'à quel point se sont-ils comportés en patriotes ?**

*Film: Lucie Aubrac (Berri)*

The Aubrac couple, serving selflessly in the Resistance, and going beyond the call of duty (perhaps for personal reasons too) are at one extreme of the scale of French patriotism. Analysis of the Resistance group of which they are part will reveal differing degrees of patriotism amongst its members: loyal chiefs of the Resistance (Jean Moulin), committed followers (Samuel/Aubrac), collaborators, traitors. Aubrac's parents are arrested and deported, demonstrating the general wave of anti-Semitism and a willingness (of some Frenchmen) to betray the existence of Jews to the Nazi authorities. Some answers might discuss confession under duress and torture. Raymond's escape from prison and flight to London to join de Gaulle show the commitment of the Resistance movement despite the dangers of undermining the Nazi occupation.

*Némirovsky, Tempête en juin (from Némirovsky, Suite française)*

The overwhelming majority of characters are not interested in the war, but are anxious to advance their self-preservation and to try to continue living as if the war was not on. Some demonstrate patriotic sentiments, e.g. Maurice who feels bitter about the Armistice; Hubert Pericand, who wants to fight with the French army, but the majority are fixated on surviving the chaos. Hubert hates his family for their hypocrisy associated with their wealth and contradictory loyalty to the French government. Answers will paint pen portraits of individual characters, most of whom are more concerned about social status and quality of life rather than the fate of their country.

*Dutourd, Au bon beurre*

There are few characters who behave decently and who wholeheartedly support resistance to the Germans. Those who are committed are flawed: Léon is naive and a romantic dreamer; Alphonse, his Communist cellmate, shows that not everyone who was against the Nazis held the same views. Amongst the carnival of characters feature a number of prominent representative positions: answers may mention Lebugle, whose pro-Vichy and pro-German sermons show him up to be a credulous fool; he is also a foil for Mme Lécuyer, whose pro-Gaullist stance is well-meaning but unreflective; her son, Léon, whose naïvety, wild imagination and plan to assassinate Laval serve only to undermine the Resistance movement; Legrandier who blows with the wind shows how fickle many French were – including the Poissonard, and point to how many forged themselves a Resistance identity at the end of the war. A good number are fuelled by self-interest and greed, and principles are

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often exchanged for expediency. Perception of patriotism is telling too: C-H's argument of the *marché noir patriotique* is quite false, it simply illustrates his self-justification and pitiless piracy.

The novel challenges the national myth of individual and national memory.

## 2 L'ÉCOLE

### A Comment les jeunes sont-ils présentés dans les deux ouvrages que vous avez étudiés?

*Les 400 coups* (Truffaut)

The film portrays a young man in need of structure and encouragement, but neither his parents nor the school provide the right approach. In many ways Antoine is an average boy who likes to please and have fun, but the people around him do not provide channels for him to develop his expectations and attitude in a positive way. Analysis of family life and incidents at school will provide good examples. His gradual exclusion from mainstream society can be charted through disappointments and moral decay. Education and teachers seen as oppressive, lacking understanding, no real learning or communication between teacher and the central character takes place; the rest of the class is kept under control; their natural enthusiasm has to be bridled to conform to the demands of the teacher (and adults). The detention establishment at the end seems well-populated, and suggests that the school system (and other institutions) are failing many.

School: success and hard work are not universally rewarded: the opening sequence with Antoine drawing a moustache on a picture of the teacher; the boy who rips pages out of his book without managing to write the dictation; later, whilst Mauricet recites a poem, the other children wreck his diving goggles. René tries to defend Antoine, but is thrown out of the class too. The scenes with René and Antoine show delinquent behaviour (R's theft of money, joint theft of alarm clock and typewriter, they throw balls of paper at passers-by). Avoidance of responsibility through truancy; the lack of a moral compass.

*Entre les murs* (Cantet)

The children in the class do not appear to be willing or cooperative learners. Whatever good will there may have been disappears when the teacher fails to keep good discipline and lets pupils interrupt. There is a cross section of ability and motivation: certainly some are keen to advance (e.g. Wei), others make a concerted effort not to cooperate. The overwhelming impression is one of hostility, or at best indifference to education. Attitudes vary: obedience, sarcasm, a lack of respect. They do cohere as a group, and when one of their number is disciplined (e.g. Souleymane), there is outright hostility towards the teacher. Pupil expectations were, arguably, not successfully developed by M Marin, and his expectations are shockingly low. There is, however, enjoyment of learning in other lessons (reported at the end).

Pennac, *Chagrin d'école*

The book looks at the attitudes and expectations of pupils from the point of view of parents, teachers and his own childhood. His own feeling of identity and exclusion are echoed in the phone calls he receives from worried parents; the adults' world is sometimes taken on by the children (e.g. Nathalie). Pupils who are failing at school have complex reasons for their

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position (e.g. metaphor of onion). Teachers' rôle is to help pupils develop skills and learning; there are good examples of success and cooperation (e.g. Blanc-Mesnil), and how the author develops tastes through dictations, etc. An aperçu of public opinion is also relevant: the demonisation of youth by the media, the interest in young people of things commercial.

The book argues that we need to rescue 'cancres', that no one should just be left to struggle, that it is essential to try. Pennac's critique of education is not saying that school is bad, far from it. He believes that school has saved many children from vice, prejudice, ignorance, stupidity and greed, as well as from class-bound or fatalistic families. He is offering ideas for making school better able to do that.

**B A quels problèmes les professeurs doivent-ils faire face dans ces ouvrages? Pourquoi ne trouvent-ils pas toujours la bonne solution ?**

*Les 400 coups* (Truffaut)

Presentation of a stiff, authoritarian class, where discipline is harshly enforced, and there is no interest in getting to know individuals; the teacher is something of a caricature. There is no real communication between teachers, parents and Antoine. The contact between school, parents and child is always within the context of a disciplinary infringement.

The teacher is not preparing him for the adult world, though the teacher's function is to open minds, develop maturity, etc. Petite-feuille shows no understanding of adolescence and, like the relationship of all adults and children in the film, it is a trial of strength; children either resist authority (e.g. René, Antoine) or submit to it (e.g. Mauricet).

Antoine is punished for drawing in class (A feels unjustly punished, as his poem shows).

*Entre les murs* (Cantet)

The film is set in a difficult environment (Paris XXe) where pupils come from a wide variety of social and ethnic backgrounds. The film shows the daily routine of confronting defiance, the mockery and sarcasm of the pupils who spend a lot of time talking amongst themselves because they attach little or no value to school; they try to manipulate the teacher so that they have the last word in senseless discussions. The pupils are often reluctant to work and some do not wish to learn anything from the teacher. Marin sometimes achieves a working relationship and obedience (e.g. he allows Souleymane's autoportrait as a photographic collage rather than written work, though this might be seen as a failure to get pupils to engage with language. Marin is confronted with a lack of engagement: Khoumba refuses to read/participate; « Avant même de maîtriser un savoir, vous êtes déjà en train de me dire que ça ne sert à rien. Commencez par le maîtriser et après vous pourrez remettre en cause le fait qu'on l'utilise. »

Other problems include: discipline: tu/vous; behaviour in the class; the problem (mishandled) of Souleymane, who is not only excluded, but whose case poisons the whole relationship between class and teacher for the rest of the year; language: to try and maintain their attention Marin has to adapt his language to that of the class; the slang the pupils proudly use and the way the teacher, rather than pulling them up, seems to join them on their territory, ending up calling two of his pupils "pétasses".

A positive moment – one of the few – is the staff-pupil football match at the end of the year.

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Pennac, *Chagrin d'école*

Challenge of a range of pupils' ability and expectations; the need for teachers to be completely committed to their classes, all the more so because of the social and pedagogical challenges; his colleague at Blanc Mesnil as example.

Influence of domestic circumstances (shouting matches between parents, father losing job, criminal behaviour), complicity of parents in excuses for pupils – e.g. appendicitis; teachers need understanding of home background to pinpoint problems (e.g. Nathalie).

The pupil as a target for commercial purposes (les enfants instrumentalisés, the interest in trainers, etc.); education as a challenge to allow pupils to think beyond the immediate: ta tête est déjà prise. Les professeurs essaient de te la rendre. The problem, too, of public perception of schools and the media's presentation of schools as awful and beyond hope: Honte à ceux qui font de la jeunesse la plus délaissée un objet fantasmatique de terreur nationale; the lack of information too (e.g. the discussion about L'Esquive). Miscommunication on a city level: explanation of school in Lyon: la ville avait peur d'eux et ils craignaient le jugement de la ville.

He offers some accounts of his own teaching challenges, of changing his pupils' perception of themselves as useless failures through helping them get to grips with language through using traditional French school methods but in a different way. (e.g. Y, dictations).

### 3 Regards sur la guerre d'Algérie

#### A Les buts politiques de la guerre avaient un prix trop élevé. Qu'en pensez-vous ?

Film: *La Bataille d'Alger* (Pontecorvo)

Both sides are confident in their ambitions and show scant regard for human life or dignity in trying to achieve their objectives. The French dismantle the FLN cell network in Algiers through intelligence and military means: torture, interrogation, repression of the local population, etc. The success was short-lived though, as the end of the film shows. The nationalists carry out guerrilla warfare (assassinations, bombings, etc.) and set about converting the Arab population to their cause through civil and religious/moral channels. Candidates may discuss the moral/ethical questions about the use of force and violence, and whether moral considerations are any different during or after conflict.

Consideration may also be given to the background of the film's history, and this factor offers a lens through which the title can be refracted: it was written by Saadi shortly after independence, so has a propaganda value for the Algerians; (it is still shown on Algerian TV every year to celebrate the 'struggle for independence'). For the French, the film is a reminder of a painful defeat.

Film: *La guerre sans nom* (Tavernier)

The series of interviews is designed to show the points of view of the conscripts, not the politicians. The ex-combatants are keen to talk about the war (at least amongst themselves) to exorcise ghosts and find camaraderie, but there is little satisfaction in their retrospective. The audience learns that they were not all keen to serve their country, and their country was not always supportive or respectful towards them, especially in relation to injuries and demobbing. Their stories reveal the contributions of foot soldiers to the Algerian campaign: in a sense their fear, disgust, acts of violence, are the stuff of those who served France as best

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they could. The stories of executions, torture, errors, accidents, etc. underline the grim reality of the war. Some were patriotic and were conscientious in their duty; some fought for the FLN. Adapting to France on their return was difficult for many, and the emotional/psychological wounds remain sensitive. The role of the State in supporting them (or failing to) during and after the conflict is a key concern.

Djebar, *La Femme sans sépulture*

The references to the general state of repression together with torture and injustice paint a desperate attempt by the French army to maintain control of Algeria, and ultimately the army failed because of lack of political support. Hania's account of El Hadj and Zoulikha's activities as independence fighters suggest that the struggle was arduous and the family paid a high price (in both their deaths). However, this commitment of self-sacrifice was not recognised by the Algerian authorities themselves after independence: Zohra recounts bitterly the injustice of being ignored by Allal for the family resettlement programme. Answers may consider both the individual circumstances of Zoulikha's family (the suffering of the war years, etc., the painfulness of evoking memories of that period) and the broader canvas of the political imperatives of the FLN. Ultimately, was the fight for independence worth the cost?

## B Jusqu'à quel point ceux qui ont participé à la guerre ont-ils regretté leurs actions ?

Film: *La Bataille d'Alger* (Pontecorvo)

The film (substantially a work of propaganda by Saadi) portrays a French army fighting against a downtrodden Algerian population and paints individual heroic figures of the FLN. The FLN are committed to their cause of emancipation from colonial rule, and are prepared to endure torture and assassinations carried out by the French to achieve their goal. The portrayal of Ali and Ben M'Hidi, who are more fully developed characters, with clear hope, enthusiasm and vision, thirsting for independence, leave no room for doubt that political victory is all important. The recruitment of the FLN women as bomb carriers is indicative of the lengths to which terrorists will go, and the carnage which ensues. The mobilisation of the Casbah population and the crowd scenes at the end of the film suggest that the politicians have widespread support. The French, by contrast are conscripts who follow orders, and appear as part of a monolithic war machine in their dealings with the local population. Mathieu, the cool-headed paratrooper commander, is methodical and objective. He is unequivocal in his determination to root out the FLN cells in Algiers, with full knowledge of the ethical consequences of the army's actions. The police chief too, in planting a bomb in the Casbah, is portrayed as having little conscience for the loss of civilian life. Both sides fight to win; in this war there is no room for ethical, moral or humanitarian considerations.

Film: *La guerre sans nom* (Tavernier)

A minority found their military service in Algeria something beneficial and positive (Bec, Drevet), but the vast majority are critical both of how the war was prosecuted and the very purpose of the war. Consideration should be given to the nature of the fighting (techniques, brutality, mutilation, torture, etc., André: *C'est la guerre qui est elle-même épouvantable.*) and the evaluation given by soldiers, e.g. Donazzolo (*on a le sentiment d'avoir gâché sa jeunesse ... ce que j'ai fait là-bas n'a servi à rien.*; Boulanger: *A cette époque je croyais que les déserteurs avaient tort. Maintenant je pense qu'ils avaient raison.*; Berthier's disgust with the army abandoning Algeria and the harkis. Also, the trauma and psychological effects on those who returned home (e.g. Manin); an evaluation of the price paid by those who were killed, those injured (e.g. Puygrenier).

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Djebar, *La Femme sans sépulture*

Discussions will centre on the part played by women and, more generally, the civilian population. The central thrust will demonstrate how Zoulikha embodies a spirit of independence, courage and commitment through her participation in the war. Against a family background, she is set apart from the other villagers by her attitude, resolve and unstinting support for the nationalist cause. The gruesome death and exposure of her corpse in the village indicate the status she had achieved as a member of the moujahadin. The perspective of the exploration of family memory through the different narrative voices will paint a fuller emotional picture of individuals' actions during the war and provide a post-independence assessment of their deeds.

#### 4 L'IDENTITÉ

##### A Analysez les changements dans la perception de l'identité des personnages dans ces ouvrages.

Film: *La Cage aux folles*

The setting of the nightclub in a place of loose morals (the MP's judgment of St Tropez) and the lifestyle of Renato and Albin are clear from the outset; they are two men very much at ease in their environment, their relationship and their business. The comedy unfolds as the exterior and conservative world, which does not share their values, intrudes into their lives, and they are called upon to assume more traditional roles and eschew campness and dressing in women's clothes. Renato attempts to do his son's bidding by removing Albin from the household and by acting in a more virile manner, but this is very much à contrecœur. Albin's attempt to be a female 'mother' falls apart when Laurent's real mother arrives. The perception of the spectator, in part developed through the eyes of Galabru, moves from one of amusement (or perhaps discomfort), to one of understanding that trying to play a role, or be inauthentic, leads nowhere, and that human nature is much more complex than at first appears. Perception of roles and lifestyles moves from the 'closed' or philistine to the 'open' and all-embracing.

Tournier, *La Goutte d'or*

Idriss is in search of an image which will confirm his status and his acceptance in the world at large. The search for confirmation of identity is betrayed at every turn as soon as he leaves his village: the photographs en route to Paris question his identity and purpose (e.g. Lola Ramirez, the wrong passport picture for his ID, the artificiality of the photographers' scenery). Further challenges to his identity and integrity are provided by the radically different cultural environment of a foreign city, where he is judged to be a stereotypical Moroccan street sweeper, for example. The novel can point to perceptions of self-worth by the individual (Idriss) as well as how others see and treat the individual as a representative symbol for immigrant labourers in the city. The two strands are intertwined, and Idriss's search for a centering and acceptance of his own culture is only arrived at after a series of adventures which are harmful on moral, cultural, spiritual and physical planes. Answers may also examine how other characters treat him, ranging from the blonde tourist in the opening chapter, through Lola Ramirez, the blonde prostitute, to Mage, and how he falls prey to the image-making machine of Western society.

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Van Cauwelaert, *Un aller simple*

Answers are likely to focus on the search for identity by Aziz as well as Jean-Pierre's inner search to re-establish his. J-P Schneider: Childhood and career have not allowed his feelings to develop, he is not fulfilled or satisfied (childhood in Lorraine, career as diplomat, failed relationships with Agnès and Clémentine). What changes his perception of life (and himself) is the opposite of his previous existence: desert landscape, no ties, but Valérie as an unlocking of his emotions, the search for Utopia (Irghez), the diary allows him to plot his self-development. There is therefore opportunity for reflection and observation, and for the reader (perhaps rather than J-P) to assess his childhood and arrested development, in particular his failed personal relationships (Agnès, parents, Clémentine). Aziz is unsure of his identity (as is the reader): even his official ID showing his origins is a forgery. He develops a tissue of lies, fiction and dream: his deportation to Morocco, his relationship to Schneider and Mlle d'Armeray, the journey of discovery to Irghez (Paradise) contribute to different elements of identity and self-orientation.

Some answers may look to the book as a piece of writing with autobiographical features and the position of J-P and Aziz as narrators; Aziz supplants Schneider's position, uses his notes as the basis of the novel (J-P's title alludes to his confessional journey) and takes on his role in the family.

## **B Jusqu'à quel point ces histoires présentent-elles une critique de la vie urbaine ?**

Film: *La Cage aux folles*

The subject matter of the film examines features of urban living, lifestyle, prejudice and social norms. The attempts to present a normal household to the future father-in-law involve the interplay of reality, image and illusion in society, notably the difficulties in introducing Laurent's 'mother', and of masking differing sexual preferences. This dramatic tension lies at the heart of the comedy and moral of the film, examining issues of pretence and sincerity in society, particularly in the urban environment of the town.

The MP's condemnation of louche morals may represent the judgement of conservative bigots, and the MP's comical undoing (or dressing-up in women's clothing) and the victory of sincere feelings over pretence (in Albin and Renato braving criticism and being open as a same-sex couple) form in part a criticism of closed-minded French society. The fact that the film is set in the urban environment of St Tropez provides for detailed illustrations. The ambiance and morality of the nightclub, indicative of the lifestyle and identity which Albin and Renato find most comfortable, contrast with the expectations and social prejudices of the wider world which are prominent in, for example, the scenes in the café, at the pâtisserie, the office waiting area. Here, urban society is presented as espousing conservative ideas of identity and lifestyle. This conservatism is lampooned as hypocritical through the plot with Charrier.

Tournier, *La Goutte d'or*

Consumerism and advertising in Paris (e.g. TV extra, model for display dummies) show how identity and personality can be eroded. The scenes in the capital point to physical danger (e.g. losing eyebrows in the dummy mould) as well as spiritual and emotional death (attitudes to sex and passion, the threat of a robotic enslavement as a shop dummy). The journey by Idriss from Tabelbala to Paris is at the same time a shift from N Africa, Islam to Europe and a commercial hub; from a position of restlessness through a difficult process of learning the new rules of an urban society to resolution and acceptance of self in the metropolis. The

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novel takes a critical look too at (modern) problems of immigrants in the city through Idriss's experiences and Achour's commentaries. Some answers may see Idriss's misreadings of Western culture as an opportunity for readers themselves to re-evaluate their own positions.

Van Cauwelaert, *Un aller simple*

The structure of the novel allows the reader to distance him/herself from the characters and events, and the interplay of true/false, illusion/reality, and the games that the author plays suggest an approach which is not a straightforward criticism of urban society. The urban environments (Marseilles, Lorraine, Paris) contrast with the desert scenes and deliberately generate misunderstandings which are at the heart of the plot (the problem of Aziz's identity, of immigration, the nature of government bureaucracy; for J-P Schneider a stifling environment where he cannot communicate properly with his parents or with women; *J'ai renié mon milieu, mes origines*). Further, J-P Schneider uses Aziz to talk about himself, he uses Irghez to talk about Lorraine, and the grey men to evoke the civilisation under threat, i.e. the Lorraine steelworkers who will lose their jobs. The resolution of the identity crisis is accompanied by the return to Lorraine, where the individual (Aziz) has found his place/identity in society.

## 5 L'ENGAGEMENT

**A « Les fins justifient les moyens. » Dans quelle mesure ces ouvrages vous encouragent-ils à accepter ce jugement sur ce que font les révolutionnaires ? Répondez en vous référant à deux ouvrages.**

Camus, *Les Justes*:

The contrast between Kaliayev and Stepan is key: Stepan's hard-line attitude contrasts with Kaliayev's more humane approach. Stepan's position is coloured by the harsh treatment he received in prison: he distrusts and despises the idealism behind Kaliayev's decision to be a terrorist. This is the conflict between ideals and efficacy, a struggle between absolutes. Kaliayev is supported by Dora and Annenkov to maintain the purity of ideals, and not degenerate to Stepan's level. The idealism explains Kaliayev's preoccupation with suicide (incomprehensible to Stepan). Discussion of the symbolism of the terrorist act (*J'ai lancé une bombe sur votre tyrannie, non sur un homme*) will bring out tensions between idealism and expediency/loss of innocence. Mention could be made too of Voinov's loss of nerve which in no way shows disloyalty to the cause; Annenkov accepts his decision. He, Dora and Kaliayev were attracted to the revolutionary movement out of a sense of a moral duty; the play develops the struggle which these characters feel between love/innocence and revolutionary acts. Some answers might suggest that a man's life is more important than fighting for an ideology as The Grand Duke and Kaliayev both die in the play. The Grand Duchess shows that justice and injustice lie in the eye of the beholder. The discussion between Foka and Kaliayev undermines some of Kaliayev's assumptions about class.

Sartre, *Les Mains sales*:

The discussion of means and ends starts with Hugo's interest in political reform. Hugo's membership of the Party is motivated by an attempt to remove himself from his bourgeois past. He is not trusted by the others in the group, whose motivation is not whimsical, but wholehearted. Hugo spends his time role-playing with Jessica, putting off his task; he feels that Hoederer, a real man of action, is truly authentic. Hugo, as an educated middle class recruit, is simplistic or naïve in his political thinking; the Party line should be clear,

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unchanging; he does not understand the real world of politics, particularly when there are competing lines of thought within the same organisation. The debate between Hugo and Hoederer shows their different conceptions of what they consider to be true and effective. Hugo's desire for purity in Party ethics, that the Party should not seize power at any cost, is matched with: *Un parti, ce n'est jamais qu'un moyen. Il n'y a qu'un seul but: le pouvoir.* Hoederer's sense of reality puts Hugo's theorising to shame: *C'est vrai: tu as des idées, toi. Ça te passera.* Hoederer's comments on bringing home the obvious to Hugo lead to the title of the play: *Comme tu tiens à ta pureté, mon petit gars. Comme tu as peur de te salir les mains.* Politics is necessarily a dirty business, and Hoederer's comment re-expresses the question: *Est-ce que tu t'imagines qu'on peut gouverner innocemment ?* Answers will go on to consider the reasons behind Hugo's actions in the play, and his desire to act consciously at the end in refusing to follow Olga's suggestion. Taking responsibility for his actions helps define him.

Essays may point to the conclusion: the ends do justify the means for the man of action, but not for the intellectual.

Film: *La Chinoise*:

The students want to bring about change in the name of the people, but without the support of the people. The young left-wing intellectuals have middle class origins and perpetuate the very elitist mentality they are trying to combat. The students live in isolation from reality and society. The cell is formed from a stereotypical group of people, and there could be analysis of their backgrounds and what they hope to achieve (e.g. Guillaume is looking for socialist theatre, Kirilov, a tortured artist, is a romantic; Yvonne is a naïve country girl representing the unintellectual). They are interested in slogans, ideas, and a political line which is at odds with the PCF. Consideration of Maoism. The egalitarian ideal which attracts them is, though, very fragile, as the social strata and individual habits reassert themselves in the flat. The development of violent action is important, particularly in the conversation between Véronique and Jeanson. His comment on why revolutions happen is key to undermining the seriousness of the group's motivation: *on ne fait pas une révolution pour les autres, tu peux participer, tu ne peux pas inventer une révolution.* The violent and unstable Kirilov echoes Camus's Stepan. The seriousness of Véronique's intent to advance the Revolution by shooting the representative of the USSR is undermined by her botching of the assassination and her complete lack of concern at having shot an innocent party. Godard's techniques constantly undermine the seriousness of the students' endeavour (e.g. Guillaume's discussions of revolution in comfortable chairs, sipping coffee out of bone china cups in a bourgeois flat).

**B Peut-on dire que les hommes sont de meilleurs révolutionnaires que les femmes, ou le contraire ?**

Camus, *Les Justes*:

Answers will look at the male Revolutionaries and their shortcomings, e.g. Kaliyev as the sensitive moralist who thinks that there are clear limits to political murder, and Stepan as his counterpart, a de-sensitised, angry young man who feels that Revolution should not spare anyone, if circumstances so dictated. Similarly, a comparison between Dora and Kaliyev will bring out points of similarity and contrast: she is fully convinced about her role (as bomb maker), not a tortured idealist; she is more conciliatory and more nuanced in her feelings, thus her love for Kaliyev is not second to her revolutionary ideal (as his is); they both sacrifice themselves for the common cause. Dora's view of revolution contrasts also with Stepan's: *Même dans la destruction il y a des limites*; her view is tactically more astute and

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she shows a better understanding of long term success in improving life for the poor. Some implications of the question are related to the play's title, and with Dora's despairing cry that being *les Justes* excludes her and Kaliayev from conventional happiness. The dramatic aspect is of course more a matter of opinion. Some might take the view that the emotional and sexual frustration evoked by the relationship helps to counterbalance the philosophical debate and to infuse some dramatic interest.

Sartre, *Les Mains sales*:

Answers will examine, at least briefly, what a revolutionary might be, in terms of the play. Motivation, commitment, obedience to the party line are the hallmarks of a revolutionary, but issues of pragmatism v orthodoxy are also raised by Sartre. The play examines differences between thoughts and actions, between (absolute) morality and political reality. It pits two men, Hugo and Hoederer, representing these distinct two approaches to political revolution, against each other, set against a background of shifting party lines and political allegiances.

The obvious female comparison to make is with Olga. Olga is a strong-willed, intellectual character, who is a dedicated party member, ready to sink personal feelings and interests in the need to obey orders; she follows the party line (even when it changes). She has a strong affection for Hugo, she feels both protective and responsible towards him. It is she who negotiates a stay of execution, instigates the flashback in which the uncertainties of the opening are explained, is part of the political content of the play.

Film: *La Chinoise*:

The students live in isolation from reality and society against a background of Chinese Communist propaganda. The cell is formed from a rather bourgeois group of people, and answers could provide analysis of their backgrounds and what they hope to achieve (e.g. Guillaume is looking for socialist theatre, Kirilov, a tortured artist, is a romantic who sees protest in terms of literature and art; Yvonne is a naïve country girl representing the unintellectual). All are looking for their own personal reasons to rebel, yet all are individuals rather than members of a coherent group, committed to a party line, the men as much as the women. Only Jeanson stands apart from the group, especially as he has experience of resistance (WW2) and rebellion (FLN), and can see beyond the slogans of dialectical materialism. It is he who points out the problems in Véronique's brand of revolution. It is Véronique who develops the need for violence, though in the end does so out of a selfish and naïve desire to 'do' something; there is no coherent political philosophy, and no support from the general population for her actions. On the other hand, she stands apart from the others, and arguably makes the men look self-serving. As the students leave the flat at the end of the holidays, the audience is left with the impression of their amateurism and futility.

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## **Part II: Literary Texts**

Candidates are to attempt **one** question from Part II: Literary Texts and will write their answers in English as these texts are to be studied primarily from a literary point of view.

Answers are to be marked out of 30 according to the criteria below:

- 25 for content [AO3: 10 marks, AO4: 15 marks]
- 5 for structure [AO3]

Examiners will look for a candidate's ability to engage with literary texts and to produce answers which show knowledge, understanding and close analysis of the text. A more sophisticated literary approach is expected than for answers to Part I. Great value is placed on detailed knowledge and understanding of the text; on the construction of an argument which engages the terms of the question and on a close and sophisticated analysis of sections of the text pertinent to the terms of the question. Candidates may have been encouraged to depend closely on prepared notes and quotation: quotation for its own sake is not useful, although it will gain credit if used appropriately to illustrate a point in the answer. Texts and notes may not be taken into the examination.

Candidates will not tend to show **all** the qualities or faults described in any one mark-band. Examiners will attempt to weigh all these up at every borderline, in order to see whether the work can be considered in the category above.

Examiners will take a positive and flexible approach and, even when there are obvious flaws in an answer, reward evidence of knowledge and understanding and especially any signs of analysis and organisation.

In the marking of these questions, specific guidelines will be given for each essay, agreed by the examination team.

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**Part II: Texts – Content**

|              |                     |  |
|--------------|---------------------|--|
| <b>23–25</b> | <i>Excellent</i>    | Excellent ability to organise material in relation to the question. Comprehensive response with an extensive number of relevant points targeting the terms of the question with precision. Displays detailed knowledge and sustained analysis.   |
| <b>19–22</b> | <i>Very good</i>    | A thoughtful and well-argued response to the question. Includes a large number of relevant points, well-illustrated. Displays thorough knowledge, good understanding and analysis of the text.   |
| <b>15–18</b> | <i>Good</i>         | A well-argued response to the question. Includes a good number of relevant points, most of which are developed and illustrated. Some limitations of insight, but a coherent approach.  |
| <b>11–14</b> | <i>Satisfactory</i> | A mainly relevant response to the question. Shows fair knowledge and understanding of the text. Includes a fair number of relevant points not always linked and/or developed.  |
| <b>6–10</b>  | <i>Weak</i>         | An uneven OR basic response to the question. Shows some knowledge and understanding of the text. Includes some relevant points, but development and illustration are limited. Contains padding AND/OR has some obvious omissions OR is largely narrative.  |
| <b>1–5</b>   | <i>Poor</i>         | Little attempt to answer the question. Only elementary knowledge and understanding of the text. Makes very few relevant points and even these are largely undeveloped and unsubstantiated. OR a response which makes hardly any attempt to address the terms of the question but which displays a basic general knowledge of the text. |
| <b>0</b>     |                     | No rewardable content.   |

**Part II: Texts – Structure**

|          |                     |   |
|----------|---------------------|---|
| <b>5</b> | <i>Very Good</i>    | A well-structured and coherent piece of writing, with ideas and arguments clearly linked throughout. All paragraphs well-constructed. Includes a comprehensive introduction and conclusion. |
| <b>4</b> | <i>Good</i>         | A clear structure, with logical presentation of ideas. Most paragraphs well-constructed. Includes an adequate introduction and conclusion.  |
| <b>3</b> | <i>Satisfactory</i> | Some success in organising material and ideas into a structured piece of writing. A reasonable attempt to paragraph but weakness in introduction and conclusion.                            |
| <b>2</b> | <i>Weak</i>         | Some attempt to organise material and ideas into a structured piece of writing. Many single-sentence paragraphs or no attempt at paragraphing. Organisation of ideas not always logical.    |
| <b>1</b> | <i>Poor</i>         | No attempt to organise material and ideas into a structured piece of writing. Incoherent. Ideas introduced in no apparent order.  |
| <b>0</b> |                     | No rewardable structure.  |

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## Indicative Content

Questions are open to interpretation and, therefore, the following notes are not intended to be prescriptive but to give an indication of some of the points which could be made in response to each question. They are by no means exhaustive.

### 6 Racine, *Andromaque*

#### A Write a commentary on the following passage.

The extract is taken from early in Act III. Oreste is charged by the Greeks with taking Astyanax, son of the dead Trojan hero Hector, back to Athens to ensure that he does not pose a threat to the Greeks in future. Pyrrhus uses his control over the boy's life as a bargaining tool to persuade his mother Andromaque to submit to his passion for her. Were this to happen, Pyrrhus would abandon the plan to marry Hermione, and Oreste, who loves her, would be able to take her away. Nobody has so far made a decision, and Oreste's impatience has led him to announce his intention of taking Hermione away by force. His *confidant*, Pylade tries to calm him down. He contests Oreste's view that Pyrrhus is deliberately trying to frustrate him. As Pylade is able to comment with some objectivity on the situation, he articulates Pyrrhus's position in a way which Oreste cannot do, blinded as he is by passion and frustration. The facts are that Pyrrhus is interested not in thwarting Oreste but in persuading Andromaque to marry him, and that Hermione is going to leave because she is forced out, not because she is beginning to feel sympathy for Oreste. The latter's view is irrational. He is consumed with self-pity, and convinced that he is the only victim of these circumstances. He is unable to apply an understanding of his own feelings in such a way as to empathise with anyone else. It is obvious to Pylade, and to the reader/spectator, that Pyrrhus is not interested in preventing Oreste from consummating his passion for Hermione. Nor is Hermione's potential rejection by Pyrrhus synonymous with her suddenly giving herself to Oreste. Pylade will try to persuade Oreste to leave without more ado, but it is clear that a man in the grip of passion, nurturing the illusion that his desires might soon be satisfied, is not a good listener. Ironically, the tragic characteristic that he shares with Pyrrhus is a willingness to commit political suicide in order to assuage his sexual frustration.

#### B Discuss the tension between human willpower and supernatural forces in this play.

The issue is that of the weakness of human willpower in the face of superhuman forces. These forces are frequently evoked by Racine in terms of implacable gods, whose control over the destinies of helpless humans makes a mockery of the latter's elevated status in human society. The gods light fires of passion in people whose decisions are far-reaching, and who are rendered incapable of making these decisions rationally. When several of these people are in much the same irrational state, there is a breakdown of the moral and social order which, in less stressful circumstances, they would uphold. What they propose is conditioned by their sense of pride and of duty. But as fast as they articulate their awareness of these instincts, more powerful instincts take over.

Racine's perception of the tragic consequences of this conflict can be illustrated by examining the vacillations of Pyrrhus in this play. He is painfully aware of his status and of what is expected of him. He is supposed to marry Hermione and to surrender Astyanax to Oreste and thus to certain death at the hands of the Greeks. His reaction to Oreste's mission is dismissive. When he decides to abandon Astyanax to the Greeks, it is not out of a sense of duty but because of wounded male pride, and he seizes on any inkling that Andromaque might give in. Ultimately, his determination to marry her, in defiance both of his duty and of

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her manifest reluctance, is the uncontrollable force which holds sway over all rational considerations.

The same applies to Oreste and Hermione. The former says in the opening scene:

« Mais admire avec moi le sort dont la poursuite  
Me fait courir alors au piège que j'évite. »

He knows that he should stop pursuing Hermione, but he pursues her relentlessly. All his instincts are against regicide, but he kills Pyrrhus. Hermione knows that she should have the self-respect to leave Pyrrhus, but she stays for the ultimate humiliation. The tragedy lies in the characters' awareness that they have lost control.

**C Discuss the assertion that human relationships in this play are described only in terms of trade and war.**

The two concepts are linked by the fact that battles of willpower are conducted with the use of threats. Pyrrhus has a hold over Andromaque in that he can use the threat of having Astyanax killed as a way of persuading her to respond positively to his love for her. Her position is defined by war in the literal sense that the Trojan war caused the death of her husband. Her perception of Pyrrhus is as of a bloodthirsty warrior, and she is haunted by the memory of the night in which so many Trojans were killed. Pyrrhus is blunt about the trade-off he offers her, and in the end she has to save her son by agreeing to his terms. The relationship between Hermione and Oreste is also based on bargaining. Hermione knows that Oreste will stop at nothing to win her favour, and Oreste has given up the unequal struggle to resist his passion. Her demand that he commit regicide is based implicitly on the *quid pro quo* of her leaving with him as soon as the deed is done. Oreste sees Pyrrhus as an enemy, and a vindictive one at that. He is convinced that Pyrrhus will marry Hermione only to spite him.

It would be fair to argue that the relationship between Hermione and Pyrrhus does not fit so neatly into the terms of the question. His treatment of her is cruel but not belligerent. It does of course depend on the protracted bargaining with Andromaque, but in itself is simply a by-product of Pyrrhus's passion for her and his determination to see that passion satisfied. She can only wait, torn between love and hatred, until the decision is reached. She then declares war on Pyrrhus, referring to him as her enemy, and threatening to kill both him and herself in the temple where he is about to marry Andromaque. But Hermione has no bargaining power, and is driven only by jealousy.

**7 Molière, *Tartuffe***

**A Write a commentary on the following passage.**

The extract comes at a moment of crisis at the end of Act III. Damis has overheard the dialogue between Tartuffe and Elmire, in which the former has made clear his desire for her and his indifference to the moral and religious values which he supposedly represents. Damis has confronted Orgon with these facts. Tartuffe responded by reverting to his play-acting and affecting self-reproach and contrition, to which Orgon has responded by accusing Damis of being gratuitously offensive. In the ensuing shouting match, Orgon has disinherited his son and put a curse on him. In this extract, he continues to rail against those who make any accusation against Tartuffe. He has, from the outset, refused to listen to anyone (notably Cléante) who suggests that Tartuffe is not a sincere *dévo*t. He is obsessive in his

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determination to place all his faith in Tartuffe, whose aim is obviously to exploit him, rather than in those who want to help him. As Dorine said early on, Tartuffe « connaît sa dupe ».

His histrionic self-reproach easily convinces Orgon that his own judgement is sound. The comedy is, as usual, in the almost unbelievable predictability of Orgon's determination to have his own way, thereby offering Tartuffe the opportunity he needs to see Elmire again. Tartuffe's evocation of obedience to divine will is richly comic in its incongruity and the ease with which it retains Orgon's faith in him. The echo « le pauvre homme » brilliantly recalls the interview between Orgon and Dorine early in the play, when Dorine recounts Elmire's indispositions, contrasting them with Tartuffe's rude health and gluttony, which provoke the refrain « le pauvre homme » in a similarly illogical context. There is also an echo of Dorine's remark that Orgon's scale of values has been distorted by his obsession in that he cares less about his family than about his relationship with Tartuffe. The act therefore ends on a note typical of Molière: there is a crisis, but the behaviour of Orgon is more laughable than menacing.

**B It has been said that the play comes close to tragedy. Would you agree that Molière's treatment of plot and characters supports this view?**

Molière's central characters are all convinced of their own superiority. When this conviction is challenged, they react in an autocratic manner, invariably seen by everyone else to be counter-productive, but generated by their refusal to countenance any perspective but their own. Orgon is no exception. He has been taken in by Tartuffe's pseudo-piety, which to any normal person such as Dorine is manifestly bogus and potentially exploitative. The challenge to his convictions and authority by his son, who has witnessed Tartuffe's advances to Elmire, provokes a reaction which threatens the whole family with misery and ruin. He exposes his wife to the possibility of rape, he disinherits and curses his son, he intends to force his daughter to marry this grotesque individual, and he signs all his possessions over to the imposter. At the narrative level, there is always the assurance, in the context of comedy, that the problem will be resolved by royal intervention if not by some obscure coincidence. At the textual level, Molière reminds us constantly of the vulnerability of those who seek to enforce their will on others.

The comic mood is sustained in this play in several ways: there is an elaborate introduction to the characters of Tartuffe and Orgon which raises laughter rather than concerns. It is made clear that Tartuffe, for all his pious posturing, has an obvious weakness for women as well as wine and food. He will easily lose control if tempted. Orgon's obsession with him is seen as comic in that he has lost all sense of proportion and dotes on Tartuffe in an absurd way. These expectations, built up early in the play, are richly fulfilled when the characters appear. There are numerous examples of Molière's use of comic exaggeration and predictability. When it comes to the seduction of Elmire, there are farcical elements in the shape of Orgon under the table and Elmire's frantic but fruitless coughing. When the family is thrown onto the street, the comic tone is restored by the ludicrous performance of Mme Pernelle, obstinately defending Tartuffe and thus turning the tables on Orgon, and Dorine's hilarious echo of the phrase *le pauvre homme*. At no time do the tragic emotions of pity and fear take over from the ridicule which both these characters, by the absurdity of their respective pretensions, consistently arouse.

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**C Molière described Tartuffe as « un méchant homme ». Explain the significance of this remark and its relevance to the playwright’s satirical aim.**

Answers should show an awareness of the controversy which this play provoked. There are lengthy prefaces setting out Molière’s defence, and it must be shown that his comedy was intended to expose the ascendancy in Parisian society of predatory *faux dévots*, who exploited the contemporary fashion for keeping a saintly person as part of a respectable household.

Molière insisted on the idea that Tartuffe was not intended to represent the Catholic Church but a criminal element in society: « des scélérats qui, tous les jours, abusent de la piété et la font servir méchamment aux crimes les plus grands. » Dorine makes clear from the outset that she understands what Tartuffe is up to:

« Lui, qui connaît sa dupe et qui veut en jouir  
Par cent dehors fardés a l’art de l’éblouir. »

Cléante famously holds forth to Orgon about the importance of distinguishing true piety from its imitator. Equally important is the insistence on Tartuffe’s very limited understanding of how a pious person thinks and behaves. For him, it is enough to talk of prayers, hair shirts and scourges, and to affect an air of self-deprecation when necessary. That said, he is laughed at within seconds of appearing on stage for his instantly identifiable lechery. When he begins his attempt to seduce Elmire, she confronts him with the fact that such intentions appear to be at variance with his vocation, and he dismisses these objections as trifling because he does not appreciate how someone of Elmire’s moral upbringing views this situation. It never occurs to him that she might not accept his argument that any sin lies in foolish indiscretion rather than in the act of adultery. His exploitation of Orgon’s anger at Damis results not only in the latter being banished and cursed but in Tartuffe immediately inheriting everything the family owns, to which his response (« La volonté du ciel soit faite en toute chose. ») shows once again that the ecclesiastical cliché is uttered without a shred of understanding of its true meaning. He will cheerfully see his materialistic aims achieved, and his arrest can only be seen as the appropriate fate for a lecherous, greedy and ultimately ridiculous imposter.

**8 Balzac, *Le Père Goriot***

**A Write a commentary on the following passage.**

This extract occurs after the long lecture and the outrageous proposition Rastignac has been given by Vautrin. Since his arrival in Paris, he has quickly worked out that poverty is not an option if he is to make any headway, so he has already asked his family for money, primarily to enable him to look suitably glamorous on social occasions. Both Mme de Beauséant and Vautrin – at very different points on the social scale – have made it clear to him that the Parisian world is dark and dangerous, that few people can be trusted, and that at this crossroads in his life, as Vautrin puts it, he must accept the need to fight his way through the moral mire in which he has so recently arrived from the peaceful and innocent world of the provinces. Vautrin has seen that Rastignac is tempted by the possibility of getting a foothold in Delphine de Nucingen’s house, having been rejected by Mme de Restaud after his gaffe concerning Goriot. This makes him feel guilty, as does the generosity of his sisters in supporting what is ultimately a selfish project. He has, at this stage, to wrestle with this conscience. His native decency is being challenged by exposure to the realities of survival. Vautrin has given him two weeks to decide whether or not to accept the plan to court and marry Victorine for her money, the latter to be made available by Vautrin’s criminal contacts, subject to a percentage fee. At this point, his declaration of intent to stick to his principles and

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to reject flattery and deceit as ways of gaining a foothold in smart society seems genuine enough. Perhaps Balzac exaggerates it somewhat to make it sound absurdly idealistic. It is significant that his moral musing is interrupted by the arrival of the tailor, since we are very soon to read: « En se voyant bien mis, bien ganté, bien botté, Rastignac oublia sa vertueuse résolution. » Vanity and ambition quickly dispel the pious thoughts of the boy up from the country. The lessons of his cynical tutors will be of more use to him than waking up in the morning feeling « pur comme un lis ».

**B Not long before his death, Goriot says: « Je suis un misérable, je suis justement puni. » How far can this remark be justified?**

Goriot is his own harshest critic. The question invites an analysis of these criticisms and a discussion of the issues which emerge from the well-known analogy with King Lear ('a man more sinned against than sinning'). It is beyond dispute that Goriot is guilty of being an over-indulgent father who has created thoroughly spoiled daughters who are accustomed to having their own way. He is also guilty, perhaps, of attempting to construct a comfortable life for himself by way of marrying them to men well-established in society. By providing substantial dowries, he thought that he would be accommodated in their homes as and when he required to be. He seems quite unable to grasp the idea that possessiveness is counter-productive. Furthermore, having launched them into the highly competitive and materialistic world of Parisian society, he naïvely failed to anticipate the very high maintenance costs of daughters who need magnificent clothes and jewellery, who have to bear the considerable costs of having a lover, and generally to be able to keep up appearances. He has himself created the expectation on their part that the father will provide. Towards the end, he feels guilty because he no longer has the means to do so. Thus far, it could be argued that he reaps what he has sown. It must also be pointed out that the behaviour of his daughters and sons-in-law is thoroughly reprehensible. Goriot's involvement in the Revolution, as Mme de Langeais points out, caused a problem to these people after the return of the Bourbon monarchy. At all events, the sons-in-law would not entertain him, and Mme de Restaud makes it extremely clear that Rastignac is unwelcome in her house after raising the whole matter of her father's situation. The daughters make self-indulgence synonymous with calculated exploitation. To quote Mme de Langeais: « Ce père avait tout donné. Il avait donné, pendant vingt ans, ses entrailles, son amour; il avait donné sa fortune en un jour. Le citron bien pressé, ses filles ont laissé le zeste au coin des rues. »

**C To what extent is Balzac conveying a moral judgement between right and wrong, good and bad in this novel?**

Superficially, it would seem that the innocent provincial with old-fashioned ideas about virtue and honour is soon corrupted by Parisian society. Much of the imagery evoking the latter involves slime and gutter, and in abstract terms, infamy, materialism, egoism, corruption, and so on. Balzac, however, must be seen as an observer, albeit a committed one, rather than as a moralist. The forces at work here are socio-historical. He was writing in a period of immense and rapid political and social change, which saw out the old order (characterised by the concepts of honour and reputation) and the new, characterised by financial acumen and ruthless ambition. If Rastignac's purity is rapidly and irrevocably destroyed by those with whom he comes into contact, it is because these forces are controlling the difference between survival and failure. Mme de Langeais articulates the only coherent position, and there is no suggestion that she is speaking here of moral high ground: « Le monde est un borbier, tâchons de rester sur les hauteurs. » The fate of a character such as Poiret is clearly ascribed to his lack of energy. Feeble is no good. At the other end of the scale, Vautrin, obviously a crook, earns Balzac's admiration for his sheer energy and his contempt for the pusillanimous. The goings-on in the great salons, where gossip and exploitation

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surround every adulterous relationship, is perceived as destructive rather than immoral. The dominance of money is seen as a fact of social evolution, not a matter of evil triumphing over good. If Rastignac is Balzac's contemporary hero, it is because he grasps the reality (sink or swim in the mire) and has the purposefulness to keep going. Not surprisingly, it is probably Vautrin who comes closest to expressing Balzac's view of this depressing scene: « Savez-vous comment on fait son chemin ici ? par l'éclat du génie ou par l'adresse de la corruption. Il faut entrer dans cette masse comme un boulet de canon, ou s'y glisser comme une peste. » There is, throughout the novel, more a sense of fascination on the part of the author than of moral indignation.

## 9 Baudelaire, *Spleen et Idéal*

### A Write a commentary on the following poem.

The poem is part of the Art cycle. Even as a relatively young man, Baudelaire was haunted by the fear of failing to fulfil his vocation before his death. The imagery implies that he is already old, but this is not the case: his 'youth' is not in a remote past, but his sense of mortality is so strong that he creates the impression of looking back from the autumn of his years. His preoccupation is with poetic inspiration and the absence of it. Darkness represents a lack of creative activity, light is associated with inspiration. He acknowledges that much of his youth was wasted in self-indulgence, which was destructive rather than productive, thus self-defeating in terms of his conviction that a poet has a mission. The image of fruit is consistent with this idea – little has been created so far, and time is against him. He is painfully aware of the urgency of his mission and the hard work which is needed if his creative activity is not to be swamped and arrested for ever. Hence the evocation of tombs – the imagery of death is always there as a threat to galvanise him into making greater efforts. He is dreaming of creating new 'flowers' – as evoked by the title of his collection – but is aware of the uncertainty weighing on his aspirations. The *mystique aliment* needed to make these flowers germinate is poetic inspiration, and he cannot control its supply. Meanwhile, the clock goes on ticking, the fragile human being goes on decaying, and the battle continues between the poet and his enemy, Time, which constantly threatens to curtail his ability to do what he desperately needs to do – and which, self-evidently, he does here. There is a very strong sense of impending physical destruction by this malevolent and powerful force, in contrast with the vulnerability of the poet's ability to marshal his fragile resources.

### B Assess and illustrate the role of sensory experience in Baudelaire's writing.

Baudelaire perceives that the poet has a privileged position. Although condemned to a kind of exile among « les vils piocheurs ignorants », as he calls ordinary mortals, he has the ability to express the simultaneous effect of different sense impressions. The echoes between these experiences are described in the poem *Correspondances*, in which he declares that « Les parfums, les couleurs et les sons se répondent » in a dark and profound unity. Part of the poet's originality lies in his perception and expression of these echoes: perfume can have the tactile effect of a child's flesh. In the company of his mistress Jeanne Duval, Baudelaire experiences the physical stimulus which in turn fires his imagination. The smell of her body evokes the sounds and sights of an exotic South Sea island; her head of hair is like a *forêt aromatique*, which becomes like the swell of the sea transporting him to a distant world of interrelated smells, sights and sounds. Her eyes are like a well from which he can drink, or they have an impenetrable metallic quality. The tactile image of his hand stroking a cat is described as intoxicating, and the sight of its cold stare causes him physical pain. There are many other examples. The most relevant love poems in this regard are *Harmonie du soir*, *Le Flacon*, *Causerie*. Perhaps the most famous of the poems entitled *Spleen* provides an example in this section of the correspondence between sights and

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sounds, mind and body. The sense of claustrophobia is accentuated by the sinister noises, and the poet's mind seems paralysed by an image of spiders which is both visual and tactile.

Answers may draw on other suitable poems, but need to illustrate the poet's ability to find creative inspiration in sense impressions and to startle the reader with unexpected imagery where one sense might be expressed in terms of another.

### C Discuss the poet's preoccupation with sin.

The first poem in *Les Fleurs du mal* makes clear Baudelaire's preoccupation with sin. Le péché is the third noun he uses, and he declares in the fourth stanza: « C'est le Diable qui tient les fils qui nous remuent ! » The poet sees himself and those like him as the playthings of forces which offer irresistible temptation and construct « Le canevas banal de nos piteux destins. » His ceaseless search for the quality of sensory experience which will fire his poetic imagination leads him inevitably into a moral abyss. His sense of a God-given vocation is tortured by the shame of self-abasement. The paradox is expressed in *Hymne à la Beauté*, in which he reiterates the fundamental need for stimulation – the key to the door which leads him to « un infini que j'aime et n'ai jamais connu ». This need overpowers his sense of sin: he does not care, in the end, whether the vision of beauty comes from heaven or hell, provided that the experience lifts him out of the hideous banality of ordinary life. His relationships with women bring out this paradox in different ways. In the case of Jeanne Duval, it can be shown that he resents the degrading element of his dependency on a highly sensual but insensitive woman. He uses a liturgical title, *De profundis clamavi*, to describe the sense of horror and blasphemy into which he sinks as a result of this dependency. Conversely, Madame Sabatier is perceived as a kind of guardian angel. This in turn provokes conflicting emotions, as the poet feels the more keenly his own imperfections. The evocations of sin and virtue are often evoked with capital letters: Remords, Haine, Vertu, Repentir. Baudelaire struggles with the insoluble dilemma of being a human being with a divinely inspired mission, forced to submit to his need for the stimulus offered by sex, alcohol and drugs to fulfil his poetic destiny.

## 10 Alain-Fournier, *Le Grand Meaulnes*

### A Write a commentary on the following passage.

Meaulnes has befriended Valentine in Paris without realising who she is, namely Frantz de Galais's fiancée who ran away before their wedding at Les Sablonnières. He has, in a social context, passed her off as his wife, but any ideas of romance are cut short by Valentine's references to her former fiancé. She has recounted to Meaulnes the plans this fiancé had made for the wedding, and her voice sounds to him like « l'écho d'une voix déjà entendue ». She then hands to Meaulnes the letters written to her by her fiancé, asking him to burn them, and he recognises Frantz's handwriting. The tone of the letter quoted conveys the sadness and anxiety which beset Frantz after Valentine disappeared. Meaulnes is in shock at this coincidence, and at the views expressed here by Valentine, who is unaware of the import of her words. Her attitude reflects the disparity between her temperament and that of Frantz. She is a simple girl who was utterly bewildered by the extravagant Romanticism of her fiancé, and who could not cope with the expectations he had of her to play the role of the Romantic heroine in a social context which was too exalted for her. Her use of the phrase *ses idées folles* is therefore logical and unsurprising coming from someone of her character and background. Meaulnes is extremely (perhaps unfairly) hostile to her attitude towards Frantz. He fails to understand why she could not handle the fairy-tale wedding. His boundless admiration for the lunatic Frantz prompts him to accuse Valentine of letting Frantz down in every respect. She has driven Frantz into a frenzied and even suicidal state by her

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lack of faith in his plans for her future. The censorious nature of his reaction is something he will live to regret. His instant rejection of Valentine forces her back onto the streets, and in the end his remorse drives him to find and rescue her.

**B Seurel describes himself as « un gamin du bourg pareil aux autres ». How far do you agree?**

The context of this quotation is the period immediately following Meaulnes's departure. It is therefore important to consider Seurel's character as it appears before Meaulnes's arrival, and the effect on it of his relationship with Meaulnes. The early part of the novel makes it clear that Seurel is a sickly and rather solitary child. His disability made it difficult for him to join in the games of the other boys, and his mother actively discouraged him from doing so. As the son of the village schoolmaster, he was also to some extent differentiated by circumstances from these rustic boys. The arrival of Meaulnes changes his life. The latter's unexplained three-day absence causes hostility on the part of other boys, notably Jasmin Delouche, and the fight between them opens the rift between these boys on the one hand and Meaulnes, subsequently supported by Seurel, on the other. The pact between Meaulnes and Seurel is sealed when Meaulnes promises to take Seurel with him on his next mysterious journey. For the other boys, Meaulnes is just showing off and wanting to be the dominant male. For Seurel, the mystery surrounding Meaulnes's adventure is captivating. Their relationship is characterised by a conspiratorial atmosphere of private nocturnal discussion. Seurel's involvement stimulates his imagination and arouses in him an excitement which he has never before experienced: « Pour la première fois me voilà, moi aussi, sur le chemin de l'aventure. » His perception of the search in the countryside is a world away from the down-to-earth attitudes of his classmates. And when Meaulnes leaves, he feels utterly bereft. His contention that he went back to being a village boy just like the others is indicative of his need to fend off the sense of abandonment caused by Meaulnes's departure. There is also an element of relief. Meaulnes's influence has been disruptive. The conventional side of Seurel's nature welcomes a return to normality. He can easily be persuaded to sympathise with the view of the other boys that Frantz, in particular, was a trouble-maker. But he will equally easily be drawn back into the Meaulnes saga because he is not, in this context, « pareil aux autres ».

**C Discuss the view that Alain-Fournier's vision of romantic love is wholly pessimistic.**

The characters in this novel experience intense emotions, but undiluted and/or lasting happiness is not chief among them. It can be argued that Alain-Fournier regarded childhood and adolescence as a time when we experience dreams uncluttered by reality, but he conveys the feeling that attempts to fulfil such dreams will end in disappointment. This is, perhaps, because the dreams are too fanciful to survive confrontation with the real world. Meaulnes's vision of Yvonne de Galais is set in a framework which makes it appear like a dream. Her suggestion that he might come back to the château and that she will be waiting for him creates the suggestion that a moment of perfection can be recreated. He later comes to realise that this is not possible: « j'étais à une hauteur, à un degré de perfection et de pureté que je n'atteindrai jamais plus. » The reality of Yvonne's life is somewhat more prosaic than her image at the *fête étrange* seemed to promise. She is a practical, sensible young woman, very beautiful but not, as it were, out of this world. Meaulnes is an incurable romantic who has to pursue his quasi-heroic quest to rescue the lunatic nomad Frantz and sacrifices his marriage to this mission, based, as Seurel rightly says, on a spontaneous promise made by an irrational adolescent.

Frantz's vision of love and marriage was based on an even more fragile chimera. To transport a simple girl who has been thrown out of her home and try to turn her into a fairy-

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tale princess was risky, and it failed. These characters have their origins in Romantic dramas and novels of the 19th century, all of whom perished in the attempt to turn fantasy into reality. If this is pessimistic, it is either pessimism based on an immature vision of what life has to offer, or it is the sigh of the emerging adult who laments the cruel fact that adolescent dreams have to be left behind before they cause more damage.

## 11 Mauriac, *Le Nœud de vipères*

### A Write a commentary on the following passage.

This letter from Janine to Hubert closes the novel. His granddaughter Janine is one of the very few people with whom Louis has been able to communicate and with whom there seems to be a measure of mutual affection. It is she who voices Mauriac's sense of the inevitability of Louis's religious enlightenment at the end of his life, and who dares to articulate the view, already expressed by Louis, that the real knot of vipers was the family. She may be overstating the case in the rhetorical question which begins this extract. Louis was a complex character whose emotional immaturity and inferiority complex was exacerbated by the discovery of Isa's relationship with Rodolphe, and Louis's anti-clerical attitudes predate his marriage. The significance of her observations lies in the suggestion that the family's brand of Catholicism was anathema to Louis and reinforced his determination to abstain from any religious practice. The instance of Hubert crossing himself in St Germain des Prés after the conspiratorial meeting with Robert typifies the hypocrisy and self-righteousness of this provincial bourgeois society. These people have no understanding of the true meaning of a Christian life, warts and all, which is led according to the instincts of faith and not the superficial rituals of a social cult. Janine is saying that Louis gave the impression of being materialistic as an act of self-defence when he was actually searching for other values, whilst the family pretended to practise Christian values but was obsessed with material issues. She is drawing attention to the pages of Louis's journal which convey at regular intervals his sense of the need for something more meaningful than control over his wealth.

Hubert's reaction is unlikely to differ from that he expresses in his previous letter to Janine. His deep-rooted complacency, his utter conviction that his conscience is clear and that he has acted only in the interest of justice for the family, is unlikely to be moved by Janine's words. He does not have either the imagination or the humility to imagine that his father could have been anyone other than the 'vieux crocodile' whom he has detested for decades. The reader is invited to write off Hubert and his kind as being incapable of self-doubt and therefore spiritually stunted human beings.

### B Isa is seen only through Louis's eyes. What impression of her does this perspective convey, and how convincing do you find it?

The beginning of Louis's relationship with Isa gave him a hitherto unknown sense of self-esteem. What he describes as « un dégel de tout mon être » was accompanied by a feeling of astonishment that an attractive young woman could love him and want to marry him. He recalls the compliments she paid him, and her assertion that the breaking off of her engagement with Rodolphe was fortunate in that it made her relationship with Louis possible. That said, his reaction to the revelations concerning Rodolphe tell us more about Louis's sense of insecurity and inferiority than about Isa. His interpretation of her tears – she was missing Rodolphe rather than shedding tears of joy – is impossible to verify. He does admit that she destroyed their happiness without realising it. He admits that she did not describe Rodolphe, but his own imagination ascribed to him the attractive features which he himself lacked. He recounts her repeated attempts to reassure him, but he is already consumed with

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hatred. It would seem, therefore, that Isa's attempts to stabilise their relationship failed partly because she did not understand Louis's inferiority complex. The reader could easily forgive her for this. Her behaviour in their married life seems to be less easy to excuse, if we are to believe Louis's account. After the birth of Hubert, he says, « tu n'étais que mère ». Given his continual and prolonged absences, and his retreat into hostile silence, one can understand her reaction when he suddenly began to interfere with regard to the Catholic education Isa required for the children. The impression is also conveyed, convincingly, that her form of Catholicism is typical of her class, a series of rituals performed because that is the social expectation. While Louis struggles to find a clue to the meaning of existence, Isa reinforced in their children the soulless religious practices behind which there is little or no understanding nor indeed interest in understanding. As time passes, she loses no opportunity to reproach Louis for being unapproachable and hard-hearted. There is no way forward from this attitude, because she has no idea why he has become like this. She does not have the single-minded materialism of other members of the family, but she has no values to offer beyond those she has inherited.

**C 'Louis suffers mainly as a result of his own lucidity.' How far do you agree with this view?**

It would be fair to say that lucidity is one of a number of issues which cause Louis to suffer. In his youth, the problem is more one of neurosis. He considers himself to be unattractive, he resents his fellow students because they are from high-class families, he convinces himself that he is unlovable, and he is driven by the ambition to succeed academically and then professionally. It is these aspects of his character which are behind the most destructive event in his life: the discovery of Isa's earlier relationship with Rodolphe rekindles his sense of inadequacy at the expense of his recent and short-lived sense of worth. After the night during which Isa blurts out the story about Rodolphe, he describes himself as being « en proie à une haine dont je crois sentir le goût d'amertume dans la bouche, après tant d'années. » His behaviour thereafter is conditioned by blind jealousy (of Isa's obsession with the children, following on from what he sees as her obsession with Rodolphe) and resentment at being shut out of the family circle. In truth, he shuts himself out, and his interference over the religious upbringing of the children only hardens attitudes against him. He might have communicated with Luc, but his clumsy offer of gold makes it impossible. Similarly with Marinette, he failed to see how she could give up money for the sake of happiness. He remains isolated because of his own failings.

The torture inflicted by lucidity comes later, when he realises that he set himself up as a monster to be feared by almost everyone around him. The increasing awareness that he has failed to show any love or to open himself to the possibility of being loved, is accompanied by a hesitant search for the meaning of his existence. He becomes aware that he does not know how to talk to children or servants. Those whom he loved or should have loved die before he can change his behaviour, and the awareness of this life-long inflexibility is deeply painful, as he describes himself as « quelqu'un qui manque de savoir-vivre, au sens absolu ». Thus, it is his lack of self-awareness over many years which has exacerbated his problems. Lucidity is there in his self-appraisal, but by this time he is close to death.

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## 12 Bazin, *Au nom du fils*

### A Write a commentary on the following passage.

Daniel Astin has, for some time, been in a relationship with his colleague Marie Germin, an unmarried lady of a certain age with a physical disability. She has made it clear to him that she is not prepared to continue this liaison as a casual affair for much longer: she has given Daniel six months to make a decision, and if at the end of that time he has not proposed marriage, she will terminate the arrangement. Daniel's children are well aware that he has been visiting her regularly, and the two older ones have very recently expressed their views on the idea that Daniel might marry Marie. Louise has said that they do not need a step-mother, not least because their maiden aunt has looked after them since their mother's death. Michel has taken an even more negative position to the extent of saying in a rather threatening manner that Daniel would live to regret it if he married Marie. Daniel is, typically, much more interested in the views of his cherished Bruno, and uses the occasion of a fishing expedition on the Marne to sound him out. Bruno uses the much more potent objection, coming as it does from the mouth of the favourite child, that they are used to having their father all to themselves, and the arrival of a new wife would rob them of that intimacy. Astin is forced to admit that Marie does not have sufficiently irresistible qualities to rival the influence exerted over his father by Bruno. And Daniel, characteristically, acknowledges his own weakness in this regard. The implication that Bruno will reward him with emotional support if he abandons the idea of getting married is more than enough. He ascribes to Bruno a newly acquired maturity and an admirable level of self-control. He will, at the beginning of the next chapter, present Marie with a further excuse for delaying any decision, and she reiterates her ultimatum and deadline, expressing the correct opinion that Daniel will not take the initiative. The passage shows Daniel's susceptibility to Bruno's attitude, and ironically exposes his self-deception, in that the very fact that Bruno is growing up means that he will make his own decisions and lead his own life, manifestly without analogous consideration for his father's views.

### B 'There is something unhealthy about Daniel's love for Bruno.' How far do you agree?

Bazin set out, in this novel, to depict a man who, as a relatively young widower, shows himself capable of bringing up three children. The youngest is shown at the outset to be more difficult to deal with than the others, which perhaps makes him deserving of greater attention. He is never going to achieve the same success as his older brother at school, and he does not have the cheerful *insouciance* of his sister. The father devotes a great deal of thought to the best ways of helping Bruno, notably with regard to the problem created by being a schoolmaster as well as a father, and thus in danger of being over-zealous or creating unreasonably high expectations of a mediocre pupil. All this is plausible enough, but as the novel progresses, the reader may well be startled by Daniel's increasing emotional dependence on Bruno. It could be argued that the more forthright and self-reliant children do not need so much support. But the signs of obsession with Bruno creep in: Daniel cannot bear the thought of Bruno going away to a *colonie de vacances*; when their boat capsizes, his instinct is to save Bruno, who can swim better than Louise. He knows that he is subconsciously looking for signs of gratitude from a boy who rarely expresses his feelings. His thoughts of marriage to Marie are influenced by one remark made by Bruno: « Si tu y penses depuis si longtemps, tu ne dois pas y penser très fort. » And when Bruno tells him, while they are out fishing together, that he would not regret deciding against marrying Marie, he surrenders immediately. The fact that Bruno never exploits his father's indulgent attitude, never seems conscious of being special, seems to stimulate Daniel's feelings for him rather than attenuating them. His enthusiasm for what they have in common seems incongruous: « Tout ce que Bruno semble tenir de moi m'enchanté. » His possessiveness is satisfied by the fact that Bruno is often left out of the social activities of the older children, often at home

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with his father, in the car with him driving back and forth to school together. When Bruno goes to university, Daniel calculates how many years he might still be based at home. The idea of living apart is intolerable, and this is unnatural. In some situations, Daniel's reactions could be considered as understandable within the social and historical context of the novel: for example, his reaction to his son's decision to work for Post Office Counters rather than as a graduate lawyer, or to the revelation that an illegitimate child is on the way. There is, on the other hand, reason to regard as unhealthy Daniel's reaction to the need to reorganise their domestic arrangements: his use of the word *exilé* when he moves over the road, and his displeasure at the alterations to the house which Bruno and his young wife carry out without his permission, convey a possessiveness which is unhealthy. His claim at the end to have been launched into a new life by Bruno's shotgun marriage sounds more like an uneasy compromise than a resolution of his emotional problems.

**C 'Both Marie and Laure are treated with a certain sympathy and yet neither is allowed to attract our whole-hearted commitment.' Discuss this view.**

Bazin is regarded as something of a misogynist. The fact that these two women are potential wives for the widower Daniel Astin must be viewed in the light of the author's manifest scepticism about marriage. Daniel's first wife was chosen for him by his mother, and his mother-in-law endlessly badgers him about marrying Laure. Women, apart from Laure, are depicted as bossy and predatory.

Marie is a colleague and friend whom Daniel treats as a repository for all his woes. She sees things differently, and her impatience soon clashes with Daniel's dithering. She needs a companion and is not well-placed to find one. Daniel needs Marie as a *confidante*, but is incapable of committing himself further than that. When their friendship turns into a sexual relationship, Marie makes it clear that she is not prepared to be his mistress indefinitely. At the age of 40 she needs to regularise the situation, and we can understand her point of view.

As the dithering is prolonged by the family's hostility towards the idea of marriage with Marie, we can feel her frustration and sympathise with her eventual imposition of a deadline. Furthermore, we can respect her implementation of the threat to leave the area if Daniel fails to make up his mind. Her departure leaves him with a feeling of guilt, and rightly so, but more with a feeling of relief, which could be said to increase our sympathy for Marie. If we do not feel committed to her cause, it is probably because we feel even more sorry for Laure, and more sympathetic to her tacit claim to fill the gap left by her sister's untimely death.

Perhaps it is precisely Laure's submissive nature which enables Bazin to treat her sympathetically. After the death of her sister and the return of her brother-in-law from the war, she seemed to have no ambition other than to serve. « Femme à demi casée, femme à demi gâchée. » She stands by while Daniel agonises about whether or not to marry Marie, and in retrospect Daniel can appreciate her perseverance: « depuis des années tu piétines, mais toi, au moins, tu ne t'es pas découragée. » She is perpetually uncomplaining, subservient, undemanding, and eminently deserving of more consideration than she gets. After the departure of Marie, and the revelation that Bruno is to become a father, the domestic reorganisation lends itself to cohabitation with Laure. Her reaction to the proposition is typically lugubrious. She has no illusions, but no alternative prospects. The reader might feel glad that she will not be left alone with nobody to look after, but her colourless character does little to arouse strong emotions, and we are left feeling that she has got the consolation prize without much consolation.

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### 13 Camus, *L'Étranger*

#### A Write a commentary on the following passage.

This extract is taken from Meursault's first interview with the defence lawyer appointed by the court. Meursault had said that he did not really think that it was necessary to have a lawyer, as the case was very simple, but he is about to find out that it is not as simple as he thought. The lawyer has started with reassurance. Just before this extract, he says « Entrons dans le vif du sujet. » Significantly, this does not concern the circumstances of the shooting, but Meursault's behaviour at his mother's funeral. The reader knows from the earlier narrative that Meursault had found the journey to the old people's home very wearing, and that he had shown little interest in the conventional rituals before, during and after the funeral. The fact that he showed no grief has been construed as a lack of sensitivity. Later, this will, as the lawyer says, be a major part of the case for the prosecution, unless Meursault can demonstrate to the court that he was, in fact, upset by the event. The lawyer, like the examining magistrate, is looking for the kind of responses which other people in this position would provide if it gave them a chance of escaping conviction. Meursault's honesty is not likely to have the same effect. He will insist on the tiredness and physical discomfort which preoccupied him at the time, and will show no more than a passing regret for his mother's death. The lawyer tries to impress upon him what the expectations of the court will be. In order to gain any sympathy, Meursault will need to present an explanation for his behaviour in terms which are acceptable and credible in the minds of people with deeply conventional moral attitudes. This will involve a distortion of the truth, and Meursault will not accept such a proposition. His refusal to play the required charade instantly alienates the lawyer (encased as he is in the moral and intellectual strait-jacket represented by his pinstripe suit and wing collar). Meursault's subsequent observation that it would be irrelevant to call witnesses from the old people's home in connection with the shooting is met by the observation that it was obvious that Meursault had no experience of the justice system. Meursault wants the man to understand that he is perfectly normal, but communication has failed and the law will draw its own conclusions.

#### B 'At the end of his adventure Meursault undergoes a kind of spiritual awakening.' What, in your view, is the significance of this?

Meursault has, throughout the narrative, shown no inclination to analyse his situation or to draw conclusions from the way in which his trial has been conducted. The emphasis throughout has been on his tendency to be distracted by the physical conditions of his surroundings and by small details concerning the appearance and behaviour of others or of objects in the room. He has lived a life dominated by physical sensations. During his defence lawyer's summing up, he is more aware of the horn being sounded by an ice-cream seller than of what is going on in the court-room. He evokes, at this point, the memories which represent what he calls « les plus pauvres et les plus tenaces de mes joies: des odeurs d'été, le quartier que j'aimais, un certain ciel du soir, le rire et les robes de Marie. » It is when he is back in his cell awaiting execution that he begins, for the first time, to think about the implications of his trial. He begins to resent the court's utter certainty about the verdict, and to resent the fact that a man condemned to the guillotine has to hope for « le bon fonctionnement de la machine » which implies that he is forced to « collaborer moralement ».

It is while he is musing on the inevitability of death and that of being forgotten by everybody, including Marie, that the Chaplain arrives. His agenda is clear: Meursault must be persuaded to accept God's help and forgiveness. But Meursault remains adamant that this issue is irrelevant to him, and that the idea of a vision of God emerging from the walls of his cell is not worth discussing. There is further resentment by Meursault of the Chaplain's imposition on his remaining time, and on wanting to be called 'father'. He reacts violently to the Chaplain's

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accusation that he has *un cœur aveugle* and the parting shot that he will pray for Meursault's enlightenment. The Chaplain's certainty echoes that of the court. The terms of reference of a Catholic middle class are regarded as beyond question. For Meursault, life is entirely contingent. Every decision and event has been arbitrary. Life is ultimately meaningless and therefore absurd. Those who cling to their stifling, formulaic existence are, to all intents and purposes, dead. The acceptance of the arbitrary nature of existence is a prerequisite for making anything of it. The reader is left with the feeling that Meursault, if granted another life, would take this thought process forward and confront the need for *engagement*.

**C What does Meursault's behaviour at his trial express about the nature of the trial itself?**

Meursault initially declines the offer of a defence lawyer on the grounds that his case is very simple. He understands that he is guilty of murder, but wants to explain that the murder was unpremeditated and caused primarily by the heat and light on the beach. Given that his lawyer has told him that « le vif du sujet » is his behaviour at his mother's funeral rather than the circumstances of the shooting, he is not surprised when the presiding judge at the trial opens by saying that he needs to ask about issues « apparemment étrangères à mon affaire, mais qui la touchaient de fort près. » Thereafter, Meursault has the impression that the trial is being conducted without any reference to him. If he resists the initial temptations to protest and to be allowed to express an opinion, it is because the whole event seems so remote from what he perceives as reality. He is not able to see any logical link between the court's interpretations of his relationship with Marie or that with Raymond and the way things actually happened. Thus, he cannot identify himself with a *liaison irrégulière* or *une affaire de mœurs inqualifiable*. He feels unable to intervene when accused of being an intelligent and calculating criminal because he is dimly aware that it would be inappropriate to try to speak honestly about himself: « Je n'avais pas le droit de me montrer affectueux, d'avoir de la bonne volonté. » He can see that the interpretation of his actions is based on predetermined and unquestioned criteria as to how people should and should not, do and do not behave. Thus, when he is allowed to speak, and affirms that he did not intend to kill the arab and that he did so simply *à cause du soleil*, his words are greeted with derisive laughter. The court requires an explanation which fits into their terms of reference. Meursault is unable to provide one, and so they concoct one which does so. Meursault then loses interest completely and feels that the whole thing is a waste of time. When invited to speak after the sentence is pronounced, he declines, because there is no point in reiterating simple truths which seem unacceptable to the people who are sitting in judgement.