

ENGLISH LITERATURE ADMISSIONS TEST

4501/11

Wednesday 2 November 2016

1 hour 30 minutes



INSTRUCTIONS TO CANDIDATES

Please read this page carefully, but do not open the question paper until told to do so.

A separate 8-page answer booklet is provided. Please check you have one.

You should allow at least 30 minutes for reading this question paper, making notes and preparing your answer.

At the end of the examination, you must hand in both your answer booklet and this question paper. Any rough notes or plans that you make should be written only in your answer booklet. No extra paper is allowed for this purpose.

No texts, dictionaries or sources of reference may be brought into the examination.



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This paper consists of 8 printed pages and 4 blank pages.

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Time allowed: 1 hour 30 minutes.

You should spend at least 30 minutes reading and annotating the passages and in preparing your answer.

The following poems and extracts from longer prose and drama texts are all linked by the theme of storms. They are arranged chronologically by date of publication. Read all the material carefully, and then complete the task below.

- (a) From 'The Storme' (1633), a poem by John Donne *page 4*
- (b) From *Modern Painters* (1843), a book on art by John Ruskin *page 5*
- (c) From *The Story of an African Farm* (1883), a novel by Olive Schreiner *page 6*
- (d) From *Riders to the Sea* (1905), a play by John M Synge *page 7*
- (e) 'The Storm' (1911), a poem by Katherine Mansfield *page 8*
- (f) From *Giovanni's Room* (1956), a novel by James Baldwin *page 9*

Task:

Select two or three of the passages (a) to (f) and compare and contrast them in any ways that seem interesting to you, paying particular attention to distinctive features of structure, language and style. In your introduction, indicate *briefly* what you intend to explore or illustrate through close reading of your chosen passages.

This task is designed to assess your responsiveness to unfamiliar literary material and your skills in close reading. Marks are not awarded for references to other texts or authors you have studied.

(a) From 'The Storme' (1633), a poem by John Donne

Then like two mighty kings, which dwelling far
 Asunder, meet against a third to war,
 The south and west winds join'd, and, as they blew,
 Waves like a rolling trench before them threw.
 Sooner than you read this line, did the gale,
 Like shot, not fear'd till felt, our sails assail;
 And what at first was call'd a gust, the same
 Hath now a storm's, anon a tempest's name.
 Jonas¹, I pity thee, and curse those men
 Who, when the storm raged most, did wake thee then.
 Sleep is pain's easiest salve, and doth fulfil
 All offices of death, except to kill.
 But when I waked, I saw that I saw not;
 I, and the sun, which should teach me, had forgot
 East, west, day, night; and I could only say,
 If th' world had lasted, now it had been day.
 Thousands our noises were, yet we 'mongst all
 Could none by his right name, but thunder, call.
 Lightning was all our light, and it rain'd more
 Than if the sun had drunk the sea before.
 Some coffin'd in their cabins lie, equally
 Grieved that they are not dead, and yet must die;
 And as sin-burden'd souls from grave will creep
 At the last day, some forth their cabins peep,
 And trembling ask, "What news?" and do hear so
 As jealous husbands, what they would not know.
 Some sitting on the hatches would seem there
 With hideous gazing to fear away fear.
 Then note they the ship's sicknesses, the mast
 Shaked with an ague, and the hold and waist
 With a salt dropsy clogg'd, and all our tacklings
 Snapping, like too-high-stretched treble strings.
 And from our tatter'd sails rags drop down so,
 As from one hang'd in chains a year ago.

¹ Jonas: also named Jonah, an Old Testament figure who is thrown overboard during a storm and swallowed by a whale.

(b) From *Modern Painters* (1843), a book on art by John Ruskin

But, I think, the noblest sea that Turner has ever painted, and, if so, the noblest certainly ever painted by man, is that of the *Slave Ship*, the chief Academy picture of the Exhibition of 1840. It is a sunset on the Atlantic, after prolonged storm; but the storm is partially lulled, and the torn and streaming rain-clouds are moving in scarlet lines to lose themselves in the hollow of the night. The whole surface of sea included in the picture is divided into two ridges of enormous swell, not high, nor local, but a low broad heaving of the whole ocean, like the lifting of its bosom by deep-drawn breath after the torture of the storm. Between these two ridges the fire of the sunset falls along the trough of the sea, dyeing it with an awful but glorious light, the intense and lurid splendour which burns like gold, and bathes like blood. Along this fiery path and valley, the tossing waves by which the swell of the sea is restlessly divided, lift themselves in dark, indefinite, fantastic forms, each casting a faint and ghastly shadow behind it along the illumined foam. They do not rise everywhere, but three or four together in wild groups, fitfully and furiously, as the under strength of the swell compels or permits them; leaving between them treacherous spaces of level and whirling water, now lighted with green and lamp-like fire, now flashing back the gold of the declining sun, now fearfully dyed from above with the undistinguishable images of the burning clouds, which fall upon them in flakes of crimson and scarlet, and give to the reckless waves the added motion of their own fiery flying. Purple and blue, the lurid shadows of the hollow breakers are cast upon the mist of the night, which gathers cold and low, advancing like the shadow of death upon the guilty¹ ship as it labours amidst the lightning of the sea, its thin masts written upon the sky in lines of blood, girded with condemnation in that fearful hue which signs the sky with horror, and mixes its flaming flood with the sunlight, and, cast far along the desolate heave of the sepulchral waves, incarnadines the multitudinous sea.

¹ She is a slaver, throwing her slaves overboard. The near sea is encumbered with corpses.
[Ruskin's note.]

(c) From *The Story of an African Farm* (1883), a novel by Olive Schreiner

Gregory Rose had been gone seven months. Em sat alone on a white sheepskin before the fire.

The August night-wind, weird and shrill, howled round the chimneys and through the crannies, and in walls and doors, and uttered a long low cry as it forced its way among the clefts of the stones on the “kopje”¹. It was a wild night. The prickly pear tree, stiff and upright as it held its arms, felt the wind’s might, and knocked its flat leaves heavily together, till great branches broke off. The Kaffirs², as they slept in their straw huts, whispered one to another that before morning there would not be an armful of thatch left upon the roofs; and the beams of the waggon-house creaked and groaned as if it were heavy work to resist the importunity of the wind.

Em had not gone to bed. Who could sleep on a night like this? So in the dining-room she had lighted a fire, and sat on the ground before it, turning the roaster-cakes that lay on the coals to bake. It would save work in the morning; and she blew out the light because the wind through the window-chinks made it flicker and run; and she sat singing to herself as she watched the cakes. They lay at one end of the wide hearth on a bed of coals, and at the other end a fire burnt up steadily, casting its amber glow over Em’s light hair and black dress, with the ruffle of crepe about the neck, and over the white curls of the goatskin on which she sat.

Louder and more fiercely yet howled the storm; but Em sang on, and heard nothing but the words of her song, and heard them only faintly, as something restful. It was an old, childish song she had often heard her mother sing long ago:

“Where the reeds dance by the river,
Where the willow’s song is said,
On the face of the morning water,
Is reflected a white flower’s head.”

She folded her hands and sang the next verse dreamily:

“Where the reeds shake by the river,
Where the moonlight’s sheen is shed,
On the face of the sleeping water,
Two leaves of a white flower float dead.
Dead, dead, dead!”

She echoed the refrain softly till it died away, and then repeated it. It was as if, unknown to herself, it harmonized with the pictures and thoughts that sat with her there alone in the fire-light. She turned the cakes over, while the wind hurled down a row of bricks from the gable, and made the walls tremble.

¹ kopje: a small usually rocky hill

² Kaffirs: black South Africans, a term now considered offensive

(d) **From *Riders to the Sea* (1905), a play by John M Synge**

[The door opens softly and old women begin to come in, crossing themselves on the threshold, and kneeling down in front of the stage with red petticoats over their heads.]

MAURYA *[half in a dream, to Cathleen]*. Is it Patch, or Michael, or what is it at all?

CATHLEEN. Michael is after being found in the far north, and when he is found there how could he be here in this place?

MAURYA. There does be a power of young men floating round in the sea, and what way would they know if it was Michael they had, or another man like him, for when a man is nine days in the sea, and the wind blowing, it's hard set his own mother would be to say what man was it.

CATHLEEN. It's Michael, God spare him, for they're after sending us a bit of his clothes from the far north.

[She reaches out and hands MAURYA the clothes that belonged to Michael. MAURYA stands up slowly, and takes them into her hands. NORA looks out.]

NORA. They're carrying a thing among them and there's water dripping out of it and leaving a track by the big stones.

CATHLEEN *[in a whisper to the women who have come in]*. Is it Bartley it is?

ONE OF THE WOMEN. It is surely, God rest his soul.

[Two younger women come in and pull out the table. Then men carry in the body of BARTLEY, laid on a plank, with a bit of a sail over it, and lay it on the table.]

CATHLEEN *[to the women, as they are doing so]*. What way was he drowned?

ONE OF THE WOMEN. The gray pony knocked him into the sea, and he was washed out where there is a great surf on the white rocks.

[Maurya has gone over and knelt down at the head of the table. The women are keening softly and swaying themselves with a slow movement. CATHLEEN and NORA kneel at the other end of the table. The men kneel near the door.]

MAURYA *[raising her head and speaking as if she did not see the people around her]*. They're all gone now, and there isn't anything more the sea can do to me.... I'll have no call now to be up crying and praying when the wind breaks from the south, and you can hear the surf is in the east, and the surf is in the west, making a great stir with the two noises, and they hitting one on the other. I'll have no call now to be going down and getting Holy Water in the dark nights after Samhain¹, and I won't care what way the sea is when the other women will be keening. *[To NORA]*. Give me the Holy Water, Nora; there's a small sup still on the dresser.

[NORA gives it to her.]

MAURYA *[drops MICHAEL'S clothes across BARTLEY'S feet, and sprinkles the Holy Water over him]*. It isn't that I haven't prayed for you, Bartley, to the Almighty God. It isn't that I haven't said prayers in the dark night till you wouldn't know what I'd be saying; but it's a great rest I'll have now, and it's time surely. It's a great rest I'll have now, and great sleeping in the long nights after Samhain, if it's only a bit of wet flour we do have to eat, and maybe a fish that would be stinking.

[She kneels down again, crossing herself, and saying prayers under her breath.]

¹ Samhain: Gaelic festival marking the end of the harvest and the beginning of winter

(e) **'The Storm' (1911), a poem by Katherine Mansfield**

I ran to the forest for shelter,
Breathless, half sobbing;
I put my arms round a tree,
Pillowed my head against the rough bark.
"Protect me," I said. "I am a lost child."
But the tree showered silver drops on my face and hair.
A wind sprang up from the ends of the earth;
It lashed the forest together.
A huge green wave thundered and burst over my head.
I prayed, implored, "Please take care of me!"
But the wind pulled at my cloak and the rain beat upon me.
Little rivers tore up the ground and swamped the bushes.
A frenzy possessed the earth: I felt that the earth was drowning
In a bubbling cavern of space. I alone—
Smaller than the smallest fly—was alive and terrified.
Then, for what reason I know not, I became triumphant.
"Well, kill me!" I cried and ran out into the open.
But the storm ceased: the sun spread his wings
And floated serene in the silver pool of the sky.
I put my hands over my face: I was blushing.
And the trees swung together and delicately laughed.

(f) From *Giovanni's Room* (1956), a novel by James Baldwin

Starting "I was glad. I was utterly, hopelessly, horribly glad. I knew I could do nothing whatever to stop the ferocious excitement which had burst in me like a storm."

Ending "That was how I met Giovanni. I think we connected the instant that we met."

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