
LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

9695/71

Paper 7 Comment and Appreciation

May/June 2015

2 hours

No Additional Materials are required.

READ THESE INSTRUCTIONS FIRST

An answer booklet is provided inside this question paper. You should follow the instructions on the front cover of the answer booklet. If you need additional answer paper ask the invigilator for a continuation booklet.

Answer **two** questions.

You are reminded of the need for good English and clear presentation in your answers.

All questions in this paper carry equal marks.

This document consists of **5** printed pages, **3** blank pages and **1** insert.

1 Write a critical commentary on the following poem by Frank Ormsby (born 1947).

Landscape with Figures

What haunts me is a farmhouse among trees
 Seen from a bus window, a girl
 With a suitcase climbing a long hill
 And a woman waiting. 5
 The time the bus took to reach and pass
 The lane's entrance nothing was settled,
 The girl still climbing and the woman still
 On the long hill's summit.

Men were not present. Neither in the fields
 That sloped from hedges, nor beyond the wall 10
 That marked the yard's limits
 Was there sign of hens, or hands working.
 No sight that might have softened
 On the eye the scene's
 Relentlessness. 15

Nothing had happened, yet the minute spoke
 And the scene spoke and the silence,
 And oppressed as air does, loading
 For a storm's release.

All lanes and houses 20
 Secretive in trees and gaunt hills' jawlines
 Turn my thoughts again
 To that day's journey and the thing I saw
 And could not fathom. Struck with the same dread
 I seem to share in sense, not detail, 25
 What was heavy there:
 Sadness of dim places, obscure lives,
 Ends and beginnings,
 Such extremities.

2 Write a critical comparison of the following two poems.

The Old Lovers

We meet in a sorrowful land
 That is hard by the gates of death –
 A smile, and a touch of the hand,
 As the sunset's flaming brand
 Flickers and fails in the west
 With the day-wind's dying breath –
 'Tis the most we may dare, and best. 5

They say that the passion is cold –
 That the flame is dead in the heart;
 "Good friends, that have loved of old,
 Once more, in the sunset gold,
 Meet with a clasp of the hand,
 Nod and dream and depart –"
 Ah, love, 'tis a sorrowful land! 10

I that have walked in a cloud, 15
 You that have wept in the sun –
 Wrinkled and wearied and bowed,
 Cover the wound! Be proud!
 Laugh – be it Hell the while –
 That the world, ere the Hell be done, 20
 May watch with a kindly smile.

Kenneth Rand (1891–1918)

The Bean Eaters

They eat beans mostly, this old yellow pair.
 Dinner is a casual affair.
 Plain chipware¹ on a plain and creaking wood,
 Tin flatware².

Two who are Mostly Good. 5
 Two who have lived their day,
 But keep on putting on their clothes
 And putting things away.

And remembering ...
 Remembering, with twinklings and twinges, 10
 As they lean over the beans in their rented back room that
 is full of beads and receipts and dolls and cloths,
 tobacco crumbs, vases and fringes.

¹ *chipware*: old, chipped plates

² *flatware*: knives, forks and spoons

Gwendolyn Brooks (1917–2000)

3 Write a critical commentary on the following extract from the short story *Private School* (published in 2005) by Alecia McKenzie.

It was the roaches¹ that had caused the disgrace.

'I hate them, I hate them, I hate them': Denise whispered to herself as she sat on a gravestone in the cemetery. She hated the roaches even more than she feared the duppies² who she knew roamed the cemetery at nights. Everyone in her neighbourhood had seen at least one duppy, but never in the daytime; like roaches, the duppies shunned bright light. If it had been dark, Denise would not have dared to set foot in this place of tumbledown headstones and dry red earth. But the blaze of the morning sun was enough to keep all but the stupidest of duppies underground. Denise herself was already sweating in her gaberdine blue uniform. 5

She pulled several comic books out of her bag – *Archie*, *Peanuts*, *Tarzan* – and settled down in a corner of the cemetery, staying far away from the cotton trees which she knew duppies especially liked. When she finished the comics, she wandered round, reading the words on the headstones. 10

It was the third school-day that she had spent in the cemetery, and like the previous two times, she went back home at about 1.30 in the afternoon, taking the key from under the mat and letting herself into the two-room house, which stood in a big yard full of other two-room wooden houses. She ate the left-over corn meal porridge from that morning then pulled a book from the mahogany bookcase (her mother's pride and joy) to pass the time. She had read *Black Beauty*³ before, but she started it again, feeling the familiar rage against the people who were going to mistreat the horse. 15 20

Her mother returned home from work around six o'clock that evening and asked what she had done at school that day.

Denise mumbled something about arithmetic.

'Mr Benny said you came home early.' (Mr Benny lived in the two rooms at the front of the yard.) 25

'Yes, Mama. Miss Maude let us out early because she had a headache.' Denise felt her stomach hurting as she told the lie, but she didn't know how to tell her mother what had happened. She pretended to do homework while her mother cooked green bananas and callaloo with saltfish on their little kerosene stove. 30

'I'm glad to see you doing your homework already,' her mother said. 'Miss Maude is a good teacher. Nearly everybody who go to that school pass their common entrance and go to high school. You only have one more year, and then it's your turn.'

Denise said nothing. She hated Miss Maude as much as she hated the roaches. It was funny; lizards didn't bother her, even the biggest of green lizards who stuck their tongues out and had been known to jump on people. Nor did rat-bats who sometimes flew into the house, seeming to dive right at you. Her mother always said they brought good luck while the other people in the yard swore that the bats were flying duppies – they always showed up soon after someone in the neighbourhood died, or was killed. 35 40

But Denise only had to see a roach to get panic-stricken. Her mother knew about Miss Maude's roaches but she thought Denise could put up with them for the sake of a good education. Once she got to high school she would forget all about them. 45

Before dinner was ready, Denise went to one of the two bathrooms in the middle of the yard and took her evening shower, closing her eyes against the whip of the cold water. She wished she was brave enough to run away and stay forever in the cemetery, until her mother realized how much she hated Miss Maude's school. But then her mother would be alone and she didn't want that either. She stayed in the bathroom until her mother shouted for her to come and eat. It was a quiet dinner; Denise couldn't think of a word to say and her mother seemed worried about 50

something. Later, while her mother ironed clothes, Denise read in bed, her face inches from the book because of the dimness of the light bulb. She finished *Black Beauty* by the time her mother turned off the light but she couldn't sleep as she thought of the roaches. It was because of them that Miss Maude had embarrassed her in front of the whole class. 55

¹ *roaches*: cockroaches

² *duppies*: ghosts

³ *Black Beauty*: a popular children's novel about a horse

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