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LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

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Paper 7 Comment and Appreciation

May/June 2017

2 hours

No Additional Materials are required.

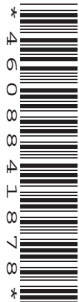
READ THESE INSTRUCTIONS FIRST

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 **7** printed pages, **1** blank page and **1** insert.

- 1 Write a critical commentary on the following extract from the novel *The Gift of Rain* (2007) by Tan Twan Eng.

The narrator, Philip Hutton, is learning the Japanese martial art *aikido* from Hayato Endo.

I was awakened by a series of short, abrupt screams. For a few seconds I had no idea where I was. I rose from the mattress and slid open the latticed door. The sun was just hauling itself up from the other side of the world. The sky was still covered with clouds pared thin by the winds and there was a palpable sense of freshness in the air; even the waves hitting the shore sounded crisp and clean. 5

He was in a clearing beneath the trees, his hands gripping the sword I had noticed the night before. It rose up in an arc described by his hands and descended swiftly, soundlessly, followed by his sharp cry. He was clothed in white robes and a pair of black trousers that looked more like a skirt. He looked very alien and very impressive. 10

He took no notice of me although I knew he was aware of my scrutiny. The air seemed to vibrate as he slashed, stabbed, sliced and whirled around the clearing. He had placed a circle of thick bamboo trunks around him and now, in one single motion, the sword cut and the sticks of bamboo fell one after the other. The blade was so sharp there was not even the sound of a crack as it sliced them. 15

The sky was bright when he finished. His clothes were wet and perspiration made his silver hair shine. He beckoned to me to approach.

‘Hit me.’

I hesitated, looking at him uncertainly, wondering if I had heard correctly.

‘Go on. Hit me,’ he said again in a tone that gave me no choice but to obey. 20

I launched my fist into his face, using the punch that had stood me in good stead at school whenever I had been called a mongrel half-breed and which had provoked quite a few parental complaints.

I found myself lying on the dew-soaked grass a moment later, my breath knocked out of me. My back felt sore, even though the ground was soft. He pulled me to my feet, his hand firm and strong. There was a look of amusement on his face as he saw my anger. He held up a placatory hand and said, ‘Come. Let me show you how to do that.’ 25

He asked me to hit him again – *slowly*. As my fist was about to connect with his face he deftly stepped aside and came closer to me. His arm rose up and met mine; with a spiralling motion he guided my hand away, gripped my throat from behind, spun my unbalanced body around and brought me to the ground. Then he let me do it to him, and after several attempts I managed to throw him off his feet. I was enthralled. 30

‘What did you feel?’ he asked. 35

‘As though everything came together when I threw you,’ I answered him as best I could. If I had wanted to sound pretentious I could have told him it felt as if the earth and I were spinning in harmony. But he seemed happy and satisfied with my reply.

He continued teaching me until it was almost noon. By then I was feeling quite hungry. 40

‘Do you want to continue learning?’ he asked.

I nodded. He told me to come again the following day.

Turn over for Question 2

- 2 Write a critical comparison of the following two poems. The poets remember their parents, no longer living.

The Reading

In memory of my parents

I'm doing it again –
reading my father my new poems
in a trance-struck
adolescent voice.

Only this time 5
they're about my mother –
no-longer with him,
couched in her cold repose.

She peers over 10
the charmed boundary
from her corner
of our triangle,

to wonder am I alright 15
(her son, the poet)
and to squeeze my father's hand
so I don't notice.

Gabriel Gbadamosi (born 1961)

Clearing

The ambulance, the hearse, the auctioneers
clear all the life of that loved house away.
The hard-earned treasures of some 50 years
sized up as junk, and shifted in a day.

A stammerer died here and I believe 5
this front room with such ghosts taught me my trade.
Now strangers chip the paintwork as they heave
the spotless piano that was never played.
The fingerprints they leave mam won't wipe clean
nor politely ask them first to wipe their boots, 10
nor coax her trampled soil patch back to green
after they've trodden down the pale spring shoots.

I'd hope my mother's spirit wouldn't chase
her scattered household, even if it could. 15
How could she bear it when she saw no face
stare back at her from that long polished wood?

Tony Harrison (born 1937)

3 Write a critical commentary on the following extract from the play *Gray Matter* (1999) by Jeanette D. Farr.

MARGE, a white and well-dressed middle-aged woman, is sitting in a police station waiting area. **RUSSELL**, a young African American, comes in. **MARGE** moves her purse from the chair next to her.

Russell: I saw that.

Marge: Excuse me?

Russell: I caught you.

Marge: I don't know you.

Russell: When I walked in, you moved your bag. 5

Marge: Please, I don't want any trouble.

Russell: I'm not –

Marge: Because if you're causing trouble, I can notify someone.

Russell: I wasn't –

Marge: OK then. [Pause] 10

Russell: Do I make you nervous?

Marge: I don't even know you.

Russell: Doesn't matter. I can still make you nervous.

Marge: Look, I was in the middle of something, if you don't mind.

Russell: Why did you move your bag? 15

Marge: I was getting some gum. [*She searches for a piece of gum*]

Russell: Can I have a piece?

Marge: It's Juicy Fruit.

Russell: My favourite.

Marge: I only have a stick. 20

Russell: Can I have half?

Marge: You're bothering me.

Russell: OK. So I don't make you nervous, but I bother you?

Marge: I'm just not in the mood for ... conversation.

Russell: I think it's something else. 25

Marge: If you say so. [*MARGE goes back to her 'project'*]

Russell: When I walked through that door you *thought*: Rapist, murderer, purse-stealer.

Marge: I thought no such thing.

Russell: But you moved your purse. 30

Marge: I was just being polite by making more room. I would do that for anyone.

Russell: I don't buy it.¹

Marge: It doesn't really concern me whether you buy it or not. That's the reason.

Russell: There are five empty chairs I could sit on.

Marge: All right. [*As if to satisfy him*] You caught me. 35

Russell: Unless you wanted me to come sit next to you.

- Marge:* You sit where you like. [RUSSELL sits in the chair farthest away from her]
- Russell:* This one's too hard. [He moves to the third chair closest to her] Nope. Not right either. [He gets two chairs away] Damn uncomfortable! [He sits next to her] Do you mind if I try yours? This one isn't right either. How 'bout you let me sit on your lap? [MARGE goes to counter and rings the bell] Wait, wait, lady! I was only joking. Sit back down! 40
- Marge:* Will you leave me alone?
- Russell:* I'll be nice. I'll even sit over here if it'll make you happy. [MARGE sits far away from RUSSELL] Why are you here? 45
- Marge:* Why are you here?
- Russell:* I came to see my parole officer.
- Marge:* Nice.
- Russell:* Does that bother you? 50
- Marge:* And you wondered why I moved my purse.
- Russell:* But when I walked in you didn't know I was coming to see my parole officer. You just saw me and assumed I was a criminal.
- Marge:* I followed my instincts. When the fight or flight kicks in you should listen to that. What you just said about being a criminal was exactly what my gut was telling me. 55
- Russell:* So you moved your purse.
- Marge:* Right.
- Russell:* Wow. I guess I can't go anywhere anymore. That must be why people cross the street when they see me comin'. It's just like B.O.² Nobody ever tells you that you have B.O. until it's too late. Then you come home after realising you forgot to put on deodorant and wonder why in the hell nobody has been talking to you. Thank you. Thank you for letting me know you can actually see or *feel* through your instinctual animal feelings that there is criminal written all over my face. 60
65

¹ *I don't buy it:* I don't believe you

² *B.O.:* body odour

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