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LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

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Paper 7 Comment and Appreciation

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2 hours

Additional Materials: Answer Booklet/Paper

READ THESE INSTRUCTIONS FIRST

If you have been given an Answer Booklet, follow the instructions on the front cover of the Booklet.

Write your Centre number, candidate number and name on all the work you hand in.

Write in dark blue or black pen.

Do not use staples, paper clips, highlighters, glue or correction fluid.

Answer **two** questions.

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

At the end of the examination, fasten all your work securely together.

All questions in this paper carry equal marks.



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



- 1 Write a critical commentary on the following extract from the novel *The Buccaneers* by Edith Wharton (1862–1937).

Mrs St. George has two daughters – Virginia, the older, and Nan – and in this passage she is trying to persuade them that they should not strike up a friendship with Conchita Closson, a girl whom she regards as entirely unsuitable for them.

“Virginia!” she called. Virginia halted, seemed to hesitate as to whether the summons were worth heeding, and then sauntered across the verandah toward her mother.

“Virginia, I don’t want you should go round any more with that strange girl,” Mrs. St. George began. 5

Virginia’s sapphire eyes rested with a remote indifferent gaze on the speaker’s tightly buttoned bronze kid boots, and Mrs. St. George suddenly wondered if she had burst a buttonhole.

“What girl?” Virginia drawled.

“How do I know? Goodness knows who they are. Your pa says she was a widow from one of those South American countries when she married Mr. Closson – the mother was, I mean.” 10

“Well, if he says so, I suppose she was.”

“But some people say she was just divorced. And I don’t want my daughters associating with that kind of people.” 15

Virginia removed her blue gaze from her mother’s boots to the little mantle trimmed with swansdown. “I should think you’d roast with that thing on,” she remarked.

“Jinny! Now you listen to what I say,” her mother ineffectually called after her.

Nan St. George had taken no part in the conversation; at first she had hardly heeded what was said. Such wrangles between mother and daughter were of daily, almost hourly, occurrence; Mrs. St. George’s only way of guiding her children was to be always crying out to them not to do this or that. Nan St. George, at sixteen, was at the culminating phase of a passionate admiration for her elder sister. Virginia was all that her junior longed to be: perfectly beautiful, completely self-possessed, calm and sure of herself. Nan, whose whole life was a series of waves of the blood, hot rushes of enthusiasm, icy chills of embarrassment and self-deprecation, looked with envy and admiration at her goddess-like elder. The only thing she did not quite like about Virginia was the latter’s tone of superiority with her mother; to get the better of Mrs. St. George was too easy, too much like what Colonel St. George called “shooting a bird sitting.” Yet so strong was Virginia’s influence that in her presence Nan always took the same tone with their mother, in the secret hope of attracting her sister’s favourable notice. She had even gone so far as to mime for Virginia (who was no mimic) Mrs. St. George looking shocked at an untidy stocking (“Mother wondering where we were brought up”), Mrs. St. George smiling in her sleep in church (“Mother listening to the angels”), or Mrs. St. George doubtfully mustering new arrivals (“Mother smelling a drain”). But Virginia took such demonstrations for granted, and when poor Nan afterward, in an agony of remorse, stole back alone to her mother, and whispered through penitent kisses: “I didn’t mean to be naughty to you, Mamma,” Mrs. St. George, raising a nervous hand to her crimped *bandeaux*¹, 35 would usually reply apprehensively: “I’m sure you didn’t, darling, only don’t get my hair all in a muss again.” 40

¹ *bandeaux*: hair band



Turn over for Question 2.

- 2 Write a critical commentary on the following extract from the play *The Swamp* (1958) by Wole Soyinka, paying particular attention to the ways in which Alu and Makuri are presented.

*A village in the swamps.
Frogs, rain and other swamp noises.*

The scene is a hut on stilts, built on one of the scattered semi-firm islands in the swamps. Two doors on the left lead into other rooms, and the one on the right leads outside. The walls are marsh stakes plaited with hemp ropes. 5

The room is fairly large, and is used both as the family workshop and as the 'parlour' for guests. About the middle of the right half of the stage is a barber's swivel chair, a very ancient one. On a small table against the right wall is a meagre row of hairdressing equipment – a pair of clippers, scissors, local combs, lather basin and brush, razor – not much else. A dirty white voluminous agbada¹ serves for the usual customer's sheet. 10

Makuri, an old man of about sixty, stands by the window, looking out. Near the left down-stage are the baskets he makes from the rushes which are strewn in front of him. Up-stage left, his equally aged wife, Alu, sits on a mat, busy at her work, unravelling the patterns in dyed 'adire' cloths. Alu appears to suffer more than the normal viciousness of the swamp flies. She has a flick by her side which she uses frequently, yelling whenever a bite has caught her unawares. 15

It is near dusk, and there is a gentle wash of rain outside. 20

ALU: Can you see him?
 MAKURI: See who?
 ALU: My son Igwezu. Who else?
 MAKURI: I did not come to look for him. Came only to see if the rain looks like stopping. 25
 ALU: Well, does it?
 MAKURI: [grunts.]
 ALU: [goes back to her work. Then –] It is time he was back. He went hours and hours ago.
 MAKURI: He knows the way. He's a grown-up man, with a wife. 30
 ALU: [flaring up with aged lack of heat.] If you had any good at all in you, you'd go and look for him.
 MAKURI: And catch my death of cramp? Not likely ... And anyway, [getting warmer] what's preventing you from going?
 ALU: I want to be here when he gives me the news. I don't want to fall down dead out in the open. 35
 MAKURI: The older you get, the more of a fraud you become. Every day for the past ten years, you've done nothing but swear that your son was dead in the marshes. And now you sit there like a crow and tell me that you're waiting for news about him. 40
 ALU: [stubbornly.] I know he's dead.
 MAKURI: Then what do you want Igwezu to tell you?
 ALU: I only want to know if ... I only want to ask him ... I ... I ... He shouldn't have rushed off like that ... dashing off like a madman before anyone could ask him a thing. 45
 MAKURI: [insistently.] Before anyone could ask him WHAT?
 ALU: [flares up again.] You're always trying to make me a liar.
 MAKURI: I don't have to make you one.

- ALU: Bah! Frog-face! [*Resumes her work.*] ... Dropped his bundle and rushed off before I could ask him a thing ... And to think he could have found him after all. To think he could have found him in the city ...
- MAKURI: Dead men don't go to the city. They go to hell.
- ALU: I know one dead man who is sitting right here instead of going quietly to hell. 55
- MAKURI: Now see who is calling who ...
- ALU: You're so useless now that it takes you nearly a whole week to make one basket ... and to think you don't even cut your own rushes! 60
- MAKURI: If you had to get up so often to shave the heads of the whole village ... and most of them crusted with *kraw-kraw*² so that a man has to scrape and scrape until ...
- ALU: [*yells suddenly and slaps herself on the arm.*]
- MAKURI: [*looks at her for a moment.*] Ha! Don't tell me now that a fly has been trying to suck blood from your dried-up veins. 65
- ALU: If you had enough blood to hold you up, you'd prove it by going to look for your own son, and bring him home to supper.
- MAKURI: He'll come home when he's hungry. 70
- ALU: Suppose he's lost his way? Suppose he went walking in the swamps and couldn't find his way back?
- MAKURI: [*in bewilderment.*] Him? Get lost? Woman, isn't it your son we're speaking of? The one who was born here, and has lived here all his life? 75
- ALU: But he has been away now for some time. You cannot expect him to find his way about so quickly.
- MAKURI: No, no. Of course not. The poor child has been away for eight ... whole ... months ... ! Tch, tch. You'd drive a man to drown himself in the swamps – just to get away from your fussing. 80
- ALU: [*puts aside her work and rises.*] I'm going after him. I don't want to lose him too. I don't want him missing his foothold and vanishing without a cry, without a chance for anyone to save him.
- MAKURI: Stay where you are. 85
[*Alu crosses to doorpost and looks out.*]
- ALU: I'm going out to shout his name until he hears me. I had another son before the mire drew him into the depths. I don't want Igwezu going the same way.
- MAKURI: [*follows her.*] You haven't lost a son yet in the slough, but you will soon if you don't stop calling down calamities on their heads. 90
- ALU: It's not what I say. The worst has happened already. Awuchike was drowned.
- MAKURI: You're a blood-thirsty woman. Awuchike got sick of this place and went into the city. That's where you'll find him, fadding it out³ with the gentlemen. But you'll be satisfied with nothing less than a festering corpse beneath the mire ... 95

¹ *agbada*: a large cloak

² *kraw-kraw*: a skin disease

³ *fadding it out*: living an expensive and fashionable life

3 Write a critical comparison of the two poems below:

Anger lay by me all night long

Anger lay by me all night long,
 His breath was hot upon my brow,
 He told me of my burning wrong,
 All night he talked and would not go.

He stood by me all through the day, 5
 Struck from my hand the book, the pen;
 He said: 'Hear first what I've to say,
 And sing, if you've the heart to, then.'

And can I cast him from my couch? 10
 And can I lock him from my room?
 Ah no, his honest words are such
 That he's my true-lord, and my doom.

Elizabeth Daryush (1887–1977)

A Poison Tree

I was angry with my friend.
 I told my wrath, my wrath did end.
 I was angry with my foe:
 I told it not, my wrath did grow.

And I water'd it in fears, 5
 Night & morning with my tears;
 And I summoned it with smiles,
 And with soft deceitful wiles.

And it grew both day and night, 10
 Till it bore an apple bright;
 And my foe beheld it shine,
 And he knew that it was mine,

And into my garden stole 15
 When the night had veil'd the pole:
 In the morning glad I see
 My foe outstretch'd beneath the tree.

William Blake (1757–1827)

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Question 2 © Wole Soyinka; 'The Swamp Dwellers' in *Five Plays*; Oxford University Press; 1964.
Question 3 © Elizabeth Daryush; 'Anger Lay by me all Night Long' in *The Rattle Bag*; Faber & Faber; 1982.

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