
LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

9695/73

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 **6** printed pages, **2** blank pages and **1** insert.

1 Write a critical appreciation of the following poem.

The poem's title refers to the name of the boat that the poet describes.

Lady Northcote

And she must have looked
like a governor's lady
when they flung champagne at her
long time ago; all polished wood
and brass and delicate white
for the tropics. 5

But when I first saw her
at the stelling¹ at Kumaka
– a raw teenager out for kicks –
she seemed excitingly abused, 10
had taken her licks
from years of men and sea
with her pride and style intact
– or just sufficiently drained
that she could notice the attentions 15
of a mere boy like me.

When the storm hit
four hours out from Waini Point
she danced as in a fit,
nostalgic for her frolic of the past 20
when she sparkled with polished brass
and with the wit of those
who journeyed for the fun of it.
She plunged and reared,
taking the breaking wave upon her breast 25
– flat and hard now, and dun²,
but comforting, none the less,
especially to a traveller like me,
still young enough to think
that strong women are the best. 30

Then, in the grey light before dawn,
she slipped quietly into harbour:
breathless, mysterious, a little naughty
– like all the 'perfect ladies'
of my adolescent dreams. 35

Mark McWatt (born 1947)

¹ *stelling*: harbour

² *dun*: a dull grey colour

Turn to page 4 for Question 2

2 Write a critical commentary on the following extract from *American Notes* by Charles Dickens.

In January 1842, Dickens left England on board a steamship going across the Atlantic Ocean to Boston in the United States of America; the voyage lasted more than two weeks, and at the start there was some very stormy weather.

My own two hands, and feet likewise, being very cold, however, on this particular occasion, I crept below at midnight. It was not exactly comfortable below. It was decidedly close; and it was impossible to be unconscious of the presence of that extraordinary compound of strange smells, which is to be found nowhere but on board ship, and which is such a subtle perfume that it seems to enter at every pore of the skin, and whisper of the hold. Two passengers' wives (one of them my own) lay already in silent agonies on the sofa; and one lady's maid (my lady's) was a mere bundle on the floor, execrating¹ her destiny, and pounding her curl-papers among the stray boxes. Everything sloped the wrong way: which in itself was an aggravation scarcely to be borne. I had left the door open, a moment before, in the bosom of a gentle declivity² and, when I turned to shut it, it was on the summit of a lofty eminence. Now every plank and timber creaked, as if the ship were made of wicker-work; and now crackled, like an enormous fire of the driest possible twigs. There was nothing for it but bed; so I went to bed. 5 10

It was pretty much the same for the next two days, with a tolerably fair wind and dry weather. I read in bed (but to this hour I don't know what) a good deal; and reeled on deck a little; drank cold brandy-and-water with an unspeakable disgust, and ate hard biscuit perseveringly: not ill but going to be. It is the third morning. I am awakened out of my sleep by a dismal shriek from my wife, who demands to know whether there's any danger. I rouse myself, and look out of bed. The water-jug is plunging and leaping like a lively dolphin; all the smaller articles are afloat, except my shoes, which are stranded on a carpet-bag, high and dry, like a couple of coal-barges. Suddenly I see them spring into the air, and behold the looking-glass, which is nailed to the wall, sticking fast upon the ceiling. At the same time the door entirely disappears, and a new one is opened in the floor. Then I begin to comprehend that the state-room is standing on its head. Before it is possible to make any arrangement at all compatible with this novel state of things, the ship rights. Before one can say, "Thank Heaven!" she wrongs again. Before one can cry she is wrong, she seems to have started forward, and to be a creature actively running of its own accord, with broken knees and failing legs, through every variety of hole and pitfall, and stumbling constantly. Before one can so much as wonder, she takes a high leap into the air. Before she has well done that, she takes a deep dive into the water. Before she has gained the surface, she throws a somersault. The instant she is on her legs, she rushes backward. And so she goes on staggering, heaving, wrestling, leaping, diving, jumping, pitching, throbbing, rolling, and rocking: and going through all these movements, sometimes by turns, and sometimes all together: until one feels disposed to roar for mercy. A steward passes. 15 20 25 30

"Steward!"

"Sir?"

"What is the matter? What do you call this?" 40

"Rather a heavy sea on, sir, and a head-wind."

A head-wind! Imagine a human face upon the vessel's prow, with fifteen thousand Samsons in one bent upon driving her back, and hitting her exactly between the eyes whenever she attempts to advance an inch. Imagine the ship herself with every pulse and artery of her huge body swollen and bursting under this maltreatment, sworn to go on or die. Imagine the wind howling, the sea roaring, the rain beating: all in furious array against her. Picture the sky both dark and wild, and the clouds, in fearful sympathy with the waves, making another ocean in the 45

air. Add to all this, the clattering on deck and down below; the tread of hurried feet; the loud hoarse shouts of seamen; the gurgling in and out of water through the scuppers³; with, every now and then, the striking of a heavy sea upon the planks above, with the deep, dead, heavy sound of thunder heard within a vault; – and there is the head-wind of that January morning. I say nothing of what may be called the domestic noises of the ship: such as the breaking of glass and crockery, the tumbling down of stewards, the gambols, overhead, of loose casks and truant dozens of bottled porter⁴, and the very remarkable and far from exhilarating sounds raised in their various state-rooms by the seventy passengers who were too ill to get up to breakfast. I say nothing of them; for although I lay listening to this concert for three or four days, I don't think I heard it for more than a quarter of a minute, at the expiration of which term, I lay down again, excessively sea-sick.

¹ *execrating*: cursing

² *declivity*: slope

³ *the scuppers*: drainage openings on the sides of a ship's deck

⁴ *porter*: beer

3 Write a critical commentary on the following poem by Ella Wheeler Wilcox (1850–1919).

The Depths

Not only sun-kissed heights are fair. Below
 The cold, dark billows of the frowning deep
 Do lovely blossoms of the ocean sleep,
 Rocked gently by the waters to and fro.
 The coral beds with magic colours glow, 5
 And priceless pearl-encrusted molluscs¹ heap
 The glittering rocks where shining atoms leap
 Like living broken rainbows.

Even so

We find the sea of sorrow. Black as night 10
 The sullen surface meets our frightened gaze,
 As down we sink to darkness and despair.
 But at the depths! Such beauty, such delight!
 Such flowers as never grew in pleasure's ways.
 Ah! not alone are sun-kissed summits fair. 15

¹ *molluscs*: shellfish

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