

CAMBRIDGE INTERNATIONAL EXAMINATIONS
General Certificate of Education
Advanced Subsidiary Level and Advanced Level

ENGLISH LANGUAGE

8693/01

Paper 1 Passages for Comment

May/June 2003

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 on both sides of the paper.
Do not use staples, paper clips, highlighters, glue or correction fluid.

Answer **two** questions.
At the end of the examination, fasten all your work securely together.
The number of marks is given in brackets [] at the end of each question or part question.
You are reminded of the need for good English and clear presentation in your answers.

Answer two questions

- 1 The passage below is a favourable review of an American group called *White Stripes* which appeared in a broadsheet newspaper.
- (a) Comment on how the writer uses language to express her views and feelings in the extract. [15]
- (b) As a music critic for the local paper, you have watched the same performance as the writer of the original extract. You are far less impressed by what you have seen and intend to say so in your review of the concert. Basing your answer closely on the extract, write the article (between 120–150 words). [10]

The first thing to say about brother-sister Detroit duo White Stripes is that it has been some time since a band looked so defiantly, organically *odd*. At one point, there was a hot rumour flying around that they were not siblings at all, rather a divorced couple, which makes you wonder what sort of children they might have had. Watching their sweaty, intimate show at Brighton's Concorde 2, it's clear that, even in music-business terms, White Stripes are not your average twentysomethings. Dressed only in red, white, a touch of black, Jack and Meg Wade resemble something Andy Warhol and David Byrne might have dreamt up for an art happening. 5

Moreover, both remind you of movies. There's Jack on vocals and guitar, 10 twanging away hypnotically, all raven, mussed hair and screaming paleness. He resembles one of the lost smalltown teenagers who sat beside the dead body in *River's Edge*. Then there's Meg, with her drums, bashing away intensely, all long, drippy pigtails and hillbilly stillness, like she might feel more at home spanking the banjo in an all-female remake of *Deliverance*. White Stripes's determined visual 15 oddness sets them apart from the common herd maybe because it suggests that, uniquely for these times, they do not (will not?) exude any stale pop chumminess, any We're-Just-Like-You-Guys bonhomie (the last refuge of the talentless pop scoundrel). With White Stripes, it seems to be a case of: *We're different*, nothing like you at all. Stare as hard as you like, baby – this time it really is all about the music. 20

And what music it is. White Stripes formed in the late Nineties, but it was their third album, this year's *White Blood Cells*, that got them noticed. And deservedly so. Listening to *White Blood Cells* feels like being hypnotised into joining a sinister religious cult for the 15-track duration. Remarkably, it manages to be insanely, 25 *impertinently* derivative without irritating the listener. Everywhere on the album, you're hearing The Stooges, The Pixies, Suicide, Bob Dylan, Sonic Youth, Jane's Addiction, The Kinks, The Cramps, Sonic Youth, Led Zeppelin, The Beatles and pretty much everybody else of note you can think of.

And while at first you laugh and think: Get out of here, you cheeky, thieving little 30 beggars, something about the way White Stripes mix it all up, then push it all out in a bluesy, garagey, noir-country roar makes you realise that something very special is happening. It's as if all the best facets of twentieth-century music have been fed into one of those car-crushing machines and White Stripes are the cube that pops out at the end. Any fool can listen to music, many a fool actually makes it, but with White Stripes you get the spooky feeling that – without bass-lines, without mincing 35 about with computer trickery – they have actually become the music.

The other great thing about White Stripes is that they're unafraid to tell you stories. At times, their set at Brighton was less a collection of songs than it was a series of out-of-towner road movies, part Neil Diamond, part George Formby, part Willie Nelson, part Nick Cave. Naturally, they never begin or end exactly as you'd 40 expect. With 'I'm Finding It Harder To Be A Gentleman', you think you're hearing

some misogynistic upstart sneering at his girlfriend ('If I held the door open for you, it would make your day'), but then you realise that the narrator is an icon of insecurity. Similarly, 'Little Room' turns out to be an essay of how success is the enemy of creativity, 'We're Gonna Be Friends' is actually childhood reminiscence, while 'The Union Forever' changes from being an anti-love song ('It can't be love for there is no true love') into a musical march against materialism ('What would I like to have been? Everything you hate').

Crucially, while White Stripes are undeniably pretentious (reekingly so), they're unafraid to be a bit silly too. Their current single, 'Hotel Yorba' ('Grab your umbrella cos I'm your favourite fella') is, beneath the layer of white-trash white noise, rather like dot-to-dot, mumsy Beatles. Elsewhere, 'I Think I Can Smell A Rat' comes across like Little Richard meets Little Jimmy Osmond, while their leftfield version of 'Jolene' sounds like *Rocky Horror* dissolving in a garage acid bath. All this and more White Stripes pelted out, note-perfect, at the Brighton crowd, with hardly a pause for breath, and certainly very little time-wasting chitchat. In the end, I left, mystified and amused. White Stripes might not be the future of rock 'n' roll, but they are definitely a witty, original, gifted take on its past. It's our good luck that we're getting to enjoy them in the present.

White Stripes play the Wolverhampton Wulfrun Hall tomorrow, Bristol Anson Rooms on Tuesday, London Astoria on Wednesday, London Forum on 6 December.

- 2 The passage below describes the atmosphere on board ship as the *Titanic* was damaged.
- (a) Comment on the style and language of the passage.
- (b) As a survivor, you are asked many years later to write a magazine article about events at the time. Basing your answer closely on the passage, write the opening of the article (between 120–150 words). [10]

From Thursday noon to Friday noon the *Titanic* ran 386 nautical miles. Friday to Saturday 519 miles, and Saturday to Sunday 546 miles. She was making 22 knots. Everyone agreed she was the most comfortable ship they had travelled in. There was, though, a vibration, which was most noticeable as one lay in the bath. The throb of the engines came straight up from the floor through the metal sides of the tub so that one could not put one's head back with any comfort. Throughout her voyage, the *Titanic* slightly listed to port, but it was nothing. As the second-class passengers sat at table in the dining-room they could, if they watched the skyline through the portholes, see both skyline and sea on the port side but only sky to starboard. The purser thought this was probably because more coal had been used from the starboard bunkers. 5 10

When some passengers went on deck on Sunday morning they found the temperature had dropped so rapidly that they did not care to stay outside, although there was no wind, or only that artificial wind created by the passage of the ship. Both the French liner *Touraine* and the German *Amerika* had wirelessly reported ice, and the *Titanic* had replied thanking them. Sunday dinner was served, and then coffee. Thomas Andrews, the shipbuilder, strolled down to the kitchens to thank the baker for making some special bread for him. The passengers went to bed with the presumption, perhaps already mentally half-realised, as (Lawrence) Beesley put it, that they would be ashore in New York in forty-eight hours time. At the evening service, after coffee, Rev. Mr Carter had caused the hymn 'For Those in Peril on the Sea' to be sung, but he had brought the service to a close with a few words on the great confidence all on board felt in the *Titanic's* great steadiness and size. At 11.40, in Lat. 41° 46' N. Long. 50° 14' W. Frederick Fleet, the look-out in the crow's-nest, saw or sensed an iceberg ahead. The *Titanic* veered to port, so that it was her starboard plates which were glanced open. The engines were stopped. There was a perfectly still atmosphere. It was a brilliantly starlit night but with no moon, so that there was little light that was of any use. She was a ship that had come quietly to rest without any indication of disaster. No ice was visible: the iceberg had been glimpsed by the look-out and then gone. There was no hole in the ship's side through which water could be seen to be pouring, nothing out of place, no sound of alarm, no panic, and no movement of anyone except at a walking pace. 15 20 25 30

Within ten minutes the water had risen fourteen feet inside the ship. Mail bags were floating about in the mail room. The passengers had no idea of danger. Beesley, who was in bed, noticed no more than what he took to be the slightest extra heave of the engines. What most people noticed first was the sudden lack of engine vibration. This had been with them so constantly for the four days of the voyage that they had ceased to be conscious of it, but when it stopped they noticed the supervening silence and stillness. The only passengers who saw an iceberg were a few still playing cards in the smoking room. They idly discussed how high it might have been, settled on an estimate of eighty feet, and went back to their cards. One pointed to a glass of whisky at his side and, turning to an onlooker, suggested he should just run along on deck to see if any ice had come on board. If so, he would like some more in his whisky. They laughed. In fact, as the crew discovered, the decks were strewn with ice, but even then, so unaware were they of danger, that Edward Buley, an able seaman, picked up a handful of it, took it down to his bunk, 35 40 45

and turned in again. There was no panic because there was no awareness. *Titanic* was assumed to be unsinkable. The shipbuilders had said so. Practically everyone believed she was as unsinkable as a railway station. A Rothschild, asked to put on his life-jacket, said he did not think there was any occasion for it, and walked leisurely away. Stewards rode bicycles round and round in the gym. She was in fact sinking very fast, and by midnight was a quarter sunk already. There was something unusual about the stairs, a curious sense of something out of balance, a sense of not being able to put one's foot down in the right place. The stairs were tilting forward and tended to throw your feet out of place. There was no visible slope, just something strange perceived by the sense of balance. The *Titanic* was settling by the head.

- 3 In the passage below, Alice Walker, author of *The Color Purple*, explains how the novel formed in her mind.
- (a) In the style of the original passage, continue the account so that it reflects the writer's growing confidence that she will finish the novel (between 120–150 words). [10]
- (b) Compare the style and language of your piece with those of the original extract. [15]

When I was sure the characters of my new novel were trying to form (or, as I invariably thought of it, trying to contact me, to speak *through* me), I began to make plans to leave New York. Three months earlier I had bought a tiny house on a quiet Brooklyn street, assuming – because my desk overlooked the street and a maple tree in the yard, representing garden and view – I would be able to write. I was not. 5

New York, whose people I love for their grace under almost continual unpredictable adversity, was a place the people in *The Color Purple* refused even to visit. The moment any of them started to form – on the subway, a dark street, and especially in the shadow of very tall buildings – they would start to complain. 10

'What is all this anyway?' they would say.

I disposed of the house, stored my furniture, packed my suitcases, and flew alone to San Francisco (it was my daughter's year to be with her father), where all the people in the novel promptly fell silent – I think, in awe. Not merely of the city's beauty, but of what they picked up about earthquakes. 15

'It's pretty,' they muttered, 'but us ain't lost nothing in no place that has earthquakes.'

They also didn't like seeing buses, cars, or other people whenever they attempted to look out. 'Us don't want to be seeing none of this,' they said. 'It make us can't think.' 20

That was when I knew for sure these were country people. So my lover and I started driving around the state looking for a country house to rent. Luckily I had found (with the help of friends) a fairly inexpensive place in the city. This too had been a decision forced by my characters. As long as there was any question about whether I could support them in the fashion they desired (basically in undisturbed silence) they declined to come out. Eventually we found a place in northern California we could afford and that my characters liked. And no wonder: it looked a lot like the town in Georgia most of them were from, only it was more beautiful and the local swimming hole was not segregated. It also bore a slight resemblance to the African village in which one of them, Nettie, was a missionary. 25

Seeing the sheep, the cattle, and the goats, smelling the apples and the hay, one of my characters, Celie, began, haltingly, to speak. 30

But there was still a problem.

Since I quit my editing job at *Ms.* and my Guggenheim Fellowship was running out, and my royalties did not quite cover expenses, and – let's face it – because it gives me a charge to see people who appreciate my work, historical novels or not, I was accepting invitations to speak. Sometimes on the long plane rides Celie or Shug would break through with a wonderful line or two (for instance, Celie said once that a self-pitying sick person she went to visit was 'laying up in the bed trying to look dead'). But even these vanished – if I didn't jot them down – by the time my contact with the audience was done. 40

What to do?

Celie and Shug answered without hesitation: Give up all this travel. Give up all this talk. What is all this travel and talk anyway? So, I gave it up for a year. Whenever I was invited to speak I explained I was taking a year off for Silence. (I also wore an imaginary bracelet on my left arm that spelled the word.) Everyone said, Sure, they understood. 45

I was terrified.

Where was the money for our support coming from? My only steady income was a three-hundred-dollar-a-month retainer from *Ms.* for being a long-distance editor. But even that was too much distraction for my characters.

Tell them you can't do anything for the magazine, said Celie and Shug. (You guessed it, the women of the drawers.) Tell them you'll have to think about them later. So, I did. *Ms.* was unperturbed. Supportive as ever (they continued the retainer). Which was nice.

Then I sold a book of stories. After taxes, inflation, and my agent's fee of ten percent, I would still have enough for a frugal, no-frills year. And so, I bought some beautiful blue-and-red-and-purple fabric, and some funky old secondhand furniture (and accepted donations of old odds and ends from friends), and a quilt pattern my mama swore was easy, and I headed for the hills.

There were days and weeks and even months when nothing happened. Nothing whatsoever. I worked on my quilt, took long walks with my lover, lay on an island we discovered in the middle of the river and dabbled my fingers in the water. I swam, explored the redwood forests all around us, lay out in the meadow, picked apples, talked (yes, of course) to trees. My quilt began to grow. And, of course, everything was happening. Celie and Shug and Albert were getting to know each other, coming to trust my determination to serve their entry (sometimes I felt *re-entry*) into the world to the best of my ability, and what is more – and felt so wonderful – we began to love one another. And, what is even more, to feel immense thankfulness for our mutual good luck.

