
LITERATURE (ENGLISH)

0486/43

Paper 4 Unseen

May/June 2018

1 hour 15 minutes

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 **either** Question 1 **or** Question 2.

You are advised to spend about 20 minutes reading the question paper and planning your answer.

Both questions in this paper carry equal marks.

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

Answer **either** Question 1 **or** Question 2.

EITHER

1 Read carefully the poem opposite.

How does the poet memorably portray people's experience of love in this poem?

To help you answer this question, you might consider:

- how the poet portrays people in love
- how she describes those who are not in love
- what the poet suggests about the relationship between love and time.

Late Love

How they strut about, people in love,
how tall they grow, pleased with themselves,
their hair, glossy, their skin shining.
They don't remember who they have been.

How filmic they are just for this time.
How important they've become – secret, above
the order of things, the dreary mundane.
Every church bell ringing, a fresh sign.

How dull the lot that are not in love.
Their clothes shabby, their skin lustreless;
how clueless they are, hair a mess; how they trudge
up and down streets in the rain,

remembering one kiss in a dark alley,
a touch in a changing room, if lucky, a lovely wait
for the phone to ring, maybe, baby.
The past with its rush of velvet, its secret hush

already miles away, dimming now, in the late day.

OR

- 2 Read carefully the extract opposite. It is the opening to a novel. The central character, Esme, is in the secure ward of a psychiatric hospital. She is looking back at her past life and wondering what has led her there.

How does the writer strikingly capture your interest in Esme's life?

To help you answer this question, you might consider:

- how the writer presents Esme's memories of the dance
- how she describes Esme's experience of life on the ward
- how she makes you feel about Esme's attempts to make sense of her life.

Let us begin with two girls at a dance.

They are at the edge of the room. One sits on a chair, opening and shutting a dance-card¹ with gloved fingers. Esme stands beside her, watching the dance unfold: the circling couples, the clasped hands, the drumming shoes, the whirling skirts, the bounce of the floor. It is the last hour of the year and the windows behind them are blank with night. The seated girl is dressed in something pale, Esme forgets what. Esme is in a dark red frock that doesn't suit her. She has lost her gloves. It begins here.

Or perhaps not. Perhaps it begins earlier, before the party, before they dressed in their new finery, before the candles were lit, before the sand was sprinkled on the boards, before the year whose end they are celebrating began. Who knows? Either way it ends at a grille² covering a window with each square exactly two thumbnails wide.

If Esme cares to gaze into the distance – that is to say, at what lies beyond the metal grille – she finds that, after a while, something happens to the focusing mechanism of her eyes. The squares of the grille will blur and, if she concentrates long enough, vanish. There is always a moment before her body reasserts itself, readjusting her eyes to the proper reality of the world, when it is just her and the trees, the road, the beyond. Nothing in between.

The squares at the bottom are worn free of paint and you can see the different layers of colour inside each other, like rings in a tree. Esme is taller than most so can reach the part where the paint is new and thick as tar.

Behind her, a woman makes tea for her dead husband. Is he dead? Or just run off? Esme doesn't recall. Another woman is searching for water to pour on flowers that perished long ago in a seaside town not far from here. It is always the meaningless tasks that endure: the washing, the cooking, the clearing, the cleaning. Never anything majestic or significant, just the tiny rituals that hold together the seams of human life. The girl obsessed with cigarettes has had two warnings already and everyone is thinking she is about to get a third. And Esme is thinking, where does it begin – is it there, is it here, at the dance, in India, before?

She speaks to no one, these days. She wants to concentrate, she doesn't like to muddy things with the distraction of speech. There is a zoetrope³ inside her head and she doesn't like to be caught out when it stops.

Whir, whir. Stop.

In India, then. The garden. Herself aged about four, standing on the back step.

Above her, mimosa trees are shaking their heads at her, powdering the lawn with yellow dust. If she walked across it, she'd leave a trail behind. She wants something. She wants something but she doesn't know what. It's like an itch she can't reach to scratch. A drink? Her *ayah*⁴? A sliver of mango? She rubs at an insect bite on her arm and pokes at the yellow dust with her bare toe. In the distance somewhere she can hear her sister's skipping-rope hitting the ground and the short shuffle of feet in between. Slap shunt slap shunt slap shunt.

¹ *dance-card*: list of dance partners

² *grille*: a frame of metal bars used to cover a window

³ *zoetrope*: a spinning toy which creates the illusion of motion

⁴ *ayah*: a nursemaid

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