



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

LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

9695/71

Paper 7 Comment and Appreciation

May/June 2010

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 *Over* by Margaret Forster (published 2007). The narrator is thinking about her husband and their separation after many years of marriage.

I have to start somewhere, trying to understand.

We lived on a noisy road, on a hill. Our house was at the point of the hill where cars change gear. The house was a bargain, when we bought it. It had a long, narrow garden at the back, with a gate in the hedge giving access to the tennis courts belonging to a local club. We didn't play tennis, but we thought the children might, later on. It was easy, because of the silence at the back of the house, where we slept, to forget about the constant traffic at the front, though sometimes, if a very heavy lorry was labouring up the hill, the whole house trembled. I worried about this, but he never did. The house was old. He said it seemed to him that it had survived worse things than lorries groaning past. Four houses down from us, there was a gap where a bomb had dropped in the Second World War. Our house had stood firm then. He had confidence in it. We had a survey done before we bought it and no structural faults had been revealed. But I worried. 5 10

In all the years we lived there, the happy years, there was only once talk of moving, to somewhere quieter. He suggested it. We all objected, for different reasons. The twins were eight and were horrified at the thought of moving schools, and Finn, three years younger, had just become best friends with the boy next door and couldn't imagine life without him. I'm not quite sure why I resisted the idea as strongly as I did. I liked the house, but it wasn't perfect. I could have liked another, perhaps even more. He took us to look at the area he was thinking of. It was very attractive, not quite suburbia, but plenty of greenery, lots of wide, tree-lined roads, no noise. Most of the houses were detached, built in the 1930s I think, solid-looking but without much character. I shook my head, wrinkled my nose. I think I complained that there was no atmosphere. Our hillside location had cafés at the foot of the hill, and a row of small, useful shops, and there was no dull uniformity – the buildings were a satisfying mixture of old and new. 15 20 25

He didn't try to persuade me. He said if it was a case of four to one, then we would stay where we were. It was good of him to give way like that, but he was – is – that kind of man, decent, understanding, anxious to be fair. We got our wish, the children and I, and he never made us feel guilty at thwarting his own desire to move. 30

Why I have begun with the house I can't imagine. The house was of no consequence whatsoever. I suppose I am trying to find a beginning and that describing where we lived when it happened helps me to start. But though there was a beginning, there is, as yet, no ending. That is what he wants, and he will never get it. I can see that, everyone else can see that, but he can't. He remains single-minded, in pursuit of the truth. This, he says, has nothing to do with any desire for revenge. He wants to discover the truth and see justice done, in so far as it can be done. An admirable man. None of us can match up to him. He makes us feel unworthy, cowardly, feeble, ashamed. All we want to do is forget. Not forget *her*, as if we could, as if we would want to, but forget *it*. We want to recover, and we can't so long as he continues with his impossible quest. 35 40

The thought of actually recovering is something I think he cannot bear. To recover would, for him, be the greatest betrayal of all.

It is strange living on my own again, though I don't know why I say 'again' when I've never truly lived on my own. That's odd, too, I suppose. It makes it sound as though I went straight from living with my parents to living with him, with Don, when we got married. But that's not the case. There were years in between when I was training as 45

a teacher, either living in a college hostel or in a flat with other girls. But all that time I never had my own room. I don't remember minding this. Until recently, I've always liked company, I've always got on well with people. I'm still friends with Lynne, Pat and Ruth, the girls I shared with for three years. We meet at least once a year, have a little reunion, though it's hard for Pat to come to London. We send each other birthday cards, and ring each other up if one of us has heard some news about one of the others which needs to be passed on. They all rang me, when it happened. They read about it in the newspapers. They kept on ringing too, they didn't fade away – and my tears, and then my silences, didn't embarrass them.

I teach Reception, the babies. Teaching Reception is not easy. Margot Fletcher, the headmistress, wondered, when I came back afterwards, whether I was up to it. She said it was wonderful to have me back but maybe ... and she left her sentence hanging in the air, waiting for my reaction. I said I would be fine. She nodded, said she trusted me to tell her if I found I was struggling.

Struggling? Of course I was struggling. But without the children the struggle would have been lost.

- 2 Write a critical commentary on the following poem, written during the First World War (1914-1918). In it the speaker talks to her husband or lover as he comes to the end of his “leave” – his time at home – before he has to return to the army.

Last Leave

Let us forget tomorrow! For tonight
 At least, with curtains drawn, and driftwood piled
 On our own hearthstone, we may rest, and see
 The firelight flickering on familiar walls.
 (How the blue flames leap when an ember falls!) 5
 Peace, and content, and soul-security –
 These are within. Without, the waste is wild
 With storm-clouds sweeping by in furious flight,
 And ceaseless beating of autumnal rain
 Upon our window pane. 10

The dusk grows deeper now, the flames are low:
 We do not heed the shadows, you and I,
 Nor fear the grey wings of encroaching gloom,
 So softly they enfold us. One last gleam
 Flashes and flits, elusive as a dream, 15
 And then dies out upon the darkened room.
 So, even so, our earthly fires must die;
 Yet, in our hearts, love’s flame shall leap and glow
 When this dear night, with all it means to me,
 Is but a memory! 20

Eileen Newton

3 Write a critical commentary on the following passage from a story called “The Spectre Bride”, published in 1822 by an anonymous writer.

The castle bells rang out a merry peal at the approach of a winter twilight, and the warder was stationed with his retinue on the battlements to announce the arrival of the company who were invited to share the amusements that reigned within the walls. The Lady Clotilda, the baron’s only daughter, had but just attained her seventeenth year, and a brilliant assembly was invited to celebrate the birthday. The large vaulted apartments were thrown open for the reception of the numerous guests. The gaieties of the evening had scarcely commenced when the clock from the dungeon tower was heard to strike with unusual solemnity, and on the instant a tall stranger, arrayed in a suit of deepest black, made his appearance in the ballroom. He bowed courteously on every side, but was received by all with the strictest reserve. No one knew who he was or whence he came, but it was evident from his appearance that he was a nobleman of the first rank, and though his introduction was accepted with distrust, he was treated by all with respect. He addressed himself particularly to the daughter of the baron, and was so intelligent in his remarks, so lively in his sallies, and so fascinating in his address, that he quickly interested the feelings of his young and sensitive auditor. In fine, after some hesitation on the part of the host, who, with the rest of the company, was unable to approach the stranger with indifference, he was requested to remain a few days at the castle, an invitation which was cheerfully accepted.

The dead of the night drew on, and when all had retired to rest, the dull heavy bell was heard swinging to and fro in the grey tower, though there was scarcely a breath to move the forest trees. Many of the guests, when they met the next morning at the breakfast table, averred that there had been sounds as of the most heavenly music, while all persisted in affirming that they had also heard awful noises proceeding, as it seemed, from the apartment which the stranger at that time occupied. He soon, however, made his appearance in the breakfast circle, and when the circumstances of the preceding night were alluded to, a dark smile of unutterable meaning played round his saturnine features, which then relapsed into an expression of the deepest melancholy. He addressed his conversation principally to Clotilda, and when he talked of the different climes he had visited, of the sunny regions of Italy, where the very air breathes the fragrance of flowers, and the summer breeze sighs over a land of sweets; when he spoke to her of those delicious countries where the smile of the day sinks into the softer beauty of the night, and the loveliness of heaven is never for an instant obscured, he drew tears of longing from the bosom of his fair auditor, and for the first time she regretted that she was yet at home.

Days rolled on, and every moment increased the fervour of the inexpressible sentiments with which the stranger had inspired her. He never discoursed of love, but he looked it in his language, in his manner, in the insinuating tones of his voice and in the slumbering softness of his smile, and when he found that he had succeeded in inspiring her with favourable sentiments, a sneer of the most diabolical meaning spoke for an instant and died again on his dark-featured countenance. When he met her in the company of her parents he was at once respectful and submissive, and it was only when he was alone with her, in their rambles through the dark recesses of the forest, that he assumed the guise of the more impassioned admirer.

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Question 2 © ed. Catherine Reilly; Eileen Newton; *Last Leave; Scars Upon My Heart*; Virago Press Ltd; 1981.

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