



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

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**LITERATURE IN ENGLISH**

**9695/71**

Paper 7 Comment and Appreciation

**October/November 2011**

**2 hours**

Additional Materials: Answer Booklet/Paper

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**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.



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This document consists of **6** printed pages and **2** blank pages.



- 1 Write a critical commentary on the following poem by Walt Whitman (1819–1892). It tells of the impact on his family of a young soldier's death in the mid-nineteenth century American Civil War.

Come up from the fields, father, here's a letter from our Pete,  
And come to the front door, mother, here's  
a letter from thy dear son.

Lo, 'tis autumn,  
Lo, where the trees, deeper green, yellower and redder, 5  
Cool and sweeten Ohio's villages with leaves  
fluttering in the moderate wind,  
Where apples ripe in the orchards hang and  
grapes on the trellis'd vines,  
(Smell you the smell of the grapes on the vines? 10  
Smell you the buckwheat where the bees were lately buzzing?)  
Above all, lo, the sky so calm, so transparent  
after the rain, and with wondrous clouds,  
Below too, all calm, all vital and beautiful,  
and the farm prospers well. 15

Down in the fields all prospers well,  
But now from the fields come, father, come  
at the daughter's call,  
And come to the entry, mother, to the front door come right away.

Fast as she can she hurries, something ominous, 20  
her steps trembling,  
She does not tarry to smooth her hair nor  
adjust her cap.

Open the envelope quickly,  
O this is not our son's writing, yet his name 25  
is sign'd,  
O a strange hand writes for our dear son,  
O stricken mother's soul!  
All swims before her eyes, flashes with black,  
she catches the main words only, 30  
Sentences broken, *gunshot wound in the breast,*  
*cavalry skirmish, taken to hospital,*  
*At present low, but will soon be better.*

Ah, now the single figure to me,  
Amid all teeming and wealthy Ohio with all 35  
its cities and farms,  
Sickly white in the face and dull in the head,  
very faint,  
By the jamb of a door leans.

*Grieve not so, dear mother* (the just-grown 40  
daughter speaks through her sobs,  
The little sisters huddle around speechless and  
dismay'd),  
*See, dearest mother, the letter says Pete will*  
*soon be better.* 45

Alas, poor boy, he will never be better (nor maybe  
needs to be better, that brave and simple soul),  
While they stand at home at the door he is  
dead already,  
The only son is dead. 50

But the mother needs to be better,  
She with thin form presently drest in black,  
By day her meals untouch'd, then at night  
fitfully sleeping, often waking, 55  
In the midnight waking, weeping, longing with  
one deep longing,  
O that she might withdraw unnoticed, silent  
from life escape and withdraw,  
To follow, to seek, to be with her dear dead  
son. 60

2 Write a critical commentary on the following poem by Edward Thomas (1878–1917).

*The Unknown Bird*

Three lovely notes he whistled, too soft to be heard  
 If others sang; but others never sang  
 In the great beech-wood all that May and June.  
 No one saw him: I alone could hear him  
 Though many listened. Was it but four years  
 Ago? or five? He never came again. 5

Oftenest when I heard him I was alone,  
 Nor could I ever make another hear.  
 La-la-la! he called, seeming far-off –  
 As if a cock crowed past the edge of the world, 10  
 As if the bird or I were in a dream.  
 Yet that he travelled through the trees and sometimes  
 Neared me, was plain, though somehow distant still  
 He sounded. All the proof is – I told men  
 What I had heard. 15

I never knew a voice,  
 Man, beast or bird, better than this. I told  
 The naturalists; but neither had they heard  
 Anything like the notes that did so haunt me,  
 I had them clear by heart and have them still. 20  
 Four years, or five, have made no difference. Then  
 As now that La-la-la! was bodiless sweet:  
 Sad more than joyful it was, if I must say  
 That it was one or other, but if sad  
 'Twas sad only with joy too, too far off 25  
 For me to taste it. But I cannot tell  
 If truly never anything but fair  
 The days were when he sang, as now they seem.  
 This surely I know, that I who listened then,  
 Happy sometimes, sometimes suffering 30  
 A heavy body and a heavy heart,  
 Now straightway, if I think of it, become  
 Light as that bird wandering beyond my shore.

**Turn over for Question 3.**

- 3 Write a critical commentary on the following passage, an extract from the short story “The Half Brothers”, by Elizabeth Gaskell (1810–1865). The narrator, a young man, talks of a journey on foot across a range of hills called the Fells, in the middle of a cold winter; Gregory is his half-brother.

One winter-time, when I was about sixteen, I was sent by my father on an errand to a place about seven miles distant by the road, but only about four by the Fells. He bade me return by the road, whichever way I took in going, for the evenings closed in early, and were often thick and misty; besides which, old Adam, now paralytic and bedridden, foretold a downfall of snow before long. I soon got to my journey's end, and soon had done my business; earlier by an hour, I thought, than my father had expected, so I took the decision of the way by which I would return into my own hands, and set off back again over the Fells, just as the first shades of evening began to fall. It looked dark and gloomy enough; but everything was so still that I thought I should have plenty of time to get home before the snow came down. Off I set at a pretty quick pace. But night came on quicker. The right path was clear enough in the daytime, although at several points two or three exactly similar diverged from the same place; but when there was a good light, the traveller was guided by the sight of distant objects, – a piece of rock, – a fall in the ground – which were quite invisible to me now. I plucked up a brave heart, however, and took what seemed to me the right road. It was wrong, however, and led me whither I knew not, but to some wild boggy moor where the solitude seemed painful, intense, as if never footfall of man had come thither to break the silence. I tried to shout, – with the dimmest possible hope of being heard – rather to reassure myself by the sound of my own voice; but my voice came husky and short, and yet it dismayed me; it seemed so weird and strange in that noiseless expanse of black darkness. Suddenly the air was filled thick with dusky flakes, my face and hands were wet with snow. It cut me off from the slightest knowledge of where I was, for I lost every idea of the direction from which I had come, so that I could not even retrace my steps; it hemmed me in, thicker, thicker, with a darkness that might be felt. The boggy soil on which I stood quaked under me if I remained long in one place, and yet I dared not move far. All my youthful hardiness seemed to leave me at once. I was on the point of crying, and only very shame seemed to keep it down. To save myself from shedding tears, I shouted – terrible, wild shouts for bare life they were. I turned sick as I paused to listen; no answering sound came but the unfeeling echoes. Only the noiseless, pitiless snow kept falling thicker, thicker – faster, faster! I was growing numb and sleepy. I tried to move about, but I dared not go far, for fear of the precipices which, I knew, abounded in certain places on the Fells. Now and then, I stood still and shouted again; but my voice was getting choked with tears, as I thought of the desolate, helpless death I was to die, and how little they at home, sitting round the warm, red, bright fire, wotted<sup>1</sup> what was become of me, – and how my poor father would grieve for me – it would surely kill him – it would break his heart, poor old man! Aunt Fanny too – was this to be the end of all her cares for me? I began to review my life in a strange kind of vivid dream, in which the various scenes of my few boyish years passed before me like visions. In a pang of agony, caused by such remembrance of my short life, I gathered up my strength and called out once more, a long, despairing, wailing cry, to which I had no hope of obtaining any answer, save from the echoes around, dulled as the sound might be by the thickened air. To my surprise, I heard a cry – almost as long, as wild as mine – so wild that it seemed unearthly, and I almost thought it must be the voice of some of the mocking spirits of the Fells, about whom I had heard so many tales. My heart suddenly began to beat fast and loud. I could not reply for a minute or two. I nearly fancied I had lost the power of utterance. Just at this moment a dog barked. Was it Lassie's bark – my brother's collie? – an ugly enough brute, with a white, ill-looking face, that my father always kicked whenever he saw it, partly for its own demerits, partly because it belonged to my brother. On such occasions,

Gregory would whistle Lassie away, and go off and sit with her in some outhouse. My father had once or twice been ashamed of himself, when the poor collie had yowled out with the suddenness of the pain, and had relieved himself of his self-reproach by blaming my brother, who, he said, had no notion of training a dog, and was enough to ruin any collie in Christendom with his stupid way of allowing them to lie by the kitchen fire. To all which Gregory would answer nothing, nor even seem to hear, but go on looking absent and moody. 55

Yes! there again! It was Lassie's bark! Now or never! I lifted up my voice and shouted 'Lassie! Lassie! For God's sake, Lassie!' Another moment, and the great white-faced Lassie was curving and gambolling with delight round my feet and legs, looking, however, up in my face with her intelligent, apprehensive eyes, as if fearing lest I might greet her with a blow, as I had done oftentimes before. But I cried with gladness, as I stooped down and patted her. 60

My mind was sharing in my body's weakness, and I could not reason, but I knew that help was at hand. 65

<sup>1</sup>*wotted* – knew

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