



UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE INTERNATIONAL EXAMINATIONS
International General Certificate of Secondary Education

WORLD LITERATURE

0408/02

Paper 2: Unseen

May/June 2012

1 hour 15 minutes

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

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

At the end of the examination, fasten all your work securely together.

Both questions in this paper carry equal marks.



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



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

EITHER

- 1 Read the following poem carefully. The poet remembers what he saw from his window in Berlin, Germany (where winter is very cold).

How does the poem convey to you the impact of what he saw?

To help you answer this question, you might consider:

- the poet's description of the setting before the horses appear
- his description of the horses
- the ways in which he expresses the effect of the experience on him.

Horses

From the window I saw the horses.

I was in Berlin, in winter. The light
was without light, the sky without sky.

The air white like wet bread.

And from my window a vacant arena,
bitten by the teeth of winter.

Suddenly, led by a man,
ten horses stepped out into the mist.

Hardly had they surged forth, like flame,
than to my eyes they filled the whole world,
empty till then. Perfect, ablaze,
they were like ten gods with pure white hoofs,
with manes like a dream of salt.

Their rumps were worlds and oranges.

Their color was honey, amber, fire.

Their necks were towers
cut from the stone of pride,
and behind their transparent eyes
energy raged, like a prisoner.

And there, in the silence, in the middle
of the day, of the dark, slovenly winter,
the intense horses were blood
and rhythm, the animating treasure of life.

I looked, I looked and was reborn: without knowing it,
there, was the fountain, the dance of gold, the sky,
the fire that revived in beauty.

I have forgotten that dark Berlin winter.

I will not forget the light of the horses.

OR

- 2 Read the following passage carefully. It is about Rajkumar, a young boy who is stranded in a foreign country. He has been told to look for a woman called Ma Cho who might have work for him. The road he takes into the city leads directly to a huge fort.

How does the writing suggest to you the nature of the boy's developing fascination with the fort?

To help you answer this question, you might consider:

- the ways in which the writer describes the fort
- the way he describes the reality of the boy's life in Mandalay
- the conversation with Ma Cho about the fort and its inhabitants.

And so it happened that at the age of eleven, walking into the city of Mandalay, Rajkumar saw, for the first time, a straight road. By the sides of the road there were bamboo-walled shacks and palm-thatched shanties, pats of dung and piles of refuse. But the straight course of the road's journey was unsmudged by the clutter that flanked it: it was like a causeway cutting across a choppy sea. Its lines led the eye right through the city, past the bright red walls of the fort to the distant pagodas of Mandalay Hill, shining like a string of white bells upon the slope.

For his age, Rajkumar was well travelled. But in all his travels he had never come across thoroughfares like those in Mandalay. He was accustomed to lanes and alleys that curled endlessly around themselves so that you could never see beyond the next curve. Here was something new: a road that followed a straight, unvarying course, bringing the horizon right into the middle of habitation.

When the fort's full immensity revealed itself, Rajkumar came to a halt in the middle of the road. It was a miracle to behold, with its mile-long walls and its immense moat. The ramparts were almost three storeys high, but of a soaring lightness, red in color, and topped by ornamented gateways with seven-tiered roofs. Long straight roads radiated outwards from the walls, forming a neat geometrical grid. So intriguing was the ordered pattern of these streets that Rajkumar wandered far afield, exploring. It was almost dark by the time he remembered why he'd been sent to the city. He made his way back to the fort's western wall and asked for Ma Cho.

"Ma Cho?"

"She has a stall where she sells food – *baya-gyaw*¹ and other things. She's half Indian."

"Ah, Ma Cho." It made sense that this ragged-looking Indian boy was looking for Ma Cho: she often had Indian strays working at her stall. "There she is, the thin one."

Ma Cho was busy frying vegetables, squinting at the smoking oil from the shelter of an upthrust arm. She glared at Rajkumar suspiciously. "What do you want?"

He had just begun to explain about the boat and the repairs and wanting a job for a few weeks, when she interrupted him. She began to shout at the top of her voice, with her eyes closed: "What do you think – I have jobs under my armpits, to pluck out and hand to you? Last week a boy ran away with two of my pots. Who's to tell me you won't do the same?" And so on.

Rajkumar understood that this outburst was not aimed directly at him: that it had more to do with the dust, the splattering oil, and the price of vegetables than with his own presence or with anything he had said. He lowered his eyes and stood there stoically, kicking the dust until she was done.

She paused, panting, and looked him over. "Who are your parents?" she said at last, wiping her streaming forehead on the sleeve of her sweat-stained *aingyi*.²

“I don’t have any. They died.”

She thought this over, biting her lip. ‘All right. Get to work, but remember you’re not going to get much more than three meals and a place to sleep.’

He grinned. ‘That’s all I need.’

Between Ma Cho’s stall and the moat there lay a wide, dusty roadway that ran all the way around the fort, forming an immense square. Rajkumar had only to cross this apron of open space to get to the moat. Directly across from Ma Cho’s stall lay a bridge that led to one of the fort’s smaller entrances, the funeral gate. He had cleared a pool under the bridge by pushing away the lotus pads that covered the surface of the water. This became his spot: it was there that he did his washing and bathing – under the bridge, with the wooden planks above serving as his ceiling and shelter.

Rajkumar was curious about the fort but he knew that for those such as himself its precincts were forbidden ground. ‘Have you ever been inside?’ he asked Ma Cho one day. ‘The fort, I mean?’

‘Oh yes.’ Ma Cho nodded importantly. ‘Three times, at the very least.’

‘What is it like in there?’

‘It’s very large, much larger than it looks. It’s a city in itself, with long roads and canals and gardens. First you come to the houses of officials and noblemen. And then you find yourself in front of a stockade, made of huge teakwood posts. Beyond lie the apartments of the Royal Family and their servants – hundreds and hundreds of rooms, with gilded pillars and polished floors. And right at the centre there is a vast hall that is like a great shaft of light, with shining crystal walls and mirrored ceilings. People call it the Glass Palace.’

‘Does the King ever leave the fort?’

‘Not in the last seven years. But the Queen and her maids sometimes walk along the walls. People who’ve seen them say that her maids are the most beautiful women in the land.’

‘Who are they, these maids?’

‘Young girls, orphans, many of them just children. They say that the girls are brought to the palace from the far mountains. The Queen adopts them and brings them up and they serve as her handmaids. They say that she will not trust anyone but them to wait on her and her children.’

‘When do these girls visit the gateposts?’ said Rajkumar. ‘How can one catch sight of them?’

His eyes were shining, his face full of eagerness. Ma Cho laughed at him. ‘Why, are you thinking of trying to get in there, you fool of an Indian? They’ll know you from a mile off and cut off your head.’

That night, lying flat on his mat, Rajkumar looked through the gap between his feet and caught sight of the gilded *hti*³ that marked the palace: it glowed like a beacon in the moonlight. No matter what Ma Cho said, he decided, he would cross the moat – before he left Mandalay, he would find a way in.

¹ *baya-gyaw*: split pea fritters, sold as street food

² *aingyi*: blouse

³ *hti*: umbrella-shaped top of a temple or pagoda

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Copyright Acknowledgements:

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Question 2 © Amitav Ghosh; *The Glass Palace*; Flamingo; 2000.

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