



Cambridge International AS & A Level

LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

9695/42

Paper 4 Pre- and Post-1900 Poetry and Prose

May/June 2024

2 hours



You must answer on the enclosed answer booklet.

You will need: Answer booklet (enclosed)

INSTRUCTIONS

- Answer **two** questions in total. You must answer **one** poetry question and **one** prose question.
Section A: answer **one** question.
Section B: answer **one** question.
- Follow the instructions on the front cover of the answer booklet. If you need additional answer paper, ask the invigilator for a continuation booklet.
- Dictionaries are **not** allowed.

INFORMATION

- The total mark for this paper is 50.
- All questions are worth equal marks.

This document has **24** pages. Any blank pages are indicated.

Section A: Pre-1900 Poetry and Prose

Answer **one** question from this section.

JANE AUSTEN: *Pride and Prejudice*

1 Either (a) Discuss Austen's presentation of different attitudes to social class and status in *Pride and Prejudice*.

Or (b) Paying close attention to language, tone and narrative methods, discuss the following passage, showing what it adds to Austen's presentation of the relationship between Elizabeth and her father, here and elsewhere in the novel.

In the evening, soon after Mr Bennet withdrew to the library, she saw Mr Darcy rise also and follow him, and her agitation on seeing it was extreme. She did not fear her father's opposition, but he was going to be made unhappy, and that it should be through her means, that *she*, his favourite child, should be distressing him by her choice, should be filling him with fears and regrets in disposing of her, was a wretched reflection, and she sat in misery till Mr Darcy appeared again, when, looking at him, she was a little relieved by his smile. In a few minutes he approached the table where she was sitting with Kitty; and, while pretending to admire her work, said in a whisper, 'Go to your father, he wants you in the library.' She was gone directly.

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Her father was walking about the room, looking grave and anxious. 'Lizzy,' said he, 'what are you doing? Are you out of your senses, to be accepting this man? Have not you always hated him?'

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How earnestly did she then wish that her former opinions had been more reasonable, her expressions more moderate! It would have spared her from explanations and professions which it was exceedingly awkward to give; but they were now necessary, and she assured him with some confusion, of her attachment to Mr Darcy.

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'Or in other words, you are determined to have him. He is rich, to be sure, and you may have more fine clothes and fine carriages than Jane. But will they make you happy?'

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'Have you any other objection,' said Elizabeth, 'than your belief of my indifference?'

'None at all. We all know him to be a proud, unpleasant sort of man; but this would be nothing if you really liked him.'

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'I do, I do like him,' she replied, with tears in her eyes. 'I love him. Indeed he has no improper pride. He is perfectly amiable. You do not know what he really is; then pray do not pain me by speaking of him in such terms.'

'Lizzy,' said her father, 'I have given him my consent. He is the kind of man, indeed, to whom I should never dare refuse any thing, which he condescended to ask. I now give it to *you*, if you are resolved on having him. But let me advise you to think better of it. I know your disposition, Lizzy. I know that you could be neither happy nor respectable, unless you truly esteemed your husband; unless you looked up to him as a superior. Your lively talents would place you in the greatest danger in an unequal marriage. You could scarcely escape discredit and misery. My child, let me not have the grief of seeing *you* unable to respect your partner in life. You know not what you are about.'

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Elizabeth, still more affected, was earnest and solemn in her reply; and at length, by repeated assurances that Mr Darcy was really the object of her choice, by explaining the gradual change which her estimation of him had undergone, relating her absolute certainty that his affection was not the work of a day, but had stood the test of many months suspense, and enumerating with energy all his good qualities,

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she did conquer her father's incredulity, and reconcile him to the match.

'Well, my dear,' said he, when she ceased speaking, 'I have no more to say. If this be the case, he deserves you. I could not have parted with you, my Lizzy, to any one less worthy.'

To complete the favourable impression, she then told him what Mr Darcy had voluntarily done for Lydia. He heard her with astonishment.

'This is an evening of wonders, indeed! And so, Darcy did every thing; made up the match, gave the money, paid the fellow's debts, and got him his commission! So much the better. It will save me a world of trouble and economy. Had it been your uncle's doing, I must and *would* have paid him; but these violent young lovers carry every thing their own way. I shall offer to pay him to-morrow; he will rant and storm about his love for you, and there will be an end of the matter.'

He then recollected her embarrassment a few days before, on his reading Mr Collins's letter; and after laughing at her some time, allowed her at last to go – saying, as she quitted the room, 'If any young men come for Mary or Kitty, send them in, for I am quite at leisure.'

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(from Chapter 59)

GEOFFREY CHAUCER: *The Merchant's Prologue and Tale*

2 Either (a) Discuss some of the ways in which Chaucer shapes a reader's response to May in *The Merchant's Prologue and Tale*.

Or (b) Paying close attention to poetic methods, discuss the following extract, showing what it adds to your understanding of Chaucer's concerns in *The Merchant's Prologue and Tale*.

Diverse men diversely hym tolde
Of mariage manye ensamples olde.
Somme blamed it, somme preyed it, certeyn,
But atte laste, shortly for to seyn,
As al day falleth altercacioun
Bitwixen frendes in disputisoun,
Ther fil a stryf bitwixe his bretheren two,
Of whiche that oon was cleped Placebo;
Justinus soothly called was that oother.

Placebo seyde, 'O Januarie, brother,
Ful litel nede hadde ye, my lord so deere,
Conseil to axe of any that is heere,
But that ye been so ful of sapience
That yow ne liketh, for youre heighe prudence,
To weyven fro the word of Salomon.

This word seyde he unto us everychon:
"Wirk alle thyng by conseil," thus seyde he,
"And thanne shalow nat repente thee."

But though that Salomon spak swich a word,
Myn owene deere brother and my lord,
So wyls God my soule brynghe at reste,
I holde youre owene conseil is the beste.

For, brother myn, of me taak this motyf:
I have now been a court-man al my lyf,
And God it woot, though I unworthy be,
I have stonden in ful greet degree

Abouten lordes of ful heigh estaat;
Yet hadde I nevere with noon of hem debaat.

I nevere hem contraried, trewely;
I woot wel that my lord kan moore than I.

With that he seith, I holde it ferme and stable;
I seye the same, or elles thyng semblable.

A ful greet fool is any conseillour
That serveth any lord of heigh honour,
That dar presume, or elles thenken it,

That his conseil sholde passe his lordes wit.
Nay, lordes been no fooles, by my fay!

Ye han youreselven shewed heer to-day
So heigh sentence, so holily and weel,
That I consente and conferme everydeel
Youre wordes alle and youre opinoun.
By God, ther nys no man in al this toun,
Ne in Ytaille, that koude bet han sayd!

Crist halt hym of this conseil ful wel apayd.

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And trewely, it is an heigh corage
Of any man that stapan is in age
To take a yong wyf; by my fader kyn,
Youre herte hangeth on a joly pyn!
Dooth now in this matiere right as yow leste,
For finally I holde it for the beste.'

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JOHN DONNE: Selected Poems

3 Either (a) Discuss Donne's presentation of different kinds of relationships. In your answer you should refer to **three** poems from the selection.

Or (b) Paying close attention to poetic methods, discuss the following poem, showing what it adds to your understanding of Donne's concerns, here and elsewhere in the selection.

A Nocturnal upon S. Lucy's Day, being the shortest day

'Tis the year's midnight, and it is the day's,
 Lucy's, who scarce seven hours herself unmasks,
 The sun is spent, and now his flasks
 Send forth light squibs, no constant rays;
 The world's whole sap is sunk: 5
 The general balm th' hydroptic earth hath drunk,
 Whither, as to the bed's-feet, life is shrunk,
 Dead and interred; yet all these seem to laugh,
 Compared with me, who am their epitaph.

Study me then, you who shall lovers be 10
 At the next world, that is, at the next spring:
 For I am every dead thing,
 In whom love wrought new alchemy.
 For his art did express
 A quintessence even from nothingness, 15
 From dull privations, and lean emptiness
 He ruined me, and I am re-begot
 Of absence, darkness, death; things which are not.

All others, from all things, draw all that's good,
 Life, soul, form, spirit, whence they being have; 20
 I, by love's limbeck, am the grave
 Of all, that's nothing. Oft a flood
 Have we two wept, and so
 Drowned the whole world, us two; oft did we grow
 To be two chaoses, when we did show 25
 Care to aught else; and often absences
 Withdrew our souls, and made us carcases.

But I am by her death (which word wrongs her)
 Of the first nothing, the elixir grown;
 Were I a man, that I were one, 30
 I needs must know; I should prefer,
 If I were any beast,
 Some ends, some means; yea plants, yea stones detest,
 And love; all, all some properties invest;
 If I an ordinary nothing were, 35
 As shadow, a light, and body must be here.

But I am none; nor will my sun renew.
You lovers, for whose sake, the lesser sun
 At this time to the Goat is run
 To fetch new lust, and give it you,
 Enjoy your summer all;
Since she enjoys her long night's festival,
Let me prepare towards her, and let me call
This hour her vigil, and her eve, since this
Both the year's, and the day's deep midnight is.

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THOMAS HARDY: *Far from the Madding Crowd*

4 Either (a) Discuss some of the ways in which Hardy shapes a reader's response to Gabriel Oak in *Far from the Madding Crowd*.

Or (b) Paying close attention to language, tone and narrative methods, analyse the following passage, showing its significance to the novel as a whole.

In her desire to make atonement she took flowers from a vase by the window, and began laying them around the dead girl's head. Bathsheba knew no other way of showing kindness to persons departed than by giving them flowers. She knew not how long she remained engaged thus. She forgot time, life, where she was, what she was doing. A slamming together of the coach-house doors in the yard brought her to herself again. An instant after, the front door opened and closed, steps crossed the hall, and her husband appeared at the entrance to the room, looking in upon her.

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He beheld it all by degrees, stared in stupefaction at the scene, as if he thought it an illusion raised by some fiendish incantation. Bathsheba gazed back at him in the same wild way.

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So little are instinctive guesses the fruit of a legitimate induction that at this moment as he stood with the door in his hand, Troy never once thought of Fanny in connection with what he saw. His first reasoned idea was that somebody in the house had died.

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'Well – what?' said Troy blankly.

'I must go – I must go!' said Bathsheba, to herself more than to him. She came with a dilated eye towards the door, to push past him.

'What's the matter in God's name – who's dead!' said Troy.

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'I cannot say – let me go out – I want air!' she continued.

'But no – stay, I insist!' He seized her hand; and then volition seemed to leave her, and she went off into a state of collapse. He, still holding her, came up the room, and thus, hand in hand, Troy and Bathsheba approached the coffin's side.

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The candle was standing on a bureau close by them, and the light slanted down, distinctly enkindling the features of the young girl and babe. Troy looked in, dropped his wife's hand, knowledge of it all came over him in a lurid sheen, and he stood still.

So still he remained that he could be imagined to have left in him no motive power whatever. The clashes of feeling in all directions confounded one another, produced a neutrality, and there was motion in none.

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'Do you know her?' said Bathsheba, in a small enclosed echo, as from the interior of a cell.

'I do,' said Troy.

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'Is it she?'

'It is.'

He had originally stood perfectly erect. And now, in the well-nigh congealed immobility of his frame could be discerned an incipient movement, as in the darkest night may be discerned light after a while. He was gradually sinking forwards. The lines of his features softened, and dismay modulated to illimitable sadness. Bathsheba was regarding him from the other side, still with parted lips and distracted eyes. Capacity for intense feeling is proportionate to the general intensity of the nature, and in all Fanny's sufferings, much greater relatively to her strength, there never was a time when she suffered in an absolute sense what Bathsheba suffered now.

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This is what Troy did. He sank upon his knees with an indefinable union of remorse and reverence upon his face, and, bending over Fanny Robbin, gently kissed her, as one would kiss an infant asleep to avoid awakening it.

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At the sight and sound of that, to her, unendurable act, Bathsheba sprang towards him. All the strong feelings which had been scattered over her existence since she knew what feeling was seemed gathered together in one pulsation now. The revulsion from her indignant mood a little earlier, when she had meditated upon compromised honour, forestallment, eclipse by another, was violent and entire. All that was forgotten in the simple and still strong attachment of wife to husband. She had sighed for her self-completeness then, and now she cried aloud against the severance of the union she had deplored. She flung her arms round Troy's neck, exclamining wildly from the deepest deep of her heart: –

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'Don't – don't kiss them! O Frank, I can't bear it – I can't! I love you better than she did – kiss me too, Frank – kiss me too! *You will Frank kiss me too!*'

There was something so abnormal and startling in the childlike pain and simplicity of this appeal from a woman of Bathsheba's calibre and independence that Troy, loosening her tightly clasped arms from his neck, looked at her in bewilderment. It was such an unexpected revelation of all women being alike at heart, even those so different in their accessories as Fanny and this one beside him, that Troy could hardly seem to believe her to be his proud wife Bathsheba. Fanny's own spirit seemed to be animating her frame. But this was the mood of a few instants only. When the momentary surprise had passed, his expression changed to a silencing imperious gaze.

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'I will not kiss you,' he said, pushing her away.

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(from Chapter 42)

BRAM STOKER: *Dracula*

5 Either (a) Discuss some of the ways in which Stoker develops the role and characterisation of Lucy Westenra through her relationships with men in the novel.

Or (b) Paying close attention to language, tone and narrative methods, discuss the following passage, showing what it adds to Stoker's characterisation of Renfield, here and elsewhere in the novel.

He [Renfield] still shook his head as he said:

'Dr Van Helsing, I have nothing to say. Your argument is complete, and if I were free to speak I should not hesitate a moment; but I am not my own master in the matter. I can only ask you to trust me. If I am refused, the responsibility does not rest with me.' I thought it was now time to end the scene, which was becoming too comically grave, so I went towards the door, simply saying:

'Come, my friends, we have work to do. Good night.'

As, however, I got near the door, a new change came over the patient. He moved towards me so quickly that for the moment I feared that he was about to make another homicidal attack. My fears, however, were groundless, for he held up his two hands imploringly, and made his petition in a moving manner. As he saw that the very excess of his emotion was militating against him, by restoring us more to our old relations, he became still more demonstrative. I glanced at Van Helsing, and saw my conviction reflected in his eyes; so I became a little more fixed in my manner, if not more stern, and motioned to him that his efforts were unavailing. I had previously seen something of the same constantly growing excitement in him when he had to make some request of which at the time he had thought much, such, for instance, as when he wanted a cat; and I was prepared to see the collapse into the same sullen acquiescence on this occasion. My expectation was not realised, for, when he found that his appeal would not be successful, he got into quite a frantic condition. He threw himself on his knees, and held up his hands, wringing them in plaintive supplication, and poured forth a torrent of entreaty, with the tears rolling down his cheeks and his whole face and form expressive of the deepest emotion:

'Let me entreat you, Dr Seward, oh, let me implore you, to let me out of this house at once. Send me away how you will and where you will, send keepers with me with whips and chains; let them take me in a strait-waistcoat, manacled and leg-ironed even to a gaol; but let me go out of this. You don't know what you do by keeping me here. I am speaking from the depths of my heart – of my very soul. You don't know whom you wrong, or how; and I may not tell. Woe is me! may not tell. By all you hold sacred – by all you hold dear – by your love that is lost – by your hope that lives – for the sake of the Almighty, take me out of this and save my soul from guilt! Can't you hear me, man? Can't you understand? Will you never learn? Don't you know that I am sane and earnest now; that I am no lunatic in a mad fit, but a sane man fighting for his soul? Oh, hear me! hear me! Let me go! let me go! let me go!'

I thought that the longer this went on the wilder he would get, and so would bring on a fit; so I took him by the hand and raised him up.

'Come,' I said sternly, 'no more of this; we have had quite enough already. Get to your bed and try to behave more discreetly.'

He suddenly stopped and looked at me intently for several moments. Then without a word he rose, and moving over, sat down on the side of the bed. The collapse had come, as on former occasions, just as I had expected.

When I was leaving the room, last of our party, he said to me in a quiet, well-bred voice:

'You will, I trust, Dr Seward, do me the justice to bear in mind, later on, that I did what I could to convince you tonight.'

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(from Dr Seward's Diary, Chapter 18)

WALT WHITMAN: Selected Poems from *Leaves of Grass*

6 Either (a) Discuss some of the ways in which Whitman explores different kinds of love. In your answer you should refer to **three** poems from the selection.

Or (b) Discuss Whitman's presentation of America in the following poem and elsewhere in the selection. In your answer you should pay close attention to poetic methods and their effects.

I Hear America Singing

I hear America singing, the varied carols I hear,
 Those of mechanics, each one singing his as it should be blithe and strong,
 The carpenter singing his as he measures his plank or beam,
 The mason singing his as he makes ready for work, or leaves off work,
 The boatman singing what belongs to him in his boat, the deckhand singing on the 5
 steamboat deck,
 The shoemaker singing as he sits on his bench, the hatter singing as he stands,
 The wood-cutter's song, the ploughboy's on his way in the morning, or at noon
 intermission or at sundown,
 The delicious singing of the mother, or of the young wife at work, or of the girl sewing 10
 or washing,
 Each singing what belongs to him or her and to none else,
 The day what belongs to the day – at night the party of young fellows, robust,
 friendly,
 Singing with open mouths their strong melodious songs. 15

Section B: Post-1900 Poetry and Prose

Answer **one** question from this section.

SUJATA BHATT: Selected Poems from *Point No Point*

7 Either (a) 'Brightly coloured and richly scented.'

How far, and in what ways, would you agree with the above comment on Bhatt's imaginative world? In your answer you should refer to **three** poems from the selection.

Or (b) Write a critical appreciation of the following extract from *The Stare*, considering how far it is characteristic of Bhatt's poetic methods and concerns.

from *The Stare*

There is that moment
when the young human child
stares
at the young monkey child
who stares back –

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Innocence facing
innocence in a space
where the young monkey child
is not in captivity.

There is purity
clarity
there is a transparency
in this stare
which lasts a long time...

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eyes of water
eyes of sky
the soul can still fall through
because the monkey
has yet to learn fear –
and the human
has yet to learn fear
let alone arrogance.

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Witnessing it all
one can count eyelashes
one can count the snails
in the grass
while waiting
for eyes to blink
waiting to see who
will look away first.

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Still the monkey looks
at the human not in the same way
he would look at leaves
or at his own siblings.

And the human looks
at the monkey knowing
this is some totally other being.

And yet, there is such good will
such curiosity brightening
their faces.

I would like to slip inside
that stare, to know
what the human child thinks
what the monkey child thinks
at that very moment.

Remember, the human child
is at that age
when he begins to use words
with power
but without the distance
of alphabets, of abstractions.

Mention bread
and he wants
a slice, buttered and with honey –
immediately.

Mention the cat
and he runs over
to awaken her.

The word
is the thing itself.

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LOUISE GLÜCK: Selected Poems from *The Wild Iris*

8 Either (a) In what ways, and with what effects, does Glück present relationships with a Creator figure? In your answer you should refer to **three** poems from the selection.

Or (b) Write a critical appreciation of the following poem, considering in what ways it is characteristic of Glück's poetic methods and concerns.

Trillium

When I woke up I was in a forest. The dark
seemed natural, the sky through the pine trees
thick with many lights.

I knew nothing; I could do nothing but see.
And as I watched, all the lights of heaven
faded to make a single thing, a fire
burning through the cool firs.
Then it wasn't possible any longer
to stare at heaven and not be destroyed.

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Are there souls that need
death's presence, as I require protection?
I think if I speak long enough
I will answer that question, I will see
whatever they see, a ladder
reaching through the firs, whatever
calls them to exchange their lives –

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Think what I understand already.
I woke up ignorant in a forest;
only a moment ago, I didn't know my voice
if one were given me
would be so full of grief, my sentences
like cries strung together.
I didn't even know I felt grief
until that word came, until I felt
rain streaming from me.

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TURN OVER FOR QUESTION 9.

9 Either (a) In what ways, and with what effects, does Joyce present different reactions to death? In your answer you should refer to at least **two** stories from *Dubliners*.

Or (b) Analyse the effects of the writing in the following passage, considering in what ways it is characteristic of Joyce's narrative methods and concerns.

Lenehan offered his friend a cigarette. As the two young men walked on through the crowd Corley occasionally turned to smile at some of the passing girls but Lenehan's gaze was fixed on the large faint moon circled with a double halo. He watched earnestly the passing of the grey web of twilight across its face. At length he said:

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– Well ... tell me, Corley, I suppose you'll be able to pull it off all right, eh?

Corley closed one eye expressively as an answer.

– Is she game for that? asked Lenehan dubiously. You can never know women.

– She's all right, said Corley. I know the way to get around her, man. She's a bit gone on me.

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– You're what I call a gay Lothario, said Lenehan. And the proper kind of a Lothario, too!

A shade of mockery relieved the servility of his manner. To save himself he had the habit of leaving his flattery open to the interpretation of raillery. But Corley had not a subtle mind.

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– There's nothing to touch a good slavey, he affirmed. Take my tip for it.

– By one who has tried them all, said Lenehan.

– First I used to go with girls, you know, said Corley, unbosoming; girls off the South Circular. I used to take them out, man, on the tram somewhere and pay the tram or take them to a band or a play at the theatre or buy them chocolate and sweets or something that way. I used to spend money on them right enough, he added, in a convincing tone, as if he were conscious of being disbelieved.

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But Lenehan could well believe it; he nodded gravely.

– I know that game, he said, and it's a mug's game.

– And damn the thing I ever got out of it, said Corley.

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– Ditto here, said Lenehan.

– Only off of one of them, said Corley.

He moistened his upper lip by running his tongue along it. The recollection brightened his eyes. He too gazed at the pale disc of the moon, now nearly veiled, and seemed to meditate.

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– She was ... a bit of all right, he said regretfully.

He was silent again. Then he added:

– She's on the turf now. I saw her driving down Earl Street one night with two fellows with her on a car.

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– I suppose that's your doing, said Lenehan.

– There was others at her before me, said Corley philosophically.

This time Lenehan was inclined to disbelieve. He shook his head to and fro and smiled.

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– You know you can't kid me, Corley, he said.

– Honest to God! said Corley. Didn't she tell me herself?

Lenehan made a tragic gesture.

– Base betrayer! he said.

As they passed along the railings of Trinity College, Lenehan skipped out into the road and peered up at the clock.

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– Twenty after, he said.

– Time enough, said Corley. She'll be there all right. I always let her wait a bit.

Lenehan laughed quietly.

– Ecod! Corley, you know how to take them, he said.
 – I'm up to all their little tricks, Corley confessed.
 – But tell me, said Lenehan again, are you sure you can bring it off all right? 50
 You know it's a ticklish job. They're damn close on that point. Eh? ... What?
 His bright, small eyes searched his companion's face for reassurance. Corley
 swung his head to and fro as if to toss aside an insistent insect, and his brows
 gathered.
 – I'll pull it off, he said. Leave it to me, can't you? 55
 Lenehan said no more. He did not wish to ruffle his friend's temper, to be sent
 to the devil and told that his advice was not wanted. A little tact was necessary. But
 Corley's brow was soon smooth again. His thoughts were running another way.
 – She's a fine decent tart, he said, with appreciation; that's what she is.

(from Two Gallants)

TONI MORRISON: *Beloved*

10 Either (a) Discuss some of the ways in which Morrison shapes a reader's response to Sethe.

Or (b) Analyse the effects of the writing in the following passage, considering in what ways it is characteristic of Morrison's narrative methods and concerns.

The last of the Sweet Home men, so named and called by one who would know, believed it.

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And it was
he, *that* man, who had walked from Georgia to Delaware, who could not go or stay
put where he wanted to in 124 – shame.

(from Part 1)

TURN OVER FOR QUESTION 11.

JEAN RHYS: *Wide Sargasso Sea*

11 Either (a) In what ways, and to what extent, would you agree that Rhys presents Antoinette's husband as a man betrayed by his family and his social class?

Or (b) Analyse the effects of the writing in the following passage, considering in what ways it is characteristic of Rhys's narrative methods and concerns.

All the people who had been staying in the house had gone, for the bedroom doors were shut, but it seemed to me that someone was following me, someone was chasing me, laughing.

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I called 'Tia!' and jumped and woke.

(from Part 3)

NATASHA TRETHEWEY: *Native Guard*

12 Either (a) In what ways, and with what effects, does Trethewey present the American Civil War? In your answer you should refer to **three** poems from the collection, which could include individual poems from longer sequences.

Or (b) Write a critical appreciation of the following poem, considering how far it is characteristic of Trethewey's poetic methods and effects.

Monument

Today the ants are busy
 beside my front steps, weaving
 in and out of the hill they're building.
 I watch them emerge and –

like everything I've forgotten – disappear
 into the subterranean – a world
 made by displacement. In the cemetery
 last June, I circled, lost –

weeds and grass grown up all around –
 the landscape blurred and waving.
 At my mother's grave, ants streamed in
 and out like arteries, a tiny hill rising

above her unintended plot. Bit by bit,
 red dirt piled up, spread
 like a rash on the grass; I watched a long time
 the ants' determined work,

how they brought up soil
 of which she will be part,
 and piled it before me. Believe me when I say
 I've tried not to begrudge them

their industry, this reminder of what
 I haven't done. Even now,
 the mound is a blister on my heart,
 a red and humming swarm.

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