
LITERATURE (ENGLISH)

0486/32

Paper 3 Unseen

May/June 2014

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 and **3** blank pages and **1** insert.

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

EITHER

- 1 Read carefully the poem opposite about the building and lighting of a bonfire. (A bonfire is a large open-air fire built to destroy rubbish and garden waste.)

How does the poet convey to you such vivid impressions of the bonfire?

To help you answer this question, you might consider:

- how the poet portrays the difficulties of lighting the bonfire
- how he describes the changes in the bonfire
- how he creates such disturbing images of the fire in the final stanza.

The Bonfire

Day by day, day after day, we fed it
 With straw, mown grass, shavings, shaken weeds,
 The huge flat leaves of umbrella plants, old spoil
 Left by the builders, combustible; yet it
 Coughed fitfully at the touch of a match,
 Flared briefly, spat flame through a few dry seeds
 Like a chain of fireworks, then slumped back to the soil
 Smouldering and smoky, leaving us to watch

Only a heavy grey mantle without fire.
 This glum construction seemed choked at heart,
 The coils of newspaper burrowed into its hulk
 Led our small flames into the middle of nowhere,
 Never touching its centre, sodden with rot.
 Ritual petrol¹ sprinklings wouldn't make it start
 But swerved and vanished over its squat brown bulk,
 Still heavily sullen, grimly determined not

To do away with itself. A whiff of smoke
 Hung over it as over a volcano.
 Until one night, late, when we heard outside
 A crackling roar, and saw the far field look
 Like a Gehenna² claiming its due dead.
 The beacon beckoned, fierily aglow
 With days of waiting, hiding deep inside
 Its bided time, ravenous to be fed.

¹ *petrol*: gasoline, a type of fuel

² *Gehenna*: fiery Biblical hell

OR

- 2 Read carefully the following extract from a short story about a Canadian teenager, Miriam, eating her breakfast and observing passers-by while her parents are still in bed.

What do you find entertaining about the ways in which the writing portrays Miriam?

To help you answer this question, you might consider:

- how the writer portrays Miriam's attitude towards her parents
- how she makes Miriam's reported conversations with them so revealing
- how she makes Miriam's thoughts and feelings so amusing.

Miriam sits in her favourite spot, the breakfast nook overlooking the ravine. Her dad's birdwatching binoculars are nearby in case anything interesting happens, but so far today it's only the usual. Joggers go past; there's an old man asleep under a bush. Dogs scabble in the leaves.

Miriam likes to get up before everyone else and have her breakfast early, so she can think in peace. So she doesn't have to listen to her parents dumping on her with their version of how she should spend her day. *Is your math done yet? What about your French? Isn't that the third movie you've been to this week? Why can't Marjilane come over here to do her homework, why does it have to be the Kaffay Nwar¹ at two-fifty for a lousy cappuccino? Well, if that's how you want to waste your allowance² I suppose it's your own business.*

Each one of them has a long list of the chores their own parents made them do when they were her age. Not that she believes they ever were her age. They were born exactly the way they are now, Dad bald at the top and Mom into the hide-your-grey rinses, and both of them with bad feet. *At your age I used to dust the whole house, top to bottom. And I mowed the lawn. But Mom, Bettina does the dusting and Green Pastures mows the lawn, so what do you want from me? Maybe I could scrub the sidewalk? Hey, I know, give me some matches and I can be the Little Match Girl and be really virtuous and freeze to death!*

That's enough out of you, young lady, at your age I would have been sent to my room for talking back in that snippy way.

Oh cool, snippy! Oh, I am devastated! I am bouleversée,³ I am écrasée!⁴ Call me a geek, call me a turkey, but don't call me snippy! How about calling me louche?⁵ At least it has a certain je ne sais quoi, n'est-ce pas, mon petit crapaud?⁶

Fred, what's she saying?

Serves us right for sending her to that snotty school. An arm and a leg and what do you get? A kid you can't understand!

These conversations don't usually take place out loud. Miriam can just hear them going on and on, inside everybody's head. Sometimes she thinks her parents aren't her real parents at all. Sometimes she thinks her mother was impregnated by aliens but can't remember anything about it because she was unconscious at the time. Miriam saw a movie like that once.

She's eating her favourite breakfast, a big piece of the apple pie she made last night. She likes making pies; it's kind of a creative process. She taught herself to do it out of her grandmother's old cookbook, because the only recipe her mother knows is *Let's go out for Italian*. That's one thing her mother approves of anyway – Miriam's pies. Or she sort of approves of them. *Look at the mess in this kitchen, who's going to clean it up, and let me tell you in advance that Bettina is not the answer.* Though she doesn't approve of Miriam eating the pies for breakfast. *When I was your age I had to eat a proper breakfast. Oatmeal porridge, every day. Even in summer.* Miriam happens to believe that this is a lie; even in the past, nobody could be that gross.

She thinks maybe she'll get a tattoo, like her friend Marjilane. A tattoo, or else a belly-button ring. She's saving up.

Down in the ravine the joggers go past; pathetic, most of them. Middle-aged guys with earbuds⁷ stuck in their ears, they think they're so cool. Trying to work off the flab. At least her dad doesn't do *that*. Make a spectacle of himself in those lime-green spandex bicycle shorts, it's almost the same as walking around naked, all the bulgy parts showing. She'd die of embarrassment.

¹ *Kaffay Nwar*: exaggerated French pronunciation of 'Café Noir'

² *allowance*: pocket money

³ *bouleversée*: astounded (French)

⁴ *ecrasée*: crushed (French)

⁵ *louche*: disreputable, shifty (French)

⁶ *je ne sais quoi, n'est-ce pas, mon petit crapaud?*: indefinable something, hasn't it, my little toad? (French)

⁷ *earbuds*: in-ear headphones

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Copyright Acknowledgements:

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Question 2 © Margaret Attwood; *Underbrush Man*, in *Guardian Review Book of Short Stories*; Guardian News & Media Ltd; 2011.

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