
LITERATURE (ENGLISH)

0486/11

Paper 1 Poetry and Prose

May/June 2017

1 hour 30 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 **two** questions: **one** question from Section A and **one** question from Section B.

All questions in this paper carry equal marks.



This document consists of **24** printed pages, **4** blank pages and **1** Insert.

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SECTION A: POETRY

Answer **one** question from this section.

SONGS OF OURSELVES VOLUME 1: from Part 5

Remember to support your ideas with details from the writing.

Either 1 Read this poem, and then answer the question that follows it:

One Art

The art of losing isn't hard to master;
so many things seem filled with the intent
to be lost that their loss is no disaster.

Lose something every day. Accept the fluster
of lost door keys, the hour badly spent.
The art of losing isn't hard to master.

5

Then practice losing farther, losing faster:
places, and names, and where it was you meant
to travel. None of these will bring disaster.

I lost my mother's watch. And look! my last, or
next-to-last, of three loved houses went.
The art of losing isn't hard to master.

10

I lost two cities, lovely ones. And, vaster,
some realms I owned, two rivers, a continent.
I miss them, but it wasn't a disaster.

15

– Even losing you (the joking voice, a gesture
I love) I shan't have lied. It's evident
the art of losing's not too hard to master
though it may look like (*Write it!*) like disaster.

(*Elizabeth Bishop*)

How does Bishop create a tone that is both serious and amusing in this poem?

- Or 2 In what ways does Nichols use imagery to memorable effect in *Praise Song For My Mother*?

Praise Song For My Mother

You were
water to me
deep and bold and fathoming

You were
moon's eye to me
pull and grained and mantling

5

You were
sunrise to me
rise and warm and streaming

You were
the fishes red gill to me
the flame tree's spread to me
the crab's leg/the fried plantain smell
replenishing replenishing

10

Go to your wide futures, you said

15

(*Grace Nichols*)

SONGS OF OURSELVES VOLUME 2: from Part 1

Remember to support your ideas with details from the writing.

Either 3 Read this poem, and then answer the question that follows it:

The Clod and the Pebble

'Love seeketh not itself to please,
Nor for itself hath any care,
But for another gives its ease,
And builds a Heaven in Hell's despair.'

So sung a little Clod of Clay
Trodden with the cattle's feet,
But a Pebble of the brook
Warbled out these metres meet:

5

'Love seeketh only self to please,
To bind another to its delight,
Joys in another's loss of ease,
And builds a Hell in Heaven's despite.'

10

(William Blake)

In what ways does Blake powerfully present ideas about love in this poem?

- Or 4 Explore how Jones uses words and images to striking effect in *Tiger in the Menagerie*.

Tiger in the Menagerie

No one could say how the tiger got into the menagerie.
It was too flash, too blue,
too much like the painting of a tiger.

At night the bars of the cage and the stripes of the tiger
looked into each other so long 5
that when it was time for those eyes to rock shut

the bars were the lashes of the stripes
the stripes were the lashes of the bars

and they walked together in their dreams so long 10
through the long colonnade
that shed its fretwork to the Indian main

that when the sun rose they'd gone and the tiger was
one clear orange eye that walked into the menagerie.

No one could say how the tiger got out in the menagerie. 15
It was too bright, too bare.
If the menagerie could, it would say 'tiger'.

If the aviary could, it would lock its door.
Its heart began to beat in rows of rising birds
when the tiger came inside to wait.

(*Emma Jones*)

GILLIAN CLARKE: from *Collected Poems*

Remember to support your ideas with details from the writing.

Either 5 Read this poem, and then answer the question that follows it:

My Box

My box is made of golden oak,
my lover's gift to me.
He fitted hinges and a lock
of brass and a bright key. 5
He made it out of winter nights,
sanded and oiled and planed,
engraved inside the heavy lid
in brass, a golden tree.

In my box are twelve black books
where I have written down 10
how we have sanded, oiled and planed,
planted a garden, built a wall,
seen jays and goldcrests, rare red kites,
found the wild heartsease, drilled a well,
harvested apples and words and days 15
and planted a golden tree.

On an open shelf I keep my box.
Its key is in the lock.
I leave it there for you to read,
or them, when we are dead, 20
how everything is slowly made,
how slowly things made me,
a tree, a lover, words, a box,
books and a golden tree.

How does Clarke's writing make this poem such a moving expression of love?

- Or 6 Explore the ways in which Clarke makes *Friesian Bull* such a powerful picture of an animal.

Friesian Bull

He blunders through the last dream
of the night. I hear him, waking.
A brick and concrete stall, narrow
as a heifer's haunches. Steel bars
between her trap and his small yard. 5
A froth of slobbered hay droops
from the stippled muzzle. In the slow
rolling mass of his skull his eyes
surface like fish bellies.

He is chained while they swill his floor. 10
His stall narrows to rage. He knows
the sweet smell of a heifer's fear.
Remembered summer haysmells reach him,
a trace of the herd's freedom, clover-
loaded winds. The thundering speed 15
blows up the Dee breathing of plains,
of cattle wading in shallows.
His crazy eyes churn with their vision.

SECTION B: PROSE

Answer **one** question from this section.

CHINUA ACHEBE: *No Longer at Ease*

Remember to support your ideas with details from the writing.

Either 7 Read this extract, and then answer the question that follows it:

There were hundreds of people at Obi's reception.

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‘And we shall
break it in the Christian way,’ he said as he fished out a kola nut.

[from Chapter 5]

How does Achebe vividly portray the welcome Obi receives at this moment in the novel?

Or **8** Explore the ways in which Achebe shows characters behaving hypocritically in this novel.

JANE AUSTEN: *Mansfield Park*

Remember to support your ideas with details from the writing.

Either 9 Read this extract, and then answer the question that follows it:

Sir Thomas came towards the table where she sat in trembling wretchedness, and with a good deal of cold sternness, said, "It is of no use, I perceive, to talk to you. We had better put an end to this most mortifying conference. Mr. Crawford must not be kept longer waiting. I will, therefore, only add, as thinking it my duty to mark my opinion of your conduct — that you have disappointed every expectation I had formed, and proved yourself of a character the very reverse of what I had supposed. For I *had*, Fanny, as I think my behaviour must have shewn, formed a very favourable opinion of you from the period of my return to England. I had thought you peculiarly free from wilfulness of temper, self-conceit, and every tendency to that independence of spirit, which prevails so much in modern days, even in young women, and which in young women is offensive and disgusting beyond all common offence. But you have now shewn me that you can be wilful and perverse, that you can and will decide for yourself, without any consideration or deference for those who have surely some right to guide you — without even asking their advice. You have shewn yourself very, very different from anything that I had imagined. The advantage or disadvantage of your family — of your parents — your brothers and sisters — never seems to have had a moment's share in your thoughts on this occasion. How *they* might be benefited, how *they* must rejoice in such an establishment for you — is nothing to *you*. You think only of yourself; and because you do not feel for Mr. Crawford exactly what a young, heated fancy imagines to be necessary for happiness, you resolve to refuse him at once, without wishing even for a little time to consider of it — a little more time for cool consideration, and for really examining your own inclinations — and are, in a wild fit of folly, throwing away from you such an opportunity of being settled in life, eligibly, honourably, nobly settled, as will, probably, never occur to you again. Here is a young man of sense, of character, of temper, of manners, and of fortune, exceedingly attached to you, and seeking your hand in the most handsome and disinterested way; and let me tell you, Fanny, that you may live eighteen years longer in the world, without being addressed by a man of half Mr. Crawford's estate, or a tenth part of his merits. Gladly would I have bestowed either of my own daughters on him. Maria is nobly married — but had Mr. Crawford sought Julia's hand, I should have given it to him with superior and more heartfelt satisfaction than I gave Maria's to Mr. Rushworth." After half a moment's pause — "And I should have been very much surprised had either of my daughters, on receiving a proposal of marriage at any time, which might carry with it only *half* the eligibility of *this*, immediately and peremptorily, and without paying my opinion or my regard, the compliment of any consultation, put a decided negative on it. I should have been much surprised, and much hurt, by such a proceeding. I should have thought it a gross violation of duty and respect. *You* are not to be judged by the same rule. You do not owe me the duty of a child. But Fanny, if your heart can acquit you of *ingratitude* — "

He ceased. Fanny was by this time crying so bitterly, that angry as he was, he would not press that article farther. Her heart was almost broke by such a picture of what she appeared to him; by such accusations, so

heavy, so multiplied, so rising in dreadful gradation! Self-willed, obstinate, selfish, and ungrateful. He thought her all this. She had deceived his expectations; she had lost his good opinion. What was to become of her? 50

“I am very sorry,” said she inarticulately through her tears, “I am very sorry indeed.”

“Sorry! yes, I hope you are sorry; and you will probably have reason to be long sorry for this day’s transactions.” 55

“If it were possible for me to do otherwise,” said she with another strong effort, “but I am so perfectly convinced that I could never make him happy, and that I should be miserable myself.”

[from Chapter 32]

How does Austen make this such a powerful moment in the novel?

Or 10 In what ways does Austen make the visit to Sotherton so memorable?

WILLA CATHER: *My Ántonia*

Remember to support your ideas with details from the writing.

Either 11 Read this extract, and then answer the question that follows it:

When Pavel and Peter were young men, living at home in Russia, they were asked to be groomsmen for a friend who was to marry the belle of another village. It was in the dead of winter and the groom's party went over to the wedding in sledges. Peter and Pavel drove in the groom's sledge, and six sledges followed with all his relatives and friends.

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After the ceremony at the church, the party went to a dinner given by the parents of the bride. The dinner lasted all afternoon; then it became a supper and continued far into the night. There was much dancing and drinking. At midnight the parents of the bride said good-bye to her and blessed her. The groom took her up in his arms and carried her out to his sledge and tucked her under the blankets. He sprang in beside her, and Pavel and Peter (our Pavel and Peter!) took the front seat. Pavel drove. The party set out with singing and the jingle of sleigh-bells, the groom's sledge going first. All the drivers were more or less the worse for merry-making, and the groom was absorbed in his bride.

10

The wolves were bad that winter, and everyone knew it, yet when they heard the first wolf-cry, the drivers were not much alarmed. They had too much good food and drink inside them. The first howls were taken up and echoed and with quickening repetitions. The wolves were coming together. There was no moon, but the starlight was clear on the snow. A black drove came up over the hill behind the wedding party. The wolves ran like streaks of shadow; they looked no bigger than dogs, but there were hundreds of them.

15

Something happened to the hindmost sledge: the driver lost control — he was probably very drunk — the horses left the road, the sledge was caught in a clump of trees, and overturned. The occupants rolled out over the snow, and the fleetest of the wolves sprang upon them. The shrieks that followed made everybody sober. The drivers stood up and lashed their horses. The groom had the best team and his sledge was lightest — all the others carried from six to a dozen people.

20

Another driver lost control. The screams of the horses were more terrible to hear than the cries of the men and women. Nothing seemed to check the wolves. It was hard to tell what was happening in the rear; the people who were falling behind shrieked as piteously as those who were already lost. The little bride hid her face on the groom's shoulder and sobbed. Pavel sat still and watched his horses. The road was clear and white, and the groom's three blacks went like the wind. It was only necessary to be calm and to guide them carefully.

25

At length, as they breasted a long hill, Peter rose cautiously and looked back. 'There are only three sledges left,' he whispered.

30

'And the wolves?' Pavel asked.

'Enough! Enough for all of us.'

Pavel reached the brow of the hill, but only two sledges followed him down the other side. In that moment on the hilltop, they saw behind them a whirling black group on the snow. Presently the groom screamed. He saw his father's sledge overturned, with his mother and sisters. He sprang up as if he meant to jump, but the girl shrieked and held him back. It was even then too late. The black ground-shadows were already crowding over

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the heap in the road, and one horse ran out across the fields, his harness hanging to him, wolves at his heels. But the groom's movement had given Pavel an idea. 50

They were within a few miles of their village now. The only sledge left out of six was not very far behind them, and Pavel's middle horse was failing. Beside a frozen pond something happened to the other sledge; Peter saw it plainly. Three big wolves got abreast of the horses, and the horses went crazy. They tried to jump over each other, got tangled up in the harness, and overturned the sledge. 55

When the shrieking behind them died away, Pavel realized that he was alone upon the familiar road. 'They still come?' he asked Peter.

'Yes.' 60

'How many?'

'Twenty, thirty — enough.'

Now his middle horse was being almost dragged by the other two. Pavel gave Peter the reins and stepped carefully into the back of the sledge. He called to the groom that they must lighten — and pointed to the bride. The young man cursed him and held her tighter. Pavel tried to drag her away. In the struggle, the groom rose. Pavel knocked him over the side of the sledge and threw the girl after him. He said he never remembered exactly how he did it, or what happened afterward. Peter, crouching in the front seat, saw nothing. The first thing either of them noticed was a new sound that broke into the clear air, louder than they had ever heard it before—the bell of the monastery of their own village, ringing for early prayers. 65 70

Pavel and Peter drove into the village alone, and they had been alone ever since. They were run out of their village. Pavel's own mother would not look at him. They went away to strange towns, but when people learned where they came from, they were always asked if they knew the two men who had fed the bride to the wolves. Wherever they went, the story followed them. It took them five years to save money enough to come to America. They worked in Chicago, Des Moines, Fort Wayne, but they were always unfortunate. When Pavel's health grew so bad, they decided to try farming. 75 80

[from Book 1 Chapter 8]

How does Cather make this extract such a dramatic part of the novel?

- Or 12 To what extent does Cather make you feel disappointed that Jim and Antonia do not marry?

GEORGE ELIOT: *Silas Marner*

Remember to support your ideas with details from the writing.

Either 13 Read this extract, and then answer the question that follows it:

With that, Dunstan slammed the door behind him, and left Godfrey to that bitter rumination on his personal circumstances which was now unbroken from day to day save by the excitement of sporting, drinking, card-playing, or the rarer and less oblivious pleasure of seeing Miss Nancy Lammeter. The subtle and varied pains springing from the higher sensibility that accompanies higher culture, are perhaps less pitiable than that dreary absence of impersonal enjoyment and consolation which leaves ruder minds to the perpetual urgent companionship of their own griefs and discontents. The lives of those rural forefathers, whom we are apt to think very prosaic figures – men whose only work was to ride round their land, getting heavier and heavier in their saddles, and who passed the rest of their days in the half-listless gratification of senses dulled by monotony – had a certain pathos in them nevertheless. Calamities came to *them* too, and their early errors carried hard consequences: perhaps the love of some sweet maiden, the image of purity, order, and calm, had opened their eyes to the vision of a life in which the days would not seem too long, even without rioting; but the maiden was lost, and the vision passed away, and then what was left to them, especially when they had become too heavy for the hunt, or for carrying a gun over the furrows, but to drink and get merry, or to drink and get angry, so that they might be independent of variety, and say over again with eager emphasis the things they had said already any time that twelve-month? Assuredly, among these flushed and dull-eyed men there were some whom – thanks to their native human-kindness – even riot could never drive into brutality; men who, when their cheeks were fresh, had felt the keen point of sorrow or remorse, had been pierced by the reeds they leaned on, or had lightly put their limbs in fetters from which no struggle could loose them; and under these sad circumstances, common to us all, their thoughts could find no resting-place outside the ever-trodden round of their own petty history.

That, at least, was the condition of Godfrey Cass in this six-and-twentieth year of his life. A movement of compunction, helped by those small indefinable influences which every personal relation exerts on a pliant nature, had urged him into a secret marriage, which was a blight on his life. It was an ugly story of low passion, delusion, and waking from delusion, which needs not to be dragged from the privacy of Godfrey's bitter memory. He had long known that the delusion was partly due to a trap laid for him by Dunstan, who saw in his brother's degrading marriage the means of gratifying at once his jealous hate and his cupidity. And if Godfrey could have felt himself simply a victim, the iron bit that destiny had put into his mouth would have chafed him less intolerably. If the curses he muttered half aloud when he was alone had had no other object than Dunstan's diabolical cunning, he might have shrunk less from the consequences of avowal. But he had something else to curse – his own vicious folly, which now seemed as mad and unaccountable to him as almost all our follies and vices do when their promptings have long passed away. For four years he had thought of Nancy Lammeter, and wooed her with tacit patient worship as the woman who made him think of the future with joy: she would be his wife, and would make home lovely to him, as his

father's home had never been; and it would be easy, when she was always near, to shake off those foolish habits that were no pleasures, but only a feverish way of annulling vacancy. Godfrey's was an essentially domestic nature, bred up in a home where the hearth had no smiles, and where the daily habits were not chastised by the presence of household order. His easy disposition made him fall in unresistingly with the family courses, but the need of some tender permanent affection, the longing for some influence that would make the good he preferred easy to pursue, caused the neatness, purity, and liberal orderliness of the Lammeter household, sunned by the smile of Nancy, to seem like those fresh bright hours of the morning when temptations go to sleep and leave the ear open to the voice of the good angel, inviting to industry, sobriety, and peace. And yet the hope of this paradise had not been enough to save him from a course which shut him out of it for ever. Instead of keeping fast hold of the strong silken rope by which Nancy would have drawn him safe to the green banks where it was easy to step firmly, he had let himself be dragged back into mud and slime, in which it was useless to struggle. He had made ties for himself which robbed him of all wholesome motive and were a constant exasperation.

Still, there was one position worse than the present: it was the position he would be in when the ugly secret was disclosed; and the desire that continually triumphed over every other was that of warding off the evil day, when he would have to bear the consequences of his father's violent resentment for the wound inflicted on his family pride – would have, perhaps, to turn his back on that hereditary ease and dignity which, after all, was a sort of reason for living, and would carry with him the certainty that he was banished for ever from the sight and esteem of Nancy Lammeter.

[from Part 1 Chapter 3]

Does Eliot make you feel any sympathy at all for Godfrey at this moment in the novel?

- Or** **14** In what ways does Eliot make Silas's departure from Lantern Yard such a powerful part of the novel?

MICHAEL FRAYN: *Spies*

Remember to support your ideas with details from the writing.

Either 15 Read this extract, and then answer the question that follows it:

I'm woken from the depths of a deep and dreamless sleep by the uneasy feeling that something's wrong.

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again I feel the cold prickling in the nape of my neck. and once

[from Chapter 10]

How does Frayn's writing convey Stephen's fear so vividly at this moment in the novel?

Or 16 What vivid impressions does Frayn create for you of the older Stephen?

KATE GRENVILLE: *The Secret River*

Remember to support your ideas with details from the writing.

Either 17 Read this extract, and then answer the question that follows it:

The shadow slid up the golden cliffs opposite and turned them to lead. As darkness fell, the distorted trees went on holding the fraction of light in the air.

The Thornhills squatted around the fire listening to the night, feeling its weight at their backs. Beyond the circle of light, the darkness was full of secretive noises, ticks and creaks, sudden rustlings and snappings, an insistent tweeting. Shafts of cold air like the draught from a window stirred the trees. From the river the frogs popped and ponked.

5

As the night deepened they hunched closer around the fire, feeding it so that as soon as it began to die it flamed up again and filled the clearing with jerky light. Willie and Dick heaped on armful after armful until the light danced against the underside of the trees. Bub squatted close up to one side, pushing in twigs that flared brilliantly.

10

They were warm, at least on one side, and the fire made them the centre of a small warm world. But it made them helpless creatures too. The blackness beyond the reach of the flames was as absolute as blindness.

15

The trees grew huge, hanging over them as if they had pulled up their roots and crept closer. Their shaggy silhouettes leaned down over the firelit clearing.

The gun lay close to Thornhill's hand. By the last of the daylight, out of sight of Sal, he had loaded it. He had checked the flint, had the powder-horn in his coat pocket.

20

He had thought that having a gun would make him feel safe. Why did it not?

The damper was burned from being cooked too fast, but the steamy fragrance under the charred crust was a comfort. The small noises they made with their food seemed loud in the night. Thornhill could hear his tea travel down his gullet, and the exclamations of his belly as it came to grips with the damper.

25

He looked up at where even the light of the fire could not dim the stars. He looked for the Southern Cross, which he had learned to steer by, but as it often did it was playing hide-and-seek.

30

Might be they watching us, Willie said. Waiting, like. There was the start of panic in his voice. Shut your trap, Willie, we ain't got nothing to worry about, Thornhill said.

35

In the tent he felt Sal squeezed up against him under the blanket. He had heated a stone in the fire and wrapped it up in his coat to warm her feet, but she was shivering. She was panting as quick as an animal. He held her tight, feeling the cold at his back, until at last her breathing slowed in sleep.

40

A wind had arisen out of the night. He could hear it up on the ridges, although down in the valley everything was still. It was like the sound of surf breaking on the shore, the way it swelled and then travelled around the ridges, its whisper growing and then fading away. The valley was dwarfed by the ocean of leaves and wind.

45

To be stretched out to sleep on his own earth, feeling his body lie along ground that was his—he felt he had been hurrying all his life, and had at last come to a place where he could stop. He could smell the rich damp air

coming in the tent-flap. He could feel the shape of the ground through his back. *My own*, he kept saying to himself. *My place. Thornhill's place.*

50

But the wind in the leaves up on the ridge was saying something else entirely.

[from Part 3]

How does Grenville create a sense of mystery and suspense at this moment in the novel?

- Or** **18** Will talks about 'the steel' in Sal. How does Grenville make this aspect of her personality so vivid?

R K NARAYAN: *The English Teacher*

Remember to support your ideas with details from the writing.

Either 19 Read this extract, and then answer the question that follows it:

My parents were unable to come. My father was down with his annual rheumatic attack, and my mother was unable to leave his side. They wrote me frantic letters every day, and it was my duty to drop them a card every day. I wrote a number of cards to others too. My brother at Hyderabad, my sister at Vellore, and the other sister at Delhi, wrote me very encouraging letters, and expected me to drop them postcards every day. They wrote, "Nothing to fear in typhoid. It is only a question of nursing." Everybody who met me repeated this like a formula, till I began to listen to it mechanically without following its meaning. Numerous people—my friends and colleagues—dropped in all day, some standing aloof fearing infection, and some coming quite close reckless and indifferent. 5

I lost touch with the calendar. In doing the same set of things in the same place, I lost count of days. Hours flew with rapidity. The mixture once in three hours, food every two hours, but two hours and three hours passed with such rapidity that you never felt there was any appreciable gap between doses. 10

But I liked it immensely. It kept me so close to my wife that it produced an immense satisfaction in my mind. Throughout I acted as her nurse. This sickness seemed to bind us together more strongly than ever. I sat in the chair and spoke to her of interesting things I saw in the paper. She spoke in whispers as the weeks advanced. She said: "My father said he would give me five hundred rupees when I got well again. ..."

"Very good, very good. Hurry up and claim your reward."

"Even without it I want to be well again." There was a deep stillness reigning in the house but for the voice of the child as she argued with her grandparents or sang to herself. 20

There was an interlude. The contractor and Sastri knocked on my door one day. "Oh, come in," I said and took them to my room, but there was no chair or table there. I said apologetically: "No chair. It is in the other room and also the table, because my wife is down with typhoid." Sastri said promptly, "Oh, we will sit on the floor." They squatted down on the floor. 30

And then after the preliminaries, Sastri said: "It is about that house—they are keeping it in abeyance. There is another demand for it. ..." I remembered my decision was due long ago. "I'm afraid I can't think of it. Wait a moment please." I went up to my wife's bedside and asked: "Susila, what shall I say about that house?" She took time to understand. "Do you like it?" she asked. 35

"Yes, it is a fine house—if we are buying a house."

"Why not think of it when all this is over?" she said.

"Yes, yes," I agreed. I ran out and told them: "I have no time to bother about it now. If it is a loss to you waiting for me ..." As I spoke I disliked the house. I remembered the shock Susila had received in the backyard. They went away. Before going, they said: "Nursing is everything." 40

"Yes, yes, I know," I said.

The contractor said: "May I say a word about it?" 45

"Go on, by all means."

"Never trust these English doctors. My son had typhoid. The doctors tried to give this and that and forbade him to eat anything; but he never

got well though he was in bed for thirty days. Afterwards somebody gave him a herb, and I gave him whatever he wanted to eat, and he got well within two days. The last thing you must heed is their advice. The English doctors always try to starve one to death. Give the patient plenty of things to eat and any fever will go down. That is my principle ...”

50

[from Chapter 3]

How does Narayan movingly reveal Krishna’s state of mind at this moment in the novel?

Or **20** How far does Narayan’s writing make you approve of Mr Brown?

from *Stories of Ourselves*

Remember to support your ideas with details from the writing.

- Either 21 Read this passage from *Of White Hairs and Cricket* (by Rohinton Mistry), and then answer the question that follows it:

Mummy came in from the kitchen with a plateful of toast fresh off the Criterion: unevenly browned, and charred in spots by the vagaries of its kerosene wick. She cleared the comics to one side and set the plate down.

‘Listen to this,’ Daddy said to her, ‘just found it in the paper: “A Growing Concern Seeks Dynamic Young Account Executive, Self-Motivated. Four-Figure Salary and Provident Fund.” I think it’s perfect.’ He waited for Mummy’s reaction. Then: ‘If I can get it, all our troubles will be over.’

5

Mummy listened to such advertisements week after week: harbingers of hope that ended in disappointment and frustration. But she always allowed the initial wave of optimism to lift her, riding it with Daddy and me, higher and higher, making plans and dreaming, until it crashed and left us stranded, awaiting the next advertisement and the next wave. So her silence was surprising.

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Daddy reached for a toast and dipped it in the tea, wrinkling his nose. ‘Smells of kerosene again. When I get this job, first thing will be a proper toaster. No more making burnt toast on top of the Criterion.’

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‘I cannot smell kerosene,’ said Mummy.

‘Smell this then,’ he said, thrusting the tea-soaked piece at her nose, ‘smell it and tell me,’ irritated by her ready contradiction. ‘It’s these useless wicks. The original Criterion ones from England used to be so good. One trim and you had a fine flame for months.’ He bit queasily into the toast. ‘Well, when I get the job, a Bombay Gas Company stove and cylinder can replace it.’ He laughed. ‘Why not? The British left seventeen years ago, time for their stove to go as well.’

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He finished chewing and turned to me. ‘And one day, you must go, too, to America. No future here.’ His eyes fixed mine, urgently. ‘Somehow we’ll get the money to send you. I’ll find a way.’

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His face filled with love. I felt suddenly like hugging him, but we never did except on birthdays, and to get rid of the feeling I looked away and pretended to myself that he was saying it just to humour me, because he wanted me to finish pulling his white hairs. Fortunately, his jovial optimism returned.

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‘Maybe even a fridge is possible, then we will never have to go upstairs to that woman. No more obligations, no more favours. You won’t have to kill any more rats for her.’ Daddy waited for us to join in. For his sake I hoped that Mummy would. I did not feel like mustering any enthusiasm.

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But she said sharply. ‘All your *shaik-chullee* thoughts are flying again. Nothing happens when you plan too much. Leave it in the hands of God.’

Daddy was taken aback. He said, summoning bitterness to retaliate, ‘You are thinking I will never get a better job? I’ll show all of you.’ He threw his piece of toast onto the plate and sat back. But he recovered as quickly, and made it into a joke. He picked up the newspaper. ‘Well, I’ll just have to surprise you one day when I throw out the kerosene stoves.’

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I liked the kerosene stoves and the formidable fifteen-gallon storage drum that replenished them. The Criterion had a little round glass window in one corner of its black base, and I would peer into the murky depths, watching the level rise as kerosene poured through the funnel; it was very

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dark and cool and mysterious in there, then the kerosene floated up and its surface shone under the light bulb. Looking inside was like lying on Chaupatty beach at night and gazing at the stars, in the hot season, while we stayed out after dinner till the breeze could rise and cool off the walls baking all day in the sun. When the stove was lit and the kitchen dark, the soft orange glow through its little mica door reminded me of the glow in the fire-temple *afargaan*, when there wasn't a blazing fire because hardly any sandalwood offerings had been left in the silver *thaali*; most people came only on the holy days. The Primus stove was fun, too, pumped up hot and roaring, the kerosene emerging under pressure and igniting into sharp blue flames. Daddy was the only one who lit it; every year, many women died in their kitchens because of explosions, and Daddy said that though many of them were not accidents, especially the dowry cases, it was still a dangerous stove if handled improperly.

Mummy went back to the kitchen. I did not mind the kerosene smell, and ate some toast, trying to imagine the kitchen without the stoves, with squat red gas cylinders sitting under the table instead. I had seen them in shop windows, and I thought they were ugly. We would get used to them, though, like everything else. At night, I stood on the veranda sometimes to look at the stars. But it was not the same as going to Chaupatty and lying on the sand, quietly, with only the sound of the waves in the dark. On Saturday nights, I would make sure that the stoves were filled, because Mummy made a very early breakfast for Daddy and me next morning. The milk and bread would be arriving in the pre-dawn darkness while the kettle was boiling and we got ready for cricket with the boys of Firozsha Baag.

How does Mistry create such a vivid picture of the narrator's parents and of his relationship with them here?

Or **22** Explore the ending of **one** story which the writer makes particularly surprising for you.

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