
LITERATURE (ENGLISH)

0486/41

Paper 4 Unseen

May/June 2018

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, **3** blank pages and **1** Insert.

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

EITHER

- 1 Read carefully the poem opposite. The poet remembers his encounter with a snake at a lecture he attended as a young boy.

How does the poet convey his fascination with this experience?

To help you answer this question, you might consider:

- how the children are encouraged to view the snakes
- how the poet describes his experience of holding a snake
- how his thoughts and feelings develop as he handles the snake.

Hands On, 1937

John S Clarke¹, festooned with snakes, said, 'Touch one, look closely, they're quite beautiful; not slimy; come on, come down to the front now, that's better. Don't be afraid, girls, aren't these eyes pure jewels? Come on lads, stretch your hands out, try this johnny, I bet it's like no creature you ever handled.'
I thought the lecture had been good, but this was unforeseen, an unknown world, strange bonus—the dry brown coil was at first almost leaden, slightly rough but inert, with scales tight-fitting like Inca² walls, till what seemed a faint tickling became a very crawling of the flesh as movement began to test my arm, the ripples of an almost unfathomable power rhythmically saying, I am living:
you may not love me but oh how I am living!
And it is all one life, in tanks, bags, boxes, lecture-theatres, outhouses, fronds of bracken, rivers for men and serpents to swim over from dark bank to dark bank and vanish quickly about their business in raw grass and reedland, scale, sole, palm, tail, brow, roving, brushing, touching.

¹ *John S Clarke*: educator and popular speaker on science and knowledge

² *Inca*: ancient South American civilisation

OR

- 2 Read carefully the extract opposite. Mr Sumarsono is a foreign diplomat visiting the narrator's family for the weekend. At the end of the visit he takes photographs of the ten-year-old narrator, her sister Kate and her mother.

How does the writer vividly convey the impact of this experience?

To help you answer this question, you might consider:

- how the writer portrays the narrator's response to Mr Sumarsono
- how the writer presents the narrator's thoughts and feelings about her mother
- how the writer conveys the narrator's reactions to the photographs.

Mr Sumarsono stooped over us, his courtesy exquisite and unyielding. ‘Please,’ he said, ‘now photograph.’ He held up the camera. It covered his face entirely, a strange mechanical mask. ‘My photograph,’ he said in a decisive tone.

He aimed the camera first at me. I produced a taut and artificial smile, and at once he reappeared from behind the camera. ‘No smile,’ he said firmly, shaking his head. ‘No smile.’ He himself produced a hideous smile, then shook his head and turned grave. ‘Ah!’ he said, nodding, and pointed to me. Chastened, I sat solemn and rigid while he disappeared behind the camera again. I didn’t move even when he had finished, after the flash and the clicks of lenses and winding sprockets.

Mr Sumarsono turned to Kate, who had learned from me and offered up a smooth and serious face. Mr Sumarsono nodded, but stepped toward her. ‘Hand!’ he said, motioning toward it, and he made the gesture that he wanted. Kate stared but obediently did as he asked.

When Mr Sumarsono turned to my mother, I worried again that she would stage a last-ditch attempt to take over, that she would insist on mortifying us all.

‘Now!’ said Mr Sumarsono, bowing peremptorily at her. ‘Please.’ I looked at her, and to my amazement, relief and delight, my mother did exactly the right thing. She smiled at Mr Sumarsono in a normal and relaxed way, as though they were old friends. She leaned easily back in her chair, graceful – I could suddenly see – and poised. She smoothed her hair back from her forehead.

In Mr Sumarsono’s pictures, the images of us that he produced, this is how we look.

I am staring solemnly at the camera, dead serious, head-on. I look mystified, as though I am trying to understand something inexplicable; what the people around me mean when they speak, perhaps. I look as though I am in a foreign country where I do not speak the language.

Kate looks both radiant and ethereal; her eyes are alight. Her mouth is puckered into a mirthful V; she is trying to suppress a smile. The V of her mouth is echoed above her face by her two forked fingers, poised airily behind her head.

But it is the picture of my mother that surprised me the most. Mr Sumarsono’s portrait was of someone entirely different from the person I knew, though the face was the same. Looking at it gave me the same feeling that the stopped escalator did; a sense of dislocation, a sudden uncertainty about my own beliefs. In the photograph my mother leans back against her chair like a queen, all her power evident, and at rest. Her face is turned slightly away; she is guarding her privacy. Her nose, her cheeks, her eyes, are bright with wine and excitement, but she is calm and amused. A mother cannot be beautiful, because she is so much more a mother than a woman, but in this picture it struck me, my mother looked, in an odd way, beautiful. I could see for the first time that other people might think she actually was beautiful.

Mr Sumarsono’s view of my mother was of a glowing, self-assured, generous woman. And Mr Sumarsono himself was a real person, despite his meekness. I knew that; I had seen him take control. His view meant something; I could not ignore it. And I began to wonder.

We still have the pictures. Mr Sumarsono brought them with him the next time he came out for the weekend.

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