

English A: literature – Higher level – Paper 1
Anglais A : littérature – Niveau supérieur – Épreuve 1
Inglés A: literatura – Nivel superior – Prueba 1

Monday 4 May 2015 (morning)
Lundi 4 mai 2015 (matin)
Lunes 4 de mayo de 2015 (mañana)

2 hours / 2 heures / 2 horas

Instructions to candidates

- Do not open this examination paper until instructed to do so.
- Write a literary commentary on one passage only.
- The maximum mark for this examination paper is **[20 marks]**.

Instructions destinées aux candidats

- N'ouvrez pas cette épreuve avant d'y être autorisé(e).
- Rédigez un commentaire littéraire sur un seul des passages.
- Le nombre maximum de points pour cette épreuve d'examen est de **[20 points]**.

Instrucciones para los alumnos

- No abra esta prueba hasta que se lo autoricen.
- Escriba un comentario literario sobre un solo pasaje.
- La puntuación máxima para esta prueba de examen es **[20 puntos]**.

Write a literary commentary on **one** of the following:

1.

I stood up and began walking back to the house, but the girl grabbed my hand and pulled me, trying to drag me to the trees. I resisted, suspecting a CT¹ ambush. I shaded my eyes and squinted at the slopes, but the tea-pickers had not yet reached this section of the estate and there was no sign of any Home Guard². Crying more loudly, the girl yanked my arm again.

5 I followed her, but froze when we came to the jungle fringe.

For the first time since the war ended, I was about to re-enter the rainforest. I feared that if I went in I would never come out again. Before I could turn around, the girl tightened her grip on my hand and pulled me into the ferns.

10 Insects ground out metallic, clicking sounds. The cicadas wove a mesh of noise over everything. Birdcalls hammered sharp, shiny nails into the air. It was like walking into a busy ironmonger's workshop in the back-alleys of Georgetown. Sunlight sifted down through the lattices of branches and leaves overhead, unable to sink far enough to dispel the soggy gloom at ground level. Vines hung from the branches in broad, sagging nooses. The girl took us along a narrow animal track, the stones greased with moss that threatened to send me sprawling at
15 the slightest lapse in concentration. For fifteen, twenty minutes I followed her beneath tree ferns that spread their fronds over us, watering the light into a translucent green.

We emerged into a small clearing. The girl stopped and pointed to a bamboo shack beneath the trees, the roof covered in a balding thatch of nipah³ fronds. The door was half-open, but it was dark inside. We moved closer to the hut, making as little noise as possible.
20 In the trees behind us, branches cracked and then something heavy dropped to the ground. I spun around on my heel and looked back. The trees were still. Perhaps it was only a ripened durian⁴, its armour of thorns shredding the leaves as it fell. I became aware of another sound running beneath the noise of the jungle, a vibration pitched so low it was almost soothing. It was coming from inside the hut.

25 The door refused to move when I nudged it with my foot. I tried again, pushing harder this time. It swung open all the way. On the beaten-earth floor, three bodies lay in a moat of blood so dark and thick they seemed to be glued to it. Hundreds of flies crawled over their faces, distended bellies and loincloths. Their throats had been slit. The girl screamed and I clamped my palm over her mouth. She struggled, swinging her arms madly, but I held on to her tightly.
30 The flies rose from the bodies and swarmed to the underside of the thatch roof, blackening it like an infestation of mould.

Tan Twan Eng, *The Garden of Evening Mists* (2012), Myrmidon Books Ltd.
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¹ CT: communist terrorist

² Home Guard: local volunteer defence force

³ nipah: type of palm

⁴ durian: Malaysian fruit with a hard, spiky shell

2.

The Pigeon

Throb, throb from the mixer
Spewing out concrete.
And at the heads of the cables
Stand the serpent-warders,
5 Sweating and straining,
Thrusting those cruel mouths to their prey.

Hark how the steel tongues hiss
As they stab.
The men sway under the effort,
10 And their eyes are bloodshot with the din,
The clatter that shatters the brain.
Throb, throb from the mixer
Spewing out concrete.

The crowd stands by
15 Watching the smoothers;
Fascinated by the flat, wet levels
Of newlaid cement.

See how those curdled lakes
Glisten under the sky,
20 Virginal.

Then the dusty air suddenly divides,
And a pigeon from a plane-tree
Flutters down to bathe its wings in that mirage of water.

But deceived, and angry,
25 Bewildered by the din,
The throb, throb from the mixer
Spewing out concrete,
It backs upon its wing,
Threshes air, and is gone.

30 But there, in the deflowered bed,
Is the seal of its coral foot,
Set till rocks crumble.

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