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南洋女子中學校
Nanyang Girls' High School

End-of-Year Examination 2017 Secondary Three

Advanced Literature (HP)

2 hours
0845 - 1045 hrs

Friday 6th October 2017

READ THESE INSTRUCTIONS FIRST

1. Write your name on your answer script.
2. Use **dark blue or black ink**.
3. Do not use correction fluid / tape.

INFORMATION FOR CANDIDATES

1. Answer **one** question from **Section A** and **one** question from **Section B**.
2. Begin your answer to Section B on a **fresh** sheet of paper.
3. Number your answers clearly.
4. You are reminded of the need for good English and legible handwriting.

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This document consists of 10 printed pages,
including this cover page.

[Turn over]

SECTION A: SET TEXT

Answer ONE question from this section

A Streetcar Named Desire – Tennessee Williams

1. Blanche believes that the opposite of death is desire. Based on your understanding of the play, in particular Blanche's behaviour and choices, how far do you think she is right in this belief?

[30]

OR

The Turn of the Screw – Henry James

2. Read the extract below and answer the question that follows.

I gaped at her coolness even though my certitude of her thoroughly seeing was never greater than that instant, and then, in the immediate need to defend myself, I called her passionately to witness. 'She's there, you little unhappy thing – there, there, *there*, and you know it as well as you know me!' I had said shortly before to Mrs Grose that she was not at these times a child, but an old, old woman, and my description of her couldn't have been more strikingly confirmed than in the way in which, for all notice of this, she simply showed me, without an expressional concession or admission, a countenance of deeper and deeper, of indeed suddenly quite fixed reprobation. I was by this time – if I can put the whole thing at all together – more appalled at what I may properly call her manner than at anything else, though it was quite simultaneously that I became aware of having Mrs Grose also, and very formidably, to reckon with. My elder companion, the next moment, at any rate, blotted out everything but her own flushed face and her loud shocked protest, a burst of high disapproval. 'What a dreadful turn, to be sure, Miss! Where on earth do you see anything?' 10

I could only grasp her more quickly yet, for even while she spoke her hideous plain presence stood undimmed and undaunted. It had already lasted a minute, and it lasted while I continued, seizing my colleague, quite thrusting her at it and presenting her to it, insisting with my point hand. 'You don't see her exactly as we see? – you mean to say you don't now – *now*? She's as big as a blazing fire! Only look, dearest woman, *look—!*' She looked, just as I did, and gave me, with her deep groan of negation, repulsion, compassion – the mixture with her pity of her relief at her exemption – a sense, touching to me even then, that she would have backed me up if she had been able. I might well have needed that, for with this hard blow of the proof that her eyes were hopelessly sealed I felt my own situation horribly crumble, I felt – I *saw* – my livid predecessor press, from her position, on my defeat, and I took the measure, more than all, of what I should have from this instant to deal with in the astounding little attitude of Flora. Into this attitude Mrs Grose immediately and violently entered, breaking, even while there pierced through my sense of ruin a prodigious private triumph, into breathless reassurance.

'She isn't there, little lady, and nobody's there – and you never see nothing, my sweet! How can poor Miss Jessel – when poor Miss Jessel's dead and buried? *We* know, don't we love?' – and she appealed, blundering in, to the child. 'It's all a mere mistake and a worry and a joke – and we'll go home as fast as we can!'

Our companion, on this, had responded with a strange quick primness of propriety, and they were again, with Mrs Grose on her feet, united, as it were, in shocked opposition to me. Flora continued to fix me with her small mask of disaffection, and even at that minute I prayed God to forgive me for seeming to see that, as she stood there holding tight to our friend's dress, her incomparable childish beauty had suddenly failed, had quite vanished. I've said it already – she was literally, she was hideously hard; she had turned common and almost ugly. 'I don't know what you mean. I see nobody. I see nothing. I never *have*. I think you're cruel. I don't like you!' Then, after this deliverance, which might have been that of a vulgarly pert little girl in the street, she hugged Mrs Grose more closely and buried in her skirts the dreadful little face. In this position she launched an almost furious wail. 'Take me away, take me away – oh take me away from *her!*'

'From *me*?' I panted.

'From you – from you!' she cried.

Even Mrs Grose looked across at me dismayed; while I had nothing to do but communicate again with the figure that, on the opposite bank, without a movement, as rigidly still as if catching, beyond the interval, our voices, was as vividly there for my disaster as it was not there for my service. The wretched child had spoken exactly as if she had got from some outside source each of her stabbing little words, and I could therefore, in the full despair of all I had to accept, but sadly shake my head at her. 'If I had ever doubted all my doubt would at present have gone. I've been living with the miserable truth, and now it was only too much closed round me. Of course

I've lost you: I've interfered, and you've seen, under *her* dictation' – with which I faced, over the pool again, our infernal witness – 'the easy and perfect way to meet it. I've done my best, but I've lost you. Goodbye.' For Mrs Grose I had an imperative, an almost frantic 'Go, go!' before which, in infinite distress, but mutely possessed of the little girl and clearly convinced, in spite of her blindness, that something awful had occurred and some collapse engulfed us, she retreated, by the way we had come, as fast as she could move.

70

Extract from Chapter XX of *The Turn of the Screw* by Henry James

- a. How does Henry James use dialogue in this extract to show the development of tension?
- b. With reference to character and plot development, explain how this scene (and what takes place just before this) furthers your understanding of the play as a gothic story.

[30]

SECTION B: LITERARY RESPONSE

Answer either question 3 or 4

Question 3

Read the texts below and answer the question that follows.

- (i) WATCHING MY PARENTS SLEEPING BESIDE AN OPEN WINDOW
NEAR THE SEA by Rebecca McClanahan (2007)

Needing them still, I come
when I can, this time to the sea
where we share a room: their double bed,
my single. Morning fog paints the pale
scene even paler. Lace curtains breathing,
the chenille spread folded back,
my father's feet white sails furled
at the edge of blue pajamas.
Every child's dream, a parent
in each hand, though this child is fifty.
Their bodies fit easily, with room
to spare. When did they grow
so small? *Grow* so small—
as if it were possible to swell
backwards into an earlier self.
On the bureau, their toys
and trinkets. His shaving brush
and pink heart pills, her gardenia
sachet. The tiny spindle that pricks
the daily bubble of blood, her sweet
chemistry. Above our heads
a smoke alarm pulses, its red eye beating.
One more year, I ask the silence.
Last night to launch myself
into sleep I counted their breaths, the tidal
rise and fall I now put my ear to,
the coiled shell of their lives.

(ii) FATHER OUTSIDE

by Nick Flynn (1960)

While volunteering at a homeless shelter, the speaker of the poem encountered his father, a new visitor. These are his thoughts after the incident.

A black river flows down the center
of each page

& on either side the banks
are wrapped in snow. My father is ink falling

in tiny blossoms, a bottle
wrapped in a paperbag. I want to believe
that if I get the story right

we will rise, newly formed,

that I will stand over him again
as he sleeps outside under the church halogen
only this time I will know

what to say. It is night &
it's snowing & starlings
fill the trees above us, so many it seems

the leaves sing. I can't see them
until they rise together at some hidden signal

& hold the shape of the trees for a moment
before scattering. I wait for his breath
to lift his blanket

so I know he's alive, letting the story settle

into the shape of this city. Three girls in the park
begin to sing something holy, a song
with a lost room inside it

as their prayerbook comes unglued

& scatters. I'll bend
each finger back, until the bottle
falls, until the bone snaps, save him

by destroying his hands. With the thaw
the river will rise & he will be forced
to higher ground. No one

will have to tell him. From my roof I can see
the East River, it looks blackened with oil

but it's only the light. Even now
my father is asleep somewhere. If I followed

the river north I could still reach him.

3. (a) Compare how the two poets explore their connection to their parents,
playing close attention to imagery and perspective.
- (b) Which poem do you prefer? Describe the reasons for your choice.

[30]

OR

Question 4

Read the texts below and answer the question that follows.

(i) It takes him a few minutes to find his stroke, a modified breaststroke, pulling water more with the right hand than the left, legs kicking hard. It is a noisy mess, his left shoulder a bag of broken glass. A gnawing worry settles into his gut. They will drown, both of them. They will both be lost to the deep. But then somehow a rhythm presents itself, and he begins to lose himself in the repetition. Arm up and in, legs scissoring. He swims into the endless deep, ocean spray in his face. It's hard to keep track of time. What time did the plane take off? Ten p.m.? How much time has passed? Thirty minutes? An hour? How long until the sun comes up? Eight hours? Nine?

Around him the sea is pockmarked and ever changing. Swimming, he tries not to think about the great tracts of open water. He tries not to picture the depth of the ocean or how the Atlantic in August is the birthplace of massive storm fronts, hurricanes that form in the cold troughs of undersea gorges, weather patterns colliding, temperature and moisture forming huge pockets of lower pressure. Global forces conspiring, barbarian hordes with clubs and war paint who charge shrieking into the fray, and instantly the sky thickens, blackens, an ominous gale of lightning strikes, huge claps of thunder like the screams of battle, and the sea, which moments ago was calm, turns to hell on earth.

Scott swims in the fragile calm, trying to empty his mind.

He takes the boy's hand.

"Where's my sister?" the boy whispers.

"I don't know," Scott whispers back. "The plane went down. We got separated."

A long beat.

"Maybe she's okay," Scott whispers. "Maybe your parents have her, and they're floating someplace else. Or maybe they've already been rescued."

"I don't think so."

They float for a while with this thought. Overhead the fog begins to dissipate. It starts slowly, the clearing, first a hint of sky peeking through, then stars appear, and finally the crescent moon, and just like that the ocean around them becomes a sequined dress. From his back, Scott finds the North Star, confirms that they're going in the right direction. He looks at the boy, eyes wide with fear. For the first

time Scott can see his tiny face, the furrowed brow and bowed mouth. The boy couldn't have been more than four.

"Hi," says Scott, water lapping at his ears. He turns over. "Okay, let's go home."

He rights himself and starts to swim, certain that at any moment he will feel a strike from below, the razor grip of a shark, but it doesn't come, and after a while he puts the shark out of his mind. He wills them forward, stroke after stroke, his legs moving behind him in figure eights, his right arm lunging and pulling, lunging and pulling. To keep his mind busy, he thinks of other liquids he would rather be swimming in; milk, soup, bourbon. An ocean of bourbon.

He considers his life, but the details seem meaningless now. His ambitions. The rent that is due every month. The woman who has left him. He thinks of his work, brushstrokes on canvas. It is the ocean he is painting tonight, stroke by stroke.

He swims without pause, teeth chattering, refusing to surrender. The weight of the boy threatens to sink him, but he kicks harder with his rubbery legs. Around him the sea is bruise purple and midnight blue, the cold white of the wave caps glimmering in the moonlight. The skin of his legs has started to chafe in the spots where they rub together, the salt doing its insidious damage. His lips are cracked and dry. Above them, seagulls chatter and glide like vultures waiting for the end. They mock him with their cries, and in his mind he tells them all to go to hell. There are things in the sea that are impossibly old, astonishingly large, great undersea rivers pulling warm water up from the Gulf of Mexico. The Atlantic Ocean is a nexus of highways, of undersea flyovers and bypasses. And there, like a speck on a dot on a flea, is Scott Burroughs, shoulder screaming as he fights for his life.

Before the Fall – Noah Hawley (2016)

(ii) When the swimmers are perfectly still, the starter's horn makes a loud *bleep*. In unison, the swimmers launch themselves over the water into something that resembles a tiny midair push-up, followed by a small flex at their hips, and enter the water. Lane five, the yawner, has the best start, hitting the water just ahead of the field. In the mid-1990s, the Federation Internationale de Natation (or FINA, the international governing body of swimming), established a zero-tolerance false-start rule. If someone in the race starts before the gun, the race proceeds and the disqualification occurs at the finish, announced over the loudspeaker.

The race, two lengths of the fifty-meter pool, is considered a sprint. Lane five leads, but at the fifty-meter mark - the split - she is outtouched by lane three. Lane three has a strong turn, with a powerful kick.

Here is what it sounds like to lane three at the wall: a low thump as her hands hit the touchpad. Brief cheering at an intake of breath, collapsing into bubbles as her head, aligned and steady, dips back and under again at the turn. This is followed immediately by quiet. There is a rippling during the long stroke of her underwater pullout, a tight, thin sigh of effort, a gruff exhalation of air, a grunt at the dolphin kick.

As her head breaks the surface, the roar of the crowd is, with each breath, loud then quiet, loud then quiet; a chorus of warbled pops and splashings bursts against the sides of her cap.

The water ahead is smooth and the view is low glassy horizon. Lane four has a grasp of her periphery, but ignores it. Lane five and three are even with her, if not just ahead. Lane four blocks a sinking feeling and starts kicking harder. Between strokes, each swimmer can catch the deep bass of the announcer calling the race over the cheering of the crowd. What they don't hear is that lane eight is creeping up in the last twenty-five meters, and is now even with lane four.

The last ten or fifteen meters are the most painful, physically and mentally. Muscles flood with lactic acid. Strokes shorten, weaken, churn, and find no purchase. It's a terrible, desperate feeling, where the results of training are determined. Not enough cardio and your entire body fails, not enough drills and your stroke slips, not enough strength training and muscles burn like paper curling in flames.

Lane three touches first, followed by lane four, just barely outtouching lane eight, in third place by two-hundredths of a second. The swimmers turn, heaving to look at the big scoreboard that displays each lane's time. When lane eight sees her third-place finish she smashes her palm into the yellow wall. Lane five is fourth, followed by six, seven, two, and one.

Lane three pulls off her cap and tosses it onto the deck, then dips her head back to feel the cool water on her head. A whistle is blown. The swimmers haul themselves out of the pool, gather their towels and clothes. Some head for the warm-down pool, others to their coaches.

Swimming Studies – Leanne Shapton (2016)

4. (a) Compare the extracts by Hawley and Shapton to show how each writer builds tension and suspense via imagery and tone.

(b) Which extract do you prefer? Describe the reasons for your choice.

[30]

END OF PAPER