



# Cambridge International AS & A Level

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**LITERATURE IN ENGLISH**

**9695/72**

Paper 7 Comment and Appreciation

**October/November 2020**

**2 hours**



You must answer on the enclosed answer booklet.

You will need: Answer booklet (enclosed)

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## INSTRUCTIONS

- Answer **two** questions.
- Follow the instructions on the front cover of the answer booklet. If you need additional answer paper, ask the invigilator for a continuation booklet.
- You are reminded of the need for good English and clear presentation in your answers.

## INFORMATION

- The total mark for this paper is 50.
- All questions are worth equal marks.

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This document has **8** pages. Blank pages are indicated.

1 Write a critical commentary on the following extract from the short story 'Release' (published in 1995) by Tan Mei Ching.

Eileen tied her hair into a ponytail and went over to say hi, just to be a friendly neighbour. She was so pregnant that she could hardly walk down the street without heaving like a dying dog, but she went anyway.

"Hi," she said to the woman who was carrying a box from the van to the house.

The woman glanced at her and stopped.

"Yeah?" she said.

"I live next door," Eileen said.

"Yeah."

"My name's Eileen."

"Yeah."

Okay, so this was a bit strange. Eileen thought the woman was shy. "Are you moving in all right?"

The woman snarled. "I'm not moving in."

As Eileen tried to work out the meaning of this, another woman appeared from the house and yelled, "What's taking you so long?" She looked at Eileen and yelled again, "What's a pregnant woman doing here? How can she carry anything worth anything? What's your company thinking? I'm not going to pay for *her*." The woman with the box continued into the house. Eileen stood face to face with her glaring, real neighbour, a tall woman with a Medusa perm<sup>1</sup>.

"I'm Eileen, your neighbour."

The woman frowned. "Yeah?"

"Just saying hi."

"You're not here to move?" the woman said.

"No, I'm afraid I can't. I would if ..."

The woman waved a hand. Her gold bracelet gleamed in the sun. "Yeah, yeah, you're like our dog."

"Excuse me?" Eileen was starting to wish she had stayed home and watched the new neighbours moving in from her kitchen window.

"Our dog is pregnant."

"Oh."

"Due in a month. When are you going to get rid of that?"

"Pardon?"

"When is it going to come out?"

"Oh, soon, very soon."

"Like our dog, huh?"

"I guess so."

The woman turned to go. "Don't give birth to as many as this dog's going to have."

Eileen went back to her house. The road was slightly uphill and she was afraid she'd lose her footing and roll downhill. When she got home, the phone rang.

"Honey, have you picked up my suit from the dry-cleaners?" her husband asked.

"No, I forgot," she said.

"I told you yesterday and this morning."

"The new neighbours just moved in and ..."

"It's all right. I'll just have to zip over to the cleaners before I come and get you. I thought that now you weren't working, you could ... forget it. If we're late for dinner, you explain to them."

"I'll get the suit." She looked at the clock on the kitchen wall. She had about half an hour to get it before her husband came home. She would have to take a taxi.

"You sure now? Don't forget the moment you put down the phone."

His tone was beginning to irritate her. For some reason, she thought about her husband's new moustache.

"I won't, Philip," she said.

"Okay."

She put down the phone. She felt tired.

<sup>1</sup> a *Medusa perm* – a kind of hair-style

## 2 Write a critical commentary on the following poem (published in 1970).

*The Field*

The field is trampled over utterly.  
 No hidden corner remains unchurned.  
 Unusable henceforth for pasture:  
 Sheep and cattle must feed elsewhere.

The field was torn by battle, dull 5  
 Explosions, trenches dug for shelter,  
 Vehicles which wheeled, reversed,  
 Hunted down the last resistance.

The field is strewn with bones and metal. 10  
 Earth which had not felt the air  
 During millennia, is now revealed  
 To every element and influence.

The undersoil surprises by its richness. 15  
 In battle's lull, at night, the farmer crawls  
 To estimate what might be salvaged  
 Of his lone field's potentiality.

If he survives, the field holds promise 20  
 Of great abundance, a yield astonishing,  
 Unprecedented as all he hopes for.  
 The field is fertile. He must survive.

Ruth Fainlight (born 1931)

**Turn over for Question 3.**

3 Write a critical commentary on the following extract from the play *A Hero's Welcome* (first performed in 1989) by Winsome Pinnock.

The play is set on a small island in the West Indies, in 1947. Len is outside his house, washing clothes in a tin bath; Nana is sitting near him, while Charlie watches from a short distance away.

- Len: Anything could happen to you out there.
- Nana: Like what? I know this place like the back a me hand. I don't know why you just can't let me alone. Just because I'm an old woman it don't mean that I don't want a life a me own, telling me what to do all the time.
- Len: Nobody telling you what to do, Nana. Hey, look at this shirt, Nana, nice and clean. Look at that white. Watch the way the sun shine on it. [*Slight pause*] Is about time you ge a new set ennit<sup>1</sup>. 5
- Nana: Set a what?
- Len: Teeth. Those old teeth won't last much longer.
- Nana: Neither will I if you don't leave me alone. 10
- Len: I'm only trying to help.
- Nana: Most of the old people around here does die from too much kindness. Look at poor Mrs B, the strongest woman I know. Everybody say she can't look after herself, sen' her to live with she daughter. Within two months the woman stone cold dead. Couldn't cope with the strain a pretending to be a poor helpless old woman. 15
- Len: That won't happen to you, Nana.
- Nana [*to CHARLIE*]: You all right Charlie boy? [*To LEN in half whisper*] Why that boy don't go home? [*LEN shrugs*] Him have parents don't it?
- Len: He likes it here, eh Charlie? [*CHARLIE says nothing, looks at ground embarrassed*] He's a good boy. 20
- Nana: Lord, the day does run slow if you got people watching you every minute.
- Len: You make it sound as if I keeping you prisoner.
- Nana: Thas' how I feel.
- Len: You free to come an' go as you please. As long as you don't go further than that line I mark out over there. 25
- Nana: You might as well lock me up.
- Len: Is for your own good, Nana. Anything could happen to you in the bush.
- Nana: Not to me.
- Len: You not starting up that witchcraft business again, Nana? Is that you reading? 30
- Nana: Mind you business. Can't I even read without you interfering?
- Len: Oh Nana. I thought you did give this up when you started going church again.
- Nana: I can't give it up, boy. Where's the harm in it? Is been in me family for years. Me great gran'mother did teach me and I'll teach your daughter. 35
- Len: I ain't no expert in these things, Nana, but it seem to me like you got to choose one or the other. The bible or this.
- Nana: And what do you know? Look, I know about these things. [*Imitating him*] 'The bible or this'. Is the same thing, boy. 40
- Len: How?

- Nana:* Didn't Pastor Broderick give Harris a dose a boils just by sitting in a churchyard on his old dead mother's tomb and praying all night?
- Len:* Nonsense.
- Nana:* You look close at Harris face and see if it isn't truth. I'm talking. Is a god given gift and I use it in the right and proper way. 45
- Len:* I don't think that you going to get too many customer after what happen to little Rosie.
- Nana:* The girl was getting belly pains and I cured them.
- Len:* Yes Nana but nine months later and the poor girl's holding a bawling baby in she arms. 50
- Nana:* She wanted that child. I know. [*Pause*]
- Len:* Nana?
- Nana:* Yes?
- Len:* Why you keep running away? 55
- Nana:* What?
- Len:* You not happy here?
- Nana:* Happy enough boy, but I'm happier out there.
- Len:* Don't you ever get frightened out there by yourself?
- Nana:* Not me. Women like me ain't frightened a nothing. In my day us women helped to build the world with our bare hands. The men worked hard in the field all day and we worked hard at home – scratching a living from the soil, bring up children. I tell you boy, those days were hard but we did it. And now you people mashing it up wit you bomb and you gun. 60
- Len:* We ain't mashing up nuttin. You have to fight for freedom sometimes, Nana. 65
- Nana:* Thou shalt not kill.
- Len:* Sometimes you got to destroy before you progress – I call it constructive destruction.

<sup>1</sup> *Is about time you ge a new set ennit* – It's about time that you got a new set, isn't it.

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