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LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

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Paper 7 Comment and Appreciation

May/June 2007

2 hours

Additional Materials: Answer Booklet/Paper

READ THESE INSTRUCTIONS FIRST

If you have been given an Answer Booklet, follow the instructions on the front cover of the Booklet.

Write your Centre number, candidate number and name on all the work you hand in.

Write in dark blue or black pen.

Do not use staples, paper clips, highlighters, glue or correction fluid.

Answer **two** questions.

You are reminded of the need for good English and clear presentation in your answers.

At the end of the examination, fasten all your work securely together.

All questions in this paper carry equal marks.



This document consists of **6** printed pages and **2** blank pages.



1 Write a critical commentary on the following passage, which opens the 'See How They Run' by Mary Elizabeth Vroman (1923–1967).

A bell rang. Jane Richards squared the sheaf of records decisively in the large manila folder, placed it in the right-hand corner of her desk, and stood up. The chatter of young voices subsided, and forty-three small faces looked solemnly and curiously at the slight young figure before them. The bell stopped ringing.

I wonder if they're as scared of me as I am of them. She smiled brightly.

5

"Good morning, children, I am Miss Richards." As if they don't know – the door of the third-grade room had a neat new sign pasted above it with her name in bold black capitals; and anyway, a new teacher's name is the first thing that children find out about on the first day of school. Nevertheless she wrote it for their benefit in large white letters on the blackboard.

10

"I hope we will all be happy working and playing together this year." Now why does that sound so trite? "As I call the roll will you please stand, so that I may get to know you as soon as possible, and if you like to you may tell me something about yourselves, how old you are, where you live, what your parents do, and perhaps something about what you did during the summer."

15

Seated, she checked the names carefully. "Booker T. Adams."

Booker stood, gangling and stoop-shouldered: he began to recite tiredly. "My name is Booker T. Adams¹, I'se ten years old." Shades of Uncle Tom!¹ "I live on Painter's Path." He paused, the look he gave her was tinged with something very akin to contempt. "I didn't do nothing in the summer," he said deliberately.

20

"Thank you, Booker." Her voice was even. "George Allen." Must remember to correct that stoop ... Where is Painter's Path? ... How to go about correcting those speech defects? ... Go easy, Jane, don't antagonize them ... They're clean enough, but this is the first day How can one teacher do any kind of job with a load of forty-three? ... Thank heaven the building is modern and well built even though it is overcrowded, not like some I've seen – no potbellied stove.

25

"Sarahlene Clover Babcock." Where do these names come from? ... Up from slavery¹ How high is up? Jane smothered a sudden desire to giggle. Outside she was calm and poised and smiling. Clearly she called the names, listening with interest, making a note here and there, making no corrections – not yet.

30

She experienced a moment of brief inward satisfaction: I'm doing very well, this is what is expected of me ... Orientation to Teaching ... Miss Murray's voice beat a distant tattoo in her memory. Miss Murray with the Junoesque² figure and the moon face ... "The ideal teacher personality is one which, combining in itself all the most desirable qualities, expresses itself with quiet assurance in its endeavor to mold the personalities of the students in the most desirable patterns." ... Dear dull Miss Murray.

35

She made mental estimates of the class. What a cross section of my people they represent, she thought. Here and there signs of evident poverty, here and there children of obviously well-to-do parents.

40

“My name is Rachel Veronica Smith. I am nine years old. I live at Six-oh-seven Fairview Avenue. My father is a Methodist minister. My mother is a housewife. I have two sisters and one brother. Last summer Mother and Daddy took us all to New York to visit my aunt Jen. We saw lots of wonderful things. There are millions and millions of people in New York. One day we went on a ferryboat all the way up the Hudson River – that’s a great big river as wide across as this town, and – ” 45

The children listened wide-eyed. Jane listened carefully. She speaks good English. Healthy, erect, and even perhaps a little smug. Immaculately well dressed from the smoothly braided hair, with two perky bows, to the shiny brown oxfords³ ... Bless you, Rachel, I’m so glad to have you. 50

“ – and the buildings are all very tall, some of them nearly reach the sky.”

“Haw-haw” – this from Booker, cynically.

“Well, they are too.” Rachel swung around, fire in her eyes and insistence in every line of her round, compact body.

“Ain’t no building as tall as the sky, is dere, Miz Richards?” 55

Crisis No. 1. Jane chose her answer carefully. As high as the sky ... mustn’t turn this into a lesson in science ... all in due time. “The sky is a long way out, Booker, but the buildings in New York are very tall indeed. Rachel was only trying to show you how very tall they are. In fact, the tallest building in the whole world is in New York City.”

“They call it the Empire State Building,” interrupted Rachel, heady with her new knowledge and Jane’s corroboration. 60

Booker wasn’t through. “You been dere, Miz Richards?”

“Yes, Booker, many times. Someday I shall tell you more about it. Maybe Rachel will help me. Is there anything you’d like to add, Rachel?”

“I would like to say that we are glad you are our new teacher, Miss Richards.” Carefully 65 she sat down, spreading her skirt with her plump hands, her smile angelic.

¹ *echoes of slave names and ideas from the 19th century*

² *Juno-esque – large and attractive*

³ *oxfords – smart shoes*

- 2 Write a critical comparison of the following two poems, both written in the 20th century:

woman's work

Traveling through time
backward one thousand years
where Chumash Indian women
walked the same path as I
along the Arroyo Creek 5
in the Conejo Valley,
sheltered by giant oaks,
like ancient sages,

I come across a sandstone boulder
with five bowl-shaped indentations 10
used as mortar to grind acorns.
My hand feels the gentle curvatures,
centuries of domestic toil.

My bones feel the pestle push and pull
of hundreds of women – 15
the aching labor of making acorn flour.
Three days work of five women grinding,
who then pour twenty baskets of water
to leach the bitter tannins
from powder placed upon sycamore leaves, 20
pure water filters through
leaving acorn meal white and sweet.

I see a Chumash woman weaving
a burden basket from green willow
which is strapped upon her torso, 25
like a womb preserving life,
for the collection of acorns.

I want to introduce myself
but realize they can't see me,
yet somehow after all these years, 30
we speak the same language,
feel the same aches –
accepting nature's way.

Umbilical cords connect our generations,
amniotic waters continue 35
to filter impurities.
Holy work of a woman
sustaining life's sweetness.

Diane Reichick

female executive

She rises early, in the shower,
 coffee over, teeth pearly, blow dry,
 powder, blush, line each eye.
 Perfect suit for ambition.
 Never trust to attrition. 5
 Read mail, meet board, get the word,
 call clerk, he brings coffee, pen, pad.
 Answer mail, assess performance,
 meet achievers, call home.
 Lunch bunch, quickly munch. 10
 Review reports, report to boss,
 late to meeting, motivate,
 call home, put out fires
 that won't wait, call home.
 Have a drink. Miss dinner. 15
 After all these things are done,
 she mothers her tiny one.

Betty Davis

- 3 Write a critical commentary on the following passage, which opens the novel *Wonders* (published 2001) by Geraldine Brooks.

I used to love this season. The wood stacked by the door, the tang of its sap still speaking of forest. The hay made, all golden in the low afternoon light. The rumble of the apples tumbling into the cellar bins. Smells and sights and sounds that said this year it would be all right: there'd be food and warmth for the babies by the time the snows came. I used to love to walk in the apple orchard at this time of the year, to feel the soft give underfoot when I trod on a fallen fruit. Thick, sweet scents of rotting apple and wet wood. This year, the hay stooks¹ are few and the woodpile scant, and neither matters much to me.

5

They brought the apples yesterday, a cartload for the rectory cellar. Late pickings, of course: I saw brown spots on more than a few. I had words with the carter over it, but he told me we were lucky to get as good as we got, and I suppose it's true enough. There are so few people to do the picking. So few people to do anything. And those of us who are left walk around as if we're half asleep. We are all so tired.

10

I took an apple that was crisp and good and sliced it, thin as paper, and carried it into that dim room where he sits, still and silent. His hand is on the Bible, but he never opens it. Not anymore. I asked him if he'd like me to read it to him. He turned his head to look at me, and I started. It was the first time he'd looked at me in days. I'd forgotten what his eyes could do – what they could make us do – when he stared down from the pulpit and held us, one by one, in his gaze. His eyes are the same, but his face has altered so, drawn and haggard, each line etched deep. When he came here, just three years since, the whole village made a jest of his youthful looks and laughed at the idea of being preached at by such a pup. If they saw him now, they would not laugh, even if they could remember how to do so.

15

20

'You cannot read, Anna.'

'To be sure I can, Rector. Mrs Mompellion taught me.'

25

He winced and turned away as I mentioned her, and instantly I regretted it. He does not trouble to bind his hair these days, and from where I stood the long, dark fall of it hid his face, so that I could not read his expression. But his voice, when he spoke again, was composed enough. 'Did she so? Did she so?' he muttered. 'Well, then, perhaps one day I'll hear you and see what kind of a job she made of it. But not today, thank you, Anna. Not today. That will be all.'

30

A servant has no right to stay, once she's dismissed. But I did stay, plumping the cushion, placing a shawl. He won't let me lay a fire. He won't let me give him even that little bit of comfort. Finally, when I'd run out of things to pretend to do, I left him.

¹ *hay stooks* – piles of hay in the fields after harvesting is completed

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