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LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

9695/07

Paper 7 Comment and Appreciation

May/June 2008

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 **5** printed pages and **3** blank pages.



- 1 Write a critical commentary on the following passage from the novel *Small Island* by Andrea Levy (published in 2004). The narrator, a young woman in Jamaica called Stella, is a teacher in a private school on the island, recently opened by Mrs Ryder, an American. Michael Roberts is a friend of Hortense.

A hurricane can make cows fly. It can tear trees from the ground, toss them in the air and snap them like twigs. A house can be picked up, its four walls parted, its roof twisted, and everything scattered in a divine game of hide-and-seek. This savage wind could make even the 'rock of ages' take to the air and float off as light as a bird's wing.

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But a hurricane does not come without warning. News of the gathering storm would sweep the island as swiftly as any breeze, scattering rumours of its speed, the position of its eye, the measure of its breath. I was too far from home to return safely on the day of the hurricane and Mrs Ryder needed my assistance. Luckily no children had yet arrived for the school term but the building had to be prepared for the onslaught to come. And her husband was nowhere to be found. 'He'll be somewhere safe – I know it,' Mrs Ryder told me, without concern. 'This will be my first hurricane and I don't mind telling you, Hortense, I find it quite exciting.' She skipped like a giddy girl, bolting the shutters with a delighted laugh. She hummed a song as we stowed chairs and desks and locked cupboards. She looked in the mirror, combing her hair, before we secured the doors. And turning to me she said, 'Wouldn't it be something to stand in a hurricane, to feel the full force of God's power in all its might?' But I was saying a prayer that the schoolhouse roof would stand firm and did not bother to answer such a ridiculous notion.

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It was no surprise to me when Michael knocked at the door of the schoolhouse. For how could he stay at home during a hurricane? After leading the agitated goats and chickens, flapping and straining, into the safety of the barn; after securing the shutters, shaking them as ferociously as a man could, then checking them again – twice, three times; after leading Miss Jewel and Miss Ma to gather up lamps, chocolate and water, he would have to sit confined in the windowless room at the centre of the house with Mr Philip. And the rage inside would have blown as fierce as the tempest outside. So Michael ran two miles to be with me on the day of the hurricane. Two miles through an eerie birdless silence that scared as much as the wind that followed.

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Was his shirt wet from the rain or the exertion of running? It cleaved to the muscles of his body, transparent in patches, revealing his smooth brown skin underneath. His chest was rising and bulging with every lungful of panted breath. Sweat dripped from his forehead, down his cheek and over his full lips. 'Michael Roberts,' I told him at the door, 'I am capable of looking after myself. You do not have to come all the time to protect me.' Looking in my eye without a word he pulled the clinging shirt from his body, flapping at it gently. He wiped his hand across his neck, over his forehead and let his chest fall.

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But then, catching sight of Mrs Ryder over my shoulder, he looked suddenly alarmed. And pushing me, not gently, to one side he went straight to her. He flew so fast towards her I feared he was going to embrace her. He called her Stella – a familiar name that even Mr Ryder would not use in my company. 'Stella,' he said, 'I saw your husband in his car and I thought you might be ...' he hesitated, looking over to me before saying '... alone.'

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2 Write a critical comparison of the two poems below.

(a)

Up-Hill

Does the road wind up-hill all the way?
 Yes, to the very end.
 Will the day's journey take the whole long day?
 From morn to night, my friend.

But is there for the night a resting-place? 5
 A roof for when the slow dark hours begin.
 May not the darkness hide it from my face?
 You cannot miss that inn.

Shall I meet other wayfarers at night? 10
 Those who have gone before.
 Then must I knock, or call when just in sight?
 They will not keep you standing at that door.

Shall I find comfort, travel-sore and weak? 15
 Of labour you shall find the sum.
 Will there be beds for me and all who seek?
 Yea, beds for all who come.

Christina Rossetti (1830–1894)

(b)

Nay, but I fancy somehow, year by year

Nay, but I fancy somehow, year by year
 The hard road waxing¹ easier to my feet;
 Nay, but I fancy as the season's fleet
 I shall grow ever dearer to my dear. 5
 Hope is so strong that it has conquered fear;
 Love follows, crowned and glad for fear's defeat.
 Down the long future I behold us, sweet,
 Pass, and grow ever dearer and more near,
 Pass and go onward into the mild land 10
 Where the blond harvests slumber all the noon,
 And the pale sky bends downward to the sea;
 Pass, and go forward, ever hand in hand,
 Till all the plain be quickened with the moon,
 And the lit windows beckon o'er the lea.

Robert Louis Stevenson (1850–1894)

¹waxing: becoming

- 3 Write a critical commentary on this extract from Thomas Hardy's novel *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* (published in 1891). Tess and her young brother Abraham are from a working-class country family, and because their father is unwell they have to take a cartload of bee hives very early one morning, long before sunrise. Tess is dreaming of what her father has recently been told – that the family may in fact be very rich and famous after all.

Left to his reflections Abraham soon grew drowsy. Tess was not skilful in the management of a horse, but she thought that she could take upon herself the entire conduct of the load for the present, and allow Abraham to go to sleep if he wished to do so. She made him a sort of nest in front of the hives, in such a manner that he could not fall, and, taking the reins into her own hands, jogged on as before.

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Prince, the horse, required but slight attention, lacking energy for superfluous movements of any sort. With no longer a companion to distract her, Tess fell more deeply into reverie than ever, her back leaning against the hives. The mute procession past her shoulders of trees and hedges became attached to fantastic scenes outside reality, and the occasional heave of the wind became the sigh of some immense sad soul, conterminous with the universe in space, and with history in time.

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Then, examining the mesh of events in her own life, she seemed to see the vanity of her father's pride; the gentlemanly suitor awaiting herself in her mother's fancy; to see him as a grimacing personage, laughing at her poverty, and her shrouded knightly ancestry. Everything grew more and more extravagant, and she no longer knew how time passed. A sudden jerk shook her in her seat, and Tess awoke from the sleep into which she, too, had fallen.

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They were a long way further on than when she had lost consciousness, and the waggon had stopped. A hollow groan, unlike anything she had ever heard in her life, came from the front, followed by a shout of 'Hoi there!'

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The lantern hanging at her waggon had gone out, but another was shining in her face – much brighter than her own had been. Something terrible had happened. The harness was entangled with an object which blocked the way.

In consternation Tess jumped down, and discovered the dreadful truth. The groan had proceeded from her father's poor horse Prince. The morning mailcart, with its two noiseless wheels, speeding along these lanes like an arrow, as it always did, had driven into her slow and unlighted equipage. The pointed shaft of the cart had entered the breast of the unhappy Prince like a sword, and from the wound his life's blood was spouting in a stream, and falling with a hiss into the road.

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In her despair Tess sprang forward and put her hand upon the hole, with the only result that she became splashed from face to skirt with the crimson drops. Then she stood helplessly looking on. Prince also stood firm and motionless as long as he could; till he suddenly sank down in a heap.

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By this time the mail-cart man had joined her, and began dragging and unharnessing the hot form of Prince. But he was already dead, and, seeing that nothing more could be done immediately, the mail-cart man returned to his own animal, which was uninjured.

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'You was on the wrong side,' he said. 'I am bound to go on with the mail-bags, so that the best thing for you to do is to bide here with your load. I'll send somebody to help you as soon as I can. It is getting daylight, and you have nothing to fear.'

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He mounted and sped on his way; while Tess stood and waited. The atmosphere turned pale, the birds shook themselves in the hedges, arose, and twittered; the lane showed all its white features, and Tess showed hers, still whiter. The huge pool of blood in front of her was already assuming the iridescence of coagulation; and when the sun rose a hundred prismatic hues were reflected from it. Prince lay alongside still and stark; his eyes half open, the hole in his chest looking scarcely large enough to have let out all that had animated him.

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'Tis all my doing – all mine!' the girl cried, gazing at the spectacle. 'No excuse for me – none. What will mother and father live on now? Aby, Aby!' She shook the child, who had slept soundly through the whole disaster. 'We can't go on with our load – Prince is killed!'

When Abraham realized all, the furrows of fifty years were extemporized on his young face.

'Why, I danced and laughed only yesterday!' she went on to herself. 'To think that I was such a fool!'

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