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LITERATURE (ENGLISH)

0486/03

Paper 3 Unseen

May/June 2009

1 hour 20 minutes

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 **either** Question 1 **or** Question 2.

You are advised to spend about 20 minutes reading the question paper and planning your answer.

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.



Answer **either** Question 1 **or** Question 2.

EITHER

1 Read carefully the poem on the opposite page about a working man's day.

What are your thoughts and feelings about the life of this man? How do the words of the poem make you respond in this way?

To help you answer, you might consider:

- the way the poet describes the man's day from getting up in the morning to going to bed at night
- the way the man's dreams are described
- what the poem leads you to think about the man's way of life and how it makes you feel towards him.

Truth at dawn

He rose at six each morning,
 an old sickness in his brain,
 but he gargled an instant coffee
 then sprinted for the train.

He swayed with the daily paper, 5
 before throttling it in a bin,
 as he raced to a high-rise tower
 to sign that he was in.

Then all day long he laboured 10
 at nothing much at all,
 and after his time was traded
 he turned homewards at a crawl.

And every step got slower
 as he reckoned up the cost,
 and each footfall on the pavement 15
 yawned, 'We are lost.'

For there is no refrain more timorous¹
 than the sound of shuffling feet,
 and no message more self-mocking
 than the snufflings of defeat. 20

Yet later on each evening
 between the sheets he'd creep,
 and he'd always get his own back
 on the battlefields of sleep.

In his dreams he was the hero 25
 of romances bold and blue;
 his potent² blade thrust lustily
 and his heart made derring-do³.

Only the bathroom mirror 30
 blabbed the truth each dawn,
 reciting the same cold mantra⁴:
 'I wish I'd never been born.'

¹ *timorous*: fearful

² *potent*: powerful

³ *derring-do*: daring deeds

⁴ *mantra*: a religious text often repeated to oneself

OR

- 2 Read carefully this extract from a novel. In it, a man called Biju, who is working in a restaurant in New York, has heard that there has been trouble in the remote, hilly part of India where his father and a cook, lives. He tries to phone his father to check that he is all right. He rings a guesthouse near the village where his father lives. The watchman, who looks after the guesthouse, goes to fetch Biju's father. The watchman and his family stay to hear what the phone call is all about.

How does the writer make the situation described in the extract amusing and, at the same time, sad?

To help you answer, you might consider:

- the description of the way the watchman and his family behave
- the dialogue between Biju and his father
- the ways the writing suggests the feelings of both Biju and his father and the difficulties of communication between them.

The phone sat squat in the drawing room of the guesthouse encircled by a lock and chain so the thieving servants might only receive phone calls and not make them. When it rang again, the watchman leapt at it, saying, "Phone! Phone!" and his whole family came running from their hut outside. Every time the phone rang, they ran with committed loyalty. Upkeepers of modern novelties, they would not, *would not*, let it fall to ordinariness. 5

"HELLO?"

"HELLO? HELLO?"

They gathered about the cook, giggling in delicious anticipation.

"HELLO?" 10

"HELLO? PITAJI¹?"

"BIJU?" By natural logic he raised his voice to cover the distance between them, sending his voice all the way to America.

"Biju, Biju," the watchman's family chorused, "it's Biju," they said to one another. "Oh, it's your son," they told the cook. "It's his son," they told one another. They watched for his expressions to change, for hints as to what was being said at the other end, wishing to insinuate themselves deeply into the conversation, to *become it*, in fact. 15

"HELLO HELLO?????"

"????? HAH? I CAN'T HEAR. YOUR VOICE IS VERY FAR." 20

"I CAN'T HEAR. CAN YOU HEAR?"

"He can't hear."

"WHAT?"

"*Still can't hear?*" they asked the cook.

The atmosphere of Kalimpong reached Biju all the way in New York; it swelled densely on the line and he could feel the pulse of the forest, smell the humid air, the green-black lushness; he could imagine all its different textures, the plumage of banana, the stark spear of the cactus, the delicate gestures of ferns; he could hear the croak *trrrr whonk, wee wee butt ock butt ock* of frogs in the spinach, the rising note welding imperceptibly with the evening. . . . 25 30

"HELLO? HELLO?"

"*Noise, noise,*" said the watchman's family, "*Can't hear?*"

The cook waved them away angrily, "*Shshshshsh,*" immediately terrified, then, at the loss of a precious second with his son. He turned back to the phone, still shooing them away from behind, almost sending his hand off with the vehemence of his gestures. 35

¹ Pitaji: Father

They retreated for a moment and then, growing accustomed to the dismissive motion, were no longer intimidated, and returned.

“HELLO?”

“KYA?²”

“WHAT?”

The shadow of their words was bigger than the substance. The echo of their own voices gulped the reply from across the world.

“THERE IS TOO MUCH NOISE.”

The watchman’s wife went outside and studied the precarious wire, the fragile connection trembling over ravines and over mountains, over Kanchenjunga³ smoking like a volcano or a cigar — a bird might have alighted upon it, a nightjar⁴ might have swooped through the shaky signal, the satellite in the firmament could have blipped — 45

“Too much wind, the wind is blowing,” said the watchman’s wife, “the line is swaying like this, like this” — her hand undulating⁵. 50

The children climbed up the tree and tried to hold the line steady.

A gale of static inflicted itself on the space between father and son.

“WHAT HAPPENED?” — shrieking even louder — “EVERYTHING ALL RIGHT?!”

“WHAT DID YOU SAY?” 55

“Let it go,” the wife said, plucking the children from the tree, “you’re making it worse.”

“WHAT IS HAPPENING? ARE THERE RIOTS? STRIKES?”

“NO TROUBLE NOW.” (Better not worry him.) “NOT NOW!!”

“Is he going to come?” said the watchman. 60

“ARE YOU ALL RIGHT?” Biju shrieked on the New York street.

“DON’T WORRY ABOUT ME. DON’T WORRY ABOUT ANYTHING HERE. ARE THERE PROPER ARRANGEMENTS FOR EATING AT THE HOTEL? IS THE RESTAURANT GIVING YOU ACCOMMODATION? ARE THERE ANY OTHER PEOPLE FROM UTTAR PRADESH⁶ THERE?” 65

“Give accommodation. Free food. EVERYTHING FINE. BUT ARE YOU ALL RIGHT?” Biju asked again.

“EVERYTHING QUIET NOW.”

“YOUR HEALTH IS ALL RIGHT?”

“YES. EVERYTHING ALL RIGHT.” 70

“Ahh, everything all right,” everyone said, nodding. “Everything all right? Everything all right.”

Suddenly, after this there was nothing more to say, for while the emotion was there, the conversation was not; one had bloomed, not the other, and they fell abruptly into emptiness. 75

“When is he coming?” the watchman prompted.

“WHEN ARE YOU COMING?”

“I DON’T KNOW. I WILL TRY. . . .”

Biju wanted to weep.

“CAN’T YOU GET LEAVE?” 80

He hadn’t even attained the decency of being granted a holiday now and then. He could not go home to see his father.

“WHEN WILL YOU GET LEAVE?”

“I DON’T KNOW. . . .”

“HELLO?” 85

² *Kya?*: What?

³ *Kanchenjunga*: a mountain in the Himalayas

⁴ *nightjar*: a kind of bird

⁵ *undulating*: waving up and down

⁶ *Uttar Pradesh*: a state in India

"*La ma ma ma ma ma*, he can't get leave. Why not? Don't know, must be difficult there, make a lot of money, but one thing is certain, they have to work very hard for it. . . . Don't get something for nothing . . . nowhere in the world. . . ."

"HELLO? HELLO?"

"PITAJI, CAN YOU HEAR ME?"

They retreated from each other again —

Beep beep honk honk trr butt ock, the phone went dead and they were stranded in the distance that lay between them.

"HELLO? HELLO?" — into the rictus⁷ of the receiver.

"Hello? Hello? Hello? Hello?" they echoed back to themselves.

The cook put down the phone, trembling.

"He'll ring again," said the watchman.

But the phone remained mute.

Outside, the frogs said *ttt ttt*, as if they had swallowed the dial tone.

He tried to shake the gadget back into life, wishing for at least the customary words of good-bye. After all, even on clichéd phrases, you could hoist true emotion.

"There must be a problem with the line."

"Yes, yes, yes."

As always, the problem with the line.

"He will come back fat. I have heard they all come back fat," said the watchman's sister-in-law abruptly, trying to comfort the cook.

⁷ *rictus*: gaping mouth

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