



LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

9539/03

Paper 3 Reading Literature *featuring* the Postcolonial Literature Topic

September 2025

3 hours

No Additional Materials are required.

Candidates may take set texts into the exam room. The texts may bear underlining, highlighting and vertical lines. Pages can be flagged with paper clips or by folding the page corners. Any other kind of folding or flagging of pages in texts (for example, use of sticky notes or tape flags) is not permitted.

READ THESE INSTRUCTIONS FIRST

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

Write in dark blue or black pen on both sides of the paper.

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

Answer **three** questions: one question from Section A, one question from Section B and one question from Section C.

Begin each essay on a fresh sheet of paper.

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

At the end of the examination, tie all essays together.

All questions in this paper carry equal marks.

This document consists of 7 printed pages.



Section A: Unseen Prose and Drama

Answer **one** question from this section.

1

Either

- (a) The following extract is taken from the opening of *Zenobia* (1995) by Nick Dear. The play is set during the Roman Empire. Write a critical appreciation of this extract from the play, considering in detail ways in which your response is shaped by the writer's uses of form, style and language.

Part 1

SCENE 1

A camp in the Syrian desert, AD 267. The tent of the King, Odainat. He is with his son, Hairan, a soldier. They are coming to the end of a feast. Odainat pats his stomach.

Odainat: Food tastes different when a war is won. There is no churning cauldron in your gut, that must be quelled before you start to eat. No haste, no fear this mouthful is your last. You may pick discriminately at your dinner, savouring each delicacy with the tip of your tongue. The first meal of the peace – every flavour is a blessing – every crumb an answered prayer. And my feast I share with my firstborn; and that too gives me joy.

5

Odainat's hands fall on a cochlis¹ brooch that pins his tunic together. He removes it and pins it to Hairan's tunic.

This is one of our finest jewels.

Hairan: Thank you, father.

15

Odainat: It was given to me by my wife.

Hairan: Then you should –

Odainat: No, keep it. You fought well. You deserve it. Four days' march, and we're home. I have sent Zabdas ahead to announce our victories.

20

Hairan: You will enter the city in triumph.

Odainat: I left it Odainat, a son of the desert. I return Odenathus, friend of Rome, Protector of the East. I am satisfied.

A valet, Moqimu, brings a large jug of wine and glasses.

What is that, Moqimu?

25

Moqimu: Wine, Majesty.

Odainat: We have no wine.

Moqimu: A gift, Majesty, from the Roman Commander at Emesa.

Odainat: The Romans send us wine? We have done well today!

(laughing) Drink with me, Hairan. Drink a toast: to home!

30

Moqimu pours the wine and exits, leaving the jug behind.

Hairan: To Palmyra!

They drink. Odainat toasts again.

Odainat: To the Queen!

Odainat drinks. Hairan hesitates.

35

She will never replace your mother, I know that. But have the courtesy to show respect where it is due.

Hairan: *(drinks grudgingly)* To your wife.

¹ Cochlis: A type of sea shell, used to make jewellery

<i>Odainat:</i>	My wife...like a glittering star, lighting up the night of my old age. Her eyes are as dark as a raven's wings; her teeth so white, they seem inlaid with pearls. How I cherish her.	40
<i>Hairan:</i>	The soldiers say she never lets you in her bed, father.	
<i>Odainat:</i>	I have with her five children.	
<i>Hairan:</i>	Five visits only they say.	
<i>Odainat:</i>	Envy breeds malice in a body of men.	45
<i>Hairan:</i>	I would be ashamed, to have such a reputation.	
<i>Odainat:</i>	You are sour tonight.	
<i>Hairan:</i>	Forgive me. I miss the war. Peace brings a dreadful silence. I miss the clatter of swords...the whisper of arrows...	
<i>Odainat:</i>	Then drink: to the noise of battle.	50
<i>Hairan:</i>	To Persian blood in the dust!	
	<i>They drink and laugh. Worod, a general, enters escorting Longinus who carries a travelling bag. He kneels before the King.</i>	
	Who is this?	55
<i>Worod:</i>	A scholar. Says he got lost.	
<i>Longinus:</i>	I am Cassius Longinus, Majesty, of Athens. I travel to Palmyra.	
<i>Odainat:</i>	Palmyra? On what business?	
<i>Longinus:</i>	Philosophy, my Lord. With some Greek, a little rhetoric, a parcel of mathematics. Sophistry, disputation, the Emanation of the Universal Mind. And I can read and write.	60
<i>Worod:</i>	(<i>laugh</i>) A joker.	
<i>Hairan:</i>	Kick him out.	
<i>Longinus:</i>	No, no, I have a letter! A formal invitation to attend the court of Queen Zenobia, and tutor her son!	65
<i>Odainat:</i>	(<i>reads the letter</i>) It is my wife's hand. (<i>smiles</i>) Wahballat wants to take up philosophy.	
<i>Hairan:</i>	Wahballat is a girl. He should take up knitting.	
<i>Odainat:</i>	(<i>to Longinus</i>) My sons...are as alike as wormwood and syrup.	70
<i>Longinus:</i>	It is rare indeed to find all the great qualities conjoined in one man's form, Majesty. Perhaps your soul is too capacious for your seed, and must, therefore, subdivide itself?	
<i>Odainat:</i>	(<i>laughs</i>) No. They had different mothers. Sit with us.	

Or

- (b) The following extract is taken from the novel *The Blind Assassin* (2000) by Margaret Atwood. Write a critical appreciation of this extract from the novel, considering in detail ways in which your response is shaped by the writer's uses of form, style and language.

She has a single photograph of him. She tucked it into a brown envelope on which she'd written *clippings*, and hid the envelope between the pages of *Perennials for the Rock Garden*¹, where no one else would ever look.

She's preserved this photo carefully, because it's almost all she has left of him. It's black and white, taken by one of those boxy, cumbersome flash cameras from before the war, with their accordion-pleat nozzles and their well-made leather cases that looked like muzzles, with straps and intricate buckles. The photo is of the two of them together, her and this man, on a picnic. *Picnic* is written on the back, in pencil – not his name or hers, just *picnic*. She knows the names, she doesn't need to write them down.

They're sitting under a tree; it might have been an apple tree; she didn't notice the tree much at the time. She's wearing a white blouse with the sleeves rolled to the elbow and a wide skirt tucked around her knees. There must have been a breeze, because of the way the shirt is blowing up against her; or perhaps it wasn't blowing, perhaps it was clinging, perhaps it was hot. It was hot. Holding her hand over the picture, she can still feel the heat coming up from it, like the heat from a sun-warmed stone at midnight.

The man is wearing a light-coloured hat, angled down on his head and partially shading his face. His face appears to be more darkly tanned than hers. She's turned half towards him, and smiling, in a way she can't remember smiling at anyone since. She seems very young in the picture, too young, though she hadn't considered herself too young at the time. He's smiling too – the whiteness of his teeth shows up like a scratched match flaring – but he's holding up his hand, as if to fend her off in play, or else to protect himself from the camera, from the person who must be there, taking the picture; or else to protect himself from those in the future who might be looking at him, who might be looking in at him through this square, lighted window of glazed paper. As if to protect himself from her. As if to protect her. In his outstretched, protecting hand there's the stub end of a cigarette.

She retrieves the brown envelope when she's alone, and slides the photo out from among the newspaper clippings. She lays it flat on the table and stares down into it, as if she's peering into a well or pool – searching beyond her own reflection for something else, something she must have dropped or lost, but of reach but still visible, shimmering like a jewel on sand. She examines every detail. His fingers bleached by the flash of the sun's glare; the folds of their clothing; the leaves of the tree, and the small round shapes hanging there – were they apples, after all? The coarse grass in the foreground. The grass was yellow then because the weather had been dry.

Over to one side – you wouldn't see it at first – there's a hand, cut by the margin, scissored off at the wrist, resting on the grass as if discarded. Left to its own devices

The trace of blown cloud in the brilliant sky, like ice cream smudged on chrome. His smoke-stained fingers. The distant glint of water. All drowned now.

Drowned, but shining.

¹ *Perennials for the Rock Garden*: a book on garden plants.

Section B: Postcolonial Literature

Answer **one** question from this section, using **two** texts that you have studied.

2

Either

- (a) Compare some of the ways in which **two** writers of postcolonial literature explore the idea of boundaries.

Or

- (b) Compare the use of motifs or symbols in **two** postcolonial texts you have studied

Section C: Pre-20th Century Writing

Answer **one** question from this section.

JOHN DONNE: Selected Poems

3

Either (a) 'Donne's religious poetry shows his obsession with the fate of the soul.'

With this comment in mind, discuss the presentation of redemption in Donne's religious poems. You should refer to at least **two poems** in your answer.

Or (b) Write a critical commentary on the following poem, relating it to Donne's imaginative use of imagery here and elsewhere in the selection. You should refer to at least **one other poem** in your answer.

A Valediction: Forbidding Mourning

As virtuous men pass mildly away,
And whisper to their souls to go,
Whilst some of their sad friends do say
The breath goes now, and some say, No:

So let us melt, and make no noise,
No tear-floods, nor sigh-tempests move;
'Twere profanation of our joys
To tell the laity our love.

5

Moving of th' earth brings harms and fears,
Men reckon what it did, and meant;
But trepidation of the spheres,
Though greater far, is innocent.

10

Dull sublunary lovers' love
(Whose soul is sense) cannot admit
Absence, because it doth remove
Those things which elemented it.

15

But we by a love so much refined,
That our selves know not what it is,
Inter-assured of the mind,
Care less, eyes, lips, and hands to miss.

20

Our two souls therefore, which are one,
Though I must go, endure not yet
A breach, but an expansion,
Like gold to airy thinness beat.

If they be two, they are two so
As stiff twin compasses are two;
Thy soul, the fixed foot, makes no show
To move, but doth, if the other do.

25

And though it in the centre sit,
Yet when the other far doth roam,
It leans and hearkens after it,
And grows erect, as that comes home.

30

Such wilt thou be to me, who must,
Like th' other foot, obliquely run;
Thy firmness makes my circle just,
And makes me end where I begun.

35