



Cambridge International Examinations
Cambridge International General Certificate of Secondary Education

LITERATURE (ENGLISH)

0486/42

Paper 4 Unseen

February/March 2018

1 hour 15 minutes

No Additional Materials are required.

READ THESE INSTRUCTIONS FIRST

An answer booklet is provided inside this question paper. You should follow the instructions on the front cover of the answer booklet. If you need additional answer paper ask the invigilator for a continuation booklet.

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

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

Both questions in this paper carry equal marks.



This document consists of **5** printed pages, **3** blank pages and **1** Insert.

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

EITHER

- 1 Read carefully the poem opposite, in which the poet remembers events from her childhood. Her father was a coal-miner. Canaries were birds used in coal mines as an early warning of explosive gases.

How does the poet vividly convey the speaker's feelings about her past?

To help you answer this question, you might consider:

- how the speaker describes her care of the eggs and the chicks
- how she describes the moment when she releases the birds
- how she conveys her feelings about her father and his death.

Ava Remembers Her Canaries

I christened them with words Papa used –
 Sentinel and Lookout and Firedamp.¹
Ten's old enough for a job, he said,
 nestling eggs in box of cotton and cedar chips.
Someone's gotta breed 'em.

Weeks later, the chicks burst into the world
 like dynamite. I offered them a flaking metal palace
 washed in sunlight, volunteered for outdoor chores
 to stay close. I taught them rhythm,
 yellow wingbeats timed to my washboard² strokes.

When Papa locked Sentinel behind flimsy bars,
 my tiny heels dug into dirt: *He has a family.*
 He kissed my forehead. *So do the miners.*

*I used to dream of feathers heavy with coal dust, notes plinking
 against blown-out walls, rush of methane swallowing song,
 black shards burning in a churn of flame.*

That night, I slipped from bed. Crickets chirred.
 Lilac thickened the breeze. I crept to their castle
 and cradled each small body in cupped palms,
 stroked the wheat-gold down of their throats,
 launched them from the chapped heels of my hands,
 watched them rush to meet the moon.

The morning's only music: rusted creaks,
 cage door beating like a broken wing.

What I have left of my father—
 on my back: five raised ridges from his belt buckle,
 in my breast pocket: a yellowed newspaper clipping,
 his face smudged in ink, and a headline seared on my lips
 each night before sleep: *Mining Explosion Kills 17.*

*I used to dream that everything I ate hardened into coal,
 that if I sliced my stomach open, I could burn
 grief in that dark furnace.*

¹ *Firedamp*: methane, a potentially explosive gas

² *washboard*: wooden board used for washing clothes

OR

- 2 Read carefully the extract from a novel printed opposite. William Stoner has just graduated from university. He has decided to continue his studies and not return to work on the family farm. In this passage, William tells his parents of his decision.

How does the writer memorably convey the difficulty of this moment?

To help you answer this question, you might consider:

- how the writer creates a tense atmosphere between William and his parents
- how he portrays the reactions of William's parents
- how he reveals William's feelings throughout the passage.

There was another silence. His parents, who looked straight ahead in the shadows cast by their own bodies, every now and then glanced sideways at their son, as if they did not wish to disturb him in his new estate.¹

After several minutes William Stoner leaned forward and spoke, his voice louder and more forceful than he had intended. 'I ought to have told you sooner. I ought to have told you last summer, or this morning.'

His parents' faces were dull and expressionless in the lamplight.

'What I'm trying to say is, I'm not coming back with you to the farm.'

No one moved. His father said, 'You got some things to finish up here, we can go back in the morning and you can come on home in a few days.'

Stoner rubbed his face with his open palm. 'That's—not what I meant. I'm trying to tell you I won't be coming back to the farm at all.'

His father's hands tightened on his kneecaps and he drew back in the chair. He said, 'You get yourself in some kind of trouble?'

Stoner smiled. 'It's nothing like that. I'm going on to school for another year, maybe two or three.'

His father shook his head. 'I seen you get through this evening. And the county agent said the farm school took four years.'

Stoner tried to explain to his father what he intended to do, tried to evoke in him his own sense of significance and purpose. He listened to his words fall as if from the mouth of another, and watched his father's face, which received those words as a stone receives the repeated blows of a fist. When he had finished he sat with his hands clasped between his knees and his head bowed. He listened to the silence of the room.

Finally his father moved in his chair. Stoner looked up. His parents' faces confronted him; he almost cried out to them.

'I don't know,' his father said. His voice was husky and tired. 'I didn't figure it would turn out like this. I thought I was doing the best for you I could, sending you here. Your ma and me has always done the best we could for you.'

'I know,' Stoner said. He could not look at them longer. 'Will you be all right? I could come back for a while this summer and help. I could—'

'If you think you ought to stay here and study your books, then that's what you ought to do. Your ma and me can manage.'

His mother was facing him, but she did not see him. Her eyes were squeezed shut; she was breathing heavily, her face twisted as if in pain, and her closed fists were pressed against her cheeks. With wonder Stoner realized that she was crying, deeply and silently, with the shame and awkwardness of one who seldom weeps. He watched her for a moment more; then he got heavily to his feet and walked out of the parlor. He found his way up the narrow stairs that led to his attic room; for a long time he lay on his bed and stared with open eyes into the darkness above him.

¹ *estate*: social status

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