Cambridge Assessment International Education

# Cambridge IGCSE™

**LITERATURE IN ENGLISH** **0475/42**

Paper 4 Unseen **February/March 2023**

**1 hour 15 minutes**

You must answer on the enclosed answer booklet.

You will need: Answer booklet (enclosed)

*6494798734*

**INSTRUCTIONS**

- Answer **one** question: **either** Question 1 **or** Question 2.
- Follow the instructions on the front cover of the answer booklet. If you need additional answer paper, ask the invigilator for a continuation booklet.

**INFORMATION**

- The total mark for this paper is 25.
- All questions are worth equal marks.

This document has **8** pages. Any blank pages are indicated.


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

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

**Either**

**1** Read carefully the poem on page 3, which is an extract from a longer text. The speaker is about to begin work on planting his crop for the coming year. Before he does this, he prays to Asase Yaa, an African Earth goddess of fertility.

**How does the speaker memorably convey his thoughts and feelings at this moment?**

To help you answer this question, you might consider:

- his close relationship with the land
- how the speaker conveys his feelings of hope
- how the writing vividly portrays the things which might threaten his crop.

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from *Masks*

Asase Yaa,
You, Mother of Earth,
on whose soil
I have placed my tools
on whose soil
I will hoe
I will work
the year has come round
again;
thirsty mouth of the dust
is ready for water
for seed;
drink
and be happy
eat
may you rest
for the year has come round
again.
And may the year
this year of all years
be fruitful
beyond the fruit of your labour:
shoots faithful to tip
juice to stem
leaves to green;
and may the knife
or the cut-
lass not cut
me; roots blunt,
shoots break,
green wither,
winds shatter,
damp rot,
hot harm-
attan[1] come
drifting in harm
to the crops;
the tunnelling
termites not
raise their red
monuments, graves,
above the blades
of our labour.

[1]*harmattan*: a dry and dusty wind

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**OR**

**2** Read carefully the following extract from a novel which explores the narrator's relationship with her mother, Katherine O'Dell, who is a famous actress. In this extract, the narrator gives a sequence of memories of growing up with her mother in the family home. Kitty is their housekeeper.

**How does the narrator memorably portray her mother?**

To help you answer this question, you might consider:

- how she portrays her mother's personality and behaviour
- the effect that her mother has on the people at the birthday party
- how she conveys her own feelings towards her mother.

My mother picks up the phone receiver and dials. Everything was 'marvellous!' when she was on this phone; a beige thing on the kitchen wall with a long clapped-out curly cord that you had to duck under as she paced and smoked, saying 'marvellous!' while giving me the wink, indicating her coffee, or a glass of wine that was out of reach, with a pointed finger and a rolling hand.

'Just marvellous,' she might say.

Or she talks to me, a girl of eight or nine sitting at the table in a pink cotton dress brought back from America. She involves the dog who waits under the table, like a dog in the movies, for scraps and crumbs. Mostly she speaks to the ceiling, at the place where it meets the wall. Her eyes rove along this line as though looking for ideas up there, or for justice. Yes, that is what she wants. She tucks her face down quickly to light another cigarette. She exhales.

The toast is now fully ignored. The toast is dead to her now. The chair is pushed back, the cigarette stubbed out on the actual plate. After which she gets up and walks away. Someone else will dispose of all that. Because I think I mentioned that my mother was a star. Not just on screen or on the stage, but at the breakfast table also, my mother Katherine O'Dell was a star.

An hour or so later she is back in the kitchen banging dishes around. She might throw the toast out through the open window or crack the plate on the edge of the sink. Because Kitty is not around. Kitty is shopping for dinner, she is on a day off, nursing her cancerous sister. Kitty is never there when you want her, though she was there all the time. And when she arrives, laden or sad, the plate was an accident and Kitty is a treasure who must be courted and spoiled. Our housekeeper, Kitty, had a daily[1] in to clean, she had a fancy carpet sweeper and one of the first dishwashers in the country. It came in time for my twenty-first birthday, there was even a photograph: my mother opening the door in a shock of steam while Kitty, in the background, sticks to her own thoughts and to the big Belfast sink.

My mother put me into a dress for the occasion. We have moved on from the pink American cottons, through three-button pinafores and drop-waisted short dresses over skinny, raw knees. I am twenty-one. My arms are soft and mottled white: I am too tall. For my birthday, I sport a swamp-green and sickish pink thing with tulle[2] pompoms on a long tulle skirt. My mother – there she is, holding the birthday cake high – wears black. In front of her is a crowd of people, and also me. There is something overdetermined[3] about the faces in this second photograph. I look at them, over the years, their cheeks blotched, their eyes fixed, and I wonder what they feel.

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*Star struck.*

You could look at those people for quite a while.

Their eyes watch her from behind a mask of delight, and it is not about attraction, this look, it is more about disaster. There is a painful stretch to some of the smiles that is envy about to happen. Especially the women. There is no denying this – my mother made women, especially, difficult to themselves.

In the middle of it all, is my own face at twenty-one, dreading the limelight and sweetened, at the same time, by her attention. The flames on the cake burn small and straight. I am held in my mother's gaze, while all around us are the fervent[4] and the savage. Or maybe it is just the drink made them look that way. All around us are the faces of the crowd.

[1]*daily*: contract cleaner
[2]*tulle*: type of lacy fabric
[3]*overdetermined*: strained
[4]*fervent*: passionate

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| Surname | StemUp Model Solution |
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| Answer booklet | Write the question number in the left-hand margin at the start of each answer. |

Question number

1

At first this poem reads like a simple prayer of hope, but what makes it memorable is the tension inside that prayer. The speaker approaches Asase Yaa with reverence and trust, yet as he goes on, his fears press in more and more, until the prayer is almost overwhelmed by a list of everything that could go wrong. The poet conveys a man whose whole life depends on the land, and who knows that the earth can destroy as easily as it can provide.

The opening establishes an intimate, almost familial bond. The goddess is addressed directly and tenderly as "Mother of Earth", so the soil is not just something he works but a parent who feeds him. The repeated phrase "on whose soil" places him physically on her body, and the plain details "I have placed my tools" and "I will hoe / I will work" present him as a humble labourer making a promise. His relationship with the land is therefore one of mutual obligation: he gives his labour, and hopes she will give her fruit.

The sense of ritual is reinforced by the cyclical structure. The line "the year has come round / again" appears twice, and the isolation of "again" on its own line stresses the endless return of the seasons. This could feel comforting, a reassurance that planting time always comes back, but it might also suggest weariness, the knowledge that the struggle must be faced every year. The earth is personified as a "thirsty mouth of the dust", and he urges her to "drink / and be happy / eat", even wishing that she may "rest". The single-word imperatives sound gentle and nurturing, like someone feeding a tired relative, so the boundary between the goddess and the soil blurs: when the land is watered and seeded, the goddess herself is satisfied.

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His hope is expressed most fully in the second section. The phrase "this year of all years" is striking, because it hints that previous harvests have failed and that this one matters desperately. He asks for the crop to be "fruitful / beyond the fruit of your labour", a wish for more than ordinary abundance. The image of growth that follows is carefully ordered: "shoots faithful to tip / juice to stem / leaves to green". The word "faithful" is especially effective, since it gives the plants the same loyalty and devotion the speaker shows the goddess.

However, the hope quickly turns to dread, and here the writing becomes most vivid. The speaker prays that "the knife" will not cut him, and the word "cutlass" is split across a line break so that the line itself seems to be cut, enacting the injury he fears. Then comes a rapid catalogue of disasters: "roots blunt, / shoots break, / green wither, / winds shatter, / damp rot". Each phrase is a brief noun followed by a harsh, active verb, and the heavy monosyllables with their hard consonants create a battering rhythm. It is significant that the threats now take up more space than the hopes, which conveys how real and familiar these dangers are to him. Even the wind is split, as "hot harm" breaks off before its ending, so that the harmattan carries the word "harm" inside it, and the alliteration makes the dry wind sound deliberately malicious as it comes "drifting in harm / to the crops".

The final image is the most unsettling. The "tunnelling / termites" are imagined raising "their red / monuments, graves" above the crop. The termite mounds become memorials to a dead harvest, and the colour "red" may suggest blood or violence. The phrase "the blades / of our labour" is a powerful closing pun: the blades are the young shoots of grass and grain, but they also recall the tools and the knife from earlier.

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The poem therefore ends not with confident blessing but with a vision of graves, and that unresolved ending is what makes it so memorable. The speaker's piety and hope are sincere, yet the poet shows that faith and fear are bound together for anyone whose survival depends on the earth.

2

The narrator portrays her mother as a dazzling but exhausting performer, a woman who is always on stage, even at the breakfast table, and whose glamour leaves damage in its wake. What makes the portrait memorable is the narrator's voice: dry, ironic and controlled, it allows us to see through her mother's performance while revealing how much the daughter was both hurt by her and drawn to her.

From the start, the mother is defined by performance. The repeated word "marvellous", placed in inverted commas and exclamation marks, is clearly a stock phrase for the phone rather than a sincere feeling, and the wink she gives her daughter mid-conversation suggests that both of them know it is an act. The details of the scene are restless: she "paced and smoked", gesturing with "a pointed finger and a rolling hand" for coffee or wine she cannot reach. These gestures are theatrical and commanding, showing that she expects others to serve her.

The narrator's irony is sharpest when she describes her mother's self-absorption. The mother speaks "to the ceiling", her eyes roving "as though looking for ideas up there, or for justice". The narrator then adds, "Yes, that is what she wants", a sly comment suggesting that her mother casts herself as a wronged heroine in a drama only she can see. The child, though present, is almost a prop, alongside the dog that waits "like a dog in the movies". This simile implies that the whole household has been arranged like a film set around its star.

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Short sentences give the toast scene a comic but cold finality: "The toast is now fully ignored. The toast is dead to her now." The exaggeration is funny, yet it also shows how completely the mother withdraws attention once something no longer interests her. Stubbing the cigarette out "on the actual plate" and walking away, leaving "Someone else" to clear up, reveals her carelessness. The deliberately casual "I think I mentioned that my mother was a star" is heavily ironic: the narrator has not needed to mention it, because the behaviour has already shown us that being a star means being served.

Her moods are also unpredictable. Later she is "banging dishes around" and might throw the toast out of the window or crack the plate, but the moment Kitty returns, "the plate was an accident" and Kitty becomes "a treasure who must be courted and spoiled". The narrator exposes how quickly her mother rewrites events to suit her audience.

The structure moves through memories and photographs, often in the present tense, which makes the past feel vivid and inescapable. In the birthday photograph the contrast in clothing is telling. The daughter, "too tall", is put into a "swamp-green and sickish pink thing", the vague word "thing" conveying her embarrassment, while her mother "wears black" and holds the cake "high", elegant and central. Even at her own birthday, the daughter is upstaged, and the phrase "a crowd of people, and also me" places her as an afterthought.

The mother's effect on the guests is darkly portrayed. The one-line paragraph "Star struck." isolates the phrase for emphasis, but the narrator reinterprets it: the guests' look "is not about attraction" but "more about disaster". Their smiles show "envy about to happen", and the narrator claims her mother "made women,

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especially, difficult to themselves". The mother's glamour is therefore presented as almost dangerous, provoking insecurity and resentment in those around her. The final vision of "the fervent and the savage" makes the party sound frightening, though the narrator immediately undercuts herself: "Or maybe it is just the drink".

Her own feelings are deeply ambivalent. At twenty-one she is "dreading the limelight and sweetened, at the same time, by her attention". The image "I am held in my mother's gaze" suggests both love and captivity. The small, straight flames on the cake create a still, intimate centre amid the crowd, as if for a moment mother and daughter share something private. The portrait is memorable precisely because it refuses to condemn or idolise: the mother is selfish, theatrical and erratic, yet her attention is still something the daughter longs for.