Cambridge Assessment International Education

Cambridge IGCSE™

LITERATURE IN ENGLISH **0475/42**

Paper 4 Unseen **February/March 2024**

1 hour 15 minutes

You must answer on the enclosed answer booklet.

You will need: Answer booklet (enclosed)

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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 following poem. The poet is writing about the time when her daughter has left home in order to study.

How does the poet memorably convey her feelings about her daughter leaving home?

To help you answer this question, you might consider:

- how she portrays the house and her daughter's room
- how the poet conveys her feelings when her daughter returns and then leaves again
- how she conveys her feelings in the final section of the poem.

Empty Nest

Dear child, the house pines when you leave.
I research whether there is any bird who grieves
over its empty nest.

Your vacant room
is a still-life framed by the unclosed door;
read by sunlight, an open book on the floor.

I fold the laundry; hang your flower dress
in darkness. Forget-me-nots[1].

*

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Beyond the tall fence, I hear horse-chestnuts[2]
counting themselves.
Then autumn; Christmas.
You come and go, singing. Then ice; snowdrops[3].

Our home hides its face in hands of silence.

I knew mothering, but not this other thing
which hefts[4] my heart each day. Heavier.
Now I know.

*

This is the shy sorrow. It will not speak up.
I play one chord on the piano;
it vanishes, tactful,
as dusk muffles the garden; a magpie staring from its branch.
The marble girl standing by the bench.

From the local church, bells like a spelling.
And the evening star like a text.
And then what next …

[1]*forget-me-nots*: small blue flowers
[2]*horse-chestnuts*: species of tree which drops hard seed cases
[3]*snowdrops*: white flowers that bloom in winter
[4]*hefts*: heaves up

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Or

2 Read carefully the following extract from a novel. The narrator is travelling on horseback across a remote desert region. He is accompanied by a small group of men and 'the girl'. One morning, a storm approaches.

How does the writer vividly convey a sense of danger?

To help you answer this question, you might consider:

- how he portrays the approach of the storm
- his description of the storm and the reactions of the travellers
- how he conveys the impact that the storm has on them.

Rolling down upon us over the snowy plain is a gigantic black wave.

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My voice rasps from my throat: ‘Come, men, let us load.’

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

Question number

1

The poet conveys her feelings about her daughter leaving home as a grief that is quiet, bewildering and slow to be named. Rather than crying out, she lets the house, the room and the garden carry her sorrow for her, so that the poem feels restrained on the surface but aches underneath. What makes it so memorable, I think, is that she seems to be discovering her feelings as she writes, moving from searching for answers to a final question she cannot finish.

The opening line, "Dear child, the house pines when you leave", sounds like the start of a letter, which immediately suggests distance: she must now write to the daughter she once spoke to every day. Yet she does not say that she pines. She transfers the feeling to "the house", as if her own sadness is too exposed to state directly. Her next act is oddly practical: "I research whether there is any bird who grieves". The clinical verb "research" is touching because it shows her trying to understand her loss rationally, looking for proof that what she feels is natural. The line break that isolates "over its empty nest" makes the nest, and the emptiness, hang alone on the page.

Her portrayal of the daughter's room is especially delicate. The "vacant room" becomes "a still-life framed by the unclosed door", turning a living space into a painting, something beautiful but motionless and no longer lived in. The "unclosed door" is quietly moving: the mother cannot bring herself to shut it, perhaps because closing it would admit that the daughter has really gone. Light is the only reader now, "read by sunlight, an open book on the floor", and the rhyme of "door" and "floor" gives the scene a still, settled finish. Even ordinary chores become loaded. She will "hang your flower dress / in darkness", the enjambment dropping

Question number

the bright dress into the dark of the wardrobe, and the fragment "Forget-me-nots" works twice: it describes the pattern on the dress and is a silent plea not to be forgotten.

The second section speeds time up to show how the daughter's visits make things harder rather than easier. The horse-chestnuts "counting themselves" suggest the mother is counting the days, and the clipped list "Then autumn; Christmas" compresses whole seasons into a few words. The carefree line "You come and go, singing" contrasts painfully with what follows: "Then ice; snowdrops." Her leaving again is felt as a freeze. The personification "Our home hides its face in hands of silence" is one of the most powerful images in the poem, because it makes the house behave like a weeping person, again expressing grief the mother will not show herself. She then admits, "I knew mothering, but not this other thing". Unable to name the feeling, she calls it "this other thing", and the verb "hefts" makes it a physical weight. The single word "Heavier." standing alone as a sentence shows the burden growing, and "Now I know." has a bleak finality, as if she has learned something she wishes she had not.

In the final section she does name it: "the shy sorrow. It will not speak up." This personification suits the whole poem, since her grief has been shy throughout, hiding in objects. Even music cannot hold it: the "one chord on the piano" simply "vanishes, tactful", as though the sound politely withdraws rather than intruding on her silence. The images that follow are fragmentary and still: dusk that "muffles the garden", a magpie "staring", and "The marble girl standing by the bench". The statue seems to me a haunting substitute for the daughter, a girl who stays but is cold and lifeless. Finally, the bells are "like a spelling" and the evening star "like a text", similes of language and messages that suggest she now reads the world for signs of her child.

Question number

The poem ends "And then what next", with no question mark and no full stop. The repeated "And" builds expectation, but the missing punctuation leaves the line, and the mother, suspended in uncertainty. This unfinished ending memorably conveys that her sorrow is not resolved: she has learned to name it, but she does not yet know how to live with it.