
LITERATURE (ENGLISH)

0486/43

Paper 4 Unseen

May/June 2015

1 hour 15 minutes

No Additional Materials 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.



The syllabus is approved for use in England, Wales and Northern Ireland as a Cambridge International Level 1/Level 2 Certificate.

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 following poem. In it the poet writes about an albino blackbird a friend had seen. Blackbirds are usually black birds with yellow beaks and yellow rings round their eyes. “Albino” means abnormally white.

How does the poet’s writing convey to you her fascination with the albino blackbird?

To help you answer this question, you might consider:

- how the poet imagines the bird at first
- how her images of the bird change and develop
- the overall impact the bird makes on her.

Albino

The truth is, it was only part white;
 the albino blackbird that came to your garden
 two winters ago – but into my head
 comes this ghost of a bird, shadowless,
 a white absence, blind negative¹

in the snow. No reflection glides
 over the lake where he flies, light and boneless,
 no sound from his throat.

And though you say they never survive; the rare
 or different, destroyed by their own kind
 I see how he speeds out of the distance,
 gathers weight, and darkens, over the miles
 till he meets his own blackness, grows

into lustre; blackbryd, ouzel, merle²
 who quickens the heart as he sings
 each night from our gate-post;
 his mouth's open crocus³, his eye ringed with gold.

¹ *negative*: photographic image in which black and white are reversed

² *blackbryd, ouzel, merle*: all old names for a blackbird

³ *crocus*: small beak-shaped flower

Or

- 2 Read carefully the following extract from an autobiography. The writer describes a boyhood trip with his father to the local park. The father swims in the lake, while the boy, who is afraid of water, watches him.

How does the writer vividly convey to you his feelings about this event?

To help you answer this question, you might consider:

- the writer's descriptions of the lake and the swans
- his descriptions of his father swimming
- how his thoughts and feelings about his father develop.

Instead of walking in the direction of the waterworks, we walked quietly towards the lake in the centre of the park. Swimming here was forbidden. The lake was surrounded by a low iron fence which was only three feet high. So it was not meant to keep people away from the deep water, only to emphasise the prohibition. I had never seen anyone swim here, except a family of swans. I had heard that the lake was maybe forty feet deep. The banks down to the water's edge were steep and overgrown with tall weeds. One reason I think Dad liked this park was its informality. It was more like the countryside than the term 'park' suggested.

'You wait here and mind this stuff. I won't be long,' he said without looking at me. I was immediately relieved and immediately apprehensive. The edges of the lake had swathes of water reed growing and beyond that a film of algae that looked like green confetti¹. Only at the centre could you see the still black sheen of unmoving water. It looked pretty at first glance, especially when the swans moved across it. But the thought of it was ominous, and the swans scared me. They were not like the birds in the reservoir lakes who were used to the proximity of people with their toy boats and the fishermen and families who often fed them bait or breadcrumbs. The lake swans never got close to human beings because of the fence, the bank and the reeds. The lake was their home and they patrolled it with austere² assurance.

Dad stepped over the fence with the rolled-up towel and swimming trunks he had brought in the small haversack³. Within minutes, he had changed and was descending the bank. 'Daddy, Daddy, what about the swans?' I asked, becoming more fearful by the second. I had seen the waterworks swans hissing and charging at dogs they thought were too near their nests. I had watched them stand up and spread their wings, flapping furiously. 'The swans won't come near me,' Dad assured me calmly as he slid down through the waist-high weeds and entered the water like a sea snake. He breasted the reeds and the water without a sound. A few water hens scurried out and skimmed to the far side of the lake. Other birds called out their warning at his alien presence in the water. Everywhere else around us was complete silence.

But Dad was no alien here. He swam on through the algae into the middle of the lake. I saw his head and face crusted with the green scum and his black shiny hair sitting on top of the water. He looked like a seal that had suddenly emerged out of the black depths. Then he disappeared again, only to reappear a few seconds later. I watched him intensely and felt lonely and afraid. He moved across the water as if his head was fixed to a submerged stick and an invisible hand was moving it under the surface. He wasn't himself. There were no signs of movement of a body beneath

the dull water. For a moment I hardly recognised the thing in the water. All I knew was an overwhelming sense of distance between him and me. His hand came up out of the water and made a slight wave. And then he was swallowed up by the lake again. I knew the wave was an encouragement for me to be unafraid; but it was a passing gesture, as if he was only half conscious of me or anything else. There in the middle of the lake he hardly made a splash or a ripple. He seemed so content. Water was his element and he melted into it. I didn't know him. I only knew the man who made aeroplanes and who brought home animals. This aquatic beast who looked back at me like a ponderous seal, rolled languorously⁴ as a beaver, shook his wet hair and snorted like a water buffalo, was from another world.

¹ *confetti*: small pieces of coloured paper thrown in celebration

² *austere*: stern or severe

³ *haversack*: backpack or rucksack

⁴ *languorously*: lazily and gracefully

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