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Cambridge International AS & A Level

Cambridge International Examinations
Cambridge International Advanced Subsidiary and Advanced Level

LITERATURE IN ENGLISH **9695/71**

Paper 7 Comment and Appreciation **October/November 2015**

2 hours

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

All questions in this paper carry equal marks.

This document consists of **7** printed pages, **1** blank page and **1** Insert.

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1 Write a critical commentary on the following extract from the novel *The Memory of Love* (published 2010) by Aminatta Forna.

The next day, at eleven o'clock in the morning, I was arrested.

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Without looking up or interrupting his meticulous transcription of my answers, he said, ‘Do you need to be somewhere?’

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2 Write a critical commentary on the poem below, by Theodore Roethke (1908–1963).

The Meadow Mouse

I

In a shoe box stuffed in an old nylon stocking
Sleeps the baby mouse I found in the meadow,
Where he trembled and shook beneath a stick
Till I caught him up by the tail and brought him in,
Cradled in my hand,
A little quaker, the whole body of him trembling,
His absurd whiskers sticking out like a cartoon-mouse,
His feet like small leaves,
Little lizard-feet,
Whitish and spread wide when he tried to struggle away,
Wriggling like a minuscule puppy.

Now he's eaten his three kinds of cheese and drunk from his bottle-cap watering-trough –
So much he just lies in one corner,
His tail curled under him, his belly big
As his head; his bat-like ears
Twitching, tilting toward the least sound.

Do I imagine he no longer trembles
When I come close to him?
He seems no longer to tremble.

II

But this morning the shoe-box house on the back porch is empty.
Where has he gone, my meadow mouse,
My thumb of a child that nuzzled in my palm? –

To run under the hawk's wing,
Under the eye of the great owl watching from the elm-tree,
To live by courtesy of the shrike[1], the snake, the tom-cat.

I think of the nestling[2] fallen into the deep grass,
The turtle gasping in the dusty rubble of the highway,
The paralytic[3] stunned in the tub, and the water rising, –
All things innocent, hapless, forsaken.

[1] *shrike* – a bird that can attack small animals
[2] *nestling* – a very young bird, still unable to fly
[3] *paralytic* – a paralysed person, unable to move

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3 Write a critical commentary on the following extract from *Conversation in a Pantry* by Henry Handel Richardson (1870–1946).

It was no use, she simply could not sleep. She had tried lying all sorts of ways: with the blanket pulled over her or the blanket off; with her knees doubled up to her chin or stretched so straight that her feet nearly touched the bottom of the bed; on her back with her hands under her neck, or with her face burrowed in the pillow. Nothing helped. Going on in her she could still feel the bumps and lurches of the coach in which she had ridden most of that day. Then the log that had been smouldering in the brick fireplace burnt away in the middle, and collapsed with a crash; and the two ends, rolling together, broke into flames again. These threw shadows which ran about the ceiling, and up and down the white walls, like strange animals.

She was spending the night with Alice, and they had had a fire 'just for luxury', and had sat by it for nearly an hour before going to bed. It would be her last chance of anything like that, Alice said: in schools, you never had fires, and all lights went out to the minute. And their talk had been fearfully interesting. For Alice was in love – she was over seventeen – and had told her about it just as if she was grown up, too; looking into the fire with ever such a funny little smile, and her blue eyes quite small behind their thick, curly lashes.

'Oh, don't you wish we could see into the future, Trix? And what it's going to bring us?'

But though she said yes, she wasn't sure if she did, really; she liked surprises better. Besides, all the last part of the time Alice talked, she had been screwing up her courage to put a question. But she hadn't managed to get it out. And that was one reason why now she couldn't sleep.

With a fresh toss, she sighed gustily. And, where her tumblings and fidgetings had failed, this sound called her companion back from the downy meadows.

'What's the matter, child? Aren't you asleep yet?'

'No, I simply can't.'

Alice sat up in bed, and shook her hair back from her face. 'You're over-excited. Try a drink of water.'

'I have. I've drunk it all up.'

'Then you must be hungry.'

'Well, yes, I am perhaps … a little.'

'Come on then, let's forage.' And throwing back the sheet, the elder girl slid her feet to the floor.

One tall white figure, one short, they opened the door and stepped out on the verandah.

Here it was almost as bright as day; for the moon hung like a round cheese in the sky, and drenched everything with its light. Barefoot they pattered, the joins in the verandah floor-boards, which had risen, cutting into their soles. Had they to pass open windows, dark holes in which people lay sleeping, Alice laid a finger on her lips. From one of these came the sound of snores – harsh snores of the chromatic kind, which went up the scale and down, over and over again, without a pause.

Turning a corner, they stepped off the verandah and took a few steps on hard pebbly ground. Inside the pantry, which was a large outhouse, there were sharp contrasts of bluish-white moonlight and black shadows.

Swiftly Alice skimmed the familiar shelves. 'Here's lemon cheese-cakes … and jam tarts … and gingersnaps … and pound cake. But I can't start you on these, or you'd be sick.' And cutting a round off a home-made loaf, she spread it thickly with dairy butter, topped by a layer of quince jelly. 'There, that's more wholesome.'

Oh, had anything ever tasted so delicious? … as this slice eaten at dead of night. Perched on an empty, upturned kerosene-tin, the young girl munched and munched, holding her empty hand outspread below, lest the quivering jelly glide over the crust's edge.

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Alice took a cheese-cake and sat down on a lidded basket. 'I say, *did* you hear Father? Oh, Trix, wouldn't it be positively too awful if one discovered *afterwards*, one had married a man who snored?'

The muncher made no answer: the indelicacy of the question stunned her: all in the dark as she was, she felt her face flame. And yet … was this not perhaps the very chance she had been waiting for? If Alice could say such a thing, out loud, without embarrassment … Hastily squeezing down her last titbit – she felt it travel, overlarge, the full length of her gullet – she licked her jellied fingers clean and took the plunge.

'Dallie, there's something I … I want to ask you something … something I want to know.'

'Fire away!' said Alice, and went on nibbling at the pastry-edging that trimmed her tartlet.

'Yes. But … well, I don't quite … I mean I …'

'Like that, is it? Wait a tick,' and rather more rapidly than she had intended, Alice bolted her luscious circle of lemon-cheese, picked up her basket and planted it beside the tin. 'Now then.'

Shut away in this outhouse, the young girl might have cried her words aloud. But leaning over till she found the shell of her friend's ear, she deposited them safely inside. Alice, who was ticklish, gave an involuntary shudder. But as the sense of the question dawned on her, she sat up very stiff and straight, and echoed perturbed: '*How?* Oh, but Kid, I'm not sure – not at all sure – whether you ought to know. At your age!' said seventeen to thirteen.

'But I must, Dallie.'

'But why, my dear?'

'Because of something Ruth said.'

'Oh, Ruth!' said Alice scornfully. 'Trust Ruth for saying the wrong thing. What was it?'

'Why, that … now I was growing up … was as good as grown up … I must take care. For, for fear … But, Dallie, how can I? … if I don't know?' This last question came out with a rush, and with a kind of click in the throat.

'Well, well! I always have felt sorry for you children, with no mother but only Ruth to bring you up – and she for ever prinking before her glass. But you know you'll be perfectly safe at school, Trix. They'll look after you, never fear!'

But there was more to come.

It was Ella, it seemed, Ella Morrison, who was two years older than her, who'd begun it. She'd said her mother said now she mustn't let the boys kiss her any more.

'And you have, eh?'

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