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CAMBRIDGE
International Education

Cambridge International AS & A Level

LITERATURE IN ENGLISH **9695/21**

Paper 2 Prose and Unseen **May/June 2026**

2 hours

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You must answer on the enclosed answer booklet.

You will need: Answer booklet (enclosed)

INSTRUCTIONS

- Answer **two** questions in total:
  - Section A: answer **one** question.
  - Section B: answer **one** question.
- Follow the instructions on the front cover of the answer booklet. If you need additional answer paper, ask the invigilator for a continuation booklet.
- Dictionaries are **not** allowed.

INFORMATION

- The total mark for this paper is 50.
- All questions are worth equal marks.

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Section A: Prose

Answer **one** question from this section.

KIRAN DESAI: *The Inheritance of Loss*

1 **Either** **(a)** Discuss some of the effects Desai achieves with the novel's frequent shifts of time.

Or **(b)** Comment closely on ways in which Desai presents the actions of the police in the following passage.

'I have become a keen gardener,' said the SDO, 'since I arrived in Kalimpong.

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The only grace was that he wouldn't see them recoiling and would disappear entirely inside the alcohol that had always given him solace.

(*from* Chapter 35)

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from ***Stories of Ourselves, Volume 1***

2 **Either** **(a)** Compare ways in which **two** stories from the selection present characters' responses to change.

Or **(b)** Comment closely on Maurice Shadbolt's presentation of the arrival of the Maoris in the following passage from *The People Before*.

Then we had our surprise. My father's step faltered; I blundered up alongside him. We saw the people climbing off the launch. And we saw who they were, at last. My father stopped perfectly still and silent. They were Maoris. We were still a hundred yards or more away, but there was no mistaking their clothing and colour. They were Maoris, all right.

'There's something wrong somewhere,' he said at last. 'It doesn't make sense. No Maori ever owned this place. I'd have known. Who the hell do they think they are, coming here?'

I couldn't answer him. He strode on down to the river. There were young men, and two old women with black head-scarves. And last of all there was something the young men carried. As we drew nearer we saw it was an old man in a rough litter. The whole party of them fussed over making the old man comfortable. The old women, particularly; they had tattoos on their chins and wore sharktooth necklaces. They straightened the old man's blankets and fixed the pillow behind his head. He had a sunken, withered face and he didn't look so much sick, as tired. His eyes were only half-open as everyone fussed around. It looked as if it were a great effort to keep them that much open. His hair was mostly grey, and his dry flesh sagged in thin folds about his ancient neck. I reckoned that he must have been near enough to a hundred years old. The young men talked quickly among themselves as they saw my father approaching. One came forward, apparently as spokesman. He looked about the oldest of them, perhaps thirty. He had a fat, shiny face.

'Here,' said my father. 'What's all this about?' I knew his opinion of Maoris: they were lazy, drank too much, and caused trouble. They just rode on the backs of the men on the land, like the loafers in the cities. He always said we were lucky there were so few in our district. 'What do you people think you're doing here?' he demanded.

'We rang up yesterday,' the spokesman said. 'We told your missus we might be coming today.'

'I don't know about that. She said someone else was coming. The people who were here before.'

'Well,' said the young man, smiling. 'We were the people before.'

'I don't get you. You trying to tell me you owned this place?'

'That's right. We owned all the land round this end of the river. Our tribe.'

'That must have been a hell of a long time ago.'

'Yes,' agreed the stranger. 'A long time.' He was pleasantly spoken and patient. His round face, which I could imagine looking jolly, was very solemn just then.

I looked around and saw my mother and Jim coming slowly down from the house.

'I still don't get it,' my father said. 'What do you want?'

'We just want to go across your land, if that's all right. Look, we better introduce ourselves. My name is Tom Taikaka. And this –'

My father was lost in a confusion of introductions. But he still didn't shake anyone's hand. He just stood his ground, aloof and faintly hostile. Finally there was the old man. He looked as though he had gone to sleep again.

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'You see he's old,' Tom explained. 'And has not so long to live. He is the last great man of our tribe, the oldest. He wishes to see again where he was born. The land over which his father was chief. He wishes to see this before his spirit departs for Rerengawairua.'

By this time my mother and Jim had joined us. They were as confused as we were. *50*

'You mean you've come just to –' my father began.

'We've come a long way,' Tom said. 'Nearly a hundred miles, from up the coast. That's where we live now.'

(*from* The People Before)

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EVELYN WAUGH: *A Handful of Dust*

3 **Either** **(a)** Discuss ways in which Waugh presents divorce laws and the legal system in the novel.

Or **(b)** Comment closely on Waugh's presentation of Brenda's and Tony's experiences in the following passage.

She would spend that day in bed, as she spent two or three days a week at this time.

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As each man and woman arrived he sank on to the dry grass and rested against his load; when the last of them came

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up with the party Dr Messinger would give the word and they would start off again, descending into the green heart of the forest before them.

(*from* In Search of a City, Part 3)

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COLSON WHITEHEAD: *The Underground Railroad*

4 **Either** **(a)** Discuss Whitehead's presentation of Caesar and the role he plays in the novel.

Or **(b)** Comment closely on the following passage, considering ways in which Whitehead presents Cora's rescue.

He moved his head slightly.

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'Will you come with us?'

(*from* Tennessee)

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Section B: Unseen

Answer **one** question from this section.

Either

5 Comment closely on the presentation of Madam Koto, her car, and people's reactions to them in the following passage.

In your answer, consider the writer's choice of language, action and narrative methods.

> And then, to crown our amazement, the news reached us that Madame Koto had bought herself a car.

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The people nodded.

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Or

6 Comment closely on ways in which the writer presents the speaker's response to animals in the following poem.

In your answer, consider the writer's choice of language, structure and poetic methods.

Come into Animal Presence

Come into animal presence.
No man is so guileless as
the serpent. The lonely white
rabbit on the roof is a star
twitching its ears at the rain.
The llama intricately
folding its hind legs to be seated
not disdains but mildly
disregards human approval.
What joy when the insouciant[1]
armadillo glances at us and doesn't
quicken his trotting
across the track into the palm brush.

What is this joy? That no animal
falters, but knows what it must do?
That the snake has no blemish,
that the rabbit inspects his strange surroundings
in white star-silence? The llama
rests in dignity, the armadillo
has some intention to pursue in the palm-forest.
Those who were sacred have remained so,
holiness does not dissolve, it is a presence
of bronze, only the sight that saw it
faltered and turned from it.
An old joy returns in holy presence.

[1]*insouciant*: casual, unconcerned

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