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CAMBRIDGE
International Education

Cambridge International AS & A Level

LITERATURE IN ENGLISH **9695/22**

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

2 hours



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.

This document has **12** pages. Any blank pages are indicated.

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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 ways in which Desai presents Biju and consider his importance in the novel.

Or **(b)** Comment closely on Desai's presentation of the cook and his family in the following passage.

The respect on the policemen's faces collapsed instantly when they arrived at the cook's hut buried under a ferocious tangle of nightshade.

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‘He works for the Americans,’ the cook had reported the contents of the letter to everyone in the market.

(*from* Chapter 2)

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

2 Either (a) 'The stories often focus on a character's significant realisation or discovery.'

In the light of this comment, discuss ways in which the writers of **two** stories from the selection present such moments.

Or (b) Comment closely on the following passage from *The Door in the Wall*, considering H G Wells's presentation of Wallace's schooldays.

'I told – what was his name? – a ferrety-looking youngster we used to call Squiff.'

'Young Hopkins,' said I.

'Hopkins it was. I did not like telling him. I had a feeling that in some way it was against the rules to tell him, but I did. He was walking part of the way home with me; he was talkative, and if we had not talked about the enchanted garden we should have talked of something else, and it was intolerable to me to think about any other subject. So I blabbed.

'Well, he told my secret. The next day in the play interval I found myself surrounded by half a dozen bigger boys, half teasing, and wholly curious to hear more of the enchanted garden. There was that big Fawcett – you remember him? – and Carnaby and Morley Reynolds. You weren't there by any chance? No, I think I should have remembered if you were ...

'A boy is a creature of odd feelings. I was, I really believe, in spite of my secret self-disgust, a little flattered to have the attention of these big fellows. I remember particularly a moment of pleasure caused by the praise of Crawshaw – you remember Crawshaw major, the son of Crawshaw the composer? – who said it was the best lie he had ever heard. But at the same time there was a really painful undertow of shame at telling what I felt was indeed a sacred secret. That beast Fawcett made a joke about the girl in green –'

Wallace's voice sank with the keen memory of that shame. 'I pretended not to hear,' he said. 'Well, then Carnaby suddenly called me a young liar, and disputed with me when I said the thing was true. I said I knew where to find the green door, could lead them all there in ten minutes. Carnaby became outrageously virtuous, and said I'd have to – and bear out my words or suffer. Did you ever have Carnaby twist your arm? Then perhaps you'll understand how it went with me. I swore my story was true. There was nobody in the school then to save a chap from Carnaby, though Crawshaw put in a word or so. Carnaby had got his game. I grew excited and red-eared, and a little frightened. I behaved altogether like a silly little chap, and the outcome of it all was that instead of starting alone for my enchanted garden, I led the way presently – cheeks flushed, ears hot, eyes smarting, and my soul one burning misery and shame – for a party of six mocking, curious, and threatening schoolfellows.

'We never found the white wall and the green door ...'

'You mean –'

'I mean I couldn't find it. I would have found it if I could.

'And afterwards when I could go alone I couldn't find it. I never found it. I seem now to have been always looking for it through my schoolboy days, but I never came upon it – never.'

'Did the fellows – make it disagreeable?'

'Beastly ... Carnaby held a council over me for wanton lying. I remember how I sneaked home and upstairs to hide the marks of my blubbering. But when I cried myself to sleep at last it wasn't for Carnaby, but for the garden, for the beautiful

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afternoon I had hoped for, for the sweet friendly woman and the waiting playfellows, and the game I had hoped to learn again, that beautiful forgotten game ... *45*

'I believed firmly that if I had not told – I had bad times after that – crying at night and wool-gathering by day. For two terms I slacked and had bad reports. Do you remember? Of course you would! It was *you* – your beating me in mathematics that brought me back to the grind again.'

(*from* The Door in the Wall)

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EVELYN WAUGH: *A Handful of Dust*

3 **Either** **(a)** Discuss Waugh's characterisation of Mrs Beaver and the role she plays in the novel.

Or **(b)** Comment closely on ways in which Waugh presents Princess Abdul Akbar in the following passage.

'Princess Abdul Akbar.'

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Sometimes when I look back at my life, especially at times like this among lovely old English things and kind people, I think the whole thing must be a frightful nightmare ... then I remember my *scars* ...'

(*from* Hard Cheese on Tony, Part 3)

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COLSON WHITEHEAD: *The Underground Railroad*

4 Either (a) 'Cora is the symbol of freedom, hard-won.'

With this comment in mind, discuss Whitehead's characterisation of Cora in the novel.

Or (b) Comment closely on ways in which Whitehead presents Ridgeway's past in the following passage.

When permitted, young Ridgeway stood in the corner while his father worked Pennsylvania iron.

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Patrol was not difficult work.

(*from* Ridgeway)

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Section B: Unseen

Answer **one** question from this section.

Either

5 Comment closely on the presentation of the daughter in the following poem.

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

Daughter

My daughter is quiet, so quiet I sometimes wonder
if she's there at all. The only time she speaks
is when I tuck her in, her sugary whisper
in my ear – asks me if her brother's asleep.
Can't let herself go down, until she knows
he's sunk below the slumber ground. Sometimes
I do her plaits, and loop them on her pillows,
two adder snakes to guard her. I can't tame

her brother. In the morning, before I wake
she combs them out in mermaid waves. She waits
for me to come, her bed a sea rock in the sea,
her legs a coiled-up fishtail in the sheets.
When I go to speak, she turns away,
dives down, and swiftly swims away from me.

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Or

6 Comment closely on the presentation of the characters in the following extract.

In your answer, consider the writer's choice of language, dialogue and dramatic methods.

MAN: You live here?

MARY LOUISE: If I didn't, do you think I'd choose this as the one spot in all New York to dry my hair?

MAN: When I said, 'live here,' I didn't mean just that. I meant who are you, and why are you here, and where do you come from, and do you sign your real name to your stuff, or use a nom de plume[1]?

MARY LOUISE: What – how did you know I was a writer?

MAN: [*Grins.*] Give me five minutes more, and I'll tell you what make your typewriter is, and where the last rejection slip came from.

MARY LOUISE: Oh! Then you *are* the scrub-lady's stalwart son, and you've been ransacking my waste-basket!

MAN: Let's see … you thought you could write, so you came to New York – one doesn't just travel to New York, you know, or move to it, one *comes* to New York – and now you're here and things aren't going quite as planned. You haven't sold a single story, your cupboard's getting bare, and you're not so sure about the writing anymore? Am I warm?

MARY LOUISE: [*Evasively*] Maybe.

MAN: Maybe? Or yes that's exactly right you must be psychic?

MARY LOUISE: All right – yes. I don't know how you can see all that. But yes, it's true.

MAN: And what's the problem – with your writing, I mean? Why hasn't it sold?

MARY LOUISE: You can't see that in your little crystal ball?

MAN: My powers are limited.

MARY LOUISE: I don't know. I don't know what the problem is. I've been trying to write about the city, you know, my experiences here. Then I decided to write a love story, but that's not working out either. My hero sounds more like a clothing store dummy than a real live human being, and, from what I hear, editors aren't fond of black-mustachioed figures nowadays. I've been fighting with him for a week now, the stubborn mule. He won't make love to my heroine. He refuses. I've tried to put red blood in his veins, but the two of them just won't get together – they're as far apart as they were the day I sat down to write. I'm at my wit's end. I've bitten off nearly half of my fingernails – look – see?

MAN: Maybe it's your heroine. Maybe she just doesn't inspire him.

MARY LOUISE: No, there's nothing wrong with my heroine – I'm sure of that. She's a fascinating, mysterious, graceful creature, full of wit and passion and adventure, but not once has he clasped her to him fiercely or pressed his lips to her hair, her eyes, her cheeks. He hasn't even had the guts to 'devour her with his gaze' as we

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writers like to say. This morning I thought he might be showing some signs of life. He was developing possibilities. But nothing came of it. He wimped out. That's why I decided to wash my hair and come out here – to get away from him for a little while.

MAN: What did you do back home?

MARY LOUISE: Back home? I taught school – and hated it. But I kept on teaching until I'd saved five hundred dollars. All the other girls teach until they've saved five hundred dollars – then they pack two suitcases and go to Europe for the summer. But I saved my five hundred for New York.

[1]*nom de plume*: a name used by a writer instead of their real name

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