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LITERATURE IN ENGLISH **0475/41**

Paper 4 Unseen **May/June 2026**

1 hour 15 minutes

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You must answer on the enclosed answer booklet.

You will need: Answer booklet (enclosed)

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.

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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. Climbing to the top of a tree one day, the poet comes across a nest of hummingbirds. Hummingbirds are small, brightly coloured birds.

How does the poet memorably portray her encounter with the birds?

To help you answer this question, you might consider:

- how she presents the birds' appearance
- how she describes their flight
- how she conveys the impact the encounter had on her.

Hummingbirds

The female, and the two chicks,

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before I climbed down.

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Or

2 Read carefully the following extract from a memoir. The writer has recently started sailing as a hobby. Here she describes sailing her yacht, the *Isean*, along a coastline of white cliffs. A storm has begun to develop.

How does the writer vividly convey the experience of sailing in a storm?

To help you answer this question, you might consider:

- how she conveys sensations of movement and speed
- how she conveys her feelings and how these change
- how she makes the moment so dramatic for the reader.

Isean is soaring. Wing on wing, snowy white against Jurassic[1] skies. Cliffs packed with relics, traces and tracks, fossils and footprints. Tiny dinosaurs glide on gale-force winds. A sky full of birds. They angle just so, feathers flattened to the gusts. Ascending updraughts, riding currents. Brilliant and bright, the time of their lives. The wind is rushing, the gulls are screaming. A raucous gathering in a storm. I'm flying too, eyes wide, heart lifting, breathing it in. All that air. There's no one here to break the spell, to crash this party. No one to stop us.

We're above and apart. Up with the birds. I've never known this kind of release, this boundless joy. A sense that I've found it, the untold story, about happiness and freedom, and life really giving. That it can be simple. I found something. It was nothing. An absence of something. A yawning empty horizon. No rules or restraints. No one with their better way of how to go. The only way my own. The freedom of that. It rushes and lifts and just overruns you. To belong, unfathomably, right here, in this wild place. We climb higher, we dip lower, we lean with the breeze, judging the gusts. The wind force builds and bends the bluff[2]. *Isean* responds with grace and with calm, steady she goes. As with the birds, their breastbones like keels[3], she is made to glide. On the wind, through the waves. Her sails flattened, her hull carving white horses[4]. As joyful as me. We are sailing.

A quarter of a mile off in a collision of cliffs and sea, there's a raging line of surf. The English Channel churning powerfully, bright foaming crests like teeth untethered, tumbling over sea green. A confused mess of steep waves. I stare in sudden and quiet horror, scan the horizon from the headland out to sea, searching without luck for a break in the frothing line. St Alban's tidal race[5], turbulent overfalls stretching as far as the eye can see. Some fifteen miles on the other side of this barrier lies sandy Weymouth, our destination. Now it feels like a distant dream, approachable as Atlantis[6]. The joy, the freedom, the sense of belonging – gone. What in the world am I doing? I don't know. I don't remotely belong here. I don't know what to do. My friend Saoirse is with me, in her early twenties, on her third ever sail. I'm calm on the surface, like a swan on a lake, feet kicking below. Nerves building, I consider our options. We could turn around, but with the tide against us, we won't make it back to Poole before nightfall, a place of narrow channels and grounding sandbanks I'd rather not navigate in the dark.

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'It's going to get rough,' I say. 'Hand on the boat at all times.'

My stomach is lurching, my heart thuds as the building swell pummels *Isean*'s hull. We are going into the tidal race.

[1]*Jurassic*: prehistoric period
[2]*bluff*: curved front of a boat
[3]*keels*: undersides of boats
[4]*white horses*: white-topped waves
[5]*tidal race*: channel of fast-moving currents
[6]*Atlantis*: legendary vanished island

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