



UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE INTERNATIONAL EXAMINATIONS
General Certificate of Education
Advanced Subsidiary Level and Advanced Level

ENGLISH LANGUAGE

8693/11

Paper 1 Passages for Comment

October/November 2009

2 hours

Additional Materials: Answer Booklet/Paper

READ THESE INSTRUCTIONS FIRST

If you have been given an Answer Booklet, follow the instructions on the front cover of the Booklet.

Write your Centre number, candidate number and name on all the work you hand in.

Write in dark blue or black pen.

Do not use staples, paper clips, highlighters, glue or correction fluid.

Answer **two** questions.

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

At the end of the examination, fasten all your work securely together.

The number of marks is given in brackets [] at the end of each question or part question.



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



Answer two questions.

- 1 The extract below is taken from a short story and describes a man's thoughts and feelings about a nurse who is employed in his household.
- (a) Comment on the style and language of the passage. [15]
- (b) At the end of the story, Miss Wilmarth writes a letter home to her sister. In it, she describes her feelings about Mr and Mrs Cruger. Basing your answer closely on the material of the original extract, write the opening (between 120–150 words) of her letter. [10]

When young Mrs Gerald Cruger came home from the hospital, Miss Wilmarth came along with her and the baby. Miss Wilmarth was an admirable trained nurse, sure and calm and tireless, with a real taste for the arranging of flowers in bowls and vases. She had never known a patient to receive so many flowers, or such uncommon ones; yellow violets and strange lilies and little white orchids poised like a bevy of delicate moths along green branches. Care and thought must have been put into their selection that they, like all the other fragile and costly things she kept about her, should be so right for young Mrs Cruger. No one who knew her could have caught up the telephone and lightly bidden the florist to deliver to her one of his five-dollar assortments of tulips, stock and daffodils. Camilla Cruger was no complement to garden blooms. 5 10

Sometimes, when Miss Wilmarth opened the shiny boxes and carefully grouped the cards, there would come a curious expression about her face. Playing over shorter features, it might almost have been one of wistfulness. Upon Miss Wilmarth, it served to perfect the strange resemblance that she bore through her years; her face was truly complete with that look of friendly melancholy peculiar to the gentle horse. It was not, of course, Miss Wilmarth's fault that she looked like a horse. Indeed, there was nowhere to attach any blame. But the resemblance remained. 15

She was tall, pronounced of bone, and erect of carriage; it was somehow impossible to speculate upon her appearance undressed. Her long face was innocent, indeed ignorant, of cosmetics, and its colour stayed steady. Confusion, heat, or haste caused her neck to flush crimson. Her mild hair was pinned with loops of nicked black wire into a narrow knot, practical to support her little high cap, like a charlotte russe¹ from a bake-shop. She had big, trustworthy hands, scrubbed and dry, with nails cut short and so deeply cleaned with some small sharp instrument that the ends stood away from the finger-tips. Gerald Cruger, who nightly sat opposite her at his own dinner table, tried not to see her hands. It irritated him to be reminded by their sight that they must feel like straw matting and smell of white soap. For him, women who were not softly lovely were simply not women. 20 25

He tried, too, so far as it was possible to his beautiful manners, to keep his eyes from her face. Not that it was unpleasant – a kind face, certainly. But, as he told Camilla, once he looked he stayed fascinated, awaiting the toss and the whinny. 30

"I love horses, myself," he said to Camilla, who lay all white and languid on her apricot satin chaise-longue. "I'm a fool for a horse. Ah, what a noble animal, darling! All I say is, nobody has any business to go around looking like a horse and behaving as if it were all right. You don't catch horses going around looking like people, do you?" 35

He did not dislike Miss Wilmarth; he only resented her. He had no bad wish in the world for her, but he waited with longing the day she would leave. She was so skilled and rhythmic in her work that she disrupted the household but little. Nevertheless, her presence was an onus². There was that thing of dining with her every evening. It was a chore for him, certainly, and one that did not ease with repetition, but there was no choice. Everyone had always heard of trained nurses' bristling insistence 40

that they be not treated as servants; Miss Wilmarth could not be asked to dine with the maids. He would not have dinner out; be away from *Camilla*? It was too much to expect the maids to institute a second dinner service or to carry trays, other than Camilla's, up and down the stairs. There were only three servants and they had work enough. 45

So Gerald dined each night with Miss Wilmarth. The small dread of his hour with her struck suddenly at him in the afternoon. He would forget it for stretches of minutes, only to be smitten sharper as the time drew near. On his way home from his office, he found grim entertainment in rehearsing his table talk, and plotting desperate innovations to it. 50

Cruger's Compulsory Conversations: Lesson I, a Dinner with a Miss Wilmarth, a Trained Nurse. Good evening, Miss Wilmarth. Well! And how were the patients all day? That's good, that's fine. Well! The baby gained two ounces, did she? That's fine. Yes, that's right, she will be before we know it. That's right. Well! Mrs Cruger seems to be getting stronger every day, doesn't she? That's good, that's fine. That's right, up and about before we know it. Yes, she certainly will. Well! Any visitors today? That's good. Didn't stay too long, did they? That's fine. Well! No, no, no, Miss Wilmarth – *you* go ahead. I wasn't going to say anything at all, really. Well! I see the cat. Do you see the cat? That cat is on the mat. It certainly is. Well! Pardon me, Miss Wilmarth, but must you look so much like a horse? Do you like to look like a horse, Miss Wilmarth? That's good, Miss Wilmarth, that's fine. You certainly do, Miss Wilmarth. That's right. Well! Will you for God's sake finish your oats, Miss Wilmarth, and let me get out of this? 60 65

¹charlotte russe – an elaborate cake

²onus – burden

2 The passage below describes the writer's relationship with his father.

- (a) Comment on the style and language of the passage. [15]
- (b) The father in the passage later becomes a journalist and contributes an article on effective parenting to a magazine. Basing your answer closely on the material of the original extract, write the opening (between 120-150 words) of the article. [10]

He was a complete stranger when he turned up late one morning, carrying a khaki kitbag across Hempton Green – the moment at which family life began for me. My first impression of him was of an unprepossessing roughness. The photo on the mantelpiece showed a junior officer so boyish he looked too young to shave. My father's jowl was the colour and texture of emery paper. His demob suit¹, too, seemed to have been woven out of corn-stubble. When my mother and he embraced, right there in the open on the green, I was mortified. I studied the faded white lettering on his bag: Major J.P.C.P. Raban R.A. By what right did this tall soldier in his ill-fitting civilian suit horn in on our household? The question took me several years to even begin to answer. 5 10

My father must have been a bit shaken too. His spindly, solemn son can hardly have been the beamish three-year-old he might have looked forward to. He was obviously unused to children anyway, and had had no practice at dealing with precocious little invalids who cried when he spoke to them. He brought with him the affectedly hearty manners of the mess, and tried to make friends with me rather as he might have jollied along a particularly green subaltern². On the afternoon of his arrival, he carried me by my feet and suspended me over the water-butt in the back garden. As I hung, screaming, over this black soup of mosquito larvae, my mother rushed out of the house to my defence. 15

'Only a game,' said my father. 'We were just having a game.' But I knew otherwise. This terrifying Visigoth³, fresh from the slaughter, had tried to murder me before we'd even reached teatime. I ran bleating to my mother, begging her to send this awful man back to the war where he so clearly belonged. My father's fears were also confirmed: unless something pretty firm in the way of paternal influence was applied here and now, I was going to turn out a first-rate milksop, an insufferable little wet. 20 25

I was frightened of him. I was afraid of his irritable, headache-y silences; afraid of his sudden gusts of good humour; afraid of his inscrutable, untouchable air; and afraid, most of all, of his summary beatings, which were administered court-martial fashion in his study. A toy left overnight in the path of the car got me a spanking; so did being unable to remember whether I had said 'thank you' to my hostess after a four-year-old's birthday party. He introduced me to a new cold world of duties and punishments – a vastly complicated, unforgiving place in which the best one could hope for was to pass without comment. Perhaps my father had cause to believe that the world really was like this, and was simply doing his best to rescue me from the fool's paradise unwittingly created for me by my mother. I felt then that he was just jealous of my intimacy with her, and was taking his revenge. 30 35

For weeks after the war he hung about the house and garden. He clacked out letters to potential employers on my mother's old portable Olivetti. He practised golf swings. He rambled round and round the birdbath in his demob suit. He made gunnery calculations on his slide rule. I played gooseberry – a sullen child lurking in passageways, resentfully spying on my parents. I felt cuckolded⁴, and showed it. When my father eventually found a job, his work took him out of the house most evenings: when he drove off I would try to seduce my mother back to the old days of our affair. We listened to *Dick Barton* on the wireless over cocoa, and then I would launch into an avalanche of bright talk, hoping to buy back her attention and distract 40 45

her from the clock. I felt her joy at having my father home, and I think I did sense her distress at my conspicuous failure to share it. I also felt a twinge or two of shame at our snugness. From my father, I was beginning to learn that my behaviour was distinctly unmanly, and these cocoon-evenings were clouded with guilt. When my father said, as he did several times a week, 'You are going to have to learn to stand up for yourself, old boy,' I shrank from the idea but knew it to be unarguably right. 50

But my father and I grew grim with the responsibilities that had been placed on our shoulders. I think we both felt helpless. He had inherited a role in life which he could only conceive in the most old-fashioned terms: he had to become a Victorian husband and father, a pillar of the family, the heir to the fading Raban fortunes. I had inherited *him*. And we both chafed under the weight of these legacies, both of us too weak to carry them off with any style. He bullied me, and he in turn was bullied by the family dead. If I feared him, he had Furies of his own – the ancestors and elderly relations who had set him standards by which he could do nothing except fail. 60

¹demob suit – suit issued to a soldier leaving the army

²green subaltern – inexperienced officer

³Visigoth – member of a warrior tribe

⁴cuckolded – betrayed

3 In the extract below, the bombing of a town is described.

(a) Comment on the style and language of the passage. [15]

(b) Basing your answer closely on the language and style of the original extract, write a description (between 120–150 words) of another dramatic event (real or imaginary) where a peaceful environment is suddenly disturbed. [10]

The town far below was asleep. It lay pillowed on the secure shore; violet shadows leaned against its pale buildings; there was no movement in its streets; no smoke from its chimneys. The ships lay still in the deep close harbour; their masts rose out of the green water like reeds thickly growing with the great funnels and turrets of the warships like strange plants among them. The sea beyond the strong breakwater was smooth as a silver plate; there was no sound anywhere. 5

The aeroplane descended in slow spirals upon the town, tracing an invisible path through the pearly air. It was as if a messenger from heaven were descending upon the people of the town who dreamed.

Suddenly a scream burst from the throat of the church tower. For an instant the sky seemed to shiver with the stab of that wail of terror rising from the great stone throat. Surely the town would waken in a panic – and yet, no, nothing stirred. There was no sound or movement in any street and the sky gave back no sign. 10

The aeroplane continued to descend until it looked from the church tower like a mosquito; then there dropped something from it that flashed through the air, a spark of fire. 15

Silence had followed the scream.

The aeroplane, superbly poised now in the spotless sky, watched the buildings below it as if waiting for some strange thing to happen; and presently, as if exorcised by the magic eye of the insect, a cluster of houses collapsed, while a roar burst from the wounded earth. 20

Still, the neat surface of the wide city showed no change, save in that one spot where the houses had fallen. How slow to wake the town was! The daylight brightened, painting the surfaces of the buildings with pale rose and primrose. The clean empty streets cut the city into firm blocks of buildings; the pattern of the town spread out on the earth, with its neat edges marked by walls and canals, gleamed like a varnished map. 25

Then the siren in the church tower screamed again; its wail followed by a second roar and a ragged hole yawned in the open square in the middle of the town.

The aeroplane circles smoothly, watching. 30

And at last signs of terror and bewilderment appeared in the human ant hill beneath it. Distracted midgets swarmed from the houses: this way and that they scurried, diving into openings in the ground: swift armoured beetles rushed through the streets; white jets of steam rose from the locomotives in the station yard: the harbour throbbed. 35

Again there was a great noise, and a cloud of debris was flung into the air as from a volcano, and flames leapt after it. A part of the wharf with a shed on it reeled drunkenly into the sea with a splash.

The white beach was crawling now with vermin; the human hive swarmed out on to the sands. Their eyes were fixed on the evil flying thing in the sky and at each explosion they fell on their faces like frantic worshippers. 40

The aeroplane cavorted, whirling after its tail in an ecstasy of self-gratification. Down among the sand dunes it could see the tiny black figures of men at the anti-aircraft guns. These were the defenders of the town; they had orders to shoot to death a mosquito floating in boundless heaven. The little clouds that burst in the sunlight were like materialised kisses. 45

The face of the city had begun to show a curious change. Scars appeared on it like the marks of smallpox and as these thickened on its trim surface, it seemed as if it were being attacked by an invisible and gigantic beast, who was tearing and gnawing it with claws and teeth. Gashes appeared in its streets, long wounds with ragged edges. Helpless, spread out to the heavens, it grimaced with mutilated features. 50

Nevertheless the sun rose, touching the aeroplane with gold, and the aeroplane laughed. It laughed at the convulsed face of the town, at the beach crawling with vermin, at the ant people swarming through the gates of the city along the white roads; it laughed at the warships moving out of the harbour one by one in stately procession, the mouths of their guns gaping helplessly in their armoured sides. With a last flick of its glittering wings, it darted downward defiant, dodging the kisses of shrapnel, luring them, teasing them, playing with them: then, its message delivered, its sport over, it flew up and away in the sunshine and disappeared. A speck in the infinite sky, then nothing – and the town was left in convulsions. 60

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