

English A: literature – Higher level – Paper 1
Anglais A : littérature – Niveau supérieur – Épreuve 1
Inglés A: literatura – Nivel superior – Prueba 1

Monday 2 May 2016 (morning)
Lundi 2 mai 2016 (matin)
Lunes 2 de mayo de 2016 (mañana)

2 hours / 2 heures / 2 horas

Instructions to candidates

- Do not open this examination paper until instructed to do so.
- Write a literary commentary on one passage only.
- The maximum mark for this examination paper is **[20 marks]**.

Instructions destinées aux candidats

- N'ouvrez pas cette épreuve avant d'y être autorisé(e).
- Rédigez un commentaire littéraire sur un seul des passages.
- Le nombre maximum de points pour cette épreuve d'examen est de **[20 points]**.

Instrucciones para los alumnos

- No abra esta prueba hasta que se lo autoricen.
- Escriba un comentario literario sobre un solo pasaje.
- La puntuación máxima para esta prueba de examen es **[20 puntos]**.

Write a literary commentary on **one** of the following:

1.

The Interrogators

It is some time ago now. The pines are wedges of silver, on either side of the road. Fresh snow crunches under the tyres, with their thick tracks, while the road keeps turning and descending, through a country of frozen lakes, a buried country. We left the main road ten minutes ago. Now we are filtering through these layers of green, silver, and air.

5 There are a few houses, with small windows, hunched under their loads of snow; a smell of woodsmoke, after we have stopped by the low wooden house with the notice outside. These houses cannot be empty, yet we are not being watched, it is too cold at the windows. The people are presumably huddled around their stoves, burning wood, papers; the insignia¹ were the first things to go. They eat from the pannikins² on the dresser, a cold potato,
10 sometimes the leaf of a discovered vegetable. Always they carry these pannikins with them, hoping to discover something edible as they walk around. In mittened hands, or attached to belts, knocking their buttocks. The wooden houses, gashed by snow, are scattered under the pines, as if hurled apart by an explosion. The village has no centre, unless this house with the notice is the centre.

15 There is a desk, with green blotter and an inkwell, several neat bundles of printed forms. On the blotter lies a yellowed sheet of paper inscribed with some lines in sloping gothic script. The room smells, warm, woodsmoke and faint local tobacco, a suspicion of rum, doubtful, but stale, it invades first the nostrils, then the folds of the thick blue material of our clothes. The windowpanes are opaque round the edges, steam inside and frost outside. The transparent
20 centre reveals the road, churned with tracks, hanging boughs of pine, and then the nearest two houses, their dark walls quite suddenly facing away, as if just caught in the act; and the door creaks as a little man steps in, takes his green hat off, and is seating himself at the desk.

25 He is as trim and brittle as an elf. The green forester's jacket and trousers, the black knee-boots, belong exactly to this body. His face is wrinkled, the white pointed beard wags as he speaks, his eyes are blue ice. The officer facing him is immediately ashamed of his stomach, so large, shamefully large, and he cannot draw it in. Yet he makes the effort, now that he has to draw breath to speak.

30 Outside, somebody is there. The black shape against the snow, a head enveloped in a scarf, whoever it is he moves to the window, peers in, then abruptly clears off, into a silence disturbed first by his boots, then only by the sifting sounds of the snowflakes falling against the glass.

35 The forester has little to say, in fact. No, there never were any batteries³ here. But 35 kilometres north. No, these forests are empty, there was nothing hidden here. We never saw anything like that. The people who live here have always lived here, only one refugee family, from the east. No accumulators⁴. No search-lights. The lake is that way, it is frozen.

Christopher Middleton, *Our Flowers & Nice Bones* (1969)

¹ insignia: a distinguishing badge or emblem of military rank

² pannikins: small metal drinking cups

³ batteries: fortified emplacements for heavy guns

⁴ accumulators: large rechargeable electric cells

2.

The Right Mask

One night a poem came up to a poet
From now on, it said, you must wear a mask.
What kind of mask? asked the poet.
A rose mask, said the poem.
5 I've used it already, said the poet,
I've exhausted it.
Then wear the mask that's made out of
a nightingale's song, use that mask.
Oh, it's an old mask, said the poet,
10 it's all used up.
Nonsense, said the poem, it's the perfect mask,
still, try on the god mask,
now that mask illuminates heaven.
It's a tight mask, said the poet,
15 and the stars crawl about in it like ants.
Then try on the troubador's* mask, or the singer's mask,
try on all the popular masks.
I have, said the poet, but they fit so easily.

The poem was getting impatient,
20 it stamped its feet like a child,
it screamed. Then try on your own face,
try the one mask that terrifies,
the mask only you could possibly use,
the mask only you could wear out.

25 The poet tore at his face til it bled,
this mask? he yelled, this mask?
Yes, said the poem, yes.

But the poet was tired of masks,
he had lived too long with them,
30 he snatched at the poem and stuck it in his face.
Its screams were muffled, it wept, it tried to be lyrical,
it wriggled into his eyes and mouth.

Next day his friends were afraid of him,
he looked so distorted.
35 Now it's the right mask, said the poem, the right mask.
It clung to him lovingly and never let go again.

Brian Patten (2003)

* troubador: medieval travelling poet and singer of love songs
