

**B O A R D O F S T U D I E S**  
NEW SOUTH WALES

**2008**

**HIGHER SCHOOL CERTIFICATE  
EXAMINATION**

# Comparative Literature

## General Instructions

- Reading time – 5 minutes
- Working time – 3 hours
- Write using black or blue pen

## Total marks – 50

- All questions are of equal value
- Attempt THREE questions, ONE from each section

### **Section I** Pages 1–6

- Question 1 is COMPULSORY
- Allow about 1 hour for this section

### **Section II** Page 7

- Attempt ONE question from Questions 2–6
- Refer ONLY to set texts
- Use different texts from the ones you use in Section III
- Allow about 1 hour for this section

### **Section III** Pages 8–9

- Attempt ONE question from Questions 7–14
- Refer ONLY to set texts
- Use different texts from the ones you use in Section II
- Allow about 1 hour for this section

## Section I

### Attempt Question 1

Allow about 1 hour for this section

Answer the question in a writing booklet. Extra writing booklets are available.

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**This question is COMPULSORY.**

### Question 1

The FOUR extracts below are translations of a passage from Book 12 of Homer's *Odyssey*.

Using THREE of the extracts, write an essay showing significant differences in the use of language in the translations you are discussing AND what the effects of such differences are.

**Context:** *Odysseus, the King of Ithaca, is narrating to an admiring king the story of his danger-fraught journey home from the Trojan War. He had been warned that his ship must pass between crags inhabited by two pitiless immortal monsters: enormous six-headed man-eating Scylla, and opposite her, inside a craggy island on which a mighty fig tree grows, Charybdis, who, three times each day, sucks down the sea and anything on it into a vast all-obliterating whirlpool, and then spits water and debris out again. Odysseus' ship successfully passes Scylla, with the loss of only six men, but the sailors then anger the gods, and Zeus' thunderbolt destroys the ship and crew, except Odysseus, who manages to lash together the mast and keel of the broken ship into a makeshift raft . . .*

**Question 1 continues on page 3**

Question 1 (continued)

TRANSLATION 1

. . . I was carried wherever the winds chose to take me. The gale from the West had now spent its force, and the wind got into the South again, which frightened me lest I should be taken back to the terrible whirlpool of Charybdis. This indeed was what actually happened, for I was borne along by the waves all night, and by sunrise had reached the rock of Scylla, and the whirlpool. She was then sucking down the salt sea water, but I was carried aloft toward the fig tree, which I caught hold of and clung on to like a bat. I could not plant my feet anywhere so as to stand securely, for the roots were a long way off and the boughs that overshadowed the whole pool were too high, too vast, and too far apart for me to reach them; so I hung patiently on, waiting till the pool should discharge my mast and raft again and a very long while it seemed. A juryman is not more glad to get home to supper, after having been long detained in court by troublesome cases, than I was to see my raft beginning to work its way out of the whirlpool again. At last I let go with my hands and feet, and fell heavily into the sea, hard by my raft on to which I then got, and began to row with my hands. As for Scylla, the father of gods and men would not let her get further sight of me otherwise I should have certainly been lost.

SAMUEL BUTLER (1900)

**Question 1 continues on page 4**

Question 1 (continued)

TRANSLATION 2

. . . and so sat tost  
With baneful weather, till the West\* had lost  
His stormy tyranny. And then arose  
The South, that bred me more abhorred woes;  
For back again his blasts expell'd me quite  
On ravenous Charybdis. All that night  
I totter'd up and down, till Light and I  
At Scylla's rock encounter'd, and the night  
Dreadful Charybdis. As I drave on these,  
I saw Charybdis supping up the seas,  
And had gone up together, if the tree  
That bore the wild figs had not rescu'd me;  
To which I leap'd, and left my keel, and high  
Clamb'ring upon it did as close imply  
My breast about it as a rermouse\* could;  
Yet might my feet on no stub fasten hold  
To ease my hands; the roots were crept so low  
Beneath the earth, and so aloft did grow  
The farspread arms that, though good height I gat,  
I could not reach them. To the main bole flat  
I, therefore, still must cling; till up again  
She belch'd my mast, and after that amain  
My keel came tumbling. So at length it chanced  
To me, as to a judge that long advanced  
To judge a sort of hot young fellows' jars\*,  
At length time frees him from their civil wars,  
When glad he riseth and to dinner goes;  
So time, at length, released with joys my woes,  
And from Charybdis' mouth appear'd my keel.  
To which, my hand now loos'd and now my heel,  
I altogether with a huge noise dropp'd,  
Just in her midst fell, where the mast was propp'd,  
And there row'd off with owers\* of my hands.  
God and man's Father would not from her sands  
Let Scylla see me, for I then had died  
That bitter death that my poor friends supplied.

GEORGE CHAPMAN (ca. 1590)

\**West* and *South* are winds

\**rermouse*: a bat

\**jars*: fights or quarrels

\**owers*: oars or paddles

**Question 1 continues on page 5**

Question 1 (continued)

TRANSLATION 3

I rode aloft, to Providence resign'd,  
Through tumbling billows and a war of wind.  
Now sunk the west\*, and now a southern breeze,  
More dreadful than the tempest lash'd the seas;  
For on the rocks it bore where Scylla raves,  
And dire Charybdis rolls her thundering waves.  
All night I drove; and at the dawn of day,  
Fast by the rocks beheld the desperate way;  
Just when the sea within her gulfs subsides,  
And in the roaring whirlpools rush the tides,  
Swift from the float I vaulted with a bound,  
The lofty figtree seized, and clung around;  
So to the beam the bat tenacious clings,  
And pendent round it clasps his leather wings.  
High in the air the tree its boughs display'd,  
And o'er the dungeon cast a dreadful shade;  
All unsustain'd between the wave and sky,  
Beneath my feet the whirling billows fly.  
What time the judge forsakes the noisy bar  
To take repast, and stills the wordy war,  
Charybdis, rumbling from her inmost caves,  
The mast refunded on her refluent waves.  
Swift from the tree, the floating mass to gain,  
Sudden I dropp'd amidst the flashing main;  
Once more undaunted on the ruin rode,  
And oar'd with labouring arms along the flood.  
Unseen I pass'd by Scylla's dire abodes.  
So Jove\* decreed (dread sire of men and gods).

ALEXANDER POPE (ca. 1725)

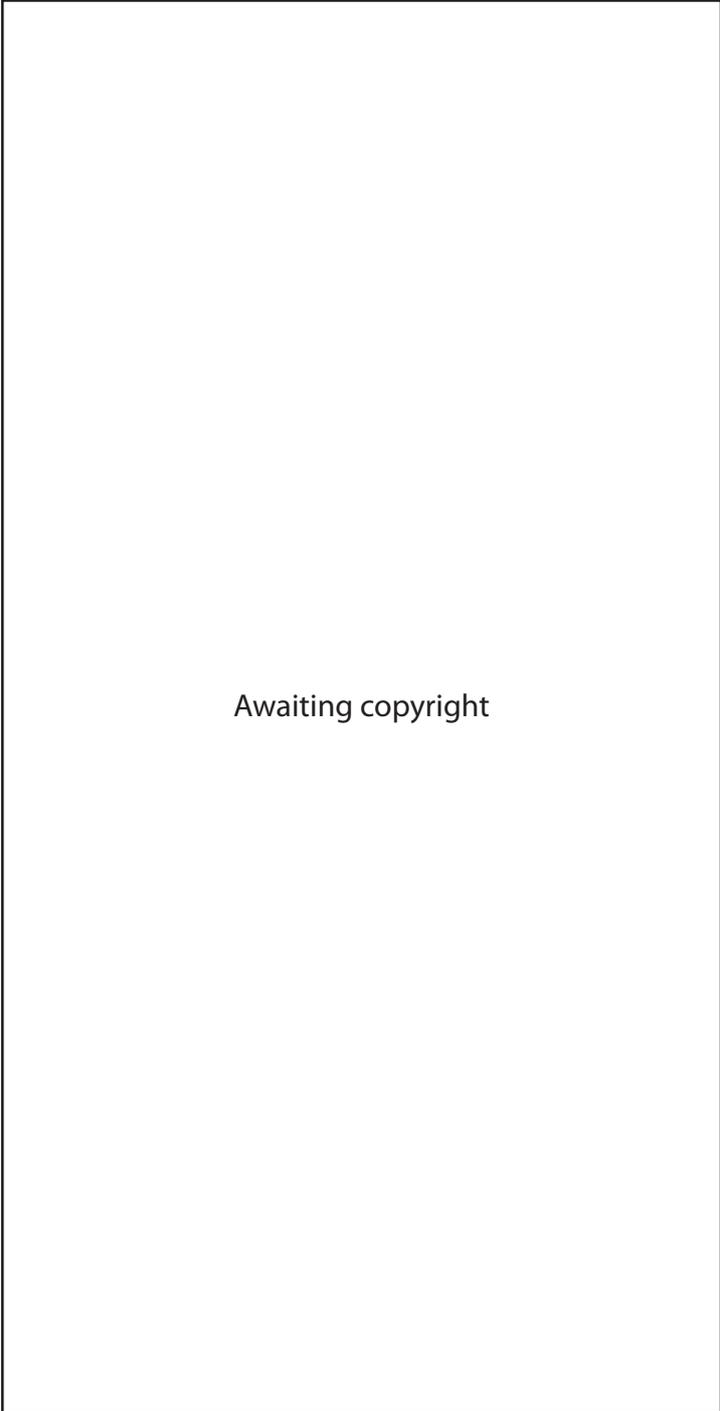
\**West*: west wind

\**Jove*: Roman name for Zeus

**Question 1 continues on page 6**

Question 1 (continued)

TRANSLATION 4



**End of Question 1**

## **Section II**

**Attempt ONE question from Questions 2–6**

**Allow about 1 hour for this section**

In Section II, your answer must make close reference to works from MORE THAN ONE MODULE.

Answer EITHER on a play, a novel and at least two poems, OR on TWO or THREE longer works, OR on ONE longer work and FOUR or FIVE poems or extracts.

Refer ONLY to set texts.

Use different texts from the ones you use in Section III.

Answer the question in a SEPARATE writing booklet. Extra writing booklets are available.

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### **Question 2**

‘Great art surprises. If the resolution of a work is implicit in its opening, it has already failed.’

Construct an argument in response to this statement.

**OR**

### **Question 3**

Literature is ‘a pallid commercial confection, consisting mainly of artificial colourings and flavourings’.

Can artifice satisfy?

**OR**

### **Question 4**

‘Reading makes masochists (or sadists?) of us. There is no greater textual pleasure than a fascinating and delicious work about suffering.’

Do you agree?

**OR**

### **Question 5**

‘Literature is the embroidery that ornaments and binds together the fabric of life.’

Discuss.

**OR**

### **Question 6**

‘Poetry speaks to us in the first person, drama in the second, and novels in the third.’

In what ways is this a useful distinction to make?

### **Section III**

**Attempt ONE question from Questions 7–14**

**Allow about 1 hour for this section**

Refer ONLY to set texts.

Use different texts from the ones you use in Section II.

Answer the question in a SEPARATE writing booklet. Extra writing booklets are available.

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#### **Question 7 — The Nineteenth-Century European Novel**

‘What’s to be done?’ (*Anna Karenina*)

‘In times of rapidly changing morality and social customs, nineteenth-century novelists explored crime, punishment, adultery and marriage as contexts within which to warn against self-delusion.’

Does this statement offer a valid and useful approach to the nineteenth-century novels you have studied this year?

Refer in some detail to TWO or THREE novels in your discussion.

**OR**

#### **Question 8 — The Nineteenth-Century European Novel**

‘Nineteenth-century fiction is most successful when the characters fail.’

Explore this statement, referring in some detail to TWO or THREE novels in your discussion.

**OR**

#### **Question 9 — Poetry and Religious Experience**

‘The literature of religious experience is the expression of a search to understand the meaning of life in language that has no vocabulary to explain it.’

Discuss, referring to EITHER *An Imaginary Life* and up to THREE poems or extracts, OR to no more than FIVE poems or extracts.

**OR**

### **Question 10 — Poetry and Religious Experience**

‘The deepest thing I know is that I am living and dying at once, and that dialogue is a terrifying thought that is at the root of much poetry.’ (Stanley Kunitz, US poet laureate)

Is this concept of a paradoxical dialogue an illuminating notion in the literature of religious experience?

Answer with reference to EITHER *An Imaginary Life* and up to THREE poems or extracts, OR to no more than FIVE poems or extracts.

**OR**

### **Question 11 — Satiric Voices**

‘Satire is an unforgiving art.’

Are satire’s methods of exposing vice and folly so harsh that they compel the reader to condemn, rather than to understand, forgive or reform?

Refer to at least THREE major works, or TWO major works and several short ones in your answer.

**OR**

### **Question 12 — Satiric Voices**

‘There is nothing funny about bad behaviour.’

If this is so, why does satire so often appeal to the reader’s sense of the ridiculous?

Refer to at least THREE major works, or TWO major works and several short ones.

**OR**

### **Question 13 — Post-Colonial Voices**

It has been said that post-colonial writing is ‘intent on the destruction of boundaries’.

How true is this of the post-colonial writing you have studied?

Answer with reference to at least THREE major works, or TWO major works and several short ones.

**OR**

### **Question 14 — Post-Colonial Voices**

Language in post-colonial writing must ‘find a new voice to remake the world’.

What is new about the language of the world of post-colonial texts you have read?

Answer with reference to at least THREE major works, or TWO major works and several short ones.

**End of paper**

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