



HIGHER SCHOOL CERTIFICATE EXAMINATION

1997

**COMPARATIVE
LITERATURE**

DISTINCTION COURSE

(50 Marks)

*Time allowed—Three hours
(Plus 5 minutes reading time)*

DIRECTIONS TO CANDIDATES

- Attempt **THREE** questions, **ONE** from each Section.
- Question 1 is **COMPULSORY**.
- All questions are of equal value.
- Do **NOT** use substantially the same material in more than one answer.
- Answer each question in a *separate* Writing Booklet.
- You may ask for extra Writing Booklets if you need them.

SECTION I

QUESTION 1. This question is **COMPULSORY**.

The following four passages are translations of the first six verses of one of the Psalms from the Old Testament of the Bible.

Read the four passages carefully and answer the question on page 4.

BACKGROUND: *After the fall of their capital city Jerusalem, or Zion, in 587 BC, the Israelites were taken into captivity by the Babylonians. The Euphrates is one of the main rivers in Babylonia.*

TRANSLATION 1

Nigh seated where the river flows
 That watereth Babel's thankful plain,
 Which then our tears in pearlèd rows
 Did help to water with their rain,
 The thought of Zion bred such woes
 That, though our harps we did retain,
 Yet useless and untouched there
 On willows only hanged they were.

Now while our harps were hangèd so,
 The men whose captives there we lay
 Did on our griefs insulting go,
 And more to grieve us thus did say:
 You that of music make such show,
 Come sing us now a Zion lay.
 – O no, we have nor voice nor hand
 For such a song, in such a land.

Though far I lie, sweet Zion hill,
 In foreign soil exiled from thee,
 Yet let my hand forget his skill
 If ever thou forgotten be;
 Yea, let my tongue fast gluèd still
 Unto my roof lie mute in me,
 If thy neglect within me spring,
 Or ought I do but Salem sing.

THE COUNTESS OF PEMBROKE, c. 1590

QUESTION 1. (Continued)

TRANSLATION 2

- ¹ By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat down, yea, we wept, when we remembered Zion.
- ² We hanged our harps upon the willows in the midst thereof.
- ³ For there they that carried us away captive required of us a song; and they that wasted us required of us mirth, saying, Sing us one of the songs of Zion.
- ⁴ How shall we sing the Lord's song in a strange land?
- ⁵ If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her cunning.
- ⁶ If I do not remember thee, let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth; if I prefer not Jerusalem above my chief joy.

The King James Authorised Version, 1611

TRANSLATION 3

On the proud banks of great Euphrates' flood
 There we sat, and there we wept:
 Our harps that now no music understood
 Nodding on the willows slept,
 While unhappy, captived we,
 Lovely Zion, thought on thee.

They, they that snatched us from our country's breast
 Would have a song carved to their ears
 In Hebrew numbers* then (O cruel jest!)
 When harps and hearts were drowned in tears:
 Come, they cried, come sing and play
 One of Zion's songs today.

Sing? Play? to whom (ah!) shall we sing or play,
 If not, Jerusalem, to thee?
 Ah thee, Jerusalem! ah, sooner may
 This hand forget the mastery
 Of music's dainty touch, than I
 The music of thy memory.

Which when I lose, O may at once my tongue
 Lose this same busy, speaking art,
 Unperched, her vocal arteries unstrung,
 No more acquainted with my heart,
 On my dry palate's roof to rest,
 A withered leaf, an idle guest.

RICHARD CRASHAW, 1646

* verse

QUESTION 1. (Continued)

TRANSLATION 4

Ballad of the Exiles

Beside the streams of Babylon
 we sat and wept
 at the memory of Zion,
 leaving our harps
 hanging on the poplars there.

For we had been asked
 to sing to our captors,
 to entertain those who had carried us off:
 'Sing', they said
 'some hymns of Zion'.

How could we sing
 one of Yahweh's* hymns
 in a pagan country?
 Jerusalem, if I forget you,
 may my right hand wither!

May I never speak again,
 if I forget you!
 If I do not count Jerusalem
 the greatest of my joys!

The Jerusalem Bible, 1966

* one of the names of God

Taken from the Jerusalem Bible, published and copyright 1966, 1967 and 1968 by Darton Longman and Todd Ltd and Doubleday & Co Inc, and used by permission of the publisher.

Using THREE of the preceding passages, write an essay saying what the principal differences are in the use of language in the three translations you are discussing AND what the effects of these differences are.

SECTION II

Attempt ONE question.

Answer *EITHER* on two or three longer works *OR* on one longer work *and* four or five poems or extracts.

Your answer must make reference to works from MORE THAN ONE module.

EITHER

QUESTION 2

‘The true value of literature emerges only when it becomes a critic of the world and of our way of looking at the world.’

ELIO VITTORINI, ‘Le Due Tensione’, *Il Saggiatore*, Milan 1967

How valid is this view of literature?

OR

QUESTION 3

Literary texts have two meanings: one while you are reading, and one when you have finished. Are these two meanings irreconcilable?

OR

QUESTION 4

‘The function of art is to conceal, rather than reveal.’

To what extent is this true of literature?

OR

QUESTION 5

‘Poets talk to God, novelists to society, dramatists to themselves.’

How useful are these distinctions? You may confine yourself to two genres, if you wish.

OR

QUESTION 6

‘Literature is designed to instruct delightfully.’

Do you agree that the function of literature is primarily didactic?

SECTION III

Attempt ONE question.

EITHER

QUESTION 7. The Nineteenth-Century European Novel

‘Nineteenth-century novels explore the crimes that society inflicts on the individual rather than the crimes of the individual against society.’

To what extent is this true of the nineteenth-century novels you have read? Make close reference to TWO novels in your essay.

OR

QUESTION 8. The Nineteenth-Century European Novel

‘A novel is a mirror walking along the road.’ (STENDHAL, 1830)

What do you think this says about nineteenth-century novels? Make close reference to TWO novels in your essay.

OR

QUESTION 9. Poetry and Religious Experience

‘It is the special danger of the literature of religious experience that in stimulating feeling, it may falsify it.’

Evaluate this comment and consider what it implies about the nature of the literature of religious experience. Write *EITHER* on NO MORE THAN SIX poems or extracts, *OR* on *An Imaginary Life* and NO MORE THAN THREE poems or extracts.

OR

QUESTION 10. Poetry and Religious Experience

‘Literature of religious experience is a contradiction in terms, for how can we put into words what is beyond language?’

Explore some of the implications of this statement in relation *EITHER* to NO MORE THAN SIX poems or extracts, *OR* to *An Imaginary Life* and NO MORE THAN THREE poems or extracts.

OR

QUESTION 11. Satiric Voices

Would you agree that in satire the negative aspect of making the object of attack abhorrent or ridiculous is usually stronger than the positive aspect of an appeal to virtue and rationality?

Answer with reference *EITHER* to THREE works, *OR* to TWO major works and several shorter ones such as fables.

OR

QUESTION 12. Satiric Voices

‘Satire demands at least a token fantasy, a content which the reader recognises as grotesque, and an implicit moral standard.’

Do you agree that all three of these elements must be present before we can call a work a satire? Discuss this question with close reference *EITHER* to THREE works, *OR* to TWO major works and several shorter ones such as fables.

OR

QUESTION 13. Post-Colonial Voices

How do post-colonial writers suggest the connections between individual identity and national identity?

Answer with close reference to TWO OR THREE post-colonial works.

OR

QUESTION 14. Post-Colonial Voices

‘Post-colonial literature seeks to revise the traditional oppositions of white–black, good–evil, civilised–savage, true–false.’

Do you agree? In your answer, discuss TWO OR THREE of these oppositions with close reference to TWO OR THREE post-colonial works.

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