S6 Literature in English Practice Paper (Set 2): Poetry, Prose, Drama and Comparative Criticism

S6 Literature in English | Time: 90 minutes | Total: 100 marks | 24 questions

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Section A: Unseen Poetry (16 marks)

Read the following poem, "Market Morning", and answer the questions.

1. (a) How does the poem use imagery to present the market moving from morning to noon? Refer to two images and explain their effect. (4 marks)

(a) "crates of ginger and ice" places cold goods and melting ice side by side, suggesting a cold, fresh start; later "the ice gives up its shapes" personifies the ice, so that melting ice and the market losing its order become one image. The two images frame the passage of time.

2. (b) Analyse the effect of the simile "Others lift their voices like nets over the crowd". (4 marks)

(b) "nets" turns the calling voices into something thrown and covering: the sound is cast over the crowd like a fishing net, conveying density and competition for attention, and hinting that in trade everyone is trying to catch someone. The tone is observant rather than accusing.

3. (c) How does the tone shift in the third stanza? Support your answer with words from the poem. (4 marks)

(c) The tone moves from relaxed observation to a cool close: "shrink", "gives up" and "take over" form a sequence of retreat and replacement, and "leaving the wet road to the sun" ends with a gesture of yielding rather than lament.

4. (d) How does the structure, a single unbroken stanza moving through time, shape your understanding of the theme? (4 marks)

(d) The undivided stanza runs from "at five" to "By nine" to "At noon" in one breath, so the reader follows a whole working day at once; the theme becomes daily repetition rather than a single event, and the open ending makes the cycle feel like something that happens again tomorrow.

Section B: Narrative Voice in Prose (17 marks)

Read the following extract from an original short story and answer the questions.

5. (a) What narrative perspective is used, and how does it limit what you know about the father? (4 marks)

(a) Third-person limited, anchored in the daughter's observation. We see dusted shelves, a new kettle and folded glasses arms, but never the father's thoughts, so his hope can only be inferred from how carefully things are kept. Our knowledge stays indirect.

6. (b) What is the effect of the repetition of "eleven years"? (4 marks)

(b) The number is repeated at once, setting the Sunday opening beside his self-deprecating claim that it pays only for coffee. It builds a man who disguises his waiting as thrift, and makes the years feel long and unchanging, so waiting has become habit.

7. (c) How does the extract use detail to create atmosphere? Give two examples. (4 marks)

(c) "the shelves had been dusted twice" and "one arm folded in" are details of excessive neatness, suggesting deliberate preparation and nerves; "did not look up from the ledger" then turns the atmosphere from anticipation to formality. Together they create restrained tension.

8. (d) How does the final sentence, "in English, which was the language he used when he wanted the conversation to be short", summarise the relationship in the extract? (5 marks)

(d) The choice of language becomes the relationship in miniature: English here signals distance rather than intimacy, and the father protects himself with the shortest possible sentence, just as he stores feeling in tidy shelves. The last line reverses all the earlier preparation into defence, so the reunion is both welcome and refusal, and the tension of the extract closes on that doubleness.

Section C: Shakespearean Drama (17 marks)

The following questions concern Macbeth, Act 3 Scene 4, the banquet and the appearance of the Ghost.

9. (a) At the banquet Macbeth sees Banquo's Ghost while the guests do not. What dramatic irony does this produce? (4 marks)

(a) The audience shares a vision Macbeth has and the guests cannot verify, while the guests see only a host shouting at an empty stool, so the question becomes who is truly disordered. Every explanation makes him look madder, and the irony is that the new king loses control in public at the moment of his triumph.

10. (b) Analyse Macbeth's language in this scene: how do broken syntax and repetition reflect his mental state? (4 marks)

(b) He hammers out questions in broken clauses, his sentences cut apart by images of blood and by repeated calls to be bold. Reason can no longer organise reality: the repetition is both self-command and self-terror, and language turns from an instrument of rule into a symptom of collapse.

11. (c) As a director, how would you stage the Ghost so that the audience understands both Macbeth's position and the guests'? (5 marks)

(c) Light only the area the Ghost occupies, in Macbeth's eyeline, and let that area go dark whenever the guests turn towards it. The Ghost stays silent and still, existing through Macbeth's body. The audience sees what he sees and also sees the empty stool and the puzzled guests, so both realities stand at once.

12. (d) How does the banquet advance the play's theme that power cannot be made secure? (4 marks)

(d) The banquet is the ritual in which royal order displays itself, yet it ends with a host in disarray and a queen dismissing the hall. Every outer form of order, seats, cups and music, is present while the inside is hollow, so the theme is not that a villain fails but that an order founded on violence cannot hold.

Section D: Tragedy in the Novel (16 marks)

The following questions concern Okonkwo in Chinua Achebe's Things Fall Apart.

13. (a) The novel says Okonkwo's whole life was dominated by fear. What is the source of that fear? (4 marks)

(a) The fear grows from his father Unoka, lazy, in debt and called weak. Okonkwo's aim in life is not to become his father, so his toughness is defensive and what he truly fears is being seen as weak.

14. (b) How do proverbs and public speech build his authority, and how do they expose its limits? (4 marks)

(b) Proverbs are the public language of the clan and he uses them well, which gives him weight in assembly. Yet his proverbs concern war, farming and manliness rather than conflict or compassion, and the narrowness of his idiom matches the narrowness of his understanding.

15. (c) To what extent is his tragedy caused by character and to what extent by historical circumstance? (4 marks)

(c) The two are interlocked: his character stops him from negotiating, so he reads every change brought by colonialism as weakness, while circumstance destroys his last hope, a clan uprising. Character alone would only isolate him and circumstance alone would not drive him to kill himself, so the two must be read together.

16. (d) The novel does not narrate his death but shows the District Commissioner finding the body. What is the effect of ending this way? (4 marks)

(d) Narrative authority passes to the colonial officer, who plans to compress Okonkwo's life into a paragraph of a book. We are forced to see the death from outside, so the tragedy is not only personal but about who has the power to record a clan's story. Irony and indictment arrive together.

Section E: Comparative Criticism (17 marks)

Base your answers on how Macbeth and Things Fall Apart each treat appearance and reality.

17. (a) Write one defensible thesis for this comparison and explain why it is more than a statement of sameness or difference. (4 marks)

(a) A workable thesis: both texts treat appearance as communal performance, but Macbeth's performance fails at the centre of power while Okonkwo's fails at the threshold of a colonial order. It identifies a shared mechanism, performance, and a difference in where it breaks, so evidence can test it.

18. (b) Give one specific piece of textual evidence from each text in support of that thesis. (4 marks)

(b) In Macbeth, the host shouts at a stool the guests see as empty, so the performance collapses at the very centre of power. In Things Fall Apart, Okonkwo maintains standing through manliness only to be abandoned by the clan before the missionaries and the court, so it collapses at the threshold of an outside order.

19. (c) Some would argue this comparison ignores the difference of genre. How would you respond? (5 marks)

(c) The answer should grant that genre governs presentation: drama lets the audience see ghost and guests at once, while the novel builds contrast through voice and span of time. But that difference is itself part of the comparison: one collapse is public and takes hours, the other is private and takes decades, so they model different kinds of tragedy.

20. (d) Which of the two presents appearance and reality more disturbingly? Make a judgement and state your criteria. (4 marks)

(d) Judged by whether the reader can find a credible witness, Things Fall Apart is more disturbing: Macbeth at least leaves the audience as a shared witness, whereas Okonkwo's death survives only as an officer's record, so even witnessing is absorbed by an institution and the reader has no neutral place to stand.

Section F: Language, Form and Structure (17 marks)

Draw on the texts above to answer these questions on technique and critical judgement.

21. (a) Explain how line breaks make meaning, using the first stanza of the poem in Section A. (4 marks)

(a) The first four lines each end on a pause, so each action (unrolling, arriving, counting, calling) becomes a separate shot. The pause is shorter than a full stop, so the rhythm still runs on and time feels like continuous labour rather than a series of events.

22. (b) Using the extract in Section B, explain how sentence length answers the relationship between characters. (4 marks)

(b) The narration is long and clause-heavy, carrying everything the daughter notices, while the father speaks two short utterances. The contrast assigns observation to one and evasion to the other, so the gap in sentence length is the gap in the relationship.

23. (c) A critic claims the tragedy of Macbeth is caused entirely by language. How far do you agree? (4 marks)

(c) Partly. Prophecy, persuasion and soliloquy drive the action, so language does come before violence. But entirely is too strong: daggers, crowns and the Ghost as staged objects shape action too, and the power of language depends on a political situation, so language is the main medium rather than the sole cause.

24. (d) You have 90 minutes for this paper. Explain how you would divide the time and identify one common reason for lost marks. (5 marks)

(d) Spend about 45 minutes on the analytical questions in Sections A to C, keep 30 minutes for the critical questions in Sections E and F, and use the last 15 minutes to check quotations against the weighting. The commonest loss is retelling plot without analysing language, or quoting without a locatable source.

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