



MINISTRY OF EDUCATION, SINGAPORE
in collaboration with
CAMBRIDGE ASSESSMENT INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION
General Certificate of Education Advanced Level
Higher 1

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LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

8841/01

Paper 1 Reading Literature

For examination from 2025

SPECIMEN PAPER

3 hours

No Additional Materials are required.

Candidates may take set texts into the exam room. The texts may bear underlining, highlighting and vertical lines. Pages can be flagged with paper clips or by folding the page corners. Any other kind of folding or flagging of pages in texts (for example, use of sticky notes or tape flags) is not permitted.

READ THESE INSTRUCTIONS FIRST

An answer booklet will be provided with this question paper. You should follow the instructions on the front cover of the answer booklet. If you need additional answer paper ask the invigilator for a continuation booklet.

Answer **three** questions: one question from Section A, one question from Section B, and one question from Section C.

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

All questions in this paper carry equal marks.

This document consists of **19** printed pages and **1** blank page.



Singapore Examinations and Assessment Board



Cambridge Assessment
International Education

Section A: Poetry

Answer **one** question from this section.

1

- Either** (a) Write a critical commentary on the following poem, considering in detail ways in which your response is shaped by the writer's use of form, style and language.

Blessed Be

1.

In days now left behind me
 the way an exile leaves behind all he cannot carry,
 I saw in part, and I understood in part;
 I strained to compass the horizon of my days,
 watching the generous promise of the future
 rise like a tall ship into view. 5
 And I rejoiced at what I saw
 the way men rejoice at the harvest,
 when it comes time to parcel out
 the spoils of victory. 10
 But just as one who stands on the beach and gazes
 can see no further than three miles
 before his vision is guillotined
 by the horizon —
 just as all the plans and foresight of generals 15
 still leave cannon pointing southward —
 so the future came upon me
 from a direction unexpected:
 like a battalion of paratroops out of the sky
 the future came, resolute, unwavering, 20
 securing its beachhead¹ in the invasion of my life —
 and through the rear window of my house
 my love came also, breaking and entering,
 a gun in her hand,
 and even while I toasted her 25
 with champagne and chocolate,
 even while I sang
 the pleasures of her mouth
 and the rich plains of her body
 she laid me low, and took what she wanted, 30
 and was gone.
 The cavalry of righteousness drew up in my yard;
 the footsoldiers of justice took up arms against me.
 But I, I —
 leaving all my life behind 35
 I stepped out of my skin, abandoned it like a corpse,
 and set out to walk the stars.

Leonard Ng (published 2014)

¹ *beachhead*: territory captured on hostile shore by an attacking force, from which it may advance further inland

- Or (b) Write a critical commentary on the following poem, considering in detail ways in which your response is shaped by the writer's use of form, style and language.

Dear Life

I can't undo all I have done unto myself,
what I have let an appetite for love do to me.

I have wanted all the world, its beauties
and its injuries; some days,
I think that is punishment enough. 5

Often, I received more than I'd asked,
which is how this works—you fish in open water
ready to be wounded on what you reel in.

Throwing it back was a nightmare.
Throwing it back and seeing my own face 10

as it disappeared into the dark water.

Catching my tongue suddenly on metal,
spitting the hook into my open palm.

Dear life: I feel that hook today most keenly.

Would you loosen the line—you'll listen 15

if I ask you,

if you are the sort of life I think you are.

Maya C Popa (published 2020)

Section B: Prose

Answer **one** question from this section.

JULIAN BARNES: *Arthur and George*

2

Either (a) 'The structure of Barnes's *Arthur and George* is key to its impact and understanding.'

In the light of this comment, discuss the use and significance of narrative structure in the novel.

Or (b) Write a critical commentary on the following passage, relating it to the portrayal of the police, here and elsewhere in the novel.

'You've met him, Campbell. How did he strike you?'

The Inspector reviewed his impressions. 'Intelligent. Nervous. Rather eager to please at first. Then a little quick to take offence. He offered us some advice and we didn't seem keen on it. Suggested we try using bloodhounds.'

'Bloodhounds? You're sure he didn't say native trackers?'

5

'No, sir, bloodhounds. The odd thing was, listening to his voice – it was an educated voice, a lawyer's voice – I found myself thinking at one point, if you shut your eyes, you'd think him an Englishman.'

'Whereas if you left them open, you wouldn't exactly mistake him for a member of the Brigade of Guards?'

10

'You could put it that way, sir.'

'Yes. It sound as if – eyes open or eyes shut – your impression was of someone who feels himself superior. How might I put it? Someone who thinks he belongs to a higher caste?'

'Possibly. But why should such a person wish to rip horses? Rather than prove he's clever and superior by, say, embezzling large sums of money?'

15

'Who's to say he isn't up to that as well? Frankly, Campbell, the why interests me much less than the how and the when and the what.'

'Yes, sir. But if you're asking me to arrest this fellow, it might help to have a clue as to his motive.'

20

Anson disliked this sort of question, which in his view was nowadays asked far too frequently in police work. There was a passion for delving into the mind of the criminal. What you did was catch a fellow, arrest him, charge him, and get him sent away for a few years, the more the merrier. It was of little interest to probe the mental functionings of a malefactor as he discharged his pistol or smashed in your window. The Chief Constable was about to say as much when Campbell prompted him.

25

'We can, after all, rule out profit as a motive. It is not as if he were destroying his own property with a view to making some claim against the insurance.'

'A man who sets fire to his neighbour's rick does not do so for profit. He does it out of malice. He does it for the pleasure of seeing flames in the sky and fear on people's faces. In Edalji's case there might be some deep hatred of animals. You will doubtless enquire into that. Or if there is some pattern in the timing of the attacks, if most of them happen at the start of the month, there might be some sacrificial principle involved. Perhaps the mysterious instrument we are seeking is a ritual knife of Indian origin. A kukri or something. Edalji's father is a Parsee, I understand. Do they not worship fire?'

30

35

Campbell acknowledged that professional methods had so far turned up nothing; but was unwilling to see them replaced by such loose speculation. And if Parsees worshipped fire, then would you not expect the man to be committing arson? 40

‘By the way, I am not asking you to arrest the lawyer.’

‘No, sir?’

‘No. What I am asking – ordering – you to do is concentrate your resources on him. Watch the Vicarage discreetly in the day, have him followed to the station, assign a man to Birmingham – in case he is lunching with the mysterious Captain – and then cover the house entirely after dark. Have it so that he cannot step out of the back door and spit without hitting a special constable. He will do something, I know he will do something.’ 45

CHARLOTTE BRONTË: *Jane Eyre*

3

Either (a) '*Jane Eyre* explores subtle shifts in power.'

Bearing this comment in mind, discuss the significance and presentation of power in the novel.

Or (b) Write a critical commentary on the following passage, relating it to the portrayal of supernatural-seeming experiences, here and elsewhere in the novel.

A singular notion dawned upon me. I doubted not – never doubted – that if Mr Reed had been alive he would have treated me kindly; and now, as I sat looking at the white bed and overshadowed walls – occasionally also turning a fascinated eye towards the dimly gleaming mirror – I began to recall what I had heard of dead men, troubled in their graves by the violation of their last wishes, revisiting the earth to punish the perjurer and avenge the oppressed: and I thought Mr Reed's spirit, harassed by the wrongs of his sister's child, might quit its abode – whether in the church vault or in the unknown world of the departed – and rise before me in this chamber. I wiped my tears and hushed my sobs, fearful lest any sign of violent grief might waken a preternatural voice to comfort me, or elicit from the gloom some haloed face, bending over me with strange pity. This idea, consolatory in theory, I felt would be terrible if realised: with all my might I endeavoured to stifle it – I endeavoured to be firm. Shaking my hair from my eyes, I lifted my head and tried to look boldly round the dark room: at this moment a light gleamed on the wall. Was it, I asked myself, a ray from the moon penetrating some aperture in the blind? No; moonlight was still, and this stirred; while I gazed, it glided up to the ceiling and quivered over my head. I can now conjecture readily that this streak of light was, in all likelihood, a gleam from a lantern, carried by someone across the lawn: but then, prepared as my mind was for horror, shaken as my nerves were by agitation, I thought the swift-darting beam was a herald of some coming vision from another world. My heart beat thick, my head grew hot; a sound filled my ears, which I deemed the rushing of wings: something seemed near me; I was oppressed, suffocated: endurance broke down; I uttered a wild involuntary cry; I rushed to the door and shook the lock in desperate effort. Steps came running along the outer passage; the key turned, Bessie and Abbot entered.

'Miss Eyre, are you ill?' said Bessie.

'What a dreadful noise! It went quite through me!' exclaimed Abbot.

'Take me out! Let me go into the nursery!' was my cry.

'What for? Are you hurt? Have you seen something?' again demanded Bessie.

'Oh! I saw a light, and I thought a ghost would come.' I had now got hold of Bessie's hand, and she did not snatch it from me.

'She has screamed out on purpose,' declared Abbot, in some disgust. 'And what a scream! If she had been in great pain one would have excused it, but she only wanted to bring us all here: I know her naughty tricks.'

'What is all this?' demanded another voice peremptorily; and Mrs Reed came along the corridor, her cap flying wide, her gown rustling stormily. 'Abbot and Bessie, I believe I gave orders that Jane Eyre should be left in the red-room till I came to her myself.'

'Miss Jane screamed so loud, ma'am,' pleaded Bessie.

'Let her go,' was the only answer. 'Loose Bessie's hands, child: you cannot succeed in getting out by these means, be assured. I abhor artifice, particularly in children; it is my duty to show you that tricks will not answer: you will now stay here an hour longer, and it is only on condition of perfect submission and stillness that I shall liberate you then.' 40

'Oh, aunt! have pity! Forgive me! I cannot endure it – let me be punished some other way! I shall be killed if —' 45

'Silence! This violence is almost repulsive:' and so, no doubt, she felt it. I was a precocious actress in her eyes: she sincerely looked on me as a compound of virulent passions, mean spirit, and dangerous duplicity.

Bessie and Abbot having retreated, Mrs Reed, impatient of my now frantic anguish and wild sobs, abruptly thrust me back and locked me in, without further parley. I heard her sweeping away; and soon after she was gone, I suppose I had a species of fit: unconsciousness closed the scene. 50

(from Chapter 2)

CHARLES DICKENS: *Hard Times*

4

Either (a) Discuss some of the ways in which Dickens presents Coketown in the novel.

Or (b) Write a critical commentary on the following passage, relating it to the portrayal of minor characters, here and elsewhere in the novel.

Mrs Sparsit, lying by to recover the tone of her nerves in Mr Bounderby's retreat, kept such a sharp look-out, night and day, under her Coriolanian eyebrows, that her eyes, like a couple of lighthouses on an iron-bound coast, might have warned all prudent mariners from that bold rock her Roman nose and the dark and craggy region in its neighbourhood, but for the placidity of her manner. Although it was hard to believe that her retiring for the night could be anything but a form, so severely wide awake were those classical eyes of hers, and so impossible did it seem that her rigid nose could yield to any relaxing influence, yet her manner of sitting, smoothing her uncomfortable, not to say, gritty, mittens (they were constructed of a cool fabric like a meat-safe), or of ambling to unknown places of destination with her foot in her cotton stirrup, was so perfectly serene, that most observers would have been constrained to suppose her a dove, embodied, by some freak of nature, in the earthly tabernacle of a bird of the hook-beaked order. 5

She was a most wonderful woman for prowling about the house. How she got from storey to storey, was a mystery beyond solution. A lady so decorous in herself, and so highly connected, was not to be suspected of dropping over the banisters or sliding down them, yet her extraordinary facility of locomotion suggested the wild idea. Another noticeable circumstance in Mrs Sparsit was, that she was never hurried. She would shoot with consummate velocity from the roof to the hall, yet would be in full possession of her breath and dignity on the moment of her arrival there. Neither was she ever seen by human vision to go at a great pace. 10

She took very kindly to Mr Harthouse, and had some pleasant conversation with him soon after her arrival. She made him her stately curtsey in the garden, one morning before breakfast. 15

'It appears but yesterday, sir,' said Mrs Sparsit, 'that I had the honour of receiving you at the Bank, when you were so good as to wish to be made acquainted with Mr Bounderby's address.' 20

'An occasion, I am sure, not to be forgotten by myself in the course of Ages,' said Mr Harthouse, inclining his head to Mrs Sparsit with the most indolent of all possible airs. 30

'We live in a singular world, sir,' said Mrs Sparsit.

'I have had the honour, by a coincidence of which I am proud, to have made a remark, similar in effect, though not so epigrammatically expressed.'

'A singular world, I would say, sir,' pursued Mrs Sparsit; after acknowledging the compliment with a drooping of her dark eyebrows, not altogether so mild in its expression as her voice was in its dulcet tones; 'as regards the intimacies we form at one time, with individuals we were quite ignorant of, at another. I recall, sir, that on that occasion you went so far as to say you were actually apprehensive of Miss Gradgrind.' 35

'Your memory does me more honour than my insignificance deserves. I availed myself of your obliging hints to correct my timidity, and it is unnecessary to add that they were perfectly accurate. Mrs Sparsit's talent for – in fact for anything requiring accuracy – with a combination of strength of mind – and Family – is too habitually developed to admit of any question.' He was almost falling asleep over this compliment; it took him so long to get through, and his mind wandered so much in the course of its execution.

(from Chapter 9)

TAN TWAN ENG: *The Garden of Evening Mists*

5

Either (a) Discuss the presentation and significance of gardens in the novel.

Or (b) Write a critical commentary on the following passage, relating it to the portrayal of wartime experiences, here and elsewhere in the novel.

'Look, everyone knows now that there were Japanese spies everywhere in Malaya years before the war, working as tailors and photographers and running little businesses. But they were living in *towns*, Tatsuji,' I say, 'in places that had some strategic importance to your army. Aritomo was here. *Here*.' I rap my knuckles on the wooden railing. 'He had hidden himself away in his garden. And, anyway,' 5
I add, 'if he was still working for your country, why did he remain in Malaya, long after the war ended? Why did he never return home?'

Tatsuji is silent, the intent look in his eyes telling me he is studying my words from various angles.

'What did you do in the war, Tatsuji?' 10

There is a moment's hesitation. 'I was in South East Asia.'

'Where in South East Asia?'

He turns his gaze to the heron picking its way between the lotus pads. 'Malaya.'

'In the army?' My voice hardens. 'Or the Kempeitai?'

'I was in the Imperial Navy's air wing. I was a pilot.' He leans slightly away from me, and I notice how rigidly he contains himself. 'When the air raids over Tokyo began, my father moved to his villa in the countryside,' he says. 'I was still in the pilots' training academy. I was an only child. My mother had died when I was a boy. I visited my father whenever I could get a few days' leave.' 15

He closes his eyes and opens them again a moment later. 'There was a labour camp a few miles away from our villa. Prisoners of war had been shipped from South East Asia to work in the coal mines outside the town. Every time some of them escaped, the men in the village would form search parties. One weekend when I was visiting my father, I saw them with their hunting dogs and their sticks and farming tools. They made wagers as to who would be the first to find the 20
escaped prisoners. "Rabbit hunting", they called it. When they were recaptured, the prisoners were taken to the square outside the village hall and beaten.' He stops, then says: 'Once I saw a group of boys club a prisoner to death.'

For a long time neither of us speaks. He turns to me and gives me a bow so deep I think he is going to topple over. Straightening up again, he says, 'I am sorry, 30
for what we did to you. I am deeply sorry.'

'Your apology is meaningless,' I say, taking a step back from him. 'It's worth nothing to me.'

His shoulders stiffen. I expect him to walk away from the pavilion. But he stands there, not moving. 35

'We had no idea what my country did,' he says. 'We did not know about the massacres or the death camps, the medical experiments carried out on living prisoners, the women forced to serve in army brothels. When I returned home after the war, I found out everything I could about what we had done. That's when I became interested in our crimes. I wanted to fill in the silence that was stifling every family of my generation.' 40

The chill in my bones leaches into my bloodstream; I restrain myself from rubbing my arms. Something he mentioned earlier is troubling me. 'Those boys in the village,' I say, plumbing the depths of his eyes, 'you were with them when they punished the prisoners, weren't you? You took part in the beatings.' 45

Tatsuji turns his back to me. His voice comes faintly over his shoulder a moment later. 'Rabbit hunting.'

It begins to rain softly, raising goose-pimples on the pond's skin. In the branches above the pavilion, a bird keeps repeating an ascending three-note cry. I want to be angry with Tatsuji. I want to ask him to leave Yugiri and never come back here again. To my surprise, I feel only sorrow for him.

50

(from Chapter 13)

Section C: Drama

Answer **one** question from this section.

THOMAS MIDDLETON AND WILLIAM ROWLEY: *The Changeling*

6

Either (a) Discuss how Middleton and Rowley make the play's title significant.

Or (b) Write a critical commentary on the following passage, relating it to the dramatic presentation of secret desires, here and elsewhere in the play.

[Enter VERMANDERO and SERVANTS]

Vermandero: O Joanna, I came to meet thee.
Your devotion's ended?

Beatrice: For this time, sir.
[*Aside*] I shall change my saint, I fear me: I find 5
A giddy turning in me. [*Aloud*] Sir, this while
I am beholding to this gentleman
Who left his own way to keep me company;
And in discourse I find him much desirous
To see your castle – he hath deserved it, sir, 10
If ye please to grant it.

Vermandero: With all my heart, sir.
Yet there's an article between: I must know
Your country. We use not to give survey
Of our chief strengths to strangers; our citadels 15
Are placed conspicuous to outward view,
On promonts' tops, but within are secrets.

Alsemero: A Valencian, sir.

Vermandero: A Valencian?
That's native, sir – of what name, I beseech you? 20

Alsemero: Alsemero, sir.

Vermandero: Alsemero! Not the son
Of John de Alsemero?

Alsemero: The same, sir.

Vermandero: My best love bids you welcome. 25

Beatrice: He was wont
To call me so, and then he speaks a most
Unfeignèd truth.

Vermandero: O sir, I knew your father;
We two were in acquaintance long ago 30
Before our chins were worth lulan down,
And so continued till the stamp of time
Had coined us into silver. Well, he's gone,
A good soldier went with him.

Alsemero: You went together in that, sir. 35

Vermandero: No, by Saint Jacques, I came behind him.
Yet I have done somewhat too. An unhappy day

	Swallowed him at last at Gibraltar In fight with those rebellious Hollanders – Was it not so?	40
<i>Alsemero:</i>	Whose death I had revenged, Or followed him in fate, had not the late league Prevented me.	
<i>Vermandero:</i>	Ay, ay, 'twas time to breathe. Oh, Joanna, I should ha' told thee news, I saw Piracquo lately.	45
<i>Beatrice</i>	[<i>Aside</i>]: That's ill news.	
<i>Vermandero:</i>	He's hot preparing for his day of triumph, Thou must be a bride within this sevensnight.	
<i>Alsemero</i>	[<i>Aside</i>]: Ha!	50
<i>Beatrice:</i>	Nay, good sir, be not so violent: with speed I cannot render satisfaction Unto the dear companion of my soul, Virginity, whom I thus long have lived with, And part with it so rude and suddenly. Can such friends divide never to meet again, Without a solemn farewell?	55
<i>Vermandero:</i>	Tush, tush! There's a toy.	
<i>Alsemero</i>	[<i>Aside</i>]: I must now part, and never meet again With any joy on earth. [<i>Aloud</i>] Sir, your pardon, My affairs call on me.	60
<i>Vermandero:</i>	How, sir? By no means! Not changed so soon, I hope? You must see my castle And her best entertainment ere we part – I shall think myself unkindly usèd else. Come, come, let's on. I had good hope your stay Had been a while with us in Alicant; I might have bid you to my daughter's wedding.	65
<i>Alsemero</i>	[<i>Aside</i>]: He means to feast me, and poisons me beforehand. [<i>Aloud</i>] I should be dearly glad to be there, sir, Did my occasions suit as I could wish.	70
<i>Beatrice:</i>	I shall be sorry if you be not there When it is done, sir – but not so suddenly.	75
<i>Vermandero:</i>	I tell you, sir, the gentleman's complete, A courtier and a gallant, enriched With many fair and noble ornaments: I would not change him for a son-in-law For any he in Spain, the proudest he – And we have great ones, that you know.	80
<i>Alsemero:</i>	He's much bound to you, sir.	
<i>Vermandero:</i>	He shall be bound to me, As fast as this tie can hold him, I'll want My will else.	85

(from Act 1, Scene 1)

SEAN O'CASEY: *Juno and the Paycock* and *The Plough and the Stars*

7

Either (a) In what ways, and with what dramatic effects, does O'Casey present strong women in both plays?

Or (b) Write a critical commentary on the following passage, relating it to the dramatic presentation of traumatic events, here and elsewhere in *The Plough and the Stars*.

[A burst of rifle fire is heard in a street near by, followed by the rapid rok, tok, tok of a machine-gun.]

Nora *[Staring in front of her and screaming]:* Jack, Jack, Jack! My baby, my baby, my baby!

Bessie *[waking with a start]:* You divil, are you afther gettin' out o' bed again! 5
[She rises and runs towards NORA, who rushes to the window, which she frantically opens.]

Nora *[at window, screaming]:* Jack, Jack, for God's sake, come to me!

Soldiers *[outside, shouting]:* Git away, git away from that window, there!

Bessie *[seizing hold of NORA]:* Come away, come away, woman, from that window! 10

Nora *[struggling with BESSIE]:* Where is it; where have you hidden it? Oh, Jack, Jack, where are you?

Bessie *[imploringly]:* Mrs Clitheroe, for God's sake, come away!

Nora *[fiercely]:* I won't; he's below. Let ... me ... go! You're thyrin' to keep me from me husband. I'll follow him. Jack, Jack, come to your Nora! 15

Bessie: Hus-s-sh, Nora, Nora! He'll be here in a minute. I'll bring him to you, if you'll only be quiet – honest to God, I will.

[With a great effort BESSIE pushes NORA away from the window, the force used causing her to stagger against it herself. Two rifle shots ring out in quick succession. BESSIE jerks her body convulsively; stands stiffly for a moment, a look of agonized astonishment on her face, then she staggers forward, leaning heavily on the table with her hands.] 20

[With an arrested scream of fear and pain] Merciful God, I'm shot, I'm shot, I'm shot! ... Th' life's pourin' out o' me! *[To NORA]* I've got this through ... through you ... through you, you bitch, you! ... O God, have mercy on me! ... *[To NORA]* You wouldn't stop quiet, no, you wouldn't, you wouldn't, blast you! Look at what I'm afther gettin', look at what I'm afther gettin' ... I'm bleedin' to death, an' no one's here to stop th' flowin' blood! *[Calling]* Mrs Gogan, Mrs Gogan! Fluther, Fluther, for God's sake, somebody, a doctor, a doctor! 30

[She staggers frightened towards the door, to seek for aid, but, weakening half-way across the room, she sinks to her knees, and bending forward, supports herself with her hands resting on the floor. NORA is standing rigidly with her back to the wall opposite, her trembling hands held out a little from the sides of her body, her lips quivering, her breast heaving, staring wildly at the figure of BESSIE.] 35

Nora *[in a breathless whisper]:* Jack, I'm frightened ... I'm frightened, Jack ... Oh, Jack where are you?

- Bessie* [*moaningly*]: This is what's afther comin' on me for nursin' you day an' night ... I was a fool, a fool, a fool! Get me a dhrink o' wather, you jade, will you? There's a fire burnin' in me blood! [*Pleadingly*] Nora, Nora, dear, for God's sake, run out an' get Mrs Gogan, or Fluther, or somebody to bring a doctor, quick, quick, quick! 40
- [*NORA does not stir.*] 45
- Blast you, stir yourself, before I'm gone!
- Nora*: Oh, Jack, Jack, where are you?
- Bessie* [*in a whispered moan*]: Jesus Christ, me sight's goin'! It's all dark, dark! Nora, hold me hand! [*BESSIE's body lists over and she sinks into a prostrate position on the floor.*] I'm dyin', I'm dyin' ... I feel it ... Oh God, oh God! [*She feebly sings.*] 50
- I do believe, I will believe
That Jesus died for me;
That on th' cross He shed His blood,
From sin to set me free 55
- I do believe ... I will believe
... Jesus died ... me;
... th' cross He shed ... blood,
From sin ... free.
- [*She ceases singing, and lies stretched out, still and very rigid. A pause. Then MRS GOGAN runs in hastily.*] 60
- [*from The Plough and the Stars, Act 4*]

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE: *The Winter's Tale*

8

Either (a) Discuss the dramatic effects of moments of revelation in the play.

Or (b) Write a critical commentary on the following passage, relating it to the dramatic presentation of cruel fathers, here and elsewhere in the play.

<i>Shepherd:</i>	Come, your hand; And, daughter, yours.	
<i>Polixenes:</i>	Soft, swain, awhile, beseech you; Have you a father?	
<i>Florizel:</i>	I have, but what of him?	5
<i>Polixenes:</i>	Knows he of this?	
<i>Florizel:</i>	He neither does nor shall.	
<i>Polixenes:</i>	Methinks a father Is at the nuptial of his son a guest That best becomes the table. Pray you, once more, Is not your father grown incapable Of reasonable affairs? Is he not stupid With age and alt'ring rheums? Can he speak, hear, Know man from man, dispute his own estate? Lies he not bed-rid, and again does nothing But what he did being childish?	10 15
<i>Florizel:</i>	No, good sir; He has his health, and ampler strength indeed Than most have of his age.	
<i>Polixenes:</i>	By my white beard, You offer him, if this be so, a wrong Something unfilial. Reason my son Should choose himself a wife; but as good reason The father – all whose joy is nothing else But fair posterity – should hold some counsel In such a business.	20 25
<i>Florizel:</i>	I yield all this; But, for some other reasons, my grave sir, which 'tis not fit you know, I not acquaint My father of this business.	30
<i>Polixenes:</i>	Let him know't.	
<i>Florizel:</i>	He shall not.	
<i>Polixenes:</i>	Prithee let him.	
<i>Florizel:</i>	No, he must not.	
<i>Shepherd:</i>	Let him, my son; he shall not need to grieve At knowing of thy choice.	35
<i>Florizel:</i>	Come, come, he must not. Mark our contract.	

<i>Polixenes</i> [<i>Discovering himself</i>]: Mark your divorce, young sir, Whom son I dare not call; thou art too base	40
To be acknowledg'd – thou a sceptre's heir, That thus affects a sheep-hook! Thou, old traitor, I am sorry that by hanging thee I can but Shorten thy life one week. An thou, fresh piece	45
Of excellent witchcraft, who of force must know The royal fool thou cop'st with –	
<i>Shepherd</i> : O, my heart!	
<i>Polixenes</i> : I'll have thy beauty scratch'd with briars and made More homely than thy state. For thee, fond boy, If I may ever know thou dost but sigh	50
That thou no more shalt see this knack – as never I mean thou shalt – we'll bar thee from succession; Not hold thee of our blood, no, not our kin, Farre than Deucalion off. Mark thou my words.	55
Follow us to the court. Thou churl, for this time, Though full of our displeasure, yet we free thee From the dead blow of it. And you, enchantment, Worthy enough a herdsman – yea, him too	
That makes himself, but for our honour therein, Unworthy thee – if ever henceforth thou	60
These rural latches to his entrance open, Or hoop his body more with thy embraces, I will devise a death as cruel for thee As though art tender to't.	
[<i>Exit.</i>]	65
(from Act 4, Scene 4)	

TOM STOPPARD: *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead*

9

Either (a) ‘*Rosencrantz and Guildenstern* forces us to look at the play as a play.’

Discuss the dramatic effects of the play in the light of this comment.

Or (b) Write a critical commentary on the following passage, relating it to its dramatic effectiveness as an ending to the play as a whole.

Player [activated, arms spread, the professional]: Deaths for all ages and occasions! Deaths by suspension, convulsion, consumption, incision, execution, asphyxiation and malnutrition – ! Climactic carnage, by poison and by steel – ! Double deaths by duel – ! Show!

[ALFRED, still in his queen’s costume, dies by poison: the PLAYER, with rapier, kills the ‘King’ and duels with a fourth TRAGEDIAN, inflicting and receiving a wound: the two remaining TRADEGIANS, the two ‘Spies’ dressed in the same coats as ROSENCRANTZ and GUILDENSTERN, are stabbed, as before. And the light is fading over the deaths which take place right upstage. Dying amid the dying – tragically; romantically.] 5 10

So there’s an end to that – it’s commonplace: light goes with life, and in the winter of your years the dark comes early ...

Guildenstern [tired, drained, but still an edge of impatience; over the mime]: No ... no ... not for us, not like that. Dying is not romantic, and death is not a game which will soon be over ... Death is not anything ... death is not ... It’s the absence of presence, nothing more ... the endless time of never coming back ... a gap you can’t see, and when the wind blows through it, it makes no sound ...

[The light has gone upstage. Only GUILDENSTERN and ROSENCRANTZ are visible as ROSENCRANTZ’s clapping falters to silence. Small pause.] 20

Rosencrantz: That’s it, then, is it? [No answer, he looks out front.] The sun’s going down. Or the earth’s coming up, as the fashionable theory has it. [Small pause.] Not that it makes any difference. [Pause.] What was it all about? When did it begin? [Pause, no answer.] Couldn’t we just stay put? I mean no one is going to come on and drag us off ... They’ll just have to wait. We’re still young ... fit ... we’ve got years ... [Pause. No answer.] [A cry] We’ve done nothing wrong! We didn’t harm anyone. Did we? 25 30

Guildenstern: I can’t remember.

[ROSENCRANTZ pulls himself together.]

Rosencrantz: All right, then. I don’t care. I’ve had enough. To tell you the truth, I’m relieved. 35

[And he disappears from view. GUILDENSTERN does not notice.]

- Guildenstern:* Our names shouted in a certain dawn ... a message ... a summons ... there must have been a moment, at the beginning, where we could have said – no. But somehow we missed it. [*He looks round and sees he is alone.*] Rosen – ? Guil – ? [*He gathers himself.*] Well, we'll know better next time. Now you see me, now you – 40
- [*And disappears.*
Immediately the whole stage is lit up, revealing, upstage, arranged in the approximate positions last held by the dead TRAGEDIANS, the tableau of court and corpses which is the last scene of Hamlet. That is: The KING, QUEEN, LAERTES and HAMLET all dead. HORATIO holds HAMLET. FORTINBRAS is there. So are two AMBASSADORS from England.] 45
- Ambassador:* The sight is dismal; 50
And our affairs from England come too late.
The ears are senseless that should give us hearing
To tell him his commandment is fulfilled,
That Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are dead.
Where should we have our thanks? 55
- Horatio:* Not from his mouth,
Had it the ability of life to thank you:

He never gave commandment for their death.
But since, so jump upon this bloody question,
You from the Polack wars, and you from England, 60
Are here arrived, give order that these bodies
High on a stage be placed to the view;
And let me speak to the yet unknowing world
How these things came about: so shall you hear
Of carnal, bloody and unnatural acts, 65
Of accidental judgments, casual slaughters,
Of deaths put on by cunning and forced cause,
And, in this upshot, purposes mistook
Fallen on the inventors' heads: all this can I
Truly deliver. 70
- But during the above speech the play fades, overtaken by dark and music.*

(from Act 3)

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