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Cambridge Assessment International Education

Cambridge International AS & A Level

LITERATURE IN ENGLISH **9695/22**

Paper 2 Prose and Unseen **October/November 2025**

2 hours

You must answer on the enclosed answer booklet.

You will need: Answer booklet (enclosed)

INSTRUCTIONS

- Answer **two** questions in total:
  - Section A: answer **one** question.
  - Section B: answer **one** question.
- Follow the instructions on the front cover of the answer booklet. If you need additional answer paper, ask the invigilator for a continuation booklet.
- Dictionaries are **not** allowed.

INFORMATION

- The total mark for this paper is 50.
- All questions are worth equal marks.

This document has **12** pages. Any blank pages are indicated.

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Section A: Prose

Answer **one** question from this section.

KIRAN DESAI: *The Inheritance of Loss*

1 **Either** **(a)** Discuss Desai's presentation of New York in the novel.

Or **(b)** Comment closely on the following passage, considering Desai's presentation of the protest.

All was going according to plan, and they began to anticipate their lunch, since they were already hungry; but then, all of a sudden when they reached the junction, an unexpected incident occurred.

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A beheaded body ran briefly down the street, blood fountaining from the neck, and they all saw the truth about living creatures – that after death, in final humiliation, the body defecates on itself.

(*from* Chapter 43)

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Stories of Ourselves, Volume 1

2 **Either** **(a)** Discuss ways in which the writers of **two** stories present life in cities.

Or **(b)** Comment closely on the following passage from *Tyres*, considering Adam Thorpe's presentation of the family tyre business.

My father started the business in 1925, the year of my birth. It was a good business: roads were rough and tyres were punished. In those days, there was the inner tube, and the outer casing of hard rubber. I always saw these as the body and the soul. Don't ask me why.

The main road is very straight, and always has been: Roman, they say. In those days there wasn't much traffic, although at the time we thought it was busy. Life would go by us, and now and again stop. We were proud that M. Michelin was a Frenchman: for once we had invented something useful, instead of making a lot of noise about nothing. No, really, I am proud of our business.

I started helping my father as soon as I could stand upright, just as he had helped his father, who was a blacksmith, hammering hot iron tyres to wooden rims. I was at first scared of the hiss of the compressors, of the great blade that took off the rubber, peeling it like an orange. I learnt to see a tyre as sad, when its chin lay flat on the ground, melting away – and when it was fat and full it bounced, it was so happy. My father could roll the tyres like a man I once saw in a circus that came to the village. The worn, sad ones lay leaning each upon the other like old men one side of the yard: my father would roll another so that it fell exactly into place against the end. He called this 'playing his accordion'. Some of the farmers would take these old tyres away, for use on the farms, where they would have a second life under a trailer, bouncing behind a horse or perhaps a donkey over stony fields. In very hard frosts, they would heap up the old, dead tyres at the ends of the fields, so that the evil smoke would scare the frost away from the vine-buds. Not everyone did this: it was my father's idea, I believe, and they didn't like to think he could tell them things, a man who had turned away from the land.

My father would tell me, when I was old enough, how one must never fall short of the highest standards, in this job. The road was getting busier, and the future looked rosy. But, he said, if you fall short of the highest standards, and start 'cutting corners', or grow sloppy, and let a man drive away with a set of tyres unevenly inflated, or with an inner tube that – from the very kindest of intentions – you have pretended to yourself is passable, though frayed in one spot, or with a tread that is smooth as here (he'd smack his furrowed brow), you might be sending that man to his death. Every time we heard of a local accident, our hearts beat faster, and not only because this unfortunate occurrence might have involved someone dear to us; many, if not most, of those running around on the roads at that time were putting their faith in our rigour and honesty and skill. Even I, a pimply young lad handling the bicycle trade (how much more considerable it was in those days!) knew that my hands were capable of bringing injury or even death, if I let my attention wander, or felt too lazy to triple-check a pressure or a repair or a bolt or the depth of a tread.

The blessed Trinity, my father called it: the check, the double-check, and the Holy-Ghost-check. Who was a Protestant through and through.

Even the local *curé* would use us. My father and he drank together, in the little office with its Dunlop tyre-clock, talking about Verdun or other things closed to me, while I dealt with the *curé*'s battered old bicycle – a Raleigh, from his time in Flanders. M Dunlop and M Michelin: these were my father's gods. I would like to say that my father was like the Michelin man, but he wasn't: I was always, from maturity, bigger than he ever was, but he was never fat. His face has always had an emaciated look, perpetually sucking on its dead cigarette, glossy with grease and seamed with dirt. Tyres pick up the filth of the world, they are not fussy. In their

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treads I have found the hair and blood of small, hapless creatures. In the great chasms of a giant truck's treads I once found a shrew, intact but quite lifeless, its tiny paws folded as my mother's were on her death-bed, in the room smelling of camphor and candles.

So the road passed by us in a blur, and now and again would come the tell-tale sounds of tyres turning into our yard, scrunching over the grit and dust, and we would lift our heads to look, squinting in the heat and glare or rubbing our hands in the cold.

André Paulhan et Fils. That sign was painted in 1942, when I was seventeen. I was very proud.

(*from* Tyres)

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EVELYN WAUGH: *A Handful of Dust*

3 **Either** **(a)** Discuss Waugh's presentation of John Beaver and his role in the novel.

Or **(b)** Comment closely on ways in which Waugh presents Christmas at Hetton in the following passage.

There were presents for all the servants, of value strictly graded according to their rank, and for all the guests (cheques for the impoverished Lasts).

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Christmas was on a Friday that year, so the party was a long one, from Thursday until Monday.

(*from* English Gothic – 1, Part 4)

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COLSON WHITEHEAD: *The Underground Railroad*

4 **Either** **(a)** Discuss some of the ways in which Whitehead makes freedom important in the novel.

Or **(b)** Comment closely on ways in which Whitehead presents Cora's experience at the doctors' in the following passage.

She saw a different physician this time, one more pleasant than Dr Campbell.

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Her stomach twisted at the idea.

(*from* South Carolina)

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Section B: Unseen

Answer **one** question from this section.

Either

5 Comment closely on the presentation of the journey in the following passage.

In your answer, consider the writer's choice of language, structure and narrative methods.

'Sim-la! Sim-la!' the boys set up a chant, their knees jouncing up and down in unison.

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As if to contradict her, the driver of the mountainous truck stalled at the top of the line swung himself out of the cabin into the road.

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Or

6 Comment closely on the presentation of the world in the following poem.

In your answer, consider the writer's choice of language, imagery and poetic methods.

The Author to his Book

The world's a theatre, the earth a stage
Which God and nature doth with actors fill,
Kings have their entrance in due equipage[1],
And some their parts play well and others ill.
The best no better are (in this theatre)
Where every humour's fitted in his kind;
This a true subject acts, and that a traitor,
The first applauded, and the last confin'd;
This plays an honest man, and that a knave,
A gentle person this, and he a clown,
One man is ragged, and another brave;
All men have parts, and each man acts his own.
She a chaste lady acteth all her life,
A wanton courtesan another plays.
This, covets marriage love, that, nuptial[2] strife,
Both in continual action spend their days.
Some citizens, some soldiers, born to adventure,
Shepherds and sea-men; then our play's begun,
When we are born, and to the world first enter,
And all find exits when their parts are done.
If then the world a theatre present,
As by the roundness it appears most fit,
Built with star-galleries of high ascent,
In which Jehove[3] doth as spectator sit,
And chief determiner to applaud the best,
And their endeavours crown with more than merit,
But by their evil actions dooms the rest,
To end disgrac'd whilst others praise inherit,
He that denies then theatres should be,
He may as well deny a world to me.

[1] *equipage*: horse, carriage and attendants
[2] *nuptial*: relating to marriage
[3] *Jehove*: old name for Jehovah, God

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