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Cambridge Assessment International Education

Cambridge International AS & A Level

LITERATURE IN ENGLISH **9695/23**

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

2 hours

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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.

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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 the relationship between Sai and Gyan in the novel.

Or **(b)** Comment closely on Desai's presentation of the cook in the following passage.

'My son works in New York,' the cook boasted to everyone he met.

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The most distinguished personage in town.

(*from* Chapter 15)

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Stories of Ourselves, Volume 1

2 **Either** **(a)** Discuss ways in which the writers of **two** stories present characters' hopes and dreams.

Or **(b)** Comment closely on the following passage from *The People Before*, considering Maurice Shadbolt's presentation of the narrator's father and his reaction to the news of the visitors.

It was near the end of the depression. But we didn't know that then, of course. It might have been just the beginning, for all we knew. My father didn't have as much interest in finishing jobs as he used to have. He tired easily. He'd given his best to the land, and yet his best still wasn't good enough. There wasn't much sense in anything and his dash was done. He kept going out of habit.

I'd been pulled out of school to help with the farm. Jim still more or less went to school. I say more or less because he went irregularly. This was because of sickness. Once he was away in hospital two months. And of course it cost money; my father said we were to blame, we who allowed Jim to become soft and sickly. But the doctor thought otherwise; he thought Jim had been worked hard enough already. And when Jim returned to the farm he no longer helped with the herd. And this was why I had to leave school: if he couldn't have both of us working with him part-time, my father wanted one full-time. Jim was entirely surrendered at last, to the house and books, to school and my mother. I didn't mind working on the farm all day, with my father; it was, after all, what I'd always wanted. All the same, I would have been happier if he had been: his doubts about himself, more and more frequently expressed, disturbed me. It wasn't like my father at all. He was convinced now he'd done the wrong thing, somewhere. He went back through the years, levering each year up like a stone, to see what lay beneath; he never seemed to find anything. It was worst of all in winter, when the land looked bleak, the hills were grey with low cloud, and the rain swirled out of the sky. All life vanished from his face and I knew he detested everything: the land which had promised him independence was now only a muddy snare; he was bogged here, between hills and river, and couldn't escape. He had no pride left in him for the place. If he could have got a price for the farm he would have gone. But there was no longer any question of a price. He could walk off if he liked. Only the bush would claim it back.

It was my mother who told us there were people coming. She had taken the telephone message while we were out of the house, and Jim was at the school.

'Who are they?' my father said.

'I couldn't understand very well. It was a bad connexion. I think they said they were the people who were here before.'

'The people who were here before? What the hell do they want here?' His eyes became suspicious under his frown.

'I think they said they just wanted to have a look around.'

'What the hell do they want here?' my father repeated, baffled. 'Nothing for them to see. This farm's not like it was when they were here. Everything's different. I've made a lot of changes. They wouldn't know the place. What do they want to come back for?'

'Well,' my mother sighed, 'I'm sure I don't know.'

'Perhaps they want to buy it,' he said abruptly; the words seemed simultaneous with his thought, and he stiffened with astonishment. 'By God, yes. They might want to buy the place back again. I hadn't thought of that. Wouldn't that be a joke? I'd sell, all right – for just about as much as I paid for the place. I tell you, I'd let it go for a song, for a bloody song. They're welcome.'

'But where would we go?' she said, alarmed.

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‘Somewhere,’ he said. ‘Somewhere new. Anywhere.’

‘But there’s nowhere,’ she protested. ‘Nowhere any better. You know that.’

‘And there’s nowhere any worse,’ he answered. ‘I’d start again somewhere. Make a better go of things.’

‘You’re too old to start again,’ my mother observed softly.

There was a silence. And in the silence I knew that what my mother said was true. We all knew it was true.

‘So we just stay here,’ he said. ‘And rot. Is that it?’ But he really wished to change the subject. ‘When are these people coming?’

‘Tomorrow, I think. They’re staying the night down in the township. Then they’re coming up by launch.’

‘They didn’t say why they were interested in the place?’

(*from* The People Before)

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EVELYN WAUGH: *A Handful of Dust*

3 **Either** **(a)** Discuss ways in which Waugh presents Brenda's attitude to Hetton in the novel.

Or **(b)** Comment closely on the following passage, considering ways in which Waugh presents the conversation between Tony and Reggie St Cloud.

'This whole business of Brenda is *very* unfortunate,' said Reggie St Cloud.

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'Did Brenda say that?'

(*from* English Gothic – 2, Part 3)

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COLSON WHITEHEAD: *The Underground Railroad*

4 Either (a) 'Cora refuses to be carried along by anyone [...]'.

With this comment in mind, discuss Whitehead's presentation of Cora's independence in the novel.

Or (b) Comment closely on Whitehead's presentation of Ethel in the following passage.

George had dropped out of the attic for some food, the lone slave Martin helped before the girl arrived.

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A savage to call her own, at last.

(*from* Ethel)

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Section B: Unseen

Answer **one** question from this section.

Either

5 Comment closely on the following passage, considering ways in which the writer presents the narrator's observations about Martin Crosbie.

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

> It would have been easy to suppose that Martin Crosbie was a ghost too, that first time I saw him, for there was nothing factual about him, other than his unexpected presence there, in a place where he should not have been, and even that was provisional, a figment of the summer night that might crumble and fade before I could make out what it was.

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> Martin Crosbie was one of those men.

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Or

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

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

The Sins of Love

Forgive me the sin of mine eyes,

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O pardon the sin of my heart!

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