

LIRA TOWN COLLEGE

S.6 PRE-MOCK EXAMS

LITERATURE IN ENGLISH P310 / 1 [PROSE AND POETRY]

TIME: 3 HOURS

INSTRUCTIONS:

Answer all the questions.

Spend 70 minutes (1 hour 10 minutes) on Section I, then 55 minutes for each of two other Sections II and III.

Read the passage below and answer the questions that follow:

May your road be rough!

I am not cursing you; I am wishing you what I wish myself every year. I therefore repeat, may you have a hard time this year; may there be plenty of troubles for you this year! If you are not sure what you should say back, why not just say, 'same to you'? I ask for no more.

Our successes are conditioned by the amount of risk we are ready to take. Earlier on today I visited a local farmer about three miles from where I live. He could not have been more than 55, but he said he was already too old to farm vigorously. He still suffered, he said, from the physical energy he displayed as a farmer in his younger days. Around his hut were two pepper bushes. There were cocoyams growing round him. There were snail shells which had given him meat. There must have been more snails around the banana trees I saw. He hardly ever went to town to buy things. He was self-sufficient. The car or the bus, the television or the telephone, the newspaper, Vietnam or Red China were nothing to him. He had no ambition whatsoever, he told me. I am not sure if you are already envious of him, but were we all to revert to such a life, we would be practically driven back to cave dwelling. On the other hand, try to put yourself in the position of the Russian or the American astronaut. Any moment now the counts three, two, one, zero, are going to go, and you are going to be shot into the atmosphere and soon you will be whirling round our earth at the speed of six miles per second. If you get fired into the atmosphere and you forget what to do to ensure return to earth, one of the things that might happen to you is that you could become for ever a satellite, going round the earth until you die of starvation, and even then your dead body would continue the gyration!

When, therefore, you are being dressed up and padded to be shot into the sky, you know only too well that you are going to be on the roughest road man has ever trodden. The Americans and Russians who have gone were armed with the great belief that they would come back. But I cannot believe that they did not have some slight foreboding on the contingency of their non-return. It is their courage for going in spite of these apprehensions that makes the world hail them so loudly today.

When my sisters and I were young and we slept on our small mats round our mother, she always woke us up at 6 for morning prayers. She always said prayers on our behalf but always ended with something like this – ‘May we not enter into any dangers or get into any difficulties this day.’ It took me almost thirty years to dislodge the neankerworm in our mother’s sentiments. I found, by hard experience, that all that is noble and laudable is to be achieved only through difficulties and trials and tears and dangers. There are no other roads.

(From *Thinking with you*, by Tai Solarin)

Questions:

1. a) According to the passage what does the writer mean by his New Year greeting: ‘May your road be rough!’ and why does he say it?

b) Suggest an appropriate title for the passage.
2. Does the writer admire the farmer or not? Give his reasons exactly.
3. Explain the following expressions in context.
a) conditioned b) cave dwelling
c) would continue the gyration c) foreboding
4. Describe the feelings of the writer towards his mother’s prayer and what is your view about the last two sentences in the passage?
5. Briefly say what the passage reveals about the writer’s character.

SECTION II

Read the passage below and answer the questions that follow:

THE GREEN BANANA

Although it might have happened anywhere, my encounter with the green banana started on a steep mountain road in the interior of Brazil. My ancient jeep was straining up through spectacular countryside when the radiator began to leak, ten miles from the nearest mechanic. The over-heated engine forced me to stop at the next village, which consisted of a small store and a scattering of houses. People gathered to look. Three fine streams of hot water spouted from holes in the jacket of the radiator. “That’s easy to fix,” a man said. He sent a boy running for some green bananas. He patted me on the shoulder, assuring me everything would work out. “Green bananas.” He smiled. Everyone agreed.

We exchanged pleasantries while I mulled over the ramifications of the green banana. Asking questions would betray my ignorance, so I remarked on the beauty of the terrain. Huge rock formations, like Sugar Loaf in Rio, rose up all around us. “Do you see that tall one right over there?” asked my benefactor, pointing to a particular tall, slender pinnacle of dark. “That rock marks the center of the world.”

I looked to see if he were teasing me, but his face was serious. He in turn inspected me carefully to be sure I grasped the significance of his statement. The occasion demanded some show of recognition of my part. "The center of the world?" I repeated, trying to convey interest if not complete acceptance. He nodded. "The absolute centre. Everyone around here knows it."

At that moment the boy returned with my green bananas. The man sliced one in half and pressed the cut end against the radiator jacket. The banana melted into a glue against the hot metal, plugging the leaks instantly. Everyone laughed at my astonishment. They refilled my radiator and gave me extra bananas to take along. An hour later, after one more application of green banana, my radiator and I reached our destination. The local mechanic smiled. "Who taught you about the green banana?" I named the village. "Did they show you the rock marking the centre of the world?" he asked. I assured him they had. "My grandfather came from there," he said. "The exact centre. Everyone around here has always known about it."

As a product of American higher education, I had never paid the slightest attention to the green banana, except to regard it as a fruit whose time had not yet come. Suddenly on that mountain road, its time and my need had converged. But as I reflected on it further, I realized that the green banana had been there all along. Its time reached back to the very origins of the banana. The people in that village had known about it for years. My own time had come in relation to it. This chance encounter showed me the special genius of those people, and the special potential of the green banana. I had been wondering for sometime about those episodes of clarity which educators like to call "learning moment" and knew had just experienced two of them at one.

The importance of the rock marking the centre of the world took a while to filter through. I had initially doubted their claim, knowing for a fact that the centre was located somewhere in New England. After all, my grandfather had come from there. But gradually I realized they had a valid belief, a universal concept and I agreed with them. We tend to define the centre as that special place where we are known, where we know others, where things mean much to us, and where we ourselves have both identity and meaning: family, school, town, and local region.

The lesson which gradually filtered through was the simple concept that every place has special meanings for the people in it; every place represents the centre of the world. The number of such centres is incalculable, and no one student or traveler can experience all of them, but once a conscious break-through to a second centre is made, a life-long perspective and collection can begin.

The cultures of the world are full of unexpected green bananas with special value and meaning. They have been there for ages, ripening slowly, perhaps waiting patiently for people to come along to encounter them. In fact, a green banana is waiting for all of us who leave our own centres of the world in order to experience other places.

By Donald Batchelder from (*Beyond Experience Vermont*: The Experiment Press, 1977)

Questions:

1. Discuss the relevance of the title "The Green Banana" to the passage.

2. With close reference to the passage, trace the changes that take place in the author's attitude and how effectively they are revealed.
3. Do you agree that there is a "universal concept" (line 38) about the centre of the world? What is your center of the world?

SECTION III

Read the poem below and answer the questions that follow:

Conquerors, by Henry Treece

By sundown we come to a hidden village
Where all the air was still
And no sound met our tired ears, save
For the sorry drip of rain from blackened trees
And the melancholy song of swinging gates.
Then through a broken pane some of us saw
A dead bird in a rusting cage, still
Pressing his thin tattered breast against the bars
His beak wide open. And
As we hurried through the weed-grown street
A gaunt dog started up from some dark place
And shambled off on legs as thin as sticks
Into the wood, to die at least in peace.
No one had told us victory was like this:
Not one of us would have eaten bread
Before he filled the mouth of the grey child
That sprawled, stiff as stone, before the shattered door.
There was not one of us who did not think of home.

Questions:

1. Comment on the atmosphere of the poem. How is it built up?
2. Discuss the effectiveness of the use of imagery in the poem.
3. Explain how the situation in the poem is ironical.
4. How does the form of the poem help to build the atmosphere and to convey the message in the poem?