



National
Qualifications
2019

X724/77/12

English
Textual Analysis

WEDNESDAY, 8 MAY

3:00 PM – 4:30 PM

Total marks — 20

Attempt ONLY Part A OR Part B OR Part C OR Part D

PART A — POETRY — 20 marks

Attempt the question.

PART B — PROSE FICTION — 20 marks

Attempt the question.

PART C — PROSE NON-FICTION — 20 marks

Attempt the question.

PART D — DRAMA — 20 marks

Attempt the question.

Write your answers clearly in the answer booklet provided. In the answer booklet you must clearly identify the question number you are attempting.

Use **blue or black ink**.

Before leaving the examination room you must give your answer booklet to the Invigilator; if you do not, you may lose all the marks for this paper.



* X 7 2 4 7 7 1 2 *

TEXTUAL ANALYSIS — 20 marks

Your answer should take the form of a CRITICAL ANALYSIS appropriately structured to meet the demands of your selected question.

Attempt ONLY Part A OR Part B OR Part C OR Part D.

PART A — POETRY

Read carefully *Carrion Comfort* (1885) by Gerard Manley Hopkins and then answer the question that follows it.

Carrion Comfort

Not, I'll not, carrion¹ comfort, Despair, not feast on thee;
Not untwist — slack they may be — these last strands of man
In me or, most weary, cry *I can no more*. I can;
Can something, hope, wish day come, not choose not to be.

- 5 But ah, but O thou terrible, why wouldest thou rude on me
Thy wring-world right foot rock? lay a lionlimb against me? scan
With darksome devouring eyes my bruised bones? and fan,
O in turns of tempest, me heaped there; me frantic to avoid thee and flee?
- 10 Why? That my chaff might fly; my grain lie, sheer and clear.
Nay in all that toil, that coil, since (seems) I kissed the rod,
Hand rather, my heart lo! lapped strength, stole joy, would laugh, cheer.
Cheer whom though? the hero whose heaven-handling flung me, foot trod
Me? or me that fought him? O which one? is it each one? That night, that year
Of now done darkness I wretch lay wrestling with (my God!) my God.

¹*Carrion*: dead and decaying flesh — usually of animals

Question

Write a detailed critical response to this poem.

In your response, you should consider:

- form and structure
- language and sound
- mood and atmosphere
- any other literary or rhetorical device you consider to be important.

OR

PART B — PROSE FICTION

Read carefully this extract from *Enduring Love* (1997) by Ian McEwan and then answer the question that follows it.

In this extract from the opening of the novel, Joe, the narrator, is walking in the Chiltern hills and preparing to enjoy a picnic with his wife. He becomes involved in a ballooning accident which will prove fatal.

Enduring Love

The Keats conversation faded as we unpacked our lunch. Clarissa pulled the bottle from the bag and held it by its base as she offered it to me. As I have said, the neck touched my palm as we heard the shout. It was a baritone, on a rising note of fear. It marked the beginning and, of course, an end. At that moment a chapter, no, a whole stage of my life closed. Had I known, and
5 had there been a spare second or two, I might have allowed myself a little nostalgia. We were seven years into a childless marriage of love. Clarissa Mellon was also in love with another man, but with his two hundredth birthday coming up he was little trouble. In fact he helped in the combative exchanges which were part of our equilibrium, our way of talking about work. We lived in an art deco apartment block in north London with a below average share of worries — a money
10 shortage for a year or so, an unsubstantiated cancer scare, the divorces and illnesses of friends, Clarissa's irritation with my occasional and manic bouts of dissatisfaction with my kind of work — but there was nothing that threatened our free and intimate existence.

What we saw when we stood from our picnic was this: a huge grey balloon, the size of a house, the shape of a tear drop, had come down in the field. The pilot must have been half way out of
15 the passenger basket as it touched the ground. His leg had become entangled in a rope that was attached to an anchor. Now, as the wind gusted, and pushed and lifted the balloon towards the escarpment, he was being half dragged, half carried across the field. In the basket was a child, a boy of about ten. In a sudden lull, the man was on his feet, clutching at the basket, or at the boy. Then there was another gust, and the pilot was on his back, bumping over the rough ground,
20 trying to dig his feet in for purchase, or lunging for the anchor behind him in order to secure it in the earth. Even if he had been able, he would not have dared disentangle himself from the anchor rope. He needed his weight to keep the balloon on the ground, and the wind could have snatched the rope from his hands.

As I ran I heard him shouting at the boy, urging him to leap clear of the basket. But the boy was
25 tossed from one side to another as the balloon lurched across the field. He regained his balance and got a leg over the edge of the basket. The balloon rose and fell, thumping into a hummock, and the boy dropped backwards out of sight. Then he was up again, arms stretched out towards the man and shouting something in return — words or inarticulate fear, I couldn't tell.

I must have been a hundred yards away when the situation came under control. The wind had
30 dropped, the man was on his feet, bending over the anchor as he drove it into the ground. He had unlooped the rope from his leg. For some reason, complacency, exhaustion or simply because he was doing what he was told, the boy remained where he was. The towering balloon wavered and tilted and tugged, but the beast was tamed. I slowed my pace, though I did not stop. As the man straightened, he saw us — or at least the farm workers and me — and he waved us on. He still
35 needed help, but I was glad to slow to a brisk walk. The farm labourers were also walking now. One of them was coughing loudly. But the man with the car, John Logan, knew something we didn't and kept on running. As for Jed Parry, my view of him was blocked by the balloon that lay between us.

The wind renewed its rage in the treetops just before I felt its force on my back. Then it struck the balloon which ceased its innocent comical wagging and was suddenly stilled. Its only motion
40 was a shimmer of strain that rippled out across its ridged surface as the contained energy

accumulated. It broke free, the anchor flew up in a spray of dirt, and balloon and basket rose ten feet in the air. The boy was thrown back, out of sight. The pilot had the rope in his hands and was lifted two feet clear off the ground. If Logan had not reached him and taken hold of one of the many dangling lines the balloon would have carried the boy away. Instead, both men were now
45 being pulled across the field, and the farm workers and I were running again.

I got there before them. When I took a rope the basket was above head height. The boy inside it was screaming. Despite the wind, I caught the smell of urine. Jed Parry was on a rope seconds after me, and the two farm workers, Joseph Lacey and Toby Greene, caught hold just after him. Greene was having a coughing fit, but he kept his grip. The pilot was shouting instructions at us,
50 but too frantically, and no one was listening. He had been struggling too long, and now he was exhausted and emotionally out of control. With five of us on the lines the balloon was secured. We simply had to keep steady on our feet and pull hand over hand to bring the basket down, and this, despite whatever the pilot was shouting, was what we began to do.

By this time we were standing on the escarpment. The ground dropped away sharply at a gradient
55 of about twenty-five per cent, and then levelled out into a gentle slope towards the bottom. In winter this is a favourite tobogganing spot for local kids. We were all talking at once. Two of us, myself and the motorist, wanted to walk the balloon away from the edge. Someone thought the priority was to get the boy out. Someone else was calling for the balloon to be pulled down so that we could anchor it firmly. I saw no contradiction, for we could be pulling the balloon down as
60 we moved back into the field. But the second opinion was prevailing. The pilot had a fourth idea, but no one knew or cared what it was.

I should make something clear. There may have been a vague commonality of purpose, but we were never a team. There was no chance, no time. Coincidences of time and place, a predisposition to help had brought us together under the balloon. No one was in charge — or
65 everyone was, and we were in a shouting match. The pilot, red-faced, bawling and sweating, we ignored. Incompetence came off him like heat. But we were beginning to bawl our own instructions too. I know that if I had been uncontested leader the tragedy would not have happened. Later I heard some of the others say the same thing about themselves. But there was not time, no opportunity for force of character to show. Any leader, any firm plan would have
70 been preferable to none. No human society, from the hunter-gatherer to the post-industrial, has come to the attention of anthropologists that did not have its leaders and the led; and no emergency was ever dealt with effectively by democratic process.

It was not so difficult to bring the passenger basket down low enough for us to see inside. We had a new problem. The boy was curled up on the floor. His arms covered his face and he was gripping
75 his hair tightly. “What’s his name?” we said to the red-faced man.

“Harry.”

“Harry!” we shouted. “Come on Harry. Harry! Take my hand, Harry. Get out of there Harry!”

But Harry curled up tighter. He flinched each time we said his name. Our words were like stones thrown down at his body. He was in paralysis of will, a state known as learned helplessness, often
80 noted in laboratory animals subjected to unusual stress; all impulses to problem-solving disappear, all instinct for survival drains away. We pulled the basket down to the ground and managed to keep it there, and were just leaning in to try and lift the boy out when the pilot shouldered us aside and attempted to climb in. He said later that he told us what he was trying to do. We heard nothing but our own shouting and swearing. What he was doing seemed ridiculous, but his
85 intentions, it turned out, were completely sensible. He wanted to deflate the balloon by pulling a cord that was tangled in the basket.

“Yer great pillock!” Lacey shouted. “Help us reach the lad out.”

I heard what was coming two seconds before it reached us. It was as though an express train were traversing the treetops, hurtling towards us. An airy, whining, whooshing sound grew to full
90 volume in half a second. At the inquest the Met office figures for wind speeds that day were part

of the evidence, and there were some gusts, it was said, of seventy miles an hour. This must have been one, but before I let it reach us, let me freeze the frame — there's a security in stillness — to describe our circle.

To my right the ground dropped away. Immediately to my left was John Logan, a family doctor
95 from Oxford, forty-two years old, married to a historian, with two children. He was not the youngest of our group, but he was the fittest. He played tennis to county level, and belonged to a mountaineering club. He had done a stint with a mountain rescue team in the Western Highlands. Logan was a mild, reticent man apparently, otherwise he might have been able to force himself usefully on us as a leader. To his left was Joseph Lacey, sixty-three, farm labourer, odd job man,
100 captain of his local bowls team. He lived with his wife in Watlington, a small town at the foot of the escarpment. On his left was his mate, Toby Greene, fifty-eight, also a farm labourer, unmarried, living with his mother at Russell's Water. Both men worked for the Stonor estate. Greene was the one with the smoker's cough. Next around the circle, trying to get into the basket, was the pilot, James Gadd, fifty-five, an executive in a small advertising company, who lived in
105 Reading with his wife and one of their grown-up children who was mentally handicapped. At the inquest Gadd was found to have breached half a dozen basic safety procedures which the coroner listed tonelessly. Gadd's ballooning license was withdrawn. The boy in the basket was Harry Gadd, his grandson, ten years old, from Camberwell, London. Facing me, with the ground sloping away to his left, was Jed Parry. He was twenty-eight, unemployed, living on an inheritance in Hampstead.
110 This was the crew. As far as we were concerned, the pilot had abdicated his authority. We were breathless, excited, determined on our separate plans, while the boy was beyond participating in his own survival. He lay in a heap, blocking out the world with his forearms. Lacey, Greene and I were attempting to fish him out, and now Gadd was climbing over the top of us. Logan and Parry were calling out their own suggestions. Gadd had placed one foot by his grandson's head, and
115 Greene was cussing him when it happened. A mighty fist socked the balloon in two rapid blows, one-two, the second more vicious than the first. And the first was vicious. It jerked Gadd right out of the basket on to the ground, and it lifted the balloon five feet or so, straight into the air. Gadd's considerable weight was removed from the equation. The rope ran through my grip, scorching my palms, but I managed to keep hold, with two feet of line spare. The others kept hold
120 too. The basket was right above our heads now, and we stood with arms upraised like Sunday bell ringers. Into our amazed silence, before the shouting could resume, the second punch came and knocked the balloon up and westwards. Suddenly we were treading the air with all our weight in the grip of our fists.

Those one or two ungrounded seconds occupy as much space in memory as might a long journey
125 up an uncharted river. My first impulse was to hang on in order to keep the balloon weighted down. The child was incapable, and was about to be borne away. Two miles to the west were high-voltage power lines. A child alone and needing help. It was my duty to hang on, and I thought we would all do the same.

Almost simultaneous with the desire to stay on the rope and save the boy, barely a neuronal pulse later, came other thoughts in which fear and instant calculations of logarithmic complexity were fused. We were rising, and the ground was dropping away as the balloon was pushed westwards. I knew I had to get my legs and feet locked round the rope. But the end of the line barely reached below my waist and my grip was slipping. My legs flailed in the empty air. Every fraction of a second that passed increased the drop, and the point must come when to let go
130 would be impossible or fatal. And compared to me Harry was safe curled up in the basket. The balloon might well come down safely at the bottom of the hill. And perhaps my impulse to hang on was nothing more than a continuation of what I had been attempting moments before, simply a failure to adjust quickly.

And again, less than one adrenally incensed heartbeat later, another variable was added to the
140 equation: someone let go, and the balloon and its hangers-on lurched upwards another several feet.

I didn't know, nor have I ever discovered, who let go first. I'm not prepared to accept that it was me. But everyone claims not to have been first. What is certain is that if we had not broken ranks,

our collective weight would have brought the balloon to earth a quarter of the way down the slope a few seconds later as the gust subsided. But as I've said, there was no team, there was no plan, no agreement to be broken. No failure. So can we accept that it was right, every man for himself? Were we all happy afterwards that this was a reasonable course? We never had that comfort, for there was a deeper covenant, ancient and automatic, written in our nature. Co-operation — the basis of our earliest hunting successes, the force behind our evolving capacity for language, the glue of our social cohesion. Our misery in the aftermath was proof that we knew we had failed ourselves. But letting go was in our nature too. Selfishness is also written on our hearts. This is our mammalian conflict — what to give to the others, and what to keep for yourself. Treading that line, keeping the others in check, and being kept in check by them, is what we call morality. Hanging a few feet above the Chilterns escarpment, our crew enacted morality's ancient, irresolvable dilemma: us, or me.

Question

Discuss the techniques Ian McEwan employs to engage the reader's interest in this incident.

In your response, you should consider:

- the narrative voice
- the use of contrast and contradiction
- the creation of tension
- any other literary device you consider to be important.

OR

PART C — PROSE NON-FICTION

Read carefully *Christmas in Vermont* by Alistair Cooke and then answer the question that follows it.

Christmas in Vermont

31 December 1976

- I spent a four-day Christmas with my daughter in northern Vermont after flying out of New York City on one of those brilliant blue winter days that ring like a bell. There was not a smidgen of snow anywhere. But very soon after we flew over Long Island Sound and into Connecticut, the smears were lining the roads, and by the time we were over Boston every lake and pond was a white rectangle and the forests were as leafless as a storehouse of telegraph poles, the towns collections of little wooden boxes strewn around bare ground. Then the real snow came in, first fringing the mountains then blanketing them, and as we veered and banked over the white-peppered evergreens the only bare land you could see was the long curving ribbons of cement, of the federal highways snaking through a planet of snow.
- When you're not used to it, it's always a shock to get out of a plane and feel that somebody's slapped you in the eyes with a towel. This is simply the first adjustment to the blinding northern light. I went padding towards the tiny airport taking deep breaths of oxygen as sharp as ammonia. I was met by my daughter and son-in-law and grandson, a grinning Brueghel trio if ever I saw one. It had been 14 below zero when they woke up, and though it had gone up to a suffocating 20 above, their outlines were thickened by the snow boots and the billowing pants and those parkas that look like balloons but weigh about an ounce and are warmer than all the wool and sweaters in the world. My family, in short, looked like the first family of spacemen out there to greet a wan man-creature from remote New York.
- With suspicious casualness, my daughter told me to put my bag in the back of the station wagon. I found it was impossible, because rearing up there and making a frightful honking sound were two of the fattest geese outside the *Christmas Carol*. About twenty minutes later, when we'd arrived at the graceful little white wooden eighteenth-century box they call home, I should say not more than ten minutes after we'd arrived, the two fat geese honked no more. They had departed this life, having had their necks wrung by my son-in-law and my son — a flown-in refugee from another distant planet, California. I didn't see these two for the next hour or two, which is just as well for a squeamish city type, since they'd been busy cleaning and plucking the birds against the Christmas feast.
- The kitchen, which on any working farm is the centre of things, was dense with odours and tottering with platters and bowls, and my wife and daughter up to their elbows in parsley and onions and forcemeat and chanterelles, and pans bubbling with morels (plucked, according to a sacred tradition of my children, from dark corners in the woods by the light of a waning moon). The only time I ever saw anything like it was in rural France when I was invited to see what was brewing in the recesses of one of those country restaurants that manage to snag three stars from the Parisian dictators of such things.
- My daughter and son-in-law lead a hard — but on these occasions and strictly to an outsider what looks like an idyllic — life. The food is not everything in some families but it happens to be my daughter's passion. And why not? After all, she has a lot of time hanging on her hands. She gets up before six, feeds, dresses and civilizes two small children, then goes out to see to the chickens and — in summer and fall — the raising of the fruits and vegetables. All that's left is to clean the house, stack the wood for the stoves, clean the barns, shovel the knee-high, fresh snow into parapets so as to be able to get to the big sleeping polar bear which tomorrow, the next day maybe, will turn into an automobile. Ferry the 4-year-old over the ice and snow to school, and put in an hour or so campaigning for the public (non-commercial) television station. So this leaves her ample time to prepare three meals a day, which are never snacks, at any time of the year. The first night, we started — started, mind — with a platter of smoked bluefish, one of a dozen

thirteen-pounders her husband had caught in the summer off the end of Long Island. We smoked them within hours of the catch and they froze beautifully. After that came the irresistible piece of resistance: venison. Ten days before, my son-in-law had shot a doe and I'm happy to say I was not on hand to watch him and my daughter spend the next six hours skinning, de-gutting and butchering it before leaving it for the statutory week or so to hang.

I ought to say that I've had venison in farmhouses in Scotland and in lush restaurants in London and Paris. And, with an immense to-do and gaudy promises of food for the gods, in Texas. Texas does not, like any other region, simply have indigenous dishes. It proclaims them. It congratulates you, on your arrival, at having escaped from the slop-pails of the other forty-nine states. Welcome 55 to Texas, and the incomparable three dishes of the Lone Star State: venison, chili con carne and rattlesnake. (To the goggling unbeliever, they say — as people always say about their mangier dishes — 'But it's just like chicken, only tenderer.' Rattlesnake is, in fact, just like chicken, only tougher.)

Well, about venison and its hunters and preparers, I can only say that they all wag their fingers against their noses and confide to you, as a privileged guest, their dark and secret recipes for 60 hanging and cooking and having it 'come out just right'. And it's always smelly and gamey and a little tough. In a restaurant, you can let the whole thing go with a sickly nod at the waiter. But the Texans are nothing if not considerate and eager hosts. They always beg you to tell them truthfully if you've ever eaten venison like that. The true answer is yes, unfortunately, always. But they are kindly people and you have to think up some variation on old Sam Goldwyn's line when he was 65 pressed for an opinion by a brother film producer who'd just shown him his latest masterpiece in a sneak preview. 'Louis,' Goldwyn used to say, looking the man square in the eye, 'only you could 'eff made a movie like that.'

Well, I want to tell you that that first evening I had naturally assigned the venison to Christmas Day and the big feast. I started to slice into a very fine tenderloin steak. It was so tender you 70 could have eaten it with a spoon. But a round of uh-ums alerted me, rather late, to the fact that this was the venison. With delicate chanterelle sauce. A salad with raw mushrooms. Then Susie's fat and creamy cheesecake, with some of the fruit of the two hundred and seventy strawberry plants I'd seen her putting in earlier in the year, up to her knees in mud on some idle day. Just to keep things in the family, the wine was a remarkable claret from the vineyard my stepson farms in 75 the beautiful Alexander Valley eighty miles north of San Francisco.

Well, it went on like that. And on Christmas Day, we had the geese, succulent and very serene in death. And a billowing cheese soufflé. And from time to time, there wafted in from the kitchen the scent of the four sorts of bread my daughter had baked. I once said to her, 'Any day now, Susie, you'll be making your own soap.' It was too late. She'd done it.

- 80 At the Christmas feast, with old Thomas Beecham whipping his orchestra and principals into proving once again that he is the Handel master of all time, I was asked to turn it down a shade while my son-in-law — a New England version of Gary Cooper — proposed a toast. He is not a gabby type, and this extraordinary initiative must have been inspired by the Alexander Valley grapes. Anyway, he said he didn't know what a proper toast should be but all he could think of 85 with — 'well, pride I guess you can call it' — was the fact that everything we'd eaten in three days had lived or roamed or been grown right there, or in the woods that rise from the long meadow that goes up to the hills. Nothing, as they say in New England, had been 'store boughten'. And, he ended, 'If it doesn't sound pretentious' — wriggling at the fear that it might be — 'I think we should drink to the bounty of nature.' A very weird thing to toast in the last quarter of the 90 twentieth century, when you can hardly buy a tomato that hasn't been squirted a chemical red, and chickens are raised in little gravel cages, and since they are immobile from birth and failing fast, must for our protection be injected with antibiotics and God knows what. (I know a very knowledgeable food writer in France who says he now recalls that the last time he tasted a chicken — a real free-range chicken — in a restaurant was in 1952.)
- 95 That evening we sang carols, in close if creaky harmony, with the 4-year-old Adam piping 'God Rest Ye Merry, Gentlemen' right on pitch. Next morning, I woke up and he was out on his skis.

They are small skis and he got them a year ago. He was plumping up the hills and skimming down them with the poles helping him on the turns. And I thought, what an extraordinary childhood. He was born in 20 below zero (outside; of course he was born inside). Winter brings about 100–120 inches of snow. May is the squishy month, when the thaw sets in. Summer bangs in with 90 degrees. Fall is a fountain of scarlet and gold, and inky forests of evergreens on the mountains. And here, at 4, he's skiing over the deep and crisp and even like a Disney doll. And this is all the life Adam knows.

One day he will grow up and, I'm afraid, taste of the forbidden fruit. One day, he will read the *New York Times*. And Adam will be out of the Garden of Eden, out of Vermont, for ever.

Question

Discuss some of the features which make this piece of writing more than just a sentimental portrait of a Christmas holiday.

In your response, you should consider:

- the structure of the piece
- imagery
- tone
- any other literary device you consider to be important.

[Turn over

OR

PART D — DRAMA

Read carefully the extract from *The Straw Chair* (1988) by Sue Glover and then answer the question that follows it.

The play is set in the early half of the 18th century on the very remote Scottish island of St Kilda (also referred to as ‘Hirta’).

Characters in this extract:

ISABEL: the Minister’s wife, 17 years old, from Edinburgh

ANEAS: the Minister, a good deal older than his wife, from Edinburgh

RACHEL: the ‘uncomfortable’ wife of Lord Grange, in her 40s

OONA: a middle-aged or elderly islander

Act One

Scene One

Early evening.

As the lights go up, ISABEL is looking around her in mounting dismay. She is clutching a package wrapped in oil cloth — the only extra piece of luggage besides the kist¹. The kist stands already in the house (unless the cast can include two extras who carry the kist on here; who acknowledge, and

- 5 *are acknowledged by, ISABEL, shyly, with a phrase or two of Gaelic greeting which ISABEL responds to politely but does not understand).*

ISABEL puts down her package, picks up the lamp, and inspects the new, bare home — including the bed in the wall.

ANEAS enters and goes to the house. He notes ISABEL’S dismay.

- 10 **ISABEL:** Is this — the manse?

ANEAS: They have made this house over to us for the summer.

ISABEL: (*not impressed*) It looks like the byre.

ANEAS: It is. It is both. In winter they share their homes with their beasts.

ISABEL: Well, I’m glad it’s summer, then.

- 15 **ANEAS:** Isabel, it is the best house on the island, and they have spared us one of their cooking pots. They told me so with pride. I don’t think they have an abundance of them.

He looks about him. Tries to think of something comforting to say. Fails.

ISABEL: They have not an abundance of chairs, either, it seems.

- 20 **ANEAS:** No . . . Well . . . No . . . (*Trying to keep cheerful.*) We had better go and bid farewell to the crew. The Captain wants to sail again before the wind should turn. Otherwise he might be trapped here some time. (*He is waiting for her to move to leave with him.*) Are you coming?

ISABEL: Would you mind very much if I didn’t? I feel — still at sea. My legs aren’t used to land — everything shifts and sways.

- 25 **ANEAS:** Captain Martin will be disappointed. You are a great favourite of his. (*A pause. But she says nothing.*) It would be courteous to thank him and say farewell.

¹*Kist:* a storage chest

ISABEL: If I went with you down to the bay now, I might forget myself — and beg the Captain to take me home.

She is near tears. He doesn't know what to say. They are awkward with each other. He makes a move towards her — but she turns her attention to the kist.

30 ISABEL: I will look out your books for you.

ANEAS goes. ISABEL opens the kist. (It contains everything they have brought with them.) She unearths from the bottom of the kist two or three books. Looks around for somewhere to put them, and realises that there is nowhere in this place. She holds the books a moment, and then — not roughly, but hopelessly — lets them drop back into the kist again.

35 ISABEL: A bed made of stones! And a chair made of straw! I shouldn't have come here! I should never have come!

RACHEL enters. She is dressed in island dress. But she wears the traditional head-covering draped around her shoulder, an attempt at elegance.

40 ISABEL, closing the kist, starts when finally she notices RACHEL. Thinking her an islander, ISABEL prepares to summon up what little Gaelic she has acquired.

ISABEL: (Gaelic.) Ciamar a tha sibh? [How do you do?] (English.) I am the Minister's wife.

RACHEL: (regal and spitting angry with it) My chair!

ISABEL: (thinking this is Gaelic, and trying to fathom it) I — I don't understand.

RACHEL: Do you not speak English?

45 ISABEL: Why, yes, of course!

RACHEL: But you don't know what a chair is?

ISABEL: Why, yes — I am sorry — I didn't —

RACHEL: You are no better than the rest of them! This is my chair! Oona had no business bringing it here. The woman's a fool! They are all fools here.

50 ISABEL lost for words. RACHEL picks up the chair.

RACHEL: It is the only chair in this vile stinking place. And it belongs to me. I am the highest born here!

Exit RACHEL with chair. Pause.

55 ISABEL: Dear God. Dear Lord and Father, from whom all blessings flow — who delivered us safe from nights and days of stormy seas — and a drunken crew . . . please deliver me safely back to Edinburgh . . . as speedily as possible. Please let the summer pass more quickly than summer has ever passed before. Let August come soon, soon . . . please . . . please . . .

ANEAS: (off) Isabel! . . . Isabel!

ISABEL: (more dutiful than urgent now) And . . . please let me be a good wife to the Minister.

60 The Minister enters. He has one rough wooden stool in his hand. Places it down in triumph.

ANEAS: There! From the Captain! With his best compliments! I told you he favoured you, Isabel. He sends his deep regrets that you still suffer from the voyage — and bids you farewell. The skiff is on its way back to the ship.

He looks round for the chair. Can't understand its disappearance. Looks at ISABEL inquiringly.

65 ISABEL: Someone came and took it away.

ANEAS: Oh. Who?

ISABEL: A woman. She spoke English.

ANEAS: Ah. (*He nods in a puzzled sort of assent.*)

ISABEL: Apparently it is the only chair on the island.

70 ANEAS: The only one! (*Rather upset.*) And the minister is not fit for it?

ISABEL: She is the highest born here — so she said. (*Bitterly.*) And the rest ‘are all fools’!

ANEAS: Isabel? . . . My dear . . . It’s only for a few months. The Captain will call for us again in August.

She nods.

75 ANEAS: Or September.

ISABEL: September? (*Sharply.*) September?

ANEAS: He will return when he can. When the weather and the winds are favourable. It’s never easy to make a landing on Hirta. Often impossible.

80 ISABEL: (*alarmed*) And what if the weather is impossible in September? More impossible than August? What then? What do we do then?

ANEAS: We have only just arrived, Isabel — it is hardly time to be planning our departure.

ISABEL: I wish it were. I wish it were.

ANEAS: You are tired. You need to rest.

85 ISABEL: (*growing hysterical*) Rest! Have you seen where we are to sleep? They sleep in tombs here on Hirta. On cold stones! Damp as wells! They are indeed all fools here — or why would they stay?

ANEAS: It is not foolishness that brought us here. It is work. God’s work.

ISABEL: (*contrite*) Yes. I know.

ANEAS: It is years since a missionary last came to St. Kilda. There is much to be done.

ISABEL: I know that, Aneas. I know.

90 ANEAS: (*sadly*) And already you wish yourself back in your uncle’s house!

ISABEL: I should have listened to my uncle and my cousins! I should have waited for you in Edinburgh. I thought I could be useful — but what can I do here? I only know two or three phrases in Gaelic — and when we came ashore I heard not one of them. I understood nothing of what they were saying.

95 ANEAS: But they welcomed you! Warmly! They were astonished that the Minister should bring his wife!

ISABEL: (*not to ANEAS, and he doesn’t hear*) They would be even more astonished if they knew how she wished to be gone!

ANEAS: Astonished. And very curious, Isabel!

100 ISABEL: (*to ANEAS*) I should never have come here. It was stupid of me, stupid!

ANEAS: But I mentioned — both to you and your uncle — that the island was — primitive. You looked forward to the adventure!

ISABEL: I didn’t know any better. I have hardly been out of Edinburgh. I will be nothing but a burden here. I can’t even cook for you — not with that! (*She gestures towards the cooking pot.*)

105 ANEAS: Of course you can cook! The fire burns here like any other. They have already given us a great basket of eggs. And another filled with sea-fowl.

ISABEL: (*hysteria creeping over her*) I have never cooked sea-fowl. Never in my life!

ANEAS: I daresay they cook like any other bird. The woman you spoke of — the one who speaks

English? Surely she will help you?

110 ISABEL: I hardly think so!

ANEAS: You are tired. And you have been sick the whole voyage. (*Sympathetic, but awkward, helpless.*) Stop crying. Isabel? Stop! You will feel better in the morning.

Awkward together.

115 ISABEL: (*trying to calm down obediently*) Yes. Yes. Of course. I will. I'm not myself. And in the morning I will feel better.

Awkwardly, she turns away. And he turns or walks to where he has a view of the shore, and the ship in the bay.

ANEAS: They are squaring the topsails already. They were determined to sail before the wind veered. It was threatening to turn when I bade Martin goodbye.

120 *Offstage (down on the shore), a voice is raised, 'leading in' the first line of a Gaelic psalm. Other voices follow.*

ANEAS: The light is fading. It will soon be quite dark.

The psalm continues, always a single voice 'leading in' and the others following.

ANEAS: (*Turning to ISABEL.*) Do you know which psalm that is?

125 *She doesn't turn to face him, still tearful; merely shakes her head.*

ANEAS: 'God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. (*Addressing her directly now.*) Therefore will not we fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea . . . '

ISABEL: (*trying to smile*) These mountains are already in the midst of the sea!

130 ANEAS: Come — we will go down to the shore and lead the prayers for Captain Martin and his crew. That they may have a safe voyage south —

He pauses, waiting for her to take his hand. She does so.

— and a safe voyage back again to take us home in August.

They go. Psalm continues as the lights fade, and for a phrase or two after.

135 **Scene Two**

The next day. Different part of island.

RACHEL enters, carrying the little straw chair. Puts it down somewhere, sits on it. OONA appears, carrying a small wooden bowl, with porridge in it. As soon as RACHEL catches sight of OONA, she gets up, moves her chair to another spot, sits on it again.

140 RACHEL: Go away!

OONA: God save you, my lady.

RACHEL: Go away!

Again she gets up, moves — but uncertain now where it is safe to place the chair.

RACHEL: Get off! Get away! Schemer! Thief! This chair is mine!

145 OONA: I know that. (*Holds out the bowl.*) And this is yours also, my lady.

RACHEL: (*glancing at the bowl without interest*) I don't want your heathen slops. Porridge boiled with gannet flesh! Sweet Christ! . . . I used to take chocolate. In a porcelain bowl. And brandy in the evening . . . As much as I wanted.

OONA is surreptitiously taking a mouthful of the bowl's contents. RACHEL sees, and pounces on her.

150 RACHEL: Throw that away!

She tries to grab the bowl from OONA, who in turn tries to hold on to it, unwilling to waste good food.

OONA: (*In Gaelic.*) *Cha tilg. Tha e bruich. Biadh math a th'ann, biadh math.* [No. [I will] not throw. It is cooked. It is good food, good.]

The bowl ends up on the ground.

155 OONA: (*In Gaelic.*) *Abair cosd.* [What a waste.]

OONA: (*English.*) A terrible waste, terrible.

RACHEL: You are a thief, Oona McQueen. You are paid for that food. You are paid for my keep. And I shall tell the Steward. The next time he comes here. I shall tell the visitor — the one who came on the brigantine — the Minister —

160 ISABEL has entered. RACHEL sees her.

RACHEL: (*Raising her voice boldly.*) Yes — and the Minister's wife, too!

ISABEL: (*Gaelic.*) *La math dhuit!* [dhuibh, if plural or 'polite'] [Good day to you!]

OONA: (*Gaelic.*) *Dia g'ur gleidheadh, a bhana-mhaighstir.* [God save you, mistress.] (*Gives ISABEL a nod-cum-curtsey and beams.*) I hope you are well this morning.

165 ISABEL: Yes, thank you.

She looks to RACHEL — who has one hand on her chair — defiantly ready to defend her property.

ISABEL: The Minister asked me to call.

RACHEL: To call?

170 ISABEL: (*looking to both of them — she never treats OONA as merely a servant, even when RACHEL is there*) I am Mistress Seton, the Minister's wife.

RACHEL: To call! (*The phrase evokes memories; she holds herself less like a wretch and more like a lady.*) How kind! (*Holds out her hand imperiously, almost as if ISABEL should kiss it.*) Rachel Erskine of Grange . . . Lady Rachel.

ISABEL takes her hand, drops an embarrassed curtsey.

175 RACHEL: (*To OONA, imperiously.*) You may go.

ISABEL: Oh, no! Please —

RACHEL: (*brusquely*) Go! Go!

OONA does not scurry. Calmly picks up the bowl and moves further off.

RACHEL: (*Screaming.*) I said go, get out, go!

180 OONA moves further off still, up the slope, and sits, impassive, holding RACHEL'S breakfast bowl.

RACHEL: (*To ISABEL.*) Sit down. Why don't you? They gave me a servant, but she is only a native.

RACHEL sits in her chair.

RACHEL: Sit down. Sit down.

ISABEL perches on a bit of rock, or on the ground.

185 RACHEL: Did you have a good journey?

ISABEL: (*automatically*) Yes, thank you.

A pause.

ISABEL: No I did not. It was not a good journey at all. I was sick the whole time. Very sick. And very glad to reach dry land.

190 RACHEL: You will not be glad for long then!

No answer to this from ISABEL.

RACHEL: They wouldn't let me get to the boat. I had a message for the Captain. (*Sharply.*) It was not the Steward's ship?

ISABEL: No.

195 RACHEL: The Steward is a liar. All that he says is lies. (*Back to the drawing-room manner.*) I have no chocolate to offer you, Mistress . . . ?

ISABEL: Seton. Isabel Seton.

RACHEL: Nor tea, neither. What necessities did you bring to Hirta?

200 ISABEL: Very little. Some linen, to make bandages with — should they be needed. For I had heard the islanders spend their time climbing the crags. And some bottles of physique. Tar water mostly.

RACHEL: Tar water

ISABEL: It is the best Norway tar.

RACHEL: Brandy is an excellent physique. What about the brandy?

ISABEL: We did not bring any. We only brought the one kist.

205 A pause.

RACHEL: My lord is in Westminster a good deal nowadays. On affairs of state.

ISABEL: (*taken aback, but rallying as best she can*) Ah. That is a great distance away — Westminster.

RACHEL: I have never had occasion to accompany him there. He lodges in Niddrie Wynd, when he is in Edinburgh. We . . . We lodge there . . . when we are in town.

210 ISABEL: And — have you lodged on St Kilda long, my lady?

RACHEL: Long enough. (*Sudden venom.*) Long enough to gladden the heart of Simon Fraser! Do you know the swine?

ISABEL: (*shocked*) No.

RACHEL: Simon Fraser, Lord Lovat. You'll have heard of him, I daresay?

215 ISABEL: Yes. I have heard of him.

RACHEL: And where are you from, Mistress . . . ? (*She has forgotten the name again.*)

ISABEL: Seton. Isabel Seton. I am from Edinburgh. And the Minister, too.

RACHEL: I saw you arrive, with the Minister. But I was not close by. He seems an old man.

ISABEL: He does not.

220 RACHEL: He walks like one.

ISABEL: He is not so old.

RACHEL: But a deal older than you.

ISABEL: I am seventeen.

RACHEL: (*not directly to ISABEL; quietly*) I was fifteen when I married.

225 Pause.

ISABEL: What brought you to —

RACHEL: 'A fortunate match'! That's the expression, isn't it? Said with a sneer, always. How did it happen, I wonder?

ISABEL *doesn't realise at first that this is a question.*

230 RACHEL: In your case, I mean? I suppose he debauched you!

ISABEL: (*very shocked*) Aneas is a man of God! You are talking of a Minister of the Kirk! . . . (*Remembering RACHEL's position.*) My lady! Besides, what girl would marry a man who had — debauched her . . . or even tried to?

RACHEL: Then what men would there be left to marry? Besides a few old men of God!

235 ISABEL: (*rising, wanting to be away*) I wonder if I might just speak with your servant before I go? I'd like to ask her —

RACHEL: How long are you and the Minister married?

ISABEL: Ten days. We set sail from Leith a few hours after the wedding.

RACHEL: And you have been seasick ever since?

240 ISABEL: It was a very stormy voyage.

RACHEL: And nearly dawn by the time you'd done praying and wailing on the beach! So — you know nothing yet . . . do you? Of debauchery?

ISABEL *has no answer to this.*

RACHEL: You are not very pretty.

245 ISABEL: (*with dignity*) No. No one ever thought me so.

RACHEL: At seventeen I was *ravissante*². Lady Rachel, the Law Lord's wife! I went to each and every Assembly. The balls. The dinners. The oyster parties. Don't you love to wear a mask and visit the oyster cellars of Edinburgh?

ISABEL: I have never been. I've never been anywhere — except here to Hirta!

250 RACHEL: Hirta! You will not like Hirta! The mice grow big as rats here! The sheep charge like buffalo! This is a hellish, stinking isle.

ISABEL: We are only here for the summer. (*Fervently.*) We are only here for the summer.

²*Ravissante* (French): lovely, exquisite, ravishing

Question

Discuss the dramatic techniques employed by Sue Glover to present Isabel and Rachel's circumstances to the audience.

[END OF QUESTION PAPER]

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