

English Literature Sample Paper

SAMPLE PAPER

1 hour 30 minutes

Instructions to Candidates

Please read this page carefully, but do not open the question paper until told to do so.

A separate 8 page answer booklet is provided. Please check you have one.

Write your name, date of birth, English Literature Admissions Test candidate number and centre number in the spaces provided on the answer booklet. Please write very clearly.

You should allow at least 30 minutes for reading this question paper, making notes and preparing your answer.

At the end of the examination, you must hand in both your answer booklet and this question paper. Any rough notes or plans that you make should only be written in your answer booklet.

No texts, dictionaries or sources of reference may be brought into the examination.



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This paper consists of 8 printed pages and 4 blank pages.

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Time allowed: 1 hour 30 minutes.

You should spend at least 30 minutes reading and annotating the passages and in preparing your answer.

The following poems and extracts from longer texts present views of fathers, mainly as seen by their children. Read all the material carefully, and then complete the task below.

- (a) An extract from a novel by Philip Roth, *The Human Stain*, page 4 published in 2001.
- (b) ‘To the Reverend Shade of His Religious Father’, a poem by page 5 Robert Herrick (1591 -1674).
- (c) An extract from a novel by Samuel Richardson, *Clarissa*, page 6 1740. vol. 1, Letter VIII. The novel is written entirely as a sequence of letters.
- (d) ‘Carousel’, a poem by Lucinda Roy; first published in 1988. page 7
- (e) ‘Father’s Bedroom’ a poem by Robert Lowell (1917-1977). page 8
- (f) An extract from a short story, ‘Grocer’s Daughter’, published page 9 in 1987, by Marianne Wiggins.

Task:

Select two or three of the passages (a) to (f) and compare and contrast them in any ways that seem interesting to you, paying particular attention to distinctive features of structure, language and style. In your introduction, indicate *briefly* what you intend to explore or illustrate through close reading of your chosen passages.

This task is designed to assess your responsiveness to unfamiliar literary material and your skills in close reading. Marks are not awarded for references to other texts or authors you have studied..

- (a) An extract from a novel by Philip Roth, *The Human Stain*, published in 2001.

The father who had another way of beating you down. With words. With speech. With what he called "the language of Chaucer, Shakespeare, and Dickens." With the English language that no one could ever take away from you and that Mr. Silk richly sounded, always with great fullness and clarity and bravado, as though even in ordinary conversation he were reciting Marc Antony's speech over the body
 5 of Caesar. Each of his three children had been given a middle name drawn from Mr. Silk's best-memorized play, in his view English literature's high point and the most educational study of treason ever written: the eldest Silk son was Walter Antony, the second son, Coleman Brutus; Ernestine Calpurnia, their younger sister, took her middle name from Caesar's loyal wife.

Mr. Silk's life in business for himself had come to a bitter end with the closing of the banks. It had taken
 10 him quite a time to get over losing the optician's store up in Orange, if he ever did. Poor Daddy, Mother would say, he always wanted to work for himself. He'd attended college in the South, in Georgia where he came from—Mother was from New Jersey—and took farming and animal husbandry. But then he quit and up north, in Trenton, he went to optician's school. Then he was drafted into the army for World War I, then he met Mother, moved with her to East Orange, opened the store, bought the house, then
 15 there was the crash, and now he was a waiter on a dining car. But if he couldn't in the dining car, at least at home he was able to speak with all his deliberateness and precision and directness and could wither you with words. He was very fussy about his children's speaking properly. Growing up, they never said, "See the bow-wow." They didn't even say, "See the doggie." They said, "See the Doberman. See the beagle. See the terrier." They learned things had classifications. They learned the power of naming
 20 precisely. He was teaching them English all the time. Even the kids who came into the house, his children's friends, had their English corrected by Mr. Silk.

- (b) 'To the Reverend Shade of His Religious Father', a poem by Robert Herrick (1591 -1674).

To the Reverend Shade of His Religious Father

That for seven lustres I did never come
To do the rites of thy religious tomb;
That neither hair was cut, or true tears shed
By me o'er thee as justments to the dead,
5 Forgive, forgive me, since I did not know
Whether thy bones had here their rest or no.
But now 'tis known, behold - behold, I bring
Unto thy ghost th'effused offering.
10 And look: what smallage, nightshade, cypress, yew,
Unto the shades have been, or now are, due,
Here I devote; and something more than so:
I come to pay a debt of birth I owe.
Thou gavest me life (but mortal): for that one
15 Favour I'll make full satisfaction.
For my life mortal, rise from out thy hearse;
And take a life immortal from my verse.

- (c) An extract from a novel by Samuel Richardson, *Clarissa*, 1740. vol. 1, Letter VIII. The novel is written entirely as a sequence of letters.

Feb. 15. In the evening,

WHAT my brother and sister have said against me I cannot tell; but I am in heavy disgrace with my father.

I was sent for down to tea. I went with a very cheerful aspect; but had occasion soon to change it.

5 Such a solemnity in everybody's countenance! My mother's eyes were fixed upon the tea-cups, and when she looked up it was heavily, as if her eyelids had weights upon them, and then not to me. My father sat half-aside in his elbow-chair, that his head might be turned from me; his hands clasped, and waving, as it were, up and down; his fingers, poor dear gentleman! in motion, as if angry to the very ends of them. My sister sat swelling. My brother looked at me with scorn, having measured me, as I may say, with his eyes as I entered, from head to foot. My aunt was
10 there and looked upon me as if with kindness restrained, bending coldly to my compliment to her as she sat; and then cast an eye first on my brother, then on my sister, as if to give the season (so I am willing to construe it) of her unusual stiffness. Bless me, my dear! that they should choose to intimidate rather than invite a mind, till now not thought either unpersuadable or ungenerous!

15 I took my seat. Shall I make tea, madam, to my mother? I always used, you know, my dear, to make tea.

No! A very short sentence, in one very short word, was the expressive answer. And she was pleased to take the canister in her own hand.

My brother bid the footman who attended leave the room. I, said he, will pour out the water.

20 My heart was up at my mouth. I did not know what to do with myself. What is to follow? thought I.

Just after the second dish, out stepped my mother.—A word with you, sister Hervey! taking her in her hand. Presently my sister dropped away. Then my brother. So I was left alone with my father.

25 He looked so very sternly that my heart failed me as twice or thrice I would have addressed myself to him; nothing but solemn silence on all hands having passed before.

At last, I asked, if it were his pleasure that I should pour him out another dish?

30 He answered me with the same angry monosyllable which I had received from my mother before, and then arose and walked about the room. I arose too, with intent to throw myself at his feet, but was too much overawed by his sternness even to make such an expression of my duty to him as my heart overflowed with.

At last, as he supported himself because of his gout on the back of a chair, I took a little more courage, and approaching him, besought him to acquaint me in what I had offended him?

He turned from me, and in a strong voice, Clarissa Harlowe, said he, know that I will be obeyed.

- (d) 'Carousel', a poem by Lucinda Roy; first published in 1988

Carousel (For Namba Roy, 1910-1961)

5 I often spin around with you and hear
the fragile music of a carousel;
I feel your black arms round me in a heavy sweep
of closeness, taking me up on notes which fall
like eggs through water.

10 I am older now
and you have fallen from the garish horse
a long time since, and I am holding on
with thin brown fingers. Do you know
it's been a quarter century since you
(with your voice like the man who plays God in the movies)
kissed me? I don't remember your kisses.
I remember you wearing striped pyjamas
and waving to me from the ward - your great hand
15 scooping a half-circle out of nothing;
how my brother almost choked on a *Lifesaver*
until a male nurse turned him upside down
and out come the white mint with the hole
that saved him.

20 I dreamed you died, and when I woke
my mother was by the bed. "How will I light
the fire?" she said. I didn't know.

25 It was cold in our house; our breath came out
round as balloons and dissolved till we breathed
again. We learned to accommodate spaces
as you must have learned to accommodate...
but no. Where there is no place to put things,
no place for your bones or your slippers or my words
there cannot be a place for spaces.

30 It must be fine to know only lack of substance —
the round emptiness in an angel's trumpet -
and still hear music.

35 I have the things you made
and she has made us see you in them.
I have the ivory statues and the pictures
telling stories of African ancestors,
a birth, flights into Egypt- In your work
I find the stillness of your eyes and mouth,
the stillness which is always at the centre
40 of the spinning ball we hurl high and long.

45 I often spin around with you and hear
the fragile music of a carousel.
My horse would gallop forward if I let him
but I prefer the swinging back to where
we were, slow undulations round and back
to identical place. I prefer to see
your black hands with mine on a crimson mane
which will never be swept back by the wind.

- (e) 'Father's Bedroom', a poem by Robert Lowell (1917-1977).

Father's Bedroom

In my Father's bedroom:
 blue threads as thin
 as pen writing on the bedspread,
 blue dots on the curtains,
 5 a blue kimono,
 Chinese sandals with blue plush straps.
 The broad-planked floor
 had a sandpapered neatness.
 The clear glass bed-lamp
 10 with a white doily shade
 was still raised a few
 inches by resting on volume two
 of Lafcadio Hearn's
Glimpses of Unfamiliar Japan.
 15 Its warped olive cover
 was punished like a rhinoceros hide.
 In the flyleaf:
 'Robbie from Mother.'
 Years later in the same hand:
 20 'This book has had hard usage
 On the Yangtze River, China.
 It was left under an open
 Porthole in a storm.'

- (f) An extract from a short story, 'Grocer's Daughter', published in 1987, by Marianne Wiggins.

5 I wish that he could see the things I've sown. Diluted in me is John Wiggins, as today's rain will be in summer's harvest. I wish that I could see him once again, hear his footfalls on the gravel driveway, heavy on one foot. These dried leavings aren't complete in their remembrance, like the trimmings swept from green growth on a grocer's floor, they crumble on my fingertips and fly piecemeal to the wind. I do not do my father justice, that was his charge. I've borne his name, in and out of marriage, a name that is my own, sometimes I wish his strain would leave me, sometimes I'd like to choke it to full bloom. I'd like to turn to him today and say, 'I love you: too late: I'm sorry: you did the best you could: you were my father: I learned from you: you were an honest man.'

10 I cultivate a tiny garden; 'plot' reminds me of a cemetery. I plant only what my family guarantees to eat. The rest I give to those who want. Had you known him, I'd like to think you would have bought your groceries from John Wiggins. He always had a pleasant word. He could tell you how to plan a meal for twenty people, give you produce wholesale, trim your cut of meat before he weighed it - profit wasn't Daddy's motive, life was. Life defeated him. He taught me how to pack a grocery bag, I worked there weekends, canned goods on the bottom, perishables on top. Someone puts tomatoes on the bottom of my bag; these days, I repack it. I was taught respect of certain order. One sees one's father's face, as one grows older, in the most peculiar places. I see Daddy in each bud. I see his stance on corners. I, myself, wear grocer's aprons, when I cook. My mother always said there was no cleaning that damned blood from those white aprons. My father left a stain: I miss him. I write longhand, and in ink.

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Acknowledgements:

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