

THE OPEN UNIVERSITY OF SRI LANKA

DIPLOMA IN ENGLISH

FINAL EXAMINATION

TEXTUAL ANALYSIS

DURATION

- LEVEL 3

- December 2012

- LSD 1203

- THREE HOURS (03 hours)



DATE: 09. 12. 2012

TIME: 9.30 am. - 12.30pm.

ANSWER QUESTION 01, QUESTION 02 , AND ANY ONE FROM PART (C).

Part A

- 1) a) Comment on the effectiveness of the poetic technique used in the stanza below:

When Evil – Doing Comes Like Falling Rain

Like one who brings an important letter to the counter after office  
hours: the counter is already closed.

Like one who seeks to warn the city of an impending flood, but speaks  
another language. They do not understand him.

Like a beggar who knocks for the fifth time at a door where he has four  
times been given something: the fifth time he is hungry

Like one whose blood flows from a wound and who awaits the doctor:  
his blood goes on flowing.

So do we come forward and report that evil has been done us.

(15 marks)

- b) **Comment on the meaning , style and effectiveness of this piece of prose.**

### **The God of War**

I saw the old god of war stand in a bog between chasm and rockface.

He smelled of free beer and carbolic and showed his testicles to adolescents, for he had been rejuvenated by several professors. In a hoarse wolfish voice he declared his love for everything young. Nearby stood a pregnant woman, trembling.

And without shame he talked on and presented himself as a great one for order. And he described how everywhere he put barns in order, by emptying them.

And as one throws crumbs to sparrows, he fed poor people with crusts of bread which he had taken away from poor people.

His voice was now loud, now soft, but always hoarse.

In a loud voice he spoke of great times to come, and in soft voice he taught the women how to cook crows and seagulls. Meanwhile his back was unquiet, and he kept looking round, as though afraid of being stabbed.

And every five minutes he assured his public that he would take up very little of their time.

**(15 marks)**

**Part B**

2)

**Read the following passage and answer the questions below.**

Knowing that Mrs. Mallard was afflicted with a heart trouble, great care was taken to break to her as gently as possible the news of her husband's death. It was her sister Josephine who told her, in broken sentences; veiled hints that revealed in half concealing. Her husband's friend Richards was there, too, near her. It was he who had been in the newspaper office when intelligence of the railroad disaster was received, with Brently Mallard's name leading the list of "killed." He had only taken the time to assure himself of its truth by a second telegram, and had hastened to forestall any less careful, less tender friend in bearing the sad message. She did not hear the story as many women have heard the same, with a paralyzed inability to accept its significance. She wept at once, with sudden, wild abandonment, in her sister's arms. When the storm of grief had spent itself she went away to her room alone. She would have no one follow her. There stood, facing the open window, a comfortable, roomy armchair. Into this she sank, pressed down by a physical exhaustion that haunted her body and seemed to reach into her soul.

She could see in the open square before her house the tops of trees that were all aquiver with the new spring life. The delicious breath of rain was in the air. In the street below a peddler was crying his wares. The notes of a distant song which some one was singing reached her faintly, and countless sparrows were twittering in the eaves. There were patches of blue sky showing here and there through the clouds that had met and piled one above the other in the west facing her window. She sat with her head thrown back upon the cushion of the chair, quite motionless, except when a sob came up into her throat and shook her, as a child who has cried itself to sleep continues to sob in its dreams. She was young, with a fair, calm face, whose lines bespoke repression and even a certain strength. But now there was a dull stare in her eyes, whose gaze was fixed away off yonder on one of those patches of blue sky. It was not a glance of reflection, but rather indicated a suspension of intelligent thought. There was something coming to her and she was waiting for it, fearfully.

What was it? She did not know; it was too subtle and elusive to name. But she felt it, creeping out of the sky, reaching toward her through the sounds, the scents, the color that filled the air.

Now her bosom rose and fell tumultuously. **She was beginning to recognize this thing that was approaching to possess her, and she was striving to beat it back with her will—as powerless as her two white slender hands would have been.**

When she abandoned herself a little whispered word escaped her slightly parted lips. She said it over and over under her breath: “free, free, free!” The vacant stare and the look of terror that had followed it went from her eyes. They stayed keen and bright. Her pulses beat fast, and the coursing blood warmed and relaxed every inch of her body. She did not stop to ask if it were or were not a monstrous joy that held her. A clear and exalted perception enabled her to dismiss the suggestion as trivial.

She knew that she would weep again when she saw the kind, tender hands folded in death; the face that had never looked save with love upon her, fixed and gray and dead. But she saw beyond that bitter moment a long procession of years to come that would belong to her absolutely. And she opened and spread her arms out to them in welcome. There would be no one to live for her during those coming years; she would live for herself. There would be no powerful will bending hers in that blind persistence with which men and women believe they have a right to impose a private will upon a fellow-creature. A kind intention or a cruel intention made the act seem no less a crime as she looked upon it in that brief moment of illumination. Now her bosom rose and fell tumultuously. She was beginning to recognize this thing that was approaching to possess her, and she was striving to beat it back with her will—as powerless as her two white slender hands would have been. When she abandoned herself a little whispered word escaped her slightly parted lips. She said it over and over under her breath: “free, free, free!” The vacant stare and the look of terror that had followed it went from her eyes. They stayed keen and bright. Her pulses beat fast, and the coursing blood warmed and relaxed every inch of her body. She did not stop to ask if it were or were not a monstrous joy that held her. A clear and exalted perception enabled her to dismiss the suggestion as trivial. She knew that she would weep again when she saw the kind,

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And yet she had loved him—sometimes. Often she had not. What did it matter! What could love, the unsolved mystery, count for in face of this possession of self-assertion which she suddenly recognized as the strongest impulse of her being! “Free! Body and soul free!” she kept whispering.

Josephine was kneeling before the closed door with her lips to the keyhole, imploring for admission. “Louise, open the door! I beg; open the door—you will make yourself ill. What are you doing, Louise? For heaven's sake open the door.”

“Go away. I am not making myself ill.” No; she was drinking in a very elixir of life through that open window. Her fancy was running riot along those days ahead of her. Spring days, and summer days, and all sorts of days that would be her own. She breathed a quick prayer that life might be long. It was only yesterday she had thought with a shudder that life might be long.

She arose at length and opened the door to her sister's importunities. There was a feverish triumph in her eyes, and she carried herself unwittingly like a goddess of Victory. She clasped her sister's waist, and together they descended the stairs. Richards stood waiting for them at the bottom. Some one was opening the front door with a latchkey. It was Brently Mallard who entered, a little travel-stained, composedly carrying his gripsack and umbrella. He had been far from the scene of accident, and did not even know there had been one. He stood amazed at

Josephine's piercing cry; at Richards' quick motion to screen him from the view of his wife. But Richards was too late. When the doctors came they said she had died of heart disease—of joy that kills.

### Questions

- 1) Describe briefly, in a couple of sentences the events of this prose passage
- 2) "She was beginning to recognize this thing that was approaching to possess her, and she was striving to beat it back with her will—as powerless as her two white slender hands would have been". What is this 'thing'?
- 3) What symbols does the author use in this piece of prose, and what do they symbolize?
- 4) How does the author express the tension between 'inside' and 'outside' of Mrs Mallard's life?
- 5) What words/phrases are repeated in this passage, and what is the effect of that?
- 6) Describe the central irony of this story

(40 marks)

### Part C

Analyse and evaluate one of the following poems paying attention to aspects of meaning and techniques used by the poet.

- 3) The Secretary Chant

My hips are a desk  
 From my ears hang  
 Chains of paper clips.

Rubber bands form my hair  
 My breasts are quills of mimeograph ink.  
 Buzz. Click.  
 My head is a badly organized file.  
 My head is a switchboard  
 where crossed lines cackle.  
 Press my fingers  
 and in my eyes appear  
 credit and debit.  
 Zing. Tinkle.  
 My navel is a reject button.  
 From my mouth issue  
 cancelled reams.  
 Swollen, heavy, rectangular  
 I am about to be delivered  
 of a baby  
 Xerox machine.  
 File me under W  
 Because I once  
 was  
 a woman.

(30 marks)

4)

A Curse Against Elegics

Oh, love, why do we argue like this?  
 I am tired of all your pious talk.  
 Also, I am tired of all the dead.  
 They refuse to listen,  
 so leave them alone.  
 Take your foot out of the graveyard,  
 they are busy being dead.

Everyone was always to blame:  
 the last empty fifth of booze,  
 the rusty nails and chicken feathers  
 that stuck in the mud on the back doorstep,  
 the worms that lived under the cat's ear  
 and the thin-lipped preacher  
 who refused to call  
 except once on a flea-ridden day  
 when he came scuffling in through the yard  
 looking for a scapegoat.  
 I hid in the kitchen under the ragbag.

I refuse to remember the dead.  
 And the dead are bored with the whole thing.  
 But you - you go ahead,  
 go on, go on back down  
 into the graveyard,  
 lie down where you think their faces are;  
 talk back to your old bad dreams.

(30 marks)

5)

ROADS

Choked sunset  
 Of crashing time  
 Roads. Roads.  
 Intersections of flight.  
 Cart-tracks across the fields  
 That saw the burned sky  
 Through the eyes  
 Of dead horses

Nights with lungs full of smoke,  
 With the heavy breath of those fleeing,  
 When shots  
 Struck the twilight.  
 Out of a broken gate  
 Ash and wind came soundlessly,  
 A fire  
 Morosely chewed the darkness.

The dead  
 Thrown over the rail road trucks  
 Thin suffocated screams  
 Like a stone in the mouth.  
 A black  
 Humming cloth o flies  
 Closed their wounds

(30 marks)