



THE OPEN UNIVERSITY OF SRI LANKA
 DIPLOMA IN ENGLISH / B.A. IN ENGLISH
 AND ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING
 FINAL EXAMINATION
 TEXTUAL ANALYSIS
 DURATION

- LEVEL 3
 - November 2016
 - LSD1203 / LSU1203
 - THREE HOURS (03 hours)

DATE: 19. 11. 2016

TIME: 9.30 am. - 12.30 pm.

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

Part A

- 1) (a) What is the main idea in this poem? State briefly how the poet has conveyed the idea effectively?

This year; very long Summer
 nothing but sunshine
 wind moving mysteriously like a spy.
 night
 belongs to howling dogs
 and growling trucks.
 daylight is
 the time between
 two curfews
 the street stands broken up between one checkpoint
 and yet another checkpoint
 life a barren dream
 surrounded

(15 marks)

- (b) What does the author of the following passage want to convey and how effectively has it been done? Comment on techniques and meaning.

Everything about the basement in our apartment building on Eastern Parkway frightened me. The pipes hung so low that it was hard, even for a twelve-year old like me at the time, to move around without getting banged on the head. You had to stoop a little and hunch your shoulders forward, a sure way to crick your neck for the rest of the day. The bulbs between the pipes dangled on frayed wires, and I'd always think I heard one starting to sizzle a crackling cybervoice from beyond? The walls were painted a color somewhere between sullen gray and bleak brown, except where big chunks of plaster were missing. Someone apparently had hung things from the walls in years past. Faded and stiff pieces of Scotch tape made an ugly pattern like pockmarks on an angry face.

The black holes in the wall scared me the most. I believed someone was hiding in there and would jump out. When I found the courage, I would tiptoe over, stand near the dark space, and listen for sounds. Was that the cry of a tormented soul? Frozen in terror, I stood quaking until I could pull myself back toward the middle of the room.

The basement floors were the same terrible gray brown as the walls but with drips of oil and mud all around making them look like the surface of a swamp. I imagined that under the floor lay pockets of quicksand that would buddle up from the big drain in the middle of the room and suck me down and away forever.

(15 marks)

Part B

2)

Read the following passage and answer the questions that follow.*"Anybody home.....?"*

I didn't hear him. The animated chatter of the babblers drowned his voice. But I saw him, a slight dark man with greying hair. A small face with shrunken cheeks protruded from a plain white shirt which was far too big for him. A colourful *palei-kart* sarong was the single feature that announced his presence to the world.

It was the first time I'd met Velu.

The moment he saw me a pleasant smile lit up his face.

"Came to cut grass, Sir," he said respectfully, "Is Nona in?"

I opened the gate. He walked towards the bungalow, slowly, steadily, at his own pace. I overtook him and walked straight to the kitchen where my aunt was busy feeding eight miaowing, growling cats. She called each cat by its name and spoke to it as if it were a rather intelligent child.

"Aunty Nilo, there' a frail man who claims that he can cut grass," I chuckled.

"Oh, you mean Velu. He's early. My regular grass cutter," my aunt smiled. "Actually he can do the job, really good at it!"

Since her husband died my aunt had shunned all company except my mother's and mine. Like any other woman who lived by herself, she attracted a certain amount of criticism, and there was a rumour that my aunt had become closer to cats and dogs than humans.

Her daughter, my cousin Inoka, swore that Aunty Nilo brushed the teeth of her favourite dog, a brown and white mongrel named Missy.

I settled down on the spacious verandah with my pencil and sketch pad. My aunt was one of my biggest fans. It was one reason why she regularly invited me for weekends at her ancestral bungalow.

Velu emerged from the back garden clad in a faded trouser that was too long for him and had the legs rolled up. A coir rope held the trouser in place at his waist. He started at the overgrown lawn for a few minutes with a long knife in his hand like a warrior examining his troops just before battle.

For the next couple of hours Velu became the subject of my humorous illustrations. I placed a larger-than-life head with exaggerated thick lips upon a thin, wiry body. Velu held the long knife like a guitar. Thus I had a Mick Jagger ready to perform on an overgrown lawn.

My HB 20 pencil began to move quickly on the blank page. One drawing had Velu demanding an obstinate grasshopper, much bigger than him, to quit the lawn. Another had him climbing a giant blade of grass to shoot an ant.

"Ha Ha Ha ... you are drawing Velu?" My aunt had sneaked up behind me.

"I couldn't resist him."

My aunt giggled when I drew Velu sleeping on a hammock between two blades of grass.

"By the way, what do you know about him, Aunty?"

"Nothing much. He is an estate Tamil. Wife is ill. Lives in a wooden shack near the Elu Gala, you know up there - the rock by the lake?"

"Do you think he will do the lawn today itself?" I kept my eyes firmly on my drawing.

"Oh, he's been doing that for ages. He'll finish today, you wait and see. In vain, he doesn't have any other income. Also he's cheap, you know. The other people charge so much for cutting the grass."

Velu defined the pace of that day for me. Squatting on the grass he swung his long knife left and right. The grass flew into the air with an occasional wad of earth. *Tschus! Tschus!* The rhythm of the grass cutter lulled me to sleep on my comfortable chair.

A big commotion woke me up. I went over to the large French window. Velu stood in the garden mutely watching something, the lawn half done. I followed his gaze. My aunt, armed with a stick, was screaming at her dog Barney. The clumsy pure-bred Labrador held something colourful in his mouth and was running round my aunt in circles. The dog seemed to have completely misunderstood my aunt's shouting, taking it to be a form of encouragement. With every shout of "Barney, drop it!" he did the exact opposite, scampering in joyful arcs around Aunt Nilo, ears back, with whatever it was, clenched firmly between his teeth. I joined the fray. A coconut husk thrown in the air distracted Barney and he let go of the colourful fabric, which I realised suddenly was Velu's sarong. I managed to catch the dog by his collar. Aunty wanted the dog in the house.

Velu immediately went over to where his torn sarong lay, and examined it.

"If you have an extra sarong give him one, I'll replace it," my aunt whispered as we entered the house with the dog between us.

She took the dog into the house and tried to make him sit on the living room carpet, but Barney stood there, tongue lolling, panting loudly, his tail wagging fast and sweeping newspapers and other objects from the low table nearby. Aunty Nilo then emerged from the room with a piece of cloth and a bottle of Dettol. "Why did you go and bite that man's dirty sarong?" she kept asking him over and over again. If the dog understood that he was being reprimanded, his joyous face showed no sign of it. For the next few minutes I was awestruck as she forced open the dog's mouth, and meticulously wiped it with disinfectant.

My aunt saw me watching the procedure and told the servant to serve me lunch at once. On my way into the kitchen, I gave Sita, the servant woman, my sarong to be given to Velu.

It was a generous lunch, with six different vegetables and grilled fish. I overate as I normally tend to do when at Aunty Nilo's, and took a walk in the backyard because my stomach felt really full. Velu had had a wash and looked clean. He was dressed in my slightly faded handloom cotton sarong, a far cry from the *palei-kart* but refined in its choice of colour. It certainly was an incongruous combination. Velu and his new sarong.

I watched as Sita gave him lunch on a plastic plate. I could see the contents: just one vegetable, dhal and a small piece of fish. Velu took out a siri-siri bag from his shirt pocket and tore it at the sides to make a wrapping paper. Then he carefully transferred the food from his plate on to the improvised lunch sheet and made a neat parcel with a page from a newspaper.

Velu was waiting near the door with his parcel, obviously for his payment, when I came to the verandah.

"Sir, thank you so much. You are very kind. It was my only good sarong. I only wear it to come here," he said as he saw me. His voice was

gentle, his syllables measured, with only a hint of his native Tamil in his accent.

I smiled. I didn't know what to say to him.

My aunt came to the verandah with two hundred-rupee notes.

"Thank you Velu. I am paying you an extra hundred rupees to buy a new sarong."

"Thank you *Nona* - you're so kind." He bent down to accept the money with both hands.

"Velu, why didn't you eat your rice?"

"It's a tasty meal, *Nona*, I am taking it home to share with my wife."

As he took leave of us, a strong gust of wind scattered my caricatures of Velu. My best one drifted outside the verandah and landed on the freshly mown lawn, where one of the dogs had already laid a fresh turd.

I watched Velu go out through the gate, closing it softly behind him.

Questions

- i) What is the intention of the writer of this piece of prose? Give reasons for your answer.

(15 marks)

- ii) Comment on the use of humour and hyperbole in the passage.

(10 marks).

- iii) Would you say that the writer has portrayed Aunt Nilo as a negative (bad) character? Say 'Yes' or 'No' and give reasons for your answer.

(15 marks)

Part C

- 3) Write an analysis of the poem below paying attention to meaning, techniques and overall effect.

Obedience of the Corpse

The midwife puts a rag in the dead woman's hand.

Takes the hairpins out.

She smells apples,

Wonders where she keeps them in the house.

Nothing is under the sink.

but a broken sack of potatoes growing eyes

She hopes the mother's milk is good a while longer

The woman up the road is still nursing.

She remembers the neighbor

And the dead woman never got along.

She looks to see if the woman wrote down any names

finds a white shirt to wrap the baby in

It's beautiful she thinks –

Snow nobody has walked in-- !

- 4) Write an analysis of the poem below focusing on *what* is said and *how* it is said.

I am learning to abandon the world

I am learning to abandon the world

Before it can abandon me

Already I have given up the moon

and snow, closing my shades

against the claims of white.

And the world has taken
My father, my friends.
I have given up melodic lines of hills
moving to a flat, tuneless landscape

And every night I give my body up
limb by limb working upwards
across bone, towards the heart.
But morning comes with small
reprieves of coffee and birdsong.

A tree outside the window
Which was simply shadow moments ago
Takes back its branches twig
By leafy twig.
And as I take my body back
The sun lays its warm muzzle on my lap
as if to make amends.

(30 marks)