CAMBRIDGE
International Education

Cambridge International AS & A Level

LITERATURE IN ENGLISH **9695/23**

Paper 2 Prose and Unseen **May/June 2026**

2 hours

You must answer on the enclosed answer booklet.

You will need: Answer booklet (enclosed)

INSTRUCTIONS

- Answer **two** questions in total:
  - Section A: answer **one** question.
  - Section B: answer **one** question.
- Follow the instructions on the front cover of the answer booklet. If you need additional answer paper, ask the invigilator for a continuation booklet.
- Dictionaries are **not** allowed.

INFORMATION

- The total mark for this paper is 50.
- All questions are worth equal marks.

This document has **12** pages. Any blank pages are indicated.

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Section A: Prose

Answer **one** question from this section.

KIRAN DESAI: *The Inheritance of Loss*

1 **Either** **(a)** Discuss Desai's presentation of the relationship between the cook and Jemubhai in the novel.

Or **(b)** Comment closely on Desai's presentation of the airport in the following passage.

After Delhi, the Gulf Air flight landed in Calcutta's Dum Dum airport.

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They were waiting for their suitcases, but they didn't arrive.

(*from* Chapter 48)

from ***Stories of Ourselves, Volume 1***

2 **Either** **(a)** Compare the presentation of ways in which significant events transform characters' lives. In your answer, you should refer to **two** stories from the selection.

Or **(b)** Comment closely on the following passage from *Tyres*, considering Adam Thorpe's presentation of the narrator's experience of the war.

One time, in March or April 1943, my father came back from town one day, looking very pleased with himself. He was scrubbed clean and in his best suit. He had left very early, before I had even shaved. He had spent the morning in the *gendarmerie*, he told me. 'There are a few new faces I don't know, but there is Jules, getting along fine, with his own office. He is in charge of regularising.' 'What is he regularising?' I asked. (There were no clients about, I might add.) 'The STO,' he said. My heart came into my mouth. By this he meant the latest bad idea of Laval's, the *Service du Travail Obligatoire*. Jules – an old schoolfriend and card-playing companion of my father's – did no more than type out lists and send out letters, but he had a certain control over things. Jules had shown my father round, 'and I shook a few hands.' Just as well he had scrubbed his own, as best he could. That is why I escaped the fate of certain others of my age, amongst them several friends. When I was twenty, I spent a few not unpleasant months in the Vosges cutting wood and gathering charcoal and getting very cold with some young people from places like Lyon – smart, educated people, who had never cut wood in their lives before. But I never went to Germany.

Whether it was because of this visit, and his odd evening with Jules playing for small money and drinking, I do not know – but the Germans used us. That is to say, they used us when it suited them, for they seemed to have their own mechanics, even their own tyre people, like they had their own newspapers and their own films and their own language. Maybe they would have used us anyway, in that case, but my father saw it as his doing. The odd thing is, he hated the Germans – they had, after all, given him his limp, in '17, and the itch would come back with heat. When the *maquisards* really got going, he didn't turn them away, when they came as clients. He served them and pretended that he didn't know, but somehow those boys never paid, only shook hands. But he said to me, one day, after the famous 'Petit Ours' (tall and elegant) had had a tube repaired on his motorcycle one evening, late: 'Don't get mixed up in all that. These boys, they are free. You are not. When all this is finished with, and those bastards are back in Berlin, that sign will have your name on it, and your son will be *le fils*. I will be the old fellow who stands watching the world go by, and getting in your hair, and proving, at ninety, what a damn good grip I still have at the expense of your clients' knuckles!' He laughed uproariously at this, but I think he was nervous, inside. I suppose he was playing a delicate game. He was a man who could never take risks. It was moulded into him, it was part of his job.

When old Mme Renouvin slid off the road in her little blue Peugeot, in 1938, and was found dead as a log in a wild rose bush, where she'd been thrown, and the report in the local paper blamed it on a 'blow-out', my poor father did not eat for days, like a fast of repentance. The fact is, Mme Renouvin was the worst driver anywhere, and in those days you could smooth out a tread in months if you took corners poorly, the surfaces were that gritty. But she was a client, and the last man to have dealt with her tyres was my father. Surprisingly, there was no decline in custom. That, as I said, came with the war, when the road traffic died away to near silence, and everyone went hungry. If we hadn't had the chestnuts, in our area, I think we might have starved to death. So my father's visit to the *gendarmerie* certainly put things straight.

(*from* Tyres)

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EVELYN WAUGH: *A Handful of Dust*

3 **Either** **(a)** 'He had got into the habit of loving and trusting Brenda.'

With this comment in mind, discuss some of the ways in which Waugh presents Tony's relationship with Brenda.

Or **(b)** Comment closely on Waugh's presentation of the changes to John Beaver's reputation in the following passage.

But with the exception of her sister's, opinion was greatly in favour of Brenda's adventure.

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'How on earth has *he* got away with it?' they may have asked themselves, but now, when he came into Brat's, they made room for him at the bar and said, 'Well old boy, how about one?'

(*from* English Gothic – 1, Part 4)

COLSON WHITEHEAD: *The Underground Railroad*

4 **Either** **(a)** Discuss the presentation and significance of the Randall plantation in the novel.

Or **(b)** Comment closely on the following passage, considering ways in which Whitehead presents Cora's experience of the Museum of Natural Wonders.

'What do you say, Skipper John,' Cora asked her fellow sailor.

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Torture them as much as you can when they are on this earth, then take away the hope that one day their people will have it better.

(*from* South Carolina)

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Section B: Unseen

Answer **one** question from this section.

Either

5 Comment closely on the presentation of the country in the following passage.

In your answer, consider the writer's choice of language, structure and narrative methods.

All across the country, people felt unsafe.

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here/there.

Or

6 Comment closely on the presentation of the relationship in the following poem.

In your answer, consider the writer's choice of language, imagery and poetic methods.

A Companionship

I saw we moved together.

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though sometimes nearly.

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