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O Level

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LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

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Paper 1 Poetry and Prose

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1 hour 30 minutes

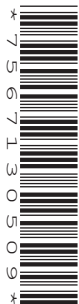
No Additional Materials are required.

READ THESE INSTRUCTIONS FIRST

An answer booklet is provided inside this question paper. You should follow the instructions on the front cover of the answer booklet. If you need additional paper ask the invigilator for a continuation booklet.

Answer **two** questions. Your answers must be on **two** different set texts.

All questions in this paper carry equal marks.



This document consists of **24** printed pages, **4** blank pages and **1** Insert.

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SECTION A: POETRY

SONGS OF OURSELVES VOLUME 1: from Part 5

Remember to support your ideas with details from the writing.

Either 1 Read this poem, and then answer the question that follows it:

Reservist

Time again for the annual joust, the regular fanfare,
a call to arms, the imperative letters stern
as clarion notes, the king's command, upon
the pain of court-martial, to tilt
at the old windmills. With creaking bones 5
and suppressed grunts, we battle-weary knights
creep to attention, ransack the wardrobes
for our rusty armour, tuck the pot bellies
with great finesse into the shrinking gear, 10
and with helmets shutting off half our world,
report for service. We are again united
with sleek weapons we were betrothed to
in our active cavalier days.

We will keep charging up the same hills, plod
through the same forests, till we are too old, 15
too ill-fitted for life's other territories.
The same trails will find us time and again,
and we quick to obey, like children placed
on carousels they cannot get off from, borne 20
along through somebody's expensive fantasyland,
with an oncoming rush of tedious rituals, masked threats
and monsters armed with the same roar.

In the end we will perhaps surprise ourselves
and emerge unlikely heroes with long years
of braving the same horrors 25
pinned on our tunic fronts.
We will have proven that Sisyphus is not a myth.
We will play the game till the monotony
sends his lordship to sleep.
We will march the same paths till they break 30
onto new trails, our lives stumbling
onto the open sea, into daybreak.

(Boey Kim Cheng)

How does Boey Kim Cheng powerfully convey his feelings about military service in this poem?

- Or 2 Explore the ways in which Dickinson makes *Because I Could Not Stop For Death* such a disturbing poem.

Because I Could Not Stop For Death

Because I could not stop for Death —
He kindly stopped for me —
The Carriage held but just Ourselves —
And Immortality.

We slowly drove — He knew no haste
And I had put away
My labor and my leisure too.
For his Civility —

5

We passed the School, where Children strove
At Recess — in the Ring —
We passed the Fields of Gazing Grain —
We passed the Setting Sun —

10

Or rather — He passed Us —
The Dews drew quivering and chill —
For only Gossamer, my Gown —
My Tippet — only Tulle —

15

We paused before a House that seemed
A Swelling of the Ground —
The Roof was scarcely visible —
The Cornice — in the Ground —

20

Since then — 'tis Centuries — and yet
Feels shorter than the Day
I first surmised the Horses' Heads
Were toward Eternity —

(Emily Dickinson)

SONGS OF OURSELVES VOLUME 2: from Part 1

Remember to support your ideas with details from the writing.

Either 3 Read this poem, and then answer the question that follows it:

'She was a Phantom of Delight'

She was a Phantom of delight When first she gleamed upon my sight; A lovely Apparition, sent To be a moment's ornament; Her eyes as stars of Twilight fair;	5
Like Twilight's, too, her dusky hair; But all things else about her drawn From May-time and the chearful Dawn; A dancing Shape, an Image gay, To haunt, to startle, and way-lay.	10
I saw her upon nearer view, A Spirit, yet a Woman too! Her household motions light and free, And steps of virgin liberty; A countenance in which did meet	15
Sweet records, promises as sweet; A Creature not too bright or good For human nature's daily food; For transient sorrows, simple wiles, Praise, blame, love, kisses, tears, and smiles.	20
And now I see with eye serene The very pulse of the machine; A Being breathing thoughtful breath; A Traveller betwixt life and death; The reason firm, the temperate will,	25
Endurance, foresight, strength and skill; A perfect Woman; nobly planned, To warn, to comfort, and command; And yet a Spirit still, and bright With something of an angel light.	30

(William Wordsworth)

How does Wordsworth's writing convey powerful emotions in this poem?

- Or 4 Explore how Sheers creates memorable portraits of his family in *Coming Home*.

Coming Home

My mother's hug is awkward,
as if the space between her open arms
is reserved for a child, not this body of a man.
In the kitchen she kneads the dough,
flipping it and patting before laying in again.
The flour makes her over, dusting
the hairs on her cheek, smoothing out wrinkles.

5

*

Dad still goes and soaks himself in the rain.
Up to his elbows in hedge, he works
on a hole that reappears every Winter,
its edges laced with wet wool –
frozen breaths snagged on the blackthorn.
When he comes in again his hair is wild,
and his pockets are filled with filings of hay.

10

*

All seated, my grandfather pours the wine.
His unsteady hand makes the neck of the bottle
shiver on the lip of each glass;
it is a tune he plays faster each year.

15

(*Owen Sheers*)

GILLIAN CLARKE: from *Collected Poems*

Remember to support your ideas with details from the writing.

Either 5 Read this poem, and then answer the question that follows it:

Heron at Port Talbot

Snow falls on the cooling towers
delicately settling on cranes.
Machinery's old bones whiten; death
settles with its rusts, its erosions.

Warning of winds off the sea 5
the motorway dips to the dock's edge.
My hands tighten on the wheel against
the white steel of the wind.

Then we almost touch, both braking flight, 10
bank on the air and feel that shocking
intimacy of near-collision,
animal tracks that cross in snow.

I see his living eye, his change of mind, 15
feel pressure as we bank, the force
of his beauty. We might have died
in some terrible conjunction.

The steel town's sulphurs billow 20
like dirty washing. The sky stains
with steely inks and fires, chemical
rustings, salt-grains, sand under snow.

And the bird comes, a surveyor
calculating space between old workings
and the mountain hinterland, archangel
come to re-open the heron-roads,
meets me at an inter-section 25
where wind comes flashing off water
interrupting the warp of the snow
and the broken rhythms of blood.

In what ways does Clarke vividly convey the significance of her encounter with the bird in this poem?

- Or 6 How does Clarke depict the relationship between mother and child so movingly ...
Clocks?

Clocks

for Cai

We walk the lanes to pick them.
'Fwff-fwffs'. He gives them the name
he gives to all flowers. 'Fwff! Fwff!'
I teach him to tell the time
by dandelion. 'One o' clock. Two.'
He blows me a field of gold
from the palm of his hand
and learns the power of naming.

5

The sun goes down in the sea
and the moon's translucent.
He's wary of waves and sand's
soft treachery underfoot.
'What does the sea say?' I ask.
'Fwff! Fwff!' he answers, then turns
his face to the sky and points
to the full-blown moon.

10

15

SECTION B: PROSE

CHINUA ACHEBE: *No Longer at Ease*

Remember to support your ideas with details from the writing.

Either 7 Read this extract, and then answer the question that follows it:

Christopher and Bisi were already waiting for them at the gate.

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No matter how one looked at it, no blame could possibly attach to the innocent musician.

[from Chapter 11]

Explore the ways in which Achebe creates a vivid picture of Obi's life in Lagos at this moment in the novel.

Or 8 What does Achebe's presentation of Mr Omo make you feel about him?

JANE AUSTEN: *Mansfield Park*

Remember to support your ideas with details from the writing.

Either 9 Read this extract, and then answer the question that follows it:

“Your prospects, however, are too fair to justify want of spirits. You have a very smiling scene before you.”

“Do you mean literally or figuratively? Literally I conclude. Yes, certainly, the sun shines and the park looks very cheerful. But unluckily that iron gate, that ha-ha, give me a feeling of restraint and hardship. I cannot get out, as the starling said.” As she spoke, and it was with expression, she walked to the gate; he followed her. “Mr. Rushworth is so long fetching this key!”

5

“And for the world you would not get out without the key and without Mr. Rushworth’s authority and protection, or I think you might with little difficulty pass round the edge of the gate, here, with my assistance; I think it might be done, if you really wished to be more at large, and could allow yourself to think it not prohibited.”

10

“Prohibited! nonsense! I certainly can get out that way and I will. Mr. Rushworth will be here in a moment you know — we shall not be out of sight.”

15

“Or if we are, Miss Price will be so good as to tell him, that he will find us near that knoll, the grove of oak on the knoll.”

Fanny, feeling all this to be wrong, could not help making an effort to prevent it. “You will hurt yourself, Miss Bertram,” she cried, “you will certainly hurt yourself against those spikes — you will tear your gown — you will be in danger of slipping into the ha-ha. You had better not go.”

20

Her cousin was safe on the other side, while these words were spoken, and smiling with all the good-humour of success she said, “Thank you, my dear Fanny, but I and my gown are alive and well, and so good bye.”

25

Fanny was again left to her solitude, and with no increase of pleasant feelings, for she was sorry for almost all that she had seen and heard, astonished at Miss Bertram, and angry with Mr. Crawford. By taking a circuitous, and as it appeared to her, very unreasonable direction to the knoll, they were soon beyond her eye; and for some minutes longer she remained without sight or sound of any companion. She seemed to have the little wood all to herself. She could almost have thought, that Edmund and Miss Crawford had left it, but that it was impossible for Edmund to forget her so entirely.

30

She was again roused from disagreeable musings by sudden footsteps, somebody was coming at a quick pace down the principal walk. She expected Mr. Rushworth, but it was Julia, who hot and out of breath, and with a look of disappointment, cried out on seeing her, “Heyday! Where are the others? I thought Maria and Mr. Crawford were with you.”

35

Fanny explained.

40

“A pretty trick upon my word! I cannot see them any where,” looking eagerly into the park. “But they cannot be very far off, and I think I am equal to as much as Maria, even without help.”

“But, Julia, Mr. Rushworth will be here in a moment with the key. Do wait for Mr. Rushworth.”

45

“Not I, indeed. I have had enough of the family for one morning. Why child, I have but this moment escaped from his horrible mother. Such a penance as I have been enduring, while you were sitting here so composed

and so happy! It might have been as well, perhaps, if you had been in my place, but you always contrive to keep out of these scrapes.”

This was a most unjust reflection, but Fanny could allow for it, and let it pass; Julia was vexed, and her temper was hasty, but she felt that it would not last, and therefore taking no notice, only asked her if she had not seen Mr. Rushworth.

[from Chapter 10]

How does Austen make this a revealing and significant moment in the novel?

Or **10** Does Austen make it possible for you to feel any sympathy for Julia Bertram?

Do **not** use the extract printed in Question 9 when answering this question.

WILLA CATHER: *My Ántonia*

Remember to support your ideas with details from the writing.

Either 11 Read this extract, and then answer the question that follows it:

Mrs. Harling laughed when she saw us coming. 'I expect you left your dishes on the table to-night, Mrs. Burden,' she called. Frances shut the piano and came out to join us.

They had liked Ántonia from their first glimpse of her; felt they knew exactly what kind of girl she was. As for Mrs. Shimerda, they found her very amusing. Mrs. Harling chuckled whenever she spoke of her. 'I expect I am more at home with that sort of bird than you are, Mrs. Burden. They're a pair, Ambrosch and that old woman!'

5

They had had a long argument with Ambrosch about Ántonia's allowance for clothes and pocket-money. It was his plan that every cent of his sister's wages should be paid over to him each month, and he would provide her with such clothing as he thought necessary. When Mrs. Harling told him firmly that she would keep fifty dollars a year for Ántonia's own use, he declared they wanted to take his sister to town and dress her up and make a fool of her. Mrs. Harling gave us a lively account of Ambrosch's behaviour throughout the interview; how he kept jumping up and putting on his cap as if he were through with the whole business, and how his mother tweaked his coat-tail and prompted him in Bohemian. Mrs. Harling finally agreed to pay three dollars a week for Ántonia's services — good wages in those days — and to keep her in shoes. There had been hot dispute about the shoes, Mrs. Shimerda finally saying persuasively that she would send Mrs. Harling three fat geese every year to 'make even.' Ambrosch was to bring his sister to town next Saturday.

10

15

20

'She'll be awkward and rough at first, like enough,' grandmother said anxiously, 'but unless she's been spoiled by the hard life she's led, she has it in her to be a real helpful girl.'

25

Mrs. Harling laughed her quick, decided laugh. 'Oh, I'm not worrying, Mrs. Burden! I can bring something out of that girl. She's barely seventeen, not too old to learn new ways. She's good-looking, too!' she added warmly.

Frances turned to grandmother. 'Oh, yes, Mrs. Burden, you didn't tell us that! She was working in the garden when we got there, barefoot and ragged. But she has such fine brown legs and arms, and splendid colour in her cheeks — like those big dark red plums.'

30

We were pleased at this praise. Grandmother spoke feelingly. 'When she first came to this country, Frances, and had that genteel old man to watch over her, she was as pretty a girl as ever I saw. But, dear me, what a life she's led, out in the fields with those rough threshers! Things would have been very different with poor Ántonia if her father had lived.'

35

The Harlings begged us to tell them about Mr. Shimerda's death and the big snowstorm. By the time we saw grandfather coming home from church, we had told them pretty much all we knew of the Shimerdas.

40

'The girl will be happy here, and she'll forget those things,' said Mrs. Harling confidently, as we rose to take our leave.

[from Book 2 Chapter 2]

15

How does Cather make you sympathise with *Ántonia* at this moment in the novel?

Or 12 In what ways does Cather vividly portray life on the prairies?

GEORGE ELIOT: *Silas Marner*

Remember to support your ideas with details from the writing.

Either 13 Read this extract, and then answer the question that follows it:

Nothing at that moment could be much more inviting to Dunsey than the bright fire on the brick hearth: he walked in and seated himself by it at once. There was something in front of the fire, too, that would have been inviting to a hungry man, if it had been in a different stage of cooking. It was a small bit of pork suspended from the kettle-hanger by a string passed through a large door-key, in a way known to primitive housekeepers unpossessed of jacks. But the pork had been hung at the farthest extremity of the hanger, apparently to prevent the roasting from proceeding too rapidly during the owner's absence. The old staring simpleton had hot meat for his supper, then? thought Dunstan. People had always said he lived on mouldy bread, on purpose to check his appetite. But where could he be at this time, and on such an evening, leaving his supper in this stage of preparation, and his door unfastened? Dunstan's own recent difficulty in making his way suggested to him that the weaver had perhaps gone outside his cottage to fetch in fuel, or for some such brief purpose, and had slipped into the Stone-pit. That was an interesting idea to Dunstan, carrying consequences of entire novelty. If the weaver was dead, who had a right to his money? Who would know where his money was hidden? *Who would know that anybody had come to take it away?* He went no farther into the subtleties of evidence: the pressing question, 'Where *is* the money?' now took such entire possession of him as to make him quite forget that the weaver's death was not a certainty. A dull mind, once arriving at an inference that flatters a desire, is rarely able to retain the impression that the notion from which the inference started was purely problematic. And Dunstan's mind was as dull as the mind of a possible felon usually is. There were only three hiding-places where he had ever heard of cottagers' hoards being found: the thatch, the bed, and a hole in the floor. Marner's cottage had no thatch; and Dunstan's first act, after a train of thought made rapid by the stimulus of cupidity, was to go up to the bed; but while he did so, his eyes travelled eagerly over the floor, where the bricks, distinct in the fire-light, were discernible under the sprinkling of sand. But not everywhere; for there was one spot, and one only, which was quite covered with sand, and sand showing the marks of fingers, which had apparently been careful to spread it over a given space. It was near the treddles of the loom. In an instant Dunstan darted to that spot, swept away the sand with his whip, and, inserting the thin end of the hook between the bricks, found that they were loose. In haste he lifted up two bricks, and saw what he had no doubt was the object of his search; for what could there be but money in those two leathern bags? And, from their weight, they must be filled with guineas. Dunstan felt round the hole, to be certain that it held no more; then hastily replaced the bricks, and spread the sand over them. Hardly more than five minutes had passed since he entered the cottage, but it seemed to Dunstan like a long while; and though he was without any distinct recognition of the possibility that Marner might be alive, and might re-enter the cottage at any moment, he felt an undefinable dread laying hold on him, as he rose to his feet with the bags in his hand. He would hasten out into the darkness, and then consider what he should do with the bags. He closed the door behind him immediately, that he might shut in the stream

of light: a few steps would be enough to carry him beyond betrayal by the gleams from the shutter-chinks and the latch-hole. The rain and darkness had got thicker, and he was glad of it; though it was awkward walking with both hands filled, so that it was as much as he could do to grasp his whip along with one of the bags. But when he had gone a yard or two, he might take his time. So he stepped forward into the darkness.

50

[from Part 1 Chapter 4]

How does Eliot make this such a dramatic moment in the novel?

- Or** **14** Nancy says Godfrey is 'the best of husbands'. How far does Eliot make you agree with her?

MICHAEL FRAYN: *Spies*

Remember to support your ideas with details from the writing.

Either 15 Read this extract, and then answer the question that follows it:

Silence from the house.

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‘Thank you, Stephen,’ she says humbly.

[from Chapter 7]

In what ways does Frayn make this such a disturbing moment in the novel?

- Or** **16** How does Frayn’s writing suggest to you that Stephen’s father is a much better father than Keith’s?

Do **not** use the extract printed in Question 15 when answering this question.

KATE GRENVILLE: *The Secret River*

Remember to support your ideas with details from the writing.

Either 17 Read this extract, and then answer the question that follows it:

One afternoon Thornhill saw Black Dick stalking along with a small kangaroo dead over his shoulder. He felt the tongue shift in his mouth. He could not remember when he had last eaten fresh meat. They would have a chicken in the pot one day, but not until the few fowls had multiplied. He caught Sal's eye as she came to the door of the hut. She went back inside and had the gun down as he came in. *Fresh meat, Will*, she said, her face alight with the prospect. *Think of it!* 5

Thornhill hid himself behind a fallen tree with the gun. The last of the sun slanted sideways, sending fingers of shadow across the grass. Six or seven kangaroos were grazing, a big buck and some females. One had a joey in her pouch that was invisible but for a single long foot sticking out. 10

Seen up close, a kangaroo was a creature out of a dream, put together from different parts: the ears of a dog, the muzzle of a deer, that thick tail like a furred python. Something was wrong with the proportions, so the back feet were nearly as long as the tail, while the forepaws were stolen from a child. Grazing along the grass they swung themselves forward between forepaws and tail, the tail curving, taking the weight as the animal shifted forward to another tuft. 15

A kangaroo was a freak of nature. But Thornhill was discovering that if a man looked at a kangaroo for long enough, it was the idea of a sheep that became peculiar. 20

He had his eye on the buck. Just that tail, as thick as his own forearm, would fill the pot. He felt the spit gush into his mouth at the thought of it: a savoury brown stew that would fill a man up the way the salt pork he brought back from Sydney never did. 25

The buck seemed to be moving closer to where Thornhill crouched behind the tree. He was getting pins and needles in his foot where it was bent under him and had been bitten on the tender flesh between his first two fingers by sharp ants. A mosquito whined at his ear but he would not wave it away. His finger on the trigger became like wood and his eye squinting along the barrel began to swim with tears. He felt invisible and soundless and hardly breathed. He had become part of the log, part of the air, part of the evening itself. 30

The buck was so close now that he could hear the little cropping sound as it pulled at the grass with its mouth. He could see a fly dancing around its ears and its delicate whiskers, lit up in the last of the sun. He could even see its long eyelashes. He was close, but did not trust himself or the gun to be close enough. The animal was moving up the slope towards him. If he could remain nothing but wood and air for long enough, it would come so close he could not miss. 35

Finally he knew that he had to tell that wooden finger of his to pull back on the trigger, or something in him would break. He made no sound, there was no movement, only the small muscle in his finger, and yet the animal knew. Its head lifted from the grass and its ears swivelled around towards him. With one powerful thrust of its tail it sprang away, sailing over the grass, over the rocks, into the forest, and all the others bounded away after it. 45

In flight, the way they were constructed made the most perfect sense.

He stood up behind the fallen tree, listening to the crashes and thumps as they leaped up the ridge through the forest and the rocks. The gun hung useless from his hand.

50

Sal was standing at the door of the hut when he came down the hill. She watched while he hung the gun back on its pegs and put the bag of powder on the shelf. He could not trust himself to speak, disappointment a stone in his chest.

55

There was no conversation around the fire that night as they held their bits of pork on sticks over the coals, catching the drips with the dry cornbread that crumbled into pieces as soon as it was handled. His throat closed against the food, the smell of it in his nostrils made him gag. Sal ate, doggedly, beside him, but he could not. She glanced at him, at the food in his hand, but said nothing.

60

Dan was the first to smell it, his head turning like an animal's to where the scent came up on the evening air all the way from the blacks' camp: the smell of fresh meat, roasting. Thornhill could hear his guts rumble with longing.

65

[from Part Four]

How does Grenville make this such a memorable moment in the novel?

Or **18** In what ways does Grenville vividly depict the hardships of the Thornhills' life in London?

R K NARAYAN: *The English Teacher*

Remember to support your ideas with details from the writing.

Either 19 Read this extract, and then answer the question that follows it:

They shoulder the stretcher. I'm given a pot containing the fire and we march out, down our street, Ellamman Street. Passers-by stand and look for a while. But every face looks blurred to me. The heat of the sun is intense. We cut across the sands, ford the river at Nallappa's Grove, and on to the other bank of the river, and enter the cremation ground by a small door on its southern wall. 5

The sun is beating down mercilessly, but I don't feel it. I feel nothing, and see nothing. All sensations are blurred and vague.

They find it necessary to put down the stretcher a couple of times on the roadside. Half a dozen flies are dotting her face. Passers-by stand and look on sadly at the smiling face. A madman living in Ellamman Street comes by, looks at her face and breaks down, and follows us on, muttering vile and obscure curses on fate and its ways. 10

Stretcher on the ground. A deep grove of tamarind trees and mangoes, full of shade and quiet – an extremely tranquil place. Two or three smouldering pyres are ranged about, and bamboos and coirs lie scattered, and another funeral group is at the other end of this grove. 'This is a sort of cloakroom, a place where you leave your body behind,' I reflect as we sit down and wait. Somebody appears carrying a large notebook, and writes down name, age, and disease; collects a fee, issues a receipt, and goes away. 15

The half a dozen flies are still having their ride. After weeks, I see her face in daylight, in the open, and note the devastation of the weeks of fever – this shrivelling heat has baked her face into a peculiar tinge of pale yellow. The purple cotton saree which I bought her on another day is wound round her and going to burn with her. 20

The priest and the carriers are ceaselessly shouting for someone or other. Basket after basket of dry cowdung fuel is brought and dumped. ... Lively discussion over prices and quality goes on. The trappings of trade do not leave us even here. Some hairy man sits under a tree and asks for alms. I am unable to do anything, but quietly watch in numbness. ... I'm an imbecile, incapable of doing anything or answering any questions. I'm incapable of doing anything except what our priest orders me to do. Presently I go over, plunge in the river, return, and perform a great many rites and mutter a lot of things which the priest asks me to repeat. 25

They build up a pyre, place her on it, cover her up with layers of fuel. ... Leaving only the face and a part of her chest out, four layers deep down. I pour ghee on and drop the fire. 30

We are on our homeward march, a silent and benumbed gang. As we cross Nallappa's Grove once again, I cannot resist the impulse to turn and look back. Flames appear over the wall. ... It leaves a curiously dull pain at heart. There are no more surprises and shocks in life, so that I watch the flame without agitation. For me the greatest reality is this and nothing else. ... Nothing else will worry or interest me in life hereafter. 35

[from Chapter 3]

23

How does Narayan's writing make this such a powerfully moving moment in the novel?

Or **20** What does Narayan's portrayal make you feel about Krishna?

from *Stories of Ourselves*

Remember to support your ideas with details from the writing.

- Either 21 Read this extract from *Billennium* (by J G Ballard), and then answer the question that follows it:

Temporarily, he and Rossiter teamed up to rent a double cubicle in a semi-derelict house a hundred yards from the library. The neighbourhood was seedy and faded, the rooming houses crammed with tenants. Most of them were owned by absentee landlords or by the city corporation, and the managers employed were of the lowest type, mere rent-collectors who cared nothing about the way their tenants divided up the living space, and never ventured beyond the first floors. Bottles and empty cans littered the corridors, and the washrooms looked like sumps. Many of the tenants were old and infirm, sitting about listlessly in their narrow cubicles, wheedling at each other back to back through the thin partitions. 5

Their double cubicle was on the third floor, at the end of a corridor that ringed the building. Its architecture was impossible to follow, rooms letting off at all angles, and luckily the corridor was a cul-de-sac. The mounds of cases ended four feet from the end wall and a partition divided off the cubicle, just wide enough for two beds. A high window overlooked the area ways of the buildings opposite. 10 15

Possessions loaded on to the shelf above his head, Ward lay back on his bed and moodily surveyed the roof of the library through the afternoon haze. 20

‘It’s not bad here,’ Rossiter told him, unpacking his case. ‘I know there’s no real privacy and we’ll drive each other insane within a week, but at least we haven’t got six other people breathing into our ears two feet away.’ 25

The nearest cubicle, a single, was built into the banks of cases half a dozen steps along the corridor, but the occupant, a man of seventy, was deaf and bed-ridden. 30

‘It’s not bad,’ Ward echoed reluctantly. ‘Now tell me what the latest growth figures are. They might console me.’

Rossiter paused, lowering his voice. ‘Four per cent. *Eight hundred million extra people in one year* – just less than half the earth’s total population in 1950.’ 35

Ward whistled slowly. ‘So they will revalue. What to? Three and a half?’
‘Three. From the first of next year.’

‘Three square metres! Ward sat up and looked around him. ‘It’s unbelievable! The world’s going insane, Rossiter. For God’s sake, when are they going to do something about it? Do you realise there soon won’t be room enough to sit down, let alone lie down?’ 40

Exasperated, he punched the wall beside him, on the second blow knocked in one of the small wooden panels that had been lightly papered over.

‘Hey! Rossiter yelled. ‘You’re breaking the place down.’ He dived across the bed to retrieve the panel, which hung downwards supported by a strip of paper. Ward slipped his hand into the dark interval, carefully drew the panel back on to the bed. 45

‘Who’s on the other side?’ Rossiter whispered. ‘Did they hear?’
Ward peered through the interval, eyes searching the dim light. Suddenly he dropped the panel and seized Rossiter’s shoulder, pulled him down on to the bed.

'Henry! Look!

Directly in front of them, faintly illuminated by a grimy skylight, was a medium-sized room some fifteen feet square, empty except for the dust silted up against the skirting boards. The floor was bare, a few strips of frayed linoleum running across it, the walls covered with a drab floral design. Here and there patches of the paper peeled off and segments of the picture rail had rotted away, but otherwise the room was in habitable condition.

50

Breathing slowly, Ward closed the open door of the cubicle with his foot, then turned to Rossiter.

'Henry, do you realise what we've found? Do you realise it, man?'

'Shut up. For Pete's sake keep your voice down.' Rossiter examined the room carefully. 'It's fantastic. I'm trying to see whether anyone's used it recently.'

55

60

'Of course they haven't,' Ward pointed out. 'It's obvious. There's no door into the room. We're looking through it now. They must have panelled over this door years ago and forgotten about it. Look at that filth everywhere.'

Rossiter was staring into the room, his mind staggered by its vastness.

'You're right,' he murmured. 'Now, when do we move in?'

65

How does Ballard make this moment in the story so dramatic?

Or 22 Explore the ways in which Desai makes *Games at Twilight* such a sad story.

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