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LITERATURE IN ENGLISH **0475/43**

Paper 4 Unseen **May/June 2026**

1 hour 15 minutes

6773318943

You must answer on the enclosed answer booklet.

You will need: Answer booklet (enclosed)

INSTRUCTIONS

- Answer **one** question: **either** Question 1 **or** Question 2.
- Follow the instructions on the front cover of the answer booklet. If you need additional answer paper, ask the invigilator for a continuation booklet.

INFORMATION

- The total mark for this paper is 25.
- All questions are worth equal marks.

This document has **8** pages. Any blank pages are indicated.

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You are advised to spend about 20 minutes reading the question paper and planning your answer.

Answer **either** Question 1 **or** Question 2.

Either

1 Read carefully the following poem.

How does the poet strikingly convey her relationship with words?

To help you answer this question, you might consider:

- how she describes giving birth to words
- how she portrays words as having a life of their own
- how she conveys the power of words.

Creation

Sometimes the only babies
us women (sub)consciously
choose to birth are our words.

Always a late developer,
mine scratched
on pregnant pause –

then forced their
way out of
tight lips.

Wayward, untidy, they
crawled naked into
the world.

I tried to catch
and tie them in
pink bows

but they wriggled out
to play,
confident, carefree,

and I smiled when Kahlil[1]
and others whispered
they did not belong to me.

At night they crept
into my bed
and covered

my nakedness
with their awkward
limbs.

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In muted nightmares –
neglected, fear and shame filled –
they disappeared.

Today I wake
relieved:
know

even in widely spaced silence
no-thing is
barren[2];
generative[3] words will
always sound us out
full-fill, still weight
us – quiet and cosmic as gravity.

[1]*Kahlil*: friend (Arabic), also the name of a famous poet
[2]*barren*: infertile or empty
[3]*generative*: having the power to produce or create

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Or

2 Read carefully the following opening to a short story set in New York, early in the twentieth century. George is going home in his lunch break. His girlfriend has recently sent him a letter threatening to break off their engagement.

How does the writer interest the reader in George and his situation?

To help you answer this question, you might consider:

- how he portrays George as he makes his way home
- how he conveys George's feeling that his life is a mess
- how the writer dramatises his decision.

George O'Kelly, whose mind was over seven hundred miles away, thought that all outdoors was horrible. He rushed into the subway[1], and for ninety-five blocks bent a frenzied glance on a car-card[2] which showed vividly how he had only one chance in five of keeping his teeth for ten years. At 137th Street he broke off his study of commercial art, left the subway, and began to run again, a tireless, anxious run that brought him this time to his home – one room in a high, horrible apartment-house in the middle of nowhere.

There it was on the bureau[3], the letter – in sacred ink, on blessed paper – all over the city, people, if they listened, could hear the beating of George O'Kelly's heart. He read the commas, the blots, and the thumb-smudge on the margin – then he threw himself hopelessly upon his bed.

He was in a mess, one of those terrific messes which are ordinary incidents in the life of the poor, which follow poverty like birds of prey. The poor go under or go up or go wrong or even go on, somehow, in a way the poor have – but George O'Kelly was so new to poverty that had any one denied the uniqueness of his case he would have been astounded.

Less than two years ago he had been graduated with honours from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology[4] and had taken a position with a firm of construction engineers in southern Tennessee. All his life he had thought in terms of tunnels and skyscrapers and great squat dams and tall, three-towered bridges, that were like dancers holding hands in a row, with heads as tall as cities and skirts of cable strand. It had seemed romantic to George O'Kelly to change the sweep of rivers and the shape of mountains so that life could flourish in the old bad lands of the world where it had never taken root before. He loved steel, and there was always steel near him in his dreams, liquid steel, steel in bars, and blocks and beams and formless plastic masses, waiting for him, as paint and canvas to his hand. Steel inexhaustible, to be made lovely and austere in his imaginative fire …

At present he was an insurance clerk at forty dollars a week with his dream slipping fast behind him. The dark[5] little girl who had made this mess, this terrible and intolerable mess, was waiting to be sent for in a town in Tennessee.

In fifteen minutes the woman from whom he sublet his room knocked and asked him with maddening kindness if, since he was home, he would have some lunch. He shook his head, but the interruption aroused him, and getting up from the bed he wrote a telegram[6].

'Letter depressed me have you lost your nerve you are foolish and just upset to think of breaking off why not marry me immediately sure we can make it all right –'

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He hesitated for a wild minute, and then added in a hand that could scarcely be recognized as his own: ‘In any case I will arrive tomorrow at six o’clock.’

When he finished he ran out of the apartment and down to the telegraph office near the subway stop. He possessed in this world not quite one hundred dollars, but the letter showed that she was ‘nervous’ and this left him no choice.

[1]*subway*: underground railway
[2]*car-card*: on-board advertising poster
[3]*bureau*: writing desk
[4]*Massachusetts Institute of Technology*: a prestigious US university
[5]*dark*: dark-haired
[6]*telegram*: short text sent by cable

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