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**SECONDARY THREE  
MID-YEAR EXAMINATION  
TUESDAY 6 MAY 2014**

**LITERATURE IN ENGLISH (CORE)  
LITERATURE IN ENGLISH (ELECTIVE)**

**2065/1  
2204/4**

Additional Materials: 6 sheets of writing paper

**1 hour 40 minutes**

**READ THESE INSTRUCTIONS FIRST**

Write your name, class and register number on all the work you hand in.  
Write in dark blue or black pen on both sides of the Answer Paper.  
Do not use paperclips, highlighters, glue or correction fluid.

Answer **any question** from **Section A** and **one question** from **Section B**.  
Begin your answer to each question on a new and separate sheet of paper.  
You are advised to spend no longer than 45 minutes on each question.  
You are reminded of the need for good English and clear presentation in your answers.

At the end of the examination, fasten all your work securely together.  
All questions in this paper carry equal marks.

**ATTACH THIS QUESTION PAPER TO YOUR ANSWER SCRIPT.**

<b>Name</b>		<b>Class</b>	
		<b>Register No:</b>	

<b>Sections</b>	<b>Marks</b>
<b>Circle the questions that you have attempted.</b>	
<b>Section A Question:1a/1b/1c</b>	
<b>Section B Question 2 or 3</b>	
<b>Total:</b>	

<b>Assessment noted by:</b>
<b>Name of Parent/Guardian</b>
<b>Signature of Parent/Guardian</b>
<b>Date</b>

This paper consists of **5** printed pages including this cover page.

## Section A

Answer ONE question from this section.

### WILLIAM GOLDING: *Lord of the Flies*

- 1 **Either** (a) “The boys have little chances of survival on the island.” How far do you agree with this view? Support your answer with close reference to details from Chapter 1 to 4.
- Or** (b) If you were one of the littluns, which of the older boys would you be most fearful of AND who would you most like to be friends with? Support your answer with close reference to details from Chapter 1 to 4.
- Or** (c) Read this passage carefully, and then answer the questions that follow it.

“There was a ship—”

One of the smaller hunters began to wail. The dismal truth was filtering through to everybody. Jack went very red as he hacked and pulled at the pig.

“The job was too much. We needed everyone.”

5

Ralph turned.

“You could have had everyone when the shelters were finished. But you had to hunt—”

“We needed meat.”

Jack stood up as he said this, the bloodied knife in his hand. The two boys faced each other. There was the brilliant world of hunting, tactics, fierce exhilaration, skill; and there was the world of longing and baffled commonsense. Jack transferred the knife to his left hand and smudged blood over his forehead as he pushed down the plastered hair.

10

Piggy began again.

15

“You didn’t ought to have let that fire out. You said you’d keep the smoke going—”

This from Piggy, and the wails of agreement from some of the hunters, drove Jack to violence. The bolting look came into his blue eyes. He took a step, and able at last to hit someone, stuck his fist into Piggy’s stomach. Piggy sat down with a grunt. Jack stood over him. His voice was vicious with humiliation.

20

“You would, would you? Fatty!”

Ralph made a step forward and Jack smacked Piggy’s head. Piggy’s glasses flew off and tinkled on the rocks. Piggy cried out in terror:

25

“My specs!”

He went crouching and feeling over the rocks but Simon, who got there first, found them for him. Passions beat about Simon on the mountain-top with awful wings.

“One side’s broken.”

30

Piggy grabbed and put on the glasses. He looked malevolently at

Jack. "I got to have them specs. Now I only got one eye. Jus' you wait--"  
Jack made a move toward Piggy who scrambled away till a great rock lay between them. He thrust his head over the top and glared at Jack through his one flashing glass. 35  
"Now I only got one eye. Just you wait—"  
Jack mimicked the whine and scramble.  
"Jus' you wait—yah!"  
Piggy and the parody were so funny that the hunters began to laugh. Jack felt encouraged. He went on scrambling and the laughter rose to a gale of hysteria. Unwillingly Ralph felt his lips twitch; he was angry with himself for giving way. 40  
He muttered.  
"That was a dirty trick."  
Jack broke out of his gyration and stood facing Ralph. His words came in a shout. 45  
"All right, all right!"  
He looked at Piggy, at the hunters, at Ralph.  
"I'm sorry. About the fire, I mean. There. I—"  
He drew himself up. 50  
"—I apologize."  
The buzz from the hunters was one of admiration at this handsome behavior. Clearly they were of the opinion that Jack had done the decent thing, had put himself in the right by his generous apology and Ralph, obscurely, in the wrong. They waited for an appropriately decent answer. Yet Ralph's throat refused to pass one. He resented, as an addition to Jack's misbehavior, this verbal trick. The fire was dead, the ship was gone. Could they not see? Anger instead of decency passed his throat. 55  
"That was a dirty trick." 60  
They were silent on the mountain-top while the opaque look appeared in Jack's eyes and passed away.  
Ralph's final word was an ingracious mutter.  
"All right. Light the fire."

- (i) How does the writer develop the tension between Ralph and Jack in **this passage**? Support your answer with close reference to the passage.
- (ii) What makes Piggy a character whom readers sympathise with? Refer to **other relevant incidents** in the novel to support your answer. [Do not use the passage given in answering the question.]

## Section B

Answer **either** Question 2 **or** Question 3.

- 2 Read this poem carefully, and then answer the questions that follow it.

*The Man Who Finds That His Son Has Become a Thief*

Coming into the store at first angry  
At the accusation, believing in  
The word of his boy who has told him:  
I didn't steal anything, honest.

Then becoming calmer, seeing that anger 5  
Will not help in the business, listening painfully  
As the other's evidence unfolds, so painfully slow.

Then seeing gradually that evidence  
Almost as if tighten slowly around the neck  
Of his son, at first vaguely circumstantial, then gathering damage, 10  
Until there is present the unmistakable odor of guilt  
Which seeps now into the mind and lays its poison.

Suddenly feeling sick and alone and afraid,  
As if an unseen hand had slapped him in the face  
For no reason whatsoever: wanting to get out 15  
Into the street, the night, the darkness, anywhere to hide  
The pain that must show in the face to these strangers,  
The fear.

It must be like this. 20  
It could hardly be otherwise.

*(by Raymond Souster)*

- (i) What is your impression of the father?
- (ii) How does the poet effectively portray the impact of the son's crime on the father?

Remember to refer closely to the poem.

3 Read this poem carefully, and then answer the questions that follow it.

*Countdown*

After midnight, the tired astronaut  
surveys her chrome-top kitchen top  
and counts the hours down  
till the alarm-clock rings. 5  
Thinks of yesterday's shopping trip  
the kids outgrowing their shoes again  
and such unfinished things.  
Daytime, and her mother-ship  
shuttles its small satellites 10  
from playschool to violin class,  
the swimming pool, art lessons, ballet,  
and feeds them at irregular intervals  
in a twenty-four-hour tour of duty.

The washing machine groans. Pipes swish,  
the dryer roars. She wishes 15  
she were in a vacuum,  
not vacuuming or doing dishes.

She longs  
to be in the dark, and young,  
with star-fields leaping light-years 20  
beyond time's gravity. And peers  
out of the window at the night,  
and counts down hours till the end,  
craning her neck, till all the clocks break  
free. 25

(by Grace Chua)

- (i) What are your impressions of the speaker?
- (ii) How does the poet effectively convey the challenges of motherhood?

Remember to refer closely to the poem.

**END OF PAPER**

## Answer Scheme for 2014 Sec 3 Lit MYE Paper 1

### 2014 Sec 3 Elective Lit Suggested Answer Scheme for LOTF

Qn

- (a) “The boys have little chances of survival on the island.” How far do you agree with this view? Support your answer with close reference to details from Chapter 1 to 4.

**Answer must explicitly state claim on the boys’ chances of survival on the island.**

**Arguments must make consistent reference to the thesis statement. Explanations must make links to the evidence to argue why the children had good or grim chances of survival.**

Factors/Situations in favour of survival	Factors/Situations that weaken chances of survival
<p>1) Sense of order / organisation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• use of conch to signal to gather so that meeting – to give everyone a chance to speak</li> <li>• election of chief (Ralph) to lead and prioritise their actions for survival</li> <li>• organised the expedition and successfully surveyed the island for its resources and have confirmed that they were alone on the island</li> </ul> <p>2) Leadership</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ralph – ‘natural leader’ – responsible in prioritising building of huts</li> <li>• Piggy’s intelligence and rationality prompted Ralph to think about rescue <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- “got to find others”</li> <li>- use conch to call for meeting</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Jack – lead the hunters and found new ways to hunt pigs (pg 68); displayed some degree of repulsion towards blood and killing in Chapter 4.</li> <li>• Simon – kind/ compassionate in looking after the littluns. He gave them the best fruit till all were fed and satisfied. (pg 71)</li> </ul>	<p>Sense of order – only temporary</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Children were interested in fun and games – without adults; The boys do not do work for a long time. They keep thinking of playing and relaxing. (pg64)</li> <li>• Piggy continued to have no freedom of speech, everything about the holder of the conch has the say was not applied. (Pg.54-55)</li> <li>• The children did not listen to Ralph who was the leader; he was trying to speak at the time but they went off. (Pg.49). They abandoned the building of huts and went swimming.</li> <li>• Piggy had difficulty taking names of all children</li> </ul> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• They lost a member but no one realized except for Piggy. trying to explain about the lost member’s (boy with the mulberry birthmark) disappearance</li> <li>• Jack’s leadership was based on use of authority, aggression and threats. Character – in doubt</li> <li>• Division of camps: Ralph’s group vs Jack’s group of hunters. Jack was obsessed with hunting, he couldn’t agree with Ralph and neglected the fire on the mountain and let the fire die – missed the ship.</li> <li>• Simon was perceived as a ‘batty’ / strange boy who preferred his own solitude in the forest.</li> </ul>

<p>3) Relationships / teamwork Signs of friendship and collaboration – Jack and Ralph at the beginning. Agree that Jack would lead the hunters. All were involved in building fire to signal passing ship. (pg 50-52)</p> <p>Setting</p> <p>4) Island has fruit and fresh water for survival</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bullying prevailed in various degree and at all levels:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Piggy was an easy target – discrimination against Piggy by all boys, even Ralph thought Piggy was a bore. Jack became increasingly aggressive towards Piggy, beginning with verbal threats, he subsequently punched Piggy in the stomach and refused to give him meat.</li> <li>○ Maurice, Roger, Henry and Johnny – all exhibited signs of the desire to control and hurt those weaker or younger than themselves.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Ralph and Jack had different priorities - Jack was too obsessed with getting meat. They are not working together.(pg65,67,68)</li> <li>• They boys are afraid of “the beast” on the island – they had fear in their heart. (pg66).</li> <li>• Difficulty adjusting to the life on the island. Littluns cried and suffered from diarrhoea – sick from eating too much fruit</li> </ul>
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(b) If you were one of the littluns, which of the older boys would you be most fearful of AND who would you most like to be friends with? Support your answer with close reference to details from Chapter 1 to 4.

Answer should adopt the perspective of one of the littluns. Both parts of the answer : character to be feared (Jack or Roger) AND character to be friends with (Ralph, Piggy or Simon).

**Fear of Jack:** Being young, littluns may not understand the need for protection and shelter, but would be more interested in fun and games, and eating meat; hence, they may choose Jack (as it was later seen that they eventually left Ralph to join Jack’s camp).

CHARACTERS	EVIDENCE
<p><u>JACK</u> <u>Qualities that make him a character to be feared</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Domineering /Aggressive disposition -:</li> </ul>	

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- treatment of the choir boys – authoritative and rigid</li> <li>- attitude towards Piggy – more abusive and quick to use physical violence</li> </ul> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Obsessed with hunting             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Characteristics of a hunter –</li> <li>- painted faces and use of sharpened spears</li> <li>- boastful of his success in killing a pig</li> <li>- enjoyed the thrill of the hunt and, possibly, the excitement of being hunted?</li> <li>- neglected the fire on the mountain</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p><b><u>Possible qualities that make him a friend:</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Leader of the Choir – one of the older boys who has authority and ability to give orders and instructions –This would ensure some sense of order and discipline for the tasks to carried out.</li> <li>• Lead in fun of hunting. Able to provide meat – successful in his hunt of pig</li> <li>• Displayed moments of ‘gentlemanly’ behaviour – in his apology to Ralph for having neglected the fire.</li> </ul>	
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**To be friends with Ralph/Piggy/ Simon :** Littluns are most vulnerable, incapable of managing themselves, falling sick frequently, cried often, filled with fears (of the ‘beastie’) and missing home

<p><b>CHARACTERS</b></p> <p><b><u>RALPH</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ‘natural leader’ - athletic, charismatic Elected the leader of the boys</li> <li>• vested with the authority of the conch</li> <li>• responsible/productive leadership in building huts and thinking about rescue – fire on the mountain</li> <li>• unafraid to challenge Jack – criticised Jack for his ‘dirty trick’ in offering an apology for neglecting the fire on the mountain.</li> </ul>	
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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>concerned about the welfare of the boys, especially the littluns – dispel their fear of the ‘beast’</li> <li>mostly kind and polite towards the boys (although there were moments when he took advantage of Piggy)</li> </ul>	
<p><b>PIGGY</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Brainy / Intelligent but only effective through Ralph – advised Ralph on key areas regarding survival and rescue. His intellectual approach to life is modeled on the attitudes and rules of the authoritative adult world, he thinks everyone should share his values and attitudes as a matter of course.</li> <li></li> </ul> <p><b>Possibility of not choosing Piggy as a friend</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>he has no clout or personality to manage the boys for survival as he relies too heavily on the power of social convention. He believes that holding the conch gives him the right to be heard. He believes that upholding social conventions get results.</li> <li>Easy target for bullies. Object for laughter.</li> </ul>	<p>Piggy is so intent on preserving some remnant of civilization on the island that he assumes improbably enough that <u>Jack's</u> raiders have attacked Ralph's group so that they can get the conch when of course they have come for fire.</p> <p>Speaking of the deaths the littlun with the birthmark, he asks "What's grownups goin' to think?" as if he is not so much mourning the boys' deaths as he is mourning the loss of values, ethics, discipline, and decorum that caused those deaths.</p>

**Passage Based Question:**

(i) How does the writer develop the tension between Ralph and Jack in this passage? Support your answer with close reference to the passage.

Points of tension	Evidence and explanation
<p>Tension between Jack &amp; Ralph – the result of different priorities / interests on what they want to do on the island:</p>	<p><i>“There was the brilliant world of hunting, tactics, fierce exhilaration, skill; and there was the world of longing and baffled commonsense”</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>World of hunting vs world of civilization</i></li> <li><i>Ralph wanted the shelters to be completed but Jack wanted everyone to help in the hunt.</i></li> </ul>
<p>There was face-off – direct confrontation</p>	<p><i>the bloodied knife in his hand. The two boys</i></p>

<p>between Jack and Ralph.</p> <p>Ralph's <b>direct / blunt/ angry accusation</b> of Jack's neglect and irresponsible act of letting the fire on the mountain die out</p>	<p><i>faced each other</i></p> <p><i>"There was a ship"</i> – missed being rescued as a result of Jack's negligence.</p> <p>Caused Jack to be embarrassed – as he went <i>"very red"</i> and showed his displeasure in <i>"hacking" and "pulling"</i> at the pig which they had hunted.</p>
<p>Jack's <b>defensive/ aggressive stance</b> and excuses that he need everyone to help hunt the meat that they need.</p>	<p>Appearance – fierce and aggressive / threatening - " Brandished a bloodied knife; smudge of blood on his forehead. <i>"bolting look"</i></p>
<p>Tension was heightened by Piggy's sudden outburst at Jack.</p> <p>Jack's reactions were violent and potentially dangerous in escalating the tension between Ralph and Jack.</p> <p>Tension was momentarily released when Jack mimicked Piggy causing hunters to laugh.</p>	<p><i>"This from Piggy, and the wails of agreement from some of the hunters, drove Jack to violence"</i></p> <p>Jack struck Piggy in the stomach and broke his glasses.</p> <p><i>"Jack stood over him. His voice was vicious with humiliation."</i></p>
<p>Undercurrents of tension remained as Ralph was resentful toward for his 'dirty trick' in deflecting the blame and turn attention to Piggy as source of humour, and the subsequent offer of apology for causing the fire to die out.</p>	<p><i>Ralph "resented, as an addition to Jack's misbehavior, this verbal trick."</i></p> <p><i>"Anger instead of decency passed his throat."</i></p> <p><i>And he repeated "That was a dirty trick"</i></p> <p><i>"Ralph's final word was an ungracious mutter."</i></p> <p>The <i>"silence on the mountain top"</i> was significant with Jack's "opaque look: in his eyes – as if he harboured some hidden / furtive thoughts towards Ralph.</p>

**(ii) What makes Piggy a character whom readers sympathise with? Refer to **other relevant incidents** in the novel to support your answer. [Do not use the passage given in answering the question.]**

Incidents which reveal Piggy's vulnerability and as an easy target for bullies	Evidence
<p>Piggy's first meeting with Ralph</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- His eagerness to make friends with Ralph who was obviously unenthusiastic/ distinterested in Piggy whom Ralph called 'fatty'.</li> <li>- Piggy was discriminated – because of his</li> </ul>	<p>Pg ____</p> <p>Pg 29</p> <p>Answers should attempt to highlight Piggy's vulnerability and</p>

<p>appearance (being fat, wore glasses, spoke with an cockney accent, depended on his adults'/his aunt's advice)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Betrayed by Ralph who revealed his name ('Piggy' ) despite his plea to Ralph to keep it a secret.</li> </ul>	<p>stress the discomfort and pain he suffered to show impact of the discrimination.</p>
<p>Exclusion &amp; discrimination of Piggy when his offer to join in the exploration of the island was rejected by Ralph and verbally abused by Jack.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Ralph : "You are no good for a job like this"</li> <li>- Jack: "We don't want you"</li> </ul> <p>His flashes of indignation and distress (Piggy was hurt and crushed) were visible but to no avail as he was unable to stand up to the easy dismissal as "jack and the others paid no attention".</p>	<p>Pg</p> <p>Answers should attempt to highlight the boys' insensitivity to Piggy's feelings and Jack's blatant / direct verbal attack on Piggy.</p>
<p>Piggy's attempts to reason and provide solutions were often ignored, dismissed or ridiculed.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- His concern that the boys were acting like a 'bunch of kids' and their impulse act of building the fire resulted in the huge bonfire on the mountain as the death of the both of the 'mulberry birthmark'.</li> <li>- Despite having the conch and the right to speak, his attempt to express himself was repeatedly threatened by Ralph's and Jack's anger/savage reaction to the awe at the power of the fire that they started but unable to control.</li> <li>- Ralph accused Piggy of having neglected the taking of names, insensitive to Piggy's difficulty of having to deal with the littluns who were running 'round like insects'.</li> </ul>	<p>Pg_____</p> <p>Answers should highlight the slights and injustice done to Piggy despite his good sense and intentions.</p>

## Section B

**Answer Question 2 or Question 3 from this section.**

- 2** Read this poem carefully, and then answer the questions that follow it.

*The Man Who Finds That His Son Has Become a Thief*

Coming into the store at first angry  
At the accusation, believing in  
The word of his boy who has told him:  
I didn't steal anything, honest.

Then becoming calmer, seeing that anger 5  
Will not help in the business, listening painfully  
As the other's evidence unfolds, so painfully slow.

Then seeing gradually that evidence  
Almost as if tighten slowly around the neck  
Of his son, at first vaguely circumstantial, then gathering damage, 10  
Until there is present the unmistakable odor of guilt  
Which seeps now into the mind and lays its poison.

Suddenly feeling sick and alone and afraid,  
As if an unseen hand had slapped him in the face  
For no reason whatsoever: wanting to get out 15  
Into the street, the night, the darkness, anywhere to hide  
The pain that must show in the face to these strangers,  
The fear.

It must be like this. 20  
It could hardly be otherwise.

*(by Raymond Souster)*

- (i) What is your impression of the father?
- (ii) How does the poet effectively portray the impact of the son's crime on the father?

**These are some possible answers. Other responses given by students may be accepted as well, as long as they are substantiated by the text.**

(i) What is your impression of the father?

Assertion	Evidence & Explanation
Protective father	This is seen in the way he is all ready to defend his son when he believes that his son has been wrongfully accused. He goes to the store, ready to do justice to what he believes to be an unfair accusation, as seen in the first line, "coming into the store at first angry at the accusation". The way that he is angered by what he believes to be a wrongful accusation also shows that he is someone who wants to protect the honour of his son's name and is stirred up when he perceives his son's name has been sullied unfairly.
Trusting father	This is seen in the way he readily believes what he son has told him, "believing in /the word of his boy who has told him:/ I didn't steal anything, honest". There is no mention of any questions asked which leads the reader to infer that the father most probably took him at his word and trusted that his son had told him the truth.
Rational	Despite the way he has been emotionally stirred by what he perceives to be a false accusation against his son, he is still rational/logical enough to recognize that "anger will not help in the business" and makes a deliberate effort to calm himself down, in engaging with the people at the store.
Reasonable	Even though it is his son who has been accused of stealing, he is still reasonable enough to hear the viewpoints of others, instead of sticking to his view that his son has been falsely accused. This is seen in the way that he listens carefully, as the evidence of his son's crime is presented before him. He also faces up the fact that his son is culpable, as the evidence is presented before him, and does not attempt to deny his son's guilt, as seen through his recognition of the presence of "the unmistakable odor of guilt".
Vulnerable	This is seen in the way he responds when he realises that his son is actually guilty. He is described as "suddenly feeling sick and alone and afraid". This shows that he is vulnerable because it shows how emotionally affected he is when he has to face the unexpected truth that his son is a thief. He is shown to be emotionally susceptible and incapable of taking this incident in his stride.
Private person	This is seen in the way that he wants to escape from the strangers, upon realising that his son is a thief, as seen in the line, "wanting to get out into the street, the night, the darkness, anywhere to hide the pain that must show in the face to these strangers, the fear", so as to prevent them from seeing his pain and fear. This shows his discomfort in revealing his feelings to others and his need to be alone in times like these.

(ii) How does the poet effectively portray the impact of the son's crime on the father?

Assertion	Evidence & Explanation
The pain that the son's	In the second stanza, the father is described as "listening

<p>crime inflicts on the father is seen through the use of puns and repetition.</p>	<p>painfully”, as the people at the store share with him the evidence of his son’s crime. “Painfully” here takes on two shades of meaning, one, a reference to how the father listened carefully and another, also to the grief he must feel, as he hears out the evidence of his son’s crime. This is further reinforced through the repetition of the word “painfully” in the next line, which emphasises how agonizing it is for the father to hear of his son’s crime, thus making it seem like the process of listening to them is “painfully slow”.</p>
<p>The agony that the father goes through as he hears of his son’s crime is portrayed through the elongation of time and the progressive nature of the revelation as the evidence is presented to him.</p>	<p>As mentioned above, the father experiences agony as the moments in which the evidence of his son’s crime is presented to him seem to be passing by excruciatingly slowly. This “painfully slow” process is highlighted through the use of the words/phrases, “ gradually”, and “slowly”. This process is agonizing for the father as the father is forced to face “the unmistakable odor of guilt which seeps...into the mind and lays its poison”, as the evidence of his son’s guilt becomes stronger, from “vaguely circumstantial” to “gathering damage”.</p>
<p>The realisation of his son’s crime contaminates the father’s previous belief of his son and this is portrayed effectively through the use of metaphors</p> <p>Could also suggest a certain feeling of repulsion on the father’s part towards hearing such news</p>	<p>This is seen in the way guilt is likened to an odour, which not only reflects the unsavoury nature of the crime, as seen through the description of this guilt as an unpleasant smell, but it also suggests the rapid way in which the recognition of his son’s guilt spreads quickly, the same way that a pungent smell diffuses quickly through the air. This odor of guilt is also described as laying its poison, which suggests the way that it has tainted the father’s initial image of his son. Both odour and poison are repulsive and even toxic (in the case of poison) to the human and this might suggest the father’s repulsion towards the facts that confront him now that suggest that his son is a criminal.</p>
<p>The impact of the son’s crime on the father is seen through the description of a slew of negative emotions that rush at him.</p>	<p>This is seen in the way the father is described as feeling “sick, alone and afraid”. For a grown man to experience such negative emotions of loneliness and fear to the point that it affects him physically i.e. in the way he feels sick makes it evident that his son’s crime was a big blow to him</p>
<p>The sting that the father feels when he realises his son is guilty is portrayed through the use of similes.</p>	<p>This is seen in the way the father’s emotions are likened to “an unseen hand (which) had slapped him in the face”. Through this simile, the reader is able to relate to the father’s pain as one can imagine the stinging sensation of a tight slap and the shock of having received such a slap because the hand had not been seen and thus the slap had not been anticipated. Through this simile, the poet drives home the point of the pain that the father feels upon recognising his son’s guilt.</p>
<p>The impact of his son’s crime is effectively portrayed through the way he responds by expressing his desire to</p>	<p>The father expresses the urgent need to escape to anywhere which would be a cover for him, whether it be the night or darkness, so as not to reveal the pain and fear in him. This shows us how much this incident must have affected him, such that he is unable to control his emotions</p>

escape.	from surfacing.
The fear that the father feels because of his son's crime is effectively portrayed through the use of structure	The way fear is in a standalone line in Stanza 4, "the fear" makes it stand out and highlights to the reader how his son's crime has created an intense amount of fear in him.



3 Read this poem carefully, and then answer the questions that follow it.

*Countdown*

After midnight, the tired astronaut  
surveys her chrome-top kitchen top  
and counts the hours down  
till the alarm-clock rings. 5  
Thinks of yesterday's shopping trip  
the kids outgrowing their shoes again  
and such unfinished things.  
Daytime, and her mother-ship  
shuttles its small satellites 10  
from playschool to violin class,  
the swimming pool, art lessons, ballet,  
and feeds them at irregular intervals  
in a twenty-four-hour tour of duty.  
  
The washing machine groans. Pipes swish,  
the dryer roars. She wishes 15  
she were in a vacuum,  
not vacuuming or doing dishes.  
  
She longs  
to be in the dark, and young,  
with star-fields leaping light-years 20  
beyond time's gravity. And peers  
out of the window at the night,  
and counts down hours till the end,  
craning her neck, till all the clocks break  
free.

(by Grace Chua)

- (i) What are your impressions of the speaker?
- (ii) How does the poet effectively convey the challenges of motherhood?

**These are some possible answers. Other responses given by students may be accepted as well, as long as they are substantiated by the text.**

(i) What are your impressions of the speaker?

Point	Evidence & Elaboration
She worries excessively.	This is seen in the way she “thinks of yesterday’s shopping trip/the kids outgrowing their shoes again/and such unfinished things”. There is actually no necessity for her to think about things that would inevitably happen e.g. kids growing out of their shoes and instead tackle them as they come, instead of spending her time projecting the potential unfinished tasks that would come her way.
She is responsible.	She obviously recognises and takes on her role of mother, as seen in the way the speaker refers to it as “a twenty-four-hour tour of duty” and sends her kids to the various classes that they need to go for.
She is free-spirited/ a dreamer.	This is seen in the way she “longs to be in the dark, and young, with star-fields leaping light-years beyond time’s gravity”. She allows her imagination to run wild, as she thinks about her desire to be young again and cross unimaginable boundaries, pointing to her dreamy and free-spirited nature.
She is an escapist.	This is seen in the way she “wishes she were in a vacuum, not vacuuming or doing dishes”. She desires to run away from her normal scope of responsibilities and duties.

(ii) How does the poet effectively convey the challenges of motherhood?

Point	Evidence & Elaboration
Metaphor of the astronaut conveys the alienation of mother from other people	The metaphor of the astronaut is perhaps used to describe the mother to bring out how motherhood could lead to the mother feeling alienated from other people as she is wrapped up in seeing to her children’s needs. Just as an astronaut floats out in space, removed and away from the people on earth, the mother too feels removed from the people around her. This is even so for her kids who are in the first stanza described as “small satellites”, thus objectifying them and diluting the human connection between mother and child.
Onomatopoeia conveys the way that a mother’s life is filled with domestic chores.	The use of onomatopoeia “groans”, “swish” and “roars” in the second stanza fills up much of the second stanza and this appeals to the reader’s sense of hearing as he can imagine the noise of these machines/objects filling the room. This is significant as these objects are closely associated with maternal domestic duty. This is a means by which the poet conveys the challenges of motherhood because the sounds that fill the room are representative of the maternal domestic duties that crowd out the mother’s life.
The constant reference to	The title of the poem, ‘Countdown’ already alludes to how precious time is to the mother, who can only claim those

time conveys the way the mother has very little time of her own as much of it is spent meeting her children's needs	wee hours at night for her own. We only see her having the luxury to think through things after midnight and this is portrayed in the way she "counts the hours down till the alarm-clock rings" and "counts down hours till the end". Her desire for time to stop catching up with her is also seen in the way the poem ends, where she expresses her desire for the clocks to break free. This parallels her desire to break free as well, from the constraints of time.
Pun- "vacuum", "vacuuming" to convey how tough motherhood is that she wants to run away from it	The poet uses the double meaning of the word "vacuum" – a space of nothingness vs the act of vacuuming, cleaning the house, to bring out how the speaker longs to be able to escape from the daily toil of doing household chores.
Long sentences to convey how many things her mother has to do for her children	The description of the mother's daytime schedule "daytime, and her mother ship shuttles its small satellites from playschool to violin class, the swimming pool, art lessons, ballet, and feeds them at irregular intervals in a twenty four-hour-tour of duty" leaves the reader rather breathless, enabling the reader to understand the mother's exhaustion from the relentless duties.
Structure conveys how a disproportionate amount of time is spent carrying out her maternal duties as opposed to the time that she spends on herself	Much of the poem is spent dwelling on the things that the mother has to do for her children, as well as the household chores. It is only in the third stanza that the speaker allows herself to imagine herself in a life outside her role as a mother, young and with "star-fields leaping light-years beyond time's gravity".

**END OF PAPER**