



Marsiling Secondary School

GCE O-Level Preliminary Examination 2020

Subject: **English Literature (2274/02)**
[Answer Booklet] Level: **4** Course: **EXP**

Date: **26 August 2020** Duration: **1 hr 40mins**

Name: _____ Index No: _____ Class: **4E**

Question 1

(a) How does Bradbury strongly criticise censorship in the novel?

Students should discuss the types of censorship in the novel:

- **Banning and burning of books**
Censoring literature is the dystopian state's way of suppressing intellectual thought and discourse, which can present challenges to the regime. The totalitarian government of Bradbury's dystopian society uses the fireman institution to censor literature. The firemen search for books and arrest any individuals possessing them. The authorities also burn the confiscated books and often destroy the homes of criminals. The threat of having one's home and library burnt mirrors the use of violent police tactics used in totalitarian states.
- **Altered and restricted information**
Another aspect of Bradbury's dystopian society that mimics a totalitarian state concerns the government's use of propaganda. Along with the censorship of literature, the government uses the media to distract citizens from the dire conditions of the state. While the nation is at war and civilians live meaningless lives, the government uses mass media to entertain the population and keep them misinformed. Intellectual pursuits are discouraged throughout the school system, and material consumption is propagated throughout society. Citizens remain docile and passively accept the conditions of the state through constant entertainment and psychologically debilitating drugs. The government's authority and ability to turn every television station towards the police chase indicates that the state controls the media, just like in a totalitarian regime.
History is also distorted and altered to ensure that the government remains in power. For example, a historical referenced by Beatty in the novel shows that firemen have always burned books and nothing else.

Students should then explore how censorship is not beneficial to the society in F451.

- The censorship of literature results in a violent and superficial society which lacks the ability to analyse its dangerous actions (e.g. Mildred's attempted suicide), eventually leading to its destruction at the end of the novel.

(b) Discuss the role of nature in the novel.

Possible discussion points:

- **Nature as innocence and life (e.g. Clarisse vs Mildred)**
Clarisse's affinity with nature sparks Montag's awakening and change, versus Mildred, whose obsession with technology disconnect her from reality and the world around her.
- **Nature as an opposing force to the destructiveness of technology (e.g. Mechanical Hound vs the Deer, One-eyed snake blood machine)**
This animal imagery expresses the importance of nature in life. The lack of nature, or the manipulation of nature (i.e. the development of the Mechanical Hound), causes death and destruction. The only time animal imagery is positive in the entire novel is when Montag gets out of the river and encounters a deer. At first he thinks it is a Hound,

but then realizes his mistake. The deer is peaceful, beautiful, and an expression of nature. This image welcomes Montag into his new life.

- Nature as healing and a source of comfort (e.g. the river rebirth scene, Part 3 of the novel, after the bomb drops on the city)

Montag finds peace when he immerses himself in nature and the country. He finds peace in the woods with other men who value knowledge and reject the over-reliance on technology.

People from the city are drawn to nature after the bomb destroys the city, and nature (and the book people) provides them the much needed comfort.

(c) (i) How does Bradbury vividly portray fire in this passage?

Fire is portrayed as a mysterious, enchanting and powerful force:

- 'Beatty flicked his igniter nearby and the small orange flame drew his fascinated gaze.'
- "What is there about fire that's so lovely? No matter what age we are, what draws us to it?"
- "It's perpetual motion; the thing man wanted to invent but never did. Or almost perpetual motion. If you let it go on, it'd burn our lifetimes out. What is fire? It's a mystery"

Fire as a destructive, yet cleansing force, and a solution / a means to remain in control:

- "Its real beauty is that it destroys responsibility and consequences. A problem gets too burdensome, then into the furnace with it. Now, Montag, you're a burden. And fire will lift you off my shoulders, clean, quick, sure; nothing to rot later. Antibiotic, aesthetic, practical."
- 'He burnt the bedroom walls and the cosmetics chest because he wanted to change everything, the chairs, the tables, and in the dining-room the silverware and plastic dishes, everything that showed that he had lived here in this empty house with a strange woman who would forget him tomorrow, who had gone and quite forgotten him already'
- "The books leapt and danced like roasted birds, their wings ablaze with red and yellow feathers."

Students should discuss the use of diction and imagery in this passage.

(c) (ii) In what ways does Bradbury explore the symbol of fire elsewhere in the novel?

Students should discuss the Duality of Fire in F451.

- Part 1 of the novel:
Fire as Knowledge and Self-Awareness in the scene where the unnamed book lady decides to burn herself with her books and knowledge.
- Part 3 of the novel:
Fire as a source of warmth (campfire)
Fire as symbol of rebirth (phoenix / explosion from the bomb dropped on the city)

Students have the option to discuss multiple instances of fire elsewhere in the novel, or focus on one other instance.

Marks should be awarded on the depth of analysis, not the scope.

Question 2

- (i) What impressions do you form of the country mentioned in the poem?

The country mentioned appears to be something that is constantly changing or evolving much to the chagrin of the speaker. He mentions that 'I can give you ... lost childhood' which belies that idea that things are always changing in this country and no one remembers these things that are part of one's past. The persona describes this in a regretful tone which indicates his dissatisfaction with the evolving landscape of the country in the poem.

The country is also described in an almost clinical manner and as such comes across as being both cold and sterile. The persona mentions that looking out of the window only enables one to see the 'clouds' and 'top of other people's roofs' which indicates the lack of interaction that he has with other people. The sky is juxtaposed with the roofs to show how one is brought back to reality when they look around. He also talks about how even the rain 'dashes past' as if desiring to avoid the place the narrator is in.

The persona also mentions 'fluorescent lighting' which are harsh lights that need to be used in place of the sunlight that seems to be missing. The mention of 'tin; sodium benzonate, vacuum sealed meats' kindles the idea that there is nothing natural and everything has been sterilized. Furthermore, the mention that there is no fear that children will not have 'earth brushed away from their knees' also shows how the place is so sterile that children are unable to organically play around.

The persona plays with the idea that to witness true nature, one would have to leave the country. The juxtaposition between the clinical manner in which the country was described versus what the persona looks for when travelling tells the reader the desire to seek for these things which are lacking. 'When I travel... they come from' also talks about how the lack of land leads to the ambiguity of our food sources.

The persona suggests that the place he lives in has a high cost of living. "I can have whatever I want as long as it's something on offer" suggests that there is a high cost of living in the country and things are only purchasable when there is some kind of promotion going on.

The persona utilizes a distanced voice when describing this country insinuating this idea that no one truly belongs there. He mentions that he is a 'son of soil' which alludes to a lack of belonging to the country as he has no land to his name. The idea that he will be 'burned, not buried' also indicates that in death, the persona has no right to the land of his birthplace. This distanced voice alongside with the lack of land for one leads to this idea that no individual feels a sense of belonging to the country.

- (ii) How does the poet convey the speaker's dissatisfaction with the country in the poem?

The poet uses irony to describe how the people are safe from 'droughts and bandits' as while the people truly do not have to worry about such things, they do not have any land to live on. The poet looks at the 'bright side' of things, being optimistic or at least being forced to and states that without land, one has nothing to lose. This iterates the idea that people have nothing to their names. 'I try to cultivate wilt under florescent lighting' ironically portrays the lack on

natural thing such as light in the country. The use of the hyperbole coupled with the irony illustrates the frustration that the poet feels as he is unable to grow plants in the environment.

The title of the poem, 'What it means to be landless' is presented in a manner where the poet is going to explain to the readers the situation. The rest of the poem reads like an explanation of all the issues the persona faces due to being landless. The listing technique the poet employs illustrates the dissatisfaction he has as there are several negative repercussions of being 'landless'.

The poet juxtaposes the beauty of nature in other countries to the sterile nature of his own. The imagery used in lines 14 – 16 describe the beauty that can be found in other countries and the persona states that he actively 'look(s) for' such places when he travels. This can be contrasted with the image painted of his own country where he uses words that describe an unnatural landscape such as 'fluorescent lights' and 'air-conditioning'. This stark comparison of the country with another shows how dissatisfied he is with his own that he needs to go searching for more in other countries.

The critical tone of the poem illustrates the persona's dissatisfaction with the country. He provides several reasons as to why the state of being landless is something that is negative. He mentions that being landless leads to one leading a sterile life and contrasts in with how life is filled with warmth and life in the other countries. The tone between the rest of the poem, with the sterility making the country appear cold and not welcoming, the persona's desire to seek life in other places indicates the dissatisfaction with his own place.

Question 3

- (i) Discuss the portrayal of women in the poem.

The women in the poem have gone through life changing moments that have altered their lives. The women depicted in the poem have all experienced some kind of hardship. In the first stanza, the readers are told how these women have had their loved ones 'shot', 'bludgeoned' and 'killed' meeting extremely violent deaths or have themselves experienced struggles in their lives with them being 'raped' and undergoing 'domestic violence'. These actions detail the lives these women have led prior to finding their way to the construction field. The poets lists these as if to provide reasons as to why these women would join this challenging industry.

The women are portrayed as being independent and strong. However, despite all the challenges these women had undergone in the past, they seem to be strengthened by what had happened rather than allow their experiences to break them down. These women 'want(ed) the career' and the use of the diction 'want' indicates a strong desire to prove themselves especially in a career that wasn't normally suited to women as they were the 'pioneers'. These women also were 'human minesweepers' taking on a job that was dangerous which showed that they were rather fearless.

The women's lives are not valued and are merely viewed as workers rather than as individuals. These women while are the 'pioneers' of this industry, there is no value to their lives. Several became casualties to the danger of the industry, 'shock', 'maimed' and 'missing' due to the hob. The use of diction 'some' groups these women up making them nameless and insignificant despite how much they had sacrificed. They were also left on their own to learn the nuances of the job as they 'taught' themselves how to 'disarm booby traps' which indicates that no one was interested or there to teach them and they had to learn through trial and error, sacrificing their lives in the process. The dehumanization of these women, 'human minesweepers' shows how little these women's lives were worth as they were easily sacrificed to the minefield.

- (ii) How does the poet strikingly present her thoughts and feelings on working women in the poem?

The poet thought that the working women had to go through unnecessary challenges in their lives and felt indignant about the conditions they had to overcome. This was conveyed through the use of a back story on what the women underwent, sarcasm, shift in pronouns and the listing technique.

The poet makes the conditions of the women very vivid when she lists all the things these women had to go through prior to joining the construction industry. She details how women had been 'date-raped' gone through 'domestic violence' and had their loved ones taken away from them through extremely violent means. These women thus have turned to the construction industry to seek some 'order' thus eliciting sympathy from the readers. By providing this back story, the poet details the challenges the women undergo and allows the readers to understand why they join a challenging workforce where they seek for something that eludes them. The women work as 'human minesweepers' and this dehumanization paints an image of these women's lives as being insignificant to the hirers.

The poet uses a tone of sarcasm to express how these women have had to go through several challenges. The mention of how 'solidarity was a corporation privately held' indicates how there was no one to help these women in this journey and it was rather exclusive in the sharing of knowledge. The word 'talent' when describing the ability to discern explosive material also sarcastically describes how these women were left to the dangers without proper training.

The speaker uses the pronoun 'her' in the first stanza of the poem indicating these women were mere strangers undergoing challenges in their lives prior to this. The use of italics is used to emphasize on the individuality and anonymity of these women almost as if to acknowledge that while these are individual experiences, they are also universal in the sense that many women go through these. However, this changes from the second stanza onwards to 'we' which shows a shift in the persona's voice creating solidarity amongst these women and allowing the readers to feel united with these women and the experiences they underwent.

The listing technique employed by the poet is also an indicator at the frustration felt. The poet lists all the violent experiences these women undergo and this allows the readers to understand the pains felt by these women and the list appears to be exhaustive with the repeated use of the conjunction 'and' plus the semicolons and commas make it exhausting even for the reader as they read through the first stanza.

This listing technique is repeated in the third stanza as the poet details what happens to the women in the industry. This however is in contrast with the first stanza that is written in short sentences to mimic the way their lives have been cut short. This list details the horrific manner in which the women left the industry with the repetition of the word 'some' to show how these women die without name and recognition for the work they do.

Other possible devices: Dehumanisation, tone.