

Section A: Structured Questions

Answer **all** of the parts (**a-c**) of each question.

- 1 *National Language Class*, 1959 by Chua Mia Tee [Fig. 1]
Oil on canvas, 112 x 153 cm.

- (a) Describe the visual appearance of the work. [10]
- (b) Discuss the use of colour and brushwork in this work. [10]
- (c) How did the artist bring out his intentions with the use of artistic devices? [10]



Figure 1

National Language Class, 1959 by Chua Mia Tee, Oil on canvas, 112 x 153 cm

My Dress Hangs There, 1933 by Frida Kahlo [Fig. 3a]

Oil and collage on Masonite, 45 x 50 cm.

The Human condition, 1933 by Rene Magritte [Fig. 3b]

Oil on canvas, 80 x 100 cm.



Fig. 3a *My Dress Hangs There*, 1933 by Frida Kahlo, Oil and collage on masonite, 45 x 50 cm.

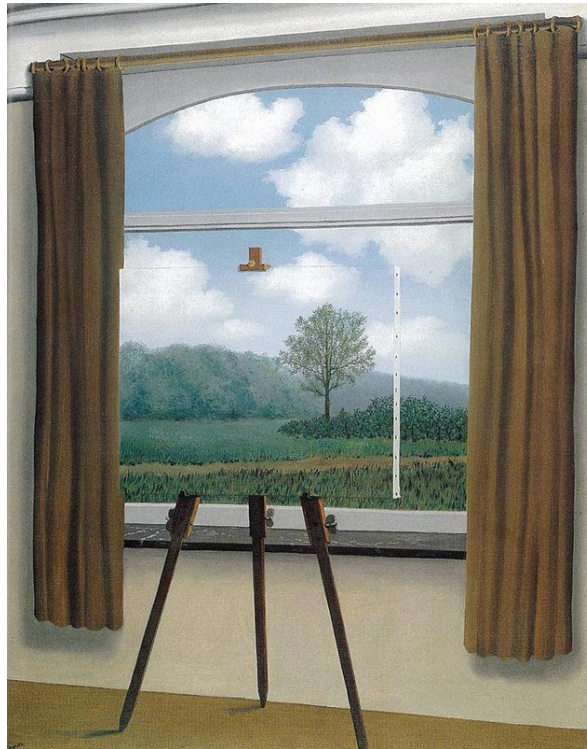


Fig. 3b *The Human Condition*, 1933 by Rene Magritte, Oil on canvas, 100 x 81 cm.

- (a) Describe the subject matter of both works. [10]
- (b) Compare the use of colour and medium in both works. [10]
- (c) Discuss which of these works you find more engaging as a Surreal work of art. [10]

Suggested answer scheme

1 *National Language Class*, 1959 by Chua Mia Tee

Oil on canvas, 112 x 153 cm.

<p>(a) Describe the visual appearance of the work.</p> <p><i>Begin the answer with an introduction of the work.</i></p> <p>National Language Class is an oil painting by Chua Mia Tee depicting a group of adults learning the National language – Malay. This painting is set in the 1950s where Singapore was gaining independence.</p> <p><i>Continue with other descriptions:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -this is an oil painting depicting a classroom setting, there are 8 students as well as their teacher -from the blackboard and the writing materials, we can infer that the human figures depicted are having a lesson -from the clothes they are wearing, we can tell that they are adults and are probably attending the lesson after work as all of them were not wearing uniform -we can also tell that the figures are from the 1950s which was when the painting was created -from the title, we can tell that the students are learning the National language which is Malay -from their skin tone, we can tell that the students were all Chinese and the teacher was on Malay ethnicity -the room looks rather cramped and the students are seated very closely together, the students are also sitting on stools instead of chairs which would take up more space in the small room -the figures are gathered around a circular table, the teacher standing on the left is balanced by the student standing on the right, creating a balanced composition -the 2 standing figures are near the one third point, creating a golden section -the man in light blue shirt, with his back facing the audience is closest to the audience and is depicted as the largest, suggesting a one point perspective -the lines on the wall also denote a space and the vanishing point -the classroom is seen at an angle, with dynamic diagonal lines cutting across the canvas -the human forms are all looking at different directions, with some students looking at the standing figure and others looking at their books, this brings the viewer's gaze across the work in a few directions 	<p>10m</p> <p>2m</p> <p>8m</p>
<p>(b) Discuss the use of colour and brushwork in this work.</p> <p><i>Begin the answer by commenting on the style the artist works with.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Chua Mia Tee works in a realistic painting style with rather naturalistic colours and a coherent composition, resulting in works that are realistic so that viewers can recognize and relate to them -influenced by the realist movement to depict everyday conditions of the working class <p><i>Continue with supporting points:</i></p> <p><u>Colour</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -a warm palette suggesting a nostalgic atmosphere - colour palette has lightened from his previous work, a lot of warm tones such as yellow ochre and browns are used to depict a cosy setting, the darker browns and greys also highlight the seriousness of the subject matter -the lighter tones tend to stand out from the warm tones, creating a focal point with the white table and the three figures wearing white – the teacher, the man in light blue with back facing the audience and the lady in white top and skirt 	<p>10m</p> <p>2m</p> <p>4m</p>

<p>-cast shadows are very dark, suggesting a night lesson where the light source is probably from a ceiling light</p> <p>-high contrast in tones, making the scene look rather dramatic despite it being a casual scene</p> <p><u>Brushwork</u></p> <p>- brushstrokes are livelier and quite visible but still retaining a realistic depiction with the portrayal of light and tone</p> <p>-larger brushstrokes in the background to add texture in an otherwise plain wall</p> <p>-linear brushstrokes on the shirts accentuate the folds of the shirts, especially for the man in the middle in the light blue shirt and the girl at the back in white skirt</p> <p>-these brushstrokes help to portray a single light source in the room and in turn show a cosy atmosphere</p> <p>-the faces are rendered more smoothly than the clothes to show difference in texture</p>	4m
<p>(c) How did the artist bring out his intentions with the use of artistic devices?</p> <p><i>Begin the answer with his intentions.</i></p> <p>Painted in an important period in Singapore History where self-governance was announced, Chua attempts to document the unity of the people. In preparation for self-government, the Ministry of Culture had promoted Bahasa Melayu as the national language of Singapore. Learning Malay became the thing to do. This was the inspiration for Chua to create National Language Class.</p> <p><i>Continue with supporting points:</i></p> <p>1. Painting shows what was happening in society at that time using an effective composition.</p> <p>- Composition is made up of various photographs to show what he hopes to portray and not merely by chance</p> <p>-This painting, depicting a group of Chinese students learning Malay enthusiastically in a village hut, is based on Chua's own experience.</p> <p>The portrait above the blackboard was intended to be of Yusof Ishak, appointed as Singapore's first president, adding on to the nationalist sentiment of the painting</p> <p>-words on chalkboard which means 'What is your name?' and 'Where do you live?' in Malay depict political and social awareness of that time, questioning our cultural and national identity in a multicultural society</p> <p>- they sit around a round table, a symbol of equality, which also signifies a public sphere, being reminiscent of the marble-top coffeeshop tables one find in the older coffee shops</p> <p>-artist had the belief that unity in the quest for national progress would eradicate the divisions of race, class and gender was at its peak</p> <p>2. Painting uses a realistic technique to show a slice of life effect.</p> <p>-he believes that works must reflect life, so he blends reality with art</p> <p>-the work looks like a moment captured in a photograph, the lighting, expressions of the figures are all naturalistic, creating a 'slice-of-life' effect</p> <p>-he was highly skilled in painting to make the elements in the painting look realistic with the high contrast in tones</p> <p>-this allows the viewers to relate to the work better and for later generations to see this as a historical painting</p> <p>3. Artist chose relevant subject matter to depict his intentions.</p>	<p>10m</p> <p>2m</p> <p>3m</p> <p>2m</p> <p>2</p> <p>3m</p>

-Chua's painting shows young women and men, the future of the nation, of different linguistic habits and different classes learning Malay from the teacher: the bespectacled middle-class man of pressed pants and shoes, the working-class man in white cotton shirt tucked out of khaki slacks in loafers, the woman in white Chinese school uniform dress, the smiling woman in capped-sleeve cheongsam

- the varied depiction of students show how all are welcomed to learn the language for unity

-The happy faces on the lady on the left and the cosy setting of the class help to portray its intention to encourage the people to study Malay which was then Singapore's national language.

(a) Describe the subject matter of both works.	10m
<p>Begin the answer with an introduction/overview of the works:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In Kahlo's work, her dress forms the visual focus of the work and there are other items and symbols of her New York experience around the dress • Magritte's work shows an easel placed in front of a window, both are almost placed in the centre of the work, though the painting is slightly more to the left. Magritte often painted dreams and images of the subconscious, ordinary objects in unusual contexts so in this painting he has chosen to depict a canvas, easel, and a common window setting. <p>Continue with other descriptions:</p> <p><u>Objects in the foreground</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In Kahlo's work, her Tehuana costume hangs from a ribbon strung across a landscape symbolizing America's false promise. Unlike most of her other works, she does not paint a portrait of herself and replaces herself with her dress, hanging empty and alone amidst the chaos in the background signifying the alienation she feels in New York. The image of a toilet bowl perched on top of a column and linked by a ribbon to a trophy sitting on top of another column supports the dress in the foreground. • As for Magritte's work, at first glance, the painting on the canvas seems to be depicting what the artist sees in the view outside of the window, there are parts of the window view that connect to the painting. The canvas depicts a serene landscape with a garden path and a tree growing amongst bushes. Within the painting itself, the landscape is depicted in horizontal stripes of greenery with a tree standing out at the one-third point. <p><u>Background</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In Kahlo's work, the illusion of volume and space or pictorial space is created with the play of scale and tones. The painting has a semi-aerial perspective, showing the landscape from a higher perspective. When viewing this painting, one is drawn to the top half of the painting depicting some of the symbols of New York City such as factories, skyscrapers, the port, Manhattan Island, and the Statue of Liberty, depicted in the style of a tourist postcard. <p>At the lower half, she portrayed a city of decay, depravity, alienation, squalor and destroyed human dignity, beneath the illusion of the city's touted industrial and economic prosperity. The brighter cool tones of the painting and landscape beyond the window are a good contrast to the dark warm tones of the room and curtains.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In Magritte's work, the painting within the painting shows a landscape that seems to blend seamlessly with the landscape seen in the window. The only hint of the image being a painting is the unpainted side of the canvas and the easel supporting the painting. The canvas depicts what the viewer might expect to see behind it but what is behind might also not be what is portrayed in the painting, giving the work a sense of mystery. The realistic portrayal juxtaposed with things defying logic (painting blending seamlessly with landscape) gives the work a surreal feel. <p>The maroon curtains frame the window, giving the work a sense of balance. The small triangular strip of floor and the tilted window and painting gives a sense of perspective and a sense of depth. As the composition is tightly cropped, the sense of depth created in the work is rather shallow but the much smaller scale of the landscape beyond the window gives a stronger sense of depth. The direction of the shadows shows two different light source – the legs of the easel show a shadow on the left, indicating light from the right while the curtains show shadows below, indicating light source from the front of the room.</p>	

(b) Compare the use of colour and medium in both works.	10m
<p>Begin the answer by describing the style of both artists:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Both artists used a <u>realistic painting style</u> in these paintings, but Kahlo used collage for parts of her work. Kahlo's colour palette is predominantly warm and dull, except for her Tehuana dress which stands out in the painting. From Magritte's commercial background, the work is rendered in a realistic way with all the objects being easily identifiable to objects from reality - flat academic style, muted palette, poster like quality, artist's hand almost invisible. <p>Continue with supporting points:</p> <p><u>Colour</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In Kahlo's artwork, the <u>Tehuana dress stands out with bright green, maroon</u>, and white tones, this is balanced by the white of the toilet bowl on the left. The maroon in the dress is echoed in several areas in the painting, in the portrait of Mae West, the fire, the brick factory building and the body parts in the rubbish bin. This helps to balance the composition and directs the eyes to the other parts of the painting. The rest of the painting is painted with warm brown tones, showing her impression of the place as one that is dirty and matches the photos used in the collage areas at the bottom. The light seems to be coming from the right as the tones are generally lighter from the right. • Magritte on the other hand <u>created strong contrast</u> in the use of colours in this painting, the foreground is mainly warm tones that are duller and more muted – the maroon curtains, white cornice, light brown wall, and dark brown floors. These suggest a plain and warm, cosy room. The mid-ground has bright blue and white tones that adds a cheery mood to the painting. The dark green tones used in the landscape is accompanied with a grey tone, making the landscape look foggy and suggests an early morning that clashes with the bright sky depicted. The clean white canvas sides and the dark brown easel suggests a break from the landscape depicted beyond the window which is rendered in similar colours as that on the canvas. <p><u>Medium</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Majority of Kahlo's work is rendered with <u>oil paint</u> while at the bottom of the work, <u>photographs of people queuing up for food coupons during the Great Depression</u> are mounted. Kahlo loved such retablos which are small metal or wooden panels where people illustrate the help they have received from the saints and the Holy Family and adopted the structures and techniques in some of her work. She also loved the bright colours and direct expression of the Mexican muralists and how they were not concerned with academic rules. • In Magritte's painting, a painting is hiding part of the view of a window and Magritte is able to show the seamless transition of outdoor and indoor with very precise brushstrokes that align both. <u>All the areas are smoothly blended</u>, the artist's hand is almost invisible with a poster like quality, especially for the flat areas such as the blue sky and the wall where the colour gradient is rendered skilfully. The clouds show some manipulation of the brush where a fluffy texture is attained by using a small brush to render the organic form. Similarly, the leaves on the trees and the grass patch are captured with a lot of details to depict them as close to reality as possible. • Both artists were considered to be Surrealists, working around the same period of time with <u>realistic painting styles and created surreal settings</u>. 	

(c) Discuss which of these works you find more engaging as a Surreal work of art.	10m
<p>Begin the answer with your stand:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Eg. I find Kahlo's work more engaging as the work portrays her intentions in a more effective way. Continue with a summary of the artist's intentions and how he/she effectively portrayed that through various artist/Surrealistic devices. <p>Continue with supporting points:</p> <p><u>Suggested points for Kahlo's work being more engaging</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The title 'My dress hangs there' helps the give a hint of how she feels as by extension, "My heart is here." And the here meant Mexico. Even though she had spent almost four years in America, it remained for her a 'there'. Kahlo felt very lonely in America and had difficulty making friends due to language barrier. She continued to wear her traditional clothes, jewellery and wrapped herself in long Mexican shawls, showing how she was adamant in keeping her identity. Instead of using her own portrait with sad expressions, the use of her Tehuana dress being out of place in the American landscape effectively shows her homesickness, and the confusion of the city to her. She saw the rift between rich and poor, with the extravagant luxury of the wealthy on full display while outside in the streets, the homeless and unemployed queued at the doors of the soup kitchens. By using actual photos of crowds at the bottom part of the painting, it adds a sense of realness to her Surreal work. The images are at the bottom of the work and are a small scale to show how insignificant they are to most people and how they tend to be forgotten. The elements in the landscape all help to illustrate her views towards America, such as how she was ridiculing the modern American obsession with sport and sanitation by placing a golf trophy and a toilet on top of classical columns. The boat is leaving the harbour in the background showing her desire to leave the country. The temple (Federal Hall), with its steps in the form of a sales graph, and the church, with a dollar sign in its window, are dedicated to the worship of money. A fashionable blonde (Mae West) parades herself on a hoarding while down below, buildings are consumed by fire. The illusions of a world of progress end up in the bin, one with apparent remnants of human body parts. The black telephone cable which, like a spider web, connects everything and everyone. <p><u>Suggested points for Magritte's work being more engaging</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Magritte was <u>influenced by the Surrealist movement</u> and Freudian theories of the unconscious. The Surrealists were <u>interested in the articulation and expression of the unconscious mind for the purpose of higher creative artistry</u>. They <u>sought to reconcile the unconscious with reality</u>. In this painting, he explores the use of Freudian theories of logic-displacement and fetish. This <u>painting uses a realistic style yet an illogical composition to displace our sense of reality</u>. His <u>title is 'Human condition' and yet there are no human forms portrayed, title mystify rather than explain</u>, the <u>work may be illustrating how habits of perception are part of human practice leading to the current condition of life</u>, forming a critique for our belief system. Using his most common artistic device, he used objects to hide what lies behind them, he challenges the viewer's perception: at first glance, the work looks with a simple painting portraying the landscape beyond the window; <u>with close inspection, one will realise that there is an unknown to the work</u>. He <u>questions how we often take what we see for granted and as the sole truth and how viewers often take likeness for reality</u>. Surreal effect is intensified because of the use of easily identified everyday objects that is portrayed in an exaggerated scale. He was successful at challenging the viewer's perception of preconceived reality, forcing the viewer to be hypersensitive to their surroundings. 	