
LITERATURE (ENGLISH)

0486/33

Paper 3 Unseen

October/November 2014

1 hour 15 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 answer paper ask the invigilator for a continuation booklet.

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

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

Both questions in this paper carry equal marks.



This document consists of **5** printed pages, **3** blank pages and **1** insert.

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

EITHER

- 1 Read carefully the poem opposite, which describes a lone skater skating along a frozen pond in winter.

How does the poet's writing create a striking image of the skater?

To help you answer this question, you might consider:

- how the poet describes the skater's preparations
- the effect of the skater's movements on those who watch him
- the possible meaning of the image of him skating out to sea.

The Sea Skater

A skater comes to this blue pond,
his worn Canadian skates
held by the straps.

He sits on the grass
lacing stiff boots
into a wreath of effort and breath.

He tugs at the straps and they sound
as ice does when weight troubles it
and cracks bloom around stones

creaking in quiet mid-winter
mid-afternoons: a fine time for a skater.
He knows it and gauges the sun
to see how long it will be safe to skate.

Now he hisses and spins in jumps
while powder ice clings to the air
but by trade he's a long-haul skater.

Little villages, stick-like in the cold,
offer a child or a farm-worker
going his round. These watch him
go beating onward between iced alders
seawards, and so they picture him
always smoothly facing forward, foodless and waterless,
mounting the crusted waves on his skates.

OR

- 2 Read carefully this extract from a novel. Jim is looking back and telling the story of his boyhood as an orphan living on a remote farm with his grandparents in Nebraska, USA, towards the end of the nineteenth century. Antonia (or 'Tony') is part of a Bohemian immigrant family, and speaks broken English with a heavy accent. Both children are about eleven years old. The passage describes the killing of a large and poisonous rattlesnake.

How does the writer make Jim's encounter with the snake both dramatic and significant for the boy?

To help you answer this question, you might consider:

- the way the writer portrays Jim's initial response to the snake, and how he kills it
- how she shows Antonia's influence on Jim's feelings about the snake
- how the writer shows how Jim's feelings have changed when he looks back at what happened.

We were examining a big hole with two entrances. The burrow sloped into the ground at a gentle angle, so that we could see where the two corridors united, and the floor was dusty from use, like a little highway over which much travel went. I was walking backward, in a crouching position, when I heard Antonia scream. She was standing opposite me, pointing behind me and shouting something in Bohemian¹. I whirled round, and there, on one of those dry gravel beds, was the biggest snake I had ever seen. He was sunning himself, after the cold night, and he must have been asleep when Antonia screamed. When I turned, he was lying in long loose waves, like a letter 'W'. He twitched and began to coil slowly. He was not merely a big snake, I thought – he was a circus monstrosity. His abominable muscularity, his loathsome, fluid motion, somehow made me sick. He was as thick as my leg, and looked as if millstones couldn't crush the disgusting vitality out of him. He lifted his hideous little head, and rattled. I didn't run because I didn't think of it – if my back had been against a stone wall I couldn't have felt more cornered. I saw his coils tighten – now he would spring, spring his length, I remembered. I ran up and drove at his head with my spade, struck him fairly across the neck, and in a minute he was all about my feet in wavy loops. I struck now from hate. Antonia, barefooted as she was, ran up behind me. Even after I had pounded his ugly head flat, his body kept on coiling and winding, doubling and falling back on itself. I walked away and turned my back. I felt seasick.

Antonia came after me, crying, 'O Jimmy, he not bite you? You sure? Why you not run when I say?'

'What did you jabber Bohunk² for? You might have told me there was a snake behind me!' I said petulantly.

'I know I am just awful, Jim, I was so scared.' She took my handkerchief from my pocket and tried to wipe my face with it, but I snatched it away from her. I suppose I looked as sick as I felt.

'I never know you was so brave, Jim,' she went on comfortingly. 'You is just like big mans; you wait for him lift his head and then you go for him. Ain't you feel scared a bit? Now we take that snake home and show everybody. Nobody ain't seen in this kawn-tree³ so big snake like you kill.'

She went on in this strain until I began to think that I had longed for this opportunity, and had hailed it with joy. Cautiously we went back to the snake; he was still groping with his tail, turning up his ugly belly in the light. A faint, fetid smell came from him, and a thread of green liquid oozed from his crushed head.

'Look, Tony, that's his poison,' I said.

I took a long piece of string from my pocket, and she lifted his head with the spade while I tied a noose around it. We pulled him out straight and measured him

by my riding-quirt⁴; he was about five and a half feet long. He had twelve rattles, but they were broken off before they began to taper, so I insisted that he must once have had twenty-four. I explained to *Ántonia* how this meant that he was twenty-four years old, that he must have been there when white men first came, left on from buffalo and Indian times⁵. As I turned him over, I began to feel proud of him, to have a kind of respect for his age and size. He seemed like the ancient, eldest Evil. Certainly his kind have left horrible unconscious memories in all warm-blooded life. When we dragged him down into the draw⁶, *Dude*⁷ sprang off to the end of his tether and shivered all over – wouldn't let us come near him.

We decided that *Ántonia* should ride *Dude* home, and I would walk. As she rode along slowly, her bare legs swinging against the pony's sides, she kept shouting back to me about how astonished everybody would be. I followed with the spade over my shoulder, dragging my snake. Her exultation was contagious. The great land had never looked to me so big and free. If the red grass were full of rattlers, I was equal to them all. Nevertheless, I stole furtive glances behind me now and then to see that no avenging mate, older and bigger than my quarry, was racing up from the rear.

We hung him up to the windmill, and when I went down to the kitchen, I found *Ántonia* standing in the middle of the floor, telling the story with a great deal of colour.

Subsequent experiences with rattlesnakes taught me that my first encounter was fortunate in circumstance. My big rattler was old, and had led too easy a life; there was not much fight in him. He had probably lived there for years, with a fat prairie-dog⁸ for breakfast whenever he felt like it, a sheltered home, even an owl-feather bed, perhaps, and he had forgot that the world doesn't owe rattlers a living. A snake of his size, in fighting trim, would be more than any boy could handle. So in reality it was a mock adventure; the game was fixed for me by chance, as it probably was for many a dragon-slayer. I had been adequately armed; the snake was old and lazy; and I had *Ántonia* beside me, to appreciate and admire.

That snake hung on our corral⁹ fence for several days; some of the neighbours came to see it and agreed that it was the biggest rattler ever killed in those parts. This was enough for *Ántonia*. She liked me better from that time on, and she never took a supercilious¹⁰ air with me again. I had killed a big snake – I was now a big fellow.

¹*Bohemian*: from Bohemia, now part of the Czech Republic

²*Bohunk* (slang): in Bohemian language (in Czech)

³*kawn-tree*: 'country' (in *Ántonia*'s heavily accented English)

⁴*riding-quirt*: a leather whip

⁵*Indian times*: when Nebraska was still largely populated by native Americans

⁶*the draw*: a dry stream bed

⁷*Dude*: the name of Jim's horse

⁸*prairie-dog*: a large rodent

⁹*corral*: enclosure for keeping livestock

¹⁰*supercilious*: superior

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