

MATRICULATION AND SECONDARY EDUCATION CERTIFICATE EXAMINATIONS BOARD

UNIVERSITY OF MALTA, MSIDA

MATRICULATION EXAMINATION
INTERMEDIATE LEVEL
SEPTEMBER 2013
Candidate's Paper

SUBJECT:	ENGLISH
PAPER:	ORAL
TIME:	10 minutes

PART 1 – Passage for Reading (5 marks)

Someone types a command into a laptop, and the robot jerks upright with a shudder and a wheeze. Compressed air flows beneath silicone skin, triggering actuators that raise her arms and lift the corners of her mouth into a demure smile. She seems to compose herself, her eyes panning the room where she stands fixed to a platform, tubes and wires running down through her ankles. She blinks, then turns her face toward me. I can't help but meet her— its —mechanical gaze. "Are you surprised that I'm a robot?" she asks. "I look just like a human, don't I?"

Her scripted observation has the unfortunate effect of calling my attention to the many ways she does not. Developed in Japan, this robot can be rented to serve as a futuristic house help. She moves awkwardly, and the rigidity of her features lends a slightly demented undertone to her lovely face. Then there is her habit of appearing to nod off momentarily between utterances, as if she were on something stronger than electricity.

These androids are part of a new generation of robots, artificial beings designed to function not as programmed industrial machines but as increasingly independent agents capable of taking on roles which were previously carried out only by humans in our homes, schools, and offices. The foot soldiers of this trend are the Roomba vacuums that scuttle about cleaning our carpets and the cuddly electronic pets that sit up and roll over on command but never make a mess on the rug. More sophisticated robots may soon be available that cook for us, fold the laundry, even babysit our children or tend to our elderly parents, while we watch and assist from a computer miles away.

"In five or ten years robots will routinely be functioning in human environments," says Reid Simmons, a professor of robotics at Carnegie Mellon. Such a prospect leads to a cascade of questions. How much everyday human function do we want to outsource to machines? What should they look like? The robot revolution can change the way humans relate to each other. A cuddly robotic baby seal developed in Japan to amuse seniors in eldercare centres has drawn charges that it could cut them off from other people. Similar fears have been voiced about future babysitting robots. In short: Are we ready for androids and are they ready for us?

Adapted from National Geographic

PART 2 – Discussion on a Topic (Long Turn) (5 marks)

Choose ONE topic from the list below and speak about it for an extended period of time:

- a) China
- b) My favourite view
- c) Eating well
- d) The greatest soundtracks of all time
- e) Facebook etiquette
- f) A trip of a lifetime

MATRICULATION AND SECONDARY EDUCATION CERTIFICATE EXAMINATIONS BOARD
UNIVERSITY OF MALTA, MSIDA

MATRICULATION EXAMINATION
INTERMEDIATE LEVEL
SEPTEMBER 2013
Examiner's Paper

SUBJECT:	ENGLISH
PAPER:	ORAL
TIME:	10 minutes

The Oral Session carries 10% of the global mark and should last approximately **10 minutes**. Examiners are to assess the candidate's oral skills (see the **Oral Grid** and **Scheme of Assessment** to assist you in assessing the candidate's performance).

The Oral Session has two components – a **Passage for Reading** and a **Discussion on a Topic**. The passage and the list of topics should be made available to the candidate at least 10 minutes before the start of the Oral Examination.

PART 1 – Passage for Reading (5 marks)

Invite the candidate to read aloud the passage below:

Someone types a command into a laptop, and the robot jerks upright with a shudder and a wheeze. Compressed air flows beneath silicone skin, triggering actuators that raise her arms and lift the corners of her mouth into a demure smile. She seems to compose herself, her eyes panning the room where she stands fixed to a platform, tubes and wires running down through her ankles. She blinks, then turns her face toward me. I can't help but meet her— its —mechanical gaze. "Are you surprised that I'm a robot?" she asks. "I look just like a human, don't I?"

Her scripted observation has the unfortunate effect of calling my attention to the many ways she does not. Developed in Japan, this robot can be rented to serve as a futuristic house help. She moves awkwardly, and the rigidity of her features lends a slightly demented undertone to her lovely face. Then there is her habit of appearing to nod off momentarily between utterances, as if she were on something stronger than electricity.

These androids are part of a new generation of robots, artificial beings designed to function not as programmed industrial machines but as increasingly independent agents capable of taking on roles which were previously carried out only by humans in our homes, schools, and offices. The foot soldiers of this trend are the Roomba vacuums that scuttle about cleaning our carpets and the cuddly electronic pets that sit up and roll over on command but never make a mess on the rug. More sophisticated robots may soon be available that cook for us, fold the laundry, even babysit our children or tend to our elderly parents, while we watch and assist from a computer miles away.

"In five or ten years robots will routinely be functioning in human environments," says Reid Simmons, a professor of robotics at Carnegie Mellon. Such a prospect leads to a cascade of questions. How much everyday human function do we want to outsource to machines? What should they look like? The robot revolution can change the way humans relate to each other. A cuddly robotic baby seal developed in Japan to amuse seniors in eldercare centres has drawn charges that it could cut them off from other people. Similar fears have been voiced about future babysitting robots. In short: Are we ready for androids and are they ready for us?

Adapted from National Geographic

PART 2 – Discussion on a Topic (Long Turn) (5 marks)

Invite the candidate to speak for an extended period on the topic of their choice, only offering prompts where necessary:

- a) China
- b) My favourite view
- c) Eating well
- d) The greatest soundtracks of all time
- e) Facebook etiquette
- f) A trip of a lifetime

MATRICULATION AND SECONDARY EDUCATION CERTIFICATE EXAMINATIONS BOARD

UNIVERSITY OF MALTA, MSIDA

MATRICULATION EXAMINATION

INTERMEDIATE LEVEL

SEPTEMBER 2013

Candidate's Paper

SUBJECT:	ENGLISH
PAPER:	ORAL
TIME:	10 minutes

PART 1 – Passage for Reading (5 marks)

Finally a planet has been discovered orbiting Alpha Centauri. That star, a neighbour of the Southern Cross, is actually a triplet of stars orbiting each other – as first discovered by a Jesuit missionary some 300 years ago. And it is our nearest neighbour, four and a half light years away.

Granted, the new planet orbits so close to its star that its surface would be hotter than molten lava. But its existence gives hope that Alpha Centauri could also host another planet at a more temperate location, which we just haven't seen yet. You could actually envisage a conversation with hypothetical intelligences inhabiting such a hypothetical planet; the conversation lag would be a mere nine years between exchanges.

Could we go there? Half a century ago, it took *Apollo* about a week to get to the Moon and back. Getting people to Mars is so challenging and expensive that we've only sent robots on one-way trips so far. But Alpha Centauri is a bit further away. A chart that placed our Moon one centimetre from Earth would need to be 1,000 km wide before you could map Alpha Centauri's position. At the rate *Apollo* went to the moon, it would take a million years.

The same week that the Alpha Centauri discovery was published, I was with 600 planetary astronomers in Nevada at the annual meeting of the American Astronomical Society's Division for Planetary Sciences. The reaction there to this news was "Cool!" – followed immediately by each of us returning to all the talks and collaborations-in-the-hallways that make up a typical scientific meeting. Science is not only done in major discoveries, it is also many tiny bits of work accumulated by a dedicated, slightly crazy clan of scruffy astronomers.

One such tiny bit of work involved plans to image the poles of Jupiter with a camera on a NASA mission due to arrive in four years. Online amateurs will make the target selection decisions for the Jupiter camera and reduce the resulting images, cleaning up the computer glitches and balancing the colours. Those amateurs are already providing images of Jupiter using backyard telescopes that rival what once only professional telescopes could provide.

The discovery of a planet around a nearby star can inspire the imagination of the amateurs (and taxpayers), who are our biggest fans and supporters. But we professionals are consumed by the details of daily data. Only with such work can we help the amateurs make sense of what they have seen. And in return, their enthusiasm reminds us of why we do the work.

Adapted from *The Tablet***PART 2 – Discussion on a Topic (Long Turn) (5 marks)**

Choose ONE topic from the list below and speak about it for an extended period of time:

- Should animal circuses be allowed to operate?
- Charity
- Smoking
- Dress-up for grown ups: Carnival and fancy dress parties
- A much loved hobby
- Living abroad for three months

MATRICULATION AND SECONDARY EDUCATION CERTIFICATE EXAMINATIONS BOARD
UNIVERSITY OF MALTA, MSIDA

MATRICULATION EXAMINATION
INTERMEDIATE LEVEL
SEPTEMBER 2013
Examiner's Paper

SUBJECT:	ENGLISH
PAPER:	ORAL
TIME:	10 minutes

The Oral Session carries 10% of the global mark and should last approximately **10 minutes**. Examiners are to assess the candidate's oral skills (see the **Oral Grid** and **Scheme of Assessment** to assist you in assessing the candidate's performance).

The Oral Session has two components – a **Passage for Reading** and a **Discussion on a Topic**. The passage and the list of topics should be made available to the candidate at least 10 minutes before the start of the Oral Examination.

PART 1 – Passage for Reading (5 marks)

Invite the candidate to read aloud the passage below:

Finally a planet has been discovered orbiting Alpha Centauri. That star, a neighbour of the Southern Cross, is actually a triplet of stars orbiting each other – as first discovered by a Jesuit missionary some 300 years ago. And it is our nearest neighbour, four and a half light years away.

Granted, the new planet orbits so close to its star that its surface would be hotter than molten lava. But its existence gives hope that Alpha Centauri could also host another planet at a more temperate location, which we just haven't seen yet. You could actually envisage a conversation with hypothetical intelligences inhabiting such a hypothetical planet; the conversation lag would be a mere nine years between exchanges.

Could we go there? Half a century ago, it took *Apollo* about a week to get to the Moon and back. Getting people to Mars is so challenging and expensive that we've only sent robots on one-way trips so far. But Alpha Centauri is a bit further away. A chart that placed our Moon one centimetre from Earth would need to be 1,000 km wide before you could map Alpha Centauri's position. At the rate *Apollo* went to the moon, it would take a million years.

The same week that the Alpha Centauri discovery was published, I was with 600 planetary astronomers in Nevada at the annual meeting of the American Astronomical Society's Division for Planetary Sciences. The reaction there to this news was "Cool!" – followed immediately by each of us returning to all the talks and collaborations-in-the-hallways that make up a typical scientific meeting. Science is not only done in major discoveries, it is also many tiny bits of work accumulated by a dedicated, slightly crazy clan of scruffy astronomers.

One such tiny bit of work involved plans to image the poles of Jupiter with a camera on a NASA mission due to arrive in four years. Online amateurs will make the target selection decisions for the Jupiter camera and reduce the resulting images, cleaning up the computer glitches and balancing the colours. Those amateurs are already providing images of Jupiter using backyard telescopes that rival what once only professional telescopes could provide.

The discovery of a planet around a nearby star can inspire the imagination of the amateurs (and taxpayers), who are our biggest fans and supporters. But we professionals are consumed by the details of daily data. Only with such work can we help the amateurs make sense of what they have seen. And in return, their enthusiasm reminds us of why we do the work.

Adapted from *The Tablet*

PART 2 – Discussion on a Topic (Long Turn) (5 marks)

Invite the candidate to speak for an extended period on the topic of their choice, only offering prompts where necessary:

- a) Should animal circuses be allowed to operate?
- b) Charity
- c) Smoking
- d) Dress-up for grown ups: Carnival and fancy dress parties
- e) A much loved hobby
- f) Living abroad for three months

MATRICULATION AND SECONDARY EDUCATION CERTIFICATE EXAMINATIONS BOARD

UNIVERSITY OF MALTA, MSIDA

MATRICULATION EXAMINATION
INTERMEDIATE LEVEL
SEPTEMBER 2013
Candidate's Paper

SUBJECT:	ENGLISH
PAPER:	ORAL
TIME:	10 minutes

PART 1 – Passage for Reading (5 marks)

Michael decided to go for a swim. He was on vacation with his family in Guerrero, Mexico, and it was hotter than blazes. He grabbed his swimming trunks, slid them on, and jumped into the pool. Instead of cool relief, a burning pain ripped through the back of his thigh. Tearing off his trunks, he leaped naked from the pool, his leg on fire.

Behind him a small, ugly, yellow creature was treading water. He scooped it into a Tupperware container, and the caretaker of the house rushed him to the local Red Cross facility, where doctors immediately identified his attacker: a bark scorpion, one of the most venomous species in North America. The fierce pain from a sting is typically followed by what feels like electric shocks racking the body. Occasionally victims die.

Luckily for Michael, the bark scorpion is common in the area, and antivenom was readily available. He had an injection and was released a few hours later. In about 30 hours the pain was gone.

What happened next could not have been predicted. For eight years Michael had endured a chronic autoimmune disease of the skeleton, a sort of spinal arthritis. No one knows what triggers it. In the worst cases the spine may fuse, leaving the patient forever stooped and in anguish. But days after the scorpion sting, the pain went away, and now, two years later, he remains essentially pain free and off most of his medications. As a doctor himself, Michael is cautious about overstating the role of the scorpion's venom in his remission. Still, he says, "if my pain came back, I'd let that scorpion sting me again."

Venom is nature's most efficient killer. It is exquisitely honed to stop a body in its tracks. Its molecules may have different targets and effects, but they work synergistically for the mightiest punch. Venom can kill by clotting blood and stopping the heart or by preventing clotting and triggering a killer bleed.

Ironically, however, the properties that make venom deadly are also what make it so valuable for medicine. Venom works fast and is highly specific. Its active components target particular molecules. Most medicines work the same way, fitting into and controlling molecular locks to thwart ill effects. It's a challenge to find the toxin that hits only a certain target, but already top medicines for heart disease and diabetes have been derived from venom. New treatments for auto-immune diseases, cancer, and pain could be available within a decade.

Adapted from National Geographic

PART 2 – Discussion on a Topic (Long Turn) (5 marks)

Choose ONE topic from the list below and speak about it for an extended period of time:

- Money has ruined sports
- Reduce, reuse, recycle
- A night out
- A social event that you did not enjoy
- Speeding traffic and traffic jams
- Student exchange

MATRICULATION AND SECONDARY EDUCATION CERTIFICATE EXAMINATIONS BOARD
UNIVERSITY OF MALTA, MSIDA

MATRICULATION EXAMINATION
INTERMEDIATE LEVEL
SEPTEMBER 2013
Examiner's Paper

SUBJECT:	ENGLISH
PAPER:	ORAL
TIME:	10 minutes

The Oral Session carries 10% of the global mark and should last approximately **10 minutes**. Examiners are to assess the candidate's oral skills (see the **Oral Grid** and **Scheme of Assessment** to assist you in assessing the candidate's performance).

The Oral Session has two components – a **Passage for Reading** and a **Discussion on a Topic**. The passage and the list of topics should be made available to the candidate at least 10 minutes before the start of the Oral Examination.

PART 1 – Passage for Reading (5 marks)

Invite the candidate to read aloud the passage below:

Michael decided to go for a swim. He was on vacation with his family in Guerrero, Mexico, and it was hotter than blazes. He grabbed his swimming trunks, slid them on, and jumped into the pool. Instead of cool relief, a burning pain ripped through the back of his thigh. Tearing off his trunks, he leaped naked from the pool, his leg on fire.

Behind him a small, ugly, yellow creature was treading water. He scooped it into a Tupperware container, and the caretaker of the house rushed him to the local Red Cross facility, where doctors immediately identified his attacker: a bark scorpion, one of the most venomous species in North America. The fierce pain from a sting is typically followed by what feels like electric shocks racking the body. Occasionally victims die.

Luckily for Michael, the bark scorpion is common in the area, and antivenom was readily available. He had an injection and was released a few hours later. In about 30 hours the pain was gone.

What happened next could not have been predicted. For eight years Michael had endured a chronic autoimmune disease of the skeleton, a sort of spinal arthritis. No one knows what triggers it. In the worst cases the spine may fuse, leaving the patient forever stooped and in anguish. But days after the scorpion sting, the pain went away, and now, two years later, he remains essentially pain free and off most of his medications. As a doctor himself, Michael is cautious about overstating the role of the scorpion's venom in his remission. Still, he says, "if my pain came back, I'd let that scorpion sting me again."

Venom is nature's most efficient killer. It is exquisitely honed to stop a body in its tracks. Its molecules may have different targets and effects, but they work synergistically for the mightiest punch. Venom can kill by clotting blood and stopping the heart or by preventing clotting and triggering a killer bleed.

Ironically, however, the properties that make venom deadly are also what make it so valuable for medicine. Venom works fast and is highly specific. Its active components target particular molecules. Most medicines work the same way, fitting into and controlling molecular locks to thwart ill effects. It's a challenge to find the toxin that hits only a certain target, but already top medicines for heart disease and diabetes have been derived from venom. New treatments for auto-immune diseases, cancer, and pain could be available within a decade.

Adapted from *National Geographic*

PART 2 – Discussion on a Topic (Long Turn) (5 marks)

Invite the candidate to speak for an extended period on the topic of their choice, only offering prompts where necessary:

- a) Money has ruined sports
- b) Reduce, reuse, recycle
- c) A night out
- d) A social event that you did not enjoy
- e) Speeding traffic and traffic jams
- f) Student exchange

MATRICULATION AND SECONDARY EDUCATION CERTIFICATE EXAMINATIONS BOARD

UNIVERSITY OF MALTA, MSIDA

MATRICULATION EXAMINATION
 INTERMEDIATE LEVEL
 SEPTEMBER 2013
 Candidate's Paper

SUBJECT:	ENGLISH
PAPER:	ORAL
TIME:	10 minutes

PART 1 – Passage for Reading (5 marks)

A Bond for our times? Director Sam Mendes has talked of the latest film, *Skyfall*, as combining fantasy with commentary about contemporary events. It's true that there are passing references to drones and spy planes that now perform many of 007's traditional espionage functions. There are also some nods to the changing nature of national security, to the growth in virtual terrorism by computer hacking and to the need in a world of shadowy threats for constant vigilance.

Bond, then, is a man of the shadows and there, indeed, is where the film begins. But we all know that the best of Bond takes place in bold, well-lit sequences – the chases, the cars, the scenery, the absurd pauses for a very British aside – and soon we are off out into the brightness of an exotic location and some speedy driving involving that iconic vehicle, a long wheelbase Land Rover.

Mendes, who was born in 1965, was a long-time Bond fan before he took the call to direct. Those boyhood years were not wasted. His achievement here is to keep the plot clear and linear, with well-defined, ambitiously realised locations. There are no messy and pointless subplots. There is Bond (and his bosses back at MI6), there is a baddie (with a legitimate grievance, in a mad way) and somewhere in between a lovely woman or two.

What is contemporary about this interpretation is a certain restraint in the depiction of Bond's womanising and an acknowledgement that Bond is not a superhero – he can be hurt, he can underperform. He's also clearly an employee rather than a true freelance. After the machismo and the brooding, the clothes-horses and the clowning of previous 007s, Craig's Bond is settling into the role of a tough but not invulnerable serviceman. Some might think this sentimental but my limited observation of men who work in secret areas of government service is that a certain fondness for notions of one's country can be essential motivation and not at all at odds with ruthlessness.

What is classic is the mixture of heroism with the odd touch of camp. That arch tone is nicely buttressed here by the villain who also doles out the film's one moment of real horror. Then there is a title sequence that is retro and there is a song by diva Adele that breathes, growls and skips up semitones, delivering the recognisable sound that has taken the singer to multi-platinum success internationally.

If Bond's your thing, enjoy it.

Adapted from *The Tablet*

PART 2 – Discussion on a Topic (Long Turn) (5 marks)

Choose ONE topic from the list below and speak about it for an extended period of time:

- a) Playing to win: lotteries and betting
- b) Guns in America
- c) Smoothies or chips? There's nothing attractive about healthy food
- d) Breakdance or ballroom?
- e) Smartphones and internet mean that we can never truly 'switch off'
- f) The perfect holiday

MATRICULATION AND SECONDARY EDUCATION CERTIFICATE EXAMINATIONS BOARD
UNIVERSITY OF MALTA, MSIDA

MATRICULATION EXAMINATION
INTERMEDIATE LEVEL
SEPTEMBER 2013
Examiner's Paper

SUBJECT:	ENGLISH
PAPER:	ORAL
TIME:	10 minutes

The Oral Session carries 10% of the global mark and should last approximately **10 minutes**. Examiners are to assess the candidate's oral skills (see the **Oral Grid** and **Scheme of Assessment** to assist you in assessing the candidate's performance).

The Oral Session has two components – a **Passage for Reading** and a **Discussion on a Topic**. The passage and the list of topics should be made available to the candidate at least 10 minutes before the start of the Oral Examination.

PART 1 – Passage for Reading (5 marks)

Invite the candidate to read aloud the passage below:

A Bond for our times? Director Sam Mendes has talked of the latest film, *Skyfall*, as combining fantasy with commentary about contemporary events. It's true that there are passing references to drones and spy planes that now perform many of 007's traditional espionage functions. There are also some nods to the changing nature of national security, to the growth in virtual terrorism by computer hacking and to the need in a world of shadowy threats for constant vigilance.

Bond, then, is a man of the shadows and there, indeed, is where the film begins. But we all know that the best of Bond takes place in bold, well-lit sequences – the chases, the cars, the scenery, the absurd pauses for a very British aside – and soon we are off out into the brightness of an exotic location and some speedy driving involving that iconic vehicle, a long wheelbase Land Rover.

Mendes, who was born in 1965, was a long-time Bond fan before he took the call to direct. Those boyhood years were not wasted. His achievement here is to keep the plot clear and linear, with well-defined, ambitiously realised locations. There are no messy and pointless subplots. There is Bond (and his bosses back at MI6), there is a baddie (with a legitimate grievance, in a mad way) and somewhere in between a lovely woman or two.

What is contemporary about this interpretation is a certain restraint in the depiction of Bond's womanising and an acknowledgement that Bond is not a superhero – he can be hurt, he can underperform. He's also clearly an employee rather than a true freelance. After the machismo and the brooding, the clothes-horses and the clowning of previous 007s, Craig's Bond is settling into the role of a tough but not invulnerable serviceman. Some might think this sentimental but my limited observation of men who work in secret areas of government service is that a certain fondness for notions of one's country can be essential motivation and not at all at odds with ruthlessness.

What is classic is the mixture of heroism with the odd touch of camp. That arch tone is nicely buttressed here by the villain who also doles out the film's one moment of real horror. Then there is a title sequence that is retro and there is a song by diva Adele that breathes, growls and skips up semitones, delivering the recognisable sound that has taken the singer to multi-platinum success internationally.

If Bond's your thing, enjoy it.

Adapted from *The Tablet*

PART 2 – Discussion on a Topic (Long Turn) (5 marks)

Invite the candidate to speak for an extended period on the topic of their choice, only offering prompts where necessary:

- a) Playing to win: lotteries and betting
- b) Guns in America
- c) Smoothies or chips? There's nothing attractive about healthy food
- d) Breakdance or ballroom?
- e) Smartphones and internet mean that we can never truly 'switch off'
- f) The perfect holiday

MATRICULATION AND SECONDARY EDUCATION CERTIFICATE EXAMINATIONS BOARD

UNIVERSITY OF MALTA, MSIDA

MATRICULATION EXAMINATION
 INTERMEDIATE LEVEL
 SEPTEMBER 2013
 Candidate's Paper

SUBJECT:	ENGLISH
PAPER:	ORAL
TIME:	10 minutes

PART 1 – Passage for Reading (5 marks)

There was a sharp frost last night. Today is bitterly cold; it's one of those naked and exposed winter days when the wind drops away, the sky is a bright duck-egg blue and the sun never climbs high enough to give any sensation of warmth.

I am walking in the woods. Winter woods are always strange – they look dead but they aren't. This is especially true of deciduous woods; however dark and closed-in forestry plantation may be, evergreens, even conifers, are clearly alive in the dead of winter. But when woods – which in summer are dappled green and rich with flowers, undergrowth, birdsong and butterflies – shed their leaves so their branches create a fine spider-web overhead, and frost scours down the growth underfoot, they feel very dead indeed. There are fewer birds; the red squirrels are hibernating; the insects are gone, or at least silent. It is very quiet, especially as there is no breeze to move the stripped branches.

But as I walk, as I tune in to the cold, still atmosphere, I realise they are not dead. The slants of sunlight illuminate the moss; it is vibrantly green and the north sides of the larger mounds still sparkle with last night's frost. There are sinister fungi in the shadier nooks and blood red berries on an unexpected holly clump. Close inspection reveals the tiny nubs of catkins, which are tucked under the twigs waiting out the winter. There are signs of rabbit and deer, and what I suspect to be a fox. The contrast between dead and alive starts to feel a little weird. The woods in winter are eerie: darkly strange.

My beloved dog, a terrier, is completely unfazed; she loves the little paths that run round huge oak trees and lead nowhere. After a bit of agitated excitement, she disappears downhill through the thickets. A deep hush descends with her departure, and after a few minutes I come to a ruined wall – a line of stones curling down the hillside. The stones are grey and green with moss, and I sit down upon one to await the dog's return and listen to the silence.

And – all of a sudden, unexpectedly – I am overwhelmed; drowned in an emotion that is hard to define, yet unmistakable once experienced. I feel a profound sense of wonder, delight even, but with it also a solemn fear. I feel tiny – I am in a rich oneness with the wood and the winter. This is not fear in the sense of anxiety. It is something deeper: fear mixed somehow with reverence, humility and a kind of dark joy. It is awe.

Adapted from Psychologies

PART 2 – Discussion on a Topic (Long Turn) (5 marks)

Choose ONE topic from the list below and speak about it for an extended period of time:

- a) Education is vital for success
- b) Crime and punishment in Malta
- c) TV adverts
- d) Keeping fit is overrated
- e) Action movie or psychological thriller?
- f) Travel broadens the mind

MATRICULATION AND SECONDARY EDUCATION CERTIFICATE EXAMINATIONS BOARD
UNIVERSITY OF MALTA, MSIDA

MATRICULATION EXAMINATION
INTERMEDIATE LEVEL
SEPTEMBER 2013
Examiner's Paper

SUBJECT:	ENGLISH
PAPER:	ORAL
TIME:	10 minutes

The Oral Session carries 10% of the global mark and should last approximately **10 minutes**. Examiners are to assess the candidate's oral skills (see the **Oral Grid** and **Scheme of Assessment** to assist you in assessing the candidate's performance).

The Oral Session has two components – a **Passage for Reading** and a **Discussion on a Topic**. The passage and the list of topics should be made available to the candidate at least 10 minutes before the start of the Oral Examination.

PART 1 – Passage for Reading (5 marks)

Invite the candidate to read aloud the passage below:

There was a sharp frost last night. Today is bitterly cold; it's one of those naked and exposed winter days when the wind drops away, the sky is a bright duck-egg blue and the sun never climbs high enough to give any sensation of warmth.

I am walking in the woods. Winter woods are always strange – they look dead but they aren't. This is especially true of deciduous woods; however dark and closed-in forestry plantation may be, evergreens, even conifers, are clearly alive in the dead of winter. But when woods – which in summer are dappled green and rich with flowers, undergrowth, birdsong and butterflies – shed their leaves so their branches create a fine spider-web overhead, and frost scours down the growth underfoot, they feel very dead indeed. There are fewer birds; the red squirrels are hibernating; the insects are gone, or at least silent. It is very quiet, especially as there is no breeze to move the stripped branches.

But as I walk, as I tune in to the cold, still atmosphere, I realise they are not dead. The slants of sunlight illuminate the moss; it is vibrantly green and the north sides of the larger mounds still sparkle with last night's frost. There are sinister fungi in the shadier nooks and blood red berries on an unexpected holly clump. Close inspection reveals the tiny nubs of catkins, which are tucked under the twigs waiting out the winter. There are signs of rabbit and deer, and what I suspect to be a fox. The contrast between dead and alive starts to feel a little weird. The woods in winter are eerie: darkly strange.

My beloved dog, a terrier, is completely unfazed; she loves the little paths that run round huge oak trees and lead nowhere. After a bit of agitated excitement, she disappears downhill through the thickets. A deep hush descends with her departure, and after a few minutes I come to a ruined wall – a line of stones curling down the hillside. The stones are grey and green with moss, and I sit down upon one to await the dog's return and listen to the silence.

And – all of a sudden, unexpectedly – I am overwhelmed; drowned in an emotion that is hard to define, yet unmistakable once experienced. I feel a profound sense of wonder, delight even, but with it also a solemn fear. I feel tiny – I am in a rich oneness with the wood and the winter. This is not fear in the sense of anxiety. It is something deeper: fear mixed somehow with reverence, humility and a kind of dark joy. It is awe.

Adapted from *Psychologies*

PART 2 – Discussion on a Topic (Long Turn) (5 marks)

Invite the candidate to speak for an extended period on the topic of their choice, only offering prompts where necessary:

- a) Education is vital for success
- b) Crime and punishment in Malta
- c) TV adverts
- d) Keeping fit is overrated
- e) Action movie or psychological thriller?
- f) Travel broadens the mind

MATRICULATION AND SECONDARY EDUCATION CERTIFICATE EXAMINATIONS BOARD
UNIVERSITY OF MALTA, MSIDA

MATRICULATION EXAMINATION
INTERMEDIATE LEVEL
SEPTEMBER 2013

SUBJECT:	ENGLISH
DATE:	6th September 2013
TIME:	9.00 a.m. to 12.00 noon

ANSWER BOTH SECTIONS

You are advised to spend about 1 hour on each task.

SECTION A – LANGUAGE (60 marks)

1. ESSAY (30 marks)

Write approximately 500 words on **one** of the following:

- a) ‘Examinations are not the best way of assessing students.’ How far do you agree with this statement?
- b) Write a short story that includes the words: ‘I learned that I have to trust my instincts more.’ Please underline the sentence in your essay.
- c) Breaking the rules.
- d) Watching the world go by at my favourite cafeteria.
- e) You are a student representative for a student organisation. Write a proposal report for a pilot project on how to encourage more students to study efficiently.
- f) Write a letter to the editor of your local newspaper to argue in favour of or against reducing the amount of hours devoted to academic study in school, in favour of compulsory sports on a daily basis throughout school life.

2. COMPREHENSION AND SUMMARY (30 marks)

Read the passage below and answer the questions that follow.

Doctors have been telling fat people to eat less and exercise more for at least 2,500 years.

Here's Hippocrates, father of Western medicine: "It is very injurious to health to take in more food than the constitution will bear, when, at the same time one uses no exercise to carry off this excess."

5 And here's the blunt advice of Polybus, student (and son-in-law) of Hippocrates: "Persons of a gross relaxed habit of body, the flabby, and red-haired, ought always to use a drying diet ... Such as are fat, and desire to be lean, should use exercise fasting; should drink small liquors a little warm; should eat only once a day, and no more than will just satisfy their hunger."

10 Public health experts no longer disparage red-haired folks, and as far as I know, they don't recommend drinking warmed-up liquors. But they're still spreading the message of the harms of obesity, via television, magazines, school curricula, and even First-Lady policy agendas. These efforts have some merit. People who are obese (defined as having a BMI of 30 or higher) have an increased risk of developing heart disease, diabetes and some cancers compared with people who are not obese. And people who are severely obese have a higher death rate than thin people.

15 The message that thinner = better just seems intuitive, doesn't it? But over the past few months, while researching a story published in today's *Nature*, I've started to wonder whether we've gone too far in our cultural war against fat.

Weight is just one factor of many — sleep, diet, fitness, psychological health, socioeconomic status — that influence whether we are healthy or sick. But politicians don't talk about a sleep deprivation epidemic; there is no *Biggest Loser of Poverty* reality TV show.

20 What's more, the health risks of being "overweight" (defined as a BMI between 25 and 30) are not at all clear. Mortality rates of people in the overweight category are actually 6 percent lower than those in the "normal" category, and some people who are overweight (and even mildly obese) show no signs of illness. Conversely, lots of thin people out there have heart disease and diabetes.

25 Yes, being obese usually takes a toll on health, no question. But guess how many obesity drugs or diet-and-exercise regimes have been proven to last more than a year or two?

Oh, right, zero.

And yet, the battle cry remains: if you're obese, just crank up that willpower! Eat less, move more!

30 "I would like to believe that modern medicine and modern science can be better than just repeating a 2,000-year-old recommendation," says Jeffrey Friedman, a molecular biologist and trained medical doctor at the Rockefeller Institute in New York. Friedman has many strong opinions about the so-called obesity "epidemic," which we talked about at length over coffee recently.

35 Friedman has been studying the genetic roots of obesity for more than 30 years. In 1994 he made headlines for the discovery of leptin, a hormone that circulates in blood and turns off hunger signals in the brain. Subsequent studies have found genetic mutations in the leptin gene that cause rare cases of obesity. Twin studies have also shown that obesity has strong genetic roots (it's about as heritable as height, in fact, and yet we don't think of being too short or too tall as some kind of moral failing).

Despite these unquestionable genetic contributions, most of us think of weight as environmentally driven: a direct consequence of a person's personal eating habits. It's this emphasis on behaviour that "gives the public a license to stigmatise the obese," Friedman says.

40 "A lot of people try to couch it in ways that don't as directly lead to stigmatisation, but they end up always getting there," Friedman says. "Because you end up saying, at some level, that the obese have made a series of poor choices that have led them to this."

Friedman sees things quite differently, as he eloquently explained in a 2003 commentary in *Science*. Each of us, he argues, has a different genetic predisposition to obesity, shaped over thousands of
45 years of evolution by a changing and unpredictable food supply. In modern times, most people don't have to deal with that nutritional uncertainty; we have access to as much food as we want and we take advantage of it. In this context, some individuals' genetic make-up causes them to put on weight — perhaps because of a leptin insensitivity, say, or some other biological mechanism.

Environment is important, of course: No one, no matter what their genome looks like, can become
50 obese without food. But scientists don't know most of the details of how the environment interacts with genes to control our eating habits. They don't know why this system has such extreme variability in the human population. They don't know why a (very select) few obese people can lose 50 percent of their weight and maintain that loss for decades. And, as I found in my story, researchers definitely don't know why extra weight leads to sickness in some people but not in
55 others. (It's not even clear that fat tissue itself is harmful; it could just be an innocuous byproduct of a harmful diet, say, or of not exercising enough.)

This whole subject is steeped in political controversy and a wide array of financial interests, which has made it difficult for me to write about and to think about. But I've tried to be provocative in this post. Considering the economic and cultural investment we've put into the war on obesity, doesn't
60 the public deserve more transparent and rigorous discussions about it?

Is this a public health emergency that warrants the \$1+ billion a year the U.S. is spending on it? Or are we fighting a war that's unjustified, unjust, and impossible to win?

Adapted from 'The Obesity Apologists' By Virginia Hughes in *The National Geographic*

- Give the meaning of the following words or phrases as they appear in context: disparage (line 8); intuitive (line 14); Mortality (line 21); takes a toll on (line 24); stigmatise (line 39); controversy (line 57) (6 marks)
- How do the quotations from Hippocrates and Polybus at the beginning of the passage contribute to the development of the text? (3 marks)
- This article can be said to be written in an informal style. Identify at least three of the features that you feel contribute to this. (3 marks)
- When the phrase 'so-called' is used in lines 30-31, what does it reflect about the author's views on the obesity "epidemic"? (3 marks)
- What is Friedman's position on the question of the relationship between health and obesity? (3 marks)
- In a paragraph of between 80 and 100 words, summarise the main arguments that lead Hughes to conclude that fighting obesity means "fighting a war that's unjustified, unjust, and impossible to win". (12 marks)

SECTION B – LITERATURE (30 marks)

Choose one of the texts below and answer one of the three questions set on the text using no less than 450 words. All answers must be supported by close reference to the text.

Text 1: Graham Greene *The Heart of the Matter*

- a. Discuss *The Heart of the Matter* in the light of the claim that “There was always a blacker corruption elsewhere to be pointed at.”

Or

- b. In *The Heart of the Matter*, Scobie thinks that he is “too old to be a cheat. Lies are for the young. They have a lifetime of truth to recover in.” Discuss Scobie’s relation to truth and untruth in the novel.

Or

- c. Write an essay on the importance of the following passage to the novel *The Heart of the Matter*. These topics are being offered to you as guidelines:
- The relation of the passage to the plot or action of the novel.
 - What the passage reveals about any of the characters in the novel.
 - The relation to the central themes of the novel

"You haven't looked at the stamps," Scobie said.

"No, I haven't, have I?" A spot of gin fell upon one of the stamps and stained it. He watched her pick it out of the pile, taking in the straight hair falling in rats' tails over the nape as though the Atlantic had taken the strength out of it forever, the hollowed face. It seemed to him that he had not felt so much at ease with another human being for years – not since Louise was young. But this case was different, he told himself: they were safe with each other. He was more than thirty years the older: his body in this climate had lost the sense of lust: he watched her with sadness and affection and enormous pity because a time would come when he couldn't show her around in a world where she was at sea. When she turned and the light fell on her face she looked ugly, with the temporary ugliness of a child. The ugliness was like handcuffs on his wrists.

He said, "That stamp's spoilt. I'll get you another."

"Oh, no," she said, "it goes in as it is. I'm not a real collector."

He had no sense of responsibility towards the beautiful and the graceful and the intelligent. They could find their own way. It was the face for which nobody would go out of his way, the face that would never catch the covert look, the face which would soon be used to rebuffs and indifference, that demanded his allegiance. The word "pity" is used as loosely as the word "love": the terrible promiscuous passion which so few experience.

Text 2: Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie *Purple Hibiscus*

a. Discuss the theme of defiance in *Purple Hibiscus*.

Or

b. During the traditional *mmuo* festival, men inspire fear in those around them whilst women are harmless. Discuss this pattern in relation to Eugene, Ifeoma and Jaja.

Or

c. Write an essay on the importance of the following passage to the novel *Purple Hibiscus*. These topics are being offered to you as guidelines:

- The relation of the passage to the plot or action of the novel.
- What the passage reveals about any of the characters in the novel.
- The relation to the central themes of the novel

Mama clucked in sympathy. ‘People do not always talk with sense. But it is good that the children go, especially the boys. They need to know their father’s homestead and the members of their father’s *umunna*.’

‘I honestly do not know how Ifediora came from an *umunna* like that.’

I watched their lips move as they spoke; Mama’s bare lips were pale compared to Auntie Ifeoma’s, covered in a shiny bronze lipstick.

‘*Umunna* will always say hurtful things,’ Mama said, ‘Did our own *umunna* not tell Eugene to take another wife because a man of his stature cannot have just two children? If people like you had not been on my side then ...’

‘Stop it, stop being grateful. If Eugene had done that, he would have been the loser, not you.’

‘So you say. A woman with children and no husband, what is that?’

‘Me.’

Mama shook her head. ‘You have come again, Ifeoma. You know what I mean. How can a woman live like that?’ Mama’s eyes had grown round, taking up more space on her face.

‘Nwunye m, sometimes life begins when marriage ends.’

‘You and your university talk. Is this what you tell your students?’ Mama was smiling.

‘Seriously, yes. But they marry earlier and earlier these days. What is the use of a degree, they ask me, when we cannot find a job after graduation?’

‘At least somebody will take care of them when they marry.’

Text 3: Robert Bolt *A Man for All Seasons*

- a. “I believe, when statesmen forsake their own private conscience for the sake of their public duties . . . they lead their country by a short route to chaos.” With specific reference to this statement, discuss the various ways of looking at **politics** in the play.

Or

- b. Discuss the relationship between More and Margaret in *A Man For All Seasons*.

Or

- c. Write an essay on the importance of the following passage to the play *A Man for All Seasons*.

These topics are being offered to you as guidelines:

- The relation of the passage to the plot or action of the play.
- What the passage reveals about any of the characters in the play.
- The relation to the central themes of the play.

CHAPUYS No, I have a personal letter for you.

MORE From whom?

CHAPUYS From King Charles! (More *puts hands behind back*.) You will take it?

MORE I will not lay a finger on it.

CHAPUYS It is in no way an affair of State. It expresses my master’s admiration for the stand which you and Bishop Fisher of Rochester have taken over the so-called divorce of Queen Catherine.

MORE I have taken no stand!

CHAPUYS But your views, Sir Thomas, are well known –

MORE My views are much guessed at. (*Irritably*.) Oh come, sir, could you undertake to convince (*grimly*) King Harry that this letter is ‘in no way an affair of State’?

CHAPUYS My dear Sir Thomas, I have taken extreme precautions. I came here very much incognito. (*Self-indulgent chuckle*.) Very nearly in disguise.

MORE You misunderstand me. It is not a matter of your precautions but my duty; which would be to take this letter immediately to the King.

CHAPUYS (*flabbergasted*) But, Sir Thomas, your views –

MORE – Are well known you say. It seems my loyalty is less so.

Text 4: Ian McEwan *Atonement*

- a. *Atonement* is set during, and just before, the Second World War. Explain how this setting is vital to the novel.

Or

- b. Consider how Emily's character affects the behaviour of Cecilia and Briony throughout *Atonement*.

Or

- c. Write an essay on the importance of the following passage to the novel *Atonement*. These topics are being offered to you as guidelines:
- The relation of the passage to the plot or action of the novel.
 - What the passage reveals about any of the characters in the novel.
 - The relation to the central themes of the novel

The cost of oblivious daydreaming was always this moment of return, the realignment with what had been before and now seemed a little worse. Her reverie, once rich in plausible details, had become a passing silliness before the hard mass of the actual. It was difficult to come back. *Come back*, her sister used to whisper when she woke her from a bad dream. Briony had lost her godly power of creation, but it was only at this moment of return that the loss became evident; part of a daydream's enticement was the illusion that she was helpless before its logic: forced by international rivalry to compete at the highest level among the world's finest and to accept the challenges that came with pre-eminence in her field – her field of nettle slashing – driven to push beyond her limits to assuage the roaring crows, and to be the best, and, most importantly, unique. But of course, it had all been her – by her and about her, and now she was back in the world, not one she could make, but the one that had made her, and she felt herself shrinking under the early evening sky. She was weary of being outdoors, but she was not ready to go in. Was that really all there was in life, indoors or out? Wasn't there somewhere else for people to go? She turned her back on the island temple and wandered slowly over the perfect lawn the rabbits had made, towards the bridge.