

150/05

ENGLISH
HIGHER TIER
PAPER 1

A.M. MONDAY, 7 November 2005

(2 Hours)

ADDITIONAL MATERIALS

A 12 page answer book.

INSTRUCTIONS TO CANDIDATES

Answer **all** questions in Section A and **both** questions in Section B.

Write your answers in the separate answer book provided.

You are advised to spend your time as follows:

Section A – about 55 minutes

Section B

Q. B1 – about 25 minutes

Q. B2 – about 40 minutes

INFORMATION FOR CANDIDATES

Section A (Reading): 40 marks.

Section B (Writing): 40 marks.

The number of marks is given in brackets at the end of each question or part-question.

SECTION A: 40 marks

*Read carefully the short story below. Then answer **all** the questions which follow it.*

THE WHIRLPOOL RAPIDS

When she was twenty-one, Emma nearly died. It was a freak accident, and the fact that she was there at all was an accident too, the result of knowing someone. The person she knew was a man, whose name was Bill, one of the group she hung out with at university. In the summer he worked for a travel agency that specialised in adventure tours. Emma was working as a waitress in a coffee shop in Niagara Falls and so she had what Bill was looking for: accessibility.

When Bill ambled into the coffee shop one day and told her that he wanted her body, Emma took it as a joke and did not resent it. Really he wanted her to come on a test run, he said. The travel agency was testing a new kind of tour: down the Whirlpool Rapids below Niagara Falls on a rubber raft. They'd done it nine times so far, and it was perfectly safe, but they wanted one more test. It struck him as the kind of thing that might appeal to Emma.

Emma was flattered by this image of herself as a brave young woman, a bit of a daredevil, willing to put on a life jacket at a moment's notice and sit on a large inflated piece of rubber and swirl down the dangerous Whirlpool Rapids. It would be like rollercoasters, which she'd always found compelling. She would join the ranks of those who had wished to challenge Niagara Falls: the tightrope walkers, the people who were flung into the river in barrels; even the suicides, whom Emma lumped in with the challengers, because if you were not gambling in some way, why not use a gun? All these people were flinging themselves on the mercy of something. Certainly not just a river. They had a desire to risk themselves and prove they were important enough to survive. It was really a form of arrogance.

She said yes at once and arranged a day off work to coincide with the tenth test run. Bill picked her up on the morning of the test and drove her to the launching site, which was on the American side, as the Canadian authorities had refused permission, considering the enterprise too hazardous. This would not have stopped Emma. She considered her fellow Canadians a lacklustre bunch.

The raft was black and enormous, and seemed very stable. But once they moved out into the river, the rubber surface under her began to ripple and Emma knew that the rapids, which had looked so decorative, were real after all. There were some dutiful thrilled noises from the other passengers, and then some genuine noises, less thrilled. Emma found herself clutching Bill's arm, a thing she wouldn't ordinarily have done.

There was a lot of talk later about why the tenth run should have failed so badly, after the other nine had gone without a hitch. Emma could not remember wondering why, at the time. All she saw was the front of the raft tipping down into a trough deeper than any they'd yet hit, while a foaming wall of water rose above them. The raft buckled across the middle, the front half snapping towards the back, like the beak of a bird closing. Emma and Bill shot back over the heads of the rest, who were now in a submerging heap. Something struck her on the head - a boot perhaps - and she was underwater. Later she learned that the raft had flipped over and a man had been trapped underneath and drowned, so it was just as well that she had been flung clear. But underwater she did not think. Something made her hold her breath and struggle towards the surface. Her head rose up, she gasped for air and was sucked under. The water tumbled and boiled and Emma fought it. She was filled almost to bursting with an energy that came from anger: *I refuse to die in such a stupid way*, was how she explained this afterwards. She shouted at least once: "No!" Which was a waste of breath, as there was nobody around to hear her. There were rocks, and she collided with several and was bruised and scraped, but nothing more hit her head. After what seemed like an hour, but was really only ten minutes, she found she could keep her head above the water and actually swim. It was hard to move her arms. She propelled herself towards the shore, and, finally, dragged herself up onto a small rocky beach.

Her shoes were gone and she wondered how she was going to get over the rocks without shoes. She must have been cut, her clothes were certainly ripped, there was a lump on the side of her forehead, but she didn't notice any of this at the time. A man and a woman, in summery clothes, came sauntering towards her along a path.

50 “What country am I in?” Emma asked them.
 “Canada,” said the man.

They walked past her and continued their stroll, as if they didn’t notice anything unusual about her. Probably they didn’t.

55 Emma did not find their behaviour out of place. ‘That’s good then,’ she thought to herself. She wouldn’t have to go through Immigration, which was lucky, because her purse had been swept away and so she did not have her passport with her. She began to walk upstream, slowly, because of her bare feet. There were an unusual number of helicopters around. She thumbed a lift in a car to the coffee shop - she doesn’t know why she went there instead of to her house - and by the time she got there, the accident had been on the news and everyone thought she was dead. She was
 60 taken to the hospital and treated for shock.

Emma learned several things from this experience. First, that the number nine is luckier than the number ten, a superstition she has retained to this day. Second, that many more people than she’d thought would have known about her death, had it occurred, and been affected by it. But third, that they wouldn’t have been affected very deeply or for very long. Soon she would have become just a
 65 name, a woman who had died young in a tragic accident. It was for this reason, perhaps, that she never had any of those wistful longings for death that afflict so many people in their twenties. She never thought to herself, a little melodramatically, that she wouldn’t see thirty, that some unspecified, graceful disease would carry her off. Not her. She was determined to live, no matter what.

70 Nor was she ever tempted, after that, to give up anything - a man, a job, even a vacation - in the mistaken conviction that by doing so she would be helping the happiness of others. Because she found out early how very little difference she makes in the general scheme of things, she has done what she wanted, almost always. She has been called selfish and unfeeling but she has not trotted out the story of her near-death to justify her sometimes dubious behaviour.

75 But the most obvious effect of the accident on Emma was her subsequent belief that she was invulnerable. She had been thrown into the Whirlpool Rapids and had lived. Therefore nothing could touch her. She walked in a bubble of charmed air. If an arrow had been shot at her, it would have bounced off. No doubt about it, at least for Emma.

80 Little by little this belief faded, until now all that is left is a faint glow. Her friends call it optimism, this conviction of hers that everything will work out for her somehow.

Margaret Atwood

A1. Look at lines 1-23.

Why does Emma take part in the test run of the raft? [10]

A2. Look at lines 24-60.

How does the writer convey the drama of the accident? [10]

Look at the writer’s technique and use of language as well as what happens.

A3. Look at lines 61-80.

In what ways does the accident change Emma? [10]

A4. To answer this question you will need to consider the whole passage.

What are your thoughts and feelings about Emma and the way she is presented? You must refer to the text to support your answer. [10]

SECTION B: 40 marks

Answer Question B1 and Question B2.

In this section you will be assessed for your writing skills, including the presentation of your work.

Take special care with handwriting, spelling and punctuation.

A guide to the amount you should write is given for each question.

B1. Describe a fairground on a winter's night. [20]

You should write about a page in your answer book.

Remember that this is a test of your ability to write descriptively.

B2. Choose **one** of the following titles for your writing. [20]

The quality of your writing is more important than its length. You should write about two pages in your answer book.

Either, (a) The Gamble.

Or, (b) Write a story which ends with the following:

... and it just showed that you can't always get what you want.

Or, (c) Write about a time when you showed courage.

Or, (d) The Betrayal.

Or, (e) Continue the following:

The relentless icy wind buffeted his whole body as he staggered on.