
LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

9695/73

Paper 7 Comment and Appreciation

October/November 2015

2 hours

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 **two** questions.

You are reminded of the need for good English and clear presentation in your answers.

All questions in this paper carry equal marks.

This document consists of **7** printed pages and **1** blank page and **1** insert.

1 Write a critical commentary on the following extract from the short story *The Curious Case of Benjamin Button* by F. Scott Fitzgerald (1896–1940).

When he was approximately a hundred yards from the Maryland Private Hospital for Ladies and Gentlemen he saw Doctor Keene, the family physician, descending the front steps, rubbing his hands together with a washing movement – as all doctors are required to do by the unwritten ethics of their profession.

Mr Roger Button, the president of Roger Button & Co.; Wholesale Hardware, began to run toward Doctor Keene with much less dignity than was expected from a Southern gentleman of that picturesque period. ‘Doctor Keene!’ he called. ‘Oh, Doctor Keene!’

The doctor heard him, faced around, and stood waiting, a curious expression settling on his harsh, medicinal face as Mr Button drew near.

‘What happened?’ demanded Mr Button, as he came up in a gasping rush. ‘What was it? How is she? A boy? Who is it? What –’

‘Talk sense!’ said Doctor Keene sharply. He appeared somewhat irritated.

‘Is the child born?’ begged Mr Button.

Doctor Keene frowned. ‘Why, yes, I suppose so – after a fashion.’ Again he threw a curious glance at Mr Button.

‘Is my wife all right?’

‘Yes.’

‘Is it a boy or a girl?’

‘Here now!’ cried Doctor Keene in a perfect passion of irritation, ‘I’ll ask you to go and see for yourself. Outrageous!’ He snapped the last word out in almost one syllable, then he turned away muttering: ‘Do you imagine a case like this will help my professional reputation? One more would ruin me – ruin anybody.’

‘What’s the matter?’ demanded Mr Button, appalled. ‘Triplets?’

‘No, not triplets!’ answered the doctor cuttingly. ‘What’s more, you can go and see for yourself. And get another doctor. I brought you into the world, young man, and I’ve been physician to your family for forty years, but I’m through with you! I don’t want to see you or any of your relatives ever again! Good-by!’

Then he turned sharply, and without another word climbed into his phaeton¹, which was waiting at the curbstone, and drove severely away.

Mr Button stood there upon the sidewalk, stupefied and trembling from head to foot. What horrible mishap had occurred? He had suddenly lost all desire to go into the Maryland Private Hospital for Ladies and Gentlemen – it was with the greatest difficulty that, a moment later, he forced himself to mount the steps and enter the front door.

A nurse was sitting behind a desk in the opaque gloom of the hall. Swallowing his shame, Mr Button approached her.

‘Good-morning’ she remarked, looking up at him pleasantly.

‘Good-morning. I – I am Mr Button.’

At this a look of utter terror spread itself over the girl’s face. She rose to her feet and seemed about to fly from the hall, restraining herself only with the most apparent difficulty.

‘I want to see my child,’ said Mr Button.

The nurse gave a little scream. ‘Oh – of course!’ she cried hysterically. ‘Up-stairs. Right up-stairs. Go – up!’

She pointed the direction, and Mr Button, bathed in a cool perspiration, turned falteringly, and began to mount to the second floor. In the upper hall he addressed another nurse who approached him, basin in hand. ‘I’m Mr Button,’ he managed to articulate. ‘I want to see my –’

Clank! The basin clattered to the floor and rolled in the direction of the stairs. Clank! Clank! It began a methodical descent as if sharing in the general terror which this gentleman provoked.

'I want to see my child!' Mr Button almost shrieked. He was on the verge of collapse.

Clank! The basin had reached the first floor. The nurse regained control of herself, and threw Mr Button a look of hearty contempt. 55

'All *right*, Mr Button,' she agreed in a hushed voice. 'Very *well!* But if you *knew* what state it's put us all in this morning! It's perfectly outrageous! The hospital will never have the ghost of a reputation after –'

'Hurry!' he cried hoarsely. 'I can't stand this!'

'Come this way, then, Mr Button.' 60

¹*phaeton* a horse-drawn carriage

2 Write a critical comparison of the two following poems.

I Am

I am – yet what I am none cares or knows,
 My friends forsake me like a memory lost;
 I am the self-consumer of my woes –
 They rise and vanish in oblivious host,
 Like shades in love and death's oblivion lost; 5
 And yet I am! and live with shadows tossed

Into the nothingness of scorn and noise,
 Into the living sea of waking dreams,
 Where there is neither sense of life nor joys,
 But the vast shipwreck of my life's esteems; 10
 And e'en the dearest that I loved the best
 Are strange – nay, rather stranger than the rest.

I long for scenes where man has never trod;
 A place where woman never smiled or wept;
 There to abide with my creator, God, 15
 And sleep as I in childhood sweetly slept:
 Untroubling and untroubled where I lie;
 The grass below, above the vaulted sky.

John Clare (1793–1864)

3 Write a critical commentary on the following passage from *Honour* (1995) by Joanna Murray-Smith. George and Honor are a couple who have been married for thirty-two years.

<i>George:</i> Honor –	
<i>Honor:</i> Yes –	
<i>George:</i> Honor –	
<i>She looks at him. She knows immediately something profoundly strange has happened.</i>	5
<i>Honor:</i> Are you ill?	
<i>George:</i> No –	
<i>Honor:</i> Sophie –	
<i>George:</i> No – no.	
<i>She waits. She can't imagine what could be so terrible, if her two loved ones are all right.</i>	10
Honor, I – I ...	
<i>Beat.</i>	
We have to talk.	
<i>She waits.</i>	15
I'm leaving.	
<i>Honor:</i> You're leaving?	
<i>George:</i> Yes.	
<i>Beat.</i>	
<i>Honor:</i> Where are you leaving for?	20
<i>George:</i> I don't know.	
<i>Honor:</i> What?	
<i>George:</i> I'm – I'm leaving you.	
<i>Honor:</i> What?	
<i>George:</i> Yes.	25
<i>Beat.</i>	
<i>Honor:</i> You're leaving me?	
<i>George:</i> Yes.	
<i>Honor:</i> Say it again.	
<i>George:</i> I'm leaving.	30
<i>Honor:</i> This. This. Our.	
<i>George:</i> Yes.	
<i>Beat.</i>	
<i>Honor:</i> Just like this?	
<i>George:</i> I don't know how –	35
<i>Honor:</i> Just like this?	
<i>George:</i> I – I don't know how –	
<i>Honor:</i> Today? Today?	
<i>George:</i> I can wait. I can stay tonight.	
<i>Honor:</i> Why?	40
<i>George:</i> I'm – I'm. Honor. Honor. I'm not. I can't stay.	
<i>Honor:</i> You're leaving. Did you say that?	
<i>George:</i> Yes.	
<i>Honor:</i> You're leaving me?	
<i>George:</i> Yes.	45
<i>Honor:</i> What's happening? What's happening?	
<i>George:</i> I'm not – I'm not happy.	

Honor: You're not happy?

George: No.

Honor: For how long? For how long haven't you been happy? 50

George: For a long time.

Honor: Why didn't you? Say?

George: I – I couldn't.

Honor: But this is us.

George: I didn't. I only realised how, how unhappy I've been – I only put it together. It's – I 55
woke up to it –

Honor: This morning? This morning you woke up to realise you don't want to be with me?

George: I've been thinking about it for – for months. For months. And it's come to the point
where I – Where I (*Becoming angry.*) Where I Just Can't Be Here Anymore.

Honor: You're angry? 60

George: In a way, I am.

Honor: You're angry with me?

George: No. No, but. But I can't – I can't – I can't describe it!

Honor: What?

George: It's – It's – It's a feeling. It's a feeling, for God's sake. I – I love you but – but I – I 65
don't want this any more. I don't want this.

Honor: Did you say you are leaving me?

Beat.

Did you say you are leaving me?

Beat. 70

George: I can't. I can't. I don't want this.

Honor: What?

George: This! This! I can't – I can't – I feel as if – I can't be my best self.

Honor: What?

George: I've got these – I feel these huge, huge needs – these needs – and it's – it's just not 75
possible.

Honor: What needs? Tell me. Tell me! I'll help! I'll – I'll –

George: No! It's not. It's no. It's no good, Honor. It's no good ...

Long silence.

Honor: You love me? 80

George: Yes.

Honor: You love me?

George: Yes – Yes, I –

Honor: Then there's no problem. If you love me, there's no problem. We can –

George: Not like that. 85

Honor: Like what?

George: I don't. I don't ...

Honor: What? Say it!

George: Love you like –

Honor: You don't? 90

George: No.

Beat.

Honor: You don't love me like a wife?

Beat.

George: That's *how* I love you. I love you like a wife. 95

Beat.

Honor: Isn't that a good thing?

George: I don't want that kind – I don't want – I want a different kind of – I don't want a wife.

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