Entrance Scholarships

ENGLISH

March 2012

Time allowed – 2 hours

RADLEY

Section A (40 marks)

Section B (20 marks)

Section C (20 marks)

Spelling, punctuation and grammar throughout the paper (20 marks)
You are advised to leave between 5 and 10 minutes at the end of the paper in which to check your work thoroughly.

You are expected to be able to write accurate, grammatical, well-punctuated prose.

SECTION A

Read the prose extract, which is the opening of the novel *Home*, by Marilynn Robinson. It is set in a small town in Iowa. A woman, Glory, is returning after a long time away to the home of her aging father.

Explain in as much detail as you can how the writer effectively establishes

a) the setting; and [20]

b) the characters of Glory and her father. [20]

"Home to stay, Glory! Yes!" her father said, and her heart sank. He attempted a twinkle of joy at this thought, but his eyes were damp with commiseration. "To stay for a while this time!" he amended, and took her bag from her, first shifting his cane to his weaker hand. Dear God, she thought, dear God in heaven. So began and ended all her prayers these days, which were really cries of amazement. How could her father be so frail? And how could he be so recklessly intent on satisfying his notions of gentlemanliness, hanging his cane on the railing of the stairs so he could, dear God, carry her bag up to her room? But he did it, and then he stood by the door, collecting himself.

"This is the nicest room. According to Mrs Blank." He indicated the windows. "Cross ventilation. I don't know. They all seem nice to me." He laughed. "Well, it's a good house." The house embodied for him the general blessedness of life, which was manifest, really indisputable. And which he never failed to acknowledge, especially when it stood over against particular sorrow. Even more frequently after their mother died, he spoke of the house as if it were an old wife, beautiful for every comfort it had offered, every grace, through all the long years. It was a beauty that would not be apparent to every eye. It was too tall for the neighbourhood, with a flat face and a flattened front and peaked brows over the windows. "Italianate," her father said, but that was a guess, or a rationalisation. In any case, it managed to look both austere and pretentious despite the porch her father had built on the front of it to accommodate the local taste for socialising in the hot summer evenings. And which had become overgrown by an immense bramble of trumpet vines. It was a good house, her father said, meaning it had a gracious heart however awkward its appearance. And now the gardens and the shrubbery were dishevelled, as he must have known, though he rarely ventured beyond the porch.

Not that they had been especially presentable even while the house was in its prime. Hide-and-seek had seen to that, and croquet and badminton and baseball. "Such times you had!" her father said, as if the present slight desolation were confetti and candy wrappers left after the passing of some glorious parade. And there was the oak tree in front of the house, much older than the neighbourhood or the town, which made rubble of the pavement at its foot and flung its imponderable branches out over the road and across the yard, branches whose girths were greater than the trunk of any ordinary tree. There was a torsion in its body that made it look like a giant dervish to them. Their father said if they could see as God can, in geological time, they would see it leap out of the ground and turn in the sun and spread its arms and bask in the joys of being an oak tree in Iowa. There had once been four swings suspended from those branches,

announcing to the world the fruitfulness of their household. The oak tree flourished still, and of course there had been and there were the apple and cherry and apricot trees, the lilacs and trumpet vines and the day lilies. A few of her mother's irises managed to bloom. At Easter she and her sisters could still bring in armfuls of flowers, and their father's eyes would glitter with tears and he would say, "Ah yes, yes," as if they had brought some memento, these flowers only a pleasant reminder of flowers.

Why should this staunch and upright house seem to her so abandoned? So heartbroken? The eye of the beholder, she thought. Still, seven of her father's children came home as often as they could manage to, and telephoned, and sent notes and gifts and crates of grapefruit. Their own children, from the time they could grasp a crayon and scrawl, were taught to remember Grandpa, then Great-grandpa. Parishioners and the children and grandchildren looked in on her father with a faithfulness that would have taxed his strength if the new minister had not hinted at the problem. And there was Ames, her father's alter ego, in whom he had confided so long and so utterly that he was a second father to them all, not least in the fact of knowing more about them than was entirely consistent with their comfort.

SECTION B

These two poems both celebrate some aspect of nature. *The Early Frogs,* which appears in an Anthology entitled *The World's Worst Poetry,* is by Harry Edward Mills (who was writing in the 1870s). *Daffodils*, by William Wordsworth (1770-1850), is a very popular poem by one of the most successful and celebrated poets of all time. Based on the evidence of these two poems, explain what makes Wordsworth a better poet than Mills. [20]

The Early Frogs

O, I love to hear the frogs
When they first begin to sing;
How they vocalise the bogs,
And vociferate the Spring.
How they carol as they croak,
How they mingle jest and joke
With their solemn chant and dirge
On the river's slimy verge.

O, I love to hear the frogs,
For their monotone uncouth
Is the music of the cogs
Of the mill wheel of my youth.
And I listen half asleep,
And the eyes of memory peep
Through the bars that hold me fast,
From the pleasures of the past.

O, I love to hear the frogs,
For their melody is health
To the heart that worry flogs
With the lash of want and wealth.
And the cares of life take wing,
And its pleasures lose their sting,
And love's channel way unclogs
In the croaking of the frogs.

Daffodils

I wandered lonely as a cloud
That floats on high o'er vales and hills
When all at once I saw a crowd,
A host of golden daffodils –
Along the lake, beneath the trees,
Ten thousand dancing in the breeze.

The waves beside them danced, but they
Outdid the sparkling waves with glee;
A poet could not but be gay
In such a jocund company.
I gazed and gazed, but little thought
What wealth the show to me had brought.

For oft when on my couch I lie,
In vacant or in pensive mood,
They flash upon that inward eye
Which is the bliss of solitude,
And then my heart with pleasure fills
And dances with the daffodils.

SECTION C

Home

Bearing in mind the opening to Robinson's novel from Section A, write about a character who returns home after a long absence. Confine your story to the moments immediately surrounding the character's return. [20]

Your writing should help the reader to share the experience described. Credit will be given especially to writing which achieves this.

Marks for spelling, punctuation and grammar throughout the paper [20]

Spend between 5 and 10 minutes checking your work for accuracy at the end.

Total for the paper [100]
