

Candidate Name: .....



# St Swithun's

## English Literature

**Sixth Form Academic Assessment**

**PAST PAPER**

**Time allowed : 1 hour**

### **Instructions to Candidates**

Candidates should answer both questions.

#### **Further Information**

- No dictionaries or thesauruses are permitted in this assessment.
- You are reminded of the need for good English and clear presentation in your answers.
- All answers should be written in continuous prose.
- You are advised to spend 20 minutes on question 1; 40 minutes on question 2.

1. *Analyse the speaker's presentation of the mother and child by commenting closely upon the effect of language and structure.*

**"Refugee Mother and Child", Chinua Achebe**

No Madonna and Child could touch  
that picture of a mother's tenderness  
for a son she soon would have to forget.

The air was heavy with odours  
of diarrhoea of unwashed children  
with washed-out ribs and dried-up  
bottoms struggling in laboured  
steps behind blown empty bellies. Most  
mothers there had long ceased  
to care but not this one; she held  
a ghost smile between her teeth  
and in her eyes the ghost of a mother's  
pride as she combed the rust-coloured  
hair left on his skull and then -  
singing in her eyes - began carefully  
to part it...In another life this  
must have been a little daily  
act of no consequence before his  
breakfast and school; now she  
did it like putting flowers  
on a tiny grave.

2. *Explore in detail the speaker's requests, ensuring that you consider their literal and metaphorical meanings as well as the language used to present them.*

**"Prayer Before Birth", Louis MacNeice**

I am not yet born; O hear me.  
Let not the bloodsucking bat or the rat or the stoat or  
the club-footed ghoul come near me.

I am not yet born, console me.  
I fear that the human race may with tall walls wall me, with strong drugs dope me,  
with wise lies lure me, on black racks rack me, in blood-baths roll me.

I am not yet born; provide me  
With water to dandle<sup>1</sup> me, grass to grow for me, trees to talk to me,  
sky to sing to me, birds and a white light in the back of my mind to guide me.

I am not yet born; forgive me  
For the sins that in me the world shall commit, my words when they speak me,  
my thoughts when they think me, my treason engendered by traitors beyond me,  
my life when they murder by means of my hands, my death when they live me.

I am not yet born; rehearse me  
In the parts I must play and the cues I must take when old men lecture me,  
bureaucrats hector me, mountains frown at me, lovers laugh at me,  
the white waves call me to folly and the desert calls me to doom and  
the beggar refuses my gift and my children curse me.

I am not yet born; O hear me,  
Let not the man who is beast or who thinks he is God  
come near me.

I am not yet born; O fill me  
With strength against those who would freeze my humanity,  
would dragoon<sup>2</sup> me into a lethal automaton, would make me a cog in a machine,  
a thing with one face, a thing, and against all those who would dissipate  
my entirety, would blow me like thistledown hither and thither  
or hither and thither  
like water held in the hands would spill me.

Let them not make me a stone and let them not spill me.  
Otherwise kill me.

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<sup>1</sup> To move (a small child) up and down on the knees or in the arms in a playful way.

<sup>2</sup> To compel by coercion, threats, or crude means.

