

**UPC** : 52031901  
**Name of the course** : B.Com. Programme (LOCF)  
**Name of the paper** : English Language Through Literature  
**Semester** : 3  
**Marks** : 75  
**Time limit** : 3+1 (one hour reserved for downloading of question paper, scanning and uploading of answer sheets)

The paper contains 3 unseen passages.  
Students will attempt any FOUR out of SIX questions.  
All questions carry equal marks.

**Answers for all questions for subpart A to to be written in 200-250 words and for subpart B in 300-350 words.**

Time: 3+1 hours

Max. Marks: 75

Answer any FOUR out of six questions based on any of the following three passages.  
(18.75 Marks x 4 = 75 Marks)

**Passage 1** (750 words)

When we went once to Malabar for a month's stay with my grandmother, we lent our cook to Mrs. Ross so that she might teach him the rudiments of European cookery. With every vacation that we took, our cook advanced more and more in the culinary arts until our eating habits had to be altered to suit his sophistication.

Instead of the rice and curry, he served us soups, cutlets and a stew. For my mother he cooked a plate of rice and lentils because he felt that it was too late to change her tastes. My father ate with a fork and knife. The children, my elder brother and I, eating early and unsupervised, ate Western meals with our little brown fingers, licking our hands, enjoying all that was served on our plates while the cook stood by, frowning. He thought us savages.

My father was always busy with his work at the automobile firm where he was employed, selling Rolls Royces, Humbers and Bentleys to the Indian princes and their relatives. My mother, vague and indifferent, spent her time lying on her belly on a large four-post bed, composing poems in Malayalam. We had no full-time maid at that time. The cook took us to the European school a furlong away and brought us back in the afternoon.

He was not of an affectionate nature. So we grew-up more or less neglected, and because we were aware of ourselves as neglected children in a social circle that pampered the young,

there developed between us a strong relationship of love, the kind a leper may feel for his mate who pushed him on a hand-cart when they went on their begging rounds.

My brother was plump and dark. His eyes were bright and circular. Although he was the cleverest in his class, the white boys made fun of him and tortured him by pushing a pointed pencil up his nostril. One day his shirt-front was covered with blood. He was stunned by the cruelty but even the tears seemed inhibited, staying suspended on his lashes while William the bully exclaimed "Blackie, your blood is red." I scratched his face in a mad rage, but was soon overpowered by the tough Anglo-Indians who were always on the other side, fighting for the white man's rights. We did not tell our parents of tortures we underwent at school for wearing, under the school uniform of white twill, a nut-brown skin.

Occasionally the school would get a distinguished visitor, a bird of bright plumage alighting for a short while, a Governor's wife, a white moustached admiral or a lady in grey silks claiming relationship with the family at Buckingham Palace.

I do not know how our lady-principal, whom we called Madam, managed to lure such august personages in. Ours was not a big school. Perhaps it was because we sang the National Anthem, Rule Britannia, louder than the others. In the morning while Madam sat at the grand piano on which stood the tinted photograph of the British royal family and we raised our voices in song, singing 'Britons never never shall be slaves', even the postman slowed his walk to listen. King George the Sixth (God save his soul) used to wink at us from the gilt frame, as though he knew that the British were singing in India their swan song...

Shirley Temple was the rage then with her golden ringlets and her toothy smile. All the little girls copied her. Our school hung her picture on the wall behind the piano. We had in my class another Shirley. A Scot with pink cheeks and yellow ringlets. When the dignitaries arrived, it was always Shirley who carried up the bouquet.

Once she was asked to read a poem that I had composed and when the visitor asked who wrote it, our principal said, Shirley of course, she is a combination of beauty and brains, and then there was from the Governor's wife a special kiss. What a bright little moppet, she said.

When the visitors came the brown children were always discreetly hidden away, swept under the carpet, told to wait in the corridor behind the lavatories where the school ayahs kept them company. None of us looked too pretty in those days. There were six in all, counting Louis the black Anglo-Indian who could not make up his mind which side to take. If we were hated by the white children, poor Louis was hated more but he followed them about, clowning to put them in good humour, barking like a dog and braying like an ass...

**1. This question has two subparts, A+B. Both have to be answered.**

A. In colonial India, Indians faced discrimination because of their skin colour. Do you agree? Give a reasoned answer, in 200-250 words, with reference to Passage 1. (8.75 marks)

B. Imagine you are the narrator of Passage 1, and you feel upset about the way Louis is treated by white children. Write a dramatic extract, in about 300-350 words, where you tell Louis to have more self-respect and not give the bullies so much importance. Use dialogues and descriptions of non-verbal cues/stage directions to draft the conversation. (10 marks)

**2. This question has two subparts, A+B. Both have to be answered.**

A. In Passage 1, Indians are shown as being obsessed with British culture, and this reflects their sense of racial inferiority, planted by years of colonial rule. Do you agree? Give a reasoned answer, in about 200-250 words, with reference to Passage 1. (8.75 marks)

B. The narrator in Passage 1 experiences neglect – by her parents as well as by her British classmates. Write a diary entry, in about 300-350 words, in the narrator's voice, where she speaks of her experiences of – and feelings about – not being cherished as much as she would have liked. (10 marks)

**Passage 2** (738 words)

THE GIRL. Oh, I know that I'm just one of the office force to you. But you don't imagine that anyone can know you as I have long enough, without there being *some* kind of an effect? You know, in my own troubles— You don't pay me a very big salary, Mr. Strickland, and there are others whom I must help. But I'm not complaining. [*She smiles.*] I used to be like the other girls. I used to watch the clock and count the hours and the minutes ... But it's different now.

STRICKLAND [*slowly*]. How—different?

THE GIRL. I thought it over, and I made up my mind that it wasn't right to count the minutes you worked for an honest man. [*Strickland turns away.*] I do my best—that's all I can do, but *you* do your best, and it's the *least* I can do.

STRICKLAND [*after a pause*]. Are you sure—I do my best? Are you sure I am an honest man?

THE GIRL. Why, Mr. Strickland?

STRICKLAND [*after another pause*]. You remember—a few minutes ago, you spoke the name of Alfred Stevens?

THE GIRL. Yes.

STRICKLAND. Suppose I told you that there once *was* an Alfred Stevens, whom I knew, who stole money—stole it when there was no excuse for it—when he didn't need it. His people had plenty but he couldn't resist the temptation.... He was eighteen years old then.

THE GIRL [*gently*]. Only a boy.

STRICKLAND. Only a boy, yes, but he had the dishonest streak in him! Other boys passed by the same opportunity. Stevens didn't even know what to do with the money when he had stolen it. They caught him in less than twenty-four hours.

THE GIRL. He was punished.

STRICKLAND [*nodding*]. He served a year in jail. God! What a year! His folks disowned him: they said such a thing had never happened in the family. And they let him rot in jail. [*He pauses.*] When he got out—or—when he was *let* out ... he changed his name so nobody could find him. He left his home town. He came here.

THE GIRL. And he has been honest ever since!

STRICKLAND. Ever since: for twenty-eight years! It was hard at times, terribly hard! In the beginning, when he had to go hungry and cold, when he saw other men riding around in carriages, he wondered if he hadn't made a mistake. He had knocked about a good deal; he had learnt a lot, and he wouldn't have been caught so easily the second time. It was *almost* worth taking the chance! And he knew *how*! I don't know why he didn't do it.

THE GIRL. Tell me more.

STRICKLAND. He managed to live. It wasn't pleasant living. But he stayed alive! I don't like to think of what he did to stay alive: it was humiliating; it was shameful, because he hadn't been brought up to do that kind of thing, but it was honest. Honest, and when he walked home from his work at six o'clock, walked home to save the nickel, his betters never crowded him because they didn't want to soil their clothes with his *honest* dirt! He had thought the year in jail was terrible. The first year he was free was worse. He had never been hungry in jail.

THE GIRL. Then his chance came.

STRICKLAND. Yes, it *was* a chance. He found a purse in the gutter, and he returned it to the owner before he had made up his mind whether to keep it or not. So they said he was honest! He knew he wasn't! He knew that he had returned it because there was so much money in it that he was afraid to keep it, but he never told them that. And when the man who owned the purse gave him a job, he worked—worked because he was afraid not to work—worked so that he wouldn't have any time to think, because he knew that if he began to think, he would begin to steal! Then they said he was a hard worker, and they promoted him: they made him manager. That gave him more chances to steal, but there were so many men watching him, so many men anxious for him to make a slip so that they might climb over him, that he didn't dare.

THE GIRL. And then?

STRICKLAND. The rest was easy. Nothing succeeds like a good reputation ...

THE GIRL. Mr. Strickland?

STRICKLAND [*looking into her eyes; very quietly*]. Stevens, please.

**3. This question has two subparts, A+B. Both have to be answered.**

A. What impression of Mr. Strickland do you form from your reading of the dramatic extract? Why does he confess? Answer in 200-250 words. (8.75 marks)

B. Imagine you are the girl in the dramatic extract in whom Mr. Strickland has confided. Write a dialogue with a friend (in 300-350 words) discussing the factors that you think are responsible for Mr. Strickland's present state. (10 marks)

**4. This question has two subparts, A+B. Both have to be answered.**

A. the state of mind and time spent by Mr. Strickland in jail and thereafter for a new life (in 200-250 words). (8.75 marks)

B. Write a letter (in 300-350 words) to Mr. Strickland's family, apprising them of their son's whereabouts and transformation, and urging them to reconnect with him. (10 marks)

**Passage 3** (741 words)

On the night of the 31<sup>st</sup> December a big bonfire and party was organised on the terrace of our apartment building. Since I am not a very social type, I didn't go up to join the party but instead watched Michelangelo Antonioni's wonderful Blow-up on cable T.V. My parents came home by 11 pm and much before the old year had been rung out and the new year rung in, the party had died a cold lingering death. Many families had failed to turn up, and like it always happens at these things, more food than needed had been ordered and was now left untouched on the tables. Great heaps of chicken and meat and biryani and paneer and kofta curry and gulab jamun with no one to consume it all. The ladies came down by 11.30 and the remaining gentlemen drunks were in no position to stand, let alone eat.

Anyway, one of the gentlemen drunks suddenly felt in his breast the milk of human kindness and said to Munna, who was there watching the antics and mixing the drinks and having a few pegs of his own, I am sure, "Munna beta go downstairs and bring the guards up to eat, someone has to eat these damn things."

So Munna went downstairs and the guards came up and all of them, except Roop, gorged on the food and went downstairs satisfied. Two of them had upset stomachs the next morning. As Roop picked up the plate and started to serve himself, Kedia rolled over to him and said loudly, "So Mr Singh, I hope you are not hungry now. You probably haven't eaten such fabulous food ever in your life, so eat carefully, don't overdo it." And then he laughed and patted Roop on the back patronisingly. Roop felt as if some had lit a long abandoned fuse inside his body and that it was snaking up slowly to his brain. He quietly put the plate down and walked away, aware of everybody's eyes boring into his back. The other guards chose to ignore Roop's reaction; they enjoyed themselves to the full.

What happened next can only be called unfortunate; maybe tragic but 'tragic', has a kind of grandeur attached to it, which doesn't necessarily include the minor characters of this world. Roop was on night duty, on the 31<sup>st</sup> of December. After the party had died down and the people gone to sleep Roop sat in the lobby and brooded over what had happened. This is all reconstruction, all conjecture on my part, because the evidence is all physical and doesn't really say anything about his mind, except that he was perhaps hopelessly melancholic and full of hurt and pain. He probably thought about his family. It was his son's face, that night, around four o'clock in the morning that finally upset the delicate balance of his mind. With his bare hands he ripped the lobby apart. With his fists he broke the glass revolving doors, the wooden bench where we sat and talked, the red plastic chairs and the intercom system. His hands were bleeding badly, the fingers broken at many places, and when Haripal, the other guard that night tried to stop him he punched him in the mouth. He was totally oblivious to pain, and only when Haripal came back with the other two guards and they all beat him up that he became quiet. But by that time the lobby was totally trashed. Haripal came to inform us and my father woke me up and we went downstairs. Some other residents followed in a little while. Roop was in the guardroom. They had tied him up with a rubber hose pipe. His face was swollen and his hands were badly smashed. The eyes were blank, expressionless, like the eyes of people we sometimes see in B.B.C documentaries in some remote corner of the world struck by natural disaster – an earthquake, a drought or a cyclone. I untied his hands and legs but he sat there on the floor motionless. Kedia didn't come down.

Later, I came to know why he didn't. My father and a few other residents took Roop to a nursing home nearby. He had multiple fractures on his hands. He probably would never work with his hands again. Damaged beyond repair. We have sued the security agency. Someone has to pay for the damages, I guess.

**5. This question has two subparts, A+B. Both have to be answered.**

A. Why did Roop Singh take his revenge by destroying the lobby and mutilating his own hands rather than by attacking Kedia? Do you think that Roop Singh's story is tragic?  
(8.75 marks)

B. Suppose that you are a policeman called in to investigate the incident that took place on the night of 31<sup>st</sup> December in an apartment building in Patna. Write a detailed report of the incident after having talked to Haripal, the two other guards, the narrator, his father as well as Munna, the servant boy.

**6. This question has two subparts, A+B. Both have to be answered.**

A. Critically examine the role of the narrator in the story. What can you surmise about the character of the narrator? (8.75 marks)

B. Imagine that you are Kedia. Conduct a conversation with your friend telling him about the incident on the night of 31<sup>st</sup> December and your reaction to it. Remember that you do not like Roop Singh but you may be intrigued by his behaviour. Will you have a sense of guilt or a sense of triumph at what happened? You may represent this conversation in the form of a narrative or an essay. (10 marks)