

SECTION C (Unseen Poetry)

Answer **both** part (a) **and** part (b)

You are advised to spend about 20 minutes on part (a) and about 40 minutes on part (b).

Read the two poems *The Closed School* by Raymond Wilson and *After Lessons* by Stephen Knight. In both these poems the poet writes about the experience of being inside an empty school.

- (a) Write about the poem *The Closed School* by Raymond Wilson, and its effect on you. [15]

You may wish to consider:

- *What the poem is about and how it is organised;*
- *The ideas the poet may have wanted us to think about;*
- *The poet's choice of words, phrases and images and the effects they create;*
- *How you respond to the poem.*

The Closed School

Under the silvering light of the cold, tall sky,
Where the stars are like glimmering ice and the
moon rides high,
Bolted and locked since the war by long-dead
hands,
Next to the shadowy church, the closed school
stands.

A village school, in the grip of frost and the past,
Its classrooms airless as tombs, its corridors
waste;
Behind boarded windows barely an insect crawls
On the spreading atlas that is staining ceiling and
walls.

Here is the stillness of death. Listen hard as you
can,
There's not one sound to be heard that is noisier
than
The creeping of mould, or the crumbling of
masonry
Into a fine floor-dust, soft and powdery.

Only deeper than the silence, at the far end of
listening,
Come the feet in the corridors, silver voices that
ring
In the raftered hall, and outside, where the frost
freezes hard,
Brittle laughter of children, snowballing in the
yard.

Raymond Wilson

b) Now compare *The Closed School* by Raymond Wilson and *After Lessons* by Stephen Knight.

[25]

You should compare:

- What the poems are about and how they are organised;
- The ideas the poets may have wanted us to think about;
- The poets' choice of words, phrases and images and the effects they create;
- How you respond to the poems.

After Lessons

The classrooms are as dead as winter trees.
You hold your breath along the corridor –
Your plimsolls* creak. There is no other noise.

A single light ices the polished floor.
You turn and, somehow, end up in The Boys,
A row of basins level with your knees.

You shouldn't be inside this place so late.
I wonder what you thought you might achieve
By squinting at the blackboard. What, and
how?

In the dark, you wipe your nose across your
sleeve.
It's much too late to put your hand up now.
There's someone outside, waiting at the gate.

Stephen Knight

* *plimsolls* – a type of shoe