**One Art**

The art of losing isn’t hard to master;

so many things seem filled with the intent

to be lost that their loss is no disaster.

Lose something every day. Accept the fluster

of lost door keys, the hour badly spent.

The art of losing isn’t hard to master.

Then practice\* losing farther, losing faster:

places, and names, and where it was you meant

to travel. None of these will bring disaster.

I lost my mother’s watch. And look! my last, or

next-to-last, of three loved houses went.

The art of losing isn’t hard to master.

I lost two cities, lovely ones. And, vaster,

some realms I owned, two rivers, a continent.

I miss them, but it wasn’t a disaster.

– Even losing you (the joking voice, a gesture

I love) I shan’t have lied. It’s evident

the art of losing’s not too hard to master

though it may look like (Write it!) like disaster.

**Elizabeth Bishop**

\*practice – Please note the American spelling. English spelling: practise

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| **2** | **7** | **.** | **1** |

**In ‘One Art,’ how does the speaker convey their feelings about the subject of loss**?

**[24 marks]**

**The Wild Swans at Coole\***

The trees are in their autumn beauty,

The woodland paths are dry,

Under the October twilight the water

Mirrors a still sky;

Upon the brimming water among the stones

Are nine-and-fifty swans.

The nineteenth autumn has come upon me

Since I first made my count;

I saw, before I had well finished,

All suddenly mount

And scatter wheeling in great broken rings

Upon their clamorous\* wings.

I have looked upon those brilliant creatures,

And now my heart is sore.

All’s changed since I, hearing at twilight,

The first time on this shore,

The bell-beat of their wings above my head,

Trod with a lighter tread.

Unwearied still, lover by lover,

They paddle in the cold

Companionable streams or climb the air;

Their hearts have not grown old;

Passion or conquest, wander where they will,

Attend upon them still.

But now they drift on the still water,

Mysterious, beautiful;

Among what rushes will they build,

By what lake’s edge or pool

Delight men’s eyes when I awake some day

To find they have flown away?

W. B. Yeats

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| **2** | **7** | **.** | **1** |

**In ‘The Wild Swans at Coole,’ how does the poet present his feelings about the swans in this poem?**

**[24 marks]**

**The Rear-Guard**

(*Hindenburg Line, April 1917*)

Groping along the tunnel, step by step,

He winked his prying torch with patching glare

From side to side, and sniffed the unwholesome air.

Tins, boxes, bottles, shapes too vague to know,

A mirror smashed, the mattress from a bed;

And he, exploring fifty feet below

The rosy gloom of battle overhead.

Tripping, he grabbed the wall; saw someone lie

Humped at his feet, half-hidden by a rug,

And stooped to give the sleeper’s arm a tug.

‘I’m looking for headquarters.’ No reply.

‘God blast your neck!’ (For days he’d had no sleep.)

‘Get up and guide me through this stinking place.’

Savage, he kicked a soft, unanswering heap,

And flashed his beam across the livid\* face

Terribly glaring up, whose eyes yet wore

Agony dying hard ten days before;

And fists of fingers clutched a blackening wound.

Alone he staggered on until he found

Dawn’s ghost that filtered down a shafted stair

To the dazed, muttering creatures underground

Who hear the boom of shells in muffled sound.

At last, with sweat of horror in his hair,

He climbed through darkness to the twilight air,

Unloading hell behind him step by step.

Siegfried Sassoon

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| **2** | **7** | **.** | **1** |

**In ‘The Rear-Guard,’ how does the poet present his ideas about the soldier’s journey?**

**[24 marks]**

**In Mrs Tilscher's class**

You could travel up the Blue Nile

with your finger, tracing the route

while Mrs Tilscher chanted the scenery.

”Tana. Ethiopia. Khartoum. Aswan.”

That for an hour,

then a skittle of milk

and the chalky Pyramids rubbed into dust.

A window opened with a long pole.

The laugh of a bell swung by a running child.

This was better than home. Enthralling books.

The classroom glowed like a sweetshop.

Sugar paper. Coloured shapes. Brady and Hindley

faded, like the faint, uneasy smudge of a mistake.

Mrs Tilscher loved you. Some mornings, you found

she'd left a gold star by your name.

The scent of a pencil slowly, carefully, shaved.

A xylophone's nonsense heard from another form.

Over the Easter term the inky tadpoles changed

from commas into exclamation marks. Three frogs

hopped in the playground, freed by a dunce

followed by a line of kids, jumping and croaking

away from the lunch queue. A rough boy

told you how you were born. You kicked him, but stared

at your parents, appalled, when you got back

home

That feverish July, the air tasted of electricity.

A tangible alarm made you always untidy, hot,

fractious under the heavy, sexy sky. You asked her

how you were born and Mrs Tilscher smiled

then turned away. Reports were handed out.

You ran through the gates, impatient to be grown

the sky split open into a thunderstorm.

**Carol Anne Duffy**

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| **2** | **7** | **.** | **1** |

**In ‘In Mrs Tilscher’s Class,’ how does the poet present ideas about childhood memories?**

**[24 marks]**

**Fantasy of an African Boy**

Such a peculiar lot

we are, we people

without money, in daylong

yearlong sunlight, knowing

money is somewhere, somewhere.

Everybody says it’s big

bigger brain bother now,

money. Such millions and millions

of us don’t manage at all

without it, like war going on.

And we can’t eat it. Yet

without it our heads alone

stay big, as lots and lots do,

coming from nowhere joyful,

going nowhere happy.

We can’t drink it up. Yet

without it we shrivel when small

and stop forever

where we stopped, as lots and lots do.

We can’t read money for books.

Yet without it we don’t

read, don’t write numbers,

don’t open gates in other countries,

as lots and lots never do.

We can’t use money to bandage

sores, can’t pound it

to powder for sick eyes

and sick bellies. Yet without

it, flesh melts from our bones.

Such walled-round gentlemen

overseas minding money! Such

bigtime gentlemen, body guarded

because of too much respect

and too many wishes on them:

too many wishes, everywhere,

wanting them to let go

magic of money, and let it fly

away, everywhere, day and night,

just like dropped leaves in wind!

**James Berry**

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| **2** | **7** | **.** | **1** |

**In ‘Fantasy of an African Boy,’ how does the poet present ideas about the significance of money?**

**[24 marks]**

**The Road Not Taken**

Two roads diverged in a yellow wood,

And sorry I could not travel both

And be one traveler, long I stood

And looked down one as far as I could

To where it bent in the undergrowth;

Then took the other, as just as fair,

And having perhaps the better claim,

Because it was grassy and wanted wear;

Though as for that the passing there

Had worn them really about the same,

And both that morning equally lay

In leaves no step had trodden black.

Oh, I kept the first for another day!

Yet knowing how way leads on to way,

I doubted if I should ever come back.

I shall be telling this with a sigh

Somewhere ages and ages hence:

Two roads diverged in a wood, and I—

I took the one less traveled by,

And that has made all the difference.

**Robert Frost**

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| **2** | **7** | **.** | **1** |

**In ‘The Road Not Taken,’ how does the poet present ideas about the importance of making decisions?**

**[24 marks]**

**Island Man**

Morning

and island man wakes up

to the sound of blue surf

in his head

the steady breaking and wombing

wild seabirds

and fishermen pushing out to sea

the sun surfacing defiantly

from the east

of his small emerald island

he always comes back groggily groggily

Comes back to sands

of a grey metallic soar

to surge of wheels

to dull North Circular\* roar

muffling muffling

his crumpled pillow waves

island man heaves himself

Another London day

**Grace Nichols**

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| **2** | **7** | **.** | **1** |

**In ‘Island Man,’ how does the poet present ideas about place?**

**[24 marks]**

**An Old Woman**

An old woman grabs

hold of your sleeve

and tags along.

She wants a fifty paise coin.

She says she will take you

to the horseshoe shrine.

You’ve seen it already.

She hobbles along anyway

and tightens her grip on your shirt.

She won’t let you go.

You know how old women are.

They stick to you like a burr.

You turn around and face her

with an air of finality.

You want to end the farce.

When you hear her say,

‘What else can an old woman do

on hills as wretched as these?’

You look right at the sky.

Clear through the bullet holes

she has for her eyes.

And as you look on

the cracks that begin around her eyes

spread beyond her skin.

And the hills crack.

And the temples crack.

And the sky falls

With a plate-glass clatter

Around the shatterproof crone

who stands alone.

And you are reduced

to so much small change

in her hand.

**Arun Kolatkar**

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| **2** | **7** | **.** | **1** |

**In ‘An Old Woman,’ how does the poet create sympathy for the old woman?**

**[24 marks]**

**Blessing**

The skin cracks like a pod.

There never is enough water.

Imagine the drip of it,

the small splash, echo

in a tin mug,

the voice of a kindly god.

Sometimes, the sudden rush

of fortune. The municipal pipe bursts,

silver crashes to the ground

and the flow has found

a roar of tongues. From the huts,

a congregation : every man woman

child for streets around

butts in, with pots,

brass, copper, aluminium,

plastic buckets,

frantic hands,

and naked children

screaming in the liquid sun,

their highlights polished to perfection,

flashing light,

as the blessing sings

over their small bones.

**Imtiaz Dharker**

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| **2** | **7** | **.** | **1** |

**In ‘Blessing,’ how does the poet present ideas about poverty and wealth?**

**[24 marks]**

**For Heidi with Blue Hair**

When you dyed your hair blue

(or, at least, ultramarine

for the clipped sides, with a crest

of jet-black spikes on top)

you were sent home from schoo

because, as the headmistress put it,

although dyed hair was not

specifically forbidden, yours

was, apart from anything else,

not done in the school colours.

Tears in the kitchen, telephone-calls

to school from your freedom-loving father:

‘She’s not a punk\* in her behaviour;

it’s just a style.’ (You wiped your eyes,

also not in a school colour.)

‘She discussed it with me first –

we checked the rules.’ ‘And anyway, Dad,

it cost twenty-five dollars.

Tell them it won’t wash out –

not even if I wanted to try.’

It would have been unfair to mention

your mother’s death, but that

shimmered behind the arguments.

The school had nothing else against you;

the teachers twittered and gave in.

Next day your black friend had hers done

in grey, white and flaxen yellow –

the school colours precisely:

an act of solidarity\*, a witty

tease. The battle was already won.

**Fleur Adcock**

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| **2** | **7** | **.** | **1** |

**In ‘Heidi with Blue Hair,’ how does the poet present ideas about individuality?**

**[24 marks]**

**Still I Rise**

You may write me down in history

With your bitter, twisted lies,

You may trod me in the very dirt

But still, like dust, I'll rise.

Does my sassiness upset you?

Why are you beset with gloom?

’Cause I walk like I've got oil wells

Pumping in my living room.

Just like moons and like suns,

With the certainty of tides,

Just like hopes springing high,

Still I'll rise.

Did you want to see me broken?

Bowed head and lowered eyes?

Shoulders falling down like teardrops,

Weakened by my soulful cries?

Does my haughtiness offend you?

Don't you take it awful hard

’Cause I laugh like I've got gold mines

Diggin’ in my own backyard.

You may shoot me with your words,

You may cut me with your eyes,

You may kill me with your hatefulness,

But still, like air, I’ll rise.

Does my sexiness upset you?

Does it come as a surprise

That I dance like I've got diamonds

At the meeting of my thighs?

Out of the huts of history’s shame

I rise

Up from a past that’s rooted in pain

I rise

I'm a black ocean, leaping and wide,

Welling and swelling I bear in the tide.

Leaving behind nights of terror and fear

I rise

Into a daybreak that’s wondrously clear

I rise

Bringing the gifts that my ancestors gave,

I am the dream and the hope of the slave.

I rise

I rise

I rise.

**Maya Angelou**

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| **2** | **7** | **.** | **1** |

**In ‘Still I Rise,’ how does the poet present ideas about determination and injustice?**

**[24 marks]**

**O Captain! My Captain!**

Captain! My Captain! Related Poem Content Details

O Captain! my Captain! our fearful trip is done,

The ship has weather’d every rack, the prize we sought is won,

The port is near, the bells I hear, the people all exulting,

While follow eyes the steady keel, the vessel grim and daring;

But O heart! heart! heart!

O the bleeding drops of red,

Where on the deck my Captain lies,

Fallen cold and dead.

O Captain! my Captain! rise up and hear the bells;

Rise up—for you the flag is flung—for you the bugle trills,

For you bouquets and ribbon’d wreaths—for you the shores a-crowding,

For you they call, the swaying mass, their eager faces turning;

Here Captain! dear father!

This arm beneath your head!

It is some dream that on the deck,

You’ve fallen cold and dead.

My Captain does not answer, his lips are pale and still,

My father does not feel my arm, he has no pulse nor will,

The ship is anchor’d safe and sound, its voyage closed and done,

From fearful trip the victor ship comes in with object won;

Exult O shores, and ring O bells!

But I with mournful tread,

Walk the deck my Captain lies,

Fallen cold and dead.

**Walt Whitman**

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| **2** | **7** | **.** | **1** |

**In ‘O Captain! My Captain!’ how does the poet present ideas about loyalty?**

**[24 marks]**

**Invictus**

Out of the night that covers me,

Black as the pit from pole to pole,

I thank whatever gods may be

For my unconquerable soul.

In the fell clutch of circumstance

I have not winced nor cried aloud.

Under the bludgeonings of chance

My head is bloody, but unbowed.

Beyond this place of wrath and tears

Looms but the Horror of the shade,

And yet the menace of the years

Finds and shall find me unafraid.

It matters not how strait the gate,

How charged with punishments the scroll,

I am the master of my fate,

I am the captain of my soul.

**William Ernest Henley**

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| **2** | **7** | **.** | **1** |

**In ‘Invictus,’ how does the poet present ideas about fate and determination?**

**[24 marks]**

**Alpine Letter**

Love? If you’d asked me yesterday, I’d say

love is a saw that amputates the heart.

I’d call it my disease, I’d call it plague.

But yesterday, I hadn’t heard from you.

So call it the weight of light that holds one soul

connected to another. Or a tear

that falls in all gratitude, becoming sea.

Call it the only word that comforts me.

The sight of your writing has me on the floor,

the curve of each letter looped about my heart.

And in this ink, the tenor of your voice.

And in this ink the movement of your hand.

The Alps, now, cut their teeth upon the sky,

and pressing on to set these granite jaws

between us, not a mile will do me harm.

Your letter, in my coat, will keep me warm.

**Ros Barber**

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| **2** | **7** | **.** | **1** |

**In ‘Alpine Letter,’ how does the poet present ideas about love?**

**[24 marks]**

**Piano**

Softly, in the dusk, a woman is singing to me;

Taking me back down the vista of years, till I see

A child sitting under the piano, in the boom of the tingling

strings

And pressing the small, poised feet of a mother who smiles as she

sings.

In spite of myself, the insidious mastery of song

Betrays me back, till the heart of me weeps to belong

To the old Sunday evenings at home, with winter outside

And hymns in the cozy parlour, the tinkling piano our guide.

So now it is vain for the singer to burst into clamour

With the great black piano appassionato. The glamour

Of childish days is upon me, my manhood is cast

Down in the flood of remembrance, I weep like a child for the

past.

**D. H. Lawrence**

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| **2** | **7** | **.** | **1** |

**In ‘Piano,’ how does the speaker present ideas about the significance of memories?**

**[24 marks]**

**Telephone Conversation**

The price seemed reasonable, location

Indifferent. The landlady swore she lived

Off premises. Nothing remained

But self-confession. “Madam”, I warned,

“I hate a wasted journey – I am African.”

Silence. Silenced transmission of

Pressurized good-breeding. Voice, when it came,

Lipstick coated, long gold-rolled

Cigarette-holder pipped. Caught I was, foully.

“HOW DARK?”...I had not misheard...“ARE YOU LIGHT

OR VERY DARK?” Button B. Button A\*. Stench

Of rancid breath of public hide-and-speak.

Red booth. Red pillar-box. Red double-tiered

Omnibus squelching tar. It was real! Shamed

By ill-mannered silence, surrender

Pushed dumbfoundment to beg simplification.

Considerate she was, varying the emphasis –

“ARE YOU DARK? OR VERY LIGHT?” Revelation came.

“You mean – like plain or milk chocolate?”

Her accent was clinical, crushing in its light

Impersonality. Rapidly, wave-length adjusted,

I chose. “West African sepia” – and as afterthought,

“Down in my passport.” Silence for spectroscopic

Flight of fancy, till truthfulness changed her accent

Hard on the mouthpiece. “WHAT’S THAT?” conceding

“DON’T KNOW WHAT THAT IS.” “Like brunette.”

“THAT’S DARK, ISN’T IT?” “Not altogether.

Facially, I am brunette, but madam, you should see

The rest of me. Palm of my hand, soles of my feet

Are a peroxide blond. Friction, caused –

Foolishly, madam – by sitting down, has turned

My bottom raven black – One moment, madam! – sensing

Her receiver rearing on the thunderclap

About my ears – “Madam,” I pleaded, “wouldn’t you rather

See for yourself?”

**Wole Soyinka**

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| **2** | **7** | **.** | **1** |

**In ‘Telephone Conversation,’ how does the poet present ideas about attitudes towards race?**

**[24 marks]**

**Once Upon a Time**

Once upon a time, son,

they used to laugh with their hearts

and laugh with their eyes;

but now they only laugh with their teeth,

while their ice-block-cold eyes

search behind my shadow.

There was a time indeed

they used to shake hands with their hearts;

but that’s gone, son.

Now they shake hands without hearts

while their left hands search

my empty pockets.

‘Feel at home’! ‘Come again’;

they say, and when I come

again and feel

at home, once, twice,

there will be no thrice –

for then I find doors shut on me.

So I have learned many things, son.

I have learned to wear many faces

like dresses – homeface,

officeface, streetface, hostface,

cocktailface, with all their conforming smiles

like a fixed portrait smile.

And I have learned, too,

to laugh with only my teeth

and shake hands without my heart.

I have also learned to say, ‘Goodbye’,

when I mean ‘Good-riddance’;

to say ‘Glad to meet you’,

without being glad; and to say ‘It’s been

nice talking to you’, after being bored.

But believe me, son.

I want to be what I used to be

when I was like you. I want

to unlearn all these muting things.

Most of all, I want to relearn

how to laugh, for my laugh in the mirror

shows only my teeth like a snake’s bare fangs!

So show me, son,

how to laugh; show me how

I used to laugh and smile

once upon a time when I was like you.

**Gabriel Okara**

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| **2** | **7** | **.** | **1** |

**In ‘Once Upon a Time,’ how does the speaker present their feelings about the effects of age?**

**[24 marks]**

**Extensions:**

**(will be added to throughout the year)**

**A Mother in a Refugee Camp**

No Madonna and Child could touch

Her tenderness for a son

She soon would have to forget. . . .

The air was heavy with odors of diarrhea,

Of unwashed children with washed-out ribs

And dried-up bottoms waddling in labored steps

Behind blown-empty bellies. Other mothers there

Had long ceased to care, but not this one:

She held a ghost smile between her teeth,

and in her eyes the memory

Of a mother’s pride. . . . She had bathed him

And rubbed him down with bare palms.

She took from their bundle of possessions

A broken comb and combed

The rust-colored hair left on his skull

And then – humming in her eyes – began carefully to part it.

In their former life this was perhaps

A little daily act of no consequence

Before his breakfast and school; now she did it

Like putting flowers on a tiny grave.

**Chinua Achebe**

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| **2** | **7** | **.** | **1** |

**In ‘A Mother in a Refugee Camp,’ how does the poet present ideas about loss?**

**[24 marks]**

**Do not go gentle into that good night**

do not go gentle into that good night,

Old age should burn and rave at close of day;

Rage, rage against the dying of the light.

Though wise men at their end know dark is right,

Because their words had forked no lightning they

Do not go gentle into that good night.

Good men, the last wave by, crying how bright

Their frail deeds might have danced in a green bay,

Rage, rage against the dying of the light.

Wild men who caught and sang the sun in flight,

And learn, too late, they grieved it on its way,

Do not go gentle into that good night.

Grave men, near death, who see with blinding sight

Blind eyes could blaze like meteors and be gay,

Rage, rage against the dying of the light.

And you, my father, there on the sad height,

Curse, bless, me now with your fierce tears, I pray.

Do not go gentle into that good night.

Rage, rage against the dying of the light.

**Dylan Thomas**

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| **2** | **7** | **.** | **1** |

**In ‘Do not go gentle into that goodnight,’ how does the poet present ideas about Death?**

**[24 marks]**

**First they came…**

First they came for the Communists  
And I did not speak out  
Because I was not a Communist  
Then they came for the Socialists  
And I did not speak out  
Because I was not a Socialist  
Then they came for the trade unionists  
And I did not speak out  
Because I was not a trade unionist  
Then they came for the Jews  
And I did not speak out  
Because I was not a Jew  
Then they came for me  
And there was no one left  
To speak out for me

**Unknown**

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| **2** | **7** | **.** | **1** |

**In ‘First they came,’ how does the poet present their ideas about speaking out against injustice?**

**[24 marks]**

**Not My Business**

They picked Akanni up one morning

Beat him soft like clay

And stuffed him down the belly

Of a waiting jeep.

What business of mine is it

So long they don’t take the yam

From my savouring mouth?

They came one night

Booted the whole house awake

And dragged Danladi out,

Then off to a lengthy absence.

What business of mine is it

So long they don’t take the yam

From my savouring mouth?

Chinwe went to work one day

Only to find her job was gone:

No query, no warning, no probe –

Just one neat sack for a stainless record.

What business of mine is it

So long they don’t take the yam

From my savouring mouth?

And then one evening

As I sat down to eat my yam

A knock on the door froze my hungry hand.

The jeep was waiting on my bewildered lawn

Waiting, waiting in its usual silence.

**Niyi Osundare**

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| **2** | **7** | **.** | **1** |

**In ‘Not My Business,’ how does the poet present their ideas about speaking out against injustice?**

**[24 marks]**