

**ISC EXAMINATION PAPER - 2025**  
**ENGLISH PAPER-2**  
**[LITERATURE IN ENGLISH]**  
**Class-12<sup>th</sup>**  
**(Solved)**

*Maximum Marks: 80*

*Time Allotted: Three Hours*

*Reading Time: Additional Fifteen Minutes*

**Instructions to Candidates:**

1. You are allowed an **additional fifteen minutes** for **only** reading the question paper.
2. You must **NOT** start writing during reading time.
3. It has **five questions** in all.
4. Answer **all** questions.
5. While answering **Question 1 in Section A**, you are required to **write only ONE option as the correct answer**.
6. **Internal choice** has been given in the **long answer question** on Drama, Prose and Poetry.
7. **Do not exceed the prescribed word limit** while answering the questions in Section B.
8. The intended marks for questions are given in brackets [ ].

**SECTION A- 20 MARKS**

**Question 1**

**[10]**

**Choose the correct options for the following questions.**

- (1) How does Ross describe Macduff to Lady Macduff in Act IV Scene ii of the play, *Macbeth*?
  - (a) Noble, wise and judicious
  - (b) Dishonest, cowardly and foolish
  - (c) Ambitious, cruel and secretive
  - (d) Loyal, brave and trustworthy
- (ii) In his soliloquy in Act III Scene i of the play, *Macbeth*, which one of the following does Macbeth refer to as a reason for fearing Banquo?
  - (P) Banquo is close to Lady Macbeth.
  - (Q) Banquo is royal in nature.
  - (R) Banquo's descendants will become kings.
  - (S) Banquo is a poor advisor.
  - (a) Only (P) and (Q)
  - (b) Only (Q) and (R)
  - (c) Only (R) and (S)
  - (d) Only (P) and (S)
- (iii) "Nought's had, all's spent,  
Where our desire is got without content;"  
What does this quote by Lady Macbeth in Act III Scene ii of the play, *Macbeth*, reveal about her mental state?
  - (a) She feels Duncan's murder was worth the effort.
  - (b) She is greedy for power.
  - (c) She is afraid of spending money.
  - (d) She realises the futility of power.
- (iv) In Act V Scene v of the play, *Macbeth*, what is Macbeth's first reaction when the messenger informs him that "the wood began to move"?
  - (a) He disbelieves the messenger and calls him a "liar."
  - (b) He wants to see the sight for himself.
  - (c) He sends a message to his General.
  - (d) He loses all hopes.

- (v) Why did Charushashi smash Tarapada's flute in the short story, *Atithi*?
- Sonamani had gifted the flute to Tarapada.
  - She felt the sound of the flute was not sweet.
  - She wanted to give Tarapada another flute.
  - She was overcome with jealousy and anger.
- (vi) What does the ever-ticking clock in the short story, *There Will Come Soft Rains*, symbolise?
- Mankind has been destroyed.
  - Punctuality is important.
  - Time is all powerful and ever present.
  - Humans can win over time.
- (vii) Read the following two statements from the short story, *The Medicine Bag*, and choose the correct option from the ones given below.
- Statement I:** "Tomorrow," he said, "when you come home, it will be time to give you the medicine bag."
- Statement II:** I felt a hard squeeze from where my heart is supposed to be and was scared, but I answered, "OK, Grandpa."
- Statements I and II are similar.
  - Statements I and II are not related to each other.
  - Statement II is the reason for Statement I.
  - Statement I is the reason for Statement II.
- (viii) Which one of the following **BEST** describes Beethoven's father's attitude to him in the poem, *Beethoven*?
- He was overbearing.
  - He was rude.
  - He drove Beethoven to perfection.
  - He wanted him to be successful.
- (ix) In the poem, *Small Towns and the River*, what is the river compared to?
- A waterfall
  - The sky full of stars
  - A torrent of grief
  - A meadow of flowers
- (x) In the poem, *Tithonus*, what does Tennyson illustrate through the image of 'the woods decay and fall... Man comes and tills the field and lies beneath'?
- Nature's bias against humans
  - The natural cycle of life and death
  - The concept of immortality
  - Humans' command over nature

### Question 2

[10]

Complete the following sentences by providing a reason for each in brief. Do not write the question.

- In Act III Scene v of the play, *Macbeth*, Hecate is angry with the three witches because \_\_\_\_\_.
- In Act IV Scene iii of the play, *Macbeth*, Malcolm is suspicious of Macduff's intentions because \_\_\_\_\_.
- In Act V Scene i of the play, *Macbeth*, the doctor says, "This disease is beyond my practice" because \_\_\_\_\_.
- In Act IV Scene i of the play, *Macbeth*, Macbeth gets angry at the witches when they show him the vision of the line of kings because \_\_\_\_\_.
- In the short story, *The Medicine Bag*, Martin and his family felt guilty when 'Grandpa' travelled all alone to their home because \_\_\_\_\_.
- In the short story, *The Cookie Lady*, when Bubber informs Mrs. Drew that it would be his last visit, she is stunned because \_\_\_\_\_.
- In the short story, *Atithi*, Motilal Babu is initially reluctant to marry his daughter to Tarapada because \_\_\_\_\_.
- In the poem, *Tithonus*, Tithonus terms his immortality 'cruel' because \_\_\_\_\_.
- In the poem, *Beethoven*, the musicians made fun of Beethoven's madness because \_\_\_\_\_.
- In the poem, *Telephone Conversation*, the speaker on the phone makes a 'self-confession' because \_\_\_\_\_.

**SECTION B - 60 MARKS**  
**MACBETH – WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE**

**Question 3**

- (i) How does Lady Macduff respond to her husband's sudden departure in Act IV Scene ii? What does her response suggest about her nature? [5]

Incorporate the following details and write your answer in a short paragraph of 100–150 words.

- Lady Macduff's accusations
- Aspects of her nature

- (ii) What secrets does Lady Macbeth reveal as she walks in her sleep in Act V Scene i? What changes do you notice in her from the Banquet scene in Act III? [5]

Incorporate the following details and write your answer in a short paragraph of 100–150 words.

- Utterances in sleepwalking
- Her conduct in the Banquet scene and the Sleepwalking scene

- (iii) (a) Do you think that Malcolm has the kingly qualities that Macbeth lacks? Justify your answer in 200–250 words by referring to the Acts studied. [10]

**OR**

- (b) The minor characters in the play act as commentators to the events that unfold in Scotland. Discuss the statement in 200–250 words with reference to the Acts studied. [10]

**PRISM – A COLLECTION OF SHORT STORIES**

**Question 4**

- (i) In the short story, *Indigo*, Bhola Babu warns Aniruddha against undertaking a solo car journey from Calcutta to Dumka. Describe the consequences of Aniruddha's decision. [5]

Incorporate the following details and write your answer in a short paragraph of 100–150 words.

- Obstacles faced by Aniruddha in the journey
- Effect on him

- (ii) Referring closely to the short story, *There Will Come Soft Rains*, describe any four routine activities performed by the automated devices. Comment on their significance. [5]

Write your answer in 100–150 words incorporating the following details.

- Description of any four activities
- Significance of the activities

- (iii) (a) Why do Martin's friends appreciate his 'Grandpa' in the short story, *The Medicine Bag*? How does peer pressure affect Martin's attitude towards his 'Grandpa'? Answer in 200–250 words. [10]

**OR**

- (b) Explore Tarapada's relationship with Annapurna and Charushashi in the short story, *Atithi*. Why, in your opinion, does Tarapada leave Kathaliya? Answer in 200–250 words. [10]

**RHAPSODY – POETRY**

**Question 5**

- (i) How does the poet depict the eternal nature of the river in the poem, *Small Towns and the River*? [5]

Write your answer in 100–150 words incorporating the following details.

- Journey of the river through the land and the town
- Poet's view of the river

- (ii) Describe Beethoven's efforts to live up to his father's expectations. Write your answer in a short paragraph of about 100 incorporating the following aspects. [5]

- His father's expectations and treatment of Beethoven
- Difficulties Beethoven faced in fulfilling those expectations

- (iii) (a) The poem, *Telephone Conversation*, does not unite but separates the two individuals engaged in a telephone conversation. Analyse the statement in 200–250 words. [10]

**OR**

- (b) With reference to the theme of immortality, analyse the portrayal of Eos/Aurora in the poem, *Tithonus*, in 200–250 words. [10]

# Answers

## SECTION A

### Answer 1

- (i) **Correct Option: (a)** Noble, wise and judicious

**Explanation:** In Act IV, Scene ii, Ross describes Macduff to Lady Macduff as someone who possesses wisdom and good judgment. He says that Macduff is “noble”, “wise” and “judicious”, highlighting his honourable character and ability to make sound decisions.

- (ii) **Correct Option: (b)** Only (Q) and (R)

**Explanation:** In his soliloquy in Act III, Scene i, Macbeth expresses his fear of Banquo because of Banquo’s noble nature and the prophecy that Banquo’s descendants will become kings. Macbeth sees Banquo as a threat to his own power and fears that Banquo’s lineage will eventually usurp him.

- (iii) **Correct Option: (d)** She realises the futility of power.

**Explanation:** Lady Macbeth’s quote in Act III, Scene ii, reveals her growing disillusionment with the pursuit of power. She recognises that even though she and Macbeth have achieved their desire of becoming king and queen, they have not found contentment. The word ‘content’ is used to suggest ‘substance’ and ‘satisfaction’ at the same time. This realisation highlights the emptiness and futility of their ambition, suggesting that the cost of their actions outweighs the rewards of power.

- (iv) **Correct Option: (a)** He disbelieves the messenger and calls him a “liar.”

**Explanation:** In Act V, Scene v, when Macbeth hears that Birnam Wood is moving towards Dunsinane, his initial reaction is of disbelief. He refuses to believe the messenger’s report and accuses him of lying. This reaction stems from Macbeth’s overconfidence and the emptiness of his ambition.

- (v) **Correct Option: (d)** She was overcome with jealousy and anger.

**Explanation:** Charushashi smashed Tarapada’s flute out of jealousy and anger. She was envious of the attention and affection he received from her parents and others in the village. Feeling threatened by his presence, she resented his talent and popularity. Her destructive act was a manifestation of her frustration and her desire to regain control and attention.

- (vi) **Correct Option: (c)** Time is all powerful and ever present.

**Explanation:** The ever-ticking clock in the story symbolises the relentless and indifferent nature of time. Even though humanity has been destroyed, the clock continues to mark time, oblivious to the absence of humans. This highlights the idea that time marches on regardless of human events, emphasising its power and omnipresence. The

clock’s persistence also serves as a stark reminder of the fleeting nature of human existence in the face of the vastness of time.

- (vii) **Correct Option: (d)** Statement I is the reason for Statement II.

**Explanation:** Grandpa’s announcement in Statement I about passing on the medicine bag triggers Martin’s emotional and fearful reaction in Statement II. The weight of the tradition and the responsibility of receiving the medicine bag cause Martin to feel scared, making Statement I the reason for Statement II.

- (viii) **Correct Option: (c)** He drove Beethoven to perfection.

**Explanation:** The poem depicts Beethoven’s father as a harsh and demanding figure. He constantly pushed Beethoven to play better, never deeming his efforts “good enough”, even resorting to physical punishment. This relentless pressure, although abusive, was ultimately aimed at making Beethoven a musical genius, effectively driving him to perfect his craft.

- (ix) **Correct Option: (c)** A torrent of grief

**Explanation:** In the poem “Small Towns and the River”, the river is compared to a “torrent of grief” in summer. This comparison suggests the river’s powerful and overwhelming nature, mirroring the intensity of sorrow and loss. The image also evokes a sense of the river’s relentless flow, carrying away the burdens and sorrows of the town, much like grief can wash over and consume a person.

- (x) **Correct Option: (b)** The natural cycle of life and death

**Explanation:** The lines describe the cyclical nature of existence in the natural world. Woods decay, vapours fall as rain, humans till the land and die and even the long-lived swan eventually succumbs to death. This imagery emphasises the universal and inevitable process of birth, growth, decay and death that all living things experience, highlighting the contrast with Tithonus’s unnatural, unending existence.

### Answer 2

- (i) they interfered with Macbeth’s fate without consulting her, undermining her authority and disrupting her plans.

- (ii) he fears Macduff might be an agent of Macbeth, sent to lure him into a trap and betray him.

- (iii) Lady Macbeth’s condition is psychological and spiritual, stemming from guilt and madness, rather than a physical ailment he can treat.

- (iv) it reveals that Banquo’s descendants will inherit the throne, threatening his own power and legacy.



- (v) they realised how lonely and frail he had become after their visits.
- (vi) she has become reliant on Bubber's visits to restore her youth.
- (vii) Tarapada comes from a poor family. Motilal Babu, being a wealthy zamindar, desires a more advantageous match for his daughter and is concerned about the social and financial implications of marrying her to someone from a lower economic background.
- (viii) it prevents him from experiencing the natural cycle of life and death.
- (ix) they were trying to understand the connection between his perceived insanity and his extraordinary talent. They mimicked his movements in an attempt to decipher the source of his genius, particularly the relationship between his deafness, his "intimacy with silence", and his profound musical creations.
- (x) he anticipates racial prejudice from the landlady. He knows that revealing his African identity might lead her to refuse him housing, so he chooses to disclose it upfront rather than waste time and effort if she is unwilling to rent to him because of his race.

### SECTION B

#### Answer 3

- (i) Lady Macduff responds to Macduff's departure with anger and disbelief, accusing him of abandoning his family. She questions his wisdom and love, stating, "He loves us not; he wants the natural touch", comparing him unfavourably to even the smallest bird that protects its young ones. Her accusations reveal her feelings of betrayal and vulnerability, as she believes Macduff's flight has left them defenceless. This response highlights her forthright and passionate nature, as she openly criticises her husband's actions without hesitation. Additionally, her conversation with her son showcases her wit and resilience, as she engages in playful yet poignant banter with him, even in the face of impending danger. Her final line, "I have done no harm", reflects her innocence and moral integrity, underscoring her tragic role as a victim of Macbeth's tyranny. Overall, Lady Macduff's response reveals her as a strong, outspoken and loving character, deeply hurt by her husband's absence but determined to face adversity with courage.
- (ii) In Act V, Scene i, Lady Macbeth's sleepwalking reveals her deep guilt and tormented conscience. Her utterances betray her involvement in the murders of Duncan, Banquo and Lady Macduff. She compulsively tries to wash imaginary blood from her hands, crying, "Out, damned spot!" This contrasts sharply with her composed and manipulative demeanour at the banquet in Act III, where she skilfully deflects attention from Macbeth's erratic behaviour. During the banquet, she maintains a facade of control, even chiding Macbeth for his

"starting". However, in the sleepwalking scene, her subconscious exposes her true feelings of remorse, guilt and fear, revealing the profound psychological toll of her and Macbeth's actions. She is no longer the strong, ambitious woman orchestrating events, but a broken figure haunted by guilt.

- (iii) Malcolm demonstrates several kingly qualities that Macbeth conspicuously lacks, making Malcolm a more suitable ruler. While Macbeth is driven by ambition and resorts to violence and deception to attain and maintain power, Malcolm displays integrity, wisdom and a genuine concern for his kingdom. In Act IV, Malcolm initially tests Macduff's loyalty, pretending to have vices to gauge Macduff's true motivations. This reveals Malcolm's prudence and his understanding of the dangers of courtly deceit, a lesson Macbeth never learns. He is cautious, unlike the impulsive Macbeth. Furthermore, Malcolm's conversation with Macduff reveals his deep love for Scotland. He laments the suffering under Macbeth's tyranny and expresses a sincere desire to restore order and justice. This patriotic sentiment contrasts sharply with Macbeth's self-serving ambition.

Malcolm also demonstrates strategic thinking and leadership in planning the invasion of Scotland. He forges alliances with England, secures military support and carefully considers the best course of action. Moreover, Malcolm acknowledges his own weaknesses and seeks counsel, demonstrating humility and a willingness to learn—qualities absent in the increasingly arrogant and isolated Macbeth.

Finally, Malcolm's declaration at the end of the play, outlining his plans for restoring peace and order, shows his commitment to good governance. He promises to reward those who served the state and to punish the guilty. This sense of justice and responsibility is the mark of a true king and stands in stark contrast to Macbeth's tyrannical reign.

### OR

- (b) Minor characters in Macbeth act as a chorus, reflecting Scotland's decline and deepening the play's themes. Their observations highlight Macbeth's tyranny. For instance, in Act III, Scene vi, Lennox and a Lord subtly express doubt about Macbeth's actions, signaling the growing atmosphere of fear, distrust, and oppression in Scotland. They subtly question his motives for Banquo's murder and Macduff's flight, recognising the growing atmosphere of fear and distrust. Their guarded language reflects the pervasive paranoia and the danger of speaking openly against the king. In Act IV, Scene ii, Lady Macduff's lament to her son about her husband's abandonment and the perilous times reflects the widespread suffering of innocent people under Macbeth's reign. The messenger's warning to Lady Macduff underscores the pervasive fear and the arbitrary nature of

Macbeth's violence. Even the doctor in Act V, Scene i, observing Lady Macbeth's sleepwalking, recognises the "unnatural deeds" and the "infected minds" plaguing the royal household, suggesting that the moral corruption extends beyond Macbeth and his wife. His inability to cure her highlights the limitations of earthly medicine in the face of spiritual and moral decay.

Similarly, Ross reports to Macduff in England in Act IV, Scene iii, about the rampant suffering and the loss of all sense of order in Scotland emphasising the extent of Macbeth's destructive impact. These minor characters, through their observations and reactions, act as witnesses to the tragedy, amplifying the play's themes of ambition, guilt and the consequences of evil. They provide a broader perspective on the events, highlighting the play's universal themes of order and chaos.

#### Answer 4

- (i) Aniruddha's decision to undertake a solo car journey from Calcutta to Dumka, despite Bhola Babu's warning, leads to a series of challenging consequences. Early in the journey, he faces a flat tyre near Panagarh, forcing him to stop and replace it under the scorching sun. Later, a norwester storm strikes, making driving perilous and heightening his anxiety. To make matters worse, a second tyre bursts near Massanjore, leaving him stranded in the rain with no spare tyre and no repair shops nearby. Lost and disoriented, Aniruddha eventually finds shelter in an old dak bungalow, where he experiences a surreal transformation into a 19th-century English indigo planter, reliving the man's tragic final moments.

The journey leaves Aniruddha physically exhausted and emotionally shaken. The obstacles highlight his unpreparedness and the risks of travelling alone in remote areas. The eerie experience at the bungalow deepens his understanding of the historical exploitation tied to indigo plantations, aligning with his earlier research. The journey serves as a humbling lesson, reinforcing Bhola Babu's advice and leaving Aniruddha with a profound, unsettling memory.

- (ii) In 'There Will Come Soft Rains', Ray Bradbury depicts a fully automated house performing routine activities despite the absence of its human inhabitants. Four key activities include: (1) The voice-clock announcing the time and tasks, such as "seven o'clock, time to get up", emphasising the house's programmed precision. (2) The kitchen stove preparing breakfast—producing toast, eggs, bacon and coffee—showcasing the house's ability to cater to human needs. (3) The robotic mice cleaning the house, darting out to remove dust and debris, highlighting the house's self-sufficiency. (4) The garden sprinklers activating at ten-fifteen,

watering the plants and maintaining the exterior, symbolising the house's care for its environment.

These activities are significant as they underscore the house's relentless adherence to routine, even in the absence of human life. They reflect humanity's reliance on technology and the eerie persistence of automation after human extinction. The house's mechanical efficiency contrasts with the emptiness and devastation around it, serving as a poignant reminder of humanity's fragility and the enduring, yet futile, legacy of its creations. The routines, once meaningful, now highlight the absence they were meant to serve.

- (iii) (a) In the short story 'The Medicine Bag' by Virginia Driving Hawk Sneve, Martin's friends appreciate his Grandpa because of the romanticised image of Native American culture that Martin and his sister Cheryl have created. They tell exciting stories about their Grandpa and the reservation, often exaggerating to make them sound glamorous. Their friends, who only know about Native Americans from movies and TV, are fascinated by these tales and the authentic Sioux artefacts, such as the moccasins and the rawhide drum, that Martin and Cheryl bring back from their visits. These stories and items make Grandpa seem like a figure of wisdom and tradition, which captivates their friends' imaginations.

However, peer pressure significantly affects Martin's attitude toward his Grandpa. When Grandpa unexpectedly arrives in their neighbourhood, Martin is embarrassed by his appearance and behaviour. Grandpa's old-fashioned clothing, frail appearance and traditional ways clash with the modern, urban environment, making Martin feel ashamed in front of his friends. He fears that his peers will laugh at Grandpa, who does not fit the stereotypical image of a "TV Indian" they had imagined. This fear of judgement causes Martin to initially distance himself from Grandpa and avoid introducing him to his friends.

Despite this, Martin's attitude begins to change when his friends finally meet Grandpa. They are impressed by his stories, wisdom and traditional attire, and they express admiration for him. This positive reaction helps Martin see Grandpa in a new light, allowing him to feel pride in his heritage and overcome his earlier embarrassment. Ultimately, peer pressure initially creates conflict for Martin, but it also leads to a deeper appreciation of his Grandpa and his cultural legacy.

#### OR

- (b) In Rabindranath Tagore's 'Atithi', Tarapada's relationships with Annapurna and Charushashi are central to understanding his character and his eventual departure from Kathaliya. Tarapada, a free-spirited wanderer, forms a bond with Annapurna, who sees him as a surrogate son. Her maternal affection is evident in her attempts to care for him,

feed him and uncover his past. However, Tarapada remains emotionally detached, appreciating her kindness but never allowing himself to be tied down by her love. His relationship with Charushashi, on the other hand, is more complex. Charu, a jealous and possessive child, sees Tarapada as her exclusive property. Her envy manifests in destructive behaviour, such as breaking his flute or disrupting his studies. Despite her antics, Tarapada finds her amusing and endures her tantrums with patience, though he never fully reciprocates her attachment. Tarapada leaves Kathaliya because his innate desire for freedom outweighs the bonds of affection and societal expectations. Throughout the story, Tarapada is portrayed as a wanderer who cannot be confined by love, care, or even the prospect of marriage. His departure is foreshadowed by his history of leaving behind those who grow too attached to him. In Kathaliya, he is on the verge of being ensnared by the familial and romantic expectations of Motilal Babu and Annapurna, who plan to marry him to Charu. However, the sight of the bustling fair and the call of the open river reignite his longing for the unattached, wandering life. Tarapada's departure symbolises his rejection of societal norms and his commitment to a life of freedom, unbound by relationships or responsibilities. His character embodies the tension between human connections and the allure of boundless liberty, making his exit both inevitable and poignant.

#### Answer 5

- (i) In *Small Towns and the River*, Mamang Dai depicts the river as an eternal, living entity with a soul, symbolising continuity and permanence amidst the transient nature of life. The river moves through land and town, surging like a 'torrent of grief' in summer, yet longing for the peaceful 'land of fish and stars.' This contrast connects it to nature and human emotions. The poet views the river as a timeless force, aware of its immortality, stretching from the first drop of rain to the mist on mountaintops. It embodies the cyclical nature of existence, contrasting with the fleeting lives of the townspeople. For the poet, the river is not just a physical presence but a spiritual one, representing the eternal flow of life and the rituals that bind the living and the dead. Its permanence offers solace and a sense of connection to something greater, as the townspeople aspire to "walk with the gods" alongside its enduring waters.
- (ii) Beethoven's father had high expectations for him, driven by a desire to mould his son into a musical genius. He was harsh and abusive, often hitting Beethoven and demanding perfection in his performances. This relentless pressure created a toxic environment where Beethoven's worth was tied to his ability to play flawlessly. Despite his father's cruelty, Beethoven strived to meet these expectations, practising tirelessly to earn even a moment of approval. However, his father's anthem of "not good enough" echoed constantly, leaving Beethoven in a perpetual state of inadequacy. The difficulties Beethoven faced were immense. Not only did he endure his father's abuse, but he also struggled with his growing deafness, which threatened his most precious tool as a musician: his hearing. Despite this, he continued to compose and perform, even amputating the legs of his piano to feel the vibrations through the floor. His father's relentless demands and his own physical limitations made his journey agonising, yet Beethoven's perseverance and genius ultimately transcended these challenges, leaving a legacy that defied his father's harsh criticisms.
- (iii) (a) The poem 'Telephone Conversation' by Wole Soyinka indeed highlights how a seemingly ordinary interaction can deepen divisions rather than foster unity. The conversation between the African speaker and the landlady is marked by racial prejudice, which creates a stark separation between the two individuals. The poem begins with the speaker's attempt to rent an apartment, but the conversation quickly devolves into an interrogation about his skin colour. The landlady's repeated questions, "HOW DARK?" and "ARE YOU LIGHT OR VERY DARK?" reveal her deep-seated racism, reducing the speaker's identity to a mere shade of skin tone. This dehumanising line of questioning underscores the societal divide between races, as the landlady's prejudice overshadows any potential for mutual understanding or connection. The speaker's response, laced with sarcasm and wit, further emphasises the separation. By describing his skin tone in exaggerated terms, such as "West African sepia" and humorously detailing the colours of his palms, soles and even his bottom, he exposes the absurdity of the landlady's fixation on race. However, this sarcasm also serves as a defence mechanism, highlighting the emotional and psychological distance created by her discrimination. The landlady's inability to comprehend his descriptions and her clinical tone further alienate the speaker, making it clear that the conversation is not a genuine exchange but a confrontation of racial biases. Ultimately, the poem illustrates how prejudice can turn a simple interaction into a divisive encounter. The telephone, a tool meant to connect people, becomes a medium for highlighting societal inequalities and racial tensions. Instead of uniting the two individuals, the conversation reinforces the barriers between them, leaving the speaker marginalised and the landlady entrenched in her discriminatory views. Through this interaction, Soyinka critiques the pervasive racism that separates individuals and perpetuates social divisions.



- (iii) (b) In 'Tithonus' by Alfred, Lord Tennyson, the theme of immortality is explored through the tragic consequences of eternal life, as experienced by Tithonus. Eos (or Aurora), the goddess of dawn, embodies the duality of eternal beauty and the divide between mortal and immortal realms. Her portrayal underscores the poem's meditation on the burdens of immortality and the natural cycle of life and death.

Eos is depicted as eternally youthful and radiant, symbolising perpetual renewal. Each morning, she rises with renewed vigour, her "pure brows" and "bosom beating with a heart renew'd" reflecting her immortal vitality. This cyclical rejuvenation contrasts sharply with Tithonus' decay, as he withers into a "gray shadow" while she remains unchanged. Her immortality, though a gift, becomes a curse for Tithonus, highlighting the incompatibility between mortal and immortal existence. Eos' tears reveal her compassion but also her inability to fully understand the human condition. Her immortality

blinds her to the natural order, making her gift of eternal life a tragic mistake.

Eos' portrayal emphasises the futility of defying natural laws. Tithonus laments that "the gods themselves cannot recall their gifts", underscoring the irreversible nature of his plight. Eos' beauty and immortality, though awe-inspiring, alienate Tithonus, who longs to return to the mortal world. Her presence serves as a constant reminder of his unnatural state, trapped between life and death, unable to share in her eternal youth or the peace of mortality.

Through Eos, Tennyson critiques the desire for immortality, suggesting it disrupts the natural harmony of existence. Her immortal beauty, while captivating, becomes a source of sorrow and isolation for Tithonus, illustrating the poem's central message: mortality, with its finite span, is a necessary and meaningful part of life. Eos' role highlights the tragic consequences of transcending human limits and the wisdom in accepting the natural cycle of life and death.