

# Engelsk A

Studentereksamen

Gammel ordning

2. delprøve

kl. 9.00 - 14.00

Mandag den 20. august 2018 kl. 9.00 - 14.00

#### Answer either A or B

## A – Fiction

Write an analytical essay (900-1200 words) in which you analyse and interpret Krishan Coupland's short story "The Sea in Me".

Part of your essay must focus on the use of symbols and on the mother and daughter relationship.

#### Text

Krishan Coupland, "The Sea in Me", 2016. . . . . . page 2

## B – Non-fiction

Write an analytical essay (900-1200 words) in which you analyse and comment on Alexis Petridis' article "Robbie Williams: 'My main talent is turning trauma into something showbizzy'".

Part of your essay must focus on how the journalist portrays Robbie Williams and on Williams' attitude to show business.

#### Text

Teksternes ortografi og tegnsætning følger forlæggene. Trykfejl er dog rettet. Opsætningen følger ikke nødvendigvis forlæggene. Dog følges forlægget nøje, hvor opsætningen på den ene eller anden måde indgår i opgaven.

### A – Fiction

Krishan Coupland is a graduate from the University of East Anglia MA Creative Writing programme. He has won several prizes for fiction.

#### Krishan Coupland

## The Sea in Me

Sometimes in the bath I plunge my head under the water and will the scars on my neck to open wide like mouths. Nothing. Even if I stay under until my eyes sting and my lungs burn and everything inside me feels like it's about to burst, they stay closed. Perhaps the water's too hot, or too soapy, or maybe even too shallow. Perhaps my brain 5 knows I'm not really swimming.

At the pool it's different. I can drift down to the bottom and sit until my fingers go wrinkly. Only when Mum's not there, of course. When Mum's there I have to train.

What I like most is when I'm the last one at the pool. They switch off the lights and the boys all watch me as they close the pumps and heave in the lane floats. The one who fancies me – his name is Martin – leans on the rolled up pool cover at the far end and calls to me as I emerge.

"It's almost closing time," he says.

"One more length," I say.

And he lets me. He always lets me. Mum would be furious if she knew I wasn't a virgin. She's old-fashioned like that. In secondary school she caught me kissing a boy on the field one time and she dragged me off home and yelled about how I was endangering my career. There's no time for boys, what with training and my competition schedule. That's what she says anyway.

Every trophy I've ever won is in the cabinet downstairs. [...] She's even kept the stupid paper certificates I got for completing my swimming lessons at school.

When my hair went green I told Mum it was because of all the chlorine, and she wrote me a note for school. I like it. Nobody else has green hair, and it's soft and never gets tangled. When I swim without a cap it floats around my head like a coral reef plant and turns with me, follows me slender and obedient like a tail. I like the way it makes me look: mysterious and strange. And sexy, I think.

Walking me home after a day of school and swimming Martin runs his hands through it, makes a fist of it at the back of my head and pulls. My spine turns hot and liquid. He doesn't say anything, but I know he likes it too.

It's hard to spend time with Martin without Mum knowing. Sometimes I don't do my lengths after school and go to his house instead. When I do that I have to fill his bathroom sink with water and dip my swimsuit in it so that it's not dry when I get home. Mum checks these things.

"You'll thank me later," she says. She's been saying it for years. Every morning at six she drives me to the leisure centre with the big pool. That early we're almost always the only ones, and I can have the whole pool to practice in. They'll let me in for free sometimes, if they recognise me from the local paper. Every time this happens Mum goes all quiet and pink and smiley, and I hate it. [...]

After school that evening, just before they close the pool, Martin jumps in with me and pins me against the wall under the diving boards. The sheltered, deepest corner.

With my back against the wall I can't kick, so it's only him that keeps me floating.

Warm bodies in cool water pressed together. Skin feels different under the surface. Most people never find that out.

"Are you going to come and watch me in the semi-finals?" I ask.

"When?" he says.

As well as being a lifeguard Martin wants to own a store someday. He runs a little one at the moment, just selling stuff on eBay. His room is full of it, boxes of clothes piled everywhere in sight. He's always so busy.

"You'll be fine," he says. "You're such a good swimmer. You're gorgeous."

Most of the time I wear a scarf to hide the scars, or smother them with foundation.

For swimming though, it does no good. They only open underwater anyway, and nobody's ever noticed. Mum buys me waterproof foundation. "Looks are important, love," she says. "You've got to win the crowd."

She doesn't have a clue. I wonder what would happen if I could show the crowd everything. The translucent, froggy webs between my toes and the cascade of beautiful green hair underneath my swimming cap. They wouldn't like it. Would think I was showing off, or that all the success had gone to my head. Nobody can really know what it's like.

Sometimes I have this dream. In the dream I'm in the water swimming, and it's the ocean and I'm not alone. There're all these dark shapes with me cutting through the water. There's hundreds of them, but they all stay just behind my eyes, flitting into murk the second I turn my head.

I'm so happy. I want to live there forever and ever. Sometimes I wake and I swear I can taste salt, and it takes me a second to realise that what I taste is actually my tears. No way to know why I'm crying. I'm not sad. The dream just makes me feel happy and longing. That's all. It must just be the strangeness of it. [...]

The skin on the back of my legs is rough. One patch right underneath my backside and another below my knee, both of them silvery and splitting into scale. I get out of the bath and feel myself all over, twisting to see my pale body in the mirror. There's another patch low down on my back as well, the same colour as the surface of an oil spill, rough and warm and slippery.

Mum drives me to the pool an hour early, while everyone's still setting up, and we sit in the cafe. I'm allowed an energy drink, but nothing else. She sips nervously at a watery cup of tea. Sometimes I like feeling this way. It feels like sitting in an aeroplane a moment before takeoff. Today what I mostly feel is tired.

"Remember your turns," she says. "They'll be watching you. I'll be watching."

The stands are full of people. Absolutely full, not just scattered like they normally are. Mum's more nervous than I am. The energy drink has made my stomach feel hot and tight. She lets me have my earphones in for a few minutes while I stretch and warm up, then whips them away. The chlorine smell hits me as I step out of the changing rooms. With echoes and ripples and the pool lights, everything is distorted. This, I think, must be what it's like to live in a bubble on the bottom of the sea.

"And smile," Mum hisses to me before she disappears.

Minutes later I'm up on the board, a hundred pairs of eyes pressing into me. Can they see the silvery patch of skin on my leg? Is that what all the whispers are?

Noise ripples in here too. The other swimmers like soldiers lining up... Some of them look at me when they think I won't notice. I hate this part. I want the buzzer to go so I can dive into the water. Once I'm in the water everything's easy. [...]

I win, of course. I always win. Swimming's easy for me. Mum says I was born swimming, which is true because she had a water birth. That's what she says during every single interview. "She was born swimming, this one was." Actually, as it happens, she does most of the talking anyhow. It's best that way. I never know the right thing to say.

[...]

Sometimes I think about telling Mum I don't want to compete anymore. I lie on my bed and line up all my words ready like little soldiers in perfect regiments. Ready to run 95 at her words and stick them through with bayonets. It's too easy. It isn't fair. [...]

It does no good. I don't know how many thousands she has spent on pool fees and swimming lessons and competition entries for me. I don't know how many hundred hours she's put into driving me to and from and training. With all that weight behind me there's no way to stop now.

After school I sit on the bottom of the pool and wait. I don't get cold. I'm never cold in water. My green hair floats up around my head in a big seaweed-coloured cloud, and I watch it. When I'm in water I feel powerful sometimes. I am powerful. I could flick up from the bottom of the pool and swim so fast that nobody could catch me. That's what all the trophies and the medals and certificates at home mean. Nobody can catch me, even if they tried.

I shut my eyes. And then the dream comes up again, rising like silt: I'm swimming in among those dark slivery shapes, and there are thousands of them, so that the water is them and their shadows and the spaces between them and nothing else. In the ocean I can see for miles.

An arm wraps around my stomach and hauls me upward. There's that skin on skin underwater feeling and I'm plunged into air, up into air, the last water escaping my lungs in a splutter and cough.

"You're okay?" says Martin. "You're okay? God, I saw you down there and I didn't know..."

I shake myself loose of him. He's still fully dressed, wet through. "You didn't need to do that," I say.

Once he's dry we sit on the bench outside, and he offers me a cigarette. I pinch a little bit of the skin of his forearm between my nails. "Martin," I say.

"Yeah?"

120

"Can we go to the seaside?"

After missing the semis he's so anxious to make things up that of course he says yes. And later in his room when he puts his dick inside me it feels right. Doesn't hurt at least, for the first time in ages. It feels like floating in hot water and I want it to go on forever.

I tell Mum that it's a school trip. She wants to know if there's a form but I tell her no since we're only going for half a day. She makes some noises but doesn't ask bad questions. She makes me a packed lunch with sandwiches and Babybel<sup>1</sup>. I leave the house in school uniform and get changed at Martin's house. Martin has a moped. There's only one helmet and he makes me wear it.

"I don't want to," I say. "I want to feel the wind." [...]

We're two of the only people to be seen on the whole wide white beach. A girl is riding a horse out in the surf, and there are men in canoes out on the ocean. Martin leaves his shirt and shoes in the box on the bike and holds my hand all the way down the sand. I want to run, but I'd look silly if I did that. The water when we reach it is dark blue-brown and full of sediment.

"Are you going to swim?" says Martin.

I nod. Of course I'm going to swim. I can't quite wrap my head around it. This is the same ocean that washes up on the shores of America. Huge. This is where life came from, first of all, before there was anything. It looks right. It smells right. I strip down to my bathing suit and wade in. Martin follows, after rolling up the legs of his shorts. He holds both our phones up at his chest, careful not to get them wet.

It's been years since I last swam in the ocean. The memories are there, all faint and faded apart from the smell: that's something I could never forget. I was barely taller than the waves that now lap at my knees. Dad was there, I remember. It must have been very long ago.

When the water's high enough to swim in I lunge down and feel the cold wash of it pass over me and in a second it's not cold anymore. My hair slicks back along my body, then floats as I plunge under and kick. I can feel how powerful I am. Powerful. In the swimming pool I was like a tiger in a shipping container, always swiping at metal and empty air.

When I pause and look back Martin is awfully distant. He looks like he wants to follow, but he doesn't know what to do with our things. I wave to him. The waves lift and drop me. I feel like I can breathe clearly for the first time in ages.

When I go under I expect to see them, those shadows from my dream. But there's nothing there. The sediment rushes past like a shoal of tiny fish. I kick deeper. The water feeds into me and I can feel my body elongating, the web between my fingers and toes becoming thicker. I have to go deep, I know. That's where they'll be. I can't hear anything but in the nothing there is sound, I think, some kind of deep and booming voice.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> a brand of cheese

I surface again. I'm further out than I thought, and I know that the things from my dream are further out still. Beyond the bay and further, further. I'd have to swim for days to get there. My body bobs in the current, the water pressing against my chest. I want to go back under. I want to kick through the water and have it hold me.

"I was getting worried there," says Martin when I return to him. His shorts are wet against his skin.

"You don't need to worry about me," I say. He kisses me for a while and I wonder if he can taste the things that are different about me. The changedness. The sea in me. "You look cold," I say at last. He nods.

"Bloody freezing."

"You can go back to the beach. I'm going to have one more swim. Out and back, and then we can go. Is that okay? Please."

He looks at me, halfway puzzled, and I feel very sorry for him. "Ten minutes," he says. "You promise?"

I tell him that I promise, and then watch, waist-deep in saltwater, as he makes his way slowly back to land.

(2016)

## B – Non-fiction

Alexis Petridis is a British journalist and rock and pop critic for the newspaper *The Guardian*. His interview with Robbie Williams was published on the paper's website in 2016.

#### Alexis Petridis

## Robbie Williams: "My main talent is turning trauma into something showbizzy"

He's sold 75m albums, but he's still racked with self-doubt. He talks about anxiety, addiction and why he still fears being sent back to Stoke-on-Trent.

Minstrels<sup>2</sup>. I transferred the smoking to working out three hours a day, and the still fears being sent every night. That's not an exaggeration of the smoking to working out three hours are the smoking to working out three hours.

Robbie Williams emerges from the bedroom of his hotel suite, shakes my hand, explains that he's just woken up – it's 2.30 in the afternoon – and lights a 5 cigarette. The latter comes as something of a surprise. For one thing, we're in the kind of central London hotel where you suspect it's ruinously expensive to ignore the no-smoking rule, but then again, you 10 probably don't worry about that kind of thing when you've shifted something like 75m albums, a figure that doesn't even take into account the ones you sold as a member of Take That1. But for another, 15 Williams made a bit of a song and dance about giving up smoking when his first

"Well, I did give up smoking," he says. "But that's the thing with having an addictive personality. One fire goes out and another pops up. And that fire became working out and eating

child was born, four years ago.

Minstrels<sup>2</sup>. I transferred the smoking to working out three hours a day, and then eating Minstrels for three hours every night. That's not an exaggeration. And then I stopped the working out and just carried on with the Minstrels and I ballooned to the point where the

Daily Mail³ suggested I was akin to Elvis⁴ before he died. It was horrible, terrible. I had to go on stage, too: 'Yeah, I know, I look like Elvis before he died. Sorry, everybody, as I'm pointing at you suggestively, pretending that you think I'm sexy."

He laughs. "So I went on this pretty hardcore diet. You woke up and had a boiled egg, then nothing for five hours, then had vegetable broth, then steamed veg, then nothing until the next day. After five days of that, first off, I was really fucking emotional, because you've got nothing, your body's starving. And

the second thing is, you just needed something to suppress your appetite, so this started again. I tried to hide it from my wife for five weeks. What I'd do, at

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> Take That: British pop group

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> a brand of candy

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> Daily Mail: British newspaper

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> Elvis Presley: (1935-1977) American musician

night I'd hide my mouthwash and hand
so sanitiser in a safe place, then wake up
an hour before she got up, climb out of
the window, take my top off, so as not
to smell of anything, then smoke, hand
sanitiser and mouthwash, top back on,
so shoes off so as not to wake her up, climb
back in the window."

Alas, this elaborate deception came to grief. "You know the first smoke in the morning, when it makes you disorientated, but it's quite beautiful? There were a few mornings when I couldn't get back in the house for at least five minutes because I'd be so out of my fucking head. And then at one point, I mouthwashed myself with the hand sanitiser. Anyway, I've started smoking again. January's the cut-off point, then I go on tour and I hope I don't look like Elvis before he died. And, you know,

70 when that fire goes out, hopefully the

put my marriage in jeopardy."

next one isn't sugar. Or anything that will

Addiction to Minstrels, inadvertently drinking hand sanitiser, starving yourself 75 on boiled eggs and vegetable broth - it goes without saying that this is a substantially more rococo<sup>1</sup> response to "Oh, I thought you'd stopped smoking" than you might expect. But over the 80 course of the next hour, it transpires that it's also very much a standard Robbie Williams answer: lengthy, frank, involved, testament to what Williams describes as his "pathological 85 oversharing", extremely entertaining and somehow leaving you with the sense that it must be fairly exhausting to be Robbie Williams, even when off-duty.

1 elaborate

Cigarette in hand, he seems in a good 90 mood. He dismisses stories that his recent single, "Party Like a Russian", caused terrible offence in Moscow -"I'm grateful for the column inches<sup>2</sup>, I could have released a ballad and not got 95 any column inches, but I think it might actually be my biggest hit in Russia" – and talks happily about the fact that his four-year-old daughter, Theodora, might follow him into showbiz. "But if she does, she won't have to be around psychologically damaging people, because Dad's already been there. It's like: 'Right, those people you're working with are cunts, we'll find you some 105 people that aren't."

He appears unbothered even by this morning's tabloids, which are packed with gripping photographs of removal men shifting furniture into his new London 110 home, the palatial former residence of the late Michael Winner<sup>3</sup>, over which Williams fought a lengthy and ultimately successful planning battle with his neighbour, Led Zeppelin guitarist Jimmy Page. This seems very sanguine of him, given that he left Britain for Los Angeles in the first place because he was sick of tabloid intrusion; you would think the fact that the paparazzi are camped outside his 120 house before he has even moved in might cause him to reconsider the wisdom of coming back.

"Well, the intense media spotlight that used to shine on me doesn't shine on me anymore," he says. "There's a story about the house, but it's not really about me, it's

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> column inches: presseomtale

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> Michael Winner: (1935-2013) English film director

about warring neighbours, Stella Street<sup>1</sup>. They might be around for a couple of months to see if they can see me throwing 130 things at Jimmy Page's house."

He hasn't thrown anything, although he did celebrate his victory in the planning dispute – a lot of which centred around underground excavations – by 135 performing a version of Led Zeppelin's "Whole Lotta Love" on stage, changing the lyrics to: "I'm gonna dig a big hole and fill it full of shit." No, he says, he hasn't spoken to Page. And no, he wasn't 140 wary of picking a fight with rock's most celebrated dabbler in the occult.

"Well, you know, I've done a bit of time with Aleister Crowley<sup>2</sup> myself. I've read some of his books. What did I learn 145 from it? That it's above my intellectual pay grade. That I didn't understand what I was getting into, and that I could probably 185 do myself some damage. 'Oh, I'm out of my depth here,' that's what I picked up."

We move on: quite clearly I've not been invited here to discuss his relationship with the written oeuvre of the Great Beast<sup>3</sup>. Williams, 42, has a new album out, The Heavy Entertainment 155 Show, which reunites him with Guy Chambers, with whom he co-wrote most of his biggest hits. It's his 10th album and he's alternately very hawkish about its chances of success and, in his words, 160 "neurotically obsessed" with its potential failure. It's partly just his nature, he says. "I'm neurotic and I find things to worry about, and if there's nothing to worry about, I make something up."

"When we got put together in Take That, we were told it wasn't going to last, you'd be lucky if you got five years. Even during the sort of imperial phase of my career, I'd be thinking: 'Is it stopping 170 now?' I'm 25 years in now, but I'm still sort of waiting for the rug to be pulled from underneath me, for it all to be put back in a box and taken away from me, and for me to be sent back to Stoke-on-175 Trent: 'See, you're right, this is ultimately what you wanted, because you wanted to sabotage this, be found out for the charlatan you are, and you have to go and work for your mum at the flower shop."

"So I think, underneath everything, that's what's propelled me forward, and also made me terrified at the same time. Not that working for my mum in the flower shop would be a terrifying prospect, it's just that my life's better now." [...]

He says he's not even sure where he fits into the pop landscape any more; a look at the singles chart just before "Party 190 Like a Russian" was released left him "thinking: 'I'm fucked', literally, 'Oh, fuck, I'm fucked." If that seems a slightly melodramatic assessment of the situation, it's certainly quite hard to imagine anyone 195 else making an album like The Heavy Entertainment Show, where daft jokes and crowd-pleasing anthems sit alongside stuff such as "Motherfucker", a song addressed to his two-year-old son, Charlie, forewarning 200 him about his family's history of mental illness. "Well, it's true, there is a history of mental illness that runs through my family and through the whole human family, and the likelihood of my children having some sort of mental dysfunction is pretty high. But I'm forearmed, I've got a lot of

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> Stella Street: British comedy television series about the imagined lives of celebrities in a street in London

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> Aleister Crowley: (1875-1947) English occultist

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> Great Beast: nickname for Aleister Crowley

information, and I don't think they could do anything worse or get to a worse place than I did."

Certainly, it's hard to avoid the feeling 210 that Williams seems much happier now than he did during the mindblowing-statistics years. I briefly met him in 2005, at the absolute zenith of 215 his fame, when he invited a handful of journalists to a London studio to hear his forthcoming album Intensive Care. He turned up bearing a sheaf of papers, announced he had sat up all the previous 220 night Googling everything we had ever written about him, and started arguing with everyone present about perceived slights dating back years. I left feeling a bit sorry for him: all that success and 225 fame and adulation, and you're up all night killing yourself because you think a critic misinterpreted a lyric on one of your album tracks six years ago. "Yeah," he says, "but words are heavy, and we're 230 human. There were a lot of people who were touching the buttons of everything negative that I felt about myself, and it was all there in black and white. It's the kind of thing that starts to make you feel 235 agoraphobic and second-guess everything you do. There it is, in black and white, everything that I think about myself has been written down in this kind of intellectual way, where I cannot escape 240 the fact of 'yeah, that's the sad cunt I am'. Anger about it kind of propelled me forward, but it's not a quality I can afford to have right now, being a dad."

Plus, he says, "we live in a very
different world than we used to. I don't
think someone who'd left a pop band
would feel the same way now. You know,

one of One Direction<sup>1</sup> being seen walking around Glastonbury<sup>2</sup> isn't the same as

250 me walking around Glastonbury in 1995.

There was a sort of indie fundamentalist mentality that was with us all the way through the 90s that was very apparent to me, where I was literally looked

255 down on when I was in conversation with a lot of people in various drinking establishments." [...]

It looks angry written down, but Williams says it all with a kind of 260 resigned self-deprecation. Still, it casts a slightly different light on those photos of him, visibly the worse for wear and puppyishly following Oasis<sup>3</sup> around Worthy Farm<sup>4</sup> in 1995. Twenty years on, when pop stars are subject to infinitely more serious critical appraisal than so-called-indie artists these days – when whatever passes for indie music these days frequently sounds indistinguishable 270 from mainstream pop – it's hard to imagine the kind of widespread consternation that the sight of a boyband member daring to breathe the same rarefied air as the Gallagher brothers<sup>5</sup> 275 once caused.

"I was the underclass, because of who I was and where I'd come from, people had this contempt for me. There was this utterly pervasive contempt. When I was at Glastonbury it felt like the rest of the festival was like: 'What the fuck are you doing here, you cunt?' And I sort of wanted to be OK with the big boys, I wanted to be accepted, there's

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> One Direction: British pop group

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> English music festival

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> British Rock Band

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> Worthy Farm: site of Glastonbury music festival

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>5</sup> Gallagher brothers: Liam and Noel Gallagher, members of Oasis

285 a playground mentality that carries on through life and at that time, I wanted to be accepted by the bullies, and that became part of the very fabric of my DNA: 'Oh, I'll be accepted by these 290 people eventually, right, here's my new album. Oh, they're not accepting me, they're not coming.' Now, I think I'm further down the road with it: 'Look, this is who I am, this is what I'm capable of.' 295 About three albums ago, I sort of realised: 'They're definitely not coming, it's not happening.' I can be quite philosophical about it." He smiles. "But then equally not, depending on what time of day it is."

In fact, he says, he's still riven with self-doubt. "I've been searching for confidence, real confidence, something of substance. It's never coming, but I've realised I'm fucking brave. And I have 305 a way of making trauma look confident on stage, and that's my talent. My main talent is turning trauma into something that looks showbizzy. Something happens 335 if you don't. So I need to do that." once I put my foot on a stage and very 310 rarely does the mask slip. I don't go up on stage alone, I go there with Robbie

Williams. He turns up. Sometimes he doesn't and I have to do it myself and that's when the trauma of backstage plays 315 itself out on stage. But most of the time he turns up."

Besides, he says, fatherhood changed his outlook. Today, he's not driven by the desire to be the biggest star in 320 the country, or to find the approval of critics and his peers, but "making sure that we've got a very nice roof over our heads."

Oh, come off it, you've sold 75m 325 albums. Surely you don't need to work. "But I do. Because I had three years off and shit stopped working. My brain stopped working. There is a monetary aspect to this, but when I say I need to 330 work, I need to because of that classic thing: people retire and then they die. I've got a great job, and it's a great hobby really, but it's something I need to do. And it sounds dramatic, but you die inside

(2016)

#### Anvendt materiale (til brug for Copydan):

"Tropical cyclone". Wikipedia website, viewed September 2017. (en.wikipedia.org)

"Hurricane Harvey Update". *Texas A&M University Corpus Christi* website, viewed September 2017. (www.tamucc.edu)

Krishan Coupland. "The Sea in Me". 2016. Nicholas Royle (ed.). *Best British Short Stories 2017*. London: Salt Publishing, 2017.

Alexis Petridis. "Robbie Williams: 'My main talent is turning trauma into something showbizzy". *The Guardian* website, October 30, 2016, viewed September 2017. (www.theguardian.com)