

PART B: POETRY

INSTRUCTIONS: Read the following poem and answer the questions on pages 4 to 7 of the written-response booklet.

Death Over Water

by Elizabeth Rhetts Woods

1 A clamour of crows
mobbing an eagle, it seems
--until I see the gull, low
down and desperate, flying
5 for its life, it swerves across
the open water, striving for
the open sky
--but the eagle is always
above and behind it, parallel, like
10 the male of a pair of ice dancers
spreading his dark arms above
his partner's every move, like that
the eagle shadows the gull, drives it
bleating over the bay--
15 why does it never
head for the trees? Why does it remain
in that arena where the enemy has
every advantage of size and speed?
Perhaps it's confused by the crows, that gallery
20 of scalawags, those scraps of scorched confetti
screeching as they swirl around the death duo
spiralling lower, on every circuit I expect to see
the talons sink home--
but each time the gull dodges,
25 it's closer to the surface. It can't
go on much longer--
indeed, the end's so quick.
I miss the *coup de grace* in passing,
some bushes obscure my view-- (I have to
30 keep walking; I have a bus to catch)
--of the instant
the eagle knocks the gull out
of the air forever.
35 Circling, it grabs the limp body
from the water, and bears it off
to a piling near the canoe club.
The suddenly silent crows disperse.

OVER