

PART B: POETRY

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

A Mother

by Samuel B. Peralta

1 Next year, we promised ourselves,
we'd have to get it for her next year,
that sculpture in cork and ivory:
framed in a world of glass,
5 a house smaller than her thumbnail
and trees and reeds
and a bridge to an island
where miniature cranes spread their wings
for flight.

10 When she saw it first, a month ago,
at that shop in Ayala,
she held it up to the light
with both hands.
She was so afraid it would slip!

15 Her dreams were larger
than our twelve-year-old pockets.
Instead, papa helped us wrap up
a china cat we'd found
in a sea front store.

20 We hid it under the towels
in the closet.

That afternoon we put on records
and papa did impressions
with a made-up guitar.

25 Then there was that smoky, rich, funny
smell coming from the oven...
We looked at each other, then raced
to the kitchen in twos.
She laughed, and he laughed too,

30 as she scraped
the burnt-out bottom of his coffee cake
from the pan.
We didn't.

35 After dinner we gathered around her,
our hearts beating
like so many small wings.
First the white ribbon, then the box,
then the layered tissues.
40 "Oh!" she said. "Oh!"
and she held it to her cheek.

There between the lamplight
and the window, rocked in his arms,
she held it to her cheek.