

# LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

---

Paper 9695/31  
Poetry and Prose

## Key Messages

- Candidates should know their texts in great detail to make secure references and use quotations to support points.
- Answers should focus on the writing of the texts, avoiding dwelling on the biography of their authors.
- Candidates should focus more closely on the language, imagery and structure of prose and drama as well as poetry.
- Answers to **(b)** passage questions in particular must be very detailed, commenting very closely on the writing of the extract. Poetry answers should focus on the set poem.

## General Comments

There was a full range of responses to the texts, often demonstrating detailed knowledge and considerable insight. The strongest answers were often conceptualised responses to the questions, developing the candidate's argument with secure references, quotations and analysis of the writer's methods. Candidates should remember that they are discussing literature – the ways in which writers communicate their ideas. This means that recall of plot and characters, however detailed, will not attract high marks unless it is accompanied by discussion of how that plot is treated and those characters portrayed.

The passage based questions focus on these skills in a particular way, always asking for a close commentary or a detailed discussion of the writing of the extract. It is therefore essential that candidates provide detailed, focused discussion of the features of the passage of writing that appears on the question paper. Candidates are often prepared for this kind of close focus in discussion of poetry texts; it should be remembered that exactly the same kind of close commentary on language and structure is needed in discussion of the prose and drama passages.

The entry for this paper is comparatively small in the November session, which meant that Examiners saw very few answers on a number of texts.

### **Question 1** Sujata Bhatt: *Point No Point*

- (a) Too few answers to make a general comment appropriate.
- (b) Too few answers to make a general comment appropriate.

### **Question 2** Thomas Hardy *Selected Poems*

- (a) A small number of candidates attempted this question, which gave an opportunity to discuss a wide range of poems. The most popular choices were 'The Self-Unseeing', 'A Thunderstorm in Town', 'The Haunter', 'Beeny Cliff' and 'The Shadow on the Stone'. The most successful answers were securely focused on the demands of the question, discussing the poetic methods Hardy uses to present past love. Many answers were weaker, as candidates became sidetracked into Hardy biography rather than a discussion of his poetry.
- (b) 'The Ruined Maid' lent itself to a range of interpretations from candidates of differing abilities. The strongest answers discussed the poem's construction through dialogue, giving it a dramatic quality, with tone of voice, accent and references to costume. Candidates made reference to the limited opportunities available to working class women which are made apparent in the poem. Simpler answers summarised a comparison between a simple country girl and a prostitute. Few answers explored the poem's ambiguities in its use of the word 'ruined'.

**Question 3** *Songs of Ourselves*

- (a) There were some strong answers to this question based on appropriate choices of poems which were discussed sensitively. The most obvious choices were 'My Parents', 'Praise Song for my Mother' and 'Follower', though other poems were used with some success. The different attitudes towards parents were explored, with thoughtful comments on retrospective judgement. The most successful looked closely at how the narrative standpoint was created and analysed the effects of the poets' choices of diction, imagery and structure.
- (b) Sassoon's 'Attack' drew a large number of responses, most of which engaged very positively with the poem. There was lively comment on a number of the poem's features, such as personification, repetition and the choices of verbs and adjectives. Some answers explored creation of setting and mood in the first 4 lines and many candidates made reference to the final plea to 'Jesus', demonstrating the tone of desperation. The First World War context was usually well understood, with appropriate references to 'trenches' and 'going over the top'.

**Question 4** Charlotte Brontë *Jane Eyre*

- (a) Less confident answers to this question were characterised by narrative summary, sometimes focused on a few occasions where Jane is seen to be suffering. The question of 'suffering as an essential part of Jane's development' was often more elusive, and this proved to be an important discriminator between the answers. The most confident candidates were able to match very detailed knowledge of the text to the question posed, considering ways in which Brontë shows, in the structure of the narrative, that episodes of suffering develop aspects of Jane's characterisation.
- (b) The passage describing St John Rivers was a popular option. Strong answers often began with narrative perspective and the effects of mediation through Jane's eyes, and went on to explore the language of the extract. The paradoxes between St John's kindly actions and his forbidding manner provided much to comment on; candidates noted phrases such as 'more of gloom than pleasure' and the triples 'compressed, condensed, controlled' and 'election, predestination, reprobation'. The most successful answers considered not just the words and phrases, but also explored the cumulative effects of such language.

**Question 5** Tsitsi Dangarembga *Nervous Conditions*

- (a) Most answers were appropriately focused on different kinds of independence: from patriarchal society, from female oppression, from educational inequality and from colonial influences, to name a few examples. The most successful answers were rooted in detailed knowledge of the text and discussed literary features in detail as well as dealing with ideas of independence.
- (b) Candidates recognised the important features of this passage and the best answers considered the question carefully. Some focused on Tambu's observations, others on Babamukuru's household, while the strongest discussed Dangarembga's presentation of Tambu's responses, as prompted by the question wording. Such answers considered the narrator's acknowledgement of her ignorance – of bedclothes, for example – and her sense of excitement in the novelty of the School uniform and the luxurious breakfast.

**Question 6** *Stories of Ourselves*

- (a) There were few responses to this question; those seen by Examiners tended to rely on narrative summary rather than on change and effects. However, the question enabled some candidates to write in thoughtful ways about the endings of stories such as 'To Da-Duh, in Memoriam', 'Of White Hairs and Cricket', 'Tyres' and 'Sandpiper'. Successful answers considered the effect of the endings on the reader, taking into account the events or characterisation in the preceding story. The poignancy of the conclusions of these stories was particularly appreciated and effectively discussed.
- (b) There was a wide range of responses to this question. Essays generally featured sound comments on setting and character with some discussion of Muni and his wife as individual characters. A number of answers, though, did not explore the dynamic of their relationship and the question's focus on the extract as an opening to the story was often insufficiently considered. Successful answers looked closely at Narayan's language and its effects, taking into account the later development of the narrative.

# LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

---

Paper 9695/32  
Poetry and Prose

## Key Messages

- Candidates should know their texts in great detail to make secure references and use quotations to support points.
- Answers should focus on the writing of the texts, avoiding dwelling on the biography of their authors.
- Candidates should focus more closely on the language, imagery and structure of prose and drama as well as poetry.
- Answers to **(b)** passage questions in particular must be very detailed, commenting very closely on the writing of the extract. Poetry answers should focus on the set poem.

## General Comments

There was a full range of responses to the texts, often demonstrating detailed knowledge and considerable insight. The strongest answers were often conceptualised responses to the questions, developing the candidate's argument with secure references, quotations and analysis of the writer's methods. Candidates should remember that they are discussing literature – the ways in which writers communicate their ideas. This means that recall of plot and characters, however detailed, will not attract high marks unless it is accompanied by discussion of how that plot is treated and those characters portrayed.

The passage based questions focus on these skills in a particular way, always asking for a close commentary or a detailed discussion of the writing of the extract. It is therefore essential that candidates provide detailed, focused discussion of the features of the passage of writing that appears on the question paper. Candidates are often prepared for this kind of close focus in discussion of poetry texts; it should be remembered that exactly the same kind of close commentary on language and structure is needed in discussion of the prose and drama passages.

### **Question 1** Sujata Bhatt: *Point No Point*

- (a) Too few answers to make a general comment appropriate.
- (b) Answers to this question varied widely, from essays on the joys and pains of childbirth without reference to the poem, to appreciative analytical writing on the language and structure of the poem. Candidates often wrote with sensitivity about the recreation in words of the moment of childbirth, presented in sticky tactile reality. Strong answers considered Bhatt's use of metaphors of sailing, birds and journeys. While some candidates seemed to find it difficult to discuss Bhatt's free conversational style as poetry and lapsed into paraphrase, more confident answers showed some appreciation of the irregular form of the poem, and of the use of ellipsis and repetition to convey the uncertainty of the speaker's thought processes. Some also noted the effect of the poem's control of time, moving from the present 'Now' to the past and the moment of childbirth, before returning to the present: 'And still there is the need...'

### **Question 2** Thomas Hardy *Selected Poems*

- (a) The aim of this question was to encourage candidates to consider the language and construction of Hardy's poetry rather than purely on content or biography. Nevertheless, a number of candidates paid little heed to the question's wording and summarised the content of two poems, often accompanied by a discussion of Hardy's personal life. Such answers were not successful. It is important to remember that it is possible to write a full marks answer with no reference at all to biography, but it is not possible to write a successful answer with no reference to a poem's language and structure. Some candidates, however, embraced the question and were able to demonstrate how ideas in Hardy's poems develop through his carefully crafted stanza structures,

his use of rhyme and assonance and his variations of rhythm in poems such as 'The Darkling Thrush', 'The Going', 'The Haunter', 'The Voice' and 'The Convergence of the Twain'.

- (b) 'A Church Romance' proved a very popular choice and attracted some appreciative and focused writing. While biography was not directly relevant to this question, it was notable that a considerable number of candidates assumed the poem to be about Hardy and Emma, rather than Hardy's parents. This led to some skewed and unhelpful readings. Stronger answers noted Hardy's imaginative recreation of the relationship from the point of view of the woman and commented on the subtleties of the poem's presentation of change and the effects of time. While simplistic responses suggested that the end of the poem illustrates the breakdown of love, more careful reading by most candidates responded to the presentation of a lasting relationship, though 'Age had scared Romance'. There was some thoughtful response to Hardy's dramatic recreation of the first moment, with the contrast between 'her sight/ Swept' and 'She turned again' once her attention has been caught. Some linked the 'bow' with Cupid's bow and wrote about love at first sight. Others commented on the church setting, either seeing it as appropriate, as the place of marriage, or inappropriate, as a sacred place profaned by an outbreak of secular love. Interestingly, very few candidates recognised that the poem is a sonnet, albeit one idiosyncratically set out.

### Question 3 *Songs of Ourselves*

- (a) Answers showed that a wide range of poems could be used for this question. Popular poems were 'Childhood', 'Because I Could Not Stop For Death', 'The Trees', 'Country School', 'Cold in the Earth', 'A Quoi Bon Dire' and 'Follower'. Weaker responses gave accounts of the content of the chosen poems with no reference to 'poetic methods', while other limited responses listed various techniques and exemplified their presence in the poems with no consideration of context or how they contributed to the meaning of the poem. Strong answers showed how the poets' choices developed the meaning and contributed to the reader's understanding. Such answers were able to show, for example, some perceptive understanding of the use of changing perspective in 'Childhood' and 'Follower', appreciation of the imagery used in 'The Trees' and sensitive appreciation of the emotions expressed in 'Cold in the Earth'.
- (b) This was a very popular question, though not always well done. While there were some very confident and successful answers exploring the effects of the poem in detail, many answers were hampered by an unclear understanding, particularly of stanza two, some of the vocabulary of the poem, such as 'mockeries', 'pall', 'pallor' and 'shires', and its references to funerary practices. Examiners noted that it was frequently the case that candidates wrote about the octave of the sonnet with a degree of confidence but were unable to discuss the sestet effectively. In most answers there was an appreciation that Owen's poem presents war as destructive, futile, violent, brutal and wasteful of young lives, generating a sense of loss, waste, grief, pain, indignity and hopelessness. Stronger responses noted that the two stanzas begin with questions which are answered in the following lines, while the octave explores the chaos and destruction of the battlefield using powerful metaphors, alliteration and onomatopoeia, while the sestet is calmer and gentler, focusing on the sorrow of the bereaved at home. Some saw the sestet as equally bitter as the octet, arguing that it showed up the complicity of the nation in the slaughter – 'blinds' having more than one function. Perceptive answers commented on techniques such as the use of caesura in line 5 and the brief pause at the end of line 6 as the poet considers the idea of the very specific 'choirs' that the soldiers hear. The most successful answers were those which looked very carefully at the answers to the initial questions and noted their pessimistic substitutions for the appropriate rites of a funeral.

### Question 4 Charlotte Brontë *Jane Eyre*

- (a) While some candidates limited their focus to particular sections of the novel and others summarised the whole of Jane's story, this was a popular question and was often answered with confidence and appropriate detail. Successful answers discussed the stages of Jane's life in terms of the difficulties she has to overcome, focusing on the various roles which Jane is asked to perform and her reaction to them, based on moral principles which develop during the process. Some answers addressed the importance of the nineteenth century context in relation to the class and gender roles expected of her and her refusal to conform. Some strong answers compared those roles with which Jane is shown to be happy – candidate, teacher, wife, penitent, a Christian with wealth – and those which create difficulties – an orphan, a 'good little girl', a governess who falls in love with her employer, an indulged bride-to-be, a mistress, a Christian like Helen Burns or

St John Rivers, Rivers' wife, a woman in contemporary society. Brontë's 'presentation' was usually expressed in terms of character, while more successful responses were able to demonstrate Brontë's creation and development of that character.

- (b) The question referred to 'narrative style' and strong answers focused on this term, acknowledging the opening reference to a 'new chapter in a novel' and the first person narrative's direct address to the 'Reader'. It was noted that these techniques help the protagonist to take readers into her confidence, allowing them to share her feelings. Candidates detected Brontë's presentation of Jane's shifting emotions during the course of the passage, picking up on phrases such as 'I am not very tranquil in my mind', 'cut adrift from every connexion' and 'The charm of adventure sweetens that sensation... but then the throb of fear disturbs it'. Some candidates compared the internal monologue addressed to the reader with the passage of dialogue which interrupts it, the driver's taciturnity creating some preparation for Jane's initial experiences at Thornfield. Others were alert to the importance of the fire and Jane's urge to progress: she is restless when waiting, but 'jumped up' and is 'at my ease' when the carriage is moving. It was sometimes noted that the narrative includes symbols – an open door and a lamp-lit street – to show Jane's fortunes are improving.

#### Question 5 Tsitsi Dangarembga *Nervous Conditions*

- (a) *Nervous Conditions* is proving to be a very popular text and this question attracted many answers. A frequent problem was that many candidates wrote at length about the 'Englishness' of the Nyasha, Chido and Nhamo, overlooking that the focus of the question was Tambu. A comparison of the presentation of the other three characters with Tambu often worked well, but candidates who did not ultimately focus their answers on Tambu were not successful. Better answers had a balanced approach, exploring Tambu's resistance to 'Englishness' by retaining her cultural identity, customs, traditions and values, though at times Dangarembga suggests she has the potential of becoming like Nyasha. There were some very thoughtful, evaluative answers; some candidates were not convinced that she has not 'succumbed', providing the evidence of her embracing of white education and her attitude to her parents, while others skilfully judged the novel's ironic tone, suggesting that while the Tambu of the novel does 'succumb', the retrospective narrator has emerged from it.
- (b) Many responses to this question showed an appreciation of the significance of the passage, pointing out that it was an uncharacteristic outburst by a character who had, for much of the novel, calmly accepted her lot. Some candidates went further, judging her as ignorant but astute, oppressed but pragmatic, poor but proud, bitter but truthful, who finally gains her voice. Her significance was seen as highlighting the novel's central concerns of education, emancipation, patriarchal oppression, superstition, tradition and betrayal. Such successful answers depended on a balance between good knowledge of the whole text and detailed comment on how the language of the passage contributes to Mainini's characterisation. Less successful answers discussed the role of women in the novel with little address to the set passage. Those who engaged with the detail were rewarded, picking up the contrasts between Mainini, Lucia and Maiguru and commenting on Tambu's shock and 'shame'. The importance of the seed image, 'germinating and taking root... over a long time', was noted, and the varied characterisation which presents Mainini as bitter but justified in her responses to Lucia and Maiguru, while also petulant and childish with 'her mouth thrust out in a defiant pout'. Perceptive candidates noted that Nhamo's death and the threat of losing Tambu are at the heart of Mainini's worries, with the feelings of rejection and powerlessness.

#### Question 6 *Stories of Ourselves*

- (a) While less confident responses relied on a retelling of narrative and summary of characters, there were many thoughtful and engaged answers to this question, considering such stories as 'The Fall of the House of Usher', 'A Horse and Two Goats', 'Sandpiper', 'To Da-duh, in Memoriam', 'Journey' and 'The Open Boat'. Some candidates discussed the attractive attributes of memorable characters, such as wisdom, knowledge, pride, responsibility, determination, sincerity, humour, compassion and tolerance, but also characters' weaknesses, such as being open to manipulation and exploitation. Such answers usually showed detailed knowledge of the stories, with references carefully used to support the points made. Stronger answers also considered the methods of characterisation used by authors, such as stream-of-consciousness, dialogue, narrative viewpoint, imagery and symbolism. Some examples were the way Narayan portrays Muni with a mixture of comic and tragic elements, and the ways in which the Grace and Soueif gain sympathy for their central characters in 'Journey' and 'Sandpiper' through distinctive narrative styles. The interior

monologue technique of 'Journey' was particularly appreciated in several answers. Sometimes candidates commented on how the use of contrast between characters makes them memorable, for example in 'To Da-duh, in Memoriam' and 'A Horse and Two Goats'.

- (b) Some candidates found this a challenging passage, having some difficulty with the layered narrative structure of Wells writing a story in which Redmond tells a story told to him by Wallace. This is, though, a central feature of the story, and many candidates appreciated that this layering is one way in which Wells gives a sense of conviction, or truth, to a fantastic narrative. They found a lot in the passage to discuss, highlighting Wallace's hesitancy and such references as 'He told it to me with such direct simplicity', 'as far as he was concerned it was a true story', 'his earnest slow voice', 'the flavour of reality' and 'I have got over my intervening doubts', all of which suggest that the narrator is convinced of at least Wallace's conviction in his story, despite its strangeness and Wallace's position 'in the world'. Many answers picked up the narrator's own careful consideration of the evidence, making the last line of the excerpt particularly important. Some answers considered the setting and atmosphere of privacy and trust in the passage, engaging the reader and giving the story its credibility, while others noticed the external evidence – the photo which shows 'something hidden', the woman who noticed something odd and Wallace's brilliant career which he finds 'dull and tedious and vain'.



# LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

---

Paper 9695/33  
Poetry and Prose

## Key Messages

- Candidates should know their texts in great detail to make secure references and use quotations to support points.
- Answers should focus on the writing of the texts, avoiding dwelling on the biography of their authors.
- Candidates should focus more closely on the language, imagery and structure of prose and drama as well as poetry.
- Answers to **(b)** passage questions in particular must be very detailed, commenting very closely on the writing of the extract. Poetry answers should focus on the set poem.

## General Comments

There was a full range of responses to the texts, often demonstrating detailed knowledge and considerable insight. The strongest answers were often conceptualised responses to the questions, developing the candidate's argument with secure references, quotations and analysis of the writer's methods. Candidates should remember that they are discussing literature – the ways in which writers communicate their ideas. This means that recall of plot and characters, however detailed, will not attract high marks unless it is accompanied by discussion of how that plot is treated and those characters portrayed.

The passage based questions focus on these skills in a particular way, always asking for a close commentary or a detailed discussion of the writing of the extract. It is therefore essential that candidates provide detailed, focused discussion of the features of the passage of writing that appears on the question paper. Candidates are often prepared for this kind of close focus in discussion of poetry texts; it should be remembered that exactly the same kind of close commentary on language and structure is needed in discussion of the prose and drama passages.

### **Question 1** Sujata Bhatt: *Point No Point*

- (a) There were not many answers to this question, but responses showed clear insight into the Bhatt's bitter/sweet perceptions of India as a place of beauty, vibrancy and colour, as well as the darker elements of violence, destruction, pain and guilt. Many also noted India as a part of the poet's cultural identity, her spiritual / emotional home and a source of her poetic inspiration. There was sometimes a tendency to drift into discussion of Bhatt's childhood rather than focusing specifically on images of India in the poetry.
- (b) Most candidates who had prepared Bhatt's poetry chose this question, though many seemed to find the poem difficult and did not show confident knowledge of it. Some strong, confident answers did stand out, however, showing understanding of the focus of the question. These essays examined how Bhatt achieves an interlinking of past and present time, using specific language choices, poetic devices and the structure of the poem. Some mentioned the use of phrases which suggest the passing of time, such as 'After a few days', 'Meanwhile', and 'Years pass.' More frequent was commentary on how Bhatt links the imagery of the rhesus monkeys being fed through a cage to the 'hu hu hu' speech of the 'year-old daughter' thrusting out her arms. This link of imagery gave many candidates the opportunity to discuss the idea that medical advances that benefit humans are linked to the suffering of animals in the past. Another connection between the past and the present shown in the poem is that of technological development – 'Microscopes improve'. The strongest answers commented closely on Bhatt's intermingling of imagery from two time frames and the use of the final stanza to develop the theme that progress involves a price as well as benefits.

### **Question 2** Thomas Hardy *Selected Poems*

- (a) Answers to this question led to some thoughtful essays that showed strong personal engagement with and sensitive appreciation of Hardy's poetry. 'At Castle Boterel' was discussed usefully in many essays, along with 'The Going', 'The Walk', 'Your Last Drive', 'The Haunter' and 'The Voice'. Some candidates were able successfully to integrate contextual knowledge about Hardy's relationship with his wife Emma into their essays, but very often this material led to biographical recall and supposition with little reference to the poetry. Examiners noted that the most successful answers were those which focused on 'ways in which Hardy presents personal relationships', rather than on relationships themselves. Strong answers discussed poems with contrasting voices and perspectives, for example, and framed their responses to contrast the methods used and the effects of these voices. A successful pairing frequently used was 'The Haunter' with 'The Voice'. Others compared different kinds of relationships, looking at an 'Emma' poem with 'A Church Romance' or even 'The Ruined Maid'.
- (b) Overwhelmingly, Examiners gained the impression that many candidates answering on 'The Year's Awakening' were not confident in their prior knowledge of the poem; many answers read as if the candidates were approaching the poem as an unseen text. Such answers struggled with understanding the significance of the seasons in the poem and the references to the signs of the zodiac. There was also some difficulty with vocabulary such as 'tinct', 'apparelling' and 'rote'. More confident answers noted that the poem is structured around the rhetorical questions at the beginning and ending of each stanza, showing the narrator's sense of wonder at the natural world's inherent knowledge of the turning of the seasons and the rebirth of life in spring. Such answers noted the passage of time indicated by the shifting stars in the zodiac and the descriptions of the harshness of winter where 'life can scarce endure', making it remarkable that the bird begins again its 'vespering' and the 'crocus root' its growth.

### Question 3 *Songs of Ourselves*

- (a) There were many enthusiastic answers to this question, with favoured poems being 'Childhood', 'My Parents', 'Follower', 'Praise Song For My Mother' and 'Friend'. Cornford's, Spender's and Tuwhare's poems were particularly thoughtfully handled. Answers often showed good knowledge and understanding of the chosen poems suggesting that the candidates were well-prepared. There were many competent and intelligent comments about imagery and form which gave candidates the opportunity to demonstrate their understanding of poetry and to give a personal response to literary effects. In some cases, rigid preparation led to essays within a Centre using almost exactly the same examples and repeating the same points. While credit is always given to the points raised, it is refreshing to find essays that take a more original approach and where the candidate is prepared to offer discussion that develop an informed personal response. Often the most able candidates take this approach but it is still gratifying to read essays placed in the middle or lower bands that show a more personal engagement with poetry. Some answers were weakened by a lack of focus, sometimes linked to the choice of poems, with essays focusing on general memories, for example, rather than specific memories of childhood.
- (b) While this was a popular option, the poem was not always well understood, with a lack of clarity about what a 'reservist' actually is. Many candidates saw the poem as referring to a constant cycle of warfare and battles in which the narrator is involved, while some picked up the imagery of 'joust' and assumed the poem described the life of a medieval knight. However, there were also some outstanding responses in which the nuances of the poem were explored with great perception, often supported by contextual knowledge of the poet and his background. Candidates often showed understanding of the allusions to Don Quixote and Sisyphus, which helped their interpretations. The most perceptive essays gave subtle readings of the changing tone of voice in the poem, linking together the language and imagery of the poem in order to discuss ideas about monotony, cycles, and lack of freedom. They examined the recurring phrases such as 'Time again', 'again' 'We will keep charging', 'same hills', 'same trails' and images such as 'children placed on carousels'. Very pleasing were those answers which offered perceptive readings of the final stanza, discussing whether Cheng's use of 'the open sea' and 'daybreak' meant a final release from monotony because of the end of soldiering, death, or both. Others considered that the reservists become 'unlikely heroes' because, by realising their absurdity, they transcend it.



**Question 4** Charlotte Brontë *Jane Eyre*

- (a) Candidates at all levels showed their knowledge, understanding and response to the novel in answers to this question. Many candidates linked Jane's passion to fire, fire imagery, and the symbolism of the colour red. Many candidates also linked fire with its opposite, ice, the absence of which indicating a lack of passion or feeling. Candidates examined how fire is used to represent passion, emotion and creativity in contrast to the imagery of ice which represents reason and duty. The balance of the two indicates Jane's development and maturity and was grasped by most candidates. There were cases, though, where the discussion of ice became so developed that it distracted focus from the terms of the question set. Typically, candidates used the narrative sequence of the novel to structure their essays, citing instances of fire and fire imagery as they worked through the novel. While this gave a solid structure and demonstrated the candidates' knowledge, those who did not rely on the narrative sequence to structure their essays were able to link incidents together more effectively by discussing their significance to Jane's character development. This approach was more sophisticated, developing particular points and demonstrating a good understanding of how Brontë repeats and builds upon motifs in varied ways.
- (b) Less successful answers to this question ignored the imperative 'Comment closely' and gave general accounts of the subject matter of Jane's and St John's disagreement, rather than engaging with the way Brontë presents their argument. The strongest answers took a detailed linguistic approach, highlighting specific features and commenting in detail on how Brontë has used those features for literary effect. For example, candidates correctly identified the use of imperative and exclamatory sentences as well as rhetorical questions to characterise Jane's assertiveness towards St John. Candidates who identified these features were able to demonstrate Jane's assertiveness by analysis and then use that as a platform from which to argue that Brontë uses these techniques to indicate to the reader a change in Jane brought about by her new financial security. Furthermore, this was also often linked to candidates' understanding of Jane's quest for autonomy, family, and love in contrast to St John's concerns with money, status and society. Strong candidates recognised Rivers' initial patronizing tone and traced at what point the argument becomes one of equals as Jane refuses to be subdued by his reason. A very few candidates noted that this dialogue is entirely without authorial or third person narrative comment, the effect of which is to pitch Jane against Rivers as equals.

**Question 5** Tsitsi Dangarembga *Nervous Conditions*

- (a) Answers to this question often showed a strong personal response to the novel, the character of Lucia and her effect on Tambu. The strongest answers identified Lucia as a woman who resisted male domination by refusing to conform to expectations and instead acting on her own ideas and desires. In these answers Lucia's character was shown to influence Tambu with the poignant observation often being made that Lucia's liberation only gets her so far whereas Tambu's is more complete (even if not total). Sensitive answers gave examples of female characters in the novel who do not resist or have withered under male domination, such as Tambu's mother. In addition, Nyasha's behaviour was also often mentioned as another example of commendable resistance to male domination but for which the woman pays a high price. The role and significance of Lucia, in the most confident answers, was therefore usually linked to her impact on Tambu and as revealing the damaging effects of colonial and male oppression on its victims, despite their strength of character. Some thoughtful commentators noted that Lucia's emancipation is ironic, as it is achieved by submitting sexually to men.
- (b) Most answers were able to relate the attack on Nhamo to Tambu's determined and indomitable character. Surprisingly, some candidates wrote that they felt Tambu was 'overreacting' and that her attack on her brother was 'unprovoked' or 'inappropriate' behaviour for a sister towards her brother. Other answers made a pertinent link between this incident and the opening line of the novel and stated how the narrative depends to large extent on Nhamo's death and Tambu's subsequent educational and emancipatory opportunities. Nhamo's oppression of his own sister, including his actions leading up to the fight depicted in the passage, was commented upon usefully in explaining Tambu's feelings towards her brother's death and how this changes everything for her. Stronger answers focused on specific literary features, such as the shift in narrative voice in the final paragraph of the passage – in the strongest answers, this was confidently linked to discussion of the dual narration of the younger and older Tambu used in the novel as a whole. Other specific features mentioned were verbs characterising the 'violent', 'aggressive', or 'animalistic' nature of Tambu's attack, while she is able to speak to Mr Matimba in an adult way, but

analysis of specific literary and linguistic features was often lacking, or merely descriptive, rather than analytical.

**Question 6** *Stories of Ourselves*

- (a) From a range of rich possibilities, most answers tended to focus on 'The Fall House of Usher', 'The Open Boat', 'Tyres', 'A Horse and Two Goats', 'Sandpiper', 'Journey', and 'To Da-duh, in Memoriam'. There were some narrative responses and examples of essays which tended to drift back towards plot and character, but many which engaged with the question of settings with considerable success. The most common structure was to introduce both stories and then discuss the presentation and importance of setting in each story in turn with a concluding section. Some candidates did successfully manage a more complex approach, alternating a paragraph by paragraph discussion of the setting in each story. Most essays showed a good understanding and many candidates were able to write with real sensitivity about the presentation and the influence of the settings of the stories. There was, for example, some remarkably thoughtful writing on 'Sandpiper', considering the use of the beach and all that went with it as symbolic of narrator's state of mind, with a discussion of the couple's separate rooms in the house, all as a contrast with the narrator's homeland. Equally, there was some strong writing on the fluctuating, threatening setting of the sea, and within it the small enclosure of the boat in 'The Open Boat'.
- (b) This was a popular extract and elicited a range of responses. Most sympathised with the position of the old man, though there was a sizeable minority who saw him as a trouble-making nuisance with whom the council official deals beautifully. On the whole, candidates discussed the passage in terms of the failure of communication between two people of different cultures with opposing agendas, clearly understanding the difference between Maori and European ideas about land. There was some sharp analysis of how the dialogue in the passage overlaps, with neither character really hearing the other. Good detail came in with focus on such diction as 'equivalent', 'equal' and 'understanding'. Other answers were marked by analysis of the emotive language opposed to 'officialese' and commented on the parallel dialogue without real understanding between the two characters. Very strong answers recognised that the mixture of direct speech and free indirect thought without any punctuation denotes the shift between voices, a deliberate stylistic choice to indicate the difficulty each side has in understanding the other's viewpoint.

# LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

---

Paper 9695/41

Drama

## Key Messages

- It is not enough simply to have insight into the texts. In order to do well, candidates need to ensure that their ideas are backed up with concise support from the text.
- With **(b)** questions, candidates must focus on the passage printed, not write a general essay.

## General comments

This version is done by a comparatively small number of candidates, so there is not necessarily a representative spread of achievement across the range. Work seen showed that candidates had enjoyed reading and thinking about the texts, though more could perhaps have been done to make them think about the dramatic aspects of how they work. At times, excessive display of understanding of contexts and backgrounds (particularly with Wilde) can over-balance an answer. It is better to let knowledge of this kind emerge from the examples adduced, than to press it onto the text even if only marginally relevant. When marking for 'Personal response', Examiners are not looking for unanchored enthusiasm – rather they look to see if candidates are making a case using their own examples, or if there is particular, distinctive insight into a particular moment that shows them thinking through an issue for themselves.

Occasionally, candidates appeared to think that writing a lot would help them demonstrate breadth of knowledge and understanding. A problem with this approach can be that candidates often then simply throw everything they know at a question, without really exercising judgement and selecting carefully enough. The time taken to think a question through and plan so that an essay moves forward logically can often earn far more marks than the scattergun approach.

## Comments on specific questions

### **Question 1: PETER SHAFFER: *Equus***

- (a) There were a number of sound responses to this question. Candidates were able to see that much of the dramatic tension of the play emerges from Dysart's moral and professional ambiguity about what he is doing to Alan.
- (b) A small number of candidates tackled this question and were able to note its dramatic power and its significance as the culmination of the play's first act.

### **Question 2: WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE: *The Winter's Tale***

- (a) Candidates were able to summarise the course of Leontes's jealousy in the play but few moved on to really focusing on the issue of 'self-deception.' A few took the word 'deception' to be synonymous with 'disappointment,' unfortunately a Spanish/ English false friend. In restricting discussions to Leontes, candidates often failed to note examples from elsewhere in the play.
- (b) There was much relevant contrasting of the joyousness and humour of the sheep shearing with the dourness of the first acts of the play. Candidates were able to comment on the imagery of Autolycus's song and about the sense of renewal created here. The humour of the Clown's foolishness was much appreciated, particularly that he takes 'a million of beating' completely literally.

**Question 3: WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE: *Henry IV, Part 1***

- (a) There were too few responses to comment.
- (b) There were too few responses to comment.

**Question 4: TOM STOPPARD: *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead***

- (a) A very small number of candidates answered on this question. Most were able to discuss the games in the play, but only a few were able to relate them to the play's larger themes and strategies.
- (b) There were few responses to this question. Candidates managed to make some useful remarks about the passage as both serious in content, absurd in presentation.

**Question 5: TENNESSEE WILLIAMS: *A Streetcar Named Desire***

- (a) Some candidates found it difficult to grasp the idea of techniques and resorted to summarising the action. Others were able to see that the symbolism of the play is quite often linked to actual physical presences (trains, set design etc.), to the light or to the music, all of which go far beyond simply creating 'mood'.
- (b) Candidates were usually able to see how Williams is characterising Stanley through what he says and what he does. Contrasts between Stanley and the rather more fastidious Blanche were often usefully made. Aspects of Stanley's masculinity were stressed, particularly in relation to Williams' comment that he 'sizes up women at a glance,' and seeks dominance whenever there are women present (Stella is 'the little woman,' for example). The best candidates were able to work in greater detail, seeing that his questions of Blanche are more an interrogation than a welcome. Blanche's nervousness was often placed against Stanley's easy self-assurance, and there was much discussion of sexual tension, particular over him removing his shirt.

**Question 6: OSCAR WILDE: *The Importance of Being Earnest***

- (a) Answers here relevantly considered the implications of 'unimportant' and 'undesirable' to both characterisation and action in the play, often referring to the presentation and foibles of Victorian society too. Candidates were acutely aware that society's valuation of earnestness is nothing but a shallow, selfish means to support the status quo. Many commented too that although Jack and Algernon are morally shabby, they are rewarded in the end, a clear statement about the inversion of values displayed both in the play and in the society which Wilde aims to mock.
- (b) Most answers here focused on the dialogue between Algernon and Jack and related the discussion here to the various deceptions that Jack and Algernon practice and to broader discussion of hypocrisy in the play. There was a slight tendency towards generalisation amongst candidates: not everyone in the Victorian age was a hypocrite; not all the characters presented are aristocrats.

# LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

---

Paper 9695/42

Drama

## Key Messages

- It is not enough simply to have insight into the texts. In order to do well, candidates need to ensure that their ideas are backed up with concise support from the text.
- With **(b)** questions, candidates must focus on the passage printed, not write a general essay.

## General comments

As always, Examiners saw a full range of responses. Most candidates had sound knowledge of what happens in the texts and had an appreciation (in varying degrees) of how a writer shapes writing for particular effects. There was still, perhaps, not enough recognition amongst candidates that the skills required for a response to a **(b)** question are distinctive, and that close commentary on the passage given demands sensitive awareness of precise detail of the play. In both **(a)** and **(b)** answers, Examiners are always pleased to see very close analysis of precise moments, with specific moments chosen and apposite quotation given in evidence. Candidates who use brief quotation that is woven skilfully into the text rather than a separated 'chunk,' are often able to express themselves concisely and move on. At the other extreme, some candidates assume that quoting at length serves the purpose of analysis in itself, which it plainly does not.

A number of candidates had clearly spent a lot of time discussing historical or biographical background (particularly noticeable with responses to Wilde and Williams) and either unloaded the information or used it rather uncritically to make points about the texts. Of course literary texts do not exist in a vacuum, but the accepted approach here is to start from the detail of the text and work outwards, not vice versa. Candidates are sometimes keen to demonstrate their wider reading, particularly through reference to other plays by Shakespeare. It is good that they have read widely but they need to remember that the principal focus must be on the text chosen for study.

Examiners have noted increasing awareness of these texts as plays to be performed, and there is obviously increasing understanding of the implication of the word 'presentation' that features in many questions. Unfortunately, there continues to be an amount of work from candidates who want to focus on commas and exclamation marks. Of course it is valid to talk about pace or about uncertainty suggested through repetition or pausing but the discussion needs to focus on how this might be realised on the stage.

The quality of communication covers a broad range. At the lower end there is often an ability to convey knowledge of plot and event together with simple analytical commentary of more obvious aspects of the texts. There is often quite a lot of circling with these essays, with candidates making points and then simply repeating them. Slightly higher up the mark range, candidates often see questions as character based and write about the issues raised by the question through character study. As written skills increase towards the top end, there is a much stronger ability to write strategically, ranging widely across a text or an extract and seeing some of the complex issues that the questions usually raise. Here, evidence is carefully adduced and examples are tellingly selected. Even without a written plan (which, of course, is not a requirement) there is a clear sense that a candidate has mapped out a direction for the essay so that each paragraph contributes pleasingly to an overall argument. And of course with the very best candidates there is a strong sense of individual and personal response, often through accumulated insights or a putting together of a case that shows that candidates have really thought about the texts for themselves, rather than relying on teachers to spoon-feed.



**Comments on specific questions**

**Question 1: PETER SHAFFER: *Equus***

- (a) Candidates showed awareness of Frank's role in the play, of his puritanical exterior and his conservative outlook, both of which conceal something rather more earthy beneath. There was often sensible discussion about how the moment in the cinema acts as a type of liberation for Alan, albeit with terrible consequences. There were discussions of the relationship Alan's parents and their different attitudes to sex and religion. The best answers tended to focus closely on the incident referred to in the question, exploring Alan's feeling of shock and disillusionment.
- (b) There was clear knowledge of the tension between both parents. Their contrasting attitudes and values were usually suitably addressed. Better candidates were able to get close to the detail, capturing perhaps the rather forced quality of 'dear' or Frank's irritating 'if you receive my meaning,' and also looking at ways in which Dysart contributes to the scene as an interrogator. There were some sensible comments, too, on ways in which the uncertainty between the two is played out in dramatic terms, with Dora 'eavesdropping.'

**Question 2: WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE: *The Winter's Tale***

- (a) There were some very convincing discussions of Perdita as both symbol and human being. She was seen very distinctly as embodying different values to her father, as representing regeneration and 'great creating nature.' At the same time candidates often responded to her as having distinctive, personal views: she argues with Polixenes about art and nature, wants to be valued for herself and does not really warm to being the 'Queen' of the sheep shearing feast. At times, candidates showed understanding of the issue without ever really managing to produce substantial supporting evidence.
- (b) Candidates were keenly aware of this moment as pivotal in the dramatic action of the play. There was often good discussion of the sense of wonder here and of the various ways in which Paulina exploits the situation to ensure that Leontes is sufficiently struck by the moment to have it as his final moment of remorse. But the question asked about Shakespeare's presentation of Leontes, and some candidates did not really get this in focus. Those who did were able to see how the other characters act as reflectors for Leontes at this point in order to highlight the inner change that he has endured, thus allowing us to see his developing emotions. Many essays responded fully to the language of the piece, with Leontes's recognition of his guilt ('Chide me, dear stone...') and his clear amazement at seeing his wife's image aged to reflect the passing of the years. A small number of candidates were able to pick up on the imagery of the passage – its mixture of the Christian and the pagan, and to contrast the tempered way that Leontes speaks here with his earlier irrationality. A small number of candidates spent too much time in filling in the background to this moment, often by plot telling.

**Question 3: WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE: *Henry IV, Part 1***

- (a) Most candidates were clear about the word loyalty and were able to characterise a whole series of betrayals and their motives in the play. A small number had obviously hoped that there would be a question about honour and thus treated loyalty and honour as synonymous, which of course they are not. Essays were often structured by working through the major characters one by one. Whilst valid, this tended to give responses a slightly disjointed feel, with examples being individually evoked rather than seen as part of a developing pattern. The strongest candidates were able to see the complexity of the issue and how loyalty is moveable and conditional, particularly in the Hal / Falstaff relationship.
- (b) Answers here were usually able to focus clearly on Falstaff's lies and exaggeration. At the lower end, candidates sometimes saw the passage as an invitation to produce a character study ranging across the whole of the play. The temptation to re-tell the tale of the Gad's Hill episode and its outcomes proved too much for a small number of candidates. Stronger candidates restricted themselves more firmly to the passage and had rich pickings for their views. Discussions of the relationship between Hal and Falstaff were soundly handled, with most candidates aware of how this joking episode has slightly deeper implications for the long-term friendship of the two. There was much delight in Falstaff's use of language amongst able candidates, sometimes linked to our mixed response towards him that contributes to wider patterns in the play. A few candidates were able to demonstrate how Hal's and Poin's words and actions are also part of the presentation of

Falstaff. There were some interesting moments where candidates compared Falstaff's comic swashbuckling image of himself here to the more serious moments where honour is needed later in the play and Falstaff is found to be so truly cowardly.

**Question 4: TOM STOPPARD: *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead***

- (a) Candidates were able to locate a number of moments of both comedy and humour. There was discussion of the complexity of the dialogue and its circularity, of the coarseness of the Players' language, of a variety of visual 'gags'. With some, understanding topped off with this sort of listing; better candidates were able to see that all of this light-heartedness creates a sheen on a much darker and much more insecure world where comedy and tragedy mix.
- (b) The quick firing serving and parrying of the episode were widely recognised in answers on this passage. Able candidates saw that it is a ploy to fill in time, or an attempt to try and nudge things into action in the play, though few paid attention to the last line of the extract ('Enter Hamlet... as he is about to disappear, Guil notices him') to show that their attempts to create sense and meaning of their circumstances are doomed to fail. Only the strongest candidates were able to see that this scene is a practice for them to 'glean what afflicts' Hamlet. Candidates who responded to the line 'A fine persecution – to be kept intrigued without ever quite being enlightened' were often able to connect this passage with the wider themes in the play of victimisation and of the two being part of the wheels that 'have been set in motion.'

**Question 5: TENNESSEE WILLIAMS: *A Streetcar Named Desire***

- (a) The majority of candidates answered this question with some skill and subtlety. They were able to see that Stanley loves and looks after Stella and that Blanche's arrival poses a very real threat to him. They saw, too, that Stanley looks out for his friends. Having established some positives, the majority of answers moved on to seeing the negative, destructive side of Stanley, which was often strongly evoked through reference to his brutality and aggression towards Blanche. Where opinions were firmly rooted in text, candidates showed a good deal of subtlety in their responses. At times, opinions about Blanche and Stanley as representative figures – the new and the old America – got in the way of honest discussion of what the play itself has to offer. Some candidates saw Stanley as symbolising reality, truth, or the light that Blanche so keenly seeks to avoid.
- (b) The majority of candidates showed clear knowledge and understanding of this particular passage and its significance to the play as a whole. However, many were less certain about the detail. The question asked that they think about 'Blanche's presentation of herself,' with the very strong hint that what Mitch sees here is a very clearly edited and practiced version of Blanche's past. Many candidates were able to catch this through her looking out of the window (a classic evasion if you do not want someone to look you fully in the eye) and her pouring of the drink. There was much focus on how she aims to manipulate Mitch's sympathy here. Nonetheless, candidates warmed to the pain Blanche feels ('I loved him unendurably') despite her self-dramatization: the language, her hesitancy, and her jumpiness when the train approaches all added to the cases made. Candidates who engaged with the language were often able to make much of Blanche's references to candles and light at this point, linking it to a wider image pattern of transience and vulnerability that pervades the play as a whole. Many answers were rather more general, simply talking about the presentation of Blanche here. The music and the locomotive were seen as important, as was the fact that the incident re-lives the experience. In seeing Allan's experience as in some sense having an autobiographical flavour for Williams, some candidates diverted themselves into discussions about attitudes towards homosexuality at the time of the play's first production or into discussions of Williams's own life. These answers often lost focus on the passage and lacked a sense of the play as a crafted work of art.

**Question 6: OSCAR WILDE: *The Importance of Being Earnest***

- (a) Some answers were rather limited in range and viewpoint, responding mainly to Lady Bracknell in character or narrative terms. She was seen as a villainous figure, variously snobby, posh or aggressive. More thoughtful answers looked at her as perhaps socially insecure: she was not born to quite this status in society, which perhaps makes her sensitivity to 'blood lines, not railway lines,' as one candidate put it, more acute. There was much discussion of her having taken over the man's role in establishing suitors for her daughter, and that often led to clear, relevant discussion of her attitudes towards money and marriage. What was unfortunately missing, except in the strongest scripts, was a developed sense of how she is a ludicrous, comic caricature. Oddly, some candidates saw her as one of the play's minor characters.
- (b) Answers here often captured the humorous suspense of the scene with Jack's frantic searching through the lists of absurdly named generals. The best responses were able to see that this scene is both the climax and a further representation of what has been going on in the play, with values inverted, expectations overthrown. The general being identified by Lady Bracknell as 'essentially a man of peace' or christening being seen as a 'luxury' perhaps show this at work. Some very good candidates also responded to Wilde's mockery of melodrama through the final embrace and repetition of 'At last!' A number of answers narrated the scene, rather than offering analysis, with a few candidates feeling obliged to fill in detail of how the play has reached this moment, an excuse for re-telling virtually the whole plot of the play. Of course this is 'knowledge,' but it is of a strictly limited nature. At the weaker end there was quite a lot of insistence that the scene is funny and exciting to watch, but little support or analysis was offered.

# LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

---

Paper 9695/43

Drama

## Key Messages

- It is not enough simply to have insight into the texts. In order to do well, candidates need to ensure that their ideas are backed up with concise support from the text.
- With **(b)** questions, candidates must focus on the passage printed, not write a general essay.

## General comments

As always, Examiners saw a full range of responses. Most candidates had sound knowledge of what happens in the texts and had an appreciation (in varying degrees) of how a writer shapes writing for particular effects. There was still, perhaps, not enough recognition amongst candidates that the skills required for a response to a **(b)** question are distinctive, and that close commentary on the passage given demands sensitive awareness of precise detail of the play. In both **(a)** and **(b)** answers, Examiners are always pleased to see very close analysis of precise moments, with specific moments chosen and apposite quotation given in evidence. Candidates who use brief quotation that is woven skilfully into the text rather than a separated 'chunk,' are often able to express themselves concisely and move on. At the other extreme, some candidates assume that quoting at length serves the purpose of analysis in itself, which it plainly does not.

A number of candidates had clearly spent a lot of time discussing historical or biographical background (particularly noticeable with responses to Wilde and Williams) and either unloaded the information or used it rather uncritically to make points about the texts. Of course literary texts do not exist in a vacuum, but the accepted approach here is to start from the detail of the text and work outwards, not vice versa. Candidates are sometimes keen to demonstrate their wider reading, particularly through reference to other plays by Shakespeare. It is good that they have read widely but they need to remember that the principal focus must be on the text chosen for study.

Examiners have noted increasing awareness of these texts as plays to be performed, and there is obviously increasing understanding of the implication of the word 'presentation' that features in many questions. Unfortunately, there continues to be an amount of work from candidates who want to focus on commas and exclamation marks. Of course it is valid to talk about pace or about uncertainty suggested through repetition or pausing but the discussion needs to focus on how this might be realised on the stage.

The quality of communication covers a broad range. At the lower end there is often an ability to convey knowledge of plot and event together with simple analytical commentary of more obvious aspects of the texts. There is often quite a lot of circling with these essays, with candidates making points and then simply repeating them. Slightly higher up the mark range, candidates often see questions as character based and write about the issues raised by the question through character study. As written skills increase towards the top end, there is a much stronger ability to write strategically, ranging widely across a text or an extract and seeing some of the complex issues that the questions usually raise. Here, evidence is carefully adduced and examples are tellingly selected. Even without a written plan (which, of course, is not a requirement) there is a clear sense that a candidate has mapped out a direction for the essay so that each paragraph contributes pleasingly to an overall argument. And of course with the very best candidates there is a strong sense of individual and personal response, often through accumulated insights or a putting together of a case that shows that candidates have really thought about the texts for themselves, rather than relying on teachers to spoon-feed.

**Comments on specific questions**

**Question 1: PETER SHAFFER: *Equus***

- (a) Candidates seized upon the chance to write about one of the seemingly minor characters in the play, and in doing so they were able to identify one of the moral perspectives embodied – that of the concerned liberal. The relationship between Dysart and Hesther was often soundly explored, with awareness that Hesther serves as a type of confessor figure too. A number of candidates simply gave an account of what she does and says in the play, and this meant that demonstration of understanding was intermittent.
- (b) Many answers understood Dysart's fellow feeling with Alan. The best responses were able to look closely at the language in which Dysart expresses his sense of inner desolation and at the ways the horses become a symbol to him as well as to Alan. In focusing on Dysart's speech some candidates forgot to mention the change of dynamics created by the entrance of the nurse in line 44. There was often sound awareness of staging and dramatic effect, sometimes through discussion of Shaffer's specifications for the set and its use.

**Question 2: WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE: *The Winter's Tale***

- (a) Answers here ranged from accounts of what Paulina does in terms of the play's action, to interesting, text based discussions of her role as mediator, reconciler and moral conscience for the play. The best candidates were able to locate their discussion through reference to particular moments and to characterise her use of language, ranging from tender concern to outraged persistence in pointing out Leontes's sins. Few remarked upon the personal loss she has faced as a consequence of Leontes's anger – she loses a husband and yet never dwells upon her own grief in the play. Nor for that matter was much made of the great danger she places herself in as a courtier by confronting the king.
- (b) Most candidates were able to see that this particular episode plays out many of the larger issues of the drama. Polixenes (seen in a new light here from that of Act 1) is an overbearing parent. Issues about the nature of true nobility were also explored, as were contrasts between court and country, old and young, Sicily and Bohemia. A number of candidates offered plot background that rather outweighed close focus on the passage presented.

**Question 3: WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE: *Henry IV, Part 1***

- (a) Candidates were able to give a range of examples of Henry's political manoeuvrings. Stronger candidates were able to focus on his language, citing examples from his opening speech or from his exchanges with the rebels or his father / son talk with Hal. Use of the last of these speeches opens up, of course, our awareness of the fact that Henry is not a naïve man, pushed against his will into kingship. Here we can see how he deliberately manipulated (and continues to do so) those around him in order to create a public image of honour and integrity. Many answers focused on Henry's treatment of Mortimer and the Percys. Some held it to be politically stupid to alienate them and cause them to rebel; others felt that this was the correct political decision at the time, and that Henry, understanding the risks involved, acts in the interests of avoiding civil war, aware that there will be further consequences. The strongest candidates took a balanced approach, weighing the evidence and then evaluating their own response. At times there was some engaging personal reaction in the form of cynicism from candidates – a clear reflection that politics and its machinations perhaps change costume and language but not type from age to age.
- (b) Good answers here focused on the detail of the passage, using the language to differentiate the characters and explore the tension between them, with Worcester's more tempered remarks sharply contrasted with Hotspur's vivid hyperbole. A number of candidates tried to analyse the punctuation, with commas seen perhaps as slowing things down (or the same commas, different candidates, speeding things up): this sort of minute examination is slightly misguided when considering a drama text that is designed to be staged. Hotspur was given the most attention, with some candidates perhaps not fully seeing how drama is created through characters being presented with contrasting views. Instead, close discussion of the particular arguments that each advances would have been more relevant. At the lower end, there was quite a lot of filling in of plot or summary of character from what they do elsewhere in the play.



**Question 4: TOM STOPPARD: *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead***

- (a) There was usually awareness of how Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are victims of the characters in Hamlet, of the play *Hamlet* as a fixed text, and of Stoppard's fixing them in yet another script. Many spent a considerable amount of time pointing out that our expectations are fixed from the beginning, as soon as we know the title of the play. Stronger answers were able to move on from these perceptions and to talk about how the two try to exercise free will, just as real human beings, aware of death, still act as though they are not destined to die. Candidates were able to summon useful examples, often citing the pair's encounters with the players and, most particularly the dumb show which draws attention to the fate of the spies.
- (b) Candidates were usually able to give a series of examples of ways in which events refuse to be controlled by Rosencrantz and Guildenstern's interventions. Useful points were often made about their vain attempts at this particular moment, with the comic potential of the trousers falling down fully exploited. More could perhaps have been made of the fact that all the two can do (by dint of Shakespeare's pre-determined script) is to follow Hamlet's words and not direct the conversation themselves. The same sense of helplessness was often illustrated too by reference to Claudius's sudden appearance.

**Question 5: TENNESSEE WILLIAMS: *A Streetcar Named Desire***

- (a) Weaker candidates here tended to see the question merely in terms of love, and simply reviewed various examples from the play. Stronger answers were able to see that Blanche is committed to a view of herself as a romantic victim ('I loved him unendurably') and that her various stories of Belle Reve (echoes of *Gone with the Wind*) and of her first marriage are all suitably exaggerated in a highly literary way. Candidates were sometimes able to make reference to the forms of romance on display – the cigarette lighting, Mitch as an unlikely Rosenkavalier, the delivery boy and so on. The best candidates were able to place the fragility of romantic love (light and moths in symbolic terms) against the hard pragmatism of Stanley and the stark, sensual physicality of his relationship with Stella.
- (b) Good answers here related close analysis of the scene to the precise terms of the question. Blanche's distaste for Stanley was clearly understood, and there was much reference to the images she evokes to back up her feeling ('He acts like an animal' etc.). Unfortunately his 'bearing the raw meat home' was often crudely dealt with in sexual terms, a distraction from some of the more important issues in the passage. Candidates were often able to comment astutely on the fact that Stanley overhearing the episode is central to his behaviour later on in the play (the question asks about developing action) because he knows what Blanche truly feels about him and has ammunition to use against her in the future. Only the strongest candidates, however, noted that Stanley's seemingly innocent greeting of Blanche (line 48) and the grin of line 54 demonstrate both intelligence and a willingness to behave with a craftiness that belies the view that he is simply an animal with 'an animal's habits.'

**Question 6: OSCAR WILDE: *The Importance of Being Earnest***

- (a) A number of candidates focused on Wilde's life and on the background to the play. Better candidates were able to see that the power of other people's opinions is a strong motivator in the play – anything is preferable in Lady Bracknell's view to 'comment on the platform' or to falling outside the 'average that statistics have laid down for our guidance.' Some candidates were unsure about the term 'social respectability' and were unable to get a clear handle on the idea that what really happens is less important than what appears to happen in society terms. Lady Bracknell's concern with appearance informed all answers, but more sophisticated candidates were able to see that ideas about respectability and proper manners motivate all of the characters, even when they pretend they do not. A small number of candidates wrote about social responsibility, not respectability, a rather different matter. As always, the strongest answers considered particular moments in great detail, whilst keeping the overall topic in view throughout.

- (b) With candidates at the lower end there was a slight tendency towards presenting two essays, loosely linked, one on each character. Better answers were able to take a more strategic view, though many failed to see the exact status of these characters in the social hierarchy of the times, or their presentation as social stereotypes. Both were rightly seen as slightly absurd, though the sheer silliness of some of what they say or its tone ('dead.... What a lesson for him. I hope he will profit from it') sometimes proved hard to pin down. There was often useful comparison and contrast of the two, with their attitudes towards Earnest's death carefully characterised. Candidates were often aware, too, of Wilde using Miss Prism in order to satirise the drier and more joyless aspects of education where everything must be useful for moral instruction. Chasuble's lack of anything resembling religious authority also produced much sensible, closely argued discussion. However, much was sometimes made of the relationship between Miss Prism and Chasuble, and this led away from the passage in an unhelpful way.

# LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

---

Paper 9695/51

Shakespeare and other Pre 20th Century Texts

## Key Messages

Candidates should consider the wording of the question carefully before starting to write their answers.

Candidates should be able to give an accurate context to any passage, identifying its significance in the wider text.

Avoid unnecessary biographical and historical background.

## General Comments

The strongest candidates achieved marks in the highest bands on nearly every text on the paper. There were very few rubric errors and almost no candidates appeared to have time problems. Nearly all candidates were able to show a sound knowledge of their chosen texts and many displayed an engagement in and enthusiasm for the works they had studied.

There are three general issues to address this session:

- (a) Planning – some candidates do not appear to allocate sufficient time to selecting and organising material relevant to the set question before writing their essay. This often leads to repetition, generalisation and unstructured arguments. It is also important that candidates consider the terms of the question in detail, setting out perhaps, where relevant their understanding of the key terms in the question in the opening paragraph.
- (b) Contextualisation of extracts – some candidates were unable to place the extract accurately within their chosen play or novel. Specific issues arising from this are discussed under the individual texts but Centres are reminded that a detailed and thorough knowledge of the set text is an essential tool for all candidates. Passage questions will very often require this knowledge of the context and candidates should always be encouraged to identify the significance of the passage in terms of its place in the whole text.
- (c) Unnecessary biographical or other information – a small minority of candidates are providing up to two sides of biography of or a historical background to their chosen authors. This is rarely relevant to the task in hand and should be avoided as this will not improve the candidate's mark and takes up valuable time in the exam.

## **Specific Texts**

### **Section A Shakespeare**

#### **Hamlet**

Option (a) was a popular choice. This was a topic candidates had evidently considered, so coverage tended to be fairly comprehensive, but not always precisely focused on the nuances of the question especially 'the contribution made to the play's meanings and effects.' Most answers focused on Hamlet himself, with some able to develop and distinguish between the 'antic disposition' and the Prince's possible 'real' madness. Many answers provided very good supporting references from the text. 'Madness' itself was variously defined to include as well as the more immediate issues of sanity, such possibilities as 'odd behaviour' and rage. This meant that as well as Ophelia, with whom Hamlet was often well contrasted, some answers extended to Laertes, Claudius, Gertrude and even Yorick, the 'mad rogue'. Candidates needed to contextualise what they meant by madness in each instance and those that did often found interesting

arguments. Some candidates launched straight into coverage of 'antic disposition' without firstly contextualising it within the question with consequent problems of repetition and generalization. Essays which developed beyond characterisation through madness into considering, for example, how Shakespeare used madness to develop the plot and his thematic concerns were rarer but often did very well.

Option **(b)** was very popular and there were some excellent, detailed and analytical responses. Very few candidates recognised the precise context or could explain what 'business' had ended (ambassadors from Norway). Better answers were aware of Polonius' long-windedness, even if they could only refer to his 'beating about the bush', but there were strongly conflicting views on his treatment of Ophelia. Many approved of his protectiveness, but many others thought he was obtrusive, a control freak, and prying into private matters (e.g. the letters from Hamlet). A few answers linked this scene to the earlier one where Polonius sends Reynaldo to spy on his son Laertes. There was confusion as to why Polonius was convinced that Hamlet was mad. Weaker candidates thought it was because Hamlet was in love with Ophelia, whereas better answers could refer to Hamlet's reported strange appearance to Ophelia and her rejection of his love, including returning the letters. It was surprising how many thought that Polonius called Hamlet 'a vile phrase', while others found sexual innuendo in 'her excellent white bosom'. Some perceptive answers commented on Gertrude's surprise that her son had written such a letter, referred to Polonius' plan to spy on Hamlet using Ophelia as a decoy, and included his later spying on Gertrude and Hamlet, which resulted in his death. Inferences about the character of Polonius were not always related to the text with some less convincing inferences made e.g. he was an entirely comic character, funny and witty. Better responses realised the bullying nature of Polonius's role as a father, and his role as a well meaning but ultimately inefficient/misguided/duplicious courtier, part of the corrupt court. Candidates needed to refer sufficiently to the whole text to fully answer the 'what it contributes to your understanding of Polonius' part of the question.

### **The Tempest**

Option **(a)** was a popular choice. Most essays were able to discuss the character of Miranda and outline her narrative from the text. Many candidates did manage to shape the material from the point of view of Miranda's relationships. Only a minority of responses though developed this material into considering the 'dramatic effects'. A lot of candidates focused on the early part of the play, with only a few referring to her 'brave new world' speech in Act 5. Some candidates were convinced that Miranda 'forgave' Antonio and Sebastian, despite lack of textual evidence. Stronger answers included references to Miranda's disobeying her father's orders, revealing her name and proposing marriage to Ferdinand and remembered the game of chess at the end and its significance.

**2(b)** This option was very popular, with most answers able to identify elements of the characters of Prospero and Ariel of significance to their developing relationship. Only a few candidates were confident in placing the passage immediately after Prospero's discussion with Miranda, so that some thought this was our first glimpse of Prospero's more humane side. Nearly all could see the development of Prospero as the master and the controlling influence, with some noticing the choric nature of this exchange, highlighting the dramatic ways Ariel brings the tempest to life on the stage, often considering how he might have illustrated the events. Ariel's desire to please because he was eager for freedom was often contrasted to Caliban's surly unwillingness and nearly all saw the power of Prospero in his final words to Ariel, reflecting that this seemed to foreshadow danger for his enemies now within his power on the island as well as leading to Prospero's threats to and treatment of Ferdinand and Caliban later in the play.

### **Section B**

#### **Mansfield Park**

Option **(a)** was very popular and there were very few answers which were not able to show detailed and relevant knowledge of the text. Some candidates were able to summarise the relationships of the three Ward sisters, sometimes drawing out how Austen used them to develop her social and financial concerns; nearly all candidates focused on the Bertram children, the Price children and Mary and Henry Crawford. Those who could explore beyond the relationships into the narrative structures and the plot found lots to say about the role of the Crawfords for example in exposing the weaknesses of the Bertrams' education and upbringing and in ultimately revealing the strengths of Fanny and leading to the rise of the Prices in social and moral status.

Option **(b)** was less popular but often very well tackled. Nearly all candidates could explore the character of Mr Rushworth as revealed here and elsewhere in the text with many referring to his part in the theatricals and how the plot developed between him, Maria and Henry. Some candidates considered what was revealed about Mrs Norris, Lady Bertram, Edmund and less often Sir Thomas. The better answers responded to

'what it reveals about Austen's methods' in detail, pointing out the multiple views of Rushworth and how the positive comments were undermined by the narrative voice and the language. Others commented on the narrative structures, the use of direct and indirect dialogue with a few excellent answers not only exploring the humour but also what is revealed about Austen's concerns such as marriage, family and status. Only a very few analysed Edmund's comment deeply enough to explore the weakness of an attitude based on money.

### The Pardoner's Prologue and Tale

Option **(a)** was a popular choice with many candidates revealing a detailed knowledge of both Prologue and Tale and often able to select examples of different types of evil, including those discussed by the Pardoner as well as those revealed by his 'confession'. Some better answers did develop into considering 'poetic methods', identifying for example types of satire and irony and Chaucer's use of comedy and almost dramatic presentation. Some excellent answers explored the multiple layers of narrator and how this enabled Chaucer to achieve his comic and for some moral aims. Only a very few essays were able to consider the impact of 'sinister' and to what extent the poetic methods created a dark and bleak presentation of the Pardoner and more generally humanity.

Option **(b)** was not as popular but there were some candidates who knew the Prologue well, referring to where the Pardoner confessed to making money from innocent victims and the effect of this when the Pardoner tries to hood wink those to whom he has revealed his 'secrets'. Many thought it was an effective ending because of this. Detailed analysis of the passage was relatively rare and often quite limited, with many seemingly reluctant to analyse in detail the Host's insults for example. The role of the 'knight' was generally understood, but only a very few attributed the success of the ending to Chaucer's construct and poetic skill.

### Hard Times

Option **(a)** was a minority choice with very few responses seen. Most were able to recognise and explore the basic contrasts between the school and the circus for example, though few were confident in defining and exploring the 'satire'. Some answers though did consider that the human cost to the Gradgrinds took the novel beyond a simple attack on a principle, whereas others thought the characterisations were too simple and unsubtle – Sissy's goodness and young Tom's 'whelpishness' for example - ever to move a reader emotionally. Some did contrast the genuine misguidedness of Gradgrind with the blatant hypocrisy of Bounderby, with most able to see the central role of Sissy and the circus in exposing the limitations of 'the system'.

Option **(b)** was more popular with most answers able to give a general context to the passage. Only a minority of candidates were confident in exploring the relationship between Sissy and Louisa, with some misattributing Jane's words of praise to Louisa herself. Only a very few remembered the cause of Louisa's attitude to her (the marriage to Bounderby). Most answers though did explore the change in Gradgrind, some seeing his emotion as genuinely moving, with a few noticing Dickens had given Gradgrind figurative language to try and explain the unusual place he was now in. Those who analysed the passage in detail often commented on Dickens's use of dialogue and narrative voice to achieve his effects, with some seeing the dramatic nature of the scenes presented, as well as the development of the thematic concerns. For a few candidates the last paragraph was rather jarring in tone, as Dickens seemed to revert to his more heavy handed imagery for describing Gradgrind, whose genuine fatherly love for his daughter this passage so clearly revealed.

### John Donne Selection

This was a minority choice with most candidates offering option **(a)**. Nearly all candidates were able to refer in detail to at least three poems, though weaker answers offered a general summary of the conflict in the poems, with some basic contrasts identified in subject matter and approach. Other more successful answers did discuss Donne's use of conflict as a method of revealing his concerns, often referring in detail to both love poems and religious poems. Better answers saw how his concerns and poetic methods inevitably led to conflict, with a few answers remembering that this was but one of Donne's poetic strategies, which might cast doubt on his sincerity, particularly in his love poems.

Option **(b)** proved much less popular. Weaker answers attempted to paraphrase the poem, often with limited understanding of the tone and meaning and with only limited attempts to link it to the concerns and methods in other poems. Better answers saw how the poem's structure reinforced his poetic 'stance', with some candidates offering detailed and at times sophisticated analysis of his poetic methods. The poem was often



contrasted to his lighter, more conversational tone in *The Flea*, with some seeing this poem as an emotional 'pose', especially when compared to his deeper more convincing anguish in his religious poems.

### Silas Marner

This was not a very popular choice with the majority of candidates opting for **(b)**. Answers on **(a)** showed a good knowledge of 'Eppie's story', with some able to explore her role in the novel in detail, especially in terms of the plot and the development of Silas. Less secure was the understanding of how Eppie affected the reader's view of Godfrey and Dolly. Better answers also saw her more symbolically; referring to how the arrival of Eppie was contrasted to the loss of the gold, for example.

Option **(b)** was more popular, with some excellent answers, showing a good understanding of how Eliot's narrative techniques develop the drama and shape the reader's response. Better answers focused on the language and the narrative structures, as well as the 'narrative voice'. Nearly every answer was aware of how this was a turning point for Marner, leading to his arrival in Raveloe, though only a few answers could see how the reader's sympathy for him is shaped by Eliot and used as a counterweight later in the novel, as his isolation and miserliness grows.

### The Rape of the Lock

This was very much a minority choice with most opting for **(a)**. Most answers thought the given quote was a good summary of the poem. Weaker candidates tended to summarise what they thought of as the epic and heroic features in **(a)** though better answers did have a very detailed knowledge of Pope's concerns and some of the ways he would 'trivialise' them. Few answers were able to explore the effects of these features in detail, though candidates with understanding of the satirical methods, Pope's humour and wit did very well. The passage – Option **(b)** – was not popular. A few answers had a sound knowledge of the context of the extract and some realized this was the card game between Belinda and the Baron. Weaker answers tended to paraphrase the passage. Better answers explored the ways in which the game of cards is presented and the effect this has on the reader, with the most successful answers linking these concerns to the wider text.

### Hopkins Selected Poems

This was the least popular text on the paper and only a few candidates offered either option. In option **(a)** candidates generally were able to refer to relevant poems to show that Hopkins did use different settings to achieve different effects but few had sufficiently detailed knowledge to develop the argument in detail. Better answers were able to draw on detailed knowledge of the text and understanding of his methods to support the points made.

Option **(b)** was slightly more popular and a few answers had a convincing grasp of Hopkins's methods here and a secure knowledge of the poem as a whole. Better answers were alive to Hopkins's methods and explored 'inscape' and 'sprung rhythm' to telling effect, showing good understanding of the meaning and how that reflected Hopkins characteristic concerns.

### The Duchess of Malfi

This was a more popular choice in this session. Most opted for **(a)** and revealed good knowledge of the play, with a general agreement that the Duchess was the cause of the tragedy. Most answers focused on her characterisation and actions – the proposal to Antonio for example immediately after the warnings from her brothers. Better answers saw various possible dramatic causes – Ferdinand's lycanthropia and sexual obsession with his sister, the role of Bosola and even 'malign fate' were often discussed in detail.

In option **(b)** the best answers focused on the dramatic impact of these events, analyzing the characters and roles of Antonio and Bosola within the context of the Duchess's 'confinement', often relating them well to the wider text. Better answers focused on how the language is used by Webster to create tension and manipulate the effects on the audience, with a few candidates remembering the roles of the two antagonists here within the world of Malfi.

# LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

---

Paper 9695/52

Shakespeare and other Pre 20th Century Texts

## Key Messages

Candidates should consider the wording of the question carefully before starting to write their answers.

Candidates should be able to give an accurate context to any passage, identifying its significance in the wider text.

Avoid unnecessary biographical and historical background.

## General Comments

The strongest candidates achieved marks in the highest bands on nearly every text on the paper. There were very few rubric errors and almost no candidates appeared to have time problems. Nearly all candidates were able to show a sound knowledge of their chosen texts and many displayed an engagement in and enthusiasm for the works they had studied.

There are three general issues to address this session:

- (a) Planning – some candidates do not appear to allocate sufficient time to selecting and organising material relevant to the set question before writing their essay. This often leads to repetition, generalisation and unstructured arguments. It is also important that candidates consider the terms of the question in detail, setting out perhaps, where relevant their understanding of the key terms in the question in the opening paragraph.
- (b) Contextualisation of extracts – some candidates were unable to place the extract accurately within their chosen play or novel. Specific issues arising from this are discussed under the individual texts but Centres are reminded that a detailed and thorough knowledge of the set text is an essential tool for all candidates. Passage questions will very often require this knowledge of the context and candidates should always be encouraged to identify the significance of the passage in terms of its place in the whole text.
- (c) Unnecessary biographical or other information – a small minority of candidates are providing up to two sides of biography of or a historical background to their chosen authors. This is rarely relevant to the task in hand and should be avoided as this will not improve the candidate's mark and takes up valuable time in the exam.

## **Specific Texts**

### **Section A Shakespeare**

#### **Hamlet**

Option (a) was a popular choice. This was a topic candidates had evidently considered, so coverage tended to be fairly comprehensive, but not always precisely focused on the nuances of the question especially 'the contribution made to the play's meanings and effects.' Most answers focused on Hamlet himself, with some able to develop and distinguish between the 'antic disposition' and the Prince's possible 'real' madness. Many answers provided very good supporting references from the text. 'Madness' itself was variously defined to include as well as the more immediate issues of sanity, such possibilities as 'odd behaviour' and rage. This meant that as well as Ophelia, with whom Hamlet was often well contrasted, some answers extended to Laertes, Claudius, Gertrude and even Yorick, the 'mad rogue'. Candidates needed to contextualise what they meant by madness in each instance and those that did often found interesting

arguments. Some candidates launched straight into coverage of 'antic disposition' without firstly contextualising it within the question with consequent problems of repetition and generalization. Essays which developed beyond characterisation through madness into considering, for example, how Shakespeare used madness to develop the plot and his thematic concerns were rarer but often did very well.

Option **(b)** was very popular and there were some excellent, detailed and analytical responses. Very few candidates recognised the precise context or could explain what 'business' had ended (ambassadors from Norway). Better answers were aware of Polonius' long-windedness, even if they could only refer to his 'beating about the bush', but there were strongly conflicting views on his treatment of Ophelia. Many approved of his protectiveness, but many others thought he was obtrusive, a control freak, and prying into private matters (e.g. the letters from Hamlet). A few answers linked this scene to the earlier one where Polonius sends Reynaldo to spy on his son Laertes. There was confusion as to why Polonius was convinced that Hamlet was mad. Weaker candidates thought it was because Hamlet was in love with Ophelia, whereas better answers could refer to Hamlet's reported strange appearance to Ophelia and her rejection of his love, including returning the letters. It was surprising how many thought that Polonius called Hamlet 'a vile phrase', while others found sexual innuendo in 'her excellent white bosom'. Some perceptive answers commented on Gertrude's surprise that her son had written such a letter, referred to Polonius' plan to spy on Hamlet using Ophelia as a decoy, and included his later spying on Gertrude and Hamlet, which resulted in his death. Inferences about the character of Polonius were not always related to the text with some less convincing inferences made e.g. he was an entirely comic character, funny and witty. Better responses realised the bullying nature of Polonius's role as a father, and his role as a well meaning but ultimately inefficient/misguided/duplicious courtier, part of the corrupt court. Candidates needed to refer sufficiently to the whole text to fully answer the 'what it contributes to your understanding of Polonius' part of the question.

### **The Tempest**

Option **(a)** was a popular choice. Most essays were able to discuss the character of Miranda and outline her narrative from the text. Many candidates did manage to shape the material from the point of view of Miranda's relationships. Only a minority of responses though developed this material into considering the 'dramatic effects'. A lot of candidates focused on the early part of the play, with only a few referring to her 'brave new world' speech in Act 5. Some candidates were convinced that Miranda 'forgave' Antonio and Sebastian, despite lack of textual evidence. Stronger answers included references to Miranda's disobeying her father's orders, revealing her name and proposing marriage to Ferdinand and remembered the game of chess at the end and its significance.

**2(b)** This option was very popular, with most answers able to identify elements of the characters of Prospero and Ariel of significance to their developing relationship. Only a few candidates were confident in placing the passage immediately after Prospero's discussion with Miranda, so that some thought this was our first glimpse of Prospero's more humane side. Nearly all could see the development of Prospero as the master and the controlling influence, with some noticing the choric nature of this exchange, highlighting the dramatic ways Ariel brings the tempest to life on the stage, often considering how he might have illustrated the events. Ariel's desire to please because he was eager for freedom was often contrasted to Caliban's surly unwillingness and nearly all saw the power of Prospero in his final words to Ariel, reflecting that this seemed to foreshadow danger for his enemies now within his power on the island as well as leading to Prospero's threats to and treatment of Ferdinand and Caliban later in the play.

### **Section B**

#### **Mansfield Park**

Option **(a)** was very popular and there were very few answers which were not able to show detailed and relevant knowledge of the text. Some candidates were able to summarise the relationships of the three Ward sisters, sometimes drawing out how Austen used them to develop her social and financial concerns; nearly all candidates focused on the Bertram children, the Price children and Mary and Henry Crawford. Those who could explore beyond the relationships into the narrative structures and the plot found lots to say about the role of the Crawfords for example in exposing the weaknesses of the Bertrams' education and upbringing and in ultimately revealing the strengths of Fanny and leading to the rise of the Prices in social and moral status.

Option **(b)** was less popular but often very well tackled. Nearly all candidates could explore the character of Mr Rushworth as revealed here and elsewhere in the text with many referring to his part in the theatricals and how the plot developed between him, Maria and Henry. Some candidates considered what was revealed about Mrs Norris, Lady Bertram, Edmund and less often Sir Thomas. The better answers responded to

'what it reveals about Austen's methods' in detail, pointing out the multiple views of Rushworth and how the positive comments were undermined by the narrative voice and the language. Others commented on the narrative structures, the use of direct and indirect dialogue with a few excellent answers not only exploring the humour but also what is revealed about Austen's concerns such as marriage, family and status. Only a very few analysed Edmund's comment deeply enough to explore the weakness of an attitude based on money.

### The Pardoner's Prologue and Tale

Option **(a)** was a popular choice with many candidates revealing a detailed knowledge of both Prologue and Tale and often able to select examples of different types of evil, including those discussed by the Pardoner as well as those revealed by his 'confession'. Some better answers did develop into considering 'poetic methods', identifying for example types of satire and irony and Chaucer's use of comedy and almost dramatic presentation. Some excellent answers explored the multiple layers of narrator and how this enabled Chaucer to achieve his comic and for some moral aims. Only a very few essays were able to consider the impact of 'sinister' and to what extent the poetic methods created a dark and bleak presentation of the Pardoner and more generally humanity.

Option **(b)** was not as popular but there were some candidates who knew the Prologue well, referring to where the Pardoner confessed to making money from innocent victims and the effect of this when the Pardoner tries to hood wink those to whom he has revealed his 'secrets'. Many thought it was an effective ending because of this. Detailed analysis of the passage was relatively rare and often quite limited, with many seemingly reluctant to analyse in detail the Host's insults for example. The role of the 'knight' was generally understood, but only a very few attributed the success of the ending to Chaucer's construct and poetic skill.

### Hard Times

Option **(a)** was a minority choice with very few responses seen. Most were able to recognise and explore the basic contrasts between the school and the circus for example, though few were confident in defining and exploring the 'satire'. Some answers though did consider that the human cost to the Gradgrinds took the novel beyond a simple attack on a principle, whereas others thought the characterisations were too simple and unsubtle – Sissy's goodness and young Tom's 'whelpishness' for example - ever to move a reader emotionally. Some did contrast the genuine misguidedness of Gradgrind with the blatant hypocrisy of Bounderby, with most able to see the central role of Sissy and the circus in exposing the limitations of 'the system'.

Option **(b)** was more popular with most answers able to give a general context to the passage. Only a minority of candidates were confident in exploring the relationship between Sissy and Louisa, with some misattributing Jane's words of praise to Louisa herself. Only a very few remembered the cause of Louisa's attitude to her (the marriage to Bounderby). Most answers though did explore the change in Gradgrind, some seeing his emotion as genuinely moving, with a few noticing Dickens had given Gradgrind figurative language to try and explain the unusual place he was now in. Those who analysed the passage in detail often commented on Dickens's use of dialogue and narrative voice to achieve his effects, with some seeing the dramatic nature of the scenes presented, as well as the development of the thematic concerns. For a few candidates the last paragraph was rather jarring in tone, as Dickens seemed to revert to his more heavy handed imagery for describing Gradgrind, whose genuine fatherly love for his daughter this passage so clearly revealed.

### John Donne Selection

This was a minority choice with most candidates offering option **(a)**. Nearly all candidates were able to refer in detail to at least three poems, though weaker answers offered a general summary of the conflict in the poems, with some basic contrasts identified in subject matter and approach. Other more successful answers did discuss Donne's use of conflict as a method of revealing his concerns, often referring in detail to both love poems and religious poems. Better answers saw how his concerns and poetic methods inevitably led to conflict, with a few answers remembering that this was but one of Donne's poetic strategies, which might cast doubt on his sincerity, particularly in his love poems.

Option **(b)** proved much less popular. Weaker answers attempted to paraphrase the poem, often with limited understanding of the tone and meaning and with only limited attempts to link it to the concerns and methods in other poems. Better answers saw how the poem's structure reinforced his poetic 'stance', with some candidates offering detailed and at times sophisticated analysis of his poetic methods. The poem was often

contrasted to his lighter, more conversational tone in *The Flea*, with some seeing this poem as an emotional 'pose', especially when compared to his deeper more convincing anguish in his religious poems.

### Silas Marner

This was not a very popular choice with the majority of candidates opting for **(b)**. Answers on **(a)** showed a good knowledge of 'Eppie's story', with some able to explore her role in the novel in detail, especially in terms of the plot and the development of Silas. Less secure was the understanding of how Eppie affected the reader's view of Godfrey and Dolly. Better answers also saw her more symbolically; referring to how the arrival of Eppie was contrasted to the loss of the gold, for example.

Option **(b)** was more popular, with some excellent answers, showing a good understanding of how Eliot's narrative techniques develop the drama and shape the reader's response. Better answers focused on the language and the narrative structures, as well as the 'narrative voice'. Nearly every answer was aware of how this was a turning point for Marner, leading to his arrival in Raveloe, though only a few answers could see how the reader's sympathy for him is shaped by Eliot and used as a counterweight later in the novel, as his isolation and miserliness grows.

### The Rape of the Lock

This was very much a minority choice with most opting for **(a)**. Most answers thought the given quote was a good summary of the poem. Weaker candidates tended to summarise what they thought of as the epic and heroic features in **(a)** though better answers did have a very detailed knowledge of Pope's concerns and some of the ways he would 'trivialise' them. Few answers were able to explore the effects of these features in detail, though candidates with understanding of the satirical methods, Pope's humour and wit did very well. The passage – Option **(b)** – was not popular. A few answers had a sound knowledge of the context of the extract and some realized this was the card game between Belinda and the Baron. Weaker answers tended to paraphrase the passage. Better answers explored the ways in which the game of cards is presented and the effect this has on the reader, with the most successful answers linking these concerns to the wider text.

### Hopkins Selected Poems

This was the least popular text on the paper and only a few candidates offered either option. In option **(a)** candidates generally were able to refer to relevant poems to show that Hopkins did use different settings to achieve different effects but few had sufficiently detailed knowledge to develop the argument in detail. Better answers were able to draw on detailed knowledge of the text and understanding of his methods to support the points made.

Option **(b)** was slightly more popular and a few answers had a convincing grasp of Hopkins's methods here and a secure knowledge of the poem as a whole. Better answers were alive to Hopkins's methods and explored 'inscape' and 'sprung rhythm' to telling effect, showing good understanding of the meaning and how that reflected Hopkins characteristic concerns.

### The Duchess of Malfi

This was a more popular choice in this session. Most opted for **(a)** and revealed good knowledge of the play, with a general agreement that the Duchess was the cause of the tragedy. Most answers focused on her characterisation and actions – the proposal to Antonio for example immediately after the warnings from her brothers. Better answers saw various possible dramatic causes – Ferdinand's lycanthropia and sexual obsession with his sister, the role of Bosola and even 'malign fate' were often discussed in detail.

In option **(b)** the best answers focused on the dramatic impact of these events, analyzing the characters and roles of Antonio and Bosola within the context of the Duchess's 'confinement', often relating them well to the wider text. Better answers focused on how the language is used by Webster to create tension and manipulate the effects on the audience, with a few candidates remembering the roles of the two antagonists here within the world of Malfi.



# LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

---

Paper 9695/53

Shakespeare and Other Pre 20th Century Texts

## Key Messages

Candidates should consider the wording of the question carefully before starting to write their answers.

Candidates should be able to give an accurate context to any passage, identifying its significance in the wider text.

Avoid unnecessary biographical and historical background.

## General Comments

The strongest candidates achieved marks in the highest bands on nearly every text on the paper. There were very few rubric errors and almost no candidates appeared to have time problems. Nearly all candidates were able to show a sound knowledge of their chosen texts and many displayed an engagement in and enthusiasm for the works they had studied.

There are three general issues to address this session:

- (a) Planning – some candidates do not appear to allocate sufficient time to selecting and organising material relevant to the set question before writing their essay. This often leads to repetition, generalisation and unstructured arguments. It is also important that candidates consider the terms of the question in detail, setting out perhaps, where relevant their understanding of the key terms in the question in the opening paragraph.
- (b) Contextualisation of extracts – some candidates were unable to place the extract accurately within their chosen play or novel. Specific issues arising from this are discussed under the individual texts but Centres are reminded that a detailed and thorough knowledge of the set text is an essential tool for all candidates. Passage questions will very often require this knowledge of the context and candidates should always be encouraged to identify the significance of the passage in terms of its place in the whole text.
- (c) Unnecessary biographical or other information – a small minority of candidates are providing up to two sides of biography of or a historical background to their chosen authors. This is rarely relevant to the task in hand and should be avoided as this will not improve the candidate's mark and takes up valuable time in the exam.

## **Specific Texts**

### **Section A Shakespeare**

#### **Hamlet**

Option (a) did not prove very popular. Most answers concentrated on characters in the 'court', with some references to spying and ceremony. Better answers identified Claudius' public efficiency (e.g. resolving the problem of Fortinbras, calming Laertes) as well as his treacherous private scheming (e.g. sending Hamlet to be executed in England, plotting with Laertes how to secretly kill Hamlet). Some candidates discussed the presentation in great detail, focusing on the disease and rankness imagery with which the court was described, principally but not exclusively by Hamlet, often discussing the effects Shakespeare created through this imagery thoughtfully. Weaker answers tended to generalise about the characters in the court and were at times short of textual detail.

Option **(b)** was a popular choice and there were a number of excellent responses. Better answers tended to link the scene to the wider text (e.g. Horatio's role when the Ghost appeared, and his hiding the truth in his speech after the death of Hamlet). The context of the extract was generally well-known and there were some sound comments on Hamlet's impatience to get the play started, and a few noticed his exchanges with the King and Polonius were the result of his adopting his 'antic disposition' again. Some candidates wanted to demonstrate that Hamlet's staging of 'The Mousetrap', including a speech he had written, was a sign of his cool sanity. His praise of Horatio was seen by some as a sign of his growing self awareness, but for others more ironic in view of the imminent murder of Polonius. Better answers also noted his public concern over the ghost's veracity as well as the choric function he had in reminding the audience to watch Claudius.

### **The Tempest**

Option **(a)** was the minority choice with only a few answers, but they were quite sound, dealing with the initial usurpation of Antonio, Caliban's resentment and Ariel's verbal rebellion, the plot by Sebastian and Antonio against Alonso, and finally the parody of a rebellion when Stephano, Trinculo and Caliban plan to murder Prospero. More thorough candidates also included the 'rebellion' against authority in the storm scene as well as Miranda's hidden rebellion against her father, when she felt sorry for Ferdinand, revealed her name to him and even proposed marriage. Answers which also considered how these rebellions were used by Shakespeare to 'dramatise' his concerns often did very well.

**2(b)**: this was a more popular choice with candidates often giving a precise context. Weaker answers tended to paraphrase Gonzalo's 'commonwealth' speech but others saw the way the characterisation and roles here were being engineered by Shakespeare in terms of the reactions to Gonzalo's 'talk of nothing'. The exchange at the end was at times ignored, with few able to explore the comedy or shifting relationships. Many did wonder at Sebastian's nastiness to Alonso, some seeing this as indicative of the treachery about to unfold. Those who noticed Ariel's entrance, the music and the sudden sleepiness had a good link into the play's concerns with magic and the role of Ariel as well as Prospero on the island.

### **Section B**

#### **Mansfield Park**

Option **(a)** was popular and most answers were able to show detailed and relevant knowledge of the text, with more limited essays concentrating on recounting Mrs Norris's 'story'. Stronger answers discussed the author's comic presentation of Mrs. Norris in different parts of the novel, as well as her ultimate fate (exiled with Maria), which some thought was a fair punishment since she had done so much to encourage Maria's spoilt selfishness. A few candidates expressed pleasure in Austen's satiric presentation of Mrs. Norris because it provided so much humour for the readers, but others just found her tiresome or wicked. Better answers focused on the 'within the world of Mansfield Park', exploring her influence on Fanny and how her role enabled Austen to develop other characters, such as Sir Thomas as well as her concerns such as marriage and wealth.

**3(b)** There were many good answers on this option, with most essays able to give quite a detailed and precise explanation of the context to this passage with weaker answers giving too much 'back story' to Henry's pursuit of Fanny and her 'exile' in Portsmouth. Many candidates focused on the characters and the various relationships, though only the stronger ones were able to analyse the literary features with confidence and an even smaller number had the necessary skills to really explore Austen's narrative techniques for presenting characters and the ways Austen presented different viewpoints (e.g. Mrs. Price, Fanny, Henry and Mr. Price). Better answers saw how Austen used the narrative structure to give us Fanny's view of events, some noticing 'we never find out what Henry actually thought of her family'. Most realised that this was the point when Henry came closest to winning Fanny's hand in marriage, as well as recognizing the good effect he seemed to have on Mr Price.

#### **The Pardoner's Prologue and Tale**

This was a minority choice in this session with few candidates offering either option. Option **(a)** essays nearly all had some detailed knowledge of the text and focused the attention on the character of the Pardoner and his hypocrisy as well as the behaviour of the 'ryotoures' in the Tale. More thoughtful answers argued that the Old Man was an exception to the quotation in the question, and some offered a quite detailed interpretation of his character, including an attempt to describe his symbolic role, while other 'redeeming features' included the peace-making by the Knight. There were only a few answers able to analyse Chaucer's 'poetic methods' and these often did very well.

Option **(b)** answers ranged from a simple paraphrase of variable accuracy to a few detailed explorations of Chaucer's presentation of the Pardoner. Better answers focused on how the Pardoner reveals his methods, candidates often showing engagement with his wickedness and honesty. Those answers which explored the concerns revealed here and how they linked to the wider text including the Tale often did very well. Weaker candidates did at times struggle with the subtlety of some of the language and ironic humour, but nearly every answer was able to offer some relevant response to the Pardoner's methods.

### Hard Times

Option **(a)** was popular. Many answers focused more on the character of Sissy rather than on the circus generally. However, there was sound understanding in general terms of Dickens's warm portrayal of the circus folk and how this was contrasted to the cold worlds of Gradgrind and Bounderby, with some better answers finding good textual evidence to support their arguments. Most candidates were aware of the role of the circus folk in terms of the plot, from Louisa and Tom peeping in at the start to their role in helping Tom to escape at the end. Sissy's role was well discussed and often supported by detailed reference, in terms of her influence on the tone of the novel and in revealing other characters such as Louisa and Harthouse.

Option **(b)** was less popular; most answers could place the passage generally, though there was some uncertainty as to the precise narrative details that had led to this point. Slackbridge's role and its effect on Blackpool were well discussed, with most able to analyse some aspects of Dickens's unsympathetic portrayal but only stronger answers identified how the narrative voice shifts in the passage. Those answers which explored this aspect often found Dickens's approach rather heavy handed; but there was good evidence of the various devices and literary features of his style in the passage, which were analysed in detail by the best answers.

### Donne Selection

This was a popular choice of text in this session. Option **(a)** produced some good answers with most candidates able to draw on a detailed knowledge of the poems. Weaker answers tended to explain the use of the science in literal terms, with varying levels of accuracy. Better answers were able to draw on a wide range of apposite quotations to demonstrate the range and variety of Donne's use of imagery drawn from science and to link this to his concerns and his metaphysical style. Less successful answers tended to simply summarise poems more or less relevant to the task.

Option **(b)** was more popular. Most candidates were able to show knowledge of the meaning of the poem and some candidates demonstrated a detailed understanding of the concerns and to some extent the methods. Weaker answers tended to summarise other related poems, though better answers related them to the set poem through discussion of the concerns and methods. Better answers explored the language, tone and imagery in detail, often showing very good understanding of the metaphysical methods Donne uses with some sophisticated analysis of the effects.

### Silas Marner

Option **(a)** was a minority choice with nearly all candidates focusing on Godfrey and his relationships with Mollie and Nancy. Weaker answers tended to summarise the storyline but better answers saw how Eliot used these relationships to develop the concerns and create her effects. Some answers also considered Silas's relationships with Dolly and Eppie as well as his earlier period in Lantern Yard. In general terms candidates had a good knowledge of the textual details with better answers shaping this material to the specific demands of the question, especially noting the 'ways and effects'.

Option **(b)** was also a minority choice. Most candidates were able to place the passage with some confidence and nearly all recognised this as the turning point in Silas's life with the disappearance of the gold, with weaker answers tending to give too much narrative background. Some were able to link this to the imminent arrival of Eppie and pick up some of the detail in the passage to explore how Eliot prepared for this. Better answers explored the use of narrative details and the shaping narrative voice as well as considering the literary features in detail.

### The Rape of the Lock

This was very much a minority choice in this session with an even split between Option **(a)** and Option **(b)**. Candidates were generally able to give examples of comedy and humour but few were able to explore the methods in detail. Weaker answers tended to summarise the poem, but those who explored Pope's mock heroic style and his use of the epic references, for example, found plenty to discuss and often did well.

Option **(b)** did not prove a popular choice. Answers showed limited knowledge of the context of the extract, with only a few answers linking the passage successfully to Pope's wider concerns. A few answers were able to explore the style and the mock heroic conventions with confidence; these often did very well in considering the poetic effects.

### Hopkins Selected Poems

This was the least popular text on the paper and few candidates offered either option. Option **(a)** candidates generally were able to refer to some relevant poems, though very few answers explored presentation in detail. Most thought the effect was negative citing *Binsey Poplars*, with others noticing the exuberance with which Hopkins responded to *The Windhover*, for example. Some answers developed into showing how Hopkins's presentation led him back to God and his faith – these answers often did well.

Option **(b)** was rare and few answers had a convincing grasp of Hopkins's methods here or even knowledge of the poem as a whole. Some candidates did show a willingness to explore the language and imagery, focusing on some of the poetic methods such as 'inscape' and 'sprung rhythm' as well. Stronger answers linked the analysis back to the poet's concerns and the wider text.

### The Duchess of Malfi

Relatively few attempted option **(a)**. Knowledge of the play was generally secure and good answers were able to shape the material into a thoughtful argument, showing understanding of Webster's concerns and attitudes to the court. Most answers discussed the Arragonian brethren and Bosola, with some setting them against the presentation of the Duchess and her courtiers. The presentation was generally agreed to be bleak, with better answers exploring the imagery and language Webster uses to create these effects, often with detailed and well selected examples.

Option **(b)** was also a minority choice with nearly every candidate able to show knowledge and some understanding of Ferdinand's portrayal here and in the wider text. Most recognised it was near the end of the play though few were able to give a detailed a context. There were some useful links to the wider text, including references to Ferdinand's earlier incestuous preoccupations, his torturing of his sister, his cry to Bosola to cover her dead face and his wish to 'hunt the badger by owl-light'. Better answers explored some of the language and imagery in the passage, analysing the effects, at times thoughtfully and with understanding of how Webster shapes our response to Ferdinand here and elsewhere in the play.

# LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

---

Paper 9695/61  
20th Century Texts

## Key messages

To improve levels of achievement many candidates need to have more detailed, personal knowledge of the texts.

Candidates need to practise the application of a critical framework of ideas and literary terms to extracts from their texts to give opportunities for close reading and developing a more analytical approach in their writing.

To improve performance on both **(a)** and **(b)** questions, candidates need to make greater use of quotations, so that through analysis they can demonstrate a greater understanding of how writers create meaning and shape response.

## General comments

All questions proved to be accessible and some provoked strong, well-informed responses. The more able offered well-structured essays with pertinent introductions directing discussion specifically to the terms of the questions and expressing themselves in a lively way that suggested genuine interest and a personal engagement with the detail of the texts. They carefully selected a range of ideas and relevant material to develop a discussion in response to **(a)** questions or an exploration of the extracts for the **(b)** questions which allowed them to demonstrate a literary appreciation of the way writers create meaning and effects. The strongest candidates used appropriate literary terminology and precise, detailed references to create passages of sustained analysis supported by interesting, personal readings and interpretations. Competent candidates were able to offer well-organised scripts which balanced a range of ideas about the text with appropriate illustrations and some brief or more generalised comments on literary methods. Too many candidates however were unable to see the texts as constructs or works of art designed to create complex responses and though they responded in a personal way, were often without the necessary critical understanding or detailed knowledge of the text to support their ideas. More candidates appeared to choose **(b)** options this session, though less competent candidates lacked the confidence to address such discriminating phrases as: *commenting in detail; focusing in detail, effects of the writing, shapes an audience's response*. They relied on excessive contextualisation often summarising the whole texts, or superficial commentaries and paraphrases which often exposed areas of confusion over meaning, or wrote general essays on the texts as a whole or on aspects *they* wanted to explore, with insufficient attention to the effects of the writing in the passage. In many cases there was evidence of useful critical reading and contextual understanding being applied to texts, to bring out aspects of skill or significance but in less assured scripts the amount of biographical, historical or cultural material outweighed textual knowledge. There were very few rubric errors and candidates seemed to manage their time well though occasionally some essays were rather brief or padded out with over-long quotations from the passages.

## Comments on specific questions

### **Question 1 FLEUR ADCOCK: *Collected Poems***

This text is becoming increasingly popular with candidates and there was evidence of real appreciation of Adcock's presentation and treatment of her ideas with the best scripts focusing on the effects of the language and showing a sensitivity to nuances of meaning and tone.

- (a)** Very few candidates chose this option. A few saw Adcock's treatment of nature as an adjunct to her humane concerns, and chose Tadpoles, Toads, Regression or Weathering to discuss the way she interweaves close observation of nature with themes of birth, death and survival. Some had enough detailed knowledge to bring out the delicate sense of growth and transformation in



Tadpoles, or the robustness of the argument in Regression. More modest answers showed some awareness of repeated themes and language choices, and asserted a general awareness of effects: 'Adcock often uses colloquial language that the reader can relate to', or 'Adcock likes to play with language' but these essays lacked informed development in terms of consideration of the theme and detailed analysis of the poems.

- (b) This was the more popular option and often very well done. The women's feelings of male oppression were strongly felt. Candidates focused on the dramatic presentation of the situation: the evidence of anxiety and the fact that the future welfare of their female friend and child would be determined by men. Some looked at the language in the fourth and fifth stanza in great detail, discussing on the one hand the impact of 'ferretings', the effect of the plural pronoun 'our skirts' and contrasting the emotive language of 'sniff out corruption' with the formal legalese of 'I put it to you.../that you yourself initiated the violence'. They intelligently discussed the significance of the reference to Joan of Arc and some enjoyed pointing out the irony of the child's future being 'at stake'. There were useful comments on enjambement and the language of ordinary speech, the use of ellipses in the fifth stanza and the effect of the repetition: 'A man.../Two other men....More . men' Very few though were able to show how the natural speech rhythms are made to play against the more formal verse structure. Less competent candidates gave a running commentary, sometimes close to paraphrase and got rather distracted by the reference to the three witches in Macbeth, but most candidates grasped the central idea of the poem and noticed obvious details like the importance of the clothes being dark and 'decent'.

### Question 2 T.S.ELIOT: *Prufrock and Other Observations, the Waste Land and The Hollow Men*

This text was not chosen by many but there were some good submissions from candidates who not only clearly understood the context of production and the allusions but were able to respond with a personal voice to the text as poetry.

- (a) This was the less popular option but the question allowed candidates to define 'desire' – as passion, lust or a desire for connection or salvation and those who knew the poems well ranged confidently around the selection explaining Eliot's concerns using Prufrock, Portrait of a Lady and the Waste Land. The more proficient scripts offered a thoughtful consideration of Eliot's treatment of the idea, comparing the more developed dramatic pieces with the creation of situations and personas as opposed to, the brief snapshots of the typist and 'young man carbuncular', the use of classical allusions like the rape of Philomel and the fragmented laments of the Thames-daughters at the end of The Fire Sermon. The most effective essays were those where the candidates had the courage to generate a thesis and explore the barriers to fulfilment and attitudes while at the same time commenting on the imagery and its implications. Competent scripts focused on the character of Prufrock and the relationship between the couple in Portrait of a Lady, the discriminating factor being the amount of detailed knowledge available to support ideas. Less successful essays tried to make over material on isolation, alienation within society and the need for salvation and often resorted to attempts at summary or paraphrase.
- (b) This question produced answers across the full range. It stimulated some good understanding of the ways language and form create atmosphere and there was some understanding of the state of mind that perceives the lady, her room and what she says. A few good candidates focused on the all-important angle of vision and showed how the poem slips in and out of the young man's thoughts and feelings, his desire for escape playing against the lady's need for attention. The best scripts looked in detail at the effects of the sentence structure, the rhythm and repetition in the lady's speech and commented on the significance of the change in the sounds of the musical instruments, noting the irony of the 'false note'. There were also some good references to the wider text, to the twisted lilacs and to his speculative thoughts and feelings about her future death. Less competent scripts focused on the narrative within the poem or attempted to do a running commentary with the more astute showing some grasp of the situation and tending to explain the characters' feelings through paraphrase. Attempts to show appreciation of method and effects were less successful with brief comments noting the presence of: the smoke and fog and linking that to other poems; the 'atmosphere of Juliet's tomb'; the repetition of 'friend' and use of French resulting in essays that were rather fragmented and thin on ideas.

**Question 3 JANET FRAME: *Towards Another Summer***

This was a popular text with candidates showing some sensitive recognition and understanding of Grace's psychological state, though the literary discussion was sometimes undermined by a tendency to relate the book too extensively to Janet Frame's own biography.

- (a) This straightforward question produced a good range of answers with most candidates showing a clear understanding of the phrase as an expression of Grace's sense of displacement and homesickness, and many others also able to look at specific episodes to show how Grace uses this imaginative transformation as an escape from feelings of alienation and inadequacy. The discriminating factor here was how far candidates were able to use the question to display an understanding of the narrative methods, the structure with its use of flashbacks, together with an appreciation of the descriptive language to explore the complexity of Grace's character. There were some excellent examples of candidates' ability to integrate detailed knowledge and quotation into paragraphs of sustained literary appreciation to show how Frame builds up an accumulation of descriptive detail and the effect of having Grace flirt with the idea self-revelation. Less competent scripts relied on narrative summary and although there were signs of engagement and clear understanding of the character, some candidates were less able to select 'continual references' as demanded by the question. Literary appreciation was often only implicit and many could not resist the temptation to drift into tangential material on Frame's biography.
- (b) This was more frequently answered but not quite so effectively. Candidates were reluctant to offer a close analysis of the narrative method and effects, tending to use the passage as a springboard for broader contextual discussion of the whole book and the author's own life. Better scripts placed the passage in the context of the weekend visit and analysed its evidence of Grace's continuous awareness of her own responses and sharp observations of the responses of her hosts, what she 'saw' and 'observed', their togetherness. The best answers focused on the repetition of 'timid and absorbed', her hosts' expectations and the significance of the hyphenated 'Grace-Cleave'. A few noted the lyrical diction used to depict Grace's internal imaginative world as a 'passionate seeker for Truth' and the contrasting riff using the business jargon at the end to comment on the presentation of Grace as a writer and the effect of the use of language within the context of a dramatic scene with dialogue. Less assured candidates, attempting to focus on character tried to explain the issue of the fire, often lapsed into paraphrase and were very tentative in their conclusions about the events and the relationships in the extract.

**Question 4 BRIAN FRIEL: *Translations***

This is proving to be a popular text which candidates have obviously enjoyed studying and are able to write about in some detail. Most showed a real understanding of colonisation as it is presented in the play and were usually able to discuss it without turning the essay into a polemic.

- (a) This question was the slightly more popular option and in many cases was done very well. It allowed candidates to focus on the core themes of the play: identity, language, betrayal, the issue of self-awareness and most candidates were able to deal with Owen in relation to some aspects of his role and contribution to the complexity of the play's ideas. The best scripts looked at the dramatic methods of presentation of the character across the whole play, usually picking on elements of contrast in terms of other characters – Manus and Yolland; his attitude to language – Gaelic and his role as translator, and the fact that Owen is the character whose attitude to colonisation and the colonisers changes by the end of the play. Successful scripts displayed detailed knowledge of the text and an ability to discuss dramatic effects within specific scenes in an exploration of family tensions or his role in terms of treachery or modernity, depending on the point of view. More modest scripts were generally clear on his role, often relying on detailed narrative of his actions with some personal response to his character while weaker scripts tended to present a generalised character portrait and sometimes showed some insecurity about his role at the end of the play.
- (b) The key discriminator here lay in the extent to which candidates could pull out the dramatic effects in the extract. Most knew that the scene came from the beginning of the play, though some were less confident in relating it to the wider text. Manus as a teacher and his relationship with Sarah were well explored with good candidates analysing how the tension is generated through the use of incomplete sentences, repetition and how the stage directions suggest Sarah's feelings for him. Many used knowledge of the wider text to comment on the irony of Sarah telling him secrets. Jimmy was less well considered. The majority of candidates saw him as a minor character, who

was presented as something of a fool, obsessed with sex and used for comic relief but only a few analysed the comedy within the passage: his absorption in his text and his identification with Ulysses, the contrasting diction of his translation and with his own excited speech, his actions, and the effect of Manus's responses. Some candidates used the extract to discuss the issue of language with varying degrees of success; the best were clear on the cultural significance of the use of Greek and Latin in the hedge-school and able to explain the symbolic significance of Sarah not being able to speak at the end but very few explained the dramatic effect of Friel's use of English for characters who are meant to be speaking Gaelic. Indeed some appeared to be unaware of this as they were under the impression that Sarah was being taught to speak English. Candidates with a less secure understanding of the play as a whole attempted to summarise the scene and were able to respond in a more limited way to obvious aspects.

### Question 5 R.K. NARAYAN: *The English Teacher*

This was the text that candidates seemed to know best and many produced some engaged and individual work. Both questions proved equally popular, with answers to **(b)** tending to be less successful because many of the candidates seemed to lack confidence in analysing the effects of the writing in a literary way.

- (a)** The question offered opportunities for answering it in a variety of ways and candidates produced a whole range of responses and levels of achievement: some with literary overview, considering the point of view and narrative structure, some focusing on informed and detailed accounts of the development of character and some moving around the text to consider different types of change. The standard approach was to see change as manifest through the Krishna's life and many modest candidates in their accounts of Krishna's history, were able to show solid knowledge of the text and a clear understanding of the role Susila plays as a catalyst for his development. Some attempted to weave in ideas about predictability and unpredictability, or the law of life or his gradual move from Western culture to reclaiming his roots in the East. The key issue here was how clearly candidates were able to explain and illustrate these ideas and integrate them into a coherent discussion of the question. More reflective and insightful readings noticed that the thematic structure is also evident in the life and death of Susila and in the marriage of the headmaster and his anticipated death. The best candidates had an impressive number of pertinent quotations to support their ideas and display a literary appreciation of Narayan's narrative methods. For example, many routinely mention the use of the first person narrative but it is a sign of a good candidate when they can explore the effects of this. Occasionally an essay commented on the tone of the first person narrative and noted the wry humour with which Krishna presents his earlier self, his pretensions as a poet, his laziness as a teacher and how that contrasted with the committed, changed man we see at the end of the novel, robust in his views on education and gratefully accepting of his spiritual growth and fulfilment.
- (b)** Most candidates were able to show a clear understanding of the content of the passage and its significance in terms of how marriage to Susila was forcing Krishna to change. Some weaker essays then became more general explorations of the role of Susila or the theme of 'change' and they might have scored more highly if they had opted for the other question. The majority of the scripts however were sound, offering detailed summaries with some basic or more insightful comments on the characters and their responses to the situation. Many also picked up on cultural issues such as tradition and the role of women in a household, though there was a tendency for weaker candidates to drift into personal reflections about the paternalistic nature of Indian relationships and the woman's subservience to her husband. What was needed here was a closer reading of the extract to display an understanding of the narrative method and a personal appreciation of its effects. Candidates mentioned the first person narrator in passing but did not use it to explore the effects Narayan creates here. Some were able to track the shifts in tone and respond intuitively to the implicit humour and poignancy, but only a few examined how the argument is sifted through Krishna's consciousness: the recording of the dialogue interspersed with his reflections on his mother's training of her daughter-in-law and the humour of his reasons for liking N.P.S man; the impact of particular words like 'victoriously' and 'venomous' and the significance of 'the sooner you change the better'. Only a few considered how effectively Susila manipulated Krishna by pretending fear of his anger and using the repeated mention of the sleeping child to gain the upper hand. Too many candidates used the text to make simple, rather obvious deductions: this proved Susila was a good mother or got distracted by debating which character was right and which wrong in the matter of the tumbler.

**Question 6 HAROLD PINTER: *The Homecoming***

This was the most popular text with the essay and extract questions proving to be equally attractive. The most successful responses to either question, tenaciously pursued textual evidence with a sustained focus upon the dramatic implications of language and behaviour and some awareness of how Pinter uses absurdity to challenge an audience's expectations and responses.

- (a) Candidates were clearly excited by this question which offered lots of possibilities for a range of views and some vigorous argument. For some Teddy was the weak, unassertive, educated outsider that no one in the violent predatory family wanted to see or respected, saddled with a promiscuous wife; the behaviour of other characters made them villains and Teddy the victim. For others, he was the cynical villain, who knowing what his family and Ruth were like, set up the whole thing; it was her 'homecoming' and she and the family deserved each other. The key issue here was the extent to which detailed knowledge of the text was used to support the arguments and bring out the dramatic effects in specific scenes. Successful essays showed a clear structure with precise textual references and well integrated quotations that covered what Teddy, or any other candidate for the title of villain actually does or says, probing the complexities and alert to the writers intentions, dramatic methods and effects. For example, one candidate suggested Teddy was conscious of the irony in his line that the family were 'not ogres', that his biting of the knuckles was a pretence because he knew Lenny was watching and proceeded to go through the play offering a coherent reading of how Teddy might keep the audience guessing in his responses to Max's initial treatment of Ruth, her behaviour with Lenny and Joey and his response to the proposal that she should stay. More limited responses could not engage with the critical proposition and presented character studies, invented back stories suggesting Teddy and Ruth were not really married or reacted with vigorously expressed moral outrage as though the characters were real.
- (b) This extract presented candidates with the challenge of analysing the dramatic interaction and presentation of the characters. Most focused on the latter and were able to respond intelligently to the presentation of Max but less securely on Sam with some confusion about his significance in the play as a whole and whether he had had an affair with Jesse. Many attempted a simple comparison of the two characters, showing how here and elsewhere in the text Max uses physical and verbal violence to assert his dominance, while Sam is presented as a more conventionally quiet and kindly man, anxious to behave as a good brother and badly treated here. Stronger responses saw this passage as concerned with both looking backward and attempting to confront or rewrite the past and as looking forward to the effects on the household of the arrival of Teddy and Ruth. They examined the interaction in detail, briefly sketching in the immediate context, looking at the rhythm and language of Sam's speech with its pauses and repetitions to show how he is winding Max up. They considered the effect of the lists in his uncharacteristic outburst but few commented on the humour created by the juxtaposition of 'Mind you, he was a good friend of yours.' They noted similar features in the role reversals in the second half of the extract. The discriminating issue here was the extent to which candidates made general comments about the Pinter pause and use of insults, asserting the effects, or whether they were prepared to consider how an audience would respond to specific examples such as; 'Isn't he dead? *Pause* He was a lousy stinking rotten loudmouth', or the comic impact of; 'One cast-iron bunch of crap after another.' Very few saw the pattern of Max's paternal reminiscences leading to the arrival of Ruth and Teddy. To improve performance on these (b) questions, candidates need to show a greater capacity for close reading and literary analysis.

**Question 7 WOLE SOYINKA: *Death and the King's Horseman*.**

Candidates produced some good answers showing useful contextual knowledge and understanding of the author and his cultural pre-occupations. Many candidates drew effective analogies with their own understanding of political power and colonisation. There were a minority of candidates who could have significantly raised their level of achievement by displaying more detailed knowledge of the text.

- (a) This was the preferred option and generally better done. Most candidates had a sound understanding of the roles of the British characters in the plot; their lack of respect and understanding of the Yoruba culture. Better candidates could discriminate between the two characters and illustrate Jane's limited willingness to be more sympathetic and Simon's more rigid views but though many candidates had a clear, sensible, personal response to the British characters, comments were often rather simplistic. Weaker scripts lacked the detailed knowledge of what they said in various scenes to enable them to explore the characters' complexities and the



dramatic effects of their presentation. Instead they spent rather more time showing the effects of colonisation by giving character studies of Amusa, Joseph and Olunde. A sensible strategy was to look for points of comparison, and most candidates mentioned the Muslim Amusa's genuine fear and respect for the 'egungun' and Simon's dismissal of it as 'mumbo-jumbo'. While there was some detailed attention paid to the scene of Jane's discussion on suicide and honour with Olunde, with the arrogant rudeness of the Aide-de-Camp contrasted with Olunde's dignified exit, candidates seemed to have less detailed material on Simon. A few candidates attempted to comment on the way Soyinka differentiates the language but lacked quotations to demonstrate this. Reference to the satirical scene in the market place when the girls mock the polite formulas and stereotypical attitudes evident in the colonists' social exchanges would have been helpful here. Just occasionally a candidate would show a real understanding of the dramatic methods by commenting on the effects of the different types of dancing, the ridiculous appearance of the British in 'fancy-dress at the Residency and the different reactions to the drumming but too often the essays suggested that candidates were working from summaries of plot and characters rather than a detailed knowledge of the text.

- (b) This was also evident in some of the responses to the extract which was done well by a minority of candidates. It gave clear opportunities for a literary response to the style of the dialogue and the most perceptive were able to comment on poetic features of the language, the use of imagery and the way the rhythm of the sentence structures and use of repetition, or repetition with a difference generated the effect of Elesin's trance-like state. The best scripts balanced detailed appreciation of the extract with a wider knowledge of the text. They were able to place the extract within a discussion of duty and honour by looking back to Elesin's performance of the Not-I bird chant and forwards to the anguish of his failure and the way the bitter recriminations of the Praise Singer shame him. There were some competent scripts which showed a sound understanding of the context, the role of the Praise Singer in taking on the voice of the dead King and who were alert to the ironies of Elesin's over-confident responses. The majority of the scripts however, lacked this assurance and relied on over-detailed explanations of the cultural beliefs of the Yoruba and a summary of the plot. In attempting to paraphrase the extract many betrayed a lack of basic understanding of the role of the Praise Singer and the presentation of character of Elesin here and elsewhere in the play.

#### **Question 8 VIRGINIA WOOLF: *To the Lighthouse***

Candidates produced personal responses and were able to respond very well to the challenges of both questions. The discriminating factor was the extent to which they shaped their material to the terms of the questions. Unfortunately, there were some who wrote answers that were as relevant to one question as to the other because they relied on narrative summary of the whole book.

- (a) Some very interesting essays resulted from this stimulating question which gave the best candidates a splendid opportunity to pursue argument and analysis supported by relevant textual reference. Some noted the symbolism of light in the presentation of the character and chose to link it with Woolf's preoccupation with death. They explored Mrs Ramsay's fears before her death, the effect on the house, and how she continued to be present in the memories and reflections of the other characters after death. Others saw Woolf moving beyond the image of the ideal wife to focus on the more emancipated Lily Briscoe, the woman of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Less assured essays showed relevant knowledge, attempting to analyse the effect of Mrs. Ramsay's death on other characters, but their arguments were rather literal and simplistic as though the characters were real people. For example: Virginia Woolf killed off Mrs. Ramsay so that Mr. Ramsay could learn to cope on his own and James could make a relationship with his father. Good essays set the novel in its cultural context and used biographical and literary contexts as support to an appreciation of the text whereas weaker essays tended to over-invest in extra-textual material, restrict literary response to general comments about the stream of consciousness technique and relied heavily on fragmented narrative detail, often veering away from the focus of the question.
- (b) The extract offered lots of opportunity to display a real understanding of how Woolf uses the stream of consciousness technique and some candidates were able to track the shifting angle of vision of the displaced narrator, as well as discuss the sensuous description and figurative imagery with some detailed analysis of linguistic aspects. They discussed the significance here and for the text as a whole of her awareness of, 'the measure of life...as ephemeral as a rainbow.' More limited answers wanted to show Mrs. Ramsey as a good wife and mother but got tangled up in attempts to paraphrase, misreading who was 'odious', asserting Mr. Ramsay did not care for his wife and son and if they considered the significance of her response to the waves, showed some insecurity

about the meaning. Less detailed readings considered her reflections on her husband and their relationship, or James's relationship with his father here and elsewhere in the text, which tended to result in a sketchy treatment of the passage.



# LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

---

Paper 9695/62  
20th Century Texts

## Key messages

To improve levels of achievement many candidates need to have more detailed, personal knowledge of the texts.

Candidates need to practise the application of a critical framework of ideas and literary terms to extracts from their texts to give opportunities for close reading and developing a more analytical approach in their writing.

To improve performance on both **(a)** and **(b)** questions, candidates need to make greater use of quotations, so that through analysis they can demonstrate a greater understanding of how writers create meaning and shape response.

## General comments

All questions proved to be accessible and some provoked strong, well-informed responses. The more able offered well-structured essays with pertinent introductions directing discussion specifically to the terms of the questions and expressing themselves in a lively way that suggested genuine interest and a personal engagement with the detail of the texts. They carefully selected a range of ideas and relevant material to develop a discussion in response to **(a)** questions or an exploration of the extracts for the **(b)** questions which allowed them to demonstrate a literary appreciation of the way writers create meaning and effects. The strongest candidates used appropriate literary terminology and precise, detailed references to create passages of sustained analysis supported by interesting, personal readings and interpretations. Competent candidates were able to offer well-organised scripts which balanced a range of ideas about the text with appropriate illustrations and some brief or more generalised comments on literary methods. Too many candidates however were unable to see the texts as constructs or works of art designed to create complex responses and though they responded in a personal way, were often without the necessary critical understanding or detailed knowledge of the text to support their ideas. More candidates appeared to choose **(b)** options this session, though less competent candidates lacked the confidence to address such discriminating phrases as: *commenting in detail; focusing in detail, effects of the writing, shapes an audience's response*. They relied on excessive contextualisation often summarising the whole texts, or superficial commentaries and paraphrases which often exposed areas of confusion over meaning, or wrote general essays on the texts as a whole or on aspects *they* wanted to explore, with insufficient attention to the effects of the writing in the passage. In many cases there was evidence of useful critical reading and contextual understanding being applied to texts, to bring out aspects of skill or significance but in less assured scripts the amount of biographical, historical or cultural material outweighed textual knowledge. There were very few rubric errors and candidates seemed to manage their time well though occasionally some essays were rather brief or padded out with over-long quotations from the passages.

## Comments on specific questions

### **Question 1 FLEUR ADCOCK: *Collected Poems***

This text is becoming increasingly popular with candidates and there was evidence of real appreciation of Adcock's presentation and treatment of her ideas with the best scripts focusing on the effects of the language and showing a sensitivity to nuances of meaning and tone.

- (a)** Very few candidates chose this option. A few saw Adcock's treatment of nature as an adjunct to her humane concerns, and chose Tadpoles, Toads, Regression or Weathering to discuss the way she interweaves close observation of nature with themes of birth, death and survival. Some had enough detailed knowledge to bring out the delicate sense of growth and transformation in

Tadpoles, or the robustness of the argument in Regression. More modest answers showed some awareness of repeated themes and language choices, and asserted a general awareness of effects: 'Adcock often uses colloquial language that the reader can relate to', or 'Adcock likes to play with language' but these essays lacked informed development in terms of consideration of the theme and detailed analysis of the poems.

- (b) This was the more popular option and often very well done. The women's feelings of male oppression were strongly felt. Candidates focused on the dramatic presentation of the situation: the evidence of anxiety and the fact that the future welfare of their female friend and child would be determined by men. Some looked at the language in the fourth and fifth stanza in great detail, discussing on the one hand the impact of 'ferretings', the effect of the plural pronoun 'our skirts' and contrasting the emotive language of 'sniff out corruption' with the formal legalese of 'I put it to you.../that you yourself initiated the violence'. They intelligently discussed the significance of the reference to Joan of Arc and some enjoyed pointing out the irony of the child's future being 'at stake'. There were useful comments on enjambement and the language of ordinary speech, the use of ellipses in the fifth stanza and the effect of the repetition: 'A man.../Two other men....More . men' Very few though were able to show how the natural speech rhythms are made to play against the more formal verse structure. Less competent candidates gave a running commentary, sometimes close to paraphrase and got rather distracted by the reference to the three witches in Macbeth, but most candidates grasped the central idea of the poem and noticed obvious details like the importance of the clothes being dark and 'decent'.

### Question 2 T.S.ELIOT: *Prufrock and Other Observations, the Waste Land and The Hollow Men*

This text was not chosen by many but there were some good submissions from candidates who not only clearly understood the context of production and the allusions but were able to respond with a personal voice to the text as poetry.

- (a) This was the less popular option but the question allowed candidates to define 'desire' – as passion, lust or a desire for connection or salvation and those who knew the poems well ranged confidently around the selection explaining Eliot's concerns using Prufrock, Portrait of a Lady and the Waste Land. The more proficient scripts offered a thoughtful consideration of Eliot's treatment of the idea, comparing the more developed dramatic pieces with the creation of situations and personas as opposed to, the brief snapshots of the typist and 'young man carbuncular', the use of classical allusions like the rape of Philomel and the fragmented laments of the Thames-daughters at the end of The Fire Sermon. The most effective essays were those where the candidates had the courage to generate a thesis and explore the barriers to fulfilment and attitudes while at the same time commenting on the imagery and its implications. Competent scripts focused on the character of Prufrock and the relationship between the couple in Portrait of a Lady, the discriminating factor being the amount of detailed knowledge available to support ideas. Less successful essays tried to make over material on isolation, alienation within society and the need for salvation and often resorted to attempts at summary or paraphrase.
- (b) This question produced answers across the full range. It stimulated some good understanding of the ways language and form create atmosphere and there was some understanding of the state of mind that perceives the lady, her room and what she says. A few good candidates focused on the all-important angle of vision and showed how the poem slips in and out of the young man's thoughts and feelings, his desire for escape playing against the lady's need for attention. The best scripts looked in detail at the effects of the sentence structure, the rhythm and repetition in the lady's speech and commented on the significance of the change in the sounds of the musical instruments, noting the irony of the 'false note'. There were also some good references to the wider text, to the twisted lilacs and to his speculative thoughts and feelings about her future death. Less competent scripts focused on the narrative within the poem or attempted to do a running commentary with the more astute showing some grasp of the situation and tending to explain the characters' feelings through paraphrase. Attempts to show appreciation of method and effects were less successful with brief comments noting the presence of: the smoke and fog and linking that to other poems; the 'atmosphere of Juliet's tomb'; the repetition of 'friend' and use of French resulting in essays that were rather fragmented and thin on ideas.

**Question 3 JANET FRAME: *Towards Another Summer***

This was a popular text with candidates showing some sensitive recognition and understanding of Grace's psychological state, though the literary discussion was sometimes undermined by a tendency to relate the book too extensively to Janet Frame's own biography.

- (a) This straightforward question produced a good range of answers with most candidates showing a clear understanding of the phrase as an expression of Grace's sense of displacement and homesickness, and many others also able to look at specific episodes to show how Grace uses this imaginative transformation as an escape from feelings of alienation and inadequacy. The discriminating factor here was how far candidates were able to use the question to display an understanding of the narrative methods, the structure with its use of flashbacks, together with an appreciation of the descriptive language to explore the complexity of Grace's character. There were some excellent examples of candidates' ability to integrate detailed knowledge and quotation into paragraphs of sustained literary appreciation to show how Frame builds up an accumulation of descriptive detail and the effect of having Grace flirt with the idea self-revelation. Less competent scripts relied on narrative summary and although there were signs of engagement and clear understanding of the character, some candidates were less able to select 'continual references' as demanded by the question. Literary appreciation was often only implicit and many could not resist the temptation to drift into tangential material on Frame's biography.
- (b) This was more frequently answered but not quite so effectively. Candidates were reluctant to offer a close analysis of the narrative method and effects, tending to use the passage as a springboard for broader contextual discussion of the whole book and the author's own life. Better scripts placed the passage in the context of the weekend visit and analysed its evidence of Grace's continuous awareness of her own responses and sharp observations of the responses of her hosts, what she 'saw' and 'observed', their togetherness. The best answers focused on the repetition of 'timid and absorbed', her hosts' expectations and the significance of the hyphenated 'Grace-Cleave'. A few noted the lyrical diction used to depict Grace's internal imaginative world as a 'passionate seeker for Truth' and the contrasting riff using the business jargon at the end to comment on the presentation of Grace as a writer and the effect of the use of language within the context of a dramatic scene with dialogue. Less assured candidates, attempting to focus on character tried to explain the issue of the fire, often lapsed into paraphrase and were very tentative in their conclusions about the events and the relationships in the extract.

**Question 4 BRIAN FRIEL: *Translations***

This is proving to be a popular text which candidates have obviously enjoyed studying and are able to write about in some detail. Most showed a real understanding of colonisation as it is presented in the play and were usually able to discuss it without turning the essay into a polemic.

- (a) This question was the slightly more popular option and in many cases was done very well. It allowed candidates to focus on the core themes of the play: identity, language, betrayal, the issue of self-awareness and most candidates were able to deal with Owen in relation to some aspects of his role and contribution to the complexity of the play's ideas. The best scripts looked at the dramatic methods of presentation of the character across the whole play, usually picking on elements of contrast in terms of other characters – Manus and Yolland; his attitude to language – Gaelic and his role as translator, and the fact that Owen is the character whose attitude to colonisation and the colonisers changes by the end of the play. Successful scripts displayed detailed knowledge of the text and an ability to discuss dramatic effects within specific scenes in an exploration of family tensions or his role in terms of treachery or modernity, depending on the point of view. More modest scripts were generally clear on his role, often relying on detailed narrative of his actions with some personal response to his character while weaker scripts tended to present a generalised character portrait and sometimes showed some insecurity about his role at the end of the play.
- (b) The key discriminator here lay in the extent to which candidates could pull out the dramatic effects in the extract. Most knew that the scene came from the beginning of the play, though some were less confident in relating it to the wider text. Manus as a teacher and his relationship with Sarah were well explored with good candidates analysing how the tension is generated through the use of incomplete sentences, repetition and how the stage directions suggest Sarah's feelings for him. Many used knowledge of the wider text to comment on the irony of Sarah telling him secrets. Jimmy was less well considered. The majority of candidates saw him as a minor character, who

was presented as something of a fool, obsessed with sex and used for comic relief but only a few analysed the comedy within the passage: his absorption in his text and his identification with Ulysses, the contrasting diction of his translation and with his own excited speech, his actions, and the effect of Manus's responses. Some candidates used the extract to discuss the issue of language with varying degrees of success; the best were clear on the cultural significance of the use of Greek and Latin in the hedge-school and able to explain the symbolic significance of Sarah not being able to speak at the end but very few explained the dramatic effect of Friel's use of English for characters who are meant to be speaking Gaelic. Indeed some appeared to be unaware of this as they were under the impression that Sarah was being taught to speak English. Candidates with a less secure understanding of the play as a whole attempted to summarise the scene and were able to respond in a more limited way to obvious aspects.

### Question 5 R.K. NARAYAN: *The English Teacher*

This was the text that candidates seemed to know best and many produced some engaged and individual work. Both questions proved equally popular, with answers to (b) tending to be less successful because many of the candidates seemed to lack confidence in analysing the effects of the writing in a literary way.

- (a) The question offered opportunities for answering it in a variety of ways and candidates produced a whole range of responses and levels of achievement: some with literary overview, considering the point of view and narrative structure, some focusing on informed and detailed accounts of the development of character and some moving around the text to consider different types of change. The standard approach was to see change as manifest through the Krishna's life and many modest candidates in their accounts of Krishna's history, were able to show solid knowledge of the text and a clear understanding of the role Susila plays as a catalyst for his development. Some attempted to weave in ideas about predictability and unpredictability, or the law of life or his gradual move from Western culture to reclaiming his roots in the East. The key issue here was how clearly candidates were able to explain and illustrate these ideas and integrate them into a coherent discussion of the question. More reflective and insightful readings noticed that the thematic structure is also evident in the life and death of Susila and in the marriage of the headmaster and his anticipated death. The best candidates had an impressive number of pertinent quotations to support their ideas and display a literary appreciation of Narayan's narrative methods. For example, many routinely mention the use of the first person narrative but it is a sign of a good candidate when they can explore the effects of this. Occasionally an essay commented on the tone of the first person narrative and noted the wry humour with which Krishna presents his earlier self, his pretensions as a poet, his laziness as a teacher and how that contrasted with the committed, changed man we see at the end of the novel, robust in his views on education and gratefully accepting of his spiritual growth and fulfilment.
- (b) Most candidates were able to show a clear understanding of the content of the passage and its significance in terms of how marriage to Susila was forcing Krishna to change. Some weaker essays then became more general explorations of the role of Susila or the theme of 'change' and they might have scored more highly if they had opted for the other question. The majority of the scripts however were sound, offering detailed summaries with some basic or more insightful comments on the characters and their responses to the situation. Many also picked up on cultural issues such as tradition and the role of women in a household, though there was a tendency for weaker candidates to drift into personal reflections about the paternalistic nature of Indian relationships and the woman's subservience to her husband. What was needed here was a closer reading of the extract to display an understanding of the narrative method and a personal appreciation of its effects. Candidates mentioned the first person narrator in passing but did not use it to explore the effects Narayan creates here. Some were able to track the shifts in tone and respond intuitively to the implicit humour and poignancy, but only a few examined how the argument is sifted through Krishna's consciousness: the recording of the dialogue interspersed with his reflections on his mother's training of her daughter-in-law and the humour of his reasons for liking N.P.S man; the impact of particular words like 'victoriously' and 'venomous' and the significance of 'the sooner you change the better'. Only a few considered how effectively Susila manipulated Krishna by pretending fear of his anger and using the repeated mention of the sleeping child to gain the upper hand. Too many candidates used the text to make simple, rather obvious deductions: this proved Susila was a good mother or got distracted by debating which character was right and which wrong in the matter of the tumbler.



**Question 6 HAROLD PINTER: *The Homecoming***

This was the most popular text with the essay and extract questions proving to be equally attractive. The most successful responses to either question, tenaciously pursued textual evidence with a sustained focus upon the dramatic implications of language and behaviour and some awareness of how Pinter uses absurdity to challenge an audience's expectations and responses.

- (a) Candidates were clearly excited by this question which offered lots of possibilities for a range of views and some vigorous argument. For some Teddy was the weak, unassertive, educated outsider that no one in the violent predatory family wanted to see or respected, saddled with a promiscuous wife; the behaviour of other characters made them villains and Teddy the victim. For others, he was the cynical villain, who knowing what his family and Ruth were like, set up the whole thing; it was her 'homecoming' and she and the family deserved each other. The key issue here was the extent to which detailed knowledge of the text was used to support the arguments and bring out the dramatic effects in specific scenes. Successful essays showed a clear structure with precise textual references and well integrated quotations that covered what Teddy, or any other candidate for the title of villain actually does or says, probing the complexities and alert to the writers intentions, dramatic methods and effects. For example, one candidate suggested Teddy was conscious of the irony in his line that the family were 'not ogres', that his biting of the knuckles was a pretence because he knew Lenny was watching and proceeded to go through the play offering a coherent reading of how Teddy might keep the audience guessing in his responses to Max's initial treatment of Ruth, her behaviour with Lenny and Joey and his response to the proposal that she should stay. More limited responses could not engage with the critical proposition and presented character studies, invented back stories suggesting Teddy and Ruth were not really married or reacted with vigorously expressed moral outrage as though the characters were real.
- (b) This extract presented candidates with the challenge of analysing the dramatic interaction and presentation of the characters. Most focused on the latter and were able to respond intelligently to the presentation of Max but less securely on Sam with some confusion about his significance in the play as a whole and whether he had had an affair with Jesse. Many attempted a simple comparison of the two characters, showing how here and elsewhere in the text Max uses physical and verbal violence to assert his dominance, while Sam is presented as a more conventionally quiet and kindly man, anxious to behave as a good brother and badly treated here. Stronger responses saw this passage as concerned with both looking backward and attempting to confront or rewrite the past and as looking forward to the effects on the household of the arrival of Teddy and Ruth. They examined the interaction in detail, briefly sketching in the immediate context, looking at the rhythm and language of Sam's speech with its pauses and repetitions to show how he is winding Max up. They considered the effect of the lists in his uncharacteristic outburst but few commented on the humour created by the juxtaposition of 'Mind you, he was a good friend of yours.' They noted similar features in the role reversals in the second half of the extract. The discriminating issue here was the extent to which candidates made general comments about the Pinter pause and use of insults, asserting the effects, or whether they were prepared to consider how an audience would respond to specific examples such as; 'Isn't he dead? *Pause* He was a lousy stinking rotten loudmouth', or the comic impact of; 'One cast-iron bunch of crap after another.' Very few saw the pattern of Max's paternal reminiscences leading to the arrival of Ruth and Teddy. To improve performance on these (b) questions, candidates need to show a greater capacity for close reading and literary analysis.

**Question 7 WOLE SOYINKA: *Death and the King's Horseman*.**

Candidates produced some good answers showing useful contextual knowledge and understanding of the author and his cultural pre-occupations. Many candidates drew effective analogies with their own understanding of political power and colonisation. There were a minority of candidates who could have significantly raised their level of achievement by displaying more detailed knowledge of the text.

- (a) This was the preferred option and generally better done. Most candidates had a sound understanding of the roles of the British characters in the plot; their lack of respect and understanding of the Yoruba culture. Better candidates could discriminate between the two characters and illustrate Jane's limited willingness to be more sympathetic and Simon's more rigid views but though many candidates had a clear, sensible, personal response to the British characters, comments were often rather simplistic. Weaker scripts lacked the detailed knowledge of what they said in various scenes to enable them to explore the characters' complexities and the

dramatic effects of their presentation. Instead they spent rather more time showing the effects of colonisation by giving character studies of Amusa, Joseph and Olunde. A sensible strategy was to look for points of comparison, and most candidates mentioned the Muslim Amusa's genuine fear and respect for the 'egungun' and Simon's dismissal of it as 'mumbo-jumbo'. While there was some detailed attention paid to the scene of Jane's discussion on suicide and honour with Olunde, with the arrogant rudeness of the Aide-de-Camp contrasted with Olunde's dignified exit, candidates seemed to have less detailed material on Simon. A few candidates attempted to comment on the way Soyinka differentiates the language but lacked quotations to demonstrate this. Reference to the satirical scene in the market place when the girls mock the polite formulas and stereotypical attitudes evident in the colonists' social exchanges would have been helpful here. Just occasionally a candidate would show a real understanding of the dramatic methods by commenting on the effects of the different types of dancing, the ridiculous appearance of the British in 'fancy-dress at the Residency and the different reactions to the drumming but too often the essays suggested that candidates were working from summaries of plot and characters rather than a detailed knowledge of the text.

- (b) This was also evident in some of the responses to the extract which was done well by a minority of candidates. It gave clear opportunities for a literary response to the style of the dialogue and the most perceptive were able to comment on poetic features of the language, the use of imagery and the way the rhythm of the sentence structures and use of repetition, or repetition with a difference generated the effect of Elesin's trance-like state. The best scripts balanced detailed appreciation of the extract with a wider knowledge of the text. They were able to place the extract within a discussion of duty and honour by looking back to Elesin's performance of the Not-I bird chant and forwards to the anguish of his failure and the way the bitter recriminations of the Praise Singer shame him. There were some competent scripts which showed a sound understanding of the context, the role of the Praise Singer in taking on the voice of the dead King and who were alert to the ironies of Elesin's over-confident responses. The majority of the scripts however, lacked this assurance and relied on over-detailed explanations of the cultural beliefs of the Yoruba and a summary of the plot. In attempting to paraphrase the extract many betrayed a lack of basic understanding of the role of the Praise Singer and the presentation of character of Elesin here and elsewhere in the play.

#### **Question 8 VIRGINIA WOOLF: *To the Lighthouse***

Candidates produced personal responses and were able to respond very well to the challenges of both questions. The discriminating factor was the extent to which they shaped their material to the terms of the questions. Unfortunately, there were some who wrote answers that were as relevant to one question as to the other because they relied on narrative summary of the whole book.

- (a) Some very interesting essays resulted from this stimulating question which gave the best candidates a splendid opportunity to pursue argument and analysis supported by relevant textual reference. Some noted the symbolism of light in the presentation of the character and chose to link it with Woolf's preoccupation with death. They explored Mrs Ramsay's fears before her death, the effect on the house, and how she continued to be present in the memories and reflections of the other characters after death. Others saw Woolf moving beyond the image of the ideal wife to focus on the more emancipated Lily Briscoe, the woman of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Less assured essays showed relevant knowledge, attempting to analyse the effect of Mrs. Ramsay's death on other characters, but their arguments were rather literal and simplistic as though the characters were real people. For example: Virginia Woolf killed off Mrs. Ramsay so that Mr. Ramsay could learn to cope on his own and James could make a relationship with his father. Good essays set the novel in its cultural context and used biographical and literary contexts as support to an appreciation of the text whereas weaker essays tended to over-invest in extra-textual material, restrict literary response to general comments about the stream of consciousness technique and relied heavily on fragmented narrative detail, often veering away from the focus of the question.
- (b) The extract offered lots of opportunity to display a real understanding of how Woolf uses the stream of consciousness technique and some candidates were able to track the shifting angle of vision of the displaced narrator, as well as discuss the sensuous description and figurative imagery with some detailed analysis of linguistic aspects. They discussed the significance here and for the text as a whole of her awareness of, 'the measure of life...as ephemeral as a rainbow.' More limited answers wanted to show Mrs. Ramsey as a good wife and mother but got tangled up in attempts to paraphrase, misreading who was 'odious', asserting Mr. Ramsay did not care for his wife and son and if they considered the significance of her response to the waves, showed some insecurity



about the meaning. Less detailed readings considered her reflections on her husband and their relationship, or James's relationship with his father here and elsewhere in the text, which tended to result in a sketchy treatment of the passage.

# LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

---

**Paper 9695/63**  
**20th Century Texts**

## Key messages

To improve performance on **(a)** questions candidates need to generate a considered response to the question, exploring and developing the discussion with judicious references to the text and appreciation of the writers' methods.

To improve performance on **(b)** questions candidates need to write much more substantial analyses of the writers' use of language and its effects looking closely at the diction, figurative language, sound effects, sentence structure and repetition.

Candidates are advised to avoid over-dependency on practice questions, biographical details and over-long explanations of contexts and critical ideas.

## General comments

Good scripts were characterised by an ability to pay close attention to the terms of the questions and to show detailed knowledge of the texts, shaped to the task. Many candidates showed a vigorous response to both questions and texts, with the best showing a sophisticated grasp of the different writers' concerns and a willingness to explore the complexities in the treatment of themes, the presentation of characters and the means by which writers shape response. They often had an impressive amount of quotation available to support discussion points and display analytical skills. There has been great improvement in the way candidates discuss dramatic methods and effects but many seem to be less confident and competent in analysing prose extracts. Less assured scripts lacked focus on the questions, often had only a generalised knowledge of the texts so that discussion points relied on unsupported personal response and were rather simple because the detailed knowledge was not available to stimulate development and analysis. Others relied on a narrative approach to both types of questions but the consequences of this when attempting to answer the **(b)** questions were rather more severe. The use of extensive biographical material continues to be problematic. Most candidates managed their time well and produced two equally substantial answers. Many produced interesting, original responses which were clearly constructed and often expressed with mature assurance and insight.

## Comments on specific questions

### **Question 1 FLEUR ADCOCK: *Collected Poems***

This text is becoming increasingly popular with candidates beginning to develop a critical framework for study, a sense of the recurring themes and an understanding of Adcock's characteristic features but there is a tendency for many to try to impose a reading based on Adcock's biography which is often unhelpful and undermines an appreciation of Adcock's poetic methods and effects.

- (a)** This was the less popular choice. Better scripts showed a willingness to consider the terms of the question in their accounts of relevant poems, the most popular being 'Tadpoles' for the mystery of life and growth and 'Toads' and 'For Andrew' to explore the mystery of death, but some candidates struggled to relate 'Willow Creek', 'Mr Morrison' and 'Weathering' to the question. Candidates tended to want to explain the poems and discuss the themes in relation to Adcock's biography rather than to write about how Adcock delights in finding surprising starting points for her explorations, makes use of an accumulation of specific details and observations, plays with language to create startling images and manipulates sentence structure and rhythm within a variety of forms to generate a vigorous or ruefully reflective voice. The better candidates had a good

supply of quotations available and made some attempt to display an understanding of how Adcock creates meaning and shapes a reader's response.

- (b) 'A Walk in the Snow' provoked some excellent essays showing a real appreciation of language and form. Her choice of diction: 'feathery', 'shawled whiteness', 'white as meringue' and 'smooth succulence' etc. were all considered and their associations teased out. The hint of danger and fear behind it all – 'bracken spicily veiled' – was nicely defined and there was often mature consideration of the state of mind of the woman, her initial uncertainty giving way to enjoyment and then the anticlimax and relapse into a more familiar state in the evening. Technical matters of form received good attention with the use of caesura and enjambment noted and sometimes given excessive significance but those who chose to focus on the last three lines showed an ability to analyse how Adcock's manipulation of sentence structure and rhythm contribute to the meaning and effect. Less assured scripts tended to expand on the quality of Adcock's life as a writer, hostess and single woman and – perhaps also influenced by Janet Frame's 'migratory bird' – tended to speculate on whether the 'feathery dog' was real. They misunderstood why the expedition needed to be made to seem 'natural,' though closer reading would have enabled them to see that this walk was unusual only in relation to her more usual 'winter pleasures'. Weaker scripts tended to be very speculative. Though there is no suggestion of suicide here a surprising number of essays asserted that there was and showed some confusion over the significance of the absent 'poltergeist' and the hesitation with the Valium bottle ignoring the phrase 'to be on the safe side'. Some also had too much recourse to preconceived notions about Adcock and wanted to make the poem into one about 'displacement'. Candidates who choose to do poems they have not studied are undoubtedly at a disadvantage, but before writing, it is a helpful strategy to work through and try to see the poem as a whole rather than starting with an initial personal response or preconceived idea that forces a reading which cannot be sustained and supported by the details.

**Question 2 T.S.ELIOT: *Prufrock and Other Observations, the Waste Land and the Hollow Men***

This challenging text continues to be a minority choice but many who offer it tend to do well because the text demands close detailed reading and discussion. The discriminating factor is often the extent to which candidates can respond to the text as poetry rather than as something that needs to be explained.

- (a) Isolation and loneliness stimulated detailed treatments especially of *Prufrock* and *Portrait of a Lady*. *The Hollow Men* was also used but less appropriately and satisfactorily. There were some excellent submissions which confidently placed the themes in the context of Eliot's concerns: distinguishing between self-isolation and alienation from society. They also displayed the analytical and expressive ability to generate sustained paragraphs of critical appreciation of Eliot's poetic methods. The best scripts were characterised by an impressive use of quotation and perceptive, personal response to the way Eliot creates meaning and effects. Less assured scripts tended to give accounts of the poems or explanations of them, often over-concentrating on the allusions. While they often dealt quite intelligently with brief examples of imagery, they found it more difficult to generate discussion and personal insights.
- (b) This option was less popular and less well done perhaps because taken from a larger work, it was less familiar. Nevertheless there were some who could use their knowledge of *The Waste Land* text to support their observations by placing it in context of the ideas and contrasting it with the subsequent pub scene. Better essays focused on the imagery of light and excess, they teased out the implications of the cupids and were sensitive to the oppressive malice at the heart of excess with the suggestions of adultery, rape, betrayal and Philomel's sad fate. Some essays revealed a total lack of knowledge of the literary allusions here but by looking closely at the imagery were able to manage an intelligent response to Eliot's creation of situation and atmosphere. They focused on the images of sight and smell in the first half, noting the disturbing distastefulness in the diction of 'lurked her synthetic perfumes', discussed the impact of 'troubled, confused/and drowned the sense in odours' and appreciated the use of sound and visual imagery to suggest the wrapt silence and expectation at the end. Few made any attempt at considering the form, the modified blank verse or any local effects of rhythm. Weaker essays either spent too long explaining the allusion to Philomel and told the story, or offered a tentative or superficial summary of the extract, picking in an almost random way on some of the images to like the cupids, the candlesticks and the dolphin for some explanation but finding it difficult to develop a coherent response.

**Question 3: JANET FRAME: *Towards Another Summer***

This is gradually becoming a more popular text and as Centres develop a critical framework for considering the novel, some candidates are beginning to show a sophisticated appreciation of Frame's technical skills as a writer. The majority show a sensitive understanding of the character of Grace but often a literary response to the text was restricted and undermined by the blurring of the character with the writer and the use of an over-detailed knowledge of her biography as a way of explaining Grace's difficulties.

- (a) Candidates who did well on this question thought carefully about the quotation and took a variety of approaches. A few recognised the context of the quotation and had the confidence and detailed knowledge of the childhood flashbacks to compare Grace who as a child was fascinated by the ambiguity of words with the adult writer. Others effectively illustrated a comparison of Grace struggling in social situations and bitterly angry with herself for her awkwardness and lack of appropriate words to the Grace who escapes into memory or an internal private world of fantasy and imagination. Those who focused on the 'words' were able to show the 'fear' and used the 'industrial school' as an example and some suggested that Grace found social relationships 'mysterious' but few had a range of quotations to show her pleasure in language and tended to restrict discussion to 'the migratory bird' motif. Those who wrote more generally on 'the presentation of Grace' relied almost exclusively on this idea, using the biographical material to explain her sense of dislocation and home-sickness and her fear of returning to New Zealand because of mental health issues. However there were some sound portraits of Grace, briefly illustrated by reference to more obvious aspects of the story through which some understanding of the structure and character's difficulties emerged.
- (b) This was the more popular option and there were some sensitive considerations of Grace's state of mind, with candidates focusing on the reference to the 'migratory bird' to explain her home-sickness, her view of herself as 'the perpetual eavesdropper' and her imaginative reconstructions of the lives of other people. Most were able to explain the context and to maintain a balance between reference to the extract and the wider text. A few resorted to a running commentary that became close to paraphrase and got tangled up in trying to decide whether Grace was naïve or not when considering her reference to filmed 'Night-Nights'. Few were able to comment on the humour of the last two lines. The best made some attempt to focus on the 'narrative methods' and discussed the way Frame slips from third person narrative point of view into Grace's consciousness, discussing the impact of the diction and imagery at the beginning, the use of lists and sentence structure to create a self-dramatising sense of the scene and then focused on the way Grace's view of relationships is explored through the idea of film and discussed the re-occurrence of the image of the coffins from the point of view of the internal structure of the piece and Grace's state of mind.

**Question 4 BRIAN FRIEL: *Translations***

There were some excellent responses to this text and even weaker candidates showed a reasonable grasp of the play's concerns. The more successful essays were distinguished by an ability to select detailed textual knowledge and shape it to the task, while displaying a keen sense of Friel's dramatic methods in presenting characters.

- (a) This was the less popular option, but often done very well. Candidates showed good knowledge of the context and understood that the Irish were not idealised. The more perceptive candidates used the issue of language: attitudes towards Gaelic as opposed to English and the use of the classics, to discuss the contribution of the various characters to the play's concerns. Only a few focused on specific scenes in the play to discuss the various dramatic effects and the significance for the overall design of the play of presenting the Gaelic-speaking Irish through the medium of English. However, some recognised the complexity of some of the characters such as Owen, Hugh and Jimmy, discussed their roles and significance with aptly chosen quotations and teased out an audience's response to them. Competent essays tended to use attitudes to the English as a way of distinguishing the Irish characters and showed some detailed knowledge and insight in discussions on Owen and Maire. Weaker scripts presented more general character sketches.

- (b) The passage was popular and often well considered in terms of Friel's dramatic methods and effects. The strongest candidates commented on the effect of having the Irish speak English and pointed to line 29 to show how Yolland's response to Manus exploits this and affects the audience's reaction to both characters. Comments on the 'renaming' often led to discussion of the broader issue, the loss of cultural identity. Some good essays explored the complex tensions that exist here between different characters: the irony of Owen's genuine interest in renaming the places, his inability to explain the truth of his own name and Manus's suggestion that Owen is a traitor to Ireland; Manus's refusal to speak English and Yolland's pleasure in learning Gaelic and Manus's relationship with his brother. These were related with some judicious reference to the wider text: Yolland and Manus as rivals for Maire and Manus's resentment of Owen, fuelled by his position as an unpaid assistant teacher and house-keeper to his father with no prospect of being able to marry and support Maire and her family. Less competent essays tended to focus on explaining the issues without paying enough attention to the extract and occasionally weaker candidates attempted the question without having a sound understanding of the play's concerns or Yolland's role and point of view. He was sometimes confused with Lancey.

### Question 5 R.K. NARAYAN: *The English Teacher*

This is a text which candidates tended to know well. The challenge is for candidates to somehow avoid presenting a sequential treatment of the novel whatever the starting question and avoiding narrative summary. Candidates are advised to pay close attention to the terms of the questions, to be prepared to find a personal angle on it and develop a discussion with detailed reference to the text rather than re-working formulaic ideas in a mechanical way.

- (a) This question offered candidates an opportunity to select a variety of approaches. 'Traditional' and 'modern' are not quite the same as 'Indian' and 'British' and better essays developed some of these distinctions well. Some candidates saw the Headmaster's ideas on education as traditional though not necessarily Indian but linked to Wordsworth's idealism of childhood. Others viewed it as very modern in comparison to the colonial education on offer at Albert Mission College, so roundly rejected by Krishna at the end. The best candidates recognised the complexity of the issue and noted Krishna's love of English literature while at the same time urging the importance of his own 'roots'. With the issue of modern as opposed to traditional medicine, many candidates mentioned the conflict with Krishna's mother-in-law over the Swamiji, but the more perceptive pointed out that neither western medicine nor traditional practices could save Susila, this was all part of the 'unpredictability' of life. Better candidates remembered that they were talking about a novel and looked at the presentation of the issue and how Narayan achieved his effects with Krishna's anxious visits to the clinic; the irony of the doctor's initial confidence; Krishna's embarrassment when the doctor met the Swamiji and Krishna's devoted attentions with the ice pack. When candidates displayed this sort of detail they did well. Those who wanted to discuss Krishna's attitude to death and his own developing spirituality were able to outline the story, but less able to produce appropriate quotations to illustrate the rational, westernised difficulty he had in accepting Susila's continued existence and the more 'traditional', eastern transcendentalism when he does. Less assured scripts covered aspects of education, medicine, relationships between husbands and wives, religion and spirituality with varying degrees of detail and clarity but often seemed to forget they were talking about a novel. Some used Krishna himself as the organising strategy and relied on narrative summary.
- (b) This passage offered much to the discerning candidate and there were some very good appreciations of the way it presents a man who is developing, but is still capable of far more development towards integrity and spiritual well being. Many noted the pretentiousness of the handsomely bound notebook, and self-deception over his capacity to write poetry, but the humour of his conscience asserting itself once in six months, his indecisiveness over which language was to be enriched with his contributions and the irony of the short sentence; 'The chief thing seemed to be the actual effort.', escaped all but the very perceptive, close readers. There was also much to say about the way Narayan presented the affectionate interaction between husband and wife. Some very good answers noted the sad irony of Krishna's choice of poem for plagiarism and saw a foreshadowing of Susila's death. Weaker scripts attempted a paraphrase, staying on the surface of the text to show that Krishna was a devoted husband. Sometimes they showed quite detailed textual knowledge but insufficient attention to the extract by sketching in Krishna's difficulties in adjusting to living as a family man, seeing the extract as a moment of happiness before tragedy and summarising the rest of the novel.



**Question 6 HAROLD PINTER: *The Homecoming***

This was the most popular text on the paper with slightly more candidates choosing the passage question. Both questions produced answers across the full range with the best submissions showing some understanding of how Pinter uses absurdity to challenge an audience's expectations and responses, confidently moving around the text to support a range of points with aptly chosen quotations and sustained analysis.

- (a) This question prompted a range of responses. That everyone in the play lacks love for others and is merely motivated by self-interest is a clear general thesis and can be demonstrated through discussion of each character taken in sequence, but only very good essays took up the invitation to discuss 'specific episodes in the play' and a very different sort of essay then resulted: something that was analytical and appreciative of dramatic effects. There were some particularly insightful analyses of Max and his demands for attention, his scenes with Lenny, Sam and the final tableau. Candidates who understood the concept of absurdity, also understood that the audience could never be sure of the motivation for some of the characters' words and actions, and focused on Pinter's methods of presentation: how various characters self-dramatise through the telling of stories or assert their dominance by physical and verbal threats or asking questions. Sometimes the essays were more general character studies and sometimes barely disguised prepared essays on the struggle for power within the household, but most found a way of relating these in some way to the question. Some candidates reworked the view of Ruth as mother and whore but in attempting to explain the behaviour of Joey for example often invested too much in Freudian theory. A minority of candidates challenged the question and argued the view that the characters were not human at all, but predatory animals which was fine when supported by detailed references but less productive when candidates gave way to sustained expressions of disbelief at the behaviour and moral outrage.
- (b) Many candidates obviously relished the opportunity to discuss this extract and fully appreciated how Pinter created his dramatic effects and manipulated the audience. Most were able to use the immediate context of her activities with Joey and the preceding discussion on setting her up as a 'live-in whore' to appreciate the full impact of Ruth's entrance and commented on the fact that she was 'dressed' and the effect of the silence. Teddy's delivery of the invitation; Ruth's initial passive politeness giving way to firm realism and demand; Max's uncharacteristic use of a semantic field of love and togetherness, and Ruth's ruthless domination in the final negotiations were all taken up with varying degrees of perception. The discriminating factor here was the extent to which candidates were prepared to examine the language. Many noted the irony of Max's reference to having a woman in the house and used precise knowledge of the wider text to discuss the audience's response to the idea of 'their mother's image was so dear any other woman would have...tarnished it.' Some enjoyed the dark humour of 'in the bosom of the family'. Most commented on the effect of the sentence structure and pauses in Teddy's speeches, and appreciated the use of the Pinter pause at particular points in the discussion. The most perceptive commented on the way what was being proposed was presented – with a lot of softening, euphemistic phrases and repetition: 'a kind of guest....you'll have to pull your weight a little....bring in a little ..a few pennies...that's all..pop up to the flat'. Only the weakest essays had recourse to a kind of generalised moral disapproval that unfortunately inhibited their response to the extraordinary tonal shifts and dramatic effects of Pinter's theatre.

**Question 7 WOLE SOYINKA: *Death and the King's Horseman***

This was not such a popular text on this paper and there were very few submissions for either question.

- (a) Candidates generally had some useful contextual understanding and knowledge of the author and his cultural pre-occupations, and some clearly knew that Soyinka has resisted a simplified view of the play as a clash of cultures, and so they tried to be even-handed about the different cultures without being overly harsh about the British and their role by focusing on how both sides had ideas about duty, leadership and honour and that characters on both sides showed weakness. The key discriminator was the extent to which candidates could look at specific episodes. Certain scenes were much better known than others such as the one in which Amusa reacts to the Pilkings' use of the 'engugun' as fancy dress, and Jane discusses suicide with Olunde but the one where Simon discusses duty and Olunde with Elesin would have been very useful here. A few candidates brought in the discomfort of those caught between cultures like Amusa's humiliation at the hand of the girls in the market or Joseph's difficulties with Simon over the holy water. Some candidates

also commented on the use of dance, costumes and drumming to suggest the different cultures, and the different kind of language given to the Yoruba and British but few could go beyond general descriptive assertions and develop the idea to show how the language displays contrasting cultural values.

- (b) This was the less popular choice but was generally well done. Candidates showed knowledge of the context and significance of the scene in terms of Yoruba culture and the plot. The role of Iyalaja as the upholder of the tradition was understood, as was her willingness to sacrifice her son's happiness rather than have the responsibility of setting 'the world adrift' by refusing Elesin his bride. One able candidate noted that the women function as a Greek chorus, questioning and concerned and that the theme of present action affecting the future is everywhere in the language to this passage as is the word 'honour'. This candidate pointed out the audience would suspect that Elesin is full of bluster and manipulative 'Who speaks of pleasure?' and 'Let /Seed... take root/ In the earth of my choice' and would appreciate the various ironies in his speeches, particularly foreshadowing the role of his son with 'the young shoot swelling even as the parent stalk begins to wither.'

### Question 8 VIRGINIA WOOLF: *To the Lighthouse*

Candidates produced some detailed analysis and interesting responses though there were fewer submissions this session. Many candidates had done some useful critical reading on the stream of consciousness technique which they could apply to both questions but there was a tendency to over-invest in ideas about Freud and the Oedipal complex in response to the extract.

- (a) Candidates were able to place the presentation of Lily within the wider social and literary context of the novel. Lily as an unconventional, independent woman was appropriately compared to Mrs Ramsay as a fine specimen of the Victorian ideal of wifely virtue. Candidates also appreciated the significance of Lily's role as an artist, as a representative of Woolf fighting for recognition against opinions expressed by men like Charles Tansley. The best candidates also understood her role as a Centre of consciousness, offering an ambivalent view of Mrs Ramsay in *The Window*, and in the final section struggling to come to terms with her death, to respond to Mr Ramsay's need for sympathy and complete her picture. The best answers made good use of aptly chosen quotations and analysed the means by which Lily was presented which also included other people's views of her.
- (b) This was the less popular choice. Better scripts applied what they knew of the stream of consciousness and tracked the way Woolf shifts the angle of vision between the characters and the narrator, focusing on the effects of the diction: the child-like repetition of 'He hated him' for James, the symbolic opposition of the 'fountain' and the 'beak of brass', the reiteration of the word 'sympathy' and the irony of 'not for a second should he find himself without her.' They noted the negative imagery in the presentation of Mr Ramsay's demands, his wife's pride in her 'capacity to surround and protect and discussed the way the cost to her and James was presented. Competent scripts explored the relationships with occasional insights, using the passage to support observations on character with some relevant references to the wider text and some recourse to Freud in dealing with James. Weaker scripts attempted to show that Mrs Ramsay was a good wife, over-invested in Freudian explanations of James's feelings towards his father here and elsewhere in the text or attempted to summarise the passage.

# LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

---

Paper 9695/71

Comment and Appreciation

## Key Messages:

- answers should focus upon the form, structure and language of the poem or passage, and upon how these shape meaning, and should not rely upon narrative or paraphrase
- answers should show clearly that candidates have read and considered the poem/passage as whole before starting to write their response
- answers should identify a range of literary devices and techniques, and – most importantly – discuss how they are used by the writers, and the effects that they create; they should not just be listed
- answers should show personal responses to the ways in which the poem/passage is written, not just to what is said

## General Comments

There was some good work on all three questions in this Paper, but a number of general concerns arose, all of which point to ways in which future candidates could make their responses clearer, more tightly focused, and more critically astute.

There is of course no simple “right” way to write a critical essay, but it was clear this session – as indeed in all past sessions – that the best answers adopted a similar kind of approach. These began with a brief outline of what the poem or passage was about, together with a quick summary of how the writer had created his/her effects; this was normally a single short paragraph, perhaps no more than five or six lines in length. Confident and successful candidates had written this after they had read and studied the poem or passage carefully and thoughtfully, so that these introductory comments were written in the light of considered opinion and thinking, rather than reflecting the initial uncertainty which all readers inevitably have before they have studied the text properly.

Implicit in this is the idea that while reading and thinking about the text, candidates had underlined what they saw to be significant, interesting, or just striking words and phrases in it, and then made sure that these were included and discussed in what they wrote. Candidates are not asked to include their question papers with their work, of course, so such an approach can never be seen or assessed, but it certainly will always pay dividends, in that it will ensure some good and close study rather than a sequence of more general and perhaps unfocused comments.

Very little credit can then be given to an answer which simply, or even largely, paraphrases what the text says; it must be assumed that A Level candidates understand and appreciate the *contents* of what they read, particularly as great care is always taken to select and set texts that are not necessarily “easy”, but most certainly accessible to all candidates entering this examination. What matters, and what *will be* rewarded, is how fully and how effectively candidates explore and discuss the various ways in which the writers have created the texts, discussing – and certainly not just listing – a range of literary devices and techniques that help create particular reader or audience responses. Again, very little credit will be given to answers that simply identify alliteration, onomatopoeia, metaphor and so on; credit will, however, be given to those answers which show exactly and sensitively how such techniques are used, and the impacts that they have; personal response to the texts is important, but this must not be just to what is said, but to how and how effectively it is said. Candidates are reminded that it is not sufficient merely to work through a list of techniques. While this is thorough and may avoid narrative summary, it has two disadvantages – some candidates who take this approach tend to list techniques whether they are relevant or not, often forcing them in where they are not in fact present, and points are often taken completely out of context, so that it is not clear what the rhythm, pace, metaphor or diction contribute to the developing meaning of the piece of literature.

Another general comment needs to be made, that candidates must – and this was very often not the case this session – make it very clear that they appreciate that poems are in fact poems, and not just prose printed in an unusual way; many answers failed to copy accurately when using quotations, changing the line layout, or occasionally ignoring it entirely.

### **Comments on Specific Questions**

#### **Question 1**

This poem led to some of the best answers on the Paper, and despite its length many candidates were able to explore its details in considerable depth, and often with a great deal of personal sensitivity to Whitman's writing. There were some occasional but relatively rare moments of misinterpretation, and some surprising and rather unhelpful speculation about why there is no title, but almost invariably answers concentrated with confidence upon the ways the poet creates a sense of excited hope at the start, followed by temporary calm and even relaxation, contrasted suddenly by the realisation that the letter brings bad news, and finally the growing realisation that the family's son is dead, and the desperate, life-numbing grief that follows and stays with the mother. There were thoughtful comments on the archaic diction, the shifting narrative point of view, the effectiveness of the descriptions of autumn beauty (variously seen as appropriate or ironic), the urgency of the family towards the letter, the gradual disillusionment as the truth emerges, and the mother's bleak and lasting sorrow. The strongest answers were able to illustrate each of these aspects with precise quotations, accompanied by comment on their effectiveness. Examples included contrasting the colourful autumn beauty with the 'sickly white' of the mother's face; the way the colours of the trees – 'green, yellow... redder' suggest a movement towards death and blood; the familiarity of 'Pete' rather than 'Peter', accentuated by the word 'dear'; the conclusive abrupt finality of line 50; the use of present participles in the final stanza suggesting an ongoing grief.

Some candidates were clearly puzzled and occasionally worried by the lack of a consistent single narrative voice; most, however, either made the assumption that much of the poem, or even all of it, is spoken by the eldest daughter of the family, or simply ignored the issue. The most confident were able to see that Whitman deliberately shifts the poem's voice, thus widening and universalising the reader's experience as the poem develops. Interestingly, and perhaps significantly, a number of candidates referred to the poem as a play, presumably justly a slip of the pen or the mind, but possibly also reflecting the curiously powerful dramatic nature which they felt as they read it. The second stanza, or section, caused some difficulties, too, though most answers noted that the contrast being drawn between the rich and fertile landscape, of which the farm is a part, is in striking contrast to the horrors of warfare and death; nature, and indeed all human life, cannot stop just because fighting continues and because one soldier dies – a poignant and painful reality for the distraught mother, of course, but certainly a truth that the poem is expressing.

Comment is made above about the need to note and explore some literary devices, and the poem led some candidates to express concern that there is no regularity in it of any sort – the stanzas are of different length, there is no rhyme pattern, there is no regular rhythm. It may be that Whitman wrote like this, as some answers speculated, to reflect the uncertainty and violently fluctuating emotions of the family being portrayed. It may also be, again as many suggested, that to have no firm regularity allows the poet to stress particular moments more strikingly and memorably, as for example in the repetitions of "come" and "letter" in lines 1-3, the repetitions of "O" in lines 24-28, and the emphatic brief statements in lines 15 and 50, for example.

#### **Question 2**

By contrast with Whitman's poem, Edward Thomas's is unusually and curiously elusive, and many candidates struggled to establish exactly what it is about; some suggested that the poet was hallucinating, or in some cases that he was entirely insane, but the majority felt that he is not writing about a literal bird, but about an abstract or metaphorical "something" which has deeply affected his life for many years, and which he himself cannot quite securely define or articulate. Some suggested that the poem may possibly be about a friend or relative or lover who died, and whose memory haunts the poet; some said that it may be about something within his own personality that he either cannot accept or understand; a few suggested that it may even refer to the act of creation itself; a few suggested that as the bird is so elusive and insubstantial and references are made to 'dream', it might not exist at all, and be a symbol of yearning, of the poet's discontent, of hope for a nebulous something. Such answers were good at picking up the vaguenesses in 'four years/ Ago? Or five?', 'seeming far-off', 'distant still', 'too far off', often contrasted with the apparent certainties in the poem. Whatever Thomas meant, however, remained uncertain for most candidates, but there were some very thoughtful and often very personal and sensitive discussions about what might lie

behind the poem, and about how Thomas writes and recreates these uncertain feelings. There were very few answers indeed that did not grasp and express something of what the poet is saying and of what he is attempting to express in tangible form. It was perhaps a useful indicator that not all poetry can be reduced to a single or simple “message”, and that to notice its ambiguities and uncertainties was in itself evidence of some good reading and thinking by many candidates.

There were some insecure and often superficial comments about the formal structures of the poem, with only a few answers apparently noticing that although the lines are of slightly varying length there is an underlying constant use of iambic pentameter throughout all three stanzas. There is certainly no rhyme pattern at all, so those – quite a large number – who asserted that “there is no regular rhyme scheme” had perhaps not looked carefully enough at the end words of each line; it is a kind of free verse, but the use of iambic pentameter holds the poem together in a tighter way than truly free verse does.

### Question 3

Perhaps because of its relative length, and its nature as a strong and clear “story”, this passage led to rather more purely narrative responses than the two poems did. However, there was also a good number of perceptive answers which developed from the extract’s ending to make points about re-evaluating relationships, seeing Lassie as clearly accompanied and encouraged by the despised half-brother Gregory. Strong answers took the passage in stages, moving from the retrospective narration at the opening, through the boy’s confidence, even cockiness, into his growing discontent and distress, to the sheer delight and relief of the ending. Light was sometimes seen as a key indicator: a ‘good light’ at the beginning; the emphasised ‘black darkness’ on the fells compared with the ‘warm, red, bright fire’ of imagination and memory. Others made direct links between the ‘ugly enough brute... ill-looking face’ and ‘the great white-faced Lassie... with her intelligent, apprehensive eyes’ at the point of rescue. For those who carefully traced the development of the boy’s experience and perceptions, this was a very rewarding passage.

Several answers used the relationships that are portrayed as a means of suggesting moral points of various sorts: we should listen to our elders; we should not be over-confident in our own abilities; we should learn to accept other people, however much we may dislike them; we should never mistreat animals. All these are relevant and valid ideas, but perhaps not at the forefront of what is really and centrally just a good and well-written piece of adventure, with a happy though arguably rather contrived ending. As suggested in the paragraph above, there is plenty of imagery to explore; the characters, though few, are well defined, and the young man’s changing feelings, especially his developing terror as the snow and the night fall, are powerfully portrayed in writing that has a wealth of literary devices and techniques – alliteration, assonance, simile, metaphor, onomatopoeia, repetition are all used, and deserving of discussion. The three strikingly different paragraphs have their own impacts, too, so structural comments were often well made: the compact and dense first paragraph, long and even unwieldy, focuses upon the narrator’s early and unwise decision, followed almost immediately by the snowstorm and his subsequent isolation and terror; the second, much shorter and more tightly focused paragraph relates the arrival of Lassie and the sheer delight of both dog and boy; and the single-sentence final paragraph simply and briefly states his relief but complete exhaustion at being found. As many sound and good answers demonstrated, there is plenty of material worthy of close exploration in the extract.



# LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

---

Paper 9695/72

Comment and Appreciation

## Key Messages:

- answers should focus upon the form, structure and language of the poem or passage, and upon how these shape meaning, and should not rely upon narrative or paraphrase
- answers should show clearly that candidates have read and considered the poem/passage as whole before starting to write their response
- answers should identify a range of literary devices and techniques, and – most importantly – discuss how they are used by the writers, and the effects that they create; they should not just be listed
- answers should show personal responses to the ways in which the poem/passage is written, not just to what is said

## General Comments

There was some good work on all three questions in this Paper, but a number of general concerns arose, all of which point to ways in which future candidates could make their responses clearer, more tightly focused, and more critically astute.

There is of course no simple “right” way to write a critical essay, but it was clear this session – as indeed in all past sessions – that the best answers adopted a similar kind of approach. These began with a brief outline of what the poem or passage was about, together with a quick summary of how the writer had created his/her effects; this was normally a single short paragraph, perhaps no more than five or six lines in length. Confident and successful candidates had written this after they had read and studied the poem or passage carefully and thoughtfully, so that these introductory comments were written in the light of considered opinion and thinking, rather than reflecting the initial uncertainty which all readers inevitably have before they have studied the text properly.

Implicit in this is the idea that while reading and thinking about the text, candidates had underlined what they saw to be significant, interesting, or just striking words and phrases in it, and then made sure that these were included and discussed in what they wrote. Candidates are not asked to include their question papers with their work, of course, so such an approach can never be seen or assessed, but it certainly will always pay dividends, in that it will ensure some good and close study rather than a sequence of more general and perhaps unfocused comments.

Very little credit can then be given to an answer which simply, or even largely, paraphrases what the text says; it must be assumed that A Level candidates understand and appreciate the *contents* of what they read, particularly as great care is always taken to select and set texts that are not necessarily “easy”, but most certainly accessible to all candidates entering this examination. What matters, and what *will be* rewarded, is how fully and how effectively candidates explore and discuss the various ways in which the writers have created the texts, discussing – and certainly not just listing – a range of literary devices and techniques that help create particular reader or audience responses. Again, very little credit will be given to answers that simply identify alliteration, onomatopoeia, metaphor and so on; credit will, however, be given to those answers which show exactly and sensitively how such techniques are used, and the impacts that they have; personal response to the texts is important, but this must not be just to what is said, but to how and how effectively it is said. Candidates are reminded that it is not sufficient merely to work through a list of techniques. While this is thorough and may avoid narrative summary, it has two disadvantages – some candidates who take this approach tend to list techniques whether they are relevant or not, often forcing them in where they are not in fact present, and points are often taken completely out of context, so that it is not clear what the rhythm, pace, metaphor or diction contribute to the developing meaning of the piece of literature.

Another general comment needs to be made, that candidates must – and this was very often not the case this session – make it very clear that they appreciate that poems are in fact poems, and not just prose printed in an unusual way; many answers failed to copy accurately when using quotations, changing the line layout, or occasionally ignoring it entirely.

### **Comments on Specific Questions**

#### **Question 1**

This poem led to some of the best answers on the Paper, and despite its length many candidates were able to explore its details in considerable depth, and often with a great deal of personal sensitivity to Whitman's writing. There were some occasional but relatively rare moments of misinterpretation, and some surprising and rather unhelpful speculation about why there is no title, but almost invariably answers concentrated with confidence upon the ways the poet creates a sense of excited hope at the start, followed by temporary calm and even relaxation, contrasted suddenly by the realisation that the letter brings bad news, and finally the growing realisation that the family's son is dead, and the desperate, life-numbing grief that follows and stays with the mother. There were thoughtful comments on the archaic diction, the shifting narrative point of view, the effectiveness of the descriptions of autumn beauty (variously seen as appropriate or ironic), the urgency of the family towards the letter, the gradual disillusionment as the truth emerges, and the mother's bleak and lasting sorrow. The strongest answers were able to illustrate each of these aspects with precise quotations, accompanied by comment on their effectiveness. Examples included contrasting the colourful autumn beauty with the 'sickly white' of the mother's face; the way the colours of the trees – 'green, yellow... redder' suggest a movement towards death and blood; the familiarity of 'Pete' rather than 'Peter', accentuated by the word 'dear'; the conclusive abrupt finality of line 50; the use of present participles in the final stanza suggesting an ongoing grief.

Some candidates were clearly puzzled and occasionally worried by the lack of a consistent single narrative voice; most, however, either made the assumption that much of the poem, or even all of it, is spoken by the eldest daughter of the family, or simply ignored the issue. The most confident were able to see that Whitman deliberately shifts the poem's voice, thus widening and universalising the reader's experience as the poem develops. Interestingly, and perhaps significantly, a number of candidates referred to the poem as a play, presumably justly a slip of the pen or the mind, but possibly also reflecting the curiously powerful dramatic nature which they felt as they read it. The second stanza, or section, caused some difficulties, too, though most answers noted that the contrast being drawn between the rich and fertile landscape, of which the farm is a part, is in striking contrast to the horrors of warfare and death; nature, and indeed all human life, cannot stop just because fighting continues and because one soldier dies – a poignant and painful reality for the distraught mother, of course, but certainly a truth that the poem is expressing.

Comment is made above about the need to note and explore some literary devices, and the poem led some candidates to express concern that there is no regularity in it of any sort – the stanzas are of different length, there is no rhyme pattern, there is no regular rhythm. It may be that Whitman wrote like this, as some answers speculated, to reflect the uncertainty and violently fluctuating emotions of the family being portrayed. It may also be, again as many suggested, that to have no firm regularity allows the poet to stress particular moments more strikingly and memorably, as for example in the repetitions of "come" and "letter" in lines 1-3, the repetitions of "O" in lines 24-28, and the emphatic brief statements in lines 15 and 50, for example.

#### **Question 2**

By contrast with Whitman's poem, Edward Thomas's is unusually and curiously elusive, and many candidates struggled to establish exactly what it is about; some suggested that the poet was hallucinating, or in some cases that he was entirely insane, but the majority felt that he is not writing about a literal bird, but about an abstract or metaphorical "something" which has deeply affected his life for many years, and which he himself cannot quite securely define or articulate. Some suggested that the poem may possibly be about a friend or relative or lover who died, and whose memory haunts the poet; some said that it may be about something within his own personality that he either cannot accept or understand; a few suggested that it may even refer to the act of creation itself; a few suggested that as the bird is so elusive and insubstantial and references are made to 'dream', it might not exist at all, and be a symbol of yearning, of the poet's discontent, of hope for a nebulous something. Such answers were good at picking up the vaguenesses in 'four years/ Ago? Or five?', 'seeming far-off', 'distant still', 'too far off', often contrasted with the apparent certainties in the poem. Whatever Thomas meant, however, remained uncertain for most candidates, but there were some very thoughtful and often very personal and sensitive discussions about what might lie

behind the poem, and about how Thomas writes and recreates these uncertain feelings. There were very few answers indeed that did not grasp and express something of what the poet is saying and of what he is attempting to express in tangible form. It was perhaps a useful indicator that not all poetry can be reduced to a single or simple “message”, and that to notice its ambiguities and uncertainties was in itself evidence of some good reading and thinking by many candidates.

There were some insecure and often superficial comments about the formal structures of the poem, with only a few answers apparently noticing that although the lines are of slightly varying length there is an underlying constant use of iambic pentameter throughout all three stanzas. There is certainly no rhyme pattern at all, so those – quite a large number – who asserted that “there is no regular rhyme scheme” had perhaps not looked carefully enough at the end words of each line; it is a kind of free verse, but the use of iambic pentameter holds the poem together in a tighter way than truly free verse does.

### Question 3

Perhaps because of its relative length, and its nature as a strong and clear “story”, this passage led to rather more purely narrative responses than the two poems did. However, there was also a good number of perceptive answers which developed from the extract’s ending to make points about re-evaluating relationships, seeing Lassie as clearly accompanied and encouraged by the despised half-brother Gregory. Strong answers took the passage in stages, moving from the retrospective narration at the opening, through the boy’s confidence, even cockiness, into his growing discontent and distress, to the sheer delight and relief of the ending. Light was sometimes seen as a key indicator: a ‘good light’ at the beginning; the emphasised ‘black darkness’ on the fells compared with the ‘warm, red, bright fire’ of imagination and memory. Others made direct links between the ‘ugly enough brute... ill-looking face’ and ‘the great white-faced Lassie... with her intelligent, apprehensive eyes’ at the point of rescue. For those who carefully traced the development of the boy’s experience and perceptions, this was a very rewarding passage.

Several answers used the relationships that are portrayed as a means of suggesting moral points of various sorts: we should listen to our elders; we should not be over-confident in our own abilities; we should learn to accept other people, however much we may dislike them; we should never mistreat animals. All these are relevant and valid ideas, but perhaps not at the forefront of what is really and centrally just a good and well-written piece of adventure, with a happy though arguably rather contrived ending. As suggested in the paragraph above, there is plenty of imagery to explore; the characters, though few, are well defined, and the young man’s changing feelings, especially his developing terror as the snow and the night fall, are powerfully portrayed in writing that has a wealth of literary devices and techniques – alliteration, assonance, simile, metaphor, onomatopoeia, repetition are all used, and deserving of discussion. The three strikingly different paragraphs have their own impacts, too, so structural comments were often well made: the compact and dense first paragraph, long and even unwieldy, focuses upon the narrator’s early and unwise decision, followed almost immediately by the snowstorm and his subsequent isolation and terror; the second, much shorter and more tightly focused paragraph relates the arrival of Lassie and the sheer delight of both dog and boy; and the single-sentence final paragraph simply and briefly states his relief but complete exhaustion at being found. As many sound and good answers demonstrated, there is plenty of material worthy of close exploration in the extract.

# LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

---

Paper 9695/73  
Comment and Appreciation

## Key Messages:

- answers should focus upon the form, structure and language of the poem or passage, and upon how these shape meaning, and should not rely upon narrative or paraphrase
- answers should show clearly that candidates have read and considered the poem/passage as whole before starting to write their response
- answers should identify a range of literary devices and techniques, and – most importantly – discuss how they are used by the writers, and the effects that they create; they should not just be listed
- answers should show personal responses to the ways in which the poem/passage is written, not just to what is said

## General Comments

There was some good work on all three questions in this Paper, but a number of general concerns arose, all of which point to ways in which future candidates could make their responses clearer, more tightly focused, and more critically astute.

There is of course no simple “right” way to write a critical essay, but it was clear this session – as indeed in all past sessions – that the best answers adopted a similar kind of approach. These began with a brief outline of what the poem or passage was about, together with a quick summary of how the writer had created his/her effects; this was normally a single short paragraph, perhaps no more than five or six lines in length. Confident and successful candidates had written this after they had read and studied the poem or passage carefully and thoughtfully, so that these introductory comments were written in the light of considered opinion and thinking, rather than reflecting the initial uncertainty which all readers inevitably have before they have studied the text properly.

Implicit in this is the idea that while reading and thinking about the text, candidates had underlined what they saw to be significant, interesting, or just striking words and phrases in it, and then made sure that these were included and discussed in what they wrote. Candidates are not asked to include their question papers with their work, of course, so such an approach can never be seen or assessed, but it certainly will always pay dividends, in that it will ensure some good and close study rather than a sequence of more general and perhaps unfocused comments.

Very little credit can then be given to an answer which simply, or even largely, paraphrases what the text says; it must be assumed that A Level candidates understand and appreciate the *contents* of what they read, particularly as great care is always taken to select and set texts that are not necessarily “easy”, but most certainly accessible to all candidates entering this examination. What matters, and what *will be* rewarded, is how fully and how effectively candidates explore and discuss the various ways in which the writers have created the texts, discussing – and certainly not just listing – a range of literary devices and techniques that help create particular reader or audience responses. Again, very little credit will be given to answers that simply identify alliteration, onomatopoeia, metaphor and so on; credit will, however, be given to those answers which show exactly and sensitively how such techniques are used, and the impacts that they have; personal response to the texts is important, but this must not be just to what is said, but to how and how effectively it is said. Candidates are reminded that it is not sufficient merely to work through a list of techniques. While this is thorough and may avoid narrative summary, it has two disadvantages – some candidates who take this approach tend to list techniques whether they are relevant or not, often forcing them in where they are not in fact present, and points are often taken completely out of context, so that it is not clear what the rhythm, pace, metaphor or diction contribute to the developing meaning of the piece of literature.

Another general comment needs to be made, that candidates must – and this was very often not the case this session – make it very clear that they appreciate that poems are in fact poems, and not just prose

printed in an unusual way; many answers failed to copy accurately when using quotations, changing the line layout, or occasionally ignoring it entirely.

### Comments on Specific Questions

#### Question 1

As noted above, the best answers here made it very clear that this extract is from a piece of theatre, which is intended to be seen as well as read. This does of course make response in a timed examination quite difficult, as all action and movement must be imagined, but there is so much in this particular extract that it really should have been picked up by more candidates. For example, there are huge contrasts in the way that Aidoo presents Badua and her husband Osam as they first appear and as the passage develops: Badua is constantly moving – stirring the pot of soup (some candidates sensibly saw this as metaphorically suggesting her deliberate taunting and “stirring up” of her husband), pacing up and down, putting her fingers in her ears, making striking and varied facial expressions, and so on; Osam on the other hand comes in and sits down, comfortably smoking his pipe, hardly moves throughout the two pages except when he reacts to Badua’s hysteria at line 55, and generally plays the part of a laid-back and outwardly unconcerned husband and father. Most answers saw these differences in what the two characters said, but their actions, or in Osam’s case lack of actions, say a great deal about them both. A few answers noted and commented upon the almost ritualistic and poetic speech that Badua uses between lines 58 and 90, but few made any suggestion as to why Aidoo has written like this, or of the effects that it creates.

A comment was made above about personal response; there was some to this passage, but in many cases it was merely to note the difference between what candidates saw as a caring if over-protective mother and an apparently care-free but arguably more realistic father, whose concern is to allow his daughter to grow up as she wishes. Some answers spoke of their own family experiences, which is certainly not what is required in a comment and appreciation Paper, where the focus must be totally and unarguably upon the texts printed. Personal response must always be to the writing and to its effects, not just to what happens or to what is said.

#### Question 2

This proved the most popular question, but was often managed with some surprising uncertainty; many candidates seemed to be sure quite where the characters were – in fact on land in Australia, and not at this point on the boat – or how many there were – William Thornhill has his wife and two children with him, and another mysterious human figure appears at the end. They have reached the convict colony after a year’s voyage in the ship called *Alexander*, and Thornhill is contemplating their new situation, contrasting it with how he lived in London; we have no idea of the crime he has committed, but this is of no significance to the extract, so candidates who speculated about this were unnecessarily taking up valuable time. The central paradox in the extract is surely the fact that although a convicted criminal, and thus in a kind of prison, there are none of the conventional walls, locks or even doors – ten thousand miles of ocean are what prevents him from escaping, so although in one sense locked away he does in fact have a kind of unlimited freedom, but what frightens him most is that this freedom is in a totally strange and alien place, where even the stars are different and unfriendly; the single-sentence paragraph in line 18 sums up his fear and loneliness with a magnificently striking metaphor. The appearance of the human at the end of the passage, presumably though not yet explicitly an aboriginal man, adds to the terror, but interestingly summons up Thornhill’s “*old familiar friend*”, anger, and this restores his sense of his own humanity – “*he felt himself expanding back into his full size*”. There is a wealth of imagery in the passage, too much for any candidate to explore everything in only an hour of reading and writing, but this should not have meant that so many took a kind of refuge in speculating about Thornhill’s background or his crime.

#### Question 3

There were some quite good responses to Browning’s poem, but the relatively few who wrote on it clearly found it quite difficult to manage and understand; those who were able to see a link between the poet’s idea of Autumn as a season of decay and change, and the way in which human life and love similarly decay and change, were often able to make some sensible and sensitive comments. There is no clear suggestion anywhere in the poem that she is writing about any particular person or lover, and while something of this nature *might* have inspired the poem, as written it is surely and simply about change and the sadness that this can bring, but also of the need to face up to such change and not to be bowed down by it; the concluding lines are firm and defiant – whatever life and “human fate” can bring, we must be strong, for “*Whatever prospect Heaven doth bound/Can ne’er be desolate*”.



The last two lines have been quoted in full, quite deliberately, to lead to a more general point about poetry; candidates must quote accurately, and this must mean using the same line-layout as in the original. There are two ways of doing this – either as shown above, with a forward slash between the two lines, or as below:

*“Whatever prospect Heaven doth bound,  
Can ne'er be desolate.”*

To use either of these methods is to make it quite clear that a candidate knows this is poetry, something that not all answers did, so that there were some very naïve comments, such as that “every line starts with a capital letter, to indicate the importance of each idea”, whereas in fact this was in the nineteenth century especially just a literary convention; the words Sorrow and Heaven are given upper-case initial letters, which does indeed give them special significance in what Browning is saying, a point made by some candidates.

Rhyme schemes and rhythms are sometimes important, but not always so, and to simply say that the rhyming pattern here is ABCBDEFE, for example, is of no value at all unless a candidate can make something of it; one or two did make the good point that the tightness of this pattern echoes the firm control of emotion that the poet is demanding from her readers, an interesting and certainly valid personal response. To assert, however, that the poem is written in blank verse is simply untrue, and to say that each line is an iambic pentameter is to suggest either that the candidate does not understand this term, or cannot in the stress of an examination count the syllables accurately. Candidates are reminded that if they choose to discuss rhythm or rhyme they should describe the significance or impact of these devices in the context of what the poem is saying.

The same is true too of all other poetic techniques; there is no value at all in simply listing them regardless of how they help the writing, and there is absolutely no value whatsoever in mentioning techniques that are *not* used. There are plenty of richly effective images in this poem (lines 3, 4, 7 of stanza one, for example, can all be explored in some detail, and there are similarly powerful lines in each of the five stanzas).

# LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

---

Paper 9695/08  
Coursework

## Key Messages

To achieve at the higher end candidates need to make more use of quotation, not just to support relevant discussion points but for detailed analysis of methods and effects.

Critical and contextual material needs to be used more effectively. It should be integrated into the argument the candidate is presenting and will be more highly rewarded if it is evaluated using detailed references to the text. Critical material should also be properly acknowledged in either footnotes or a bibliography.

Biographical material needs to be brief, carefully selected, and made relevant to a discussion point. It is not the focus of the syllabus in A Level English Literature, and so cannot be rewarded unless it is very strictly made part of a particular argument.

It is very important that folders do not exceed the maximum length of 3000 words; candidates should indicate how many words – inclusive of quotations – they have used for each of their two pieces.

## General Comments

It has become almost routine to comment on the high standard of coursework submissions, but once again it is entirely true; candidates whose work has been sampled and moderated this November have clearly been very well taught and prepared, and Centres have assessed their work professionally and efficiently, in most cases using the Marking Criteria fully and thoughtfully, and awarding marks that are very close indeed to agreed standards for the Syllabus. Knowledge of the two texts used was uniformly good or excellent, and there was also an increasing confidence in the way in which wider contextual material and concerns were integrated and used, not just biographical or historical, but in many cases literary and/or critical as well; there was too a greater confidence than in many previous sessions in exploring not just *what* is said in the texts, but more importantly *how* it is said. It is of course not easy to include and integrate all these factors into a pair of essays each of which can be no more than about 1500 words long, but many candidates had clearly learned to write with concise and tight focus, making sure that every sentence added something critically valuable, rather than just “marking time” with narration or repetition. In many cases work was stimulating and indeed thought-provoking; of course, entirely new or groundbreaking insights in work written for an A-Level examination is not expected, but where it is evident that work is fresh, personal, and the result of genuinely individual thought by each candidate then candidates and teachers are to be commended.

Most Centres, for obvious and entirely just reasons, use the same two texts for all their candidates, and it is certainly a rare Centre that does otherwise; many, however, will allow and presumably encourage candidates to select a question from a list of three, four or even more, so that there is unlikely to be more than an occasional overlap of ideas and references across the whole entry. Some such overlap – not in any sense the same as copying, of which there was no evidence anywhere this session – is of course almost inevitable, and is never something that a Centre marker or a Moderator will “penalise”; what matters is how each candidate *makes use of* what he or she has been taught or has discussed, and it is here that individuality will become evident, and must be rewarded. It is recommended that Centres offer candidates a guided choice of questions, rather than giving them all exactly the same two.

In a similar way, the choice of texts is clearly very important indeed in helping all candidates to achieve of their very best. There was no evidence this session that any texts were in any way too difficult or too daunting for candidates, though some did perhaps find the sheer length and size of Dickens’s *Great Expectations* quite hard to manage in a short essay. Freshness of response is again something worth mentioning here, and where the same text has been used in a number of previous sessions there is inevitably a lessening of this freshness; the texts in question are of course new to each set of candidates, but not to their teachers, and when exactly the same questions reappear several times over the years there may

be some sense that candidates are being taught at least some of their ideas rather than being encouraged to explore and think independently.

There was rather more reference to contextual factors than has often been the case in previous years, and in most cases this helped and supported what candidates were saying. There is certainly no need for lengthy presentation or discussion of biographical or historical details, though these can occasionally be relevant and helpful, provided that they are brief and very much linked to an ongoing argument. More valuable sometimes were short comparative comments on one or two other texts by the same writer, or from the same period, but as with other contexts, only where these really added something critically worthwhile; contextual material for its own sake certainly has no place, and cannot be rewarded.

Many candidates also made occasional and again brief use of secondary critical comments; as with contexts, such comments are of little or no value on their own, but if *engaged with* by candidates as part of a developing personal argument they can add a great deal. They must of course come from genuine critical sources, whether these are printed book, Internet sites, or teachers' notes and handouts, but whatever their origin they must be properly acknowledged in footnotes and a bibliography.

All these "additional" factors will of course raise a concern about length, which is why the word "brief" has been frequently used. The Syllabus requires work to total at least 2000 words, but no more than 3000 (including all quotations), and it is essential that these limits, particularly the upper one, are strictly adhered to; all work, from all Centres, and in all countries, must be assessed and moderated to the same rules.

**Some of the texts used successfully this session:**

<b>Novels</b>	Brighton Rock The Greenstone Door Moll Flanders Great Expectations Wide Sargasso Sea The Child in Time The Grapes of Wrath
<b>Drama</b>	The Real Inspector Hound Pygmalion Old Times (Pinter)
<b>Poetry</b>	Eileen Duggan Philip Larkin