

LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

Paper 8695/21
Composition

General Comments

In general, there was a high level of good writing across a large number of Centres. If occasionally able writers drifted away from the task or wrote inappropriately, they were very much in the minority, with most fully focused on the task in hand.

A 600-900 words length for each composition is stipulated, but many candidates wrote too little, at around 500 words, which was effectively self-penalising. None wrote beyond the 900 word limit.

There seemed to be more confusion with tenses this session than has been seen in the past, and in lower scoring answers (including some cases of candidates who did not seem to have an adequate standard of English to make entry at this level appropriate) problems with tense could impede an essay's flow.

The overwhelming majority of candidates allocated their time in the exam well, dividing it evenly between the two answers.

Comments on Individual Questions

Question 1

This was a fairly popular choice, and it produced some effective and varied responses. Some candidates focused on future worlds with some skill and panache. Most responses were of the post-apocalyptic variety (with quite a few candidates providing plot details reminiscent of Cormac McCarthy's *The Road* (perhaps inspired by a film adaptation)). A few were of the 'return to the dawn of time' variety. Even the lower scoring responses attempted to produce suitably desolate descriptions of location and their protagonists' thoughts and feeling about surviving inhospitable conditions. This question produced some of the most descriptive pieces of writing seen this session.

Question 2

This was the most popular of the questions on the paper. Content was often mundane and/or involved gruesome murder and kidnapping in large part. More thoughtful planning would have assisted some candidates' performances. Some candidates attempted to create a sense of closure in unfortunately hackneyed, contrived ways that diffused most of the suspense and tension they had laboured to create. By contrast, there were some competent stories showing a good grasp of how to handle suspense writing. These candidates worked hard to make gradually manifest an originally unspecified, or at least latent, threat to the protagonist's well-being (often a form of stalking), or that of a loved one.

Question 3

This title produced some reflective and effective personal writing, occasionally a little anecdotal in tone; many reflected on holidays or visits; others wrote about being in the examination room when they could be doing something else. Candidates clearly relished the opportunity to engage in some autobiographical writing. However, a good number could have expended more thought about potential situations in the planning stage. Many struggled to produce pieces featuring clearly contrasting lexis – a few moments to create suitable word banks would have been time very well spent. They tended to produce bare narratives nearly devoid of characterisation and the description of settings



Question 4

This task tended to elicit rather conventional responses on the whole, sometimes devoted to the theme of fixating about meeting a favourite boy/girl at school or in a shop or on a plane. By contrast, there were some more effective answers aware of more interesting potentials for 'romance' writing. Generally, though, there was far too much attention on the romantic possibilities without due consideration of the question's requirement to 'create an unusual setting'. The majority of the narratives unfolded prosaically, at parties or in clubs, at schools or colleges and in cafes, but with limited attention paid to what it was that made the setting unusual.

Question 5

This was a popular choice and elicited some strong and well-argued, thoughtful answers. The most engaging were not afraid to take a strong line of argument while also exploring strong counter arguments. Weaker answers tended only to explain the potential pitfalls of LDCs receiving financial aid in the longer term (dependency on the donating nation(s)) without much sense of the (at least short term) pragmatic benefits of the aid being received in the first place; stronger answers clearly differentiated the forms aid could take (emergency food aid and essential infrastructure provision after a natural disaster; strategic investment in crucial industries; development loans for specific purposes and with defined terms from international bodies like the IMF, etc.) and the tangible, mutually-supportive end benefits (usually stronger trade links, political cooperation and defence pacts) that could accrue for both the recipient and donor nations.

Question 6

There were some strong contrasting pieces here, particularly those probing technological and scientific matters. Some high scoring candidates encapsulated a strong sense of voice and a keen sense of audience very well indeed. They broached a wide range of potential issues (usually environmental, economic and technological in nature) and explored each in some detail from both perspectives. Some of the better responses advocated various forms of materialism in the first piece, and ethical and spiritual considerations in the second, to very good effect. Weaker answers seemed unable to focus fully on the need for both an article and substantive content, and the objectivity and formality implied by the direction to write pieces published in a magazine did not seem to have been internalised. Some candidates wrote the pessimistic piece first and tended simply to provide 'solutions' to previously cited problems in the optimistic piece that followed.

Question 7

There were many focused and personal answers which drew on the candidates' own experiences. This was a question that elicited highly effective answers from candidates across a wide variety of school backgrounds. Some very good answers were based on a clear understanding of what might be very different experiences of education. The best answers adopted an objective perspective to explore, in a suitably comparative way, the various issues arising from differing levels of infrastructure, the availability (or otherwise) of learning materials, the differing levels of experience and expertise that may exist between the two sets of teachers, and the varying degrees of motivation amongst candidates from different candidate bodies.

Question 8

This was the least popular of the discursive/argumentative options. Answers tended to focus on beauty products or household goods and addressed the rubric of the question competently. The selection of a suitable 'product' was key here. Some ill-advised product choices hindered attempts to demonstrate how the chosen product is an essential part of the candidate's life. By contrast, one of the best responses carefully and passionately made the case for the continued availability of an inexpensive but highly effective brand of insulin (clearly a response based in personal experience). Other plausible and persuasive pleas were made for the continued availability of specific auto parts and beauty products, sometimes to very humorous effect.

LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

Paper 8695/22
Composition

General Comments

In general, there was a high level of good writing across a large number of Centres. If occasionally able writers drifted away from the task or wrote inappropriately, they were very much in the minority, with most fully focused on the task in hand.

A 600-900 words length for each composition is stipulated on the paper, but many candidates wrote too little, at around 500 words, and this was effectively self-penalising. Candidates should be reminded that the instruction about word length is intended as reliable guidance on what is deemed (in exam conditions) a reasonable length for the suitable development of ideas if they are hoping to achieve marks in the higher bands. None wrote beyond the 900 word limit.

Technical accuracy and structure remained the main differentiators of performance criteria. There seemed to be more confusion with tenses this session than has been seen in the past, and in lower scoring answers (including some cases of candidates who did not seem to have an adequate standard of English to make entry at this level appropriate) problems with tense could impede an essay's flow.

The majority of candidates allocated their time in the exam well, dividing it evenly between the two answers, but there were some notable exceptions with those who wrote on Question 3 (see below).

Comments on Individual Questions

Question 1

This was a popular - and topical – choice and it produced a wide range of responses. There was a substantial amount of good descriptive writing, demonstrating nicely contrasting pieces with opposite moods sustained quite well. However, some responses tended to make the second half a mere negative image of the first - 'there were some pretty houses...now there were no pretty houses...' – concentrating more on the absence of what was there before, rather than what could actually be seen. Weaker answers usually reverted to travelogue mode and weak clichés.

Question 2

This was answered by many candidates and produced variable material. Some answers were highly driven by motivation and contrast, but other answers tended to be rather lacking in clear planning and direction. Some lacked the qualities of the required *opening* chapter, often reading more like a complete story. A lot focused on the idea of 'escape' at the expense of the 'moving'. Some spent a long time still in the city and hardly mentioned the rural area. Weaker answers tended to bias their writing too much to one way rather than the other, with extensive description of the city or romantic rural idylls with little sense of the effect of the move relating to outlook or mood. Some candidates had a completely different take on this given that rural life can involve walking to find water and fuel – and there were some powerful responses in this connection. There were also some amusing and effective descriptions of a city dweller's response to rural life.

Question 3

While this title resulted in some very derivative responses others used it more interestingly as a springboard to explore tribal life, folk stories and unusual customs. Recycled versions of vampire movies were popular. Weaker answers used anything which might relate to something going wrong to prompt a story and many

drifted off into pseudo-detective writing rather than concentrating on actual suspense. Skill was needed to plan a good short story under timed conditions, and many did not reach any sense of resolution or ending. Some candidates seemed to get so absorbed in the task that they overran and ended up with short work in their Section B choice.

Question 4

This was the least popular of the Section A tasks. There were some effusive, unfocused answers where planning would have helped to shape responses more effectively. Weaker scripts displayed a confusion with verb tense and narrative perspective. Some wrote extensively on getting into the air and getting down again with little in between. The stronger responses were, by contrast, very strong: especially when candidates imagined that they had the power of flight themselves.

Question 5

This was a popular choice and produced many engaging and reflective answers; candidates demonstrated a good working knowledge of the material and often argued their cases with insight and strong exemplification. There was a large amount of informed debate which more than met the key criteria. Some well argued pieces had a clear understanding of the range of difficulties. The strongest answers revealed real knowledge and understanding. It was interesting to read the varying responses of candidates drawn from a range of different countries. Impressive subject knowledge was displayed by the highest scoring candidates, in their knowledgeable, balanced and detailed compositions. By contrast, some wrote very biased pieces based on (personal) experience of the UN within one particular country. Having adopted that approach many candidates prevented themselves from a more considered, wider view of the statement, which would have been appropriate to this task.

Question 6

Candidates responded to the challenge soundly and wrote some practical and encouraging pieces, often using rhetorical devices to good effect and displaying a sharp sense of audience. Quite a number of answers only picked up the 'ideal' part of the question and thus wrote about their idea of a perfect society rather than relating it to the environment or sustainability. Some of these managed to still write quite fluently on parallel issues. Some candidates tended to focus on human rights issues and it led to their running short of material to engage with the terms of the question.

Question 7

This was the most popular of the discursive/imaginative tasks, and it produced good number of sound answers. Churchill, Hitler, Jesus, Mandela and Obama were the prime examples most usually treated, but in stronger answers candidates referred to other examples from their own and other cultures, which resulted in a more interesting argument. Those who kept the 'born vs. made' quotation firmly in mind usually gave an interesting meditation on the topic, but quite a number of candidates lost focus and tended to discuss what makes a good leader, rather than engage in discussion about the actual topic, ignoring the nature/nurture dimension altogether. Some floundered because they did not refer to any examples. Some spent time on 'businessmen', often using the category as a synonym for leadership.

Question 8

This seemed to strike a chord with most of those who attempted it and there were some sound and practical pieces of advice put on offer in the strongest answers. Less secure answers drew on cliché and generalisation to the point where substance was lost. Some tended to confuse the two parts with references to savings accounts and investment as part of spending. Some did not understand the idiom, and wrote about having resources to protect against adverse climate conditions, reservoirs and irrigation, but in general the responses were clear and focused. Most candidates seemed to appreciate the appropriate tone for a newspaper article, but fewer managed to come up with a broad selection of examples for each side of the subject, so there was quite a lot of repetition in an attempt to reach the word length requirement.

LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

Paper 8695/23
Composition

General Comments

In general, there was a high level of good writing across a large number of Centres. If occasionally able writers drifted away from the task or wrote inappropriately, they were very much in the minority, with most fully focused on the task in hand.

A 600-900 words length for each composition is stipulated on the paper, but many candidates wrote too little, at around 500 words, and this was effectively self-penalising. Candidates should be reminded that the instruction about word length is intended as reliable guidance on what is deemed (in exam conditions) a reasonable length for the suitable development of ideas if they are hoping to achieve marks in the higher bands. None wrote beyond the 900 word limit.

Technical accuracy and structure remained the main differentiators of performance criteria. There seemed to be more confusion with tenses this session than has been seen in the past, and in lower scoring answers (including some cases of candidates who did not seem to have an adequate standard of English to make entry at this level appropriate) problems with tense could impede an essay's flow. This was particularly the case with responses to Question 4.

The majority of candidates allocated their time in the exam well, dividing it evenly between the two answers, but there were some notable exceptions with those who wrote on Question 3 (see below).

Comments on Individual Questions

Question 1

This question produced a very strong range of material with extremely diverse workplaces chosen; there were some highly imaginative, evocative and impressive pieces of descriptive writing, and many of these were sophisticated. Some of the workplaces chosen had unusual and interesting settings: the ocean for a sailor, a blacksmith's workshop and so forth, in which colours, sounds and textures could be brought to life effectively. There was a genuine sense of engagement with this task.

Question 2

This was the most popular of the narrative/descriptive/imaginative tasks. The continuations were generally effective and developed a sense of genre fairly quickly so that conventions of threats and surprises were established well. Good discriminators were a convincing description of the island setting (*place*) and some engagement with the feelings and thoughts of the characters created and, possibly, their various motivations and adaptability to their new surroundings (including survival skills and innate savvy), to help convey an appropriate sense of *mood*.

However, there was often a reluctance to do more than name the characters (certainly personalities or character traits were not in much evidence), and many answers merely treated the characters as two-dimensional entities (usually a captain and inexperienced, younger passengers), usually contending against the mooted storm and, quite often, inhospitable inhabitants on an island (usually one containing a jungle and, sometimes, a mysterious cave or abandoned settlement). Some wayward answers went straight into stories of country houses and haunting, overlooking the second and third sentences of the opening given in the question.

Question 3

This was far less popular, but it encouraged some really enjoyable and sophisticated responses. There was a variety of approach, with many showing strong evidence of motivation and sharp characterisation played out against an ambience of fear and lawlessness. Conventions were explored to full effect. The question provided a positive prompt for story-telling and allowed candidates to place themselves clearly in terms of the narrator and then choose the time scale for the events. Most candidates wrote third-person narratives where, arguably, employment of the omniscient narrator allowed some explication of and engagement with the character's motivation. The best responses were usually rendered in the first person (to foreground the eponymous character's inner most feelings as well as the source of their motivation) and featured some convincing descriptive writing (such as locations the outlaw either entered or was made to defend if elements of the law encroached on his (it was invariably 'his' rather than 'her') turf). Most candidates seemed clear about the opening chapter aspect of this question.

Question 4

There was a good range of answers here, though a number seemed to miss the focus of the question. Some effective answers described strange and unknown worlds with some skill and awareness; but less secure work was marred by tense confusion. Another pitfall was the tendency to dwell on the imprisonment rather than the contrast between before and after. Weaker responses spent energy describing how awful it was in prison or arguing why they had been imprisoned unfairly. Some compositions were not very well planned – mostly material differences were noted in the present setting being explored, but with little sense of a plausible point of reference developed through an explanation of how the character remembers it from thirty years before. A number relied on emotional meetings with their families after all that time but some without any real focus on the changes.

Stronger candidates were able to draw on the contrasts over thirty years even when their own knowledge might be sketchy. The most successful tactic was to create a character vividly recalling how s/he remembers the community surrounding the prison in anticipation of the release, and then carefully noting the physical changes that have taken place in a thirty year hiatus once the character is a free person. The best responses focused on personal relationships (with parents and siblings usually) and how these have been transformed over thirty years of incarceration, a case of 'sights and sensations' being augmented by philosophical insights and profound emotions, respectively, too.

Question 5

This title prompted some very engaging and thoughtful work, especially where exemplification was woven into the material adroitly. Candidates showed good knowledge of the underpinning issues and even of the historical contexts of the arguments. A few thought that 'capitalism' referred to capital punishment or communism. Relatively few related it to their own situations or countries. Some very strong scripts were able to adduce pertinent quotations in the course of their discussions.

Question 6

This was answered unevenly; frequently the request to develop contrasting styles of language was not fully in evidence, making the two reports rather repetitive. Some candidates wrote with some sense of vision and understanding, in the polarised styles prescribed. Disasters were the favoured topics (terrible fires in conurbations being particularly popular), but political events tended to produce more focused, contrasting pieces of writing.

Question 7

There was a strong and informed sense of voice and audience in many of the responses to this. Candidates tended to side with the quotation, and presented their arguments with some degree of sophistication. However, many answers were not at all prepared to give much attention to dimensions such as traditional cultural systems and discussions could be one-sided, lacking an argumentative element. Some high scoring scripts picked up the distinct differences between the three approaches to foretelling the future given.

Question 8

This question was the most popular of the discursive/argumentative options, perhaps owing to the high degree of engagement in many Centres with citizenship issues defining the 'individual and the state'. Many candidates were able to draw on a range of suitable perspectives, and many remarked on the JFK-esque formulation of the talk's title.

Candidates argued their views quite effectively and persuasively in most cases, although a number were poorly expressed and vague. There was a strong sense of national pride in evidence in many answers and a determination to honour the qualities that the candidates saw in their environment and appreciation of the healthcare/education/national defence/welfare provision received. Some of the best responses came from candidates who extolled the virtue of their country – and particularly its leadership – and insisted that all had a duty to support the country by working for it once trained, pointing to patriotic, cultural and religious obligations on the part of the individual.

A good number understood that this was a speech and wrote accordingly, with rhetoric generally well used to pledge their loyalty to their country. There was usually a very sound conception of audience, not only with regard to the most immediate one of a scholastic peer group, but also taking into account the wider context of who had organised the competition in the first place.



LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

Paper 8695/91

Poetry, Prose and Drama

Examiners reported that they had seen some strong insightful work this session, with candidates responding particularly well to *Songs of Ourselves*, *Stories of Ourselves* and *Jane Eyre*. It was clear in many cases that it was not just the poems and stories themselves which had captured candidates' imaginations, but a real appreciation of the writing and construction of texts. It is the articulation of such appreciation which Examiners are looking to reward.

It was also true that many candidates showed comprehensive, often detailed knowledge of texts, but did not discuss their language, form or structure at all, limiting the development of essays of literary appreciation. An accurate recall of content alone will never achieve high marks in the examination. Equally, candidates need to be able to make secure references and to quote to support their points; otherwise their argument becomes unsupported assertion.

While slavish accounts of biographical detail are largely a thing of the past, candidates showed a particular tendency to discuss Wordsworth's ideas without any, or only glancing, reference to the poems themselves. While such candidates showed themselves to be well informed about history, philosophy and literary development, they did not show a real and detailed knowledge of Wordsworth's poems themselves.

There was also some evidence of candidates relying on pre-prepared answers, particularly on the poetry and short story anthologies. In some cases, candidates seemed to have made up their minds about appropriate pairings of poems or stories before the examination and forced them to fit the questions on the paper, seldom with real success. It is important that candidates, while prepared, approach the examination with an open mind and respond to the questions they find there.

As has been said before, the selected extract questions always demand a close commentary on the passage – it is essential that candidates look closely at the writing and its effects in answering such questions. It should also be noted that lists of technical terms do not guarantee success either; candidates need to be able to demonstrate how literary devices work and achieve their effects for readers. Candidates who consider different potential effects often construct the strongest essays.

It was pleasing to see that the CIE anthologies were so popular and are providing interesting reading and provoking such thoughtful work. A number of Examiners commented on the extra insight they had gained from marking candidates' work on the texts.

Question Specific Comments 8695/91

Question 1

Sujata Bhatt: *Point No Point*

- (a) Too few answers to make a general comment appropriate.
- (b) A very few answers, some of which showed appreciation of the playfulness of the poem while it explores self through relationships and cultural tensions.

Question 2

Songs of Ourselves

- (a) Poems such as 'Hunting Snake', 'The Woodspurge', 'Morse' and 'The Telephone Call' proved suitable choices for this question, with the first two of these in particular allowing candidates to express some perceptive ideas about individuals' encounters with the natural world. Knowledge of the poems was generally good and some candidates demonstrated an impressive understanding of the effects of form, language and structure. Candidates who took particular notice of the instruction to 'compare the effects achieved' were clearly the most successful.
- (b) There were some very strong answers on 'Finding a Small Fly Crushed in a Book'. While many candidates appreciated the central metaphor of the poem – the book of life that can close upon us at any time – the best answers showed a clear understanding of the contrast between the 'fair monument' left by the fly and the fact that human beings may 'leave no lustre'. There was some intelligent awareness of structure here too, with one or two candidates noting that, unusually, the change in tone in this poem comes, not at the end of the octet, but half way through the eighth line.

Question 3

William Wordsworth: *Selected Poetry*

- (a) Candidates chose appropriate poems to discuss in response to this question, though many answers ignored the word 'ways' and provided narrative accounts of the content of poems such as 'Tintern Abbey' and 'Westminster Bridge' with little or no appreciation of poetic aspects. Stronger answers included developed comment on language and imagery and some candidates were able to compare the longer narrative/reflective poems such as 'Tintern Abbey' and 'The Prelude' with tighter forms such as the sonnet in 'Westminster Bridge'.
- (b) There were few answers to this question, but those candidates who attempted it followed the developing narrative of the poem, often noting the way the different positions of the moon are used in each stanza to prefigure the poem's sudden climax. In considering its characteristic nature, candidates discussed Wordsworth's blending of profound thought with simple language and structure, making quick links with other suitable poems.

Question 4

Charlotte Brontë: *Jane Eyre*

- (a) Responses to this question usually showed sound or good knowledge of the novel and were able to discuss the unattractive presentation and influences of Gateshead and Lowood, compared with the conflicting experiences of Thornfield and the restorative influences of Moor House. Some candidates chose very specific settings, comparing, for example, the Red Room with Jane's bedroom at Thornfield when visited by Bertha. The strongest answers were sharply focused on 'presentation', looking carefully at Brontë's descriptive language and ways in which influence on character is shown, while weaker answers relied on narrative and description.
- (b) Strong answers here explored the tension of the passage, created by Jane's puzzlement, indicated by her questions throughout the second half of the extract, and the gothic descriptions of the room and Mason's physical state. The language used for Bertha was also commented upon – 'snarling, canine noise', 'creature', 'mocking demon', 'carrion-seeking bird of prey'. Discussion of Bertha led candidates towards useful consideration of 'the importance of this episode in the novel' as they wrote about Rochester's hidden marriage, Bertha as a foil to Jane, and Jane's moral decision after her failed marriage to Rochester when Mason reveals his identity to her.

Question 5

Tsitsi Dangarembga: *Nervous Conditions*

- (a) Though there were not many answers to this central question, candidates recognised the importance of education to the novel, from Tambu selling her mealies to her attendance at the convent school. Perceptive answers explored ways in which Tambu's education is shown to distance her from her relationships with her family and with Nyasha. Candidates considered her early idealistic views of the school, its uniform and teachers and how her adoption of white values risks leading her towards a similar alienation as felt by Nyasha.
- (b) Candidates responded well to the passage describing Maiguru's departure. Most answers appreciated the significance of this 'failed' attempt at independence and were able to comment intelligently on the wider issue of female emancipation in the novel. Strong candidates showed a perceptive awareness of the differing perspectives and reactions of Tambu and Nyasha in the way they deal with their unspoken knowledge that Maiguru will return.

Question 6

Stories of Ourselves

- (a) This question was designed to encourage candidates to consider the literary qualities of the stories and to steer them away from purely narrative responses. A number of candidates, however, still wrote answers dominated by narrative summary, while confident candidates focused on the kind of details that the question was looking for. There was some interesting discussion of 'The Open Boat', for example, with its focus on minute details within the boat and on the symbolic lighthouse. Other examples from candidates' responses were discussions of the details of tyres, mechanics and pothole-filling gravel as a sign of love in 'Tyres', the extensive description of setting in 'The Fall of the House of Usher' and the intriguing details of the fantasy garden in 'The Door in the Wall'.
- (b) There were some sensitive answers which showed a thoughtful understanding of the relationships in this extract, exploring the presentation of the father's distrust, Jim's friendliness and Tom's careful responses to them both. Candidates showed an understanding of Tom's role as a bridge between both cultures and generations and considered the symbolic significance of the greenstones while analysing the exchanges between Tom and Jim. Some answers were informed by a cultural and historical understanding, recognising in the adzes the shift in power and ownership of the land which creates an underlying tension to the depiction of the relationships in the passage.

Question 7

Arthur Miller: *A View from the Bridge*

- (a) Candidates found it quite easy to pick out 'moments of intense dramatic action', choosing, for example, the Eddie/Rodolpho boxing lesson, Marco's lifting of the chair, Eddie's kissing of Rodolpho and Catherine and Eddie's death. Answers showed appreciation of such climaxes and their effects on an audience and significances were seen in the signs of Eddie's insecurities, the power struggles in the play, and its denouement. A few sharp answers looked carefully at the way Miller structures the play, using such scenes to create its dynamic, with Act 1's climactic ending foreshadowing the end of the play.
- (b) The strongest answers on the passage were able to contextualise the scene in order to demonstrate its contribution to an audience's developing understanding of Eddie, recognising that this is not static but undergoing constant change. Most candidates commented on Alfieri's choric role at the opening of the extract and the way this guides an audience's response to the dialogue which follows. Many candidates wrote well of Eddie's growing desperation when faced with Alfieri's unequivocal advice in ll.37-38, though disappointingly, large numbers of candidates missed the significance of the glowing phone booth and Eddie's disappearance in to 'darkness'.



Question 8

Peter Shaffer: *Equus*

- (a) There were not many attempts on this question. Candidates wrote sensibly of Alan's mental state and recounted the various influences on his development which are revealed through the play's action. While they showed knowledge of the play, few candidates directly tackled whether it made Alan's blinding of the horses 'comprehensible' to them. Stronger answers were able to discriminate between the play's 'explanation' of his actions and the candidates' own acceptance or understanding of them.
- (b) The few candidates answering on the passage were able to place it within the play's development and recognised the importance of Frank's discovery and his revealing of these events to Dysart. There was some discussion of the beginning of Alan's religious perception of the horses which ultimately leads to his climactic blinding of them. Where candidates were usually less successful was in the discussion of the play's 'dramatic methods', a key part of the question. Examiners were hoping to see points about how the play is structured through a sequence of separate interview scenes with Dysart, of which this is one, and the way the stage directions in the extract indicate Alan's acting out of the events which his father describes, so that the audience not only hear of the events but see them as well. An appreciation of this led to an understanding of the potentially shocking final actions of the extract.

Question 9

William Shakespeare: *Henry IV part 1*

- (a) There were surprisingly few answers to this question, considering that honour is central to the play. Candidates attempting it wrote with knowledge about characters who demonstrated honourable or dishonourable behaviour, ranging from usurpation, treachery, military bravery, theft, betrayal and integrity. Although a range of characters and events was often discussed, there was frequently less clear focus on 'ways in which the play explores ideas of honour'. The range is one of these 'ways', as are changes, contrasts and, crucially, the language used in the discussion of honour.
- (b) A number of candidates overlooked the requirement to 'Comment closely' on this passage and often took a literal view of the relationship in which the characters were seen as 'a typical couple, always arguing' or as neither trusting nor loving each other. More accomplished answers showed appreciation of the teasing nature of the dialogue, indicating a loving relationship, but also an awareness that Hotspur is a man of action who, at this point, can not waste time on affairs of the heart. Some answers made an effective comparison with the portrayal of the more demonstrative relationship of Mortimer and his wife.

LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

Paper 8695/92
Poetry, Prose and Drama

General Comments

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It was also true that many candidates showed comprehensive, often detailed knowledge of texts, but did not discuss their language, form or structure at all, limiting the development of essays of literary appreciation. An accurate recall of content alone will never achieve high marks in the examination. Equally, candidates need to be able to make secure references and to quote to support their points; otherwise their argument becomes unsupported assertion.

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There was also some evidence of candidates relying on pre-prepared answers, particularly on the poetry and short story anthologies. In some cases, candidates seemed to have made up their minds about appropriate pairings before the examination and forced them to fit the questions on the paper, seldom with real success. It is important that candidates, while prepared, approach the examination with an open mind and respond to the questions they find there.

As has been said before, the selected extract questions always demand a close commentary on the passage – it is essential that candidates look closely at the writing and its effects in answering such questions. It should also be noted that lists of technical terms do not guarantee success; candidates need to be able to demonstrate how literary devices work and achieve their effects for readers. Candidates who consider different potential effects often construct the strongest essays.

The CIE anthologies were popular and are providing interesting reading and provoking thoughtful work. A number of Examiners commented on the extra insight they had gained from marking candidates' work on the texts.

Comments on Specific Questions

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

Songs of Ourselves

- (a) Candidates interpreted 'landscape' in a number of different ways, to include both natural and manmade landscapes. In some instances, candidates constructed interesting essays by choosing poems which reflected those different interpretations, comparing 'The Bay' with 'Composed Upon Westminster Bridge', for example. Although comparison was not required by the question, candidates who employed a comparative approach often produced well structured answers. A wide range of poems was used in responses, the most popular being 'Where I Come From', 'The Planners', 'City Planners' and those cited above. As always, those who were able to quote and analyse the writing wrote the most successful essays. Candidates who wrote in general terms were largely restricted to the content of the poems and therefore did not score highly.
- (b) Halligan's 'The Cockroach' was a very popular option. Virtually all candidates recognised the poem's parallel between the speaker and the insect and interpreted the poem as an extended metaphor. Those who took this interpretation as a given from the beginning of the poem often missed its gradual development and that the link is only confirmed in the final line. Better essays combined commenting on the cockroach's 'journey' with an analysis of the poem's form, specifically its metrical pattern and rhyme scheme, combined with close attention to the verbs. Several candidates identified the poem as a sonnet and structured their answers around commenting first on the octave and then the sestet. This often proved highly fruitful as candidates were then able to make perceptive comments about Halligan's subversion of the form and comment directly on the poem's development.

Question 3

William Wordsworth: *Selected Poetry*

- (a) Responses to this question were on the whole not strong, as many candidates wrote generally about Wordsworth and his favoured subject matter without any direct reference to any particular poem. Answers which engaged with content rather than literary arguments gained very few marks. A considerable number of answers stated without question that Wordsworth's poetry is pessimistic and cited a few references to prove their case. Sometimes these references were taken out of context and a closer examination might have led to a more balanced answer. Better candidates mounted a challenge to the statement, arguing that while Wordsworth's presentation of human life may be pessimistic to an extent, he also provides a solution in the form of a closer connection with nature, 'the nurse, /The guide, the guardian of my heart, and soul / Of all my moral being.' Others noted that characters such as the Leech Gatherer present a resilience and patience to be found and admired in human nature.
- (b) Weaker responses to selected poem or passage questions often tend towards narrative summary – in this case, several candidates had not understood the poem and made errors in their summary. There were suggestions that the figure in the poem is travelling incognito, that he finds the hazel copse already desecrated and that he finds it populated by sheep. Examiners gained the impression that some candidates were reading the poem for the first time, and it should be emphasised that candidates are unwise to tackle a selected poem with which they are unfamiliar. Stronger answers looked carefully at the structure of the poem, from its optimistic opening, the delight in the discovery, the shame at the 'ravage' and the concluding three lines of meditation. This led to careful consideration of the changing nature of the language in those sections, the key to the 'tone' and the 'mood'. Many candidates considered the sexual implications of some of the language, which was handled well in many cases to suggest the extremity of the shame felt by the speaker of the poem. Those arguments which depended on a detailed biological exploration were less convincing.



Question 4

Charlotte Brontë: *Jane Eyre*

- (a) Many candidates responded enthusiastically to this question, and the most successful integrated their discussions of Jane's and Rochester's developments, noting how they are, to a large degree, interdependent. Such answers often focused on the idea that Brontë uses Rochester as a catalyst for Jane Eyre's own development and that the ensuing struggle between the two characters drives the plot forwards, influencing the structure of the novel. The very best essays explored financial, social, spiritual and moral development, including brief but useful references to Victorian or patriarchal society and even some feminist criticism. Nearly all answers showed detailed knowledge of the text, but at the lower end of the mark range there was less discrimination and direction to the question, as candidates relied on narrative summary rather than argument in response to the question.
- (b) Some candidates mistook Helen Burns for Miss Temple in this passage, particularly in discussing the fifth paragraph of the extract, which misdirected their answers. Many candidates understood the nature of Miss Temple and wrote about her generosity and the contrast she makes with Brocklehurst, but unless these comments were supported with detailed reference to the passage, they could gain little reward. This was a question where many candidates did not note the instruction to discuss the passage 'in detail'. Stronger answers noted the significance of language: 'nectar and ambrosia'; on the link between Miss Temple's name and the awe she inspires; 'kindled' and 'glowed' in relation to the fire which represents the physical and emotional warmth the girls are denied at Lowood. As one candidate remarked, Miss Temple is presented as 'loving, educated, independent' and as such, a role model for Jane herself in the later development of the novel.

Question 5

Tsitsi Dangarembga: *Nervous Conditions*

- (a) In response to the question on Babamukuru, most candidates demonstrated a detailed knowledge of the novel and at least a competent knowledge of the complexities of this character. Several fully developed answers considered the demands placed on him in his various roles and, after carefully considering his strengths and weaknesses, conveyed a genuine personal response by making an evaluation of the title statement. Such answers were most successful when supported by close reference to particular episodes within the novel, and the best were also supported by key quotations. Several candidates approached the question by identifying important aspects of Babamukuru's influence on the events in the novel (e.g.: education, gender roles) and discussed his role in relation to them. This often led to the organisation of ideas into an argument rather than a series of observations, which was a successful approach.
- (b) Many candidates showed very good understanding of the significance of this passage in the novel as a whole, with many candidates commenting on it as the beginning of Tambu's emancipation, as well as the exploration of the conflicts caused by colonialism and the freedom of Doris to ignore her husband, unlike the African wives in the novel. Some candidates also discussed the portrayal of an economic divide along with the racial one. Alert candidates noted that Tambu herself, just before the selected extract, comments on the unpleasant smell coming from Doris and George and 'papery-skinned Doris and her sallow, brown-spotted husband'. Many candidates would have been more successful with closer attention to the writing of the passage, noting, for example, Mr Matimba's calculated grovelling and the whites talk about 'munts' as well as Doris' patronising 'plucky little piccanin'.

Question 6

Stories of Ourselves

- (a) 'The People Before', 'Sandpiper', 'To Da-Duh in Memoriam', 'A Horse and Two Goats', 'Journey' and 'The Door in the Wall' were frequent choices in response to this question. Candidates who used 'A Horse and Two Goats' were able to point out that a clash of ideals can be presented humorously, though in many answers candidates struggled to move beyond a description of what the ideals are and how they conflict. There was less awareness of the need to engage with the writers' presentation. Candidates require detailed knowledge and confidence with the text to explore literary methods as well as plot and character in whole text questions.
- (b) More candidates answered the passage based question and such answers were advantaged by knowledge of the whole story. Some candidates admitted in their answers that they were reading the extract for the first time, which is not an appropriate way to tackle the exam. Better prepared candidates dealt more effectively with the narrative method of Wallace telling the story to the narrator and the narrator's role in gently drawing out the story without challenging it. Successful answers also commented on the contrast between the garden and the language at the close of the story, the woman and the living pages of the book.

Question 7

Arthur Miller: *A View from the Bridge*

- (a) Most candidates showed sound knowledge of the play and its context. Occasionally candidates' focus was a little narrow, with discussion centring on either Eddie's desire for the law to stop Rodolpho or on Marco's wish for revenge for his family. Many candidates, though, responded to the question's focus on tension so that they discussed the drama of the play. Such answers looked at the tension between the Sicilian community's way of dealing with wrongdoing and the American justice system, as well as the tension between morality and the law. Candidates referred to Alfieri with good effect, showing understanding of his dramatic function. Sound textual knowledge, supported by appreciation of dramatic method, led to some strong answers.
- (b) This question elicited some enthusiastic answers from candidates alert to Miller's stagecraft and who saw the two scenes in sequence – Marco's visual, physical and emblematic defeat of Eddie and its consequence in Rodolpho's renewed confidence in Act 2. Confident answers dealt perceptively with Miller's stage directions, the visual impact of the action on the audience and its overall significance to the play as a whole. In the second scene, candidates often engaged successfully with the way Miller uses Alfieri as a 'bridge' or chorus figure to changes the mood. A number wrote well about the simmering sexual undercurrent in Rodolpho's dialogue.

Question 8

Peter Shaffer: *Equus*

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

Question 9

William Shakespeare: *Henry IV Part 1*

- (a) There were few answers to this question. While there were some interesting comments on Hal's early behaviour as a type of political rebellion, not many candidates went beyond an account of the political rebellions which occur in the play. There was, overall, little analysis of 'ways in which' the play presents them.
- (b) Promising points were made by candidates on the relationship between Hal and the King, and many candidates effectively used knowledge of the play as a whole to explain how the relationship had changed and developed over its course. More confident candidates looked closely at the language and structure of the passage itself to explore the way the relationship is presented as well

as the way Prince Henry has developed and matured. There was close comment especially on Hal's measured address to the rebels. The detail and significance of Hal calling himself Prince of Wales and Henry's repetition of the title was noted and discussed. Surprisingly, very few dealt with the final private comments, thereby missing a further point about the relationship.

LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

Paper 8695/93

Poetry, Prose and Drama

Examiners reported that they had seen some strong insightful work this session, with candidates responding particularly well to *Songs of Ourselves*, *Stories of Ourselves* and *Jane Eyre*. It was clear in many cases that it was not just the poems and stories themselves which had captured candidates' imaginations, but a real appreciation of the writing and construction of texts. It is the articulation of such appreciation which Examiners are looking to reward.

It was also true that many candidates showed comprehensive, often detailed knowledge of texts, but did not discuss their language, form or structure at all, limiting the development of essays of literary appreciation. An accurate recall of content alone will never achieve high marks in the examination. Equally, candidates need to be able to make secure references and to quote to support their points; otherwise their argument becomes unsupported assertion.

While simple accounts of biographical detail are largely a thing of the past, some answers dealt with Wordsworth's ideas without any, or only glancing, reference to the poems themselves. While such candidates showed themselves to be well informed about history, philosophy and literary development, they did not show a real and detailed knowledge of Wordsworth's poems themselves.

There was also some evidence of candidates relying on pre-prepared answers, particularly on the poetry and short story anthologies. In some cases, candidates seemed to have made up their minds about appropriate pairings before the examination and forced them to fit the questions on the paper, seldom with real success. It is important that candidates, while prepared, approach the examination with an open mind and respond to the questions they find there.

The passage questions always demand a close commentary on the passage – it is essential that candidates look closely at the writing and its effects in answering such questions. It should also be noted that lists of technical terms do not guarantee success; candidates need to be able to demonstrate how literary devices work and achieve their effects for readers. Candidates who consider different potential effects often construct the strongest essays.

The CIE anthologies were popular and are providing interesting reading and provoking such thoughtful work. A number of Examiners commented on the extra insight they had gained from marking candidates' work on the texts.

Question Specific Comments 9695/33

Question 1

Sujata Bhatt: *Point No Point*

- (a) Difficult experiences were interpreted quite widely, with candidates using '3 November 1984', 'Walking Across Brooklyn Bridge', 'The Writer', 'Wine from Bordeaux' and 'The Need to Recall the Journey' appropriately to answer this question. Strong candidates focused closely on Bhatt's poetic methods – the language, imagery and form of the poems. Those who restricted themselves to accounts of the subject matter did not adequately answer the question set.



- (b) There were a small number of remarkably sensitive and thoughtful readings of 'Rooms by the Sea' which were a delight to read. Most candidates who wrote about it recognised the particular intimate personal nature of the memory, indicated by the subtitle and continued through the poem's detail and the suggestions of its language. A few candidates used Edward Hopper's painting of the same name as their starting point and were able to use details from the painting, like the open door, as a way into personal memory. There was some interesting discussion of the presentation of intimacy from a female perspective and the poem's different evocations of different types of heat.

Question 2

Songs of Ourselves

- (a) Candidates used such poems as 'Summer Farm', 'Where I Come From', 'The Cockroach' and 'The Bay' among others in response to this question. Candidates who either chose poems which could be closely connected or else strikingly contrasted tended to construct arguments with more drive and purpose. The most successful answers were those which focused closely on the 'ways' ideas are presented and issues explored, looking at the language and construction of the chosen poems.
- (b) This was an immensely popular question and in the main, candidates responded to Adcock's poem with real enthusiasm and a lot of understanding. Several candidates conveyed a sense of involvement with this poem through imagining themselves on the receiving end of the call, sometimes suggesting that the name of the company implies universality and suggests that anybody could fall victim to such a call. There were critical comments on materialism and greed. Many candidates showed understanding of the shifts in tone – joy, disbelief, suspicion, disillusionment – but the best answers noted the more subtle aspects of the poem such as the abrupt start with 'They' giving an anonymous sinister tone, and the caller's cynical manipulation of the narrator's emotions. Some showed a sharp appreciation of techniques such as rhetorical questions and ellipsis to convey the casual, conversational mood of the poem, which is abruptly halted by the final words.

Question 3

William Wordsworth: *Selected Poetry*

- (a) It was hoped that this question might prompt candidates to consider Wordsworth outside the confines of the traditional 'nature poet' limitations, but many candidates immediately dismissed the 'interest in humanity' and wrote about nature anyway. It is important for candidates to take on the full question, and those who avoided the issue in this way did not produce strong answers. Stronger answers pointed out that a number of the poems have important human characters – the narrative voice, Lucy, solitary reapers, leech gatherers and so on. The most successful answers, though, explored the relationship between nature and humankind and argued that Wordsworth's interest in the natural world is seldom for its own sake, but for the guidance and restoration of the human spirit, and thus came to agree with the question's premise. There were a large number of weak answers which discussed Wordsworth's ideas and philosophies at some length, but without any direct reference to any poems. All answers on a literature paper must be based on close and detailed knowledge of the texts, clearly referenced in the essays.
- (b) Several candidates were able to use Nature's words when discussing the relationship between Lucy and Nature, commenting on the use of antithesis: 'sun and shower', 'earth and heaven', which some interpreted as the opposing forces in Nature: 'storm and calm', 'kindle and restrain'. Lucy as a part of Nature was occasionally linked with 'Rolled round in earth's diurnal course/With rocks and stones and trees', but more often with 'Lucy Gray/Solitude' in which Lucy is absorbed into Nature. A few were able to link the sadness in the closing stanza with 'She Dwelt'. Few candidates really focused on ways form, structure and rhyme shape meanings in the poems.

Question 4

Charlotte Brontë: *Jane Eyre*

- (a) This proved to be a very fruitful question; the most successful candidates were able to pick out specific incidents to illustrate a developing dynamic in the novel as passion and judgement come into balance. There were some neat comparisons between the wild child in the Red Room, for instance, and the calm and restrained governess. Confident answers moved the discussion beyond Jane's development, with important consideration of Brontë's use of other characters to develop the ideas. Rochester and St John Rivers were central to such discussions, and there was some very sharp analysis of the characterisation of Bertha as an unbridled passionate parallel to Jane. The best answers were able to conceptualise the issue and demonstrate how the novel as a whole is structured to achieve reconciliation between passion and judgement, while less confident, selective answers tended to rely on narrative summary.
- (b) Close commentary on the extract from Chapter 14 was often intelligent and well focused. Candidates frequently wrote perceptively about the imperative tone of Rochester's dialogue, the grandeur of the surroundings and its link with Rochester's social position. They considered what the exchange between Rochester and Jane reveals about their characterisation and relationship. This last point was taken up in detail in strong answers, which identified and commented on the playful nature of the exchange and how it foreshadows the romantic involvement of the characters. Less confident answers tended to read the surface meaning of the dialogue and interpret Rochester as merely vain or pompous, missing the ways in which Brontë shows him create a family-like atmosphere between people who are actually his employees and dependents.

Question 5

Tsitsi Dangarembga: *Nervous Conditions*

- (a) On the whole, candidates sympathised with Nyasha, though many saw that to be the question and did not sufficiently focus in Dangarembga's characterisation of her. The fact that the reader's perception of Nyasha is governed by Tambu's narration was seldom considered. There was recognition of Nyasha's stormy relationship with her father, her isolation and cultural confusion after her time in England and her desire to rebel against Shona attitudes to women, made worse by her eating disorders. Candidates often wrote about these aspects with thought and sensitivity. Many answers, though, did not consider aspects of Nyasha's characterisation which are less likely to evoke sympathy, leading to imbalanced answers. She was, however, condemned by a number of candidates for smoking.
- (b) This passage proved unexpectedly challenging, as comparatively few candidates who attempted the question explored the ironic distance between Tambu's mature narration and her earlier childhood veneration of white people which she describes; only a few picked up her use of sarcasm and irony. The extract is rich in little clues, such as the 'self-satisfied dignity', 'brotherly love' and the 'lightening of diverse darkneses'. Candidates who read the extract very closely were able to show how the passage demonstrates the divisions in both Shona and white society in Rhodesia and that the 'debates' inherent in this extract are fundamental to the novel and Tambu's own development.

Question 6

Stories of Ourselves

- (a) In response to this question, candidates' favourite choices were 'The Door in the Wall' (where the cue quotation originates) and 'The Fall of the House of Usher'. Answers usually developed direct contrasts between the two, both of which have extreme versions of 'a fantastic dream'. Perceptive candidates argued that both stories use a dependable, prosaic narrator whose reliability helps to persuade the reader of the veracity of what they describe. Other favoured stories were 'The Open Boat', 'A Horse and Two Goats', 'Sandpiper' and 'Tyres', discussed with varying degrees of success. Success often depended on candidates' ability to construct an argument about how the writers presented events, rather than describe the unusual events themselves.



- (b) There were many very successful answers on the extract from 'White Hairs and Cricket'. On the whole, candidates showed a perceptive awareness of the significance of the narrator's discovery, firstly by contrasting the narrative clues to his rather immature, thoughtless behaviour with the presentation of the more serious Viraf; secondly by showing how the seriousness of Viraf's father's illness gradually dawns on the narrator; thirdly by focusing on the detailed description of the sick-room with the symbolic significance of the 'long needle' and the 'towering metal stand'; and finally by relating this discovery to the narrator's own situation and the story's concern with ageing and death.

7. Arthur Miller: *A View from the Bridge*

- (a) There were a small number of answers to this question, which usually focused on the difficult relationship between Beatrice and Eddie. A number of answers went further and considered the potential for the marriage between Catherine and Rodolpho, with the question of Rodolpho's true motivation. A few candidates considered Marco's comments on his own marriage and the sacrifices he makes for his wife and family.
- (b) Strong essays on this question paid close attention to the stage directions as well as the dialogue and were able to demonstrate the ways in which Miller shows Eddie's growing unease and its destabilisation of his relationship with Catherine. Candidates looked at Eddie's developing argument about Rodolpho and noticed Catherine's dismay and disbelief. Perceptive answers explored how an audience might be caught between the attractiveness of the characters of Catherine and Rodolpho and the fact that what Eddie argues may be true. Some candidates looked forward in the play to the scene where Catherine challenges Rodolpho on this question.

8. Peter Shaffer: *Equus*

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

9. William Shakespeare: *Henry IV part 1*

- (a) There were few answers here. Candidates tended to write about Falstaff with knowledge, describing his character and behaviour, but comparatively few tackled the potentially controversial statement that he can be considered 'the central figure of the play. Candidates needed to consider his role more closely, as a figure connected to the centre but still on the periphery, allowing him knowledge but relatively detached commentary on political events and political figures.
- (b) Again, there were few answers to this question. A number of essays worked through Hotspur's speeches and recounted the history of Henry IV's rise to power, though several candidates made errors in their accounts. Stronger answers paid attention to the measured stateliness of Hotspur's speeches and focused on some of his pointed language and imagery, such as 'subtle king', the contrast between 'sweet, lovely rose' and 'this thorn, this canker', and 'd disdain'd contempt'. His final speech about honour also received appropriate attention in more confident essays.

