

LITERATURE (ENGLISH)

Paper 2010/11

Paper 11

Key messages

The following are necessary for success on this component:

- showing evidence of a detailed knowledge of the whole text
- ensuring that the answer is relevant to the question
- maintaining a focus on the extract in the passage-based questions, considering particularly the language of the extract
- using a well-structured and developed argument
- supporting in detail, by means of well-chosen quotation or close echoes of the text.

General comments

The majority of candidates demonstrated good knowledge of the texts they had studied and an ability to adapt that knowledge to the purposes of the question. There was much evidence that they had enjoyed their reading. As ever, the most able showed an impressive appreciation of literature and the ability to analyse language.

Most candidates knew how to construct a literary essay, focusing on the question, constructing a solid argument with several key points and development, and supporting it with good use of quotation and textual detail. One of the key messages for teachers preparing candidates for this paper remains the importance of analysing individual words and phrases if marks in Band 5 and above are to be achieved, but the majority had clearly been taught how to approach literary language, and they made good efforts to discuss the effects of the writers' language choices. Where critical literary terms are deployed, it is important that candidates can explain them. For example, many used the term 'pathetic fallacy' but some were not able to go beyond merely noting its presence, as opposed to exploring what use the writer made of it. While it may be perfectly appropriate to note sentence length, enjambment, lexical fields, and so forth, it is a fairly arid exercise if these are not related to meaning and context; fortunately, though, there was far less simple 'feature spotting' in evidence this series than previously. Some candidates seemed to think of quotations, especially for poetry questions, as fulfilling the requirement to explore language choice and its effects - which generally they do not do. A minority of candidates merely gave line references to sometimes quite lengthy passages instead of quoting, and as a result the focus of a point being made was not clear.

Another key message is the importance of maintaining focus on the question. Candidates who lost sight of the key theme, or, in passage-based questions, the passage itself, struggled to develop a response sufficient for the higher bands if central ideas or sections of the passage were missed.

Candidates should be reminded that passage-based questions require more than narrative run-throughs. The whole of the extract is important, and it has been selected to offer candidates the optimum opportunity for discussion. Although there is not necessarily a specific requirement to contextualise the passage, it is more often than not useful to give at least some indication of the circumstances surrounding it. Prompts such as 'dramatic', 'moving', 'powerful' are specifically intended to draw out a personal response and if they are ignored the answer will not demonstrate the engagement that is crucial for achieving the top Bands, no matter how competent the understanding of situation.

A significant number of candidates tried to apply a formulaic approach to all responses, evidenced by pencilled acronyms/mnemonics they wrote on the answer booklet. While this was a useful memory jogger for some, it could cause a problem, particularly with passage-based questions, when it led to extremely

disjointed answers that ignored what was actually happening in the extract and tried to force the response mechanically into separate paragraphs on subject, form, language, purpose etc. By contrast, the best answers were those that integrated all these effectively to produce a developed, focused and coherent response.

The poetry drew some very sensitive and engaged responses this session. Candidates generally knew that it was important to focus on language and imagery, not merely to describe or narrate. Some candidates focused on the effect of rhyme and rhythm at the expense of meaning, but generally there were many enthusiastic and engaged answers. In weaker answers there was a tendency for the words 'positive' and 'negative' to be overused rather than words which identify effects precisely.

Candidates were usually disadvantaged when they wrote lengthy drafts, often as long as, and identical to, the answer itself.

There were fewer attempts at empathic questions this series, but most who tackled them knew the importance of writing 'in character' and trying to capture particular mannerisms and turns of phrase. For success it was, of course, essential to have identified precisely the moment specified in the question.

Most candidates adhered to the rubric, and their scripts showed evidence of good time management.

SECTION A: DRAMA

ARTHUR MILLER: *Death of a Salesman*

- 1 There is much that could be thought moving here. Candidates referred mainly to Willy's final and deluded dream about Biff, Ben's continuing malign influence to the very end, Linda's ignorance of the real meaning of Willy's utterances, and the way Miller uses stage sound to augment the climax as the characters transform into mourners. Differentiation came from engagement with the writing and the ways in which it moves the audience. This was a popular choice and one which was done very well by most candidates, particularly those who could clearly visualise the complex staging of this scene and were able to communicate its dramatic potential as a result. Generally there was much sympathy for Willy, understanding his failures and illusions. The incident of Willy dancing, unusually happy, was discussed well. Good answers used the stage directions as evidence in their argument to help focus their comments into sharp observations. Similarly the sound effects were utilised, including the gasp, 'sh', scream, and the car. The use of music in the scene was also commented upon widely with most recognising its part in making the tragic climax of the action so powerful. Biff's reaction was commented upon, candidates understanding that there was nothing to be done. There was good general knowledge about few mourners at the funeral. Weaker answers tended to focus on staging and the swift transition from Willy's happiness to his suicide, without tackling the finer detail or demonstrating broader knowledge of the play. They sometimes worked through the extract, getting diverted by writing a paragraph or two on the context and Willy's failure to achieve the American Dream. Most candidates had clearly engaged with this text and it is a credit to them that such a complex play, with its time shifts and flashbacks, was understood so well. There was a good deal of use of the term 'mobile concurrences' but in some cases it was not clear that candidates actually knew what it meant.
- 2 Despite Willy having profoundly dislikeable characteristics he desperately wants to do well by his family with ambitions which are not ignoble, does have moments of profound feeling and insight, and is in a predicament from which there is no escape without a bitter blow to his self-esteem. Some communication of an understanding of this with supporting detail was looked for, with evidence of engagement with the ways in which Miller makes the audience care. The best answers focused on Miller's methods and addressed both 'how' and 'care about'; weaker answers ignored the 'how' and provided a character study of Willy with the occasional comment on why we should sympathise with or pity him – some comments proving more relevant than others. An area that was sometimes not handled well was the concept of the American Dream. It tended to become a catch-all term to explain how Willy had gone wrong in life without close examination of how it specifically applies to him as an individual. Answers lacked conviction as a result, but the candidates who referred to Charley's valedictory speech at the end in this connection tended to demonstrate a more critical understanding of the major themes.
- 3 Linda is most certainly very angry and may be thinking about her sons' appalling behaviour and how they can have acted like this, her own responsibility for their selfishness, the effect it is likely to have

on Willy, and what she will say to the boys when they get home. Crucial to a good answer was the creation of a convincing voice for Linda. Responses generally managed to capture Linda's love for her sons and her awareness of Willy's deterioration. As always, the best made use of textual echoes; the weaker ones retold the plot, sometimes with direct lifting from the text of what she did say on their return.

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE: *Julius Caesar*

- 4 It was helpful to outline briefly the immediate context and the strong but sometimes fraught relationship that has existed between Brutus and Cassius up to this point. The characters of the two men were worthy of consideration. Brutus has always been deferred to by Cassius, and sees himself as a beacon of honourable behaviour. Cassius, the pragmatist and soldier, is deeply hurt that Brutus should think him dishonourable. The strength of their emotions, perhaps the fact that Portia has just died and the pressures of the situation just before the battle were worthy of exploration. Differentiation came from the depth in which candidates explored the power of the language and the dramatic conflict. Excellent knowledge of the text was displayed by many candidates. Most understood the context of this scene, and also the changed relationships within it. Quotation was generally used well. Brutus's feelings of guilt and disillusionment were recognised. There were some sound comments on Brutus's strong language; when two characters are involved in such a bitter row, the way they deliver the lines is just as important as the meaning of what they are saying in terms of the 'dramatic moment' suggested in the question. Better answers commented upon individual exchanges in this manner.
- 5 Answers usually focused on the fickleness of the Roman crowd, highlighted in the first scene when they have forgotten Pompey and are now following Caesar, on their self-interest (Caesar's will), on their readiness to turn to violence and to run out of control, e.g. the murder of Cinna the poet, on how they are despised by the higher classes but consciously manipulated by Caesar and Antony. There were also some well-developed responses with relevant detail and understanding of the crowd's fickle nature. Some strong answers considered how are sometimes used for comic relief, particularly in the early stages of the play, and how they are presented as a mob, not as individuals. By contrast, there were some rather mechanical answers which ran through the attempt to crown Caesar, Brutus and Antony at the funeral, Cinna the poet. There were a few outstanding answers which discussed what the play revealed about history, politics, democracy and the power of the people. The best quoted the crowd, freely pointing out the irony that they are seen as 'senseless' yet they have control.
- 6 Answers focused on Antony's shock and grief at the death of his friend, his feelings towards Brutus and the rest of the conspirators, Brutus's speech, how he can turn things to his advantage and avenge Caesar, and his plans for joining forces with Octavius. Discrimination came from the degree to which the voice was convincing, and the most successful answers conveyed genuine sadness and anger, and also the manipulateness of the character. The better answers in general tended to integrate phrases from the text – not in a purely narrative sense, but to highlight the significance of a key idea, e.g. a reference to specific phrases in Brutus's speech by Antony enabled candidates to really explore his bitterness.

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE: *The Tempest*

- 7 This question was generally chosen by those who had the confidence to explore the language in detail and there were some very good answers which showed how the characters of Antonio and Sebastian are revealed through the aggressiveness and violence of their dialogue. The best answers thoroughly engaged with the tension, and with the noise and chaos of the apparently doomed ship. Less successful answers often remarked that the scene showed Prospero's power as a magician, when that is not known at this stage. Better responses took into account the physical business on the stage; recognising, for example, how a sense of chaos could be created by, amongst other things, the various entrances and exits. Most candidates recognised the way Shakespeare used the scene to introduce us to characters and how they might behave in the future.
- 8 This was the most popular question on the play, and the material was well known. The following points came up in most answers: Caliban is brutish and presented as savage, he has apparently attempted to rape Miranda, and his normal mode of discourse is truculent and abusive. He feels a sense of injustice and has a sense of grievance against Prospero, who, he feels, has cheated him of his birthright, and he is capable of a sense of wonder (e.g. 'The isle is full of noises') but lacks discernment. Many answers were very sympathetic, even to the extent of writing off the attempted

rape of Miranda as not really his fault because he has not been taught any better. He does not mention his plot with Trinculo and Stephano to kill Prospero and seeing him entirely as a villain. The best explored his function in the play and the implications of nature and nurture. To score well, candidates needed to move beyond a mere character study and to evaluate the different aspects of his character. Most candidates opted for a balanced response, highlighting the character's strengths and weaknesses often with impressive sensitivity. There were some interesting responses referring to aspects of colonialism. However, few took time to really explore the beauty of Caliban's 'island' speech (though some did mention that it was recited during the opening ceremony of the 2012 Olympic Games).

- 9 Ariel is about to gain a yearned-for freedom. He is likely to feel a sense of joyous excitement. He may reflect on the events of the past few hours and his own part in them. He may feel gratitude to Prospero at his release, but this may be tempered by a feeling of resentment at his servitude. He may think further back to his plight before Prospero's arrival. There were relatively few responses to this question but those who attempted it made a real effort to capture the voice. Although the voice may be elusive, candidates who were attentive to 'Where the bee sucks' found the song helpful in capturing it.

OSCAR WILDE: *The Importance of Being Earnest*

- 10 Most of the responses were appropriately precise. The triviality of Jack's complaints – with the attendant opportunity to comment on the foibles of the upper-classes – was well-understood by most. The absurdity of many of Lady Bracknell's assertions, coupled with her scarcely disguised self-interest, was also well-handled. Perhaps the most impressive answers highlighted the comic value of seeing the dramatic shift of the power relationship between Jack and Lady Bracknell. Reference to their initial encounter was central to this idea and it was taken up in the better responses. There was real enjoyment in many of these responses.
- 11 Gwendolen at times appears to be an obedient and dutiful daughter, but she may also be thought to be at times very like her mother in her determination to have her way and her ruthlessness at getting it, particularly in regard to Jack Worthing. This was successfully commented upon in most cases. Responses were not always well-organised but were quite astute – particularly those which took as their starting point the early remark by Algernon about how a daughter comes to resemble her mother.
- 12 Jack Worthing is a worried man likely to be thinking about his failure to persuade Lady Bracknell of his credentials as a son-in-law, what on earth he is to do about the mystery of his birth and how he is to present the demise of Ernest to all at the Manor House. He might be bemoaning Algernon's lack of trustworthiness in regard to what he has revealed to him about his life. The best answers not only gave evidence of Jack's concerns but also communicated his rising sense of desperation at his situation.

SECTION B: POETRY

- 13 Differentiation came from the extent to which candidates engaged with mood and the way in which it is conveyed. (Part L is full of grief and despair and LXVII is resigned and almost celebratory of Hallam. The words of L convey physical pain caused by the extremity of grief and also a loss of faith and sense of futility. LXVII is much calmer and more mystical. The imagery of L is harsh and physical ('blood creeps', 'nerves prick', 'pangs', 'Time a maniac' etc.), that of LXVII is calmer, associated with rest and peacefulness ('broad water of the west') and light ('silver flame', 'glory on the walls', 'moonlight dies' etc.).) The most successful saw a contrast in the two parts and movement from despair to acceptance. Less successful answers rolled both parts together and did not distinguish between them. There was much less biography in answers than has been the case in previous series, which was a great improvement.
- 14 The key word in this question was 'compelling' and the mystery and suspense of both stories was central to this. We know what happens next in *The Lady of Shalott* but not in *Mariana*, and in both stories there are unanswered questions. Other areas for exploration were the central characters and the extent to which we empathise with them, and the ways in which Tennyson creates a setting for the stories. Differentiation came from the extent to which candidates went beyond re-telling and showed a clear understanding of the writer at work. Understanding was more complete and there was much more personal engagement with these poems than with *In Memoriam*. Particularly impressive in responses to *Mariana* was the recognition of decay, or inertia at least, as conveyed

through the description of her surroundings. Candidates were also able to recognise the impact of the repeated lines in emphasising her mental stasis and persistent anguish. Particularly impressive responses to *The Lady of Shalott* was the awareness shown by some of Lancelot's lack of consciousness and the impact he has had upon the lady and the events his appearance has precipitated.

- 15 This was a less popular question than the other Tennyson options, but the poem was generally well known. Success was dependent on the amount of focus given to the word 'movingly'; it was not sufficient merely to describe Ulysses' feelings; the emotional impact of the words and imagery needed close examination and those candidates who showed sensitivity to his recognition that he was approaching the end of his life and recognising his loss of strength (and yet determined to push forward) achieved good marks.

SONGS OF OURSELVES: from Part 4

- 16 Focus here was explicitly on Hopkins's methods and elicited comment on the juxtaposition of words to create contrast and embody 'piety'; the way in which the entire poem is a hymn of praise and the individual details which corroborate this (the opening words, the repetition of 'For', the last line of the poem, for example); the poem's sense of inclusiveness (repetition of 'all', use of 'Whatever'); the use of (frequently alliterated) compound words and the rhythm and rhyme of the poem. Most candidates were able to stay focused on the question and recognised the poet's intentions in writing about nature in this way. Better responses recognised the sense of awe and wonder in the 'voice', illustrating the point by referring to the rhetorical question and the neologisms as well as the use of contrasting words for effect towards the end. One weakness in some answers was the failure to recognise that the landscape Hopkins refers to is man-made, and this aspect – developed in 'trades', 'gear' etc. – was largely overlooked, as if candidates could not make the connection between the work of God and the work of man. Most answers explored the language and imagery very thoroughly but there were some who gave only a general overview and some that focused entirely on the rhythm and rhyme, ignoring the meaning of the poem.
- 17 Candidates usually referred to the following: the general references to people in the first stanza and the details of city life (in particular, the smells) and references to organisation and crowding; the second stanza and its references to spaciousness, neglect and disorder; the contrast between the two and the movement from the general to the more particular ('Where I come from'); and the significance of the last two lines of the poem. Brewster's attitudes and preferences were clearly recognised and discussion of imagery was adequate, but it was rare to find that a candidate had grasped the whole sense of the poem as the final lines (which jar so strongly with what has gone before them) were overlooked in most cases.
- 18 As this was an open-choice question, candidates needed to ensure that their chosen poems contrasted natural and man-made things. They needed to refer in appropriate detail to two poems, demonstrate how their chosen poems contrast the natural and the man-made, offer some evaluation of how these contrasts are made striking, and move beyond giving an account of or listing literary features of two poems. Unsurprisingly, frequently the Brewster poem was chosen along with one of the city planning poems. Having to write about two poems proved challenging for a lot of candidates, and resulted in an 'overview' approach which did not allow for detailed consideration of individual images or lines. The dislike shown in all three poems towards the man-made city environment made it a challenge to highlight their individuality. Some candidates chose to write about one poem which dealt with natural things and one that dealt with man-made. Such an approach was allowable but tended to produce less convincing arguments than by choosing poems where both aspects were covered. *Lines composed on Westminster Bridge* produced some very good work.

SECTION C: PROSE

EMILY BRONTE: *Wuthering Heights*

- 19 Lockwood appears as someone who considers himself as a rather superior sort of gentleman, accustomed to be treated as such. His gentlemanly self-regard and composure is instantly and almost humorously destroyed by the dogs. Heathcliff is, like his house, rough and inhospitable and finds it highly amusing that his effete guest should be so discomfited by his dogs doing what they are supposed to. Most candidates who attempted this passage question demonstrated some understanding of Heathcliff and how he is presented; they tended to be less clear on interpreting Lockwood's character and the presentation of *Wuthering Heights* itself, however. These candidates

tended to focus on surface interpretation only; better candidates were able to engage with the deeper implications conveyed through the language.

- 20 Heathcliff is an elemental figure of great strength and imagination in the grip of great passions. He disdains everything to do with polite society, and hence Linton. Linton is an educated and civilised gentleman who is physically timid and fearful of anything which is beyond reason, such as Heathcliff's violent passions. He sets great store by the values of polite society and detests what he sees as the boorishness of Heathcliff. Good answers explored the way in which the two characters are presented in some detail, commenting on the contrasting imagery associated with them even when they are children. Many considered them only from Catherine's point of view and thereby limited themselves to a narrower section range of reference, but generally there were some conscientious attempts to develop ideas.
- 21 Catherine is at this moment likely to be thinking that she is at long last at peace with herself, that both she and Hareton were brutalised by life at Wuthering Heights, and that neither saw the better and gentler qualities of the other. Now she has discovered that love is possible, life with Hareton is a truly delightful prospect. Some understanding of Catherine's situation and feelings in a voice communicating her blissful state of mind was looked for. This question was not as popular as the others, but those who attempted it generally understood the character and what she has been through. A few candidates confused the two Catherines.

TSITSI DANGAREMBGA: *Nervous Conditions*

- 22 Nyasha's state is precarious, brought about by her regime of hard study and self-neglect. She perceives herself to be contending against oppressive hierarchies of gender and race. She is a teenage schoolgirl challenging a system which has assimilated her parents and her only confidante is her younger cousin, the narrator. Differentiation came from the extent of response to the power of the descriptive writing throughout the extract, but particularly in the third paragraph where Nyasha's mood moves from frail vulnerability through bitter sarcasm to blazing anger. There was a genuinely personal response to many answers and real engagement with Nyasha's condition. Equally impressive was the way the overwhelming majority of candidates of all abilities dealt with the underlying causes of it. There was some inappropriate use of the word 'colonialism' which left a somewhat naive impression, but the concept itself was well understood and candidates were able to recognise her loss of identity and notion of being caught between two cultures and the demands of each. One danger was that, in explaining a relatively sophisticated theory, some answers moved away from the passage and become more generalised or abstract in nature. 'Deeper implications' were handled better than actual analysis of language in this context.
- 23 Life on the homestead is hard work and the living conditions are squalid. The narrator shows some affection for it, nevertheless; for example for the company of other children and for the river. Nhamo's reluctance to return once he had gone away to school is commented on unfavourably by the narrator, but she herself only visits infrequently after she follows in his footsteps. The rivalry between the narrator and her older brother looms fairly large in the early chapters, and was seen by the very few candidates who attempted this task as colouring our impressions of her early life.
- 24 Lucia's job offers her the prospect of more independence from the men in her life, which she will welcome. She is likely to be grateful to Babamukuru and determined to try to better herself. Although she does not share the views of the younger girls that she has compromised herself, her subsequent comments are rather more equivocal. She does retain some of her feistiness in her comments about Tambudzai's parents' wedding. Some strong answers displayed a mixture of gratitude and pragmatism in an appropriate voice.

ANITA DESAI: *Fasting, Feasting*

- 25 Arun's whole life has been dominated by examinations and by cramming. His father has perhaps unreasonable expectations and may be thought to be reliving his life through Arun, and will not be deterred from his plans for him. He is being subjected to emotional blackmail by both parents. His physical appearance has been modified by study. Good answers considered Uma's sympathetic viewpoint. Differentiation came from commentary on key words and phrases, e.g. 'manic determination', 'scholarly toil', 'worn down', 'ground down' and 'stricken look'. There was incredibly strong sympathy universally felt for Arun, indicating real engagement with the novel. What stood out was the recognition of his sister's sorrow for her brother in nearly all responses.

- 26 Though it was expected that most candidates would choose to write about the American novel, it was acceptable to consider the preparation and eating of food in India at the banquets etc. and also in the way that some of the women are used almost as kitchen slaves at their weddings. There were very few answers to this question, but those there were usually showed they recognised how Desai contrasts the rich/overindulgent society of the USA with a more restrained Indian society, though both societies make food a central element of family life. Differentiation came through attention to the writing – the gross descriptions of the barbecue and so forth.
- 27 Aruna would be reflecting on Uma's marriage/wedding and all the efforts Mama went to. She would be thinking about the bridegroom, Haresh, and the ceremony, about Uma's letters home and Papa's reactions. Differentiation came from understanding of Aruna's character – pretty, vivacious, cleverer than Uma - and the creation of a convincing voice, sometimes sympathetic, sometimes mocking. Aruna mostly seemed unsympathetic towards her sister, being rather gleeful in many cases. Better answers wove in appropriate details from the text to show reasons for Aruna's opinion.

KIRAN DESAI: *Hullabaloo in the Guava Orchard*

- 28 Sampath's journey to work is hell through the chaos of early morning Shahkot, in which crowds from every conceivable occupation are intent on getting to work in the heat. It is made worse for Sampath by having Pinky to put up with and the final obstacle of the wire which every morning he forgets to duck under. Engagement with the ways in which the writing conveys this hellish vision was looked for, and there was some good teenage empathy with Sampath (similar to that which was evident in responses to Arun in *Fasting, Feasting*).
- 29 Mr. Chawla thinks his son to be a grave disappointment. He is lazy, has no ambition and is decidedly odd at times. Sampath thinks his father to be dedicated to making his life unbearable, and trying to make him into something which he cannot and does not want to be: in a word like his father. Response to the humour of the writing was a feature of better answers to this question. Candidates knew where in the novel to go for this question, and most were able to tune in to comedy in the early scenes.
- 30 There were far too few answers on this question to make general comment appropriate..

F SCOTT FITZGERALD: *The Great Gatsby*

- 31 The context is important here, and the understanding that this is a turning point in the novel. Gatsby's pretended unconcern about Nick's invitation of Daisy is completely false; the whole of the past five years has been building to this moment of reunion and all his hopes are centred on it. Candidates commented on Daisy's lack of awareness, Nick's excitement, and Gatsby's nervousness and pretended casualness, and the embarrassment of all three. Differentiation came from the focus on 'vividly', exploration of the language and dialogue, and close reading of the extract. This was the most popular question on the entire paper, and there was a wide range of performance, but in general the focus upon the passage was impressive. There was careful and effective examination of character dynamics, movement and speech, as well as the symbolism of the clock. References to the text were well-chosen and relevant. Though mixed, it was rare to read a very poor response to this question, with most recognising at least some of the ways tension is created and sustained.
- 32 This was another popular choice. Most tried to put both cases forward, but broadening the scope to include Myrtle and Jordan was usually a mistake; though the question does not insist upon it, there was clearly more mileage in focusing solely upon Gatsby's obsession with Daisy. It is the heart of the novel and its symbolism in terms of chasing the unattainable, particularly in the era the novel is set in, provides ample scope in itself to demonstrate a critical understanding of the author's concerns. Candidates considered the early days of the relationship before Gatsby goes off to war, Gatsby's dreams of a reunion with Daisy and his obsession with her, Daisy's character and marriage, and Nick's viewpoint. Balance was not required, but was usually the sign of a good answer. Less successful answers tended to be unclear what was meant by 'self-deception', and often just wrote about 'deception' or deceit in general.
- 33 Jordan might be thinking about the last meeting with Nick and Myrtle's death and its effect on her, Nick's behaviour at the time, and his relationship with Gatsby and with Daisy. Though she never seems to have expectations about Nick there will be a blow to her vanity. Jordan is usually quite jaunty and direct, but at this moment Nick says her voice is 'harsh and dry' rather than 'fresh and

cool'. This was far less popular than the other *Gatsby* questions. The relatively few candidates who attempted it understood the character, and were usually able to convey her pragmatic and slightly wounded vanity.

Stories of Ourselves

- 34 Successful answers gave at least some brief reference to the predicament that Lord Emsworth finds himself in. Differentiation came from the extent to which the wit and humour of the writing was appreciated: the arrivals of 'rough and knobby physique', the description of Donaldson as a 'Roman Emperor', the reference to the magazines of people who take correspondence courses, and so forth. Some accomplished work conveyed good understanding of how comedy works.
- 35 The key words here were 'memorably' and 'the power that one character has over another'. *The Son's Veto* proved the most popular and successful choice. What distinguished the better responses to this time being taken to try to explore the character of the son himself. The vast majority went into great detail about his mother, but the boy was left a rather faceless symbol of sheer malignancy. There was a vague understanding often that his veto of his mother's dearest desire was to maintain his own social status, but this was not explored. In particular, the hypocrisy of a Christian minister in showing such little charity whilst preaching, no doubt, about love and fellowship makes him an incredibly odious character. There are issues of class and education and obligation. The father's domination of his son in *The Fly in the Ointment* centres on the importance of money. There is the lover's power over the narrator in *The Sandpiper*. The differentiator was the definition of what is meant by power and the way in which candidates went beyond mere narrative of their chosen story to engage with the writing and with the author's purpose.
- 36 There were far too few responses to this question to make general comment appropriate.

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General comments

The majority of candidates demonstrated good knowledge of the texts they had studied and an ability to adapt that knowledge to the purposes of the question. There was much evidence that they had enjoyed their reading. As ever, the most able showed an impressive appreciation of literature and the ability to analyse language.

Most candidates knew how to construct a literary essay, focusing on the question, constructing a solid argument with several key points and development, and supporting it with good use of quotation and textual detail. One of the key messages for teachers preparing candidates for this paper remains the importance of analysing individual words and phrases if marks in Band 5 and above are to be achieved, but the majority had clearly been taught how to approach literary language, and they made good efforts to discuss the effects of the writers' language choices. Where critical literary terms are deployed, it is important that candidates can explain them. For example, many used the term 'pathetic fallacy' but some were not able to go beyond merely noting its presence, as opposed to exploring what use the writer made of it. While it may be perfectly appropriate to note sentence length, enjambment, lexical fields, and so forth, it is a fairly arid exercise if these are not related to meaning and context; fortunately, though, there was far less simple 'feature spotting' in evidence this series than previously. Some candidates seemed to think of quotations, especially for poetry questions, as fulfilling the requirement to explore language choice and its effects - which generally they do not do. A minority of candidates merely gave line references to sometimes quite lengthy passages instead of quoting, and as a result the focus of a point being made was not clear.

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Most candidates adhered to the rubric, and their scripts showed evidence of good time management.

SECTION A: DRAMA

ARTHUR MILLER: *Death of a Salesman*

- 1 In general, candidates tackled this question fairly well, though there was often a lack of attention to the dramatic nature of the scene and reluctance to imagine this in performance. Most recognised that Willy's optimism shifts throughout the passage and some were able to show that this was typical of his character through the play. There was little evident engagement with the invitation to make a personal response as this reflects the need to understand the drama.
- 2 Most candidates spent time writing about surface details of the relationship between Bernard and Biff and ignored Happy. Perceptive answers attempted to examine the way the boys were influenced by upbringing and examined Charley and Willy as fathers, tending to focus discussion on Willy and his vision of the American Dream versus Charley and the 'hard-work' approach to success.
- 3 Answers usually attempted to reflect some of the language features evident in the drama. There were plenty of 'kids' and 'oh boys' language tics used, but not necessarily by Willy in the play. Some candidates attempted to explore the psychology of Willy in some depth and this tended to produce a character full of self-loathing and remorse prepared to grovel at the feet of Howard. This did not reflect the deluded Willy of the play, however. Some candidates relied fairly heavily on the passage in Question 1, making reference to Willy's anxiety over bills and his looking forward to the meal with his sons (all this is of course relevant in context but it tended to be overused to the exclusion of other textual reference). Most presented Willy as largely confident, though a few were able to portray his fragile state of mind.

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE: *Julius Caesar*

- 4 Differentiation was expected to come from focus on the word 'strikingly', close examination of the words and images of Brutus's speech and of the dynamics of the meeting. Most candidates were able to provide an interpretation of the scene and demonstrate understanding of the concerns of the principal players and of language issues. However, there were problems with responses when candidates chose to interpret the question as an invitation to provide a character study of Brutus and ignore the other conspirators. More successful answers demonstrated an understanding of the contrast between Cassius and Brutus and their contrasting leadership styles. Few explored the word 'striking' in the question. Where the other conspirators were considered the focus was mainly on Cassius and the potential gathering tension amongst the others largely ignored.
- 5 Answers focused mainly on the relationship between Antony and Octavius ignoring Lepidus; an ironic sidelining, as this suggested something about the character of Lepidus which might have enriched responses. Some candidates concentrated almost entirely on Antony and his speech after Caesar's assassination, ignoring the later scenes and the other two members of the triumvirate.
- 6 Most candidates were successful in being able to show Calphurnia's grief and love of Caesar and made reference to her dream and sorrow at being unable to persuade Caesar to stay away from the Senate. Several candidates projected unlikely knowledge of the whole conspiracy on Calphurnia, and made reference to events that happen much later on in the play.

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE: *The Tempest*

- 7 Most candidates demonstrated a sound understanding of the passage and its context within the play. Answers tended to be descriptive and focused on plot and characterisation over close examination of language and 'powerfully dramatic'.
- 8 Very few candidates answered this question. A few answers were unable to build an argument for either of the portrayals of Gonzalo and changed their opinion half way through their argument. Most demonstrated a reasonably thorough knowledge of the character and play as a whole.
- 9 The candidates who answered this question were generally reasonably successful in producing a convincing voice for Caliban, especially regarding his relationship with Prospero and his fear of future punishment. Few candidates made reference to the events shared with Stephano and Trinculo.

OSCAR WILDE: *The Importance of Being Earnest*

- 10 Candidates commented on the surreal circumstances of Jack's early life, Lady Bracknell's mounting outrage, her withering amazement at this flouting of all social conventions and Wilde's ability to produce the most dramatically witty and memorable of lines. Most were able to identify the comedy in the absurdity of the situation and Lady Bracknell's unreasonable 'advice' for Jack to 'produce' parents. Some seemed to misread the question, or – more likely – were determined to answer a slightly different question than the one that was asked. As ever, writing about comedy or 'comic' material proved challenging for many. Those who misread the question often left this word out completely and just discussed the passage as 'memorable'. Even here, it is surely the comedy that makes it memorable, but some somehow contrived to sidestep this. More focus was needed on how Wilde uses language and tone to create this sublime comic moment. Very often candidates were determined to write about social commentary on the upper classes, but contented themselves with identifying this without discussing how Wilde made it so comical. Some were aware of the fact that Lady Bracknell's reference to the French Revolution was comic, but few showed how Wilde made this so.
- 11 Candidates showed some appreciation of the ways in which Wilde consistently turns accepted notions on their head, how he engineers surprises in the plot such as the denouement of the play and how the laughter is generated. With a wide selection of suitable passages to choose from, most candidates were fairly successful in this question. Weaker candidates tended to narrate the episodes instead of exploring Wilde's writing and the dramatic effectiveness of 'surprise'.
- 12 Candidates writing as Lady Bracknell were often not writing as Lady Bracknell on the journey the question asks about. However, there were some clearly recognisable monologues offered, and candidates were able to capture the hauteur quite successfully at times.

SECTION B: POETRY

ALFRED LORD TENNYSON: *Selected Poems*

- 13 Good answers focused on the light and energy of the extract. Weaker ones concentrated on the narrative, often with misinterpretations of the Lady's motivations (she wants to marry him; she has fallen in love etc.) and no reference to how the attractiveness of Lancelot overwhelms common sense. Some candidates seemed confused about what 'attractiveness' might entail. Answers were generally approached stanza by stanza, missing some of the imagery that recurs throughout. The weakest answers paraphrased the poem. Several candidates seemed to think that the Lady was named "Shalott" (or 'Shallot;') and did not seem to have an understanding of the poem in context. Others relied heavily on background/contextual knowledge, avoiding focus on the question and this specific extract.
- 14 Candidates who answered this question were successful in selecting suitable extracts to illustrate Tennyson's changing feelings about Hallam's death and stronger candidates were able to show how images, symbols and other poetic devices could be compared to illustrate this change. . Differentiation came from the extent of the sharpness of focus on *changing* feelings and on 'vividly' i.e. the sense of the writer at work.
- 15 There were far too few answers to this question to make general comment appropriate..

SONGS OF OURSELVES: From Part 4

- 16 This was a very popular question, with plenty of opportunity for engagement with poetic language. Many sound answers referred to aspects such as: the recurrent use of the third person plural pronoun as if to distance the planners from 'us', the syntactical variation of the two first sentences followed by rather longer ones, the contrast between the planners and the sea in lines 7-9, the imagery of cosmetic standardisation in the second stanza, the references to time and history in the later parts of the poem, the imagery of dentistry in particular, the poet's apparent approval of 'flaws', 'blemishes' and 'stain'. Most candidates were reasonably successful in using the language of the poem to show how Cheng either seemed to have an approving or disapproving attitude towards the planners. Weaker candidates demonstrated a general understanding of the poem and poetic effect, but were unable to show how this affected our interpretation of Cheng's *attitude*. A significant number were tripped up by the last stanza, not knowing how to reconcile their understanding of this section with the rest of the poem. There was also a tendency to spend too much time on contextualising the poem. As usual, however, there were candidates who clearly understood the poem but who did not explicitly answer the question, merely implying Cheng's attitude. Occasionally this was clear enough, but at times it was so unclear it was impossible to determine whether the candidate in question had fully understood the poem. Such answers were self-penalising. The best answers made something of the ending of the poem – weaker answers tended to ignore it or made personal responses which were not really secure.
- 17 Many seemed to find it difficult to discuss the relationship between man and nature whilst demonstrating an engagement with poetic language. Most candidates explained the poem stanza by stanza without engaging with the question. The more secure answers referred to the animal behaviour described in the first two stanzas, the similarity of this to the poet's behaviour in lines 9-10 and the effect of the image of the grasshopper, and the significance of the final stanza.
- 18 Few candidates managed to demonstrate what structure had contributed to poetic intention. Where they did write about it the responses tended to be arid descriptions of the way sonnet form worked ('The first part of the poem is the octet ... the second part is... the rhyme scheme is ... it makes the poem flow...') Most ignored the effect of the poem on readers. Many candidates who attempted this question simply hoped to get by writing the words 'sonnet form' over and over again in an attempt to convince the Examiner that they were answering the question. While most candidates seemed aware of the form of a sonnet, few were able to show how this had any bearing on the reader's experience of the poem. A few strong answers on *The Cockroach* considered the form as a vehicle for conveying a reflective and self-reflective quality of the poem's thought, showing how detailed description of the insect's behaviour and the developing speculation about the causes of this behaviour from line 8 onwards subverts the traditional sonnet forms, and considering how the use of caesura in the last four lines sharpens the impact of the final line.

SECTION C: PROSE

EMILY BRONTE: *Wuthering Heights*

- 19 Stronger answers focused on the text and the language of the text to demonstrate character understanding. Weaker answers used the passage as a springboard to describe the whole narrative.
- 20 Candidates were able to explain what Nelly Dean contributed to the narrative, but only the strongest explored the challenges of her character: the language she uses; her relationship with characters; her relationship with readers.
- 21 There were some successful empathic assumptions of Edgar Linton facing his death in despair.

TSITSI DANGAREMBGA: *Nervous Conditions*

- 22 Differentiation came from the detail in which the language is explored (with comment on such terms as 'piccannin') and from the understanding of viewpoint; the episode is being observed by the narrator as a young child. Most candidates could write with some detail and understanding. There was a good knowledge of themes and events in evidence. Candidates had obviously enjoyed the book and identified with it.

- 23 Candidates found Lucia an interesting character, and in general had been well prepared in discussing her. They usually commented on the way she dominates Takesure at the dare, her directness and fiery honesty and the way she follows her appetites were seen as admirable in some.
- 24 Candidates who tackled this seemed to enjoy writing from the viewpoint of Nyasha, giving her a clear and opinionated voice. There was evidence of appreciation of her feelings of alienation and isolation.

ANITA DESAI: *Fasting, Feasting*

- 25 There was evidence of enjoyment and understanding of the text, and answers provided interesting insight into plot and character. This was a long passage and candidates tended to focus on broad themes within the narrative and how they were revealed in the passage, e.g. Uma's bid for spiritual and actual freedom; Aruna's general discontent. They generally did this well and gave evidence of clear understanding, but not necessarily *critical* understanding. There was plenty of language detail to focus on here but this was not pursued by many. Some candidates focused on the second part of the passage (the incident with Uma's near drowning) and concentrated discussion on what the passage revealed about Uma's character, rather than Aruna's visit as a whole. Other candidates produced a character sketch of Aruna and emphasised her desire to 'achieve perfection'.
- 26 This was well handled by many, although there were some answers which worked to a formula, providing 'this is India, this is America' –type responses with no real comparison. More effective answers were able to provide insightful responses to cultural differences often revealing perceptive similarities in aspects of family life. Weaker answers digressed into (personal) discussions about preference for one culture over the other, often making reference to the candidate's own general knowledge that was not always presented in or relevant to the novel.
- 27 Most candidates were able to make a reasonable attempt at a convincing voice for Mrs Patton, showing her genuine affection for Arun and dissatisfaction with her own family life, usually giving her a slightly nervous, hesitant and sometimes sad voice.

KIRAN DESAI: *Hullabaloo in the Guava Orchard*

- 28 The extract moves from Sampath's characteristic day dreams, to mounting joy and ecstasy, to the felt need to share this exquisite world with the assembled company by communicating unbridled joy, a joy which, of course, is certainly not shared by the shocked onlookers. Candidates were generally able to identify, through the writing, what made this amusing. There were some interesting responses to this. Some got to grips with language and effects; others merely listed all the 'amusing' things that Sampath, the squealing ladies and Mr D.P.S did. A small number of struggled to see the incident as at all amusing because it was perceived to be a shameful and disrespectful act especially as it took place at a wedding. They found it difficult to detach from this viewpoint to write about Desai's methods.
- 29 Candidates tended to focus on narrative issues here such as Sampath's knowledge about the letters and Mr Chawla's needs to make money. They seemed aware that there was satire in the novel but they struggled to express clearly how Desai was presenting it. There was generally quite a lot of relevant narrative of incident or reference to relevant action, but little or no developed response as to how Desai was using this to make fun of the way people behave towards gurus and holy men. At times the narrative became little more than just this, a self-penalising approach.
- 30 There were some very funny, outraged self-absorbed empathic responses here which revealed good understanding of the aggressive energy of Pinky's character.

F SCOTT FITZGERALD: *The Great Gatsby*

- 31 Differentiation came from the detail in which the language was examined and the viewpoint considered. Many candidates were able to focus on Fitzgerald's writing and used the passage to provide clear evidence that they understood how he had crafted this character. Some weaker candidates still wanted to provide extensive narrative overview which missed the potential for marks.

- 32 It was expected that answers would consider the narrative voice and the extent to which Nick's perspective shapes his relationship with Gatsby and the nature of his relationship with Daisy, his comments on the other people who inhabit Gatsby's world. Candidates needed to define 'honesty' within the context of the novel, their understanding as readers and within the context of the novel to answer the question well. Many candidates chose to focus on surface details of Nick's lifestyle and then 'stick' the notion of honesty on to it without having suggested what the qualities of honesty might be in the first place. To be answered fully, the question requires a personal response as only the reader can really judge Nick's honesty. Many answers tended to describe narrative moments which did not get to the heart of the question.
- 33 Many candidates got narrative details wrong. Some had Daisy knowing who Myrtle was, or had Gatsby driving the car when it hit Myrtle. There was some echo of a voice for Daisy but very few managed to sustain it. Answers to this question tended to err on the side of melodrama, with Daisy seemingly quite hysterical in some answers. Few were successful in demonstrating knowledge of the context of Daisy's thoughts, although most tried to show her conflicting feelings about both Gatsby and Tom. Some referred back to the argument with Tom as a flashback, others focused only on the accident. Apart from Daisy's panic, fear, and speed, the voice was not strong, with some confusion about what she actually feels about Gatsby and how far she is planning her future while driving after the crash, giving Daisy more logic and serious intelligence than she perhaps has.

from *Stories of Ourselves*

- 34 This question gave candidates considerable opportunity to explore language and effect and candidates were generally reasonably successful in accomplishing this, and there was plenty of evidence of strong personal engagement with the extract. A few seemed confused by 'disturbing', interpreting it as 'disrupting' rather than 'troubling'. Some digressed from the passage into a prolonged and unnecessary explanation of the story's post-war-time context.
- 35 Candidates needed to focus on sympathy (which could also extend to empathy) and develop an argument. Vital considerations were the way the mother is bullied by her son and the way in which Sam is despised by the son and fobbed off by the mother. Some candidates assumed that the need for sympathy would be understood from the details of the story alone and merely gave a narrative outline. A number of candidates did not mention Sam in any way. More successful candidates recognised the cumulative effect of Sophy and Sam's tragedy on the reader's sympathy and the strongest answers showed how Hardy's writing prompted a sympathetic response.
- 36 In general, this was the best done of the empathic questions on this paper, with candidates often willing and able to supply small textual details from the story as they recalled the first ball. Leila's voice is quite distinctive and candidates found it reasonably easy to get somewhere near it in their monologues. The best answers were able to offer a range of thoughts, feelings and reactions to the events she had experienced.

LITERATURE (ENGLISH)

Paper 2010/13

Paper 13

Key messages

The following are necessary for success on this component:

- showing evidence of a detailed knowledge of the whole text
- ensuring that the answer is relevant to the question
- maintaining a focus on the extract in the passage-based questions, considering particularly the language of the extract
- using a well-structured and developed argument
- supporting in detail, by means of well-chosen quotation or close echoes of the text.

General comments

The majority of candidates demonstrated good knowledge of the texts they had studied and an ability to adapt that knowledge to the purposes of the question. There was much evidence that they had enjoyed their reading. As ever, the most able showed an impressive appreciation of literature and the ability to analyse language.

Most candidates knew how to construct a literary essay, focusing on the question, constructing a solid argument with several key points and development, and supporting it with good use of quotation and textual detail. One of the key messages for teachers preparing candidates for this paper remains the importance of analysing individual words and phrases if marks in Band 5 and above are to be achieved, but the majority had clearly been taught how to approach literary language, and they made good efforts to discuss the effects of the writers' language choices. Where critical literary terms are deployed, it is important that candidates can explain them. For example, many used the term 'pathetic fallacy' but some were not able to go beyond merely noting its presence, as opposed to exploring what use the writer made of it. While it may be perfectly appropriate to note sentence length, enjambment, lexical fields, and so forth, it is a fairly arid exercise if these are not related to meaning and context; fortunately, though, there was far less simple 'feature spotting' in evidence this series than previously. Some candidates seemed to think of quotations, especially for poetry questions, as fulfilling the requirement to explore language choice and its effects - which generally they do not do. A minority of candidates merely gave line references to sometimes quite lengthy passages instead of quoting, and as a result the focus of a point being made was not clear.

Another key message is the importance of maintaining focus on the question. Candidates who lost sight of the key theme, or, in passage-based questions, the passage itself, struggled to develop a response sufficient for the higher bands if central ideas or sections of the passage were missed.

Candidates should be reminded that passage-based questions require more than narrative run-throughs. The whole of the extract is important, and it has been selected to offer candidates the optimum opportunity for discussion. Although there is not necessarily a specific requirement to contextualise the passage, it is more often than not useful to give at least some indication of the circumstances surrounding it. Prompts such as 'dramatic', 'moving', 'powerful' are specifically intended to draw out a personal response and if they are ignored the answer will not demonstrate the engagement that is crucial for achieving the top Bands, no matter how competent the understanding of situation.

A significant number of candidates tried to apply a formulaic approach to all responses, evidenced by pencilled acronyms/mnemonics they wrote on the answer booklet. While this was a useful memory jogger for some, it could cause a problem, particularly with passage-based questions, when it led to extremely

disjointed answers that ignored what was actually happening in the extract and tried to force the response mechanically into separate paragraphs on subject, form, language, purpose etc. By contrast, the best answers were those that integrated all these effectively to produce a developed, focused and coherent response.

Candidates were usually disadvantaged when they wrote lengthy drafts, often as long as, and identical to, the answer itself.

There were fewer attempts at empathic questions this series, but most who tackled them knew the importance of writing 'in character' and trying to capture particular mannerisms and turns of phrase. For success it was, of course, essential to have identified precisely the moment specified in the question.

Most candidates adhered to the rubric, and their scripts showed evidence of good time management.

SECTION A: DRAMA

ARTHUR MILLER: *Death of a Salesman*

- 1 This was by far the most popular question on this text. There were some perceptive responses to the dramatic impact of this self-contained flashback. Candidates were well prepared for the topic and had no difficulty with the words 'illusions' and 'reality'. Most explored in some convincing detail Willy's central speech about 'the man who creates personal interest, is the man who gets ahead'. The delusions of the Loman father and sons were often effectively contrasted with the young Bernard's more sober grip on reality, a world in which you study and work hard in order to succeed. Stronger responses were able to place this flashback in the context of a present in which Bernard was the one who was successful.
- 2 This was a much less popular question than the passage-based text. The few responses seen were largely character sketches, pointing out the importance of Charley's financial assistance to Willy, and were able to offer a few direct quotations. These responses did not deal adequately with Miller's use of this character as a contrast to Willy, and tended to forget the key words of the question 'dramatic contribution'. There was little evidence to suggest that candidates were responding to a play, intended for performance. Most referred to the 'book'.
- 3 Again, there were very few responses. They captured something of the moment specified in the question (after Willy has left Howard Wagner's office) and Willy's predicament, but the voices for Howard were rarely convincing.

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE: *Julius Caesar*

- 4 Focus on 'powerful' and commentary on the emotionalism of Brutus and the ambiguity of Antony's speeches was a key differentiator. Candidates tended to focus on Antony but there was some confusion as to whether he was joining the conspirators or not. Very few answers explored the word choice in this richly emotive passage, though supporting quotations were offered. The 'powerful' element of the question was not well served without exploration of language.
- 5 Some candidates interpreted 'unreasonable' as meaning 'had no reason for doing something.' A few also saw 'vain' in the sense of 'in vain', which skewed their approach. A large majority of candidates dealt with this question solely on the basis of Act 3, or Acts 1-3. Very few saw that Acts 4 and 5 provided useful material. Thus their answers tended to be focused on Brutus's role in the assassination and the 'unjustified murder' of his great friend, which limited their approach. Some did grasp the significance of Cassius's influence, but not of the Brutus-Cassius falling-out in Act 4.
- 6 There were far too few answers to this question to make general comment appropriate.

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE: *The Tempest*

- 7, 8, 9 There were far too few answers on this text to make general comment appropriate.

OSCAR WILDE: *The Importance of Being Earnest*

- 10 Many of the responses clearly found this extract, in the words of the question, ‘delightfully’. Some simply catalogued the lines they found amusing, often with lengthy quotation. The topsy-turvy nature of Wilde’s aphorisms was discussed in better answers, sometimes with a degree of originality. Most had, for example, something worthwhile to say about Gwendolen’s ‘In matters of grave importance, style, not sincerity, is the vital thing’. The stronger responses explored convincingly the effects of the stylised language and structure of the extract, and the melodramatic actions indicated in the stage directions. A few responses took matters very literally, without any appreciation of Wilde’s sense of the absurd.
- 11 There were far too few answers to this question to make general comment appropriate.
- 12 The majority of candidates tackling this task showed a clear engagement with the humour of the play. Their responses usually gamely attempted the voice of Miss Prism, conveying her surprise at the turn of events towards the end of the play. Most were able to include echoes from the text, alluding to capacious handbags, railway termini and three volume novels. Some explored entertainingly her affections for Dr Chasuble.

SECTION B: POETRY

ALFRED, LORD TENNYSON: *Selected Poems*

- 13 There was a general ignorance of the context and hence the significance of tone and mood. Quite a number of answers seem to have been approached as ‘unseens’. ‘Moving’ tended to be a term thrown in randomly but not demonstrated. In better answers, differentiation came from the extent to which candidates focused on the word ‘moving’ and saw the poignancy of this final section in coming to terms at last with the death of Hallam. Response to the last two-and-a-half lines was important to this.
- 14,15 There were far too few answers to this question to make general comment appropriate.

SONGS OF OURSELVES: *From Part 4*

- 16 Some responses attempted a paraphrase of the poem but found difficult the two rhetorical questions at the beginning of the second stanza which take readers to the core of the poem: ‘Which language / has not been the oppressor’s tongue? / Which language / truly meant to murder someone?’ Some candidates understood the poem perfectly but, again, did not fully consider the strongly emotive language shift between stanzas, and the effects of language in the second stanza. The best answers realized that the tone of the poem is crucial and considered the link between the title of the poem and the last few lines.
- 17 In general, those who attempted this question were at least able to deal with the broad outline of the poem, with the speaker awake at night time. Stronger responses embarked on a closer exploration of language relating to the moon and clouds, and the vividness of the descriptions.
- 18 There were far too few responses to this question to make general comment appropriate.

SECTION C: PROSE

EMILY BRONTE: *Wuthering Heights*

- 19, 20, 21 There were far too few responses to this text to make general comment appropriate.

TSITSI DANGAREMBGA: *Nervous Conditions*

- 22, 23, 24 There were far too few responses to this text to make general comment appropriate.

ANITA DESAI: *Fasting, Feasting*

- 25, 26, 27 There were far too few responses to this text to make general comment appropriate.

KIRAN DESAI: *Hullabaloo in the Guava Orchard*

28, 29, 30 There were far too few responses to this text to make general comment appropriate.

F. SCOTT FITZGERALD: *The Great Gatsby*

- 31** This was the most popular question on this text, and many candidates made at least some reasonably developed response to the detail of the extract and to the key word of the question 'disturbing'. Most captured the oppressiveness of the alcohol-filled moment, with Nick unable to get away. Some wrote persuasively about the disturbing nature of the values captured by Fitzgerald here: the adultery, and the shallowness and materialism evident in Myrtle's list: 'A massage and a wave, and a collar for the dog, and one of those cute little ash-trays...' There were strong personal responses to the extract's one-sentence paragraph in which the most disturbing action, Tom's breaking Myrtle's nose, is described with a shocking abruptness. Some outrage was expressed at the dog being forced to sit in the smoke-filled room.
- 32** Far fewer responses were seen to this than to Question 31, and they were less effective – probably because candidates wanted to write either character sketches of both Gatsby and Nick or a response to an essay that had not been set: Nick as 'unreliable narrator'. Differentiation came from the degree to which the answer went beyond a character sketch of Nick to see him solely from Gatsby's point of view and also the consideration of the narrative voice here and the reliability of Nick's presentation.
- 33** There were some genuine attempts to capture Daisy's voice, and the best answers had her wrapped up in her thoughts which ended mid-sentence at the collision. Some gave Daisy more depth of thought and guilty conscience than most would; no-one suggested that Daisy might not care about the bootlegging, but several picked up that her social status was now at stake. The least convincing responses lacked a detailed grasp of the moment and what had led up to it. Some tried to wrench the moment towards an 'as live' account of Myrtle being knocked over ('Oh my God!') and there was some unhelpfully anachronistic language here ('Gatsby, you scumbag...').

from ***Stories of Ourselves***

- 34** Some dealt well with the detail of this question, offering apt quotations to support points made. For others it seemed to be approached as an 'unseen', as there was confusion as to the identity of the two men in the last paragraph, and even to Randolph's (the father's) relationship with Sophy (his daughter). 'How does Hardy make you feel' provoked some unusual, and very personal replies, but generally indignation and anger predominated. There was some misreading, for example that Randolph was full of remorse in the final paragraph.
- 35** Candidates went beyond narrative to focus on significant detail and explore the language of the stories. In weaker answers, 'significant experience' was not always clearly identified and there was a tendency to a narrative approach, as well as overlooking the question's key word 'memorable'.
- 36** There were far too few responses to this question to make general comment appropriate.