

LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

Paper 2010/12

Paper 12

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

Most candidates appeared to have been well prepared for the examination; knowledge of the texts was generally good, and most knew how to structure their answers and showed evidence of planning. Most candidates made appropriate question choices, though weaker candidates sometimes chose empathic questions that enabled them to show some knowledge and understanding, but not in a reasonably appropriate voice. When such candidates attempted a passage-based or essay question, they often fared better than in the empathic questions.

There were relatively few examples of rubric infringements and of the 'final answer syndrome', where it is obvious that time has run out and the final answer is much briefer and sketchier than the previous ones. In a few cases, candidates had written very lengthy plans, crossed them out and written almost identical final drafts. This is a waste of time in examination conditions and should be discouraged.

Overall there seemed to be a general understanding of meaning / ideas in the texts and a largely conscientious response to questions (even those responding in simple narrative); but only the most successful answers engaged with the language on a deeper level.

In general candidates used their knowledge of the texts judiciously, constructed convincing arguments, and illustrated them with apt quotations. The most successful went on to explore in detail the effects of language and imagery, and showed awareness of the authors' intentions. The best answers showed a close engagement with the texts and a real enjoyment of the books studied.

The point must be made that the words 'How' and 'In what ways' and 'explore' are specific indicators to candidates that more than narrative is required; that the main consideration is writer's method, and that the reinforcing words like 'memorably', 'vividly', 'strikingly' are also directed to consideration of the use of language. It is strongly recommended that teachers should make learners aware of the importance of these terms, and of the necessity to use them as the focus of their responses. Similarly the word 'significant' is one that candidates need to be familiar with, since it directs them to consideration of the function of a particular aspect of the text.

Lack of consideration of these words was particularly evident in some of the poetry answers. Whereas some candidates responded with enthusiasm and critical awareness to the poems selected, others seemed somewhat at sea and had difficulty in articulating anything beyond rough 'translations' or paraphrases of the poems. Sometimes they showed an awareness that they needed to explore the effect of language, but they did this by means of general personal responses such as describing how watching a sunrise in the early

morning made them feel, rather than by examining the way in which Wordsworth conveys this through words and imagery in *on Westminster Bridge*. It was good to see that there was less 'spotting' and no particularly 'fashionable' critical term this session, but there was a continuing tendency for the words 'positive' and 'negative' to be used instead of words which identify effects precisely.

Similarly there was a lack of really close reading of the extracts in some weaker answers to the passage-based questions. Every session the Principal Examiner's Report comments on the necessity for candidates to give more than narrative run-throughs and to look analytically at the language used. Furthermore, the whole of the extract is important; it has been selected to offer candidates the optimum opportunity for the discussion. Though there is not usually 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, and it is easy to detect a lack of knowledge of the whole text.

Empathic questions generated some of the higher-scoring responses, with several assuming a credible voice; that said, some responses in this category produced narrowly focused answers, often ignoring broader aspects of the character or their significance in the play / novel. Most candidates knew the importance of writing 'in character' and trying to capture particular mannerisms and turns of phrase. It was, of course, essential to identify precisely the moment specified in the question.

In the past, it has been commented that the sense of drama is underdeveloped in responses to the plays on the papers and this continues to be a concern. For example, the best answers to questions on *Julius Caesar* showed an understanding of the visual qualities of the scene, and of the dynamics between the characters, as well as responding to changes in tone and mood. Weaker answers merely gave run-throughs of the passages.

Though it is appreciated that not all candidates will be able to see plays in production, the acting of scenes in class is an important tool in developing this sense. Too often candidates refer to plays as 'books', revealing that they see them only as words on a page.

There was some poorly presented work this session, thankfully a minority, with handwriting that was very difficult to decipher. Candidates do themselves a disservice if they do not take pride in their work, and chaotic presentation often reflects a lack of coherence in the answer.

There follow notes on all the texts indicating some of the ideas that candidates might have used in their answers. They are not intended to be seen as templates for perfect answers; any relevant ideas that were supported from the text were credited. There are also indications of what candidates did particularly well and areas in which they were not quite so successful.

SECTION A: DRAMA

Death of a Salesman

Question 1

This was a very popular text and question. In the passage Happy is clearly at his most unpleasant. He is a blatant liar in everything he says, relishes his capacity to make people believe his lies, sees women as pitiable objects to be seduced and then argues that that is the reason why he has never married, without thinking that there is a possibility that some women understand him all too well. The question invited a strong personal response and many candidates offered very critical opinions, particularly about his treatment of Miss Forsythe as a 'piece of meat' whom he is quite ready to pass over to his brother. Some were able to find it in their hearts to sympathise with him, seeing his behaviour as another form of attention-seeking because he has always been made to feel inferior to his brother. The most able candidates linked Happy's behaviour back to Willy's own values, his unfaithfulness, and his shallow appreciation of the world. Weaker answers tended to see only the surface meaning of the passage and thought he was quite charming in his flirtatiousness. Knowledge of context was clearly an advantage.

Question 2

There was a wide range of choice for this question but the key point was the dramatic effect of the time shifts and, though most candidates were able to identify apt instances, they often merely narrated them rather than focusing on the way in which the past illuminates the present. The most able showed that they understood the significance of these moments to explore Willy's past, to raise tension, to provoke pathos for Willy, and to show the extent of his mental disintegration.

Question 3

Biff is likely to be thinking about his present unsatisfactory life, and his lack of vision for the future. His confidence about the interview with Bill Oliver will be offset by his uncertainty as to whether he really was the life of a businessman. Willy's expectations of him may provoke feelings of disgust. Most candidates knew the context and understood Biff's feelings very well. There were some very competent assumptions of his voice.

Julius Caesar

Question 4

The key words in the question were 'a dramatic and significant moment in the play', so more than a mere run-through of the extract was required. Good answers commented on the fickleness and potential violence of the plebeians, who are easily won over by Brutus, on Brutus's self-justification and the manner of it, and on the entry of Antony and the implications of leaving Antony alone with the plebeians. The best answers explored Brutus's oratory in detail, showing what it reveals of his character. Candidates often gave a narrative response, with considerable re-telling of events and explaining of meaning, and little awareness of context. Many candidates understood the skills of Brutus as an orator and explored his language with confidence. They also understood the political sensitivity of the situation and the fickleness of the crowd. Many also made the point that allowing Mark Anthony to speak was a mistake, and that that this made the extract even more significant since it was the beginning of Brutus's downfall. There was some confusion about whether or not Brutus had deliberately killed Caesar for his own ends or whether he had been tricked. Some candidates suggested that Brutus was deliberately lying to the crowd as he had killed Caesar in order to gain the crown himself.

Question 5

'To what extent' was a key consideration in examining sympathy for Cassius, and candidates tended to begin by feeling contempt for him but came to feel more sympathy as the play progresses. Their perceptions of his character covered his jealousy of Caesar, his flattery of Brutus, without whom he is unable to raise support, and on the other hand his success as a soldier, generally respected except by Caesar and Antony. Issues under consideration were his part in the conspiracy, his treatment by Brutus before Philippi, and the manner of his death. Some candidates did not engage with Cassius on a human level and merely saw him as a pantomime villain. Many acknowledged that his character had changed and that there was more sympathy with him towards the end of the play, but they were unable to truly communicate how and why.

Question 6

There were some very competent assumptions of the character of Brutus, showing his appreciation of the nobility and courage of his wife, and of the strength of their bond. They tended to focus on his sense of honour and his fear of the outcome of the conspiracy. Many smoothly integrated echoes of the text into their answers. Weaker answers tended to pour out plenty of emotion but did not refer in detail to what has happened in the meeting with the conspirators.

The Tempest

Question 7

The extract (Act III Scene ii) develops the blossoming attempt by Caliban to persuade his fellow-drinkers to plot against and overthrow Prospero, and is comic in the way in which the drunken Stephano and Trinculo attempt to be effective. Caliban's descriptions of Prospero and Miranda are compelling; he obviously has some understanding of the sources of Prospero's power. The 'isle is full of noises' speech reveals his character as more complex than it might have at first appeared. The way that the conspirators are led on by Ariel's music contributes to the dramatic power of the scene, as Ariel is going to tell Prospero of their plans. The key words were 'dramatic' and 'amusing', and successful answers focused sharply on them and developed arguments. Many candidates understood the humour in it; that there was comic relief after a previously tense scene, and that Caliban was comic and foolish. Unfortunately they did not engage with the language to any great extent, and there was little reference to the brutality of Caliban's threats.

Question 8

Central points were Caliban's truculent and resentful reaction to Prospero's physical punishments, the fact that he regards himself as having been robbed of his birthright by Prospero. Candidates might also have referred to his attempts to involve others in his plots against Prospero's power. In fact there were some excellent answers which confidently debated the previously kind treatment of Prospero and his cruel treatment of Caliban. Many saw the injustice of what had happened and discussed how Shakespeare created this sense of injustice. Those who referred closely and in detail to Caliban's language achieved high marks, though some weaker candidate referred only to the extract for **Question 7** and thus limited their achievement significantly. A number of candidates wrote about *their feelings about Caliban*, rather than Caliban's feelings. Many simply described Caliban's feelings or responded to the character in a very basic way.

Question 9

Miranda has come a long way emotionally in a very short time. She has met and fallen in love with the third man she has ever seen. She has learned a great deal about her background and early history in her conversation with her father. Her love for Ferdinand seems all consuming as she declares she would also happily be his servant. She is likely to be glad and relieved that her prospective father-in-law is as happy to bless the union as her own father, and she is likely to show some bewilderment at the pace of events. Many candidates embarked on this task enthusiastically but success was dependent on achieving the compassionate serenity of her voice, often through the integration of some of her actual words.

The Importance of Being Earnest

Question 10

This text was not widely studied, but those who offered it responded very enthusiastically to it and there were some very good answers. The opening of the play immediately introduces the audience to the witty banter which is common to most of the play's characters - characters who set about turning the accepted norms upside down - and the most successful answers explored this idea of reversal and inversion with gusto. They also commented on the conflict between the characters and the plot development which is being set up. There were several candidates who thought Lane was a woman. A number of broadly narrative responses went a good way beyond the given extract in discussing the opening of the play.

Question 11

Cecily is a lively girl, who has been isolated in the country from the much more exciting world of London. Miss Prism is a stern, earnest and humourless spinster with no contact to a girl's world and aspirations. She behaves rather like a gaoler and so at the first opportunity Cecily rebels. The question is why this is so funny, and unless answers were able to discuss the dialogue in some detail and to move beyond narrative they were unlikely to be successful. Several responses focused principally or even exclusively on Miss Prism's relationship with Dr Chasuble, ignoring Cecily almost totally.

Question 12

Algernon 'loves scrapes'. He is likely to be thinking that here is the ideal opportunity for a scrape. He has been intrigued for a long time by the mysteries surrounding his friend's life, and now is the opportunity to solve the mystery and to have some fun at Jack's expense. There were some extremely convincing and lively assumptions of the character of Algernon; many candidates appeared to find it easy to get into his voice. Most managed to say something that showed some level of understanding / knowledge of Algernon's character. The best captured his mischievous scheming, whilst the weaker ones were overly plot-based.

SECTION B: POETRY

There are many ways of interpreting a poem, and any ideas that could be supported were credited. Answers which explored the imagery and show sensitivity to the music of the poetry were very successful, but those that merely explained or narrated the content of the poem rarely achieved a mark higher than Band 5.

Alfred, Lord Tennyson: *Selected Poems*

This text was only offered by a few Centres, but candidates seemed to enjoy the poems, probably because of their strong narrative elements and their musical quality.

Question 13

The key word in the questions was 'admire', and so straightforward character sketches did not attract high marks. Ulysses has prepared for the final journey; he has put his house in order with Telemachus and seems to be content to hand over the reins of power to his son. This may be seen as courageous and sensible or as defeatist. He is encouraging his old friends and compatriots to make the most of their last days with him, and is courageous in refusing to succumb to old age. He insists on pressing onwards into the unknown, though he accepts the inevitability of death. Good answers responded well to the tone of the poem and explored the imagery in some detail. Weaker answers did not seem to fully understand the character or Tennyson's purpose.

Question 14

Elements for consideration were the curse, the entrapment and loneliness of the Lady, her willingness to sacrifice herself for love, Sir Lancelot, and the fantasy background (the mediaeval castle, knights in armour). Good answers went beyond narrative, and considered the way the language and imagery and the form of the poem all contribute to the effect. Weak answers merely told the story.

Question 15

This is the final section of the poem and has a sense of completion about it. The mood has changed from grief and despair to one of hope and optimism, though there are still tinges of sadness. The imagery is full of light and colour, and there is a sense of new life in nature which is reflected in the poet ('in my breast Spring wakens too'). The strong rhymes give a sense of uplift. The discriminator was the strength of response to 'moving', and the details in which the language was explored, not merely explained.

Songs Of Ourselves: from Part 4

Question 16

This question was perhaps the most popular on the whole paper. Answers ranged across all levels, but almost all understood the poem and the poet's feelings about what bliss it was to be alive, and attempted to communicate this very positively. It was, however, an easy poem to 'parrot', and many answers were deceptive, in that they seemed good but actually consisted only of choosing a great many lines and paraphrasing what they said. There were innumerable blue skies and gentle clouds. 'Calm' and 'wonder' appeared over-frequently, without a clear understanding of *how* they had been created. Answers therefore tended to be descriptive rather than analytical. Candidates might have commented on the lack of activity in the poem and identified specific features of the diction of the poem which support this, e.g. 'silent', 'smokeless', 'calm', 'still'. They might have commented on the use of repetition, e.g. of 'Never', on the contrast between human inactivity and the ongoing processes of nature, and on the rhythm and form of the sonnet, and how it contributes to the creation of this sense of calm and wonder. However not many answers showed a secure understanding of what a sonnet is. There was a good deal of misreading of the line referring to 'valley, rock, or hill', which many seemed to think meant that these natural features existed in the middle of London. The main problem was a lack of analysis of the words. Many candidates took a line by line approach, offering a sort of paraphrase or explanation and even sometimes inventing a scenario, for example, "Earth has not anything to show more fair" The world is full of beautiful gardens but Wordsworth does not find any of them as appealing as to his view which shows that he was in awe.' (sic.). There was, however, feature-spotting, e.g. 'there is personification', but without any development. There was some confusion about when the poem was written and suggestions that it was calm because there were no cars, and some candidates seemed not to realise that the poem is about London.

Question 17

Key words in this question were 'the power of nature'. In *Hunting Snake* candidates might have commented on the contrast between the language used to describe the humans out for a gentle walk and the more intense language to describe the appearance and activity of the snake, and on the effect of the snake on them. *Pike* apparently offered more explicit references to power because of the violence and malevolence of the creature, and it produced some extremely good answers. Candidates seemed to engage powerfully with the power of nature in the two animals, with strong descriptions of movement and, of course, grins and jaws. Answers were focused and used language creatively to communicate feelings, candidates often writing at length. Weaker answers showed a working knowledge of the chosen poem but they did not relate it to the 'power' of nature, instead discussing in general terms what it told them about nature.

Question 18

The sustained use of simile by Rossetti and the ways in which Hopkins uses compound words to create images of pined beauty were central here. It was a fairly open question, but answers required more than mere listing of appropriate words and images. Analysis was the key to success and focus on the effect created on tone and mood. A number of otherwise competent candidates provided unnecessary biographical details for both poets and, while picking up one or two marks for knowledge, lost focus on the poems and the marks they might have gained by exploring the language more closely.

SECTION C: PROSE

Wuthering Heights

This text was offered by only a few Centres, so comments are by necessity limited.

Question 19

A number of things might be thought to point to a changed relationship. Heathcliff and Cathy no longer seem to value and share the same things. Catherine wants civilised conversation which Heathcliff cannot provide. He is a farm labourer, she is a lady, and therefore much drawn to Edgar Linton's world as is made clear through the passage. Almost all candidates understood Heathcliff's feelings and the changes in Catherine, but there were many intrusive paragraphs about what happened elsewhere in the novel.

Question 20

The key word in this question is 'compelling'. Heathcliff is larger than life in everything. He is a man of huge energy, consuming passions, violent rages and the capacity for vengeance and at times titanic imagination. Although there were some valiant efforts to engage with 'compelling', engaging with two sides of Heathcliff's character, there were whole chunks of writing describing his childhood and early years.

Question 21

Edgar Linton is besotted, as Nelly Dean observes. He will be thinking about the vibrant personality of this young woman who lives with an intensity which he finds overwhelming, disconcerting, but utterly beguiling. He might also be thinking with self-satisfaction about how he can offer Catherine the life of a lady, and how he is just the man to 'civilise' further this still rather wild creature. Most candidates knew the context of the question, but quite a few did not understand Edgar's state of mind, not quite capturing his mixed feelings about what had happened. The best answers picked this up and explored it well.

Nervous Conditions

This was a very popular text and candidates had clearly derived a good deal of enjoyment from it.

Question 22

Lucia has just overheard herself accused of witchcraft by Takesure at the *dare*, and her impulsive and passionate personality mean that she cannot hold back from action. The monolith of male dominance is subverted by Lucia's directness. The men are having to take notice of her. She offers a role model to Tambu and the other women. Good answers commented on the slapstick elements of her assault, and explored the manner in which her treatment of Takesure and his helpless submission to her physical force are described. Some noticed that even the patriarchy smiles at these events. Candidates understood the politics of gender equality and used the term patriarch / patriarchal confidently. The more able were also capable of seeing that Lucia's behaviour was the beginning of emancipation for some of the other female characters. However, there was little engagement with the language or understanding of the humour in the passage. Candidates struggled to show how Babamukuru's power was thwarted and to comment on his reaction. Candidates did not address the strength of personality that Lucia would have to exhibit in order to break into this patriarchal conference. Nor did they comment on her adopting masculine attitudes and resorting to violence.

Question 23

The relationship between Babamukuru and his wife is quite complex. Both have experience of different cultures, and Maiguru on her return from England seems to have made a conscious decision to subordinate her own views to Babamukuru's patriarchal status. For much of the novel, she only infrequently attempts to make him change his mind and uses a good deal of baby talk in trying to keep him sweet. He clearly requires her to have the last word, and seems unwilling or unable to change. Maiguru is clearly frustrated that her educational qualifications count for nothing beside his, and that he takes all her salary. Maiguru's five day visit to her brother seems to mark a change in the balance of power. The relationship is presented through the narrator's description of it, together with their daughter Nyasha's comments. Some candidates misunderstood the relationship between Maiguru and Babamukuru and suggested that it was one of love, and that Maiguru was happy to look after Babamukuru and content not to work.

Question 24

Mr Matimba appears to have recognised some potential in Tambu and has given her a chance to realise it by the attempt to sell mealies. He receives ten pounds from Doris, having had to convince her that he was not exploiting Tambu as child labour. In order to do this, he has had to play a role as a subservient and ingratiating black man to this old white woman, which, given his behaviour elsewhere, is unlikely to have been a pleasure for him. He may well be thinking now that this trip was worthwhile. He has clearly given thought to how to dispose of the money. He may well be anticipating some resistance to his plans from Tambu's parents, but will be determined that the money made will be put to good use towards Tambu's education. This was well answered on the whole, with good understanding and good knowledge of the text, including suitable condemnation of Tambu's parents and brother. It was interesting that little was made of the encounter with Doris. Tambu's ambitions and calibre were given due attention.

Fasting, Feasting

Question 25

Arun is suffering physical discomfort and has almost had an accident. He is also suffering mental discomfort, as he does not understand the family dynamics. 'Arun knows when to leave a family scene'. He does not fit in with the American way of life, he is revolted by the meat-eating, and he is bemused by Melanie and Rod. Good answers commented on the violence of 'the seeping blood of whatever carcass Mr Patton has chosen...', and the irony of 'one can not tell what is more dangerous in this country, the pursuit of health or of sickness'. There was clearly a sense of engagement with Arun and his feelings of isolation. Candidates explored both his physical and his emotional discomfort, and commented closely on how Desai had crafted this.

Question 26

Melanie is truculent, bad mannered, and uncommunicative. She lacks a meaningful relationship with her parents and they are apparently unconcerned - particularly her father. She is bulimic. This question was answered less well than the others on this text. Little sympathy or understanding was felt for Melanie; most candidates considered her to be rude and aggressive, but had little understanding of bulimia or Desai's critique of some American values.

Question 27

Dr Dutt would be reviewing the visit and its purpose and thinking about Uma and her potential, her impressions of MamaPapa, and her thoughts about the position of women in this society. The voice would be educated and westernised. Not many examples were seen of responses to this question and few displayed a secure grasp of the moment specified.

Hullabaloo in the Guava Orchard

Question 28

The morning activities might be thought to show Mr. Chawla as a ridiculous man of great self-importance and self-satisfaction, of busy, busy energy, who expects to be waited on hand and foot by the women of the family and to be listened to whenever he opens his mouth to spout an opinion. Many candidates wrote on the extract but struggled to understand how personality was revealed. There was quite a narrative approach by some of the candidates, and many seemed not to be able to view Mr Chawla's early morning routine as a

facet of his organised and rather rigid personality. Few candidates were sensitive to any of the implications of the passage.

Question 29

Two approaches might be adopted. Sampath clearly likes a life of leisure. His ideal is to be waited upon, and he relishes being the centre of interest on his own terms. He is also capable of radiating apparent wisdom. Alternatively it might be argued that he is a genuine dreamer, and does have some natural and rather mysterious affinity with the natural world. Candidates tended to answer this question well. Many were able to link the events before Sampath's birth with his personality as he grew up, and his behaviour in the guava orchard.

Question 30

Sweet Miss Jyotsna who worships Sampath is likely to be thinking that this is the most dreadful moment of her life. She will have no idea what has happened or where he has gone, just that what has become her mission to support him has suddenly evaporated. Now there just remains her boring life at the post office. Voices for Miss Jyotsna ranged from grief to pleasure to anger to heartbreak. Some candidates were uncertain about what her voice should be. A few more successful candidates wrote knowledgeably about life in the Post Office, the flirting, and Sampath's knowledge of secrets.

The Great Gatsby

Question 31

The arid and unpleasant quality of the landscape, Wilson's run-down premises, and the general air of poverty provide a suitably unpleasant – and symbolic – backdrop. Both George and Myrtle are described in unattractive terms; George is weak and colourless, Myrtle overweight and overdone and contemptuous of George. Tom is able to control both of them. This was a very popular question that produced a range of responses. The best covered both parts of the question and focused on 'unpleasant', whereas some only looked at one aspect of the task. Most were able to comment on Wilson (with some condemning him because he looked 'anaemic') and most picked up on Myrtle's attitude towards her husband, especially her 'walking through her husband as if he were a ghost'. The best answers made critical comment on the effect of the language used by Fitzgerald and the impact of the adjectives.

Question 32

Candidates might well have commented on the parties and those who attend them, the conspicuous consumption and greed, the class consciousness (new and old money), and the lack of depth in the relationships. Gatsby himself thinks that money is the answer to everything. Though candidates had clearly been taught about 'the Jazz Age', some had difficulty in producing cohesive arguments here and limited themselves to Daisy's reaction to Gatsby's shirts, and to Tom's philandering. The best answers were very condemnatory of the way in which Gatsby is sued by the party-goers, and that none turn up at his funeral.

Question 33

Gatsby will be thinking about Tom's reaction when he was told that Daisy did not love him, Daisy's behaviour, and the effect on her of the accusation of bootlegging. He will also be thinking about the journey home. Responses showed an accurate knowledge of textual detail; many failed to capture Gatsby's 'shock' and 'despair', a few completely misunderstood his reaction (e.g. optimistic about future). Some foretold the fact Daisy was in a state and that if she drove she might kill someone. The best answers had the right mix of Gatsby's turmoil, mulling over what had happened; especially what Daisy had said and why.

from *Stories of Ourselves*

Question 34

It would be virtually impossible to write about the ending without making reference to earlier parts of the story, and to Leila's excitement and enjoyment of the dancing, which are deflated by the fat man's cynicism. The effect of his words and her recovery are conveyed very strikingly in the extract, and the discriminator was the extent to which answers went beyond narrative / description and focused on 'memorable', seeing the implications of the fat man's words and Mansfield's intentions. This was a fairly popular text and question,

with lots of reference to detail overall in responses. There was, however, a popular misconception that the question was what made the ball memorable for Leila, rather than what made the writing memorable for the reader.

Question 35

In both cases the humour is what makes the story entertaining – in the Wodehouse it comes from the strong authorial voice, in *My Greatest Ambition* from the self-deprecating first person narrative. Answers needed to focus on significant detail: in *the Custody of the Pumpkin* on the way they the characters – ‘fluffy’ Lord Emsworth, his idiot son, the dour McAllister and the millionaire Mr Donaldson - are described and the interactions between them; in *My Greatest Ambition* on the contrast between the expectations of the boy of 13 and the reflections upon them of his older self. Most candidates were able to describe some things that were entertaining about the stories named, and some addressed the ways in which the writer made them so. Wodehouse was better understood than Lurie, though there were good answers on both. The most successful candidates were the ones who had the best grasp of the background and social setting of the former.

Question 36

The American will be thinking about his impressions of India, in particular this remote part, the meeting with Muni, the negotiations for the horse, his wife’s possible reactions and his intentions for the horse. The American makes great play of the fact that he is not rich. He has been completely baffled by most of the conversations with Muni, and there may well be a rather patronising tone to his observations. This was a popular question; content was reasonable and knowledge of detail sound. There were a few convincing Americans, but generally there was not a great deal of success in capturing the voice and the character was not clearly understood. Often responses could have done with including much more textual evidence.

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examining the way in which the poet creates an effect. It was good to see that there was no 'spotting' and no particularly 'fashionable' critical term this session, but there was a continuing tendency for the words 'positive' and 'negative' to be used instead of words which identify effects precisely.

Similarly there was a lack of really close reading of the extracts in some weaker answers to the passage-based questions. Every session the Principal Examiner's Report comments on the necessity for candidates to give more than narrative run-throughs and to look analytically at the language used. Furthermore, the whole of the extract is important; it has been selected to offer candidates the optimum opportunity for the discussion. Though there is not usually 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 and it is easy to detect a lack of knowledge of the whole text.

Empathic questions generated some of the higher-scoring responses, with several assuming a credible voice; that said, some responses in this category produced narrowly focused answers, often ignoring broader aspects of the character or their significance in the play / novel. Most candidates knew the importance of writing 'in character', and trying to capture particular mannerisms and turns of phrase. It was, of course, essential to identify precisely the moment specified in the question.

In the past, it has been commented that the sense of drama is underdeveloped in responses to the plays on the papers and this continues to be a concern. For example, the best answers to questions on *Julius Caesar* showed an understanding of the visual qualities of the scene, and of the dynamics between the characters, as well as responding to changes in tone and mood. Weaker answers merely gave run-throughs of the passages. Though it is appreciated that not all candidates will be able to see plays in production, the acting of scenes in class is an important tool in developing this sense. Too often candidates refer to plays as 'books', revealing that they see them only as words on a page.

It may seem a trivial issue, but there was some poorly presented work, thankfully a minority, with handwriting that was very difficult to decipher. Candidates do themselves a disservice if they do not take pride in their work, and chaotic presentation often reflects a lack of coherence in the answer.

There follow notes on all the texts indicating some of the ideas that candidates might have used in their answers. They are not intended to be seen as templates for perfect answers; any relevant ideas that were supported from the text were credited. There are also indications of what candidates did particularly well, and areas in which they were not quite so successful.

SECTION A: DRAMA

Death of a Salesman

Question 1

Charley comes across in this extract as someone who genuinely cares for Willy's welfare. He senses that Willy is very unsettled and seeks to quieten things down with a game of cards, and by attempting to put things in perspective. He recognises that Willy is commercially a failure yet out of kindness offers him a job. He maintains his good humour despite Willy several times insulting him. This question was a popular choice. Most candidates were able to find relevant points about Charley's 'goodness'. In some cases, candidates wrote more about Willy than Charley, and responses lacked focus. Some responses were very literal and failed to see below the surface meaning. Detailed understanding of deceptively simple language and the way it can be interpreted in this particular context was the factor that discriminated between different candidates' responses. Less accomplished answers gave a 'running commentary' of the conversation, rather than analysing what was going on 'between the lines'.

Question 2

Candidates might have expressed sympathy for Biff and Happy in the light of the way they have been brought up, the spurious set of values and assumptions given them by Willy, their resultant failure in the real world, and Biff's final facing up to the truth. They may also have found them unsympathetic characters who are full of bombast, macho in their attitudes, and in the case of Happy whining in failure. Again, most candidates were able to find at least some valid points to write about. This question also seemed to generate engaged responses and identification with characters. The main weakness was not enough detailed support and points that were quite general. Overall, there was little evaluation. Most candidates only really discussed how one can sympathise with the two boys, rather than offering a balanced perspective. The best answers saw the significance of Willy's upbringing and how it created the path to

adulthood for his two sons, but were able to cite some unforgivable behaviour as well. Some candidates were completely confused about the time differences within the play, and some were given the impression that Happy knew about 'the woman' and Boston.

Question 3

Willy is in despair and may be thinking that his life is effectively over, and that he can no longer face the continuing and humiliating failure of all his dreams. Less despairingly he may also be thinking that now despite everything Biff does love him, and that his death with the insurance and the house paid for will help Biff at last to be the success he yearned for in a son. Those candidates who chose this question sometimes found it difficult to pitch – should it be delusional to the end, or a mixture of this and coming to terms with the reality of failure? Better answers integrated some excellent textual references and showed strong personal engagement with the text.

Julius Caesar

Question 4

In answering this question the context is not directly required but helpful. Antony is successfully discrediting Brutus and the other conspirators by his emotional description of the actual killing, and his 'modesty'. The crowd are eating out of his hand. This question was by far the most popular choice. Generally candidates were well prepared and able to offer some valid points. Most were able to identify some of Anthony's persuasive features. Many candidates however did not go quite far enough in their analysis. They made an initial comment on an identified feature but could have drawn out more significance. Higher achieving candidates were able to explore the power and effectiveness of the writing, and conveyed a real sense of enjoyment. There were some impressive pieces of analysis, although more distinction between 'persuasive' and 'impressive' would have improved some answers. Many candidates offered valid but general points which were not supported well enough or rooted in the text. Similarly, some candidates fixated on explaining the Aristotelian techniques that are used in the speech to the extent that they never got around to discussing the language itself in any detail.

Question 5

Candidates needed to consider the different motives of the characters, Brutus's domination of them, and the lack of clear objectives following the death of Caesar. They needed also to look at Antony and Octavius and their alliance. The best answers were able to consider a range of evidence from throughout the play, rather than focus entirely on the relationship between Brutus and Cassius.

Question 6

Cassius will be feeling delight and satisfaction at the achievement and thinking about what has led up to this, his relationship with Brutus, and his vision for the future. There were relatively few attempts at this question, but the material was generally well known and most candidates created convincing voices for Cassius; the best seamlessly integrating quotations or echoes of the text.

The Tempest

Question 7

Some of the comic effect of this scene is visual, and stronger candidates were likely to show some awareness of this. Stephano's misapprehension concerning the hybrid beast is compounded by the fact that he has taken drink, and has given some to Caliban. Trinculo's emergence from Caliban's gabardine provides some comedy. Caliban's amazement at the appearance of the two drunkards swiftly turns to oaths of allegiance. Candidates might find the contrast between their concern about supplies of drink and Caliban's awed worship of them both amusing and moving, the poignancy enhanced by Trinculo's mockery. The more perceptive may have noted how Caliban's response to these two parallels Miranda's reaction to her 'brave new world'. This was a very popular choice and generally produced reasonable answers. Candidates seemed well prepared and had quite a lot of background knowledge. Generally, candidates were able to respond in varying degrees to 'amusing', and less so to 'moving'. Some candidates went off on a tangent about theories of colonisation and slavery. A noticeable feature of the best answers was that candidates were aware of the visual aspect of the scene, and made reference to the audience perspective.

Question 8

Much depended on the choice of scene. In some cases, music accompanies magic, so that it is at the beginning and end of a period when some of the characters are under the influence of the supernatural (as in the plot between Antonio and Sebastian). Ariel's songs lead Ferdinand to Miranda and Prospero, and so on. Music is instrumental in plot development. Some of the songs are more ribald and show the influence of strong drink. Candidates needed to remember to focus on dramatic impact in order to merit higher marks. This was not a popular choice, and it is therefore difficult to make comment about general performance.

Question 9

Prospero has engineered this encounter, so he will be pleased that his plans are working out. He may be reflecting on his hopes for the outcome of their meeting but he will, like any protective father, have some concerns for his daughter. He will be revising his assessment of the merits of her suitor, and may well be reflecting on the wider implications of his daughter's involvement with Ferdinand's family. There were some assured assumptions made about the character here. The material was generally well known, and most candidates were able to create a reasonably convincing voice.

The Importance of Being Earnest

Question 10

Wilde here is ridiculing the hardly credible revelations so common to Victorian melodrama. Jack, having discovered that Miss Prism is not his unmarried mother, discovers he is Algernon's long lost brother which makes him Lady Bracknell's nephew, which makes him eligible, just, to marry Gwendolen, provided that his name is Ernest, which fortunately it is. Many candidates tackled this question but relatively few managed to address it successfully. The farcical elements of the drama were generally missed at this point. Most candidates were able to refer back to earlier moments in the drama, and support their thinking with some textual reference to suggest straightforward changes in the behaviour and outlook of key players. However they tended to miss the comedy of the language; the sense of energy from younger members of the cast; how that energy might contrast with Lady Bracknell; and the speed with which all issues are resolved. All these features help create a sense of *hilarity*, a more intense quality than merely being funny.

Question 11

There is a wealth of material from which to choose. It could include such things as Wilde's ridicule of the arcane customs of this society as set out, for instance, by Lady Bracknell, its snobbery, its idleness and boredom, and its ineffectuality in controlling the desires of the young. He constantly undermines moral and social norms by turning them wittily on their heads. There was a tendency with some candidates attempting this question to provide broad assertions about aspects of Victorian life, rather than focus on those aspects of behaviour and values demonstrated within the drama.

Question 12

Proposing to Gwendolen is Jack's pre-occupation at this moment. Therefore he is likely to be hoping that his decision to call on Algernon will prove a way of meeting her, that he can separate her from her Mother's inevitable attendance, and that his proposal will be successful. There were only a few responses to this question so it is difficult to make any general judgements about performance.

SECTION B: POETRY

There are many ways of interpreting a poem; there follow ideas that the poems in question might suggest. Any ideas that could be supported were credited, and answers which explored the imagery and showed sensitivity to the music of the poetry gained high reward.

Alfred, Lord Tennyson: *Selected Poems*

This was a less popular text than *Songs of Ourselves*, but those candidates who had studied it showed a good deal of engagement with the poems, probably because of their narrative qualities and the musicality of the verse forms. Discrimination, as ever, came from the degree of detailed analysis of the language.

Question 13

The ending of the poem is so sad because of the setting – it is autumn and it is raining, and there is a sense of death about the environment. The Lady is in a trance-like state; she seems to be moving almost automatically, and her death is described as slow and cold. Also significant are Sir Lancelot's reaction and the reactions of the local people. The regular, even inexorable, rhythm contributes to the inevitability of the Lady's demise.

Question 14

Candidates needed to consider what is meant by 'disturbing' – is it the character's physical or mental state? They might have fixed on Mariana's isolation, neglect, betrayal by her lover and the way in which all this is reflected by the moated grange, or on the Speaker's turmoil in *Maud*. The death of his lover seems to have rendered him in a state of living death. They needed to look at the way in which the words and images, and the versification of the poems, reinforce these ideas.

Question 15

The change of mood from grief and despair to a more optimistic feeling looking forward to the New Year is very different from other sections of the poem. There has been a movement from introversion to more social and political concerns – there is a sense of the existence of the rest of the world. The four line verse form, and the repetition of 'Ring out', has an exhilarating effect and the language reflects the rejection of 'the false' and the positive values of 'sweeter manners' 'purer laws' etc.

Songs Of Ourselves: from Part 4

Question 16

The horses are described with the hyperbolic terms: 'monsters', 'seraphim', 'gigantic', and the wider language of the poem is elemental: 'apocalyptic', 'ecstatic', 'rage invisible and blind'. Imagery is associated with heat and light, and with machinery and mechanical power. A key point is the child's viewpoint and the way in which this is conveyed through the vision of the horses. A large number of candidates responded to this question. Most candidates focused on the concept of 'power' in *Horses* really well, and were able to identify some of the features in the poem with varying degrees of ability, and to explain the significance of these and how the writing works. Generally, there was understanding and nearly always a high level personal response. In the best answers there was close analysis of language which developed interpretations, and linked with the way words had been used elsewhere in the poem. Candidates who were able to see the contrast between the poet's childish and adult perspectives derived more from the poem.

Question 17

This was another popular choice, with both poems being considered. Again, candidates were able to identify the imagery in the poems and make some valid comments about these. In responses to *A Birthday*, some candidates did not understand that this was referring to a spiritual experience, and wrote instead about

Rossetti's 'lover' or 'husband'. Generally candidates were able to analyse the language though the significance in the choice of objects used.

Question 18

The focus of the question is on capturing a moment in time, so candidates who merely provided an account or paraphrase of their chosen poem were unlikely to achieve high reward. In *Hunting Snake* there are specific time markers. There is a contrast between the snake's activity and the relative passivity of the human observers. There is detailed description of the observer's behaviour in *The Woodspurge*, and the acuteness of the poet's observations merit comment. What is going on in the poet's mind at the moment is the key to *Continuum*, and candidates may have commented on the particularity of the poet's observations and on the tentativeness of much of the diction. This question was less popular, although there were still quite a large number of responses. Those who selected *Hunting Snake* were able to produce engaged answers, which picked out several valid points about the snake, the background, and the poet's response. Answers to the other two poems were less successful. In *The Woodspurge*, some were able to see deeper meaning but a number of answers were muddled, only commenting on surface meaning. *Continuum* produced answers of varying degrees of competency. A number of candidates struggled to make precise points, and seemed to plod their way through this poem, making statements that identified features rather than meaningful comments.

SECTION C: PROSE

Wuthering Heights

This was not a popular text and so it is difficult to make any comment about performance.

Question 19

The power and immediacy of Lockwood's dream, such that it hovers between dream and reality, is compelling. At one point there is terrible violence, and the reader does not know Catherine's story at this stage and is mystified by the dream's significance. Heathcliff's intrusion and appearance are quite different to how he has been seen hitherto.

Question 20

Brontë makes these houses stand for the opposite poles of existence played out by the characters in the novel. Thrushcross Grange is an elegant house with a lovely garden, where the sun shines often. It is also a place of privilege cut off from common life. *Wuthering Heights* is a gaunt forbidding house, which seems to battle the surrounding bleak landscape and is constantly lashed by the elements. It is life at its most basic.

Question 21

Of course, Heathcliff is in despair. He is likely to be thinking that he has lost the only person who made his life worthwhile, that marriage to the contemptible Edgar Linton drained the life from her, and that this man will pay for it in full measure. His life's purpose is now even more a quest for vengeance against the Lintons and their kind, and Isabella is key to this.

Nervous Conditions

Question 22

Before this point, Tambu has given the impression that her aunt is almost cloyingly sweet, although there have been glimpses of another side of her from time to time. Here, the hint of some deep-seated and usually well-suppressed discontent becomes much stronger. Candidates' responses could range from sympathetic understanding of Maiguru's plight to condemnation of her for the compromises she has decided to make. Candidates understood the passage, but only the best answers grasped the ambivalence of Maiguru's response at the end of the passage. Furthermore, few candidates discussed language, which is key to addressing 'In what ways?'

Question 23

Much of the interaction between Babamukuru and Lucia is characterised by the tension established in Chapter 7. Babamukuru visits the homestead in Chapter 7 to discover that Lucia and Takesure have not yet left, despite his orders. Lucia is determined not to be ignored, and Babamukuru as a patriarchal figure clearly expects to be obeyed and finds it difficult to deal with a free spirit. Lucia uses her expertise and experience in dealing with men in dealing with Babamukuru. He is clearly perplexed by her behaviour at the *dare*, and is unable to deal with her effectively. Her manipulative skills are evident when she tells him she would like a job, although her gratitude seems genuine. This does not prevent her from straight talking in defence of Tambu, something which earns perhaps unexpected praise from Babamukuru.

Question 24

Nhamo as presented through Tambu's narration is not a very likeable boy. At this stage he is likely to be filled with a sense of his own destiny, and a self-congratulatory sense of entitlement. He may be thinking dismissively of his sister and possibly the rest of his immediate family. He may make a passing acknowledgement of his debt to Babamukuru, but such is his sense of his own worth that it is unlikely to figure too prominently. There were some appropriately nasty Nhamos! It was evident that candidates found it satisfying to get to grips with a character like this in an empathic response.

Fasting, Feasting

There were insufficient answers to these questions to make any general comments on candidates' performance.

Question 25

The extract is sad because of Uma's situation. She is dominated by parents and has to be 'disposed of' like a chattel. The quality of the suitors is depressing, as is their reason for pursuing her. Equally sad are MamaPapa's attitude and the way in which the bridegroom behaves. On the other hand the way in which Uma is prepared for the photograph, the way in which the suitors and their relatives present themselves, and the description of the wedding party are all comical.

Question 26

Arun's parents have unreasonable expectations and he has years of 'swotting' – he does not seem to have a normal childhood. He is virtually in exile in the USA where he feels completely alienated. He does not appear to have much capacity for making decisions for himself, but he seems a kind and considerate young man (with Mrs Patton for example) which makes us like him.

Question 27

Mr Patton will be thinking about this young man from a different world and his reaction to the food. The barbeque will be in the forefront of his mind. He may be thinking of his family and the impact this young man will have on it.

Hullabaloo in the Guava Orchard

There were insufficient answers to these questions to make any general comments on candidates' performance.

Question 28

In this extract Desai satirises officialdom's consistent placing of personal ambition before public good. The Brigadier dreams of fame and honour, and naturally thinks that a blunt military solution is what is required. The CMO wants to escape Shahkot and thinks that a drive against drink will rebound to his credit in medical circles. The Superintendent of Police of all people wants a quiet life and to stay where he is, and hence declines the risk of offering any plan whatsoever.

Question 29

Desai's portrayal might be thought to convey a wide range of responses. On the one hand the reader might view Shahkot as noisy chaos where nothing works, corruption and inefficiency are rife, and life is a constant struggle with people living cheek by jowl. It might also be viewed as a colourful and vibrant place, where the inhabitants are lively and for the most part good humoured and neighbourly.

Question 30

How will this shy and ineffectual man, who has been gifted this post probably through his father, explain the hornet's nest he has uncovered? He is likely to be thinking in despair how to explain the mayhem created by the monkeys, the uproar created by the plans for their removal, the unexplained disappearance of the local guru and cash cow, and finally the loss of the cook who has served his predecessors with such diligence.

The Great Gatsby

Question 31

The context is inescapable: Wilson's reaction to the death of Myrtle, Michaelis's failure to comfort him, and the information about the yellow car planted by Tom. The narrative of Wilson's last movements largely deduced by Nick or put together later, and the inferences about Gatsby's movements up to his discovery in the pool, are told dispassionately by Nick. He attributes all sorts of thoughts and feeling to Gatsby which can only be inferred. There is a sort of calmness and inevitability about the account of the death of both men which terminates in the shock of 'the holocaust was complete'. The fact that the shooting is not directly described makes the whole event more powerful. Generally, this question produced answers which showed candidates were well-prepared and had an overall knowledge of the plot. Most candidates grasped something of the 'dramatic climax', and the higher achievers were able to explore the writing in detail. Better answers were able to discuss the way it was structured, the way it lacked dialogue, the dramatic irony, the language, the understatements, and Gatsby's lost dream.

Question 32

Candidates needed to define 'careless'. They are careless about other people and their feelings, of the consequences of their actions. Tom is careless vis a vis Daisy and Myrtle. He is unconcerned and lacking in guilt about his adultery. Did Daisy ever really love Gatsby? She takes the first suitor to come along after his departure. They are also able to move on and resume their normal life at the end of the novel. This was quite a popular choice and again most candidates seemed well-prepared, with some knowledge and understanding of the characters. Although most responses were able to offer reasonable points of an argument, in many cases these could have been more detailed and better supported from the text question or novel. Weakest answers were unable to move much beyond stating that Daisy's 'murder' of Myrtle showed that she was a careless driver. Many candidates explained that because of Nick's comments at the beginning of the novel his view point was one that should be trusted, and then developed their arguments from there. Usually they were well supported and often quite personal. Some candidates however took a far too general approach and wrote about The American Dream without much detailed relation to the novel or the question.

Question 33

Nick will be thinking about the visit to the garage and the apartment on 158th Street with Tom, Tom and Myrtle and Daisy, and Tom's attack on Myrtle. He will be considering the implications. His reactions could be inferred from his usual voice.

from *Stories of Ourselves*

Question 34

The context is not explicitly required, but is helpful in establishing the fact that the American does not speak Tamil and expects all Indians to be able to speak English. Muni has been giving a 'long peroration', none of which has been understood. The American's focus on the horse and Muni's lack of comprehension (he hardly even notices the horse because it has been there for so long) are comic, as are Muni's narration of his life history, and the incongruity of the American's proposed new setting for the horse in light of what it means to the villagers. This was quite a popular choice and produced a range of answers. Most candidates were able to grasp the humour in the miscommunication, and make some valid comment about this. In many

cases, though, candidates did not explore and analyse the passage in enough detail, and responses were general rather than detailed.

Question 35

In *The Destructors* the youth of the children, their lack of emotion, their lack of concern for Mr Thomas, and their enjoyment of the process of destruction are all worthy of comment, as is the effect on them of the War. In *The Rain Horse*, the way in which the horse appears malevolent and to be targeting the man, the almost surreal quality of it, the weather and the surroundings should be explored. This was a popular choice, in which candidates seemed to be quite fascinated with the boys' actions in *The Destructors* and wrote with engagement. Nearly all candidates were able to comment on some aspects of 'disturbing', and there were some very perceptive answers which were enjoyable to read. Some, however, went off on a tangent about the parallel in the story to Nazism and Hitler. Although a few comments about this could have been relevant, it was not necessary to write about this in detail. Relevance to the question is the prime consideration. *The Rain Horse* was not as popular but candidates were able to grasp the 'disturbing' aspect, and included comments about the weather and the uneasy atmosphere.

Question 36

Harold will be thinking about his concerns about his father's financial difficulties, his relationship with him generally and the 'two faces', the obsession with the fly, and the end of the meeting and his father's final words. A few candidates chose this empathic question and most were able to convey the son's mixed feelings for his father. Background details showed that candidates were well prepared and familiar with the story. Some struggled to capture the authenticity of the text and sustain this throughout.