

LITERATURE (ENGLISH)

Paper 0486/11
Paper 11 (Open Books)

Key messages

The following are important for success on this paper:

- detailed knowledge of the whole text, not simply a part of it
- maintaining direct relevance to the question
- focus on writer's language in answers to passage-based questions
- exploration of the writer's method, not just through language and imagery, but also through structure, theme, characterisation as appropriate
- well structured and developed argument
- detailed support by way of well chosen quotation and reference, or close echoes of the text.

General comments

Examiners commented very favourably on much of the work that they saw this session. The vast majority of candidates had been very well prepared and are to be commended for their serious approach and their clear enjoyment of the texts they had studied. There were some very sincere and well-argued personal responses. Candidates' different interpretations were engaging and often perceptive, and there were very few 'clone' answers.

There was impressive general knowledge behind many of the scripts, and many could therefore put their answers in context, which supported their understanding of character and theme. This was especially true of responses to Miller in the Drama section and Fitzgerald in the prose section.

Candidates on the whole had a competent or more than competent level of understanding of the texts and this session there was more conscientiousness in answers about addressing the words of the question directly. However, in some cases there was still a tendency to repeat a question's key terms mechanically with little apparent thought as to what they meant. Some candidates would benefit from greater understanding of what is required in questions which use phrases such as 'strikingly convey', 'dramatically reveal' and 'vividly reveal'; some gave vague and unfocused responses because they did not seem to understand or wish to engage with such phrases.

The passage-based questions were the most popular, as in previous sessions. They are not in any way a 'soft' option, though. Lack of knowledge of the text quickly reveals itself even if specific external reference is not explicitly required, and the writers' method needs to be explored in depth before marks in the higher bands can be awarded. Narrative run-throughs go very little way to meeting the demands of the questions. There were some examples of candidates using the passage to answer the second ('dagger') question on a text and this, approach though not prohibited, was often very limiting.

In poetry responses there was much less 'feature-spotting' ('line X contains a simile, line Y contains two similes...') than there has been in some previous sessions. Many commented on the writer's use of language very effectively, or attempted to, knowing that this was what they were supposed to do, although in weaker answers there was evidence of 'prepared' responses, rather than comments tailored to the question. Sometimes candidates responded to language without going into detail of *how* the effects are created which encourage them to respond as they do. Other responses started with some developed analysis but this then petered out into lists. In each genre and type of question, it is rooting in the language which will enable responses to be convincing. Though it is well understood that candidates like to use technical vocabulary, it counts for nothing if it is not linked to commentary on the effects that are produced.

A significant number of candidates dealt at length with punctuation in discussing drama passages (without any awareness that it is Shakespeare's printers and editors, not Shakespeare, who are generally responsible

for it). But comments such as ‘Cassius’ use of elision makes him very persuasive’ and ‘The exclamation marks after ‘O’ and ‘sham’d’ highlight the need for urgency, making Cassius very persuasive.’ often seemed rather stretched, especially if not then supported with more analysis, and tended to get away from the sense of drama as drama.

The empathic questions were significantly less popular; in fact, there was a sense that Centres are increasingly discouraging candidates from attempting them. Those who did try often showed a sensitivity to some essentially important ideas/facets of characters or plots, revealing a wider understanding of the texts. It was, of course, essential to identify precisely the moment specified in a question. There were very few examples of candidates offering the wrong character or of not attempting to create a voice for the character.

Candidates are reminded that they should present their work and number their answers clearly.

Section A: Drama

Death of a Salesman

Question *1

This text was a popular choice – and this was the most popular question on it. Candidates were able to relate the question to the American Dream, citing a great deal of evidence from the text. Stronger responses showed a very clear understanding of Willy’s state of mind and the techniques he uses to delude himself, and they used Charley and Linda as a counterbalance to Ben’s misleading model for Willy. Weaker responses were less clear about what Willy wants and what he thinks he has, but almost all candidates were able to bring their knowledge of the play as a whole to bear, and they also addressed stage directions. A few were able to address the key words ‘dramatically reveal’ convincingly, but many took refuge in general platitudes about the American Dream, without textual support and therefore lost focus on the task. Much was made of dashes and exclamation marks, but very often in isolation from how they might actually affect the words the characters speak. The best answers made some response to staging, for example the effectiveness and symbolism of the music, the tension of the umbrella poised over Biff’s eye.

Question † 2

This was almost as popular as the previous question (though a few tried to answer it just on the basis of the extract in Question 1). Candidates overwhelmingly had sympathy for Biff; as the only one in the family who faces up to reality. Impressive knowledge of his story was shown, from his childhood football, to Boston and then Willy’s death, and detailed textual evidence was offered in support of arguments, including his enjoyment of the outdoors, his maths troubles, and his loyalty to Linda. His thefts were perhaps understressed, although the reasons for them were well understood. Willy’s attempts at fatherhood were considered exceptionally well in better answers, leading to much sympathy for Biff especially since he ultimately confronts Willy. Weaker answers found it difficult to rise above character sketches or simply alluded to parts of the text and asserted ‘This makes Biff sympathetic’. Some also got into unprofitable extended comparisons with Happy.

Question 3

By contrast, there were relatively few answers to this question but some were very well done, chosen by very able candidates, who wrote knowledgably of Bernard’s efforts to be a friend, his childhood, and the differences between himself and Biff now. There was effective use made of the mystery surrounding what happened in Boston. Candidates were able to capture a sense of Bernard’s concern well, though there was a tendency in less successful answers to paint him as a conceited and rather severe figure in terms of his attitude towards Willy – out of keeping with the humble, modest character we learn of in the play.

Much Ado About Nothing

Question *4

This question was a very popular choice. Candidates obviously had a liking for Benedick. His change from wit to hero was well charted in considerable detail, with some excellent descriptions of his new attitudes and strength. Candidates understood the puns and language impressively well, and were able to trace subtle insults very effectively. Most found the changes in Benedict admirable, but weaker answers were less successful in identifying where this was indicated in the text. Very good answers showed that our good

opinion of Benedick here is due to our contrastingly low opinion of Don Pedro and Claudio. Although most were aware of the context, it was often implicit rather than used to substantiate points.

Question † 5

Overall, this question was perhaps the least well answered of the three on *Much Ado*, the main reason being that there was a tendency to re-tell whole swathes of the text leading up to the end, with little focus on the actual ending itself. Most covered the four lovers and Don John, and also Don Pedro, candidates feeling sorry for him because he had no partner, and feeling that Shakespeare should have written it differently. These candidates also wanted some punishment for Don John on stage, thinking that justice had not been done. Good answers addressed all the strands with some subtlety, tracing their roots back into the play whilst supplying some details from the ending. The best responses showed some balance, expressing reservations about Claudio, for example.

Question 6

A good sense of malevolence was conveyed in responses to this question, though a few candidates overplayed this. Most answers conveyed resentment and jealousy. The best brought in textual references well. There were interesting motives, including an illicit love for Hero and a desire to bring down Don Pedro. There were some imaginative ideas about an abused childhood, but these were not always linked clearly to the play, and often candidates struggled to find things to say.

Julius Caesar

Question *7

Most candidates showed that they knew the whole play well and demonstrated a good understanding of both characters. Good answers looked in detail at the speech and realised how creatively Cassius kept adapting his approach until he found something which worked on Brutus; some also put the extract in context, and explained why Brutus was particularly vulnerable at this particular moment. Even most of the weaker candidates were able to say that Cassius appealed to Brutus' honour, although not always pointing to a specific example of this; conversely, some noticed the repetition of 'Rome' and 'one man' without being able to explain why it was important. Weaker answers misunderstood Brutus's motivations as envy/ambition rather than Republican ideals. However, many candidates did not see this question as an invitation to explore language, but a requirement simply to list rhetorical strategies involved. Their answers tended to be based on the use of rhetorical questions, similes (Colossus), use of anaphora, subtle hints (few examples were offered), comparisons, and punctuation. When candidates supplied appropriate examples from the text and commented on their language choice, answers were sound, but many penalised themselves by not exploring language, apart from offering a quotation to demonstrate a rhetorical strategy - a pity when there were such rich pickings. Apt quotations were often left to speak for themselves. Some answers contained long vague paragraphs on pitch of voice or an actor's expression, which did not add a lot to the response.

Question † 8

Most candidates knew the context of the quotation and were able to utilise it effectively. There were responses on both sides, and most argued effectively with textual evidence. Many answers took Brutus's nobility as a given in the play and adduced multiple quotations to 'prove' it, arguing either 'He must be noble because x y and z all say he is' or 'He must be noble because he worries about doing the right thing all the time', with multiple examples of the latter. Some were unhelpfully sidetracked into discussions of differences between Roman and Elizabethan ideas of honour (especially when it came to Brutus's suicide). Better answers explored what might constitute nobility or honour for Brutus and within his particular context. There were some original and effective points, such as Brutus as a husband and friend. Weaker answers tended to be very black-and-white, sometimes showing some misunderstanding of Brutus as a weak and ambitious fool (even though they usually kept well to the question wording).

Question 9

This proved a good example of where candidates' knowledge of the play as a whole worked well to inform empathic work, with considerable knowledge shown of what had led up to this scene, and good understanding of Caesar's strengths and weaknesses. Calphurnia's fearful voice was clear. There were relatively few answers, but they were well done.

Journey's End

Question *10

More successful answers gave very close readings of the passage. Understanding of both characters was often excellent, though Trotter was harder to qualify than Osborne and some candidates misunderstood his use of humour. Close attention was given to stage directions, 'Alice', Osborne's short sentences, and the reasons for them. The relationship between the two men was also explored sensitively, for example differences of class as shown through language and attitudes, and the bonding that went on in the trenches, which included the care taken over Raleigh and Mason. The way both men coped with the news of the raid, and their distractions, was well understood – this is a subtle point in the text and candidates did very well to tease it out. In weaker responses there was a lack of awareness of the context and a need to engage with details from the passage yet further.

Question † 11

This was a popular choice and it was generally well answered. Some candidates could have drawn from a wider range of evidence, however. Since Osborne is such an obviously admirable character, candidates were able to engage readily with the question and this lifted responses above character sketches. As a stripling in his mid-40s, he was ubiquitously regarded as being very old. Weaker responses listed his avuncular qualities, usually in relation to his 'looking out for' Stanhope. There were many high-level responses which looked in depth at Osborne's own well-hidden feelings, tracing them through his language until his death. The best left the ending of their essays to Stanhope's comments after Osborne's death. Weaker candidates, ironically, sometimes used the extract set for Question 10 as their main evidence for assertions about Osborne. In a way he suffered the same fate as Brutus, because he was so self-evidently an admirable character that candidates struggled to do more than merely reiterate this with examples, although some did manage a more nuanced account of what we might admire about him in his particular circumstances.

Question 12

Very few candidates opted for this question. Those who did were quite limited in what they wrote, though there was acknowledgement of Stanhope's fastidiousness and concerns over Hardy.

Section B: Poetry

Tennyson

Question *13

There was a significant increase in the number of Centres choosing this text this session. Answers were about equally divided between all three questions on it. All candidates understood Ulysses' desire for travel, and state of mind, although they were not strong on what that meant. All the major images in the poem were quoted, for example the star and arch, with little understanding of what was beyond, or what the images were offering. The commentary was therefore often a little repetitive, focused on the travel. The context of the poem seldom seemed to be known, possibly indicating that some candidates chose this question 'unseen'. There was some misreading, especially the line 'I am become a name', and often an over-emphasis on arrogance and vanity. There was much vehemence regarding the ageism of the 'aged wife'.

Question † 14

The question invited personal response, and candidates were quick to exploit the opportunity. Some of the answers were truly moving themselves, showing empathy with Tennyson's grief and loss. There was much good analysis, especially of the 'dark house' lyric, and *Ring Out...* The depth of understanding in some answers was outstanding, candidates really getting behind the language to recreate the feelings. All recognised the shift in feelings over time.

Question † 15

Some of the commentaries were almost as vivid as the original. All candidates captured the use of colour, gold, sun, black curls, and fire images. Not all got as far as Camelot, which is of course a key point. There were differing arguments on Lancelot's last actions, and some candidates were severely censorious of him, blaming him for knowingly causing the death of the Lady. Weaker answers tended to concentrate on the vivid description of Lancelot.

Songs of Ourselves

Question *16

Candidates were secure in understanding the general meaning and 'message' of the poem. All understood a sense of loss and recognised the difference between 'then' and 'now', but there were a lot of what might be termed 'run-through' answers. Selected images were quoted, explained and deemed to be powerful laments, but in general there was not much engagement with the shape and sound of the poem. Language points centred round alliteration, line-length and repetition, sometimes a little mechanically, at the expense of meaning and focus on the word 'powerfully'.

Question † 17

Lament was popular. The poem seemed to have a contemporary resonance and to strike a chord with most candidates. Many felt strongly about the destruction in the poem, and the best answers analysed the 'ashes of language' image in real and heart-felt depth. Many answers explored all the main images in the poem, from turtle to ashes; and the personal response to the poem was very strong. Many knew why the poem had been written and talked knowledgeably about Clarke's feelings; all answers focused closely on the question. Less accomplished candidates needed to show what the poet's emotions were to secure higher reward in their answers. They sometimes explored imagery from the first part of the text, but the climax at the end was often ignored completely.

First Love was equally popular, but it attracted some candidates who did not really respond to the feelings, or the poet, and struggled to comment on the language, often calling it 'simple', showing a lack of understanding of images such as the burning and the snow. Many were able to do a mechanical analysis or appreciation of individual images and so forth without relating the pain experienced by the narrator to the over-arching fact that his feelings of love are unrequited

Question † 18

Though comparison was not required, some candidates compared the two poems effectively, and produced some lively answers. Some, as with the Clare poem in Question 17, struggled with Byron's feelings, not sure what they were; others who did understand, wrote about the poem with relish. Browning was better understood, and there was some good knowledge on 'measuring' love.

Section C: Prose

Wuthering Heights

Question *19

This was by far the most popular of the options on this novel. Candidates focused on the passage and they were able to highlight the sadness and poignancy of the death of Mr Earnshaw. They commented on how the death meant trouble for Heathcliff in foreshadowing his abuse by Hindley. Few mentioned Nelly Dean's part in the extract. In general a closer analysis of language was needed and more comments on the effects of the writer's language choice, though stronger candidates were usually confident in discussing pathetic fallacy and pathos, and some even commented upon the reliability of the account by Nelly Dean. Better answers, however, linked the significance of the scene to the development of the rest of the novel and this contextualisation made for more complete appreciation. In weaker answers, responses to 'moving' tended to be limited to the last (and often misunderstood) exchange between Mr Earnshaw and Cathy, very little was generally made of the children's grief and how they dealt with it. 'Significant' was not often addressed.

Question † 20

This was well done in general. Most recognised both the Victim and Monster in Heathcliff but traced the latter back to his appalling treatment at the hands of Hindley – explaining his evil vengeance, if not excusing it. (A very rare few looked beyond the text to consider the characterisation in terms of gothic literature.) Most recognised a key moment of change when Cathy said she could not marry Heathcliff, and understood how the latter's childhood treatment affected him. There was not much, oddly, on his love for Cathy.

Question 21

There were far too few answers on this empathic task to make general comment appropriate.

Hullabaloo in the Guava Orchard

Question *22

Candidates generally embraced this novel with enthusiasm and knew the text well, using this knowledge as essential background for their answers, especially in relation to the 'holy' man's back story. Many responded to the humour in the extract with exuberance and liveliness. Most answers were detailed and analytical, writing at length about the photographs, the *Times* report, and Sampath in his tree. Better answers stood back a little and tried to find a more critical approach to the sources of humour, e.g. social pretension and cultural misconceptions, and gave convincing evaluations of Desai's writing and effects. Weaker answers found it difficult to explain the humour and fell back on picking out details and simply stating that they are humorous.

Question † 23

Responses to this question tended to be similar to the previous one, for similar reasons. Once again, the better responses showed a real enjoyment and had a rich seam of material to mine. Candidates who could explain the humour in Pinky, referring to her colourful dress sense, the biting of the ear, and the idea of being followed tended to do well. She was seen as a typical teenager, even a little stereotypical. Few answers referred to the end of the novel, when she is trying to choose between suitors.

Question 24

This generated varied responses. Not many candidates were able to capture an appropriate balance between Mr Chawla's mercenary values and his feelings towards Sampath, but most had some sense of the moment's place within the wider context, and a few captured his querulous, self assured, 'busy busy' voice convincingly.

The Great Gatsby

Question *25

This was a very popular question, and often very well answered. Much enjoyment of the text was shown. There was some very successful writing about the language, for example the images of grass, house, and green light. Nick's feelings were covered well and sympathetically. The second half of the extract differentiated well. Most could appreciate the sense of the party being over and the dead atmosphere surrounding Gatsby's house but some were unable to interpret the symbolism towards the end. That severely limited the quality as it is these final paragraphs that relate to the over-arching themes of the novel. As a result, the complete sense of the novel coming to an end was not explained. A few clearly did not know the novel in sufficient detail. Some answers were diverted into more general essays about Nick and his unreliable narration, and so were answering the question rather narrowly. Most candidates were successful in the level of quotation and analysis they used, and the best were able to write with a good focus on the question, assessing the significance of details in view of previous parts of the novel.

Question † 26

Daisy is clearly a character who engaged a lot of candidates imaginatively, and divided opinion. Many pointed out that we get only Nick's perspective. Comments were strong and, in the main, based on excellent knowledge and understanding of her own words and actions. Some very thoughtful answers explored the background and culture, for example in relation to the daughter and marrying a wealthy man; a few very good answers argued that Daisy was in fact a victim. On the other hand, "Daisy is the embodiment of all

that is the American Dream.” Discuss’ seemed to be the question that a significant number of candidates attempted. The material is not impossible to fit to the actual question, but they found it difficult to do so.

Question 27

This was significantly less popular than the essay and passage-based tasks. Some answers tended to be rather excessive in portraying Jordan’s regret over the end of the relationship with Nick; others were far too nonchalant. In general there was a lack of detailed knowledge of the character and answers tended to be rather brief.

When Rain Clouds Gather

Question *28

Good answers worked well with the extract, picking out appropriate words and imagery on which to comment. They showed an understanding of the significance of this event to the lives of African women and to village life. Weaker answers considered aspects of the extract, but did not focus enough on how it makes “the village community come to life’. There was a sense in some answers that the novel as a whole was not very well known. Though the traditional rituals associated with the marriage were described, many did not point out that this is a very special occasion, and their responses were limited, lacking depth and detail. Few quotations or clear references were used.

Question † 29

Most answers explored Makhaya as a central character, yet needed to focus more on the word ‘compelling’ in the question. References to the text were scanty and comments were not always grounded in the text.

Question 30

There were very few answers to this question. Necessary for success was a strong sense of the context: that Mma-Millipepe would be reflecting that this was an extraordinary time to talk business with Gilbert, who has left his bride just before the feast is to start.

Ethan Frome

Question *31

This text was very popular this session and candidates clearly enjoyed it. Candidates tackling this question, the most popular of the three on the text, generally made detailed use of the extract, selecting and commenting on key detail from the passage; better responses were wide-ranging in scope and able to include apt comments on setting and on pathetic fallacy. Despite their obvious engagement, many candidates did not show *close* understanding of the passage; for example, very few referred to the cause of Ethan’s jealousy and the obsessiveness of that emotion. Equally, a lot missed the significance of the tombstone with hardly any drawing attention to the name Endurance. The almost feverish build up of his passion as he reaches the door of the farmhouse was not really reflected in many cases, though empathy for Ethan was much in evidence – candidates clearly liked and sympathised with him. There were many good answers which recreated the tension in the extract and question in their own writing, using similar dramatic techniques to the author.

Question † 32

There was a need to consider the portrayal of Mattie throughout the novel in this question; better answers offered this broad approach, though with selection of precise textual evidence. Some answers, following Mattie’s story from before her arrival to a bleak future. Good knowledge of the text was shown, and relevant references to the pickle dish, dinners, the ribbon in the hair, Zeena, and the accident. Better answers found more of substance in the character of Mattie by comparing her to Zeena (particularly through the eyes of Ethan) rather than dwelling on her impoverished background and so forth.

Question 33

There were plausible responses for this empathic task. Candidates acknowledged and portrayed Ethan's vacillation and a need to marry for practical reasons. Pleasingly, most were reminded of Zeena's early 'vigour'. However, once the fear of being alone had been dealt with, lots of candidates found it difficult to move forward from there. Good answers clearly intimated that respect and gratitude were the more positive reasons for the proposal with love or, at least, physical attraction, playing no part.

Stories of Ourselves

Question *34

There was some insight shown into the personality of the narrator and her relationship with her husband and even the weakest answers conveyed a complex relationship with 'undercurrents'. There was widespread misunderstanding of John, however; some thought that he was intentionally locking his wife away, enjoyed power for its own sake, and even caused the Narrator's illness in the first place. There was also, conversely, a belief that everything was usual for the period, women were expected to be neurotic and the Narrator was making a lot of unnecessary fuss. Such readings tended to dominate many answers at the expense of real exploration of the Narrator's personality. They tended not to answer the question "How?". Short sentences, rhetorical questions and exclamations were not commented on. In general, more analysis of the writer's technique was needed.

Question † 35

Some handled the ending of the *The Signalman* very well, though answers on it were perhaps the least successful. *Secrets* generally evoked a sound response. Exploration of *Meteor* varied in success, depending on whether the candidate had appreciated the ironies, or any irony. Weaker responses offered narrative reprises before getting to the point of the question. Better responses engaged with the language in the ending of the stories but quite a few candidates did little more than summarise. Overall, candidates wrote briefly about the texts, giving a sketchy overview. There was very little quotation.

Question 36

Candidates engaged well with this question and responses offered a good sense of guilt and remorse on the part of the narrator. The boy's reflections were lively and many candidates clearly sustained his voice, incorporating details from the text with understanding. Willadean and Mr and Mrs Wills featured strongly.

Conclusion: Some key messages for candidates

- Answer the question as posed - do not try and force it to fit 'prepared' answers to previous questions. Read the question carefully, looking for the key words and phrases on which to base an answer.
- Take time to plan both ideas and structure in the answer.
- Engage with the detail of extract questions and explore the precise effects created by particular words. (Don't devote an answer to punctuation marks at the expense of writing about *words*.)
- Use brief quotations and always do so as part of analysis, not for decoration. Avoid unhelpful long quotations.
- Pay close attention to the instructions in questions, to words such as 'explore', 'in what ways' and particularly the little word "how". Constant reference to key words from the title in the answer can often encourage relevance and focus.

LITERATURE (ENGLISH)

Paper 0486/12

Paper 12 (Open Books)

Key messages

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- maintaining direct relevance to the question
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General comments

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Those who attempted the empathic tasks often showed sensitivity to some essentially important ideas/facets of characters or plots, revealing a wider understanding of the texts. It was, of course, essential to identify precisely the moment specified in a question. There were very few examples of candidates offering the wrong character or of not attempting to create a voice for the character.

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Section A: Drama

Death of a Salesman

Question *1

This text was a popular choice – and this was the most popular of the three questions on it. Responses ranged from the explanatory and superficial to those with very good focus and understanding. Some of the weaker responses gave a line-by-line commentary on Biff and Linda’s conversation, showing her love for Willy and confusion at the deterioration of Willy and Biff’s relationship. The higher band responses explored Biff’s dilemma, understanding how later revelations made sense of his anger about Willy’s treatment of Linda, but some candidates mistakenly thought that the audience knows about the Boston incident at this particular point. Some candidates gave the impression that they did not know this text and were using the passage as an unseen: there was much quoting and paraphrasing with no evidence of background knowledge/understanding. Some grasped the ideas of ‘moving’ and ‘sad’ and attempted to select the evidence which showed these aspects. The very best were able to show how Biff has lost belief in Willy and how this signals the loss of his ambitions and hopes for the future.

Question † 2

This was not a popular question, but those who chose it understood what was required and brought forward all their ideas about the American Dream. They generally selected ‘moments’ judiciously, the most popular choice being Willy’s interview with Howard.

Question 3

Biff’s anger, disappointment and disillusionment were well appreciated and this moment, being perhaps the most memorable in the play, was well known. Answers were differentiated by the amount of detail that they included; higher scoring answers went beyond a mere outpouring of emotion to cite the reasons for Biff’s turning up in Boston, to reflect on details of his relationship with Willy, and to look to what the future holds, but a significant number of candidates offered much too detailed a plan of action for Biff at this juncture - ‘I’m going to give everything up and go west to work on a farm’. The quality of the voice was also a key differentiator. The words ‘phony’ and ‘fake’ were much used but the voice had to be consistent in order to score highly.

Much Ado About Nothing

Question *4

This question was a very popular choice and elicited a range of responses across the range. There were some engaged answers, although some candidates did just list the jokes. They seemed to find it more difficult to write about how the scene was ‘serious’ at the same time. Most candidates recognised the nature of the humour, but only higher band responses were able to analyse how the language in the extract worked to create this humour. They generally saw the significance and the seriousness of the scene in the context of the accusation against Hero. The best answers showed an awareness of the effect of Shakespeare’s placement of the scene immediately following the intensity of the scene in which Beatrice demands that Benedick should kill Claudio.

Question † 5

Candidates needed to produce more than a mere character study here, and reward was given to answers that demonstrated a clear personal response and an attempt to evaluate Don John’s behaviour. In general candidates found him intriguing because of his villainy, but often limited their answers to an account of his actions with some attempt to explain his motives.

Question 6

A clear sense of enjoyment was communicated by many answers to this question and there were some very impressive assumptions of the character of Beatrice, the best making a good attempt at conveying her wit and integrating echoes of the text very effectively. Generally candidates conveyed convincing baffled feistiness. Her confusion about Benedick's behaviour and reference to their 'merry war of words' was usually understood well, and higher band responses interwove textual detail about this and her views of marriage and indicated her feelings for Benedick. A few candidates were confused as to the timing of this moment and were unclear whether this was between the 'tricks' or after them both; some wrote as if Beatrice had already overheard Ursula and Hero talking and moved ahead to when Benedick has declared his feelings.

Julius Caesar

Question *7

This was a popular question. Commentary on the extract tended to focus on Antony's desire for revenge and often adopted a line-by-line approach, with little exploration of the power of the language. Some gave an unnecessary introduction before getting on to focus on the passage itself. Some candidates – but not many – thought Antony was speaking to the masses. Some better answers moved beyond the soliloquy to consider the servant's reaction to the sight of Caesar's body and Antony's final speech. The best answers made close critical examination of the language and showed awareness of Shakespeare's stagecraft in using the servant. Only a small proportion referred to the language in any detail, however, and 'How' was sometimes forgotten. Many candidates, although they chose the passage-based question, hardly quoted at all.

Question † 8

The essay on Brutus was generally done very well with some really compelling answers, which were rooted in the text and cited a range of reasons why audiences might sympathise with Brutus. Less successful answers tended to focus on what Brutus does and why, with little sense of the way Shakespeare presents him and hardly a single quotation.

Question 9

Most responses were excellent, although a few offered a 'narrative' rather than 'thoughts' and some gave Caesar all sorts of doubts which were not really in character. Answers usually included some detail but tended to be repetitive about the omens. In the best answers, thorough knowledge of text was used well to support the response and the 'voice' was suitably arrogant, self-obsessed and yet fearful because of Calphurnia's dream.

Journey's End

Question *10

While less popular than the Shakespeare choices in this section, this text had been similarly appreciated and enjoyed by those who had studied it. There were a number of responses to this question, though 'gripping' was sometimes forgotten, candidates being more concerned with the military hierarchy. The stage directions were generally well appreciated.

Question † 11

Hibbert got a surprising amount of sympathy from candidates – perhaps seeing the 'human' side to him, not attractive, but realistic. Candidates seemed to think his cowardice was endearing because at least he was honest – he was plain scared, like most people would be in his situation. Not many analysed the Stanhope/Hibbert confrontation fully, particularly the former's more sympathetic stance after his threat to shoot. Hibbert's less attractive qualities were usually ignored.

Question 12

Osborne was well represented with a lot of detail and a convincing voice conveying his generous spirit.

Section B: Poetry

Tennyson

Questions *13, 14, and 15

In the responses to Tennyson, Questions 13 and 15 were more evident, with very few on 14. The language engaged the candidates in both poems, with a range of interpretations of the imagery. Some focused heavily on the sexual implications of the poplar tree as a metaphor for Marianna's frustration. References to the personal context of Tennyson's poetry was often interwoven, reflecting candidates' knowledge of his experiences and relationships, and this was generally used well to develop their response to his language. The best answers were fully engaged with close attention to language and structure; less impressive answers imposed extraneous ideas on the extract without evidence. 'How' was sometimes overlooked. The weakest answers used very little detail from the poems and showed a lack of familiarity with them.

Songs of Ourselves

Questions *16, 17 and 18

Songs of Ourselves was the more popular choice for the poetry section, with Questions 16 and 18 being chosen more than 17. There were fewer explanatory/paraphrase essays and almost everyone at least attempted to make some comment on language, however simple. Candidates appeared to enjoy responding to the feelings expressed in the poems for Questions 16 and 18, often exploring the language and particularly the imagery in a thoughtful and sometimes perceptive way. The sonnets and *Marrysong* were perfectly well understood but for the former (especially *Sonnet 43*) there was sometimes a lot of abstract generalising over love and reading into the poem facets of love that the candidate obviously thought ought to be there. The focus was on meaning and there was insufficient close examination of the words and images and their effects. Not that there were not some very sensitive essays. Answers on *Marrysong* seemed altogether fresher responses. The few who chose Question 17 on the Hughes and Arnold struggled to find any 'mystery' in the night and were reduced to writing a general commentary on the poems so restricting the mark that it was possible to award. A number of candidates strayed away from the question in focusing exclusively on Arnold's attitude to religion and there was some confusion in the interpretation of the Hughes poem. In the case of the Hughes, biographical detail often obscured the effect of the poem.

Section C: Prose

Wuthering Heights

Question *19

Whilst candidates showed good understanding of Heathcliff and his feelings at this point and recognised the significance of the passage in relation to end of the novel, there were few who explored Brontë's writing and its dramatic effects. Many candidates wrote a lengthy preamble, and some gave no more than a cursory glance at the passage itself, choosing to write about what followed instead.

Question † 20

There were some sound answers on Joseph, although some candidates misunderstood the question and wrote about how he was unsympathetic to other characters rather than how he was portrayed in an unsympathetic way by Brontë. There were some baffled responses to his dialect, seeming to regard it as a ruse he employed to obscure what he was saying.

Question 21

Heathcliff's desire for revenge and his determination to use Linton were well expressed in the empathy task and the best responses effectively interwove his feelings for Catherine alongside his past treatment at the hands of Edgar and Hindley. Most reflected on his lack of real feeling for Linton and simple desire to use him as a pawn. A few candidates gave a level of detail about his future plans which seemed rather unconvincing at this stage in the novel but all seemed to relish writing in role and there was some effective building in of detail. Excellent textual references were interwoven in the best of them.

Hullabaloo in the Guava Orchard

Question *22, 23 and 24

Candidates conveyed a lot of enthusiasm for the extract in Question 22, showing engagement with Desai's language and appreciating the contrast between Kulfi here and elsewhere in the novel. There were far too few answers to the other questions for general comment to be appropriate.

The Great Gatsby

Question *25

Responses to *The Great Gatsby* were more evenly spread over the questions, with the extract being the most popular. Candidates tended to be sympathetic to Daisy, often missing the impact of seeing her from Nick's perspective in the final paragraph. Stronger candidates had plenty to work on and could comment on the ambivalent feelings encouraged by Fitzgerald; less confident ones took Daisy at face value, often misreading Nick's "I suppose she talks, and – eats, and everything" as being said by Daisy as evidence of her indifference to her child. Some candidates ignored the 'at this moment' part of the question and wrote about aspects of Daisy which were not evident from the passage.

Question † 26

There was some staunch defence of Jay Gatsby, with sympathy and admiration for his faithful pursuit of Daisy; even when his bootlegging was acknowledged, it was defended by his love. Some candidates failed to mention how his death came about, but recognised his loyalty to Daisy in his acceptance of her guilt regarding the car accident. Reflections on the American Dream were sometimes intrusive but other candidates used this context effectively to justify the way they interpreted the presentation of Gatsby. This was another opportunity to explore ambivalence, and was grasped eagerly by the strongest candidates.

Question 27

In writing in role as Tom, most candidates showed his arrogance and his attitude to Daisy, with the best showing also his feelings for Myrtle and motives in leaving town as well as his attitude to Nick. The best answers displayed convincing awareness of Tom's arrogant carelessness, racism and misogyny. Some less successful answers included references to themes that had been taught, in a way that was inappropriate for the character. For example, candidates had Tom talking about 'The American Dream' and 'old money' in an effort to show how well they knew the book.

When Rain Clouds Gather

Question *28

The relatively few candidates who answered this tended to deal quite thoroughly with the passage and focused on Mma-Millipede's likeability especially her motherliness and her care and concern for her friends, like Paulina. Better answers explored the point that she was farsighted and keen on progress.

Question † 29

There were far too few answers on this question to make general comment appropriate.

Question 30

The character of Gilbert was quite well known as was the significance of his first meeting with Makhaya. Though the voice was often not particularly distinctive, the best answers often included some appropriate detail.

Ethan Frome

Question *31

This was the most popular of the three questions on this text and generally the focus on 'dramatic' was good, candidates citing the contrast between Ned and Ruth and Ethan and Mattie, the desperation of the latter pair at their imminent separation. Some made the point that there is almost a role reversal here in that Mattie is taking the initiative in suggesting the suicide pact. Good answers explored the language in some detail, showing the over-heated quality of their speech and behaviour, for example 'she whispered breathlessly', 'flung her arms about him', 'groping' for his lips. Appreciation of the situation was common but awareness of Wharton's hand in creating drama here less so.

Question † 32

Strong antipathy to Ethan, who was perceived as weak was evident in some answers but most candidates displayed awareness of the whole book and weighed up responsibilities. The general conclusion seemed to be that Ethan was bad at making decisions and had too strong a moral sense and that circumstances weighed very heavily against him.

Question 33

This was not a popular task but those who attempted it showed a good understanding of the character and usually managed to convey something of Zeena's spitefulness and querulousness. Some were surprisingly sympathetic.

Stories of Ourselves

Question *34

Most candidates had a good knowledge of *There Will Come Soft Rains* and of this extract and there were some excellent responses to the question, although many answers effectively 'explained' the passage rather than focused on language and effect. In some cases the candidates tended to write more general comments and more focus on the language of the extract and on the word 'how' would have been beneficial. Weaker answers gave a line-by-line explanation of events and feelings, using the text as support, but the stronger ones engaged with some of the imagery and the personification. There was some sensitive appreciation of syntax, image, diction, pace etc. and the message of Bradbury's story was often effectively built into these higher level responses.

Question † 35

Impressive knowledge of both stories was evident in the best answers and sympathetic responses to both victims. In both cases nearly all of the candidates focused very well on the aspect of suffering and could illustrate the points which they made with evidence from the respective texts. *The Lemon Orchard* did on balance produce the better answers but candidates using it tended to concentrate on the racism and the events of the story rather than the language. In the best answers there was a real focus on techniques used by La Guma and candidates were able to discuss the subtleties of the story as well as link it to the overall theme of racism and thus 'suffering' in a wider context. Weak answers displayed a lack of basic knowledge of the stories.

Question 36

Candidates generally had a good understanding of the character and situation and were able to capture Mother's voice quite well, displaying awareness of her sense of dignity and self-worth. Answers tended to be discriminated by the amount of detailed knowledge that they revealed since the voice is not a particularly distinctive one.

Conclusion: Some key messages for candidates

- Answer the question as posed - do not try and force it to fit 'prepared' answers to previous questions. Read the question carefully, looking for the key words and phrases on which to base an answer.
- Take time to plan both ideas and structure in the answer.
- Engage with the detail of extract questions and explore the precise effects created by particular words. (Don't devote an answer to punctuation marks at the expense of writing about *words*.)
- Use brief quotations and always do so as part of analysis, not for decoration. Avoid unhelpful long quotations.
- Pay close attention to the instructions in questions, to words such as 'explore', 'in what ways' and particularly the little word 'how'. Constant reference to key words from the title in the answer can often encourage relevance and focus.

LITERATURE (ENGLISH)

Paper 0486/13

Paper 13 (Open Books)

Key messages

The following are important for success on this paper:

- detailed knowledge of the whole text, not simply a part of it
- maintaining direct relevance to the question
- focus on writer's language in answers to passage-based questions
- exploration of the writer's method, not just through language and imagery, but also through structure, theme, characterisation as appropriate
- well structured and developed argument
- detailed support by way of well chosen quotation and reference, or close echoes of the text.

General comments

Examiners commented very favourably on much of the work that they saw this session. The vast majority of candidates had been very well prepared and are to be commended for their serious approach and their clear enjoyment of the texts they had studied. There were some very sincere and well-argued personal responses. Candidates' different interpretations were engaging and often perceptive, and there were very few 'clone' answers.

There was impressive general knowledge behind many of the scripts, and many could therefore put their answers in context, which supported their understanding of character and theme. This was especially true of responses to Miller in the Drama section and Fitzgerald in the prose section.

Candidates on the whole had a competent or more than competent level of understanding of the texts and this session there was more conscientiousness in answers about addressing the words of the question directly. However, in some cases there was still a tendency to repeat a question's key terms mechanically with little apparent thought as to what they meant. Some candidates would benefit from greater understanding of what is required in questions which use phrases such as 'strikingly convey', 'dramatically reveal' and 'vividly reveal'; some gave vague and unfocused responses because they did not seem to understand or wish to engage with such phrases.

The passage-based questions were the most popular, as in previous sessions. They are not in any way a 'soft' option, though. Lack of knowledge of the text quickly reveals itself even if specific external reference is not explicitly required, and the writers' method needs to be explored in depth before marks in the higher bands can be awarded. Narrative run-throughs go very little way to meeting the demands of the questions. There were some examples of candidates using the passage to answer the second ('dagger') question on a text and this approach, though not prohibited, was often very limiting.

In poetry responses there was much less 'feature-spotting' ('line X contains a simile, line Y contains two similes...') than there has been in some previous sessions. Many commented on the writer's use of language very effectively, or attempted to, knowing that this was what they were supposed to do, although in weaker answers there was evidence of 'prepared' responses, rather than comments tailored to the question. Sometimes candidates responded to language without going into detail of *how* the effects are created which encourage them to respond as they do. Other responses started with some developed analysis but this then petered out into lists. In each genre and type of question, it is rooting in the language which will enable responses to be convincing. Though it is well understood that candidates like to use technical vocabulary, it counts for nothing if it is not linked to commentary on the effects that are produced.



Those who attempted the empathic tasks often showed sensitivity to some essentially important ideas/facets of characters or plots, revealing a wider understanding of the texts. It was, of course, essential to identify precisely the moment specified in a question. There were very few examples of candidates offering the wrong character or of not attempting to create a voice for the character.

Candidates are reminded that they should present their work and number their answers clearly.

Section A: Drama

Death of a Salesman

Questions 1, 2, 3

The passage-based question was the most popular and there were some sound answers when candidates gave a thorough examination of the passage. Very few candidates analysed the long setting at the start of the scene and there were missed opportunities with the stage directions in general. Some of those selected for comment describe things which an audience were unlikely to be able to see or deduce at this opening point in the play. Most could find something to engage the audience although often there was very little focus on the idea of what effect an audience might be expected to feel at curtain-up. At times there was no understanding conveyed of this being a play. Many candidates wanted to talk in general terms about the character of Willy in the play and this restricted the effectiveness of their answer. However, even weaker answers picked up on Linda's anxiety and Willy's apparent exhaustion and disorientation. Better answers explored possible implications and the best considered the dramatic qualities and the music.

The other two questions produced relevant and fairly knowledgeable answers. Candidates answering Question 2 tended to focus on Happy's relative neglect in childhood and ignored the less attractive adult, but some were very interesting, finding a balance and justifying, for example, Happy's abandoning of Willy at the restaurant due to the preferential treatment of Biff throughout. It was made clear that Happy tried to impress Willy by, for example, losing weight and getting married, but was always ignored despite the fact that he was the only one really working. Also, some candidates argued that it was inevitable that he would give up on Willy and Biff since neither of them showed any interest in Happy at all. A few found him totally despicable with no redeeming features, judging him to be self-centred and boastful when he was in a dead-end job. Many answers had very little detail or close reference to the text. Very few candidates wrote as Charley but all able to empathise effectively showing a good knowledge of character and plot. The best responses included Charley's concern for Linda, the long suffering wife, and his treatment of his sons holding him to blame for all their shortcomings.

Much Ado About Nothing

Questions 4, 5, 6

This was a popular text and answers conveyed a sense of enjoyment. Candidates clearly liked Beatrice and Benedick and there were some good responses to the humour of the extract with clear understanding that the characters are completely at cross-purposes. The most successful answers explored the dramatic impact of the scene as well as explaining the situation. There were very few responses to Question 5. The empathic task was quite popular but performance overall would have been stronger if more candidates had managed to convey the fact that Hero has more character than is sometimes attributed to her and that she is enjoying the deceit that is being practised on Beatrice.

Julius Caesar

Questions 7, 8, 9

The passage-based question was by far the most popular on this text and candidates approached it with enthusiasm. They all did well on Calphurnia but were less perceptive on Caesar himself - many thought he was a loving husband who gave in so that she would not worry. The better responses saw how cleverly Calphurnia manipulated her words so that his ego would not suffer. The best answers went beyond describing the feelings of the characters and explored the power of the language, in other words they focused on the key words 'vividly convey'.

Journey's End

Questions 10, 11, 12

The passage-based question produced sympathetic answers which demonstrated a sensitive response to the soldiers facing the imminence of going over the top and understanding of the characters and their feelings. Candidates recognised Hibbert's fear and his understandable reluctance, shown by his playing for time. Some candidates, however, were not careful and thorough enough in the inspection of the extract and often found only one point to discuss throughout their essay. In fact, 'sad' was rarely carefully enough thought through and it became the norm to write about how sad it was that Hibbert was a coward who was trying to avoid going into battle. Much confusion and/or lack of awareness of context was in evidence over the reference to champagne in the extract, a number of candidates cheerfully informing of the Dutch courage on offer to men about to go 'over the top'. Clearly a good answer would have needed to look at the relationship of Stanhope and Raleigh at this moment in the action, and more careful consideration of the treatment of Hibbert by Stanhope, as well as some reference to the ending of the extract and the involvement of Mason. For most candidates this material escaped their notice and comment. In Question 11 weaker candidates lapsed into description and character study whereas better responses analysed and responded to the character and role of Raleigh. Responses focused on his relationship with Stanhope but weaker answers did not address 'dramatically'. 'Moving' tended to be restricted to his premature death. There were very few attempts at the empathic task but one or two were quite credible and others were over-simplified. The best were able to capture the awkward 'piggy-in-the-middle' nature of the colonel and his anxiousness to please his superiors whilst not letting it appear he did not care about those he was sending to almost certain death.

Section B: Poetry

Tennyson

Questions 13, 14, 15

The Tennyson poems were far less popular than *Songs of Ourselves*. Many of the responses to *Ulysses* were purely explanatory and never approached the terms of the question. Some of the answers revealed only a rudimentary knowledge and understanding of the poem. The best answers were able to look at some of the language of the poem and do a little more than explain what it 'meant'. Very few answers were able to assemble a convincing response to how Tennyson makes the reader admire the hero, however. *The Lady of Shalott* was usually poorly answered on. There were few answers and these all retold the poem, sometimes not very well. There was never a concerted response to feeling sympathy for the character, or how this was engineered by Tennyson's writing. Answers here were always weaker than those on *Ulysses*.

Songs of Ourselves

Questions 16, 17, 18

All three of the questions were equally popular. There were fewer explanatory/paraphrase essays and almost everyone at least attempted to make some comment on language, however simple. The question which elicited the least successful answers was 16, where candidates tended to lose focus on the key words 'vividly appeal to your senses' and merely gave a 'run-through' of the poem. Candidates tended to quote, rather than engage with, language. Concentration was largely on the octet - some overlooked the cricket all together, or assumed it was the grasshopper. Almost all candidates were able to find a poem that appealed to them in the other choices offered. In Question 17 *The Voice* dominated. Again there was very little focus on the language of the poem and quite a lot of biography was offered, not all of it accurate (e.g. assuming that theirs had been a happy marriage to the end). The heavily emotive last two stanzas received very little comment, apart from 'wistlessness'. In *Report to Wordsworth* there was heavy concentration on 'feelings', supported by textual reference but, again, avoiding exploring language. In Question 18 *First Love* elicited some focus on language though there were problems with 'turned to clay'. 'Red' received some curious expansions on the theme of 'blood'. However, about half of the candidates did not note the change of tone and language in the final stanza. *Lament* was also a firm favourite, where, again, there was some engagement with language. *The Flower-Fed Buffaloes* elicited fewer responses, some very good, others concentrating on feelings and a few even forgot the buffaloes.

Section C: Prose

Wuthering Heights

Questions 19, 20, 21

The passage-based question was offered almost universally and there were some very competent and well focused answers, which gave a sensitive response to Heathcliff and his situation and also to the way in which Brontë's writing creates drama and pathos. Some candidates appeared to be a little confused as to Heathcliff's part in Catherine's death, and how long Heathcliff had been mourning there. Some candidates overlooked Nelly's contribution to the passage. A few candidates interpreted 'most memorable' as an instruction to choose one section from the extract and limit comments to that.

Hullabaloo in the Guava Orchard

Questions 22, 23, 24

There were far too few answers Questions 22 and 24 to make general comment appropriate, but Question 23 was relatively popular, if not particularly well done. Candidates tended to select appropriate moments, but their entertaining qualities were considered to be self-evident, and there was little detailed exploration of the writing.

The Great Gatsby

Questions 25, 26, 27

This was perhaps the most popular of the prose texts. Question 25 was reasonably well attempted, though answers tended to be heavily reliant on quotations. Highlighted were Gatsby's nervousness, surprising lack of confidence and almost childish behaviour expecting disappointment, supported by his being 'pale', 'signs of sleeplessness', speaking 'hollowly' etc. His desire for perfection in all aspects - the lawn, refreshments, flowers - was clearly understood. One candidate interestingly pointed out that Gatsby's clothes, on this occasion, reflected the colours of money. Responses to Question 26 were well argued, although candidates' interpretation of 'great' varied. They clearly knew the character, however, and were able to draw on well-selected textual detail. They demonstrated a thoughtful response to the character, often balancing their argument and showing they were ambivalent about Gatsby, although usually deciding that they had sympathy for him. The best answers showed how our perception of Gatsby is conditioned by Nick and how his ambivalence is communicated by Fitzgerald. There were some convincing re-creations of Wilson, conveying his anguish and the façade of his marriage, and integrating lots of detail.

When Rain Clouds Gather

Questions 28, 29, 30

There were far too few answers to these questions to make general comment appropriate.

Ethan Frome

Questions 31, 32, 33

There were far too few answers to these questions to make general comment appropriate.

Stories of Ourselves

Questions 34, 35, 36

The passage-based question was again the most popular and there were some competent explorations of the passage, the best focusing on the description of the signalman and his surroundings and conveying the gloomy and mysterious atmosphere. Maia's voice and likely apprehensions at this moment were well conveyed.

Conclusion: Some key messages for candidates

- Answer the question as posed - do not try and force it to fit 'prepared' answers to previous questions. Read the question carefully, looking for the key words and phrases on which to base an answer.
- Take time to plan both ideas and structure in the answer.
- Engage with the detail of extract questions and explore the precise effects created by particular words. (Don't devote an answer to punctuation marks at the expense of writing about *words*.)
- Use brief quotations and always do so as part of analysis, not for decoration. Avoid unhelpful long quotations.
- Pay close attention to the instructions in questions, to words such as 'explore', 'in what ways' and particularly the little word 'how'. Constant reference to key words from the title in the answer can often encourage relevance and focus.

LITERATURE (ENGLISH)

Paper 0486/02
Coursework

Key Messages

- The framing by teachers of appropriately worded assignments, encouraging and requiring candidates to fulfil all assessment objectives to the best of their ability, remains vital to success in this component.
- It is important that all required paperwork is submitted with the sample.

General comments

In general, Centres are to be congratulated on the quality of work that their candidates produced (much of it impressive) and on standards of internal moderation and administration.

As in previous sessions, each Centre entering for this coursework component receives an individual report on its work and its assessment. These have been intended in the vast majority of cases to congratulate individual Centres on the work presented and for their careful presentation and moderation of the folders. In a minority of cases they are intended to bring to the Centres' attention features of their assessment and presentation which need addressing and to offer advice how that can be achieved.

This session a large number of new Centres opted for coursework so it is pertinent to draw attention to the importance of the Centre reports. In them the external Moderator provides particular information about the Centre's standards of assessment and administration, on some occasions offering advice on how that might be improved. Over the years this has proved to be a very effective means of helping Centres to monitor their practice. A number of reports carried suggestions for minor changes, but there was general admiration for the quantity of imaginative, lively and thoughtful writing to be found in the assignments and of the way in which Centres had carried out the often time-consuming process of internal moderation.

Overall there seemed to be more adventure this year in the selection of texts and fewer Centres where every candidate wrote on the same text and the same subject. With this proliferation of texts, it is worth reminding Centres that it helps the external Moderator if copies of short texts like poems and even short stories are included with the folders submitted for the sample.

The texts chosen for candidates' assignments were in most cases of comparative complexity and imaginative power to the texts selected for IGCSE examinations over the years. On rare occasions they did not come into this category and did not offer the challenges which are necessary if a candidate's work is to reach the top Bands. Centres should also note that texts in translation must not be offered on this syllabus. (They may be studied in the new syllabus 0408 World Literature.) A more common problem concerned assignments which featured only one poem or one short story when the component requirements make it clear that candidates need to show knowledge of two. Conversely, on a few occasions candidates wrote on far more than two poems or short stories; the standard of work for of these assignments suffered since in the breathless chase from one text to the next quantity tended to take over from quality.

In some cases tasks did not fully encourage candidates to fulfil all the assessment objectives to the best of their ability. It is recognised that task setting can be deceptively tricky and again the majority succeeded admirably in giving their candidates the best possible chances. However, sometimes more thought needed to be given to providing candidates with a helpful focus. Sometimes titles did not explicitly encourage and require candidates to respond to the ways in which writers create their imaginative worlds. Showing responsiveness to that is a necessity for high reward. Drama texts tended to suffer more in this connection than Prose and Poetry texts. Sometimes assignments would simply focus on theme and character and give little indication that the candidate was expected to think about the dramatic effect of a play. Not infrequently candidates referred to the studied play as a novel. There were a few, rare instances where the candidates

apparently were instructed merely to write something under the text's title. The result of that approach was usually unfocused meandering work which could not possibly satisfy the top Band Descriptors.

The Coursework Handbook has much to say about task setting but perhaps one or two examples here might help illustrate ways in which this problem can be solved. First, three questions on the written papers for this Syllabus avoid words that suggest that the task is looking for a 'right' answer which the good candidate can supply with little thought. Hence, a candidate is rarely asked to *explain*. A word like *explore* is felt to be much more appropriate. This year the word *discuss* figured prominently in the tasks of a few Centres. That is avoided in IGCSE examination questions since it does not address the candidate in a direct manner and hence is unlikely to encourage the personal response which is so important to the Syllabus. A shift towards encouraging this is very easily effected. Hence *Shylock is an unsympathetic character*. *Discuss* might become *To what extent do you sympathise with Shylock?* This, though, is still not ideal as it stands. It does not put the author and the writing at the Centre of the task and hence does not require of the candidate close involvement with the effect of literary language. To a certain extent that requirement can be met by adding a second sentence such as *Support your ideas with details from Shakespeare's writing*. Better still, the author might be incorporated in the basic task as in *To what extent do you think Shakespeare makes Shylock a sympathetic figure in the play? Support your ideas with details from the writing*. Of course, there are many possible variants but it is important that the task makes clear that a text is an imaginative creation and that it is hoped that the candidates will show themselves responsive to its power. The encouragement of a candidates' personal involvement with their reading is likely to lead to higher quality work.

Much of the empathic response work in the samples revealed candidates to be right at the heart of the author's imaginative world. However, it was also noted that some tasks inappropriately directed candidates away from the text towards simple invention. There should be no encouragement, for example, to rewrite the end of a completed book or play. The study is of the text as written. Similarly, there has to be a 'voice' which is not invented but is that of a character in the text. That is an essential route to finding out the candidates' understanding of the author's creation. In regard to the 'situation' of the task, that has to be one of the many moments in a complex text when thought and action are implicit rather than explicit. Thus, the encouragement to candidates to assume Nick Carraway's persona in *The Great Gatsby* is problematic since he is at most times in the book the narrator and hence his thoughts are quite explicitly there in Fitzgerald's words. Similarly a task about Mark Antony and Caesar's body will most likely lead to a simple parroting of Shakespeare's words.

Some Centres are operating a *mandatory* upper limit of 1000 words for assignments. There can be a virtue in succinctness and the suggested range is designed to discourage candidates inclined to repetitiveness from thinking that length will bring extra reward. However, the suggested word limits in the present syllabus are given as a guideline only; they are not mandatory. There is no wish to constrict the scope of argument for some (often very able) candidates. Ironically, there was also some evidence that enforcement of the lower suggested limit sometimes created a problem. A few empathic assignments were felt to be repeating themselves in order to be of an 'acceptable' length. In this format the essence of a good piece of work is less to do with range and scope and much more with precision in capturing in every word an authentic 'voice' which is also saying things which seem convincing in the situation defined by the task.

There were some cases of submitted samples not containing essential documentation. Candidate Record Cards did not always have all the information filled in and there could be significant variation in the standard of commentary and annotation, sometimes even within Centres. Comment on the Record Card sometimes gave little information about how according to the Band Descriptors the folder had been assessed. Biographies of the candidates, irrelevant to assessment, featured at times. Assignments with no annotation were encountered which did not provide evidence that they had been validated by the teachers. The Coursework Summary Forms were sometimes absent, sometimes just filled in for the sample. These are essential documents which show the results of the full internal moderation and indeed show that it has been carried out. A copy of the CIE Mark Sheet was also sometimes missing. The importance of having all these documents to hand was illustrated on some occasions when external Moderators found that a candidate's mark did not tally in all the documents: it is vital that Centres carefully check that all marks on the various documents do correspond with one another. However, in conclusion it is worth stressing that in the great majority of cases the standard of administration was very good.

LITERATURE (ENGLISH)

Paper 0486/31

Unseen

Key Messages

1. Be aware of all the Assessment Criteria. A little more comment on language, for example on the effects of two or three images, using quotation as supporting evidence, can lift candidates' work into a higher mark band.
2. The amount of recommended planning and reading time is deliberately substantial. This is to encourage closer reading and planning before candidates write. They would benefit, especially in response to poetry, from forming an accurate response to the whole text before beginning to write.
3. In responses to poetry, candidates' work could be improved by more attention to the effect of extended metaphors.
4. In responses to prose, candidates can improve their work by taking a less narrative approach (i.e. *what* happens), giving more consideration to the time-frame of a piece of writing and the point of view which is presented, and then considering the writer's intended effect on the reader (i.e. *how* the writing works). Imagery and descriptive language are as important in prose passages as they are in poetry.
5. Candidates might usefully pay more attention to the way a poem or passage *ends* before they begin writing. Often the ending contains a twist or change of perspective which needs to be understood before a critical response to the text is complete.

General Comments

The format of this paper is now well-established, and both Centres and candidates clearly relish the opportunity it gives for free personal response and demonstrating the development of sophisticated skills of literary analysis at the end of the IGCSE course. It was clear that many candidates had been prepared for this Paper very well indeed: their answers were well-planned, argued and illustrated and showed individual engagement with the texts and the impression they made. Some strong responses also showed evidence of how widely candidates read in order to prepare for this task, or made illuminating comparisons with their set texts. But most also remembered that marks are gained through clear engagement with the stem question and for detailed critical analysis of the writer's use of language and its effect on the reader, demonstrated through quotation and comment. Centres have clearly paid plenty of attention to the advice provided in previous Examiners' Reports: Examiners saw very few very weak answers, and there was plenty of evidence of planning, focus on the question and extensive exploration of the effects of language choices. Candidates generally find the bullet points useful in planning their responses, although their use is not obligatory. Some weaker candidates make use of the introductory rubric to help them begin their responses: this is a reasonable approach and can help focus but will not of course attract any marks. Likewise, there is no reward for copying out footnotes: these are purely intended to help candidates with vocabulary or detail they may find difficult to understand on a literal level. They are not intended to draw particular attention to those words or phrases, or to indicate that they need special treatment. It certainly is not necessary to copy out or refer to the footnote at the appropriate moment in a candidate's response.

Poetry continued this session to be more popular of the two options, but the prose was far from neglected. Some candidates do find it harder to make an analytical response to prose, and there is a tendency to paraphrase the surface narrative, with extensive quotation, instead of looking at viewpoint or the non-literal use of language. Exploring metaphor is just as important in prose as in poetry: indeed Assessment Objective 2 in the syllabus refers to exploring texts 'beyond surface meanings' and this is therefore a key quality in the stronger responses. Extended metaphor also caused some candidates problems in the poetry:

some searched for a 'story' instead of exploring and explaining the meaning of the poet's extended use of a single metaphor throughout the poem (indicated by the choice of title).

The two other Assessment Objectives which need particular attention – and in the implied order – in this paper are: AO3 'the ways in which writers use language, structure and form to create and shape meanings and effects' and AO4 'communicate a sensitive and informed personal response to texts'. These can be characterised at their best as the higher order skills of analysis and evaluation. Skills of analysis in responses to this paper continue to improve impressively: candidates are more aware that the comment on effects is more important than mere quotation and identification of features of language. While Examiners are happy to reward apposite quotation, the best quotation is brief and pointed, while exploration of the effect of a rhetorical device is more highly rewarded than simply identifying its presence (or absence). Some candidates spend too long looking speculatively (and often inaccurately) at the possible implications of verse form, lineation or rhyme scheme, when deeper consideration of the non-literal use of imagery might have been a more profitable line of enquiry. In both verse and prose, it is useful to consider point of view and the time frame presented: candidates should ask if there is a particular narrative voice or viewpoint presented (or more than one) and whether the text contains a temporal shift. Flashbacks and considerations of the past are just as likely in prose as in verse: paying accurate attention to the writer's choice of tense might be especially helpful. Personal response should be embedded in an evaluation of the emotional effect of the writer's choices: empathy and sympathy are good ways to explore the ways in which writing can place us in someone else's shoes, or give us a very different perspective from our own (or perhaps that of the writer too). It is a mistake to assume that the views of a character are necessarily shared by the writer, or based on personal experience; (and even if they are, that may not be relevant to their intended effect). Similarly, personal reflections on the subject matter of a text unrelated to the language and effect of the text are not genuinely literary. Candidates have become aware of this, and now relate their feelings about a text much more closely to the way in which it is written. Texts chosen for this paper often show significant development or change in their final sections, and do not necessarily end in quite the same way they begin. A good answer shows appreciation of the overall direction of the text from the beginning of the candidate's response.

Comments on Specific Questions

Question 1

This poem, written by the Australian poet and environmentalist Judith Wright, proved a popular choice among candidates, despite its prickly ambiguities. Indeed, Examiners saw a very wide range of different readings of the text and its possible implications, and many genuinely exploratory responses were highly rewarded. The question was a deliberately open one, encouraging candidates to delve for meaning rather than narrowing their possible responses. The poem is deliberately mysterious, even haunting, and puts up its own barrier to over-interpretation, just as the old woman keeps away the rider and others who wish to peer through the hedge. There are no clear answers to the identity of the rider, the events of the woman's past, her reasons for hiding away or the symbolism of the fourth stanza and its relationship to the cycle of life. However, good candidates enjoyed exploring different possibilities, and the best were content to remain in a degree of uncertainty. The setting of the poem could be anywhere, and some appreciated that the woman herself might be equally archetypal.

Candidates differed in the extent to which they felt sympathetic towards the woman: some saw her as a malevolent witch-like figure, a Boo Radley or Baba Yaga; others saw her as enchanted or trapped, albeit by something of her own making, a Sleeping Beauty or Rapunzel. Some compared her to the Lady of Shalott and the rider became an unsuccessful Sir Lancelot, kept at a distance by the barrier thorn. Many found the woman barely human at all: one candidate wrote 'there is a hauntedness to her nature, something ghostly, something insubstantial'. Others took the description of her (by whom?) as a 'mad old girl' rather literally, and tried to analyse her condition. Many candidates seemed happier with the analysis of possible psychological conditions than with looking closely at the poet's use of metaphors drawn from the natural world to explain the woman's condition and her withdrawal from human contact, and yet it is the hedge itself which both tops and tails the poem. She becomes increasingly embedded in the natural world until the hedge and the woman become almost synonymous. As one strong answer put it, 'she is inextricably linked with nature...compared to a tree, her heart driven by the wind, her hands in the earth, surrounded by the hedge she planted – she has turned away from humanity and is screened by the natural world'.

Stronger answers tended to come from candidates who had something interesting to explore about the whole poem from their very first sentence, rather than those who laboured over introductions which repeated the bullet points or who worked systematically through the poem stanza-by-stanza, only beginning to venture an opinion at the very end of their essays. Such answers required some preparation and planning. They usually appreciated that the hedge is used symbolically: the descriptions of thorn and snow throughout the poem and the allusions to the sharpness of the thorns but also the whiteness, beauty and fertility of the 'snow' or blossom suggest that the hedge is an extended metaphor. Such extended metaphors can also subtly shift in meaning from stanza to stanza, just as the hedge's significance changes over time, as it grows more 'wild and high'. It should be clear that Examiners were not looking for any one single interpretation of what the thornbush represents, or had any clearer idea than is suggested in the poem of why the woman planted it. However, what was looked for, and found among the stronger responses, was an appreciation not only of how it is described but what ideas of isolation, renunciation or devotion to nature at the expense of humanity which it might represent. So answers which went beyond the descriptive, and explored in the spirit of AO2 'beyond surface meaning' to suggest possible ideas were highly rewarded.

The poem is also clearly structured into stanzas, using rhyme and half-rhyme. Successful candidates managed the difficult task of addressing the form of the poem explicitly without losing sight of the central thoughts and feelings being expressed. Focus on particular patterns and specific effects was more likely to be rewarded than listing: for example assonance, alliteration, consonance, half-rhyme, enjambment and the curtailed final line all help to establish the enduring symbiosis of woman and hedge in the poem's last two lines: 'the final half-rhyme leaves the uncomfortable feeling that the old woman does not wish to be trapped behind a 'barrier' and the final short line emphasises her separation and isolation', as one candidate put it. Another felt that the uneven lines were 'like shards of glass' and 'linked with the thornbush in denoting the woman's pain'. Good responses saw not only the uneven rhythms of the poem, but also the imagery of the wind turning her grindstone heart and shouting in winter 'Death' as a sinister, even Gothic, representation of the natural world and the process of ageing, seeing the woman as a symbol of entrapment. However, equally valid responses stressed the fecundity of the natural world and suggested that it has a reliability which the human world of the staring and peering rider lacks. These stressed the rebirth of the white bud each spring, and the beauty of the 'bee-hung blossom', although of course the later image also has a sting in its tail.

Weaker answers were very quick to interpret or to construct a narrative of their own, speculating at length about what might have happened to the woman instead of focusing on the text itself. They tended to miss the ambiguities of speaking voice in the poem. Who calls her 'only the mad old girl', which is really a colloquialism rather than an oxymoron? Once this approached as an open question, the possible answers become more interesting than narrowing down the definition. Has she excluded herself from human contact, or are others too quick to dismiss or label her? The pronouns at the end of the third stanza also raise questions about voice and viewpoint. Stronger candidates were more adventurous in their approaches to the difficult fourth stanza, but even they sometimes were confused about whether wind, woman or thornbush were whetting a branch like a knife. Many picked up the sinister aspects of this image, and of a heart turned to stone, while missing the operation of a natural cycle which also accommodates the shout of 'Life' – although again it may not be literally the woman who is shouting.

Attention to syntax and grammar can help to unlock a complex poetic text. Good answers tended to notice the change from present tense to past in the fifth stanza and to explore what it tells us about the ways in which the woman's life and song have changed. The best answers saw her glance at the sky, and the dazzle of sun and birdsong, and the strongest compared the different images of the wind to meditate on the process of time and change, seeing the progression and development of imagery throughout the poem. As one candidate wrote: 'the last stanza acts as a bridge, a divide between the seen and the unseen, between mortality and mysterious immortality'. The best answers were full of insight derived from sustained engagement with the language and images of the text, and worked from analysis of effects towards interpretation and evaluation of their impact on the reader. They reached a developed understanding of 'the hungry ridge', 'that thorn, that green, that snow' which allowed an appreciation of how human life reflects its environment; as one candidate wrote, 'the hedge represents all our insecurities and if we allow them to grow, they will control us'.

Question 2

The extract from *Nice Work* by the English novelist David Lodge provided candidates with interesting characters and issues: Robyn Penrose and Vic Wilcox are in fact both unwillingly involved in a work shadowing placement scheme and their mutual resentment is part of their hostility here. Candidates clearly found both the drama of their relationship engaging, the portrayal of the factory intriguing and disturbing, and the attitudes to employment and the world of work worth exploring. Examiners saw many highly engaged responses, and candidates had little difficulty in writing at length about the passage. That said, there are a number of ways in which responses to this kind of question could be improved further, and the problems candidates encountered with this passage, while individual, might also allow reflection on ways in which to improve the analysis and evaluation of narrative prose.

The extract provided a good balance of dialogue, description and narrative for analysis. The best candidates kept a good balance between these different elements: they realised that all of these are essential for good prose writing, and that each element reveals a great deal about the emotions of Robyn, the principal character here and hence the focus of the question. Nevertheless, many candidates have always had a tendency to work systematically through prose passages, treating them simply as narratives and producing responses which are little more than paraphrases, however well-illustrated by quotation and comment. They do not always see that it is also important to be selective rather than exhaustive when analysing a long extract like this one. Candidates who were better prepared had perhaps been guided by previous Examiners' reports, which put an emphasis on the importance of using similar analytical skills when reading prose to those needed for poetry. Both the dynamics of dialogue and the implications of the narrator's choice of imagery and language in the descriptive passages were crucial in establishing tone and mood here, and thus an overall idea of the ways in which the writing is intended to have an effect on the reader.

Narrators are not always reliable guides to what is really happening in a story, and writers using the third person are frequently adopting the point of view of characters who are very different from themselves. Robyn's view of Pringles is not only different from that of Vic Wilcox, but it is probably also very different from David Lodge's: certainly the limitations of her perspective become much more evident later in the novel. It was possible to achieve a high mark in response to this question without realising this, but most of the best candidates saw that Robyn's view of the foundry is coloured both by her reading and by her very limited experience of life. More attention in teaching to the writer's choice of narrative voice and perspective might make candidates more aware of potential irony. They could also experiment with narrative viewpoint in their own writing.

Just as in the poetry, a closer look at tenses and time frame might also have helped candidates to achieve a little more distance and perspective in examining Robyn's feelings. The reference to 'an hour or so later' and the pluperfect 'he had referred to' are the first indications that the conversation between Robyn and Vic at the beginning of the passage happened after the tour of the factory which she then reflects on: 'What *had* she expected?' and 'Robyn had said'. The dialogue and visit to production control at the end of the passage therefore occurred before the visit to the factory floor which has left Robyn so 'confused, battered, exhausted' and uncharacteristically lost for words at the beginning of the extract. This was far from easy to pick up, and again candidates were able to achieve high marks without seeing this, if they made other interesting comment about the writing, but correct appreciation of time frame and the writer's use of flashback does help a reader of narrative prose to see the ways in which description is coloured by memory and by the bias and prejudices of the character who is recalling those experiences, and therefore not to take them at face value. This is another aspect of AO2, reading for meaning which goes beyond the 'surface meanings' and explores at a deeper level. This ability to identify bias and to evaluate its potential effect is one of the valuable ways in which Literature contributes to the secondary curriculum.

Thus while many candidates were able to explore Robyn's feelings in some depth and detail and to discuss the dynamics of the relationship between Robyn and Vic, often showing a very acute awareness of gender politics and the implications of the ways in which they interrupt one another, fewer were able to put much critical distance between Robyn's feelings and their own, or to see that her point of view might be just as patronising and prejudiced as Vic's. While higher achieving candidates were able to focus on how Lodge conveys the feelings of Robyn to the reader through a clear and undivided focus on the range of methods and techniques he uses, less successful candidates tended to engage with the narrative and the characters too quickly in their answers and often did not get around to exploring the writer's methods. The descriptive paragraph about the factory was (surprisingly) avoided by a significant number of candidates. Mid- and higher-band achieving answers were more likely to comment on the imagery concerning a prison and hell and relate this to both Robyn's naivety and her revised ideas about unemployment. There were plenty of examples of language and imagery to analyse ranging from simple repetition of phrases ('the noise...the dirt') to similes such as 'like a prison', 'like hell' and 'as into a tank of water'. Candidates seemed more

reluctant to identify similes as such (let alone spell them correctly) when writing about prose than about verse. However Robyn's visions of hell and damnation accompanied by a demonic soundtrack of unrelenting cacophony give the strongest impressions of her horror and disapproval at seeing how others work. The narrator's voice was noted by the better candidates who were aware of the unsympathetic manner in which Vic was portrayed, some feeling that he was demonised as the presiding figure in this drama of undeserved punishment and retribution.

What differentiated lower and middle responses from top-band answers was a candidate's ability not only to identify these images as examples of Robyn's view of the factory but also to explore them in the context of the passage as a whole and link them to more complex language features. The best responses were able to link terms such as 'demonic cacophony' and 'satanic mills' to recognise a linguistic pattern and even intertextual references. They recognised that Robyn was taking a moral stance in seeing the workers as condemned souls or prisoners, and that her literary background colours her perception: while weaker candidates were confused by the reference to the Industrial Revolution, the more able often picked up the allusion to Blake's 'Jerusalem'. Perhaps after the Olympic opening ceremony, more will understand the central conceit of industrialisation as a loss of innocence, although they might question whether Robyn is really correct to apply this to modern employment.

However, the majority of candidates wrote well about the language of the passage while largely taking Robyn's views at face value, understanding the ways in which recurring images of dirt, noise, loss of identity and chaotic mess suggest ways in which work dehumanises people and condemns them to a 'bleak' existence. Many noticed that 'few smiled' as Robyn went past them. Those who did less well tended to paraphrase, or lose focus on the ways in which Robyn's feelings are revealed, sometimes to make personal responses to industrialisation or the role of women in the workplace. Such ideas, however passionately argued, are hard to reward in what must remain a literary response, grounded in the analysis of the writing. The best answers saw the irony of a lecturer in English Literature with a special interest in the Industrial Novel who is 'lost for words' after her first factory visit, and appreciated how her middle-class naivety is exposed in expecting a Mozart soundtrack to a vision of the factory workshop derived from television advertising. While many saw Robyn's vulnerability and the ways in which she is shocked (her emotions as 'battered' as the door to the foundry), surrounded by imagery of plunging into a demonic and nightmarish underworld, a few realised that, that far from being realistic, this language might be deliberately overblown, and thus her ill-informed prejudices are also exposed.

LITERATURE (ENGLISH)

Paper 0486/32

Unseen

Key Messages

1. Be aware of all the Assessment Criteria. A little more comment on language, for example on the effects of two or three images, using quotation as supporting evidence, can lift candidates' work into a higher mark band.
2. The amount of recommended planning and reading time is deliberately substantial. This is to encourage closer reading and planning before candidates write. They would benefit, especially in response to poetry, from forming an accurate response to the whole text before beginning to write.
3. In responses to poetry, candidates' work could be improved by more attention to the effect of extended metaphors.
4. In responses to prose, candidates can improve their work by taking a less narrative approach (i.e. *what* happens), giving more consideration to the time-frame of a piece of writing and the point of view which is presented, and then considering the writer's intended effect on the reader (i.e. *how* the writing works). Imagery and descriptive language are as important in prose passages as they are in poetry.
5. Candidates might usefully pay more attention to the way a poem or passage *ends* before they begin writing. Often the ending contains a twist or change of perspective which needs to be understood before a critical response to the text is complete.

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The format of this paper is now well-established, and both Centres and candidates clearly relish the opportunity it gives for free personal response and demonstrating the development of sophisticated skills of literary analysis at the end of the IGCSE course. It was clear that many candidates had been prepared for this Paper very well indeed: their answers were well-planned, argued and illustrated and showed individual engagement with the texts and the impression they made. Some strong responses also showed evidence of how widely candidates read in order to prepare for this task, or made illuminating comparisons with their set texts. But most also remembered that marks are gained through clear engagement with the stem question and for detailed critical analysis of the writer's use of language and its effect on the reader, demonstrated through quotation and comment. Centres have clearly paid plenty of attention to the advice provided in previous Examiners' Reports: Examiners saw very few very weak answers, and there was plenty of evidence of planning, focus on the question and extensive exploration of the effects of language choices. Candidates generally find the bullet points useful in planning their responses, although their use is not obligatory. Some weaker candidates make use of the introductory rubric to help them begin their responses: this is a reasonable approach and can help focus but will not of course attract any marks. Likewise, there is no reward for copying out footnotes: these are purely intended to help candidates with vocabulary or detail they may find difficult to understand on a literal level. They are not intended to draw particular attention to those words or phrases, or to indicate that they need special treatment. It certainly is not necessary to copy out or refer to the footnote at the appropriate moment in a candidate's response.

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The two other Assessment Objectives which need particular attention – and in the implied order – in this paper are: AO3 'the ways in which writers use language, structure and form to create and shape meanings and effects' and AO4 'communicate a sensitive and informed personal response to texts'. These can be characterised at their best as the higher order skills of analysis and evaluation. Skills of analysis in responses to this paper continue to improve impressively: candidates are more aware that the comment on effects is more important than mere quotation and identification of features of language. While Examiners are happy to reward apposite quotation, the best quotation is brief and pointed, while exploration of the effect of a rhetorical device is more highly rewarded than simply identifying its presence (or absence). Some candidates spend too long looking speculatively (and often inaccurately) at the possible implications of verse form, lineation or rhyme scheme, when deeper consideration of the non-literal use of imagery might have been a more profitable line of enquiry. In both verse and prose, it is useful to consider point of view and the time frame presented: candidates should ask if there is a particular narrative voice or viewpoint presented (or more than one) and whether the text contains a temporal shift. Flashbacks and considerations of the past are just as likely in prose as in verse: paying accurate attention to the writer's choice of tense might be especially helpful. Personal response should be embedded in an evaluation of the emotional effect of the writer's choices: empathy and sympathy are good ways to explore the ways in which writing can place us in someone else's shoes, or give us a very different perspective from our own (or perhaps that of the writer too). It is a mistake to assume that the views of a character are necessarily shared by the writer, or based on personal experience; (and even if they are, that may not be relevant to their intended effect). Similarly, personal reflections on the subject matter of a text unrelated to the language and effect of the text are not genuinely literary. Candidates have become aware of this, and now relate their feelings about a text much more closely to the way in which it is written. Texts chosen for this paper often show significant development or change in their final sections, and do not necessarily end in quite the same way they begin. A good answer shows appreciation of the overall direction of the text from the beginning of the candidate's response.

Comments on Specific Questions

Question 1

Vernon Scannell's 'Nettles' is a much more complex poem than it appears to be on the surface. While it portrays a fairly straightforward situation with a narrative, characters, recognisable human emotions and a progression of feelings and ideas, the poet's choice of extended metaphor, and the wider implications which he draws when reflecting on his experience in the final lines, allow the sentiments expressed to be applied much more widely. Thus the poem was accessible at a surface level to a wide range of candidates, but also provided a real test for the more able to show their ability to appreciate the 'deeper implications' of a text (see the Band Descriptors at Band 4 and above) and to achieve a clear critical understanding of the text (Band 2 and above) based on a sensitive and detailed appreciation of the way language and form are used (Assessment Objective 3). A strong answer went beyond the emotions of the injured boy and the father's angry response, to explain the futility of that anger, and to explore what the metaphors might tell us about our human reactions to evils we are unable to control.

Examiners saw ample evidence of detail of engagement and insight into language which the brevity of the poem allowed candidates to demonstrate. A few candidates did struggle with the idea of a nettle and thought the plant far more dangerous and the incident far more serious than it really was. Most, however, appreciated a degree of exaggeration and hyperbole in the poet's response, and many were able to begin to appreciate what lay behind this. They thus saw that this is a poem about parenthood, and the extent to which a parent can protect a child from the dangers of the world outside. The imagery suggests that some of those dangers might be man-made as well as natural.

Close analysis in many strong scripts revealed the poet's use of irony, metaphor, alliteration and onomatopoeia to recreate his powerful emotions, while many noticed how enjambment helps to give a sense of the vigour and continuity of his attempt at preventative, or retributive action. The majority of candidates worked through the poem line-by-line and found plenty to comment on. However, the limitation of this line-by-line approach was that a sense of the structure of the poem as a whole was more limited. It is in fact like a Shakespearean sonnet with a concluding coda. That should be an indication that the emotions expressed progress, develop and change. There is a concluding reflection which puts a further ironic twist on the emotions expressed earlier. Thus it might have been a good idea to have divided the poem into clear sections before writing. The sequential approach to reading the poem tended to ignore its larger structures, which are also revealed by sentence construction and by the use of conjunctions: 'And...And...And...But...'

Candidates who kept their noses too close to the text were often unable to see the deeper implications of the small incident which the poet describes until the very end, and so only addressed the subtext towards the end of their answers. This limited the extent to which they could explore and evaluate the poem's deeper implications throughout their responses.

A further limitation of line-by-line commentary, however close and detailed, is that it can miss the broader patterns of imagery which work their way through the whole poem. Again, this could be seen by more careful annotation of the text before writing. This poem depends for its effect on a persistent extended metaphor which is threaded throughout the texture of the poem's imagery. It sees the nettles as soldiers, the poet as engaged on a war against enemies, requiring him to arm himself with weapons, their attack on his son as a form of assault or wounding and his realisation that a small victory provides only temporary relief to his feelings, and no long term protection as the operation of nature has soon 'called up tall recruits behind the shed'. Good candidates really enjoyed engaging with the implications of this idea, seeing it as symbolic of man's war with nature or the problem of evil, while others engaging with the difficulties of growing up, and of parents who needed to 'let go'. Certainly those who missed the extended military analogy revealed in 'regiment of spite', 'honed the blade', 'fierce parade', 'the fallen dead' and the 'sharp wounds' as well as the 'tall recruits' missed much and were unable to show a thorough and developed response to the ways in which the writer achieves his effects, restricting them to Band 4 at best. It is this pattern of images which gives the poem its shape: thus it is much more important that the way in which too many seemed to get stuck in the nettle bed themselves by giving over-extended consideration of the irony of calling the 'green spears' a bed, without seeing that this metaphor sets up an extended presentation of the nettles as a savage and hostile alien army.

Without clear understanding of the metaphorical presentation of the army, it was harder to understand the poet's fury or pride in his weapons. Most candidates were able to engage with the presentation of the small boy's pain, and the care of his parents in soothing him and waiting for his 'watery grin' before seeking revenge. The pathos of the boy's tears and the father's care were well understood and illustrated, and many also appreciated the macho element behind the father's rage and desire to sharpen his weapon of mass destruction. However, better answers approached this with an awareness of how futile his hostility would prove to be, and some were able to extend the analogy to look at the futility of war and aggression too. Good answers saw how the extended metaphor gives the domestic drama an epic resonance: when he lights the nettles and incinerates them this becomes a 'funeral pyre to burn the fallen dead'. Some saw pettiness in this action, some saw honour: some picked up an allusion to the epic treatment of fallen enemies, whether in Homer or *Lord of the Rings*. One or two felt that 'spite' was only being treated with further spite. Some contrasted the pride of the 'fierce parade' with the father's pride in their destruction, while the best were aware that this victory would only be a hollow one, as it is inevitably so impermanent. Engagement with these issues of interpretation and meaning beyond the surface narrative is always highly rewarded by Examiners: they do not approach candidates' responses with a sense of what is the 'correct' answer, but will reward highly any bold and adventurous interpretation based on detailed and sensitive response to the words, imagery and tone of the text.

The last lines of the poem proved to be a real discriminator. Only strong candidates, although there were plenty of these, realised that they demonstrated this is not just a poem about 'nettles'. Indeed, the reference to 'the busy sun and rain' suggests that the poet's real enemy has been nature and the processes of nature, and therefore he cannot fight it with billhook and blade. Good candidates appreciated that the 'sharp wounds' which the son might feel are an extension of the military metaphor and therefore not to be read literally, or as simply a reference to nettle stings. There were some wonderful interpretations by the strongest candidates of the dark space behind the shed, as an area beyond human cultivation and control, where nature runs wild and threateningly. Many realised that while the parental instinct to protect is natural and touchingly portrayed, it cannot be sustained for ever.

Question 2

The prose passage described the experience of a real, rather than metaphorical war. However, this passage also provided high reward for those who were adventurous and advanced an interpretation which went beyond a narrative response. The key to appreciating this passage from Stephen Crane's *The Red Badge of Courage* was understanding that we share the young man's observations and reflections on the battle as he experiences it. Crucially, his feelings change and develop and he grows from agitation to commitment and confidence in the face of the enemy. Here, too, a sense of the progression of the whole passage and how it is working towards its endpoint was important. Candidates who appreciated the shape of the passage as a whole and the significance of the final sentence before beginning to write tended to be more successful than those who attempted a paragraph-by-paragraph analysis.

A further weakness of this kind of approach was that many of the most interesting images came in the last three paragraphs, and it was these which allowed candidates to address the third of the bullet points ('his changing feelings during the battle') and to show how language shapes meaning. This is also where the key development or change occurs. Thus a well-planned answer was always likely to be more successful than a narrative. Unfortunately, detailed commentary on the imagery here tended to be rare. Good candidates should see that similes and metaphors are as potent in prose as they are in poetry, and that figurative language helps the reader to gain a picture of feelings. Good examples are: 'welded into a common personality' 'he could flee no more than a little finger can commit a revolution from a hand', the regiment was like a firework' and 'the subtle battle brother hood'. The last three images are all given more extended treatment and therefore need considered analysis of the thinking behind the choice of comparison.

When so much needs to be said about how a passage ends, it is important to realise this before beginning to write. Good critical responses to prose do require timing and planning, which is why the rubric to this paper recommends 20 minutes of reading and planning before beginning an answer. Inevitably a good answer needs to show some selectivity: Examiners are more interested in the range of skills a candidate shows than in comprehensiveness. It is impossible to evaluate a whole passage without considering its ending, but skills of analysis can be demonstrated by well-chosen selection of significant moment.

There is a clear sequence of events in the passage moving from the youth's nervous expectancy, compared to 'the arrival of the circus parade', through the realisation that what he is really expecting is the arrival of the 'brown swarm' of the enemy, to the anxiety of preparation before the first, wild shot. The memory of home made a lot of sense to candidates: some commented that you often think of home when you believe you are going to die. Few saw that while the boy is 'thrillful', the circus is actually rather tawdry and faded.

Candidates enjoyed the detail with which the youth observed the feverish anxiety of the men around him to be properly equipped, although few mentioned the comedy of the comparison to women trying on 'seven hundred new bonnets'. Many speculated profitably about the tall soldier with the red handkerchief, some – perhaps correctly – seeing this as a symbol, and possibly an ominous one. There was much attention to syntax and punctuation, no doubt as a result of good Language teaching, and candidates had little difficulty in identifying the creation of tension. Most sympathised with the boy's momentary – but illogical – anxiety about whether his rifle was loaded, as he faces the enemy, and could appreciate his instincts and reason at war with each other: this showed sophisticated response to the question and the ways in which the writing brings the boy's feelings to life (the meaning of 'vividly convey'). Candidates could easily see that the youth's memory, which was only a few moments before distracted by nostalgic memories of home, is playing tricks on him.

The dialogue caused a little more difficulty. Good prose writing maintains a lively balance of narrative, description and dialogue to keep the reader attentive, but it is important to work out correctly who is speaking, as well as who is observing or narrating. While the repeated nervous cries of 'Here they come!' were easily understood, some muddled the general, the captain and the captain of the company. Perhaps to young people all the authority figures seem much the same, but part of the wit of the writing is to see the different reactions of the chain of command. The general puts pressure on his subordinate who in turn passes his stammering and fearful anxiety on to those under him by beginning to 'scold like a parrot', and appearing to resent the weakness of his own men. In contrast, the captain is much more favourably portrayed, coaxing and encouraging his 'boys' and giving them precise instructions to ensure they do not waste their fire. Good answers showed appreciation of the detail of this description of leadership under pressure. This moment shows how men are tested by pressure in the face of the enemy advancing. The comparisons to the parrot and Schoolmistress are comic but also instructive.

Nearly all candidates were able to comment in detail on the boy's emotions, as perspiration 'streamed down' his face and he wipes his eyes. Some thought he was actually crying, while others spotted the simile 'soiled like a weeping urchin' and saw that he was *almost* reduced to the state of a weeping child. Exploration of the significance of detail and what it shows marked out the really strong candidates. Almost all saw how he abandons thought and acts on instinct 'working at his weapon like an automatic affair' and that this is part of the transformation of his feelings in the face of battle. Certainly most noticed that he becomes a better shot after his first 'wild' attempt.

Treatment of the last three paragraphs tended to distinguish the stronger candidates. The youth seems to no longer care about the 'menacing fate' which so clearly threatened him and those around him just a few moments before, and no longer observes other individuals around him in a detached and judgemental way. Now he is part of a brotherhood, or 'mysterious fraternity'. He feels part of something bigger than himself. Good candidates saw that he is now simply part of a bigger entity, the regiment responding to his country in crisis. The imagery of body parts reinforces this. The dead or wounded are merely described as

'discomfited' which does not suggest fear: the prevailing imagery surrounds the mighty 'firework' of the regiment, full of 'blazing vitality' and more potent than any abstract sense of cause or identity. Very good answers saw some sinister aspects to this transformation, as well as noting that this has been a rite of passage from boyhood to manhood. Ideas of brotherhood dominate the final paragraph. Only the best answers could see through all the confusion and smoke of battle to identify exactly what had happened by the end: that the passage is essentially about feeling part of a corps or fraternity of comrades, fighting as a company, and about no longer being alone.

LITERATURE (ENGLISH)

Paper 0486/33

Alternative to Coursework (Unseen)

Key Messages

1. Be aware of all the Assessment Criteria. A little more comment on language, for example on the effects of two or three images, using quotation as supporting evidence, can lift candidates' work into a higher mark band.
2. The amount of recommended planning and reading time is deliberately substantial. This is to encourage closer reading and planning before candidates write. They would benefit, especially in response to poetry, from forming an accurate response to the whole text before beginning to write.
3. In responses to poetry, candidates' work could be improved by more attention to the effect of extended metaphors.
4. In responses to prose, candidates can improve their work by taking a less narrative approach (i.e. *what* happens), giving more consideration to the time-frame of a piece of writing and the point of view which is presented, and then considering the writer's intended effect on the reader (i.e. *how* the writing works). Imagery and descriptive language are as important in prose passages as they are in poetry.
5. Candidates might usefully pay more attention to the way a poem or passage *ends* before they begin writing. Often the ending contains a twist or change of perspective which needs to be understood before a critical response to the text is complete.

General Comments

The format of this paper is now well-established, and both Centres and candidates clearly relish the opportunity it gives for free personal response and demonstrating the development of sophisticated skills of literary analysis at the end of the IGCSE course. It was clear that many candidates had been prepared for this Paper very well indeed: their answers were well-planned, argued and illustrated and showed individual engagement with the texts and the impression they made. Some strong responses also showed evidence of how widely candidates read in order to prepare for this task, or made illuminating comparisons with their set texts. But most also remembered that marks are gained through clear engagement with the stem question and for detailed critical analysis of the writer's use of language and its effect on the reader, demonstrated through quotation and comment. Centres have clearly paid plenty of attention to the advice provided in previous Examiners' Reports: Examiners saw very few very weak answers, and there was plenty of evidence of planning, focus on the question and extensive exploration of the effects of language choices. Candidates generally find the bullet points useful in planning their responses, although their use is not obligatory. Some weaker candidates make use of the introductory rubric to help them begin their responses: this is a reasonable approach and can help focus but will not of course attract any marks. Likewise, there is no reward for copying out footnotes: these are purely intended to help candidates with vocabulary or detail they may find difficult to understand on a literal level. They are not intended to draw particular attention to those words or phrases, or to indicate that they need special treatment. It certainly is not necessary to copy out or refer to the footnote at the appropriate moment in a candidate's response.

Poetry continued this session to be more popular of the two options, but the prose was far from neglected. Some candidates do find it harder to make an analytical response to prose, and there is a tendency to paraphrase the surface narrative, with extensive quotation, instead of looking at viewpoint or the non-literal use of language. Exploring metaphor is just as important in prose as in poetry: indeed Assessment Objective 2 in the syllabus refers to exploring texts 'beyond surface meanings' and this is therefore a key quality in the stronger responses. Extended metaphor also caused some candidates problems in the poetry:

some searched for a 'story' instead of exploring and explaining the meaning of the poet's extended use of a single metaphor throughout the poem (indicated by the choice of title).

The two other Assessment Objectives which need particular attention – and in the implied order – in this paper are: AO3 'the ways in which writers use language, structure and form to create and shape meanings and effects' and AO4 'communicate a sensitive and informed personal response to texts'. These can be characterised at their best as the higher order skills of analysis and evaluation. Skills of analysis in responses to this paper continue to improve impressively: candidates are more aware that the comment on effects is more important than mere quotation and identification of features of language. While Examiners are happy to reward apposite quotation, the best quotation is brief and pointed, while exploration of the effect of a rhetorical device is more highly rewarded than simply identifying its presence (or absence). Some candidates spend too long looking speculatively (and often inaccurately) at the possible implications of verse form, lineation or rhyme scheme, when deeper consideration of the non-literal use of imagery might have been a more profitable line of enquiry. In both verse and prose, it is useful to consider point of view and the time frame presented: candidates should ask if there is a particular narrative voice or viewpoint presented (or more than one) and whether the text contains a temporal shift. Flashbacks and considerations of the past are just as likely in prose as in verse: paying accurate attention to the writer's choice of tense might be especially helpful. Personal response should be embedded in an evaluation of the emotional effect of the writer's choices: empathy and sympathy are good ways to explore the ways in which writing can place us in someone else's shoes, or give us a very different perspective from our own (or perhaps that of the writer too). It is a mistake to assume that the views of a character are necessarily shared by the writer, or based on personal experience; (and even if they are, that may not be relevant to their intended effect). Similarly, personal reflections on the subject matter of a text unrelated to the language and effect of the text are not genuinely literary. Candidates have become aware of this, and now relate their feelings about a text much more closely to the way in which it is written. Texts chosen for this paper often show significant development or change in their final sections, and do not necessarily end in quite the same way they begin. A good answer shows appreciation of the overall direction of the text from the beginning of the candidate's response.

Comments on Specific Questions

Question 1

Vernon Scannell's 'Nettles' is a much more complex poem than it appears to be on the surface. While it portrays a fairly straightforward situation with a narrative, characters, recognisable human emotions and a progression of feelings and ideas, the poet's choice of extended metaphor, and the wider implications which he draws when reflecting on his experience in the final lines, allow the sentiments expressed to be applied much more widely. Thus the poem was accessible at a surface level to a wide range of candidates, but also provided a real test for the more able to show their ability to appreciate the 'deeper implications' of a text (see the Band Descriptors at Band 4 and above) and to achieve a clear critical understanding of the text (Band 2 and above) based on a sensitive and detailed appreciation of the way language and form are used (Assessment Objective 3). A strong answer went beyond the emotions of the injured boy and the father's angry response, to explain the futility of that anger, and to explore what the metaphors might tell us about our human reactions to evils we are unable to control.

Examiners saw ample evidence of detail of engagement and insight into language which the brevity of the poem allowed candidates to demonstrate. A few candidates did struggle with the idea of a nettle and thought the plant far more dangerous and the incident far more serious than it really was. Most, however, appreciated a degree of exaggeration and hyperbole in the poet's response, and many were able to begin to appreciate what lay behind this. They thus saw that this is a poem about parenthood, and the extent to which a parent can protect a child from the dangers of the world outside. The imagery suggests that some of those dangers might be man-made as well as natural.

Close analysis in many strong scripts revealed the poet's use of irony, metaphor, alliteration and onomatopoeia to recreate his powerful emotions, while many noticed how enjambment helps to give a sense of the vigour and continuity of his attempt at preventative, or retributive action. The majority of candidates worked through the poem line-by-line and found plenty to comment on. However, the limitation of this line-by-line approach was that a sense of the structure of the poem as a whole was more limited. It is in fact like a Shakespearean sonnet with a concluding coda. That should be an indication that the emotions expressed progress, develop and change. There is a concluding reflection which puts a further ironic twist on the emotions expressed earlier. Thus it might have been a good idea to have divided the poem into clear sections before writing. The sequential approach to reading the poem tended to ignore its larger structures, which are also revealed by sentence construction and by the use of conjunctions: 'And...And...And...But...'

Candidates who kept their noses too close to the text were often unable to see the deeper implications of the small incident which the poet describes until the very end, and so only addressed the subtext towards the end of their answers. This limited the extent to which they could explore and evaluate the poem's deeper implications throughout their responses.

A further limitation of line-by-line commentary, however close and detailed, is that it can miss the broader patterns of imagery which work their way through the whole poem. Again, this could be seen by more careful annotation of the text before writing. This poem depends for its effect on a persistent extended metaphor which is threaded throughout the texture of the poem's imagery. It sees the nettles as soldiers, the poet as engaged on a war against enemies, requiring him to arm himself with weapons, their attack on his son as a form of assault or wounding and his realisation that a small victory provides only temporary relief to his feelings, and no long term protection as the operation of nature has soon 'called up tall recruits behind the shed'. Good candidates really enjoyed engaging with the implications of this idea, seeing it as symbolic of man's war with nature or the problem of evil, while others engaging with the difficulties of growing up, and of parents who needed to 'let go'. Certainly those who missed the extended military analogy revealed in 'regiment of spite', 'honed the blade', 'fierce parade', 'the fallen dead' and the 'sharp wounds' as well as the 'tall recruits' missed much and were unable to show a thorough and developed response to the ways in which the writer achieves his effects, restricting them to Band 4 at best. It is this pattern of images which gives the poem its shape: thus it is much more important that the way in which too many seemed to get stuck in the nettle bed themselves by giving over-extended consideration of the irony of calling the 'green spears' a bed, without seeing that this metaphor sets up an extended presentation of the nettles as a savage and hostile alien army.

Without clear understanding of the metaphorical presentation of the army, it was harder to understand the poet's fury or pride in his weapons. Most candidates were able to engage with the presentation of the small boy's pain, and the care of his parents in soothing him and waiting for his 'watery grin' before seeking revenge. The pathos of the boy's tears and the father's care were well understood and illustrated, and many also appreciated the macho element behind the father's rage and desire to sharpen his weapon of mass destruction. However, better answers approached this with an awareness of how futile his hostility would prove to be, and some were able to extend the analogy to look at the futility of war and aggression too. Good answers saw how the extended metaphor gives the domestic drama an epic resonance: when he lights the nettles and incinerates them this becomes a 'funeral pyre to burn the fallen dead'. Some saw pettiness in this action, some saw honour: some picked up an allusion to the epic treatment of fallen enemies, whether in Homer or *Lord of the Rings*. One or two felt that 'spite' was only being treated with further spite. Some contrasted the pride of the 'fierce parade' with the father's pride in their destruction, while the best were aware that this victory would only be a hollow one, as it is inevitably so impermanent. Engagement with these issues of interpretation and meaning beyond the surface narrative is always highly rewarded by Examiners: they do not approach candidates' responses with a sense of what is the 'correct' answer, but will reward highly any bold and adventurous interpretation based on detailed and sensitive response to the words, imagery and tone of the text.

The last lines of the poem proved to be a real discriminator. Only strong candidates, although there were plenty of these, realised that they demonstrated this is not just a poem about 'nettles'. Indeed, the reference to 'the busy sun and rain' suggests that the poet's real enemy has been nature and the processes of nature, and therefore he cannot fight it with billhook and blade. Good candidates appreciated that the 'sharp wounds' which the son might feel are an extension of the military metaphor and therefore not to be read literally, or as simply a reference to nettle stings. There were some wonderful interpretations by the strongest candidates of the dark space behind the shed, as an area beyond human cultivation and control, where nature runs wild and threateningly. Many realised that while the parental instinct to protect is natural and touchingly portrayed, it cannot be sustained for ever.

Question 2

The prose passage described the experience of a real, rather than metaphorical war. However, this passage also provided high reward for those who were adventurous and advanced an interpretation which went beyond a narrative response. The key to appreciating this passage from Stephen Crane's *The Red Badge of Courage* was understanding that we share the young man's observations and reflections on the battle as he experiences it. Crucially, his feelings change and develop and he grows from agitation to commitment and confidence in the face of the enemy. Here, too, a sense of the progression of the whole passage and how it is working towards its endpoint was important. Candidates who appreciated the shape of the passage as a whole and the significance of the final sentence before beginning to write tended to be more successful than those who attempted a paragraph-by-paragraph analysis.

A further weakness of this kind of approach was that many of the most interesting images came in the last three paragraphs, and it was these which allowed candidates to address the third of the bullet points ('his changing feelings during the battle') and to show how language shapes meaning. This is also where the key development or change occurs. Thus a well-planned answer was always likely to be more successful than a narrative. Unfortunately, detailed commentary on the imagery here tended to be rare. Good candidates should see that similes and metaphors are as potent in prose as they are in poetry, and that figurative language helps the reader to gain a picture of feelings. Good examples are: 'welded into a common personality' 'he could flee no more than a little finger can commit a revolution from a hand', the regiment was like a firework' and 'the subtle battle brother hood'. The last three images are all given more extended treatment and therefore need considered analysis of the thinking behind the choice of comparison.

When so much needs to be said about how a passage ends, it is important to realise this before beginning to write. Good critical responses to prose do require timing and planning, which is why the rubric to this paper recommends 20 minutes of reading and planning before beginning an answer. Inevitably a good answer needs to show some selectivity: Examiners are more interested in the range of skills a candidate shows than in comprehensiveness. It is impossible to evaluate a whole passage without considering its ending, but skills of analysis can be demonstrated by well-chosen selection of significant moment.

There is a clear sequence of events in the passage moving from the youth's nervous expectancy, compared to 'the arrival of the circus parade', through the realisation that what he is really expecting is the arrival of the 'brown swarm' of the enemy, to the anxiety of preparation before the first, wild shot. The memory of home made a lot of sense to candidates: some commented that you often think of home when you believe you are going to die. Few saw that while the boy is 'thrillful', the circus is actually rather tawdry and faded.

Candidates enjoyed the detail with which the youth observed the feverish anxiety of the men around him to be properly equipped, although few mentioned the comedy of the comparison to women trying on 'seven hundred new bonnets'. Many speculated profitably about the tall soldier with the red handkerchief, some – perhaps correctly – seeing this as a symbol, and possibly an ominous one. There was much attention to syntax and punctuation, no doubt as a result of good Language teaching, and candidates had little difficulty in identifying the creation of tension. Most sympathised with the boy's momentary – but illogical – anxiety about whether his rifle was loaded, as he faces the enemy, and could appreciate his instincts and reason at war with each other: this showed sophisticated response to the question and the ways in which the writing brings the boy's feelings to life (the meaning of 'vividly convey'). Candidates could easily see that the youth's memory, which was only a few moments before distracted by nostalgic memories of home, is playing tricks on him.

The dialogue caused a little more difficulty. Good prose writing maintains a lively balance of narrative, description and dialogue to keep the reader attentive, but it is important to work out correctly who is speaking, as well as who is observing or narrating. While the repeated nervous cries of 'Here they come!' were easily understood, some muddled the general, the captain and the captain of the company. Perhaps to young people all the authority figures seem much the same, but part of the wit of the writing is to see the different reactions of the chain of command. The general puts pressure on his subordinate who in turn passes his stammering and fearful anxiety on to those under him by beginning to 'scold like a parrot', and appearing to resent the weakness of his own men. In contrast, the captain is much more favourably portrayed, coaxing and encouraging his 'boys' and giving them precise instructions to ensure they do not waste their fire. Good answers showed appreciation of the detail of this description of leadership under pressure. This moment shows how men are tested by pressure in the face of the enemy advancing. The comparisons to the parrot and Schoolmistress are comic but also instructive.

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Treatment of the last three paragraphs tended to distinguish the stronger candidates. The youth seems to no longer care about the 'menacing fate' which so clearly threatened him and those around him just a few moments before, and no longer observes other individuals around him in a detached and judgemental way. Now he is part of a brotherhood, or 'mysterious fraternity'. He feels part of something bigger than himself. Good candidates saw that he is now simply part of a bigger entity, the regiment responding to his country in crisis. The imagery of body parts reinforces this. The dead or wounded are merely described as

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LITERATURE (ENGLISH)

Paper 0486/41

Paper 41 (Closed Books)

Key messages

The following are important for success on this paper:

- detailed knowledge of the whole text, not simply a part of it
- maintaining direct relevance to the question
- focus on writer's language in answers to passage-based questions
- exploration of the writer's method, not just through language and imagery, but also through structure, theme, characterisation as appropriate
- well structured and developed argument
- detailed support by way of well chosen quotation and reference, or close echoes of the text.

General comments

Examiners commented very favourably on much of the work that they saw this session. The vast majority of candidates had been very well prepared and are to be commended for their serious approach and their clear enjoyment of the texts they had studied. There were some very sincere and well-argued personal responses. Candidates' different interpretations were engaging and often perceptive, and there were very few 'clone' answers.

There was impressive general knowledge behind many of the scripts, and many could therefore put their answers in context, which supported their understanding of character and theme. This was especially true of responses to Miller in the Drama section and Fitzgerald in the prose section.

Candidates on the whole had a competent or more than competent level of understanding of the texts and this session there was more conscientiousness in answers about addressing the words of the question directly. However, in some cases there was still a tendency to repeat a question's key terms mechanically with little apparent thought as to what they meant. Some candidates would benefit from greater understanding of what is required in questions which use phrases such as 'strikingly convey', 'dramatically reveal' and 'vividly reveal'; some gave vague and unfocused responses because they did not seem to understand or wish to engage with such phrases.

The passage-based questions were the most popular, as in previous sessions. They are not in any way a 'soft' option, though. Lack of knowledge of the text quickly reveals itself even if specific external reference is not explicitly required, and the writers' method needs to be explored in depth before marks in the higher bands can be awarded. Narrative run-throughs go very little way to meeting the demands of the questions. There were some examples of candidates using the passage to answer the second ('dagger') question on a text and this, approach though not prohibited, was often very limiting.

In poetry responses there was much less 'feature-spotting' ('line X contains a simile, line Y contains two similes...') than there has been in some previous sessions. Many commented on the writer's use of language very effectively, or attempted to, knowing that this was what they were supposed to do, although in weaker answers there was evidence of 'prepared' responses, rather than comments tailored to the question. Sometimes candidates responded to language without going into detail of *how* the effects are created which encourage them to respond as they do. Other responses started with some developed analysis but this then petered out into lists. In each genre and type of question, it is rooting in the language which will enable responses to be convincing. Though it is well understood that candidates like to use technical vocabulary, it counts for nothing if it is not linked to commentary on the effects that are produced.

A significant number of candidates dealt at length with punctuation in discussing drama passages (without any awareness that it is Shakespeare's printers and editors, not Shakespeare, who are generally responsible

for it). But comments such as ‘Cassius’ use of elision makes him very persuasive’ and ‘The exclamation marks after ‘O’ and ‘sham’d’ highlight the need for urgency, making Cassius very persuasive.’ often seemed rather stretched, especially if not then supported with more analysis, and tended to get away from the sense of drama as drama.

The empathic questions were significantly less popular; in fact, there was a sense that Centres are increasingly discouraging candidates from attempting them. Those who did try often showed a sensitivity to some essentially important ideas/facets of characters or plots, revealing a wider understanding of the texts. It was, of course, essential to identify precisely the moment specified in a question. There were very few examples of candidates offering the wrong character or of not attempting to create a voice for the character.

Candidates are reminded that they should present their work and number their answers clearly.

Section A: Drama

Death of a Salesman

Question *1

This text was a popular choice – and this was the most popular question on it. Candidates were able to relate the question to the American Dream, citing a great deal of evidence from the text. Stronger responses showed a very clear understanding of Willy’s state of mind and the techniques he uses to delude himself, and they used Charley and Linda as a counterbalance to Ben’s misleading model for Willy. Weaker responses were less clear about what Willy wants and what he thinks he has, but almost all candidates were able to bring their knowledge of the play as a whole to bear, and they also addressed stage directions. A few were able to address the key words ‘dramatically reveal’ convincingly, but many took refuge in general platitudes about the American Dream, without textual support and therefore lost focus on the task. Much was made of dashes and exclamation marks, but very often in isolation from how they might actually affect the words the characters speak. The best answers made some response to staging, for example the effectiveness and symbolism of the music, the tension of the umbrella poised over Biff’s eye.

Question † 2

This was almost as popular as the previous question (though a few tried to answer it just on the basis of the extract in Question 1). Candidates overwhelmingly had sympathy for Biff; as the only one in the family who faces up to reality. Impressive knowledge of his story was shown, from his childhood football, to Boston and then Willy’s death, and detailed textual evidence was offered in support of arguments, including his enjoyment of the outdoors, his maths troubles, and his loyalty to Linda. His thefts were perhaps understressed, although the reasons for them were well understood. Willy’s attempts at fatherhood were considered exceptionally well in better answers, leading to much sympathy for Biff especially since he ultimately confronts Willy. Weaker answers found it difficult to rise above character sketches or simply alluded to parts of the text and asserted ‘This makes Biff sympathetic’. Some also got into unprofitable extended comparisons with Happy.

Question 3

By contrast, there were relatively few answers to this question but some were very well done, chosen by very able candidates, who wrote knowledgably of Bernard’s efforts to be a friend, his childhood, and the differences between himself and Biff now. There was effective use made of the mystery surrounding what happened in Boston. Candidates were able to capture a sense of Bernard’s concern well, though there was a tendency in less successful answers to paint him as a conceited and rather severe figure in terms of his attitude towards Willy – out of keeping with the humble, modest character we learn of in the play.

Much Ado About Nothing

Question *4

This question was a very popular choice. Candidates obviously had a liking for Benedick. His change from wit to hero was well charted in considerable detail, with some excellent descriptions of his new attitudes and strength. Candidates understood the puns and language impressively well, and were able to trace subtle insults very effectively. Most found the changes in Benedict admirable, but weaker answers were less successful in identifying where this was indicated in the text. Very good answers showed that our good

opinion of Benedick here is due to our contrastingly low opinion of Don Pedro and Claudio. Although most were aware of the context, it was often implicit rather than used to substantiate points.

Question † 5

Overall, this question was perhaps the least well answered of the three on *Much Ado*, the main reason being that there was a tendency to re-tell whole swathes of the text leading up to the end, with little focus on the actual ending itself. Most covered the four lovers and Don John, and also Don Pedro, candidates feeling sorry for him because he had no partner, and feeling that Shakespeare should have written it differently. These candidates also wanted some punishment for Don John on stage, thinking that justice had not been done. Good answers addressed all the strands with some subtlety, tracing their roots back into the play whilst supplying some details from the ending. The best responses showed some balance, expressing reservations about Claudio, for example.

Question 6

A good sense of malevolence was conveyed in responses to this question, though a few candidates overplayed this. Most answers conveyed resentment and jealousy. The best brought in textual references well. There were interesting motives, including an illicit love for Hero and a desire to bring down Don Pedro. There were some imaginative ideas about an abused childhood, but these were not always linked clearly to the play, and often candidates struggled to find things to say.

Julius Caesar

Question *7

Most candidates showed that they knew the whole play well and demonstrated a good understanding of both characters. Good answers looked in detail at the speech and realised how creatively Cassius kept adapting his approach until he found something which worked on Brutus; some also put the extract in context, and explained why Brutus was particularly vulnerable at this particular moment. Even most of the weaker candidates were able to say that Cassius appealed to Brutus' honour, although not always pointing to a specific example of this; conversely, some noticed the repetition of 'Rome' and 'one man' without being able to explain why it was important. Weaker answers misunderstood Brutus's motivations as envy/ambition rather than Republican ideals. However, many candidates did not see this question as an invitation to explore language, but a requirement simply to list rhetorical strategies involved. Their answers tended to be based on the use of rhetorical questions, similes (Colossus), use of anaphora, subtle hints (few examples were offered), comparisons, and punctuation. When candidates supplied appropriate examples from the text and commented on their language choice, answers were sound, but many penalised themselves by not exploring language, apart from offering a quotation to demonstrate a rhetorical strategy - a pity when there were such rich pickings. Apt quotations were often left to speak for themselves. Some answers contained long vague paragraphs on pitch of voice or an actor's expression, which did not add a lot to the response.

Question † 8

Most candidates knew the context of the quotation and were able to utilise it effectively. There were responses on both sides, and most argued effectively with textual evidence. Many answers took Brutus's nobility as a given in the play and adduced multiple quotations to 'prove' it, arguing either 'He must be noble because x y and z all say he is' or 'He must be noble because he worries about doing the right thing all the time', with multiple examples of the latter. Some were unhelpfully sidetracked into discussions of differences between Roman and Elizabethan ideas of honour (especially when it came to Brutus's suicide). Better answers explored what might constitute nobility or honour for Brutus and within his particular context. There were some original and effective points, such as Brutus as a husband and friend. Weaker answers tended to be very black-and-white, sometimes showing some misunderstanding of Brutus as a weak and ambitious fool (even though they usually kept well to the question wording).

Question 9

This proved a good example of where candidates' knowledge of the play as a whole worked well to inform empathic work, with considerable knowledge shown of what had led up to this scene, and good understanding of Caesar's strengths and weaknesses. Calphurnia's fearful voice was clear. There were relatively few answers, but they were well done.

Journey's End

Question *10

More successful answers gave very close readings of the passage. Understanding of both characters was often excellent, though Trotter was harder to qualify than Osborne and some candidates misunderstood his use of humour. Close attention was given to stage directions, 'Alice', Osborne's short sentences, and the reasons for them. The relationship between the two men was also explored sensitively, for example differences of class as shown through language and attitudes, and the bonding that went on in the trenches, which included the care taken over Raleigh and Mason. The way both men coped with the news of the raid, and their distractions, was well understood – this is a subtle point in the text and candidates did very well to tease it out. In weaker responses there was a lack of awareness of the context and a need to engage with details from the passage yet further.

Question † 11

This was a popular choice and it was generally well answered. Some candidates could have drawn from a wider range of evidence, however. Since Osborne is such an obviously admirable character, candidates were able to engage readily with the question and this lifted responses above character sketches. As a stripling in his mid-40s, he was ubiquitously regarded as being very old. Weaker responses listed his avuncular qualities, usually in relation to his 'looking out for' Stanhope. There were many high-level responses which looked in depth at Osborne's own well-hidden feelings, tracing them through his language until his death. The best left the ending of their essays to Stanhope's comments after Osborne's death. Weaker candidates, ironically, sometimes used the extract set for Question 10 as their main evidence for assertions about Osborne. In a way he suffered the same fate as Brutus, because he was so self-evidently an admirable character that candidates struggled to do more than merely reiterate this with examples, although some did manage a more nuanced account of what we might admire about him in his particular circumstances.

Question 12

Very few candidates opted for this question. Those who did were quite limited in what they wrote, though there was acknowledgement of Stanhope's fastidiousness and concerns over Hardy.

Section B: Poetry

Tennyson

Question *13

There was a significant increase in the number of Centres choosing this text this session. Answers were about equally divided between all three questions on it. All candidates understood Ulysses' desire for travel, and state of mind, although they were not strong on what that meant. All the major images in the poem were quoted, for example the star and arch, with little understanding of what was beyond, or what the images were offering. The commentary was therefore often a little repetitive, focused on the travel. The context of the poem seldom seemed to be known, possibly indicating that some candidates chose this question 'unseen'. There was some misreading, especially the line 'I am become a name', and often an over-emphasis on arrogance and vanity. There was much vehemence regarding the ageism of the 'aged wife'.

Question † 14

The question invited personal response, and candidates were quick to exploit the opportunity. Some of the answers were truly moving themselves, showing empathy with Tennyson's grief and loss. There was much good analysis, especially of the 'dark house' lyric, and *Ring Out...* The depth of understanding in some answers was outstanding, candidates really getting behind the language to recreate the feelings. All recognised the shift in feelings over time.

Question † 15

Some of the commentaries were almost as vivid as the original. All candidates captured the use of colour, gold, sun, black curls, and fire images. Not all got as far as Camelot, which is of course a key point. There were differing arguments on Lancelot's last actions, and some candidates were severely censorious of him, blaming him for knowingly causing the death of the Lady. Weaker answers tended to concentrate on the vivid description of Lancelot.

Songs of Ourselves

Question *16

Candidates were secure in understanding the general meaning and ‘message’ of the poem. All understood a sense of loss and recognised the difference between ‘then’ and ‘now’, but there were a lot of what might be termed ‘run-through’ answers. Selected images were quoted, explained and deemed to be powerful laments, but in general there was not much engagement with the shape and sound of the poem. Language points centred round alliteration, line-length and repetition, sometimes a little mechanically, at the expense of meaning and focus on the word ‘powerfully’.

Question † 17

Lament was popular. The poem seemed to have a contemporary resonance and to strike a chord with most candidates. Many felt strongly about the destruction in the poem, and the best answers analysed the ‘ashes of language’ image in real and heart-felt depth. Many answers explored all the main images in the poem, from turtle to ashes; and the personal response to the poem was very strong. Many knew why the poem had been written and talked knowledgeably about Clarke’s feelings; all answers focused closely on the question. Less accomplished candidates needed to show what the poet’s emotions were to secure higher reward in their answers. They sometimes explored imagery from the first part of the text, but the climax at the end was often ignored completely.

First Love was equally popular, but it attracted some candidates who did not really respond to the feelings, or the poet, and struggled to comment on the language, often calling it ‘simple’, showing a lack of understanding of images such as the burning and the snow. Many were able to do a mechanical analysis or appreciation of individual images and so forth without relating the pain experienced by the narrator to the over-arching fact that his feelings of love are unrequited

Question † 18

Though comparison was not required, some candidates compared the two poems effectively, and produced some lively answers. Some, as with the Clare poem in Question 17, struggled with Byron’s feelings, not sure what they were; others who did understand, wrote about the poem with relish. Browning was better understood, and there was some good knowledge on ‘measuring’ love.

Section C: Prose

Wuthering Heights

Question *19

This was by far the most popular of the options on this novel. Candidates focused on the passage and they were able to highlight the sadness and poignancy of the death of Mr Earnshaw. They commented on how the death meant trouble for Heathcliff in foreshadowing his abuse by Hindley. Few mentioned Nelly Dean’s part in the extract. In general a closer analysis of language was needed and more comments on the effects of the writer’s language choice, though stronger candidates were usually confident in discussing pathetic fallacy and pathos, and some even commented upon the reliability of the account by Nelly Dean. Better answers, however, linked the significance of the scene to the development of the rest of the novel and this contextualisation made for more complete appreciation. In weaker answers, responses to ‘moving’ tended to be limited to the last (and often misunderstood) exchange between Mr Earnshaw and Cathy, very little was generally made of the children’s grief and how they dealt with it. ‘Significant’ was not often addressed.

Question † 20

This was well done in general. Most recognised both the Victim and Monster in Heathcliff but traced the latter back to his appalling treatment at the hands of Hindley – explaining his evil vengeance, if not excusing it. (A very rare few looked beyond the text to consider the characterisation in terms of gothic literature.) Most recognised a key moment of change when Cathy said she could not marry Heathcliff, and understood how the latter’s childhood treatment affected him. There was not much, oddly, on his love for Cathy.

Question 21

There were far too few answers on this empathic task to make general comment appropriate.

Hullabaloo in the Guava Orchard

Question *22

Candidates generally embraced this novel with enthusiasm and knew the text well, using this knowledge as essential background for their answers, especially in relation to the 'holy' man's back story. Many responded to the humour in the extract with exuberance and liveliness. Most answers were detailed and analytical, writing at length about the photographs, the *Times* report, and Sampath in his tree. Better answers stood back a little and tried to find a more critical approach to the sources of humour, e.g. social pretension and cultural misconceptions, and gave convincing evaluations of Desai's writing and effects. Weaker answers found it difficult to explain the humour and fell back on picking out details and simply stating that they are humorous.

Question † 23

Responses to this question tended to be similar to the previous one, for similar reasons. Once again, the better responses showed a real enjoyment and had a rich seam of material to mine. Candidates who could explain the humour in Pinky, referring to her colourful dress sense, the biting of the ear, and the idea of being followed tended to do well. She was seen as a typical teenager, even a little stereotypical. Few answers referred to the end of the novel, when she is trying to choose between suitors.

Question 24

This generated varied responses. Not many candidates were able to capture an appropriate balance between Mr Chawla's mercenary values and his feelings towards Sampath, but most had some sense of the moment's place within the wider context, and a few captured his querulous, self assured, 'busy busy' voice convincingly.

The Great Gatsby

Question *25

This was a very popular question, and often very well answered. Much enjoyment of the text was shown. There was some very successful writing about the language, for example the images of grass, house, and green light. Nick's feelings were covered well and sympathetically. The second half of the extract differentiated well. Most could appreciate the sense of the party being over and the dead atmosphere surrounding Gatsby's house but some were unable to interpret the symbolism towards the end. That severely limited the quality as it is these final paragraphs that relate to the over-arching themes of the novel. As a result, the complete sense of the novel coming to an end was not explained. A few clearly did not know the novel in sufficient detail. Some answers were diverted into more general essays about Nick and his unreliable narration, and so were answering the question rather narrowly. Most candidates were successful in the level of quotation and analysis they used, and the best were able to write with a good focus on the question, assessing the significance of details in view of previous parts of the novel.

Question † 26

Daisy is clearly a character who engaged a lot of candidates imaginatively, and divided opinion. Many pointed out that we get only Nick's perspective. Comments were strong and, in the main, based on excellent knowledge and understanding of her own words and actions. Some very thoughtful answers explored the background and culture, for example in relation to the daughter and marrying a wealthy man; a few very good answers argued that Daisy was in fact a victim. On the other hand, "Daisy is the embodiment of all that is the American Dream." Discuss' seemed to be the question that a significant number of candidates attempted. The material is not impossible to fit to the actual question, but they found it difficult to do so.

Question 27

This was significantly less popular than the essay and passage-based tasks. Some answers tended to be rather excessive in portraying Jordan's regret over the end of the relationship with Nick; others were far too nonchalant. In general there was a lack of detailed knowledge of the character and answers tended to be rather brief.

When Rain Clouds Gather

Question *28

Good answers worked well with the extract, picking out appropriate words and imagery on which to comment. They showed an understanding of the significance of this event to the lives of African women and to village life. Weaker answers considered aspects of the extract, but did not focus enough on how it makes “the village community come to life”. There was a sense in some answers that the novel as a whole was not very well known. Though the traditional rituals associated with the marriage were described, many did not point out that this is a very special occasion, and their responses were limited, lacking depth and detail. Few quotations or clear references were used.

Question † 29

Most answers explored Makhaya as a central character, yet needed to focus more on the word ‘compelling’ in the question. References to the text were scanty and comments were not always grounded in the text.

Question 30

There were very few answers to this question. Necessary for success was a strong sense of the context: that Mma-Millipepe would be reflecting that this was an extraordinary time to talk business with Gilbert, who has left his bride just before the feast is to start.

Ethan Frome

Question *31

This text was very popular this session and candidates clearly enjoyed it. Candidates tackling this question, the most popular of the three on the text, generally made detailed use of the extract, selecting and commenting on key detail from the passage; better responses were wide-ranging in scope and able to include apt comments on setting and on pathetic fallacy. Despite their obvious engagement, many candidates did not show *close* understanding of the passage; for example, very few referred to the cause of Ethan’s jealousy and the obsessiveness of that emotion. Equally, a lot missed the significance of the tombstone with hardly any drawing attention to the name Endurance. The almost feverish build up of his passion as he reaches the door of the farmhouse was not really reflected in many cases, though empathy for Ethan was much in evidence – candidates clearly liked and sympathised with him. There were many good answers which recreated the tension in the extract and question in their own writing, using similar dramatic techniques to the author.

Question † 32

There was a need to consider the portrayal of Mattie throughout the novel in this question; better answers offered this broad approach, though with selection of precise textual evidence. Some answers, following Mattie’s story from before her arrival to a bleak future. Good knowledge of the text was shown, and relevant references to the pickle dish, dinners, the ribbon in the hair, Zeena, and the accident. Better answers found more of substance in the character of Mattie by comparing her to Zeena (particularly through the eyes of Ethan) rather than dwelling on her impoverished background and so forth.

Question 33

There were plausible responses for this empathic task. Candidates acknowledged and portrayed Ethan’s vacillation and a need to marry for practical reasons. Pleasingly, most were reminded of Zeena’s early ‘vigour’. However, once the fear of being alone had been dealt with, lots of candidates found it difficult to move forward from there. Good answers clearly intimated that respect and gratitude were the more positive reasons for the proposal with love or, at least, physical attraction, playing no part.

Stories of Ourselves

Question *34

There was some insight shown into the personality of the narrator and her relationship with her husband and even the weakest answers conveyed a complex relationship with ‘undercurrents’. There was widespread misunderstanding of John, however; some thought that he was intentionally locking his wife away, enjoyed

power for its own sake, and even caused the Narrator's illness in the first place. There was also, conversely, a belief that everything was usual for the period, women were expected to be neurotic and the Narrator was making a lot of unnecessary fuss. Such readings tended to dominate many answers at the expense of real exploration of the Narrator's personality. They tended not to answer the question "How?". Short sentences, rhetorical questions and exclamations were not commented on. In general, more analysis of the writer's technique was needed.

Question † 35

Some handled the ending of the *The Signalman* very well, though answers on it were perhaps the least successful. *Secrets* generally evoked a sound response. Exploration of *Meteor* varied in success, depending on whether the candidate had appreciated the ironies, or any irony. Weaker responses offered narrative reprises before getting to the point of the question. Better responses engaged with the language in the ending of the stories but quite a few candidates did little more than summarise. Overall, candidates wrote briefly about the texts, giving a sketchy overview. There was very little quotation.

Question 36

Candidates engaged well with this question and responses offered a good sense of guilt and remorse on the part of the narrator. The boy's reflections were lively and many candidates clearly sustained his voice, incorporating details from the text with understanding. Willadean and Mr and Mrs Wills featured strongly.

Conclusion: Some key messages for candidates

- Answer the question as posed - do not try and force it to fit 'prepared' answers to previous questions. Read the question carefully, looking for the key words and phrases on which to base an answer.
- Take time to plan both ideas and structure in the answer.
- Engage with the detail of extract questions and explore the precise effects created by particular words. (Don't devote an answer to punctuation marks at the expense of writing about *words*.)
- Use brief quotations and always do so as part of analysis, not for decoration. Avoid unhelpful long quotations.
- Pay close attention to the instructions in questions, to words such as 'explore', 'in what ways' and particularly the little word "how". Constant reference to key words from the title in the answer can often encourage relevance and focus.

LITERATURE (ENGLISH)

Paper 0486/42

Paper 42 (Closed Books)

Key messages

The following are important for success on this paper:

- detailed knowledge of the whole text, not simply a part of it
- maintaining direct relevance to the question
- focus on writer's language in answers to passage-based questions
- exploration of the writer's method, not just through language and imagery, but also through structure, theme, characterisation as appropriate
- well structured and developed argument
- detailed support by way of well chosen quotation and reference, or close echoes of the text.

General comments

Examiners commented very favourably on much of the work that they saw this session. The vast majority of candidates had been very well prepared and are to be commended for their serious approach and their clear enjoyment of the texts they had studied. There were some very sincere and well-argued personal responses. Candidates' different interpretations were engaging and often perceptive, and there were very few 'clone' answers.

There was impressive general knowledge behind many of the scripts, and many could therefore put their answers in context, which supported their understanding of character and theme. This was especially true of responses to Miller in the Drama section and Fitzgerald in the prose section.

Candidates on the whole had a competent or more than competent level of understanding of the texts and this session there was more conscientiousness in answers about addressing the words of the question directly. However, in some cases there was still a tendency to repeat a question's key terms mechanically with little apparent thought as to what they meant. Some candidates would benefit from greater understanding of what is required in questions which use phrases such as 'strikingly convey', 'dramatically reveal' and 'vividly reveal'; some gave vague and unfocused responses because they did not seem to understand or wish to engage with such phrases.

The passage-based questions were the most popular, as in previous sessions. They are not in any way a 'soft' option, though. Lack of knowledge of the text quickly reveals itself even if specific external reference is not explicitly required, and the writers' method needs to be explored in depth before marks in the higher bands can be awarded. Narrative run-throughs go very little way to meeting the demands of the questions. There were some examples of candidates using the passage to answer the second ('dagger') question on a text and this approach, though not prohibited, was often very limiting.

In poetry responses there was much less 'feature-spotting' ('line X contains a simile, line Y contains two similes...') than there has been in some previous sessions. Many commented on the writer's use of language very effectively, or attempted to, knowing that this was what they were supposed to do, although in weaker answers there was evidence of 'prepared' responses, rather than comments tailored to the question. Sometimes candidates responded to language without going into detail of *how* the effects are created which encourage them to respond as they do. Other responses started with some developed analysis but this then petered out into lists. In each genre and type of question, it is rooting in the language which will enable responses to be convincing. Though it is well understood that candidates like to use technical vocabulary, it counts for nothing if it is not linked to commentary on the effects that are produced.

Those who attempted the empathic tasks often showed sensitivity to some essentially important ideas/facets of characters or plots, revealing a wider understanding of the texts. It was, of course, essential to identify precisely the moment specified in a question. There were very few examples of candidates offering the wrong character or of not attempting to create a voice for the character.

Candidates are reminded that they should present their work and number their answers clearly.

Section A: Drama

Death of a Salesman

Question *1

This text was a popular choice – and this was the most popular of the three questions on it. Responses ranged from the explanatory and superficial to those with very good focus and understanding. Some of the weaker responses gave a line-by-line commentary on Biff and Linda’s conversation, showing her love for Willy and confusion at the deterioration of Willy and Biff’s relationship. The higher band responses explored Biff’s dilemma, understanding how later revelations made sense of his anger about Willy’s treatment of Linda, but some candidates mistakenly thought that the audience knows about the Boston incident at this particular point. Some candidates gave the impression that they did not know this text and were using the passage as an unseen: there was much quoting and paraphrasing with no evidence of background knowledge/understanding. Some grasped the ideas of ‘moving’ and ‘sad’ and attempted to select the evidence which showed these aspects. The very best were able to show how Biff has lost belief in Willy and how this signals the loss of his ambitions and hopes for the future.

Question † 2

This was not a popular question, but those who chose it understood what was required and brought forward all their ideas about the American Dream. They generally selected ‘moments’ judiciously, the most popular choice being Willy’s interview with Howard.

Question 3

Biff’s anger, disappointment and disillusionment were well appreciated and this moment, being perhaps the most memorable in the play, was well known. Answers were differentiated by the amount of detail that they included; higher scoring answers went beyond a mere outpouring of emotion to cite the reasons for Biff’s turning up in Boston, to reflect on details of his relationship with Willy, and to look to what the future holds, but a significant number of candidates offered much too detailed a plan of action for Biff at this juncture - ‘I’m going to give everything up and go west to work on a farm’. The quality of the voice was also a key differentiator. The words ‘phony’ and ‘fake’ were much used but the voice had to be consistent in order to score highly.

Much Ado About Nothing

Question *4

This question was a very popular choice and elicited a range of responses across the range. There were some engaged answers, although some candidates did just list the jokes. They seemed to find it more difficult to write about how the scene was 'serious' at the same time. Most candidates recognised the nature of the humour, but only higher band responses were able to analyse how the language in the extract worked to create this humour. They generally saw the significance and the seriousness of the scene in the context of the accusation against Hero. The best answers showed an awareness of the effect of Shakespeare's placement of the scene immediately following the intensity of the scene in which Beatrice demands that Benedick should kill Claudio.

Question † 5

Candidates needed to produce more than a mere character study here, and reward was given to answers that demonstrated a clear personal response and an attempt to evaluate Don John's behaviour. In general candidates found him intriguing because of his villainy, but often limited their answers to an account of his actions with some attempt to explain his motives.

Question 6

A clear sense of enjoyment was communicated by many answers to this question and there were some very impressive assumptions of the character of Beatrice, the best making a good attempt at conveying her wit and integrating echoes of the text very effectively. Generally candidates conveyed convincing baffled feistiness. Her confusion about Benedick's behaviour and reference to their 'merry war of words' was usually understood well, and higher band responses interwove textual detail about this and her views of marriage and indicated her feelings for Benedick. A few candidates were confused as to the timing of this moment and were unclear whether this was between the 'tricks' or after them both; some wrote as if Beatrice had already overheard Ursula and Hero talking and moved ahead to when Benedick has declared his feelings.

Julius Caesar

Question *7

This was a popular question. Commentary on the extract tended to focus on Antony's desire for revenge and often adopted a line-by-line approach, with little exploration of the power of the language. Some gave an unnecessary introduction before getting on to focus on the passage itself. Some candidates – but not many – thought Antony was speaking to the masses. Some better answers moved beyond the soliloquy to consider the servant's reaction to the sight of Caesar's body and Antony's final speech. The best answers made close critical examination of the language and showed awareness of Shakespeare's stagecraft in using the servant. Only a small proportion referred to the language in any detail, however, and 'How' was sometimes forgotten. Many candidates, although they chose the passage-based question, hardly quoted at all.

Question † 8

The essay on Brutus was generally done very well with some really compelling answers, which were rooted in the text and cited a range of reasons why audiences might sympathise with Brutus. Less successful answers tended to focus on what Brutus does and why, with little sense of the way Shakespeare presents him and hardly a single quotation.

Question 9

Most responses were excellent, although a few offered a 'narrative' rather than 'thoughts' and some gave Caesar all sorts of doubts which were not really in character. Answers usually included some detail but tended to be repetitive about the omens. In the best answers, thorough knowledge of text was used well to support the response and the 'voice' was suitably arrogant, self-obsessed and yet fearful because of Calphurnia's dream.

Journey's End

Question *10

While less popular than the Shakespeare choices in this section, this text had been similarly appreciated and enjoyed by those who had studied it. There were a number of responses to this question, though 'gripping' was sometimes forgotten, candidates being more concerned with the military hierarchy. The stage directions were generally well appreciated.

Question † 11

Hibbert got a surprising amount of sympathy from candidates – perhaps seeing the 'human' side to him, not attractive, but realistic. Candidates seemed to think his cowardice was endearing because at least he was honest – he was plain scared, like most people would be in his situation. Not many analysed the Stanhope/Hibbert confrontation fully, particularly the former's more sympathetic stance after his threat to shoot. Hibbert's less attractive qualities were usually ignored.

Question 12

Osborne was well represented with a lot of detail and a convincing voice conveying his generous spirit.

Section B: Poetry

Tennyson

Questions *13, 14, and 15

In the responses to Tennyson, Questions 13 and 15 were more evident, with very few on 14. The language engaged the candidates in both poems, with a range of interpretations of the imagery. Some focused heavily on the sexual implications of the poplar tree as a metaphor for Marianna's frustration. References to the personal context of Tennyson's poetry was often interwoven, reflecting candidates' knowledge of his experiences and relationships, and this was generally used well to develop their response to his language. The best answers were fully engaged with close attention to language and structure; less impressive answers imposed extraneous ideas on the extract without evidence. "How" was sometimes overlooked. The weakest answers used very little detail from the poems and showed a lack of familiarity with them.

Songs of Ourselves

Questions *16, 17 and 18

Songs of Ourselves was the more popular choice for the poetry section, with Questions 16 and 18 being chosen more than 17. There were fewer explanatory/paraphrase essays and almost everyone at least attempted to make some comment on language, however simple. Candidates appeared to enjoy responding to the feelings expressed in the poems for Questions 16 and 18, often exploring the language and particularly the imagery in a thoughtful and sometimes perceptive way. The sonnets and *Marrysong* were perfectly well understood but for the former (especially *Sonnet 43*) there was sometimes a lot of abstract generalising over love and reading into the poem facets of love that the candidate obviously thought ought to be there. The focus was on meaning and there was insufficient close examination of the words and images and their effects. Not that there were not some very sensitive essays. Answers on *Marrysong* seemed altogether fresher responses. The few who chose Question 17 on the Hughes and Arnold struggled to find any 'mystery' in the night and were reduced to writing a general commentary on the poems so restricting the mark that it was possible to award. A number of candidates strayed away from the question in focusing exclusively on Arnold's attitude to religion and there was some confusion in the interpretation of the Hughes poem. In the case of the Hughes, biographical detail often obscured the effect of the poem.

Section C: Prose

Wuthering Heights

Question *19

Whilst candidates showed good understanding of Heathcliff and his feelings at this point and recognised the significance of the passage in relation to end of the novel, there were few who explored Brontë's writing and its dramatic effects. Many candidates wrote a lengthy preamble, and some gave no more than a cursory glance at the passage itself, choosing to write about what followed instead.

Question † 20

There were some sound answers on Joseph, although some candidates misunderstood the question and wrote about how he was unsympathetic to other characters rather than how he was portrayed in an unsympathetic way by Brontë. There were some baffled responses to his dialect, seeming to regard it as a ruse he employed to obscure what he was saying.

Question 21

Heathcliff's desire for revenge and his determination to use Linton were well expressed in the empathy task and the best responses effectively interwove his feelings for Catherine alongside his past treatment at the hands of Edgar and Hindley. Most reflected on his lack of real feeling for Linton and simple desire to use him as a pawn. A few candidates gave a level of detail about his future plans which seemed rather unconvincing at this stage in the novel but all seemed to relish writing in role and there was some effective building in of detail. Excellent textual references were interwoven in the best of them.

Hullabaloo in the Guava Orchard

Question *22, 23 and 24

Candidates conveyed a lot of enthusiasm for the extract in Question 22, showing engagement with Desai's language and appreciating the contrast between Kulfi here and elsewhere in the novel. There were far too few answers to the other questions for general comment to be appropriate.

The Great Gatsby

Question *25

Responses to *The Great Gatsby* were more evenly spread over the questions, with the extract being the most popular. Candidates tended to be sympathetic to Daisy, often missing the impact of seeing her from Nick's perspective in the final paragraph. Stronger candidates had plenty to work on and could comment on the ambivalent feelings encouraged by Fitzgerald; less confident ones took Daisy at face value, often misreading Nick's "I suppose she talks, and – eats, and everything" as being said by Daisy as evidence of her indifference to her child. Some candidates ignored the 'at this moment' part of the question and wrote about aspects of Daisy which were not evident from the passage.

Question † 26

There was some staunch defence of Jay Gatsby, with sympathy and admiration for his faithful pursuit of Daisy; even when his bootlegging was acknowledged, it was defended by his love. Some candidates failed to mention how his death came about, but recognised his loyalty to Daisy in his acceptance of her guilt regarding the car accident. Reflections on the American Dream were sometimes intrusive but other candidates used this context effectively to justify the way they interpreted the presentation of Gatsby. This was another opportunity to explore ambivalence, and was grasped eagerly by the strongest candidates.

Question 27

In writing in role as Tom, most candidates showed his arrogance and his attitude to Daisy, with the best showing also his feelings for Myrtle and motives in leaving town as well as his attitude to Nick. The best answers displayed convincing awareness of Tom's arrogant carelessness, racism and misogyny. Some less successful answers included references to themes that had been taught, in a way that was inappropriate for the character. For example, candidates had Tom talking about 'The American Dream' and 'old money' in an effort to show how well they knew the book.

When Rain Clouds Gather

Question *28

The relatively few candidates who answered this tended to deal quite thoroughly with the passage and focused on Mma-Millipede's likeability especially her motherliness and her care and concern for her friends, like Paulina. Better answers explored the point that she was farsighted and keen on progress.

Question † 29

There were far too few answers on this question to make general comment appropriate.

Question 30

The character of Gilbert was quite well known as was the significance of his first meeting with Makhaya. Though the voice was often not particularly distinctive, the best answers often included some appropriate detail.

Ethan Frome

Question *31

This was the most popular of the three questions on this text and generally the focus on 'dramatic' was good, candidates citing the contrast between Ned and Ruth and Ethan and Mattie, the desperation of the latter pair at their imminent separation. Some made the point that there is almost a role reversal here in that Mattie is taking the initiative in suggesting the suicide pact. Good answers explored the language in some detail, showing the over-heated quality of their speech and behaviour, for example 'she whispered breathlessly', 'flung her arms about him', 'groping' for his lips. Appreciation of the situation was common but awareness of Wharton's hand in creating drama here less so.

Question † 32

Strong antipathy to Ethan, who was perceived as weak was evident in some answers but most candidates displayed awareness of the whole book and weighed up responsibilities. The general conclusion seemed to be that Ethan was bad at making decisions and had too strong a moral sense and that circumstances weighed very heavily against him.

Question 33

This was not a popular task but those who attempted it showed a good understanding of the character and usually managed to convey something of Zeena's spitefulness and querulousness. Some were surprisingly sympathetic.

Stories of Ourselves

Question *34

Most candidates had a good knowledge of *There Will Come Soft Rains* and of this extract and there were some excellent responses to the question, although many answers effectively 'explained' the passage rather than focused on language and effect. In some cases the candidates tended to write more general comments and more focus on the language of the extract and on the word 'how' would have been beneficial. Weaker answers gave a line-by-line explanation of events and feelings, using the text as support, but the stronger ones engaged with some of the imagery and the personification. There was some sensitive appreciation of

syntax, image, diction, pace etc. and the message of Bradbury's story was often effectively built into these higher level responses.

Question † 35

Impressive knowledge of both stories was evident in the best answers and sympathetic responses to both victims. In both cases nearly all of the candidates focused very well on the aspect of suffering and could illustrate the points which they made with evidence from the respective texts. *The Lemon Orchard* did on balance produce the better answers but candidates using it tended to concentrate on the racism and the events of the story rather than the language. In the best answers there was a real focus on techniques used by La Guma and candidates were able to discuss the subtleties of the story as well as link it to the overall theme of racism and thus 'suffering' in a wider context. Weak answers displayed a lack of basic knowledge of the stories.

Question 36

Candidates generally had a good understanding of the character and situation and were able to capture Mother's voice quite well, displaying awareness of her sense of dignity and self-worth. Answers tended to be discriminated by the amount of detailed knowledge that they revealed since the voice is not a particularly distinctive one.

Conclusion: Some key messages for candidates

- Answer the question as posed - do not try and force it to fit 'prepared' answers to previous questions. Read the question carefully, looking for the key words and phrases on which to base an answer.
- Take time to plan both ideas and structure in the answer.
- Engage with the detail of extract questions and explore the precise effects created by particular words. (Don't devote an answer to punctuation marks at the expense of writing about *words*.)
- Use brief quotations and always do so as part of analysis, not for decoration. Avoid unhelpful long quotations.
- Pay close attention to the instructions in questions, to words such as 'explore', 'in what ways' and particularly the little word 'how'. Constant reference to key words from the title in the answer can often encourage relevance and focus.

LITERATURE (ENGLISH)

Paper 0486/43

Paper 43 (Closed Books)

Key messages

The following are important for success on this paper:

- detailed knowledge of the whole text, not simply a part of it
- maintaining direct relevance to the question
- focus on writer's language in answers to passage-based questions
- exploration of the writer's method, not just through language and imagery, but also through structure, theme, characterisation as appropriate
- well structured and developed argument
- detailed support by way of well chosen quotation and reference, or close echoes of the text.

General comments

Examiners commented very favourably on much of the work that they saw this session. The vast majority of candidates had been very well prepared and are to be commended for their serious approach and their clear enjoyment of the texts they had studied. There were some very sincere and well-argued personal responses. Candidates' different interpretations were engaging and often perceptive, and there were very few 'clone' answers.

There was impressive general knowledge behind many of the scripts, and many could therefore put their answers in context, which supported their understanding of character and theme. This was especially true of responses to Miller in the Drama section and Fitzgerald in the prose section.

Candidates on the whole had a competent or more than competent level of understanding of the texts and this session there was more conscientiousness in answers about addressing the words of the question directly. However, in some cases there was still a tendency to repeat a question's key terms mechanically with little apparent thought as to what they meant. Some candidates would benefit from greater understanding of what is required in questions which use phrases such as 'strikingly convey', 'dramatically reveal' and 'vividly reveal'; some gave vague and unfocused responses because they did not seem to understand or wish to engage with such phrases.

The passage-based questions were the most popular, as in previous sessions. They are not in any way a 'soft' option, though. Lack of knowledge of the text quickly reveals itself even if specific external reference is not explicitly required, and the writers' method needs to be explored in depth before marks in the higher bands can be awarded. Narrative run-throughs go very little way to meeting the demands of the questions. There were some examples of candidates using the passage to answer the second ('dagger') question on a text and this approach, though not prohibited, was often very limiting.

In poetry responses there was much less 'feature-spotting' ('line X contains a simile, line Y contains two similes...') than there has been in some previous sessions. Many commented on the writer's use of language very effectively, or attempted to, knowing that this was what they were supposed to do, although in weaker answers there was evidence of 'prepared' responses, rather than comments tailored to the question. Sometimes candidates responded to language without going into detail of *how* the effects are created which encourage them to respond as they do. Other responses started with some developed analysis but this then petered out into lists. In each genre and type of question, it is rooting in the language which will enable responses to be convincing. Though it is well understood that candidates like to use technical vocabulary, it counts for nothing if it is not linked to commentary on the effects that are produced.

Those who attempted the empathic tasks often showed sensitivity to some essentially important ideas/facets of characters or plots, revealing a wider understanding of the texts. It was, of course, essential to identify precisely the moment specified in a question. There were very few examples of candidates offering the wrong character or of not attempting to create a voice for the character.

Candidates are reminded that they should present their work and number their answers clearly.

Section A: Drama

Death of a Salesman

Questions *1, 2, 3

The passage-based question was the most popular and there were some sound answers when candidates gave a thorough examination of the passage. Very few candidates analysed the long setting at the start of the scene and there were missed opportunities with the stage directions in general. Some of those selected for comment describe things which an audience were unlikely to be able to see or deduce at this opening point in the play. Most could find something to engage the audience although often there was very little focus on the idea of what effect an audience might be expected to feel at curtain-up. At times there was no understanding conveyed of this being a play. Many candidates wanted to talk in general terms about the character of Willy in the play and this restricted the effectiveness of their answer. However, even weaker answers picked up on Linda's anxiety and Willy's apparent exhaustion and disorientation. Better answers explored possible implications and the best considered the dramatic qualities and the music.

The other two questions produced relevant and fairly knowledgeable answers. Candidates answering Question 2 tended to focus on Happy's relative neglect in childhood and ignored the less attractive adult, but some were very interesting, finding a balance and justifying, for example, Happy's abandoning of Willy at the restaurant due to the preferential treatment of Biff throughout. It was made clear that Happy tried to impress Willy by, for example, losing weight and getting married, but was always ignored despite the fact that he was the only one really working. Also, some candidates argued that it was inevitable that he would give up on Willy and Biff since neither of them showed any interest in Happy at all. A few found him totally despicable with no redeeming features, judging him to be self-centred and boastful when he was in a dead-end job. Many answers had very little detail or close reference to the text. Very few candidates wrote as Charley but all able to empathise effectively showing a good knowledge of character and plot. The best responses included Charley's concern for Linda, the long suffering wife, and his treatment of his sons holding him to blame for all their shortcomings.

Much Ado About Nothing

Questions *4, 5, 6

This was a popular text and answers conveyed a sense of enjoyment. Candidates clearly liked Beatrice and Benedick and there were some good responses to the humour of the extract with clear understanding that the characters are completely at cross-purposes. The most successful answers explored the dramatic impact of the scene as well as explaining the situation. There were very few responses to Question 5. The empathic task was quite popular but performance overall would have been stronger if more candidates had managed to convey the fact that Hero has more character than is sometimes attributed to her and that she is enjoying the deceit that is being practised on Beatrice.

Julius Caesar

Questions *7, 8, 9

The passage-based question was by far the most popular on this text and candidates approached it with enthusiasm. They all did well on Calphurnia but were less perceptive on Caesar himself - many thought he was a loving husband who gave in so that she would not worry. The better responses saw how cleverly Calphurnia manipulated her words so that his ego would not suffer. The best answers went beyond describing the feelings of the characters and explored the power of the language, in other words they focused on the key words 'vividly convey'.

Journey's End

Questions *10, 11, 12

The passage-based question produced sympathetic answers which demonstrated a sensitive response to the soldiers facing the imminence of going over the top and understanding of the characters and their feelings. Candidates recognised Hibbert's fear and his understandable reluctance, shown by his playing for time. Some candidates, however, were not careful and thorough enough in the inspection of the extract and often found only one point to discuss throughout their essay. In fact, 'sad' was rarely carefully enough thought through and it became the norm to write about how sad it was that Hibbert was a coward who was trying to avoid going into battle. Much confusion and/or lack of awareness of context was in evidence over the reference to champagne in the extract, a number of candidates cheerfully informing of the Dutch courage on offer to men about to go 'over the top'. Clearly a good answer would have needed to look at the relationship of Stanhope and Raleigh at this moment in the action, and more careful consideration of the treatment of Hibbert by Stanhope, as well as some reference to the ending of the extract and the involvement of Mason. For most candidates this material escaped their notice and comment. In Question 11 weaker candidates lapsed into description and character study whereas better responses analysed and responded to the character and role of Raleigh. Responses focused on his relationship with Stanhope but weaker answers did not address 'dramatically'. 'Moving' tended to be restricted to his premature death. There were very few attempts at the empathic task but one or two were quite credible and others were over-simplified. The best were able to capture the awkward 'piggy-in-the-middle' nature of the colonel and his anxiousness to please his superiors whilst not letting it appear he did not care about those he was sending to almost certain death.

Section B: Poetry

Tennyson

Questions *13, 14, 15

The Tennyson poems were far less popular than *Songs of Ourselves*. Many of the responses to *Ulysses* were purely explanatory and never approached the terms of the question. Some of the answers revealed only a rudimentary knowledge and understanding of the poem. The best answers were able to look at some of the language of the poem and do a little more than explain what it 'meant'. Very few answers were able to assemble a convincing response to how Tennyson makes the reader admire the hero, however. *The Lady of Shalott* was usually poorly answered on. There were few answers and these all retold the poem, sometimes not very well. There was never a concerted response to feeling sympathy for the character, or how this was engineered by Tennyson's writing. Answers here were always weaker than those on *Ulysses*.

Songs of Ourselves

Questions *16, 17, 18

All three of the questions were equally popular. There were fewer explanatory/paraphrase essays and almost everyone at least attempted to make some comment on language, however simple. The question which elicited the least successful answers was 16, where candidates tended to lose focus on the key words 'vividly appeal to your senses' and merely gave a 'run-through' of the poem. Candidates tended to quote, rather than engage with, language. Concentration was largely on the octet - some overlooked the cricket all together, or assumed it was the grasshopper. Almost all candidates were able to find a poem that appealed to them in the other choices offered. In Question 17 *The Voice* dominated. Again there was very little focus on the language of the poem and quite a lot of biography was offered, not all of it accurate (e.g. assuming that theirs had been a happy marriage to the end). The heavily emotive last two stanzas received very little comment, apart from 'wistlessness'. In *Report to Wordsworth* there was heavy concentration on 'feelings', supported by textual reference but, again, avoiding exploring language. In Question 18 *First Love* elicited some focus on language though there were problems with 'turned to clay'. 'Red' received some curious expansions on the theme of 'blood'. However, about half of the candidates did not note the change of tone and language in the final stanza. *Lament* was also a firm favourite, where, again, there was some engagement with language. *The Flower-Fed Buffaloes* elicited fewer responses, some very good, others concentrating on feelings and a few even forgot the buffaloes.

Section C: Prose

Wuthering Heights

Questions *19, 20, 21

The passage-based question was offered almost universally and there were some very competent and well focused answers, which gave a sensitive response to Heathcliff and his situation and also to the way in which Brontë's writing creates drama and pathos. Some candidates appeared to be a little confused as to Heathcliff's part in Catherine's death, and how long Heathcliff had been mourning there. Some candidates overlooked Nelly's contribution to the passage. A few candidates interpreted 'most memorable' as an instruction to choose one section from the extract and limit comments to that.

Hullabaloo in the Guava Orchard

Question *22, 23, 24

There were far too few answers Questions 22 and 24 to make general comment appropriate, but Question 23 was relatively popular, if not particularly well done. Candidates tended to select appropriate moments, but their entertaining qualities were considered to be self-evident, and there was little detailed exploration of the writing.

The Great Gatsby

Question *25, 26, 27

This was perhaps the most popular of the prose texts. Question 25 was reasonably well attempted, though answers tended to be heavily reliant on quotations. Highlighted were Gatsby's nervousness, surprising lack of confidence and almost childish behaviour expecting disappointment, supported by his being 'pale', 'signs of sleeplessness', speaking 'hollowly' etc. His desire for perfection in all aspects - the lawn, refreshments, flowers - was clearly understood. One candidate interestingly pointed out that Gatsby's clothes, on this occasion, reflected the colours of money. Responses to Question 26 were well argued, although candidates' interpretation of 'great' varied. They clearly knew the character, however, and were able to draw on well-selected textual detail. They demonstrated a thoughtful response to the character, often balancing their argument and showing they were ambivalent about Gatsby, although usually deciding that they had sympathy for him. The best answers showed how our perception of Gatsby is conditioned by Nick and how his ambivalence is communicated by Fitzgerald. There were some convincing re-creations of Wilson, conveying his anguish and the façade of his marriage, and integrating lots of detail.

When Rain Clouds Gather

Question *28, 29, 30

There were far too few answers to these questions to make general comment appropriate.

Ethan Frome

Question *31, 32, 33

There were far too few answers to these questions to make general comment appropriate.

Stories of Ourselves

Question *34, 35, 36

The passage-based question was again the most popular and there were some competent explorations of the passage, the best focusing on the description of the signalman and his surroundings and conveying the gloomy and mysterious atmosphere. Maia's voice and likely apprehensions at this moment were well conveyed.

Conclusion: Some key messages for candidates

- Answer the question as posed - do not try and force it to fit 'prepared' answers to previous questions. Read the question carefully, looking for the key words and phrases on which to base an answer.
- Take time to plan both ideas and structure in the answer.
- Engage with the detail of extract questions and explore the precise effects created by particular words. (Don't devote an answer to punctuation marks at the expense of writing about *words*.)
- Use brief quotations and always do so as part of analysis, not for decoration. Avoid unhelpful long quotations.
- Pay close attention to the instructions in questions, to words such as 'explore', 'in what ways' and particularly the little word 'how'. Constant reference to key words from the title in the answer can often encourage relevance and focus.

LITERATURE (ENGLISH)

Paper 0486/51

Paper 51 (Closed Books - B)

Key Messages

- Close attention to the wording of the question and addressing the task from the outset would improve the achievement of many candidates.
- Many competent answers would achieve a higher mark if direct quotations were included. (This is particularly true of answers to passage-based questions.)
- Close reference to the effects of the author's language choices, where relevant to the task, is necessary for high reward.
- A focus on the comic, entertaining or satirical aspects of texts could be more fully developed.

General Comments

The majority of Centres offered *Romeo and Juliet* and *1984* but there was also an enthusiastic uptake of *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof* and the *Selected Poems* of Carol Ann Duffy.

Candidates showed a lively response to their set texts and most showed considerable knowledge of them. In answers to passage-based questions the strongest responses paid close attention to key words in the question such as 'striking' or 'entertaining' and selected their material accordingly. They also referred closely to the passage in support of their points, using direct quotation from it. Such answers showed implicit knowledge of the context of the passage, without narrating it at length. Response to the language of the passage is often the area which would benefit from closer attention. It is difficult to access the higher mark bands without some analysis of language. In response to drama texts an awareness of stagecraft and dramatic effectiveness is also an asset.

There were many strong discursive responses, and the most effective essays ranged widely across the texts and gave a balanced, well-supported view. Many candidates this session had difficulty with questions which asked them to consider one moment or two moments in the text. This was more apparent in relation to novels than plays. Candidates often did not concentrate on particular episodes but wrote about the text in general or considered four or five different moments. In assessment, a broad, liberal view as to the definition of a 'moment' is taken, but answers inevitably penalise themselves by not adhering to the task and not referring to specific events in the text.

In empathic tasks, many candidates showed detailed knowledge of the chosen character and moment in the text. Voices were often both convincing and, where appropriate, highly entertaining. Less successful responses misplaced the moment or gave characters knowledge that they were not likely to possess.

There were very few rubric infringements or inadequate responses.

Comments on Specific Questions

I Know Why The Caged Bird Sings

Question 1 was answered successfully when candidates focused clearly on what was 'entertaining' in the passage and commented on the comic nature of the action, rather than merely listing the comic moments. Attention to language, such as the use of Spanish or the personification of the car, distinguished strong responses. Some candidates included extraneous detail about the autobiography as a whole and Maya's family relationships, which wasted valuable time.

Question 2 was handled competently by most and well by those who selected appropriate moments and considered them in some detail. Some answers here considered poverty, racism and aspiration in general without exploring specific moments in the text such as the High School graduation ceremony. Education, as a theme of the autobiography, would perhaps benefit from closer consideration.

Question 3 The strongest answers here used apt expressions and captured Momma's religious outlook and sympathetic approach to Mr Taylor. Some answers would have been improved by more concrete and detailed knowledge of this part of the book, such as Momma's handling of the issue of Florida Taylor's spirit wanting a child. Most candidates found an appropriate 'voice' for Momma.

Carol Ann Duffy: Selected Poems

Question 4 Many candidates commented on how Duffy 'vividly' presents the Head of English and showed appreciation of the satire and how it is created. Some responses tended to list what the Head of English said without commenting on the significance of her words. There were misreadings of the poem where candidates assumed that the visiting poet was being admired.

Question 5 was tackled competently but more rarely, with candidates showing good knowledge of the poem.

Question 6 was answered successfully with candidates selecting aspects of language which revealed the speaker of the poem's unhappiness.

1984

Question 7 There were many excellent explorations of this horrific moment in the novel. The strongest combined an overview of the purpose of the torture and the significance of the betrayal of Julia with close attention to the language of the passage, including the creation of tension and suspense. Candidates selected the imagery which created Winston's sense of isolation and disembodied terror and commented on O'Brien's horribly matter-of-fact description of the rats and the generally terrifying nature of his detachment. Some answers would have been improved by closer attention to the detail of the passage and a focus on its most terrifying aspects. There was a tendency to put it in context and explain its significance without close attention to the passage itself.

Question 8 was answered effectively when candidates appreciated the full significance of the relationship against the background of the society of the novel. Such answers selected appropriate material from the novel as a whole, used direct quotations, and explored the full significance of Winston's betrayal of Julia. The strongest responses could show how Orwell uses the relationship not just as a plot device but also as a fundamental message about dehumanization and the absence of love. Shaping the narrative to answer the question proved more effective than merely retelling Winston and Julia's story.

Question 9 The strongest answers here showed detailed knowledge of Winston and Julia's visit to O'Brien and captured Winston's naive, awestruck trust in him. Many reflected Winston's relief at having found a 'soul mate' and a focus for his rebellious thoughts. Some made him a little too euphoric which did not seem consistent with his characteristic 'voice'.

Brave New World

Question 10 Strong answers here considered the amusing as well as the significant aspects of the passage, exploring the farcical aspects of Bernard's hesitation and cowardice, the depiction of the police and the patronising tone of 'The Voice of Reason'. Such answers also showed a sound knowledge of how the society depends on drugs and conditioning to maintain order.

Question 11 This question was tackled competently with candidates showing knowledge of life in Malpais and how it contrasts with the 'new world' of the novel.

Question 12 There were excellent 'Leninas' in response to this question, engaging with the different worlds the two inhabit and reflecting her bewilderment about John's behaviour and outlook. The strongest answers also captured the pathos of her rejection. Voices were convincing and answers concise.

Romeo and Juliet

Question 13 A strong focus on the wording of the question - 'How does Shakespeare *vividly portray* Romeo and Juliet's love for each other in this extract' - was necessary for high reward. Strong answers considered elements of the dialogue such as both lovers' willingness to abandon their family name and Romeo being happy to face danger and death, combined with a close reading of how these thoughts are expressed: as in Juliet's "a rose by any other name" or Romeo's "I'll be new baptiz'd...with love's light wings...stony limits cannot keep love out". The strongest responses explored accurately Romeo's statement: "My life were better ended by their hate/Than death prorogued wanting of thy love" and examined imagery of Juliet as a saint and a treasure (merchandise) along with Romeo's "dear perfection". Some answers would have been improved by going beyond an account of what the lovers say to each other and an explanation of what it meant.

Question 14 The best answers here showed some balance in their views and made well-selected reference to the text. They also used key quotations such as "these violent delights have violent ends", "to turn your households' rancour to pure love," or "I dare no longer stay". Some candidates showed universal admiration for Friar Lawrence without consideration of the wisdom of his marrying the lovers in the first place and the risk factor in his potion plot or of his cowardice in the tomb. 'How far...' in the question is an invitation to evaluate and debate and the most successful answers took advantage of that.

Question 15 There were many very successful Lady Capulets capturing her exasperation with Juliet, her grief for her nephew and desire for revenge on Romeo. Some responses made her too sympathetic, not capturing her icy detachment from her daughter or her vengeful nature. Other candidates had her anachronistically being critical of arranged marriages and having full knowledge of Romeo and Juliet's affair. This has been a feature of many answers in the last two sessions of the examination. If the Capulets had known of Romeo and Juliet's marriage it would have been a very different play.

Songs of Ourselves (from Part 1)

Question 16 Most answers showed sound understanding of personification but there were also explanatory responses which did not focus on the 'striking' of the question. Other aspects of the verse such as alliterative effects or the vividness of the imagery of old age, for example, were often ignored. Whilst historical background is useful in teaching preparation, it is not necessary to include this at length in examination answers. There are still candidates who do not have a clear understanding of the basic *meaning* of the poems.

Question 17 Those few who attempted this question did so competently, showing a basic understanding of their selected poem.

Question 18 The poems by Tichbourne and Nashe were the most popular choices and a basic understanding of what was 'striking' in each poem was shown.

Cat on a Hot Tin Roof

Question 19 There were many very strong answers to this question with candidates showing a full awareness of the passage's function and effect as the opening scene of the play. The best answers showed an awareness of stagecraft - of the dramatic effectiveness, for example, of the audience not seeing Brick, of the off-stage shrieks of the children and the drama of Maggie's near-monologue. Such answers also explored how characterisation and main themes of the play are established from the start. The strongest candidates examined the vitality in Maggie's language and saw the humour in, as well as the significance of, her descriptions of Mae and Gooper's children. An awareness of audience response also characterised strong answers.

Question 20 Successful answers to this question concentrated on the main reasons for the lack of communication between father and son, selected appropriate support, showed good knowledge of the play as a whole, and engaged personally with the characterisation. Awareness of author, for example the dramatic reasons for the way in which Williams brings the two characters together or keeps them apart, marked the strongest responses.

Question 21 was generally answered with knowledge and vitality. Many candidates successfully captured Mae's dialect, attitudes and characteristic tones. The most convincing responses reflected her outrage, her hatred of Maggie, resentment and contempt for Brick, as the undeservedly favoured son over Gooper, and desire to inherit Big Daddy's estate. The responses reflected wide-ranging knowledge of the text: Maggie's childlessness and her own fertile state; Maggie's refusal to name a doctor; her eavesdropping on Maggie and Brick's private conversations and their sleeping arrangements; the hurt of Brick referred to as the 'only child'; her views on Brick's sexuality and her intention to place Brick in Rainbow Hall. There were some responses that simply repeated the cursing and ranting.

LITERATURE (ENGLISH)

Paper 0486/52

Paper 52 (Closed Books - B)

Key Messages

- Close attention to the wording of the question and addressing the task from the outset would improve the achievement of many candidates.
- Many competent answers would achieve a higher mark if direct quotations were included. (This is particularly true of answers to passage-based questions.)
- Close reference to the effects of the author's language choices, where relevant to the task, is necessary for high reward.
- A focus on the comic, entertaining or satirical aspects of texts could be more fully developed.

General Comments

The majority of Centres offered *Romeo and Juliet*, *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* and *1984* but there was also an enthusiastic uptake of *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof* and the *Selected Poems* of Carol Ann Duffy.

Candidates showed a lively response to their set texts and most showed considerable knowledge of them. In answers to passage-based questions the strongest responses paid close attention to key words in the question such as 'striking' or 'entertaining' and selected their material accordingly. They also referred closely to the passage in support of their points, using direct quotation from it. Such answers showed implicit knowledge of the context of the passage, without narrating it at length. Response to the language of the passage is often the area which would benefit from closer attention. It is difficult to access the higher mark bands without some analysis of language. In response to drama texts an awareness of stagecraft and dramatic effectiveness is also an asset.

There were many strong discursive responses, and the most effective essays ranged widely across the texts and gave a balanced, well-supported view. Many candidates this session had difficulty with questions which asked them to consider one moment or two moments in the text. This was more apparent in relation to novels than plays. Candidates often did not concentrate on particular episodes but wrote about the text in general or considered four or five different moments. In assessment, a broad, liberal view as to the definition of a 'moment' is taken, but answers inevitably penalise themselves by not adhering to the task and not referring to specific events in the text.

In empathic tasks, many candidates showed detailed knowledge of the chosen character and moment in the text. Voices were often both convincing and, where appropriate, highly entertaining. Less successful responses misplaced the moment or gave characters knowledge that they were not likely to possess.

There were very few rubric infringements or inadequate responses.

Comments on Specific Questions

I Know Why The Caged Bird Sings

Question 1 was answered successfully when candidates explored the language of the passage to comment on how Angelou 'vividly' conveyed the importance of the boxing match. Such answers cited the babies sliding to the floor, for example, the metaphorical 'ambrosia' and the use of ellipsis to create tension.

Candidates clearly understood the political significance of Joe Louis's victory but some concentrated solely on this rather than the question set.

Question 2 The strongest answers here focused on the key word 'disturbing' rather than merely narrating and giving their own, rather than Maya's, responses. Less effective answers tended to concentrate solely on Maya's loss of speech.

Question 3 was answered well when candidates captured Mrs Cullinan's ingrained racism and clearly established the details and the intensity of the moment. Less successful renditions were over lengthy and repetitive or portrayed her as a sympathetic woman. Some subtle responses adopted an ironic view and had her as a do-gooder, misunderstood and misunderstanding.

Carol Ann Duffy: *Selected Poems*

Question 4 The poem *Valentine* was tackled well when candidates understood its basic premise and assessed the effectiveness of the imagery rather than explaining it. There were intelligent comments on the structure. Most candidates showed a reasonable understanding of the first half of the poem but found the ending more difficult. There were some answers which paraphrased the lines or gave an overview without detailed analysis of the language.

Question 5. Candidates who tackled this question showed a sound overview and some close analysis. Comments were made on the structure reflecting the assimilation of the child into the new area but that the last line's hesitation showed that the original home still lingered. The effectiveness of images such as 'stirred like a loose tooth' and 'shedding its skin like a snake' were considered in strong answers.

Question 6 Answers to this question would have been improved by focusing less on establishing the innocence of the classroom and more on the 'growing up' of the question. The thunderstorm was seen as an example of pathetic fallacy but an understanding of its effect as a contrast to the earlier innocence could have been explored in greater detail.

1984

Question 7 The key to success here was an understanding that the moment is memorable because the scene takes place in a unique location, develops the love story and marks the first act of rebellion. The strongest responses supported these points with an analysis of the description of the countryside and saw that there are dark undertones even in this Edenic moment. They also made relevant and telling comments on the portrayal of the proles and the significance of Winston's desire to make a romantic gesture. There was a wide diversity of responses here with some excellent knowledge shown. Less effective responses tended to focus on the lack of telescreens and microphones or on putting the extract into context, rather than focusing clearly on the passage itself.

Question 8 was answered well when candidates chose two relevant moments and analysed them in some detail with specific reference to the text. Many responses wrote about life in Oceania in general, selecting newspeak or the level of surveillance, without reference to particular moments or analysing where the horrifying nature of the society lay. Although these answers showed considerable knowledge of the text, they did not answer the question and were, therefore, self-limiting.

Question 9 Candidates who understood the moment in the novel and captured Winston's flatness of tone, despondency and conversion to Big Brother gave the strongest responses here. Some misread the moment as being after Winston and Julia's first meeting and others seem to have missed the fact that they had betrayed each other and were no longer in love.

Brave New World

Question 10 There were some excellent responses to this question with candidates appreciating the ironies, the humour in the opposing outlooks and Lenina's increasing irritation with John.

Question 11 was answered soundly, with candidates who chose it understanding John the Savage's championship of Shakespearean values and giving appropriate support from the text.

Question 12 The strongest answers captured Bernard's self-pity and self-importance and demonstrated knowledge of the context. The best reflected his growing acceptance of his fate and that, as Helmholtz assures him, they will probably be happier on an island with like-minded people.

Romeo and Juliet

Question 13 This question elicited considerable engagement from candidates. They interpreted 'entertaining' in their own ways: as 'amusing' or 'engaging' or 'enjoyable'. Most candidates grasped, to some degree, Shakespeare's structural device of creating the tension, frustration and exasperation felt by Juliet, effected by the Nurse's 'slow-release' of information and the deployment of diversionary tactics such as Lady Capulet's whereabouts and the derogatory comments about Romeo, which are transformed in the final line by her reference to 'husband' and 'wife'. This was supported with good detailed reference to the text. Those candidates who did not appreciate this structural dramatic strategy resorted to mainly narrative accounts of the encounter.

Question 14 The most popular choices here were the opening scene of the play and the fight between Mercutio, Tybalt and Romeo in Act Three. Attention to the dramatic effectiveness of the chosen scene was key here. Most candidates commented on the reasons for Romeo's refusal to fight Tybalt and the dramatic irony of this but there was less focus on the scene as a pivotal moment and on the pathos and foreshadowing inherent in Mercutio's death and curse upon the families. There were many strong answers showing sound knowledge but some would have been improved by closer attention to the chosen scene itself rather than general background and comment on the feud in the play as a whole.

Question 15 All responses were engaged and most were engaging. Tybalt's fiery nature was used to good effect with his anger and rage focused well on Romeo's 'insulting' behaviour in attending a Capulet ball, and his bemusement aimed towards Lord Capulet for his 'cowardly' appeasement. Candidates attempting this type of empathetic task need to be aware of the risk of a complaint becoming a rant, and the risk of repetition or circularity resulting in a lack of force. Some candidates gave him awareness of the extent of Romeo and Juliet's relationship, which is not supported by the text.

Songs of Ourselves (from Part 1)

Question 16 Responses here were mainly very well prepared, especially in the candidates' readiness to deploy a fairly comprehensive range of literary and poetic terms to good effect. All the important key words in the question were consistently addressed: 'vivid', 'memorable' and 'details'. The vast majority interpreted vivid and memorable as applying only to *visual* stimulus such as features of the natural world, but other candidates interpreted vivid and memorable as visual *and* conceptual in the immortalising of youth, beauty and love. Weaker responses interpreted the comparative 'compare' to mean 'likeness', whereas stronger responses clearly noticed the other comparative 'more' and therefore were able to understand that Shakespeare was demonstrating a 'difference' between the loved-one and 'a summer's day'.

Questions 17 and 18 elicited far too few responses to make general comment appropriate. .

Cat on a Hot Tin Roof

Question 19 This question was answered well when candidates considered the dramatic effectiveness of the family dynamics and complex relationships. Whilst showing sound knowledge of the play, some responses would have benefited from analysis of stagecraft rather than treating the passage as if it were from a prose text.

Question 20 Many candidates commented successfully on Williams's powerful portrayal of Brick's loneliness, commenting on his words and deeds, or lack of them and providing thoughtful points. Less successful responses would have been improved by development of the valid points made or in moving beyond the fact that Brick is an alcoholic to look at his relationships with Skipper, Maggie and Big Daddy.

Question 21 Those who tackled this question focused clearly on the moment and reflected Big Daddy's attitude to those who had lied to him. Voices were generally appropriate, but there was some lack of development in less convincing responses.

LITERATURE (ENGLISH)

Paper 0486/53

Paper 53 (Closed Books - B)

There were too few candidates for this paper to make meaningful comment.