

# LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

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Paper 9695/31  
Poetry and Prose

## Key Messages

- All questions are a test of literary knowledge and understanding; answers which focus on the biography of writers rather than the texts will not do well.
- For high marks, candidates need to know their texts in sufficient detail to make secure references and use quotations to support points.
- Answers should always focus on the writing and the author's language and literary methods.
- Answers to **(b)** passage questions in particular must offer detailed analysis, commenting very closely on the writing of the extract. When the passage is a poem, answers should focus on the set poem.

## General Comments

Examiners saw a wide range of responses in this session, with quite a full coverage of the texts, though Thomas Hardy, *Songs of Ourselves*, *Nervous Conditions* and *A Passage to India* were clear favourites. Each text produced strong answers, though many answers on Thomas Hardy were dominated by biographical discussion, often with limited attention to the poetry, which restricted the marks which could be awarded. However, there were some excellent, sophisticated answers on every text. The strongest combined an astute understanding of the concerns of the texts with a detailed, analytical appreciation of the way they are written, supported by quotations. Candidates who can quote to support points they make have a clear advantage in the examination room, as the quotations both indicate the level of their knowledge and create opportunities for focus on the language, imagery and form used by the writer.

It sometimes appears that some candidates attempt **(b)** questions as unseen poems and extracts. There are responses where the candidates are clearly unfamiliar with the selected poem, demonstrated through misunderstandings and misreadings. At other times, it seems that some candidates choose to answer a **(b)** question on a text they have not studied – sometimes a single candidate in a Centre might answer a **(b)** question on a different text from the rest of the cohort and make simple errors of interpretation. Needless to say, such answers are invariably unsuccessful on this paper, and candidates should be discouraged from attempting this tactic.

## Question Specific Comments 9695/31

### **Question 1** Thomas Hardy: *Selected Poems*

- (a) There were only a few answers to this question. Successful approaches considered the role of time and the recall of past events in Hardy's poetry, considering the imagery, language and techniques he uses to evoke those memories. Less confident responses relied heavily on Hardy's life rather than his poetry.
- (b) The general thrust of this poem was grasped by most candidates who answered on it, though few engaged closely with its development of ideas and the means by which they are communicated. Most recognised the shift in tone from 'bleak' to 'joy' with the singing of the thrush, but fewer linked that with the evocation of the winter season or considered the temporal setting at the turn of the 'Century'.

### **Question 2** Seamus Heaney: *District and Circle*

- (a) There were too few answers to make a general comment appropriate.

- (b) There were very few responses to this question. Candidates who attempted to answer on the poem were not always confident in their understanding of it, usually thinking that it refers to the first experience of cigarette smoking, rather than tobacco chewing, which led to confusion in the second and third stanzas.

**Question 3** *Songs of Ourselves*

- (a) There were too few answers to make a general comment appropriate.
- (b) The overwhelming majority of candidates answering on *Songs of Ourselves* responded to this question. Most candidates found plenty to discuss, looking at the imagery of ageing and language concerned with decay, such as 'worn' 'peeled' and 'rusty'. The significance of '*Pinus*' was much discussed. Most understood how the tree had grown 'in less than the life of a man', suggesting that nature ages at a different rate from humankind and that the girls in School were now 'small' from the narrator's perspective. More able candidates picked up on the final stanza's shift in tone with the sad irony of 'the terrible doors' and a feeling of lost youth. A number of candidates discussed Curnow's use of second person perspective, usually suggesting that the narrator is addressing an old School friend, but there was also the idea that the speaker could be addressing a younger self.

**Question 4** Tsitsi Dangarembga: *Nervous Conditions*

- (a) There were not many responses to this question, but it was often done well, as candidates correctly focused on method. Candidates felt that Tambu's narration enabled Dangarembga to present some unsympathetic attitudes through a persona, for example her lack of empathy for her brother's death. Some sophisticated answers explored a duality in the narration, where Tambu's development is presented simultaneously as positive and with ironic criticism. Other candidates argued that a female voice was important in a novel with feminist concerns.
- (b) The passage question proved popular, candidates recognising the episode's importance in establishing Tambu's yearning for education while illustrating the preference given to boys' education. There was also fruitful exploration of the different kind of life promised by living with Babamukuru. Candidates often linked this with the changes brought about by 'Englishness'. The strongest answers linked these points specifically with details from the passage, looking at the tension generated through the aggressive dialogue, with exclamations, challenging questions and verbs such as 'jeered', 'retorted', 'attached' and 'retaliated'. Some looked perceptively at Tambu's listing of the relationships in ll.29-31, commenting on how those family ties are stretched with Tambu's own education later in the novel.

**Question 5** EM Forster: *A Passage to India*

- (a) There were too few answers to make a general comment appropriate.
- (b) There were not many responses to this question. The majority of these described an unsympathetic portrait of Ronny as he thinks through events with his mother and Adela. Candidates discussed his approach to religion and his abandonment of his marriage plans. These ideas were all relevant, but candidates often found it difficult to look closely and analytically at the language Forster uses to narrate these issues. More successful answers noted how his attitudes are defined by his Schooldays, with the reference to the 'Fifth Form' and 'sterilized public-School', which suggest immaturity, and Forster's use of restrained language, such as 'tiresome', 'behaved badly' and 'unsuitable', showing the character's difficulty with emotions. A few candidates' responses suggested limited knowledge of the novel, as they read the second line of the passage as fact, indicating that Ronny had in fact killed his mother.

**Question 6** *Stories of Ourselves*

- (a) This was a popular question, with a number of developed, interesting answers. The most commonly featured stories were 'Sandpiper' and 'To Da-Duh in Memoriam', 'The Fall of the House of Usher' and 'A Horse and Two Goats'. On the Poe, candidates saw the way the setting suggests a connection with the Usher family, with the fissure opening as the family falls, often relating the story to the gothic genre. The narrator's difficulty in adapting to Egypt was the focus on Soueif's story, while the contrast between the Caribbean and New York was developed in discussion of Marshall's. There were some interesting comments on the cinematic opening of Narayan's story,

by which he establishes the location. Candidates also discussed 'The People Before' and 'Journey' effectively.

- (b)** Answers on the passage from 'Of White Hairs and Cricket' were often done well, with candidates discussing the effects of the first person narrative and its internal nature, observing the behaviour and comments of the other characters. Candidates explored effectively the presentation of the narrator's feelings towards his father and grandmother. Many candidates saw the metaphors of the spinning of thread and the spinning records. Strong answers used the context of the rest of the story to comment on the irony of the father's optimism and the boy's development from the 'cosy and comforting' youth of the passage to his later acknowledgement of mortality.

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## Question Specific Comments 9695/32

### Question 1 Thomas Hardy: *Selected Poems*

- (a)** Candidates chose appropriate poems from the wealth available but a consistent weakness in answers was a tendency to write substantially about Hardy's biography and his relationship with his wife Emma, rather than about the poetry. Often, titles of poems were mentioned, with a brief glance at the content, without exploring poetic language or technique at all. Contextual material should be used sparingly, only where relevant, and it should inform the evaluation of the text; too often, candidates reversed this relationship, with the text, only briefly informing a lengthy discussion of biography. Successful answers looked at poems as expressions of universal ideas about love and relationships, rather than specifically Thomas Hardy's particular circumstances, and were therefore more able to look at language, imagery and poetic structure. Some interesting responses challenged the question's premise by comparing a 'difficulties of love' poem, such as 'The Going' or 'The Voice', with a more optimistic one, such as 'A Church Romance'.
- (b)** Answers to this question too were often dominated by discussion of biography, despite the question asking about the presentation of location. Stronger responses answered this question directly, looking at ways in which Hardy presents the poem's setting, with the references to the sea, sky, gulls and beauty, before moving on to its importance through the cliff's permanence compared

with the transience of human life and relationships. This allowed comparison of key phrases in the final stanza, between 'still in chasmal beauty' and 'The woman now is – elsewhere'. The final line of the poem confirms the importance of the location as one of former happiness and of personal significance which has now passed with the passing of the narrator's lover. Many less successful responses ignored the question about the presentation of the location and wrote only of Hardy's relationship with Emma, thus misdirecting the essays.

**Question 2** Seamus Heaney: *District and Circle*

- (a) There were too few answers to make a general comment appropriate.
- (b) There were a very few responses to this question and most seemed to be approaching the poem as an unseen text. The helicopter in particular caused confusion, with some suggesting it formed a guard of honour while others suggested the deceased was so important that her coffin arrived in the helicopter. More careful answers looked at the noise of the helicopter momentarily disturbing the otherwise peaceful funeral cortege, which shows a quiet and respectful community walking the coffin to the grave. Some looked at the language of the woman's final decline – 'Foetal, shaking, sweating', while others looked at her many relationships now at an end – 'Favourite aunt, good sister, faithful daughter'. Her simple life was commented on, noting her enjoyment of 'Her birdtable'. Sensitive candidates saw the moment of celebration of her life in the poem's title and the final lines of the poem.

**Question 3** *Songs of Ourselves*

- (a) This was a very popular question, with candidates exploring a wide range of emotions. This meant that Examiners saw nearly all the poems in the collection in answers to this question. There were some very interesting pairings, with candidates coupling war poems, poems about loss and grief and poems about family relationships, to pick just three examples. The strongest answers were often where candidates were able to find some significant differences between their poems as well as some common ground, as this helped them structure their responses. These answers were also based on detailed knowledge which allowed the candidates to quote in support of their points and to comment on 'ways' – looking at diction, imagery and structure. Weaker answers were restricted to accounts of the subject matter or contents of the poems, without considering matters of writing and verse.
- (b) The Housman poem was a very popular choice, producing some excellent work showing that a short poem can energise strong candidates. Although they often read the first line on its own, without linking it to l.2, less confident candidates were usually at ease with stanzas one and two but lost a clear grasp of stanzas three and four, often assuming that the narrator's loved one had died. This led to considerable confusion and misreading of the closing stages of the poem. Successful answers explored the restrained nature of the poem's language, such as 'liked' and 'irked', often noting the change to 'loved' at the end of the poem. They commented sensitively on how this achieves the effect of an abrupt, emotionless and stoical acceptance of rejection and subsequent farewell. Such answers also noted the poem's central irony, that the poem itself is testament to the fact that the narrator does not keep his 'word' to 'forget me'.

**Question 4** Tsitsi Dangarembga: *Nervous Conditions*

- (a) This question attracted a very large number of responses, many of them developed and thoughtful, showing a detailed knowledge of the novel. The strongest answers demonstrated an understanding of the ambiguities of the issue, recognising the 'Englishness' is favoured for chances of education and economic advancement, but resented for the threat to indigenous culture and tradition. Most candidates engaged positively with the question, balancing both sides of this debate by exploring Dangarembga's presentation of the effects of Englishness on the main characters in the novel. There was relevant discussion of Ma'Shingayi's view of Englishness as dangerous, corrupting and eroding, as she blames it for her son's death and remains anxious about its potential damage to her daughter. Some candidates noted that even Nyasha's classmates perceive Englishness as corrupting and immoral, while the characterisation of Chido, Nhamo and Nyasha was cited to show these characters' complete assimilation, though there was generally a sympathetic view of Nyasha's position as she pays a high price for it. Jeremiah was judged to be too self-centred as he approves of Englishness only when it suits him. Most candidates also noted the more complex and often contradictory views held by Babamukuru and Maiguru, both educated and successful role models but shown to be flawed, as Babamukuru is not totally enlightened, nor

is Maiguru totally emancipated. On Tambu there was often perceptive analysis of her shifting perceptions on Englishness throughout the novel, for while she sees Englishness as an opportunity for female emancipation and self-improvement, she is also critical of what succumbing to it does to other characters. Some candidates argued, however, that Dangarembga shows Tambu making the same mistakes she once saw Nyasha making.

- (b) The passage from Chapter 5 stimulated some interesting responses from those candidates who read the question carefully and looked closely at the writing of the extract. Most candidates were able to comment that this is a defining moment in Tambu's development, but more focused responses explored how Dangarembga's writing shows Tambu's self-centredness and demonstrates, through her own narration, just how naïve she is at this point in the novel. Such answers noted such vocabulary as 'reincarnation', 'egotistical' and 'fantasies'. Some remarked on the indiscriminating nature of her reading, compared with Nyasha's political awareness, and strong answers noted that the passage does not just focus on Tambu's formal academic education, but also marks the beginning of her personal journey of self-awareness, self-confidence and life-style changes under the influence of Nyasha. Part of this wider growing awareness is contained in the final paragraph of the extract, which a number of candidates ignored.

#### Question 5 EM Forster: *A Passage to India*

- (a) Many candidates responded well to this question on Aziz, recognising that in the two statements provided, he demonstrates his religious spirituality and his interest in women. Aziz is a devout believer in Islam, but he likes to talk about women – his favourite themes are 'the decay of Islam and the brevity of Love'. This combination of the religious and the secular is a key part of Forster's rounded characterisation of Aziz, and it is a complexity which Fielding appreciates but most of the British cannot recognise. Many candidates wrote about the meeting with Mrs Moore in the mosque and some referred to his belief in the superiority of Islam over Hinduism, while a few mentioned his religious poetry. On the physical side, candidates noted his continuing love for his wife, whose photograph he still treasures, but his willingness to seek physical solace in brothels and his unflattering comments about Adela's figure. For these attributes, some candidates condemned him, while others saw the layered, complex characterisation. One or two candidates also noted that Aziz is a doctor, whose job is to administer to weaknesses of the physical body.
- (b) Well-constructed answers to this question focused on its wording carefully, looking at Adela's response to the punkah-wallah, and therefore also looking at what it is to which she responds. The early description of the punkah-wallah is in the narrative voice, not Adela's, a distinction that many candidates failed to make, but the implication is that she noticed these aspects of the man. His role as 'apart from human destinies... a winnower of souls' and his separation from events he is witnessing was linked in strong answers with Adela's mental absence from the court – she is more 'impressed' by his 'aloofness' than she is by the legal events taking place which directly concern her, and it is this sense of her own, and the court's, lack of importance which lead to her retraction of her charge against Aziz. Some candidates noted the irony of her place as a plaintiff in a charge of sexual assault when she seems to be aware of the sexual attractiveness which the narrator notes in the punkah-wallah's 'strength and beauty' and 'physical perfection' as he is 'Almost naked, and splendidly formed'.

#### Question 6 *Stories of Ourselves*

- (a) 'Of White Hairs and Cricket', 'Journey' and 'A Horse and Two Goats' were the most favoured stories in answers to this question, though several other stories also featured, with varying levels of success. There were many successful answers which explored the issue of old-age with its associated insecurities, such as fear, denial, alienation, distrust and the inability to accept or adapt to change or new ideas, often resulting in a clash of old and new values. There was also some consideration of the inevitability and irreversibility of the process of ageing and what lessons the younger generation can learn. Candidates explored the perception of older characters and younger characters' views of them. There was discussion, for example, of the vitality but frustration of the old man in 'Journey', the father's desperation to ward off old age and the sight of Viraf's father in 'Of White Hairs and Cricket' and the humorous characterisation of Muni in 'A Horse and Two Goats'. The contrast between the young narrator's views with those of her grandmother in 'To Da-duh, In Memoriam' were also usefully explored. Some candidates also commented on the symbolic value of the titles of the stories they had chosen.

- (b) The passage from 'Sandpiper' was a very popular choice, most candidates combining close reading and insightful understanding. Many candidates noted the use of time shifts in the presentation of the two relationships, in the present and the past. Candidates recognised the parallel created with the image of the Pakistani woman protecting her small son with contentment and the narrator's own loving relationship with Lucy, many linking the woman's 'worldly treasure' with 'my treasure, my trap' later on in the narrative. Most noted the literal and the metaphor in the passage's opening line and noted that the narrator is reduced to the capacity of a maid, glad to be of 'use', as her roles within the house are restricted. Alert candidates also discussed the past mutuality of the lovers' obsessive physical and emotional passion, contrasted with the change in the dynamics of the relationship later on as cultural differences become apparent. Many answers were alert to the reflective, nostalgic, retrospective quality of the writing and of the ironic undertones of the passage. Less successful were those candidates who did not note the shifts to past tense and wrote of the loving relationship with the husband as if unaware of the rest of Soueif's story.

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## Question Specific Comments 9695/33

### **Question 1** Thomas Hardy: *Selected Poems*

- (a)** The most successful answers to this question looked at differing poems, comparing, for example, a poem of memories of a past relationship, like 'The Voice', with a poem celebrating new love, like 'A Church Romance'. This allowed candidates to explore different attitudes communicated through varied choices of vocabulary, imagery and structure and were able to demonstrate a range within Hardy's verse. Unfortunately, many answers chose to recount Hardy's biography, concentrating on his relationship with Emma Gifford, often with only passing reference to poetry. Some candidates maintained the focus on the verse, but in many responses, the biographical speculation was a distraction.
- (b)** Some candidates discussed Hardy's relationship with Emma even with a question on 'The Convergence of the Twain'. They were a minority, though, and in general candidates discussed this poem more successfully than other Hardy poems which have featured in **(b)** questions, as they focused on the content and the writing of the poem. Answers were often contextualised within a view of 'human vanity' receiving its comeuppance from the forces of nature, candidates noting diction such as 'vaingloriousness' and the juxtaposition of 'mirrors meant/ To glass the opulent' with sea creatures which are 'grotesque, slimed, dumb, indifferent.' The strongest candidates noted that



the question asked about the development of the response and commented on the shift from these observations to the dominant idea of the 'sinister mate' and the 'Immanent Will' which governs the second half of the poem. Some suggested that Hardy's placing of the blame for the wreck on fate, with the image of a 'consummation' between ship and iceberg, combined with the poem's lack of sympathy for the victims, might have seemed a tactless response to the tragedy.

**Question 2** Seamus Heaney: *District and Circle*

- (a) A number of candidates included 'Follower' in their choice of poems – although featured in *Songs of Ourselves*, the poem is not included in *District and Circle*. More careful answers used a wide range of poems from the collection, some exploring a rural childhood, others memories which hint at the political divisions within Ireland. Candidates often suggested that the importance of these memories lay in the way they shaped the poet's sensibilities, sympathies and interests, while the strongest answers looked closely at the structure and language of the poems, recognising a directness in the physical language, but also subtle ways in which allusions are made to violence and politics.
- (b) Candidates tended to write very well on 'The Nod', appreciating ways in which the memory of queuing to buy the Sunday roast provokes more unsettling ideas. The significant colours were often noted and that despite being 'bow-tied neat and clean', the package is still 'seeping blood'. Sensitive candidates – and there were many – noted significant and suggestive diction, such as 'dead weight', 'sling' and 'shelled out'. These ideas were often linked with the second stanza, with its awkward juxtaposition of 'neighbours' and 'guns' and the tone of uneasy truce but constant threat. Only a few candidates, though, noted that the poem is a sonnet, a striking use of this traditional form.

**Question 3** *Songs of Ourselves*

- (a) While most candidates compared Sassoon's 'Attack' with Owen's 'Anthem for Doomed Youth' in response to this question, Fenton's 'Cambodia' featured frequently, as did Boey Kim Cheng's 'Reservist'. Some candidates made good use of contextual knowledge of the actual involvement of Owen and Sassoon in the First World War and went on to make intelligent comparisons of structure, diction and imagery. Several noted the contrasting focus of the two poems, with Sassoon concentrating on battlefield action and Owen considering the circumstances of the soldiers' deaths and the effect on others. Answers on 'Cambodia' made thoughtful comments on its simple structure, using numbers as a key stylistic device, emphasising anonymity. Responses using 'Reservist' often compared its gently satirical tone with the harsher mood of the more conventional military poems.
- (b) This was an enormously popular question and almost every candidate who chose it was able to show some engagement with the poem. Less confident answers dealt almost entirely with content, occasionally lapsing into sociologically dominated essays about the problems caused by over-protective parents and/or bullying. There was a good range, though, among the more literary answers. Some answers picked up on the immediately accessible imagery such as 'threw words like stones' and 'muscles like iron', while others went further, to make perceptive comments about the hurt conveyed in 'salt coarse pointing' and the symbolic nature of the children being 'behind hedges'. The most confident answers produced remarkably detailed analyses, showing appreciation of techniques such as the use of active verbs to portray the other children in contrast to the passive diction describing the speaker. Thoughtful points were also made about enjambment, conveying the hectic nature of the childhood experience, and caesura, allowing the speaker to pause and consider the children's treatment of him. A number considered the ambiguity of the final line (does 'them' refer to the bullies or the parents?), while some commented on the changing perspective, noting that the first stanza suggests the influence of the parents, whereas the final stanza suggests the voice of an adult looking back on an unhappy childhood. The absence of the parents from the poem after the first two words often drew thoughtful speculation.

**Question 4** Tsitsi Dangarembga: *Nervous Conditions*

- (a) Candidates responding to this question usually demonstrated a high standard of knowledge and understanding of the novel. They showed detailed knowledge of the actions, and in some cases the words, of Jeremiah and Ma'Shingayi and their influence on Tambu. They considered Tambu's parents as representatives of particular attitudes and behaviour, against which Tambu measures her own aspirations and conduct. Some effectively compared Jeremiah with Babamukuru and Ma'Shingayi with Maiguru. These comparisons highlighted Jeremiah's fecklessness and dependence and his wife's lack of education and her bitter view of first Nhamo's, then Tambu's, development under Babamukuru's influence. Dangarembga's presentation of their wedding was often highlighted and candidates also acknowledged that the parents provide impetus for Tambu to escape and gain an education and freedom.
- (b) In responses to this popular question, candidates often noted that the passage features a literal and a metaphorical journey, both of which will 'speedily lead (Tambu] to [her) destination.' Candidates showed their awareness of the importance of the episode as the beginning of Tambu's new life and noted the vocabulary and imagery of change and excitement, such as 'limitless horizons', 'new me' and 'my emancipation', while she acknowledges the difficulty of leaving the river, her 'childhood playground'. Some candidates criticised Tambu for her insensitive dismissal of her parents as 'insignificant' and a 'piece of surplus scenery', as well as her own physical self with 'broad-toed feet' and 'dull tufts of malnourished hair'. The most subtle and sensitive answers suggested that the reader's repulsion has been deliberately achieved, discussing Dangarembga's use of an ironic narrative voice which criticises the attitudes of the young Tambu simultaneously with conveying her youthful views with some sympathy.

**Question 5** EM Forster: *A Passage to India*

- (a) Many candidates responded to this question with enthusiasm, producing answers that showed detailed knowledge of the novel to achieve a clear focus on the question. Some answers used the tripartite structure of the novel to consider ways in which each section focuses on a different religion and the contrasts between them. Others considered how the three religions are presented through different characters, notably Aziz, Godbole and Mrs Moore. In answers which adopted this approach, some made perceptive observations about Mrs Moore, for example, commenting that officially she is a Christian but in some ways her beliefs are closer to those of Aziz. The British in general, however, claim to be Christian but show virtually no evidence of displaying Christian values in their behaviour towards others, while Fielding is open and compassionate, but not religious. Some responses made good use of specific incidents in the novel, for example the meeting at the mosque, the Marabar Caves visit and Mrs Moore's consequent loss of faith, and the Hindu festival at Mau, which serves to some extent to heal the religious divisions.
- (b) Many answers to this question struggled to rise above the level of paraphrase, without really attempting to respond to the question set. However, many were able to see McBryde and Fielding as representatives of two contrasting viewpoints towards Indians and some were able to dissect the extract carefully, exploring the nuances of the dialogue and the few snatches of narrative commentary. Such answers noted that Forster's narrative irony is used to steer readers' sympathies towards Fielding's view, while the McBryde's language successfully gently satirises his attitudes. Many candidates were alert to hypocrisy, Fielding openly confessing his youthful indiscretions whereas McBryde remains quiet. Some compared this with his affair with Miss Derek, demonstrating another level of sexual hypocrisy. There were some forensic examinations of the evidence presented against Aziz in the extract, noting that, despite being a professional policeman, McBryde cannot recognise that it all points to Aziz's innocence. This confirmed that, whereas Fielding's arguments are reasonable and logical, McBryde's are based on prejudice. Interestingly, very few candidates acknowledged that at this point in the novel the reader knows that Aziz is innocent and his picking up of the field glasses has already been described.

**Question 6** *Stories of Ourselves*

- (a) Candidates responded well to this question, though there were cases where the openings of the stories were known in insufficient detail to construct a competent answer, and others where the definition of 'opening' was stretched to a considerable degree. With an unlimited choice of stories to refer to, answers covered virtually the full range of stories and there was, overall, plenty of evidence of good, accurate knowledge of the text. 'The Fall of the House of Usher', 'Sandpiper', 'A Horse and Two Goats', 'The Open Boat' and 'Journey' were perhaps the most popular stories, with

candidates exploring setting, the establishing of character and attitudes and the use of metaphorical references which assume significance as the stories progress. The strongest responses used the context of the development of their chosen stories to show the effectiveness of the openings.

- (b) While there were a number of weak responses which were restricted to paraphrase, stronger candidates responded well to the wide range of interesting vocabulary, imagery and structural devices in this vivid passage of writing. There were some very engaging responses, commenting on techniques such as the effects of the alliteration in 'dull, dark, and soundless day'; the personification in 'the vacant and eye-like windows'; the sibilance in 'an iciness, a sinking, a sickening of the heart'; and the rhetorical question, 'What was it...? More perceptive answers noted the use of long, complex sentences and dashes to reflect the seemingly interminable journey and mental exhaustion of the narrator. Some candidates unfortunately ignored the second paragraph, but others successfully linked the effect of the natural surroundings on the spirits of the narrator with the similar effect of the house on Roderick Usher and his sister, while others noted the effect of the final words, 'a very singular summons', in setting the reader up to expect a particularly strange story. Some candidates were aware of the gothic genre and wrote effectively about how Poe's story demonstrates some of the key features of the style.

# LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

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Paper 9695/41

Drama

## Key messages

When tackling **(b)** type questions, candidates must be prepared to engage with detail. The passage needs to be examined strategically as well as simply placed in term of the play's action.

Candidates need to be carefully tutored in the implications of the word 'presentation' for a drama text. This issue is further discussed in the comments on Questions 2(a) and 5(a) below.

## General comments

This paper is taken by relatively small numbers of candidates, so the full range of ability of AS Level candidates across the world is not necessarily reflected in the responses produced.

On the whole, the candidates demonstrated knowledge and understanding of the texts that they had studied, though close reference to language, form and structure was often rather limited. Most candidates showed some response to the texts as plays, as dramatic structures that function on stage as well as on the page. Personal response was often clearly displayed in answers to the questions, but candidates needed to be cautious about simply enthusing about a text rather than letting their response come out through detailed argument. Most candidates planned their work carefully and showed an ability to convey their insights, even if limited, with fluency.

Candidates seemed less preoccupied with the biographies of writers this session compared to recent sessions, and fewer tried to make links between a writer's life and works. This is a step in the right direction.

## Comments on specific questions

### **Peter Shaffer: *Equus***

#### **Question 1**

- (a) There were very few answers to this question. Most saw Frank as having been responsible for his son's illness because of his intolerance and his strained relationship with Dora. Detail from the text was not often fully explored. Stronger candidates were able to move towards analysing Frank's limitations and, perhaps, his similarities with his son. Some candidates took the question simply to be an invitation to look at Frank's character, and these responses tended simply to deal with the relationship between him and Alan as peripheral.
- (b) Candidates were usually able to demonstrate the fundamental contrasts of the passage presented, showing clear understanding of Dora's feelings. Stronger answers looked at the rhythms of Dora's language, the listing with the use of the word 'and', and her imagery here of the Devil as part of the larger themes of the play such as paganism, growth of the self, and the conflict exploration of the relationship between religion and passion. A few candidates attempted to analyse the stage directions to good effect, making use of the contrast between two scenes as a means of focusing attention on the power struggle between Dora and Dysart.

**William Shakespeare: *The Winter's Tale***

**Question 2**

- (a) There were a very small number of responses to this question, mostly basic in their appreciation of Leontes's jealousy and simply recounting the course of its progress over the first three acts of the play. Better responses looked at the issue in relation to the action of the play as a whole.
- (b) Candidates were aware of the content of the scene and of its place in the pattern of the whole play. However, many resorted to narrative, rather than analysis, with little comment on language or significance in relation to the overall themes. Some candidates showed awareness of the reversal of roles that goes on between Florizel and Perdita, with a small number going on from there to draw attention to the double irony of both of them being royal whilst neither knows the truth about the other. The richness of the vocabulary from the pastoral idyll was analysed by the most able candidates.

**William Shakespeare: *Henry IV, Part 1***

**Question 3**

- (a) Candidates were able to see that the action of the play and Hal's development presents a rather different view of Hal to that depicted by his father. Some argued – sensibly – that Hal's 'vile participation' was a vital part of his movement towards maturity. The strongest of the responses looked carefully at particular moments (Hal's soliloquy in Act 1, or the mock interview with Falstaff) in order to explore their perceptions further.
- (b) Candidates who tackled this question were able to outline Hotspur's character and make some reference to the text in order to establish his sense of self-importance, his bluster, and his foolhardiness. More focus on precise language features would have been a more successful approach in many responses.

**Tennessee Williams: *A Streetcar Named Desire***

**Question 4**

- (a) Candidates showed a good understanding of Mitch's character and were often comfortable in focusing on that. The question asked for his 'significance,' though, and many candidates failed to develop a coherent response to this, with many simply noting that Mitch is Blanche's last hope for the future. Stronger candidates were able to draw attention to him as emotionally needy, like Blanche, or as a contrast to the alpha male characteristics of Stanley.
- (b) Some candidates confined themselves to simply describing and tracking what happens in the passage presented. Others were able to talk about the fear of the other men who leave quickly before the situation blows up completely. Stanley's reliance on Stella – a slight surprise perhaps – was also often carefully referred to. Some candidates wanted to see the incident in the shower as symbolic of washing away Stanley's violence. One or two compared it to Blanche's constant desire for bathing and cleanliness. A small number of candidates at the top end noted the imagery of the passage, particularly that related to animals and linked this to the wider view of Stanley as expressed by Blanche elsewhere. Other candidates talked appropriately about Stanley's change of tone with 'my baby' and 'my baby doll,' often seeing this as symbolic of the way in which he patronises her elsewhere in the play. Most responses took account of the staging – lights and music – and were able to say something about it. Lines 40-50 were often ignored, perhaps because they were considered to be simply 'staging,' though of course much about the relationship between Stanley and Stella is revealed as 'they come together with low, animal moans.... Her eyes go blind with tenderness' etc. All the text which is given in the passage-based questions is provided for the purpose of analysis by the candidates.

**Oscar Wilde: *An Ideal Husband***

**Question 5**

- (a) There were a few responses to this question. Responses tended to centre on the characters, with some reference to ways in which their public behaviour and morals are at odds with private realities. Candidates were clear about Robert Chiltern's hypocrisy and the ways in which he tries to conceal his past in the play. 'Dramatic presentation' often centred on narration of plot rather than consideration of Wilde's methods.
- (b) Candidates were clear about the dramatic qualities of the showdown between Lord Goring and Mrs Cheveley. As one-time lovers, each is aware of the weakness of the other, and the scene works through this love-hate relationship with great dramatic impact. Even those who mainly chose to narrate had something to say about the contrast between the two, and better candidates were able to analyse the point scoring in the game that the two play. Many focused on Lord Goring's adept use of the bracelet as a means of dramatizing the tension between the two.

# LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

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Paper 9695/42

Drama

## Key messages

When tackling **(b)** type questions, candidates must be prepared to engage with detail. The passage needs to be examined strategically as well as simply placed in term of the play's action.

Candidates need to be carefully tutored in the implications of the word 'presentation' for a drama text. This issue is further discussed in the comments on Questions 1(a), 3(b) and 5(b) below.

## General comments

Work at all but the most basic level showed a willingness to engage with these texts in interesting ways. The best candidates offered fresh, individual readings and ensured that they tailored what they had to say to the precise requirements of the question. Arguments here were sometimes subtle, often responding to particular moments where the candidate had an individual insight into how something worked. These candidates were also able to shape a sustained argument, knitting together individual insights into a larger pattern. Slightly lower down, candidates were able to show knowledge and understanding of texts, often with close reference to text. At this level, responses were often less robustly shaped to the precise requirements of the question. At the 'basic' and 'solid' end of the mark scheme, candidates were usually able to make it clear that they had an understanding of the plot and characters, with some reference to particular moments. However, answers sometimes relied on paraphrase and narrative, with little critical evaluation. Responses here also tended to give a rather general view, with the questions slipping in and out of view at times. Although it is not a requirement that candidates should submit plans for their essays, it is clear that those who spend some time mapping out what they want to say before they begin to write usually do better with the fourth of the marking criteria – communication. At the very bottom end, candidates sometimes struggled to make their views clear or failed to recognise that they had been asked a specific question.

Some candidates, particularly at the bottom end, appeared to consider **(b)** questions as slightly easier because they only have to address the passage that is printed on the paper. Candidates should not make this wrong assumption. The fact that the passage is printed means that the skills of close reading are being rigorously tested, so it is unwise to do such a question unless a candidate's knowledge and understanding of the particularities of the specific moment in the play are secure. The principle focus of responses here must be on the given text – it is not simply an invitation to set off from this point to discuss the play as a whole. In particular, on a drama paper, candidates must be prepared to articulate their views about how a passage works in terms of words and action.

Candidates should be reminded that not all sources of critical opinion may be equally valid. Many candidates use study guides, either printed or online, when they are preparing for the examination, which is appropriate, but it sometimes appears that responses are unduly influenced by easily obtained material that may be of dubious critical worth. A fresh, personal reading showing analytical skills of literary criticism that articulates an honest response tends to be stronger than one which relies on half-remembered insights from others.

### Comments on specific questions

#### **Peter Shaffer: *Equus***

##### **Question 1**

- (a) Candidates were quick to point out that Dalton's view is only one of many that is presented in the play. Candidates also pointed out the unsympathetic presentation of Dalton. Candidates ranged widely over the other characters in the play often showing sympathy for Dysart's conception of mental disturbance as something that makes Alan more fully alive than others. The strongest candidates were able to talk about the structure of the play and Shaffer's manipulation of an audience in order to focus the word 'presentation' of the question.
- (b) The two different aspects of Dysart in this scene were clearly seen and explicated by the majority of candidates. Reference to the stage directions often provided a useful focus, as they associate Dysart with light. There was much sympathy for Dysart as he attempts to comfort Alan, and some recognition amongst better candidates that he is actually talking to himself rather than Alan in lines 15-32. The role of Hester in the scene was usually clearly understood. Issues of Dysart's state of mind towards the end of the scene were not always fully explored.

#### **William Shakespeare: *The Winter's Tale***

##### **Question 2**

- (a) A number of candidates saw this question as an invitation simply to outline the plot and then point out that the last act resolves some of the tensions established elsewhere. While this is partly true, more perceptive candidates recognised that a clear focus on the details of the last act would be productive. Focus on the statue scene often proved central to the stronger answers. A few candidates argued, with some conviction, that the last act fails to satisfy because it ties things up too neatly, with ideas of reconciliation and the new beginning pointed to by the relationship between Florizel and Perdita simply stretching the audience's credibility, whilst at the same time Hermione's meek acceptance of the reformed Leontes seems unlikely. But this is one interpretation, and candidates who argued in detail certainly showed that they were responding personally. The best candidates were able to analyse the balance of seriousness and frivolity presented in the first four acts in order to establish the serene tone of reconciliation at the end. A number of candidates pointed out that quite a lot of the action in the last act is reported rather than seen, and they saw this as a slight inadequacy. Others moved forward with this idea to suggest that Shakespeare is too crafty to present the wonders of reconciliation between Perdita and her father, only to have them rapidly superseded by the true resolution of the play.
- (b) Responses on this question were often detailed and carefully argued, though candidates who responded fully to the language and tone of the passage were quite rare. There was clear awareness of the situation, and candidates were able to locate the tension between Leontes and Paulina. There was often full discussion of Paulina's courage in challenging the king, both as a commoner and as a woman. Better candidates also saw something of the melodrama of her language. Candidates at the lower end of the mark scheme were often tempted into paraphrase or narrative or to move too quickly from the passage to more general discussion of the play.

#### **William Shakespeare: *Henry IV, Part 1***

##### **Question 3**

- (a) Better answers here developed the contrast between the Hal of the early part of the play and his newly found sense of honour and loyalty towards the end. Weaker candidates tended to focus more on Hotspur and to see that his view of honour is full of bluster and bravado, a matter of action, rather than a moral stance. The role of Falstaff as the measure of the issue towards the end of the play was often suitably explored. The best candidates ensured that their responses were securely argued from detailed discussion of particular moments in the play.



- (b) Candidates at the lower end of the mark scheme often responded to the question simply by giving an account of what Hotspur says or by demonstrating knowledge of the historical background of the play. Better responses quickly established that the focus should be on ways in which Hotspur is adducing a very biased view of the recent historical past and of the virtues or limitations of the current king in order to justify his rebellion. Candidates who saw the veiled sarcasm of the opening lines were soon launched into detailed discussion, with most pointing out that Hotspur's hidden agenda is that he feels his family has not been sufficiently rewarded for its role in gaining the throne for Henry – a truth that he does his best to hide behind assertions of altruism. Blunt's 'Tut I came not to hear this,' was not often discussed, but it does provide the clue to 'presented' as requested in the question

### **Tennessee Williams: *A Streetcar Named Desire***

#### **Question 4**

- (a) Most answers showed a willingness to range across a variety of characters, rather than focusing entirely on Blanche. A number of candidates discussed a much wider variety of 'desire' than simply sexual desire. Candidates were often very much aware of the complexity of Blanche's character and the nature and psychological foundations of her desire. Some very good answers saw that Blanche's end lies in her beginning, linking a detailed examination of the opening to the final moments of the play with confident understanding. Contrasts were often usefully made with Stella and Stanley's raw attraction for each other and of the perverse desire that shapes the relationship between Stanley and Blanche. Weaker responses tended to take a more one-dimensional view of the issue, focusing almost entirely on Blanche and often taking a rather moralistic attitude towards her.
- (b) There was usually clear understanding here of the ways in which Blanche is trying to manipulate her sister. The best responses noted that all of what Blanche says has a staged, rehearsed feel to it – this is not a spontaneous evocation of what actually happened. In weaker answers, Stella's part in the scene was sometimes seen as peripheral. But it is not. Her interjections demonstrate that she understands more about Blanche than Blanche perhaps realises ('Stop this hysterical outburst,' 'Blanche! You be still! That's enough!') and the fact that Stella has made no accusation before Blanche launches into her tale indicates Blanche's inner sense of guilt very tellingly. Many candidates made useful reference to the stage directions, most particularly to the 'blue piano' which appears as a recurrent motif throughout.

### **Oscar Wilde: *An Ideal Husband***

#### **Question 5**

- (a) Most candidates were confident about this issue and able to write coherently about how the reality of the Chiltern's marriage belies the public rhetoric. Useful contrasts were sometimes made to Lord Goring's impending marriage where, for all his faults, it is possible to feel that he will be a better husband than Chiltern because he will treat his wife as more of an equal. There was much useful discussion of Lady Chiltern and her views, particularly her ironic statements that morally dubious characters should be unmasked and disgraced until she realises that she too might get caught up in such moral outrage. Most pointed to the ending of the play as a suitable conclusion; a few went further to suggest that for all its tidiness, the ending simply conceals the fault-lines in the Chiltern marriage.
- (b) Strong answers here developed the dramatic aspects of the scene, with Lord Goring's interventions seen as crucial to our understanding of, and sympathy (or lack of it) towards Sir Robert. At times, digression onto the character of Lord Goring, an unlikely moral voice bearing in mind his role as dandy elsewhere, proved fertile. Weaker answers focused almost entirely on what Sir Robert says. Able candidates located his arrogance and his complacency, his very odd concepts of weakness and strength, and the fact that he still does not really want to confront the reality and consequences of what he has done. More could perhaps have been done to discuss the language of the passage, particularly with its Christian undertones and reference to 'temptation,' 'remorse,' 'strength and courage' and 'confession', a reminder perhaps that the play is a morality tale at heart.

# LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

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Paper 9695/43

Drama

## Key messages

When tackling **(b)** type questions, candidates must be prepared to engage with detail. The passage needs to be examined strategically as well as simply placed in term of the play's action.

Candidates need to be carefully tutored in the implications of the word 'presentation' for a drama text. This issue is further discussed in the comments on Questions 2(a), 2(b), 3(a) and 5(b) below.

## General comments

Work at all but the most basic level showed a willingness to engage with these texts in interesting ways. The best candidates offered fresh, individual readings and ensured that they tailored what they had to say to the precise requirements of the question. Arguments here were sometimes subtle, often responding to particular moments where the candidate had an individual insight into how something worked. These candidates were also able to shape a sustained argument, knitting together individual insights into a larger pattern. Slightly lower down, candidates were able to show knowledge and understanding of texts, often with close reference to text. At this level, responses were often less robustly shaped to the precise requirements of the question. At the 'basic' and 'solid' end of the mark scheme, candidates were usually able to make it clear that they had an understanding of the plot and characters, with some reference to particular moments. However, answers sometimes relied on paraphrase and narrative, with little critical evaluation. Responses here also tended to give a rather general view, with the questions slipping in and out of view at times. Although it is not a requirement that candidates should submit plans for their essays, it is clear that those who spend some time mapping out what they want to say before they begin to write usually do better with the fourth of the marking criteria – communication. At the very bottom end, candidates sometimes struggled to make their views clear or failed to recognise that they had been asked a specific question.

Some candidates, particularly at the bottom end, appeared to consider **(b)** questions as slightly easier because they only have to address the passage that is printed on the paper. Candidates should not make this wrong assumption. The fact that the passage is printed means that the skills of close reading are being rigorously tested, so it is unwise to do such a question unless a candidate's knowledge and understanding of the particularities of the specific moment in the play are secure. The principle focus of responses here must be on the given text – it is not simply an invitation to set off from this point to discuss the play as a whole. In particular, on a drama paper, candidates must be prepared to articulate their views about how a passage works in terms of words and action.

Candidates should be reminded that not all sources of critical opinion may be equally valid. Many candidates use study guides, either printed or online, when they are preparing for the examination, which is appropriate, but it sometimes appears that responses are unduly influenced by easily obtained material that may be of dubious critical worth. A fresh, personal reading showing analytical skills of literary criticism that articulates an honest response tends to be stronger than one which relies on half-remembered insights from others.

### Comments on specific questions

#### **Peter Shaffer: *Equus***

##### **Question 1**

- (a) This question provoked some strong responses. Candidates were able to see that an audience for the play is actually seeing the action at second hand, with all the sense of distance or alienation that might be involved with that. Most wanted to argue that having 'ordinary people' represented actually provided the audience with a strong feeling of involvement. A number of answers focused on the horses masking and unmasking in plain view, and saw that this can be powerfully dramatic.
- (b) The general pattern of the scene was clearly understood by all, and most candidates were able to point out some of the ways in which Dysart starts to open up lines of communication with Alan, at first by seeming highly professional, then by starting to play Alan's game, only to subvert it ('I really do think that one's better'). Responses showed sound understanding of Alan's singing as a defence method, and many drew attention to his staring at the end of the scene as an indication of his awareness that Dysart is trying to outwit him. Some saw Dysart's staring back as crafty and manipulative; others accepted it simply as the opening of the treatment.

#### **William Shakespeare: *The Winter's Tale***

##### **Question 2**

- (a) Slightly restricted answers on this question saw it straightforwardly as being an invitation to discuss Hermione's character. More able responses were able to see her as a symbolic figure, or indeed one whose spirit infuses the whole play, so that it is no surprise that her daughter has inherited her characteristics of grace and majesty. Some candidates were puzzled by her reappearance at the end of the play, with a small number convinced that she had been standing on her plinth throughout the sixteen years; others took the view that her absence until Perdita comes back showed signs of her unfeeling hard-heartedness towards Leontes. Most rightly saw that this is a question that simply does not occur to an audience as the play moves to its conclusion.
- (b) Most candidates were able to see the affection that lies between Leontes and Polixenes and the courtly respect that is expressed between them ('our throne'). Responses were also able to see how Hermione's intervention might start to lead Leontes on towards his subsequent imaginings, sometimes seeing the nine months of the opening line as being deeply significant. The best answers responded closely to the tone and the imagery of the scene, using this moment as a way of suggesting that the easiness of what goes on here makes an audience's response to what follows all the more sympathetic towards Hermione. Many commented on the depth of the two kings' feelings for each other, clearly in evidence here, which shows how much is lost through Leontes' jealousy.

#### **William Shakespeare: *Henry IV, Part 1***

##### **Question 3**

- (a) There were many strong answers on this question. Candidates quickly recognised that this was not simply an invitation to offer a character study of Hal, and the best responses showed awareness of how Hal's words and actions are carefully measured by Shakespeare in order to shape an audience's reaction. There were sensible discussions of Hal's calculated involvement with the 'low life' of the play, and most saw this as his preparation for kingship as he cultivates the common touch. Stronger candidates were also able to note his discomfort at having to fit into a royal role that has been foisted onto him. There was often full discussion of his soliloquy and of the mock interview with Falstaff. One or two very good candidates focused on this moment and contrasted it with the actual moment when Hal confronts his father. One or two also focused on the word 'truant' in the question, often to good effect. Less able answers tended towards character study, though the general progress of Hal towards kingship was clearly understood.

- (b) Many responses were oddly unsympathetic to Falstaff, seeing him as a foolish time-waster whose behaviour here is despicable. This is one view, but it does perhaps contradict the presentation of him elsewhere as a likeable rogue, and his opening lines here may actually change the mood of the play back to light-heartedness, with an audience feeling glad that he has survived. Of course the issue raised about his integrity is a serious one, but it is clear from line 20 that Prince John and Hal know perfectly well what he is up to. Issues of Falstaff's self-delusion were dealt with well by candidates who looked carefully at the closing lines of the passage.

**Tennessee Williams: *A Streetcar Named Desire***

**Question 4**

- (a) Most candidates were able to give a clear account of how Blanche is a victim of the various things that have happened to her in the past, such as the loss of Belle Reve or the loss of her husband. Better answers were aware that things are not quite this simple and that Blanche likes to portray herself as a victim too. Some responses also suggested that she might have brought down some of her misfortunes upon herself – there was no need for her to enter so fully into the life of the Flamingo Hotel or to seduce one of her candidates. In analysing her current position, some candidates observed that she is victim of present circumstance too. Some saw Blanche as representative of the old values: in colliding with Stanley, the representative of the new America, she is crushed, whereas her sister accommodates both Stanley and his values and therefore prospers. Others argued more simply that in provoking Stanley, Blanche ensures that she becomes a victim of the present. Poorer answers tended simply to focus on plot or on how one might feel sorry for Blanche in her current circumstances.
- (b) Blanche's teasing of Mitch was soundly understood by the majority of candidates, as was the fact that her light-heartedness covers over increasing desperation for security on her part. Her ambiguity towards Mitch was often discussed through reference to her speaking French, which was variously seen as patronising or simply that she articulates her true desires in code. Her fake fastidiousness ('unhand me, sir') was often carefully evoked, as was her flirtatious leading on of Mitch ('It's awe inspiring') until he crosses a boundary. Reference to the drinks, to the desire to be in a little artists' café, to the candle, often led on to discussions about Blanche's self-delusion and desire to live in a fantasy world. The best responses also noted that Blanche is constantly testing her own worth in the scene, trying to assess whether playing hard to get will lead to defeat or will make Mitch want her more. Many were aware of the ironies that play out here, bearing in mind what we already know of Stanley's plans to unmask her.

**Oscar Wilde: *An Ideal Husband***

**Question 5**

- (a) Responses here tended to focus almost entirely on Sir Robert. There was some awareness of how Wilde is satirising contemporary attitudes and values. Fuller answers picked up on the word 'dramatise' in the question and used aspects of stage presentation to show contrasts. One or two responses focused on Lord Goring's role as an unlikely commentator and moral judge of society values. Better answers were able to offer clear, coherent views about the presentation of hypocrisy in the play, often by quoting moments where characters avowed values are immediately undermined by their reactions to the situation they find themselves in.
- (b) There was much to explore in this passage and most responses found things to say about the staging and the dramatic effects as the women circle round each other with increasing animosity. Contrasts about power were tellingly made, with Lady Chiltern's 'stern and pale' set against Mrs Cheveley's 'seems rather amused.' The irony of Lady Chiltern's moral position was also clearly understood, as was Mrs Cheveley's verbal trap in line sixteen. Her sinister impertinence of tone was often commented on to good effect. The best answers showed confident understanding of the sub-text of what is going on, and were clear, too, on the significance of Sir Robert's appearance at the end of the exchange. More basic answers simply focused on the dislike that the two have for each other, with Lady Chiltern being seen favourably here. Able candidates were able to point out that her confidence in both herself and her husband is both complacent and misplaced.

# LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

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Paper 9695/51

Shakespeare and other Pre 20th Century Texts

## Key Messages

Candidates should avoid unnecessary general narrative summaries by selecting the most relevant material to support answers before beginning their responses.

Candidates should have a detailed knowledge of their set texts and be confident in placing passages if they attempt the option **(b)** questions.

## General Comments

The general standard this session was comparable with previous sessions, with some candidates achieving marks in the highest bands on nearly every text on the paper. There were very few rubric errors and almost no candidates appeared to have time problems. All but a few candidates were able to show at least a sound knowledge of their chosen texts and many displayed an engagement in and enthusiasm for the works they had studied.

There are two general issues to address this session:

- (a)** Contextualisation – a number of candidates did not appear able to analyse the passages with regard to their context. It is a fundamental requirement that candidates should know their set texts very well, especially if they intend to tackle the passage questions. There will very often be a requirement to discuss the significance of the passage or its effect on the characterisation and to do that well candidates must be able to place the passage accurately within the text and not be confused by other versions of the work they may have seen.
- (b)** Many candidates in this session, especially less confident ones, had a tendency to retell large parts of their chosen set text. To make best use of their knowledge and time, it is important that candidates consider the terms of the question carefully and select the most relevant material from the text to support their argument or answer. This would help candidates develop points in detail, perhaps analysing the writer's methods and effects, essential if the candidate is to secure marks in the higher assessment bands.

## Specific Texts

### **Section A**

#### **Hamlet**

Option **(a)** was a less popular choice on this text but candidates had plenty of material to discuss. Some candidates chose to interpret 'players' as the actors in the play generally and discussed their significance to the play as whole, often focusing on dramatic function and significance to the plot. This led some weaker candidates to a rather superficial, if very detailed, response. Those who narrowed the focus to the Mousetrap and its dramatic function were able to develop arguments more fully, often emphasizing the effect on the characterisation of Hamlet and Claudius. Other answers also referred to the Player's Pyrrhus speech and its effect on Hamlet.

Option **(b)**: This was a popular choice and the minority of candidates who knew the context to the passage had an advantage, remembering the hidden watchers, Polonius and Claudius. This led to some sensitive and analytical responses, identifying how Ophelia's nervousness is revealed and wrestling with the perennial critical problem of whether Hamlet knows they are there or not. Others focused on the relationship and what

it revealed about the characters now and in a happier time, with some excellent explorations of Ophelia's final speech and what it adds to our view of Hamlet's sanity. Those who focused on language and style often did very well, especially in linking this to Hamlet's view of women in general and his mother as well as Ophelia in particular.

### **Coriolanus**

Option **(a)** proved very popular and candidates were quick to identify many kinds of conflict: political, social, military and familial. Weaker answers tended to summarise examples but more successful answers did focus on presentation as well, often noting the many contrasts in the play to good effect, such as Coriolanus and Aufidius, the Tribunes and the patricians, Volumnia and Virgilia, Coriolanus and the ordinary soldiers. Other answers also discussed internal conflict and for some its absence, one candidate suggesting 'this is why we do not grieve at Coriolanus's death.' Candidates who were careful to select relevant material and structure the arguments presented often did very well.

Option **(b)** was less popular and some candidates were not able to contextualise the passage as Coriolanus's leave-taking after his banishment; this inevitably limited the success of the analysis. Those who did know the context sometimes focused too much on the preceding and/or following events – it is important to focus attention on the passage in hand, in the light of its context. Candidates who did this often produced detailed and thoughtful responses about Coriolanus himself: 'Does he already know what he is about to do?' one candidate wondered. Others discussed the family and social dynamics and nearly all commented on the surprising nature of Coriolanus's sensitivity revealed here.

### **Section B**

#### **Mansfield Park**

Option **(a)** was the less popular choice on this text. Candidates were often able to identify the formalities but were less confident about 'personal emotions' and only a few focused on presentation. Weaker answers tended to summarise examples of formal behaviour and emotions, whereas stronger answers were able to explore the effects of the tension created in the various characters. Maria, Crawford and Rushworth, for example, within the usual world of Mansfield Park society were contrasted with what happened during the theatricals and the social catastrophe that followed. Fanny and Edmund were also discussed, with the rigidity and timidity of Fanny often contrasted with the 'wildness and daring' of Mary. Those who remembered the absence of Sir Thomas, and his role in the development of characters and plot, often did very well.

Option **(b)** was more popular and often very well tackled by candidates who could recognise the context and securely identify the speakers. Candidates alive to the narrative structure and who saw the various changes in narrative voice were able to explore in detail how Austen developed both character and plot here. Others concentrated more on the 'human' emotions displayed here by the 'warring sisters' and Fanny. More detailed analyses also considered how and to what effect Henry's selfishness is revealed by his sister and aunt. Weaker answers tended to concentrate on Mary and her character as well as summarizing the events that have led to this conversation.

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

This was a popular choice of text with most candidates choosing option **(b)**. Those who did tackle option **(a)** needed a clear understanding of the concept of irony to address this task successfully, as well as a confident grasp of when the Pardoner is addressing his fellow pilgrims or his supposed congregation. Those who were not entirely clear on the term often produced some detailed summaries of Prologue and Tale but did not always link this material back to the task. Those who were confident with the concept of irony found much to say and often the success of an answer depended on how well the candidate had been able to structure and shape the material. Better answers considered 'effects' – Chaucer's attack on the corruption of the church for example – as well as the drama and humour of the Pardoner's performance. Option **(b)** answers from weaker candidates tended to paraphrase the passage, in some cases linking this to the presentation of the Pardoner more generally. Stronger answers, aware of the context, were able to show what is revealed about him and his methods and why this is significant at this point in the Prologue. Candidates, who considered the language and tone, as well as the concerns, often did very well, though a surprising number of answers appeared unsure of the meaning of 'coveitise'.

## Hard Times

Option **(a)** was often well done. Most candidates showed close knowledge of the text and Mr Gradgrind's history in particular. Weaker answers often produced detailed summaries of all that had gone on in the Gradgrind household, sometimes explaining why that had left him 'aged' and 'bowed'. Stronger answers linked this material into a detailed consideration of his role in the novel and why, unlike Bounderby, Dickens chooses to develop him in a positive way. The importance of his children was often well discussed and for some candidates his act of charity in taking in Sissy was enough reason for his positive outcome. For others, however, his marrying Louisa off to Bounderby and his attitude to the circus were unforgivable acts for which he deserved to suffer.

Option **(b)** was equally popular with most answers able to give quite a precise context to the passage, after Louisa's escape from Harthouse and Bounderby. Those who analysed the passage in detail often commented on Dickens's use of dialogue and narrative voice to achieve his effects, contrasting Sissy and Louisa's language and actions to telling effect. Many candidates were able to explore Dickens's methods of characterisation here in detail, with stronger answers linking back to earlier scenes, often Sissy's problems in the school and the reasons for Louisa's 'hatred' of the 'stroller's child'.

## John Donne Selection

This was a minority choice with only a few candidates offering option **(b)**. Option **(a)** answers often ignored 'effects', simply summarising three poems with varying accuracy and detail. Those who did consider 'effects' noted such key issues as Donne's use of tense and dialogue, as well as his more striking metaphysical methods. Candidates did consider love poems and holy sonnets and answers which were able to contrast the effects created in the light of the concerns of the poems often did very well.

Option **(b)** was not on the whole done well. Some weaker candidates appeared to be paraphrasing the poem, almost as an unseen, and were not able to develop a critical response to the methods and concerns. Better answers did focus on these and there were some sensitive explorations of Donne's emotions in terms of religion and faith but also his human loss.

## Silas Marner

This was a very popular choice. Answers on **(a)** showed a good knowledge of the text and nearly all candidates discussed in detail William Dane and Lantern Yard, as well as Dunstan Cass, the gold and the stone pit. Better answers were able to link these examples into a consideration of Eliot's presentation and methods, with some answers linking this to an awareness of characterisation and the structure of the novel as a whole. Some candidates explored how these evil deeds led to positive outcomes; the theft of the gold for example was often seen as the catalyst to Marner's reintegration into Raveloe society, for some an important first step before the arrival into his life of Eppie. Answers which developed beyond the narrative summary into seeing how Eliot uses these events to shape her reader's response often did very well.

Option **(b)** though less popular was often well done, with some excellent explorations of how Eliot contrasts the various characters in this passage: most often Godfrey and Silas, but also Nancy and Eppie. Weaker answers tended to give too much contextual background and often had time only to summarise the passage. Candidates who focused on the style, especially Eliot's language and use of dialogue and narration, to develop her characters and the concerns of the novel, often did very well.

## Hopkins Selected Poems

Only a few candidates attempted either option. In option **(a)**, candidates generally were able to refer to relevant poems to demonstrate his use of language and grammar, but very few were able to explore confidently what effects the poet created and how that was used to reveal his concerns.

Option **(b)** was less popular and only a very few answers had a convincing grasp of Hopkins's methods here and a secure knowledge of the poem as a whole. Stronger answers were alive to Hopkins's methods and how that reflected Hopkins characteristic concerns, his fear, his doubt and his love of God.

## The Changeling

This was more popular but still a minority choice in its second session. Those who opted for **(a)** often showed a detailed knowledge of the subplot and the characters involved. Weaker answers summarised the events, with varying focus on Isabella herself. Candidates with a clearer understanding of the dramatic conventions were able to explore her role, especially as a contrast to Beatrice, in detail. For many she was an example of what Beatrice failed to be – a faithful and honest wife. Others saw the contrast in social status as significant, while for others Isabella's ability not to take herself too seriously and the humour thereby created was her key advantage over her foil in the main plot.

Option **(b)** was also popular. Nearly every answer saw the dramatic significance of Beatrice's employment and 'seduction' of De Flores. Weaker answers tended to focus on where this led in the rest of play with insufficient focus on the detail of this passage. Candidates who considered the language and dramatic tone, especially in exploring how each of the characters is reacting to the other here, often did very well. Those answers who linked the language here – De Flores's use of 'precious' and 'ravishes' for example –with the development of this relationship in the rest of play also did very well.



# LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

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Paper 9695/52

Shakespeare and other Pre 20th Century Texts

## Key Messages

Candidates should avoid unnecessary general narrative summaries by selecting the most relevant material to support answers before beginning their responses.

Candidates should have a detailed knowledge of their set texts and be confident in placing passages if they attempt the option **(b)** questions.

## General Comments

The general standard this session was comparable with previous sessions, with some candidates achieving marks in the highest bands on nearly every text on the paper. There were very few rubric errors and almost no candidates appeared to have time problems. All but a few candidates were able to show at least a sound knowledge of their chosen texts and many displayed an engagement in and enthusiasm for the works they had studied.

There are two general issues to address this session:

- (a)** Contextualisation – a number of candidates did not appear able to analyse the passages with regard to their context. It is a fundamental requirement that candidates should know their set texts very well, especially if they intend to tackle the passage questions. There will very often be a requirement to discuss the significance of the passage or its effect on the characterisation and to do that well candidates must be able to place the passage accurately within the text and not be confused by other versions of the work they may have seen.
- (b)** Many candidates in this session, especially less confident ones, had a tendency to retell large parts of their chosen set text. To make best use of their knowledge and time, it is important that candidates consider the terms of the question carefully and select the most relevant material from the text to support their argument or answer. This would help candidates develop points in detail, perhaps analysing the writer's methods and effects, essential if the candidate is to secure marks in the higher assessment bands.

## Specific Texts

### **Section A**

#### **Hamlet**

Option **(a)** was a less popular choice on this text but candidates had plenty of material to discuss. Some candidates chose to interpret 'players' as the actors in the play generally and discussed their significance to the play as whole, often focusing on dramatic function and significance to the plot. This led some weaker candidates to a rather superficial, if very detailed, response. Those who narrowed the focus to the Mousetrap and its dramatic function were able to develop arguments more fully, often emphasizing the effect on the characterisation of Hamlet and Claudius. Other answers also referred to the Player's Pyrrhus speech and its effect on Hamlet.

Option **(b)**: This was a popular choice and the minority of candidates who knew the context to the passage had an advantage, remembering the hidden watchers, Polonius and Claudius. This led to some sensitive and analytical responses, identifying how Ophelia's nervousness is revealed and wrestling with the perennial critical problem of whether Hamlet knows they are there or not. Others focused on the relationship and what

it revealed about the characters now and in a happier time, with some excellent explorations of Ophelia's final speech and what it adds to our view of Hamlet's sanity. Those who focused on language and style often did very well, especially in linking this to Hamlet's view of women in general and his mother as well as Ophelia in particular.

### **Coriolanus**

Option **(a)** proved very popular and candidates were quick to identify many kinds of conflict: political, social, military and familial. Weaker answers tended to summarise examples but more successful answers did focus on presentation as well, often noting the many contrasts in the play to good effect, such as Coriolanus and Aufidius, the Tribunes and the patricians, Volumnia and Virgilia, Coriolanus and the ordinary soldiers. Other answers also discussed internal conflict and for some its absence, one candidate suggesting 'this is why we do not grieve at Coriolanus's death.' Candidates who were careful to select relevant material and structure the arguments presented often did very well.

Option **(b)** was less popular and some candidates were not able to contextualise the passage as Coriolanus's leave-taking after his banishment; this inevitably limited the success of the analysis. Those who did know the context sometimes focused too much on the preceding and/or following events – it is important to focus attention on the passage in hand, in the light of its context. Candidates who did this often produced detailed and thoughtful responses about Coriolanus himself: 'Does he already know what he is about to do?' one candidate wondered. Others discussed the family and social dynamics and nearly all commented on the surprising nature of Coriolanus's sensitivity revealed here.

### **Section B**

#### **Mansfield Park**

Option **(a)** was the less popular choice on this text. Candidates were often able to identify the formalities but were less confident about 'personal emotions' and only a few focused on presentation. Weaker answers tended to summarise examples of formal behaviour and emotions, whereas stronger answers were able to explore the effects of the tension created in the various characters. Maria, Crawford and Rushworth, for example, within the usual world of Mansfield Park society were contrasted with what happened during the theatricals and the social catastrophe that followed. Fanny and Edmund were also discussed, with the rigidity and timidity of Fanny often contrasted with the 'wildness and daring' of Mary. Those who remembered the absence of Sir Thomas, and his role in the development of characters and plot, often did very well.

Option **(b)** was more popular and often very well tackled by candidates who could recognise the context and securely identify the speakers. Candidates alive to the narrative structure and who saw the various changes in narrative voice were able to explore in detail how Austen developed both character and plot here. Others concentrated more on the 'human' emotions displayed here by the 'warring sisters' and Fanny. More detailed analyses also considered how and to what effect Henry's selfishness is revealed by his sister and aunt. Weaker answers tended to concentrate on Mary and her character as well as summarizing the events that have led to this conversation.

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

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# LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

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Paper 9695/53

Shakespeare and other Pre 20th Century Texts

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There are two general issues to address this session:

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## Specific Texts

### **Section A Shakespeare**

#### **Hamlet**

Option **(a)** was the less popular choice on this text but candidates who chose this option found plenty of material to discuss; for this reason those who planned their response and selected material relevant to their argument tended to do better. Most candidates discussed the Players and the Mousetrap and its dramatic function, often emphasizing the effect on the characterisation of Hamlet and Claudius. Some answers also referred to the Player's Pyrrhus speech and its effect on Hamlet. Many candidates saw contrasts and parallels between Hamlet and Claudius, acting a part, for different moral reasons perhaps, but nevertheless united by the intention to deceive those around them; this led some answers into considering the dramatic layers, the metadrama, especially around the Mousetrap. Others contrasted Hamlet's pretend madness to Ophelia's actual madness, with many seeing a wider contrast between the two families and the irony of Polonius's 'by indirections' trying to find the truth.

Option **(b)**: This was a popular choice and candidates who knew the context to the passage had an advantage, remembering the recent shock ending to the *Mousetrap*, as the trigger for Claudius's soliloquy. Some candidates were inclined to sympathy but others, analysing his language more closely felt this was but another 'desperate 'act' by the wickedly selfish king.' Many focused on the key concerns of religion and earthly or spiritual justice. This led naturally into considering Hamlet's state of mind here – there was much discussion of his real reasons for wasting this opportunity to complete his task. A few answers remembered his savage murder of Polonius a few moments later, which seemed to be at odds with his words here. Nearly all answers noted the dramatic irony of Claudius's last words, given his lucky escape from Hamlet's sword.

### **Coriolanus**

Option **(a)** was popular and candidates were mostly in agreement with the comment, though a few did question how simple the hero really is. Others questioned its inevitability, though most agreed that his mother had unwittingly trained him to this tragic end. Better answers focused on the characterisation and especially the way the Tribunes are presented from the start. For some the lack of development in *Coriolanus*, remaining simple throughout the play, was the reason his eventual death was not moving: 'How else could it end but by his death at the hands of one of the many much more manipulative enemies his success as a soldier had created?' as one candidate asked.

Option **(b)** was equally popular and, with no contextual problems, some candidates rose to the challenge of seeing how this scene set up the play to follow. Weaker answers tended to tell the rest of the story in detail, but better answers focused on the presentation of the citizens, the differences between them and how easily they are manipulated here. Others teased out the hints about Coriolanus here and what the attitudes of the citizens to him and the nobility in general were to lead to, with some seeing the role of the hero's mother and the fundamental question of pride or valour as well introduced here. Better answers concentrated on the tone and language, as well as the dramatic nature of this passage: 'An arresting and exciting opening to the tragedy to follow,' as one enthusiastic candidate put it.

### **Section B**

#### **Mansfield Park**

Option **(a)** was the less popular choice on this text. Most candidates accepted the quotation as correct and gave detailed examples to support the view. Maria and Henry, Mary and Mrs Price were all seen as 'crushed' as a result of their rebellion, though the justice of this for some candidates was questionable. Some good answers in supporting this view focused on the Sotherton outing, exploring the gates as symbolic of the social barriers. Stronger answers were well focused on 'Austen's presentation', showing how characterisation is used to develop concerns, whilst at the same time developing the narrative of Fanny's rise to first place in the Bertram household and to Edmund's hand in marriage. Some candidates saw the Crawfords as a threat to the Mansfield Park society, even overwhelming the good country sense of Sir Thomas and Edmund with their city behaviour and attitudes. Others saw the irony of Fanny turning out to be the true guardian of the society to which she had so surprisingly been elevated.

Option **(b)** was more popular and often very well tackled. Candidates alive to the narrative structure and who saw how Austen developed both character and plot here, supporting their points with close reference to the text, often did very well. Others concentrated more on the 'human' emotions displayed here by Fanny, her joy at William's success and her distress at Crawford's sustained attentions. More detailed analyses also considered the effect of Mary's letter and Austen use of letters generally, as well as how she presented the world from Fanny's perspective. Weaker answers were often unsure of the precise context, especially what followed, and tended to concentrate on Fanny's predicament in her love for Edmund as well as summarizing the events that led to this point.

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

This proved a less popular choice of text with few candidates choosing either option. Those who tackled option **(a)** often had a detailed knowledge of both Prologue and Tale, giving detailed examples of where greed and avarice appeared. Better answers concentrated on the presentation: Chaucer's use of irony and satire, the role of church, the Pardoner's shameless hypocrisy and the effect of the tale on the audience of pilgrims. Option **(b)** answers from weaker candidates tended to paraphrase the passage, in some cases linking this to the presentation of the Pardoner more generally. Stronger answers, aware of the context, were able to show what is revealed about him and his methods and why this is significant at this point in the Prologue. Candidates, who considered the language and tone, as well as the concerns, often did very well.

## Hard Times

Option **(a)** was popular and often well done. Most candidates showed close knowledge of the text and were able to summarise, sometimes in great detail the various marriages, usually with most attention on the Gradgrinds and the Bounderbys. More developed answers saw how Dickens sets up a series of parallels and contrasts – for example the attitudes to divorce revealed by Bounderby and Blackpool. This more structured approach was at times developed into a consideration of how Dickens through these marriages presented his concerns about utilitarianism generally and how, for example, by the contrast between Louisa and Sissy he revealed the human cost of the ‘statistical approach to love and life.’

Option **(b)** was equally popular, with most answers able to give quite a precise context to the passage, after Louisa’s escape from Harthouse and Bounderby. Those who analysed the passage in detail often commented on Dickens’s use of dialogue and narrative voice to achieve his effects, contrasting Sissy’s and Harthouse’s language and actions to telling effect. Many candidates were able to explore Dickens’s methods of characterisation here in detail, with better answers linking back to earlier scenes, especially Sissy’s first day in school and Harthouse’s confidence in dealing with the politicians and the whelp. Sharp eyed candidates saw Dickens’s use of ‘fact’ and its effect on Sissy and Harthouse as the central point of the discussion and symbolic of Sissy’s triumph over the Gradgrind philosophy, her beaming face indicative of her presentation throughout the text.

## John Donne Selection

This was a minority choice this session. Option **(a)** answers tended to ignore ‘effects’, simply summarising three relevant poems with varying accuracy and detail. Those who did consider ‘effects’ noted such key issues as Donne’s use of tense and dialogue, as well as his more striking metaphysical methods. A minority of responses saw the task as relating to Donne’s relevance to the 21<sup>st</sup> Century and though some found this difficult others developed a convincing argument for the poet’s continuing relevance. Candidates did consider love poems as well as holy sonnets and answers which were able to contrast the effects created in the light of the concerns of the poems often did very well.

Option **(b)** was less well done. Some weaker candidates appeared to be paraphrasing the poem, almost as an unseen, and were not able to develop a critical response to the methods and concerns. Others were not confident in discussing the rest of the poem. Stronger answers however did focus on these areas and there were some sensitive explorations of Donne’s emotions and his concerns, noticing how the physical leads so elegantly into the spiritual, here and in other poems.

## Silas Marner

This was a minority choice this session. Answers on **(a)** showed a good knowledge of the text and nearly all candidates discussed in detail William Dane and Lantern Yard, as well as Marner’s later ‘discovery’ of Raveloe religion through the good offices of Dolly and in his transforming desire to do right by Eppie. Answers which developed beyond the narrative summary into seeing how Eliot presents these events, for example contrasting the presentation of William and Marner’s lost love interest with Dolly and Eppie and how this helps to shape her reader’s response often did very well.

Option **(b)** though less popular was often well done, with some excellent explorations of how Eliot contrasts the various characters in this passage: most often Godfrey and Silas, in their responses to Eppie and the unfolding situation. Many sensitive and analytical answers explored how Eliot, while making these contrasting reactions clear, never lets the reader judge too harshly and how she so ‘brilliantly creates the drama and bustle of the village folk and the human stories within it.’ Weaker answers tended to give too much contextual background and often had time only to summarise the passage. Candidates who focused on the style, especially Eliot’s language and use of dialogue and narration, to develop her characters and the concerns of the novel, often did very well.

## Hopkins Selected Poems

Only a few candidates offered either option. In option **(a)** candidates generally were able to refer to relevant poems to demonstrate his use of nature and natural imagery, linking that to his love of God and his religion, but very few were able to explore confidently what effects the poet created and how that was used to reveal his concerns.

Option **(b)** was less popular and only a very few answers had a convincing grasp of Hopkins's methods here and a secure knowledge of the poem as a whole. Stronger answers were sensitive to Hopkins's methods and how that reflected Hopkins's characteristic concerns: his fear, his doubt, his use of symbols and his trust in and love of God.

### **The Changeling**

This proved a more popular choice in its second session. Those who opted for **(a)** often had a detailed knowledge of the subplot and the characters involved. Limited answers summarised the events and characters with many putting the detailed focus on Isabella herself, especially as a contrast to Beatrice. Candidates with a clearer understanding of the dramatic conventions were able to explore the function of the subplot in relation to the main plot. The contrast in social status of the two households was often seen as significant, while for others the humour created and the 'positive outcome' for the would-be lovers and the married couple were significant in view of the unhappy ending for the characters of the main plot.

Option **(b)** was also popular. Nearly every answer saw the dramatic significance of Beatrice's misunderstanding of De Flores. Weaker answers tended to focus on what had gone before or where this led in the rest of play with insufficient focus on the detail of this passage. Candidates who considered the language and dramatic tone, especially in exploring how each of the characters is reacting to the other here, often did very well. Those answers which linked the language here – the use of 'commercial and financial diction' for example – with the development of this relationship in the rest of play also did very well. Others noted the dramatic structure and use of asides as the means by which the audience is gradually made aware of De Flores's true intentions and the enormity of Beatrice's miscalculation.



# LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

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Paper 9695/61  
20th Century Texts

## Key Messages

At a basic level, candidates need to have much more detailed textual knowledge of what happens and what it means, and to have at their disposal some short, judiciously chosen quotations.

Candidates need to be encouraged to see texts as constructs, works of art that are designed to create a literary response.

Candidates need to be aware of the importance of time management and essay planning so that they produce two essays of similar length in which material has been carefully selected and shaped to the focus of the questions.

## General comments

The paper was comparable in difficulty with previous papers. All questions were accessible; there was little misinterpretation of their requirements and very few rubric errors. Some candidates had such a detailed level of knowledge of texts and the concerns of writers such as Roy, Friel and Soyinka, that they wrote overlong first essays and had less time to do justice to the second. Interestingly, those who tackled the **(a)** questions appeared to be more successful in structuring a substantial argument, and using well chosen illustrative scenes or pertinent quotations to support views. In answering both **(a)** and **(b)** type questions, the strongest responses made focused attempts to explore the writers' use of narrative, dramatic or poetic techniques, whereas less secure responses depended on narrative commentary approaches which often prevented the development of a personal, critically informed discussion. Questions using a leading quotation tend to invite candidates to adopt a critical stance. It is worth reminding candidates that a competent plan and introduction can be devised by focusing on the key terms of the question, 'the what', and then on the instructive phrases, 'By what means and with what effects?' or 'Discuss the effects of the writing.' It is helpful to offer immediate cultural/literary/historical contexts though these need to be carefully balanced and integrated into a response to the text. Biographical material on Adcock, Frame, Roy and Woolf could not be rewarded and often proved to be an unhelpful distraction. Candidates should be advised to avoid a strictly linear approach to passages or poems and to offer an overall synthesis, perhaps starting in the middle or the end of an extract, looking for a main focus, something of key significance, before considering a range of opportunities to show the extent of their understanding of the methods and an appreciation of the effects. In responses to drama texts, candidates need to be confident about addressing the dramatic effects of the language, to avoid merely showing understanding of content through narrative summary and reference to stage directions. Candidates could improve their analytical skills by being encouraged to make a point, support it with detailed evidence and then to explore how the significance or effect is achieved rather than just explaining or asserting an effect.

The benefit of planning responses was generally clear. Scripts with evidence of organisation were more coherent and critically assured, more able to develop ideas and generate an argument. In a small minority of cases, plans were too far ranging and detailed, took too much time and compromised the final essay.

Some candidates need to think more carefully about which question they attempt. Many, perhaps believing that they may be more accessible because an extract is printed on the Question Paper, chose to do the **(b)** questions. These required close reading to support a detailed analysis of the writers' choices of language, structure and form in the presentation of their concerns or characters in the extracts. Many of the candidates in the lower bands who showed quite a detailed knowledge of the text and the writers' concerns did not show the required skills in practical criticism. Those with some knowledge of the 'stream of consciousness' for example, or notions about a writer's characteristic style were not always able to apply this knowledge in a productive way to the extract or poem printed on the paper. This session, quite a few weaker candidates wrote essays which seemed to be a mixture of responses to the essay question and the passage question.

Candidates are reminded to be consistent in their approach, and to select an appropriate style and focus for the option they choose.

Overall, the standard of expressive English was sound and there were some impressively well informed, perceptive responses to the texts. The best scripts appropriately discussed the effects of the writings or dramatic techniques using such terms as: pathos, irony, juxtaposition, symbolism, stream of consciousness, soliloquy. With poetry, some candidates ably tackled aspects of poetic form, imagery, metaphor, a range of sound effects and rhythm. Less accomplished scripts relied upon textual summary and imposed received opinions on their discussions. Some low band scripts clearly had some relevant knowledge but literary understanding was compromised by a lack of textual knowledge or restricted communication skills. There was however, some welcome evidence of Centres matching the ability and experiences of the candidates with interests and intellectual demands of the specific texts. Many candidates had clearly enjoyed studying their texts.

### **Comments on specific questions**

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

This did not prove a popular choice of text, with the **(b)** question attracting the majority of responses. In answers to both questions, there was often too much attention to the biographical contexts of the writing. The poems were seen less as artefacts in their own right and more as a record of Adcock's own alienation or mental health.

- (a)** There were some substantial responses to poems such as 'House Talk', 'Going Back', 'Instead of an Interview' and 'Weathering'. A more divergent but wholly valid response to the question was to relate 'home' to a search for genetic identity and heritage by considering poems such as 'Water' and 'Flames'. The key words in the question were: 'By what means and with what effects...' and a few assured answers could consider Adcock's use of a concrete situation or specific moment, her choice of language and control of tone, but many less satisfactory answers simply summarised the themes of the poems, more or less successfully.
- (b)** Most candidates managed to respond productively to this poem. The text had been well understood and the question was often well answered. Good scripts adopted an explicitly literary approach, using close reading to focus on significant poetic details to explore meaning and effect, sensitively tracking the development of ideas and considering the personal reflection at the end. Even modest answers relying on summary, conveyed some sense of Adcock's precise and felt creation of the actual essence of 'a bird'. Better scripts commented on the immediacy of a conversational or declarative tone, evident from the first line, and analysed the interplay of the verse form with the lilt of forceful speech, its syntax, the imagery and tone. Many essays made no reference to other poems, but some placed it in a group that relates the lives of creatures to that of humans and referred intelligently to 'Toad', 'Tadpoles', 'The Three-Toed Sloth' or 'The Pangolin'. They integrated into their arguments, comments on Adcock's close observation or fascination with the singularity of Nature and aspects of poetic method and effect. Weaker answers relied on summary. There was some sense of the bird representing a sense of freedom but little engagement with the language and poetic methods. Some mistakenly, attempted to relate the poem to Adcock's alienation from home, and so limited the poem's interpretation.

#### **Question 2 W.H. AUDEN: *Selected Poems***

This did not prove a popular text this session. The majority of candidates who wrote on Auden chose option **(b)**.

- (a)** This question allowed candidates to define for themselves the idea of a 'moment' but the task seemed to have been chosen by some weaker candidates who struggled to make the poems they knew fit. Many candidates went for the Second World War as their 'moment' with 'O what is that sound?', 'O where are you going?' and 'Refugee Blues' but they could have chosen 'love' poems like Lay your sleeping head, occasional verse *such as* 'In Memory of W.B. Yeats' or the moment of Icarus's fall in 'Musée des Beaux Arts'. Most offered summaries of the poems with little engagement or comment on the poetic methods and effects.

- (b) This was the more popular option. Many adopted a workmanlike approach to 'The Unknown Citizen' providing quite a thorough discussion of meaning, form and other poetic effects. Most conveyed some understanding of the totalitarian state and its indifference to issues of individuality, with stronger candidates conveying a confident, though mostly implicit recognition of tone. Weaker answers summarised its contents, or read it entirely literally, and some failed to notice that it was a poem.

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

This was a popular text and both questions provided answers across the range. Many candidates, however, found it difficult to offer a literary discussion. They struggled to separate biography from fiction and so responded to the text as though it were a symptom or expression of mental illness, rather than a deliberately created literary product. While candidates sometimes showed a detailed knowledge of particular incidents and engagement with the character, the discussion of methods and concerns was usually limited to the obvious. This text was often done with Adcock.

- (a) The question provided a useful checklist for those with detailed knowledge of the text. While some attempted to define and explore 'insecurity' very few focused on 'By what means and with what effects...' Many treated it as an opportunity to write a character study of Grace or a case study of Janet Frame, taking pains to explain how events in her childhood and the inadequacies of her parents, her experience in a mental hospital and home-sickness for New Zealand had made her 'like that'. There were, however, some well developed and sensible treatments of this question in which candidates showed how the flashbacks to Grace's childhood showed her insecurities with language and relationships and how these carried forward into her current experience. They analysed in particular her assumption of roles in relation to her hosts – seeing Anne and Philip as her parents, or Philip as her husband as well as particular scenes which revealed her inability to discuss her work, music, the viaduct, or relate to people on the train. The strongest candidates could talk about Frame's use of free indirect discourse to show how articulate, imaginative and witty Grace was in her head and how self-conscious and inadequate she was in conversation, how Frame showed her carefully rehearsing interactions and being inordinately proud of saying the 'right' social thing like 'I've enjoyed your cooking so much' or communicating the simplest things about herself: 'Oh how wonderful to possess an identifying characteristic! Late early, tidy untidy...' Strong candidates followed up quotations by exploring the language in them and one candidate particularly enjoyed the way the second sentence here subverted the first and created a humorous effect.
- (b) This was more frequently answered and the passage stimulated some good commentary on the importance of the migratory bird imagery to Grace's feelings of identity and to the issues that it raised in relating to other people. This was a demanding aspect of the text and those candidates attempting to summarise often betrayed partial understanding here. Better answers could provide an accurate context for the incident and focused on the intensity of the single and inward perspective, exploring how Grace's preoccupations are played out symbolically here, with some analysis of the way Frame established a physical realism in the description of the day, the houses and streets as well as the elements of hallucination, the surreal in the presentation of the 'metamorphosis'. One particularly perceptive candidate explored the way fear of madness is evoked in the choice of diction. This is quite different from claiming: 'Through the narrative we are made to see Frame as a schizophrenic person.' Weaker answers tended to seize on the motif of Grace changing into a bird and reiterate its importance without really exploring the passage in any detail, discussing rather generally the idea of identity or Janet Frame's biography. Ideas on 'magic realism' did not seem to be very helpful here, with some candidates believing that 'as a matter of fact Grace believes she is a bird and that is why she feels insecure, because she is surrounded by humans.'

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

Candidates responded to both questions with well-supported discussions and answers showed evidence of a genuine enthusiasm for the play and empathy for its issues. There was extensive evidence of critical reading, on the issue of language, colonialism and the play itself. As always the challenge is for students to integrate this material into an argument relevant to the question. It is more productive for candidates to discuss the dramatic significance of Hugh's view that 'words are signals, counters. They are not immortal', than the linguistic theories of Saussure and Derrida which proved too complicated and difficult for candidates to apply to the text. Candidates are advised to constantly view the text as a play to be seen, so that specific scenes can be analysed through the critical eye and responses of an audience.

- (a) This was a popular question and in some cases produced some highly competent responses which vigorously argued the significance of renaming in the play, with pertinent attention to dramatic presentation: connecting the ‘public’ debates over the strategic renaming in the mapping exercise e.g. the discussion between Yolland and Owen about Tobair Vree, with the personal, symbolic ‘namings’ of the christening, Sarah’s ability and later inability to say her own name and the significance of Owen’s repudiation of his misnaming as Roland. Many candidates became so completely hooked into addressing the political, social and cultural issues of renaming that they seemed to forget this was a play. The question does say to refer to particular scenes, but this was ignored in some very intelligent and articulate discussions. Other less able answers interpreted ‘renaming’ very loosely, tending to equate it with translating in general and so were writing on the significance of the title.
- (b) The passage was more popular and it often prompted close and appreciative analyses of its dramatic effects, with awareness of its emotional intensity and communication of loving that transcended language. There was often a warm and appropriate identification with the lovers and recognition of the deep irony of the repeated word ‘Always’. A few candidates misread the question and took ‘comment on the use of language’ as an instruction to discuss language more generally as a theme. These candidates were taking an approach more suited to the (a) question. Most answers explained that Maire was speaking Gaelic and Yolland English, but very few clearly explained the essential dramatic conceit that the play is in English, that the audience have no problem understanding the dialogue and showed how Friel exploits this in the parallel dialogue or use of repetition for dramatic effects: for example, humour, pathos and a range of wider concerns. Stronger answers included reference to the way both characters try to use the other’s language to connect, some interpreting the exchange of Gaelic place names as Maire correcting Yolland’s pronunciation; Sarah’s entry and the dramatic effect and irony of her running off calling ‘Manus’ with the stage direction ‘Music to crescendo’ and apt connection to the wider text such as the results of Sarah’s discovery and ideas on ‘*exogamein*’. Good answers showed their quality by explaining this using the play, by referring to the effect of Jimmy Jack’s discussion with Maire about marriage outside the tribe, his ‘relationship’ with Athene, how ‘You do not cross those borders casually.’ Less able answers clearly explained the context and significance of the relationship, the motives of the characters, and made much of the use of body language and action, though some over-analysed the language in the stage directions claiming that the ‘s’ sounds of ‘She stands shocked, staring at them’ would ‘predominate in the ears of the audience’, making Sarah into the snake in Paradise. Weaker answers relied on paraphrase and summary, or paid insufficient attention to the extract, narrating the plot or choosing to view both characters as cynically exploiting each other.

#### Question 5 ARUNDHAT ROY: *The God of Small Things*

This was a very popular text with candidates communicating real pleasure in their writing, often showing vigorous engagement with the issues and impressive textual knowledge. The issue on both questions was shaping the available material to the question: whether candidates displayed a literary approach and could display some understanding of the narrative methods and appreciation of a range of effects or whether they treated the text as a social treatise on gender politics, the caste system, family dysfunction and child development.

- (a) This question provided answers across the range and most answers discussed relevant events; Sophie Mol’s arrival, death and funeral; the ‘Orangedrink Lemondrink Man’; how the twins relate to Ammu and view Velutha, his eventual death and the incestuous outcome. The issue here was in the question: the idea of ‘a child’s point of view’ and how this is presented. The more successful essays carefully considered this and explored specific scenes to comment on the way Roy presented the children’s view of the world and their experience through the structure and choice of language to show their innocence, curiosity, imagination, anxieties and loss. They had specific details to demonstrate the variety of tone Roy achieves in presenting the level of the children’s understanding of events, their fascination with language (‘locust stand’), the seemingly obsessive focus on the ‘small things’ and the literal interpretations of adult speech: ‘careless words...make people love you less.’ Many of the more modest answers did not grasp the idea of ‘point of view’. Some wrote detailed biographical accounts of the children, explaining why the various traumas suffered by Rahel and Estha, or Ammu as a child, made them who they were, showing the world was cruel, sad and miserable. Some took the opposite approach of making general comments about how children ought to see the world and asserting that this was or was not the case in the novel.

- (b) This proved the more popular choice and many candidates had a sound idea of the significance of the extract, showing appreciation of the nature and dangers of the attraction between Ammu and Velutha. They adopted a literary approach by exploring in detail the shifts in narrative viewpoints and the subtleties of some of the details such as the identical memories from childhood recalled successively by Ammu and then Velutha and the sinister reminders of later developments in the lexis of personal injury used to describe history here. Less able answers were often prefaced with apposite contextual allusion reflecting clear understanding of cultural and wider textual contexts while at the same time showing a clear understanding of the characters' feelings and the significance of the 'Love Laws' though opportunities to discuss the specific effects of the figurative language were missed. Candidates sometimes unbalanced their essays with an excessive focus on the caste system or Velutha as the God of Small Things. Weaker responses tended towards a simplistic narrative approach, summarising the content and in some cases offering unbalanced answers with excessive reference to the wider text.

**Question 6: WOLE SOYINKA: *The Trials of Brother Jero and Jero's Metamorphosis***

This was a popular text with clear evidence of engagement. In some cases, extensive knowledge presented candidates with problems of time management and controlling the argument. In many cases there was a productive discussion of the post-colonial Nigerian situation and a clear understanding of the targets of Soyinka's satire, but candidates continue to find comedy a challenge to analyse. There was also evidence that candidates tended to know the first play in much more detail than the second.

- (a) This question produced answers across the range. Successful responses looked in detail at all elements of the question and produced an argument to link them together, focusing on selected scenes to illustrate a range of comic methods, from irony to slapstick with some attention to the use of biblical language and exaggerated evangelistic conventions while at the same time using the text to show a detailed understanding of the targets of Soyinka's satire. They were able to communicate how the comedy would work in performance. Less able answers diligently went through the plays, sometimes scene by scene, commenting on what parts were comic and what human weaknesses were exposed, typically hypocrisy, gullibility, lust for material gain, power or women but had less textual detail available for analysis. Weaker responses gave accounts of some scenes and claimed they were hilarious or focused only on 'human weaknesses' or used the question to write a character portrait of Jero.
- (b) This question was slightly more popular and produced answers across the range. Most opted for an introductory paragraph establishing the context and then went for the running commentary approach. At its best, this allowed candidates to focus on the scene's multiple ironies, its comedy of misunderstandings, the centrality of Jero despite his physical absence from the scene and the interplay of all three speakers, including the well-informed (but nevertheless eventually deceived) clerk. More modest answers focused on the serious business of corruption of Jero and others and the misuse of Christianity. At times there was an implicit awareness of the style of dialogue of Rebecca which could have been developed, but comic effect tended to be asserted rather than explored. Weaker responses were often confused in their reading of who attempted to seduce Rebecca and instead of seeing her as a comic character, were full of indignation at the duping of an educated woman, by Jero, which then took them off into other scenes from other play. They also took the Executive's denunciation of 'fake prophets' at face value, did not understand his interest in the land value and so missed a lot of the irony.

**Question 7 VIRGINIA WOOLF: *To the Lighthouse***

This text proved less popular this session and less well done because although there was some evidence of textual knowledge, there was less focus on the demands of the specific questions. There was some useful contextualisation of Woolf's interest in feminism and her ideas about the role of women in marriage and the family but there was the tendency for knowledge of Woolf biography – her parents – or ideas about aestheticism, gender politics or the literary context to be a distraction. Explaining or pursuing these ideas often lead candidates away from the text. For example, 'The allusion to Mrs Ramsay is significant of Woolf's technique of tunnelling... this gives us an idea of the modernists as they tried to connect to their macrocosmic worlds and memories of their dead acquaintances.'

- (a) This was perhaps seen as the more straightforward option. Most answers attempted to evaluate whether or not the Ramsay's marriage was a good one and, based on some very thin, generalised character portraits, quite a lot of answers asserted that it was not: James's request to go to the lighthouse showed they were incompatible, they did not understand each other and although Mrs Ramsay was very giving, Mr Ramsay was an impossible man. The question asked them to discuss how it was presented, but few could go beyond the obvious general observations on the stream of consciousness approach. They did not have enough detailed knowledge or quotation to illustrate its use, though much was made of Mr Ramsay's feelings for wife once she had died. There were some, nicely structured answers which showed how the intuitive understanding between the Ramsays was mediated through the presentation of their inner consciousnesses and how other characters, particularly Lily and William Bankes evaluated the relationship.
- (b) Many candidates had much to say about the place of this extract in the novel, with the feeling of the past and past losses all around the characters and the anticipation of the final effort of reconciliation and completion. Once again candidates showed a general understanding of the stream of consciousness technique but were less confident at moving between the inner voices of the two characters. The best answers, once they had established the context and explained the narrative approach and use of point of view in the first paragraph, tended to avoid the running commentary approach. They went for issues: how tension is generated through the presentation of the characters' views of each other and themselves; how the presence of Mrs Ramsay pervades the scene even though she is dead. There were some interesting comments on the significance and presentation of Mr Carmichael. They commented on the use of direct speech, reported speech and free indirect discourse; aspects of the diction such as the use of water imagery or the way 'grief' is described and various aspects of sentence structure, including repetition, very short sentences, the use of brackets. Some caught the bitterness in the tone but few saw the humour in Woolf's writing. Less able responses focused on character and feeling, made some relevant references to the wider text, discussed the significance of the Lighthouse and attempted to comment on some significant details of language or the use of brackets. Weaker responses gave insufficient attention to the passage or attempted to paraphrase.

# LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

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**Paper 9695/62**  
**20th Century Texts**

## **Key Messages**

At a basic level, candidates need to have much more detailed textual knowledge of what happens and what it means, and to have at their disposal some short, judiciously chosen quotations.

Candidates need to be encouraged to see texts as constructs, works of art that are designed to create a literary response.

Candidates need to be aware of the importance of time management and essay planning so that they produce two essays of similar length in which material has been carefully selected and shaped to the focus of the questions.

## **General comments**

The paper was comparable in difficulty with previous papers. All questions were accessible; there was little misinterpretation of their requirements and very few rubric errors. Some candidates had such a detailed level of knowledge of texts and the concerns of writers such as Roy, Friel and Soyinka, that they wrote overlong first essays and had less time to do justice to the second. Interestingly, those who tackled the **(a)** questions appeared to be more successful in structuring a substantial argument, and using well chosen illustrative scenes or pertinent quotations to support views. In answering both **(a)** and **(b)** type questions, the strongest responses made focused attempts to explore the writers' use of narrative, dramatic or poetic techniques, whereas less secure responses depended on narrative commentary approaches which often prevented the development of a personal, critically informed discussion. Questions using a leading quotation tend to invite candidates to adopt a critical stance. It is worth reminding candidates that a competent plan and introduction can be devised by focusing on the key terms of the question, 'the what', and then on the instructive phrases, 'By what means and with what effects?' or 'Discuss the effects of the writing.' It is helpful to offer immediate cultural/literary/historical contexts though these need to be carefully balanced and integrated into a response to the text. Biographical material on Adcock, Frame, Roy and Woolf could not be rewarded and often proved to be an unhelpful distraction. Candidates should be advised to avoid a strictly linear approach to passages or poems and to offer an overall synthesis, perhaps starting in the middle or the end of an extract, looking for a main focus, something of key significance, before considering a range of opportunities to show the extent of their understanding of the methods and an appreciation of the effects. In responses to drama texts, candidates need to be confident about addressing the dramatic effects of the language, to avoid merely showing understanding of content through narrative summary and reference to stage directions. Candidates could improve their analytical skills by being encouraged to make a point, support it with detailed evidence and then to explore how the significance or effect is achieved rather than just explaining or asserting an effect.

The benefit of planning responses was generally clear. Scripts with evidence of organisation were more coherent and critically assured, more able to develop ideas and generate an argument. In a small minority of cases, plans were too far ranging and detailed, took too much time and compromised the final essay.

Some candidates need to think more carefully about which question they attempt. Many, perhaps believing that they may be more accessible because an extract is printed on the Question Paper, chose to do the **(b)** questions. These required close reading to support a detailed analysis of the writers' choices of language, structure and form in the presentation of their concerns or characters in the extracts. Many of the candidates in the lower bands who showed quite a detailed knowledge of the text and the writers' concerns did not show the required skills in practical criticism. Those with some knowledge of the 'stream of consciousness' for example, or notions about a writer's characteristic style were not always able to apply this knowledge in a productive way to the extract or poem printed on the paper. This session, quite a few weaker candidates wrote essays which seemed to be a mixture of responses to the essay question and the passage question.

Candidates are reminded to be consistent in their approach, and to select an appropriate style and focus for the option they choose.

Overall, the standard of expressive English was sound and there were some impressively well informed, perceptive responses to the texts. The best scripts appropriately discussed the effects of the writings or dramatic techniques using such terms as: pathos, irony, juxtaposition, symbolism, stream of consciousness, soliloquy. With poetry, some candidates ably tackled aspects of poetic form, imagery, metaphor, a range of sound effects and rhythm. Less accomplished scripts relied upon textual summary and imposed received opinions on their discussions. Some low band scripts clearly had some relevant knowledge but literary understanding was compromised by a lack of textual knowledge or restricted communication skills. There was however, some welcome evidence of Centres matching the ability and experiences of the candidates with interests and intellectual demands of the specific texts. Many candidates had clearly enjoyed studying their texts.

### **Comments on specific questions**

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

This did not prove a popular choice of text, with the **(b)** question attracting the majority of responses. In answers to both questions, there was often too much attention to the biographical contexts of the writing. The poems were seen less as artefacts in their own right and more as a record of Adcock's own alienation or mental health.

- (a)** There were some substantial responses to poems such as 'House Talk', 'Going Back', 'Instead of an Interview' and 'Weathering'. A more divergent but wholly valid response to the question was to relate 'home' to a search for genetic identity and heritage by considering poems such as 'Water' and 'Flames'. The key words in the question were: 'By what means and with what effects...' and a few assured answers could consider Adcock's use of a concrete situation or specific moment, her choice of language and control of tone, but many less satisfactory answers simply summarised the themes of the poems, more or less successfully.
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This did not prove a popular text this session. The majority of candidates who wrote on Auden chose option **(b)**.

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- (b) This was the more popular option. Many adopted a workmanlike approach to 'The Unknown Citizen' providing quite a thorough discussion of meaning, form and other poetic effects. Most conveyed some understanding of the totalitarian state and its indifference to issues of individuality, with stronger candidates conveying a confident, though mostly implicit recognition of tone. Weaker answers summarised its contents, or read it entirely literally, and some failed to notice that it was a poem.

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

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#### Question 5 ARUNDHAT ROY: *The God of Small Things*

This was a very popular text with candidates communicating real pleasure in their writing, often showing vigorous engagement with the issues and impressive textual knowledge. The issue on both questions was shaping the available material to the question: whether candidates displayed a literary approach and could display some understanding of the narrative methods and appreciation of a range of effects or whether they treated the text as a social treatise on gender politics, the caste system, family dysfunction and child development.

- (a) This question provided answers across the range and most answers discussed relevant events; Sophie Mol’s arrival, death and funeral; the ‘Orangedrink Lemondrink Man’; how the twins relate to Ammu and view Velutha, his eventual death and the incestuous outcome. The issue here was in the question: the idea of ‘a child’s point of view’ and how this is presented. The more successful essays carefully considered this and explored specific scenes to comment on the way Roy presented the children’s view of the world and their experience through the structure and choice of language to show their innocence, curiosity, imagination, anxieties and loss. They had specific details to demonstrate the variety of tone Roy achieves in presenting the level of the children’s understanding of events, their fascination with language (‘locust standi’), the seemingly obsessive focus on the ‘small things’ and the literal interpretations of adult speech: ‘careless words...make people love you less.’ Many of the more modest answers did not grasp the idea of ‘point of view’. Some wrote detailed biographical accounts of the children, explaining why the various traumas suffered by Rahel and Estha, or Ammu as a child, made them who they were, showing the world was cruel, sad and miserable. Some took the opposite approach of making general comments about how children ought to see the world and asserting that this was or was not the case in the novel.

- (b) This proved the more popular choice and many candidates had a sound idea of the significance of the extract, showing appreciation of the nature and dangers of the attraction between Ammu and Velutha. They adopted a literary approach by exploring in detail the shifts in narrative viewpoints and the subtleties of some of the details such as the identical memories from childhood recalled successively by Ammu and then Velutha and the sinister reminders of later developments in the lexis of personal injury used to describe history here. Less able answers were often prefaced with apposite contextual allusion reflecting clear understanding of cultural and wider textual contexts while at the same time showing a clear understanding of the characters' feelings and the significance of the 'Love Laws' though opportunities to discuss the specific effects of the figurative language were missed. Candidates sometimes unbalanced their essays with an excessive focus on the caste system or Velutha as the God of Small Things. Weaker responses tended towards a simplistic narrative approach, summarising the content and in some cases offering unbalanced answers with excessive reference to the wider text.

**Question 6: WOLE SOYINKA: *The Trials of Brother Jero and Jero's Metamorphosis***

This was a popular text with clear evidence of engagement. In some cases, extensive knowledge presented candidates with problems of time management and controlling the argument. In many cases there was a productive discussion of the post-colonial Nigerian situation and a clear understanding of the targets of Soyinka's satire, but candidates continue to find comedy a challenge to analyse. There was also evidence that candidates tended to know the first play in much more detail than the second.

- (a) This question produced answers across the range. Successful responses looked in detail at all elements of the question and produced an argument to link them together, focusing on selected scenes to illustrate a range of comic methods, from irony to slapstick with some attention to the use of biblical language and exaggerated evangelistic conventions while at the same time using the text to show a detailed understanding of the targets of Soyinka's satire. They were able to communicate how the comedy would work in performance. Less able answers diligently went through the plays, sometimes scene by scene, commenting on what parts were comic and what human weaknesses were exposed, typically hypocrisy, gullibility, lust for material gain, power or women but had less textual detail available for analysis. Weaker responses gave accounts of some scenes and claimed they were hilarious or focused only on 'human weaknesses' or used the question to write a character portrait of Jero.
- (b) This question was slightly more popular and produced answers across the range. Most opted for an introductory paragraph establishing the context and then went for the running commentary approach. At its best, this allowed candidates to focus on the scene's multiple ironies, its comedy of misunderstandings, the centrality of Jero despite his physical absence from the scene and the interplay of all three speakers, including the well-informed (but nevertheless eventually deceived) clerk. More modest answers focused on the serious business of corruption of Jero and others and the misuse of Christianity. At times there was an implicit awareness of the style of dialogue of Rebecca which could have been developed, but comic effect tended to be asserted rather than explored. Weaker responses were often confused in their reading of who attempted to seduce Rebecca and instead of seeing her as a comic character, were full of indignation at the duping of an educated woman, by Jero, which then took them off into other scenes from other play. They also took the Executive's denunciation of 'fake prophets' at face value, did not understand his interest in the land value and so missed a lot of the irony.

**Question 7 VIRGINIA WOOLF: *To the Lighthouse***

This text proved less popular this session and less well done because although there was some evidence of textual knowledge, there was less focus on the demands of the specific questions. There was some useful contextualisation of Woolf's interest in feminism and her ideas about the role of women in marriage and the family but there was the tendency for knowledge of Woolf biography – her parents – or ideas about aestheticism, gender politics or the literary context to be a distraction. Explaining or pursuing these ideas often lead candidates away from the text. For example, 'The allusion to Mrs Ramsay is significant of Woolf's technique of tunnelling... this gives us an idea of the modernists as they tried to connect to their macrocosmic worlds and memories of their dead acquaintances.'

- (a) This was perhaps seen as the more straightforward option. Most answers attempted to evaluate whether or not the Ramsay's marriage was a good one and, based on some very thin, generalised character portraits, quite a lot of answers asserted that it was not: James's request to go to the lighthouse showed they were incompatible, they did not understand each other and although Mrs Ramsay was very giving, Mr Ramsay was an impossible man. The question asked them to discuss how it was presented, but few could go beyond the obvious general observations on the stream of consciousness approach. They did not have enough detailed knowledge or quotation to illustrate its use, though much was made of Mr Ramsay's feelings for wife once she had died. There were some, nicely structured answers which showed how the intuitive understanding between the Ramsays was mediated through the presentation of their inner consciousnesses and how other characters, particularly Lily and William Bankes evaluated the relationship.
- (b) Many candidates had much to say about the place of this extract in the novel, with the feeling of the past and past losses all around the characters and the anticipation of the final effort of reconciliation and completion. Once again candidates showed a general understanding of the stream of consciousness technique but were less confident at moving between the inner voices of the two characters. The best answers, once they had established the context and explained the narrative approach and use of point of view in the first paragraph, tended to avoid the running commentary approach. They went for issues: how tension is generated through the presentation of the characters' views of each other and themselves; how the presence of Mrs Ramsay pervades the scene even though she is dead. There were some interesting comments on the significance and presentation of Mr Carmichael. They commented on the use of direct speech, reported speech and free indirect discourse; aspects of the diction such as the use of water imagery or the way 'grief' is described and various aspects of sentence structure, including repetition, very short sentences, the use of brackets. Some caught the bitterness in the tone but few saw the humour in Woolf's writing. Less able responses focused on character and feeling, made some relevant references to the wider text, discussed the significance of the Lighthouse and attempted to comment on some significant details of language or the use of brackets. Weaker responses gave insufficient attention to the passage or attempted to paraphrase.

# LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

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Paper 9695/63  
20th Century Texts

## Key Messages

At a basic level, candidates need to have much more detailed textual knowledge of what happens and what it means, with some short, judiciously chosen quotations.

Candidates need to be encouraged to see texts as constructs, works of art that are designed to create a literary response.

Some candidates need to be aware of the importance of time management and essay planning so that they produce two essays of similar length in which material has been carefully selected and shaped to the focus of the questions.

In responding to **(b)** questions candidates need to use their knowledge of the wider text and critical writing to inform their reading of the extracts but make sure they engage with the detail of the extracts and thoroughly explore the narrative, poetic and dramatic methods displayed there.

## General comments

The paper was comparable in difficulty with previous papers. All questions proved accessible; there was little misinterpretation of their requirement and very few rubric errors. Some candidates had such a detailed level of knowledge of texts and the concerns of writers such as Roy, Friel and Soyinka, that they wrote overlong first essays and had less time to do justice to the second. Scripts with evidence of organisation were more coherent and critically assured, more able to develop ideas and generate an argument. Interestingly, those who tackled the **(a)** questions appeared to be more successful in structuring a substantial argument than those attempting **(b)** questions. In answering both **(a)** and **(b)** type questions, the best scripts made gallant attempts to explore the writers' use of narrative, dramatic or poetic techniques, whereas less secure responses depended on narrative commentary approaches which often prevented the development of a personal, critically informed discussion. Questions using a leading quotation tend to invite candidates to adopt a critical stance. It is worth reminding candidates that a competent plan and introduction can be devised by focusing on the key terms of the question 'the what' and then on the instructive phrases: for example, 'Discuss the presentation', which is another way of saying 'By what means and with what effects?' in the **(a)** questions; or 'Discuss the effects of the writing..', in the **(b)** questions. It is often helpful for candidates to offer immediate cultural/literary/historical contexts though these need to be carefully balanced and integrated into a response to the text. Biographical material on Adcock, Frame, Roy and Woolf often proved to be an unhelpful distraction. Candidates should be advised to avoid a slavish, linear approach to passages or poems and offer an overall synthesis, perhaps starting in the middle or the end of an extract, looking for a main focus, something of key significance, before going on to consider a range of opportunities to show the extent of their understanding of the methods and an appreciation of the effects. In responses to poetry texts, candidates need to be confident about addressing poetic methods and effects, to avoid merely showing understanding of content through narrative summary. Candidates could improve their analytical skills by being encouraged to make a point, support it with detailed evidence and then to explore how the significance or effect is achieved rather than just explaining or asserting an effect.

Some candidates need to think more carefully about which question they attempt. Many, perhaps believing this an easier option as an extract is printed on the Question Paper, choose to do the **(b)** questions. These require close reading to support a detailed analysis of the writers' choices of language, structure and form in the presentation of their concerns or characters in the extracts. Many of the candidates in the lower bands who showed quite a detailed knowledge of the text and the writers' concerns, did not show the required skills in practical criticism, which are key to a high mark in responses to the **(b)** questions. Some showed knowledge of the 'stream of consciousness' for example, or notions about a writer's characteristic style but did not always apply this knowledge in a productive way to the extract or poem printed on the paper.

Overall, the standard of expressive English was sound and there were some impressively well informed, perceptive responses to the texts. The strongest scripts appropriately discussed the effects of the writing or dramatic techniques using such terms as: pathos, irony, juxtaposition, symbolism, stream of consciousness, free indirect discourse, and soliloquy. In poetry some candidates ably tackled aspects of poetic form, imagery, metaphor, a range of sound effects and rhythm. Less accomplished scripts relied upon textual summary and imposed received opinions on their discussions. Some low band scripts clearly had some relevant knowledge but literary understanding was compromised by a lack of textual knowledge or in a few cases, restricted communication skills. There was however, some welcome evidence of Centres matching the ability and experiences of the candidates with interests and intellectual demands of the specific texts.

### **Comments on specific questions**

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

This was quite a popular choice of text. Both questions were straightforward and produced answers across the range, with the **(b)** question attracting the majority of responses. Candidates had access to some useful critical reading which supported an understanding of Adcock's concerns and poetic methods, though most candidates lacked confidence in discussing form.

- (a)** This was the less popular choice, but those who did it, did reasonably well. There were some sensible treatments of *A Way Out*, *The Pangolin*, *The Three-toed Sloth*, *Tadpoles and Toads*. The best answers carefully considered the implications of the question and were able to focus on Adcock's objective view of animals, the way she conveys a precise sense of their 'thisness' as well as the way they contribute to her reflections and feelings about what it means to be human. Most dealt with the poems in a sequential way but some of the best were able to sometimes move between the poems making comparisons and developing ideas on poetic techniques and effects. They commented on the immediacy of a conversational or declarative tone; analysed the interplay of the verse form with the lilt of forceful speech, its syntax, the imagery and tone with many of them having favourite examples to show Adcock's delight in witty word play and surprising detail. More modest answers relied on summary. There was some reliance on doubtful biographical material; which could not be rewarded. For example, the *Three-toed Sloth* being interpreted as a representation of an unsuccessful relationship with a slow, lazy man with the result that Adcock 'gave up on sex.'
- (b)** Responses to this poem were clear and often perceptive, some candidates recognising that it is a sonnet and feeling the tight structure and rhyme scheme played off against the matter-of-fact personal tone. The largely end-stopped lines make it a thoughtful, 'pauseful' piece of writing and this was appreciated in the better answers. Many answers traced the development of the ideas, commenting on the effect of the declarative first line, the use of brackets to isolate a detail that symbolically and physically connects her with her heritage and the isolated final line that identifies the different and ambivalent realities of presence and absence. More modest answers focused on the significance of 'water' as necessary for life and linked that to Adcock's interest in her ancestry, her recognition of the contribution made by hard working women in the past, in poems such as *Voyage Out*. They also made some interesting connections with *Flames* and Adcock's sympathy for the lot of women in *Water with Witnesses*. They summarised the poem in a way that showed a clear understanding of the twist in the end and made some attempts to explore how Adcock creates the sense that this unattainable experience is actually happening by looking at the sensuous imagery.

#### **Question 2 W.H. AUDEN: *Selected Poems***

This text was not popular but was often done by able candidates whose essays were often impressive in terms or range of reference, individual interpretation and development of argument.

- (a)** The theme of love was the less favoured choice but it was often done well, with candidates exploring attitudes to love in poems such as 'From the very first coming down' and the 'More Loving One', the frustrations of time in 'As I walked out one evening' and 'But I cannot' while others seemed to delight in not choosing the most obvious, such as 'What is that sound?' There was some unnecessary discussion of Auden's homosexuality, though some candidates thought the nature of his loving prompted some interesting poems where sexual orientation or even sexuality was obscured i.e. 'Control of the passes', or in a different way 'Lay your sleeping head'. Stronger

answers had detailed knowledge of the texts available so that they could integrate some analysis of use of language, tone and humour into their discussion of ideas. Weaker answers relied on summaries of poems or sometimes had to argue vigorously to make poems they knew such as Fairground fit the question.

- (b) There were some good analyses of 'Where are you going', most answers suggesting that this tightly structured poem presents a sort of internal dialogue between different aspects of the mind or psyche. Many appreciated its clarity and economy of construction, commenting on the patterning and the reversals in the last stanza. Some good answers wrote of the 'story book feel' of the poem, responding to the ballad style and fairy story element, particularly in the imagery in the third stanza, seamlessly linking this poem to the wider text to discuss ideas or aspects of poetic technique and effects. Modest answers had more success taking note of the patterning, and identifying the concerns of action as opposed to fear and passivity than they did at constructing a convincing interpretation, but some gallantly attempted to recognise and discuss the effects of the ambiguity. Weaker responses relying on paraphrase struggled to make a coherent argument. Some got hung up on Auden's sexuality and so confined the poem's meaning either to his defiance of society's norms or less convincingly an apparent reluctance to act on his feelings.

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

This was quite a popular text and though both questions provided answers across the range, there were few that were very strong. This seemed to be because many candidates found it difficult to offer a literary discussion. Some candidates struggled to separate biography from fiction and so responded to the text as though it were a symptom or expression of mental illness, rather than a deliberate literary product. There was a reluctance to come to terms with the structure of the novel and the narrative voice so that while there was sometimes detailed knowledge of particular incidents and engagement with the character, the discussion of methods and concerns was usually limited to the superficial.

- (a) This proved the less popular choice. Candidates often had relevant knowledge of how Grace coped with different kinds of social interaction, with strangers on trains, being interviewed about her work and the challenges of her visit to the Thirkettles. A few good responses focused closely on the methods used by Frame to present Grace's difficulties with conversation and social situations. They chose particular scenes: the interviews or conversations with the Thirkettles about New Zealand poets and prime ministers, music, Winchley Viaduct or Anne's cooking to analyse Frame's use of free indirect discourse showing how anxious and self-denigrating Grace was in her head, the pressure she felt to fulfil other people's expectations, how she rehearsed interactions, was usually disappointed and often ashamed at the inadequacy of her conversation and was never able to confess what she was thinking about, particularly her conviction that she was a 'migratory bird'. They commented on the use of flashbacks to show how Grace's insecurities in relationships and over language as a child contributed to her frustrations as an adult. Modest answers treated the question as an opportunity to write a character study of Grace or a case study of Janet Frame, taking pains to explain how events in her childhood and the inadequacies of her parents, her experience in a mental hospital and home-sickness for New Zealand had made her 'like that'.
- (b) Most candidates displayed a clear understanding of the significance of the extract and picking up Grace's insecurities over language and her parents, adopted a similar explanatory approach of Grace's character. Modest responses were characterised by over-extended references to the wider text and insufficient exploration of the effects of the writing in the extract. Weaker attempts at a closer reading betrayed a partial, unsympathetic understanding of a young child's 'half-solved perplexities' or conflated the character with the author: the childhood memories 'help us to understand and sympathise with Frame' or 'show us that even as a child Frame was mentally ill'. There was some misunderstanding of the kind of 'magazine' that was forbidden and a suspicion that the beastie was imaginary. Better answers showed some sensitive responses to the effects of the writing. There were some accomplished displays of sustained analyses of the passage, particularly by those who resisted the temptation to do a running commentary, but found an effective starting point in 'Words were so mysterious, full of pleasure and fear' or 'I was myself, only myself and nobody else'. Into their explorations of the significance of the key concerns were integrated, some detailed analysis and appreciation of a range of stylistic devices. With well chosen quotations, candidates examined some aspects of the following: the shifting thoughts and internal logic of the first person account of the memories; the different effects of the snatches of conversation, the different effects created by the two lists, the use of questions, repetitions and rhythms in the various sentence structures and the way Frame exploits the sound effects and tone

of the language. Candidates showed various insights, into the relationship with the reader, the creation of humour, pathos and Grace's defiance at the end.

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

This was a popular text, with the (b) question proving to be the favoured option. Both questions elicited well-supported discussions and answers showed evidence of a genuine enthusiasm for the play and understanding of its issues. There was extensive evidence of critical reading, on the issue of language, colonialism and the play itself. As always, the challenge for candidates is to integrate this material into an argument with relevance to the question. Candidates are advised to constantly view the text as a play to be seen, so that specific scenes can be analysed through the critical eye and responses of an audience.

- (a) There were some strong answers to this question, identifying the hedge-school as a place which unifies a community, where language is enjoyed and relished and where a rich culture prevails. This was contrasted with the evident material deficiency of the place, its dilapidated appearance and the symbolic shortcomings of the people in it: the lame, drunk, dumb escapist etc. Mention was made of the new National Schools and most candidates offered a well argued and illustrated discussion of the wider issues of cultural heritage and decay, ambivalence towards change. Candidates were equally divided between those who mourned the passing of the hedge-school and those who thought it was the only way for Ireland or any country to develop. The key difference between strong and weak candidates here was whether candidates focused on the 'dramatic' function and presentation of the hedge-school. Some well-informed candidates adopted an expository, socio-political approach covering the colonial agenda, clearly seeing the significance of the focus on language and education but not quite exploiting the dramatic significance of the setting. The best responses moved adeptly between relevant contextual material and the text. They saw the hedge-school as the 'real battle-ground' between the English and Irish in terms of culture, that apart from the romantic episode between Yolland and Maire, all action takes place within it, so that astute candidates explored how Friel made dramatic effect out of theatrical necessity, by discussing the significance and dramatic impact of the baptism and death of Nellie Ruadh's baby, reactions to Yolland's disappearance and Doalty's casual interruption of Lancy's threats with 'Tell him his whole camp's on fire.' They covered the significance of the role of Hugh, the love of the classics and the way he rationalises his attitudes to change. Weaker responses were often thin on textual material or gave character portraits of characters, and narrative accounts of events.
- (b) This passage was also well analysed to show a good understanding of the roles and the development of the contrast of attitudes between the characters. The ironic exchange of more obviously stereotyped positions, with an Irishman advocating change and an English soldier resisting it, was often brought out and the increasing dramatic tension to the point of Owen's outburst about his own name was also well defined. Good answers were characterised by a close reading of the text catching the nuances of tone and feeling in the language and the significance of the stage directions at the end. How Friel generates audience shock, amusement and recognition of irony was analysed to different degrees and then the whole situation was related to Anglo-Irish relations and the possibility of friendly interaction. Some good use was made of critical opinion, but some candidates focused rather narrowly on Owen's Tobair Vree speech, over-investing in theoretical discussions on translation, what it does to communication and the problem of the 'private residue'. Weaker responses offered running commentary approaches, tending to summarise, or discuss ideas with insufficient attention to the extract, sometimes ignoring Owen's long speech completely.

#### Question 5 ARUNDHATI ROY: *The God of Small Things*

This was a very popular text with candidates communicating real pleasure in their writing, often showing vigorous engagement with the concerns and impressive textual knowledge. The issue on both questions was shaping the available material to the question: whether candidates displayed a literary approach and could display some understanding of the narrative methods and appreciation of a range of effects or whether they treated the text as a social treatise on gender politics, the caste system, family dysfunction and its effects on child development.

- (a) This central question provoked an intelligent and unpredictable range of answers, sometimes linking the title specifically to Velutha, sometimes distinguishing between the 'big' concerns of adults and the 'small' concerns of childhood which are, of course ironically, 'big' as well, sometimes focusing on the narrative method which is littered with detailed minute observations and repetitive



motifs and makes use of the Kathakali dance culture. The best answers set out an agenda and illustrated their ideas with good reference to the detail of the text. They used an impressive amount of quotation for analytical purposes, integrating comments on the structure, language and tone into the discussion of concerns, presentation of characters and roles and shifting points of view. Modest responses were less able to construct a coherent argument and tended to present a lot of detailed knowledge with partial discussion. They covered Vellutha and Ammu, their relationships with the twins and the breaking of the 'Love Laws', the twin's childhoods and the tragic events leading up to their incestuous relationship. Most candidates could at some point show how 'small things' such as Ammu's ill-considered warning that people can 'love you a little less'; or Pappachi's moth loomed large in the characters' lives. Weaker responses relied on narrative summary or over-invested in the social context.

- (b) The passage was a very popular choice and responses varied hugely in quality, but even basic responses recognised the viewpoint of the young child and commented on the language with that in mind. The best answers used their knowledge of the wider text to inform and enhance their appreciation of the significance of the detail in the passage: explaining the significance of the reference to Julius Caesar, or comparing this funeral to Sophie Mol's very productively to draw out contrasts in the family reactions and comparisons in the use of language and focus on specific detail. Some developed the implications of the first brief sentence and the caste-bound disapproval of Ammu, pointing out the irony of Ammu being reduced not just to the status of 'beggars, derelicts and 'significantly 'the police-custody dead', but in two separate lists being deconstructed into separate elements ('small things') to be totally dehumanised in the label: Receipt No. Q498673. Less able answers tended to pick on specific details and explain their significance with reference to the wider text, using a more narrative approach. Rahel's relationship with her twin was considered by some and the cruelty of their separation and meeting in adult life. Stronger answers focused on the irony of Estha being 'The Keeper of Records' and explained the contribution to that irony of the repeated refrain: 'Little Man. He lived in a Cara-van. Dum dum, with its reminder of his traumatic experience with the 'Orangedrink Lemondrink Man' and subsequent silence. Many of the candidates found much to relish and appreciate in the imagery and sentence structure; the differentiating factor was often how well they managed to structure their response and express their understanding of the effects. A few weaker responses got hooked into expressing too much outrage at the inequities of class and caste prejudices.

**Question 6 WOLE SOYINKA: *The Trials of Brother Jero and Jero's Metamorphosis***

This is becoming a more popular text. There is clear evidence of engagement with the issues and enjoyment of the detail. In many cases there was a productive discussion of the post-colonial Nigerian situation and a clear understanding of the targets of Soyinka's satire, but candidates continue to find comedy a challenge to analyse. In some cases extensive knowledge presented candidates with problems of time management and controlling the argument. There was also evidence that candidates tended to know the first play in much more detail than the second.

- (a) This proved to be the more popular option and in many cases it was well done. Good responses clearly thought about the implications of the question, explored both the character and the dramatic methods used by Soyinka to present him and argued a balanced response. Many competently illustrated Jero's hypocrisy and self-serving ability to manipulate others but good responses understood that the audience's reaction to him is mediated by his function in the plays to expose the greed, dishonesty and gullibility of others, the relationship he builds with the audience as a result of the soliloquies and the visual, slapstick comedy, particularly in the first play. As some astute candidates pointed out, his undignified panting over girls in wet wrappers or attempts to escape his vociferous creditor Amope by climbing through a window make it difficult to take him too seriously. Less able responses used enough quotation from the first soliloquy to show his attitude to his 'business' and how he makes the audience collude with him before he goes to work on the Member of Parliament and could explain his treatment of Chume. Weaker responses wrote a character portrait, simply judging Jero for his misuse of religion, his greed for money, lust for women and the plying of the other prophets in 'Jero's Metamorphosis' with alcohol. Most candidates merely asserted that the second play was much darker than the first. Stronger responses commented on the misleading nature of the title 'Metamorphosis' which led to expectations of Jero reforming and the political resonances and comedy of the Military titles and uniforms. Few however, had quotations to expose the shocking ironies of Jero's speeches on the need for the prophets to gain a monopoly over the planned expansion of public execution as part of the tourist business.

- (b) This proved less popular and was generally less well done because most used the extract as a lift-off for a more general essay on the role of Chume, the misuse of religion or, in reaction to the end of the extract, a general essay on Jero and his weakness for women. They often showed a detailed knowledge of the text but missed the opportunities within the passage to analyse Soyinka's theatricality. Less able responses mentioned Soyinka's use of Pidgin English as symptomatic of his lack of education and naivety and focused on the personal nature of Chume's requests for improvements in work status and means of transport, referring to his conversation with Amope in an earlier scene. Those who were using the running commentary approach discussed the stage directions at the beginning, showed the comic effect of the actions and how Chume grows in confidence or the visual spectacle of Jero's entrance at the end but missed the irony of Jero's speeches at the end. While stronger answers understood the satirical function of the scene, which is that a congregation will follow anyone who takes on the role of prophet or prayer leader, very few looked in detail at the use of language, particularly the rhythms and repetitions in Chume's long prayer. Occasionally someone would comment on the use of parody of evangelical services in the call and response structure of the dialogue or more rarely, the Lord's Prayer in lines 40-45. Weaker responses spent too long establishing the context and attempted to summarise the scene.

### Question 7 VIRGINIA WOOLF: *To The Lighthouse*

This text proved less popular this session. Both questions attracted equal numbers of candidates and many of the essays were competent, the key difference between strong and weak responses being how well candidates focused on the terms of the questions and shaped their material to fit the tasks.

- (a) Candidates who attempted this question clearly understood the implication behind the quotation and focused on the way Woolf presented characters through the stream of consciousness technique and with a few examples, how she placed one subjective response against another to enable the reader to make some sort of judgement. The best answers saw the virtue in the ambiguity and ambivalence of the reader's response. Many used the opening with the different reactions of the Ramsays and particularly James to the prospect of not going to the lighthouse the following day. Some commented on the roles of Lily and Bankes in commenting on other characters, with a few remembering Lily's observation that one needed 'fifty pairs of eyes' to appreciate the complexities of Mrs Ramsay and some others commenting on James's epiphany 'that nothing is ever only one thing' to show how views of characters change over time. The key issue here was the extent to which candidates had detailed knowledge of the text available for analysis, but even more modest answers could give some more or less nuanced portraits of characters and how they judged them.
- (b) Most candidates were secure on the context and significance of this passage and many relished the opportunity of displaying their appreciation of the effects of the writing. The best answers did not start at the beginning but took a key phrase such as 'unrelated passions', 'how to bring them together' or 'the truth of things' to introduce key concerns, while more modest answers focused on presentation of character, the significance of Lily's painting and Mr Ramsay's oppressive need for sympathy. Most were able in some degree, to comment on how Woolf's use of the stream of consciousness technique effectively mimicked Lily's observations, thoughts and feelings. Many commented on the dramatic visual impact of the empty coffee cup to establish an external reality and the precision and sense of excitement with which she pitches her easel. There were some terrific analyses of the choice of language and the effects of the sentence structure – the use of repetition, grammatical parallelism and short or minor sentences – at particular points in the extract, most effectively at the beginning, her decision to find her paints and the effect of Mr Ramsay's appearance on her painting. Less able answers wrote in a more general way about the stream of consciousness technique, noted the use of brackets as a link into the wider text and the announcement of the death of Mrs Ramsay and while tending to focus on the presentation of character, at least tried to balance references to the wider text with some comments on significant details from the passage. Weaker responses gave over-long accounts of the context, simple character portraits or attempted to paraphrase the content.

# LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

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Paper 9695/71

Comment and Appreciation

## Key Messages

- Candidates need to show clearly that they have read and considered the poem or passage as a whole before starting to write their response.
- Answers should focus upon the form, structure and language of the poem or passage, and upon how these shape meaning; candidates should not simply retell or paraphrase the text.
- Candidates should identify a range of literary devices and techniques, and – most importantly – discuss how they are used by the writers, and the effects that they create; they should not just be listed.
- Candidates should describe some personal response to the ways in which the poem or passage is written, not just to what is said.
- Strong answers focus exclusively upon what is written in the poem or passage, and do not speculate about anything outside it.

## General Comments

There was much solid or competent response and it was a rare answer indeed that did not show at least some basic appreciation of what the poems or prose passages were about; there was some thoughtful and sensible consideration of at least some of the language used by each writer, and an occasional response to the form and structure of the writing; relatively few answers relied largely or even wholly upon narrative or paraphrase, and almost all attempted to explore at least something of the effects created by each writer in her or his use of particular vocabulary or imagery.

A strength of the responses this session and in line with the first of the five bullet-points above, was the way in which most answers opened with a brief paragraph outlining what the poems or passages were about, introducing their ideas and often showing a confident appreciation of these, before moving into the kind of formal critical commentary that must lie at the heart of all strong responses. As the key messages state, it is vital that candidates should read, and re-read carefully and thoughtfully, before putting any thought down on paper. They have an hour to complete each answer, so fifteen minutes of such reading – perhaps first quickly and then slowly and thoroughly – is of enormous importance; to know what happens at the end of each piece may radically affect what is said about its beginning.

There appeared less reliance this session on simple outlining of what is said in each poem or passage; a limited amount of credit can be given for answers that do not go beyond this, but given the wording of the question, which will always require “a critical commentary” or “a critical comparison” the emphasis of strong answers must clearly be upon the adjective – “critical”. Again, little credit will be given to answers that simply list or identify particular literary techniques: it must be how each writer *uses* these, and the effects that they create for a reader or audience, that will matter.

Personal response is also something that is expected, and what has just been said about literary techniques should elicit such a response. Examiners will not reward answers that respond just to what is said, or to what happens, and those candidates who relate the set pieces to events or thoughts about their own lives are not doing what is required. The personal response must be to how the texts are written, and to the impacts and effects that are created for their readers or audiences. A relatively large number of answers this session became overly speculative in several ways: candidates wondered about what might happen later in the novel or short story, or what had happened earlier; they speculated about why certain actions or words might be written; they wondered about possible biographical influences; they wasted some valuable time by comparing the poems or passages to other texts that they had read, even speculating about possible influences of one upon the other. None of these approaches helped towards creating a confident personal and critical response to the unseen texts printed on the examination paper.

Candidates are expected to use technical terminology where appropriate and where it is helpful to their argument; there is no need at all simply to identify particular literary devices or techniques, and a bare listing or illustrating of these will never gain much reward, but it can be very helpful to use specific terms as a form of shorthand when considering the effects that a writer is creating. One surprisingly common misuse of a technical term was the rather loose use of the word “imagery” in place of “image”; the former word is normally used in relation to such things as simile or metaphor, whereas the latter should be restricted to simple, straightforward depictions or descriptions.

Another quite frequent error lay in the use of a phrase such as “the second-person narrative”; this phrase can only be used (and this is not the case in any of the prose passages here) when the speaker or narrator addresses the reader. Narrative in this paper was either first-person, when the speaker writes of what “I” did and thought, as in **Question 1**, or the third-person, where the narrator uses “he” or “she”, as in **Question 3**.

A final point needs to be made; it is arguably a small one, but it sometimes appeared to suggest a lack of understanding. It is understandable that in the stress of a timed examination some candidates will make the slip of calling a piece of prose a poem, or will call a poem a play, but when this happens consistently through an answer it may become questionable whether the candidate actually knows the correct terminology. To give a few specific examples, more than one answer appeared to think that **Questions 1** and **2** were poems, in several cases referring to paragraphs as stanzas; **Question 3** was referred to as a ballad, and even a sonnet, and in one case was said throughout the answer to have been written by a playwright.

### **Comments on Specific Questions**

#### **1 The Woman’s Rose**

In a longer prose extract such as this it is acceptable that some answers did not manage to cover all aspects. A number of weaker candidates spent an unnecessary amount of time discussing the possible implications of the flower references in the opening short paragraphs, possibly a reflection of not having fully read or absorbed the whole extract first. A significant part of the passage – and indeed the focus of the question itself – lies in the account starting in line 18, where the narrator talks of the 17-year-old girl and her impact on the men of the small town, followed by her account of what happened when she arrived, and of how the men’s attention shifted rapidly from one young woman to the other. The narrator clearly regards the older girl with admiration, even awe – the description of her beauty implies this, and possibly (though there is no concrete evidence of this in the passage) some hints of a more physical attraction to her rather than to the men who now “worship” her. The older girl’s feelings are of course never made absolutely clear: her supposed dislike of the younger is not explicit, but only what the narrator “felt sure” (line 54), though the fact that they “never spoke to each other” (line 63) is certainly a strong suggestion of a mutual distrust, if not actual dislike.

The wooden box at the start of the passage is perhaps a metaphor for the narrator’s own life; at this stage in the passage she is elderly and presumably world-worn like her box. Its contents suggest a relatively thin life – a few squares of paper with hair inside (a common kind of keepsake in times gone by), a picture reminding her of her brother, a few “other things as small”, and then of course the withered rose itself. What this represents is not made clear, and there were many various suggestions made by candidates, but all implied a lover or love affair of some sort, possibly between the narrator and the older girl; she had other loves, but like the acacia flowers these have been discarded and almost forgotten now. The second paragraph is very elusive, but several answers suggested with some confidence that for a brief moment the narrator is referring to herself in the third person: when she becomes depressed, the memory of the rose gives her hope that even in her older years there will be life and hope.

There were frequent comments about paragraph length, though such comments rarely seemed to consider what sort of effect a particular length or shortness might have; the only really valid comment in this case came from a small handful of answers that spoke of the extreme brevity of the final eight-word paragraph, and the sudden jolt that this has on a reader. Those answers that merely stated that there were some long paragraphs and some brief ones could not gain any credit for this.

## 2 Two poems

This was the most popular question and some candidates found it challenging; although both poems are short they are – particularly Emily Dickinson’s – far from simple.

Almost all answers noted that Dickinson’s poem had no title, unlike Lwanga’s; in itself this is a harmless if very obvious comment, but what was rather surprising was how concerned so many candidates appeared to be by the lack of a title, even to the point of suggesting that Dickinson clearly could not be bothered to think of one, or that she was not really clear in her own mind what the poem is about. A title is not a compulsory element of any poem, and it might be worth suggesting to future candidates that very little critical sophistication is likely to emerge from abstract discussion of it, or indeed of its absence.

A number of candidates said with certainty that Dickinson’s poem had no rhyme, whereas in fact it uses regular half-rhyme to very strong effect; several were also concerned that it did not adopt any particular verse pattern, or in the words of one answer that “it is a poem that has no traditional poetic techniques”. In reality its structure is remarkably tight and highly controlled, with a regular rhythm, regular four-lined stanzas, and an abcb/dbeb rhyme pattern. The most confident answers used these features to point to the emotional firmness and indeed restraint that Dickinson’s speaker conveys. Unlike the high level of colour and sound, and the personal enthusiasm that Lwanga’s persona has for daybreak, Dickinson’s is cool almost to the point of appearing unemotional; in fact, however, she clearly expresses a conscious determination to overcome her fear of the darkness of midnight, by means of deliberately putting on an outward appearance of readiness – smoothing the hair and getting the dimples ready, a picture that is either grimly determined or gently comic.

Lwanga’s poem, by contrast, is apparently rather less controlled and structured, but as every answer pointed out it has the repeated opening phrase “O dawn” at the start of each stanza, and each of the first three stanzas is a question, so while there is certainly no rhyme and no regular rhythm it is certainly not free of control. It may be, as many suggested, that Lwanga’s clear, energetic and widely focused praise for daybreak is such that an apparently greater freedom of expression is helpful, but the most confident responses did see a definite progression and movement through the poem, from a general sense of daylight developing in stanza one, through natural sounds in stanza two, to the impact of daybreak on city life in stanza three, and finally to individual and personal impacts in stanza four. This final stanza led to a number of varied interpretations, but whatever was suggested agreed that despite the initial word “cold”, there is more that is “warm”, so that daylight will “enflame” and “gladden” people.

More than one candidate clearly misunderstood the word “daybreak” and read Lwanga’s poem as a paean to dusk, and the approach of night; this appeared to reflect a misunderstanding, but credit was given for argument and response as far as was possible.

Nothing has so far been said about the question’s requirement for comparison, but almost invariably candidates were able to move with at least relative ease and fluency between the two poems; only a handful wrote about each separately, and even these candidates generally made a concluding comparative comment, drawing the two together. The former approach is generally more appropriate, though certainly more demanding; it does, however, demonstrate an ability to hold the two poems together at the same time, and thus also an ability to link, compare and contrast particular ideas about each as they develop. There is nothing inherently wrong with the latter approach, and for many candidates this is the easier and safer method, but it can result in an answer being effectively two discrete responses rather than a cohesive single one.

It should be understood that the term “blank verse” is a very specific one, meaning verse that is written in unrhymed iambic pentameters; neither of these poems are structured in this way; Lwanga’s may be described as free verse, though its control and structure are such that even this term may not be entirely correct. There is of course no need to define the form of either poem, unless in doing so candidates can make pertinent critical comments about any particular impact that such form may have; as with all technical terminology, its use is best seen as a helpful short-hand way of making a particular point – simply to use the term, whether correctly or not, is in itself of no real value.

When quoting verse, candidates are reminded of the need to quote correctly, running lines together with no apparent regard for where the poets had ended them. Candidates are reminded that there are two ways of doing this: one is to copy exactly what is printed:

*When night is almost done,  
And sunrise grows so near*

*That we can touch the spaces  
It's time to smooth the hair*

The other way is to use a forward slash at each line change:

*When night is almost done,/And sunrise grows so near/That we can touch the spaces/It's time to smooth the hair*

Either way is fine, but candidates should adopt one or the other.

### **3 A Journey**

There was a lot of strong personal response to the situation portrayed in this extract, and most candidates expressed warmth and sympathy for the predicament in which the woman finds herself, though a significant number were quite strongly critical of her for a range of reasons – she did not sit up all night with her dying husband, she selfishly went to sleep, she was cheerful in the morning, she did not tell anyone that he had died. Whatever the rights and wrongs of these reactions, they were very often responding simply to *what* is written rather than to *how* it is written; as noted in the Key Points above, such emotional responses are not required, and may well take too much valuable time away from the critical commentary that the question requires. There is plenty of material that can be, and in most answers was, considered.

The opening word of the passage is significant and immediately attracts our attention, and the whole of the long opening paragraph continues to portray the woman's fear, uncertainty, inability (until line 15) to relax and sleep; the use of ellipsis (...), of short hesitant sentences, of the sound of another man's ugly-sounding snoring, all combine to make her appear a deeply worried woman.

The second paragraph is similarly rich with material for comment, and most answers saw a striking and bitterly ironic contrast between the woman's natural and instinctive delight in a new day when she first wakes and the cold and bare landscape through which the train is travelling. Many also noted the almost horrific sentence "It looked like the first day of creation", when in fact it was to be the last day of her married life, and indeed the last of her husband's actual life.

Finding him dead, and her subsequent terror, both of her own loneliness and of her possible expulsion from the train, are portrayed in a sequence of very striking and powerful lines, at times verging on the melodramatic (for example lines 39-42); the conclusion in lines 55 to the end is bleak and stark, and the closing ellipsis could be considered very moving in its possible implications.

A large number of answers used the words "symbol" or "symbolism" throughout this question, but there are in fact no symbols in it, unless possibly the journeying train symbolises the rapid nature and passage of human life. The lifeless sky and the bare hillocks, the other man's loud snoring, the window shade, are all actual facts within the narrative; they are certainly *images*, and arguably metaphors, but it is difficult to make a strong argument that they are symbols. It is not correct to describe this passage as a poem, or a ballad, and while it is certainly dramatic in its plot, it is not a play. While the misuse of such basic terms might sometimes be seen as mere slips of the pen, this can also imply a lack of true understanding of literary terms. Candidates are reminded to use these terms correctly.

# LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

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**Paper 9695/72**

**Comment and Appreciation**

## Key Messages

- Candidates need to show clearly that they have read and considered the poem or passage as a whole before starting to write their response.
- Answers should focus upon the form, structure and language of the poem or passage, and upon how these shape meaning; candidates should not simply retell or paraphrase the text.
- Candidates should identify a range of literary devices and techniques, and – most importantly – discuss how they are used by the writers, and the effects that they create; they should not just be listed.
- Candidates should describe some personal response to the ways in which the poem or passage is written, not just to what is said.
- Strong answers focus exclusively upon what is written in the poem or passage, and do not speculate about anything outside it.

## General Comments

There was much solid or competent response and it was a rare answer indeed that did not show at least some basic appreciation of what the poems or prose passages were about; there was some thoughtful and sensible consideration of at least some of the language used by each writer, and an occasional response to the form and structure of the writing; relatively few answers relied largely or even wholly upon narrative or paraphrase, and almost all attempted to explore at least something of the effects created by each writer in her or his use of particular vocabulary or imagery.

A strength of the responses this session and in line with the first of the five bullet-points above, was the way in which most answers opened with a brief paragraph outlining what the poems or passages were about, introducing their ideas and often showing a confident appreciation of these, before moving into the kind of formal critical commentary that must lie at the heart of all strong responses. As the key messages state, it is vital that candidates should read, and re-read carefully and thoughtfully, before putting any thought down on paper. They have an hour to complete each answer, so fifteen minutes of such reading – perhaps first quickly and then slowly and thoroughly – is of enormous importance; to know what happens at the end of each piece may radically affect what is said about its beginning.

There appeared less reliance this session on simple outlining of what is said in each poem or passage; a limited amount of credit can be given for answers that do not go beyond this, but given the wording of the question, which will always require “a critical commentary” or “a critical comparison” the emphasis of strong answers must clearly be upon the adjective – “critical”. Again, little credit will be given to answers that simply list or identify particular literary techniques: it must be how each writer *uses* these, and the effects that they create for a reader or audience, that will matter.

Personal response is also something that is expected, and what has just been said about literary techniques should elicit such a response. Examiners will not reward answers that respond just to what is said, or to what happens, and those candidates who relate the set pieces to events or thoughts about their own lives are not doing what is required. The personal response must be to how the texts are written, and to the impacts and effects that are created for their readers or audiences. A relatively large number of answers this session became overly speculative in several ways: candidates wondered about what might happen later in the novel or short story, or what had happened earlier; they speculated about why certain actions or words might be written; they wondered about possible biographical influences; they wasted some valuable time by comparing the poems or passages to other texts that they had read, even speculating about possible influences of one upon the other. None of these approaches helped towards creating a confident personal and critical response to the unseen texts printed on the examination paper.

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A final point needs to be made; it is arguably a small one, but it sometimes appeared to suggest a lack of understanding. It is understandable that in the stress of a timed examination some candidates will make the slip of calling a piece of prose a poem, or will call a poem a play, but when this happens consistently through an answer it may become questionable whether the candidate actually knows the correct terminology. To give a few specific examples, more than one answer appeared to think that **Questions 1** and **2** were poems, in several cases referring to paragraphs as stanzas; **Question 3** was referred to as a ballad, and even a sonnet, and in one case was said throughout the answer to have been written by a playwright.

### Comments on Specific Questions

#### **1 The Woman’s Rose**

In a longer prose extract such as this it is acceptable that some answers did not manage to cover all aspects. A number of weaker candidates spent an unnecessary amount of time discussing the possible implications of the flower references in the opening short paragraphs, possibly a reflection of not having fully read or absorbed the whole extract first. A significant part of the passage – and indeed the focus of the question itself – lies in the account starting in line 18, where the narrator talks of the 17-year-old girl and her impact on the men of the small town, followed by her account of what happened when she arrived, and of how the men’s attention shifted rapidly from one young woman to the other. The narrator clearly regards the older girl with admiration, even awe – the description of her beauty implies this, and possibly (though there is no concrete evidence of this in the passage) some hints of a more physical attraction to her rather than to the men who now “worship” her. The older girl’s feelings are of course never made absolutely clear: her supposed dislike of the younger is not explicit, but only what the narrator “felt sure” (line 54), though the fact that they “never spoke to each other” (line 63) is certainly a strong suggestion of a mutual distrust, if not actual dislike.

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There were frequent comments about paragraph length, though such comments rarely seemed to consider what sort of effect a particular length or shortness might have; the only really valid comment in this case came from a small handful of answers that spoke of the extreme brevity of the final eight-word paragraph, and the sudden jolt that this has on a reader. Those answers that merely stated that there were some long paragraphs and some brief ones could not gain any credit for this.



## 2 Two poems

This was the most popular question and some candidates found it challenging; although both poems are short they are – particularly Emily Dickinson’s – far from simple.

Almost all answers noted that Dickinson’s poem had no title, unlike Lwanga’s; in itself this is a harmless if very obvious comment, but what was rather surprising was how concerned so many candidates appeared to be by the lack of a title, even to the point of suggesting that Dickinson clearly could not be bothered to think of one, or that she was not really clear in her own mind what the poem is about. A title is not a compulsory element of any poem, and it might be worth suggesting to future candidates that very little critical sophistication is likely to emerge from abstract discussion of it, or indeed of its absence.

A number of candidates said with certainty that Dickinson’s poem had no rhyme, whereas in fact it uses regular half-rhyme to very strong effect; several were also concerned that it did not adopt any particular verse pattern, or in the words of one answer that “it is a poem that has no traditional poetic techniques”. In reality its structure is remarkably tight and highly controlled, with a regular rhythm, regular four-lined stanzas, and an abcb/dbeb rhyme pattern. The most confident answers used these features to point to the emotional firmness and indeed restraint that Dickinson’s speaker conveys. Unlike the high level of colour and sound, and the personal enthusiasm that Lwanga’s persona has for daybreak, Dickinson’s is cool almost to the point of appearing unemotional; in fact, however, she clearly expresses a conscious determination to overcome her fear of the darkness of midnight, by means of deliberately putting on an outward appearance of readiness – smoothing the hair and getting the dimples ready, a picture that is either grimly determined or gently comic.

Lwanga’s poem, by contrast, is apparently rather less controlled and structured, but as every answer pointed out it has the repeated opening phrase “O dawn” at the start of each stanza, and each of the first three stanzas is a question, so while there is certainly no rhyme and no regular rhythm it is certainly not free of control. It may be, as many suggested, that Lwanga’s clear, energetic and widely focused praise for daybreak is such that an apparently greater freedom of expression is helpful, but the most confident responses did see a definite progression and movement through the poem, from a general sense of daylight developing in stanza one, through natural sounds in stanza two, to the impact of daybreak on city life in stanza three, and finally to individual and personal impacts in stanza four. This final stanza led to a number of varied interpretations, but whatever was suggested agreed that despite the initial word “cold”, there is more that is “warm”, so that daylight will “enflame” and “gladden” people.

More than one candidate clearly misunderstood the word “daybreak” and read Lwanga’s poem as a paean to dusk, and the approach of night; this appeared to reflect a misunderstanding, but credit was given for argument and response as far as was possible.

Nothing has so far been said about the question’s requirement for comparison, but almost invariably candidates were able to move with at least relative ease and fluency between the two poems; only a handful wrote about each separately, and even these candidates generally made a concluding comparative comment, drawing the two together. The former approach is generally more appropriate, though certainly more demanding; it does, however, demonstrate an ability to hold the two poems together at the same time, and thus also an ability to link, compare and contrast particular ideas about each as they develop. There is nothing inherently wrong with the latter approach, and for many candidates this is the easier and safer method, but it can result in an answer being effectively two discrete responses rather than a cohesive single one.

It should be understood that the term “blank verse” is a very specific one, meaning verse that is written in unrhymed iambic pentameters; neither of these poems are structured in this way; Lwanga’s may be described as free verse, though its control and structure are such that even this term may not be entirely correct. There is of course no need to define the form of either poem, unless in doing so candidates can make pertinent critical comments about any particular impact that such form may have; as with all technical terminology, its use is best seen as a helpful short-hand way of making a particular point – simply to use the term, whether correctly or not, is in itself of no real value.

When quoting verse, candidates are reminded of the need to quote correctly, running lines together with no apparent regard for where the poets had ended them. Candidates are reminded that there are two ways of doing this: one is to copy exactly what is printed:

*When night is almost done,  
And sunrise grows so near*

*That we can touch the spaces  
It's time to smooth the hair*

The other way is to use a forward slash at each line change:

*When night is almost done,/And sunrise grows so near/That we can touch the spaces/It's time to smooth the hair*

Either way is fine, but candidates should adopt one or the other.

### **3 A Journey**

There was a lot of strong personal response to the situation portrayed in this extract, and most candidates expressed warmth and sympathy for the predicament in which the woman finds herself, though a significant number were quite strongly critical of her for a range of reasons – she did not sit up all night with her dying husband, she selfishly went to sleep, she was cheerful in the morning, she did not tell anyone that he had died. Whatever the rights and wrongs of these reactions, they were very often responding simply to *what* is written rather than to *how* it is written; as noted in the Key Points above, such emotional responses are not required, and may well take too much valuable time away from the critical commentary that the question requires. There is plenty of material that can be, and in most answers was, considered.

The opening word of the passage is significant and immediately attracts our attention, and the whole of the long opening paragraph continues to portray the woman's fear, uncertainty, inability (until line 15) to relax and sleep; the use of ellipsis (...), of short hesitant sentences, of the sound of another man's ugly-sounding snoring, all combine to make her appear a deeply worried woman.

The second paragraph is similarly rich with material for comment, and most answers saw a striking and bitterly ironic contrast between the woman's natural and instinctive delight in a new day when she first wakes and the cold and bare landscape through which the train is travelling. Many also noted the almost horrific sentence "It looked like the first day of creation", when in fact it was to be the last day of her married life, and indeed the last of her husband's actual life.

Finding him dead, and her subsequent terror, both of her own loneliness and of her possible expulsion from the train, are portrayed in a sequence of very striking and powerful lines, at times verging on the melodramatic (for example lines 39-42); the conclusion in lines 55 to the end is bleak and stark, and the closing ellipsis could be considered very moving in its possible implications.

A large number of answers used the words "symbol" or "symbolism" throughout this question, but there are in fact no symbols in it, unless possibly the journeying train symbolises the rapid nature and passage of human life. The lifeless sky and the bare hillocks, the other man's loud snoring, the window shade, are all actual facts within the narrative; they are certainly *images*, and arguably metaphors, but it is difficult to make a strong argument that they are symbols. It is not correct to describe this passage as a poem, or a ballad, and while it is certainly dramatic in its plot, it is not a play. While the misuse of such basic terms might sometimes be seen as mere slips of the pen, this can also imply a lack of true understanding of literary terms. Candidates are reminded to use these terms correctly.

# LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

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Paper 9695/73

Comment and Appreciation

## Key Messages

- Candidates need to show clearly that they have read and considered the poem or passage as a whole before starting to write their response.
- Answers should focus upon the form, structure and language of the poem or passage, and upon how these shape meaning; candidates should not simply retell or paraphrase the text.
- Candidates should identify a range of literary devices and techniques, and – most importantly – discuss how they are used by the writers, and the effects that they create; they should not just be listed.
- Candidates should describe some personal response to the ways in which the poem or passage is written, not just to what is said.
- Strong answers focus exclusively upon what is written in the poem or passage, and do not speculate about anything outside it.

## General Comments

There was much solid or competent response and it was a rare answer indeed that did not show at least some basic appreciation of what the poems or prose passages were about; there was some thoughtful and sensible consideration of at least some of the language used by each writer, and an occasional response to the form and structure of the writing; relatively few answers relied largely or even wholly upon narrative or paraphrase, and almost all attempted to explore at least something of the effects created by each writer in her or his use of particular vocabulary or imagery.

A strength of the responses this session and in line with the first of the five bullet-points above, was the way in which most answers opened with a brief paragraph outlining what the poems or passages were about, introducing their ideas and often showing a confident appreciation of these, before moving into the kind of formal critical commentary that must lie at the heart of all strong responses. As the key messages state, it is vital that candidates should read, and re-read carefully and thoughtfully, before putting any thought down on paper. They have an hour to complete each answer, so fifteen minutes of such reading – perhaps first quickly to get an overview and then slowly and thoroughly – is of enormous importance; to know what happens at the end of each piece may radically affect what is said about its beginning.

There appeared less reliance this session on simple outlining of what is said in each poem or passage; there will always be some small reward for answers that do not go beyond this, but given the wording of the question, which will always require “a critical commentary” or “a critical comparison” the emphasis of strong answers must clearly be upon the adjective – “critical”. Again, little credit will be given to answers that simply list or identify particular literary techniques: it must be how each writer *uses* these, and the effects that they create for a reader or audience, that will matter.

Personal response is also something that is expected, and what has just been said about literary techniques should elicit such a response. Examiners will not reward answers that respond just to what is said, or to what happens, and those candidates who relate the set pieces to events or thoughts about their own lives are not doing what is required. The personal response must be to how the texts are written, and to the impacts and effects that are created for their readers or audiences. A relatively large number of answers this session became overly speculative in several ways: candidates wondered about what might happen later in the novel or short story, or what had happened earlier; they speculated about why certain actions or words might be written; they wondered about possible biographical influences; they wasted some valuable time by comparing the poems or passages to other texts that they had read, even speculating about possible influences of one upon the other.

Candidates are expected to use technical terminology where appropriate and where it is helpful to their argument; there is no need at all simply to identify particular literary devices or techniques, and a bare listing

or illustrating of these cannot gain much credit, but it can be very helpful to use specific terms as a form of shorthand when considering the effects that a writer is creating. One surprisingly common misuse of a technical term was the rather loose use of the word “imagery” in place of “image”; the former word is normally used in relation to such things as simile or metaphor, whereas the latter should be restricted to simple, straightforward depictions or descriptions.

Another quite frequent error lay in the use of a phrase such as “the second-person narrative”; this phrase can only be used (and this is not the case in any of the prose passages here) when the speaker or narrator addresses the reader. Narrative in this paper is either first-person, when the speaker writes of what “I” did and thought, as in the two poems in **Question 1**, or the third-person, where the narrator uses “he” or “she”, as in **Question 2**. By its very nature, of course, a piece of drama will not normally be narrated in any conventional sense.

A final point needs to be made; it is arguably a minor one, but it sometimes appeared to suggest a lack of understanding. In the stress of a timed examination some candidates make the small slip of calling a piece of prose a poem, or call a poem a play, but when this happens consistently through an answer it may be questionable whether the candidate actually knows the correct terminology. This was especially worrying in the case of **Question 3**, where quite a large number of answers appeared unaware that this is part of a play – several said, for example, that it was “a story written in dialogue form”.

### **Comments on Specific Questions**

#### **1 Two poems**

Candidates produced some very thoughtful responses and many showed not just confident personal responses but also some quite sophisticated comparative skills. The speaker in Simpson’s poem looks back to an occasion, probably several similar occasions, when he went into his father’s study late in the evening to find him still working on his legal cases; he was – is – very much in awe of his father’s quiet and undemonstrative skills as an advocate, and he recalls with a mixture perhaps of pride and at the same time some residual fear of the occasions when he unexpectedly came across a plaster cast of a murder victim’s head in a closet – not, however, as one or two candidates gruesomely assumed, a real head.

The fourth stanza did cause a few problems, with some candidates rather curiously assuming that the moon in line 20 is the persona’s mother – presumably misreading line 29, though here the poet makes quite clear that “nature . . . is the mother of us all”. The point appears to be that the speaker sees the moon moving across the sky as he talks with his father, or as he recalls doing so, and appreciates how “nothing in nature changes” (line 27); the moon’s constant path across the sky is evidence of this, and is at the same time illustrative of the fact that he is now, like his father before him, working late into the night – Nature’s cycle comes round again.

Walter’s poem has a very similar theme, though with the big difference that the speaker is not following *his* father’s footsteps; unlike his father, an expert locksmith, he is a poet.

Nothing has so far been said about the question’s requirement for comparison, but almost invariably candidates were able to move with at least relative ease and fluency between the two poems; only a handful wrote about each separately, and even these candidates generally made a concluding comparative comment, drawing the two together. The former approach is generally more appropriate for the task, though certainly more demanding; it does, however, demonstrate an ability to consider the two poems together at the same time, and thus also an ability to link, compare and contrast particular ideas about each as they develop. There is nothing inherently wrong with the latter approach, and for many candidates this is the easier and safer method, but it can result in the appearance of an answer being effectively two discrete responses rather than a cohesive single one.

Candidates are reminded of the need to quote correctly, running lines together with no apparent regard for where the poets had ended them. There are two ways of doing this: one is to copy exactly what is printed:

*A light is on in my father’s study.  
“Still up?” he says, and we are silent,  
looking at the harbour lights  
listening to the surf  
and the creak of coconut boughs.*

The other way is to use a forward slash at each line change:

*A light is on in my father's study. / "Still up?" he says, and we are silent, / looking at the harbour lights / listening to the surf and the creak of coconut boughs.*

Either way is fine, but candidates should adopt one or the other

## 2 *Anna of the Five Towns*

At first glance this may appear a straightforward piece of writing, with a simple narrative structure and some elements of character presentation; many answers, however, saw a lot more in it, often argued and illustrated with considerable critical confidence. For example, many saw the passage as part of a larger coming of age story, showing Anna at a crucial phase of her growing up from childhood to adulthood; several read the passage as an account of how puny and powerless human beings are in the face of the natural world; many more saw it, as perhaps the writer intended, simply as a well-written and rich account of Anna's and Henry Mynor's short voyage from the mainland to the Isle of Man (a name suggesting to some candidates evidence that this is indeed a journey into a growing sexual awareness). Whatever the interpretation, credit could only be given to those answers that focused tightly and critically upon what is actually there in the passage itself; no reward could be offered to those that speculated about what might have preceded it, or more commonly what might follow it, and certainly there was little to be gained in this case in speculation about the meaning of the title of the novel itself.

There is plenty of strongly effective description and imagery in the passage: the opening idea, reflecting Anna's inexperience, that the landing-stage is moving away from the boat rather than the other way round; the shaking of the boat "like that of an earthquake", again suggestive of Anna's momentary fear; the calmness of the sea, "the unruffled mirror of effulgent sunlight"; "the proud gaiety of the ship"; and finally the first glimpse of the island itself, "mysterious, enticing, enchanted, a glinting jewel on the sea's bosom . . . fraught with strange secrets" – many answers saw this last idea as suggestive of Anna's growing excitement as she moves towards new and adult experience. Henry Mynors came in for some quite severe criticism, as being portrayed as something of a know-it-all, perhaps showing off to Anna; he was also praised by many, as simply being knowledgeable and more worldly-wise, and of course also very concerned for the comfort and welfare of the Sutton family.

Answers that remained firmly and consistently focused on the passage and its writing, its movement between description and conversation, responded well and confidently.

## 3 *The Dilemma of a Ghost*

This was marginally the most popular question, but while it led to some able and perceptive responses there were also some that did very little more than narrate and summarise; there was also much more speculation and generalised contextual comment than for either **Question 1** or **Question 2**. Relatively few answers wrote about the extract as a piece of drama, as something to be seen and experienced rather than just read; there is a great deal of action in it – the stage directions are full and frequent. Candidates are reminded that in commenting on drama answers should refer not only to the "readers" of the passage but also to the "audience"; those who considered the dramatic effects of a play showed evidence of a deeper understanding and appreciation of the passage.

Virtually all answers understood the basic situation, and the often fierce but also potentially humorous contrast between what Ato's Ghanaian family expect of him and what Ato himself has seen and done. The apparent backwardness of the family, whose responses are rooted in age-old tradition, was seen by many candidates as something that the writer is criticising, and they often assumed that she is saying that American culture and habits are necessarily better. There is no concrete evidence in the passage that this is being stated as fact; indeed, it could equally well be argued that by making him break away from his family traditions, and to some extent at least adopting American habits, the writer is in fact criticising Ato himself. It may also be that neither is the case, and that the passage simply dramatises a meeting of minds and experiences, perhaps suggesting a potential conflict, but not actually making this central to what is written.

Candidates are reminded that they are expected to show evidence of at least some appreciation of how the writer creates character and drama. Because this is an extract from a play, critical discussion must be based entirely upon what is said by the characters and on what they do. For example, Ato announces his marriage "*casually*" – what effect does this adverb have on how an audience might react? A few lines later, several voices are speaking and "*overlapping*", all speaking more or less at the same time – how is this likely to sound in a theatre? What might be the effect of the "silence" in line 34? What does this silence tell an

audience about Nana's character, and about her position in the family? And as some answers pointed out, the very busy physical actions between lines 84 and 89 must surely be hugely striking and effective on stage.

A number of answers wanted to discuss political issues, racial issues, African versus American social issues, rather than purely literary or dramatic issues; such answers were often quite thoughtful and well put together, but credit could not be given for this because these candidates were not doing what the question specifically asked for – “a *critical commentary on the following extract*”. Candidates are reminded that answers must unequivocally and consistently focus upon what is there in the passage printed on the question paper.

# LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

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Paper 9695/08

Coursework

## Key Messages

### Good answers will:

- address the set tasks with clear and concise focus;
- explore how writers create their particular effects, discussing their literary techniques in some detail;
- support what is said with brief, apt textual quotation and reference;
- make some appropriate use of critical and/or contextual material to support the arguments proposed;
- where practicable, write on individually selected and worded tasks, to make responses as personal as possible;
- ensure that the two pieces submitted remain within the 3000 word limit.

## General Comments

It has become almost routine to say how well Centres and candidates have managed their coursework, but there is no doubt that this was entirely true of work this session. Folders were carefully and efficiently submitted, with very obvious care having been taken when considering the marks to be awarded; annotations and summative comments were helpful and often very detailed, and where they were combined with double marking it was evident that teaching staff had spent a lot of time and personal interest in the work of their candidates. The work itself was of course varied, in both character and critical quality, but what was evident yet again was that almost without exception candidates demonstrated at the very least a sound knowledge of their two texts, and in most cases an awareness that considerably more than simple knowledge is required, so that close critical reading and judgement, supported by plenty of textual quotation and/or reference, were the norm rather than the exception.

Mention has just been made of the need for close reading and reference, and this should form the bulk of any piece of coursework, as indeed with any other examination response; much will of course depend upon the questions that candidates are addressing – more of this in a moment – but while *knowledge* of the two texts is certainly essential this should almost be taken for granted in coursework, so that time can be spent on looking at the various ways in which each writer has created his or her particular effects. There is a quite tight word limit – approximately 1500 words for each piece – and all quotations must be counted towards this limit, so it is clearly sensible to use a good number of brief but tightly focused quotations rather than just a few lengthy ones. It is similarly and obviously important that candidates must focus their responses very exactly on what is asked by their questions, and not allow themselves to stray into unnecessary narrative or paraphrase, or indeed to other areas of personal interest, however fascinating these may be; unless strictly relevant to the task in hand they must be avoided.

Centres are required to have their proposed questions approved by CIE before they are given to candidates. This aims to ensure candidates work on appropriate texts and tasks, and also that they focus their responses as much as possible upon what the marking criteria require. Changes are advised to ensure the focus is clear or strong enough; there may be a shift of emphasis or a slight change of wording, to assist candidates as much as reasonably possible.

Most Centres this session, as in previous sessions, had clearly offered their candidates a range of questions, and sometimes also of texts, though except in large Centres the latter was rare. Less confident candidates can often be helped by being given a more straightforward question, while the most confident on the other hand may be best served by being given a more difficult and demanding one; teaching staff of course know their candidates in ways that no external Moderator possibly can, and the choice and decision must be theirs alone, but it is almost invariably the case that some of the best work seen by Moderators comes from candidates who have worked on questions that not every other candidate in the Centre has done. Their responses tend to be more independent and individual, and while there will of course have been a great deal of common teaching, discussion and preparation, what they say will be fresher and livelier.

Most Centres vary text choice each year, which is good, and this helps to avoid the reiteration of ideas and arguments that can occur if the same texts are used again and again. One of the delights of reading candidates' coursework, and surely also one of the pleasures that candidates themselves feel, is the sense that there is some personal and individual thinking and even perhaps research, as well as what has been taught to everybody else; such a sense was very evident in some of the most confident work received this session.

Personal response is crucially important, but to make it as secure and convincing as possible candidates should be strongly encouraged to read some critical writing about each of their two texts – a few relevant thoughts and ideas may help candidates as they work towards and develop their own ideas. There is little value in simple copying of a critical comment, however: what matters is that some *use* is made of it, and that it becomes an integral part of what the candidates are saying. It is essential that all such critical references are properly acknowledged, both in a footnote and in a bibliography.

Some contextual material can often be very helpful in adding weight to an argument; such material may be social, historical, cultural, but it must be used simply and solely to help and support a developing argument. Once more, though, the word limit must be borne in mind, so that time is not wasted on unnecessary background matters, which may not explicitly address the set question.

Most candidates this session wrote in very confident and often immaculately correct English, but this is only a part of what is required. More important is the need to write structured and cogently argued responses, so that at all times a reader can see and understand where the work is leading; any digression, however interesting it may be in itself, does need to be carefully considered and perhaps deleted, so that there is a clear and consistent focus on what really matters.

A few more general points are worth making in conclusion.

- Annotation has been mentioned, and it is worth reiterating that much of it this session was very detailed and very helpfully directed, showing Moderators exactly where and in what ways each candidate had addressed the demands of the syllabus and marking criteria; marginal annotation need not be over-detailed – and in fact if it is so then it can be unhelpful and even distracting; a summative comment on each piece, however, is particularly useful, especially when using terms found in the mark scheme.
- When a collection of poems is used, it is vital that enough poems are considered to make it clear that a substantial number has been studied. It is impossible to define exactly what such a number must be, because so much must depend upon the length and the complexity of any poem, but it is unlikely that a high mark should be awarded to any essay that relies upon fewer than five or six. The same is true if a collection of short stories is used.
- The word limit has been repeatedly mentioned, but it is very important; it is clearly essential that all work is assessed in exactly the same way to exactly the same set of criteria, one of which is that each folder must contain between 2000 and 3000 words.
- All relevant paperwork should be enclosed with candidates' work: the MS1 mark sheet (or a hard copy of an electronic equivalent), the Assessment Summary Form for the Centre, and the individual cover-sheet for each candidate's work; draft work and notes should *not* be attached.
- Each candidate's work should be stapled together, or attached with a treasury tag, not with paperclips and not placed inside plastic wallets.
- A list of texts used by Centres this session follows below; this is not intended to act as a list to copy, though that may be one result, but simply to illustrate the kind of work that has been studied by candidates, and which has proved successful in what they have written.

**Prose:**

*Blood Meridian* – Cormac McCarthy  
*The Grapes of Wrath* – John Steinbeck  
*The Handmaid's Tale* – Margaret Atwood  
*A Thousand Splendid Suns* – Khaled Hosseini  
*Nicholas Nickleby* – Charles Dickens  
*The White Hotel* – D M Thomas  
*The Picture of Dorian Grey* – Oscar Wilde  
*Wide Sargasso Sea* – Jean Rhys  
*Jane Eyre* – Charlotte Brontë



**Drama:**

*All My Sons* – Arthur Miller  
*Dear Brutus* – J M Barrie  
*Pygmalion* – Bernard Shaw  
*The Homecoming* – Harold Pinter

**Poetry:**

Philip Larkin – selected poems  
*The Squire's Tale* (from *The Canterbury Tales*) – Geoffrey Chaucer