

WORLD LITERATURE

Paper 0408/01
Portfolio
(Coursework)

Key Messages

- It is important that Centres' internal assessment procedures are both rigorous and transparent (as clearly they were in this first pilot session for the syllabus).
- Assignments should be set in a way that allows all candidates to reach their potential, and wording of tasks should keep the assessment criteria in mind: Critical Essay tasks should enable candidates to probe the quality of the writing; in Empathic tasks, candidates need to select a specific moment in the text upon which to construct their voice.

General Comments

In addition to this report, Centres receive individual reports on their moderation. This general review draws together the main points contained within those reports.

It was clear from the work submitted for external moderation that candidates had enjoyed the texts they studied and engaged thoughtfully with the tasks that had been set. There was much perceptive and sensitive appreciation of literature evident in critical essays, in empathic responses and in the recorded conversations. Observations about task-setting can be found below in the individual sections for the three items in the Portfolio.

Centres are to be congratulated on the way in which they contributed to the moderation process. Detailed summative comments on each assignment relating to the relevant assessment criteria were provided, and these are at the core of successful moderation. For the two written assignments, marginal comments and thoughtful ticking additionally form part of the dialogue between Centre and Moderator, as they help to document particular strengths and weaknesses, and by extension, offer a rationale for marks awarded. One Centre used cover sheets for each of the three items in the Portfolio, with space for comments on candidate performance made by more than one teacher, and it was made very clear this way that moderation within the Centre had been carried out effectively.

Critical Essay

Texts studied included Henrik Ibsen's *A Doll's House*, selected poems by Rabindranath Tagore, an Anna Akhmatova selection, and a range of poems extracted from the Cambridge University Press anthology *Songs of Ourselves*.

The strongest essays demonstrated a perceptive appreciation of writers' themes and methods. At the top end of the range there was a sustained and sensitive exploration of the ways in which writers achieve their effects, and essays integrated into their analysis concise references and precise critical comment. This was shown to be possible within the 800-1200 word limit for this assignment. Less successful responses had difficulty sustaining analysis but nonetheless showed an overall understanding of texts studied.

There were many suitable and varied tasks. It is worth reminding Centres at this pilot stage of the syllabus that tasks should be set in a way that allows all candidates to reach their potential and that the wording of tasks should be such that candidates can meet the assessment criteria for the critical essay. Tasks should enable candidates to probe the quality of the writing: for example, 'Explore the ways in which the poets powerfully convey...' and 'How does Ibsen dramatically reveal...'. Phrases such as 'powerfully convey' and 'dramatically reveal' are useful since they explicitly invite a consideration of the ways in which writers use language, structure and form to achieve their effects.

A coursework task such as the following has a clear and manageable focus: 'How do the poets convey the destruction of nature in *Report to Wordsworth* and *Lament*?' If the scope is too broad, the candidate can find it difficult to achieve a clear focus. In poetry assignments, writing about two poems permits candidates to explore each poem in significant detail. (Writing about three or more poems can sometimes lead candidates into a more superficial approach.) In this syllabus there is no requirement to compare poems in poetry assignments.

Empathic Response

Candidates assumed the voices of various characters from *A Raisin in the Sun* (by Lorraine Hansberry), *Mister Pip* (by Lloyd Jones) and *My Brilliant Career* (by Miles Franklin).

The best responses were able to sustain an entirely convincing voice for their chosen character and demonstrated candidates' genuine enthusiasm for both text and task. It is essential that candidates select a particular moment in the text upon which to construct their voice. This allows them to demonstrate imaginatively their engagement with key aspects such as theme, characterisation and use of language, as channelled through the specified moment. In the absence of such a moment, the writing can become rather narrative, simply re-telling events from the chosen character's perspective rather than engaging with the deeper implications evident in a character's thoughts at a given moment.

The word 600-1000 limit allows for relatively succinct responses.

It is helpful to have both character and moment indicated clearly at the top of the assignment.

Oral response (Recorded Conversation)

There was much evidence of insight into the characters and themes candidates selected for this element of the Portfolio. Texts discussed were *The Sound of the Waves* (by Yukio Mishima) and *Antigone* (by Jean Anouilh) which also feature as set texts on Paper 3. Many candidates were able to talk at length and engagingly about their chosen character or theme. At the top end of the range, they were able to integrate many well-selected references as part of their discussion.

Centres appeared to cope well with the administration required. There was much evidence of questioning that was sensitive to the needs of particular candidates, for example knowing when to ask prompt questions to elicit responses from the less confident. There were, however, also instances of candidates not being stopped from delivering what seemed to be rehearsed commentaries, but these were very much in the minority. Some candidates did not benefit from extending their conversation for the whole seven minutes allowed for this item; in these cases conversations began to fragment after about four or five minutes.

Support for Centres

Centres are reminded of the guidance found on task-setting, the conduct of the Recorded Conversation element and other topics found in the *Coursework Training Handbook* and *Teacher Guide* for this syllabus. Over time it will be possible to amend and supplement this guidance in the light of candidate performance.

In January-March 2013 an online training course for the 0408 syllabus is planned, with a primary emphasis on the Coursework Portfolio.

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Paper 0408/02

Unseen

Key Messages

The most successful answers

- select material which focuses on the exact wording of the question and on key areas of the text
- give a sensitive and personal response to imagery, ideas, structure and themes.
- avoid a 'check list' approach to analysis of language and a tendency to write in a narrative or descriptive, rather than an analytical way.

General Comments

Overall the response to this paper was impressive. Candidates showed a lively and responsive engagement with both poetry and prose and the ability to approach an unseen text in both an appropriate and enthusiastic fashion.

There was much evidence that candidates had been carefully prepared for this examination and understood the importance of referring to the language of the text.

The strongest answers, of which there were many, concentrated closely on the wording of the question and organised their essay to respond to the task set. An ability to analyse the effects of language, particularly the connotations of words, combined with a developed overview of the writer's aims and intentions, characterised the most successful responses. There was an impressive awareness of the biblical/classical allusions in the poem *The Horses* and an awareness of how Rajkumar's fascination with the fort in the prose passage was reflected in the imagery used to describe it. Many candidates gave interesting and unexpected interpretations, demonstrating their originality of thought and willingness to engage both intellectually and emotionally with the texts. There were some impressively sophisticated approaches, at ease with metaphorical and symbolic meanings and the effects of the ways in which a text is constructed.

Less successful answers often listed technical terms in their introduction rather than giving a focused response to the question. Candidates who wrote them had, perhaps, not spent sufficient time planning their answer and were therefore unselective in their choice of material. This often meant that the early parts of the text were considered in too much detail, at the expense of more productive key areas later on. There were narrative approaches to the prose passage and some answers which schematised imagery in the poem into 'positive' or 'negative' categories, leading to limitations in analysis. Weaker answers lacked an overview of the text as a whole, missing aspects such as contrast or patterns of imagery. Others made generalised rather than specific comments, such as 'This gives a clear image', without elaboration, or stating that the poet wrote short lines because he had little to say. Some responses were over-literal; for example 'bitten by the teeth of winter' meaning the poet had frostbite. 'Cacophony' and 'caesura' were sometimes used inappropriately and 'lexi' used where 'words' would have been more appropriate. Outright misinterpretation or misreading, however, was very rare – a tribute to the general quality of those taking this first pilot session of the syllabus.

Comments on Specific Questions

Question 1 (Poetry)

(*The Horses* by Pablo Neruda: translated by Stephen Mitchell)

Candidates clearly found the poem fascinating and the responses were varied and interesting. Most candidates managed to comment on the nature of the light at the beginning of the poem, created by the repetition of 'without'. The strongest answers linked the nature of the light to the poet's psychological state and saw how it set up the contrast with the 'fire' of the horses. The simile 'like wet bread' was interpreted as suggesting distaste, an unpleasant texture, snow, soggy or even prison food. Responses to 'vacant arena' were interesting with some seeing this as having war, gladiatorial or sporting connotations and others suggesting it reflects the loneliness, emptiness and isolation of the scene. Response to it as 'boring' was often the mark of a less sensitive answer. 'Bitten by the teeth of winter' likewise proved a discriminator; with detailed answers commenting on the animalistic, brutal nature of the image as opposed to its merely suggesting the weather was cold.

Strong answers were alert to the change of mood and pace on the entry of the horses. Comments were made on the supernatural effect of their appearing through the mist and the impact of words such as 'stepped' and 'surged' in conveying their majesty. A detailed analysis of the imagery of heat and fire, as opposed to the cold of the opening of the poem, was characteristic of strong answers. Surprisingly some candidates did ignore this rather central aspect of the poem. 'Filled the whole world' gave rise to useful comment on the impact the horses made on the poet, the emptiness of the initial scene now being ablaze with light, colour and warmth. One candidate commented interestingly that this was emphasised by the poet looking through a window (a microcosm) which the horses filled in its entirety.

Close attention to the idea of the horses as deities characterised strong responses. The imagery of whiteness in their hooves and the 'dream of salt' suggesting purity were appreciated. There was comment on the impact of the use of 'perfect' to describe them. Several candidates commented on the glittering, healing and preserving quality of salt. One very sensitive response saw the horses' manes being like poured salt glittering as it moves through the air. Strong candidates also distinguished between the impact of the words 'honey, amber and fire', seeing that the terms were incremental in both colour and intensity and that honey denoted sweetness, amber preciousness and fire energy. Some candidates pointed out that the food imagery surrounding the horses contrasted with the barren 'like wet bread' scene of earlier in the poem. 'Worlds and oranges' provoked less comment, though strong answers connected this to 'filled the whole world'. The 'tower' image and 'cut from the stones of pride' were seen as having connotations of strength, self-confidence and indestructibility. Many candidates commented on the hyperbolic nature of the language reflecting the impact of the horses.

The lines 'and behind their transparent eyes / energy raged, like a prisoner' produced varying responses. Some saw the eyes as reflecting the clarity and honesty of the God-like horses, others that the transparency revealed their energy. Some candidates did not see that 'like a prisoner' referred to the energy rather than the horses. Many, however, commented that the simile suggested controlled power and aggression and contributed to the intensity of the poet's experience. Strong candidates looked at 'blood and rhythm' in some detail, saying that 'blood' added colour and represented the life force, whereas 'rhythm' suggested control, animation and movement, contrasting to the vacancy and sterility of the opening scene.

Analysis of the final section of the poem proved to be a good discriminator. The whole idea of the horses making the poet feel reborn is crucial to an overall understanding of the impact the horses made. Many candidates were alert to the spirituality of the ending of the poem. The strongest commented on how the poet could now see again the beauty of the world even in the depths of wintry despair. They supported this with comment on the joy and movement of the lines: '...the fountain, the dance of gold, the sky', contrasting with the lack of light and life before the horses appeared. There was a full appreciation of the life changing nature of the event, supported by comment on the parallelism and contrast of the concluding lines.

Very strong candidates considered the structure of the poem. They commented, for example, on the simple statement of the first line creating anticipation of the horses and on the longer stanzas reflecting their movement and animation. They made perceptive observations on the use of enjambment – for example its use putting emphasis on 'bitten', and caesura – emphasising 'Perfect'. By contrast in less successful answers 'caesura' was used to denote any kind of pause.

One area that could have been considered more fully, perhaps, was the *sound* of the words. Only a few candidates commented, for example, on the soft sounds of 'Suddenly, led by a man, ten horses stepped out into the mist', making the very good point that the sibilants contributed to the aura of mystery surrounding the horse and contrasted strikingly with the hard consonant sounds earlier in the poem.

Question 2 (Prose)

(from *The Glass Palace* by Amitav Ghosh)

The key to success here was for candidates to focus on the question rather than to become distracted by Rajkumar's history, status and search for work in Mandalay. These were relevant to the question but the candidate had to make that connection. Most candidates made effective comments on the characterisation of Rajkumar, on the author's use of imagery and description and the way in which the passage is constructed.

The strongest answers often began by selecting the causeway image of the straight road to the fort contrasting with the surrounding shacks and shanties as the beginning of the boy's fascination. Several perceptively compared the image to Moses parting the Red Sea and connected this to the spiritual qualities of the pagodas visible on the hill beyond the fort and to the fort being 'a miracle to behold'. Many candidates commented interestingly on the geometric pattern of the roads radiating out like the sun.

Quotations which showed the impact on Rajkumar were well selected: '...came to a halt', '...it was dark by the time he remembered why he was there'. Such answers also appreciated how the description of the fort, for example the repetition of ideas of 'immensity' and decoration, reflected the boy's fascination. Perceptive candidates saw that the realism and earthiness of the descriptions of the world outside the fort and of Ma Cho contrasted with the fantasy world of luxury inside the fort. Its inaccessibility and enigmatic purity contributed still further to the boy's fascination with it. The contrast with the poverty of his own living conditions is stark. It is a different world and fires his aspiration to begin a new life.

Observant candidates noted that Rajkumar sets up camp near the fort and that his questioning of Ma Cho shows his fascination developing from the fort's external features to its interior and then on to its inhabitants. Ma Cho's descriptions contribute to Rajkumar's interest. One very strong candidate noted how Ma Cho's tone and mood changed from aggressive and earthy to peaceful and reflective when she spoke of the fort. The imagery of light and massive scale is continued in Ma Cho's speech. Strong candidates connected this to the 'beacon in the moonlight' image at the end of the passage.

Rajkumar's fascination with the maids in the fort went unobserved by some. Others commented on this as reflecting the boy's awakening sexuality and growing up or as indicating a rite of passage. Others, interestingly, saw him identifying with the maids, as they were orphans like him. Some commented on the 'fairy tale' or hyperbolic description of the maids as: 'the most beautiful women in the land' and how this fired Rajkumar's passion to see them. Most candidates commented on the boy's 'shining eyes' and on his growing determination to enter the fort despite the dangers. Strong candidates linked this to the repetition of 'he would' at the end of the passage.

Some less successful answers frustratingly selected relevant material – often supported by a very pertinent quotation – but then did not comment on the material selected. There were some ineffective comments such as ' "He was curious," shows that Rajkumar was curious.' Several candidates wrote too much about the straight roads contrasting with the twisting alleys that Rajkumar was used to and thus did not progress very far into the passage. Sometimes the candidate wrote extensively about the poverty shown in the passage without making the connection between this and Rajkumar's fascination with its opposite. The best answers, however, effectively contrasted the realism of images such as 'wiping her streaming forehead on the sleeve of her sweat-stained aingyi' with the glamour of 'shining crystal walls and mirrored ceilings'.

As with the poetry answers, strong candidates distinguished themselves by close reading, insight and overview, originality of ideas and a full engagement with the text and task.

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Paper 0408/03

Set Text

Key messages

The following are key ingredients for success in this Set Text paper:

- *Relevance to the question.* It is important for candidates to address the key words of the question throughout their answers. A few minutes spent planning an answer will help candidates to stay focused.
- *Developing and sustaining arguments.* Candidates require a detailed knowledge of their texts and should be able to support the points they make by means of apt reference from the text, usually in the form of brief quotations. Without such reference, essays can become a series of unsupported assertions and the approach adopted can become closer to description than analysis.
- *Analysis of the writer's technique.* The strongest answers demonstrate an ability to engage critically with a writer's technique, exploring with confidence use of language, structure and form in shaping meanings. All questions will direct candidates to explore the ways in which writers achieve their effects. Careful evaluation of the precise effects of using particular words will help candidates to reach the top two bands of the marking criteria.

General Comments

In general, the scripts revealed candidates' enjoyment of the texts they had studied for this first pilot session of this syllabus. Textual knowledge was generally strong, and there were many very good scripts in which candidates sustained perceptive analysis, addressing the questions confidently and integrating effectively pertinent reference and precise critical comment. There were very few scripts containing only a superficial understanding of character and themes.

In the majority of scripts time had been managed well, with roughly equal time devoted to each question. In a minority of scripts the second essay was significantly shorter than the first, with some evidence of rushing.

Confident responses started to address the question directly from the start. There were, however, instances of lengthy introductions which made points that were to be repeated later in the essay. Candidates should be reminded they earn no extra credit for repeating points. There were few introductions that wasted time unloading extraneous background information before getting to grips with the question.

The first 'key message' above spells out the importance of answering the question, and the majority of candidates did this. There were a few instances of candidates who started their answer by addressing the question but then digressed into topics that had been perhaps covered in past essays. This was most evident in answers to the Mishima essay question.

There were some excellent responses to passage-based questions, where candidates engaged thoughtfully and sensitively with detail of the extract. Although there is no requirement to be exhaustive, it is important for candidates to make more than the occasional reference to the extract. The strongest discursive essays were good at selecting sufficient relevant material with which to construct a convincing argument. Less successful answers tried to cram in too much material to the detriment of the quality of analysis or lacked the detail necessary for a convincing argument.

The most effective analysis always related the evaluation of a writer's technique to the meanings conveyed. In some scripts, however, technique was treated in isolation, and at times a list of devices and quotation was offered by way of analysis. Often this was accompanied by assertions along the lines of 'This makes the writing tense' or 'This is emotive'. Such essays often put great emphasis on ellipses creating tension and

exclamation marks indicating anger. When making claims of this kind, stronger responses examined specific examples and, more importantly, considered the effects of the words which precede these punctuation marks in conveying a writer's subject-matter.

Comments on Specific Questions

The Sound of Waves was the most popular text, followed in turn by *An Enemy of the People*, *Antigone* and a handful of answers on the passage-based question on *'Master Harold'... and the Boys*. There were no answers on the other texts.

Antigone

Question 1

Strongest responses acknowledged the pivotal nature of this extract for Antigone who had assumed that Polynices was a brother worth dying for and showed how Creon deliberately leads Antigone on in her rose-tinted memories of her brother, only to shatter them. Most candidates wrote convincingly about Antigone's shock at the revelation of his loutish behaviour, and the best answers explored how Anouilh had made this such a powerful moment in the play. Indeed, such answers made it clear that they were responding to a drama text, something intended to be watched rather than 'read' in a 'book'.

Question 7

Nearly all answers were able to convey something of these ordinary, unimaginative men and the contrast they provided with the play's aristocratic figures. Most answers explored in some detail aspects of the humour they provide. Only the strongest responses were able to respond fully to the ways in which the guards 'contribute to the impact of the play', exploring their role as instruments of fate and providers of comic relief, and commenting on the significance of their being the final actors on stage.

'Master Harold'...and the Boys

Question 2

The few answers for this question captured the extract's dramatic impact and how Fugard made this a revealing moment about the nature of the relationship between Hally and Sam. Answers showed an appreciation of the closeness between the two and were able to contrast the way Fugard conveys Hally's earlier embarrassment at the makeshift kite and his later joy at its success. Some responses saw the wider significance of Sam being unable to take time off work and related it to the play's wider themes.

An Enemy of the People

Question 4

Candidates were generally aware of the extract's wider significance in the play and wrote of Dr Stockmann's misplaced optimism at the end of the extract in the view of what happens next in the play. Some candidates took him at his own estimation but others explored his naivety and, at times, arrogance. In general, responses focused on characterisation and themes, and only the strongest considered the dramatic impact of details in the extract, with one candidate exploring the over-the-top nature of some of the stage directions attributed to Dr Stockmann and what they revealed about his character.

Question 10

The strongest answers rose significantly above well-rehearsed character sketches to explore the ways in which Ibsen makes the Mayor such a 'memorable' and 'important' character in the play. Most answers gave a clear account of the self-interest the character represents, with telling examples from the play. Others offered convincing detail from Ibsen's writing which depicted the man's self-importance and his self-righteous tones. Many answers made apposite judgements about the Mayor by comparing his portrayal with that of the Doctor, but this led to digression in some cases, with a consequent loss of focus on the question.

The Sound of Waves

Question 6

This produced some very good answers demonstrating a sustained engagement with the question and with the detail of the extract. The emptiness, silence, contrast between light and dark, the fleeting dialogue and the widow's final powerful words were explored persuasively. Most candidates were able to see the extract's significance within the wider novel: the visit of this poor widow is a courageous one, though costly in emotional terms. Less successful responses focused excessively on Mishima's use of ellipses and exclamation marks; sometimes it was simply asserted in general terms that these created tension. Stronger responses explored the effects of particular words used to create tension in the extract.

Question 12

Successful responses were significantly better than character sketches. Some regarded Chiyoko as wholly self-absorbed and others regarded her as wholly pitiable. Yet others adopted a more balanced approach. Candidates' personal responses were rewarded so long as they were informed by apposite textual support. Quite a few candidates tried to introduce wider themes of the city/island and civilisation/nature and found it difficult to remain focused on the actual question. Sometimes candidates thought it sufficient to assert that Chiyoko represented Mishima's view of the corrupt city without textual support and without an attempt to make it relevant to the question's key word 'sympathy'.