



Cambridge Assessment
International Education

Example Candidate Responses – Paper 1

Cambridge IGCSE™ / IGCSE (9–1)

Literature in English 0475 / 0992

Cambridge O Level
Literature in English 2010

For examination from 2023



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Introduction

The main aim of this booklet is to exemplify standards for those teaching Cambridge IGCSE / IGCSE (9–1) / O Level Literature in English, and to show how different levels of candidates' performance (high, middle and low) relate to the syllabus requirements. This document helps teachers to assess the standard required to achieve marks beyond the guidance of the mark scheme.

In this booklet candidate responses have been chosen from the June 2023 exam series to exemplify a range of answers for a selection of questions from Section A: Poetry, Questions 1, 2 and 4, and Section B: Prose, Questions 7, 11 and 21.

For each question, the response is annotated with examiner comments about where and why marks were awarded or omitted. This is followed by comments on how the answer could be improved. There is also a list of common mistakes and guidance for candidates.

Please refer to the June 2023 Examiner Report for further details and guidance.

The questions and mark schemes are available on the [School Support Hub](#)

[0475 / 0992 June 2023 Question Paper 12](#)

[0475 / 0992 June 2023 Mark Scheme 12](#)

[2010 June 2023 Question Paper 1](#)

[2010 June 2023 Question Paper 1](#)

Past exam resources and other teaching and learning resources are available on the [School Support Hub](#)

How to use this booklet

This booklet goes through the paper one question at a time, showing you the high-, middle- or low level response for each question. In the left-hand column are the candidate responses, and in the right-hand column are the examiner comments.

| Example Candidate Response – middle | Examiner comments |
|--|---|
| <p>21 "A Thousand Years of Good Prayers" is a short story written by Yiyun Li which revolves around a former rocket scientist, trying to repair his relationship with his daughter. The story features themes of intergenerational differences and the difficulties of father-daughter relations. Li vividly portrays Mr. Shi's unhappiness at this moment in the story by Mr. Shi feeling like a burden and his own jealousy of Madam's attitude to life. Lastly, it can be seen by Mr. Shi's daughter lack of understanding ^{appreciation towards} of her father.</p> <p>Further, Mr. Shi's unhappiness can be seen</p> | <p>1 This reference to the father being a rocket scientist needs to be seen in the context of what the story reveals about this and what is not revealed in this extract. This reinforces the need for a detailed knowledge of the whole text (in this case a short story) and not just the extract in the question.</p> <p>2 There are three valid reasons given here for Mr Shi's unhappiness, which are then</p> |

Answers are by real candidates in exam conditions. These show you the types of answers for each level. Discuss and analyse the answers with learners in the classroom to improve their skills.

Examiner comments are alongside the answers. These explain where and why marks were awarded. This helps you to interpret the standard of Cambridge exams so you can help your learners to refine their exam technique.

How the candidate could improve their answer

- Some points could have been further developed, for example, the idea in the final sentence that the father-daughter relationship might have been 'beyond repair'. Textual evidence from within and outside the extract would have helped to support this assertion.
- Mr Shi's reference to his job as a rocket scientist in the candidate might have referred to the fuller explanation of a rocket scientist for only three out of his thirty-eight years of work.

This section explains how the candidate could have improved each answer. This helps you to interpret the standards of Cambridge exams and helps your learners to refine their exam technique.

Common mistakes and guidance (Section B: Prose)

- Beginning answers with a random list of themes without addressing the actual key words of the question.
- Re-telling the story and writing simple explanations rather than analysing the text.
- Showing knowledge but not answering the question.
- Writing assertions without providing specific supporting evidence.
- Making basic comments on individual words without connecting them to the text.

This section lists common mistakes as well as helpful guidance from the examiner. This will help your learners to avoid these mistakes. You can use this alongside the relevant Examiner Report to guide your learners.

Question 1

Example Candidate Response – low

Examiner comments

| | |
|--------------|---|
| | Section A: Poetry |
| 1. | 'Rain' by Edward Thomas |
| | Rain The poem 'Rain' by Edward Thomas monologue monologue |
| | monologue 'Rain' by Edward Thomas is a monologue ^{poem} where the narrator is trapped in a tempest, both figurative literal metaphorically and figuratively. Through th an array of linguistic devices, the writer tapers into ¹ a monologue about life and death itself. |
| ² | For example, the writer uses the line 'Nothing but wild rain' as a metaphor to convey how ^{everything} in the world is tempers will come and go and how at the end eventually, nothing will matter. He the further expounds on this topic with the phrase 'And me remembering that I shall die' This highlights that the future is so inevitable ⁴ and that the death sneaks up on you so quick that for the rest of the world, time stops. the rest of the world |
| ³ | |
| | Furthermore, the writer uses symbolism to expound on the writer's own perception of himself. He believes that rain washes himself off away all his past sins and presents him with a clean slate - which could perhaps be a |

¹ The response begins with an awareness of the tempest as a metaphor as well as a literal storm (though the candidate actually writes 'metaphorically and figuratively'). There is also a recognition in general terms that the poem is 'a monologue about life and death'.

² This quotation is followed by a comment that does not really explain the quotation.

³ This comment is too general.

⁴ The quotation here ('... remembering I shall die') does match the valid comment about the future being inevitable.

Example Candidate Response – low, continued

Examiner comments

| | |
|---|---|
| 5 | <p>symbol for being baptised with holy water. He also further moves onto say about the 'Blessed are the dead' which makes the readers think that the poet has had his time and perhaps wants to be on the other side now.</p> |
| 6 | <p>The phrase 'cannot, the tempest tells me, disappoint' conveys his thoughts on how his mind pressures him to not let himself down. This pressure builds up to then burst out, leaving him in shambles.</p> |
| 7 | <p>Lastly, he uses imagery to also highlight the peace rain gives him. He states how he lies 'listening' to the rain - which is an example of auditory imagery.</p> |

8

5 There is some understanding of the symbolism of baptism, the rain washing away his past sins, though the point is not fully developed.

6 There is a little direct reference to the poet's use of language in the quotation 'Blessed are the dead', though the comment could be further developed.

7 Textual evidence is required to support what the candidate means by the assertions about 'his mind pressures him to not let himself down' and 'leaving him in shambles'.

8 Overall, there is some understanding of the poem and there is some supporting textual detail. This begins to develop a response to the poem, though a closer focus on the question is needed.

**Total mark awarded =
11 out of 25**

How the candidate could improve their answer

- The candidate needed to make sure that the comments and quotations were always clearly linked. For example, the explanation of the quotation 'Nothing but wild rain' needed to reflect more clearly its meaning in the poem.
- Several points were overly assertive and needed to be developed further, with careful reference used for support. For example, in the final paragraph, the comment about 'imagery [highlighting] the peace the rain gives him' needed a supporting example from the poem.
- Although the response showed some understanding of the poem, there needed to be a closer focus on the key word of the question 'moving'.

Question 2

Example Candidate Response – middle

Examiner comments

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 2 | 4 | <p>In the poem, the Hanners, written by Boey Kin cheng, a very disturbing image of a city is being described, through the use themes, language and structure. 1</p> <p>To start with, cheng describes the city as perfectly built, to a point where it is almost disturbing. In the first stanza, there is lexical field of mathematics: "permutations", "alignments", "gridded", "mathematics". The use of this semantic field, describes a city which was carefully and precisely built using complex equations and building techniques, therefore holding no flaws. 3 This gives a first impression of perfection to the reader which is also present in the poem's structure, as it is composed of three stanzas (blocks) which each contain a number of lines 4 which are mostly the same length (building). This reflects the words "gridded" and alignment previously used in the first stanza. Then, the poem instals a theme of innovation throughout the first stanza, which is felt through the words: "possibilities", "desired", "grace". This gives a sense that this city has a purpose and that it was built for good reasons. This may seem disturbing to the reader, as they are wondering why this perfect city needs so much attention and importance. 5</p> <p>Moreover, the poet does not only this describe city as perfect. In fact, as the</p> |
|---|---|---|

1 This response starts with a focus on the key word 'disturbing'.

2 The candidate gives an interesting personal response that the city is disturbing because it is too perfect.

3 There is reference to language drawn from the field of mathematics, followed by a comment on a city that is 'precisely built' and 'holding no flaws'. This shows a clear understanding of the poem's deeper implications.

4 This sentence on the poem's structure is less convincing. A glance at the poem's layout on the page shows they are actually not 'mostly the same length'. The candidate here appears to be forcing an interpretation that is not justified by the evidence of the text.

5 The focus on the question is clear. However, commenting separately on the individual words quoted ('possibilities', 'desired', 'grace') would have helped to develop the candidate's ideas more effectively.

Example Candidate Response – middle, continued

Examiner comments

the reader reads on, they are left with a flawed city. To start with, the first stanza ends with "Even the sea draws back and the skies surrender". This implies that the city is so big and so tall that it is at war with nature. It is pushing the elements back as seen with the words "draw back" and is keeping all the space to itself, forcing the skies to submit themselves to the city as seen with the word "surrender". It is banishing what was once the only things present on Earth. Furthermore, a theme of "flaw" is present from the second stanza onwards. This theme can be represented with the ~~best~~ field words: "useless", "hurt", "stain" and "blemishes" which create a lexical field. This is put in contrast with the perfect portrayal of the city which disturbs the reader as they realise now cities, when looked in more detail, are not what it seems. They seem, they are compromising the people's future and are full of imperfect traits.

6 In this part of the response, the candidate develops points effectively by considering the precise effects of the words 'draw back' and 'surrender' as they are used in the poem. This is developed and gives precise analysis.

7 Here, there is another list that the candidate writes, 'creates a lexical field'. A more successful approach might have been to explore more closely individual words in the context they are used in the poem. For example, why 'blemishes of the past' in line 11? Why 'so it will not hurt' in line 19?

8 The judgement that cities are 'compromising the people's future' is an interesting one but it needs further development and support.

9 The word 'humans' is too general. 'They' refers to the planners.

Lastly, the poet ~~shows~~ describes the human's control over the city, which is creating these flaws. Firstly in the first stanza, the poet wrote: "They build and will not stop." This shows that humans will always keep on building, there is no way to stop them, they are undefeated and therefore create these wars with nature. Building is their only purpose even though it is what creates these imperfections. Then, the poet wrote "the country wears perfect rows of shining teeth". The personification of the country shows

Example Candidate Response – middle, continued

Examiner comments

10 it is not only the planners' fault. The countries building new cities are fooling the public with "shining teeth" pretending everything is going according to plan even though many imperfections are actually present. This creates disturbance for the reader as they realise how wrong they have been and ~~they they should~~ that most of the problems happening in cities are due to them. Lastly the use of the semantic field of ~~cases~~ medicine: "anaesthesia" 11 "amnesia", "hypnosis", ~~also~~ implies to the reader that the past's authenticity is being hidden in the new futuristic cities. Men are building brand new infrastructures and here for the people ~~to~~ forget ("amnesia") what a beautiful city truly looks like. 12

10 The comment on personification in 'shining teeth' is an apt one that the candidate links to the key word in the question 'disturbing'.

11 The comment on the impact of the individual word 'amnesia' is more persuasive to a reader than the earlier simple listing of words in a 'semantic field'.

12 Overall, this response shows a clear understanding of the poem's deeper implications, supported by relevant references.

Total mark awarded = 18 out of 25

Question 4

Example Candidate Response – high

Examiner comments

| | |
|---|---|
| 4 | <p>A.R.D Fairburn's 'Rhyme of the Dead Self' describes how an unknown speaker trying to get rid of his past younger self. The point is relatable to the reader, as it discusses themes that are present in everyone's lives - Maturity and growing older. 1 However, A.R.D Fairburn uses opinic ing words and strong language to convey this message in a memore memorable way.</p> <p>The first way A.R.D Fairburn makes 'Rhyme of the Dead Self' memorable is the title. 'Rhyme' 2 can usually be related to something nice, or childish, like Nursery Rhymes a child may sing. However 'Dead Self' takes this into a more morbid tone that makes the reader really question the nature of the poem. The title also gives at some foreshadowing about the extant world content of the poem. 3</p> <p>'Rhyme of the Dead Self' is structured into 3 stanzas, that each tell a part of the way that A.R.D Fairburn killed, or rather, slaughtered his younger self in such a cruel way. The structure and rhyming pattern (ABAB) of each stanza, especially the rhyme scheme, makes it easy for the reader to read because it has some sort of a melodic quality to it. Each stanza is an enjambment (run-on line) of just one stanza, which makes the poem more memorable because it is like the speaker's angry rambling about his younger self. The point of view also makes this poem memorable because it is first person, 4 so the reader can really see and understand</p> |
|---|---|

1 The opening paragraph states what the poem is about and mentions relevant themes of maturity and growing older.

2 Both at the end of the first paragraph and the beginning of the second, the candidate refers directly to the key word of the question 'memorable'.

3 The candidate effectively explores the use of language in the poem's title and comments on the contrast between the use of the word 'Rhyme' (something a child may sing) and the more morbid tone of the rest of the title.

4 The comments on the rhyming pattern and enjambment are general in nature, referring to 'melodic quality' and 'angry rambling'. Specific examples after each comment would have improved the answer.

Example Candidate Response – high, continued

Examiner comments

| | |
|---|---|
| 4 | <p>the anger and hatred of the speaker really poured out in their actions.</p> |
| 5 | <p>Next, A.R.D Fairburn uses striking visual imagery to paint gory images in the reader's head that aren't forgettable. In stanza 1 he uses the or powerful verbs to describe his actions - "strangled"; "choked" "catching him". All of these words actions portray intense anger at his younger self and it paints a very graphic image in the reader's mind. "Catching him" basically makes it seem as if the speaker is capturing a creature with no mercy and creating an evil tone. The poem is also memorable, as it seems as if the speaker is killing his younger self for no reason as the first stanza describes the younger self as - "pale and lily-white lad" and "he lay a-dreaming in his bed". The words 'lily-white' symbolise innocence ^{and purity}, which makes sense he can refer to childish innocence and points this makes the poem more memorable. This is because the younger self was seen as a pure innocent child and the speaker is brutally murdering him, causing confusion.</p> |
| 6 | <p>Stanza 2 makes it more memorable as the poet persona, A.R.D Fairburn, makes the speaker all the more villainous because it seems like he enjoys brutally slaughtering his younger self - "chucking I dragged out his foolish brains..." In the first stanza, A.R.D Fairburn also makes a visual reference to the speaker being a villain using imagery - "my hands these claws". "Claws" are traits usually seen in animals, so A.R.D</p> |

5 This paragraph contrasts with the previous one, as specific examples of 'graphic images' are given in the short direct quotations from the poem which 'portray intense anger at this younger self'. The comment on the word 'catching' is particularly perceptive.

6 In the second half of this paragraph, the candidate continues to address the key word 'memorable' in analysing ways in which the poet uses language to create specific effects: e.g. the comment on the symbolism of describing his younger self as 'lily-white'.

7 There is detailed exploration here of the language the poet uses to create memorable impressions of the speaker as a murderous villain.

Example Candidate Response – high, continued

Examiner comments

| | |
|---|--|
| 4 | <p>Fairbairn is describing the speaker as one with animalistic qualities which makes sense because the is memorable, as the speaker is acting very animalistic. It's in stanza 2, the theme of maturity is shown although APD Fairbairn describes it in a very gory and graphic way that makes it memorable. "Foolish brains... full of pretty love-tales" heighten the "heighten the holly... dreams of love, oh what ruinous folly" all describe that the younger self possibly had a very naïve outlook on life - "pretty love-tales" but a much older and wiser speaker realises that life is not all that idyllic - "oh what ruinous folly". The younger self also had ideas and dreams about the future, that may have been crushed by the harsh realities of life - "dreams of love". This makes the poem memorable as the reader can understand all the pain and anger the poet persona has conveyed because at a point in life, something could happen that makes you wake up to life's harsh realities'. This hidden truth is presented with tones of harsh emotions and a tone of anger, but hidden pain, so the reader stops and realises the harsh truth present, making the poem memorable.</p> <p>Stanza 3 takes on a more somber tone than the climatic ones of stanzas 1 and 2 because the the younger self has been killed, what makes this memorable is that the poet persona has finally grown up and is now a mature adult but the reader still has a sense of sadness ^{sadness} underneath all the satisfaction</p> |
|---|--|

8 Well-selected references support a clear critical understanding of the contrast at the heart of the poem: the naive younger self with the older and wiser self.

9 The candidate sustains a personal and evaluative engagement with the detail of the poem, leading to their comment about 'wak[ing] up to life's harsh realities'.

10 In this paragraph, the candidate writes about 'somber tone' and 'a sense of sadness'. Other candidates detected a more humorous tone in the poet's use of exaggerated language: e.g. 'chuckling I dragged out his foolish brains'. Some observed that the tone was 'darkly comic'.

Example Candidate Response – high, continued

Examiner comments

| | |
|---|---|
| 4 | <p>they are supposed to feel. ARD Fairburn uses a Biblical allusion - "he shall not rise on the third day..." to at conclude that his past self is truly gone and there's no chance of it coming back again. He uses a simile - "sloughed like a snakeskin there he lies" so the the reader can see the tragedy of it all, that makes this memorable that the body was flung like a discarded snake skin, showing how dead he really is. What what makes this memorable though, is how the past self was seen as a hindrance - not "he shall not trouble me to again" like a snakeskin. Snakes shed dead skin because they become unbearable and ARD Fairburn alluded to that. Just as a snakeskin's shedding makes the snake feel more at ease, the killing of his dead young self 11</p> <p>ARD Fairburn makes his poem memorable by appealing to something all readers can relate to which is growing up to become more mature. However, the speaker seems to have an intense hatred for his younger self, which then causes causes strong emotive language and graphic images to be created all making this poem unforgettable. Innocence caused the death of the younger self because the speaker had seen too much in the world that tried took advantage of his innocence so he made sure to crush it, so it never comes out 12</p> <p>again. 13</p> |
|---|---|

11 This paragraph contains a detailed exploration of the effects created by using the simile 'sloughed like a snakeskin': the candidate comments on what they see as a memorable idea of 'how the past self was seen as a hindrance'.

12 This is a lengthy concluding paragraph that sums up the candidate's response. It might have benefited from being more concise as some points are repeated from earlier parts of the response. This wastes time; it is better to move quickly to the next question.

13 Overall, this response sustains a critical understanding of the poem and a personal engagement with the poem and question.

**Total mark awarded =
23 out of 25**

How the candidate could improve their answer

- The candidate might have provided specific examples on rhyme and enjambment to support their comments in paragraph three. They could have developed their judgement about the 'melodic quality' and related it to the ideas in the poem. Similarly, they might have made clearer the link between the use of enjambment and what they described as the speaker's 'angry rambling'. Specific examples would have improved the answer.
- The final paragraph could be more concise. There is no need to re-state points made in the body of the answer.

Common mistakes and guidance (Section A: Poetry)

- Writing lengthy introductions, including irrelevant background material about the poet, instead of focusing on the question.
- Showing knowledge of a poem, sometimes detailed knowledge, without linking the comments to the key words of the question.
- Making assertions about the poem rather than supporting points with evidence from the text.
- Listing quotations in lexical or semantic fields rather than exploring closely the effects the poet creates by their use of specific words and phrases.
- Copying out excessively lengthy quotations without exploring effects of particular words and phrases.
- Listing devices used in a poem without exploring effects.
- Looking at the meanings of individual words in general terms rather than considering how they are actually used in the context of the poem.
- Describing rhyme patterns without providing specific examples of how they contribute to the poet's use of structure and form.
- Wasting time by writing sometimes lengthy conclusions which simply repeat points already made.

Question 7

Example Candidate Response – low

Examiner comments

| Question | Part | |
|----------|------|--|
| 7 | | <p>In this passage, Chimamanda ^{conveys} gives feelings of sadness, pain and regrets, as Kambili and her family figures out a tragic loss. Chimamanda uses diction, metaphors and adjectives to give the reader a perspective of the passage. 1</p> <p>As the passage begins, Adichie starts with the quote 'when the phone rang that evening' which this shows a build up of tension in the beginning of the passage as Adichie addresses to a specific time. This shows how the mood begins to change as the passage continues. 2</p> <p>Adichie portrays a feeling of fear. Adichie used the quote 'silently absorbed' which this shows fear. 4 The word 'silently' shows the reader as something strange or unusual is to happen, giving the reader with curiosity on what is to happen next.</p> <p>As the passage continues Adichie conveys the feeling of pain as Auntie Ifeoma and Kambili receive a tragic news. 5 The change in language from Auntie Ifeoma as Adichie uses diction, conveys sadness and shock as they make 6</p> |

- 1 There is a general awareness of sadness, pain and tragic loss, though this is not developed.
- 2 This comment is too general to be useful in answering the question.
- 3 This paragraph shows a straightforward awareness that the phone call changes the mood. There is mention of a 'build-up of tension' though this is not developed.
- 4 This is a misreading. The word 'silently' does not refer to fear but rather to the characters' quiet concentration on the game of cards.
- 5 The candidate recognises the pain felt by Auntie Ifeoma and Kambili on receiving the tragic news, though does not say what the news is.
- 6 This assertion about Ifeoma's 'sadness and shock' is not supported by reference to the detail of the extract.

Example Candidate Response – low, continued

Examiner comments

the passage, included with more tension.

Adichie uses the quote 'My hand shook so much' as Adichie portrays a feeling of fear **7** conveying tension to the reader as the passage continues. **8**

7 There is a straightforward comment on Kambili's fear with a little reference provided in the quotation before the comment.

8 Overall, there are a few signs of understanding surface meanings, together with a little reference to the extract.

**Total mark awarded =
7 out of 25**

How the candidate could improve their answer

- The candidate could have developed points in greater detail: for example, by:
 - referring to what the sad news over the phone is
 - explaining the mood change in more detail.
- The candidate needed to read the extract more carefully to show understanding of events. The word 'silently' describes the way the characters are concentrating on their card game when the phone rang.
- Diction, metaphors and adjectives were mentioned in the first paragraph. The candidate might have provided specific examples, showing how they help Adichie to make the extract such a dramatic moment in the novel.

Question 11

Example Candidate Response – high

Examiner comments

1.1 In the book "Rebecca" written by Daphne Du Maurier we see a powerful passage which is when the main character has dressed up on Mrs Danvers' advice and goes down to meet everyone but contrary to her ^{happy} expectations they all look petrified. This pos moment of the story is powerful because of the characters' change of feelings as well as Mr Maxim de Winter's unusual reaction which shows Rebecca's lasting effect on him and finally the way we are revealed that Mrs Danvers was a very big villain.

The contrast between the ^{feeling of the main character at the} beginning and end of this passage creates a powerful moment. We first see that the main character is very happy and excited since we are told she was "smiling" and that she "waited for the clapping and laughter". This shows that she was very happy and expected a lot since as she went down she "waited" to know certain she is they are going to be excited by her dress since she thought she only needed to wait for it to happen. But at the end of the passage her feelings have completely changed since ^{she says that} "tears blinded my eyes" ~~she is~~ ^{she is} crying so much that they are blocking her vision. This contrast between her happy and excited emotions at the beginning of passage versus ~~she is~~ ^{she is} very sad emotion ~~at the end~~ ^{at the end} shows how ~~she is~~ ^{she is} distressed she was by what happened which is what makes this passage powerful.

1 The opening paragraph shows knowledge of the extract's context within the novel as a whole. Part of this moment's power comes from what we know happens both before and after the printed extract.

2 The candidate sets out their agenda concisely for the rest of their answer. Three examples are given of what makes this moment 'powerful' (a key word of the question).

3 There is a clear understanding of the narrator's situation at the beginning of the extract, with well-selected supporting reference. There is some slight repetition about her being happy; this might have been avoided.

4 There is a clear critical understanding of the shift from the mood at the start of the extract to the completely changed mood at the end. Further developed, with reference to others described in the extract.

Example Candidate Response – high, continued

Examiner comments

she is for a villain since devils are considered to be evil creatures. Her big revealed as the villain behind this set up with the dress shows makes her more powerful since ~~it makes it~~ shows how evil Mrs Danvers is and how close to Rebecca she was since she goes and gets her very happy in someone else's pain. 8 9

To conclude this is a powerful moment in the story since we see how strongly it impacts the main characters and Maxim as well as revealing Mrs Danvers' true character. This passage is made powerful in this way to show Rebecca's lasting impact on the people in this house. 10

11

8 This point has already been made earlier in the paragraph; there is no merit in repeating the point.

9 The closeness of Mrs Danvers to Rebecca plays a significant role in the novel. This point could have been developed in more detail, with supporting evidence from the text.

10 The final comment on 'Rebecca's lasting impact' on others might have been further developed, with reference to others described in the extract.

11 On the whole, this is a perceptive personal response, generally supported by well-selected references, and focused on the question's key word 'powerful'.

**Total mark awarded =
21 out of 25**

How the candidate could improve their answer

- There might have been more careful editing, by using concise expression and avoiding repeated points. This would have created time to develop ideas in greater detail, for example, about the shift in mood outlined in the response's second paragraph.
- Despite this being a generally convincing and perceptive response to the question, some points might have been further developed, with supporting reference from the text: for example, the reason behind Maxim's intense anger.
- The significance of Mrs Danvers' closeness to Rebecca is mentioned, and this was an idea worth pursuing. Related to this was the candidate's final comment on the lasting impact of Rebecca on others. The reaction of Beatrice, Maxim's sister, in lines 6–7 might have been explored, together with the general reaction: 'Why did they all stand like dummies, like people in a trance?'

Question 21

Example Candidate Response – middle

Examiner comments

21 "A Thousand Years of Good Prayers" is a short story written by Yiyun Li which revolves around a former rocket scientist, trying to repair his relationship with his daughter. The story features themes of intergenerational differences and the difficulties of father-daughter relations. Li vividly portrays Mr. Shi's unhappiness at this moment in the story by Mr. Shi feeling like a burden and his ~~own~~ jealousy of Madam's attitude to life. Lastly, it can be seen by Mr. Shi's daughter lack of ~~understanding~~ ^{appreciation towards} of her father. 1

Firstly, Mr. Shi's unhappiness can be seen through his worry of being a burden. When to Madam about his daughter, he wonders

1 This reference to the father being a rocket scientist needs to be seen in the context of what the story reveals about this and what is not revealed in this extract. This reinforces the need for a detailed knowledge of the whole text (in this case a short story) and not just the extract in the question.

2 There are three valid reasons given here for Mr Shi's unhappiness, which are then explored in the remainder of the answer.

"she must be thinking I'm a nuisance". The use of the word "must" reveals that Mr. Shi in fact does not know that is the way his daughter thinks of him, however that is what he assumes. Later on, he "does not want to burden (Madam) with his petty unhappiness". Mr. Shi describes his "unhappiness" as "petty" which could suggest that showing his emotions can be considered negative. The reader is allowed to feel pity for Mr. Shi as "never ~~is~~ wants to be a burden or an inconvenience to anyone, even if he is struggling. 3

3 This paragraph offers a reasonably developed personal response to the question, showing understanding of the character and his not wanting to burden Madam with his 'petty' unhappiness. Although there is some supporting use of the text, the word 'petty' could have been explored more closely.

Example Candidate Response – middle, continued

Examiner comments

Secondly, Mr. Shi's unhappiness can be portrayed by his envy for Madam. When talking to Madam, Mr. Shi confesses to himself that he "almost envies her for the energy^{his} daughter (...) does not possess." It can be seen that Mr. Shi is unhappy due to his not having the kind of attitude he appreciates. He almost wishes that his daughter would be more cheerful and have more energy, just like Madam. The reader can sympathize with Mr. Shi because of how he wishes his daughter was happier and ~~was~~ more excited about life. It proves that no matter what he says, she is always important to her.

Lastly, Mr. Shi can be viewed as unhappy because ~~he~~ of his daughter's underappreciation towards him. He explains that "she doesn't understand this" even though they "were trained not to talk." Mr. Shi expresses that

it was not his wish to not communicate with his daughter but she refuses to acknowledge it. He also confesses that "he's traveled half ~~the~~ a world to his daughter" to make up for his mistakes but she was "uninterested in his words." Mr. Shi's unhappiness can be portrayed by the lack of interest and appreciation shown him by his daughter. The expression "half a world" is meant to illustrate the measures Mr. Shi went through to talk to his daughter to the reader and show he has not given up ~~on~~ on their relationship yet. The reader is invited to empathize with Mr. Shi because of his attempts to bond with his now-adult daughter, even though she showed no interest. Mr. Shi is unhappy because he is slowly starting to realize that their relationship might be beyond repair.

4 There is understanding that Mr Shi wishes his daughter had more of the energy shown by Madam. A suitable quotation is followed by relevant comment on how the reader can 'sympathise' with him.

5 This quotation is not clearly explained. The candidate might have pointed to its position in the story, to who 'they' are and to the actual detail the story provides about the truth of Mr Shi's employment.

6 The candidate explains the lack of appreciation the daughter shows towards the father and how this adds to his unhappiness.

7 There is some response to the writer's use of language in the comment about Mr Shi travelling 'half a world'.

8 This is a reasonable judgement based on the evidence, though the point might have been developed further and supported more precisely with specific evidence from the text.

9 Overall, the candidate shows understanding of some deeper implications about the unhappy relationship between father and daughter. There is a fairly reasonably developed personal response to the question, with textual evidence provided.

**Total mark awarded =
15 out of 25**

How the candidate could improve their answer

- Some points could have been further developed, for example, the idea in the final sentence that the father-daughter relationship might have been ‘beyond repair’. Textual evidence from within and outside the extract would have helped to support this assertion.
- Mr Shi’s reference to his job as a rocket scientist in the extract was taken at face value in the response. The candidate might have referred to the fuller explanation of why Mr Shi deceived himself about this (being a rocket scientist for only three out of his thirty-eight years of work), and how this contributed to his unhappiness.
- There was some response to language, though effects created could have been explored more closely; for example, what did the candidate mean by the comment on the word ‘petty’ suggesting ‘his emotions could be considered negative’?

Common mistakes and guidance (Section B: Prose)

- Beginning answers with a random list of themes without addressing the actual key words of the question.
- Re-telling the story and writing simple explanations rather than analysing the text.
- Showing knowledge but not answering the question.
- Writing assertions without providing specific supporting references from the text.
- Making basic comments on individual words without considering how words and phrases are used in the context of the text.
- Not paying sufficient attention to a writer’s use of structure and form (for example, the use of narrative viewpoint).
- Treating characters as real-life people rather than fictional ‘constructs’ created by the writer.
- Not learning enough direct quotations to support responses to general essay questions on key characters and themes.

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