

LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

Paper 9695/11
Drama and Poetry

Key messages

- Option **(a)** discursive essays should analyse specific details of the text within the argument presented.
- Option **(b)** passage questions may usefully place the passage in the wider text as a relevant context.

General comments

The general standard was satisfactory with the large majority of candidates showing at least a sound knowledge of the set texts. There were some rubric errors in this session with candidates not understanding the optionality on the paper. Very few responses showed evidence of mismanagement of time in this session. The quality of expression was sound in nearly every case, although there are still some candidates with expressive weaknesses which can impede communication at this level.

There were responses to nearly all the texts on the paper and answers reflecting a wide range of performance were seen on each of the texts attempted by the candidates.

There are two specific issues to be addressed in this session:

Assessment Objective 2 from the Literature in English syllabus states that candidates should ‘analyse ways in which writers’ choices of language, form and structure shape meanings and effects’. Candidates attempting option **(b)** passage questions often showed evidence of meeting this Assessment Objective in their responses to the given passage. However, candidates attempting option **(a)** questions, the discursive essay, also need to provide evidence that they are able to do this, by quoting or referring closely to specific moments in the text. They should then discuss these references in detail, focusing on the writer’s choices and exploring what for the candidate are the effects of those choices.

Candidates responding to option **(b)** passage questions, who briefly place the passage within the wider work it is selected from, often write more focused and relevant answers. Some candidates could benefit from considering this approach, as it will give a context to their interpretation of the passage itself, as well as providing evidence of knowledge of the text. This equally applies to passages from poetry selections as well as the drama texts on paper 1.

Comments on specific questions

Section A

Question 1 ARTHUR MILLER: *All My Sons*

- (a)** Nearly every candidate was able to select relevant material with which to address the task, often focusing on Joe, with weaker answers tending to retell Joe’s story, often in great detail. Better answers at this level saw Chris as having contrasting attitudes to his father, with ‘Joe thoroughly corrupted by the value he places on his family’s wealth’ and ‘Chris suffering from survivor’s guilt, from the war and the court case’. The ability to select relevant narrative and shape it to the specific question was an important factor in the overall success of weaker responses. Better answers at this level considered the other characters and their interactions, sometimes suggesting an appreciation of Miller’s dramatic choices. More competent responses were able to range more widely in the text to support their ideas, often bringing in the Baylisses as having contrasting attitudes, similar to Joe and Chris, ‘where materialism clashes with idealism’, as one suggested. Others saw Miller’s concerns as critical: ‘Miller presents wealth as a motivator for the likes of Joe

and Sue but also a cause of conflict and family tensions', as one suggested. Better answers at this level often supported their ideas with direct reference to or quotation from the text. Good answers paid attention to the wording of the question and focused on 'Miller's presentation', with clear and detailed analysis of how he uses dramatic techniques, such as contrast, irony and staging to present his concerns, 'about wealth and thereby the American Dream and its poisonous effect on family values', as one put it. Very good answers were also able to embed contextual references to the social concerns in post-war America, often illuminating their arguments perceptively, seeing the play as 'Miller's critique of the American Dream, tying together dramatically wealth and family, in a series of conflicts and deceptions'.

- (b) In response to this question many candidates were able to place the passage into the context of the wider text, with nearly all answers showing at least some knowledge and understanding of the significance of the passage. There were however some very weak responses which struggled with some of basic knowledge: the relationship between Ann and Kate, the situation with Larry and his relationship to both women and the role and situation of Chris were common causes of confusion and suggested a lack of knowledge of the text. Answers in the lower levels tended either to paraphrase the dialogue or to give a more general summary of the play's action and its characters to this point, with some able to chart the changing tone and tension within the passage: 'the conversation moving from light and playful (gossip) to the conflicted and tense (trembling)', as one suggested. Others saw the nuances of the relationship, how 'Kate makes a sly point about Ann's mother waiting for Steve, to encourage Ann to do the same for Larry out of guilt'. Better answers at this level kept the question firmly in mind and were able to focus on the presentation of the women. Analysis at this level often consisted of comparing and contrasting the words and actions of the women, with better answers, for example, exploring some of the effects of Miller's stage directions. More successful answers focused on Miller's dramatic methods throughout – the effects of the very specific stage directions ('going upstage' and 'delicately' for example). Good answers were illuminated by precise contextualisation, often identifying who knows what at this stage – 'Kate's hiding of the truth about Joe and Ann similarly protective of Larry's reputation', as one put it. Very good answers developed such interpretations further, for example, 'there is a kind of reverse dramatic irony at work here, where Ann knows the truth about Larry, because of the letter, when the audience and all the other characters do not', was one such development. Others had detailed analysis of the language, 'how the dashes show they are growing further apart', for example. There was also consideration of the symbolic significance of Chris on stage, 'his presence serving to heighten the divide between the two women', as one put it. Those who could blend their contextual points with a grasp of the dramatic methods in their interpretations of the relationship often did very well.

Question 2 WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE: *Much Ado About Nothing*

- (a) Most responses were able to select relevant material with which to address the task. Weaker answers often retold Hero's story, sometimes in great detail, with better answers at this level seeing contrasts with Beatrice's reputation and how that changes through the play, 'though they both end up married to the right man', as one noted. More competent answers considered Shakespeare's presentation, often seen as dramatic contrasts between pairs of characters: Hero and Margaret or Benedick and Beatrice or more subtly Don John and Don Pedro. Better answers developed such contrasts by reference to the text and especially exploring the language through which, for example, Don Pedro's reputation of being honourable is set against Don John's malice. Good answers linked reputation to the idea of 'noting' and the various puns on that word throughout the play. Some saw the entire structure of the play as a series of reputations lost, from Hero's purity to Beatrice's shrewishness through more thematic losses such as 'love as a genuine human emotion becoming a mere comic manipulation', as one put it. Very good answers considered the dramatic language with which such ideas were presented, the use of 'characters talking about each other both sincerely – Beatrice on the fallen Hero – and insincerely – Hero on Benedick's love for Beatrice, so that there is no moral or reputational stability at all in the end', as one suggested. Such interpretations, supported by pertinent reference to the text, did very well.
- (b) Most responses were able to find relevant points to make about the relationship. Very weak answers struggled with the basic situation and the relationships between the various groups of characters, often assuming the exchanges between Don Pedro and his friends to be 'sincere'. Weaker answers tended to retell the story of the relationship, sometimes in great detail, largely ignoring the shifting focus. Success at this level was often determined by how closely the candidate explored the given passage and what that revealed about the couple. More competent responses were able to track how the dramatic focus moved from Benedick listening, to his soliloquy to his

exchange with the unwitting Beatrice. Many responses analysed the final exchanges in detail, often with awareness of the effects, such as the comedy and irony of his 'determination to see signs of love and her reluctance to move beyond their existing 'war'', as one suggested. Good answers were alive to Shakespeare's use of different comic techniques here, from the audience's awareness of Don Pedro's 'trick', to the 'comic irony of Benedick's self-delusion and at the same time his self-awareness', as one put it. Other answers developed such ideas analysing the effects of the audience knowing that Benedick has been tricked as he engages with the unsuspecting Beatrice. Very good answers explored the language in detail, with some contrasting, for example, Benedick's 'fair lady' here with his 'harpie' of a few scenes before. Others explored the language of love and its effects – 'doting', 'get her picture', 'wear her heart out' and 'marks of love' suggesting, for some candidates, a superficiality in its treatment. Very good answers sometimes considered the staging, sometimes using their knowledge of the Globe as a useful context, with others showing very good understanding of the play's themes of deception, false reporting and naivety, 'so that Benedick and later Beatrice both end up just as much victims of the meddling court as Hero', as one suggested.

Question 3 WOLE SOYINKA: *The Trials of Brother Jero and Jero's Metamorphosis*

- (a) Most of the responses had enough knowledge of the plays to answer the question relevantly. Weak answers retold parts of the narrative connecting Amope and Jero with Chume, often in accurate detail, with only implicit reference to Chume's role and characterisation. Better answers at this level were aware that he helped to show what sort of characters they were and that he developed during the two plays. More competent responses were able to consider some of the ways Soyinka develops his character: his music making, his arguments with his wife and his simple faith were often useful starting points for discussion. Others were able to compare and contrast the way he is used by Jero during the plays, how 'his importance to Jero grows as Jero's own power and influence grows', as one suggested. Very good answers were able to explore his dramatic role in detail, in terms of the plot and as a method 'that Soyinka uses to explore the moral and gender concerns he is presenting in the play', as one suggested. Other responses at this level also analysed Soyinka's methods of characterisation: Chume's language, the contrasts between Chume and the other minor characters, such as the band leader and his attitudes to religion. Where such interpretations were supported by specific reference to and quotations from the text they often did very well.
- (b) Most responses were broadly aware of the context, though few were able to place this exchange precisely. Weak answers tended to either summarise the relationship so far, often with little direct reference to the passage, or to paraphrase the passage in detail. Better answers at this level showed understanding of the importance of Rebecca to Jero and how 'she seems to be changing him and the way he behaves', as one suggested. Sounder answers considered Soyinka's presentation, with discussions of the setting, the props and the stage directions enabling candidates to show some understanding of his dramatic methods. Other answers at this level considered the relationship from different perspectives, Jero and Rebecca's as well as the audience's, resulting in some interesting interpretations developing. Good answers also analysed some of the details, the dramatic effects of the setting and props for example. Others looked closely at the language, noticing for example Rebecca's 'almost hero worship of her mentor, whilst he shows barely disguised lust for her at odds with his spiritual role', as one suggested; such points led to a consideration of Soyinka's use of characterisation to develop his plot and the way he creates 'both laughter and intrigue in his audience'.

Question 4 THOMAS MIDDLETON AND WILLIAM ROWLEY: *The Changeling*

- (a) There were too few responses to this question to make a general comment appropriate.
- (b) There were too few responses to this question to make a general comment appropriate.

Section B

Question 5 ROBERT BROWNING: Selected Poems

- (a) Nearly all responses to this question were able to select relevant poems to discuss, the most popular choices were *Soliloquy of the Spanish Cloister*, *The Bishop Orders his Tomb at St Praxed's Church*, *Confessions* and *The Confessional*. Weak response often summarised the poems chosen for discussion, often concentrating on the characters in the poems. At this level, successful essays tended to compare the 'stories', with some sense of the religious backdrop to the characters' actions. Direct references to some details of the poems, indicating knowledge and understanding, also helped to lift some responses. More competent answers focused on the topic of 'religion', often recognising that Browning's characters were an important part of his poetic choices in presenting his concerns. Other responses at this level developed the comparing and contrasting of characters, as well as discussing such diverse elements as settings, verse form and language. Good answers explored such poetic methods in detail, often using apt quotation and showed at least an awareness of appropriate contexts to inform and expand their interpretations. Very good answers analysed the effects of such poetic methods in detail, with some responses showing perceptive exploration of imagery and language. Other very good responses were able to explore the tone, with some seeing a 'dark, even disturbing humour in some of Browning's ironic phrases', where others showed some sophistication in comparing the effects of his choices of verse forms and rhythms. Answers which supported such points with specific reference to the detail did very well.
- (b) Nearly all answers were able to explore the poem with some knowledge and understanding. Very weak answers, however, were often puzzled by the overarching metaphor and appeared to be responding as to an unseen poem, with consequent weaknesses in understanding and the discussion. Answers in the lower levels often attempted a paraphrase of the poem, with some able to recognise the poem's 'triple layered structure', as one called it. Answers which were able to shape the paraphrase partly to the topic of the question, 'emotions', did better at this level. More competent answers showed knowledge and understanding of Browning's concerns and to some extent possible interpretations of the poem. At this level these tended to be asserted with occasional supporting quotations, and candidates who were able to show some awareness of Browning's poetic choices tended to do better. Good answers developed this further, often starting from a consideration of Browning's poetic methods, for example, the structure and verse form of the poem, using this to lead naturally into considering the question in more detail. Many good responses offered multiple interpretations of the poem's meaning and where such arguments were supported by detailed analysis of the language and imagery, the answers were very good. More sophisticated analyses considered the effects of the language and imagery in forensic detail, with some seeing the 'typical longing for something both desirable and unobtainable we see in so many of Browning's poems', as one suggested. Other sophisticated answers saw a sexual, almost predatory tone in some of his choices, with the main metaphor of the rose, 'suggesting beauty in the flower, danger in the thorns and the poet's desire to pick the bloom, in other words to Deflower the subject', as one answer put it. Such arguments were at times supported by appropriate biographical context and did very well.

Question 6 OWEN SHEERS: *Skirrid Hill*

- (a) Nearly all responses to this question were able to select relevant poems to discuss, the most popular choices being *The Farrier*, *The Fishmonger*, *Winter Swans*, *Late Spring*, *Song* and *Swallows*. Weak responses often summarised the poems chosen for discussion, often concentrating on the characters in the poems, with each poem treated separately. At this level some focus on the task lifted responses, as did some attempt to compare the treatment in the poems. More competent answers showed understanding of Sheers's concerns as well as detailed knowledge of the poems, often offering interpretations in which the comparison was, at least implicitly, embedded. Answers tended to be assertive rather than demonstrative at this level. Those essays which included some appreciation of Sheers's methods, often language and imagery, did better. Good answers developed the analysis, often exploring the effects of the poetic choices by comparison. 'Sheers uses the animals – the calm solidity of the horse and the cold deadness of the fish to reveal the characters he is really interested in, *The Farrier* and *The Fishmonger*', as one candidate wrote. Very good answers were able to develop their interpretations across a wider palette of methods, Sheers's use of verse form and repetition, for example, but focusing on the effects of such choices and how these effects might suggest a variety of interpretations.

- (b) Nearly every answer showed knowledge of the basic meaning of the poem, though there were some very weak responses which struggled with some of the details – for example, the ‘long-dead sheep’ – resulting in some uneven commentaries. Weak answers retold the story, often quite accurately, yet with limited awareness of the construction or its poetic nature, often becoming distracted by speculations about the nature of the relationship at the heart of the poem. More competent responses showed clear knowledge of the poem and often sympathetic understanding of Sheers’s concerns and even the nuances of the relationship. This was a sound basis for exploring the poetic methods used by Sheers and good essays rose to the challenge of exploring the language, the symbols and the imagery, often developing convincing interpretations on the strength of the analysis. Very good answers focused on the effects of the poetic methods identified, with many candidates showing great perception in discussing ‘the changing emotions of the couple, the sense of timelessness but also of immediate loss’, as one suggested. Other very good answers wrestled with some of the details, the ‘clumsy shoes’ and the ‘sarcophagus’ for example, exploring different interpretations and how these details enable Sheers to ‘give his reader, bit by bit, a complete picture of the relationship and the couple’s changing emotions’, as one suggested. Where such points were drawn from specific references to the poem and had some contextual support, the answers often did very well.

Question 7 *Songs of Ourselves, Volume 2*

- (a) Most responses were able to choose relevant poems to discuss. Some very weak responses, however, discussed poems not in the selection, for which no credit could be given, or poems from the selection which did not apparently present war – Dickinson’s *I Years had been from Home* or Browning’s *If thou must love me*, for example. The success of the essays based on these choices was very limited. Weak answers chose at least one relevant poem and were often able to show some knowledge of the basic meaning of the poems. At this level there was often very little or no attempt to offer a comparison of the writing. Some implicit sense of the poetic methods or that the poems were constructed improved the responses, though in many weak essays there was very little evidence of any appreciation of the genre or that the works were poems. More competent responses made wiser choices of material to discuss with Owen’s *Futility*, Sassoon’s *The Death Bed*, Hardy’s *A Wife in London* and Gurney’s *First March* the most popular choices. There were surprisingly few references to Gallagher’s *Distant Fields/Anzac Parade*. Answers at this level showed understanding of the concerns and were able to offer a comparison of the chosen poems, often treating each poem separately with a summative, comparative conclusion. Better answers at this level explored some of the poetic methods, often the language and the imagery, with often some relevant context added in support of the interpretation. Good answers focused on the writing of their chosen poems, exploring how the different choices of form, rhythm and rhyme, as well as language and imagery, enable the poets to create different tones and emotions in the readers. Very good responses developed such points into sophisticated interpretations of the poets’ concerns, often embedding the comparison throughout the essay, with apt quotations and a use of appropriate contexts.
- (b) In response to this question, some contextual knowledge was very helpful, particularly in weaker responses. Without the context, very weak answers attempting to unpick the relationship and the ‘story behind it’, as one suggested, often struggled to make relevant points. Lower level answers tended to paraphrase the poem line by line or offer a general summary with some generally relevant comments on the situation. Better answers at this level were able to explore the meaning of Yeats’s poem, often showing understanding of ‘the speaker’s feelings of loss, disappointment and anger’, as one suggested. Competent answers linked such ideas to the poetic methods, often focusing on language and imagery, for example noting how Yeats creates ‘a picture of the old lady, once beautiful, sitting sadly by the dying fire’, as one put it. Others explored the structure of the poem, showing understanding of Yeats’s use of time, ‘merging past in the present’, as one suggested. Very good answers, often informed by detailed contextual knowledge, analysed the effects of the poetic choices perceptively, offering sophisticated and at times sensitive, interpretations of Yeats’s intentions in the poem, ‘from the very graphic image of her sad old age to his love-lorn mythical wanderings in the Irish mountains’, as one wrote, with many noting his own sad future in his attempt to fill his ex-lover with regret. Where such discussions were structured, so that context, analysis and interpretation were fully integrated, the answers often did very well.

Question 8 GILLIAN CLARKE: Selected Poems

- (a) Nearly all responses to this question were able to select relevant poems to discuss, the most popular choices being *The Baby Sitter*, *Catrin*, *White Roses*, *Sunday* and *Cold Knap Lake*. Weak responses often summarised the poems chosen for discussion, often concentrating on the characters in the poems, with each poem treated separately. At this level some focus on the task, 'relationships between adults and children', lifted the response, as did some attempt to link the treatment in the chosen poems. More competent answers showed understanding of Clarke's concerns as well as detailed knowledge of the poems, such as the conflict between the generations or the lack of communication. Answers at this level tended to be assertive, and those essays which included some appreciation of Clarke's methods, often language and sentence structures, did better. Good answers developed the analysis, often exploring the effects of the poetic choices by comparison. 'Clarke often uses the indifference of nature to contrast the human emotions, such as the lake and the drowning girl or the cat and the dying boy', as one candidate wrote. Very good answers were able to develop their interpretations across a wide range of methods, Clarke's use of verse form and natural imagery, for example, but always focusing on the effects of such choices and possible interpretations, informed in some cases by appropriate reference to contexts.
- (b) Nearly every answer showed knowledge of the basic meaning of the poem, though there were some very weak responses which struggled with some of the details – for example, 'lamb-grief' or a 'ruff of ice' – resulting in some confused discussions. Weak answers tended to paraphrase the poem, explaining how the details gave a 'wintry image of what February looks like in Wales', as one suggested. More competent responses showed understanding as well as clear knowledge, noting for example 'how the humans seem almost like aliens in the landscape described by Clarke', as one put it. Others explored the imagery and language in depth, showing some awareness of the visual and auditory effects created by Clarke. Good answers often supported ideas with relevant biographical contextual detail, such as the Welsh countryside, noting how the precise and specific details, such as the frozen tap, lend an air of authenticity to her presentation. Very good answers focused on the effects of Clarke's choices, the interplay between verse form and enjambement and her poetic imagination, 'connecting the frozen pond to the harp-string as the human 'plays' is both graphic and creative', as one put it. Others explored the anthropomorphism of some of her imagery, 'indicating the loneliness of her existence in the countryside, so that only the streams, the pond and dead lambs seem to communicate', as one stated. Such interpretations supported by specific and detailed reference to the poem did very well.

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General comments

The general standard was satisfactory with the large majority of candidates showing at least a sound knowledge of the set texts. There were some rubric errors in this session with candidates not understanding the optionality on the paper. Very few responses showed evidence of mismanagement of time in this session. The quality of expression was sound in nearly every case, although there are still some candidates with expressive weaknesses which can impede communication at this level.

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There are two specific issues to be addressed in this session:

Assessment Objective 2 from the Literature in English syllabus states that candidates should 'analyse ways in which writers' choices of language, form and structure shape meanings and effects'. Candidates attempting option **(b)** passage questions often showed evidence of meeting this Assessment Objective in their responses to the given passage. However, candidates attempting option **(a)** questions, the discursive essay, also need to provide evidence that they are able to do this, by quoting or referring closely to specific moments in the text. They should then discuss these references in detail, focusing on the writer's choices and exploring what for the candidate are the effects of those choices.

Candidates responding to option **(b)** passage questions, who briefly place the passage within the wider work it is selected from, often write more focused and relevant answers. Some candidates could benefit from considering this approach, as it will give a context to their interpretation of the passage itself, as well as providing evidence of knowledge of the text. This equally applies to passages from poetry selections as well as the drama texts on paper 1.

Comments on specific questions

Section A

Question 1 ARTHUR MILLER: *All My Sons*

- (a)** Nearly every candidate was able to select some relevant material with which to address the task, with weaker answers tending to retell Joe's story, often in great detail. Some responses interpreted 'ignore' as 'ignorance' or 'denial', which limited the success of the response. The ability to select relevant narrative and shape it to the specific question was an important factor in the overall success of weaker responses. Better answers at this level considered the quotation broadly, sometimes suggesting an appreciation of Miller's dramatic presentation as 'Miller shows Joe's social success in the neighbourhood, based on his self-confidence, as just a façade', as one suggested. More competent responses were able to range more widely in the text to support their ideas, often looking at what other characters say about him, often focusing on Chris and George, and showing understanding of the impact of Sue's negative opinions and 'Kate's ability to equally ignore the truth as much as her husband', as one essay put it. Better answers at this level often

supported their ideas with direct reference to or quotation from the text. Other answers considered the moral implications, noticing, for example, how 'Joe's lies and deceit have destroyed the Deevers, but the truth destroys him and his family', as one suggested. Good answers paid attention to the wording of the question and focused on 'Miller's dramatic presentation', with clear and detailed analysis of how he uses dramatic techniques, such as moral opinions, the interplay of characters and irony to present how the 'true situation is gradually revealed to audience and cast, leading to Joe's inevitable suicide as he finally has to face up to the consequences of his deceit', as one put it. Very good answers were also able to embed contextual references such as the social pressures of post-war America, the returning soldiers and families coping with loss. Where these answers supported their interpretation with reference to the text they often did very well.

- (b) Nearly every response had some relevant ideas about the relationship, though very weak answers were insecure about the factual details, such as George's role or who the 'woman' is. Weak answers retold the story of the relationship between Chris and Ann, with success at this level depending on how much use the candidate made of the given passage. Many weak answers ignored the end of the passage and the entrance of Joe, which limited the interpretation offered. Better answers were alive to the tensions between the couple, often noting the tone shifts and how Miller 'hints at what each of them really believes without it ever being openly stated', as one noted. Competent answers were aware of the context, often referring to Larry's letter, as yet unrevealed by Anne. Some explored what her knowledge of Larry's death meant to the relationship here – noting that 'though she never said she suspected him, surely Larry's letter meant she did?' as one wondered. Good answers analysed how Miller prepares the audience for the high drama to come, the hesitations of both Chris and Ann, as well as the 'threat of Chris's reactions when the truth is revealed', were all well explored. Her doubts about Chris's ability to see what people are really like was also well discussed. Some saw how Miller's presentation of her reaction to Sue, for example, 'developed her honesty and moral clarity in a way that leads to her later revelations', as one wrote. Good answers noticed the change in tension and tone when Joe appears, 'the easiness of the relationships, at least on the surface, as a contrast to troubling exchanges between Ann and Chris', as one noted. Joe's certainty of 'the big night' was also noted as contrasting the preceding atmosphere. Very good answers explored the dramatic ironies at work in the passage – Chris stating he could not forgive his father for doing what Ann's father was found guilty of was often analysed in terms of their relationship, with some seeing 'modern masculinity dealing with a conflict between idealism and practicality', while other saw 'a modern feminist with independence of choice and decisiveness'. Others looked in detail at the various deceptions at play, both public and self, and how they serve to undermine the relationship here and more generally in the play 'until in the end the relationship is destroyed as effectively as all the other relationships in the play', as one suggested.

Question 2 WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE: *Much Ado About Nothing*

- (a) Most responses were able to select relevant material with which to address the task. Weaker answers often retold Beatrice's story, sometimes in great detail, with better answers at this level aware of how she changes through the play, with some linking those changes to specific moments in the drama. More competent responses considered Leonato's comment in their interpretation, with some exploring how, in changing her tone, after she is tricked by Hero and Margaret, she does 'get a husband'. Others thought the significant event in her development was the shaming of Hero, one response noting how 'Shakespeare shapes the audience's attitude to Claudio and Don Pedro through Beatrice's impassioned desire for revenge'. Good answers analysed how such moments of development in Beatrice often led to changes in other characters, notably Benedick but also Leonato and Don Pedro. More developed responses explored her role more widely, often analysing how she is often the source of visual and verbal comedy (her exchanges with Benedick at the masked ball, for example) but also the driving force behind the potentially tragic conflicts between Benedick and Claudio. Very good answers often saw the irony in Leonato's references to 'a husband', noting the hints of a previous romance with Benedick as well as her scathing comments about men in general and husbands in particular. Where such interpretations considered Shakespeare's use of language and imagery, with specific supporting examples, as well as dramatic effects such as irony, the answers did very well.

- (b) This choice was often well done, with most answers able to give some contextualisation to the passage, the tricking of Benedick about Beatrice's love for him. Weaker answers tended to retell the story of that gulling and often Beatrice's as well, often ignoring the second part of the passage. Better answers at this level were aware of the change in tone with Don John's entrance, though some were confused as to whom he was accusing and of what. More competent answers saw some of the dramatic contrasts Shakespeare uses here – how 'the deceived Benedick exits to be replaced by the deceiving Don John', as one suggested. Others saw how the deceivers become the deceived with some analysing the effects of this on the audience. Good answers often started with a clear focus on the audience, analysing how the reactions might shift from laughter to anger and concern. Many thought audiences would be 'appalled at how easily Don Pedro and Claudio are tricked, especially as they have served a similar turn on Benedick', as one suggested. Others wondered why 'they would so easily believe a known liar and villain like Don John'. Very good answers developed such ideas into considering the attitudes to women on display in this scene. 'Perhaps very amusing to a Jacobean audience, but shockingly predictable to a modern one', as one put it. Other very good responses analysed the language, the hint of expectant malice in 'two bears' and 'biting' for example, becoming the shifty, even sinister tones and words of Don John. Many discussed the audience's potential shock at the speed with which Claudio and Don Pedro 'move onto discussing how they will punish Hero with the most public disgrace they can imagine, with no thought for the girl or her family', as one argued. Where such ideas were supported with specific and detailed reference to the passage and the wider text, the responses did very well.

Question 3 WOLE SOYINKA: *The Trials of Brother Jero and Jero's Metamorphosis*

- (a) There were too few responses to this question to make a general comment appropriate.
- (b) There were too few responses to this question to make a general comment appropriate.

Question 4 THOMAS MIDDLETON AND WILLIAM ROWLEY: *The Changeling*

- (a) There were too few responses to this question to make a general comment appropriate.
- (b) There were too few responses to this question to make a general comment appropriate.

Section B

Question 5 ROBERT BROWNING: Selected Poems

- (a) There were too few responses to this question to make a general comment appropriate.
- (b) Nearly all answers were able to explore the poem with some knowledge and at times understanding. Very weak answers, however, were often puzzled by the details and appeared to be responding as to an unseen poem, with consequent weaknesses in understanding and the supporting comments. Answers in the lower levels of assessment often attempted a paraphrase of the poem; at this level some ability to explain the poem's meaning often lifted the overall performance. Answers which were able to shape the paraphrase partly to the topic of the question, 'a sense of anticipation', did better at this level. More competent answers showed knowledge and understanding of Browning's concerns and had a clear grasp of the meaning of the poem. Interpretations at this level tended to be asserted with occasional supporting quotations, and candidates who were able to show some awareness of Browning's poetic choices tended to do better. There was also a tendency to speculate as to 'why the meeting was across water and land on an isolated farm', and where support from the poem was selected such ideas were often sound. Good answers explored some of the poetic methods in detail, often the language and Browning's use of telling detail, 'such as ringlets and sleep, all suggesting lovers meeting together', as one put it. Others explored the character of the speaker, the tone with which the journey is described and how Browning leads up to 'the climax of the two beating hearts', as one suggested. Where such analyses were supported by reference to the poem and with some contextualisation, either biographical or textual, the answers often did very well.

Question 6 OWEN SHEERS: *Skirrid Hill*

- (a) There were too few responses to this question to make a general comment appropriate.
- (b) Nearly all answers were able to explore the poem with some knowledge and at times understanding. Answers in the lower levels of assessment often attempted a paraphrase of the poem; at this level some ability to explain the poem's meaning often improved the overall performance. A few responses seemed to struggle with basic knowledge of the poem, with consequent unevenness in the interpretation. Answers which were able to shape the paraphrase partly to the topic of the question, 'shapes a reader's response to the fishmonger', did better at this level, where the beginnings of understanding of the character and his work led to increasing competence in the response. Sound answers showed knowledge and understanding of Sheers's concerns, offering interesting interpretations of the relationship between the man, the fish and his work, sometimes rather assertively or speculatively presented. Interpretations at this level were improved by supporting quotations and candidates who were able to show some awareness of Sheers's poetic choices, such as language and tone, did better. Good answers often explored the language in detail, noticing, for example, how Sheers creates the connections between 'the man and fish by the coldness and emotionless description of both', as one suggested. Others explored the tone and its effects in 'showing the reader the anger and even the suppressed violence of the fishmonger', as one candidate stated. Very good answers focused on the effects of language, imagery and verse form, often exploring in detail how Sheers use all these techniques to present 'not just the facts of the fishmonger's life but also his inner life, from his violence and cruel kindness, hinting of Hamlet and Gertrude, to his heart break and loneliness', as one put it. Where such interpretations and analyses were supported by an awareness of contexts, the essays often did very well.

Question 7 *Songs of Ourselves, Volume 2*

- (a) Most responses were able to choose relevant poems to discuss. Some very weak responses, however, discussed poems not in the selection, for which no credit could be given, or poems from the selection in which time passing was not a central concern – Dickinson's *I Years had been from Home* or Browning's *If thou must love me*, for example. The success of the essays based on these choices was very limited. Weak answers chose at least one relevant poem and were often able to show some knowledge of the basic meaning of the poems. At this level there was often very little or no attempt to link the writing of the two poems, so that the response read as two separate essays. Some implicit sense of the poetic methods or that the poems were constructed improved some of the responses, though in many weak essays there was very little evidence of any appreciation of the genre or that the works were 'poems'. More competent responses made better choices of poems to discuss. Shakespeare's *Sonnet 19* 'Devouring time...', Yeats's *When You are Old* and Byron's *When we two parted* were popular choices. Answers at this level showed understanding of the concerns and were able to link their chosen poems, finding similarities in topic and at times treatment. Better answers at this level explored some of the poetic methods, usually the language and the imagery, with some responses adding relevant contexts in support of their ideas. Good answers kept the focus on the presentation of time passing in their chosen poems, exploring how the different choices of form, rhythm and rhyme, as well as language and imagery, enable the poets to create different tones and emotions in the readers. Very good responses developed such points into sophisticated interpretations of the poets' concerns, often embedding the comparison throughout the essay, with apposite quotations and a telling use of appropriate contexts.
- (b) Nearly every answer showed knowledge of the basic meaning of the poem, though there were some very weak responses which struggled with many of the details – resulting in some unconvincing discussions. Weaker answers tended to paraphrase the poem line by line or offer a general summary with some generally relevant comments on the speaker's state of mind. Better answers at this level were able to show knowledge and at times some understanding of the poem, often showing understanding of some of the key themes in it, with many noticing the structure and repetition, for example. More competent answers linked such ideas to the poetic methods, often focusing on language and imagery, for example. Others explored the structure of the poem, 'Warren's use of the repetitive "take back" enabling him to reveal the total rejection by the despairing lover of everything they had been given', as one suggested. Good answers developed their understanding of the meaning of the poem by close reference to each stanza in turn, often showing good awareness of the 'wide range of subjects used by Warren, from food to hunting to funerals', as one noted. Very good answers linked such interpretations to the poetic methods, exploring the different effects of his choices – such as the verse form itself, the use of rhyme and

particularly the poetic voice and how he draws the reader into the despair. Others noted the absence of specific details about the relationship in the speaker's rejections, 'so that the reader never gets a picture of the lover being rejected, since we never see the gifts or hear his/her words', as one put it. Where such discussions were structured and focused on the task with an analytical purpose, the answers often did very well.

Question 8 GILLIAN CLARKE: Selected Poems

- (a) There were too few responses to this question to make a general comment appropriate.
- (b) Nearly every answer showed some knowledge of the basic meaning of the poem, though there were some very weak responses which struggled with many of the details, showing confusion over the setting for the poem and not understanding the relevance of the cat, for example. This lack of basic knowledge often resulted in very uneven discussions. Weaker answers tended to paraphrase the poem line by line or tell the story of the poem with little reference to the poetic methods or acknowledgement that the text was a poem. Better answers at this level were able to show clear knowledge and at times some understanding of the poem, Clarke's use of the 'ice splinters to reveal the boy's suffering is very moving', as one suggested, for example. More competent answers focused on Clarke's presentation often focusing on the language of nature and the natural imagery that Clarke uses to contrast the boy's suffering. Good answers developed their interpretations by analysing some of the details, her 'contrasting of the white rose, a symbol for death, but still living after the boy has passed', as one suggested. Very good answers linked such interpretations to different poetic methods, her use of contrasts, the enjambement of the lines, the 'simple statements describing the unconcern of the natural world, the cat, the sun and the roses, as the boy dies create a sense of poignancy in the reader', as one put it. Some responses at this level were also able to integrate telling contextual details to support their interpretation on how and why Clarke presents the sick boy in the poem and these answers often did very well.

LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

Paper 9695/13
Drama and Poetry

Key messages

- Option **(a)** discursive essays should analyse specific details of the text within the argument presented.
- Option **(b)** passage questions may usefully place the passage in the wider text as a relevant context.

General comments

The general standard was satisfactory with the large majority of candidates showing at least a sound knowledge of the set texts. There were some rubric errors in this session with candidates not understanding the optionality on the paper. Very few responses showed evidence of mismanagement of time in this session. The quality of expression was sound in nearly every case, although there are still some candidates with expressive weaknesses which can impede communication at this level.

There were responses to nearly all the texts on the paper and answers reflecting a wide range of performance were seen on each of the texts attempted by the candidates.

There are two specific issues to be addressed in this session:

Assessment Objective 2 from the Literature in English syllabus states that candidates should 'analyse ways in which writers' choices of language, form and structure shape meanings and effects'. Candidates attempting option **(b)** passage questions often showed evidence of meeting this Assessment Objective in their responses to the given passage. However, candidates attempting option **(a)** questions, the discursive essay, also need to provide evidence that they are able to do this, by quoting or referring closely to specific moments in the text. They should then discuss these references in detail, focusing on the writer's choices and exploring what for the candidate are the effects of those choices.

Candidates responding to option **(b)** passage questions, who briefly place the passage within the wider work it is selected from, often write more focused and relevant answers. Some candidates could benefit from considering this approach, as it will give a context to their interpretation of the passage itself, as well as providing evidence of knowledge of the text. This equally applies to passages from poetry selections as well as the drama texts on paper 1.

Comments on specific questions

Section A

Question 1 ARTHUR MILLER: *All My Sons*

- (a)** Most answers were able to select relevant material with which to address the task, often focusing on Joe and Steve, with weaker answers tending to retell their story, often in great detail. Better answers at this level did discuss the relationships with their children, though often only from the father's perspective. The ability to select relevant narrative and shape it to the specific question was an important factor in the overall success of weaker responses. More competent responses were able to range more widely in the text to support their ideas, considering, for example, how the father and child dynamic might have changed as the children grew up and moved on. Better answers at this level often supported their ideas with direct reference to or quotation from the text. Good answers paid attention to the wording of the question and focused on 'Miller's presentation', with clear and detailed analysis of how he uses dramatic techniques, such as contrast, irony and staging to present the different attitudes to fathers, often, for example, comparing and contrasting

the attitudes of Chris and George. Others considered gender differences, comparing Anne and Larry's attitudes. Very good answers also saw how Joe's attitudes to fatherhood changed, 'leading him to his tragic final act', as one suggested. Successful responses were also able to embed contextual references to the social concerns of post-war America, as well as considering Miller's 'main concern of the conflict between family values and the American dream', as one suggested.

- (b) Many candidates were able to place the passage into the context of the wider text, with nearly all answers showing at least some knowledge and understanding of the significance of the passage. There were however some weak responses which struggled with some basic knowledge: the relationship between Joe and Kate, what the issue was and who and where was Chris were common causes of confusion and suggested a lack of knowledge of the text. Weaker answers tended either to paraphrase the dialogue or to give a more general summary of the play's action and what had happened so far. Better answers at this level kept the question in mind and were able to focus on the presentation of the relationship and how it was changing. More successful answers focused on Miller's dramatic methods throughout – the effects of the stage directions ('sensing...quietly' for example). Good answers were illuminated by precise contextualisation, often identifying the key elements driving the plot, for example, Joe's belief in family and money and Mother's intuition regarding Chris. Very good answers developed such interpretations further, discussing how 'little they seem to really know each other even at this point', as one suggested. Others analysed the effects of the language here: 'pay for what you did' having an 'ironic twist considering Joe's suicide', as one put it. Others thought that 'guilt, blame and deception over the factory and Larry had damaged the relationship for ever', as one response argued. Such interpretations supported by close analysis of the language, the shifting tone and stage directions often did very well.

Question 2 WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE: *Much Ado About Nothing*

- (a) Nearly every answer had some relevant material to discuss, often focussing on Beatrice and Hero. Weaker answers retold the various stories of what happened to different women and their love interests, with most answers offering comments on Beatrice and Benedick at least. Better answers at this level were aware that Beatrice and Hero had very different relationships, 'perhaps because Beatrice is only a niece and Hero is a daughter', as one thought. Others were able to refer to Margaret as well and to see, at least in broad terms, a range of different kinds of love. More competent answers paid more attention to the wording of the question, discussing the underlying attitudes that led to the way the different women responded to love, 'from Hero's shy acquiescence to Beatrice's shrewish individualism via Margaret's healthy lustiness', as one response summarised it. Other answers developed such ideas into considering Shakespeare's characterisation of the women and how he uses the differences in attitudes to develop the plot and as a structural framework. Very good answers developed such ideas into considering the language in detail, contrasting Hero and Beatrice's more refined if opposing diction with Margaret's earthiness. Others saw how love and sex were sometimes blurred in the different attitudes, with others linking this into how the women viewed marriage and relationships generally. When such interpretations were supported by specific reference to the text, the answers often did very well.
- (b) Most answers were aware of the context, the first notable appearance of Don John in the play. Very weak answers were often confused as to the details of the relationships between the three men and their roles in the wider text, with such misunderstandings leading to a consequent loss of relevance and communication. Weak answers often simply retold what these characters did in the play, with the success of the response relying on how much reference was made to the passage and how accurate the summary was. Better answers at this level explored some of the more basic effects of this plot to undermine Claudio and Don Pedro, with some seeing a foreshadowing of their more significant intervention later in the play. Sounder answers considered Shakespeare's presentation – how he creates the 'malcontent' image of Don John, for example, with others discussing why his followers showed such loyalty to him. Good answers linked the presentation to the play's plot and structure, 'the villainy here being just a foreshadowing of the more successful plot against Hero', as one suggested. Other good responses analysed Shakespeare's methods of characterisation, how 'Don John becomes animated at the prospect of villainy', as one put it, while others saw the importance of 'Don John's malice as the only real source of conflict in the play'. Very good answers looked closely at the language, analysing the effects of Don John's imagery of a muzzled dog, for example, in developing his characterisation and creating the malevolent tone. Other answers at this level offered appropriate contexts, often historical or dramatic. Where such contexts were linked to the detail of the passage and the candidate's interpretation, the responses often did well.

Question 3 WOLE SOYINKA: *The Trials of Brother Jero and Jero's Metamorphosis*

- (a) There were too few responses to this question to make a general comment appropriate.
- (b) There were too few responses to this question to make a general comment appropriate.

Question 4 THOMAS MIDDLETON AND WILLIAM ROWLEY: *The Changeling*

- (a) There were too few responses to this question to make a general comment appropriate.
- (b) There were too few responses to this question to make a general comment appropriate.

Section B

Question 5 ROBERT BROWNING: Selected Poems

- (a) Nearly all responses to this question were able to select relevant poems to discuss, the most popular choices being *The Lost Mistress*, *Life in a Love*, *Love in a Life*, *A Woman's Last Word* and *The Confessional*. Weak responses often summarised the poems chosen for discussion, often concentrating on the characters and their stories. At this level, successful essays often had an implicit comparison of the 'stories', with some sense of the nature of the loss for the characters. Direct references to some details of the poems, indicating knowledge and understanding, also helped to lift some responses. More competent answers focused on the topic of 'feelings of loss', often recognising that Browning's choice of 'speaker' was an important method for presenting his concerns. Other responses at this level developed the comparing and contrasting of the situations, as well as discussing such diverse elements as settings, verse form and language. These answers were at times also informed by biographical contexts, which, when shaped to the task, improved the overall performance. Good answers explored the poetic methods in detail, often using apt quotations and at least an awareness of appropriate contexts to inform and expand their interpretations. Very good answers analysed the effects of such poetic methods in detail, with some responses showing perceptive exploration of imagery and language. Other very good responses were able to explore the tone, with some seeing a connection to 'Browning's sense of longing and almost despair for the way things change', as one suggested. Others offered more sophisticated comparisons of the effects of his choices of verse forms and rhythms. Answers which supported such points with specific reference to the detail of the poems did very well.
- (b) Nearly all answers were able to explore the poem with some knowledge and understanding. Very weak answers, however, were often puzzled by situation and unable to untangle the relationship between the speaker and Brother Lawrence, often seeming to respond as though to an unseen poem, with consequent weaknesses in understanding and the supporting comments. Answers in the lower levels often attempted a paraphrase of the poem, with some able to recognise the poem's situation and the importance of the speaker and his attitudes. Answers which were able to shape the paraphrase partly to the topic of the question, the presentation of the speaker, did better at this level. More competent answers showed knowledge and understanding of Browning's concerns and had a clear grasp of the meaning of the poem. Responses often addressed the 'wickedness of a monk behaving like the speaker in the poem, obviously forgetting his Christian vows of love and understanding', as one put it. Others explored the different kinds of envy and jealousy displayed, sometimes considering what might be Browning's concerns in the poem. Good answers developed this further, often starting from a consideration of Browning's poetic methods, for example, the voice and language of the speaker, the use of reported dialogue and the tone, using this to lead naturally into considering the question in more detail. Many good responses offered engaged commentaries on the poem's apparent attack on religion and where such arguments were supported by detailed analysis of the language and imagery, the answers were very good. More sophisticated analyses considered the effects of the language and imagery in detail, with some seeing this passage 'as further evidence of Browning's antipathy to the Catholic church and its perceived corruption', as one suggested, linking this passage to the rest of the poem and other examples in the wider text, most commonly *The Bishop Orders his Tomb at St Praxed's Church*. Such arguments, supported by detailed reference to the poem, often did very well.

Question 6 OWEN SHEERS: *Skirrid Hill*

- (a) There were too few responses to this question to make a general comment appropriate.
- (b) Nearly all answers were able to explore the poem with some knowledge and at times understanding. Answers in the lower levels of assessment often attempted a paraphrase of the poem; at this level some ability to explain the poem's meaning often lifted the overall performance. A few responses seemed to struggle with basic knowledge of the poem, with consequent unevenness in the interpretation. Answers which were able to shape the paraphrase partly to the topic of the question, 'presents the central character', did better at this level, where the beginnings of understanding of the character's situation and her emotions led to increasing competence in the response. Sound answers showed knowledge and understanding of Sheers' concerns and were able to respond with some personal engagement to the 'sadness of a forgotten film star growing old alone', as one put it. Interpretations at this level were lifted by supporting quotations and candidates who were able to show some awareness of Sheers' poetic choices, such as language and tone, did better. Good answers often explored the language in detail, noticing how Sheers creates the image of the actress subtly: 'screening, Olivier, Brando and the audience all suggest how famous she was and how much she has lost', as one suggested. Others teased out the 'narrative of fame turning to loneliness through aging and isolation', as one candidate wrote. Very good responses explored ideas such as 'performing' and the audience, noting the melancholic nostalgia of her reliving her past and the irony of the silence and the lack of audience. Others analysed for example the effects of 'every stage of her life' or the security camera and lights with some sensitive appreciation of verse form and the intermittent rhymes. Where such analyses were supported by specific reference to the poem and with some contextualisation, either biographical or textual, the answers often did very well.

Question 7 *Songs of Ourselves, Volume 2*

- (a) There were too few responses to this question to make a general comment appropriate.
- (b) Nearly every answer showed knowledge of the basic meaning of the poem, though there were some very weak responses which struggled with some of the details – for example, that it is the same 'wife' in both parts of the poem– resulting in very uneven discussions. Weak answers attempted to retell the story, sometimes quite accurately. These candidates often wrote with limited awareness of the construction or its poetic nature, often becoming distracted by speculations about the events and what had happened. Better answers at this level were able to explore the meaning of Hardy's poem, often showing the beginnings of understanding of some key elements and how the two parts of the poem were linked together, with many noticing the shift from tragedy to irony, which 'makes me feel really sorry for the woman in the poem because the news of her loss is exaggerated by her husband's letter, showing how much she has lost', as one suggested. More competent answers linked such ideas to the poetic methods, often exploring Hardy's narrative methods, comparing the atmosphere of the two halves of the poem, for example. Good answers developed such interpretations of the meaning of the poem by close reference to Hardy's language choices 'moving from the bleak city to the young lovers in the summer countryside', as one explained. Very good responses explored the different effects of his choices – such as his shift from the wife to the husband and how he draws the reader into the lives and deaths of the two characters by his choices of rhythm and rhyme. Where such discussions were supported by specific references to the poem and some awareness of appropriate contexts, the answers often did very well.

Question 8 GILLIAN CLARKE: *Selected Poems*

- (a) There were too few responses to this question to make a general comment appropriate.
- (b) Nearly every answer showed some knowledge of the basic meaning of the poem, though there were some very weak responses which struggled with many of the details – for example, the references to the reservoir, the Saddle and the sloes – resulting in some uneven discussions. Weaker answers tended to paraphrase the poem line by line or offer a general summary with some generally relevant comments on death, though some responses spent too long speculating on the causes of the ram's death. Better answers at this level were able to show knowledge and at times some understanding of the poem, such as Clarke's use of graphic details to create the 'rather repulsive image of the decomposing corpse', as one put it. More competent answers linked such ideas to the poetic methods, often focusing on the language of nature and the natural imagery that

Clarke uses. Good answers developed their interpretations by analysing some of the details, how 'Clarke intermingles positive images such as the harebell and the birds nesting with the negative language such as seeping, skulls and blackening flesh', as one put it. Very good answers linked the analysis of poetic methods to their interpretations, exploring the different effects of these choices, for some a 'positive image of nature in the wild', and for others 'a shocking reminder of the harshness of life for all creatures on earth', as two responses suggested. Some responses at this level were also able to integrate telling contextual details to support their interpretation on how and why Clarke presents death in the poem and these answers often did very well.

LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

Paper 9695/21
Prose and Unseen

Key messages

- Better responses focus on the writing of the texts and how the meaning and content is communicated to the reader.
- Better essays include analysis of specific references and quotations to support points, particularly in the Prose (a) questions, where candidates select their own material to answer the question.
- Better responses to Prose (b) passage questions analyse the writing of the selected passage in detail.
- Better responses to the Unseen use the three prompts as guidance towards consideration of aspects of the text rather than as an essay structure. Dealing with them separately makes it difficult to write about the relationships between them.
- Weaker responses tend to be restricted to summary of the content of texts or extracts.

General comments

Most candidates showed knowledge of the content of the texts, and many were confident in exploring ways in which the writers communicate their concerns through choices of language, form and structure. Better essays focussed more clearly on ways in which the texts are written. This is particularly true of the (a) questions, where better essays included some analysis of specific episodes from the texts. Although there is no specific requirement for candidates to make connections between selected extracts in (b) questions and the text as a whole, better essays showed an awareness of the wider text which helpfully informed a view of the passage. Weaker answers to (b) questions, particularly responses to *Stories of Ourselves*, were limited by lack of knowledge of the texts from which the passages were taken. Stronger responses to questions in **Section B: Unseen** made specific points about the structure and techniques of the poem; less attention was paid to the structure and techniques of the drama extract and responses to it were generally more limited.

Comments on specific questions

Section A

Question 1 E M FORSTER: *Howards End*

- (a) Candidates who responded to this question appreciated the significance of reading, music and art to the novel and its concerns. Many focused on the Beethoven concert in Chapter 5, demonstrating understanding of how Forster discriminates between Helen's and Leonard's responses to the music. Stronger answers used this as a foundation for a consideration of ways in which reading, music and art are used to support the exploration of class in the novel, with some thoughtful observations on how responses to art and culture characterise the Schlegels, Basts and Wilcoxes. While the Wilcoxes' philistine dismissal of 'artistic beastliness' shows the family's focus on materialism and pragmatism, it was often noted that Leonard's attempts to educate himself, through attending concerts and reading Ruskin, are belittled by Forster, leading to his ironic death under the bookcase. Successful responses were able to refer in some detail to relevant parts of the novel to support their ideas.
- (b) Stronger responses were aware of the context of Charles' antipathy towards Margaret, and looked at Charles' and Dolly's contrasting ways of expressing themselves. Many answers noted the parental implications of Charles 'scolding' and the possessive 'his Dolly', which with the diminutive name suggests his wife to be a plaything. Better responses noted that the extract was largely dialogue and looked closely at the tone of the characters' language. Charles' barrage of accusatory questions was noted, while Dolly's retreat into baby-talk was often interpreted as strategic

evasiveness as well as creating a scene of social comedy. Strong answers, while noting how the passage reveals class and gender roles, were aware of the humour of the passage, with the back and forth dialogue revealing contrasting attitudes – ‘Miss Schlegel has fairly got us on toast’ and ‘I could simply scratch that woman’s eyes out’. The narrative makes similar contrasts, between Charles’ ‘thunder’ and Dolly’s ‘chirrupings’, for example. Forster’s use of business vocabulary in Charles’ dialogue was sometimes noted, as well as the use of setting in a comfortable garden with the symbolic car. Accomplished responses noted a shift to present tense authorial comment in the final paragraph; such responses commented on the term ‘interlude’ and the reference to the Wilcox children as an ‘edition’, implying a production line of entitled people. Weaker responses to the passage sometimes lacked awareness of the wider text, some assuming that Charles had physically assaulted Dolly, while others thought that they were siblings, and in some cases, children.

Question 2 **ANDREA LEVY: *Small Island***

- (a) Most candidates responding to this question focused on the marriage of Gilbert and Hortense and that of Queenie and Bernard, though less confident responses relied on description and narrative summary. Stronger answers showed how both relationships are marriages of convenience but develop through the novel. Confident responses were able to refer in detail to key episodes, like the initial arrangements for each marriage, Gilbert’s comforting Hortense after the disastrous job interview and Queenie’s argument with Bernard about donating furniture. Candidates recognised the gradual blossoming in Hortense’s and Gilbert’s relationship, while Queenie is stifled by her marriage to Bernard and finds freedom when he departs for war. The strongest answers developed the discussion to include aspects of identity, feminism or colonialism, or developed thoughtful discussion of how the novel’s structure and narrative perspective guides the reader’s understanding of its marriages.
- (b) More confident responses appreciated the contrast between ‘the boys [who] were looking upwards’ and being gently mocked by Gilbert, whilst he was ‘looking down’, having seen it all before and being determinedly unimpressed. Many candidates understood that Gilbert’s ready understanding of the views of the new arrivals arose from his having been previously one of ‘them big-eyed newcomer boys’. Some noted the comical descriptions of the dullness of England, with its ‘billowing black smoke,’ and the use of adjectives such as ‘dowdy’, ‘grey’, and ‘glum’, which contrast with the gleaming ‘iridescent green’ of the brooch. Candidates often associated this brightness of colour with Jamaica and noted that Gilbert’s dilemma demonstrates his moral compass and also his hopes for a loving relationship with Hortense. Perceptive responses noted that Levy attracts sympathy towards Gilbert here, as the reader, through Hortense’s narration, is more aware of her character at this point than Gilbert’s. Most candidates discussed the significance of the brooch, which turns out to be a cluster of flies, as a metaphor for Gilbert’s coming disillusionment about what the ‘Mother Country’ will offer him. This discussion was most successful when candidates were able to supply the context and knew that the flies had gathered on faecal matter. Weaker responses confused the impressions of Gilbert with those of the ‘Jamaican boys’.

Question 3 ***Stories of Ourselves, Volume 2***

- (a) Stronger answers chose appropriate stories such as *The Paper Menagerie*, *The Doll’s House*, *The Black Ball*, *Gabriel-Ernest* and *The Plantation*. Weaker responses relied on summary and narration; stronger responses explored contrasts between the stories and so shaped a developing argument. Children were often seen as affected by parents and society and that led to discussion of race in *The Black Ball* and *The Paper Menagerie*, and discussion of class in *The Doll’s House*. Stronger essays noted that children may be portrayed as innocently affected by societal pressures which they do not understand, as in Kezia’s invitation to the Kelvev children in Mansfield’s story and the ambitions of Ellison’s narrator’s son who insists that his ball is ‘white’. Innocence contrasting with the parents’ greed was often the focus of discussion of *The Plantation*, while responses to *Gabriel-Ernest* looked at Saki’s provocative undermining of the ideas of childhood innocence.
- (b) Better answers showed knowledge of the whole story, understood the old woman’s relationship with the dogs and their treatment of her after her death. Wider knowledge was also helpful in analysing the narrative perspective as the narrator tries to make sense of a childhood experience by recreating the story. Essays often featured good analysis of the setting, noting the alliteration of ‘cold and clear’ and the ‘soft snow’; they also noted that the woman ‘died softly’, presenting her death as a peaceful and tranquil departure. Good answers referred to other moments of quiet and explored ways in which Anderson creates the atmosphere of the story. The woman’s death was

sometimes considered in the context of her life and experience of abuse, although fewer drew connections with the ending of the story, while the dogs' role drew a variety of interpretations. Most candidates saw a link between the woman and the dogs as their circling creates a mysterious 'death ceremony' and considered how the narrator even uses the dogs' perspective to give them a voice. Perceptive responses noted the effect of words such as 'perhaps' and 'it may have been', demonstrating the narrator's guesswork as he retells the story, while at other times the narrative voice is detached and factual, for example describing the old woman's pack as 'a big haul for the old woman' and 'It was a big haul for the dogs now', and in 'Well, she was dead now.'

Question 4 NGŪGĪ WA THIONG'O: *Petals of Blood*

- (a) Stronger answers approached the quotation through specific reference to the actions of different characters and moved beyond narrative accounts of exploitation. These better answers considered Ngũgĩ's uses of symbolism and characterisation, Wanja being often cited as an example of a character who survives exploitation by becoming an exploiter herself.
- (b) Better responses appreciated the lyrical quality of the opening paragraph and referred to the ancient historical matter in the second paragraph, considering its effect in demonstrating the significance and importance of the region. Oral storytelling techniques were noted in the third paragraph, with expressions such as 'who will sing it?' and 'who'll tell it?' rooting the description in cultural traditions. Good responses included reference to the international trading significance of the country prior to the colonial period and saw the ridge of Ilmorog as a metaphor for the whole of Kenya and how it had been for thousands of years before colonisation.

Section B

Question 5 Poetry

Candidates who saw the poem as directly about a cat, an observational poem about a domesticated animal, tended to write more fluently and cogently than those who interpreted the animal to be a metaphor for something else, such as human idleness. Strong responses appreciated ways in which the poet captures the essence of a cat apparently owned but independent, and made sustained comment on verse form, irregular rhythm and rhyme, symbolism and personification. Stanza length, tone and use of repetition were considered appropriately with the final stanza being identified as different from the rest of the poem. Much attention was drawn to phrases such as 'three-focused shut eye', with varying interpretations. The poem's structure was considered by almost all candidates; many suggesting that its unevenness reflects ways in which, although a cat of habit, the animal's life is at the same time unpredictable and uneven; similar comments were made about the lack of consistent rhyme and much was made, usually well, of the occasional alliteration and assonance. Stronger responses saw the interrelationships between language, imagery and structure and discussed these aspects of the poem in a blended way.

Question 6 Drama

Stronger responses analysed relationships between the characters and their varied attitudes to marriage, noting that Pedro's view of marriage is transactional, linked to wealth and status, and contrasts with the views of both Florinda and Hellena. Some thoughtful responses applied a feminist reading to the extract, seeing Hellena in particular as a subversive feminist figure. Some perceptive answers argued that the sharper, more independent utterances of Florinda and Hellena characterise them as stronger than the men in all but historical societal advantage. Better answers also considered the text as drama, avoiding the paraphrase into which weaker answers lapsed. Better answers also showed some awareness of historical and social contexts – it was generally noted that the play's language was 'like Shakespeare'. Some subtleties in the dialogue were noted, for example the power hierarchy implied in Florinda addressing her brother as 'sir' as well as pleading 'sweet Pedro' as he carries their father's 'command'. Subtle readers of stage action suggested that Pedro's donning of his 'masking habit' implies deception and perhaps indicates that he is hiding his own feelings in order to enact his 'father's will'. Strong responses explored the differing imagery and ideas about freedom and constraint, while others drew attention to the humour of the drama, especially in Hellena's account of what she thinks will await her sister in the marital chamber, noting that while this is amusing to the audience, it is a horrifying prospect for Florinda.

LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

Paper 9695/22
Prose and Unseen

Key messages

- Better responses focus on the writing of the texts and how the meaning and content is communicated to the reader.
- Better essays include analysis of specific references and quotations to support points, particularly in the Prose (a) questions, where candidates select their own material to answer the question.
- Better responses to Prose (b) passage questions analyse the writing of the selected passage in detail.
- Better responses to the Unseen use the three prompts as guidance towards consideration of aspects of the text rather than as an essay structure. Dealing with them separately makes it difficult to write about the relationships between them.
- Weaker responses tend to be restricted to summary of the content of texts or extracts.

General comments

Most candidates showed knowledge of the content of the texts, and many were confident in exploring ways in which the writers communicate their concerns through choices of language, form and structure. Better essays focussed more clearly on ways in which the texts are written. This is particularly true of the (a) questions, where better essays included some analysis of specific episodes from the texts. Although there is no specific requirement for candidates to make connections between selected extracts in (b) questions and the text as a whole, better essays showed an awareness of the wider text which helpfully informed a view of the passage. Weaker answers to (b) questions, particularly responses to *Stories of Ourselves*, were limited by lack of knowledge of the texts from which the passages were taken. Stronger responses to questions in **Section B: Unseen** arose from careful and detailed reading and made specific points about the tone of language and relationships in the prose extract or about the structure, language and techniques of the poem.

Comments on specific questions

Section A

Question 1 E M FORSTER: *Howards End*

- (a) Stronger essays considered ways in which Forster contrasts London with rural locations in the novel and his frequent use of the adjective 'grey'. Some better essays also considered the presentation of London as a place of busy streets, shops, restaurants, concert halls and commercial enterprises, which shows the bustle of the city but also suggests that it is a place of competitiveness and consumption. Weaker answers focused on characters in their London settings.
- (b) Candidates responded to this passage with some confidence, exploring the relationships between Margaret and Henry, and between Margaret and Helen. The passage was often helpfully contextualised within the novel and within Edwardian society in general, especially relating to attitudes to Helen's pregnancy. The contrast between the reactions to the pregnancy shown by Margaret and Henry were examined, with Margaret's determination to stand by her sister. Many quoted the line 'if men came into Howards End it should be over her body' with sympathy and approval. Strong responses also selected examples of Margaret's behaviour showing how it was linked to the men's attempts to persuade her that she needed them. Such comments on her actions and body language ('shook her head... could not speak... remained clutching the keys' and 'looking him straight in the eyes') as well as on the dialogue between the characters showed an

appreciation of the uses of language and form. There was also some interesting discussion based around Margaret's liberalism and proto-feminist stance.

Question 2 ANDREA LEVY: *Small Island*

- (a) The development of loving feelings between Hortense and Gilbert was often the focus of better essays. Gilbert's sensitivity and empathy were often mentioned, while his speech challenging Bernard's racism was frequently seen as a significant turning point. Some stronger responses widened the scope and considered the fleeting illicit love between Michael and Mrs Ryder and Michael and Queenie, both affairs outside marriage but portrayed more attractively than the marriages themselves. A few also considered the unrequited love which Hortense has for Michael and the prospect of a loving parental relationship between her and Michael's son at the end of the novel.
- (b) Stronger answers recognised the position of this extract in the novel and its significance for Hortense's future. They also analysed Hortense's narrative voice, recognising that it may not be an altogether objective recollection of the episode described. Perceptive responses noted that in this retrospective narration she cannot admit the truth of her manipulation: her shrewd control of events in order to secure Gilbert for herself, reducing Celia from the status of best friend to a 'wretched girl' deserving of the reader's sympathy. The structure of Hortense's revelations about Celia's mother received some perceptive attention, as did the 'silence' that followed. Perceptive responses looked closely at the way Celia is portrayed through Hortense's descriptions of her, such as 'The playful light in her eyes was suddenly extinguished...stood still as stone...dropped her head to gaze at her feet', which portrayed her as a victim, while Hortense presents herself as one at the end of the passage. Weaker answers consisted of undeveloped narrative accounts of the passage.

Question 3 *Stories of Ourselves, Volume 2*

- (a) As nearly all the stories in the selection include male characters, candidates needed to consider how they might use particular characters to shape an argument. Some stronger responses chose to look at men as fathers, for example, while others considered how the characters conformed to or challenged stereotypes of men and masculinity. Fathers were a productive focus in discussions of *The Black Ball* and *The Plantation*. Contrasting portrayals of men's relationships with women were appropriately explored in *The Melancholy Hussar* and *Haywards Heath*. Comparison of *The Black Ball* and *The Paper Menagerie* gave candidates the opportunity to discuss the presentation of relationships between fathers and sons. Such responses usually avoided the more narrative approach of weaker essays.
- (b) Knowledge of the context of the rest of the story allowed more informed candidates to explore Mrs Burridge's 'kind of sadness' and careful preparations with greater discernment. Some better answers also included exploration of the presentation of the relationship between Mrs Burridge and Frank, picking up that when she asks her husband to carry heavy baskets for her, 'he grumbles; but he likes it when she asks', while 'she watches him with a kind of sadness'. A sense of habit and familiarity was also recognised in better answers that considered details such as 'she doesn't even feel like teasing him ...he would miss it if she stopped'. Others appropriately responded to language effects in the description of her voice as 'angular, prodding, metallic' and the way she appears to work in a 'robotic' way. Better answers viewed Mrs Burridge sympathetically, seeing her obsessive making of pickles as reflective of her determination not to let life grind her down, nor to allow her husband's and neighbours' lack of understanding get in the way. Weaker, more limited, responses to the passage showed little or no awareness of the rest of the story.

Question 4 NGŪGĨ WA THIONG'O: *Petals of Blood*

- (a) There were too few responses to this question to make a general comment appropriate.
- (b) There were too few responses to this question to make a general comment appropriate.

Section B

Question 5 Prose

Good answers responded sensitively to Martin Linke's arrest, perceptively commenting that the controlled unemotional writing mirrors Linke's own emotional control, which cracks only slightly when 'He blinked his wet eyes.' Candidates wrote appropriately about Linke's neat, methodical packing of his case, his acceptance of what is about to happen, his calm dignity and the impression that an injustice has been committed. Good essays also addressed the phrase 'These are confusing times' and recognised the suggestion of events being beyond the control of those caught up in them. Careful attention was paid to the presentation of his relationship with various figures of authority, and the way in which the arrest seems difficult for them too, though the quiet force of 'so-called gentlemen' was noted. Better essays considered Sergeant Richards' dialogue, Frank Lucas' removal of 'his captain's cap' and that Linke sits on an 'office armchair' rather than a 'cell bunk', with Linke himself commenting that 'I am among friends' while 'drinking a cup of tea'. Better essays also speculated on the reasons for Linke's arrest, the most astute recognising that he is not presented as a criminal and that the arrest lacks urgency, though it is expected. Some picked up Linke's long role contributing to the community and the support given to him and his family by Sergeant Richards, showing that he is valued even by those enforcing the law which has deemed his arrest necessary. Better essays identified and paid careful attention to the combination of detached narrative observation and dialogue in this passage.

Question 6 Poetry

Though a small number of responses insisted that the shoes are a metaphor, better answers focused on the shoes themselves, how they are presented and what their presentation indicates about the speaker. The owner of the shoes was sometimes interpreted as selfish and superficial, with a materialistic emphasis on owning what is perceived as the best while discarding unwanted possessions. Appropriate focus on the physical appearance of the shoes concentrated on the vibrancy of their colour and the imagery which associates them with riches and preciousness: 'red lacquer/... of a beautiful chest' and references to 'gold'. More perceptive responses noted the 'mock gold' of the 'fastenings' and 'maker's name', suggesting that such rich appearances are deceptive and that it is the shoes' ostentatious association with a brand which is attractive. The desire for the shoes alongside the certainty that they would cause discomfort led to a range of interpretations, but most recognised that the speaker is willing to undergo pain for the pleasure of wearing them, and supported this point with comment on the determined future tense of 'I shall wear them' in stanza 3 and the sense of pride and anticipation in the final stanza. Strong answers noted the sense of luxuriousness and luxuriating in the contrast made by the red shoes on the peaceful and calm 'white sofa'. A number of candidates commented on the regular structure of the poem and the poet's occasional use of repetition, rhyme and half rhyme. Such observations were most successful when accompanied by persuasive discussion of the effects of such choices. Weaker answers simply noted poetic features within a paraphrase of the stanzas.

LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

Paper 9695/23
Prose and Unseen

Key messages

- Better responses focus on the writing of the texts and how the meaning and content is communicated to the reader.
- Better essays include analysis of specific references and quotations to support points, particularly in the Prose (a) questions, where candidates select their own material to answer the question.
- Better responses to Prose (b) passage questions analyse the writing of the selected passage in detail.
- Better responses to the Unseen use the three prompts as guidance towards consideration of aspects of the text rather than as an essay structure. Dealing with them separately makes it difficult to write about the relationships between them.
- Weaker responses tend to be restricted to summary of the content of texts or extracts.

General comments

Most candidates showed knowledge of the content of the texts, and many were confident in exploring ways in which the writers communicate their concerns through choices of language, form and structure. Better essays focussed more clearly on ways in which the texts are written. This is particularly true of the (a) questions, where better essays included some analysis of specific episodes from the texts. Although there is no specific requirement for candidates to make connections between selected extracts in (b) questions and the text as a whole, better essays showed an awareness of the wider text which helpfully informed a view of the passage. Weaker answers to (b) questions, particularly responses to *Stories of Ourselves*, were limited by lack of knowledge of the texts from which the passages were taken. Stronger responses to questions in **Section B: Unseen** made specific points about the dramatic effects of the first extract or the structure and techniques of the prose extract.

Comments on specific questions

Section A

Question 1 E M FORSTER: *Howards End*

- (a) Stronger answers considered the presentation of men in the context of Edwardian society. The pragmatism and materialism of the Wilcoxes was often supported in better essays by specific references to episodes within the novel, and condemned. More balanced responses also considered Leonard Bast as a contrasting example of masculinity but concluded that he offers little hope either. The word 'govern' in the quotation was sometimes considered, noting the assumption that men will rule, while Margaret herself is intelligent, forthright and dignified, with greater understanding and empathy than any Wilcox, male or female. Weaker answers did not acknowledge the context of Margaret's statement, made to Mrs Avery near the end of the novel, or noted that it was an unusual thing for Margaret to say but did not develop the point further. Weaker essays simply disagreed with Margaret's statement and criticised the Wilcox men.
- (b) Stronger responses included thoughtful comments on the way Margaret becomes more impassioned over the course of the passage, and how this is demonstrated in the structure of lines 23–35 with broken sentences and repetition and when she asks Henry to forgive Helen as he has been forgiven. Good responses also showed understanding of Henry's characterisation, commenting on 'fortress' and looking at in the wider context of his presentation in the novel as a whole and at his obstinate refusal to recognise that he and Helen might be compared. The hypocrisy of double standards for men's and women's behaviour was noted in better essays. Less

successful essays summarised the argument and treated the characters as real people with little attention to Forster's presentation. Some weaker answers showed little awareness of the reasons for Margaret's anger.

Question 2 ANDREA LEVY: *Small Island*

- (a) Better responses to the question showed a secure grasp of the ways in which the two central relationships are balanced against each other and wrote thoughtfully about Gilbert's and Hortense's relationship growing and strengthening while Queenie's and Bernard's slowly withers. Close references to some selected episodes helped to ground more successful answers in the text.
- (b) Sensitive and thoughtful responses recognised the simple sad power of the last line, particularly the use of the familiar 'pa', and observed that it enables the reader to respond sympathetically to Bernard's character which Levy portrays less attractively elsewhere in the novel. Many candidates commented thoughtfully on the uses of language, especially in the first paragraph with the 'return' of Arthur like 'a parcel' and the way in which he is 'marched up the steps' – better responses commenting here on the use of the passive voice, and exploring the contrast between the life Agnes had imagined him living and the reality of his experience, as well as the poignancy of 'smiling at her hero's return'. Better responses also included deft comments on structure, considering the effects of the single sentence paragraphs of ll.13, 28 and 34. There were perceptive comments on the contrast of 'got his body back' and 'lost his mind', and on the naivety of the young Bernard's hope that someone might find it for him. The calm fortitude of Bernard's mother, dealing with the results of Arthur's mental state, portrayed so graphically in the passage, attracted some sensitive commentary, as did the trench/flowerbed in the penultimate paragraph. Candidates often showed good awareness of the context of shell shock, or PTSD, though very few recognised the significance of the white feather, which explains why Agnes is so angry. Weaker essays were narrative and descriptive summaries of the passage,

Question 3 *Stories of Ourselves, Volume 2*

- (a) There were too few responses to this question to make a general comment appropriate.
- (b) The passage from *The Plantation* included a lot of detail, giving opportunities for candidates to explore Adagha's writing. Better essays effectively considered the language used to create initial tension and the unfolding horror of events, noting foreshadowing in descriptions of heat and the sun at the outset and the suggestion of hell in the metaphoric 'demons' at the end. Better essays also responded well to the rich imagery of the second paragraph and the 'avid thirst' of the villagers and their hunger for the fuel. There was also appropriate consideration of the contrast between the behaviour of the adults and the children in the middle of the passage, emphasised in the alliteration of 'giggled with glee' and 'bubbled and brawled'. Better responses also noted the grim irony of the boys' game, which foreshadows death, before the nightmarish description of the explosion.

Question 4 NGŪGĨ WA THIONG'O: *Petals of Blood*

- (a) There were too few responses to this question to make a general comment appropriate.
- (b) There were too few responses to this question to make a general comment appropriate.

Section B

Question 5 Drama

Good answers showed secure understanding of the argument between Sadiku and Lakunle, and their contrasting views. Straightforward answers were sympathetic to Lakunle, noting how he speaks with 'conviction', and plans a beneficial and well-intended 'transformation' of the town, but weaker answers failed to consider the final twelve lines of the passage with its direct insults aimed at Sadiku. Better answers recognised Lakunle's threats to overturn traditional ways with attendant destruction of the environment. Better essays commented on Sadiku's initial confidence and the way Lakunle breaks that down, and there was some thoughtful contrast between Sadiku's 'cackling laughter' at the outset and her 'staring in terror' towards the end. Stronger answers commented on the apportioning of the dialogue in relation to the power dynamic unfolding in the passage as Sadiku stops talking, and on the transition from prose to verse. Some

stronger responses explored dramatic effects and stage directions and considered the effect on the audience of continuing to hear Lakunle's voice even as the characters leave the stage. Weaker responses lacked full detailed consideration of Lakunle's long speech and its implications.

Question 6 Prose

Better responses paid good attention to the narrative voice, noting the precision of date and weather and the brevity of the opening sentences, as if these details were embedded in the speaker's mind. Some good answers also commented on the factual unemotional medical definition of hydrocephalus and suggested that it remains a defining influence and source of worry in Donald's life. Some also referred to the factual tone of the ominous closing sentence of the second paragraph. There were sensitive responses to the narrator's imagined dance, though in weaker essays there was the assumption that he was literally holding Janet up. Confident answers made good observations about the structure of the passage – for instance noting the way that the drift into reverie in l.25 is interrupted by the encouraging words of the surgeon and a return to reality, and that the conscious narrative is in shorter sentences than those used to convey the narrator's imagination. A few good answers noted the shift from the past tense to the present but most responses dealt well with the second part of the passage, seeing the thin ice as a metaphor for the husband's enduring concerns for his wife's safety and wellbeing, for his need to still hold her up. There was recognition of poignancy in the husband's last words, but a number of candidates argued that his concerns for his wife were suffocating and prevented them from enjoying a full life together.

LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

Paper 9695/31
Shakespeare and Drama

Key messages

- The texts on this paper are plays, written to be performed. Candidates need to acknowledge the genre of the texts in their writing.
- With **(b)** type questions, the passage printed needs to be the central focus of the answer and needs to be considered in detail. It is not a springboard for a general essay.

General comments

Although it is often not possible for candidates to see a play live in the theatre, the genre of the texts on this paper should always be kept in mind. This means that candidates should constantly be asking themselves about how the action of the play might be seen. Who is on the stage? Who is trying to influence who? How does one particular moment fit into the pattern of the whole? How is a playwright shaping a scene for effect? As candidates go deeper, they need to tune their analysis in terms of dramatic action as well as on what is being said. It is, therefore, not relevant to talk about punctuation, though a point about pauses or hesitations, for example, might be useful to demonstrate a character's state of mind. In **(b)** questions there are often stage directions, and these are worthy of consideration, particularly when dealing with plays like *The Glass Menagerie*, where Williams is explicit about staging and its effect on the action.

All candidates showed knowledge of the texts that they had studied. More skilled candidates were able to shape their knowledge to respond to the particular demands of a question, producing a coherent argument. For some candidates, sustaining relevance proved a challenge. To achieve well, candidates need to have a good understanding of phrases like 'dramatic presentation' or 'dramatic effects.' The best answers are argued in detail and present firmly based close textual analysis in order to support an overall case.

Many of the candidates were shy about using the names of the writers. While this may seem a trivial point, if texts seem to emerge from nowhere, it is often easy to forget that there is a guiding, shaping intelligence at work in a piece of writing. There is significant merit in sentences that engage with the writer as a writer. Candidates need to show understanding that the characters on stage are not speaking or acting of their own volition; everything that they say or do forms part of a larger pattern which is dictated by the writer. Use of writers' names is a good method for pulling discussion towards matters of form, structure and language, the technical aspects of the texts under consideration.

Background information about a writer may be useful, although candidates sometimes get distracted: Tennessee Williams's relationship with his sister, for example, may be of interest to the biographer, but under the constraints of time of an exam, it is irrelevant. The focus must constantly be upon the play as an achieved work of art, not on the process of its creation.

With **(b)** type answers, it is vital that the candidates understand that the question requires close, detailed discussion of the passage presented. They should range fully across the play, and they must use detailed points from the passage to provide the jumping off points, and they must keep returning to the passage in order to demonstrate that the techniques and concerns here are typical, or perhaps atypical, of the play as a whole. Candidates who give a line by line account of the passage often hamper themselves considerably and run out of time. There is no need to give an account of what happens. Rather it is important to take a strategic view from the beginning, though there are times when some element of context within the play is relevant. Less satisfactory answers could often be improved by some close reference to, and quotation from, particular moments. In all essays there should be moments where the candidate engages closely with the language and the particularities of a scene or exchange in order to anchor the discussion firmly and fulfil the need for analysis, which is one of the assessment objectives.

The contexts of any literary text are many and various. When considering them, it is important that candidates also take into account their relevance to the particular question that they have been asked. Candidates should be wary of generalising statements ('In Shakespeare's time, everyone believed in the divine right of kings') or of making texts fit the context, rather than the other way round. Writing about contexts should arise from a need to put in some background, not from a desire to include it simply because it has been learned. If candidates are seeking to give a historical context, it should be accurate.

The mark scheme asks that candidates should consider and evaluate different interpretations of texts. Candidates often do so with phrases such as 'another possibility', or 'the action here could be seen as...'. At the very top end, candidates are often able to quote critics and define their own reactions to a text in relation to the critics' views. Critics should be there for a purpose, to help shape an argument, not simply to demonstrate that they have been read. Candidates should be wary about setting up imagined, non-specific views ('A feminist critic could argue') simply for polemical purposes. Insights gained from watching filmed versions of plays or actual stage performances are often useful in showing awareness of how texts might be variously interpreted.

Comments on specific questions

Section A

Question 1 – WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE: *The Winter's Tale*

- (a) Better answers to this question on the healing effects of time offered a convincing awareness of how the play changes tone in its central acts and the passing of time brings forth Perdita and Florizel who symbolise new beginnings and hope for the future. A number of very good answers explored the somewhat compromised tone of the end, where it could be argued there is much that is covered up rather than healed. Weaker answers never got beyond the episodes in Sicilia and thus did not take up the question's invitation to discuss redemption and forgiveness in the play. It was important to establish what had been lost but this was not the central thrust of the question and should have been dealt with quickly. Weaker answers were simply character studies of Leontes, sometimes with a parallel discussion of Polixenes, which did not lead towards a strategic view of the question. Strangely, the character of Time (Act 4, Scene 1) was often ignored, despite his speech giving the tone of the last acts of the play with 'the argument of Time'.
- (b) Most candidates understood the significance of this scene, though some failed to point out that Polixenes is in disguise at this moment. Good answers discussed the contrast between generations and Perdita's natural goodness and lack of 'art'. Better candidates were aware of the significance of the discussion about the flowers, and of the irony or hypocrisy of Polixenes upholding the principle of marrying 'a gentler scion to the wildest stock'. There was often useful comment on how Perdita is unafraid of these older gentleman visitors and speaks with an openness, sincerity, grace and economy of expression that she has unknowingly inherited from her mother. The question asked for 'implications for the play as a whole' but only the best answers really engaged with the thematic concerns of nature and nurture, raised in this passage, that have implications throughout the play.

Question 2 – WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE: *King Lear*

- (a) Successful answers made links between the two plots of the play, with many pointing out that the Gloucester plot is a parallel, not a sub-plot. Good essays commented on the conflict between generations and pointed to the fact that both Lear and Gloucester are made to pay for their past errors. There were some interesting discussions on a thematic/dramatic level about the significance of physical and metaphorical blindness in the play. Parallels were also drawn between the virtues of Cordelia and Edgar, and between the pernicious evil of Goneril, Regan and Edmund.
- (b) Better responses to this passage closely analysed the speeches (particularly for language) of the daughters and discussed the different ways in which they might be judged or justified. This led to good discussion of possible responses. Some regarded Goneril and Regan as being manipulated and used to a controlling father who must be obeyed and saw them as a reflection of what they had learned from their father. Stronger responses made good use of links to the wider play, for example when considering that Cordelia loved Lear the most. Good responses also discussed the significance of 'nothing' and also how the word was used at other times in the play.

Section B

Question 3 – ATHOL FUGARD: *Township Plays*

- (a) Better answers were able to articulate the feelings of the characters towards the state which has limited or forestalled their ability to live full lives. *Sizwe Bansi is Dead* and *The Island* were the most used texts here, in part because the relationship between state and individual is so vividly presented in terms of the passport in the first and in the trial scene in the second. The best essays engaged fully in the detail of the text and in the dramatic situations presented. With weaker candidates there was sometimes a tendency to fill in the historical background at the expense of discussions of ‘dramatic presentation’.
- (b) Better responses dealt well with the context of a bureaucratic system that subjects people to economic hardship and restrictions on movement. Good appreciations also explored tensions in the scene and appreciated how the apartheid system creates distrust amongst all, not merely between whites and blacks. On the whole, responses tended to stay within the context of *No-Good Friday* and focused on themes rather than on dramatic methods that are typical of the plays as a whole.

Question 4 – TENNESSEE WILLIAMS: *The Glass Menagerie*

- (a) Most responses gave a clear account of how Tom is a victim of economic circumstances and a dysfunctional and needy family. There were often sensible discussions of his attempts to escape. Better answers conveyed how the whole play being a memory play offers the possibility of Tom shaping and editing his past and his response to it. The best essays often offered the thought that part of Tom’s suffering might be his own psychological limitations: the longings that are presented are far stronger than his ability to overcome them. Good answers discussed the stage directions, particularly the screen legends and the symbolism of the fire escape and Tom’s reference to Malvolio the Magician’s escaping trick. One or two candidates even pointed out that Malvolio’s trick is precisely that, a conjuring trick that presents an illusion of escape, not a reality.
- (b) More searching answers commented on the stage directions, on the image of Amanda as a girl, for example, or the roll of thunder and the coming storm. They also made much of the various ways in which Amanda reverts to a younger, perhaps imagined, social self, when she is supposed to be looking to pair off Laura. Many good responses commented on the way that she speaks, reverting to her more southern accent and a decidedly flirtatious tone of voice. Nearly all candidates commented on how Amanda dominates the scene and on how typical this is of her dominance in the scenes in which she appears. A few responses noted that Jim, supposedly the focus of their attention in the scene, only gets to say one word, a sign that the family as a whole constantly looks inward to its own tensions and dysfunctionality. Weaker responses focused on a character study of Amanda for the most part.

Question 5 – TOM STOPPARD: *Indian Ink*

- (a) Better answers recognised Flora’s reaction to the exotic nature of India but also pointed out that as an artist she is an outsider in England too. The best answers were able to analyse her reactions to Indian art and to the Indian people, with some responses contrasting her enthusiastic naivete with the view of the established order, as represented by Durance. A few good responses focused on her diaries and letters as demonstrating how she feels the need to comment on her experiences. There were some interesting discussions of her willingness to engage with India through art and her relationship with Das. In terms of context, the candidates who talked about differences between Indian poetry and English poetry, or about the representation of the human figure in both were acute and analytical, used contexts to substantiate and deepen a discussion, rather than simply as learned facts that had to be included, whatever the question. Some responses at the lower end struggled to pin down the idea of an outsider.
- (b) Good responses were able to make clear contrasts between Flora and Durance’s views of India, though many pointed out that in this passage she is being tempted to see the country through Durance’s eyes and experiences. Very good responses noted that Durance’s attitudes are ambiguous: he patronises the ‘natives’ and yet recognises that ‘India smells wonderful’. Better essays also developed ideas about the contrasting attitudes of British men and British women towards India, pointing out that in the beginning India was seen as ‘a man’s country’ and that the error of colonialism lay in letting in the women. There was some effective use of context and brief

exposition of the role of the East India Company in these answers. Weaker essays took a line-by-line view of the passage, rather than a strategic one, and often failed to consider the last third of the passage in which Flora's understanding of the oppressiveness of British rule deepens considerably.

LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

Paper 9695/32
Shakespeare and Drama

Key messages

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The contexts of any literary text are many and various. When considering them, it is important that candidates also take into account their relevance to the particular question that they have been asked. Candidates should be wary of generalising statements ('In Shakespeare's time, everyone believed in the divine right of kings') or of making texts fit the context, rather than the other way round. Writing about contexts should arise from a need to put in some background, not from a desire to include it simply because it has been learned. If candidates are seeking to give a historical context, it should be accurate.

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Comments on specific questions

Section A

Question 1 – WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE: *The Winter's Tale*

- (a) More successful answers were able to deal succinctly with the early sections of the play so that they could move on to talk about regeneration, reconciliation and forgiveness. Some responses used the similarities between Leontes and Polixenes (presented in the second half of the play as intolerant and authoritarian) in order to make the link. Many saw the dramatic significance of the jealousy as providing a tragic first half of the play, which is then blown away by the breezy jollity of Act 4. Some of the best answers were able to make links between the understated grace of Hermione, which is unknowingly inherited by her daughter. There were some interesting discussions of the last scene of the play. Weaker responses dealt with Leontes' jealousy without ever getting to a moment where they considered its relationship to the latter part of the play. These discussions were not without merit, and they often showed an ability to analyse language and action, but they were, by definition, limited and restricted.
- (b) Better responses saw the nature of the love between the two and some very good responses explored Florizel's view of Perdita as already a queen and as almost a goddess. Some candidates were able to exploit what they had read about pastoral conventions in order to talk about the elevation of language and constant reference to the gods (Jove, Jupiter, Neptune, Lady Fortune) which makes an audience aware that there is strong symbolism at work here in relation to ideas of reconciliation and renewal in the whole text. Many of the best responses discussed Perdita as both symbolic figure and a young girl who has real worries about how her relationship with Florizel can work out in the real world. As always with (b) questions, some weaker essays were simple accounts of the scene, though often placing it within the context of the play as a whole.

Question 2 – WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE: *King Lear*

- (a) Virtually all responses were able to provide character studies of King Lear and Gloucester but the question asked that these two be compared and contrasted. It was not enough simply to write about one and then the other. Better answers discussed Lear and Gloucester in relation to their children, or in relation to their literal and metaphorical blindness and there were some interesting arguments about the status of both as tragic heroes, with the issue of which of them is more sinned against than sinning fully aired. There was often useful discussion of the pair as 'unaccommodated' men after their fall from power. The best answers made close and continued reference to particular moments in the play.
- (b) Lear's reaction to Cordelia's death and then his own death provoked strong responses in virtually all candidates. The best responses dealt with Lear as both King ('He but usurp'd his life') and as faulted human being stretched out on the rack of 'this tough world'. In weaker essays, the roles of both Kent and Edgar in this scene were often ignored, despite their commentary on the action that is designed to shape an audience's reaction to what is seen and heard. The best answers were able to contrast Lear's language and action here (humble and self-aware) with his imperiousness early on in the play.

Section B

Question 3 – ATHOL FUGARD: *Township Plays*

- (a) Better answers focused on the relationship between the individual and the state, though there were other good answers that looked closely at relationships between men and woman or employers and employees. One or two candidates wrote on only one play, which meant that they did not cover the full requirements of the question.
- (b) Responses to this question appropriately engaged with the extract as the end of the play. There were sensible discussions about how Fugard explored the nature of identity here, together with man's relationship with the state as seen here and elsewhere in the plays. The best answers were able to see that here and elsewhere Fugard's characters are unable to act independently so remain stuck in the roles assigned to them. Responses that filled in the background on apartheid lightly and applied it to the text did better than those that explained the whole political situation in South Africa in detail.

Question 4 – TENNESSEE WILLIAMS: *The Glass Menagerie*

- (a) All candidates were able to see that Tom and Laura share a past of abandonment, a present of entrapment. More sophisticated responses were able to talk about the duality of Tom's relationship with his sister, its representation in 'real time' on the stage, together with his retrospective, guilt-filled commentary at the end. Many good responses also explored the symbolism of the play, commenting on the significance of the fire escape for Tom, the glass menagerie for Laura. There were some interesting responses that suggested that Tom's presentation of his own past in relation to his sister (the whole is a memory play) might well present him in a favourable light of his own choosing. On the whole contexts were dealt with well, though some candidates dwelt too long on the economic situation of the 1930s or the imperatives of the American dream. As always, in better essays context was only discussed when it helped an argument move forwards.
- (b) The vast majority of responses to this question focused on family matters, and in particular the relationship between Amanda and Laura. There was often useful discussion of Laura's nervousness when with her mother, and of Amanda's overbearing intolerance. The best answers were able to deal with matters of setting by commenting on the typing chart or Amanda's staged self-dramatization ('She lets the hat and gloves fall to the floor — a bit of acting'). There were some interesting responses which dwelt more fully on Williams's techniques of staging – the charts, the pauses, the use of music, the background projections – in order to look across the play and suggest that this extract contains many of the methods used elsewhere.

Question 5 – TOM STOPPARD: *Indian Ink*

- (a) All responses were able to discuss some of the ways in which Stoppard presents India as exotic to English eyes. There were interesting discussions of Indian art and attitudes towards sex. Very good responses engaged fully with the detail of particular moments and episodes, often discussing the scenes with Flora and Das. Some candidates rightly saw the episodes with Mrs Swan as providing a distancing commentary on Flora's perceptions of India. Most responses recognised that India is seen through Flora's rose-coloured spectacles, but some reflected on Durance's views and noted that the 'modern' section of the play shows awareness of how Flora's India was already dying. Less satisfactory answers spent too much time filling in the context of British imperialism: the main focus of an answer must be on the text itself, not on its background.
- (b) Better answers were developed from recognition that the extract invokes some of the complexities and ironies of colonialism (pictures of coaching inns in Anglo-Indian homes in India; ornamental elephants in a British home) that are less obvious in the scenes involving Flora. Contexts of the Free India campaign were often evoked to good effect. Many good answers pointed to the easy relationship between Mrs Swan and Anish that is so clearly present at this moment: for them, history is history, no longer a source of continuing antagonism or resentment.

LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

Paper 9695/33
Shakespeare and Drama

Key messages

- The texts on this paper are plays, written to be performed. Candidates need to acknowledge the genre of the texts in their writing.
- With **(b)** type questions, the passage printed needs to be the central focus of the answer and needs to be considered in detail. It is not a springboard for a general essay.

General comments

Although it is often not possible for candidates to see a play live in the theatre, the genre of the texts on this paper should always be kept in mind. This means that candidates should constantly be asking themselves about how the action of the play might be seen. Who is on the stage? Who is trying to influence who? How does one particular moment fit into the pattern of the whole? How is a playwright shaping a scene for effect? As candidates go deeper, they need to tune their analysis in terms of dramatic action as well as on what is being said. It is, therefore, not relevant to talk about punctuation, though a point about pauses or hesitations, for example, might be useful to demonstrate a character's state of mind. In **(b)** questions there are often stage directions, and these are worthy of consideration, particularly when dealing with plays like *The Glass Menagerie*, where Williams is explicit about staging and its effect on the action.

All candidates showed knowledge of the texts that they had studied. More skilled candidates were able to shape their knowledge to respond to the particular demands of a question, producing a coherent argument. For some candidates, sustaining relevance proved a challenge. To achieve well, candidates need to have a good understanding of phrases like 'dramatic presentation' or 'dramatic effects.' The best answers are argued in detail and present firmly based close textual analysis in order to support an overall case.

Many of the candidates were shy about using the names of the writers. While this may seem a trivial point, if texts seem to emerge from nowhere, it is often easy to forget that there is a guiding, shaping intelligence at work in a piece of writing. There is significant merit in sentences that engage with the writer as a writer. Candidates need to show understanding that the characters on stage are not speaking or acting of their own volition; everything that they say or do forms part of a larger pattern which is dictated by the writer. Use of writers' names is a good method for pulling discussion towards matters of form, structure and language, the technical aspects of the texts under consideration.

Background information about a writer may be useful, although candidates sometimes get distracted: Tennessee Williams's relationship with his sister, for example, may be of interest to the biographer, but under the constraints of time of an exam, it is irrelevant. The focus must constantly be upon the play as an achieved work of art, not on the process of its creation.

With **(b)** type answers, it is vital that the candidates understand that the question requires close, detailed discussion of the passage presented. They should range fully across the play, and they must use detailed points from the passage to provide the jumping off points, and they must keep returning to the passage in order to demonstrate that the techniques and concerns here are typical, or perhaps atypical, of the play as a whole. Candidates who give a line by line account of the passage often hamper themselves considerably and run out of time. There is no need to give an account of what happens. Rather it is important to take a strategic view from the beginning, though there are times when some element of context within the play is relevant. Less satisfactory answers could often be improved by some close reference to, and quotation from, particular moments. In all essays there should be moments where the candidate engages closely with the language and the particularities of a scene or exchange in order to anchor the discussion firmly and fulfil the need for analysis, which is one of the assessment objectives.

The contexts of any literary text are many and various. When considering them, it is important that candidates also take into account their relevance to the particular question that they have been asked. Candidates should be wary of generalising statements ('In Shakespeare's time, everyone believed in the divine right of kings') or of making texts fit the context, rather than the other way round. Writing about contexts should arise from a need to put in some background, not from a desire to include it simply because it has been learned. If candidates are seeking to give a historical context, it should be accurate.

The mark scheme asks that candidates should consider and evaluate different interpretations of texts. Candidates often do so with phrases such as 'another possibility', or 'the action here could be seen as...'. At the very top end, candidates are often able to quote critics and define their own reactions to a text in relation to the critics' views. Critics should be there for a purpose, to help shape an argument, not simply to demonstrate that they have been read. Candidates should be wary about setting up imagined, non-specific views ('A feminist critic could argue') simply for polemical purposes. Insights gained from watching filmed versions of plays or actual stage performances are often useful in showing awareness of how texts might be variously interpreted.

Comments on specific questions

Section A

Question 1 – WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE: *The Winter's Tale*

- (a) Good answers were very clear about the role that Perdita and Florizel play in the reconciliations of the end of the play and the change of tone in Act 4. Better responses were able to engage with the detail of particular scenes, often dwelling on Perdita's natural goodness and making a connection between the young lovers and the seasons. A small number of weaker responses wanted to explore contrasts between the worlds of the first and second half of the play and got completely diverted, with references to the second half of the play present almost as afterthoughts.
- (b) Better responses were able to see that this moment is pivotal in Leontes's descent into jealous rage, with his words about Hermione plainly at odds with what is presented to the audience through Hermione's dignified responses, her loyalty towards Leontes, and her patient attempt to see his rage as temporary. The best answers referred relevantly to themes and moments elsewhere in the play, particularly in Act 5, which show Hermione restored and Leontes penitent. The weakest answers simply told the story or narrated the passage.

Question 2 – WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE: *King Lear*

- (a) Good responses engaged in comparisons and contrast between Lear's daughters and Gloucester's sons with appropriate discussion of the opening scene and of Edmund's soliloquies. Some good responses also remarked that Edmund perhaps has more reason for treating his father badly than Goneril and Regan have for treating Lear badly. Some good responses interestingly deepened the argument by contrasting the behaviour and language of the ungrateful and the grateful children. Weaker answers were too preoccupied with contexts of the role of kings at the time, or the status of illegitimate children.
- (b) Stronger responses commented on the familiarity between Lear and the Fool, and on the reversal of roles that takes place here and discussed some of the ways in which the Fool – both here and elsewhere in the play – offers wisdom under the guise of foolery. Good responses also discussed the use of the word 'nothing' and here and elsewhere in the play. Few essays (perhaps a sign that most responses took a line by line, not strategic view of the passage) got as far as the discussion of crowns offered by the Fool at the end of the extract.

Section B

Question 3 – ATHOL FUGARD: *Township Plays*

- (a) There were too few responses to this question to make a general comment appropriate.
- (b) There were too few responses to this question to make a general comment appropriate.

Question 4 – TENNESSEE WILLIAMS: *The Glass Menagerie*

- (a) Very good responses linked the presentation of the play through Tom’s memory with the dramatic presentation of failure because the ‘events’ are all seen retrospectively and lead towards his lonely excavation of his past. Other strong responses looked at Amanda’s self-delusion and her failure as wife and mother, trapped, like Tom, by attachment to the past and her vision of a perfect family. Less strong answers focused on the family as victims of social and economic circumstances, but here the discussions of context often outweighed reference to details from the text. Better answers responded to the particular nudge of ‘dramatic presentation’ and focused on technique, not on story.
- (b) Good responses to the passage explored the presentation here of the relationship between Tom and his mother. More sophisticated answers linked Tom’s enthusiasm for the movies to his desire for escape and illusion. Good answers also focused on the ludicrousness of his exaggerations towards the end of the passage, contrasting his older self, as commentator on the action, with his earlier, immature illusions about what he might do once he escaped from home and the Continental Shoemakers.

Question 5 – TOM STOPPARD: *Indian Ink*

- (a) Competent answers provided a character study of Eldon Pike but few really got to the centre of his pedantry, his inability to separate out the relevant and pertinent parts of Flora’s life from the detail of her everyday existence. Good essays included discussions of his relationship with Eleanor Swan, whose humorous and often ironic treatment of him adds significantly to the dramatic presentation and our opinion of him.
- (b) Better responses discussed dramatic methods and the effects and significance of time shifts. Better essays also discussed contexts and how Flora as a single and independent woman was presented. Weaker answers did not mention Mrs Swan and the important perspective of Flora’s voice being ‘heard’ via her letters.

LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

Paper 9695/41
Pre- and Post-1900 Poetry and Prose

Key messages

- Understanding of genre differences between poetry and prose is important in developing awareness of the forms of literary texts as well as for rubric fulfilment. Candidates should incorporate knowledge and understanding of the conventions of poetry and prose texts in their answers.
- Comprehensive application of the assessment objectives leads to the most successful responses in all levels of achievement.
- Subject terminology should be used as part of a critical approach to analysis and personal response rather than as commentary for its own sake. Better answers use subject terminology as a useful tool in exploring writers' intentions and defining literary effects on readers.
- Better responses select and integrate textual reference and support in the argument and development of their essays.

General comments

A very wide range of performance was seen with some very well-informed and impressive answers alongside less accomplished responses. There were several problems with rubric infringements from some candidates either answering on two pre-1900 texts or two post-1900 texts. Other rubric infringements came from candidates who answered on two prose texts or two poetry texts. Better answers applied critical analysis to the texts studied and developed a personal response with awareness of varying opinions and other interpretations. The best answers reflected a comprehensive response to all assessment objectives with the question securely in view. In **(a)** questions, candidates who used robust knowledge and understanding to support clear arguments performed most positively. This held true for **(b)** answers (the extract-based questions) and worked well where candidates understood the context of the given extract and its significance to the whole text. Answers that tracked the extract with little awareness of the wider view were less convincing. Knowledge and understanding often worked in tandem and underpinned analysis and personal response. Evaluation of varying opinions ranged from astute reflections on critical commentaries to an awareness that other opinions might exist and what the contexts for these views might be. Some candidates made brief reference to other literature in their answers but these references lacked relevance and were a distraction from the question. An example would be a candidate trying to make a link between Nancy in *Oliver Twist* to a character in *King Lear* or a link between Offred and a character in Sylvia Plath's poetry. Most answers communicated complex ideas fluently and developed ideas in detail.

Comments on specific questions

Section A

Question 1 JANE AUSTEN: *Persuasion*

- (a) This question required candidates to write about the theme of pride in the novel. Better answers were able to differentiate subtle features of the characters and made some useful references to critics' views to address AO5. These answers recognised the breadth of pride across the characters, such as Anne priding herself on doing the right thing. Some good answers considered the military pride of naval officers, from the Admiral and Mrs Croft to less prominent figures such as Wentworth, and there was some valid contextual information given on the Napoleonic wars leading to advancement of status for naval officers. Sometimes this was developed into a view of narrative structure with some candidates struggling to clarify arguments relating to this aspect. Most answers focused on Sir Walter and Elizabeth leading to a negative view of pride. The least successful answers tended to be narrative based attempts with some forced applications of the concept of pride to fit with knowledge of the text.
- (b) The extract is from Volume 1, Chapter 9 of the novel. Good answers demonstrated awareness of narrative voice through which the reader only views Anne's version of events. This attracted some interesting and sympathetic personal responses about Anne's feelings, the best of which reflected an original viewpoint. Weaker answers tended to restrict themselves to a repetitive treatment of Anne's feelings of embarrassment and discomfort and did not define the precise context. Stronger answers discussed Anne's weakness and Wentworth's 'mastery' as a foreshadowing of later events at Lyme. Less successful answers lacked fundamental understanding and offered little analysis of language or context.

Question 2 GEOFFREY CHAUCER: *The Knight's Tale*

- (a) Better answers on the presentation of Emily developed approaches based on the likely contrasts between a contemporary and modern readership and explored methods beyond characterisation and contrast. They showed contextual awareness of aspects of chivalry and marriage with the best answers considering the conventions of Courtly Love. Better answers also used the quotation in the question as stimulus to argument, showing empathy towards Emily and her objectification by the men who love her. Weaker essays offered straightforward character studies with focus on retelling what Emily goes through and with reliance on narration.
- (b) Better answers analysed the effects of language, form and structure in depth in order to discuss Chaucer's presentation of Palamon in the extract, some considering the context of the passage in the wider text and reflecting on its foreshadowing of the eventual outcome. Better answers considered the language, selecting judiciously and relating to arguments about love and chivalry. Weaker answers were restricted to Palamon's devotion to Emily with the least successful responses presenting general essays on Palamon.

Question 3 CHARLES DICKENS: *Oliver Twist*

- (a) Stronger responses dealt with the social and cultural implications of the relationships between adults and children, referring to the Poor Law and conditions in London at the time. Oliver's relationships with Nancy, Fagin and Bill Sykes and his early interactions with Mr Bumble were considered. One answer developed an interesting commentary on Oliver's relationship with his dead mother. Weaker answers tended to be plot driven, working their way through Oliver's interactions with adults throughout the course of the novel. Some weaker essays struggled to get away from details of context and into a focus on the relationships.
- (b) Better answers conveyed understanding of Nancy's central dilemma, her moral and emotional conflict and responded to the passage with effective personal engagement and analysis. Stronger answers focused successfully on a comparison between Rose and Nancy and commented on the use of biblical language. A few astute answers understood the role of the dialogue in relation to Dickens's narrative intentions, with one commenting: 'Dickens lets the reader draw their own conclusions and has no need to use a narrator to control them'. Some better answers extended interpretation to consider Nancy's representation in social and cultural terms, considering her role as part of the criminal fraternity. There was also some reference in better answers to the foreshadowing of her death in the passage with the ominous ending, 'if I am alive'. Weaker

answers did not realise that Nancy is referring to Sykes in 'I cannot leave him now'. Weaker answers tended to repeat general messages about Nancy's upset and anguish or presented narrative summaries of her story

Question 4 **EMILY DICKINSON: Selected Poems**

- (a) Stronger answers selected three appropriate poems with which to answer this question on the power of nature. These answers integrated relevant quotation and understood the relationship between Dickinson's religious upbringing and the losses she suffered. Stronger answers used quotation effectively and commented critically on a range of effects. Less successful answers demonstrated little knowledge and understanding of the poems and focus on the question tended to be partial or drifting.
- (b) The best answers analysed the poem perceptively and were able to incorporate views of aspects such as punctuation use and capitalisation within the framework of detailed critical awareness. Context was dealt with sympathetically in these answers and candidates explored the sensory references to hearing, body temperature and taste. The bells sticking out their tongues were seen as mocking the persona and there was some sensitive awareness of the depression suggested in the poem. Weaker answers tended to rely on narration, paraphrase, and sometimes lengthy quotations (sometimes as much as a full stanza copied out) or identifying poetic techniques without exploring their effects. Other weak answers became confused and lost direction in their interpretations or lacked coherence, with some referring to Dickinson as writing from beyond the grave. Others merely repeated that Dickinson was preoccupied with death or focused on one or two aspects of the poem.

Question 5 **THOMAS HARDY: *Tess of the D'Urbervilles***

- (a) The relationship between Angel and Tess featured in most answers with evidence of the difference between male and female attitudes to marriage appearing in some. Better answers also included Alec's proposal to Tess and reflected on this or dealt with marriage itself rather than just Angel's view of it. There was strong personal response to Angel Clare in most answers. Most answers showed sound knowledge and understanding, but little focused analysis. The weakest answers tended to be sketchy in detail and lacked textual support, struggling to develop beyond quite narrow areas of the novel.
- (b) Stronger answers analysed the description of Tess in this passage to open a wider discussion of her situation, character and experiences. This was also the case with the character of Angel. Some successful responses explored Hardy's use of techniques to set up his characters in different ways that inform their personality and behaviour in the wider novel. Weaker responses jumped straight to the presentation of Angel with little reference to Hardy's detailed description of Tess. There was some appropriate discussion of the class difference between Tess and Angel with reference to other parts of the text. Some candidates saw this in blunt terms of Angel as rich and Tess as poor while better responses related the dancing to aspects of rigid class barriers at that time.

Question 6 **JOHN MILTON: *Paradise Lost, Books IX and X***

- (a) Better answers would convey an understanding of the fundamental aspects of Puritan belief and what the Garden of Eden represented but, for the most part, candidates did not mention the link to paradise and there was confusion over the Fall of Man and Satan's involvement.
- (b) Some very successful answers contained lucid analysis of the subtlety and ambiguity of Satan's presentation and offered critical opinion to refine and develop their arguments. Most answers demonstrated sound understanding of Satan's character and his relationship with God. Some context points were well used. Weaker essays struggled with the complexity of the passage but understanding and personal response to Satan's character emerged. Less confident answers showed confusion about the concept of the fallen angel.

Section B

Question 7 **MARGARET ATWOOD: *The Handmaid's Tale***

- (a) Stronger answers showed clear understanding of the question and used the quotation as a focus for their answers. These answers demonstrated confident expression of complex literary ideas

such as feminist readings and use of critics including Elaine Showalter, incorporating their ideas in often impressive arguments. Some candidates mentioned the Marxist derivation of the quotation, but some considered it to be a biblical reference. Weaker responses struggled to apply the quotation to their knowledge of the novel, lacked understanding of the question and offered basic, narrative answers with some focus on how women are treated.

- (b) Successful answers demonstrated impressive levels of knowledge and understanding with a good ability to relate this passage to the wider text. They emphasised the narrative method with its direct address to an unknown reader of the future. There was some analysis of flowers and connections made to Serena Joy and the symbolism behind her and her plants. Some effective analysis related to freedom of choice and why Offred returns to Nick including what this shows about her character. The multiple apologies were seen as evidence of the conditioning of Gilead which has made Offred guilty about her sexual needs. Good comment was seen on the imagery of entrapment and violence 'like a mousetrap or a weapon'. There were some impressive responses that incorporated postmodern and metafictional interpretations. Less successful answers struggled to respond to the passage, and some strayed from relevant discussion.

Question 8 JACKIE KAY: Selected Poems from *Darling*

- (a) The best answers compared the content and technical features of appropriately chosen poems with the question on children clearly in view. Many candidates genuinely engaged with Kay's themes, related to her style and showed astute personal engagement. Weaker responses dealt superficially with the poems or lacked security of interpretation. Less successful answers offered thin paraphrases with little reference to specific details.
- (b) The most successful answers combined proficient technical analysis of *Rubble* with a sympathetic and contextualised understanding of the poem and wider selection. Some explored poetic methods, including Kay's use of punctuation and rhythm to create the sense of a mind slowly disintegrating in a fog of memories and panic. Less successful answers lacked coherence, and some appeared to be approaching the poem as if it were 'unseen'. Weaker answers struggled to understand the precise circumstances of the persona in the poem and offered limited reference to the wider collection.

Question 9 BARBARA KINGSOLVER: *The Poisonwood Bible*

- (a) This question required candidates to discuss Kingsolver's presentation of Rachel in the novel with the provision of a quotation as stimulus for argument. Many wholeheartedly agreed with the quotation and better answers gave good examples of Rachel's inappropriate comments on the dress sense of the Congolese and her general selfishness. Her insistence on rescuing her mirror during the ant invasion was seen as symbolic of her narcissism. Some competent responses were in broad agreement with the quotation and offered arguments to suggest that Rachel had not changed. Although largely accurate, these answers tended to offer little direct quotation or analysis to support their views. One response offered counterarguments to suggest that Rachel had changed, because of her choice not to return to the U.S.A.
- (b) Stronger answers identified Orleana's maternal grief and her increasing feelings of sympathy for the local people, including her use of their language. Stronger answers also explored Orleana's character and presentation here and in the wider novel. One good answer acknowledged the notion of colonisation and power but tempered this with the idea that it is less important than the power of maternal instinct to protect and save offspring. Less successful answers did not realise that at this point in the novel, Ruth May has just died.

Question 10 STEPHEN SPENDER: Selected Poems

- (a) There were too few responses to this question to make a general comment appropriate.
- (b) Better responses engaged with the language of the poem *XI*, presenting detailed and lucid analysis, especially in relation to the 'antique lovers' rose'. Less successful answers struggled with interpretation of the poem, and did not recognise the speech as dialogue between the parents. Some offered strongly negative personal views of the parents presented in the poem, suggesting contextually that Spender had suffered from a difficult childhood.

Question 11 DEREK WALCOTT: *Selected Poems*

- (a) Better answers to this question about Walcott's reflections on death demonstrated good contextual understanding of Walcott's experience as a person of mixed race. Less successful answers showed a limited sense of effects and a lack of depth and knowledge.
- (b) The strongest responses to the poem *The Flock* explored the multifaceted dimensions of the poem and produced some impressive analytical and thoughtful readings. Candidates tended to be confident when writing about imagery but were less able to explore structure or rhythm with confidence. Some responses focused on only one aspect of the poem, but presented an adequate examination of a particular theme such as change or nature. Weaker responses struggled with the poem's meaning and offered basic, sometimes invalid interpretations.

Question 12 VIRGINIA WOOLF: *Mrs Dalloway*

- (a) Better answers offered thorough evaluations of parties and how these contribute to the structure of the text and were significant as a distraction for Clarissa as well as showing the reader another side of her character. In stronger essays, references to stream of consciousness and understanding of this feature were secure and appropriately handled. Some responses offered effective awareness of context with some varying use of biographical details of Woolf's life. Weaker answers contained little analysis of the text and little specific handling of details.
- (b) Stronger responses explored how Woolf's methods in this passage were tailored to an examination of Septimus's fractured psyche. Better essays skilfully analysed the range of Woolf's inner and external representation of reality, not only in Septimus's experiences, but through other characters in the extract. Less successful answers were limited to descriptions of Septimus and accounts of his shell shock. Few answers related the passage meaningfully to the novel as a whole.

LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

Paper 9695/42
Pre- and Post-1900 Poetry and Prose

Key messages

- Understanding of genre differences between poetry and prose is important in developing awareness of the forms of literary texts as well as for rubric fulfilment. Candidates should incorporate knowledge and understanding of the conventions of poetry and prose texts in their answers.
- Comprehensive application of the assessment objectives leads to the most successful responses in all levels of achievement.
- Subject terminology should be used as part of a critical approach to analysis and personal response rather than as commentary for its own sake. Better answers use subject terminology as a useful tool in exploring writers' intentions and defining literary effects on readers.
- Better responses select and integrate textual reference and support in the argument and development of their essays.

General comments

A very wide range of performance was seen with some very well-informed and impressive answers alongside less accomplished responses. There were several problems with rubric infringements from some candidates either answering on two pre-1900 texts or two post-1900 texts. Other rubric infringements came from candidates who answered on two prose texts or two poetry texts. Better answers applied critical analysis to the texts studied and developed a personal response with awareness of varying opinions and other interpretations. The best answers reflected a comprehensive response to all assessment objectives with the question securely in view. In **(a)** questions, candidates who used robust knowledge and understanding to support clear arguments performed most positively. This held true for **(b)** answers (the extract-based questions) and worked well where candidates understood the context of the given extract and its significance to the whole text. Answers that tracked the extract with little awareness of the wider view were less convincing. Knowledge and understanding often worked in tandem and underpinned analysis and personal response. Evaluation of varying opinions ranged from astute reflections on critical commentaries to an awareness that other opinions might exist and what the contexts for these views might be. Some candidates made brief reference to other literature in their answers but these references lacked relevance and were a distraction from the question. An example would be a candidate trying to make a link between Nancy in *Oliver Twist* to a character in *King Lear* or a link between Offred and a character in Sylvia Plath's poetry. Most answers communicated complex ideas fluently and developed ideas in detail.

Comments on specific questions

Section A

Question 1 JANE AUSTEN: *Persuasion*

- (a) There were too few responses to this question to make a general comment appropriate.
- (b) Better answers would analyse the language, tone and narrative methods of this passage showing what it adds to Austen's presentation of Anne Elliot and consider implications in the relationships between the sisters. Less perceptive answers commented on the submissive character of Anne and how she is treated by others. Weaker answers relied on narrative and paraphrase with a lack of specific analysis and few were aware of Austen's use of free indirect discourse or narrative voice.

Question 2 GEOFFREY CHAUCER: *The Knight's Tale*

- (a) Better answers to this question on conflict discussed issues such as fighting, love and lust, women and chivalry and sometimes included less obvious examples, such as the conflict related to doing what is right and conflict between the internal and external. Better answers related conflict to context, were well focused and showed convincing and secure knowledge of courtly love and chivalry. Candidates tended to use few quotations to support their points, but there were many examples of broader textual reference. Weaker answers relied on narration of events and characters who could be related to conflict.
- (b) Stronger responses to the passage offered perceptive insights and analysis with reference to Chaucer's use of mirror imagery and subtle understanding of Arcite's role and engagement with other characters. They discussed Chaucer's characterisation of Arcite, his conflicts between love and duty and his duplicity. Such answers offered a secure sense of the context and significance of the episode. Less successful responses focused on aspects of the story and sense of rivalry.

Question 3 CHARLES DICKENS: *Oliver Twist*

- (a) The most successful answers explored Fagin's relationship with his 'gang of boys' with a balanced analysis and overview of the novel. Fagin was seen as evil and some more perceptive answers showed empathy with his situation as an 'aging fence' whose bitterness is largely the result of the prejudice shown to him by society. Less balanced answers concentrated more on the boys than Fagin with focus on the Artful Dodger but some dealt appropriately with the humour of the group of boys. There was some consideration of context including reference to workhouses.
- (b) Better answers included some very thoughtful and sympathetic readings of the presentation of Nancy. Stronger candidates selected material judiciously and applied it to complex critical arguments and grasped the moral and emotional conflict in Nancy. Some successful responses used a comparison between Nancy and Rose to develop convincing arguments. Some responses also engaged with a wider view of Nancy's representation in social and cultural terms. Weaker candidates were able to select and examine specific details and build arguments around them. The least successful candidates offered paraphrase or narrative responses, working their way through the extract. Some misreading was evident in the weakest essays with simplistic comments made about Nancy being simply 'bad' and inaccurate comments made about her relationships with characters such as Rose and Fagin.

Question 4 EMILY DICKINSON: *Selected Poems*

- a) Answers to this question offered wide ranging consideration of Dickinson's uses of settings, including the well, the volcano, the grave, Dickinson's own mind, death itself and depression and despair. The most successful answers focused on the effects of the settings and there were appropriate references to gothic effects, fear, a sense of the epic and even amusement. Most answers were competently handled but few drew ideas together into an overarching argument. The least successful answers restricted themselves to Dickinson's interest in, or passion for settings.
- (b) The best answers featured an immediate focus on the significance of time in *As Imperceptibly as Grief* and used the concept to structure their answers effectively with specific analysis. Some very good essays used a wide range of accompanying poems to good effect including *After great pain, I*

dreaded that first robin, A narrow fellow in the grass and A bird came down the walk. Analysis was well done in these better essays with focus on aspects such as hyphens, capitals, poetic rhythm and alliteration. Many candidates made purposeful and sensitive reference to the final word, 'Beautiful'. Weaker answers showed only a general understanding of the poem's meaning, its short length causing uneasiness and leading to repetition of points including consideration of words including 'Perfidy', 'Sequestered' and 'Keel'. Weaker responses were unclear about the precise meaning of some of the vocabulary and produced interpretations that were ultimately general discussions.

Question 5 THOMAS HARDY: *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*

- (a) Better responses discussed the quotation in the question and focused on Angel's role and significance with reference to both his faults and virtues. One well thought out answer totally agreed with the comment and noted that Angel seems to improve after his return from Brazil and his search for Tess. Some successful answers also discussed the dual morality of Victorian England which allows Angel to accuse Tess of the sin he has committed himself. Weaker answers tended to present supported character studies of Angel Clare with little use of the comment in the question. Weaker answers also showed some confusion about his social class and standing and there was confusion over the situation of the clergy in Hardy's society.
- (b) Some stronger essays recognised the structural significance of the news imparted in this passage and how it sets Tess's fate in motion as she is forced to claim kin with the fake Durbervilles after the incident with Prince. Some candidates wrote effectively about the use of dialect in the extract and there was appropriate exploration of contrast between the parson and Durbeyfield. Many answers made comments on the role of fate in the novel with the best of these analysing the effects on the narrative arc and Hardy's likely intentions in the unfolding events later in the novel.

Question 6 JOHN MILTON: *Paradise Lost, Books IX and X*

- (a) There were some good links made in more successful answers between the relationship of the couple (Adam and Eve) and Satan. Critics and context points were used well in the best answers, enabling some sophisticated and comprehensive arguments. Better answers ranged across the two books with clarity and relevance, with a focus on deceit and Adam's lack of free will. Less successful answers tended to be general and there were some peculiar views that struggled to make coherent, supported interpretations.
- (b) This question required candidates to discuss Milton's presentation of Satan in an extract from Book 9. Some excellent answers showed extensive and sophisticated knowledge and sharp focus on the presentation of Satan's character. As in the (a) answers, critical opinions were well used to sharpen views and to highlight key areas of analysis and context. Less successful answers reflected a lack of wider knowledge and some lengthy quotations were used to support briefly articulated points.

Section B

Question 7 MARGARET ATWOOD: *The Handmaid's Tale*

- (a) This question required candidates to discuss Atwood's presentation of 'a women's culture' in the light of a comment given as part of the question. Stronger answers discussed Offred's role, feminism and use of the first-person narrative voice. They included references to context, including religious fundamentalism and Trumpian America. Better answers also explored concerns about male domination and political extremism considering how these relate to the roles and experiences of women in the novel. There was much robust discussion relating to the Aunts and the Marthas as well as the hierarchy of the Commanders' wives. The best answers presented detailed analysis and selection of points relating to a collective sense of women's culture. Less successful answers either went off on tangents, losing relevance to the question, or retold parts of the story (although these narrative approaches were largely relevant to the question). Some weaker answers struggled with the idea of 'culture'.
- (b) Good responses to the passage from 'Historical Notes on *The Handmaid's Tale*' showed understanding of the context of the passage in the wider novel. Some did this very well and applied analysis at a structural level to the impact of the piece on Atwood's wider concerns. Successful answers also reflected on feminist perspectives and the irony of male historians examining the regime of Gilead. Some effectively critiqued the connotations of admiration in the language used by

these male academics. Less successful responses became narrative summaries with little analytical focus, and some were hampered by confusion between the identity of Waterford and Judd and those of the historians.

Question 8 JACKIE KAY: Selected Poems from *Darling*

- (a) Answers to this question on Kay's presentation of mothers reflected straightforward or sound knowledge but lacked analysis and links to Kay's background. Some were descriptive in nature and struggled to apply textual reference and specific detail.
- (b) Good critical appreciations of *Pork Pies* demonstrated engagement and evident enjoyment of this poem. Candidates commented on the 'seagull's fury' and how the mother was presented as a scavenger, with some sound connections to other poems in the collection. Better answers selected judiciously from the text, applied insightful personal responses and evaluated varying opinions of the work. One effective answer explored many key elements of the poem with perception and a lucid sense of tone and how Kay uses the child's view of a horrific event. Less successful answers tended to misunderstand the premise behind the poem and there were several significant examples of misreading and of candidates approaching the poem as though it were previously unseen.

Question 9 BARBARA KINGSOLVER: *The Poisonwood Bible*

- (a) There were too few responses to this question to make a general comment appropriate.
- (b) Effective answers concentrated on the characters and narrative within the passage, exploring ideas about family tensions and attitudes to Nathan. Few commented on Rachel as narrator and the wider significance of her account to the novel's concerns. Links to the wider text were based largely on plot and character, making analysis difficult to pin down for some candidates.

Question 10 STEPHEN SPENDER: Selected Poems

- (a) There were too few responses to this question to make a general comment appropriate.
- (b) Better responses to *A Father in Time of War* demonstrated confident knowledge of the poem and its concerns and developed convincing personal arguments. Weaker answers found the poem challenging and there was much misunderstanding. Some candidates wrote unhelpfully brief responses and some appeared to treat the poem as an unseen text.

Question 11 DEREK WALCOTT: Selected Poems

- (a) Better answers to this question about Walcott's presentation of the natural world were skilful and thorough in their discussions of the ways in which Walcott's poems represent a multi-faceted treatment of nature. In less successful answers, analysis tended to be spread thinly over the chosen poems, leading to partial and restricted argument with some assertion of Walcott's response to nature. Weaker answers offered a brief description of each poem used while others developed their discussion with links to Walcott's life.
- (b) Better responses to *The Virgins* dealt well with the structure of the poem and kept the focus of Walcott's view of the islands in their sights. Less successful answers struggled to sustain relevance, ending with a general approach to the poem's meaning and effects.

Question 12 VIRGINIA WOOLF: *Mrs Dalloway*

- (a) Better answers to this question on Clarissa and Septimus showed secure knowledge and understanding of the text and some purposeful interpretations of the contrasts and similarities between the two characters. Most wrote about the party and the announcement of Septimus's death, but there were many close references to the text. Woolf's concerns about relationships, life, mental health and happiness were all considered, sometimes perceptively and with suitable support. The best essays were very well structured with scholarly approaches to critical analysis and evaluation of varying opinions was strong in many of these answers. Less successful answers presented more straightforward readings of the contrast between the two characters.

- (b) There were some excellent responses to this passage, revealing thorough and detailed understanding of the extract and how it represents Woolf's concerns and technical approaches. The best essays showed understanding of Woolf's approach in peeling away the layers of complacency until the climax of Rezia's final comment. Less successful responses tended to deal with only part of the passage, leading to a fragmented and incomplete analysis.

LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

Paper 9695/43

Pre- and Post-1900 Poetry and Prose

Key messages

- Understanding of genre differences between poetry and prose is important in developing awareness of the forms of literary texts as well as for rubric fulfilment. Candidates should incorporate knowledge and understanding of the conventions of poetry and prose texts in their answers.
- Comprehensive application of the assessment objectives leads to the most successful responses in all levels of achievement.
- Subject terminology should be used as part of a critical approach to analysis and personal response rather than as commentary for its own sake. Better answers use subject terminology as a useful tool in exploring writers' intentions and defining literary effects on readers.
- Better responses select and integrate textual reference and support in the argument and development of their essays.

General comments

This was the first full series of the new specification and performance on Paper 4 was, for the most part, very pleasing. A very wide range of performance was seen with some very well-informed and impressive answers alongside less accomplished responses. There were several problems with rubric infringements from some candidates either answering on two pre-1900 texts or two post-1900 texts. Other rubric infringements came from candidates who answered on two prose texts or two poetry texts. Better answers applied critical analysis to the texts studied and developed a personal response with awareness of varying opinions and other interpretations. The best answers reflected a comprehensive response to all assessment objectives with the question securely in view. In **(a)** questions, candidates who used robust knowledge and understanding to support clear arguments performed most positively. This held true for **(b)** answers (the extract-based questions) and worked well where candidates understood the context of the given extract and its significance to the whole text. Answers that tracked the extract with little awareness of the wider view were less convincing. Knowledge and understanding often worked in tandem and underpinned analysis and personal response. Evaluation of varying opinions ranged from astute reflections on critical commentaries to an awareness that other opinions might exist and what the contexts for these views might be. Some candidates made brief reference to other literature in their answers but these references lacked relevance and were a distraction from the question. An example would be a candidate trying to make a link between Nancy in *Oliver Twist* to a character in *King Lear* or a link between Offred and a character in Sylvia Plath's poetry. Most answers communicated complex ideas fluently and developed ideas in detail.

Comments on specific questions

Section A

Question 1 JANE AUSTEN: *Persuasion*

- (a) Successful responses to this question on Austen's presentation of different attitudes to social class recognised the interplay between finance and social class and applied supporting references. Less successful answers tended to narrate, selecting from characters and situations where social class featured prominently.
- (b) This question required candidates to discuss a passage from Chapter 8, focusing on Austen's presentation of the relationship between Anne and Captain Wentworth. Better essays showed understanding of the relationship between Anne and Captain Wentworth with some comments on social standing. There was also analysis related to how Wentworth seems reluctant to move on from Anne and her reaction to this. Personal response to the extract tended to be sound.

Question 2 GEOFFREY CHAUCER: *The Knight's Tale*

- (a) The question required candidates to discuss some of the ways Chaucer shapes a response to Theseus. Better answers reflected on his role in the tale and personal responses focused on his relationships with other characters and his significance to the plot. The least successful answers lacked development and offered general approaches with little supporting detail.
- (b) There were too few responses to this question to make a general comment appropriate.

Question 3 CHARLES DICKENS: *Oliver Twist*

- (a) There were too few responses to this question to make a general comment appropriate.
- (b) There were too few responses to this question to make a general comment appropriate.

Question 4 EMILY DICKINSON: *Selected Poems*

- (a) Better answers to this question on Dickinson's presentation of the relationship between humans and the natural world selected appropriate poems for discussion, quoted from them with accuracy and made better use of critical perspectives and aspects of wider context. These broader answers resulted in more effective outcomes. Weaker answers tended to end in repetition and circling of one or two points.
- (b) Better responses to the poem *I felt a Funeral, in my Brain* demonstrated strong personal interpretations, awareness of varying opinions and relevant contextual points. There was some interesting analysis relating to Dickinson's use of repetition and capitalisation and how these aspects are used in other poems in the collection. Weaker but competent responses worked through the poem systematically, offering straightforward analysis of aspects of form, structure and language. The most basic responses showed lack of understanding and knowledge and tended to summarise the poem, stanza by stanza.

Question 5 THOMAS HARDY: *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*

- (a) There were too few responses to this question to make a general comment appropriate.
- (b) This question required candidates to discuss the passage from Chapter 14 in terms of Hardy's presentation of Tess. Better answers incorporated thoughtful and perceptive personal readings into their analysis with judicious handling of the dialogue and sensitive awareness of context. Reference to the baptism of Sorrow was well handled in these answers, and indeed in less successful answers that provided narrative approaches to the extract. More successful answers were well able to draw in the wider text with a convincing awareness of what this particular episode adds to the reader's understanding of Tess here and elsewhere in the novel.

Question 6 JOHN MILTON: *Paradise Lost, Books IX and X*

- (a) This question required candidates to discuss Adam's relationship with Eve in the light of a given comment. Better essays had a clear view of the relationship and the best of these were able to use the comment appropriately to build a convincing argument. Less effective answers described the relationship between Adam and Eve with little support or development.
- (b) There were some very interesting and engaging essays on the presentation of Satan in this passage and his response to Eve. These answers demonstrated knowledge and understanding of the poem and the bible story. Analysis featured strongly in the best answers with purposeful selection of details and insightful critical commentary. Less successful answers presented more general approaches to analysis and evaluation of varying opinions.

Section B

Question 7 MARGARET ATWOOD: *The Handmaid's Tale*

- (a) Better answers offered well-argued investigations into Offred's character and her attempts to maintain her identity in the oppressive regime of Gilead. Some wrote about her relationships with the Commander and Ofglen, and in very good answers there was critical analysis of Atwood's narrative style.
- (b) This question required candidates to discuss the effects of Atwood's writing in a passage from Chapter 19. Better responses focused on the presentation of the Wives and ranged into the wider novel. Less successful answers tended to track the passage with some paraphrase and assertion evident.

Question 8 JACKIE KAY: Selected Poems from *Darling*

- (a) There were too few responses to this question to make a general comment appropriate.
- (b) Better responses to the poem, *He Told Us He Wanted a Black Coffin (for Margaret McAllister)* showed understanding of the poem and applied relevant knowledge to address the question. These essays often included discussion of the Charles Rennie Mackintosh reference and commented securely on aspects of context. Better essays showed personal response to this poem but analysis tended to peter out by the end of stanza three. Less successful responses offered descriptive accounts of the poem with little analysis or engagement with detail.

Question 9 BARBARA KINGSOLVER: *The Poisonwood Bible*

- (a) Better answers to this question on Kingsolver's presentation of Leah demonstrated secure knowledge and understanding of Leah's role and significance in the novel, offering some very specific references to parts of the novel in support of their arguments. Many agreed with the premise of the question and were able to provide evaluation of differing opinions. Weaker answers tended to make more general comments or revert to narration when struggling to develop a structured argument.
- (b) Better answers demonstrated good knowledge and understanding of Ruth May's narrative voice and the portrayal of Nathan in this passage. They considered how the doctor was the voice of reason and Nathan the voice of American ignorance. Better answers effectively analysed the significance of the ceiling light and how it could symbolise Nathan and his anticipation that the people of the Congo would see the light and his view of God. The Price family were seen as the bugs trapped in a clear glass bowl (The Congo) because they followed Nathan. Less successful answers struggled to understand the material and produced partial or fragmentary answers.

Question 10 STEPHEN SPENDER: Selected Poems

- (a) There were too few responses to this question to make a general comment appropriate.
- (b) Better critical appreciations of the extract from *Nocturne* examined technical aspects and demonstrated a sense of personal engagement with the themes and tone. Weaker responses struggled with the poem and misunderstanding was evident with some superficial readings and general handling of some poetic features.

Question 11 DEREK WALCOTT: Selected Poems

- (a) There were too few responses to this question to make a general comment appropriate
- (b) This question required candidates to analyse an extract from *Ruins of a Great House*, considering how far it is characteristic of Walcott's poetic methods and concerns. Better answers considered Walcott's use of detail, particularly analysis of the limes with close focus on the line 'The world's green age then was a rotting lime'. These answers engaged with the context and identified with Walcott's tone of anger and frustration at the treatment of African slaves. Less successful answers struggled to relate the meaning of the poem and tended to describe parts of the extract rather than analyse it.

Question 12 VIRGINIA WOOLF: *Mrs Dalloway*

- (a) This question required candidates to write about the effects of time in the novel. Very good answers considered the ways in which Woolf uses the timeframe of the novel and structural features such as the chiming of Big Ben to convey the division of narrative. Better essays wrote about the effects of compressed narrative and the circular presence of the past via memories, and often demonstrated impressive knowledge of the novel. Less successful answers tended to tie their discussion to characters with an implicit view of the question.
- (b) Better answers were able to place the extract in its wider context and comment on its narrative significance. Less successful answers tended to struggle with analysis and lacked confidence in selecting from the extract with any degree of strategy.