LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

Paper 9695/31
Poetry and Prose

Key messages

- Successful responses focus on how the meaning and content of texts is shaped by the writer.
- Successful responses use specific references and quotations to support points. This is particularly important for the **(a)** questions, where candidates select their own material to answer the question.
- Successful responses to **(b)** passage questions examine the writing of the selected poem or extract in great detail.
- Responses which summarise the content of text or passage only are not successful.

General comments

In this series, there were some responses to every question on the poetry and prose texts, with the two Cambridge anthologies, *Songs of Ourselves* and *Stories of Ourselves*, *Small Island* and the poetry of Robert Frost being particularly popular choices. Owen Sheers' poetry, a new text, had an initially small take-up, but elicited some enthusiastic and thoughtful responses. Most candidates showed knowledge of the content and subject matter of their chosen texts, and most made at least some attempt to explore ways in which the writers communicate their concerns through choices of language, form and structure. The most successful were able to accomplish this with confidence, analysing detail to support their arguments. There were some examples of sophisticated and subtle writing.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1 Robert Frost: Selected Poems

(a) Candidates wrote some excellent answers which explored Frost's presentation of the relationships between humanity and the natural world using a range of details from the poems to support a directed essay. While some went beyond the rubric and wrote about several poems, which restricted the opportunities to develop a reading and explore detail, most focused on two well-chosen poems. *An Encounter, There Are Roughly Zones, The Wood-Pile* and *Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening* were the most popular choices, with essays often exploring an uneasy relationship where humankind and the natural world are at odds, but recognising that there is solace in the natural world, a point particularly stressed by those candidates who chose *An Unstamped Letter*.

(b) There were also some thoughtful responses to the extract from *Home Burial*, as candidates teased out Frost's presentation of the tension between husband and wife, often indicating clear sympathy for one of the other. The exchange in the centre of the extract, with its references to 'sneering' and 'angry', drew comment as the point where the disparity between the two views is most apparent. There were observant comments on both characters' leaning on gender stereotypes, with the husband's reference to what a 'man must partly give up' and his impatient outburst of 'God, what a woman!' while his wife criticises his difficulty in knowing 'how to speak' and accuses him of a lack of 'feelings'. Perceptive candidates noted that the whole passage is in dialogue, with only 'She moved the latch a little' indicting narrative, a key moment of the wife's imminent departure, which is followed by three imperatives from the husband. The easy colloquial iambic pentameter was noted, which nevertheless contained emotional turmoil under the surface.

Question 2 Owen Sheers: *Skirrid Hill*

(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 3 *Songs of Ourselves, Volume 2*

(a) Change was interpreted in several different ways, including the passing of time and ageing, though changes in relationships became the focus for most of the responses to this question. Shakespeare's *Sonnet 19, A Song of Faith Forsworn* and *When We Two Parted* were popular for this angle, but there were also thoughtful answers which referred to *The Death-Bed* and *A Wife in London*, or *When You Are Old* and *On This Day I Complete My Thirty-Sixth Year*. The strongest responses were those which went beyond an account of the content and mood of the poems to explore the effects of language and structure. Some discussed Shakespeare's use of the sonnet form, for example, the repeated patterns in Warren's poem which cumulatively create the bitter tone, the effects of the short lines of the Byron, the imagery of Sassoon or the parallel structure of Hardy's poem.

(b) Slessor's poem produced some good answers, which analysed the form and tone, relating it to the different stages of sleep. The personification was recognised by most candidates, with the sleeper's compliant response in l.5. Some commented on the initially demanding, even intimidating tone before noting the imagery of support in the central stanzas, with vocabulary such as 'bear', 'Carry', 'receive', 'cling', 'slumber', before the challenges of waking in the final stanza. Many explored productively the extended metaphor of pregnancy and birth, picking out the relevant terms, such as 'estuary', 'cave', 'belly', 'waves', 'chamber', 'blood's beat' before finally the 'forceps' and 'pangs and betrayal of harsh birth'. The smoother structure of the central stanzas, with their patterns of repetition and evenly spaced lines, was often contrasted with the indented lines and more challenging lexis of the first and final stanzas.

Question 4 E M Forster: *Howards End*

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

(b) There were few answers on *Howard's End* in this variant and nearly all candidates responded to the passage exhibiting Mr Wilcox's and Helen's attitudes towards Leonard Bast and the poor. There was a lot of focus on the language and structure of the dialogue, with candidates commenting on Helen's righteous indignation as she challenges Wilcox insistently as she 'went scarlet all over her face'. Mr Wilcox's speeches were often compared with Helen's unfavourably, with candidates noting his carelessness, indicated by his question 'Did I?' early in the passage and his patronising terms 'My dear' for Helen and 'fellow' for Leonard. Some also pointed out that his long speeches dominate the end of the exchange, while his references to 'sentimental attitude', the 'poor are the poor' and 'the shoe pinching' demonstrate his lack of care for other people. This is confirmed by his dismissal of the 'Social Question' and his judgement of civilisation where there has 'always been rich and poor'. Astute responses noted Forster's inclusion of the word 'complacent' in the narrative during the final speech of the passage to reinforce a critical view of Henry Wilcox.

Question 5 Andrea Levy: *Small Island*

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

(b) Candidates responded to the passage on Hortense's interview at the education office with considerable sympathy for her position. Strong answers noted how that sympathy is created by the episode being narrated from Hortense's perspective, so that the reader witnesses directly the collapse of her expectations and her confidence. There was some perceptive comment on Hortense's elaborate language ('tutelage') and courtesy, contrasted with the impolite interruptions, brief discourteous sentences and clear mocking from the interviewer. Candidates also noted the repeated shaking of the letters, the ‘pointing a finger at the door’, rolling of eyes and ‘giggling’, contrasting these aspects with Hortense’s control under this humiliation, retaining her courtesy and striving to ‘redeem her composure’. Some noted that it is clear that her suggestion that she is ‘untroubled by their rising laughter’ is far from true, and is another example of her determination to rise above the indignity. There were some observations that her true feelings are apparent in her use of the ‘gargoyle’ image and some candidates showed an appreciation of Levy’s style, mixing the pathos of the interview with the comedy of Hortense’s exit into the broom cupboard.

Question 6 ***Stories of Ourselves***

(a) Most candidates who chose this question wrote about Conan Doyle’s *How It Happened*, focusing on the frightening car crash. There were also frequent comments on the spiritualist aspects of this story, although whether this context made the narrator’s death more or less frightening was seldom considered. Accompanying stories tended to be *The Taste of Watermelon* and *The Hollow of the Three Hills*. Candidates wrote well about how the first person narration communicates the fear of both stealing the melon and facing Mr Wills in the former, and how the gothic setting and character presentation increases the fear in the Hawthorne story. Such answers, focusing on method, were much more successful than those which were restricted to the narrative content of the stories.

(b) While there was a good number of responses to the passage from *The Custody of the Pumpkin*, few candidates were attuned to Wodehouse’s style, missing the satiric humour of the writing. Many took the story entirely seriously, some arguing that Lord Emsworth was British royalty and that the size of your pumpkin was genuinely a matter of social prestige or shame. They therefore missed the ironic humour of the overblown language (‘striving indefatigably to remove this blot on the family escutcheon’), which undercuts and mocks Emsworth and the importance he attaches to a vegetable. There were answers which took a Marxist interpretation, seeing the passage as a damning critique of the oppression of the workers by the aristocracy. Though there are elements of this within Wodehouse’s story, some of these responses missed the humour and lightness of touch.

LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

Paper 9695/32
Poetry and Prose

Key messages

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General comments

In this series, there were some responses to every question on the poetry and prose texts, with the two Cambridge anthologies, *Songs of Ourselves* and *Stories of Ourselves*, *Small Island* and the poetry of Robert Frost being particularly popular choices. Owen Sheers' poetry, a new text, had an initially small take-up, but elicited some enthusiastic and thoughtful responses. Most candidates showed knowledge of the content and subject matter of their chosen texts, and most made at least some attempt to explore ways in which the writers communicate their concerns through choices of language, form and structure. The most successful were able to accomplish this with confidence, analysing detail to support their arguments. There were some examples of sophisticated and subtle writing.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1 Robert Frost: Selected Poems

(a) Many candidates interpreted the differences between humankind and the natural world in terms of how human beings work with or against nature, thus demonstrating the different traits of each. This gave a wealth of poems from which to choose and popular options were *An Encounter*, *Mending Wall*, *Birches*, *Gathering Leaves*, *Mowing*, *After Apple Picking*, *There Are Roughly Zones* and *Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening*. Some fruitful lines of argument which emerged were, for example, people's insistence on fixed boundaries while nature is limitless and resistant (*Mending Wall*); human beings' constant pushing of boundaries whereas the natural world keeps within its limitations (*There Are Roughly Zones*); humanity's need to dominate when nature in fact dominates humanity (*An Encounter*); humanity's impatience with nature's constant patient cycle of seasons (*Gathering Leaves*). The particular argument depended on the choice of poems and the higher marks were awarded to essays which showed a clear understanding of Frost's poetic methods as well as the content of the poems.

(b) There was a large number of enthusiastic responses to the passage from *The Ax-Helve*. Many candidates clearly knew the poem well, while others did not appear to know which part of an axe a 'helve' is and were unable to deduce it from the context. The most successful answers clearly focused on the terms of the question, looking at the presentation of Baptiste and his skills. His accent and ungrammatical English were noted in the short elements of dialogue, while it also shows his ability to assess a piece of wood with expertise. His hard manual work was seen in his 'rough hand' and the comment that he could 'make a short job long/ For love of it'. His skills are apparent in the sensual descriptions of the ax-helves he has made – 'slender as a whipstock', 'its curves were no false curves', 'long white body'. His generosity was generally noted, in wishing the narrator 'To have the best he had', but alert candidates noted the importance of the speaker's perspective throughout, who is grudging and suspicious, apparent in 'Needlessly soon' and 'unscrupulously'. Some suggested this was also the reason behind the use of the Eden image at the end of the extract. Others suggested that the narrator has an unconscious admiration of Baptiste, apparent in the chivalric imagery of the 'quiverful' of helves and the chosen one 'bending like a sword across his knee'. Many candidates were well-informed too about the historical context and the reluctance of immigrant French Canadians to trust the American education system, which here presents Baptiste as an outsider in the community. There were some comments on form, noting that, as in Frost's other long narrative poems, the iambic pentameter allows for easy colloquial story-telling into which dialogue fits comfortably.

Question 2 Owen Sheers: *Skirrid Hill*

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

(b) Nearly all responses to Sheers were on *Happy Accidents*, though these did not always demonstrate a firm focus on the presentation of photography. A significant number of responses focused on warfare only and therefore missed the point of the poem and the question. Other candidates understood the context and knew something of Robert Capa and the development process of emulsion film, which helped understanding and analysis. Stronger candidates understood the poem's central suggestion that the damage done to the photographs inadvertently captured the war far more effectively than the originals might have done. There was some good writing on ways in which Sheers presents the horrific drama of the war in which the photographs were taken, with comments on the phrase 'the air turned lead' and many picking out the pun of 'shoot and shoot', referring both to gunfire and the taking of photographs. There were also several careful analyses of the imagery and language describing the darkroom damage and resultant effects on the photographs.

Question 3 *Songs of Ourselves, Volume 2*

(a) There were few responses to this question. Candidates who chose it focused mainly on *When You Are Old* and *On This Day I Complete My Thirty-Sixth Year*, with a few on Shakespeare's *Sonnet 19*. The essays showed quite thorough knowledge of the content and meaning of the poems, though exploration of the poets' choices of language and structure was often less evident. Candidates knew that Shakespeare's poem is a sonnet, for example, but careful analysis of how he exploits that structure was rare.

(b) There were a number of essays by candidates who had not grasped the personification of Love established in the first stanza and therefore analysed the poem as a depiction of the love between a mother and a literal child, which led to fundamental misunderstanding. While most candidates grasped the personification, many presented a paraphrase of the meaning of the poem, working through it line by line. More sophisticated answers noted the irony of the poem's title, initially suggesting celebration, while others commented that the tight form of tetrameter couplets is reflective of the speaker's control of her emotional disappointment. There was some subtle discussion of the repeated pronoun 'He', with candidates suggesting that though this can be identified as Cupid by putting 'Love', 'child' and 'flying' together, the repeated use of the male pronoun implies that the failings of Love are the failings of men. There were some supporting historical and biographical contextual comments. In looking at the imagery of the poem, candidates found most to say about the 'Feathers' and 'Wolves' metaphors in the final stanza.

Question 4 E M Forster: *Howards End*

(a) Henry Wilcox provoked some critical personal responses which demonstrated secure knowledge of the novel and the character. Many candidates showed awareness of his role in the text as well as Forster's presentation of him, and several used useful contextual knowledge of the Edwardian time period to show how Forster uses Wilcox to explore shifting attitudes. While some candidates wrote generally about the character, more confident candidates used Helen's cue as a prompt to engage clearly with the reader's response to him and the way Forster prompts and develops the reader's sympathies over the course of the novel.

(b) This was a passage which repaid careful reading and close, detailed comment. Successful candidates explored the tone of the narrative voice, with some identifying a kind of sympathetic knowingness, while others disapproved of the contemptuous dismissal of the 'amorous little hole' and Leonard's cultural aspirations. Confident candidates were able to analyse how the narrator creates a detached view of Leonard, imposing a judgement of him on the reader with a phrase like 'Take my word for it' as well as comments on Ruskin's voice, like 'How supreme its command of admonition!' and the ironic praise of Leonard's understanding of the 'spirit of English prose' at the end of the extract. Some candidates were able to explore productively how Leonard's home and possessions reflected his character, his social position and his poverty. Several commented on the fragility of his existence conveyed through the rented and 'makeshift' nature of his accommodation and his lack of possessions, while some also were able to distinguish between the items belonging to Jacky, the landlord and Leonard. Candidates frequently discussed the breaking of the glass over the picture and either saw Leonard's swearing as ineffectual or a sign of his 'lower class' status, which in some cases led to rather sweeping assertions about the differences in behaviour of upper and lower class people. While there were plenty of comments on the 'dusty crumbs' of cake, surprisingly few essays focused on Leonard's attempts to imitate the prose style of Ruskin and the comic inappropriateness of this elegant prose style with the realities of his position and dwelling.

Question 5 Andrea Levy: *Small Island*

(a) In response to this question, candidates naturally focused on Gilbert's difficulties at work and in finding work suitable for him and on Hortense's disappointment in trying to find work as a teacher in England. This led to a broader discussion of the difficulties faced by Caribbean immigrants in England. The strongest essays were well supported with appropriate detail, often contrasting the characters' early optimism with the disillusionment of reality and their experience. They were able to quote key extracts from dialogue to show the varieties of excuses for the refusal of work.

(b) The passage dealing with the birth of Queenie's baby was very popular and candidates tended to write with enthusiasm and appreciation. Though some candidates' answers suggested that they thought the extract takes place in a hospital, most dealt effectively with the effects of Hortense's narrative voice and engaged with the descriptive detail with relish. Many recognised the way Levy creates humour in the passage through Hortense's perspective and concern for her dress, while there was some thoughtful reference to the significance of the scene in relation to the identity and fate of the baby. Essays often featured thoughtful discussion of Hortense's attempts to continue a formal relationship in desperate circumstances, with Queenie trying to break through the formality with her shouting, and the comic contrast between these attitudes. Several wrote well on the imagery of 'constipation', 'an erupting pustule' and 'a robust earthworm', used to describe the birth and the baby, showing Hortense's inexperience and revulsion, yet contrasted with words such as 'perfect', 'love' and 'miracle'. The passage offered a great deal and candidates' answers suggested that they enjoyed the opportunity to explore it.

Question 6 *Stories of Ourselves*

(a) A wide range of appropriate stories was chosen in response to the question of characters who make an impact, though the question of what impact the characters make was less securely addressed by less confident candidates. Stronger candidates engaged with reader response, especially sympathy, as well as considering those characters from whom the reader might learn a moral lesson. *The Happy Prince* was popular in this regard, while candidates also wrote about empathy with the narrators of *The Taste of Watermelon* and *Sandpiper*, the fear inspired by the hag in *The Hollow of the Three Hills*, the pressures on the narrator's family in *Elephant*, the arrogance of the narrator of *How It Happened*, among others. There was clear discrimination between those essays which summarised the narrative and asserted that the characters had impact and those which were able to demonstrate how the authors' presentation of those characters created the impact.

(b) Woolf's narrative style can be challenging and candidates who relied on narrative summary found this a perplexing passage. However, for candidates who were able to tease out the narrative perspective and style, this was a rich piece of writing which created opportunities for subtle analysis. The most confident noted Isabella's character and wrote carefully about how it is revealed by the narrative voice. They noted the idea of 'prizing her open', suggesting the hidden and the secret, while the concrete details from the first paragraph were often carefully noted, suggesting wealth, ease and a certain kind of social position. Other features identified included the use of the modal auxiliary ‘must’ to emphasise the mock urgency of the quest to find the ‘real’ Isabella and to invade the secrecy illustrated by the ‘locked drawers’ and the use of sun and cloud to veil her thoughts. Such answers focused on the disillusion when the mysterious letters are revealed to be really only bills and the surface signs are rendered untrustworthy. Some candidates focused thoughtfully on the role of the mirror, reflecting inaccurately, and that the final paragraph suggests the perspective of a visual artist making an attempt at characterisation through what can be seen and known. Some successful responses linked this conscious narrative voice with modernism and stream of consciousness, demonstrating an awareness of the literary context.

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Comments on specific questions

Question 1 Robert Frost: Selected Poems

(a) Some interesting arguments were developed to support the question's cue quotation, reflecting on how Frost uses nature to prompt moments of introspection in the speakers about both the natural world and the human condition. There were some especially perceptive comments on *There Are Roughly Zones*, *An Encounter*, *Mending Wall*, *Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening* and *Two Look at Two*. The amount of accurate quotation used to support the argument was often very impressive, and there were also some welcome comments on form and structure. Less confident candidates wrote more generally about the battle between mankind and the natural world and there was some use of poems which were ill-suited to the question, including the extract printed for the (b) question.

(b) The strongest responses to the extract from *The Death of the Hired Man* dealt effectively with the dialogue, noting the way it allows Frost to offer two contrasting perspectives on Silas, as well as recognising that we do not hear from Silas himself. A number of essays noted his anonymity in the title of the poem, supporting a view of his ordinariness. Many answers were successful in showing how Mary and Warren's different views and reminiscences create a picture of Silas's attitudes and work. His dismissal of Harold's Latin and violin playing in preference for rural skills such as water-divining was noted, as well as his skill in loading, baling and tagging hay. The reader gains a balanced view and has to interpret between Mary's sympathy and Warren's dismissive aloofness. Alert candidates pointed out that the reader's interpretation of Silas is therefore guided by Frost's presentation of Mary and Warren, noting the angelic portrayal of Mary, with 'light poured softly', 'harplike' and 'played unheard' as well as her empathetic attitude to Silas seen in 'I know just how it feels' and 'poor Silas'. Many commented on the parallel phrasing of her poignant summing up of Silas' life in ll.30–31. However, the passage also attracted much misreading. A number of candidates lost sight of which speaker is speaking, there was confusion between Silas and Harold, and ll.24–25 were often misinterpreted, arguing that Silas foolishly tried to 'lift himself', missing the 'never' in the previous line.

Question 2 Owen Sheers: *Skirrid Hill*

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

(b) While most candidates responded to this poem as one of devoted love through the metaphor of the trapped magpie being sustained by the speaker, it also offered some interesting variant interpretations. There were some suggestions that the magpie in the cage has, like a Siren, trapped the speaker into constant attendance at the cage. Others argued that the apparent devotion of the speaker has a sinister undercurrent, noting such phrases as 'let you walk' and 'I will be waiting' at the end of the poem. Attention was also drawn to the female bird being associated with words like 'bait', 'trap', and 'cage' while the male can 'spread' his wings. These answers also considered the darker imagery of the poem, like the 'oil spill', 'darkness of your eye', 'wings on wire' and 'wring their lives away'. A number of candidates commented on the poem's tercets, a favoured Sheers structure, though fewer noticed the quatrain of the final stanza which adds greater emphasis to the final line.

Question 3 *Songs of Ourselves Volume 2*

(a) Poems chosen for this question were usually well selected, with *If Thou Must Love Me*, *Sonnet 19*, Wroth's *Song* and *The Pride of Lions* being particularly popular. Candidates chose poems which allowed them to explore contrasting perceptions of love and its effects. Where the essays only compared the nature of love through paraphrase and summary, candidates had limited success. Those who knew their chosen poems well and were able to quote from them and use the analysis to support the argument, produced thoughtful and confident essays. There was some comparison of Browning's and Shakespeare's use of the sonnet form, while Wroth's use of personification and metaphor was compared with Preston's more sensual and carnal metaphor of the lion.

(b) There were some very perceptive and thoughtful responses to this question which traced the development of ideas through the sonnet. Using the key words 'mood and atmosphere' from the question, many candidates noted various auditory effects, like the use of assonance ('huge', 'brood', 'mute') and sibilance and alliteration ('repercussive…drowsy billows', rugged…rocks remote'). Many commented also on the other sounds in the poem, from the initial silence to the 'roar' of the waves, the 'distant tone' of sailors and the 'deep voice' and the bell which ends the octet. There was also discussion of the lack of sight through both the 'vapors' and the darkness, which render the world uncertain and indistinct and put the emphasis on what is heard. Candidates discussed an intimidating mood of isolation, with the ship distanced from the speaker beyond the 'rocks remote' but few engaged fully with the last four lines and many ignored the final couplet altogether. Though the deceptiveness of the 'wandering fairy fires' was sometimes noted, few linked them with the failing lights of 'wavering Reason' and the resulting pessimism about 'life's long darkling way'.

Question 4 E M Forster: *Howards End*

(a) Many candidates viewed Leonard Bast as a sympathetic character who is a victim of the class system. His attempts to develop cultural interests were discussed, often in reference to the concert where he meets the Schlegels. His lost umbrella was also seen as a symbolic representation of the class differences, in that he has only one and values it, whereas Helen has many and describes his as 'appalling'. His interest in art and books was also commented on, with candidates commenting on the ironic cause of his death at the hands of Charles Wilcox. Leonard's failing fortunes as a result of Henry Wilcox's advice was explored in some responses as a key part of his presentation and role in the novel. Apart from being part of Forster's critique of the class structure, some candidates saw Leonard's role as a linking mechanism between the Schlegels and the Wilcoxes. From a chance meeting at the Queen's Hall concert to the revelation of Henry Wilcox's association with Jacky, Leonard's story is interwoven with theirs, affecting their perceptions of each other and, as several candidates pointed out, leaving behind a child who will live the life to which he had aspired.

(b) Candidates showed good knowledge of the two characters, and were able to deal with the contrasting perspectives they present. However, in many cases the eagerness to write about the characters in a more general sense sometimes meant that the nuances of the writing of the passage were unexplored. More confident candidates looked closely at the way Forster characterises Mrs Wilcox in particular here, with analysis of ll.13–16 especially fruitful. Most responses identified Margaret's perspective within the narrative voice in parts of the extract and useful contrasts were drawn between the two characters in terms of their attitude to shopping – Margaret's list-making as opposed to Ruth Wilcox 'hopelessly' suggesting two shops. Several candidates saw Margaret's name at the top of the list as foreshadowing the gift of Howards End later in the novel as was Mrs Wilcox's desire to give Margaret 'something worth your acquaintance'. Margaret's business-like approach to friendship was commented on – her desire to 'book Mrs Wilcox as a friend' and 'settle up' as opposed to Ruth Wilcox's languid attitude – she 'took her time' and 'refused to fit in', her 'vitality was low' and she was 'apt to brood'. A few candidates noted the inauspicious start to the expedition, with references to 'crisis', 'cheerless', and 'fog may thicken', possibly suggesting ominous developments later in the novel. In contrasting the two characters, the last two sentences of the passage were often overlooked, although the word 'vulgarity' offered much to discuss in the context of the question.

Question 5 Andrea Levy: *Small Island*

(a) Candidates wrote many clear and sensible answers on Gilbert. Candidates had a good grasp of his character and role, although some turned this into a more general essay on racial inequality. Most candidates wrote lucidly about Gilbert's nature, his difficulties, his sense of humour and his role in marrying Hortense and sustaining their lives in England. Candidates often referred to specific episodes, such as his encounters with racial discrimination and moments with Hortense. Often these were recalled in impressive detail, with supporting quotations. In other answers, there was much on the plot, but less analysis of Levy's organisation and structure of the novel and her use of Gilbert's narrative voice.

(b) This was a very popular question, with most responses identifying the way in which Hortense's narration positions readers to share her experiences but also allows them to see her faulty perception of the events, particularly in relation to Michael. Most candidates discussed the descriptions of the hurricane's destructive power, with some citing the hyperbolic comparison of the 'rock of ages' to a 'bird's wing'. Many candidates explored the symbolic significance of the hurricane in the extract and in the novel as a whole, especially concerning the character of Michael and his effect on female characters such as Hortense, Mrs Ryder and Queenie. Some, however, spent so much time developing the metaphor of the hurricane that they neglected the actual hurricane in the passage. Most responses usefully compared Hortense's and Mrs Ryder's reactions to the impending hurricane, noting that Levy describes Hortense 'bolting shutters', 'securing doors' and 'praying that 'the schoolhouse roof would stand firm' while Mrs Ryder 'skipped like a giddy girl' and combed her hair. One or two candidates commented on the irony of Mrs Ryder's desire to 'stand in a hurricane to feel the force of God's power' when it causes her husband's death. Hortense's mistaken belief that Michael had come to support her was discussed by most candidates. Her appreciation of his physicality, with the sensual description of his shirt which 'cleaved to the muscles of his body', was seen as blinding her to his true purpose by some candidates. Hortense's inability to see the truth was further explored when towards the end of the extract Michael pushes her 'not gently' and addresses Mrs Ryder as Stella.

Question 6 *Stories of Ourselves*

(a) For the question on characters' past, candidates wrote most often about *Elephant, The Hollow of the Three Hills* and *The Door in the Wall*. These stories were appropriately chosen and often discussed with some detailed knowledge, though many candidates focused more on what the characters' past was, rather than how the writer makes it important in the narrative. Stronger responses took note of how the reader learns of the past in each of the stories. In each of these stories, candidates noted how the past is gradually built up from references within the narrative and how they allow the reader to interpret the story, gaining more understanding as it progresses. In this way, the various stories about the history and relationships of the narrator in *Elephant* give the reason for the pressures on him and the need to escape; the three visions given to the young woman in *The Hollow of the Three Hills* gradually reveal her history and the reasons for her interview with the hag; the accumulating references to the narrator's childhood in *The Door in the Wall* allow the reader to understand his need for escape and invite interpretation of his garden vision.

(b) More successful responses to this popular passage discussed the first person narrative and structural features, such as the differing sentence lengths (ll.35–40) which help to create the dramatic effect of the narrator's experience. Some also commented on how, even in the midst of the disaster, the narrator appreciated the quality of his car, describing it as a 'majestic sight' and a 'great, roaring, golden death', which for some showed his arrogance and sense of superiority, not to mention his lack of concern for Perkins. Some candidates also explored the way tension is increased in the opening paragraph of the extract, with the four difficult stages to be negotiated by the driver – three 'curves' and the gate – being marked out for the reader. The dialogue also received attention from some candidates with some responses seeing it as Conan Doyle's way of magnifying the drama and excitement. Others saw it as a way of revealing Perkins' character in his attempts to save his master's life at the expense of his own. Most candidates recognised line 40 as signalling a change in the narrator's experiences. Phrases such as 'a man in a dream', 'giddy and shaken' were identified as showing the narrator's altered perception of the world around him. The subsequent dialogue was explored by most in terms of its gradual revelation of the narrator's death. The calm aura, particularly in relation to the appearance of Stanley in the final paragraphs was noted by many, using words and phrases such as 'smiling', 'gentle and wistful', 'soothing' and 'light and happy'. Some candidates referred at this point to Conan Doyle's interest in spiritualism and the afterlife. Some candidates showed their awareness that a story narrated by a dead person might strain the credibility of the modern reader. There was also ample discussion of the class system, with comments on the narrator's arrogance and Perkins' servile loyalty throughout.

LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

Paper 9695/41
Drama

Key messages

- Stage directions, when present, are often worth commenting upon, but only if the comment is centred on how the writer wants the scene to be staged and the effects achieved.
- If candidates choose **(b)** type questions, they need to engage with detailed analysis of the passage printed.
- Some high achieving candidates could do better if they planned more and wrote less, thus taking a more strategic view of questions.

General comments

When dealing with a question on the presentation of character, candidates would do well to notice and comment upon the fact that in a drama the reactions of others on the stage – either through words or action – form a distinctive aspect of an audience's developing reaction to someone.

A number of candidates write of stage directions as though they are something that will be present to the audience in written form, as though they are third person, novelistic comments. This shows a misunderstanding of genre. Similarly, it is never useful to talk about punctuation — the author's written clue needs to be addressed in terms of the clues it gives about how to say something, and the implication of it being said in this way.

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Many candidates comment on the contexts of their texts. Whilst this is useful, it is important that false connections between an author's life and work are not made. This is particularly to be avoided in cases where writers such as Tennessee Williams have had a colourful personal life. The text, as set, needs to be the absolute focus of an answer. Similarly, big ideas ('The American Dream', for example) can often lead to candidates providing descriptions of contexts without considering the precise nature of the question asked. It is important, too, that candidates avoid asserting that at certain periods in the past everyone believed the same thing, or that certain attitudes prevailed. Of course, gender roles were different in Shakespearean times, but the fact that a character like Beatrice features at all in *Much Ado About Nothing* suggests that not all women at the time were passive and servile. There are points to be made which are best made with subtlety, rather than received discussions about patriarchy at the time.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1 Arthur Miller: *All My Sons*

(a) Answers to this question varied widely in their approach. Some focused on the Keller family and their response to Joe's miscalculation. The best answers were able to look carefully at how the family deceive each other, and even themselves, with the knowledge that if the truth comes out their life will be unliveable. Other answers included details of 'The American Dream' (sometimes to the detriment of analysis of the text), while the best of these provided careful glosses about how Joe and Kate measure themselves against an ideal, or have internalised the need for economic success and the pursuit of happiness, deceiving themselves that this excuses immoral behaviour. The fullest responses explored dramatic moments when the deceptions can no longer be sustained, often focusing on Chris's final showdown with his father.

(b) Most candidates were able to describe the easy, relaxed tranquillity of the opening scene, both by characterising the conversations and by referring to stage directions. Deeper responses noted that the seeds of what is to come are planted here – Keller is unimaginative about consequences (he is 'of stolid mind'); he says he doesn't read the news bit of the paper any more as he doesn't want to involve himself in real life; the tree is introduced innocently with its symbolism just starting to be revealed ('He'd been twenty-seen this month. And this tree blows down'). Some responses noted perceptively that the tree introduces a tension in the play between random acts of chance and deliberate acts destruction. Responses that looked closely at the detail did best.

Question 2 William Shakespeare: *Much Ado About Nothing*

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

(b) Most candidates were able to present a coherent view of Beatrice on her first appearance in the play. They commented on her wit and her apparently disdainful view of Benedick. Better responses noted that her lengthy discussion of his limitations suggests that her indifference to him is anything but what she says it is. There was often useful discussion of the vividness of her language and of her forthright manner of speaking which suggests that she is far from fulfilling the role of the passive woman that might have been expected at the time.

Question 3 William Shakespeare: *Henry IV, Part 2*

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

(b) Responses to this question focused on Falstaff's complacent fecklessness, on his self-delusion, on his constantly chancing his luck ('Will your lordship lend me a thousand pound...'). There was also focus on his humorous view of the rebellion simply as an opportunity for self-advancement. In general, candidates responded well to what Falstaff said. Some of these answers could have been improved by commenting more extensively on how the presentation often depends on the counterpoint of the Chief Justice's seriousness and his critical (and more realistic view) of Falstaff as a broken-down wastrel. Some very good responses pointed out that this scene is a dynamic demonstration of one of the key tensions in the play for Hal – the choice between order and chaos.

Question 4 Wole Soyinka: *Death and the King's Horseman*

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

(b) Responses were quick to point out the Pilkings' unawareness of what is going on around them, their slightly forgetful ('Oh, now I remember'), casual and unthinking relationship with the people they notionally rule. Better responses were able to see Jane and Pilkings as separate entities, identifying Jane as the more empathetic and with a stronger willingness to engage with Yoruban cultural practices ('It's a family thing isn't it Joseph'), while Pilkings tends to caricature and dismiss ('Sly, devious bastards'). There was sometimes useful comment on the Pilkings' exchanges with Joseph.

Question 5 Tennessee Williams: *Sweet Bird of Youth*

(a) Responses to this question were often quick to see that the play's focus on actors (or would be actors) in their private lives and the disparity between Boss Finley's family life and hypocritical public appearances and utterances form a strong dramatic structure for the play. There was also discussion of time of public and private spaces. The best responses were able to talk about how characters keep up appearances when all is crumbling around them, and about the way various ways in which the central characters manipulate others when in public. Answers that focused on particular moments did best.

(b) Candidates were usually confident about placing the scene in the play. They were aware that Chance's presence is unwelcome in St Cloud (the group turn their chairs 'snubbing him') and that he does little to endear himself to others because of his drunken boorishness and his determination to dominate (which Miss Lucy tries to tone down with 'You're too loud baby'). There was often useful commentary on dramatic action, with the chair being knocked over, Chance making himself ridiculous as he 'sprawls on the floor'. Candidates often reacted with strong disapproval of Chance's behaviour and his overall lack of self-control. Few candidates demonstrated an understanding of the change of gear towards the end of the passage, when Chance becomes – for a moment at least – 'the centre of attraction'. A few candidates commented on Chance's discussion of Princess, with some feeling that he is puffing himself up by association, others saw him as obviously self-deluded.

LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

Paper 9695/42
Drama

Key messages

- Stage directions, when present, are often worth commenting upon, but only if the comment is centred on how the writer wants the scene to be staged and the effects achieved.
- If candidates choose **(b)** type questions, they must be willing to engage with detailed analysis of the passage printed.
- Some very good candidates would do better if they planned more, wrote less, thus taking a more strategic view of questions.

General comments

When dealing with a question on the presentation of character, candidates would do well to notice and comment upon the fact that in a drama the reactions of others on the stage – either through words or action – form a distinctive aspect of an audience's developing reaction to someone.

A number of candidates write of stage directions as though they are something that will be present to the audience in written form, as though they are third person, novelistic comments. This shows a misunderstanding of genre. Similarly, it is never useful to talk about punctuation — the author's written clue needs to be addressed in terms of the clues it gives about how to say something, and the implication of it being said in this way.

With **(b)** type questions, it is noticeable that some candidates do not seem to understand the nature of the task fully. The central focus in these responses must be on the passage presented, though reference to elsewhere in the text can often usefully be made. Candidates do not need to contextualise the passage in the play in terms of plot, though the precise situation may need to be discussed. At the same time, it is not very useful to go through the passage line by line, though often the scenes have a distinctive dramatic arc that is worthy of comment. The most important thing is that the passage is considered in terms of drama – in terms of the precise language that the characters use, the significance of the exchanges for an audience's understanding of either plot or theme. There are certain key questions to ask: Who is on the stage? Why are they there? Who is trying to impress/influence who? What clues has the dramatist given us through stage directions? Do the characters speak in a distinctive way? Are they telling the truth? Are they aiming to deceive? – or are they deceiving themselves? Who speaks most? Are there characters present who do not speak but serve a dramatic purpose? Most particularly, the focus should be on the language that the characters use in terms of vocabulary, syntax and tone. It follows from this that students need to show that they know their texts in detail. The highest marks are awarded to candidates who take a strategic view of a scene, commenting relevantly (and as part of a developing argument) on detail in order to support their views.

Many candidates comment on the contexts of their texts. Whilst this is useful, it is important that false connections between an author's life and work are not made. This is particularly to be avoided in cases where writers such as Tennessee Williams have had a colourful personal life. The text, as set, needs to be the absolute focus of an answer. Similarly, big ideas ('The American Dream', for example) can often lead to candidates providing descriptions of contexts without considering the precise nature of the question asked. It is important, too, that candidates avoid asserting that at certain periods in the past everyone believed the same thing, or that certain attitudes prevailed. Of course, gender roles were different in Shakespearean times, but the fact that a character like Beatrice features at all in *Much Ado About Nothing* suggests that not all women at the time were passive and servile. There are points to be made which are best made with subtlety, rather than received discussions about patriarchy at the time.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1 Arthur Miller: *All My Sons*

(a) Most candidates were quick to get to the centre of this question. They saw Chris's admiration and love for his father evaporate; they traced his increasing disillusionment. The best answers also commented on Chris's inner battles and his gradual realisation of his father's limitations. Beyond that, many candidates also commented fully on the nature of Joe's mistaken belief in the centrality of family success and prosperity, even if bought at high cost. Many candidates were highly sympathetic to the strain that Joe found himself under in terms of tensions within his family and his desire to succeed. Amongst less successful responses, there was a slight tendency to deal with the two serially, rather than really addressing the issue of the relationship between the two.

(b) Responses to this question usually demonstrated a good understanding of the scene and of the various tensions underlying it. There was much useful comment on stage directions, with Mother's ceaseless rocking seen as a symbol of her inner state of mind – she counts as part of Jim's evocation of 'people who are walking round loose, and they're cracked as coconuts'. There was often useful discussion of Jim's view of money and ambition, a sidelong perspective on some of the play's themes. Most candidates were able to make something of Jim's revelation that the secret that the Keller family have tried to hide is, in fact, common knowledge – how the Kellers have shown only a limited 'talent for lying', and that the talent has been mainly through their ability to lie to themselves.

Question 2 William Shakespeare: *Much Ado About Nothing*

(a) Candidates were able to look closely at various aspects of the relationship between Hero and Leonato. There were many responses that discussed the patriarchy and the notional obedience of women at the time. Better answers pointed to particular moments in the play, and there was often (and rightly) detailed focus on Leonato's moment of doubt in the play, when he chooses to believe Claudio, not Hero. Some responses focused perhaps too much on this moment, forgetting the tenderer moments from earlier in the play, and forgetting, too, that Leonato did not force Hero towards Claudio in the first place.

(b) The sheer playful richness of this scene gave the candidates much to talk about. Less successful attempts did not seem to appreciate that the scene is a set–up – that the speakers are deliberately exaggerating for effect because they are fully aware that they are being overheard. In this particular instance, it was important for candidates to contextualise the passage. There was much to reflect on about the fact that Leonato is so fully credited by Benedick as trustworthy. The highest achieving candidates revelled in the exaggerations, the joy of the language with all the metaphors about wars and combat, letters and sheets etc and the knowing winks to an audience ('It were good that Benedick knew of it by some other') that give the scene so much of its comedy.

Question 3 William Shakespeare: *Henry IV, Part 2*

(a) Virtually all responses were able to see that there is a sharp contrast between the two central relationships in Prince Hal's life: one leads towards duty, maturity, responsibility; the other to pleasure and vice. However, a number of candidates took the question to be about Hal's relationship with King Henry and with Falstaff, simply picking moments in the play where Hal is with them. Such responses could have been improved by a sharper focus on the question which asked about the pair as father figures, and higher attaining candidates used this instruction as a means of demonstrating and determining the influence that each of them has on Hal as he moves towards kingship. The better answers focused on particulars, noting that Falstaff's influence, though ultimately rejected, has given Hal a common touch with ordinary people that his high–minded father completely lacked.

(b) Candidates were usually clear about the situation at this point in the play, and most responded to the domesticity of the drama, seeing it as a contrast to the action of the play elsewhere. The best responses noted that the scene is unusual: it is dominated by the women; it places the toxic masculine posturings elsewhere in a new perspective. Most particularly, the scene demonstrates the sheer emotional cost of civil wars and interrogates fully Northumberland's conception of honour. Lady Percy's forthright and pointed dominance of the scene was often discussed in great detail and recognised as being full of true and felt passion (‘for God’s sake go not to these wars!). The candidates who were able to see this scene as contributing thematically to the play, illustrating their points through direct and indirect quotation, did well. Some candidates wrote extensively (and well) about the feelings of personal betrayal that are so richly evoked by Lady Percy.

Question 4 Wole Soyinka: *Death and the King’s Horseman*

(a) The major focus for most candidates was, of course Elesin, with his view of his fertility and his sense of entitlement. Better responses placed this in perspective, with discussions of Olunde’s much more responsible sense of morality and obligation to the tribe. There was also some comparison of Nigerian and European (stiff upper lip) views of masculinity, with Pilkings’ discussions of Elesin and his misunderstanding of the requirements of Yoruban mores in relation to male behaviour. More could have been done, perhaps, to see how Soyinka is keen to give the Praise Singer and Iyaloja voices that interrogate and question Elesin’s self–satisfied complacency. The best answers were able to offer detailed discussion of particular moments.

(b) In a play, what a character says about him or herself is very revealing. In this passage it was possible to see Elesin’s view of himself as a man with sexual prowess and a persuasive speaker, but at the same time an immoral chancer and a coward. However, the central revelations here come from the responses of others – the shocked incomplete reaction of Iyaloja (‘Elesin Oba...’), the barbed reply to Elesin’s ‘Who do you say I am?’: ‘Still among the living’. Both Iyaloja who ‘...falls silent’ and the women who ‘shuffle uneasily’ demonstrate that his demands are unreasonable and fall outside the Yoruban ethical system. It is important, therefore, that candidates think of a question like this in the widest terms if they are to do well: the word ‘presentation’ is a clue that the successful answers will provide more than a character study.

Question 5 Tennessee Williams: *Sweet Bird of Youth*

(a) Less successful candidates approached this question by providing a brief character study of each of the women in the play. As the question asked about ‘presentation’ and ‘dramatic effects,’ more successful answers focused on what the various women add to the themes and realisation of the play. Princess was an obvious focus as a foil to Chance, a representation perhaps of both his ambitions and his failures, a look into his future. By contrast, Heavenly is a representation of his past and of how his future will be blighted because he cannot let go. Both these characters were often considered in their own right, with many candidates focusing on the dysfunctional relationship between Heavenly and her father. The answers to this question were many and various, with many candidates making interesting connections across the play as a whole. There were some interesting responses that centred on ideas about the women in the play as victims.

(b) There were many strikingly different responses to this question. Some took Chance to be – as his name suggests – a chancer and gigolo who exploits others. Others were sympathetic to his kinder side, drawing attention to his tender language (‘plump lady’) and to him straightening up the pillows. Other responses were deeply sympathetic to Princess and her apparent loss of clarity about herself (often epitomised through references to her broken spectacles). Many responses were able to explore how the themes of the play as a whole (memory, youth, libido) are starting to emerge. The most successful responses were able to evoke the atmosphere of the scene, its playful intimacy, the feeling that both of the characters are slightly disorientated (‘What is this place....’) and in a story that they don’t quite understand or have control of, as symbolised by Princess’s references to liking ‘a good mystery novel’.

LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

Paper 9695/43
Drama

Key messages

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Comments on specific questions

Question 1 Arthur Miller: *All My Sons*

(a) Candidates were quick to discriminate between deceiving others and deceiving oneself. There were often useful discussions of particular moments, with some of the discussions between Joe and Chris forming a central focus. But there was also discussion of how Joe tries to maintain a façade of ordinariness to his neighbours, of how Kate needs to maintain a deception in front of others in order not to confront a larger self-deception about Larry's fate. The best responses pointed to the fragility of the deceptions and to the various ways in which they unravel during the course of the play, revealing along the way the internal tensions of the Keller family and Joe's deluded ambitions for the success of his family at the expense of personal morality Some candidates wrote about 'The American Dream'. Some wrote about it well, whereas less successful responses unloaded information into the answer without analysing its dramatic significance.

(b) Candidates' responses suggested that they found the passage accessible. The majority of responses showed an overall understanding of character and plot. Solid responses showed some evidence of tracking the passage for Chris's feelings and with some relevant commentary. However, some of these responses did not always pay enough attention to Joe Keller's feelings/reactions to his son. A number of candidates referenced the stage direction 'in a broken whisper' as an initial sign of Chris's incredulity compared with the progression of anger resulting in his outburst of anger in line 30. Stronger responses looked more closely at language and the change in dynamic on stage between father and son. Insightful responses often saw the incident as a sort of courtroom drama with Chris the judge as stylised through the dialogue. Chris's passionate speech starting at line 76 was often was given careful consideration, both in terms of its tone and its constant questions. Few candidates responded to the last line of the scene, Joe's sorrowful recognition of the effect of his actions on his son and on their relationship.

Question 2 William Shakespeare: *Much Ado About Nothing*

(a) Most responses gave an account of what Dogberry and the Night Watch do in the play. However, the best answers were also aware of the linguistic world that they occupy, where words don't quite sound right and are certainly not fully under control. This insight allowed candidates to discuss wider issues of exploitation of language. The best responses were also able to comment on how Dogberry and the Night Watch are responsible for the denouement of the play – honest agents, despite their linguistic insufficiencies.

(b) Candidates knew the scene and the various underlying tensions. Solid responses commented on how Claudio was 'easily deceived' 'gullible' and 'naïve'. Some candidates showed the beginnings of a personal point of view/argument by stating how Claudio 'objectified' women. Responses at this level were inclined not to reference other characters in the scene which, had they done so, would have helped to develop their responses. In stronger responses Claudio's treatment of Hero was central. Many candidates introduced their argument with vigour in statements such as 'Claudio mercilessly castigates Hero at the altar'. This often launched an analysis of language with a reference to Hero as a '*rotten orange*' followed by numerous insults which candidates analysed well. Claudio's behaviour was viewed with contempt as excessive, with many responses seeing him as superficial and easily influenced. There was little sympathy for him as a character. Candidates often commented on the 'unrestrained rage' of Claudio – the language adding to the drama on stage. Strong and well-referenced views such as 'the villainous malicious degrading of Hero' provided rich analysis of language/drama. There were many comments that saw Claudio as a representation of all Elizabethan men fearful of female wantonness, though lengthy discussions of the patriarchy tended to lead nowhere. The strongest responses also drew attention to the parts played by the other men in the scene, excluding Benedick. They noted, too, the further shaming of Hero by Don Pedro and the scheming of Don John. The best candidates noted that this whole scene fits uncomfortably into a comedy, that it is only the audience's previous knowledge of Hero's integrity and the plotting of others that keeps the action in the realm of light-heartedness. Seen on its own and without a context, the scene is painful to watch.

Question 3 William Shakespeare: *Henry IV, Part 2*

(a) Candidates achieved well on this question. The responses were able to make clear contrasts between the might of the law, represented by the Chief Justice, and Falstaff's selfish indifference to its importance. Few candidates referred to the scenes with Justice Shallow, which help an audience see the issue in less binary terms. There was much focus on the dismissal of Falstaff at the end of the play. A small number of candidates wrote about how the chaos surrounding the law was, in fact, Henry's fault for so blatantly breaking the law in the first place.

(b) Responses usually showed a sound understanding of the situation and of Henry's disillusionment with both life ('the yoke of government') and his eldest son. Many saw Henry as deeply saddened by Hal's behaviour. Most candidates saw Henry as able and as a good leader, preoccupied with the health of his country, obsessed with his legacy ('my grief/stretches itself beyond the hour of death') as he sees Hal as allowing the country to go to 'weeds'. The highest achieving candidates gave a clear account of the details in this passage. Weaker responses used the passage as a starting point for more general discussions of the play.

Question 4 Wole Soyinka: *Death and the King's Horseman*

(a) The issue of the individual against the collective in the play is central to the play, however there were few responses to this question. The most successful responses were able to characterise Elesin's lust and cowardice, whilst also evoking the strong disapproval of Iyaloja and the women for his behaviour.

(b) Most responses were able to select from an array of evidence in the passage to demonstrate that Pilkings and the Resident, as symbols of colonial rule, are aloof, self-important and ignorant of the people they are trying to govern. There was often reference to Pilkings's view of the Yoruban death rite as a 'strange custom', a 'business,' with the emphasis on order made more extreme by the Residents desire not to have the royal tour disrupted. Better responses also zeroed in on Simon's complete failure to attend to Amusa's account of the situation or to see the loss of the hat as anything other than a joke. Given his local function (District Officer) and his representative role, which is tellingly captured by the Resident's ironic comments ('If we all let these little things slip past us where would the empire be eh?') Pilkings' limitations were seen by most candidates as egregious. Some candidates could have improved by showing an understanding of the significance of a Resident in the hierarchy of British Empire power.

Question 5 Tennessee Williams: *Sweet Bird of Youth*

(a) Responses to this question varied widely. Some focused on Chance as a failed filmstar; others looked at his failure as a lover of Heavenly; others responded to his return to St Cloud; others focused on his relationship with Princess. The best answers dealt with his self-delusions, his behaviour towards others and his dependency on drugs and alcohol to avoid confronting his own limitations. A small number of candidates had great sympathy for him, but many others thought of him very as paralleled with Boss, both of them self-obsessed bullies who lives with little thought for others. An ability to discuss the drama of the presentation was central to the question, and candidates who selected particular moments were able to substantiate their views. Some candidates pointed out that although he is a *failed* actor, he sees himself as a protagonist, self-dramatising his life.

(b) Weaker responses to this question focused mostly on descriptive (and often repetitive) accounts of Princess's appearance and state of desperation. Better responses were able to see the scene as pivotal in her relationship with Chance as she explores her own state of mind and her feelings towards him. The strongest responses made much of the scene as a moment where we see Princess as being a deeper, more sympathetic character. The most perceptive answers often suggested that Princess's epiphany comes at exactly the moment where it is all irrelevant to Chance. There were some useful explorations of the implications of the fairy tale imagery. There was much to say about the stage directions in the extract presented and the opportunity to comment on the author's explicit shaping of the scene was often lost.

LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

Paper 9695/51
Shakespeare and other pre-20th Century Texts

Key messages

- To do well, candidates need to show sufficient knowledge of the text in order to place passages accurately.

General comments

The overall standard was satisfactory with nearly all learners showing at least a sound knowledge of the set texts. Very few learners made rubric errors in this session and the majority of answers showed evidence of candidates managing their time well. The quality of expression was at least acceptable in nearly every case, although there was a small minority of learners with some expressive weaknesses, which limited the ability to engage with the texts at the appropriate level.

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

- Learners should have sufficient knowledge of their chosen texts so that they are able to place any passage or extract from a text in a precise location.
- Learners should give a sufficiently detailed context so that they can consider the significance of the passage in terms of the wider text. With novels and narrative poems, this may involve considering how the passage develops key elements of the whole text, often one or more of the narrative, the plot, characterisation or thematic concerns. With poets such as Shelley, the context may well be his wider concerns or aspects of style in the wider selection. The key point is that the learners must show they have a thorough knowledge of the text. In a passage question this is partly evidenced by how well the learner can make appropriate links between the given passage and the wider text.

Question 1 William Shakespeare: *Richard II*

(a) Many candidates offered general discussions of the familial and filial relationship between Richard and Bolingbroke. Better responses posited Gaunt's family loyalty to the Crown in opposition to Richard's assumed status as head of the royal family. Good responses considered how Shakespeare presents family units, for instance by beginning the play with a father summoned to present his son to the king, or the scenes used by Shakespeare to develop the Queen's character. Good responses pointed to the 'ways' Shakespeare controls the action on the stage and discussed the 'effects' of these choices. For instance, 'the Queen's statements build audience sympathy for Richard which makes his loss at the end of the play a true tragedy' as one response suggested. Where such points were supported by appropriate reference to the text, the responses often did well.

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

Question 2 William Shakespeare: *The Winter's Tale*

(a) The theme of justice was popular, and all candidates responded enthusiastically with knowledge of where justice and its opposite, injustice, occur in the play. Weaker work focused on the first part of the play, often retelling Hermione's court appearance and presumed guilt, with better answers at this level seeing this as testament to the lack of justice inherent in Leontes's kingdom. Other answers at this level were also able to refer to the Oracle, unable to overturn his injustice, and some referred to the final acts of the play to show how Leontes is punished for his unjust behaviour. More competent work saw Shakespeare as the presenter of a world lacking legal justice, in particular for women and children, as a candidate argued: 'it's bad justice to Hermione that causes true justice to be served on Leontes'. Good work also saw not just Leontes as key to the presentation of the theme but that other tyrant ruler, Polixenes, whose own brand of injustice is revealed at the sheep shearing festival. One learner concluded: 'at the end, Perdita gets the justice she did not know she was seeking'. Very good work often linked Shakespeare's societal concerns with a lack of justice for shepherds and women alike, with discussions of autocracy versus a social model where all are equal under the law. Some very good work extrapolated Paulina's role as a defender of justice, and Shakespeare's attempts to show that a lack of justice has physical consequences before emotional redemption is possible. These responses often did very well when candidates found appropriate support from the text and showed awareness of alternative interpretations.

(b) This was the most popular question on the paper, and nearly all responses considered the passage's significance to the play as a whole. Most candidates saw this as a transitional scene, in terms of setting and plot (Perdita's survival and Antigonus's death creating the dramatic irony that only the audience are aware that the child is alive). Other responses also noted the introduction of new characters, in a fresh, new atmosphere (offering new hope after the death of Mamillius) and a shift from the tragic events of the first half to a new environment. Weaker work focused on the situational features from the start of the scene, what one candidate called 'a baby abandoned with a superb amount of money' but rarely covered in any detail the reported death of the play's virtuous antagonist, Antigonus, at the scene's end. Less successful answers sometimes reduced the scene to 'comedy' rather than recognising its lighter, pastoral elements. More competent work saw the scene as amplifying the suspense of Leontes' fate and the change of tone signifying new beginnings and new hope. Very good answers explored the detail of Shakespeare's method and the ways the scene could play out on stage (for instance the inherent melodrama in the Clown's retelling of the shipwreck and Shakespeare's ability to make the grisly death less dreadful for an audience). Answers that were very good also explored the change in language – from solemn to jovial, formal to informal – as critical to the play's new direction. Also considered were the meanings the scene offered to the play's wider concerns, such as the Shepherd's redemption from youthful sins offering hope for Leontes' transgressions and the social conscience of the shepherd in taking in Perdita at all – 'he could have completed Leontes' dirty work and just kept the gold', as one candidate neatly suggested. Where such responses referred appropriately to the wider text, they often did well.

Question 3 Jane Austen: *Northanger Abbey*

(a) Most candidates were enthusiastic in their discussion of the question's subject of female characters' roles. Responses were quick to offer textual instances of gender bias and make links into Austen's concerns for the position of women in her era and her purposes in highlighting inequality. Weaker responses often retold the story of Catherine's disappointments, usually unable to challenge the question's assertion and therefore arguing that Austen's female characters were limited, which led to inconclusive discussions. More competent work compared and contrasted Austen's presentation of Catherine with that of the other women, such as 'the selfish, empty-headed Isabella or the self-sacrificing Eleanor', assessing that she is not as 'goody two shoes as Eleanor, but not as grasping as Isabella', as one put it. Very good analysis supported ideas with textual detail and apposite quotation, for instance, as one suggested, 'Austen shows Isabella undermine her own idea of '(y)our brother, who might marry anybody!' by passively insulting Mr Morland, which the reader sees as a shallow move and turns us against her'. Answers which were able to support such insights with appropriate reference to the text and some awareness of other interpretations, often did well.

(b) Nearly all responses had at least some awareness of the significance of this passage and could provide some context in terms of Catherine's situation. Most candidates took the opportunity presented by the extract to discuss John Thorpe's characterisation as a braggart, seeing his immodest flattery of the heroine here and in the wider text, as significantly weakening his hopes of capturing her heart. More competent responses compared Thorpe to Henry and found him wanting. Better work explored the dynamic movements of the extract – its dialogue, questions, dashes and dramatic asides such as '(lowering his voice)' to show Austen's skill in highlighting that there is 'more to love than merely money, and this is how she distinguishes the better characters, such as

Henry Tilney from the worse ones, such as Isabella', as one candidate phrased it. Very good responses noted the objectification of Catherine by both Thorpe and the General, and some linked this scene to the General's later expulsion of the heroine, which facilitates Henry's proposal. Such linking of the passage to the wider text was typical of the more successful answers.

Question 4 Geoffrey Chaucer: *The Knight's Tale*

(a) Almost every response found some relevant material with which to address the task. Weaker answers often lapsed into a narrative retelling of the story of the relationship. Nearly all responses, however, were to some degree attuned to Chaucer's ability to affect the reader's experience of the work. Weaker responses often referred to the worship of the gods, Mars and Venus, and how this prompts the reader to side with Palamon who shows the value of his love for Emily, rather than the victory-seeking Arcite. Better responses took a thematic approach and linked the characters, who are 'cousins but almost brotherly in nature' in terms of their friendship, adherence to the codes of knightly conduct and the principles of courtly love and their stances on war, rivalry and love. Some learners argued that the reader wants the reconciliation of the friendship and relationship between the characters, rather than to see them as opposing forces. Very good work offered different perspectives on how various readers might respond, for instance seeing that their relationship was fundamentally destroyed by their fragile masculinity, or that their respect for one another is masked by their adherence to the strict codes of conduct in their universe. It was argued that 'the relationship is fuelled by their desire for competition and to fulfil their egos' whilst another candidate summarised the relationship as 'delicate, given it was destroyed by a single woman'. Candidates also made links between Chaucer's use of the characters to drive the plot and the narrative forward by demonstrating 'the contrast of their situations, rather than how they react to them', as one suggested. Answers arguing at this level often provided detailed support from the text and did very well.

(b) Some better responses were able to give a context for the extract. Weaker responses did not locate the passage in the wider text which suggested limited knowledge and inhibited any consideration of the passage's significance. As these weaker responses were unable to take their starting point as somewhere between the gods' discussion and the start of the great tournament, they were severely hampered in their commentary. There was some attempt at times to engage either with the language of the extract (noting that it rhymes) or with 'Chaucer's concerns' (he shows the chivalric code). To improve, these basic points needed to be developed and candidates needed to demonstrate an understanding what part of the story was supposed to be discussed. More successful responses avoid narrative-driven explanations of the entire plot and showed an appreciation of the passage as part of the whole text. More competent work sought to explore Chaucer's ability to capture the bustle and movement of the preparations, the rich descriptions of the onlookers' chatter and excitement and the tensions created by the poet for his reader, and by the Knight for his pilgrim audience. These answers were therefore able to recognise different meanings available to the text. For instance, it was suggested that 'whilst the tournament is literally deadly serious for Arcite, Palamon and Emily, Theseus and the modern audience see this as a grotesque form of entertainment'. Where such responses were linked to the wider text, with appropriate support, the answers often did well.

Question 5 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 6 Thomas Hardy: *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*

(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 7 John Milton: *Paradise Lost Books, IX and X*

(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 8 Percy Bysshe Shelley: Selected Poems

(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.

LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

Paper 9695/52
Shakespeare and other pre-20th Century Texts

Key messages

- To do well, candidates need to show sufficient knowledge of the text in order to place passages accurately.

General comments

The overall standard was satisfactory with nearly all learners showing at least a sound knowledge of the set texts. Very few learners made rubric errors in this session and the majority of answers showed evidence of candidates managing their time well. The quality of expression was at least acceptable in nearly every case, although there was a small minority of learners with some expressive weaknesses, which limited the ability to engage with the texts at the appropriate level.

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

- Learners should have sufficient knowledge of their chosen texts so that they are able to place any passage or extract from a text in a precise location.

- Learners should give a sufficiently detailed context so that they can consider the significance of the passage in terms of the wider text. With novels and narrative poems, this may involve considering how the passage develops key elements of the whole text, often one or more of the narrative, the plot, characterisation or thematic concerns. With poets such as Shelley, the context may well be his wider concerns or aspects of style in the wider selection. The key point is that the learners must show they have a thorough knowledge of the text. In a passage question this is partly evidenced by how well the learner can make appropriate links between the given passage and the wider text.

Question 1 William Shakespeare: *Richard II*

(a) Nearly every answer showed evidence of appropriate knowledge of the text. Most responses considered the main characters in turn, summarising their attitudes to England. Better answers were able to contrast, for example, Richard's 'melodramatic self indulgent homecoming, which told the audience more about him than how he saw England', as one candidate phrased it, with Gaunt's deathbed lament over the state of England under Richard's rule. Others focused more on how different characters used the idea of England to justify their actions; York and Bolingbroke were popular exemplars. Very good answers developed such ideas by exploring the 'myth of old England's greatness', as learner suggested, often citing the gardener's analogy of England as a garden, linked to Gaunt's use of terms such as 'Paradise' and 'Eden'. Where such points were developed to consider how this enabled Shakespeare to create the different dramatic moods, the answers did very well.

(b) Nearly every answer was able to give a relevant context, Richard's abdication, and to offer some ideas on how an audience might view Richard at this point in the play. Weaker answers tended to either paraphrase the extract, with some personal response interwoven, or to narrate the history of Richard's reign until this point in the play. Slightly more successful answers linked some of the preceding events to the action of the extract. More successful answers focused on the characterisation of Richard in this passage. Many noted his situation, 'surrounded by his enemies, shamed in public view and about to be imprisoned', as learner suggested and considered how this was reflected in the language and tone. Others saw how Shakespeare's use of the language of loss and defeat led easily to Richard's self dramatisation. Better answers explored his ability to perform, with some debate emerging over how genuine he is – for some, 'simple self pity as his bad decisions and selfishness catch up with him' and for others 'his sudden awareness of his humanity and of the end of divinity in kings'. Other good responses were able to contrast Northumberland's 'unfeeling pragmatism' and Bolingbroke's 'apparent sympathy and emotion', showing how Shakespeare used such dramatic devices to shape the audience's view of Richard. This focus on how Shakespeare presents Richard was an essential component of every high-level response. Candidates did well when they linked their arguments to the wider play, and supported their arguments with apposite references to both passage and text.

Question 2 William Shakespeare: *The Winter's Tale*

(a) Nearly every answer was able to select and discuss relevant material. The vast majority inevitably focused on the marriage of Leontes and Hermione, with weaker answers summarising relevant events from the play, as a means of considering different attitudes. Better answers focused more on their characterisation, as individuals and as a couple, often noting how 'we see the pregnant Hermione, playfully teased by her son, as a picture of marital contentment', whereas for others 'Leontes is only ever the crazed jealous husband or the broken penitent'. Such observations often enabled learners to discuss the topic soundly and effectively. More developed answers saw the bigger picture, how marriage was also linked with politics and status, usually referring to Polixenes 'about whose marriage we know very little', as one candidate pointed out, and his attitudes as revealed in his reactions to Florizel and Perdita's proposed marriage. Some answers linked this to the revelation scene – how Paulina is 'given to Camillo as a reward for hiding Hermione and presumably lying to Leontes for 16 years', for example. Others explored the impact of the reunion of Hermione and Leontes on the audience, some noting 'the inevitable feel good factor as the two generations are brought harmoniously together in the usual comic trope of marriage'. Others were less convinced, with one learner summarising a common concern: 'surely no audience believes that after 16 years Hermione and Leontes will pick up where they left off and live happily ever after?'. Very good answers supported such arguments with detailed reference to the text and very often showed a good understanding of how the play lends itself to a multiplicity of interpretations on this and many other topics.

(b) This was the most popular question on the paper. Many answers rose to the challenge of having two short scenes to explore. Nearly every answer recognised the dramatic context and some answers gave a detailed contextualisation of the preceding events in Sicilia and the death of Antigonus**.** Some answers spent too long on such matters, leaving too little time to focus on the details of the passage. Better answers explored the effect of the Chorus, time, many noting how Shakespeare 'sows a lot of seeds in his speech which grow in acts four and five'. Others considered the effects of a 'Personified Time on the audience', with some very good answers analysing the verse form and rhymes, as well as the dramatic impact of Shakespeare's presentation of time passing, often with some apposite comments on his breaking of the Aristotelian unities. Many noted the contrasts between Leontes and Polixenes as well as between the settings of Sicilia and Bohemia. Very good answers developed the Leontes and Polixenes comparison into an exploration of Shakespeare's methods of characterisation. There were also good discussions of Camillo's loyalty and fidelity to two monarchs, linked to themes of redemption and forgiveness. Others noted that Polixenes is 'deeply scarred by his Sicilian experiences and trusts nobody, except Camillo, even spying on his son', as one candidate put it. Another thought he was 'now wary of his son as well as Leontes and his penitence'. Some concluded that Polixenes was not like Leontes, citing his care for Camillo and his son, whereas others thought his selfishness and potential anger was just like Leontes, linking to his violent and uncontrolled threats to Florizel and her family later in the play. Some very good answers explored the dramatic irony of discussions about Perdita's status and class here, with other good answers noting how Camillo's desire to return to Sicilia leads to the final gathering in Leontes' court. Answers did very well when they developed such arguments on character and plot with apposite reference to the wider text and showed an awareness of different interpretations of the passage.

Question 3 Jane Austen: *Northanger Abbey*

(a) Nearly every answer was able to select relevant material with which to address the task. Weaker answers tended to retell the story of one or more of the families in the text, with success dependent on the supporting comments shaping the chosen material to the question. More successful answers focused on specific relationships, though some answers were limited to narrative summaries. Better answers often started with character studies of the parents; Mrs Thorpe, General Tilney and Mr and Mrs Moreland were popular choices. Where this was developed into a consideration of how the child or children reflected their upbringing, the answers did well. Some good answers noted that Catherine had two parents, 'which inevitably seems to make her more grounded', as one suggested. Very good answers developed such points by exploring how Austen contrasts the families, noting the key differences, for example, between 'the shallow, avaricious Thorpes, the well brought up, but guarded Tilneys and the 'ordinary', everyday Morelands', as one defined it. Good answers also considered how these relationships fitted into Austen's wider concerns, such as the Gothic genre, social class and status, and attitudes to wealth. Very good answers also saw how Austen used these relationships as tools for characterisation, discussing, for example how Catherine and the Thorpes reflect their parents and their upbringing in a way that, for some, was not true of Eleanor and Henry. There were some very good analyses of how Austen created these differences and importantly what their effects on the reader might be. When such discussions included appropriate references to the text and integrated consideration of other interpretations, the answers did very well.

(b) Nearly every response placed the passage in its context, recognising this as the climax of Catherine and Henry's relationship. Most answers identified the strained atmosphere as resulting from Henry's embarrassment at his father's actions, with some also discussing his intended proposal. Weaker answers tended to offer summaries of their relationship to this point in the novel, at the expense of sufficient focus on the passage. Better answers often focused on their characters, linking references from the wider text to specific details from the passage, with some awareness of how Austen creates humour through her narrative choices, for example Sarah's helpful comment on the Allens' house. Very good answers developed this into a detailed exploration of Austen's style, with some analysing the effects of the shift from the third person to first person narration at the end of the passage. High achieving answers linked this to Austen's satirical approach to the Gothic genre, 'as she is here continuing her presentation of Catherine and her relationship as extraordinary because they are in fact ordinary', as one learner suggested. Candidates did well when they developed such arguments with appropriate reference to the wider text and showed an awareness of other readings.

Question 4 Geoffrey Chaucer: *The Knight's Tale*

(a) Nearly every response showed knowledge of the text. Weaker answers tended to retell the story of the rivalry between Palamon and Arcite for Emily, often in great detail. Better answers at this level were able to select and shape relevant material to the task, for example, noting that the worship of the gods Mars and Venus might distinguish them for the reader as 'Palamon shows the value of his love for Emily, rather than the victory-seeking Arcite'. Competent responses often took a thematic approach and distinguished the characters, who are 'cousins but almost brotherly in nature' in terms of their attitudes to friendship, the codes of knightly conduct and the principles of courtly love. Some better answers were able to argue that Chaucer manipulates the reader into wanting the reconciliation of the friendship and relationship between the characters, rather than seeing them as opposing forces. Very good work offered different perspectives on how various readers might respond, for instance how they both revealed a fragile masculinity, or that their respect for one another is masked by their adherence to the strict codes of conduct in their universe. Most learners implicitly agreed with the given statement, noting how Chaucer uses their similar responses to Emily and their situation to drive the plot and the narrative forward.

(b) Nearly all responses showed at least some general knowledge of the text, although few responses provided a precise context for the extract. Learners need to be able to locate a passage within the wider text if they are to tackle a **(b)** question with some degree of competence. There was some attempt at times to engage with the language of the extract. Candidates needed to develop these basic points on language, rhyme and concerns in order to improve their responses. Better answers explored Chaucer's ability to capture the mood of Mars's temple. Some of these responses showed evidence of beginning to appreciate the different meanings available to the text. Candidates did well when they discussed the significance of the passage in the wider text or identified the speaker in the passage. One candidate noted that 'given the endless list of misery and suffering in the temple, it is no surprise that Arcite is doomed not to end up with the fair and gentle Emily'.

Question 5 Charles Dickens: *Oliver Twist*

(a) Every response showed appropriate knowledge of the text, with nearly all answers able to shape the material to the task. Weaker answers tended to narrate what happened to the children in the text, with most focusing solely on Oliver. Better answers at this level often considered different adults, and how they treated the children, in turn. Sound answers were able to contrast the attitudes of characters such as Fagin, Sikes and Bumble with those of Brownlow, Rose and Nancy, showing how Dickens manipulates the reader through such contrasting attitudes. Good answers noted that 'the eponymous hero is a child throughout the book, so that almost everything is in a sense presenting different attitudes to children'. Other better answers contrasted how Oliver is 'cared for by some grasping, cruel people, some well intentioned but misguided, and some like Rose and Mr Brownlow, who become symbols of the caring father and mother', as one put it. Good answers often developed such arguments by noticing for example how Dickens uses settings to reinforce his concerns, from 'the selfish meanness of the workhouse, through the debilitating squalor of Fagin's den, to the homely domesticity of Mr Brownlow's or the Maylie family's house', as one suggested. Very good answers often considered aspects of Dickens's style by exploring his descriptions of these settings, the sarcasm and irony in the passages on the workhouse, for example, reflecting his views on the attitudes to children. Other very good answers saw how the different attitudes revealed were a key tool in Dickens's characterisations. Candidates often did very well when they supported such arguments with appropriate textual references and showed an appreciation of different interpretations.

(b) Nearly every answer showed detailed knowledge of the text, with most able to give an appropriate context and some answers recognising this as Sikes's first appearance in the novel. Weaker responses tended to summarise all the events in the novel in which he is involved, often in great detail. The success of these answers depended on how well references were linked to the detail of the passage. Better answers at this level explored how Dickens 'right from the start presents him as violent, threatening and with a true understanding of Fagin's evil nature', as one suggested. Others discussed how Dickens shows the characters' hostile interdependence and in what ways that enables Dickens to develop their narratives 'to the violent and predicted, even here in Sikes's first appearance, end', as one put it. Good answers focused on the details of the passage, analysing the way narrative pointing and description are skilfully interwoven with telling dialogue, to enable the characterisation to develop, as well as the nuances of the relationship. Many good answers also explored the foreshadowing here, for example, the use of the symbols of the gallows and the dog. Very good answers linked such details into the wider textual concerns, how Sikes's 'treatment of the dog here leads inevitably to Sikes's and the dog's deaths at the end of the novel', according to one answer. Many very good responses discussed the key concerns here, with violence, conflict, poverty, criminality and the treatment of the children often mentioned. Candidates did very well when they supported such points and comments on the methods of characterisation with appropriate reference to the wider text and analysis of the detail of the passage.

Question 6 Thomas Hardy: *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*

(a) Nearly every response revealed a detailed knowledge of the text and almost all learners identified at least some contrasting settings with which to address the task. Weaker answers tended to retell the events which took place in each setting, often focusing on what happened to Tess there in great detail. Better answers at this level recognised how the events were shaped by the settings and how Hardy uses this to develop his characters, for example Angel at the Mayday dance and Alec in the woods of the Chase. Competent answers were able to explore Hardy's methods of characterisation through his use of settings, from the larger town and country contrasts, or English countryside to Brazilian forest, to the contrasting fortunes of 'the drunken father and the weary daughter whose lives are changed in a horse and cart', as one suggested. Good answers were developed such ideas by exploring the details of Hardy's writing, his descriptions of Talbothays farm and Stonehenge for example, and the events they gave rise to, with many noting some of his key concerns: fate, nature, human weakness and folly and how his choice of setting enabled him to develop his ideas and his characterisations. Candidates did very well when they supported such arguments with detailed reference to the novel and an appreciation of the many possible interpretations.

(b) Nearly every response found interesting points to make on the relationship, often derived from the given passage. Weaker answers often struggled to provide a precise context for the passage, which inevitably limited the interpretation. Several of the weaker responses were unable to link Tess's 'I cannot' to her being married to Angel, seeing it rather in terms of her antipathy to Alec generally. Better answers explored the changing dynamic here, noting how 'Tess's hard experiences and Alec's, 'conversion' means it is a different relationship now', as one learner suggested. Some answers still saw this in terms of Tess as victim and Alec as villain, how he 'characteristically shifts the blame, here onto Tess's upbringing', as one said. Good answers were able to explore different interpretations of the relationship as presented here, by analysing Hardy's use of narrative pointing to suggest ways of interpreting the dialogue. This led to engaged discussions on Alec's feelings and whether Tess, if free, might have accepted his proposal. Answers did very well when they supported such opinions on Alec and Tess, as well as their relationship, with reference to the wider text, and close analysis of the language and tone of the passage.

Question 7 John Milton: *Paradise Lost Books, IX and X*

Answers showed at least a sound knowledge of the text and an understanding of Milton's concerns and, to a lesser extent, his characteristic methods.

(a) Nearly very answer was able to select relevant material to address the task. Weaker answers narrated Satan's rebellion against God, whereas more accomplished discussions considered whether his rebellion is justified or not. More successful responses at this level also considered Adam and his failure to subdue Eve, as well as his eating the fruit, with some more competent answers considering his reasoning. Competent answers also considered Eve's rebellion against her husband, though many simply thought her 'weak and not really rebelling, but simply giving in to her susceptibility to flattery', as one answer put it. Good answers linked such discussions to Milton's wider concerns of authority, hierarchy and ambition, with many noting the ambiguity of placing 'divine knowledge against human free will', as one suggested. Very good answers developed such ideas with close reference to some aspects of Milton's style, particularly language, imagery and symbolism. Where such points were supported by detailed textual references and an appreciation of other interpretations, the responses did very well.

(b) Responses to this option tended to be weak. Many candidates did not provide a precise context for the passage and this limited their ability to explore the significance of what is revealed about Milton's concerns here. Weaker answers paraphrased the passage or summarised the general plot of the text in detail. Better answers explored the descriptions of the serpent and Eve in detail, showing how Milton shapes the reader's response through his choice of language and imagery. Very good answers linked their analysis into Milton's wider concerns such as sin, innocence, fate and attitudes to women. Candidates did very well when they developed such points with apt reference to the wider text and showed some awareness of other views.

Question 8 Percy Bysshe Shelley: Selected Poems

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

(b) Most responses made some relevant comments on the given poem, although the weakest responses made little reference to Shelley or the wider selection. Better answers at this level offered some relevant comments on either Shelley's style or his concerns, usually within a more detailed paraphrase of the content of the poem. Good answers offered a more structured and developed analysis of some of Shelley's poetic methods, often commenting on language and imagery. More thorough analyses also explored his use of rhythms and verse forms. Very good answers considered the concerns here, 'the tone and language of his common topics: death and misery and the end of life and energy', as one candidate suggested. The essays which linked such discussions to the wider text, such as 'Mont Blanc' or 'Ode to the West Wind', both of which were seen as more optimistic and characteristic of his views, did very well.

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

- Learners should have sufficient knowledge of their chosen texts so that they are able to place any passage or extract from a text in a precise location.

- Learners should give a sufficiently detailed context so that they can consider the significance of the passage in terms of the wider text. With novels and narrative poems, this may involve considering how the passage develops key elements of the whole text, often one or more of the narrative, the plot, characterisation or thematic concerns. With poets such as Shelley, the context may well be his wider concerns or aspects of style in the wider selection. The key point is that the learners must show they have a thorough knowledge of the text. In a passage question this is partly evidenced by how well the learner can make appropriate links between the given passage and the wider text.

Question 1 William Shakespeare: *Richard II*

(a) Nearly every response found relevant material with which to address the task, often showing detailed and thorough knowledge of the text. Weaker answers tended to narrate some of the more significant conflicts in the play, with the most popular choices being the chivalric duel of Bolingbroke and Mowbray and the conflict between Bolingbroke and Richard for the crown. Better answers at this level contrasted the different conflicts, at least implicitly. More competent responses offered a wider range of conflicts from the political, for example the nobles' suspicions about the king over Gloucester's death, through family conflicts such as York's divided loyalties, to inner and self conflicts, as exemplified in Richard himself. Good answers saw how Shakespeare used the different conflicts as a means of characterisation, for example the self conflict in Richard was often well exemplified and analysed, with some sharper answers noticing 'there are no such inner conflicts in Bolingbroke until the end when he has finally become king', as one suggested. Very good answers developed these ideas into the play's more abstract concerns such as the 'central conflict of the play being over the role and the rights of kingship – divine right to rule badly, democratic right to rule wisely', as one learner astutely summarised. Where such answers demonstrated Shakespeare's presentation through detailed textual referencing and an awareness of different interpretations, they did very well.

(b) Most answers were able to place the passage appropriately and found relevant points to make about Richard at this point in the play. Weaker answers often provided a detailed summary of Richard's journey to his resignation of the crown, with some able to link the points made to the given passage. Better answers at this level discussed Richard's character and how the passage revealed how he had changed. Competent answers explored some of Shakespeare’s dramatic methods, such as Richard’s use of questions, both direct and rhetorical, which were seen by some learners as evidence of ‘his ambivalent attitudes to his resignation, his confused state of mind and his desperation at the loss of his identity, as a true king’, as one response put it. Good answers developed such ideas, with some seeing his self dramatisation as indicative of his life as the centre of everything, but for others it revealed ‘his weakness and self-pitying cast of mind that proved to be his undoing’, as one suggested. Others though were more sympathetic, suggesting that in this passage ‘we see un-kinged Richard, or Richard the man, coming to terms with his loss of status and purpose’. Very good answers were always alive to the detail of the passage. For example, how Shakespeare captured Richard’s total failure by the previously loyal York now becoming Bolingbroke’s stooge in leading in the king and managing his resignation. Other very good responses analysed the stylistic features in depth – the extended metaphor of the well and the buckets was often very well analysed with multiple interpretations offered: a symbol of tragedy (the fall of a great man to a low estate); of the kinship and connection of the two rivals; of the contrasting fullness and emptiness, in terms of power, character or moral strength, of the two cousins; and of how the rise of one was only made possible by the fall of the other. Similarly, developed and sophisticated interpretations were offered about the crown as a symbol. Other responses analysed Shakespeare’s poetic methods, particularly in Richard’s final speech, noting for example the gradual movement into rhyming couplets to ‘emphasise the finality of Richard’s position and his acceptance of it’, as one suggested. Where such analysis was supported by appropriate reference to the wider text, the answers always did very well.

Question 2 William Shakespeare: *The Winter’s Tale*

(a) Most answers were able to find relevant points to discuss, with nearly every answer discussing Leontes either as the best example of a lack of loyalty or as one to whom others are, for some, surprisingly loyal. Weaker answers often retold the story of his jealousy and the effects of it on his family. Better answers at this level recognised some of the loyalties within that narrative, Hermione’s to her husband most usually, but also Mamillius’s to his mother ‘for what is more loyal than dying because your mother is wrongfully disgraced’, as one suggested. More competent answers discussed the topic through the prism of Leontes’ lack of loyalty to Hermione and Polixenes, and his expectation of it from Camillo and Antigonus. Other sound answers were structured around a selection of characters and the different kinds of loyalty they represented, for example Paulina’s devotion to her mistress, which some saw as parallel with Florizel’s ‘abandonment of everything for his country wench’, as one put it. Antigonus, Camillo and Polixenes were all often seen as portraying some positive aspect of loyalty, in direct contrast to Leontes. Good answers often responded to the question conceptually with loyalty linked to the courts and kings, leading to rewards and punishments, but for some contrasted with the ‘loyalty to human decency shown by the shepherd and clown’s reactions to the baby’, as one suggested. Other good answers explored loyalty to the gods and the Oracle, through Paulina’s faith, for example, that there would be an heir. Others though were more sceptical as exemplified by one learner, who wrote that ‘her loyalty to the good queen was in reality disloyalty to the repentant king’. Where such arguments were supported by detailed reference to the text, and an appropriate awareness of other possible interpretations, the answers did vey well.

(b) Nearly every answer found some relevant points to make about the comic characters, though some were unable to put the passage into a precise context, not recognising this as Autolycus’s first appearance in the play. Weaker answers tended to summarise his role in the play too generally, with insufficient focus on the detail of the passage. Better answers at this level referred to some of the key comic elements used by Shakespeare – the song and music, the robbing of the clown, the deception and the good-natured stupidity of the clown were common tropes identified. More competent answers developed such ideas by considering the tone and importantly the effects on the audience, ‘still reeling from the metaphorical storms of the Sicilian court and the actual storms of the Bohemian coast’, as one candidate suggested. Good answers examined the comic elements in more detail. Specifically, these often provided a good analysis of Shakespeare’s use of language, of irony and more physical slap-stick comedy. Other very good answers noticed how Autolycus’s relationship with the audience is ‘created by his direct confessions and honesty and is crucial here and later in the play to avoid the comedy becoming too dark’, as one learner wrote. Other very good answers saw how this exchange was an important element in ‘the final revelations and in the development of the Perdita part of plot’, as one response put it. Where such interpretations were linked to the wider text with appropriate references, the answers often did very well.

Question 3 Jane Austen: *Northanger Abbey*

(a) Almost every response selected relevant material with which to address the task. Weaker responses often retold the narrative of Catherine's relationship with different men, with better answers at this level able to identify differences in the way they treated her. More competent responses often structured their essays by contrasting the way Henry and John Thorpe treat Catherine and discuss her with others. This led some good answers into exploring Austen's concerns, such as social status, wealth and the objectification, for some even the commodification of women. Some good answers also discussed Austen's use of gothic tropes, particularly the vulnerable heroine. Responses were often very good when this discussion was developed into an analysis of the narrative methods that Austen uses to create humour. Very good answers were often much wider in scope, comparing male attitudes to Catherine, Isabella and Eleanor, for example, and analysing how Austen uses these attitudes to the develop the characterisation of both men and women in the novel. This was developed by some high attaining learners into a consideration of Austen's wider concerns such as marriage, parents and education. Where these arguments were well supported by textual references and awareness of other interpretations, the answers did very well.

(b) Most responses showed a sound knowledge of the text and were able to place the passage appropriately. Weaker answers lapsed into paraphrase, with some essays giving a detailed narrative summary of Catherine's various relationships. Better responses at this level linked back to the passage to some extent. Many competent answers explored what this revealed about Catherine, often seen as a turning point in her growth and maturity as 'her eyes are opened to the real Isabella Thorpe and, because of that, the untrustworthiness of some of her acquaintance', as one put it. Good answers often tempered such ideas by a recognition of her continued naivety e.g. towards the General and Mrs Thorpe. Good answers also saw the role of Henry, often well recognised as her 'teacher and guide', with the irony of his 'description of Isabella in fact describing Catherine', well explored and sometimes leading into good analysis of aspects of Austen's narrative style. Very good answers always noticed the humour here, amongst the more serious concerns, and 'how Austen shapes the reader's response by ensuring we are amused at Catherine's lack of worldliness, compared to the Tilneys and the Thorpes, rather than worried or irritated by it', as one suggested. Many noted her recognition here of Isabella's shallow ambition, guided to it by Henry, but also approved of 'how she starts to reconsider past events in a new light', as one suggested, all seen as part of Catherine's growing maturity and understanding of the world around her. Where such arguments were developed by appropriate reference to the wider text, the essays did very well.

Question 4 Geoffrey Chaucer: *The Knight's Tale*

(a) There were too few responses to this question to make any general comments on performance.

(b) Weaker answers offered either a general summary of the text or a broad paraphrase of the given passage, with some showing little evidence of knowledge of the wider text. Better answers at this level were able to offer comments on Emily, her situation and her prayer. Responses were lifted to a more competent level of performance by the inclusion of wider textual references. Good answers looked closely at Chaucer's poetic methods, especially his use of language and imagery. Others explored the effects of Diana appearing and talking to Emily, 'one of the few moments when the heavenly and earthly worlds actually interact', as one noted. Very good answers developed their responses beyond a consideration of Emily's role and characterisation into an exploration of Chaucer's wider concerns. Religion, the gods, treatment of women and fate and destiny were all popular discussion points, enabling the very good responses to consider fully the significance of this passage in the wider text. Candidates did very well when their arguments were supported by reference to the rest of the tale and showed some awareness of the other interpretations.

Question 5 Charles Dickens: *Oliver Twist*

(a) Nearly every answer selected relevant material from the text with which to address the task. Weaker answers tended to retell parts of the story, often focusing on Oliver himself. Better answers at this level were able to shape the material to consider at least implicitly Dickens's presentation. Competent answers were usually more wide-ranging, looking at how Oliver symbolises the effects of poverty in several scenarios, including the workhouse, the court and the criminal underworld.

Other responses developed such ideas with reference to other unfortunates, such as Oliver's mother, Nancy and even Sikes. Good answers were able to move beyond the characters and consider the concepts more closely, such as how 'Dickens shows that poverty is the root of so much of the evil in contemporary London society', as one suggested. For others, the 'attitudes of the wealthy to the poor inevitably gives them no alternatives but a life of crime', as one response put it. Very good answers supported such arguments with close reference to the text and often a sophisticated understanding of how Dickens's choice of language and symbols 'cleverly shapes the reader's view into at times sympathising with the gang of boys and especially Nancy', according to one response. When such arguments were supported by appropriate quotation and an appreciation of other interpretations, the responses did very well.

(b) Most responses placed the passage appropriately and were able to consider at least partly its significance in terms of the characters and the narrative development. Weaker answers tended to retell Sikes's backstory to this point in the novel, with better answers at this level linking the narrative to some of the details of the passage. More competent answers focused on how Dickens presents the developments of the characters and their relationships, particularly 'Charley's violent and fearless attack on Nancy's murderer, which suggests an underlying morality in the gang of boys', as one response put it. Good answers developed such ideas by analysing Dickens's methods in detail, with many exploring the language in which Sikes is described, the use of dialogue and the violence in word and action. Where this was supported by apposite reference to the wider text and some appreciation of other possible interpretations, the answers did very well.

Question 6 Thomas Hardy: *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*

(a) Almost every answer showed detailed, relevant knowledge of the text, with most learners, focusing on Tess and her mother. Weaker answers tended to move too far away from the task when writing about Tess, often giving very detailed accounts of her misfortunes. Better answers at this level were more selective in writing about Tess, often showing real engagement with 'her abusive treatment at the hands of her own mother, leading to her own pitifully short-lived motherhood and the loss of Sorrow', as one put it. More competent answers developed such ideas into considering Hardy's concerns, such as how fate and fortune conspire against the women's best intentions and 'how mothers are inevitably dominated to their detriment by the men around them, whether fathers or sons', as one learner wrote. Very good answers always considered some elements of Hardy's style, his use of language and imagery, for example, in the burial of Sorrow or the descriptions of Mrs Durbeyfield with the children early in the novel. Other responses analysed his use of symbols, as a means of characterisation, or how he used narrative structures to contrast the attitudes of very different mothers such as Mrs Clare and Mrs D'Urberville. Such arguments when supported by detailed reference to the text and an awareness of other opinions always did very well.

(b) This was a popular question and often very well answered. Nearly every essay could place the passage in the wider text and the context of the post marriage revelations was well identified. Weaker answers were liable to retell the history of Angel's doomed marriage, with too little focus on the detail of the passage. Some better answers at this level often found intermittent connections with some of the detail of the passage. More competent answers focused firmly on the question, Angel's role and characterisation, and explored with some engaged personal response what for some was 'Angel's genuine grief and his 'ghostliness' as a shadow of the modern, lively and curious character we have seen up to this point', as one essay suggested. Good answers saw his role as shaping our response to Tess, through his for some 'typically male idealisation of a barely known woman followed by his demonising of the real woman when he gets to know her', as one candidate astutely suggested. Others saw his characterisation in different terms: 'his idealism of her, was symptomatic, like Alec, of the male gaze', as one put it. Very good answers linked these ideas to Hardy's presentation of religion and the church or to the 'hypocrisy of the contemporary attitudes to sex, relationships and 'fallen' women', as one suggested. Very good answers always looked at the detail of the writing, how his misery was portrayed in the descent down the hill, for example. Others noted the similarities with the pregnant Tess's return home, also with a despairing heart. For some, Angel was still a villain in his 'changing attitudes to society and status, in his double standards about sex, but also in his confused thinking about Tess's name and ancestry'. For nearly all learners, Angel was deeply conflicted in his thoughts about Tess, his future and himself. Where such ideas and arguments were linked to the wider text, with appropriate references, the responses did very well.

Question 7 John Milton: *Paradise Lost Books, IX and X*

(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 8 Percy Bysshe Shelley: Selected Poems

(a) Almost every response was able to select relevant poems with which to address the task. Popular choices were ‘Mask of Anarchy’, ‘England 1819’ and ‘Ode to the West Wind’. Weaker answers tended to paraphrase the poems, with some intermittent commentary in the better responses at this level. Competent answers explored Shelley’s political concerns: ‘Shelley is urging the people to rise-up and rebel in almost all his poems’, suggested one learner. For nearly all responses, rebellion was presented as a positive ‘in the face of corrupt, wicked rulers and moribund elite class, from the Crown down’, as one suggested. Good answers developed such ideas by close reference to the detail of the poems, exploring his use of verse form, imagery and language often in detail. Such analyses were often developed into a wider appreciation of Shelley’s concerns, his moral and political modernity, for some readers. Rebellion was caused by ‘The injustice of society through its treatment of the poor and needy, exacerbated by the ineffectiveness of religion and the clergy’, as one said. For others though, ‘There is hope in some of the poems, hope that through action change can be brought about'. Where such arguments were fully supported by apt references and clear analysis, alongside an awareness of the many ways Shelley’s writing can be interpreted, the responses always did very well.

(b) Candidates often did this question well, and there were some very good, sophisticated analyses of Shelley’s methods. Weaker answers tended to paraphrase the given passage, with some very weak answers responding as if to an unseen poem. Better answers at this level discussed some of Shelley’s concerns, such as nature and change. Sounder answers linked this extract to Shelley’s political views, with several responses discussing the contexts, such as the Peterloo massacre. Good answers explored Shelley’s poetic voice and concerns and his struggle to be heard, as a poet and as a guide, reflected in the repeated ‘O hear’. Very good answers, whilst focused on the detail of the passage, were also able to range more widely in the selection. Wider text references included ‘England 1819’, ‘Adonais’, ‘The Mask of Anarchy’ and ‘Mont Blanc’. Others explored the poem more metaphorically, for example an interpretation of the state of England and how there is a need for ‘the winds of change’. For others the poem was seen as ‘Shelley’s lament for his lack of audience, his failure to inspire revolution and change, compared to the wind’. Where such ideas were supported by developed analysis and an appreciation of other interpretations, the responses did very well.

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Key messages

- Good responses demonstrate a thoroughly detailed knowledge of the set texts.
- Good responses show some knowledge of critical approaches such as the Marxist approach, the Feminist reading, or some works of criticism specifically on the texts.
- Successful candidates use short, appropriate quotations to support their responses to questions. Quoting line numbers from passages or giving the first and last words of a quotation (e.g. 'So…years') tends to disrupt the coherence of the response.
- Candidates should demonstrate knowledge of the main themes and concerns of a text both in essay and passage questions.
- Candidates must make a relevant selection of knowledge in answering the question.
- Good answers go beyond discussion of plot and characters to demonstrate how the writer shapes meaning bearing in mind the genre of the text. While comments on effects of language and structure will be valid across all three genres, attention should also be paid to the ways dramatic effects are achieved in plays and to poetic effects in poetry.

General comments

Nearly all candidates complied with the rubric and wrote full responses on two texts in the time allocated.

Most answers were clearly expressed. Candidates used an appropriate register and avoided slang expressions. Some candidates demonstrated fluency and felicity of expression.

There was some appropriate reference to critical opinion in answers. Many candidates scrutinised critical opinions as part of a coherent argument. Critical approaches such as Marxism, Feminism or Post-Colonialism were aptly applied, and very few candidates quoted banal and obvious statements such as, 'Critic J Bloggs has stated that *The Glass Menagerie* is a memory play'.

Most candidates wrote relevantly in response to questions. Some less successful responses included material that was not relevant to the set question.

Successful candidates included personal responses which were closely linked to the question and the text. Less successful responses engaged in general reflection which detracted from a focus on the question and misused time.

The need to make connections between the passages set in the **(b)** questions and the texts as a whole is being more widely recognised, but less so with poetry passages. Candidates who recognised some concerns or characteristics of the poet could improve further by quoting other examples from elsewhere in the poet's work.

<u>Comments on specific questions</u>

Question 1 T S Eliot: *Four Quartets*

(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 2 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 3 Kazuo Ishiguru: *Never Let Me Go*

(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 Barbara Kingsolver: *The Poisonwood Bible*

(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 5 Derek Walcott: Selected Poetry

Most candidates demonstrated some appropriate contextual knowledge, such as the way that many of Walcott's poems reflect his Caribbean background and his post-colonial outlook, although weaker responses spent too much time giving background information with biographical details. High attaining candidates paid attention to the subject matter of the poems and to the way the writer achieves effects through his use of language, form and structure.

(a) In response to this question, candidates employed some of their contextual knowledge of Caribbean history and most demonstrated an appropriate level of such knowledge. Poems such as 'The Almond Trees' and 'Veranda' were successfully explored in relation to the question. The more successful candidates showed understanding of Walcott's balanced view of the past, demonstrated in 'Ruins of a Great House'. Some responses suggested that the speaker of the poem recognises that alongside the cruelty and abuse inflicted by colonisers, some of them were also great poets and as well as leaving behind the ugly relics of slavery, islanders like Walcott inherited some of the beauties of their language, giving rise to the quotations Walcott uses from Browne, Milton and Donne. Some candidates suggested that when Walcott recognises that 'Albion too was once a colony', the tone of this poem shifts from being 'ablaze with rage' to tolerant acceptance of what is in the past: 'All in compassion ends.' 'The Virgins' was used by some candidates and although set in more modern times it demonstrates a different kind of colonisation by tourists. Candidates reflected on the tacky effects of tourism such as the proliferation of tourist goods, 'cameras, watches, perfumes', which generate little profit for local people and 'only the crime rate is on the rise'. Better answers discussed the significance of details such as the 'jewelled housefly' and the' banks of silver'.

(b) Most candidates were able to achieve some success with 'The Flock', usually identifying its themes of winter, both in physical form and as a metaphor for old age, approaching death and the freezing of creativity. Good answers made a close reading of the text showing the connection between the scene described and the process of poetic creativity. They recognised the migratory birds as representative of poetic images and the ways the winter is associated with the mind and the knight with the poet. Less successful candidates misinterpreted the opening of the poem and suggested that it is set in the Arctic, rather than 'our tropic light' to which the birds are migrating. Some candidates wrote about topics such as colonialism, which was not relevant to the question, and some saw references to global warming in the poem. While analysis of this long and complex poem allowed little time for candidates to explore other poems in the collection which reflect characteristics demonstrated in this poem, answers could have benefited from brief allusion to poems dealing with similar topics of ageing and the shrinking of creativity such as ‘Nearing Forty’ and ‘To Return to the Trees’, or to Walcott’s interest in time and the changing of the seasons.

Question 6 Tennessee Williams: *The Glass Menagerie*

Most candidates were at least moderately successful in their responses to the questions. The context of the Depression, the threat of war in Europe and the American Dream were often usefully mentioned in relation to this text. Candidates should be aware that the biographical details of Williams’s life, links between his sister Rose and Laura, and the possible connection between Amanda and Williams’s mother are rarely helpful and can waste time. Some candidates correctly described this as a memory play with Tom as the narrator/participant. Candidates did less well when they went on to suggest that Tom’s memories of his family are naturally biased and that in reality Amanda was somehow different to the way she is presented in this play as though she is real, rather than a construct of the playwright. Many candidates included critical opinions in their answers which, in the best cases, helped to shape the argument by supporting or refuting the point being discussed. Less successful answers could improve by avoiding using critical opinions to make obvious points.

(a) Most candidates who tackled this question tended to agree with the given quotation. They gave fairly well detailed accounts of Jim’s role in the play, starting with the extended build-up to his appearance as ‘the long-delayed but always expected something that we live for’, mostly paying particular attention to the effect he has on Laura. Equally valid arguments were given to support the opinion that he destroys Laura and breaks her heart as well as the opinion that he makes Laura into a more ‘normal’ person, symbolised by the breaking of her unicorn’s horn, turning it into an ordinary horse. More subtle responses examined in detail some of Jim’s speeches in scenes six and seven. Despite the enormous promise of his schooldays he has failed to achieve success so far and describes himself as ‘disappointed’ but not ‘discouraged’, perhaps an implied criticism of the American Dream which encouraged everyone to believe in success. His speech to Laura in which he claims, ‘I can analyse people better than doctors that make a profession of it’ suggests that ‘I guess you think I think a lot of myself’ might be an accurate judgement. His behaviour in kissing Laura and then telling of his engagement to Betty elicited varying responses, ranging from approval that he is building Laura’s confidence to outrage. Good answers focused on the way Williams presents him and included comments on the screen legends, such as ‘The sky falls’, the way the music from the dance hall stimulates Jim to dance with Laura and the significance of Jim discarding his chewing gum ‘when the flavour is gone’.

(b) This question elicited a range of responses. While weaker answers were confined to narrative accounts of the scene with some commentary, many candidates related the scene to some of the play’s main concerns and were well focused on audience response. The scene was identified as typical of the ongoing conflict between Amanda and Tom, reflecting Amanda’s desire to dominate and Tom’s frustration at the thwarting of his dreams. The role of Mr Wingfield’s picture, the overthrown chair and the fiery glow casting shadows on the ceiling were commented on as well as the threatening nature of Tom ‘over-towering her tiny figure’. Many candidates identified the tone of the final speech as sarcastic, and some of these responses could have been improved by a closer scrutiny of the extravagant fabrication of Tom’s secret life. Some candidates employed a Feminist approach to the passage, noting how women were forced to be economically dependent on men. Only a few noted the role of Laura in this scene whose distress is signified by the one word she speaks. Candidates mentioned her role as peacemaker and the fact that Tom’s reluctance to leave her is what stops him from departing altogether. When he finally leaves home, he is unable to shake off his guilt and is ‘more faithful than (he) intended to be’.

Question 7 Virginia Woolf: *Mrs Dalloway*

(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.

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- Candidates must make a relevant selection of knowledge in answering the question.
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Nearly all candidates complied with the rubric and wrote full responses on two texts in the time allocated.

Most answers were clearly expressed. Candidates used an appropriate register and avoided slang expressions. Some candidates demonstrated fluency and felicity of expression.

There was some appropriate reference to critical opinion in answers. Many candidates scrutinised critical opinions as part of a coherent argument. Critical approaches such as Marxism, Feminism or Post-Colonialism were aptly applied, and very few candidates quoted banal and obvious statements such as, 'Critic J Bloggs has stated that *The Glass Menagerie* is a memory play'.

Most candidates wrote relevantly in response to questions. Some less successful responses included material that was not relevant to the set question.

Successful candidates included personal responses which were closely linked to the question and the text. Less successful responses engaged in general reflection which detracted from a focus on the question and misused time.

The need to make connections between the passages set in the **(b)** questions and the texts as a whole is being more widely recognised, but less so with poetry passages. Candidates who recognised some concerns or characteristics of the poet could improve further by quoting other examples from elsewhere in the poet's work.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1 T S Eliot: *Four Quartets*

Candidates showed enthusiastic engagement with some of the religious and philosophical ideas expressed in the poems, though some were inclined to use the poems as a springboard for their own spiritual and philosophical ideas not well linked to the text. Some did not engage with the text as poetry and made few comments on the way Eliot shapes meaning. Better responses demonstrated intelligent reading and some originality of interpretation. Few candidates referred to criticism on Eliot, and references to criticism could have improved their answers. There is plenty of helpful criticism available, including some by Helen Gardner, Christopher Ricks and Allen Tate.

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

(b) The best responses to the passage showed ability to consider other areas of the poem. They referred to the overarching theme of time and the motif of the dance in contrast with the still point. In this passage Eliot is elaborating on ideas set forth earlier in the poem. Eliot's characteristic use of antithesis was noted as a recurring characteristic. The necessity to be removed from time to achieve true spirituality was countered with the idea that the 'enchainment of past and future … Protects mankind from heaven and damnation' and linked to 'human kind cannot bear very much reality' as stated in the opening movement of 'Burnt Norton'. The reference to the rose-garden and the draughty church at smoke fall are echoed in other areas of the poem. Weaker answers tended to move through the passage line by line in an attempt at paraphrase, while others wrote general personal or moralising reflections based loosely on some of the religious and philosophical ideas of *Four Quartets*.

Question 2 Athol Fugard: *Township Plays*

Candidates' responses suggested that they found the plays, set during the era of apartheid in South Africa, accessible and relevant to today's world. They demonstrated some sound knowledge and understanding of the texts in both questions, as well as sensitive awareness of the context of these plays. Not all candidates showed evidence of being aware of the dramatic features employed by Fugard, and to improve, they could show greater scrutiny of these features.

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

(b) Most candidates made sound comments on aspects of the passage including Queeny's obvious reluctance to disclose her past, Johnny's shocked reaction and his inability to accept someone who is 'filth' like him, the hypocrisy of Queeny's customers and Johnny's departure which gives rise to the 'resurrection' of the old Queeny as she returns to running an illegal shebeen. Good answers focused on the language of the extract, contrasting the tension implied in the abruptness of the first twenty lines with the longer speeches of Queeny describing her past hardship, the use of religious language as she describes the 'miracle' of bringing the old Queeny back to life and the stage directions at the end of the scene which demonstrate the change in her demeanour. Some candidates referred to the wider text, contrasting Johnny's behaviour here to his enthusiasm and happiness earlier in the play. Some feminist criticism was applied to the predicament of Queeny, linking her to Rebecca in 'No-Good Friday' in the way they are used by men, though both women retaliate in the end. The activities of Shark were also compared to the smaller scale criminal activity of Sam and candidates viewed both as a by-product of the apartheid system.

Question 3 Kazuo Ishiguru: *Never Let Me Go*

Candidates' responses indicated engagement in the text, and they showed an awareness of the topicality of cloning in the 1990s and of potential moral issues. Good answers took account of the ways the dystopian world of the novel is depicted, with evidence of brainwashing of the clones so that they become accepting of their fate, masked by the use of euphemisms such as 'donate' and 'complete'. To improve, candidates should avoid writing passionate personal condemnations of the ill treatment or lack of humanity implied by the system of cloning unless clearly linked to the question.

(a) Some of the best responses showed detailed knowledge of the text and an understanding of Ishiguru's methods and intentions, as well as some intelligent use of critical views. Answers considered the attitudes implied by the clones' treatment at Hailsham, the role of Miss Lucy in informing the clones of their future and the revulsion exhibited by Madame. Candidates often linked this to the later revelation that Hailsham was a place of privilege in comparison to other establishments caring for clones, particularly in its efforts to prove the clones had souls. The attitudes of the clones themselves to their fate were usually discussed in detail. Ruth was viewed as one who is constantly seeking escape from the reality of her situation in the ways she indulges in fantasy of various kinds, ranging from her imaginary horses to her search for her 'possible' and her dream of working in an office. Candidates often discussed Tommy with reference to his tantrums, seen as an indication of his inability to accept his fate while Kathy was viewed as sadly resigned to her fate, especially by the end of the novel. Many commented on the infuriating passivity of the clones in never rebelling, though this was taken a step further in some responses where the fate of the clones, their inevitable death, was seen as an allegory of the human situation. Weak answers were usually narrative, lacking in precise detail or side-tracking into discussions about whether the clones should be viewed as humans.

(b) Most answers found much to discuss about the running commentary of the girls as they watch Tommy's temper tantrum. The tendency of the Hailsham candidates to bully Tommy was mentioned and some learners compared the responses of Laura, Ruth and Kathy. Kathy's careful observation of Tommy, rather than watching Laura's performance, was identified as evidence of her compassionate nature and her deepening interest in Tommy which would develop later. Candidates saw her concern for his precious shirt as further evidence. Others put more emphasis on analysing the character of Tommy, observing his tendency to be more open and honest than the other boys in showing his eagerness to be chosen for the team while the other boys pretend not to care. Candidates linked this observation to Tommy's tendency later on to be less guileful and more open than the other characters. Weaker responses tended to give narrative accounts of Tommy's later development as a character. Better responses made a direct link between Tommy's raging 'no longer trying to direct his comments in any particular direction' with his outburst of screaming rage after he and Kathy learn much later on that deferrals do not exist and his admission that, 'Maybe I did know, somewhere deep down. Something the rest of you did not'. Candidates who identified Kathy as an unreliable narrator sometimes observed that we cannot know whether she tells us the truth, however such comments sometimes indicated a misunderstanding, as there cannot be a 'truth' concerning events in a construct such as a novel.

Question 4 Barbara Kingsolver: *The Poisonwood Bible*

Candidates showed an ability to assimilate detail and to acquire an overview of themes and concerns in this text. They demonstrated sound knowledge of context, including the political changes taking place in the Congo during the middle of the twentieth century, which was mostly used judiciously. Some candidates made relevant use of critical opinions and most were able to consider the text from a post-colonial viewpoint.

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

(b) The passage question was usually tackled with some competence with most candidates demonstrating sufficient knowledge of the text to consider the way in which Adah was presented earlier in the novel, sometimes in detail. Many picked up that Adah had been viewed sympathetically by the Congolese who were less horrified by physical differences than most white people. Much of the passage is concerned with the way Adah misses being different. Her able-bodied self is now less original and creative than the former Adah whose 'two unmatched halves used to add up to more than one whole'. Good responses were able to comment on the language of the passage which displays the characteristic belligerent voice of Adah, mocking the ways Western Civilisation expects perfection and assumes that 'poor miserable buggers' would all want to be like them. Candidates connected Adah's feelings of guilt, shown at the end of the passage, with the guilt all four of the narrators carry out of the Congo, 'the scene of the crime'. They share the guilt of taking part in the white man's desecration of Africa as well as the familial guilt of not preventing the death of Ruth May.

Question 5 Derek Walcott: Selected Poetry

(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 6 Tennessee Williams: *The Glass Menagerie*

Most candidates were at least moderately successful in their responses to the questions. The context of the Depression, the threat of war in Europe and the American Dream were often usefully mentioned in relation to this text. Candidates should be aware that the biographical details of Williams's life, links between his sister Rose and Laura, and the possible connection between Amanda and Williams's mother are rarely helpful and can waste time. Some candidates correctly described this as a memory play with Tom as the narrator/ participant. Candidates did less well when they went on to suggest that Tom's memories of his family are naturally biased and that in reality Amanda was somehow different to the way she is presented in this play as though she is real, rather than a construct of the playwright. Many candidates included critical opinions in their answers which, in the best cases, helped to shape the argument by supporting or refuting the point being discussed. Less successful answers could improve by avoiding using critical opinions to make obvious points.

(a) This question was done well by many candidates who demonstrated detailed knowledge and understanding of the play. They tended to consider the topic in relation to each of the family members and Jim, relating the source of their bewilderment to the abandonment of the family by Mr Wingfield, economic problems and to their character traits. There was some difference of opinion as to whether this description could be applied to Jim and some argued that Tom is not bewildered because he knows what he wants. It was possible to agree or disagree with the statement in different ways providing there was evidence from the text to support the view. However, some candidates did not pay attention to the word 'bewildered' and produced responses which were mainly focused on other key topics, such as dreams, the desire to escape or not living in the present. They wrote less successful essays which were often simply character studies.

(b) The passage question proved popular and prompted some very good responses from candidates who took account of the whole passage, making connections with other areas of the text such as the arrival of Jim and Tom's reference to the magician's coffin trick. Candidates saw the account of the departure of Mr Wingfield as prolepsis in relation to Tom's desertion of the family, recognised by most as having already happened because we are now being invited to enter his memory. The context of the 'dissolving economy' and 'shouting and confusion' were linked by some to what the audience will witness within the family. There were comments on Amanda's dominating treatment of Tom and while candidates appreciated that the portrayal of her is seen through the memory of Tom, some candidates insisted that there was a real version of Amanda which had been exaggerated. Very good answers paid attention to the ways Williams achieves effects through his use of plastic theatre, music, the fire escape, Tom's costume, the imitation of eating and the screen legend. Weaker responses tended to give narrative accounts of the scene with some comments on characters.

Question 7 Virginia Woolf: *Mrs Dalloway*

Candidates demonstrated understanding of Woolf's narrative technique as well as knowledge of the literary, social and historical context of the novel. Some candidates showed knowledge of critical writing on this text and were able to make judicious reference to it in their answers.

(a) Candidates wrote well balanced responses which considered both of the given views of Clarissa Dalloway. They gave details of her society lifestyle in London, and her preoccupation with her party. Candidates saw Clarissa's marriage to Richard Dalloway, as opposed to her refusal of Peter Walsh's proposal, as an indication of her superficiality. Some candidates reasoned that Peter would have demanded closer intimacy with her than Richard ever has, and that Clarissa loses part of her identity in becoming Mrs Richard Dalloway in return for a comfortably prosperous life. The more passionate side of her nature was seen to be reflected in her memories of her youth at Bourton, her relationship with Sally and even in her hatred of Mrs Kilman. More subtle responses reflected on the implied connection between Clarissa and Septimus, giving further evidence of the depth of Clarissa's character. Some candidates identified that the stream of consciousness technique employed by Woolf allows the reader to recognise the similarity in Clarissa and Septimus's thoughts as they each respond with similar intensity to what they see around them. Both characters bring to mind Shakespeare's lines from *Cymbeline*, 'Fear no more the heat of the sun', and contemplate death. Candidates also identified Clarissa's reaction at her party on hearing of the death of Septimus as significant.

(b) Candidates demonstrated engagement with this passage. Some less successful responses spent too much of their answer on the PTSD from which Septimus is suffering, which, though relevant, does not require lengthy explanation and personal reflection on the insensitivity of civilians to his disorder or detailed digressions into the bouts of mental illness from which Woolf suffered. Successful responses noted that Woolf's depiction of Septimus is characteristic of her social criticism in an era when shell shock was regarded as the male equivalent of hysteria in women. The prevalent attitude towards mental illness as a taboo subject is demonstrated by Rezia's embarrassment and her fear that 'People must notice'. The ignorance and lack of sympathy of the medical profession was identified as a major concern in this novel by candidates who made links to other areas of the text involving Dr Holmes and Sir William Bradshaw. High attaining candidates commented in detail on Septimus's perception of the beauties of nature which move him to tears. The incongruity of the aeroplane spelling out 'Toffee' in the sky was seen as a comic touch by some, as was the comparison of the nursemaid's voice to a grasshopper. The focus on nature in the heart of London is another recurring feature of this novel. Many answers expressed sympathy with Rezia's obvious distress and love for Septimus even though 'far rather would she that he were dead'. Candidates saw Rezia's frequent recourse to the reassurance from Dr Holmes that 'there was nothing the matter' with Septimus as ironic in view of later events. Good responses paid attention to relevant details, and they showed ability to make connections with the main concerns of the novel. These good responses also demonstrated awareness of Woolf's narrative technique as she moves smoothly between the consciousness of Septimus and Rezia.

LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

Paper 9695/63
1900 to the Present

Key messages

- Good responses demonstrate a thoroughly detailed knowledge of the set texts.
- Good responses show some knowledge of critical approaches such as the Marxist approach, the Feminist reading, or some works of criticism specifically on the texts.
- Successful candidates use short, appropriate quotations to support their responses to questions. Quoting line numbers from passages or giving the first and last words of a quotation (e.g. ‘So…years’) tends to disrupt the coherence of the response.
- Candidates should demonstrate knowledge of the main themes and concerns of a text both in essay and passage questions.
- Candidates must make a relevant selection of knowledge in answering the question.
- Good answers go beyond discussion of plot and characters to demonstrate how the writer shapes meaning bearing in mind the genre of the text. While comments on effects of language and structure will be valid across all three genres, attention should also be paid to the ways dramatic effects are achieved in plays and to poetic effects in poetry.

General comments

Nearly all candidates complied with the rubric and wrote full responses on two texts in the time allocated.

Most answers were clearly expressed. Candidates used an appropriate register and avoided slang expressions. Some candidates demonstrated fluency and felicity of expression.

There was some appropriate reference to critical opinion in answers. Many candidates scrutinised critical opinions as part of a coherent argument. Critical approaches such as Marxism, Feminism or Post-Colonialism were aptly applied, and very few candidates quoted banal and obvious statements such as, ‘Critic J Bloggs has stated that *The Glass Menagerie* is a memory play’.

Most candidates wrote relevantly in response to questions. Some less successful responses included material that was not relevant to the set question.

Successful candidates included personal responses which were closely linked to the question and the text. Less successful responses engaged in general reflection which detracted from a focus on the question and misused time.

The need to make connections between the passages set in the **(b)** questions and the texts as a whole is being more widely recognised, but less so with poetry passages. Candidates who recognised some concerns or characteristics of the poet could improve further by quoting other examples from elsewhere in the poet’s work.

Question 1 T S Eliot: *Four Quartets*

Candidates showed enthusiastic engagement with some of the religious and philosophical ideas expressed in the poems, though some were inclined to use the poems as a springboard for their own spiritual and philosophical ideas not well linked to the text. Some did not engage with the text as poetry and made few comments on the way Eliot shapes meaning. Better responses demonstrated intelligent reading and some originality of interpretation. Few candidates referred to criticism on Eliot, and references to criticism could have improved their answers. There is plenty of helpful criticism available, including some by Helen Gardner, Christopher Ricks and Allen Tate.

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

(b) The best responses to the passage showed ability to make connections to other areas of the text. As some candidates noted, the first eighteen lines reflect Eliot's frustration at the difficulty of expressing ideas clearly, 'trying to learn to use words' which is a recurring subject – 'the intolerable wrestle with words and meanings'. Some candidates pointed out the use of battle imagery in these lines ('raid', 'squads', 'fight') emphasising the difficulty of the struggle, and echoing the reference to 'les deaux guerres' at the beginning of the passage. The second part of the passage was identified as contributing to the idea of a spiritual journey, starting from 'home' which prevails throughout the poems, most evidently in 'The Dry Salvages' section III, 'Fare forward, travellers'. The idea of a pattern and of there being 'a time for' specific moments or events echoes the earlier passage in 'East Coker' describing the 'earth feet' of earlier generations keeping time in their dancing, 'the time of the seasons and the constellations'. The sea images at the end of the passage are connected with 'The Dry Salvages'. Weaker answers tended to move through the passage line by line in an attempt at paraphrase while others wrote general personal or moralising reflections based loosely on some of the religious and philosophical ideas of *Four Quartets*.

Question 2 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 3 Kazuo Ishiguru: *Never Let Me Go*

Candidates' responses indicated engagement in the text, and they showed an awareness of the topicality of cloning in the 1990s and of potential moral issues. Good answers took account of the ways the dystopian world of the novel is depicted, with evidence of brainwashing of the clones so that they become accepting of their fate, masked by the use of euphemisms such as 'donate' and 'complete'. To improve, candidates should avoid writing passionate personal condemnations of the ill treatment or lack of humanity implied by the system of cloning unless clearly linked to the question.

(a) Good responses demonstrated detailed knowledge of the text and an understanding of Ishiguru's methods and intentions as well as some intelligent use of critical views. Answers considered the attitudes of the clones as children at Hailsham as they gradually become aware of their role as organ donors, partly through the revelations of Miss Lucy. The comic behaviour of pretending to unzip their bodies and remove organs was viewed as a coping mechanism and compared to the ways young people often joke irreverently about death. The donating of their artwork was viewed as preparation for giving away their organs as was the constant attention and importance given to their health. Kathy's often oblique references to her caring activities, with reference to Ruth and Tommy, demonstrate their increasing weakness and deterioration as they draw nearer to completion. Candidates used Kathy and Tommy's visit to Madame and Miss Emily in the hope of finding out about deferrals to show the attitudes of the human world, a more scientific and efficient place where people like Miss Emily can have worn out parts of their bodies replaced but which does not wish to be reminded of the clones, wishing the existence of these 'poor creatures' to be kept in the shadows. Many commented on the infuriating passivity of the clones in never rebelling. Weak answers were usually narrative, lacking in precise detail or side-tracking into discussions about whether the clones should be viewed as humans.

(b) Most candidates identified the context of this passage as the trip to Norfolk to look for Ruth's 'possible'. There was detailed discussion of the group dynamics shown in this section of the novel, with its continuing focus on Ruth's tendency to dominate the Hailsham clones and occasionally treat them unkindly, as shown here in the way she joins in the teasing of Kathy, in the interests of impressing their new friends from the cottages. Candidates saw the minor rebellion contemplated here as ironic in view of the clones' total lack of resistance to their fate. The ulterior motive of Chrissie and Rodney in seeking information about deferrals was acknowledged and the high status of Hailsham implied in 'That's Hailsham for you'. Good answers commented on the dreams and fantasies which pervade this passage, particularly the notion of having jobs, mundane as they seemed to most candidates, and the language of the passage which emphasises how unrealistic their dreams are: 'We all looked dreamily out at the clouds.' Candidates who identified Kathy as an unreliable narrator sometimes observed that we cannot know whether she tells us the truth, however such comments sometimes indicated a misunderstanding, as there cannot be a 'truth' concerning events in a construct such as a novel.

Question 4 Barbara Kingsolver: *The Poisonwood Bible*

Candidates showed an ability to assimilate detail and to acquire an overview of themes and concerns in this text. They demonstrated sound knowledge of context, including the political changes taking place in the Congo during the middle of the twentieth century, which was mostly used judiciously. Some candidates made relevant use of critical opinions and most were able to consider the text from a post-colonial viewpoint.

(a) Most candidates commented on the absence of a narration from Nathan, seeing it as fitting that the women, whose lives he so dominates, should be given a voice, allowing the reader to see Nathan though their eyes. They referred closely to details from some of the narratives which reflect the concerns and characters of the narrators showing how each of them is affected by their time spent in the Congo, and for some of them what happens to them afterwards. Candidates noted that this narrative approach affords the reader a wide spectrum, ranging from the domestic difficulties of Orleanna (whose narrative is the only retrospective one), through to the self-absorbed and often comically portrayed teenage attitude of Rachel, to a wider perspective of political events which impinge on their lives, particularly Leah's. Responses identified that Adah's narrative reveals open hostility to her father's teachings. The beginning of Rachel's narrative ironically shows some insight on their arrival: 'We are supposed to be calling the shots here, but it does not look to me like we're in charge of a thing.' Both Rachel and Ruth May reveal in their narrative the racist attitudes with which they have been indoctrinated. Rachel assumes superiority over the native population and Ruth May innocently refers to the tribes of Ham and the Jim Crow Laws. Candidates made comparisons between the different ways the narrators adapt to their situation. As the victims of Nathan's religious fanaticism, their sympathies sometimes lie with the people of Kilanga. Many candidates mentioned that the final narration is Ruth May's reflection that all of her family are 'accomplices to the fall' which is the white man's treatment of Africa. Weaker responses showed a lack of discrimination, sometimes attempting to summarise each of the narratives.

(b) Some candidates tackled this passage question very ably. They recognised that the confrontation between Nathan and Anatole deals with one of the central concerns of the novel: the lack of respect shown by white colonisers for the culture and religious beliefs of the indigenous population. The absence of any real understanding between the villagers and Nathan is demonstrated in Tata Ndu's fear that the villagers are being corrupted by Nathan bringing them the Christian word. Anatole's description of the people who have so far joined Nathan's church as 'the bad-luck people' whose own gods have not been able to do anything for them is incomprehensible to Nathan. The best answers took into consideration the narrative perspective of Rachel which adds great humour to this passage with her teenage American slangy descriptions of Nathan's reactions to Anatole's words: 'the fire hit the pan'; 'when he sees an argument coming, man oh man does he get jazzed up', and 'Father was going to keel plumb over. Call the ambulance'. Her phrases bring out her vicarious enjoyment of watching her father being put down. Some discussed the clash of language in the passage. What Nathan calls 'Chriti-an-ity' is interpreted by Tata Ndu as 'leading our villagers down into a hole … where they will become trapped like bugs on a rotten carcase'. Some noted the clever tact of Anatole in avoiding a direct response to Nathan's question at the end of the passage. Other concerns which are highlighted in this passage are the bigotry of Nathan and the awe with which his family regard any attempt to stand up to him. Other examples of Nathan's failure to understand the local people were mentioned, such as his misuse of their language and his attempt to baptise the villagers in a crocodile infested river.

Question 5 Derek Walcott: Selected Poetry

Most candidates demonstrated some appropriate contextual knowledge, such as the way that many of Walcott's poems reflect his Caribbean background and his post-colonial outlook, although weaker responses spent too much time giving background information with biographical details. High attaining candidates paid attention to the subject matter of the poems and to the way the writer achieves effects through his use of language, form and structure.

(a) This question offered a lot of scope for candidates to choose appropriate poems. 'A Careful Passion' was chosen by most. Candidates commented on the way the scene described in the poem reflects the worn-out love affair, particularly the 'old Greek freighter quitting port' and the 'coupling flies'. Some noted the pun on 'lies' and the aptness of 'wave after wave of memory', suggesting that this illicit affair now coming to an end is a repeated experience for the speaker of the poem who shows some contempt for his 'self-seeking heart'. Other candidates identified that the form of the poem with its end-stopped rhyming lines reflects the boredom of the speaker and the ending with 'the stores rattling shut' gives an air of finality. Other poems selected included 'Lampfall', 'Oddjob' and 'Sea Canes' all of which afforded opportunities to comment on the different kinds of love portrayed by Walcott: love of his family, love for animals, love for humankind in general, and love for friends. Good answers recognised that in each poem the description of the setting was used to evoke the feelings and beliefs of the persona (usually assumed to be Walcott). The glow of light cast by the Coleman lamp in 'Lampfall' suggested the warmth of family love; the weather described in 'Oddjob' sets the scene for unexpected death and the sea canes are a symbol of religious faith.

(b) Candidates who had specific contextual knowledge were most successful in writing a critical appraisal of 'Parades, Parades'. While some candidates simply interpreted this poem as an example of Walcott's criticism of colonial rule, others knew that 'Papa! Papa!' in line 35 refers to Papa Doc, a notorious and tyrannical post-colonial ruler of Haiti. The parade is a celebration of Independence but the speaker of the poem suggests little has changed since the days of colonial rule and may even have been better 'when the veiled queen (Victoria), her girth/as comfortable as cushions,/upheld the orb'. High attaining candidates paid attention to the repetitive title and the description of people marching in the desert in 'pads of old caravans', ships on the ocean sailing along the 'precise old parallels' while planes 'scratch the same lines in the jet trails' demonstrating the lack of any change while the politicians 'plod without imagination'. They also commented on the diction of this poem, the repetitiveness, the brashness of the parade suggested by the 'brazen joy of the tubas', the contrasting widened eyes of the children 'in terror of the pride drummed into their minds', and 'the sleek waddling seals' (Papa Doc's Cabinet ministers). The poet is left bemused at 'how it all happened' and at the end there is a sense of self-recrimination in his own failure to protest.

Question 6 Tennessee Williams: *The Glass Menagerie*

Most candidates were at least moderately successful in their responses to the questions. The context of the Depression, the threat of war in Europe and the American Dream were often usefully mentioned in relation to this text. Candidates should be aware that the biographical details of Williams's life, links between his sister Rose and Laura, and the possible connection between Amanda and Williams's mother are rarely helpful and can waste time. Some candidates correctly described this as a memory play with Tom as the narrator/ participant. Candidates did less well when they went on to suggest that Tom's memories of his family are naturally biased and that in reality Amanda was somehow different to the way she is presented in this play as though she is real, rather than a construct of the playwright. Many candidates included critical opinions in their answers which, in the best cases, helped to shape the argument by supporting or refuting the point being discussed. Less successful answers could improve by avoiding using critical opinions to make obvious points.

(a) This question was often done well. Weaker responses tended to overlook 'set apart from reality' and wrote a character description of each member of the family with some narrative summary. Better answers considered the different ways each family member is removed from reality, with Amanda living in the past, Tom escaping reality to watch films of adventure and dreaming of a new life in the future, while Laura was judged to be in a world of her own and removed from everyday life. Good evidence from the text was provided to support these estimates. Better answers went further to discuss how filtering the events of the play and the characters of Laura and Amanda through Tom's memory takes them even further from reality. It was considered that Tom would have exaggerated the dominating and overbearing nature of Amanda as well as the fragility and other-worldliness of Laura. Candidates also identified the use of screen legends, music, lighting effects and the transparent fourth wall as adding to the lack of realism in the presentation of characters.

(b) Most candidates were able to tackle this question competently. They contrasted the narcissistic, excited behaviour of Amanda with the horrified, shy reaction of Laura when she hears the identity of the gentleman caller. Amanda was judged to be self-centred and rather ridiculously attired as well as insensitive to the needs of Laura. Detailed comments were made on Amanda's long speech, the way she raises her skirt and does a mincing step around the room and the significance of jonquils as well as her stopping in front of Mr Wingfield's picture. All this was linked to the way Amanda lives in her past throughout much of the play. While showing awareness of Laura's timidity and fragility some pointed out that Laura for once speaks firmly to her mother, 'You'll have to excuse me. I would not come to the table'. Better answers paid attention to the dramatic effects in this scene including the stage directions. Amanda switching on the rose-coloured lamp was seen as displaying her desire to view everything through rose-coloured spectacles. Laura's physical reactions were noted and some recognised that the screen legend 'Not Jim' could have a melodramatic and mocking effect along with 'the music becomes ominous'. Less successful responses tended to be narrative summaries of the scene and often continued to narrate the visit of Jim. Some aptly pointed out that, though this is a memory play, Tom is not present to witness and remember this scene.

Question 7 Virginia Woolf: *Mrs Dalloway*

Candidates demonstrated understanding of Woolf's narrative technique as well as knowledge of the literary, social and historical context of the novel. Some candidates showed knowledge of critical writing on this text and were able to make judicious reference to it in their answers.

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

(b) This passage was identified as bringing together many of the attributes and concerns of Clarissa as she occupies herself with the superficial activities revolving around her social life. Throughout the novel the passionate excitement of Clarissa's youth and her association with Peter and Sally are balanced against her present life with Richard. The importance she places on the opinion of Peter suggests she still has feelings for him, a topic which recurs throughout the novel. Her belief that she is looking older leads her to contemplate the passage of time. Time is a major theme throughout the novel with the day punctuated by the sound of Big Ben and both Clarissa and Septimus contemplating the Shakespearean elegy, 'Fear no more the heat of the sun'. The fading of the green in her dress echoes the way she has faded since her illness. As well as contemplating her appearance, through her effort to be 'her self', comparing herself to 'one diamond' we see Clarissa justifying her existence, elevating her role as party hostess and the benefits her 'refuge for the lonely' has bestowed on her guests. Some candidates noted the air of complacency or self-reassurance in Clarissa's appreciation of her comfortable home with its silver and pleasant servants along with her own ability to manage it all so skilfully. Other answers saw that the narrative shift to the thoughts of Lucy is characteristic of Woolf's method throughout the novel. Some candidates observed that when Peter visits Clarissa, shortly after this scene, and asks her whether she is happy, the reader is made to reassess Clarissa's self-justification here and perhaps view it as futile.

LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

Paper 9695/71
Comment and Appreciation

Key messages

- Good answers show that candidates have read and considered their chosen poems or passages as a whole before starting to write.
- Good answers focus on the form, structure and language of the poems or passages and on how these shape meaning, and do not rely upon narrative or paraphrase.
- Good answers discuss how literary devices and techniques are used by the writers.
- Good answers show personal responses to the ways in which the poems or passage are written, not simply to what is said.
- Good answers maintain a tight focus on the poems or passage throughout their response, and do not discuss other writers, other texts or other ideas.

General comments

This, the final session of the current Syllabus, saw some good responses to the three questions in the Paper, and while there were some answers that did not move far beyond simple paraphrase, there were many more where candidates provided thoughtful responses and approached their tasks with some confidence. Almost all understood what was required in a 'critical commentary', and rose to the challenge of responding to the texts with intelligent insight and genuine appreciation of the ways the different writers had shaped their responses. Many candidates took the approach of identifying issues and looked for themes, literary devices, diction and tone with mixed results.

Successful essays delivered a balanced discussion, based on a close reading of the texts so that technical details and discussion of the significance or impact of specific details were skilfully integrated into a discussion of the writers' ideas or concerns. They were able to create interesting, personal investigations and comments on the writers' methods and effects which, given the limited time available, often showed impressive abilities to understand and develop some complex ideas about the presentation of character, relationships, or the way choice of form contributes to meaning, as well as some sensitive analysis of the writers' choice of language.

Those who opted to find and explore a more narrowly focused 'message' or theme often delivered very partial discussions or imposed interpretations, or drifted into tangential material, too frequently seeing, or even unconvincingly forcing, thoughts that were not in any way explicit in what the passage or poems actually said. Some who structured their essays on a list of broad technical terms such as point of view, imagery, and diction made a few general comments about each one, provided a single example – or a list – and by the end gave little sense of what the whole passage or poem amounted beyond the assertion of a particular theme. Others went for the running commentary approach and this often involved the selection of many quotations which were followed by an explanation of what they meant. Often this approach resulted in an essay that was mostly narrative summary with paraphrase without sufficient textual support for critical understanding or personal response to be argued.

Successful candidates had a good command of technical terms which they were able to use correctly, including common terms such as assonance, alliteration, onomatopoeia, but also such techniques as anaphora and synecdoche. They were not simply feature-spotting but able to discuss the effects of their use in the context of the various texts. Some less confident candidates attempted to feature-spot and displayed some confusion about narrative point of view. Others were unclear about the meaning of personification, the

difference between imagery and images, and talked about the significance of punctuation rather than the effects of the sentence structure.

The best responses focused very firmly and consistently upon what was actually written. Less successful responses decided too early and too firmly that the writers were presenting some kind of additional or hidden meaning; such responses almost invariably proved unsuccessful.

<u>Comments on specific questions</u>

Question 1 ***A youth for Jane with ardour sighed*** **and** ***Dead Love***

Almost all responses looked at both poems throughout, moving fluently and frequently between them, rather than focusing upon one and then the other. This highly successful approach led to some good critical responses. Having said this, many candidates seemed to find difficulty in deciding what the tones were of the two poems, with relatively few seeing the light-hearted nature of the first (Opie's), compared with the much darker and serious nature of the second (Siddal's). Some candidates argued that Opie's poem was a tragic narrative rather than noting the comic irony of Jane's rejection at the end of the poem in favour of Emma; the bouncy rhythms and simple rhyme pattern reflect this – and incidentally, the poem is not written in iambic pentameters, nor in rhyming couplets. It does perhaps propose a moral – do not hesitate to accept love while you have the chance – but this is never weighty or solemn.

Siddal's poem, however, is much more serious and darker, and certainly proposes a bleak thought, immediately obvious in the title and the quite striking opening line, with its reiteration of the words 'love' and 'dead' alongside 'weep'; though as a few noted, the poet does say '*never weep…*' – because love is never true there is no point in weeping if it is lost. Almost all responses were clearly aware of the much colder tone throughout this poem, with the bitterly alliterative words '*When wintry winds'* in line 12, and its very bleak last stanza, culminating in the final line.

Some responses spent much of the time ineffectively comparing the structure and form of the poems. To improve, candidates need to move beyond simply saying that there is a kind of rhyme or rhythm, and that one poem has five stanzas and the other just three. Instead, they should also consider what kind of impact these factors make on the reader.

Question 2 ***An Instant in the Wind***

This was the most popular question, and often managed with skill; most responses focused upon just one or sometimes both of two features: the relationship between Elizabeth and Adam, and the very striking descriptions of their surroundings.

The two characters are of course very different in nature and background; while there is no evidence in the passage that Elizabeth is, in the words of more than one candidate, 'a city girl' there is no doubt that she is relatively new to the kind of land she is now in. 'Relatively' so, because we know from the rubric that she has been on an expedition with her husband and others, but she has obviously never been so completely awe-struck as she is in the passage. Similarly, there is no evidence that she is wealthy or that she has an inborn dislike of slaves and therefore of Adam. These things may be true, but speculation cannot be rewarded. Adam, by contrast, is much more used to life in the bush, and his knowledge and skills are powerfully evident, not for themselves but to reinforce his care and concern for Elizabeth; whatever his reasons for being so, it is clear that he wants to help her survive, and so teaches her about berries, how to set traps, and how to see signs of wild elephants; he has also fashioned some footwear. Some were interested in the implications of Adam being a runaway slave and the reversal of power in the relationship; Elizabeth is clearly presented as almost subservient to Adam – the first sentence of the passage sums this up well. There is no suggestion whatsoever of any romantic feeling between the two, but it is very clear at the end that they are content in each other's company; they '*frolic and splash*' in the pool, and after eating they both rest and sleep.

A few responses noticed that the passage is written entirely in the present tense, so although a narration of past events the writer wants his readers to feel that it is all happening here and now. And while the narrative uses the third person, it is almost entirely drawn as if in Elizabeth's own eyes and thoughts. Candidates did well to mention these two rather unusual stylistic devices.

A number of responses overlooked the relationship, focusing instead almost entirely upon the descriptive parts, often restricting their discussion to a generalised appreciation of nature and ignoring the relationship completely, with some simple and uncritically focused feature-spotting.

Descriptions play a huge part in the passage, often of almost hypnotic and arguable surreal quality. This is especially so in lines 18 – 20, with phrases that many responses quoted, suggestive of how Elizabeth sees her surroundings in a kind of trance-like state. This returns briefly in line 35 with the strange expression of silence speaking to them '*in its innumerable voices*'; as many pointed out this is literally impossible, but it again implies a dreamlike quality. The dream is quickly swept aside, of course, and comes to an abrupt end in line 44, '*and, soon, fresh dung*'; reality hits.

Question 3 ***A Grain of Wheat***

This was a very well managed question, with plenty of warm and sensitive personal appreciation of the ways in which the writer presents the two characters and their developing feelings for themselves and for each other. Candidates clearly felt a lot of sympathy for both, especially for Gikonyo, and in most cases this sympathy was supported by at least some textual support rather than simply asserted.

As the passage opens, the writer draws a picture of Gikonyo as tired but content; he is a hard-working carpenter, and enjoys relaxing with his guitar; most responses noted that the background is similarly quiet and relaxed, as the sun is said to be settling (not, as a handful noticed, *setting*; the word used adds an interesting but subtle warmth to the description), and we are told how Gikonyo's muscles soften as he plays and sings. Music is immediately shown to be central to his personality, and indeed to the whole passage.

He is startled by Mumbi's quiet entrance, and the writer shows his embarrassment well in what is presumably a half-humorous comment in lines 11 – 12. It is important to notice that Mumbi's question ('*Why did you stop?*') is said with a smile; the two know each other quite well already, hence Mumbi's '*malicious twinkle*', a phrase that several said was an oxymoron – true, perhaps, but on its own not really a point worth making – what matters is that the first word's apparent unpleasant connotations are immediately countered by the second. As before, the two characters are well acquainted with each other and can make, and take, a joke; this is reinforced by the word '*playfulness*' in line 27.

A third character is mentioned – Karanja; we are not told who he is, and how he is related to Mumbi, but the writer makes it clear that Gikonyo is slightly jealous of him, evident in the way he '*curtly*' repeats Mumbi's saying that he is a good player. However, more importantly, the mood changes from light-hearted flirtatiousness to serious music-making; Gikonyo knows this, as he swallows something in his throat, an action used by the writer to indicate his nervousness at this critical moment. He plays, and Mumbi sings, and the atmosphere changes radically, so much so that the two paragraphs starting in line 36 show both characters losing themselves and their self-consciousness in a kind of euphoria, described in terms that are certainly unrealistic but equally certainly very powerful and moving; Gikonyo and Mumbi are experiencing new and wonderful emotions, and presumably falling in love. A few proposed a theme such as the power of music to bring together a community or to overcome jealousy, but these tended to encourage personal reflection rather than analysis, and as suggested in the general introductory comments above is an example of the dangers of moving beyond what is very explicit in the writing.

In a sense the passage ends as it began; the twilight is calm, and the country quiet and peaceful. The final line of the passage is ambiguous, and many candidates clearly felt its purpose; is the darkness simply the inevitable result of the sun settling, or is there something ominous in it? We cannot know, but it is a striking conclusion, and well worth some of the personal comments made.

LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

Paper 9695/72
Comment and Appreciation

Key messages

- Good answers show that candidates have read and considered their chosen poems or passages as a whole before starting to write.
- Good answers focus on the form, structure and language of the poems or passages and on how these shape meaning, and do not rely upon narrative or paraphrase.
- Good answers discuss how literary devices and techniques are used by the writers.
- Good answers show personal responses to the ways in which the poems or passage are written, not simply to what is said.
- Good answers maintain a tight focus on the poem or passage throughout their response, and do not discuss other writers, other texts or other ideas.

General comments

This, the final session of the current Syllabus, saw some good responses to the three questions in the Paper, and while there were some answers that did not move far beyond simple paraphrase, there were many more where candidates provided thoughtful responses and approached their tasks with some confidence. Almost all understood what was required in a 'critical commentary', and rose to the challenge of responding to the texts with intelligent insight and genuine appreciation of the ways the different writers had shaped their responses. Many candidates took the approach of identifying issues and looked for themes, literary devices, diction and tone with mixed results.

Successful essays delivered a balanced discussion, based on a close reading of the texts so that technical details and discussion of the significance or impact of specific details were skilfully integrated into a discussion of the writers' ideas or concerns. They were able to create interesting, personal investigations and comments on the writers' methods and effects which, given the limited time available, often showed impressive abilities to understand and develop some complex ideas about the presentation of character, relationships, or the way choice of form contributes to meaning, as well as some sensitive analysis of the writers' choice of language.

Those who opted to find and explore a more narrowly focused 'message' or theme often delivered very partial discussions or imposed interpretations, or drifted into tangential material, too frequently seeing, or even unconvincingly forcing, thoughts that were not in any way explicit in what the passage or poems actually said. Some who structured their essays on a list of broad technical terms such as point of view, imagery, and diction made a few general comments about each one, provided a single example – or a list – and by the end gave little sense of what the whole passage or poem amounted beyond the assertion of a particular theme. Others went for the running commentary approach and this often involved the selection of many quotations which were followed by an explanation of what they meant. Often this approach resulted in an essay that was mostly narrative summary with paraphrase without sufficient textual support for critical understanding or personal response to be argued.

Successful candidates had a good command of technical terms which they were able to use correctly, including common terms such as assonance, alliteration, onomatopoeia, but also such techniques as anaphora and synecdoche. They were not simply feature-spotting but able to discuss the effects of their use in the context of the various texts. Some less confident candidates attempted to feature-spot and displayed some confusion about narrative point of view. Others were unclear about the meaning of personification, the

difference between imagery and images, and talked about the significance of punctuation rather than the effects of the sentence structure.

The best responses focused very firmly and consistently upon what was actually written. Less successful responses decided too early and too firmly that the writers were presenting additional or hidden meanings; such responses almost invariably proved unsuccessful.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1 ***Release***

Most candidates addressed this question, and as a consequence there was a very wide range of responses, some very perceptive and sensitive to the language used by the writer, with others often heavily reliant upon paraphrase, and sometimes with unsupported but strongly felt personal reactions to what candidates thought that the writer might be saying, rather than focusing closely upon what she actually does say. There is, for example, no evidence in the passage that it is an attack upon a patriarchal society, or upon some alleged social discrimination against pregnant women. These candidates who concentrated simply upon what is actually written invariably presented better responses.

Eileen is shown from the start of the passage to be a friendly and relaxed person, as evidenced in the opening sentence; the second sentence, with its striking simile, adds weight to this. Many responses noted that the dog comparison returns in different forms throughout the passage; here it is arguably quite humorous, but it becomes more significant later, as the writer portrays the neighbour as an unfeeling and probably humourless woman. Several candidates did not seem to appreciate that the first woman is not in fact the neighbour but a removal worker; this is a misunderstanding on Eileen's part, and is therefore understandable, but once the lady with the Medusa perm appears it is clear that the two women are different, except of course that both appear to be as offhand and discourteous as each other. The use of the curt monosyllabic 'Yeah' is important, as it is echoed in line 21 by the neighbour.

She appears at least as offhand as the first woman, and her comparison between Eileen and her own dog is possibly intended as light-hearted and even friendly, but referring to the expected baby as 'it' and 'that', and 'When is it going to come out?' is at the very least unsympathetic, and is shown by the writer to upset Eileen. The reference to the neighbour's gold bracelet, after she has waved a hand and not listened to Eileen, simply adds weight to her unfriendliness, and the use of the term 'Medusa perm' was seen by many candidates as a parallel to the mythical Medusa with snakes for hair, who could turn men to stone with a single glance. Some perceptive comments were made on this phrase, and even if it was overlooked, most responses saw the neighbour as wholly unwelcoming. Some candidates made unsubstantiated claims that she was truly evil. Furthermore, there is no textual support for the view that she hates Eileen's pregnancy because she herself cannot have children or just hates them. Similarly, there is no evidence, even with her bracelet and perhaps expensive hair style taken into account, that she is hugely wealthy and dislikes Eileen because she is – supposedly – very poor. To improve, candidates should ensure that their claims can be supported by evidence from the text.

The closing telephone conversation between Eileen and Philip is again not evidence that this is in any way an anti-patriarchal story, but simply one where the central character has a (perhaps temporarily) self-centred husband. Some candidates noted that he should certainly have been kinder to his wife in her pregnant state, and arguably not complained about her absent-mindedness. Candidates should take care to treat such passages as a piece of fiction – it is not real life – Eileen is surrounded by unfeeling people; it is no wonder that the passage ends with the weary three words.

Candidates should note that the title of the whole story does not need any comment; the reader is given no idea why it is called 'Release', and speculations about this are not critically helpful, even when supported by reference to what is written. Candidates do not need to treat the story's title as part of the passage.

Question 2 ***The Field***

As with 'Release' in **Question 1**, there were many responses which wanted the poem to be about much more, and often very different, from what is actually written; there is no reason at all to assume that this, or indeed any poem, must contain hidden ideas which for some reason the poet has decided not to reveal. Higher achieving candidates regarded The Field as a powerfully felt poem about the devastating impact that war has had upon a single field. They might have noted some uncertain but growing hope that now the war is over, there may be a chance for the field to become fruitful again. The field could of course represent many such fields, and possibly even a whole country, but there is no textual evidence for this. Those who saw the poem as a political diatribe, a pacifist plea, a poem about the impacts of industrialisation and new housing developments, or a poem about climate change and pollution, did not do as well as the candidates who analysed what was actually written.

Many responses seemed concerned that there are five four-lined stanzas, as if this in some way echoes what is being said; the lack of a rhyme scheme may possibly be important in reflecting the uneven damage caused by war; the responses which suggested that by turning the poem on its side you could see the ups and downs of the field's damage was ingenious, but not really convincing.

Most candidates stressed the complete devastation drawn in the opening eight lines; the language is powerfully striking in the first four, and becomes more so in the next four when we discover the cause of the damage. It is impossible not to see and appreciate the word 'battle' in line 5, or to interpret this in some way other than warfare, especially given what is said in the following lines. Many noticed the enjambement between lines 5 and 6, but relatively few made any critical comment on its effect – the necessary short pause after the word 'dull' makes the impact of 'explosions' much more powerful. And the opening line of stanza three is very strong – 'bones and metal', two things which should be kept well apart, are now devastatingly strewn everywhere.

However, immediately after this line is the nicely ironic and almost ambiguous effect of the up-torn earth actually being positively opened to the air; after millennia during which it was simply under the surface and unaffected by anything it is now open and thus a new hope is possible. The farmer, who significantly has not been mentioned before in the poem, begins tentatively to see the possibility of the field returning to life and use again. The battle is not yet over (line 14 refers to its 'lull'), which is why he has to crawl rather than walk openly and safely, but he hopes that something might be salvaged. Many candidates noted that this is his 'lone' field, suggesting two things at least – he is a poor farmer, totally reliant upon this single field, and the field is now alone and helpless after its destruction. The farmer may not survive, but if he does then there is real hope that the field will astonish by the richness that its newly turned soil will produce huge and abundant crops. The word 'he' in line 17 is the farmer, not the field; however, many responses suggested it was a personification, and there were some reasonably convincing arguments around this; but the final line's double positiveness makes it clear – the field is, despite the opening of the poem, fertile, so the farmer must survive; the field itself is already surviving.

The facts that the poet was born in 1931, and the poem published in 1970, are not necessarily of any significance. Ignoring the fact that many candidates appeared unaware of the dates of either World War 1 (1914 – 1918) or World War 2 (1939 – 1945), there is no evidence in the poem that the poet herself wrote the poem as a direct result of having lived through the second of these wars, let alone that the field was hers, and that she was the farmer. She may have been influenced by what she had read about war and its impacts, although to improve their work, candidates should avoid speculation which is not part of a critical commentary.

Question 3 ***A Hero's Welcome***

There were some very thoughtful responses to this extract, with some perceptive and well-argued appreciation of it as a piece of drama, to be seen and heard as well as read. Most focused on the relationship between Len and Nana, with less assured essays simply but aptly wishing to show that Len was kind and caring, while Nana was fiercely independent and did not see why she should give up witchcraft. Better answers looked more closely at the interaction, noting an audience's likely response early on to such lines as Len's 'Nobody telling you what to do, Nana. Hey look at….'; the notion of a person dying 'from too much kindness' and the humorous effect of the adjacency pairs as in 'Those teeth wo not last much longer/Neither will I if you do not leave me alone'. Successful essays took the opportunity to consider audience response to dramatic methods and discussed the use of dialect; the tension of not knowing what it was that could happen to Nana 'out there'; the effects of the pauses at particular times and Nana's mimicry of Len. Some considered the dramatic function of Charlie, that he might be employed to keep an eye on Nana, while others commented on the dramatic effect of Nana's whispering, and whether it complicated an audience's view of her. The best answers noted a change in tone and pace after the pause in Len's question 'Why you keep running away?' and offered some interesting discussion about Nana's long speech in lines 60 – 64 and Len's reaction to it.

Unlike many pieces of drama, there is relatively little physical action in this extract, but there was enough to lead to some thoughtful comment on how an audience might respond, as noted above. When Len changes the subject in line 5, an audience may well see this as his attempt to change the subject, and to move Nana away from her complaining, which has presumably been going on for some time before the extract opens as is implied by Len's opening words. What he says about his shirt must make an audience smile, even if it can hardly be argued to be evidence that social expectations about men’s and women’s roles are being challenged by the playwright; and his neat segue from his shirt to Nana’s teeth is similarly clever and entertaining.

Many responses stated that the playwright was presenting a pair of characters who, despite their superficial differences – though these become much more serious as the extract closes – clearly know each other well, and respect each other’s feelings. Their dialogue is generally quick, with short and often quite punchy points being made – both Len and Nana are strong personalities – and when there are longer speeches their effects are much greater.

Charlie is a mysterious character; is he just a bored or interested neighbour? Is he helping Len to keep an eye on Nana? We do not know, but his dramatic effect must be quite significant, especially as Nana is clearly bothered by his presence, and his watching her every move.

The argument about religion is clearly one that Len and Nana have had before, and her interest in witchcraft may be one reason why Len does not want her to wander too far away. She is after all, she says, ‘happier out there’ (line 58), where she is not at all frightened. We do not know what dangers there are out there, but an audience must clearly see that her ‘imprisonment’ is both literally and metaphorically very important to both her and Len. The closing lines of the extract do suggest that there may be danger from ‘you bomb and you gun’, even when Len uses what many noted as an oxymoron and calls it ‘constructive destruction’. Those responses that sought to establish the extract as an anti-colonial piece quite reasonably used this phrase as evidence, together with the date when the play is set (1947), though there is nothing else in the extract to support this view. The fact that both characters speak in a local dialect is not clear evidence that they are rebelling against English oppression; the playwright may simply be using the dialect to add realism.

Those candidates who took hold of the piece as theatrically powerful wrote some good responses; those who saw it as simply a presentation of youth versus age certainly saw much in it, and those who saw it as a discussion of two types of religious belief had some weight on their side. There was much to consider, and candidates showed thoughtful ideas.

LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

Paper 9695/73
Comment and Appreciation

Key messages

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General comments

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Successful essays delivered a balanced discussion, based on a close reading of the texts so that technical details and discussion of the significance or impact of specific details were skilfully integrated into a discussion of the writers' ideas or concerns. They were able to create interesting, personal investigations and comments on the writers' methods and effects which, given the limited time available, often showed impressive abilities to understand and develop some complex ideas about the presentation of character, relationships, or the way choice of form contributes to meaning, as well as some sensitive analysis of the writers' choice of language.

Those who opted to find and explore a more narrowly focused 'message' or theme often delivered very partial discussions or imposed interpretations, or drifted into tangential material, too frequently seeing, or even unconvincingly forcing, thoughts that were not in any way explicit in what the passage or poems actually said. Some who structured their essays on a list of broad technical terms such as point of view, imagery, and diction made a few general comments about each one, provided a single example – or a list – and by the end gave little sense of what the whole passage or poem amounted beyond the assertion of a particular theme. Others went for the running commentary approach and this often involved the selection of many quotations which were followed by an explanation of what they meant. Often this approach resulted in an essay that was mostly narrative summary with paraphrase without sufficient textual support for critical understanding or personal response to be argued.

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difference between imagery and images, and talked about the significance of punctuation rather than the effects of the sentence structure.

The best responses focused very firmly and consistently upon what was actually written. Less successful responses decided too early and too firmly that the writers were presenting some kind of additional or hidden meaning; such responses almost invariably proved unsuccessful.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1 ***A youth for Jane with ardour sighed*** **and** ***Dead Love***

Almost all responses looked at both poems throughout, moving fluently and frequently between them, rather than focusing upon one and then the other. This highly successful approach led to some good critical responses. Having said this, many candidates seemed to find difficulty in deciding what the tones were of the two poems, with relatively few seeing the light-hearted nature of the first (Opie's), compared with the much darker and serious nature of the second (Siddal's). Some candidates argued that Opie's poem was a tragic narrative rather than noting the comic irony of Jane's rejection at the end of the poem in favour of Emma; the bouncy rhythms and simple rhyme pattern reflect this – and incidentally, the poem is not written in iambic pentameters, nor in rhyming couplets. It does perhaps propose a moral – do not hesitate to accept love while you have the chance – but this is never weighty or solemn.

Siddal's poem, however, is much more serious and darker, and certainly proposes a bleak thought, immediately obvious in the title and the quite striking opening line, with its reiteration of the words 'love' and 'dead' alongside 'weep'; though as a few noted, the poet does say '*never weep…*' – because love is never true there is no point in weeping if it is lost. Almost all responses were clearly aware of the much colder tone throughout this poem, with the bitterly alliterative words '*When wintry winds'* in line 12, and its very bleak last stanza, culminating in the final line.

Some responses spent much of the time ineffectively comparing the structure and form of the poems. To improve, candidates need to move beyond simply saying that there is a kind of rhyme or rhythm, and that one poem has five stanzas and the other just three. Instead, they should also consider what kind of impact these factors make on the reader.

Question 2 ***An Instant in the Wind***

This was the most popular question, and often managed with skill; most responses focused upon just one or sometimes both of two features: the relationship between Elizabeth and Adam, and the very striking descriptions of their surroundings.

The two characters are of course very different in nature and background; while there is no evidence in the passage that Elizabeth is, in the words of more than one candidate, 'a city girl' there is no doubt that she is relatively new to the kind of land she is now in. 'Relatively' so, because we know from the rubric that she has been on an expedition with her husband and others, but she has obviously never been so completely awe-struck as she is in the passage. Similarly, there is no evidence that she is wealthy or that she has an inborn dislike of slaves and therefore of Adam. These things may be true, but speculation cannot be rewarded. Adam, by contrast, is much more used to life in the bush, and his knowledge and skills are powerfully evident, not for themselves but to reinforce his care and concern for Elizabeth; whatever his reasons for being so, it is clear that he wants to help her survive, and so teaches her about berries, how to set traps, and how to see signs of wild elephants; he has also fashioned some footwear. Some were interested in the implications of Adam being a runaway slave and the reversal of power in the relationship; Elizabeth is clearly presented as almost subservient to Adam – the first sentence of the passage sums this up well. There is no suggestion whatsoever of any romantic feeling between the two, but it is very clear at the end that they are content in each other's company; they '*frolic and splash*' in the pool, and after eating they both rest and sleep.

A few responses noticed that the passage is written entirely in the present tense, so although a narration of past events the writer wants his readers to feel that it is all happening here and now. And while the narrative uses the third person, it is almost entirely drawn as if in Elizabeth's own eyes and thoughts. Candidates did well to mention these two rather unusual stylistic devices.

A number of responses overlooked the relationship, focusing instead almost entirely upon the descriptive parts, often restricting their discussion to a generalised appreciation of nature and ignoring the relationship completely, with some simple and uncritically focused feature-spotting.

Descriptions play a huge part in the passage, often of almost hypnotic and arguable surreal quality. This is especially so in lines 18 – 20, with phrases that many responses quoted, suggestive of how Elizabeth sees her surroundings in a kind of trance-like state. This returns briefly in line 35 with the strange expression of silence speaking to them '*in its innumerable voices*'; as many pointed out this is literally impossible, but it again implies a dreamlike quality. The dream is quickly swept aside, of course, and comes to an abrupt end in line 44, '*and, soon, fresh dung*'; reality hits.

Question 3 ***A Grain of Wheat***

This was a very well managed question, with plenty of warm and sensitive personal appreciation of the ways in which the writer presents the two characters and their developing feelings for themselves and for each other. Candidates clearly felt a lot of sympathy for both, especially for Gikonyo, and in most cases this sympathy was supported by at least some textual support rather than simply asserted.

As the passage opens, the writer draws a picture of Gikonyo as tired but content; he is a hard-working carpenter, and enjoys relaxing with his guitar; most responses noted that the background is similarly quiet and relaxed, as the sun is said to be settling (not, as a handful noticed, *setting*; the word used adds an interesting but subtle warmth to the description), and we are told how Gikonyo's muscles soften as he plays and sings. Music is immediately shown to be central to his personality, and indeed to the whole passage.

He is startled by Mumbi's quiet entrance, and the writer shows his embarrassment well in what is presumably a half-humorous comment in lines 11 – 12. It is important to notice that Mumbi's question ('*Why did you stop?*') is said with a smile; the two know each other quite well already, hence Mumbi's '*malicious twinkle*', a phrase that several said was an oxymoron – true, perhaps, but on its own not really a point worth making – what matters is that the first word's apparent unpleasant connotations are immediately countered by the second. As before, the two characters are well acquainted with each other and can make, and take, a joke; this is reinforced by the word '*playfulness*' in line 27.

A third character is mentioned – Karanja; we are not told who he is, and how he is related to Mumbi, but the writer makes it clear that Gikonyo is slightly jealous of him, evident in the way he '*curtly*' repeats Mumbi's saying that he is a good player. However, more importantly, the mood changes from light-hearted flirtatiousness to serious music-making; Gikonyo knows this, as he swallows something in his throat, an action used by the writer to indicate his nervousness at this critical moment. He plays, and Mumbi sings, and the atmosphere changes radically, so much so that the two paragraphs starting in line 36 show both characters losing themselves and their self-consciousness in a kind of euphoria, described in terms that are certainly unrealistic but equally certainly very powerful and moving; Gikonyo and Mumbi are experiencing new and wonderful emotions, and presumably falling in love. A few proposed a theme such as the power of music to bring together a community or to overcome jealousy, but these tended to encourage personal reflection rather than analysis, and as suggested in the general introductory comments above is an example of the dangers of moving beyond what is very explicit in the writing.

In a sense the passage ends as it began; the twilight is calm, and the country quiet and peaceful. The final line of the passage is ambiguous, and many candidates clearly felt its purpose; is the darkness simply the inevitable result of the sun settling, or is there something ominous in it? We cannot know, but it is a striking conclusion, and well worth some of the personal comments made.

LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

Paper 9695/08
Coursework

Key messages

Good folders:

- Addressed their two texts with clear, concise and consistent focus upon what the questions asked.
- Explored how each writer creates particular effects, discussing some of the literary or dramatic techniques used.
- Supported comments with apt textual quotations and references.
- Made some brief use of critical and/or contextual material to support arguments.
- Wrote on individually selected and worded questions, making responses as personal as possible.
- Ensured that the work submitted remained within the overall 3000-word limit (NB. quotations do not count towards this total).

General comments

There was a small entry this session, but it was very clear that centres and candidates alike were confident in how they should approach the Syllabus requirements, and how completed work should be submitted; annotations and summative comments were brief but always professional and related to the Marking Criteria, making it clear how and why marks had been agreed. Where appropriate, there was evidence of double marking and/or internal moderation, offering firm evidence of careful assessment of each candidate’s work.

Candidates had selected some entirely appropriate texts, and all followed the Syllabus requirement that these must be from two of the three basic genres, prose, poetry and drama. Candidates all addressed different questions, even when using the same texts as others in the centre, so that what they wrote was individual; this offered clear evidence that what lay behind each response was personal rather than simply taught; this was a particular strength in all work submitted.

Textual knowledge was generally at least good, often more, with ample quotation and reference in support of what was being argued. There was some thoughtful consideration of the language and imagery used by the writers, together in a few cases with an awareness of how texts were structured; a notable weakness however was that when discussing a play there was often only limited consideration of its dramatic and theatrical nature. Alternative critical views were generally cited, and in the most confident cases these were argued with, giving candidates’ own interpretations a firmer foundation; most candidates using such critical ideas listed their sources, both printed material and web addresses, which was always helpful. Some apt contextual material, both literary and historical, was integrated into many responses.

The 3000-word limit is tight (approximately 1500 words for each response, though quotations do not count towards this limit), but few candidates strayed above this by more than a handful of words; most offered a word-count, both with and without quotations, as evidence of how aware they were of the constraints laid upon their arguments. There were however some candidates who clearly found the limit difficult to manage, with the result that while responses stayed below 3000 words their arguments were incomplete or too narrowly focused, so that at times only limited parts of the texts involved were considered.