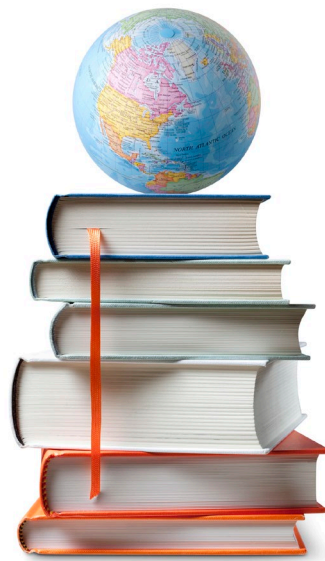


Specimen Paper Answers – Paper 2

Cambridge International AS & A Level Literature in English 9695

For examination from 2021



Copyright © UCLES 2019 (updated Oct 2024)

Cambridge Assessment International Education is part of the Cambridge Assessment Group. Cambridge Assessment is the brand name of the University of Cambridge Local Examinations Syndicate (UCLES), which itself is a department of the University of Cambridge.

UCLES retains the copyright on all its publications. Registered Centres are permitted to copy material from this booklet for their own internal use. However, we cannot give permission to Centres to photocopy any material that is acknowledged to a third party, even for internal use within a Centre.

Contents

Introduction	4
Assessment overview	5
Question 1(a)	6
Question 2(b)	10
Question 5(a)	14

Introduction

The main aim of this booklet is to exemplify standards for those teaching Cambridge International AS & A Level Literature in English, and to show examples of very good answers.

We have selected questions from Specimen Paper 2 for examination from 2021.

In this booklet, we have provided answers and examiner comments for:

- Question 1(a)
- Question 2(b)
- Question 5(a)

Each question is followed by an example of a high-level answer with an examiner comment on performance. Comments are given to indicate where and why marks were awarded, and how additional marks could have been obtained. In this way, it is possible to understand what candidates have done to gain their marks and how they could improve.

The mark schemes for the Specimen Papers are available to download from the [School Support Hub](#)

2021 Specimen Paper 02

2021 Specimen Paper Mark Scheme 02

Past exam resources and other teacher support materials are also available on the [School Support Hub](#)

Assessment overview

Paper 2– Prose and Unseen

Written paper, 2 hours, 50 marks

Candidates may not use dictionaries.

There are six questions in total in the question paper. All questions carry equal marks. Candidates must answer **one** question from **Section A** and **one** question from **Section B**.

The paper is an externally set assessment, marked by Cambridge.

50% of the AS Level

25% of the A Level

Assessment objectives

AO1 Knowledge and understanding

Respond with understanding to literary texts in a variety of forms, from different cultures; with an appreciation of relevant contexts that illuminate readings of the texts.

AO2 Analysis

Analyse ways in which writers' choices of language, form and structure shape meanings and effects.

AO3 Personal response

Produce informed independent opinions and interpretations of literary texts.

AO4 Communication

Communicate a relevant, structured and supported response appropriate to literary study.

Question 1(a)

Discuss Adichie's presentation of Kainene, considering her significance in the novel.

Specimen answer

Kainene is one half of Adichie's pairing of the twin Ozobia sisters in *Half of a Yellow Sun*, whose progress through the novel traces the course of the Nigerian civil war and the short life of the Biafran nation. Adichie depicts the sisters in directly contrasting ways, so that each is in some ways the alter-ego of the other. While Olanna is presented as the noted beauty, with a 'curvy, fleshy body', making her the focus of attention for different potential suitors, Adichie describes Kainene as 'not pretty at all', 'androgynous' in appearance with a 'near-flat chest'. This physical disparity separates Kainene from not only her twin sister, but from conventional ideals of femininity and this is important for Adichie's development of her character and of the novel.

The 'androgynous' quality of Kainene's depiction extends further; not only is she immune to being used as 'sex-bait', her description of how her father uses Olanna to attract business partners, but she also takes an active and successful role in running parts of her father's business empire, a role which would more conventionally be performed by a man. As her father says early in the novel, 'Kainene is not just like a son, she is like two', which furthers Adichie's questioning of gender roles.

Adichie also distances Kainene from the rest of her family by her aura of cynical detachment. Though she has a large part in her family's financial success before the war, she is often depicted with a 'mocking smile' and speaks with a 'dry sarcastic tone', for example when she describes the moneyed circle of her parents and business leaders as 'a collection of illiterates who read nothing and eat food they dislike' and talk only about cars. Though she is part of the world of wealth and materialism, she maintains an intellectual distance from it, and Adichie uses her voice to criticise it.

While presenting Kainene as an independent, rather hard woman, Adichie suggests vulnerability in her too. It is clear at several points, in comments both to Olanna directly and to Richard, that she is at least conscious of Olanna's feminine attractiveness, if not actively jealous. It is striking too, that of the two sisters and their lovers, Kainene is the only one of the four who remains faithful throughout and Olanna knows 'how tightly Kainene held on to hurt.' She shows her independence in taking the Englishman Richard Churchill as her lover, even rebuking General Udodi that her 'choice of lovers is none of your business'. Adichie makes it clear that Kainene is the one who initiates the sexual side of their relationship, yet she is patient and undemanding when Richard repeatedly fails to make love successfully.

It is in this context that Adichie creates the tension and shock of Richard's 'unforgivable' betrayal of Kainene with Olanna, a point in the novel which demonstrates both her strength and vulnerability. She retains dignity after Richard's confession and controls the responses, saying 'We will talk when I want to talk, Richard.' Adichie creates a key moment when she reacts by 'burning his manuscript', which paradoxically fills Richard with 'hope'. While his manuscript is precious, he recognises that its destruction means that 'she would not end the relationship'. Their relationship is stronger afterwards, through the course of the war, and Adichie uses Richard's pride in the 'extraordinary woman' he claims as his 'fiancée' to encourage the reader to a similar feeling of respect towards her character. The atrocities of the war change her own views too, as she tells Olanna, 'There are some things that are so unforgivable that they make other things easily forgivable'.

This respect grows in the war sections of the novel. Although their parents flee to London, the sisters remain in Nigeria and Kainene uses her business skills to great effect in running a refugee camp. Adichie shows the woman who earlier in the novel is snapped by a society photographer wearing expensive jewellery, working tirelessly to obtain supplies and organise the camp. Her idealism is shown to be strong when she defends an ethnic minority doctor who has been insulted, exclaiming 'Do you understand me? We are all Biafrans!' She also stands up to and dismisses the priest who has taken advantage of the young women refugees in the camp. She is presented, therefore, as a clear contrast to a character like Olanna's 'revolutionary lover' Odenigbo, whose strength, vitality and idealism collapse during the war.

Perhaps Kainene's most striking contribution to the novel is her absence from the last section of it, although her name is constantly present as characters ask about her whereabouts and search for her after she goes missing attempting to trade across enemy lines. In the unanswered mystery of her disappearance, Adichie recreates for the reader some of the sense of loss, of people and relationships, that is caused by war. As well as this, though, Adichie places her disappearance at the end of the war, around the time of the Biafran surrender, and in some ways her disappearance could be said to represent the loss of Biafra itself, momentarily independent but subsumed by war and ultimately disappearing.

This interpretation is supported by Richard's search, as when asking people about her and pulling out photographs, he 'showed them Kainene's picture. Sometimes, in his rush, he pulled out the picture of the roped pot instead.' Here Adichie draws an equivalence between Kainene and Igbo-Ukwu art, both indigenous to Biafra and lost. Importantly, though, although 'Richard began to cry' when 'Nobody had seen her', and

Olanna ends the novel crying 'softly', Kainene, like Biafra, lives in their memories, and as Olanna says, 'My memory is inside me'.

Examiner comment

This impressive top-level response shows that the candidate has detailed knowledge and understanding of the novel. They explore a wide range of ideas to select specific references and quotations. Importantly, it uses the references and quotations to develop an assured personal interpretation about Adichie's presentation of Kainene's character and the significance of her role within the novel. It covers her challenge to gender conventions, her roles as daughter, sister and lover, and finally gives a thoughtful view of Adichie's use of her character to represent Biafra itself.

The essay opens by setting Kainene in the context of not only her family and the difference between her and her twin sister, but also of the Nigerian Civil War. The candidate mentions Biafra and how important it is to the novel at a very early stage in the essay. This helps to structure the argument for how the candidate plans to conclude their essay. The candidate is clearly in control of the essay and how it is progressing and each paragraph develops clearly from the preceding one. The expression is fluent, with appropriate literary terminology used accurately.

Quotations are carefully selected and incorporated to support points, with comments on language where appropriate, for example with the contrasting physical descriptions of Kainene and Olanna. The candidate is also able to analyse how Kainene is defined by Adichie's use of the character's own actions and speech as well as the actions and speech of others. In this way, Chief Ozobia, Olanna, General Udodi, Odenigbo and Richard are all important to the essay, while Kainene's own cynical views of Nigerian society and her role within it, her work in refugee camps during the war, her relationship with Richard and her final disappearance are all covered. The exploration of Kainene's character and role is perceptive and there is also a consistent focus on Adichie as the controlling author. Every paragraph has some focus on Adichie's presentation of character or her shaping of the narrative. In this way, the essay carefully and consistently answers the question.

The conclusion, which is developed through the final two paragraphs, shows an individual and thoughtful response, using an awareness of narrative structure, dialogue and symbolism to advance a sophisticated reading of the end of the novel.

How the answer could be improved

A useful way of approaching this is to take each of the Assessment Objectives/ mark scheme descriptors in turn and consider the elements for which the candidate might have provided more evidence under each heading.

AO1 Knowledge and Understanding

The candidate has provided much evidence of knowledge, but there are some areas where this could have been demonstrated in a more precise way. For example, at the start of the 4th paragraph, the candidate calls Kainene 'a rather hard woman', but no explicit evidence for this is given. Every opinion the candidate gives should be precisely supported. 'Understanding' is also occasionally implicit rather than explicit. For example, at the end of paragraph 3, the candidate has demonstrated ways in which Adichie presents Kainene's detachment, but has only hinted at the effect of this on the reader or its significance in the overall scheme of the novel. The candidate could have explored how Adichie's use of Kainene's role within her family here enables the writer to present her wider concerns revealed in the overall presentation of the wealthy Biafrans at the start of the novel. The second bullet point in the mark scheme refers to context and the candidate has demonstrated awareness of this aspect, but this is not always 'perceptive'. In terms of this essay, that might have been addressed by a more considered discussion of, for example, the cultural expectations towards women in society, which underpin Adichie's presentation of the twins, Olanna and Kainene.

AO2 Analysis

The first bullet point, dealing with the writer's choices, is generally well evidenced in the essay. However there are number of occasions when the candidate might have explored more explicitly the possible different effects on the reader. For example, when considering Richard's search for Kainene, the candidate might have developed their point by considering other effects, such as the tone of the language Adichie uses and the sense of pity, loss or even sadness this might have created in other readers.

The second bullet point is covered less well in this essay. Candidates need to show some understanding of the genre and its conventions to meet this aspect fully. In this essay there is little sense that this is a novel and that therefore Adichie has had to select a narrative voice and a narrative structure. Answering such questions as, 'What is the effect of the third person narrative on the depiction of Kainene?' or, 'In what ways does the structure of the novel limit or support the presentation of Kainene?' would have enabled the candidate to demonstrate a deeper appreciation of Adichie's skill as a novelist.

AO3 Personal Response

The first bullet point has been done well because the candidate gives lots of informed and supported opinions. The second bullet point has been less well addressed. The candidate offers a more or less standard reading of Kainene's characterisation. There is little to suggest independence or engagement with what is at times a disturbing character in a challenging work of art. This might have been addressed by some more explicit discussion of the more challenging elements of Kainene's characterisation and role which the candidate themselves found significant or disturbing, with precise quotations to support their ideas.

AO4 Communication

The candidate has communicated very well in terms of expression, appropriate literary ideas and effectively linked paragraphs. The second bullet point however also identifies the need for a logical structure. Though that is evident in this essay, the structure is relatively simple in that it follows the chronology of the novel itself, with the essay ending at the end of the novel. A more complex approach to the task would have enabled the candidate to demonstrate higher-level skills of argument. This might have been achieved by a clear statement of the direction of the essay at the start and then by an appropriate summative conclusion at the end. One possible strategy for a question like this is to suggest different ways the topic might be interpreted in the introductory paragraph. This could have been along the lines of: *'Adichie uses Kainene for many different purposes in the novel – as a challenging, intriguing character in her own right, as a detached 'voice' commenting on her society and culture, as a symbol of certain Biafran attitudes to and about women...'*. This would have helped the candidate to develop different interpretations more clearly, exploring different and perhaps contrasting aspects of Adichie's style and leading to a conclusion in which these separate elements are drawn together and the candidate's own voice can be expressed.

Question 2(b)

Discuss Dangarembga's presentation of the relationship between Tambu and Nyasha in the following passage. In your answer, you should refer in detail to Dangarembga's use of language and narrative methods.

Specimen answer

Dangarembga conveys the relationship between Tambu and Nyasha in this passage through letters from Nyasha and Tambu's response to them. The letters show the physical distance between the girls, as Nyasha is at home and Tambu is at boarding school, and as the passage develops, they are shown to be becoming distant as friends as well.

The passage begins with one of Nyasha's letters, which allows both Tambu and the reader to 'hear' Nyasha's voice although she is at a distance. The tone of the letter sounds just like Nyasha speaks and it contains a typical mixture of affection, intelligence, resentment and irony. Her affection and need for Tambu are immediately clear at the beginning, when she writes, 'I am missing you badly', a phrase which is reinforced by repetition. Dangarembga also shows her care for Tambu in her comments, 'I did not want to worry you' and, 'I know about your guilts'. These phrases show an unexpected sensitivity in Nyasha and she also explains why she misses Tambu so much, because Tambu is 'essential... in bridging some of the gaps in my life'. 'Essential' is a particularly strong word and confirms how important Tambu is to her, while it also shows Nyasha's vulnerability without Tambu. This challenges the reader's view of Tambu when she fails to respond to the letter.

While the rest of the letter does not deal with the relationship between the cousins so directly, by dealing with Nyasha's sense of isolation from school friends and her parents, Dangarembga amplifies her need for Tambu. She does not 'speak with the girls at school' because she does 'not read their romance stories' and she alienates herself from the boys because she beat them 'at maths'. She tells Tambu that the others think that she is a 'superior' 'snob' and to an extent the reader might agree, since she is proud that her English 'is authentic' and is unconcerned that her Shona (her indigenous language) 'is not'. On the other hand, readers might applaud her challenge to the boys, as she does not feel 'inferior to men' and therefore challenges Rhodesian patriarchal attitudes. The letter also includes a reminder of Nyasha's difficulties with her father, who she is trying not 'to antagonise'. The reader will remember Babamukuru beating Nyasha and sympathise with her facing him on her own. She retains her cutting irony about him, though, referring to him as 'a hallowed headmaster, a revered patriarch', the admiring adjectives denoting perceptions of him within his community which she

and the reader do not share. It is striking that the first-person pronoun 'I' is used very frequently in the letter – over thirty times – which might be expected in a letter conveying personal news, but it is a reminder that there is no 'we', as she and Tambu are separate. Tambu is addressed by name and by 'you' many times too, showing how Nyasha is yearning for Tambu. The letter therefore sounds like a direct appeal from Nyasha to Tambu.

Because of Nyasha's obvious need, the shift to Tambu's first person narration may come as a shock to the reader, as although she says she feels 'a pang of guilt', the letter is placed 'away' in her desk as a reminder to write back, which sounds contradictory. Instead, she is overcome by 'the stream of novelty and discovery'; it is clearly new things which capture Tambu's imagination now, and Nyasha is of lesser interest. It therefore seems heartless that another letter from Nyasha arrives before Tambu has written back, and although the letter is not printed in full, it is clear that Nyasha no longer feels confident in opening up about her feelings to Tambu, as it is 'Bubbly and bouncy', full of 'gossip' and makes jokes about physical appearances with the assurance that she will be 'svelte, sensuous' by the time Tambu comes home. These details indicate that the letter is about trivial matters and Damgarembga includes these extracts to provide a contrast with the passionate heartfelt letter at the beginning of the passage and emphasise the coldness of Tambu's lack of response. This becomes even clearer later when the reader discovers that the reference to Nyasha's 'diet' is a hint at her anorexia, where she becomes 'skeletal' rather than 'svelte, sensuous'. The reader might connect Nyasha's collapse of mental health with Tambu's lack of response.

While the term is 'thirteen weeks' long, Nyasha's letters 'eventually stopped altogether' but Tambu 'did not really notice'. She is far from the friend in whom Nyasha confided in the first letter, but cold and careless. This is reinforced by the ending of the passage, where Tambu is eager to pour her 'torrent of news' about herself into Nyasha's ear, despite having ignored her for a whole term. Through the frankness of the first-person narration, revealing Tambu's lack of recognition of her own faults, Damgarembga encourages the reader to be critical of her and find her a much less sympathetic character than earlier in the novel. It is something that Tambu herself eventually learns, when she acknowledges Nyasha at the end of the novel as one of the 'four women whom I loved', though she does not show it in this extract.

Examiner comment

A successful response to a passage-based question needs to focus on the passage very closely in order to develop analysis of its language and methods. This response gives a coherent reading of the passage and consistently mentions Damgarembga's language choices and the ways in which she shapes the narrative, making links between the author's writing and a reader's response.

The essay starts with an overview of the extract and addresses both aspects of the question by referring to the change in the relationship between the characters. The candidate also refers to one of the key narrative methods – the use of letters. This makes the initial focus on the first letter, which is also the opening of the passage, a logical development from the essay's first paragraph. The candidate discusses the letter as a whole first, with a comment on tone, so that further detailed points are put into context. While there is a focus on Nyasha, her writing and her feelings, the use of quotations links the points to the text and there is acknowledgement that Dangarembga is a controlling author, with some comments on specific words, such as 'essential'.

The essay recognises that the sections of the letter which do not refer directly to the relationship between the girls is still relevant to the question and skilfully includes that material with an explanation of how it is an appropriate area for discussion. Precise selected quotations are again used within the argument, and there are purposeful references to the wider text, irony and language. The final point of the third paragraph, about the balance of personal pronouns, is very perceptive, while the fourth paragraph's consideration of the text after the letter shows a strong awareness of narrative method and its effects. A very good level of understanding of the passage is shown in charting the changes in Tambu's responses. The candidate keeps a close focus on the selected passage through evidence of precise knowledge of the wider text. This is used very effectively in the contrast between 'svelte, sensuous' in the passage and 'skeletal' later in the novel.

The references to the novel's ending in the conclusion contextualises the selected passage and focuses the final paragraph on the question, with a clear judgement of the relationship and how Dangarembga's narrative choices guide the reader's response.

How the answer could be improved

AO1 Knowledge and Understanding

The candidate could have shown more understanding of how significant this passage was to the rest of the novel by developing some of the points they made in the essay. Firstly, if the candidate had discussed the context of this passage in a more explicit way, that might have helped them to show why specific elements in this passage were significant to the concerns of the wider text. It might have been useful for the candidate to discuss the state of the relationship prior to this passage and immediately after it. There is also little evidence of knowledge or awareness of the wider context – this might have been addressed at relevant moments, such as the mention of 'Rhodesian patriarchal attitudes' for example, and how they underpin the writer's concerns here.

AO2 Analysis

The candidate has dealt with some aspects of the style very well, noting a number of literary techniques and considering their effects. When discussing language, such as the description of Nyasha's father and the effect of irony, the candidate could have explored the nuances of the words used, such as 'patriarch', and the different effects these might create. The candidate could have also discussed more elements of style such as the varied and subtle sentence structures and the use of reported and enclosed dialogue. Analysing these elements of the writer's choices and their effects is key to demonstrating a Level 6 grasp of the style and genre. The candidate could have explored Dangarembga's narrative choices more fully, for example, '*Why is a letter significant in a first person narrative novel in terms of the narrative structure?*' and '*What are the effects created by the shifting focus?*' The candidate could have explicitly discussed the genre and its conventions, as required by the second bullet point. Although the candidate has considered the two girls as characters and explored their characterisation well, there is little sense of their 'roles' or of how Dangarembga is using them in terms of developing the novel's concerns. The candidate does not seem to see these girls and their changing relationship as constructs, created by the writer for specific purposes, whether in terms of the plot, the structure or the style.

AO3 Personal Response

Here the candidate offers a more or less standard reading of the girls' relationships and characters. There is little to suggest an independent reading, which might have been addressed perhaps by some more explicit

discussion of the elements of the relationship and the way it changes, which the candidate found significant or challenging or in some way unexpected.

AO4 Communication

This essay is well written and fluent. There is sometimes a lack of literary terminology such as 'narrative voice', or 'structure' in the analysis. The essay also follows the passage chronologically. This does mean that all of the passage is considered, but it limits the candidate's ability to develop a structured argument in considering the significance of the passage. It also limits development of the analytical points made. The candidate could have been more precise in the opening paragraph, which could have outlined a clearer sense of the context whilst also identifying aspects of the style and concerns to be considered in the essay as a whole. This would then have provided a clearer direction for the essay and would have meant that the candidate could have discussed different aspects of the narrative structure and its effects. It would also lead to a coherent concluding paragraph where important points about the style and significance of the passage could be discussed.

Question 5(a)

Comment closely on the following passage, considering its presentation of the father's relationship with his daughter.

In your answer, consider choice of language, dialogue and narrative methods.

Specimen answer

The passage portrays an awkward relationship between the father and his daughter. The reader learns that it is a resumption of a relationship interrupted eight years previously by divorce and emigration, and when the father last saw his daughter she was only eight years old. It is not surprising, then, that both parties will need readjustment; she has changed from a dependent Chinese eight-year-old into a confident brash American teenager. The writer reveals these pieces of information as the extract develops, so that the reader pieces the past narrative together as the encounter at the airport unfolds.

The length of time that has elapsed between meetings is clear at the opening of the extract, as the father, who normally would be very familiar with his daughter's appearance, only has a 'smudged photograph to go by', a low-quality visual clue rather than memory. However, he still has strong paternal feelings, as when he cannot find her straight away, 'he panicked, imagining all sorts of things', showing the concern any parent would have about a child who might be missing.

The writer describes the girl's smile in the photo as 'wide and lopsided,' which might be an early suggestion of her character, someone with a sense of humour who sees the world in a different way. When she appears in the story, this impression is confirmed through her clothing – 'a black man's jacket and tight red jeans'. These choices suggest a slightly unconventional individual and therefore someone who might not fall easily into a relationship with a father who they have not met for a long time. This is confirmed by suggestions of aggression as she 'kicked the machine' repeatedly when she does not get a drink from it.

It is important that all these clues are narrated as the father's observations as they have not yet met, and the reader therefore is making the same kind of judgements as he is. Their meeting is conveyed in dialogue, which confirms these early impressions, as she speaks first with an almost challenging question: 'Are you my dad?' There is no hesitation or suggestion of emotion, whereas the father's question, 'Li Wen?' is much less confident, a point emphasised when she immediately corrects him with: 'Yeah. But everyone calls me Lee.'

The writer makes the awkwardness of the meeting very clear with the adverb 'Clumsily' to describe the hug the father gives her as well as highlighting Lee's lack of feeling in the verb 'accepted' and describing her feelings as 'grudging nonchalance.' She does not reject or resist her father, but it is clear there is no genuine response to him. It is only at this point that the writer includes the backstory so that the reader understands why the relationship between them lacks warmth – the divorce, separation and Lee's mother's death are revealed at this midway point and this prepares the reader for an awkward meeting of cultures as well as that between father and daughter. The author writes about Lee's grandmother to show that there

are different cultural understandings of family, and the following dialogue confirms that Lee does not see this country, assumed to be China, as hers.

While her grandmother may think things have to be done 'As Family', the writer's portrayal of Lee, importantly an Americanised version of her Chinese name, consistently shows that she is independent and confident, unlikely to react well to constraint. Although really a newcomer, she 'walked ahead of' her father in a 'jaunty, light-footed' way. Her lines of speech are also casual, lacking connected ideas, such as 'Oh. Yeah. Some. Not much.' This shows that she does not communicate well with her father and there are a number of signs of possible tensions to come later in the story, as when she is irritated by the lack of music choice on the radio ('this junk') and using an 'imperative' tone, 'commanded' that he stops the car. The writer notes that the father is momentarily 'annoyed' but 'relented' in order to avoid a scene. The fact that the author earlier stated that the father 'was to recognize... well' the 'odd reflective look' seems to be a foreshadowing of a continued separation between them, as she mentally retreats to 'LA'.

This particular extract ends, though, with a degree of harmony. While the father's uncertainty in this relationship with his daughter means that it is 'a relief not to have to talk and he was almost apprehensive', it is significant that she initiates the next section of dialogue, showing some interest in what her father does, although she expects to be 'amused'. His revelation that he is a 'deejay' is clearly unexpected, from her crude American exclamation, 'Gross out, man'. The writer describes her as 'midway between being tickled and patronizing,' which suggests that in some way she feels superior to her father, a point which is picked up in the final role reversal, as she speaks to him 'soothingly,' as if she does not want him to worry.

Although the meeting is awkward and there are a number of indications of future tension within the relationship, the writer also indicates some hope that it might improve with time, as Lee's final 'soothingly' mirrors her father's 'relented' previously.

Examiner comment

This is a detailed Level 6 essay. One of its key strengths is the way it develops an overall argument in response to the question. The candidate begins by discussing the passage as a whole and offers an initial overview. This focuses on the question and contextualises the father, daughter and their meeting whilst also including an early comment on the narrative structure of the passage.

Then the candidate analyses the passage chronologically, with a couple of exceptions, and writes about how it develops. Establishing the overview and context first allows the candidate to avoid any kind of narrative summary. Each paragraph focuses on a specific aspect of the narrative – the photograph, Lee's appearance, the change from observation to dialogue and so on. The ending of the essay is neat, and brings together two separate references from near the end of the extract to balance the points already made about the tension in the relationship. Although the ending is quite sudden – time may possibly have been a factor – there is a clear structure of the material for the answer.

The essay does at times use the prompts of the question to include comment on language, dialogue and narrative methods. Quotations are used frequently to support points and precise selections are integrated fluently and skilfully in to the candidate's argument. The one exception to this is the bracketed quotation in paragraph 6, which would have been more effective within a sentence of commentary. The most explicit language points occur in paragraph 5, with references to the use of an 'adverb' and a 'verb'. While it would have been useful to have this kind of technical precision more frequently, analysis is still apparent in the details of characterisation in paragraphs 3, 6 and 7. Dialogue is discussed well, from the way it begins the meeting (paragraph 4) to analysis of Lee's dislocated speech in paragraph 6 and her Americanised expression in the

penultimate paragraph. There is a comment on the way that narrative structure works in the first paragraph and paragraph four makes a subtle point about the shift from observation to dialogue. Paragraph five discusses the point where 'the writer includes the backstory' and the way it affects the reader, and sees how cultural issues are woven into the personal. The comments on foreshadowing show an understanding that this is an extract from a larger story and how that technique works, which is developed with the last paragraph's further suggestions about possible outcomes. The balance of possible interpretations demonstrates an active reading of the passage and an assured understanding of some of the conventions of prose narrative.

How the answer could be improved

AO1 Knowledge and Understanding

The candidate has demonstrated both knowledge and understanding well throughout the essay. More precision in the opening and closing (discussed in AO4 below) might have meant that the candidate could discuss context in a more detailed way, which, in an Unseen is how the details fit into the whole passage. The candidate could have done more to focus on the 'text type'. The candidate briefly covers that this is a piece of fiction, but lacks a clear sense of how the genre (prose fiction in a third person narration) limits and shapes what the writer is able to do. Candidates do need to discuss the literary type and the genre specifically, as this will help them to consider the writer's choices and the construction of the writing. This is perhaps even more essential when discussing a poem or a piece of drama, as the literary conventions will often be central to the effects of writing.

AO2 Analysis

There is much to admire in this essay and the candidate does deal with a number of important details. However, the paragraph looking at the effect of the adverb 'clumsily' and then some elements of the language is not sustained. There are many more interesting language choices that might also have been analysed for the effects created and in an Unseen it is essential that every paragraph unpicks, in detail, the writer's choices. The analysis itself is not very complex in its conclusions. This candidate does not directly consider other interpretations and that is a limiting factor. The essay would also be more thorough if the various literary devices were considered in separate sections, to show the different ways the writer is manipulating the reader by the language choices. The same would also apply to other elements such as narrative voice, use of dialogue, sentence structure and prose form. To some extent the candidate's choice of a more or less chronological exploration of the passage limits the response because this strategy means that the candidate cannot analyse more subtle style points that could develop the literary analysis.

AO3 Personal Response

The candidate uses the 'point-evidence-analyse/explain' method throughout but they tend to offer one interpretation. It is obviously more sophisticated for a candidate to be able to give a range of interpretations. This is a more nuanced way of approaching a text and enables the candidate to identify his/her own independent opinion(s) at the same time as setting out and discussing the more immediate and obvious ones.

AO4 Communication

This is generally very good, with clear and complex expression and some useful literary terminology which enables the candidate to address the task in a clear and coherent way. However, a more complex and sophisticated strategy in terms of addressing the task as a whole could have enabled the candidate to organise this essay in a more sophisticated way. This might have meant that the candidate could have discussed other interpretations of language and literary methods. The 'weaker' elements of this essay, such as the rather general introductory and concluding paragraphs, might be strengthened by adopting a more challenging approach to the task as a whole.

Cambridge Assessment International Education
The Triangle Building, Shaftesbury Road, Cambridge, CB2 8EA, United Kingdom
t: +44 1223 553554
e: info@cambridgeinternational.org www.cambridgeinternational.org

Copyright © UCLES 2019 (updated Oct 2024)