

# LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

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Paper 8695/21

Writing

## Key Messages

- imaginative responses need to be planned and structured more effectively with greater narrative / descriptive control;
- argumentative / discursive writing needed to be shaped more effectively and developed in terms of detail and depth.

## General Comments

Some of the responses to **Section B** were very short; these were self-penalising: short work is often under-developed and lacking in convincing details. Candidates who wrote a brief plan often wrote more structured responses. The use of a short plan to clarify ideas before writing definitely helps the thinking process. It is important to read the 'small print' to each question carefully, to avoid writing inappropriately. Quite well written responses sometimes scored less highly because of lack of focus. This planning stage is crucial, but quite often neglected.

Where Imaginative Writing is concerned, candidates were not always clear about how to structure the opening of a story or novel, or how to write in a way to engage the reader. More often than not, paragraph structure was neglected. Candidates need to ensure that they address inconsistent tenses. They should also pay closer attention to the different types of sentence, in order to write with more variety.

Where Writing for an Audience is concerned, candidates need to think carefully about "for whom" and "from whom" so that they engage more in the idea of voice, thinking more carefully about forms of address for their audience and the use of vocabulary.

## Comments on Specific Questions

### **Section A**

#### **Question 1**

#### **Regeneration**

There were some lively and original interpretations. Successful answers showed focus on setting and mood and ended with a cliff hanger. They displayed a balanced narrative between the run-down aspects of the neglected neighbourhood preceding the actions of the developers. The best answers used character's memories to remember their old home/town before it was regenerated; and many good answers used actual places, which made the composition more convincing. Often a first - person narrative was employed, of someone who has risen from poverty to change their own environment, though the 'outsider' element sometimes provided more suspense and contrasting moods. Many of the successful answers used vivid imagery to depict the setting, scene, and mood.

Less successful responses tended to be swept away by plot and to overlook these key words. They often drifted from the idea of regeneration to a complaint about the neglect. Sometimes there was very little about anyone "developing" the area. A lot of weaker responses were not openings, or part of a story, or even very narrative-based; there were quite a few discursive essays. Less successful answers struggled with the concept of change.

## Question 2

### A Change in the Weather

This was generally handled in an appropriate way. Successful answers showed use of evocative description capturing particular places at a moment of weather change. There were some metaphorical interpretations, which only worked well where candidates had included detailed description. Stronger answers showed the effects of the weather on the people and/or animals that had to change their plans in accordance with the change. There were some very good responses on a 'climate change' level, though it was then harder to describe a particular "scene". Some answers explored the emotional landscape of relationships and integrated nature as a character, keeping the descriptive element as a core focus.

Less successful answers relied sometimes on highly artificial prose and this led to the misuse of certain words in an effort to be original. Many used endless lists of what a storm can do in a given place, starting with the clichéd "baby-blue" sky, followed by a sudden and terrifying hurricane. Many less successful answers slipped into a solely narrative mode, disregarding the essential 'descriptive' element of the task.

## Question 3

### Ambition

This brought forth a variety of effective answers. "To succeed at any cost" was an interesting aspect of the question: many candidates chose psychopathic or otherwise criminally minded individuals, living on the edge. Stronger answers were very driven personality narratives in many cases, often dealing with a criminal sub-text, gangster power and so forth; quite a few really excellent answers described a character's rise to power from the 'ghetto' type environment.

Less successful answers demonstrated a general tendency to be too ambitious with timescale, which often led to the narration of a whole story, not just the opening. Plot then took over and the candidates sometimes lost sight of the central focus of the exercise until the last few lines. In numerous scripts, the sense of an appropriate form was lacking. Less successful were often the family conflict stories, where (typically) the father figure expects too much of the son. This was acceptable enough, but a lot of the less effective answers dwelt too long on this aspect of motivation and forgot to delineate much character. As usual, there were many 'motiveless crime' stories, which, by definition of course, do not highlight motivation.

## Question 4

### Corruption

The idea of public corruption was treated too generally in many weaker answers. The opportunity to use contrasting voices was not always well exploited. Less successful answers did sometimes achieve contrasting viewpoints but had little specific content - they generalised about corruption, or railed against the writers of the article without introducing specific criticisms based on what would have been close readings. Less successful answers used a personal tone, or inappropriate overly-emotive language. Many candidates seemed to find the question too abstract and found it difficult to provide a convincing context.

Better answers provided key examples of local government corruption and addressed these issues differently in each letter. Strong answers mentioned specific types or cases of corruption. One or two Snowden-associated pieces were effective.

## Question 5

### Fan magazine

Candidates generally wrote well from their own knowledge of a specific celebrity personality. Some really effective responses highlighted the star's personality through interview format and subtly got them to admit to their 'good works'. Other treatments included profiles with a surprised narrator wondering what all the fuss was about, when the star went AWOL, took drugs publicly or offended their fan-base inappropriately.

Less successful answers tended to use a fairly crude format for the essay without a properly controlled paragraph structure. There were a lot of formulaic answers which listed either the star's entertainment highlights, or their unacknowledged (thus far) helping out in African villages, or both. Some candidates

simply did not mention the 'bad bits'! The answers where the stars themselves wrote their justifications were understandably trickier to accomplish.

## Question 6

### Gap Year

The best answers showed some knowledge of travel and notions of different foreign places. Strong answers mentioned specific locations to highlight the difference between problems/benefits. Some good answers used anecdotes sparingly within the overall structure of the pros and cons. Many were realistic speeches where the audience were put at ease at the beginning and reminded of the opportunities in a summary.

Less successful answers were written very generally and without a focus on the terms of the questions, which require them to specify "their experience" and call for a sense of "problems and benefits". Some candidates did less well because they forgot the form and wrote an article, not a speech. Some were side-tracked in terms of task and tone: being snide to the candidate-audience (or more often staff) about how they themselves had hated School and could not get away quickly enough (these were plastered over occasionally by irony though it still did not work); recounting long and rambling 'stories' of incidents on their travels; stereotyping poorer cultures in the world as helpless, or certainly in need of *their* help; moralising in a generalised way about what they had learned, and by implication, what the poor candidates in front of them should learn; and finally, not speaking about a gap year at all, but listing what had happened at the School.

# LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

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Paper 8695/22

Writing

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## General Comments

Some of the responses to **Section B** were very short; these were self-penalising: short work is often under-developed and lacking in convincing details. Candidates who wrote a brief plan often wrote more structured responses. The use of a short plan to clarify ideas before writing definitely helps the thinking process. It is important to read the 'small print' to each question carefully, to avoid writing inappropriately. Quite well written responses sometimes scored less highly because of lack of focus. This planning stage is crucial, but quite often neglected.

Where Imaginative Writing is concerned, candidates were not always clear about how to structure the opening of a story or novel, or how to write in a way to engage the reader. More often than not, paragraph structure was neglected. Candidates need to ensure that they address inconsistent tenses. They should also pay closer attention to the different types of sentence, in order to write with more variety.

Where Writing for an Audience is concerned, candidates need to think carefully about "for whom" and "from whom" so that they engage more in the idea of voice, thinking more carefully about forms of address for their audience and the use of vocabulary.

## Comments on Specific Questions

### Question 1

#### The Settlers

There were some lively and original interpretations. Stronger answers showed focus on setting and motivation and ended with a cliff hanger, whilst weaker ones tended to be swept away by plot, and overlooked the key words of the title, which led to some inappropriate handling of the question. Stronger answers included a number of effective responses about colonisation (often from the 'native's' point of view). Some good answers showed improvement in the situation, though most opted for a negative, land-wasting angle.

Less successful answers reflected a stereotypical point of view in a simple narrative, in which the older men were manly and the women foraged for berries and did the washing; with unrealistic ideas about a communities being built in a couple of days. Quite a lot of responses missed the "rural" element. This question seemed to prompt more complete stories, rather than openings. Time passing, as the transformation takes place, was seldom tackled effectively.

## Question 2

### Laughter and Tears

This question provoked some rather sentimental, sometimes mawkish responses. Less successful answers tended to be quite plot-driven and to lose sight of the key prompt ('write a descriptive piece') for the answer. Many less effective answers tended to be repetitive, using the terms of the question throughout without really creating a sense of happiness or sadness. There were also quite a few narrations and even discursive essays on why we laugh or cry. These were sometimes successful when the candidate managed to embed description through giving examples of particular events where we might laugh or cry.

Stronger answers were subtle in their approach. Some strong answers had original ideas, such as a circus setting or a funeral. The pieces that worked best tended to stick to one setting and examine laughter and tears within this one setting. A common theme was marriage, and there was a clear sense of cultural context at play, with a number of candidates describing a girl leaving her parents and joining her husband and his family to begin a new life. The sense of contrasting emotions was often conveyed effectively as a result, but the focus was on narration which resulted in a lack of descriptive language features in many responses.

## Question 3

### Suspicion

This produced a variety of effective answers. The task of writing an "ending of a novel" needed to be kept in focus, and few candidates managed to successfully deal with the 'backstory' elements succinctly. The best answers showed a focus on the notion of suspicion from the first sentence. There were many good answers with climactic endings or denouements showing the reasons why protagonists did not trust each other beforehand. The use of first person narrative generally led to the best work here. Some well-crafted responses involved murder / gangster plots, which had developed, engaging novel endings with credible characters and situations.

Less successful answers were heavily plot-driven and tended to lose touch with the central theme early on. There were many dialogue-heavy accusation pieces where the characters simply blamed everyone (mostly fathers) for betrayals from the past. A small number of candidates went for a failed romantic relationship/ marriage and these responses tended to be significantly weaker than the ones in the gangster/ murder genre.

## Question 4

### Two Politicians

Apart from a few exceptionally able attempts at this question, it was not treated well by candidates. First the format of a leaflet was rarely used - very few candidates wrote realistic "leaflet" type texts, which should be punchy and attractive to the reader. Instead a common treatment was to offer two contrasting speeches. Quite a few were couched in the format of a letter, which was unhelpful. Less successful answers showed haziness about the political process and about the issues in focus. Many were content to merely flatter their readers and promise everything to them. Some candidates wrote all about why the old or the young were important, but did not really include any policies. Quite a few candidates interpreted 'older voters' as OAPs and promising more care homes / hospitals / instructions for technology etc., unwittingly insulting their audience.

Stronger responses were specific with policies and they used political rhetoric. The most successful candidates managed to create contrasting voices directed at the very different audiences suggested by the question. Successful responses had candidates demonstrating an ability to use rhetorical devices for effect.

## Question 5

### Sportsperson's Injury

This was generally handled in an appropriate way. Strong answers showed an excellent grasp of a sporting career. Effective answers tended to use the interview format, with an anchor-person to lead the (sometimes over-modest) sportsperson through their achievements. Both interviews and 'live broadcasts' were used, incorporating all aspects of the question and including detail about the career of the sportsperson. Very few

of the answers considered the press conference, which is the most common form in which these announcements are usually made.

Less successful candidates had trouble with the format of the “broadcast script”. Their answers showed a lack of clarity about the sport in question or how a career in sport develops. Many were justifications of the sportsperson’s achievements; complaining about their injury and hoping they *would not* be retiring; or a dull listing of their life story, elaborating at great length how they were inspired to get into the sport in the first place. Less successful answers allowed the interviewer to hold the floor more than the ‘sportsperson’ or were non-specific about the sport / ignored the retirement and the injury.

## Question 6

### The New Socialisers

This title led to some excellent answers from the candidates’ own experience. This type of writing often showed a greater level of articulacy and a greater tone of authority. Stronger responses focused on the parents’ generation as a contrast (rather than the candidates’ earlier memories of their own generation). Successful compositions were well structured by different aspects of socialising, often by witty headings. The more successful candidates typically included anecdotes and provided balanced discussion of social media versus more traditional socialising, or argued convincingly that the new way was just as valid as the old.

Sometimes in less successful answers there was an imbalance in the treatment of one generation or the other. Some wrote the same answer about the wonder of social media which was a question in the previous exam series. A lot of the less effective responses were unstructured, with many using the ‘scattergun’ approach of writing down all they knew about how people like them socialised, with scandalised parents in attendance. There seemed to be many short answers as well, for this question. Less successful answers repeated the same point several times (e.g. social media bad, face-to-face meetings good). Another approach was to examine the manner in which the young and old talk to each other, rather than the mediums through which they socialise. These responses were not without merit, but tended to be more limited in scope.

# LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

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Paper 8695/23

Writing

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## General Comments

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## Comments on Specific Questions

### Question 1

#### The Old Town

Strong responses were seen where candidates gave interesting, thoughtful responses, with setting and mood clearly addressed. An effective way of addressing the terms of the question, 'a historic part of a modern environment' was when the narrator moved through the modern bits of a city to chance upon its older parts.

Less successful responses talked about the "old town" as a separate entity and not part of a bigger environment. This was a common error - to address a 'historic part...(which) remains unchanged' but not in setting of a 'modern environment'. Less effective answers also lacked narrative structure and features; or addressed 'setting' in the rubric well but were lacking in 'mood'; or were not an opening to a story. There were some attempts to write a complete 'short story' – which then became plot driven responses, lacking in both mood and setting. Less successful answers repeatedly stated that 'nothing had changed' in the 'old town'.

## Question 2

### Winter Turns to Spring

Generally, candidates were comfortable with the idea of a descriptive piece and they wrote reasonably well on this clear and contrasting theme. There were often some quite interesting metaphorical answers. Successful answers explored the emotional climate of relationships and integrated nature as a character, keeping the descriptive element as a core focus. This question brought out some poetic responses.

Less successful responses tended towards narrative form and lacked descriptive contrast. Some listed features or wrote what people do in winter or spring, rather than describing the seasons. Also, there was some confusion about spring - a few candidates misunderstanding and describing summer.

## Question 3

### Confrontation

In general, this was the most popular question, bringing forth a variety of effective answers. Successful responses managed to effectively convey a sense of character and motivation. Stronger answers wrote with a sense of realism and credible beliefs. There was a clear focus on a character being confronted/ challenged in some way, and there were some interesting ideas around the notion of confrontation.

Some candidates seemed to struggle with adapting their writing to suit the form of this task, and tended to write a whole story rather than a novel opening. Often, 'beliefs' was understood to be religious beliefs. Less successful answers were about a fight or argument, ignoring the idea of beliefs being challenged.

## Question 4

### World Fitness for All

This was handled rather well. Stronger answers were specific and realistic about grievances. They mentioned specific weaknesses of the firm and expressed truly "justified disappointment". Some excellent answers to this combined outrage with substantial grievance. This question provoked a real variety of content that read like lived experience. There was some good use of sarcasm.

Less successful answers took the approach of objecting to the slogan itself - e.g. that it is unrealistic for 'all' people to be fit because some are ill, in hospital or struggling with obesity. There is a point here, but answers like this had limited scope. There were some candidates who were a little over-passionate and blunt about their hatred of the health Centre, thus achieving the effect of humour - or of a rant, rather than justified disappointment.

## Question 5

### Wealth Creators

There were a few outstanding responses, which acknowledged the concerns about favourable treatment and then went on to create a sophisticated counter-argument by listing all the benefits of businesses and generating wealth.

## Question 6

### Getting Around for Less

Stronger responses focused on budgeting within one country, which is what the key words in the question actually are. The strongest answers were those that had a close focus on the question – the problems and benefits of travelling on a budget. The more successful candidates, as with other questions, provided specifics and included examples and tips.

Some candidates overlooked the terms of the question and simply focused on describing their own travels. Whilst offering some interesting descriptive writing, the sense of purpose/ audience/ task was therefore lacking in these responses. A small number of responses revealed a misunderstanding of the question with candidates writing a persuasive text, advertising a travel company or website, instead of an article about

travelling on a restricted budget. Less successful candidates were not specific about their country or focused only on one aspect of money saving for budget travellers.

# LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

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Paper 8695/91

Poetry, Prose and Drama

## Key Messages

- Questions focus on ways in which writers treat particular concerns, so successful responses focus on authors' choices of language and literary methods, and the effects these might have on a reader.
- Questions are a test of literary knowledge and understanding, so answers which rely on paraphrase and narrative summary will not do well.
- Candidates succeed best when they use secure detailed references and quotations to support points.
- Answers to **(b)** passage questions should examine the selected poem or extract in great detail.

## General Comments

There was, on all texts, some excellent writing, where candidates advanced thoughtful arguments closely supported by detailed quotation and analysis. These demonstrated advanced appreciation of how writers choose language and how their methods affect the communication of their ideas. The strength of such answers was the blending of detailed knowledge and appreciative understanding. Responses which rely on knowledge only, of plot and character, for example, without the literary understanding, tend to lapse into paraphrase and summary, which is not successful.

## Question Specific Comments

### 1. Ted Hughes: *Selected Poems*

- (a) Candidates attempting this question tended to agree whole-heartedly that Hughes is the 'poetic voice of blood and guts' and were able to cite a number of appropriate poems to demonstrate his interest in violence and predatory wildlife. Successful answers were very detailed, with a developed understanding of how Hughes's choices of diction, imagery and verse structure accentuate violence, sometimes in unexpected quarters, like 'Thrushes' or 'Skylarks' as well as more obvious examples such as 'Hawk Roosting' or 'Pike'. Thoughtful answers teased out some of the differences between such poems or examined some of the significances of Hughes's interest in violence, with comparison between the natural and human worlds.
- (b) The strongest responses noted the question's prompts towards 'language and imagery', which helped target the essays on linguistic detail while still engaging with structure and form. While there were some confused answers which suggested the poem is set in a jungle, or that the jaguar physically breaks out of the cage, most candidates understood the central premise of the poem and offered some comment on the effects of Hughes's delaying of its real subject matter until the third stanza. Successful answers explored ways in which Hughes creates an atmosphere of indolence in the first two stanzas, examining the verbs, similes and metaphors applied to the animals, even ones associated with ferocity like 'tiger and lion'. Equally, the language used to show the viewers' response to the Jaguar, 'stands, stares, mesmerized', was noted to demonstrate the contrast. Candidates often wrote well about the suggestions of controlled fury in the jaguar, including the forceful plosive 'bang of blood in the brain' and the animal's transcendence of his captivity. Focused discussion of the associations of the language, its auditory effects and its arrangement, led to some exceptionally strong responses to this question.

**2. Wilfred Owen: *Selected Poems***

- (a) There are a number of poems in the selection where Owen includes dialogue and the voices of individual soldiers are used to create the effects. Candidates who understood this and used such poems in their responses tended to write well, whereas candidates who chose poems without such voices, arguing that every war poem expresses the point of view of a soldier and therefore in some way creates a soldier's voice, were markedly less successful. This was a good example of careful consideration of a question and its implications paying dividends. Strong responses were focused on poems such as 'The Dead-Beat', 'The Sentry', 'The Letter' and 'Inspection'. Detailed comments on Owen's use of colloquial and barrack room language within the poems were often illuminating, candidates commenting on how the dialogue creates a sense of individual men, from ordinary backgrounds, caught up in war, individualising the experience and the suffering.
- (b) Weaker responses made no reference to the question's focus on ways in which the poem 'presents ideas about poetry'. Additionally, many candidates were unaware that this poem was written some time before World War I broke out, and is, therefore not about the war. The poem, of course, makes no reference to warfare whatsoever, but a large number of candidates wrote about it as a war poem and made no reference to 'ideas about poetry'. More alert candidates acknowledged Owen's early debts to the Romantic poets, governing both the content and the sonnet form of the poem. Strong answers noted the poem's acknowledgement of the communicative power of poetry as an exploration of emotional states, but also the limitations found in that at the central point of the poem – 'Not one verse that throbs/Throbs with my heart'. Candidates noted the effects of the repetition here and the way the poem turns from this point away from other poets' communication towards a hope for the communicative power of the speaker's own poetry, with a direct address to the reader – 'Listen; my voice my haply lend thee ease.'

**3. *Songs of Ourselves***

- (a) In responses to this question, the most popular poems chosen were 'Why So Pale and Wan', 'Written The Night Before His Execution', 'When I Was Fair and Young', 'Weep You No More' and 'Walsingham', thus covering a range of 'failed hopes'. Candidates tended to write more successfully when they chose a pair of poems that contrasted in some way, either in content or form, as this gave them firmer grounds for the comparison. As ever, the strongest responses were those which focused clearly on poetic methods, considering the various ways in which the poets presented the ideas, rather than comparing the ideas themselves and limiting the essay to content and subject matter. Successful essays looked at point of view, the creation of the speaker's voice, the use of setting, language, imagery and the use of verse form.
- (b) The Shakespeare sonnet was the more popular choice and most candidates were able to trace the use of imagery of the natural world to parallel human ageing, recognising the autumnal imagery of the 'yellow leaves' and the metaphor of 'sunset'. Such imagery was discussed capably and sometimes with thoughtful sensitivity, though the 'Bare ruined choirs' puzzled many, or were ignored, and many candidates avoided close discussion of the poem's ending. Many ended the discussion with the idea of death in ll. 8-10 and did not consider the final lines or consider the use of the second person throughout the poem. Just a few candidates noted that the poem is addressed to another person and that the poem's speaker, in acknowledging his own ageing, also pays tribute to 'thou', whose love is 'more strong', even as ageing moves the speaker towards inevitable death. Such full and perceptive treatment of the poem was awarded high marks.

**4. Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie: *Half of a Yellow Sun***

- (a) Most candidates were able to select appropriate characters and write about them with some knowledge. Occasionally candidates spread themselves too thinly by writing an essay on three, four or five characters. While there is no marking penalty for this, such an approach is self-penalising because it inevitably means that the essay cannot consider any one of them in sufficient detail. Odenigbo, Olanna and Ugwu were the favoured characters, with a focus on Odenigbo's strengths before his mother dies and his descent to alcoholism; Olanna's beauty, patience and teaching during the war balanced against her sleeping with Richard; and Ugwu's loyalty before his conscription and his participation in the gang rape. There were also some very interesting responses to Richard. The most successful answers explicitly considered the word 'heroic' in the question as well as 'flaws', which led to fuller discussion of character roles, the situations in which they are placed and actions and attitudes which might be considered 'heroic'. Thus the apparent heroism of Odenigbo's 'revolutionary' language was compared with his collapse during the war,

while Olanna's selfless work during the war in contrast to her privileged upbringing was noted, and offset her momentary infidelity in most readers' eyes. While Ugwu's participation in the rape was universally reviled, it was noted that he is shown to share the revulsion, haunted by it through the rest of the novel, and his penning of *The World Was Silent When We Died* was often seen to be a heroic act, recording the truth for the victims.

- (b) Some less good answers spent too much time recording the context for this passage, so that they retold the story of Mama's manipulation of Amala and her son; such responses did not attract high marks as they did not focus clearly on the writing of the set passage. More focused answers found much of interest in the sixty lines, carefully noting the effects of Adichie's choices of detail: Odenigbo's hands behind his back, his clumsy attempts to appear sorry and his tentative grip on the steering wheel. Olanna's decisiveness, refusal to acknowledge Odenigbo and her direction to the nurse to give the baby to him were all noted and discussed. Strong answers noted the mixture of narrative and dialogue and some very careful answers showed a sophisticated appreciation of the narrative position of the passage, which, while being written in the third person, closely follows Olanna's perceptions and responses, giving the reader an empathetic position with regards to her while maintaining a separation from Odenigbo.

## 5. **E.M. Forster: *A Passage to India***

- (a) It was clear from most answers to this question that candidates know this novel extremely well. The cue quotation from Mrs Moore was often clearly placed and candidates were able to draw on a number of key reference points to develop their view of Forster's presentation of India. The strongest responses were clearly organised, considering the idea of 'muddle' in separate categories. In this way candidates structured their consideration of the muddled setting of ramshackle Chandrapore, the muddled plot and uncertainty about what exactly happens to Adela, and the muddled relationships seen in Aziz's and Fielding's misunderstandings and Ronny and Adela's on-off engagement. Some candidates continued to consider religion and colonial politics. Well developed answers considered these big issues through an examination of telling detail, like the failure to identify the green bird or the cause of the road accident, and the difficulty of classifying the caves. There was also much useful comment on the failure of British attempts to sort out the muddle, like numbering the caves or setting out the streets on a grid system. Many candidates saw an incompatibility between Indians' open acceptance of spirituality and lack of rigidity with the British predilection for rules and identification.
- (b) Much of the passage from Chapter 9 is dialogue, so candidates who only provided a summary of the extract without a close examination of the writing were far from successful. Stronger answers were careful in their analysis not only of what is said, but of tone of voice and implications, matched by the narration which gives the reader insight into Fielding's thoughts. This allowed for greater subtlety and a variety of interpretation. Most candidates, for example, found Fielding's answers articulate and convincing, while others found him stumbling and banal. Some candidates suggested that despite the elaborate courtesy of many of the questions put to him, they are in fact rude and prying, while others noted the careful formality of the Indians' sentence construction, compared with the more relaxed idiomatic English of Fielding. Through these details, there was some thoughtful discussion of differing attitudes to the British, to colonialism and to religion, while the passage develops further the reader's understanding of Fielding as a British man separated from conventional British attitudes and opinions.

## 6. ***Stories of Ourselves***

- (a) Some candidates considered the apparently ordinary boy who commits extraordinary vicarious murder in 'Sredni Vashtar', the lowly and disillusioned shopkeeper in 'The Prison' who tries to redeem a young thief, an old woman struggling with age in 'The Bath' and a man struggling with money and relationships in 'Elephant'. Better answers looked at what makes these characters 'ordinary', with reference to common human traits and features with which many readers might empathise, and how they become central to the narratives as the focus of stories, giving them their narrative drive.
- (b) This question was a passage from 'Billennium'. As with all passage questions, those essays which restricted their focus to the content of the passage and recounted the difficult circumstances in which the characters live, did not do well. More successful responses, often very personal in their reactions to the claustrophobic setting, considered the casual way in which Ward's and Rossiter's

dialogue debates the possibility of a further reduction in living space, emphasising their powerlessness, while the passage also provides plenty of facts and figures of population numbers, precise measurements and the changes over time which give a concrete understanding of the special limitations. Alert responses also picked the effects of words such as 'shuffling mob', 'lock', 'paralysed', 'trampled', 'cubicle', 'crammed', 'force their way' and 'pushing in', the preponderance of which communicate the difficulties of living in the cramped city and thus create the world of the story.

**7. Edward Albee: *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?***

- (a) There were too few responses to this question to make general comment appropriate.
- (b) The assertions of some candidates that the passage demonstrates that the marriage is a straightforward loving one suggested a misreading of the passage and a lack of knowledge of the text. Stronger responses explored aspects of language, stage directions and structure, looking at the changes in tone, the use of capital letters to indicate raised voices, the ellipses indicating pauses to timing, goading or interruptions. These details needed to be linked to a secure understanding of the rest of the play and of the relationship between George and Martha. Successful answers on drama texts always show awareness of how the text will work on stage in performance.

**8. William Shakespeare: *Richard III***

- (a) There were too few responses to this question to make general comment appropriate.
- (b) Many responses demonstrated confident engagement with the question, exploring characterisation of both Richard and Buckingham. Stronger answers looked thoughtfully at the structure of the passage and ways in which Shakespeare illustrates the shifting relationship between the two men. Less secure answers showed a lack of certainty about who is being addressed at certain points of the passage, confusing Stanley and Buckingham. This diluted the effect of Richard ignoring Buckingham at the beginning of the passage. On the whole, though, candidates showed secure knowledge of the play and used it to inform the analysis of the extract.

**9. Robert Bolt: *A Man for All Seasons***

- (a) Some stronger answers examined the varied roles played by the Common Man, creating a continuity of action in the play and developing an understanding of Thomas More through these roles. Some referred to Bolt's use of open theatricality centred on the Common Man, discussing Brechtian techniques effectively.
- (b) Answers to this question often showed some thoughtful consideration of the structure of the dialogue, with Henry's long speeches, his threatening flattery of More and his interruptions of him. The strongest responses closely engaged with the language and the details of the passage, particularly the richness of Henry's speeches and the range of techniques he uses in them.

# LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

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Paper 8695/92

Poetry, Prose and Drama

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- Questions are a test of literary knowledge and understanding, so answers which rely on paraphrase and narrative summary will not do well.
- Candidates succeed best when they use secure detailed references and quotations to support points.
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## General Comments

There was, on all texts, some excellent writing, where candidates advanced thoughtful arguments closely supported by detailed quotation and analysis. These demonstrated advanced appreciation of how writers choose language and how their methods affect the communication of their ideas. The strength of such answers was the blending of detailed knowledge and appreciative understanding. Responses which rely on knowledge only, of plot and character, for example, without the literary understanding, tend to lapse into paraphrase and summary, which is not successful.

## Question Specific Comments

### 1. **Ted Hughes: *Selected Poems***

- (a) Poems like 'Hawk Roosting', 'Thrushes' and 'Pike' were most popular in answers to this question on cruelty, though some candidates spread the range to include poems such as 'Wind'. Good answers illustrated examples of cruelty using appropriate quotations. Stronger answers went on to use these quotations to explore the poetic methods used by Hughes to communicate his vision and explored the significance of the idea of cruelty by looking at the range in the poetry and discussing the implications of Hughes's view of the natural world.
- (b) While candidates were confident with the content of the poem, comparatively few explored its language, imagery and structure in full detail. Some stronger responses tackled it with confidence, identifying the tone, diction and repetition of 'dead' as ways in which Hughes presents the dead pig in a matter of fact way. Occasionally candidates noted the use of caesurae and end-stopped lines as indicators of the finality of the pig's death and noted the comparisons with inanimate objects like 'a sack of wheat' and 'a doorstep'. Some of the poem's auditory effects were missed, however, and a number of candidates missed the comparative reminiscence of trying to catch the piglet at the fair.

### 2. **Wilfred Owen: *Selected Poems***

- (a) Although some candidates wrote about soldiers at war generally, in most cases the idea of injured soldiers was well understood, with many answers usefully broadening the definition to include mental as well as physical injuries. This invited consideration of a good range of poems, including 'Dulce et Decorum Est', 'Disabled', 'Mental Cases' and 'Inspection' among others. The most successful responses explored voice and structure with some confidence, looking at ways in which Owen not only describes such soldiers, but also sometimes gives them voice and elicits readers' responses which might vary from pity to shock and horror.



- (b) In answering the question on 'Storm', some candidates were significantly hampered by mistaking it for a war poem and failing to recognise that it is a poem written before the war and makes no reference to war. Better answers considered ways in which the sonnet develops the speaker's response to a highly significant encounter with the use of elemental imagery through the separated quatrains and sestet. Such answers explored the imagery's indication of the overwhelming beauty of 'His face' and compared this with the ideas of fear and danger associated with the speaker's response, risking men's cries and women hiding 'bleak faces'. In this way many responses appropriately saw the 'Storm' as an extended metaphor for the speaker's intense emotional strife. Some candidates went on to consider the homoerotic context directly, demonstrating an understanding of why the 'beauty' might risk the speaker's 'fall' in society at the time.

### 3. *Songs of Ourselves*

- (a) Answers focused on a range of poems including Wroth's 'Sonnet 19', 'Why So Pale and Wan', 'Written the Night Before His Execution', 'The Author's Epitaph' appearing frequently in responses. While answers which simply compared the type of grief without exploring 'ways' were not successful, stronger answers went beyond subject matter and were able to discuss perceptively the poets' use of language and form. The choice of two poems which contrast in some way was often helpful to candidates in giving them a structure for their responses, comparing the differences not only in type of grief, but also ways in which it is expressed.
- (b) Spenser's sonnet elicited some sensitive and thoughtful responses. Good answers acknowledged the relationship to be one of mutual love and affection but also carefully considered the two different perspectives offered in the poem. The man's passion and determination was noted in his writing in the sand not once, but twice, and his attitude was contrasted with the woman's sceptical and pragmatic tone in response to her lover's foolish and futile attempts to immortalise her mortal being in this way. Candidates commented on the effect of the direct speech interrupting the action, leading to the man having the last word by claiming to be immortalising her name and their love in his poetry, clinched in the final couplet. Some very good responses teased out these stages very carefully and often recognised a sense of fun or 'banter' in the mock argument between the two, a sign of the love which is in fact 'eternised' in the poem.

### 4. *Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie: Half of a Yellow Sun*

- (a) Those who chose this option tended to write about Ugwu's loyalty to Odenigbo and Olanna's loyalty to the Biafran people. The most successful responses considered the idea of 'divided loyalties' more carefully, looking at, for example, Olanna divided between Odenigbo, Baby and her work for refugees; Richard divided between Kainene, the Biafran cause and his own ambition; or Ugwu's loyalty to family and the Biafran cause undermined by his actions during the war. Candidates wrote about Adichie's novel with knowledge and enthusiasm. It should be noted, though, that success in answering questions requires careful consideration of the demands of a question and secure selection of appropriate material.
- (b) Most answers demonstrated not only a good knowledge of the passage, but an understanding of its significance within the novel. Less confident responses related the narrative of the meeting between Olanna and Odenigbo's mother, but more successful answers were keenly observant of detail, sometimes considering the importance of the narrative following Ugwu's perspective. Observant candidates noted the contrast between Olanna's 'smiling face' with Mama's refusal to 'hug Olanna back', which creates an ominous note towards the beginning of the passage. A number picked up on the implications of the 'proper' soup before the conflict becomes apparent in Mama's sudden direct challenge to Olanna in 1.21. The contrast between her rising voice and Olanna's silence was noted, and the shocking effect of her call to the neighbours before Olanna's controlled decision to leave. Candidates also found much to say about the last section of the passage where Mama is portrayed gently singing, having achieved her aims. Answers which matched enthusiasm for the text with this kind of detailed observation achieved high marks.

### 5. *E.M. Forster: A Passage to India*

- (a) Some responses were less successful because they attempted to cover too many characters and therefore developed few strands of the argument in detail. Some of the strongest essays quickly looked at the general picture of the British – the 'Turtons and Burtons' – before examining a small number of specific characters to see how they fitted into this type. Ronny,

typifying the colonial view, was often a focus, and usually contrasted with Fielding and Mrs Moore. It was the answers which clearly discussed not just how these characters are presented, but also considered the effects in Forster's overall presentation of colonial India, which were most successful.

- (b) Discussion of the extract was often given focus by the knowledge of Adela's later withdrawal of her accusation against Aziz. This gave candidates an interesting angle in their analysis of the casual, confident dialogue of the English who assume their superiority throughout. The uncontrolled outbursts of Mahmoud Ali were also subject to careful scrutiny; his long emotionally charged sentences constructed in quite a different way from the speech of the English. Candidates also wrote well on the professional dignity of Mr Das, trying to manage the events of the trial, combined with the implications of Turton's patronising comment that Das is 'not getting much of a show.' The question also gave candidates an opportunity to explore the significance of Mrs Moore to the novel and the trail, which was effective as long as the passage remained the core focus of the answer.

## 6. *Stories of Ourselves*

- (a) The 'need to escape' was interpreted widely by candidates, giving them a wide choice of stories about which to write. 'The Prison', 'The Bath', 'Sredni Vashtar', 'The Hollow of the Three Hills' and 'Elephant' were all popular choices. Most candidates were able to explore different aspects of escape, both physical and psychological, depending on the choice of stories. The best responses explored ways in which the writers established and then developed the dominant voice in the stories, articulating the differing urges to escape. In this regard, 'The Prison' and 'The Bath' produced particularly sensitive writing from candidates, showing thoughtful understanding of the central characters and their situations.
- (b) As long as candidates had studied this story and read its opening with care, they tended to write well on this passage. However, quite a large number of candidates seemed unfamiliar with the story and confused the two Mrs Grancys. More confident responses noted the importance of the passage as the opening of the story, informing the reader of the death of the second Mrs Grancy at its outset, before the brief information about the first Mrs Grancy in the second paragraph. Strong essays compared the language and imagery used by Wharton to describe the second Mrs Grancy and the effect she has on her husband with that used to describe the relationship with the first Mrs Grancy. The natural metaphors of growth and fruition in the first paragraph are a striking contrast with the 'leaden embrace' of Grancy's first marriage. There were many perceptive answers which, through careful analysis of this imagery and the narrative voice, were able to demonstrate that the warming and restorative effect of Grancy's second wife is not restricted to Grancy himself. They explored how the tone of the passage reveals that the narrator idolises Mrs Grancy too, and that she becomes a beacon for the circle of friends, not just her husband.

## 7. *Edward Albee: Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?*

- (a) There were too few responses to this question to make general comment appropriate..
- (b) Many responses to this question did not progress much further than a summary or paraphrase of the passage. A successful answer relied on careful focus on the 'creation of dramatic tension between characters', which in turn required careful analysis of Albee's dialogue and stage directions. Observant candidates found much to write on, including the interruptions, the varied tone of the dialogue, the alternating focus of Martha's and George's speeches between each other and Nick and Honey, Martha's flirting with Nick and the growing discord between Nick and Honey. The strongest answers had a strong sense of the scene played out on stage, with ideas of pace and audience response.

## 8. *William Shakespeare: Richard III*

- (a) There were too few responses to this question to make general comment appropriate..
- (b) There were few responses to this question, where the presentation of Richmond in the passage depends not just on his long speech, but also in the passage's opening exchanges. An awareness of Shakespeare's parallel presentation of Richard in this Act could also be helpful, to show how contrast is created as Richmond is made to seem confident and certain in preparation for battle.

**9. Robert Bolt: *A Man for All Seasons***

- (a) This attracted a number of focused and enthusiastic responses. Strong answers showed clear understanding of the idea of dramatic tension and focused closely on the ideas of 'a good son of the church' and 'a man', with the implied opposition between the two. Candidates could explore the tensions between More's loyalties to God, to his King and his family. The discriminator was the level of detailed textual knowledge and exploration of the dramatic ways in which this tension is explored.
- (b) Candidates often found Cromwell a fascinating figure, though they often also expressed a great dislike for him. The strongest answers here looked very closely at the dialogue, recognising an important battle between More and Cromwell in the subtext of the formal, polite exchanges. They analysed Cromwell's attempted manipulation in the dialogue, the way his speeches create verbal fences to pen More in and guide him. This required not only close observation of the language and tone, but also a sense of how the scene would play out on stage. Less successful responses were more descriptive of character, expressing a personal view of Cromwell without supporting it clearly from a close examination of the passage.

# LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

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Paper 8695/93

Poetry, Prose and Drama

## Key Messages

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## General Comments

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## Question Specific Comments

Comments on this paper must be prefaced by the observation that they are based on a very small number of candidates who took this variant. Most answered on the poetry of Wilfred Owen and *Stories of Ourselves*, meaning that several questions were not attempted at all.

### 1. **Ted Hughes: *Selected Poems***

- (a) There is a wide range of poems which candidates might have chosen to respond to the question on violence in Hughes's poetry. Examiners were looking for a detailed knowledge of appropriate poems with an appreciation of how violence, in varied forms, is presented by Hughes's choices of language, imagery and verse form.
- (b) The candidates who attempted this question showed an awareness of the idea of the calf's innocence and its eventual fate with the butcher. There was less appreciation of Hughes's writing in the poem and ways in which his language develops a view of the calf, its appearance and behaviour. There was little commentary on the sense of life and joy in the poem, which is there despite the ominous reference to 'Butchers' in the eighth stanza.

### 2. **Wilfred Owen: *Selected Poems***

- (a) There were some responses to this question, candidates appreciating Owen's concern and sympathy for the plight of young men exposed to the brutality of warfare. Poems chosen included 'Futility', 'Disabled', 'The Letter' and 'Inspection' among others. With 'Disabled', candidates were able to compare the soldier's previous life and activities with his diminished physical state as described in the poem, whereas with 'The Letter' and 'Inspection', some candidates explored how the direct speech in the poems give the reader a direct link with the voices of such ordinary men experiencing war. Success depended not only on knowledge, but also on a clear focus on 'ways in which' Owen writes.

- (b) Candidates who mistook the poem 'Music' for a war poem and assumed that the moods are responses to warfare gave an obscured reading and were not successful. It is an early sonnet, written before the outbreak of war, and explores how music provokes differing moods, before a comparison with the mood created by love. Candidates who read the question and poem carefully recognised this and were able to write about ways in which Owen reflects the different moods by choosing different language and images, with references to particular musical instruments. Few, though, noted the shift in focus to the impact of love which is the climax of the poem.

### 3. *Songs of Ourselves*

- (a) Disappointment in love offered candidates a wide range of poems to consider in response to this question, including 'When I Was Fair and Young', 'They Flee From Me' and Wroth's 'Sonnet 11'. Disappointment with one's life, with fortune and with loss were also possibilities, though for success candidates would have to consider ways these ideas are treated in the poems, rather than just focusing on the subjects of disappointment.
- (b) Shakespeare's famous sonnet gave candidates ample opportunity to tease out developing imagery through the sonnet form, from its opening question to the remaining lines which answer it.

### 4. **Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie: *Half of a Yellow Sun***

- (a) There are a number of examples of betrayal in the novel, on a personal scale and on a wider political one, which gave candidates many opportunities to explore the idea. They might have looked at the betrayals of relationships in the infidelities of Odenigbo, Olanna and Richard, and thus Olanna's betrayal of Kainene. Odenigbo's betrayal of his revolutionary fervour as he declines into alcoholism could have been a fruitful area, while Ugwu's betrayal of the girl in the bar and his own integrity and ideals could have provided a strong focus. There was also the possibility of looking at political and military betrayals in the lead up to the coup and its aftermath.
- (b) There were a number of responses to this question, where most candidates were appreciative of Adichie's ominous tone created under the optimistic mood of Olanna's return. Ugwu's eager expectation was noted as he 'opened the door before she knocked', as well as Adichie's indication of Olanna's happy refamiliarisation with the house before she realises Mama is still present. Candidates who picked up Adichie's inclusion of small details, such as Odenigbo's failure to relax, his 'papery' lips and Mama's puzzling warmth, did well. Amala's difficulty in communication was also noted, before Adichie's detailed focus on the moment of the passing of the key in ll.39-45, almost like a cinematic close up. Some candidates wrote well on the description of Olanna's feelings in the penultimate paragraph and comments on the final line of the passage were well handled when candidates showed their knowledge of the rest of the text and were aware of what has happened between Odenigbo and Amala.

### 5. **E.M. Forster: *A Passage to India***

- (a) In the few responses, candidates sometimes showed that they had not read the question carefully enough, writing about Forster's presentation of the English, rather than his presentation of Indian attitudes to the English. While there is of course common ground, this is quite a different question and candidates who did not discriminate were less successful. Well focused answers might have looked at Aziz in particular, and his changing views of the English as the novel progresses. The conversation between Aziz's friends and Fielding in Chapter 9 is also a fruitful source of such attitudes, while answers could also have looked at how Adela's and Mrs Moore's openness stimulates different responses from the Indians, considering the Bridge Party and the tea party at Fielding's house. From areas such as these, candidates could also generate an argument about the political dimension of the relationship.
- (b) There were some generalised narrative-based responses to this question on Fielding, which missed the question's focus on the literary methods by which Forster directs the reader's response to the character. Stronger answers showed an understanding of Fielding's role and how this long narrative introduction explains his background and attitudes in a way which presents him as fair-minded, open and honest. In separating Fielding from the other English in India, who see him as 'a disruptive force', Forster is encouraging the reader to take sides and is therefore setting up key loyalties for a reading of the novel.

**6. Stories of Ourselves**

- (a) There was a wide range of possibilities for this question. Ageing in 'The Bath' was a good focus, or the desire for change in 'Elephant' and 'Sredni Vashtar'. In 'Report in the Threatened City' the narrators try, without success, to effect change, while 'Billennium' creates a nightmarish vision of future urban change.
- (b) This question produced some very good responses. All candidates recognised the situation and the impact of the stranger in the small town. Stronger responses acknowledged the context of the beard competition and looked closely at ways in which Proulx creates the comic situation. Attention was paid to the description of the visitor and particularly the imagery used to indicate the quality of his beard, a 'tsunami' of 'snowy, radiant white'. The reactions of Creel and Amanda were also examined, while some careful and thoughtful answers compared Creel's and the stranger's reactions to each other, with Creel's assumptions about the bike overturned and the stranger's eloquent, educated and confident speech, demonstrating his intellectual and economic superiority. There were perceptive comments on the image Kaups creates for himself compared with the inhabitants of Elk Tooth, with Plato who 'liked to fight' and is habitually 'scratching his crotch'. The most successful answers were those which recognised the dynamics of the passage in this way and were also alert to the humour of the piece.

**7. Edward Albee: *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?***

- (a) Marriage is one of the central concerns of the play, as it dissects Martha and George's relationship and Nick and Honey's marriage. It does so through challenging dialogue and action, and this would be the focus of successful essays, rather than a discussion of the marriages themselves.
- (b) The question referred to 'an audience's overall reaction to Martha', thus requiring candidates to look closely at the extract, but also to consider it in the light of the rest of the play. Successful answers would look carefully at the 'story' Martha tells, as well as her way of telling it. In her commands and comments she is assertive and unsympathetic towards her audience of Nick and Honey, whereas the ellipses in her longer speeches can give them a dreamlike quality as she reminisces. The subject matter of her memories is crucial background for the rest of the play, including her relationship with her father, her previous relationship with the gardener and the reasons for her marriage to George.

**8. William Shakespeare: *Richard III***

- (a) Shakespeare presents Clarence as quite an endearing figure and one who acknowledges and shows remorse for his own guilt. His early manipulation and betrayal by Richard therefore sets the tone for the future king's actions in the rest of the play. The scene of Clarence's arrest, his dream speech and the murder scene would be key reference points, as well as parallels with Richard's similarly ruthless actions elsewhere in the play.
- (b) In this extract, Richard manipulates his other brother, King Edward. A successful response would depend on knowledge of the context, and Richard's handling of Clarence's murder, as well as a close examination of the speeches of the passage. In this way candidates would be able to analyse Richard's manipulative hypocrisy as he puts the blame for Clarence's death on his brother. King Edward's long speech is therefore poignant with dramatic irony as he explores his own remorse for the death of Clarence. Alert candidates would pick up that what he says about brotherly feeling should apply to Richard too, a further way in which Shakespeare separates Richard from human relationships and feelings. The counterpoint of Derby's plea for his servant, and Buckingham's final line as he moves himself into position as Richard's follower were also worthy of comment.

**9. Robert Bolt: *A Man for All Seasons***

- (a) Although candidates would not need an understanding of Brechtian theatrical techniques to answer this question, they would need to appreciate ways in which the Common Man is used to fill in various smaller roles in the action, providing continuity and oversight of the action, which in turn is used by Bolt in a choric role. Candidates might have considered how he is used to create a link between scenes, introduce characters and give background information as well as providing a straightforward view on the action in ways which help shape an audience's responses.
- (b) The episode between More and Wolsey provided opportunities for candidates to write about Bolt's presentation of More's dilemma and the ways his moral scruples are challenged. Thoughtful answers would have looked at ways in which Bolt indicates both Wolsey's affection for More and his irritation at him, while much of More's dialogue is studiously non-committal as he avoids the real subject of the discussion. Strong answers would have considered Bolt's use of telling stage directions as well as the dialogue, considering particularly the pauses, the looking away, the coldness of More's tone, his 'dry murmur' and his 'horrified alarm'. The passage repays careful examination.