

LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

Paper 9695/31
Poetry and Prose 31

General Comments

The examination produced a wide range of answers with good coverage of each of the set texts, though *Stories of Ourselves* and *Jane Eyre* were particularly popular choices. Nearly all candidates showed some interest in what they had read and were able to select from their knowledge to answer the questions. The real discriminator is the detail of that knowledge and the level of the candidates' understanding of the writing and construction of the texts. It is the candidates who can go beyond accurate recall of characters, events and even quotations, to say something about how the writers' choices shape meaning and affect the readers' responses, who achieve the high marks on the paper.

It is particularly disappointing when that kind of attention to the writing is missing from answers to passage based questions, where the candidate has the text printed on the question paper and has the opportunity, therefore, to examine the detail of the writing intensively. Every passage based question demands this kind of close commentary on the writing and candidates who do not acknowledge this requirement will not score high marks.

Examiners increasingly gain the impression that large numbers of candidates approach the selected poem tasks without having studied the poem prior to the exam; many answers carry the hallmarks of an 'unseen' response, often making rudimentary errors. Candidates who answer on poems which they have not studied put themselves at a great disadvantage.

On the other hand, Examiners were also delighted to mark and reward many substantial, well-informed and sensitive essays, based on detailed and often sophisticated knowledge and understanding of the texts.

There was a spate of rubric errors this session, often, but not exclusively, focused in particular Centres. It is important that candidates know that they need to answer one question from each section.

Question Specific Comments

Question 1. Sujata Bhatt: *Point No Point*

- (a) Few candidates chose this question. Of those who attempted it, the most successful were those who clearly focused on the question's requirement that they discuss 'ways in which' relationships are treated in the poems. The relationships chosen varied between inspirational figures ('Sujata: The First Disciple of Buddha'), through lovers ('Love in a Bathtub') to children ('Genealogy').
- (b) 'The Writer' was much more popular and produced some interesting, sensitive responses. Candidates noted the poem's provocative opening and were often alert to language, repetition, rhetorical questions, personification and physical line placement used ironically to evoke an effective impression of the natural world while the poem expresses that impossibility. The strongest answers were able to express this paradox of 'the writer's art' explored in the poem.



Question 2. *Songs of Ourselves*

- (a) Candidates selected a wide range of poems to answer this question, though a number overlooked the detail of the question's wording and missed the focus on 'the relationship between human beings and the world around them' and wrote about what they perceived as nature poems. More successful answers looked carefully at the relationship and the way it is explored by poets. Some interesting answers compared human beings' relationship with the natural world ('Hunting Snake' for example) with the relationship with the urban world ('The City Planners' for example).
- (b) This was a very popular option, though a surprisingly large number of candidates misread l.22's 'failed not' as 'failed' and thus misunderstood a large part of the poem. This was one of the features of answers which suggested that some candidates were looking at poems in the exam without prior study. On the other hand, many candidates were aware of Hardy's advanced age when this poem was composed and saw the poem as a wry subversion of his usual pessimism, accepting that 'he never expected much' out of life anyway. Such answers discussed the tone of the poem (described appositely by one candidate as 'two old friends having a chat'), with the dialogue between the speaker and the World, its repetitions and regularity of form. There was sensitive and well-expressed appreciation of the tone of the poem, with its understated mixture of acceptance and regret.

Question 3. William Wordsworth: *Selected Poetry*

- (a) A number of candidates were hampered in their attempts at this question by their choice of inappropriate poems and their determination to write about Wordsworth's view on nature. However, those who read the question carefully chose such poems as 'The Solitary Reaper', 'Composed Upon Westminster Bridge' and 'Lines Written in Early Spring' and showed how Wordsworth's choices of language, imagery and form transformed his observations into something evocative and significant. Candidates who knew a good range of poems and could recall key quotations were much advantaged.
- (b) The extract from 'Tintern Abbey' was a very popular option and most candidates made some reference to the rest of the poem from which it was taken. Some gave a rather summary-based account of the extract, but confident candidates focused on 'the development of Wordsworth's view of the natural world' and traced his images of boyhood wild ecstasy and recognised the shift in tone in l.26. The best answers looked at Wordsworth's use of blank verse and examined closely the choices of diction and imagery.

Question 4. Charlotte Brontë: *Jane Eyre*

- (a) This question provoked pleasingly personal responses, with candidates arguing very different views. The best answers looked at both sides and appreciated the ambiguity of Brontë's portrayal of Bertha. Candidates picked out the gothic nature of some of the bestial descriptions of her and her wild behaviour and used this to argue that the reader's sympathies are with Rochester and Jane. Others, however, interpreted the behaviour as symbolic of frustrated passion and jealousy for Jane and sympathised with Bertha. Discussions of Rochester too showed a range of views, with as many detractors for his incarceration of Bertha as supporters for his desperation for a meaningful relationship after the insanity of his wife.
- (b) While there were some narrative responses, candidates who looked at the language, imagery and dialogue of this passage found plenty of interest. In particular, some candidates closely examined the structure and language of St John's speeches, suggesting that they create the effect of a legal case being prosecuted rather than a proposal of marriage. This was contrasted with Jane's shorter, punchier speeches which couple reason with feeling. Candidates who did not quote and comment on the detail of the passage missed its opportunities – and opportunities to gain marks. Successful candidates were able to build on passage detail with references to other parts of the text, particularly contrasting this scene with Rochester's proposal and linking the imagery applied to St John and Brocklehurst.



Question 5. Tsitsi Dangarembga: *Nervous Conditions*

- (a) Nearly all candidates who attempted this question were able to show their knowledge of the novel and many worked through various female characters to comment on their roles. Tambu, Nyasha and Miaguru received a lot of attention, with others extending to Lucia and Tambu's mother. Such answers were usually sound, but more developed and successful answers were able to conceptualise the issues by making comparisons and considering the roles of men as well. In this way, some candidates were able to challenge the accepted view and argue that some of the women are not inferior. Successful answers avoided assertions and sweeping assumptions about women in Africa, instead referring to specific incidents and quotations from the text.
- (b) Some of the changes in Nhamo were noted by most candidates; the more successful answers closely focused on Tambu's perception of those changes, as the question required. Such answers noted the implications of the tone of voice in both recognising the physical changes and the apparent loss of knowledge of Shona. The gradual irony of its 'miraculous' return was usually noted and the best answers were able to demonstrate the detached observational quality of Tambu's narrative here, particularly apparent in the final paragraph of the extract.

Question 6. *Stories of Ourselves*

- (a) Several stories from the anthology were chosen by candidates for this question, including *Of White Hairs and Cricket*, *Sandpiper*, *Tyres* and *The Open Boat*. In many cases, unfortunately, candidates progressed little further than relating the narrative of their two chosen stories. Successful answers considered the structure of the stories, the narrative voice and perspective, considering the ways that these features affect the reader's understanding.
- (b) There were quite frequent signs of candidates approaching this question without prior knowledge of the story, as several answers lacked any knowledge of the identity of the narrator or his relationship with Usher – to whom some candidates referred a '*the Usher*'. Those more familiar with the material often wrote well, showing appreciation of the drama conveyed through the imagery and language. The better answers were sensitive to the Gothic style with the passage's archaic language and were able to pinpoint the heavily charged parts of grammar in the sentences. The importance of the description of the weather conditions was noted, as well as the irony of the final line.



LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

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On the other hand, Examiners were also delighted to mark and reward many substantial, well-informed and sensitive essays, based on detailed and often sophisticated knowledge and understanding of the texts.

There was a spate of rubric errors this session, often, but not exclusively, focused in particular Centres. It is important that candidates know that they need to answer one question from each section.

Question Specific Comments

Question 1. Sujata Bhatt: *Point No Point*

- (a) There were few answers to this question, but those who attempted it usually made useful comments about poems such as '3 November 1984', 'The Need to Recall the Journey' and 'The One Who Goes Away'. The most successful of these were those which paid attention to the writing of the poems and discussed Bhatt's language, form and structure, rather than just recalled the content.
- (b) This was the more popular choice and many candidates wrote well about the way the visitor is described and the way the poem treats the relationship between him and the speaker. Strong answers explored the relationship effectively as one between teacher/student, mother/child, saint/disciple, master/apprentice, noting the poem's description of ritualistic nourishment involving trust, compassion and co-operation but ending in a spiritual bond, mutual respect and devotion.



Question 2. *Songs of Ourselves*

- (a) A wide range of poems was used in answers to this question, the most popular being 'The Bay', 'Where I Come From' and the extract from 'Long Distance'. Examiners were able to reward those answers which were based on the writing of the chosen poems, looking, as the question demanded, at 'the ways in which poets explore memories'. Weaker answers described the memories in the poems with little attention to how they are presented. Accurate recall of quotation is not enough – candidates need to comment on the effects created by what they quote.
- (b) This was a very popular question, and very effective in discriminating between candidates. In the lower range of marks were answers where candidates described the content of the poem with little attention to the question. There were also several answers which struggled to comprehend the poem, again suggesting that the candidates were looking at the poem for the first time. Candidates who read the whole poem as a metaphoric extension of the speaker often came unstuck, however inventive the analysis. There were, though, very many personal, careful responses to MacCaig's poem, producing varied and interesting readings of it. Such thoughtful answers considered 'self' as part of the poet's meandering, meditative observations of the everyday activities on the farm which also inspire the metaphysical reflections on the multi-layered, multi-faceted complexity of his identity.

Question 3. William Wordsworth: *Selected Poetry*

- (a) Those that answered this question offered responses which referred to childhood incidents described in the poems, but it was rare to find candidates taking the words from the prompt ('beauty and... fear') and investigating this duality. A number of candidates wrote extensively on background and historical context – the importance of the French Revolution, or the nature of Romanticism – but at the expense of a close focus on the texts. More successful answers chose poems carefully – 'The Prelude' and 'Nutting' were particularly popular – and showed how Wordsworth presents the natural world as a moral guide to the child.
- (b) Good answers closely analysed the presentation of the Leech Gatherer in the extract to suggest that he represents Wordsworth's Pantheistic ideology. Such answers focused on the symbolic value of his presence: extraordinary qualities of determination, dignity, honesty, stamina and inner strength which are all inspirational for the poet's own personal admonishment. These answers were based on close attention to the language, imagery and form of the poem.

Question 4. Charlotte Brontë: *Jane Eyre*

- (a) There were some narrative and descriptive answers to this question, but most candidates selected appropriate material. Many acknowledged the use of dreams as a narrative tool to achieve a range of effects. Such answers argued that dreams are used in the novel as a structural device with their integral and symbolic function to act as warnings or premonitions of later events. Strong candidates were also able to show how the dreams highlight the gothic, supernatural and mysterious elements of the novel and reflect Jane's emotional development and destiny.
- (b) This was a very popular question. Most candidates recognised the extract and were able to place it in context. While a disappointing number of candidates used the question as an opportunity to re-tell the whole plot of the novel, stronger candidates saw the passage's significance as the dénouement of the novel. A number of candidates saw the importance of the role of the commentators on the marriage, whose comments are in keeping with the low-key wedding, a contrast with the first abandoned one. The strongest answers also acknowledged the narrative tone and address to the reader.



Question 5. Tsitsi Dangarembga: *Nervous Conditions*

- (a) Less accomplished candidates used textual knowledge to recount the events of the novel. More successful answers focused on particular key episodes and considered how Tambu narrates them. In this way, these answers were able to acknowledge some of the ambiguities of Tambu's development.
- (b) The passage provoked some very personal responses as candidates sympathised with Nyasha's emotional state. Strong answers contrasted the passage's initial tone of observant detachment with the intimate description of Nyasha's violence in the last paragraph. They also noted the force of Tambu's rhetorical questions and the tone of Nyasha's dialogue.

Question 6. *Stories of Ourselves*

- (a) Successful answers to this question demanded an appropriate choice of stories; several candidates chose to discuss stories which are not written in the first person, which prevented them from answering the question. Some candidates chose to relate the plot of their chosen stories, with some acknowledgement of the narrator's position. Such answers did not receive high marks. More successful were those candidates who picked up elements of the prompt quotations and were able to demonstrate the effectiveness of the particular narrative position and the narrator's experience. *The Fall of the House of Usher*, *To Da-duh*, *In Memoriam* and *Tyres* were particularly successful choices in this regard.
- (b) The passage from *A Horse and Two Goats* was a popular option and candidates appreciated the humour of the extract. In some cases, the humour was asserted without explanation, but successful candidates were able to note the effects of the situational comedy achieved through the juxtaposition of two contrasting characters and cultures. By looking closely at the narrative writing and the dialogue, they explored the comic effects of the body language, assumptions, misunderstandings, misinterpretations and language barriers between Muni and the American.



LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

Paper 9695/33
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Question Specific Comments

Question 1. Sujata Bhatt: *Point No Point*

- (a) There were few answers to this question, but those who attempted it usually made useful comments about poems such as '3 November 1984', 'The Echoes in Poona', 'Walking Across Brooklyn Bridge, July 1990' and 'The One Who Goes Away'. The most successful of these were those which paid attention to the writing of the poems and discussed Bhatt's language, form and structure, rather than just recalled the content.
- (b) There were some interesting responses to 'Iris'. The most accomplished answers examined the effectiveness of the choices of language and imagery in evoking the creative moments of a painter creating her art, matching movement with visual details. Some noted that the long single stanza does not break up across the page as so many of Bhatt's poems do, but instead focuses intensely on the creation of image and colour. Some candidates suggested a parallel between Bhatt's observation of a painter painting with the moment of creation of her own verse.



Question 2. *Songs of Ourselves*

- (a) Few candidates were confident enough to discuss poetic structure to attempt this question, confirmed by several candidates' choices of poems which are not sonnets. This was surprising, as the sonnet is perhaps the most widely recognised poetic form and there are four conventional sonnets in the selection, with two more acceptable as variations on the form. 'Ozymandias' and 'On Finding a Small Fly' were the two most frequently chosen, but very few candidates made reference to how the structure of the poems creates their effects.
- (b) With so few candidates opting for 2a, there were many answers on Baxter's 'The Bay', and many of these were strong and informed. The poem offered itself to a number of different interpretations and most were alert to how the memories of the past in the poem change their nature. Such readings often depended on a detailed appreciation of the nuances of Baxter's choices of diction and the structure of the poem with its shift from 'we' to 'I' in the final stanza.

Question 3. William Wordsworth: *Selected Poetry*

- (a) 'The Solitary Reaper' and 'Resolution and Independence' were the favoured poems in answer to this question, though candidates also referred to the Lucy poems and those, such as 'Nutting' which depict the speaker as solitary. The figures as sources of inspiration to Wordsworth were acknowledged, with the importance of solitude for reflection. Answers would have been improved by closer attention to the poetry and how Wordsworth communicates the importance of the solitary figure.
- (b) This question provoked much discussion of Wordsworth's philosophies and discussion of the whole of the 'Ode', though few candidates settled successfully to a close examination of the three stanzas presented on the question paper.

Question 4. Charlotte Brontë: *Jane Eyre*

- (a) *Jane Eyre* is proving to be a successful text in eliciting personal responses from candidates. Most who attempted this question did find the conclusion satisfactory, appreciating the end of Jane's struggles, her growing independence and her ability to find a marital relationship on her own terms. Some found the ending more ambiguous, however, feeling that this independence had only been achieved by the bequest, which meant that her marriage to Rochester meant that she finally conformed to those Victorian conventions which she had earlier challenged.
- (b) Several candidates gave general accounts of Jane's difficulties at the Reeds' house, without paying close attention to the wording of the question. Those who did note the focus on 'Jane's state of mind' concentrated on the narration of the passage, the description of the seclusion behind the 'scarlet drapery' and the psychological attraction she feels to the remote and austere locations depicted in Bewick's *Birds*.

Question 5. Tsitsi Dangarembga: *Nervous Conditions*

There were no answers on this text.

Question 6. *Stories of Ourselves*

- (a) A wide range of stories was available for this question, but the most frequently cited were *The People Before*, *Sandpiper* and *Tyres*. Although not specifically required by the question, the most successfully constructed essays were those which made a comparison between the stories, looking at different effects of the passage of time or different ways in which the stories were structured to reflect the passing of time.
- (b) This was a popular option and most candidates were able to comment on ways in which the clash of different cultures is presented. Wider comments focused on the triumph of the manmade over the natural, progress over tradition. Strong answers discussed the narrative voice and competitiveness in the dialogue between the narrator and Da-duh. There was useful discussion of the effect of the listing in lines 12-14, compared with the powerful description of the royal palm in lines 27-32. The best answers also noted a tone of regret in the narrator's recollection of her earlier triumphalism.



LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

Paper 9695/41

Drama

General Comments

As always, Examiners saw a wide variety of answers. At the bottom end, candidates mainly knew their texts and were able to make simple, relevant points, though often without the substantiating evidence that is needed in order to convince. Some spent too long on contextualising the plays, either with biographical background about the writer or with discussion of social background. Most of this was not highly rewarded and thankfully there was less of it than in previous years. Higher up, candidates wrote clearly and with evident enthusiasm about texts, showing a range of responses to the questions. Points were sensibly adduced, often backed by detailed reference to episodes or particular moments. At the top end, there were clear, insightful responses that showed candidates thinking on their feet and being able to co-ordinate a range of points into a coherent, over-arching argument, often with originality.

It is worth pointing out that there seemed to be little correlation between length and quality of answers. Of course, answers have to be developed in order to get into the higher ranges of the Mark Scheme, but Examiners certainly saw fine essays contained on three pages (brevity being the soul of wit) and much less successful answers that were twice as long. On the whole, candidates who write at great length do themselves a disservice, because the impression usually given is that they are simply throwing everything at the question in the hope that some of it will prove relevant. The Mark Scheme asks for an ability to 'select', and Centres should not underestimate the power of this word in an Examiner's mind.

Although the point has been repeatedly made, it might be useful to reiterate (and further explore) the issue of **(b)** questions. The techniques of close reading that are required here are very specific, and it should not be assumed that candidates just pick them up. Plainly, too, some candidates are more adept at this sort of answer. What tends to happen, though, is that candidates who are perhaps less confident (or sometimes less prepared) seize upon the passage question because it gives them something to hang on to. Before the exam, candidates should give considerable thought to whether the **(b)** option is right for them – and if they want to do these questions they should have done some practice.

The main difficulty encountered is usually that the text is not well enough known. This has a number of possible outcomes. At the bottom end, candidates tend simply to give a summary of what's going on, often taking a linear approach of moving through the passage from beginning to end. Slightly more coherent responses show that the particular incident is understood in relation to the whole play and to issues and characters seen elsewhere. However, at this point, many candidates divert themselves and imagine that they have been invited to write a general discussion of the play, whilst making some reference to the passage provided. This is not the case. Questions usually ask for 'particular attention' or something similar, and this is the clue that the passage printed should be **the main focus** of what is written. Even when candidates go outside the passage, they should be constantly following threads back to details of the piece they have in front of them. William Blake wrote about seeing 'the world in a grain of sand,' and that image is apposite here: the detail needs to stand for the whole.

In terms of writing about a play, candidates should explicitly consider the language used in the extract, whilst at the same time perhaps thinking about how the passage is structured in order to move along the story, develop the themes, or show us something about characters and their relationships with others. They will also need to be alive to the idea of a play as something that exists in the theatre, and that stage directions and proxemics will make a difference to an audience's understanding of what is going on. The implication of all of this is, of course, that candidates will need to have spent considerable amounts of time looking at individual scenes in their preparation for this paper.



Comments on Specific Questions

Question 1

- (a) This question prompted a wide variety of answers. Some candidates confined themselves to giving an account of Frank and Dora's characters, with occasional insights as to how the two different value systems that they represent have had a profound effect on their son. Further up the mark range, candidates were able to discuss precise moments at which they appear, either together or apart, and see that they are presented in quite a complex way as a structuring device in the play.
- (b) Often candidates did not fully see that this scene is a re-living of a moment, not the incident itself, and thus they were not clear about the function of the first few lines. There was much relevant discussion of Alan's self-repression and his mixing up of the horses as symbols of moral/religious guidance with his other view of them as representing sexuality and desire ('When I touched her, I felt *Him*'). Many candidates wrote well about the staging of the scene and the vision of Alan as '*in the corner against the rails, like a little beast in a cage*'; however, in a few cases, candidates then expanded the discussion to staging in the play as a whole, and this was less successfully focused in relation to the precise requirements of the question.

Question 2

- (a) This proved a popular choice. Of course, there were candidates who were simply determined to unload their thoughts about love in the play, without really considering the particular spin that the question implied. Others, however, were aware of the topsy-turvy nature of the play and of how love is shown to make people behave irrationally. There was much good work on Malvolio, and answers were often perceptive on the different varieties of foolishness displayed by people who ought to know better. A small number of candidates – rather oddly – thought that Viola being in disguise was a particular form of madness, a reading that is quite hard to sustain from the play, where it is obvious that it is a visual demonstration of her pragmatism.
- (b) Although most candidates could see the broad outline of this scene, many answers were rather short on detail. There was often confusion about which particular characters Orsino is threatening at various points in the scene. Most candidates were able to see that this scene marks the beginning of the play's resolution. The best candidates were able to see clearly how Orsino's first encounter with Olivia is far from the idealized moment he has spent so long fantasising about: it serves as neither romantic, nor seductive ('You uncivil lady') and instantly reveals the truth about his previous posturing. The complexity of what is going on in Orsino's long speech, where he reveals by accident what he really feels about Viola/Cesario tended to be underplayed, as was Viola's potent confession of her love for Orsino ('To do you rest, a thousand deaths would die'). Some answers made sound points about how the scene as a whole makes Olivia look ridiculous. A few candidates (sensibly) made use of Olivia's 'still so constant, lord' to make points about how Viola is the only character here who has been truly constant, both in her actions and feelings.

Question 3

- (a) At the bottom end, candidates tended to provide a catalogue of Hotspur's character and actions in the play. Others were able to see that Hotspur has a significant role in relation to the themes, particularly by offering an implied commentary on Hal and on ideas of honour. Sophisticated answers went beyond the question in order to consider the implications of King Henry's remark as showing something about his own insecurities. No particular focus was required, but candidates who were able to look closely at his dealings with others (the rebels/his wife) often found that they had little sympathy with his bravado, his bullying, and his one dimensional view of honour as being little more than self-interested aggression.
- (b) The question here asked specifically for focus on language, and some candidates were able to provide a really closely analytical view of the informality of the first half of the extract and then the much more structured, formal expression of Hal's true self in the soliloquy. Some candidates pointed out – rightly – that there are hints of Hal's new sense of responsibility in his reserve about joining the 'jest.' There were some excellent analyses of the developing image patterns in the soliloquy.

Question 4

- (a) Many answers here showed that candidates had a strong sense of how death and thinking about death infuses the whole play. There was a lot of discussion of how the audience's knowledge from the beginning of the play that 'Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead' shades its view of the action and the central characters. Many answers were able to focus on the various presentations of death, of which Rosencrantz and Guildenstern's ('Now you see me...') is the most disappointing in terms of the Player's articulation of stage effectiveness is concerned. There was often close analysis of particular scenes or exchanges, with Rosencrantz and Guildenstern's discussion of what it would be like to be dead pointedly explored.
- (b) There was much effective discussion of the scene presented, though candidates sometimes forgot that they had been specifically asked to discuss the relationship between the two different sorts of language in the extract. Those who did look closely at the language and structure of the scene soon recognized that Stoppard is not quite giving the audience Shakespeare's text absolutely straight ('fractional suspense') and that the emphasis on confusion contributes strongly to the way in which Rosencrantz and Guildenstern feel further disconcerted after this moment, despite the fact that they were previously longing for a sense of motivation and direction. A few inspired candidates drew attention to the way that even the simple language that the two use elsewhere in the play is on the edge of disintegration, as the most simple colloquial clichés suddenly start to run out of control (lines 54-5). More could have been made of Polonius's arrival and the fact that at line 45, mid-sentence, the action of *Hamlet* sweeps relentlessly past Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, leaving them once again in the dark.

Question 5

- (a) Candidates were usually confident about what Beatrice does (and represents) in the play. They were less successful when talking about the presentation of her marriage, in part because they succumbed to the temptation to divert themselves into long discussions about Eddie. The best answers focused onto particular moments and attempted to see the strength and bravery of this woman whose world is collapsing around her through no fault of her own. There were some excellent discussions of the various ways in which she tries to handle Eddie and of the clear demonstrations of her unfailing love for him at the end of the play. At times the subtlety of Miller's presentation of her was not fully seen, and there was a slight temptation (without evidence) to see her as 'merely' a housewife, an 'earth mother,' or a passive victim. Many candidates judged her quite harshly, seeing her as conniving and as determined to get Catherine out of the house because she is jealous.
- (b) This was a very popular question. At the bottom end there was quite a lot of paraphrase or narration of what is going on. Candidates readily seized upon the main difference – American law as represented by Alfieri set against Sicilian ideas of justice and honour represented by Marco – but only the best candidates were able to see how carefully the nuances of the clash are traced in the scene through discussions of the difference between law and justice. The slightly different perspectives offered by the interventions by Rodolfo and Catherine were not always considered, and in wanting to see Alfieri as representing American law, his ambiguity, his role as the 'bridge' between the two cultures was ignored.

Question 6

- (a) Candidates entered fully into the spirit of this question. Most could make some sort of case centred round the obvious focus of Miss Prism as a source of fun. Chasuble, too, came in for some attention, with his high sounding discussions of the Primitive Church set against his rather trivial self-concern ('I myself am peculiarly susceptible to draughts'). Often the pair were seen as a poor model of moral behaviour. As answers warmed to the theme, Cecily was often evoked as an example of how education had not moved her on from trivial concerns, such as diaries and looking plain after her German lesson. Gwendolen, too, was seen as an example of misguided education ('...mamma, whose views on education are remarkably strict, has brought me up to be extremely short sighted; it is part of her system...'). And, of course, Lady Bracknell was often examined for her limitations and her whole-hearted enthusiasm for ignorance as a 'delicate, exotic fruit' and her certainty that education provides 'no effect whatsoever' and is socially undesirable ('a serious danger to the upper classes'). Jack and Algernon, too, came in for a fair amount of discussion. Pleasingly, candidates used the issue to really show that they understood the word 'satire', and

they were often confident about the precise effects achieved by pitting characters and what they say against each other. There was often acute focus on detail.

- (b) There were a wide variety of responses here. Oddly, many candidates got very bogged down in irrelevant detail, often speculating about Jack and Algernon as in some way representative of aspects of Wilde's own life. Some were very unsure about the nature of a cigarette case, and many took seriously the idea that Jack might have reported its loss to Scotland Yard. What was missing from most answers was some sense that the two are being presented satirically, and that the scene is designed to show up their characters through humour, with the banter being presented as precisely that – wit for its own sake. Better answers were able to make something of the detail and show how the studied vacuousness of these characters amuses an audience whilst at the same time demonstrating a series of techniques (reversal, taking the metaphorical literally etc.) that infuse the play as a whole.



LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

Paper 9695/42

Drama

General Comments

As always, Examiners saw a wide variety of answers. At the bottom end, candidates mainly knew their texts and were able to make simple, relevant points, though often without the substantiating evidence that is needed in order to convince. Some spent too long on contextualising the plays, either with biographical background about the writer or with discussion of social background. Most of this was not highly rewarded and thankfully there was less of it than in previous years. Higher up, candidates wrote clearly and with evident enthusiasm about texts, showing a range of responses to the questions. Points were sensibly adduced, often backed by detailed reference to episodes or particular moments. At the top end, there were clear, insightful responses that showed candidates thinking on their feet and being able to co-ordinate a range of points into a coherent, over-arching argument, often with originality.

It is worth pointing out that there seemed to be little correlation between length and quality of answers. Of course, answers have to be developed in order to get into the higher ranges of the Mark Scheme, but Examiners certainly saw fine essays contained on three pages (brevity being the soul of wit) and much less successful answers that were twice as long. On the whole, candidates who write at great length do themselves a disservice, because the impression usually given is that they are simply throwing everything at the question in the hope that some of it will prove relevant. The Mark Scheme asks for an ability to 'select', and Centres should not underestimate the power of this word in an Examiner's mind.

Although the point has been repeatedly made, it might be useful to reiterate (and further explore) the issue of **(b)** questions. The techniques of close reading that are required here are very specific, and it should not be assumed that candidates just pick them up. Plainly, too, some candidates are more adept at this sort of answer. What tends to happen, though, is that candidates who are perhaps less confident (or sometimes less prepared) seize upon the passage question because it gives them something to hang on to. Before the exam, candidates should give considerable thought to whether the **(b)** option is right for them – and if they want to do these questions they should have done some practice.

The main difficulty encountered is usually that the text is not well enough known. This has a number of possible outcomes. At the bottom end, candidates tend simply to give a summary of what's going on, often taking a linear approach of moving through the passage from beginning to end. Slightly more coherent responses show that the particular incident is understood in relation to the whole play and to issues and characters seen elsewhere. However, at this point, many candidates divert themselves and imagine that they have been invited to write a general discussion of the play, whilst making some reference to the passage provided. This is not the case. Questions usually ask for 'particular attention' or something similar, and this is the clue that the passage printed should be **the main focus** of what is written. Even when candidates go outside the passage, they should be constantly following threads back to details of the piece they have in front of them. William Blake wrote about seeing 'the world in a grain of sand,' and that image is apposite here: the detail needs to stand for the whole.

In terms of writing about a play, candidates should explicitly consider the language used in the extract, whilst at the same time perhaps thinking about how the passage is structured in order to move along the story, develop the themes, or show us something about characters and their relationships with others. They will also need to be alive to the idea of a play as something that exists in the theatre, and that stage directions and proxemics will make a difference to an audience's understanding of what is going on. The implication of all of this is, of course, that candidates will need to have spent considerable amounts of time looking at individual scenes in their preparation for this paper. It follows, too, that often the best candidates will not simply start at the very beginning, but will rather take a strategic view, perhaps by deciding to focus on a pattern that can be discerned, or by looking at one character, then another.

Comments on Specific Questions

Question 1

- (a) Candidates were usually clear about the inner conflict that Dysart faces as he tries to cure Alan. There were useful discussions about the ways in which this is presented, particularly through Dysart's dealings with Hesther. However, candidates could have made much more, perhaps, of the way in which Alan seizes upon Dysart's marriage as a weakness in his professional facade and then tries to exploit it. Oddly, for a play where masks are absolutely central, very few candidates tussled with the idea of professional/social masks. A number of candidates took a narrative approach, and this was largely unsuccessful, limiting responses to the 'Basic' and 'Solid' bands in the Mark Scheme.
- (b) Some candidates only provided a paraphrase of the scene, with very little critical commentary. Better answers started to focus on the language of the piece, seeing that there is a clear contrast between Frank and Dora and that the tension between them is a central part of the Alan's problem. Some candidates were able to discuss the framing dialogue by Dysart and Hesther and also to pick up on the way that Alan (line 40 onwards) reverts into different elements of his parents' language and outlook as he moves further towards self-revelation. On the whole, the desire to simply explain the workings of Alan's mind tended to over-rule the specific instruction given in the question, and this took focus away from consideration of the extract as part of a developing drama, with a particular, structural and thematic importance to the play as a whole.

Question 2

- (a) Responses here were confident about love in the play, less sure about how foolishness may play a part. Some candidates struggled with the word 'foolishness' itself. Most were able to see that being in love (or thinking that they are in love) pushes many of the characters into ridiculous situations and absurd concealments. Orsino and Malvolio came in for a fair amount of well-focused comment. Elsewhere, Viola was often criticised for dressing as a man, which was taken as a sign of foolishness in love, even though her decision to do so pre-dated her first meeting with Orsino. If Viola was to be mentioned, she could more relevantly have been seen as a representative of the fact that foolishness is not an 'unavoidable' part of being in love, because in keeping quiet and hiding her love, she embodies the deeper qualities of someone who is truly in love. There were some interesting responses on how, in Malvolio's case, being in love leads to social transgression.
- (b) Responses here tended to be slightly narrative, with much contextualising of how the characters have reached this moment, often by presenting a view of the relationship between Sir Andrew and Sir Toby earlier in the play. Better candidates were able to see that there is a real contrast going on between what we see and what we hear, particularly because we know that neither character is what they seem, but we have the additional knowledge that what Viola 'lack(s) of a man' is not apparent to the participants. Many were able to focus closely on the over-blown language, and this proved a fertile area for establishing humour. More could have been made of the farcical entrances and exits at this point in the play and of the parallels of a mock fight which then starts to look at line 54 as though it is going to become something more serious.

Question 3

- (a) Candidates were usually quick to realize that this was not a character question, and most moved on to take the prompt as a means of discussing Henry as a rather distant, Machiavellian figure; others went in another direction and argued with some conviction that Henry is much less secure, both in himself and in his hold on power, than much of what he says would have us believe. Many candidates talked about the King's relationship with Hal as a means of demonstrating that he is far from cold at times.

- (b) Candidates were able to see that Henry is offering a partial and biased account of the state of the nation. They responded, too, to the imagery of suffering, the feeling government is not fully in control. In particular, through Westmoreland's piling up of the nation's problems (also, of course, simple exposition for the audience's benefit) there is a strong feeling of Henry as fire-fighting, a picture helped along by all the ideas of Henry's first speech as a breathless pause in the action, a time for 'frighted peace to pant'. The explicit imagery of Christian endeavour was often soundly discussed, with candidates clear that Henry's desire for pilgrimage has quite a lot to do with his guilt about what he has made England suffer in terms of 'civil butchery'.

Question 4

- (a) At their most basic, answers gave a list of plot-based betrayals, such as Hamlet swapping the letter, the lack of good faith between the court characters and Rosencrantz and Guildenstern. More sophisticated responses started to see that betrayal is another aspect of the illusion/reality discussions of the play, where all things that seem to be certain (numbers, chance, acted death, words etc.) all seem to be conspiring against the central characters.
- (b) Responses on Rosencrantz and Guildenstern's growing uneasiness were able to demonstrate a number of effects from this passage, ranging from the desire to work out how they came to be here, the fragmentation of the dialogue and the mutual misunderstandings to Rosencrantz's increasingly hysterical filling up of silence with anything that he can think of to say in order not to look into the abyss.

Question 5

- (a) Most candidates were prepared for a question on Alfieri, but they were not quite ready for the spin that this question put on him. So at the lower end, candidates tended simply to unload what they had prepared previously. Elsewhere, candidates were able to show that they had thought about the question prompt and had begun to realize that Alfieri is talking about the whole action of the play in retrospect, and that his hindsight might be mixed with a degree of wondering about whether he could have made things turn out differently. It is clear from a few of his interjections that he wants to portray himself to the audience in a particular and sympathetic light whilst at the same time pretending that his role in the action was entirely neutral. The best answers offered confident, wide-ranging commentary on the text that tried to deal fully with the question. A few answers did not find the prompt at all 'useful' but that did not then lead them into considering its limitations – rather it allowed them to revert to the general essay they had wanted to write on Alfieri in the first place. It is worth noting when preparing candidates that questions that seem to be simply character based often need teasing out much more than seemingly more complex questions which superficially seem less attractive.
- (b) Responses on conflict between Eddie and Beatrice were usually soundly answered, though some candidates were not entirely confident about the precise moment at which this conversation takes place. The question talked about 'at this point in the play' precisely because there is complexity here, with the audience knowing what Eddie has done, but with Beatrice in ignorance. The lack of a clear sense of this situation meant that candidates often took a rather sympathetic view of Eddie and simply saw Beatrice as envious of Catherine and keen to get her away from her husband. More sensitive responses noted Beatrice's tolerance, her desire to pacify and her desire (too late) to protect Eddie from himself. Surprisingly little was made of the last line ('I'm goin', I'm goin' for a walk'), with its fractured repetition perhaps a sign of Eddie starting to see things in a different way, feel guilty, or just simply recognise that he has done a wrong thing which cannot now be put right.

Question 6

- (a) As might have been expected, some candidates simply gave a list of different moments when characters eat or drink. However, the vast majority saw that food and drink are far from neutral props in the play. Whether it is the champagne consumed by the servants, the cucumber sandwiches or muffins consumed elsewhere, eating and drinking has serious ramifications ('They have been eating muffins. That looks like repentance') in terms of Wilde's social satire. And this is nowhere more true than in the tea party, as many candidates recognised, where cake, sugar, bread and butter, take on the role of weapons. There were some excellent discussions of social rituals and bad manners in relation to food and drink. More could have been made of comic effects in relation to the issue.



- (b) There were a full range of answers on this passage. Limited answers tended to focus on Lady Bracknell's entertaining but ludicrous change in attitude towards Cecily. Fuller responses dealt in detail with the ways in which Lady Bracknell's snobbishness is conveyed as ridiculous here, as she creates social distinctions ('three addresses always inspire confidence') that are completely meaningless. A few candidates considered the stage directions as a means into the topic, examining the 'shiver' and 'the practised hand.' One or two answers showed understanding of how this incident parodies what used to be something more than a formality, the business of asking a girl's father for his daughter's hand in marriage. Candidates who were willing to look closely at the language found much to explore and to delight, particularly with 'I am not myself in favour of premature experiences'.



LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

Paper 9695/43

Drama

General Comments

The small number of candidates who sat this paper did not seem to have time problems – most completed both questions and there were only a few slightly truncated second responses. There were no rubric infringements.

As always, Examiners saw a variety of answers. At the bottom end, candidates mainly knew their texts and were able to make simple, relevant points, though often without the substantiating evidence that is needed in order to convince. Some spent too long on contextualising the plays, either with biographical background about the writer or with discussion of social background. Most of this was not highly rewarded and thankfully there was less of it than in previous years. Higher up, candidates wrote clearly and with evident enthusiasm about texts, showing a range of responses to the questions. Points were sensibly adduced, often backed by detailed reference to episodes or particular moments. At the top end, there were clear, insightful responses that showed candidates thinking on their feet and being able to co-ordinate a range of points into a coherent, over-arching argument, often with originality.

It is worth pointing out that there seemed to be little correlation between length and quality of answers. Of course, answers have to be developed in order to get into the higher ranges of the Mark Scheme, but we certainly saw fine essays contained on three pages (brevity being the soul of wit) and much less successful answers that were twice as long. On the whole, candidates who write at great length do themselves a disservice, because the impression usually given is that they are simply throwing everything at the question in the hope that some of it will prove relevant. The Mark Scheme asks for an ability to 'select', and Centres should not underestimate the power of this word in an Examiner's mind.

Although the point has been repeatedly made in, it might be useful to reiterate (and further explore) the issue of **(b)** questions. The techniques of close reading that are required here are very specific, and it should not be assumed that candidates just pick them up. Plainly, too, some candidates are more adept at this sort of answer. What tends to happen, though, is that candidates who are perhaps less confident (or sometimes less prepared) seize upon the passage question because it gives them something to hang on to. Before the exam, candidates should give considerable thought to whether the **(b)** option is right for them – and if they want to do these questions they should have done some practice.

The main difficulty encountered is usually that the text is not well enough known. This has a number of possible outcomes. At the bottom end, candidates tend simply to give a summary of what's going on, often taking a linear approach of moving through the passage from beginning to end. Slightly more coherent responses show that the particular incident is understood in relation to the whole play and to issues and characters seen elsewhere. However, at this point, many candidates divert themselves and imagine that they have been invited to write a general discussion of the play, whilst making some reference to the passage provided. This is not the case. Questions usually ask for 'particular attention' or something similar, and this is the clue that the passage printed should be **the main focus** of what is written. Even when candidates go outside the passage, they should be constantly following threads back to details of the piece they have in front of them. William Blake wrote about seeing 'the world in a grain of sand,' and that image is apposite here: the detail needs to stand for the whole.

In terms of writing about a play, candidates should explicitly consider the language used in the extract, whilst at the same time perhaps thinking about how the passage is structured in order to move along the story, develop the themes, or show us something about characters and their relationships with others. They will also need to be alive to the idea of a play as something that exists in the theatre, and that stage directions and proxemics will make a difference to an audience's understanding of what is going on. The implication of all of this is, of course, that candidates will need to have spent considerable amounts of time looking at individual scenes in their preparation for this paper.

Comments on Specific Questions

Question 1

- (a) No responses.
- (b) No responses.

Question 2

- (a) Answers on the significance of Antonio to the play as a whole were often narratively focused, explaining what he does, not what he represents. Candidates had plainly thought about the possibly homoerotic aspects of his relationship with Sebastian, and this tended to distort their responses. A few were able to engage with ideas of genuineness, self-sacrifice and empathy as a means of showing the limitations of the 'love' that so many of the other characters in the play purport to feel.
- (b) Some answers showed that candidates could discuss the major themes of the play, but others were often limited by a failure to make close, detailed reference to the extract provided. Few were able to tussle with Viola's coded longing, or indeed the rather flirtatious tone of much of what is said both by Viola and the Duke – a clue perhaps for what is to come. It was a shame that Feste's song – deliberately printed, not simply there because it finishes off the episode – was ignored by virtually all candidates, because it provides both a dramatic and thematic (which is what the question asked) commentary on what has gone before.

Question 3

- (a) No responses
- (b) Answers mostly dealt with the character of Falstaff and his views about honour. Much more could have been done to suggest that there is a series of different opinions both articulated and dramatised here. Again, much closer focus on the language of the passage would have been welcome.

Question 4

- (a) Candidates had obviously enjoyed this text and there were some interesting responses to the question. There was discussion of explicit reference to the audience of Stoppard's play ('Fire') but also much exploration of ways in which the Players use Rosencrantz and Guildenstern as an audience ('Keep back – we're spectators'). The complexity of the issue was well seen. The best candidates were able to link all of this to the larger issues of what is 'real' that infuse the play.
- (b) There were a few answers to this question. The tendency was towards giving an account of the passage. Better answers were able to contrast complete inaction with the frenzied action of the pirates' attack, the breakdown of syntax, the constant questions towards the end, and the characters' increasing preoccupation with trying to work out what they know for certain.

Question 5

- (a) No responses
- (b) No responses

Question 6

- (a) Candidates knew this play well and were able to see Lady Bracknell as the epitome of snobbish self-regard. Many of her aphorisms about society and culture were quoted with enthusiasm. What was lacking was a wider view of the question. The play is full of examples of social convention being subverted (engagements, tea parties, expectations etc.) and so to see it only through the narrow focus of Lady Bracknell was slightly limiting. The point here is that the 'prompt' in a question like this is simply that: it does not imply that because the remark is by a particular character, the issue can only be seen in terms of that character.

- (b) The studied politeness of Gwendolen and Cecily was well discussed in responses to their first meeting. The superficiality of both of them was often caught, as was the mutually suspicious verbal duelling in the latter part of the passage.

LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

Paper 9695/51

Shakespeare and other Pre Twentieth Century Texts 51

General Comments

The overall standard this session was satisfactory with a number of candidates achieving very good marks on the full range of texts, though there were a small number of candidates who were ill equipped for this exam and disappointingly could offer little evidence of having acquired the necessary skills to meet the assessment objectives. Rubric errors were very rare and almost no candidates appeared to have time problems, offering two more or less evenly balanced answers on a text from each of the section on the paper in the time allowed.

The standard of written English for most candidates was commendably high. Very few candidates were unable to express themselves clearly and fluently. Inevitably there were varying levels of understanding but only a handful of candidates seemed to be hampered by expressive difficulties irrespective of their knowledge of the texts. Centres are once again asked to remind candidates of the need for clear presentation and good English, as required by the rubric. It is also helpful to have a clear indication of the questions attempted on the front of the answer booklet. It is also important to ensure the candidate's name as well as number appears on the front of the script.

In the November report reference was made to the need for adequate planning as well as careful consideration of the terms of the question. Those comments are equally applicable to this session, along with a reminder that the option **(b)** passage questions do require a different approach from the option **(a)** questions. In the passage questions the main focus will inevitably be on the words from the text on the exam paper in front of the candidate, with the specific task usually requiring detailed analysis of those words. Candidates should pay careful attention to the words of the task as well – references to 'language', 'tone' or 'narrative structure' for example are a guide to the methods of the author most likely to be exemplified in the passage and on which the candidate should focus. This requires an understanding of the genre generally – the novel form for example – as well as of the particular context of the given passage. Candidates should also note that some **(b)** questions ask for or invite reference to the wider text as well as the close analysis of the passage itself. This is a balancing act but wider textual references should be seen as following on from a specific point in the passage itself and not a separate task. By understanding this candidates will avoid the general narrative summary of large parts of the text which weakens so many otherwise acceptable answers.

Specific Texts

Section A Shakespeare

Hamlet

This was the first session for this text and as expected it proved very popular. Option **(a)** was a minority choice on this text. The task offered good opportunities to use textual knowledge and knowledge of wider critical reading. Selection was paramount so that candidates could focus on the key issues and characters, but equally the terms of the task needed attention and weaker answers often failed to define what 'justice' or 'revenge' might in fact mean and many missed the word 'plot' in their planning – a crucial reminder of Shakespeare's construction. There were however some thoughtful answers, especially where candidates discussed what they considered as 'justice', or where, perhaps, they had been influenced by such as Kitto's book on 'Hamlet' as a morality play, so there was for many candidates some sense of 'you reap what you sow'. Some answers offered effective contrasts between Hamlet's introspective delays and the determination of Laertes and Fortinbras, and some detailed comments on the injustice to Ophelia and Gertrude. There were conflicting attitudes to the fate of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, some seeing them as agents of Claudius and so deserving of punishment, while others viewed Hamlet's role in their death as another sign of his callousness (linked to his comments on Polonius after he had killed him impulsively). Polonius too was either entirely deserving of his fate or merely trying to do his job in trying circumstances. Weaker answers at times dealt with fewer characters or simply listed characters and said what happened to



them. There were interesting reflections on Hamlet's death in nearly every answer, some finding it a kind of justice because of his involvement in the death of at least 3 characters.

Option **(b)** was very popular and there were many excellent responses. Relatively few answers supplied a detailed context for this extract (The Mousetrap, the Recorders and Claudius praying all being in point), and just assumed that Polonius was still trying to find out the source of Hamlet's 'madness'. The few who knew the context could refer to the outcome of 'The Mousetrap' and to Hamlet's soliloquy – 'Now could I drink hot blood' and 'I will speak daggers to her, but use none', and so have a clearer sense of his mood at this moment in the play. However, many candidates saw Gertrude's agreeing to Polonius' spying as a betrayal of her son. There were some effective comments on Hamlet's mockery of his mother's utterances, but not all understood L.24-25, with a few thinking Hamlet was kind for offering Gertrude a drink ('set you up a glass')! Most candidates were convinced of her innocence of the murder of her former husband, but few looked closely at Hamlet's two final long speeches, although there were a few references to the potency of key images (e.g. 'blister' and 'false as dicers' oaths'). Only a few answers referred to the way the scene developed or to the re-appearance of the Ghost later in the scene.

The Tempest

Option **(a)** was not a very popular choice with a few answers only, and some of these struggled to comment in detail on Shakespeare's 'presentation'. Some answers considered how different characters viewed the island, and a few were convinced that the island was a real place (and might be in the guide books!). Better answers noticed the symbolic impact of the island, where further attempts at usurpation echoed Antonio's usurpation of Prospero's dukedom, and where the author could reflect on his art, seeing it as a metaphor for the Globe itself.

2(b) This option was very popular, and while many could refer to the interruption of the masque because of the imminent conspiracy on Prospero's life, there were a number of answers which ignored Prospero's long speech (L13 -25). Candidates did focus on Prospero and Ariel's relationship, noticing the contrast with Caliban. A few candidates did not realize that Prospero's final speech referred to Caliban, and that the 'all' in L65 referred to the 3 conspirators. Some considered 'my bird' as a slur on Ariel, because he was being called the name of an inferior creature, while others rightly judged it to be playfully affectionate. Those who concentrated on the tone and language found much to comment on, while weaker answers tended to tell the full history of Ariel and Prospero's relationship in detail.

Section B

Mansfield Park

Option **(a)** was popular and there were very few answers which were not able to show detailed and relevant knowledge of the text, though some discussed the qualities of Mary and Henry in rather general terms. Few answers showed an awareness that Mary had her sights initially on Tom, as the heir to the estate's wealth, but nearly all were very critical of Henry attitude to women, not only Fanny but also to Maria and Julia. A few believed he was genuine about Fanny and pitied the outcome of her refusal. Many answers commented on the narrative structure, seeing the Crawfords as the narrative foils for Fanny and Edmund. Alert candidates picked up the hint in the quotation ('superficially') and could explore the moral and social discriminations which Austen is making throughout.

3(b) Some quite sound answers, although not many candidates were aware of the precise context of the extract, and perhaps forgot that Fanny, in the previous chapter, had read the play and found it to be 'improper for home representation'. Those who knew that were able to understand Fanny's strong unwillingness to take part in the play, and why she was confident that Edmund would support her. There were some effective comments on how Austen presents Fanny's 'agitation' and the different responses of other characters to her situation, including Mrs. Norris's spiteful comments. Good answers also remembered that her outburst was followed by Mary moving to sit next to Fanny and thus the development of that relationship. Fanny's habitual role almost as a servant to the family was picked up. Some better answers focused on Austen's use of different kinds of speech to represent the different characters. Weaker answers offered a summary of what happens in the scene.



The Nun's Priest's Prologue and Tale

This was a popular, if minority choice in this session with only a few candidates offering the option **(b)** essay. Nearly all option **(a)** responses had some knowledge of the conventions of the beast fable and wrote quite well on the cock and hen as husband and wife, and the consequences of pride and flattery, with some detailed textual references. Better answers were also able to see the humour and tone of the text and to explore Chaucer's poetic techniques in detail.

Option **(b)** was much less popular with answers ranging from a simple paraphrase of variable accuracy to a few detailed explorations of Chaucer's style and methods, including in a few rare cases an understanding of the narrator's role. Only a few answers knew the extract well, with some detailed appreciation of the physical description of the cock and the qualities of the hen's character. A few did not understand the astrological references in L7 – 12.

Hard Times

This was a popular choice in this session, and candidates knew the opening chapters of the novel well, and so were able to comment on Dickens' satirical presentation of Gradgrind's School (with a few mistaking Bounderby as one of the teachers). Better answers linked the exclusive concentration on facts to Utilitarianism and self-interest, and to the effects of the education on Tom, Louisa and Bitzer. Sissy was also considered in some detail, with better answers aware of her failure at School as Dickens's way of revealing her strength of character. Candidates who saw these characters as symbolic of a wider view and reflected in Dickens's narrative methods often did very well.

Option **(b)** was particularly popular, with some very good commentaries which linked this extract to the later scene when Louisa flees to her father's home and collapses at Gradgrind's feet. There was some good awareness of Dickens' methods, with his use of repetition and symbolism (the clock and the distant smoke). Gradgrind's uneasiness was explored as well as Louisa's relentless questions and some candidates referred to the earlier scene when Bounderby kisses Louisa and she tells Tom how much she detested it. Alert answers noticed Gradgrind's change of mood when he had 'something to demonstrate' and how the awkwardness was felt on both sides. Wider and useful textual references included episodes with Harthouse to show Louisa's growing desperation in her marriage.

The Mayor of Casterbridge

This was very popular in this session with candidates split evenly between the options, and most candidates knew enough to compare and contrast the leading women involved, as well as referring to the firmity woman. Better answers considered character traits in Henchard which also lead to his downfall, especially to his inability to understand Eliz-Jane (e.g. he was unaware how much she had tried to improve herself by reading). Knowledge of the text was generally very good, with the ability to select relevant and contrasting material to discuss often a key discriminator.

Option **(b)** Not many candidates convincingly knew the context of the extract, or where Henchard had been before he arrived back, and why he could not reveal why Farfrae did not trust his word. Most were aware of the 'Skimmity ride' and its effects. The best answers looked in detail at the long middle paragraph, with Hardy's use of images, and were sympathetic to Henchard's desperate search for 'affection'. Jopp's role was sometimes considered, and the re-appearance of Newson, hinted at in the final sentences, and its effect on the plot and especially Henchard and Elizabeth Jane was generally understood and commented on. Not all answers however recognised why Lucetta was so ill.

Marvell Selection

This was a more popular choice of text in this session. Option **(a)** produced some lively and balanced answers with *To His Coy Mistress*, *The Picture of little TC* and *The Garden* as the main focus. Time was seen as a threat in some poems and indicative of the transience of human existence, often set against the eternal of the soul and the spiritual world. Marvell's treatment was seen as humorous and trivial by some as well as serious and religious by others. Option **(b)** was well done often, though a few candidates failed to refer to the rest of the poem, but there was good reference to the transience of life and Marvell's attitude to nature and the spiritual, though some candidates are bemused by the pastoral and pastoral innocence as key poetic concepts for the poet.



The Rape of the Lock

This was very much a minority choice with an even split between Option **(a)** and Option **(b)**. Weaker candidates focused on what the ‘unnumbered sylphs’ did, rather than on the effect of the presentation, with what happened more of a focus than how it was constructed. Better candidates were able to consider in what ways Pope’s concerns were revealed by the effects – a good knowledge of the wider context of the poem was helpful here. The passage –Option **(b)** – was not popular. The few answers seen showed a sound knowledge of the context of the extract, but few seemed to understand the references in the first 10 lines. There was better appreciation of the next section, with satirical references to Belinda’s torture by her hair appliances, and a few candidates able to refer back to the earlier scene of her applying makeup.

Hopkins Selected Poems

This was the least popular text on the paper and very few candidates offered either option. Candidates generally did agree with the view offered and were able to refer to relevant poems, *The Windhover* being the most popular choice. Option **(b)** was rare and few answers had a convincing grasp of Hopkins’s methods here or even knowledge of the poem as a whole.

The Duchess of Malfi

This was once again not a popular choice. Most opted for **(a)** and had strong views on the Duchess as a victim and as rash, although a few read as prepared character studies of the Duchess rather than attempts to focus on the terms of the question. The better answers attempted to balance evidence of her victimisation against some of the Duchess’ willful choices. Knowledge of the play was generally secure and good answers remembered the role of Bosola in the play’s plot.

10(b) There were a few answers and these did not always grasp the swift sequence of events, although the Cardinal’s treachery was often discussed well. Antonio’s presence was not understood generally. The best answers focused on the dramatic impact of these events, picking up the ironies of action and language and relating them to the wider text.



LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

Paper 9695/52

Shakespeare and other Pre Twentieth Century Texts

General Comments

The overall standard this session was satisfactory with a number of candidates achieving very good marks on the full range of texts, though there were a small number of candidates who were ill equipped for this exam and disappointingly could offer little evidence of having acquired the necessary skills to meet the assessment objectives. Rubric errors were very rare and almost no candidates appeared to have time problems, offering two more or less evenly balanced answers on a text from each of the sections on the paper in the time allowed.

The standard of written English for most candidates was commendably high. Very few candidates were unable to express themselves clearly and fluently. Inevitably there were varying levels of understanding but only a handful of candidates seemed to be hampered by expressive difficulties irrespective of their knowledge of the texts. Centres are once again asked to remind candidates of the need for clear presentation and good English, as required by the rubric. It is also helpful to have a clear indication of the questions attempted on the front of the answer booklet. It is also important to ensure the candidate's name as well as number appears on the front of the script.

In the November report reference was made to the need for adequate planning as well as careful consideration of the terms of the question. Those comments are equally applicable to this session, along with a reminder that the option **(b)** passage questions do require a different approach from the option **(a)** questions. In the passage questions the main focus will inevitably be on the words from the text on the exam paper in front of the candidate, with the specific task usually requiring detailed analysis of those words. Candidates should pay careful attention to the words of the task as well – references to 'language', 'tone' or 'narrative structure' for example are a guide to the methods of the author most likely to be exemplified in the passage and on which the candidate should focus. This requires an understanding of the genre generally – the novel form for example – as well as of the particular context of the given passage. Candidates should also note that some **(b)** questions ask for or invite reference to the wider text as well as the close analysis of the passage itself. This is a balancing act but wider textual references should be seen as following on from a specific point in the passage itself and not a separate task. By understanding this candidates will avoid the general narrative summary of large parts of the text which weakens so many otherwise acceptable answers.

Specific Texts

Section A Shakespeare

Hamlet

This was the first session for this text and as expected it proved very popular. Option **(a)** was a minority choice on this text. There were many good answers, with the full range of views about Hamlet's royalty and a pleasing variety in the material used to substantiate the views, with Ophelia's lament after the nunnery scene often used as a structuring device. A few candidates did not seem to understand the word 'royal', however, with one or two misreading it for 'loyal'. The best answers used critics well, for example using G. Wilson Knight to suggest Hamlet's unfitness for revenge or other major roles, and then considering his more positive traits, such as his choice of Horatio as a friend, his sense of political morality in his comments on Claudius' court, his testing of the Ghost's integrity and especially his popularity with the people, according to Claudius and the Gravedigger. Many answers referred to specific versions of the play on stage or film so that these were influenced by particular readings of the text. When set alongside the candidate's own reading and supported with specific textual reference this approach was very successful.

Option **(b)** produced some very good answers and a number achieved full marks. Perceptive candidates considered the threats to Denmark implied by the strict watch, and commenting in detail on the buildup of



tension, the mystery of the 'thing', and the dramatic appearance of the Ghost. The shattering of Horatio's scepticism was discussed, especially successful for those who linked it to his wider role in the text as Hamlet's confidante and trusted ally. The ambivalence of 'the king' and the insights of Marcellus were well commented on. This question required good links to the wider text and many answers rose to this challenge well, with only a minority seduced into too much narrative detail at the expense of close analysis of the passage. A few answers also made references to contrasting attitudes to the supernatural held by Protestants and Catholics in Shakespeare's time with useful contextual points thus arising. Particularly pleasing were the candidates who focused on the dramatic presentation and were able to consider the effect on an audience and how that would influence the way the play as a whole would be remembered.

The Tempest

Option (a) was a popular question, and sound knowledge of the text was on display. A variety of strategies proved successful but particularly noteworthy were the good answers which began with the political disorder on the boat, followed by Prospero's purposeful but harsh government on the island. Candidates were aware that Shakespeare clearly focused on usurpation as a major theme (which some candidates linked to the History plays), as well on aspects of colonisation. The 'arranged' marriage between Ferdinand and Miranda was seen as sound political judgment by some, though as evidence of the desire to control in Prospero for others. Many answers referred to Gonzalo's reflections on a form of utopia, which was undermined by Sebastian's suggestion that Gonzalo would be king of his utopia. Some candidates also linked the discussion to Prospero's reflections on his magic and the theatre, as a way of considering 'rulers' more widely. Caliban and the sub-plot were well discussed, often seen as the dramatist's way of offering a fuller analysis of the idea of 'government' through comedy, but also for some linking to the nature and nurture debate, where nurture leads to domination and control, evidenced for some by Miranda's acquiescing to her what was seen as arranged marriage.

2(b) was often very well done partly because nearly all the answers were clear about the context and understood the different accounts of how Prospero became ruler of the island. As the first appearance of Caliban and, evidently much discussed, candidates were able to offer interesting and developed readings of the various strands here – with some surprisingly ready to find excuse or justification for his attempt on Miranda's virtue. Good answers also recognised Caliban's speeches were in verse, alongside those of Prospero and Miranda and some answers were surprised by Miranda's spirited speech, which supported Prospero's account of the failed education of Caliban. There was some quite excellent analysis of the language and tone of this extract, showing good understanding of the drama and its construction.

Section B

Mansfield Park

This was the first session for this text and it is evidently a popular choice. Option (a) produced very good work, with only a few more general character studies of Sir Thomas and most answers focusing on the actual terms of the topic. Some candidates saw his reliance on his wife and Mrs Norris as a sign of his poor judgment. His prolonged absence, his distant relationship with his daughters and his misjudgement of Fanny's rejection of Henry were well discussed. However, candidates praised his acceptance of Fanny into his household, and later, Susan. Other members of the family, Tom and the daughters, as well as Lady Bertram and Mrs Norris came in for blame, so that Sir Thomas came off lightly in some essays. The best answers focused on Austen's presentation of him and especially his development throughout the novel, running parallel to Fanny's own development.

Option (b) was disappointing overall since only a few candidates seemed to know the exact context and so many, for example, were unable to refer to the contents of the first letter. Fanny's awareness of the dirt and disorder in her parent's home received some attention, but the contrast between the sunshine in town and country described by Austen was noticed only by the better answers, as was the context, ironic as it turned out, of Fanny's being in Portsmouth as part of Sir Thomas's plan to help Henry's cause. Not all candidates knew what a rope's end was, but there were some sympathy for Mr. Price's crude but strict morality. Fanny's disbelief was also noted by better answers. The most successful responses looked closely at how Austen presents the novel, for example, her use of dialogue and narrative description and the way the novel is structured around Fanny's perceptions.



The Nun's Priest's Prologue and Tale

This was a popular, if minority choice in this session with fewer candidates offering the option **(b)** essay. Nearly all option **(a)** responses had some detailed textual references to work with, though weaker answers often relied on summary and paraphrase of the dreams themselves. Better answers were also able to see the humour and tone of the text and to explore Chaucer's poetic techniques in detail.

Option **(b)** was less popular with answers ranging from a simple paraphrase of variable accuracy to a few detailed explorations of Chaucer's style and methods, including in a few rare cases an understanding of the effects of the dialogue and topic on the way we respond to the married couple. Some quite sound answers were aware of Chauntecleer's flattery of his wife, of his deliberate mistranslation of the Latin, and of his sexual appetite. There were fewer comments on the final 18 lines, although some candidates knew what 'wo' referred to, offering a narrative of what follows in the Tale.

Hard Times

This was a popular choice in this session, though the majority opted for the **(b)** option. Views of the industrial world were wide ranging in that candidates saw the physical side of Coketown and where people lived and worked, better answers remembering that Bounderby and Gradgrind also had a comfortable existence here. Other answers though concentrated more on the people and how they lived and how the Gradgrind approach, evidenced in the spectacular failure shown by his children, was equally doomed for the general mass of people too. Better answers focused on the presentation while others less successful opted for narrative summary.

Option **(b)** was popular and many were able to analyse how Dickens presents the evil that is Harthouse's casual attitudes to life by suggestion and inference as well as direct narration. The significance of this and the catastrophic effects on Louisa that it leads to were well discussed and placed, with some pointing out it is only through Harthouse that Louisa was able to escape Bounderby.

The Mayor of Casterbridge

This was very popular in this session with candidates split evenly between the options. Candidates showed quite a sound familiarity with the marriages in the novel, although inevitably weaker answers relied on narrative summary. A few candidates tried to link Hardy's presentation of marriage to his own life, but the comments, though interesting, were not sufficiently developed in terms of the novel to be very useful. The second half of the question was answered in terms of characters' behaviour linked to the different marriages (e.g. Lucetta's dropping of Henchard for Farfrae was compared to his rejection of her when Susan turned up). For many the effects were limited to Henchard himself, but more discerning answers saw how Lucetta and Elizabeth Jane also suffered, with Farfrae often criticized for coldness as little seemed to affect him at all.

6(b) needed a good grasp of context and though most answers were aware of the flashback in the opening words, only a few were able to link 'self-repression' or 'resignation' to earlier events. There were some quite perceptive comments on Hardy's use of the letter, although few answers noticed the P.S. and what that referred to. The paragraph from L35 to 44 received some shrewd analysis, with Henchard's 'emotional void' linked to other situations in the novel when he felt a need for affection. Henchard's ignorance of Lucetta's change of identity was noted by more alert candidates as was the loss of Elizabeth-Jane and what that was going to lead to.

Marvell Selection

Option **(a)** was rarely tackled, but there were some good answers, concentrating on *The Garden*, *On a Drop of Dew* and *Bermudas*. Many were able to see the presentation in the variety of the poems, but very few noticed the word 'need' and those that did were able to explore the contrasts in Marvell's work to telling effect.

Option **(b)** led to some detailed commentaries, showing excellent understanding of the dialogue, and looking closely at some of Marvell's imagery (e.g. the body as a prison to the soul, while the body complains of the soul's basic emotions – hope, love, sorrow - as kinds of disease). Many essays were able to link this poem to the wider selection, finding what was characteristic of Marvell in a variety of poems. Better answers were alive to the playfulness of the tone - 'jocoserious' for some candidates - but also to the context of dialogue poems in general.



The Rape of the Lock

Option **(a)** produced just a few answers, and these displayed some good knowledge of the poem, especially of the way Pope presents Belinda's beauty alongside his satirical comments on women's vanity and triviality, with most agreeing it was a celebration.

8(b) was not well tackled overall, because answers lacked close analysis, especially of the final section where Pope does not shirk from mentioning the inevitable later decline in Belinda's beauty, and even her death, because he then reminds her that her lock will always be celebrated in his poetry. Weaker answers resorted to paraphrase of the passage and at times of the wider poem.

Hopkins Selected Poems

This was the least popular text on the paper and very few candidates offered either option. Candidates generally were able to find poems referring to hope and fear, though few addressed 'human' in any detail. Option **(b)** was rare and few answers had a convincing grasp of Hopkins's methods here or even knowledge of the poem as a whole.

The Duchess of Malfi

This was once again not a popular choice with very few attempting **(a)** and often limited to listing examples of death and disease happening in the play and ignoring 'imagery'. Most opted for **(b)** where the context was generally identified and textual knowledge was secure. Good answers remembered the role of Bosola in the play's plot without being tempted into detailed narrative summary, as unfortunately some candidates were.



LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

Paper 9695/53

Shakespeare and other Pre Twentieth Century Texts

General Comments

The overall standard this session was satisfactory with a number of candidates achieving very good marks on the full range of texts, though there were a small number of candidates who were ill equipped for this exam and disappointingly could offer little evidence of having acquired the necessary skills to meet the assessment objectives. Rubric errors were very rare and almost no candidates appeared to have time problems, offering two more or less evenly balanced answers on a text from each of the sections on the paper in the time allowed.

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LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

Paper 9695/61
Twentieth Century Writing

General Comments

The overall difficulty of the paper was comparable with previous years. The key discriminators were the extent to which well-informed candidates could shape their knowledge to the task and demonstrate their understanding of how a writer shapes meaning by choice of language. Candidates should be advised of the need to focus more carefully on the terms of the questions and to refer back to them at strategic points in the essay. While practice on past papers is invaluable, there was evidence that too many candidates answering (a) questions were relying on pre-prepared answers. Those doing the (b) questions should understand that the passage is always the main focus of the response even when the question explicitly directs them to consider the wider text. Knowledge and understanding of the wider text will inform and support what they have to say about the passage and candidates are expected to make appropriate links to the wider text even when not directed, but to do well on the (b) question they should demonstrate a good understanding of how the literary or dramatic effects in passages have been generated. Examiners are rather surprised that there is little evidence of detailed work done on past (b) questions. Candidates would not be penalised if this sort of work were included in answer as long as it was made relevant to the question as set and a proper balance was maintained. Similarly, while biographical details or knowledge of the social or literary context of a work can inform a point, their main focus in the essay must be on the set texts; some answers on Atwood, Eliot, Soyinka, Woolf and particularly Churchill got the balance wrong.

Good scripts showed that candidates could make a range of relevant points, illustrate them with lots of brief pertinent quotations and follow up not just with attempts at personal interpretation, but appreciative analysis of how the words work to create meaning and effect. Candidates who often wrote quite fluently, sometimes produced weaker scripts, displaying a disappointing level of textual knowledge, a limited understanding of the writer's themes and a lack of confidence in the use of critical terms and ideas. This paper revealed that useful work is being done on narrative method, but few understand how comedy works and the ways humour can contribute to point of view, theme and dramatic effect. Although some candidates wrote very well on T. S. Eliot, many found it difficult to confidently discuss poetic methods and effects and candidates should always be discouraged from attempting any of the poetry (b) questions as unseens. Having said that, what impresses the Examiners most is the way many candidates demonstrate a lively, personal engagement with and response to their chosen texts, and the way many write mature, stimulating responses.

Comments on Specific Questions

Question 1. MARGARET ATWOOD: *Cat's Eye*

This was not a popular choice of text with the (b) question proving to be the preferred option.

- (a) Most candidates understood that by revisiting Toronto, Elaine could regain and confront her memories and change herself and could explain why Elaine hated Toronto. Some candidates did not understand the word 'setting' and interpreted it as meaning different periods in Elaine's life. Better candidates showed appreciation of the narrative structure and point of view, and showed how 'setting' was associated with particular feelings. They noted the freedom of the character's early childhood and her affinity with nature, contrasting this with the alienation and anxiety of the city while at the same time mentioning some of the changes in the Toronto of her childhood and the present, or the difference between Toronto and Vancouver. Few candidates addressed the effectiveness of the descriptive writing and the significance of particular details with reference to specific locations like Simpson's Basement, the ravine or gallery.

- (b) Better answers engaged with the narrative structure and first person point of view, dealing with the issue of memories and the significance of the 'friends' with appropriate references to the wider text. Few candidates could give the passage a precise context or refer to the specific memory of being buried in the hole that is hinted at in the passage. The main discriminator was the focus on descriptive writing. Good candidates commented on how the verbs in 'There must have been... These things must have occurred... I think', together with the repetition of 'I close my eyes and wait for pictures' framing the second paragraph, creates the sense of effort in the character's attempt to remember. Some were able to make useful links with Elaine's pictures and the fact that she is an artist, but while a few asserted that a strong visual quality was a feature of the style, fewer were able to demonstrate this by detailed analysis of the passage or a specific reference to the wider text. Those who did analyse the descriptive writing in the passage, focused on the stereotypical list of images to describe the birthday and the generalised enormity of the diction 'vague horror ... sense of shame and failure'; they noted the detailed sensuous description in the third paragraph and sensitively interpreted the symbolism. More modest answers attempted to explain the significance of the passage, noticed that the language was 'dark' and attempted to interpret symbolism in paragraph four with 'the weed' standing for the memory of Cordelia's treatment of her, the potatoes signifying her friends. Weaker candidates used the passage as a springboard for an account of Elaine's childhood experiences.

Question 2. R. K. NARAYAN: *The English Teacher*

This was a popular text and many candidates knew it well. The (a) question was the preferred option and generally was done much better than the (b) question.

- (a) This question allowed the candidates to go to the heart of the novel and most were able to describe in some narrative detail – the relationship between the narrator and his wife both before and after her untimely death. The discriminating factor was how well the material was selected and shaped to the task. Most argued that Susila was significant by giving an account of how she changed Krishna's life, with some of them making use of the 'unpredictability' theme. The danger of this was to lose focus on the presentation of Susila and drift into tangential material – like the influence of the headmaster – because candidates wrote the essay in terms of the character of Krishna's development. In spite of the helpful diary entry quotation in the question itself, only the best made any detailed reference to the way the novel is experienced through the narration of Krishna and showed how Narayan creates Susila's 'presence'. Good answers confronted the issue of the reader's response to Krishna's communications with his wife after her death by explaining how the detailed descriptions of incidents, conversations and feelings before and after the event created a subjective realism. Pertinent quotations showed how the language conveys Krishna's feelings towards his wife, commenting on the significance and effect of the diction in describing Susila's 'unearthly loveliness' and how the dialogue and letters give her a voice, which became even more authoritative after death. More modest answers focused on specific incidents to show their relationship – like the quarrels over the shopping, the alarm clock, and the use of jasmine as a running motif. They tended to deal in a very general way with their relationship after death commenting on the way Susila leads Krishna back into a relationship with his own eastern culture, although this approach would have been improved with supporting quotations. Weaker scripts spent too long on the biographical details; gave a narrative summary of the plot; characterised Susila as a good Hindu wife and mother or misread the text by confusing the idea that their initial long-distance relationship meant that Krishna was cold and distant towards Susila and his daughter, saw their arrival as an irritation and interruption of his life, so that her significance was to teach him to become a good husband and father. Some candidates found it difficult to accept Susila as significant because she died so quickly after appearing in the novel and argued the headmaster was more important in changing Krishna.
- (b) This question was less frequently attempted and generally provoked only superficial 'appreciation' of the detail in Narayan's description. For example, candidates noted the precision of the colours but few could analyse this further. Some of the best answers could give a precise context for the passage and a few commented on the presentation of Krishna, contrasting the portrayal of his excitement at receiving the letters and the liveliness of his experience as a child with his frustrations of being a teacher and a poet. They illustrated the idea that Krishna was observant and a few commented on the diction, the 'sizzling cauldron' and the 'enchancing haze' of 'bleached dust', but little was made of the rhythmic effects generated by the variety of sentence structure. The more usual approach was to use the passage as a springboard for general discussion of the wider text with better answers showing how the passage fitted into the ways Krishna's values and beliefs developed later. Some candidates saw the extract as initiating a theme of 'children and

adults' perceived to be significant in the latter half of the book or discussed the importance of letters or the family in Indian culture. There was little attempt to show how the narrative and descriptive methods were characteristic of the novel as a whole. Comments were limited to the observation that like the rest of the novel, everything was seen through Krishna's eyes and that memories were important to him. To demonstrate thoroughly an understanding and appreciation of Narayan's narrative style and techniques, there needed to be much more detailed attention to the language of the passage.

Question 3. LES MURRAY: from *Selected Poems*

This was not a popular choice of text with the **(b)** question proving to be the preferred option.

- (a)** Candidates attempted to sketch Murray's general concerns about Australian identity and gave accounts of relevant poems like *Morse* or *The Mitchells*. However, there was little understanding of the question, of what is meant by the 'ways' in which the writer 'presents' a theme through the use of a specific incident, point of view, literary and colloquial language, or wordplay. Comments on poetic devices and form tended to be mechanistic with restricted discussion of the way these contributed to meaning and effect.
- (b)** This question provoked a fuller range of responses. There were some candidates who were able to address the poem in an informed way with some knowledge of Murray's characteristic concerns and techniques and with some brief references to the wider text. Good answers noted the chronological structure, how the diction in each stanza created a sense of the historical references to the Romans, colonial wars, the First World War and Vietnam War to explain the poet's view in the final stanza. They showed they understood the detail – the 'belt-fed country' and 'mechanized fury', for example – and interpreted the 'Judas face of every idea' sensibly. The best noted the significance of the title, commenting on the lexical field covering alcohol and drugs noting the wordplay 'acid war...Score; rising helicopters cried Smack-Smack...trip....pot' and tracked the presentation of the participants from the romantic 'whirling golden warriors' through to the 'eaters of fish sauce'. Modest answers understood the general thrust of the poem and based their answers on clear summaries of the stanzas, including occasional comments to show engagement with detail like the appreciation of the transformation of 'the pipe of peace' into 'the pipes of war'. Weaker candidates attempted to deal with detail and feature spot without having an understanding of the whole poem to provide a coherent context for their remarks. For example, some seized on the mention of 'Judas' and digressed into explanations of who he was. Some gave the impression that they were working on an unseen.

Question 4. CARYL CHURCHILL: *Top Girls*

The play was a popular text though very few candidates attempted the **(a)** question. The chief discriminator on the **(b)** question was the extent to which candidates were able to balance a detailed exploration on the way language is used in the extract with an intelligent, appropriately illustrated discussion of the wider text to show how it contributes to the play's concerns.

- (a)** Candidates found it difficult to engage with the question. They could not explain the ways Churchill uses humour to present character and ideas about women, work and politics or provoke specific audience response – to engage, entertain, persuade, challenge or alienate – in order to present the complexity of her concerns. The best showed some knowledge of the text by listing scenes they thought were funny with a few quotations.
- (b)** Again there was a lack of precise knowledge as to what was going on before and after the scene, though most were able to explore the contrast between Marlene as the modern woman and Mrs Kidd as the traditional stay-at-home wife. The best looked closely at the language, commenting on the use of polite forms to different effect, and the way the writer controls audience response, finding Marlene's crack about the sleeping pills unsympathetic but Mrs Kidd's suggestion that Marlene step down outrageous. They carefully selected material from the wider text to support and develop the discussion about women in the work place and the sacrifices that had to be made, explaining the significance of Angie's presence and making use of other scenes set in the agency to discuss the presentation of Marlene. Some candidates became over-involved in discussing differences between British and American feminism, which together with other material of a social and political nature was certainly relevant, but should not have been offered instead of a detailed focus on the extract. Other candidates gave an indiscriminating account of the scene with little sense of the dramatic effects or its contribution to the themes of the play.

Question 5. HAROLD PINTER: *The Homecoming*

This was another popular text. The **(b)** question was the preferred option and stimulated the full range of responses, whereas the **(a)** question, though popular, tended to be poorly done. Answers to both questions showed a lack of confidence and experience perhaps in dealing with comedy.

- (a)** The problem with this question was one of balance. Most candidates focused on showing the extent to which characters needed 'to defend themselves or wound others' with little analysis of the comedy. At best this approach showed detailed knowledge of the text and some sound understanding of character with occasional accounts of physical or verbal events that demonstrated some awareness of comic effect. The best scripts showed some understanding of the dramatic effectiveness of the comedy in complicating the audience response to the characters and they gave carefully selected examples of physical and verbal comedy to explore the presentation of character according to the terms of the question. Generally speaking, many candidates treated the play as a serious portrait of a dysfunctional family and failed to see or understand the absurdity or appreciate the games playing aspect of the relationships. Weaker scripts fell back on the 'power struggle' essay, or thin character portraits.
- (b)** The extract was better done with the key discriminator again being the ability to focus on a detailed exploration of the extract with an appreciation of its literary and dramatic features, while at the same time engaging with the presentation and significance of the character in the play as a whole. Most candidates had a good idea of the roles though there was some uncertainty about the precise context. Better candidates could relate the scene to Lenny's account of dealing with the 'pox-ridden prostitutes' and did some astute detailed work on his motivation, using specific detail from the monologue to show his use of story-telling skills in an attempt to engage Ruth. They saw and commented on the irony in the development of the idea of 'sensitivity', of his being 'desensitized' when faced with 'unreasonable demands' though few spotted the humour in the old lady 'not even lifting a little finger to give me a helping hand'. Some of the best candidates commented on the variety of sentence structure, the use of repetition, and were sensitive to the tone. Many noticed the dramatic effect of the shocking 'I just gave her a short arm jab to the belly and jumped on a bus outside' followed by the politeness of the offer to remove the ashtray. A few deconstructed the sentences and noted the comic effect in the choice of language: his feeling 'jubilant', the impact of the word 'just' and the casual simplicity of his escape. More modest candidates kept the 'power struggle' theme in mind and plotted the ways Lenny seeks to intimidate Ruth and his failure to do so, moving relatively easily from the extract to the rest of the play, though too many actually believed everything Lenny said and tried to explain his character from this evidence. Comments on language in the passage tended to focus on the shocking effect use of 'bloody', 'stuff' and 'arse' and there was some over-interpretation of front and back room and the mangle as sexual innuendo. Weaker candidates gave a sketchy treatment of the passage and a generalised portrait of Lenny with some drifting into too much material on Ruth.

Question 6. T. S. ELIOT: *Prufrock and Other Observations, The Waste Land and The Hollow Men*

This was a quite a popular choice of text with answers more or less evenly split between the two options. While strong candidates were impressive in the breadth and depth of their knowledge and understanding, generally speaking this text was the least well done with too many candidates struggling to show a detailed enough knowledge of the text and express complex ideas clearly. In answers to both questions, weaker candidates spent too long generally describing the impact on society of the First World War, the lack of faith and the moral values of the time.

- (a)** Some candidates struggled here with the concept of 'urban life' and focused on people who lived in cities with the best of these having enough detail to show the despair and emptiness of their lives with some appreciation of Eliot's poetic methods. A few had detailed knowledge of *Preludes* and *Rhapsody* and were able to look at the effects of some visual images and show how these looked forward to elements in *The Waste Land*. The best were able to focus on elements of poetic technique such as the fragmentation, the imagery, including the use and significance of recurring motifs and symbols, as well as the use of persona in the presentation of the theme. Weaker candidates gave generalised accounts of poems like *Prufrock* or encounters from *The Waste Land* to show the sordid nature of sexual encounters.

- (b) This question was brilliantly done by the candidates who had a thorough knowledge of the whole poem and the significance of the use of allusions, who understood a range of elements, characteristic of Eliot's technique – particularly the symbolic use and development of particular images – and used this knowledge to analyse the extract. They focused on the nature of the valley, different uses of 'kingdom' and the changing significance throughout the poem of the 'eyes', moving confidently around the wider text and into *The Waste Land* to generate and support discussion about Eliot's religious concerns. Some candidates obviously had knowledge that was potentially very useful – of allusions to Dante or technical matters such as synecdoche and anaphora – but they tended to be feature spotting and insecure on the contribution to meaning and effect. Too many candidates displayed an inconclusive practical criticism approach to the extract and struggled to generate a coherent discussion.

Question 7. WOLE SOYINKA: *Death and the King's Horseman*

This is becoming an increasingly popular choice with candidates showing a good level of engagement with the detail of the text and developing skills to appreciate how the writer achieves dramatic effects. The (b) question proved to be the most favoured option and was better done than the (a) question.

The key discriminator in both questions was the ability to shape the material to the task.

- (a) Only a few candidates focused on the question, understood what was meant by 'different styles of language' and could select relevant quotations to support ideas how Soyinka created specific idioms for the African and British people. The best discussed the colonial implications of language and explored the comedy generated by the market girls' mockery of polite English and contrasted Amusa's use of English with Olunde's. They looked at the use of proverbs, the use of nature imagery, and characterised African speech as being more poetic or lyrical. They found it more difficult to discuss the standard English used by the British colonials, though some were able to show the way their language revealed attitudes, noting Pilkings's reference to holy water as 'nonsense' and the shock effect of the use of the word 'nigger'. More modest answers showed an understanding of general characteristics, referred to specific incidents like the scenes with Amusa and briefly referred to the Not-I Bird speech, but did not have enough quotations to support their ideas. It is worth noting that candidates would not have been penalised if they had made appropriate analytical comments on examples taken from the printed passage, providing that their answers were not restricted to the extract. The majority converted the question into a 'clash of cultures' essay and had enough textual knowledge to describe the differences between the Yorubans and the British and their attitudes to the situations within the play.
- (b) The best candidates briefly explained the prior relationship between Iyaloja and Elesin and contrasted it with that shown in the passage. They then demonstrated evidence of a perceptive approach to the dramatic effects by engaging with the language and tone and pointing out the tension generated by the 'message', explaining 'the burden' and the dramatic irony of 'You have more than discharged it'. Most adopted a running commentary, examining the way Soyinka's use of imagery to express Iyaloja's scorn, though few looked at the accumulative effect of the use of contrasts and repetition in her long speech. They commented on the presence of the bride and used that as a way into explaining and examining Elesin's excuses. Some candidates were able to raise the issue of the corruption of male leaders and role of the female voice in post-colonial African politics in a way that informed their reading of the text and highlighted particular details e.g. 'We called you leader and oh, how you led us on.' Weaker candidates spent far too long giving a very detailed account of the back-story, or tried to paraphrase the passage.

Question 8. VIRGINIA WOOLF: *To the Lighthouse*

This was a reasonably popular choice of text and it was generally well done with both questions proving to be equally accessible. Candidates showed good knowledge of the text and there were very few who did not make constructive references to literary features.

- (a) Many candidates found it helpful to see the relationship in terms of an opposition between the Victorian 'angel of the hearth' and the modern independent woman. Strong candidates showed how the stream of consciousness technique was used to give composite portraits of characters, noting the effect of their views on each other and what these revealed about themselves. Some had pertinent quotations to show the characters' ambivalence to their own situations and each other. More straightforward answers gave quite detailed character portraits and looked at how the relationship changed. Weaker candidates tended to give more generalised character sketches

which were often valid but thin on knowledge of the text or invested too much in discussing biographical material.

- (b)** This was also one of the most successful **(b)** questions, prompting a full range of answers. The best candidates offered well-structured essays that balanced a detailed discussion of the context, explaining the significance of specific details in terms of resolving issues of plot and theme with a sensitive exploration of the effects of the writing in the passage. They focused on the significance of the lighthouse and its melting away, together with Lily's attitude to Mr Ramsay, though only a few commented on what the language in 'What-ever she had wanted to give him...' showed about the way Lily experienced emotions particularly in response to him. Most candidates were able to comment on the significance of Lily's completion of her picture and explained why the fact that it did not matter if it 'hung in attics' marked a development in Lily's confidence and character. Better candidates were able to broaden the discussion to explore their view of Woolf's vision of human relationships and experience in the novel, and a few were able to support this with an appreciation of the presentation of Mr Carmichael as 'the pagan god...spreading his hands over all the weakness and suffering of mankind'. Weaker candidates discussed the passage in terms of plot, giving an account of the difficulties in reaching the lighthouse and Lily painting her picture, but ignored Mr Carmichael and made a few general remarks about the narrative method or gave a generalised account of the novel.



LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

Paper 9695/62
Twentieth Century Writing

General Comments

The overall difficulty of the paper was comparable with previous years. The key discriminators were the extent to which well-informed candidates could shape their knowledge to the task and demonstrate their understanding of how a writer shapes meaning by choice of language. Candidates should be advised of the need to focus more carefully on the terms of the questions and to refer back to them at strategic points in the essay. While practice on past papers is invaluable, there was evidence that too many candidates answering **(a)** questions were relying on pre-prepared answers. Those doing the **(b)** questions should understand that the passage is always the main focus of the response even when the question explicitly directs them to consider the wider text. Knowledge and understanding of the wider text will inform and support what they have to say about the passage and candidates are expected to make appropriate links to the wider text even when not directed, but to do well on the **(b)** question they should demonstrate a good understanding of how the literary or dramatic effects in passages have been generated. Examiners are rather surprised that there is little evidence of detailed work done on past **(b)** questions. Candidates would not be penalised if this sort of work were included in answer as long as it was made relevant to the question as set and a proper balance was maintained. Similarly, while biographical details or knowledge of the social or literary context of a work can inform a point, their main focus in the essay must be on the set texts; some answers on Atwood, Eliot, Soyinka, Woolf and particularly Churchill got the balance wrong.

Good scripts showed that candidates could make a range of relevant points, illustrate them with lots of brief pertinent quotations and follow up not just with attempts at personal interpretation, but appreciative analysis of how the words work to create meaning and effect. Candidates who often wrote quite fluently, sometimes produced weaker scripts, displaying a disappointing level of textual knowledge, a limited understanding of the writer's themes and a lack of confidence in the use of critical terms and ideas. This paper revealed that useful work is being done on narrative method, but few understand how comedy works and the ways humour can contribute to point of view, theme and dramatic effect. Although some candidates wrote very well on T. S. Eliot, many found it difficult to confidently discuss poetic methods and effects and candidates should always be discouraged from attempting any of the poetry **(b)** questions as unseens. Having said that, what impresses the Examiners most is the way many candidates demonstrate a lively, personal engagement with and response to their chosen texts, and the way many write mature, stimulating responses.

Comments on Specific Questions

Question 1. MARGARET ATWOOD: *Cat's Eye*

This was not such a popular choice of text this session, though candidates tended to show a good level of personal engagement with the text supported by detailed knowledge. The **(b)** question was the favoured option.

- (a)** There was some general understanding of the implications of the question with most candidates being able to explore Elaine's sense of herself at different periods of her life: the 'wild child', the victim, the 'mean mouth' the art candidate, wife mother and artist. The best answers used specific references and had lots of pertinent quotations to show how Elaine defined herself against other people. In exploring the relationship with Cordelia, for example, they used the 'twin' idea, and contrasted the way she perceived herself in relation to girls and women in contrast to her relationships with boys and men. They used the interview with Andrea to explore the mature woman and her attitude to feminism but detailed though these discussions were, they were not always very literary. Knowledge of the narrative structure could have been used to show how Elaine becomes a more integrated personality without digressing too much into psychoanalytical theories. Weaker answers gave indiscriminating accounts of Elaine's experience.



- (b) This passage was also well discussed by some candidates. At the more obvious level of plot and character, it offered opportunity to write about the coming of Cordelia into the childhood circle and what difference her presence made. Candidates who looked closely at the passage noticed the youthful innocence in the uncertainty surrounding the use of the horse chestnuts and the 'safe' and commented that at this stage Grace is prepared to challenge Cordelia's story of the 'dissolved dead people'. In order to show the significance of the passage they moved from the 'dare' to the later scenes of the trauma of Elaine's falling into the ravine to show the turning point in relationship with Cordelia and Elaine's adult visit to the area with its concrete bridge signifying that she was a more secure person. The best answers balanced this discussion with comments on the literary quality of the writing, commenting on the effect of the use of the present tense narrative, noting how the focus on the 'We' suggests Elaine's absorption into the group, with one candidate astutely commenting on the effect of the repetition of 'Cordelia says ... She says. She says...' to suggest that Elaine does not believe her either. Some responded to the 'gothic' atmosphere of the valley, commenting on the sensuous description and use of lists; others caught onto 'cats' and their 'eyes' and their symbolic connections in the novel. The symbolism of the 'nightshade' was also developed and its presence in a later painting. Essays from weaker candidates tended to be disjointed as they attempted to link details from the passage like Cordelia's relationship with her sisters, or the significance of 'Our Lady of Perpetual Help' to the wider text, or they restricted their discussion to aspects of plot and character.

Question 2. CARYL CHURCHILL: *Top Girls*

This was a popular text with both questions proving attractive though slightly more opted for the passage. Both questions forced the candidates to consider the structure of the play and strong candidates did well on either question. Weaker candidates sometimes gave the impression that they know more about the socio-historical and political background than the text itself.

- (a) Many candidates wrote well about the chronological versus the dramatic sequence and how the cost of Marlene's success was gradually revealed. Some candidates aptly pointed out that the play began in a fantasy or dream and ended in a nightmare with the best answers showing how the non-chronological presentation forced the audience to question the issues of women in the world rather than presenting them with answers. They showed how the selection and depiction of the characters in Act 1 universalises the female experience and raises the issue of progress and self-determination and the dramatic impact of the doubling of the actors. They clearly explained the dramatic irony of Angie's appearances in Act 2: the use of the dress and Marlene's certainty that 'she's not going to make it' and the dramatic impact of Act 3. They used the interview scenes to contrast the top girls with Mrs Kidd and Joyce in Act 3. They also looked at internal aspects of structure – how the contrast in Marlene and Mrs Kidd was used to manipulate the audience from distaste at Marlene's coldness to outrage at Mrs Kidd's request for her to stand down. More modest candidates attempted to discuss Churchill's concerns with some reference to the text although many drifted into tangential material about the Equal Pay Act and Thatcherism. Less able candidates found it difficult to deal with the issue of structure and wrote descriptively about the events as presented or limited their discussion to Act 1.
- (b) Many candidates chose to write about this passage, the discriminating factor being the extent to which they examined the extract and commented on it as drama rather than a socio-political document. Good candidates realised that 'the root of the disagreement was something more personal and significant and that this is merely echoed in their political differences'. They confidently used knowledge of the wider text to provide an insightful context for the characters' relationship which then informed their commentary on the extract. They explained why Joyce could not take Marlene's money, that there might be a bitter edge in the actor's voice over the fact that Marlene can 'always find work' and the question 'Who needs [men]?'. They pointed out that Joyce was as tough and determined as Marlene and some remembered that the characters have been drinking. They noted and discussed the realism and dramatic effects of the overlapping speech, the colloquialisms, the ellipsis in the sentence structure and hyperbolic conflation of Thatcher with Hitler, capped by the sneering 'Dadda's little parrot'. They put this into the wider context of Churchill's concerns about equality and that Marlene's success in the previous scenes is predicated on the abandonment of her family responsibilities. Less able candidates tended to limit their focus to the passage, were often rather vague as to the context and content: 'There seems to be some kind of resentment....' and gave character sketches. Too many, picking up on 'I believe in the individual', launched into detailed explanations of the difference between social and individual feminism, while some thought the play was anti-Thatcher propaganda and explained why. Very



few candidates looked at the effect of the writing within the dialogue on the dramatic effect of the way one character picks up on the words of a previous speech e.g. Look at me/I am looking at you.

Question 3 T. S. ELIOT: *Prufrock and Other Observations, The Waste Land, and The Hollow Men*

This was a fairly popular text with the **(b)** question proving to be the most popular option. Many candidates had an impressive detailed knowledge of the texts with the chief discriminating factor being their ability to shape the material to the task.

- (a)** Almost all the candidates who answered this question could identify various characters and discuss their 'spiritual poverty'. Some tended to provide a catalogue of spiritual failure and so many examples of the same thing were not very productive. The question asked 'By what means and with what effects..?' so it was disappointing that candidates who had an impressive amount of detail at their fingertips and lots of pertinent quotations did not discuss them in terms of poetic methods and effects. More able candidates talked in terms of how examples from mythology, allusions to other texts and the use of class universalises the theme. Sometimes there was relevant mention of the roles of Madame Sosostris and Tiresias, his significance and the fact that he observed 'the young man carbuncular' and the typist. Generally, these and the other obvious characters, were used for what they contributed to the meaning rather than as a focus for discussion of choice of language and specific detail, the use of imagery, and variety of rhythm, in particular the sense of the spoken voice and how all these express and evoke feelings. Less able candidates provided a generalised portrait of some of the characters and made generalised comments as to their significance.
- (b)** Candidates performed better on the passage, almost always showing extensive knowledge of the whole text with some understanding of the task. Candidates dealt with the persona's dilemma and relevant themes, commented on the structure and its effects and illustrated points with pertinent quotations from the wider text and the passage. They focused on the use of repetition, the use of specific detail, the significance of the allusions to Dante and *Twelfth Night*, and gave sensitive explanations of the effects of key images. Though most commented on the presence of the rhyme, few could comment on its effect, how it contributed to the sense of character and mood. More modest answers often opted for a running commentary, showed understanding of the character and themes but were less assured in their comments on effect; they tended to observe and explain the meaning of images in a pedestrian way. Weaker answers concentrated on the character of Prufrock, seeing him as a representative of modern man but treating him too much as a real person with little on the poetic methods and effects; they might have been writing about a short story.

Question 4. LES MURRAY: from *Selected Poems*

There were no takers for the **(a)** question and the very few who attempted the **(b)** question as an unseen were not equipped to grapple with the complexity of the ideas of the effects of the language in the time. Essays were disjointed, poor attempts at paraphrase with partial discussions of ideas.

Question 5. R. K. Narayan: *The English Teacher*

This was a popular choice of text and there were a number of essays on both questions which showed a real personal response to the novel and its style.

- (a)** The key discriminating factor here was the extent to which candidates could explore the idea of India within the context of narrative method because the question asked 'By what means...'. Good answers displayed a sound understanding of this and candidates were able to range widely across the text picking out examples of eastern cultural values and western colonial oppression, often focusing on the roles of Susila and the headmaster in contributing to Krishna's journey of enlightenment. They had detailed specific references and pertinent quotations available and the comments in the best answers showed sensitive, critical appreciation of the narrative methods, the use of point of view, the structure of the novel and the way choice of language conveyed feeling. More modest answers tended to list relevant aspects: the educational system, religious rituals and spirituality or family values and explained where to find them in the text, sometimes in convincing detail. They referred to the portrayal of Malgudi but found it difficult to develop and illustrate this idea. Weaker answers tended to be effusive in agreement with the question but thin on detailed knowledge, or told the story with little attention to narrative methods and effects.

- (b) There was usually a useful awareness of the context, with stronger candidates pointing out the sad irony of this moment of mutual delight being a prelude to the tragedy of Susila's death. Many were able to discuss the first person narration and its effects and also the revelation of character and concerns. The comedy of the bossy contractor (often confused with Sastri) and his boy evoked over-serious comment on the social condition of inequality in India, but most people praised Krishna for his sensitive and skilful intervention. Strong answers noted Krishna's private reflections and some appreciated the humour of the specific details in 'if a census on this subject were taken, ten thousand persons would be found to be bullying ten thousand others.....', they commented on Narayan's description of the houses comparing the diction 'very narrow suffocating veranda...wide compound, broad windows...spaciousness...' and even weaker candidates noted the significant use of the jasmine creeper. More modest answers focused on character, on the presentation of Susila as the concerned mother and manager of the finances, Krishna as the kindly, romantic husband and Sastri/contractor as a salesman. Weaker answers often had valid points which were under-developed or tended to get sidetracked into issues such as 'unpredictability' and 'social class' while others just told the story.

Question 6. HAROLD PINTER: *The Homecoming*

This was a very popular text and candidates seemed to choose the (a) and (b) options in equal numbers. The discriminating factor in both questions was the extent to which candidates showed awareness of dramatic method and effect and shaped their material to the task.

- (a) This was a straightforward essay question which enabled even weaker candidates to present knowledge of the text and consider Ruth's first entrance and interactions with Teddy, her subsequent encounter with Lenny and all her later victories and negotiations. Better candidates were distinguished by the way they explored her role and effect on the play. They commented on the way she is used to challenge a conventional moral framework and the audience's expectations, with the best, picking up the qualification in Pinter's own statement and debating the extent to which she was 'free'. Many argued that she frees herself from one stereotype – that of wife and mother to take on another – that of prostitute. Others suggested that she was free in the sense that she did not just have self-determination, but dominated the household. These arguments were supported by copious quotation to show the effect of her use of language, particularly surprising questions, silence and stage business. Most candidates could discuss the meaning and effect of the final tableau. Unfortunately many candidates who obviously knew the play well, converted this question into one about the power struggle and restricted the discussion to showing how she became dominant, which restricted the marks somewhat.
- (b) This was also often well done. Good answers had a clear idea of the context and made the passage their main focus, with carefully selected references to the wider text to support their points, for example showing how Ruth's description of America contrasted with Teddy's. They focused on the language in the dialogue, commenting on Lenny's imitation of different registers and his attempts to provoke Teddy, the contrast of his effusive politeness with Teddy's minimalistic answers and the contrast in the tone between Ruth's first speech – with its pauses and opportunities for visual impact – and her final lines. They looked carefully at the issues of meaning and language, with the best of the candidates relishing the flamboyance of 'apart from the known and the unknown, what else is there?' and explored Ruth's speech in detail, discussing the dramatic effect of repetition and stage business. There were some misreadings, the most serious being the number of candidates who thought that Teddy spoke the last five lines which are actually quite important in understanding Ruth. Some candidates did not understand that a table has often featured in philosophical discussions and saw it as a symbolic sexual object, though few could justify this by focusing on the impact of the repetition of the word 'take' or how it might be suggested in performance. Few candidates seemed to realise how hilarious Lenny's philosophical language is. Weaker candidates tended to discuss the scene in terms of the power struggle within a dysfunctional family and tended to treat the characters as if they were real, speculating on Teddy's motives for answering as he does and using the passage as a springboard for wider discussions about the characters.

Question 7. WOLE SOYINKA: *Death and the King's Horseman*

This was not a popular choice of text on this paper, and neither question was well done.

- (a) Candidates seem to find the issue of comedy rather difficult, but as it permeates the play, the question seemed to be a relevant one. Very few candidates opted for this question and produced limited, partial discussions focusing mainly on how comedy was used to mock the British offering as evidence the market girls' abuse of Amusa, but there was little sense of how this fitted into the overall theme and atmosphere of the play.
- (b) Again, very few attempted the passage. There was usually secure contextual knowledge, though weaker candidates spent too long giving an account of the back story and explaining the cultural background to it. The best candidates showed a clear awareness of the dramatic contrast of different styles of dialogue with some ability to select pertinent phrases. Some investigated the presentation of character through Elesin's monologue and the relationship between the Pilkings, though not many reached the stage of considering Elesin's response to Jane.

Question 8. VIRGINIA WOOLF: *To the Lighthouse*

This was a popular text with the (a) question very much the preferred option. Both questions allowed for some fine appreciation of textual detail. One of the key issues here was the way candidates had assimilated critical reading about the stream of consciousness technique and extra-textual material, particularly about the influence of Sigmund Freud.

- (a) This question produced the full range of answers with the best focusing well on the terms of the question. Able candidates placed the relationship within the context of the novel, the significance of the trip to the lighthouse, their competition for Mrs Ramsay's attention and sympathy and pointed out that in their need for a recognition of their feelings and value, they were both very similar. They examined the way the relationship was presented and discussed the effects of the use of various viewpoints and the impact of some of the imagery, informed by an understanding of the Oedipus complex. More modest answers showed with some pertinent detail how much James disliked his father at the start and how he came to be reconciled to him at the end. Weaker answers tended to be assertive, thin on detail or to spend too long dealing with social and historical background and Freud.
- (b) In many cases this key extract showed that many candidates were well prepared on the narrative technique and could apply what they had learnt to the passage. The best answers tracked the shifts in point of view and demonstrated how the technique allows characters to reveal aspects of their values and their feelings towards themselves and others. They focused on the language, the use of specific descriptive detail and the diction in the presentation of Mrs Ramsay and Lily, showing how the reader became aware of the ambivalence of Mrs Ramsay's feelings towards the engagement and Lily's towards Mrs Ramsay. Few candidates attempted to comment on the use of dialogue or could make constructive comments about the sentence structure. More modest answers tended to write descriptively with some insight into the characters and their feelings with some remarks about the effect of the stream of consciousness technique. Weaker answers relied on narrative summary and some of the commentaries were confused.

LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

Paper 9695/63

Twentieth Century Writing 63

General Comments

The overall difficulty of the paper was comparable with previous years. The key discriminators were the extent to which well-informed candidates could shape their knowledge to the task and demonstrate their understanding of how a writer shapes meaning by choice of language. Candidates should be advised of the need to focus more carefully on the terms of the questions and to refer back to them at strategic points in the essay. While practice on past papers is invaluable, there was evidence that too many candidates answering **(a)** questions were relying on pre-prepared answers. Those doing the **(b)** questions should understand that the passage is always the main focus of the response even when the question explicitly directs them to consider the wider text. Knowledge and understanding of the wider text will inform and support what they have to say about the passage and candidates are expected to make appropriate links to the wider text even when not directed, but to do well on the **(b)** question they should demonstrate a good understanding of how the literary or dramatic effects in passages have been generated. Examiners are rather surprised that there is little evidence of detailed work done on past **(b)** questions. Similarly, while biographical details or knowledge of the social or literary context of a work can inform a point, the main focus in the essay must be on the set texts; some answers on Atwood, Eliot, Soyinka, Woolf and particularly Churchill got the balance wrong.

Good scripts showed that candidates could make a range of relevant points, illustrate them with lots of brief pertinent quotations and follow up not just with attempts at personal interpretation, but appreciative analysis of how the words work to create meaning and effect. Candidates who often wrote quite fluently, sometimes produced weaker scripts, displaying a disappointing level of textual knowledge, a limited understanding of the writer's themes and a lack of confidence in the use of critical terms and ideas. This paper revealed that useful work is being done on narrative method, but few understand how comedy works and the ways humour can contribute to point of view, theme and dramatic effect. Although some candidates wrote very well on T. S. Eliot, many found it difficult to confidently discuss poetic methods and effects and candidates should always be discouraged from attempting any of the poetry **(b)** questions as unseens. Having said that, what impresses the Examiners most is the way many candidates demonstrate a lively, personal engagement with and response to their chosen texts, and the way many write mature, stimulating responses.

Comments on Specific Questions

Question 1. MARGARET ATWOOD: *Cat's Eye*

This was not such a popular choice of text this session, though candidates tended to show a good level of personal engagement with the text supported by detailed knowledge. The **(b)** question was the favoured option.

- (a)** There was some general understanding of the implications of the question with most candidates being able to explore Elaine's sense of herself at different periods of her life: the 'wild child', the victim, the 'mean mouth' the art candidate, wife mother and artist. The best answers used specific references and had lots of pertinent quotations to show how Elaine defined herself against other people. In exploring the relationship with Cordelia, for example, they used the 'twin' idea, and contrasted the way she perceived herself in relation to girls and women in contrast to her relationships with boys and men. They used the interview with Andrea to explore the mature woman and her attitude to feminism but detailed though these discussions were, they were not always very literary. Knowledge of the narrative structure could have been used to show how Elaine becomes a more integrated personality without digressing too much into psychoanalytical theories. Weaker answers gave indiscriminating accounts of Elaine's experience.



- (b) This passage was also well discussed by some candidates. At the more obvious level of plot and character, it offered opportunity to write about the coming of Cordelia into the childhood circle and what difference her presence made. Candidates who looked closely at the passage noticed the youthful innocence in the uncertainty surrounding the use of the horse chestnuts and the 'safe' and commented that at this stage Grace is prepared to challenge Cordelia's story of the 'dissolved dead people'. In order to show the significance of the passage they moved from the 'dare' to the later scenes of the trauma of Elaine's falling into the ravine to show the turning point in relationship with Cordelia and Elaine's adult visit to the area with its concrete bridge signifying that she was a more secure person. The best answers balanced this discussion with comments on the literary quality of the writing, commenting on the effect of the use of the present tense narrative, noting how the focus on the 'We' suggests Elaine's absorption into the group, with one candidate astutely commenting on the effect of the repetition of 'Cordelia says ... She says. She says...' to suggest that Elaine does not believe her either. Some responded to the 'gothic' atmosphere of the valley, commenting on the sensuous description and use of lists; others caught onto 'cats' and their 'eyes' and their symbolic connections in the novel. The symbolism of the 'nightshade' was also developed and its presence in a later painting. Essays from weaker candidates tended to be disjointed as they attempted to link details from the passage like Cordelia's relationship with her sisters, or the significance of 'Our Lady of Perpetual Help' to the wider text, or they restricted their discussion to aspects of plot and character.

Question 2. CARYL CHURCHILL: *Top Girls*

This was a popular text with both questions proving attractive though slightly more opted for the passage. Both questions forced the candidates to consider the structure of the play and strong candidates did well on either question. Weaker candidates sometimes gave the impression that they know more about the socio-historical and political background than the text itself.

- (a) Many candidates wrote well about the chronological versus the dramatic sequence and how the cost of Marlene's success was gradually revealed. Some candidates aptly pointed out that the play began in a fantasy or dream and ended in a nightmare with the best answers showing how the non-chronological presentation forced the audience to question the issues of women in the world rather than presenting them with answers. They showed how the selection and depiction of the characters in Act 1 universalises the female experience and raises the issue of progress and self-determination and the dramatic impact of the doubling of the actors. They clearly explained the dramatic irony of Angie's appearances in Act 2: the use of the dress and Marlene's certainty that 'she's not going to make it' and the dramatic impact of Act 3. They used the interview scenes to contrast the top girls with Mrs Kidd and Joyce in Act 3. They also looked at internal aspects of structure – how the contrast in Marlene and Mrs Kidd was used to manipulate the audience from distaste at Marlene's coldness to outrage at Mrs Kidd's request for her to stand down. More modest candidates attempted to discuss Churchill's concerns with some reference to the text although many drifted into tangential material about the Equal Pay Act and Thatcherism. Less able candidates found it difficult to deal with the issue of structure and wrote descriptively about the events as presented or limited their discussion to Act 1.
- (b) Many candidates chose to write about this passage, the discriminating factor being the extent to which they examined the extract and commented on it as drama rather than a socio-political document. Good candidates realised that 'the root of the disagreement was something more personal and significant and that this is merely echoed in their political differences'. They confidently used knowledge of the wider text to provide an insightful context for the characters' relationship which then informed their commentary on the extract. They explained why Joyce could not take Marlene's money, that there might be a bitter edge in the actor's voice over the fact that Marlene can 'always find work' and the question 'Who needs [men]?'. They pointed out that Joyce was as tough and determined as Marlene and some remembered that the characters have been drinking. They noted and discussed the realism and dramatic effects of the overlapping speech, the colloquialisms, the ellipsis in the sentence structure and hyperbolic conflation of Thatcher with Hitler, capped by the sneering 'Dadda's little parrot'. They put this into the wider context of Churchill's concerns about equality and that Marlene's success in the previous scenes is predicated on the abandonment of her family responsibilities. Less able candidates tended to limit their focus to the passage, were often rather vague as to the context and content: 'There seems to be some kind of resentment...' and gave character sketches. Too many, picking up on 'I believe in the individual', launched into detailed explanations of the difference between social and individual feminism, while some thought the play was anti-Thatcher propaganda and explained why. Very



few candidates looked at the effect of the writing within the dialogue on the dramatic effect of the way one character picks up on the words of a previous speech e.g. Look at me/I am looking at you.

Question 3 T. S. ELIOT: Prufrock and Other Observations, The Waste Land, and The Hollow Men

This was a fairly popular text with the **(b)** question proving to be the most popular option. Many candidates had an impressive detailed knowledge of the texts with the chief discriminating factor being their ability to shape the material to the task.

- (a)** Almost all the candidates who answered this question could identify various characters and discuss their 'spiritual poverty'. Some tended to provide a catalogue of spiritual failure and so many examples of the same thing were not very productive. The question asked 'By what means and with what effects..?' so it was disappointing that candidates who had an impressive amount of detail at their fingertips and lots of pertinent quotations did not discuss them in terms of poetic methods and effects. More able candidates talked in terms of how examples from mythology, allusions to other texts and the use of class universalises the theme. Sometimes there was relevant mention of the roles of Madame Sosostris and Tiresias, his significance and the fact that he observed 'the young man carbuncular' and the typist. Generally, these and the other obvious characters, were used for what they contributed to the meaning rather than as a focus for discussion of choice of language and specific detail, the use of imagery, and variety of rhythm, in particular the sense of the spoken voice and how all these express and evoke feelings. Less able candidates provided a generalised portrait of some of the characters and made generalised comments as to their significance.
- (b)** Candidates performed better on the passage, almost always showing extensive knowledge of the whole text with some understanding of the task. Candidates dealt with the persona's dilemma and relevant themes, commented on the structure and its effects and illustrated points with pertinent quotations from the wider text and the passage. They focused on the use of repetition, the use of specific detail, the significance of the allusions to Dante and *Twelfth Night*, and gave sensitive explanations of the effects of key images. Though most commented on the presence of the rhyme, few could comment on its effect, how it contributed to the sense of character and mood. More modest answers often opted for a running commentary, showed understanding of the character and themes but were less assured in their comments on effect; they tended to observe and explain the meaning of images in a pedestrian way. Weaker answers concentrated on the character of Prufrock, seeing him as a representative of modern man but treating him too much as a real person with little on the poetic methods and effects; they might have been writing about a short story.

Question 4. LES MURRAY: from Selected Poems

There were no takers for the **(a)** question and the very few who attempted the **(b)** question as an unseen were not equipped to grapple with the complexity of the ideas of the effects of the language in the time. Essays were disjointed, poor attempts at paraphrase with partial discussions of ideas.

Question 5. R. K. Narayan: The English Teacher

This was a popular choice of text and there were a number of essays on both questions which showed a real personal response to the novel and its style.

- (a)** The key discriminating factor here was the extent to which candidates could explore the idea of India within the context of narrative method because the question asked 'By what means...'. Good answers displayed a sound understanding of this and candidates were able to range widely across the text picking out examples of eastern cultural values and western colonial oppression, often focusing on the roles of Susila and the headmaster in contributing to Krishna's journey of enlightenment. They had detailed specific references and pertinent quotations available and the comments in the best answers showed sensitive, critical appreciation of the narrative methods, the use of point of view, the structure of the novel and the way choice of language conveyed feeling. More modest answers tended to list relevant aspects: the educational system, religious rituals and spirituality or family values and explained where to find them in the text, sometimes in convincing detail. They referred to the portrayal of Malgudi but found it difficult to develop and illustrate this idea. Weaker answers tended to be effusive in agreement with the question but thin on detailed knowledge, or told the story with little attention to narrative methods and effects.



- (b) There was usually a useful awareness of the context, with stronger candidates pointing out the sad irony of this moment of mutual delight being a prelude to the tragedy of Susila's death. Many were able to discuss the first person narration and its effects and also the revelation of character and concerns. The comedy of the bossy contractor (often confused with Sastri) and his boy evoked over-serious comment on the social condition of inequality in India, but most people praised Krishna for his sensitive and skilful intervention. Strong answers noted Krishna's private reflections and some appreciated the humour of the specific details in 'if a census on this subject were taken, ten thousand persons would be found to be bullying ten thousand others.....', they commented on Narayan's description of the houses comparing the diction 'very narrow suffocating veranda...wide compound, broad windows...spaciousness...' and even weaker candidates noted the significant use of the jasmine creeper. More modest answers focused on character, on the presentation of Susila as the concerned mother and manager of the finances, Krishna as the kindly, romantic husband and Sastri/contractor as a salesman. Weaker answers often had valid points which were under-developed or tended to get sidetracked into issues such as 'unpredictability' and 'social class' while others just told the story.

Question 6. HAROLD PINTER: *The Homecoming*

This was a very popular text and candidates seemed to choose the (a) and (b) options in equal numbers. The discriminating factor in both questions was the extent to which candidates showed awareness of dramatic method and effect and shaped their material to the task.

- (a) This was a straightforward essay question which enabled even weaker candidates to present knowledge of the text and consider Ruth's first entrance and interactions with Teddy, her subsequent encounter with Lenny and all her later victories and negotiations. Better candidates were distinguished by the way they explored her role and effect on the play. They commented on the way she is used to challenge a conventional moral framework and the audience's expectations, with the best, picking up the qualification in Pinter's own statement and debating the extent to which she was 'free'. Many argued that she frees herself from one stereotype – that of wife and mother to take on another – that of prostitute. Others suggested that she was free in the sense that she did not just have self-determination, but dominated the household. These arguments were supported by copious quotation to show the effect of her use of language, particularly surprising questions, silence and stage business. Most candidates could discuss the meaning and effect of the final tableau. Unfortunately many candidates who obviously knew the play well, converted this question into one about the power struggle and restricted the discussion to showing how she became dominant, which restricted the marks somewhat.
- (b) This was also often well done. Good answers had a clear idea of the context and made the passage their main focus, with carefully selected references to the wider text to support their points, for example showing how Ruth's description of America contrasted with Teddy's. They focused on the language in the dialogue, commenting on Lenny's imitation of different registers and his attempts to provoke Teddy, the contrast of his effusive politeness with Teddy's minimalistic answers and the contrast in the tone between Ruth's first speech – with its pauses and opportunities for visual impact – and her final lines. They looked carefully at the issues of meaning and language, with the best of the candidates relishing the flamboyance of 'apart from the known and the unknown, what else is there?' and explored Ruth's speech in detail, discussing the dramatic effect of repetition and stage business. There were some misreadings, the most serious being the number of candidates who thought that Teddy spoke the last five lines which are actually quite important in understanding Ruth. Some candidates did not understand that a table has often featured in philosophical discussions and saw it as a symbolic sexual object, though few could justify this by focusing on the impact of the repetition of the word 'take' or how it might be suggested in performance. Few candidates seemed to realise how hilarious Lenny's philosophical language is. Weaker candidates tended to discuss the scene in terms of the power struggle within a dysfunctional family and tended to treat the characters as if they were real, speculating on Teddy's motives for answering as he does and using the passage as a springboard for wider discussions about the characters.



Question 7. WOLE SOYINKA: *Death and the King's Horseman*

This was not a popular choice of text on this paper, and neither question was well done.

- (a) Candidates seem to find the issue of comedy rather difficult, but as it permeates the play, the question seemed to be a relevant one. Very few candidates opted for this question and produced limited, partial discussions focusing mainly on how comedy was used to mock the British offering as evidence the market girls' abuse of Amusa, but there was little sense of how this fitted into the overall theme and atmosphere of the play.
- (b) Again, very few attempted the passage. There was usually secure contextual knowledge, though weaker candidates spent too long giving an account of the back story and explaining the cultural background to it. The best candidates showed a clear awareness of the dramatic contrast of different styles of dialogue with some ability to select pertinent phrases. Some investigated the presentation of character through Elesin's monologue and the relationship between the Pilkings, though not many reached the stage of considering Elesin's response to Jane.

Question 8. VIRGINIA WOOLF: *To the Lighthouse*

This was a popular text with the (a) question very much the preferred option. Both questions allowed for some fine appreciation of textual detail. One of the key issues here was the way candidates had assimilated critical reading about the stream of consciousness technique and extra-textual material, particularly about the influence of Sigmund Freud.

- (a) This question produced the full range of answers with the best focusing well on the terms of the question. Able candidates placed the relationship within the context of the novel, the significance of the trip to the lighthouse, their competition for Mrs Ramsay's attention and sympathy and pointed out that in their need for a recognition of their feelings and value, they were both very similar. They examined the way the relationship was presented and discussed the effects of the use of various viewpoints and the impact of some of the imagery, informed by an understanding of the Oedipus complex. More modest answers showed with some pertinent detail how much James disliked his father at the start and how he came to be reconciled to him at the end. Weaker answers tended to be assertive, thin on detail or to spend too long dealing with social and historical background and Freud.
- (b) In many cases this key extract showed that many candidates were well prepared on the narrative technique and could apply what they had learnt to the passage. The best answers tracked the shifts in point of view and demonstrated how the technique allows characters to reveal aspects of their values and their feelings towards themselves and others. They focused on the language, the use of specific descriptive detail and the diction in the presentation of Mrs Ramsay and Lily, showing how the reader became aware of the ambivalence of Mrs Ramsay's feelings towards the engagement and Lily's towards Mrs Ramsay. Few candidates attempted to comment on the use of dialogue or could make constructive comments about the sentence structure. More modest answers tended to write descriptively with some insight into the characters and their feelings with some remarks about the effect of the stream of consciousness technique. Weaker answers relied on narrative summary and some of the commentaries were confused.



LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

Paper 9695/71

Comment and Appreciation 71

General comments

All Examiners reported some very good work on this Paper; some answers were of course rather less confident, and some showed relatively little critical confidence, relying upon either simple paraphrase or just a listing of technical facts and material, but much more common were those which demonstrated at least some genuine and sensitive critical perception, together with an understanding of how each writer creates her or his particular effects for the reader. Particularly pleasing this year was the fact that so many of the poetry answers – and virtually every candidate responded to **Question 2** – showed a clear understanding of Newton’s craft and poetic methods, with far less of the general and non-specific responses that have been widespread in previous years. Unusually but perhaps understandably, the two prose passages presented more problems, possibly because, as will be discussed below, both passages were in different ways quite elusive and ambiguous in what they said; some candidates appeared unsettled by their uncertainties.

Timing was very rarely an apparent problem, and Examiners saw almost no evidence that candidates had any difficulties in completing two good and full answers in the allotted two hours. Written English was generally good and often excellent, with very few instances where meaning was difficult to grasp because of inaccuracies of syntax or spelling; handwriting was, however, a quite significant concern in rather too many cases: Examiners are of course fully aware that work was necessarily written under considerable pressure, and did not worry at all about the occasional crossing-out or hurriedly added afterthought – scripts are, after all, only first draft-material, without time to be polished in any way – but there were too many scripts whose handwriting was quite seriously hard to read. This is not in itself a “punishable” offence in any sense at all, but it is clearly of huge importance that candidates appreciate that Examiners have to be able to read and understand what is presented to them.

Candidates are always, and quite rightly so, encouraged to use technical critical terms when writing answers to this Paper, but care does need to be taken that they use the *correct* terms. Too often every year – and this was no exception – Examiners read that poems that are strictly metrical in nature are free verse; or that poems that have clear and unarguable rhyme schemes are blank verse (itself a very precise term, meaning more than just unrhymed poetry); poems are often called ballads when in fact there is no narrative or story attached to them at all; prose that contains a character’s thoughts is referred to as being a stream of consciousness, again a very exact term, and certainly not one that can apply to either **Question 1** or **3** here. Finally, when candidates do use critical terms, whether correctly or not, two things are vital: there is no need whatsoever to *explain what the term means* – the Examiners know this; and candidates must explore and explain the *effects* that the technique or device is having – simply to identify it is of no particular value.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

This extract was by far the more popular of the two prose passages, and while its doubts and uncertainties raised all manner of speculation among candidates it certainly attracted some very thoughtful and often very personally-felt responses. Most candidates seemed well aware that the speaker is herself doubtful about why and indeed how her separation from her husband has taken place – her opening sentence makes this immediately clear; her feelings for him are very mixed, and she, like her readers, seems puzzled and confused about her own emotions, and indeed about what exactly he has done. Who, for instance, is “her” in line 40? Is she, as some candidate suggested, a woman with whom he has had an adulterous affair? Is she one of their daughters, to whom something dreadful has happened? What is “it” in line 41? There is no clarity within the passage, adding to the lack of certainty which Forster is conveying, and which good answers identified as one of the strongest characteristics of the passage. If candidates tried to identify “her” and “it” – and most did – then Examiners did not look for any “correct” interpretation, and certainly did not reward or penalise accordingly. Even the more extreme speculations, such as the few who assumed that the



house had collapsed and killed a daughter, or that she had been kidnapped, raped or murdered, were accepted and rewarded according to how confidently and aptly these ideas were *used* in answers.

Some candidates seemed puzzled by the time spent by the speaker on describing the house which the family first lived in, but many also suggested, with varying degrees of confidence and detailed linking, that it was being used by her as a kind of symbol or parallel to the marriage itself. This was certainly an often fruitful approach; one particularly interesting point was that it is never referred to as their “home”, but simply as a “house”, with implications of a lack of intimacy or commitment. An absence of security and confidence was also frequently noted by candidates, supported by plenty of quotations; lines 8, 13, 18, 32, 45 for example, all contain phrases that aptly imply this. And the last paragraph of the whole passage strongly reinforces the sense that the speaker could completely lose all her confidence; Forster’s significant repetition of the word “struggling” was noted by candidates.

The writer’s name – Forster – has just been used, and it is worth stressing here that not enough candidates made any apparent differentiation between her as the creator of the speaker; there is no evidence at all that this is autobiographical. A few tried to make it appear so, by the rather unconvincing method of saying that the name of the headmistress in the penultimate paragraph is nearly the same as Margaret Forster – an idea that might have carried a little weight if the speaker had herself been the headmistress.

There was plenty of discussion of the speaker’s nature and personality; as already suggested, she was generally seen as uncertain and lacking confidence, but several also saw her as friendly and “chatty, as if speaking to a friend”, as an admirably spirited “modern woman” who gets on with an independent life despite all her problems, as someone who can – despite her disagreements with him – admire and respect her husband (though a few read this admiration as sarcasm, without suggesting why).

Candidates should certainly be advised against allowing themselves the luxury of making general comments about their own lives, or how others should live their lives; personal responses to the ways in which a passage is written are of course important, but the passage itself must absolutely and always remain the centre of attention.

Question 2

A very large number of candidates responded to this poem, often with great warmth and sensitivity to the situation and mood that Newton creates; most saw it – and some used the expression “carpe diem” – as a plea by the poet to make the most of whatever short time is left with one whom you love. The poem’s title itself implies that this may indeed be the very last time the pair can share time together; the situation is very specifically tied to the First World War, but wider general ideas could certainly be usefully adduced, provided as always that they were firmly secured in what is said in the poem itself.

Most answers spoke in some way of the highly structured form that Newton uses, and related this to the way in which she suggests the importance of not allowing possible future pains or loss to affect the present intimate moment between the two lovers. It is indeed a highly formalised poem, though there were unfortunately many who failed to see how it is actually shaped – many, for example, denied that there is any rhyme pattern (in fact each stanza has a very exact and tight rhyme scheme), and surprisingly many suggested that it was written in free verse (in fact nine of the ten lines in each stanza is an almost perfect iambic pentameter).

Most candidates, however, were able to make sensible and often very perceptive comments about some at least of the poem’s very rich imagery – the flames of the fire echoing or representing the love shared by the two, and the rain and storm-clouds outside the room mirroring the coming separation, and the possible death that the man will face on his return to the battle front. The way in which the two stanzas are contrasted but balanced was noted by many – in the first the speaker refuses to think of the coming morning, and concentrates upon the warmth and security of the private and intimate fireside, while in the second she accepts that time cannot be stopped, and that her lover/husband must leave, and that she knows that in reality he will soon, like this last leave, be “but a memory”.

There was plenty of personal response to some of the words and phrases, though this was not always entirely secure or convincing; the word “hearthstone”, for example, was seen by most as reflective of the intimate homely nature of the scene, with occasional suggestions that the word “heart” inside it was significant (not a very likely interpretation), and even that the word really meant “tombstone”; the phrase “furious flight” was quite often read as meaning flights of bomber planes, echoed by “grey wings” later in the poems (ignoring the fact that such aeroplanes did not exist in the First World War); slightly more convincing was the possibility that the word “pane” in line 10 is a noun upon the word “pain”.

Examiners were careful as always not to reject or penalise any such suggestions, however unlikely or unconvincing, provided that they were argued and supported from what is actually in the text itself. What they did not reward highly, however, were the relatively few answers that simply listed devices and techniques, without relating them to what the poem itself is saying.

Question 3

There were relatively few answers to this passage, though candidates who wrote about it undoubtedly found it particularly enjoyable in many ways; its Gothic extravagance and ideas were noted and explored by most, many being clearly convinced that it was deliberately melodramatic as a way of exaggerating and so parodying the conventions of the genre. Gothic elements are certainly abundant – the winter twilight, the dead of night, the dull heavy bell, the castle battlements, the diabolical sneer of the dark-suited stranger, the innocent young girl, and so on – and much of the language used seems very close to pastiche – “sensitive auditor”, “whence he came”, “inexplicable sentiments”, “his saturnine features”, “a dark smile of unutterable meaning” and so on.

As always, however, Examiners were not looking for answers that adopted this angle, though they did justly reward those who argued and supported a case for the passage being parody; equally, however, reward was duly given to answers that took it entirely seriously. It was perhaps quite hard to agree with answers that said this was a story about love between two young people; certainly Clotilda is falling in love, but here is every evidence that the stranger has other motives than love – he is certainly not just a harmless young man, and indeed is almost without doubt a danger to Clotilda. As more than one answer suggested, he is surely the embodiment in many ways of all that identifies a Byronic hero, though without the underlying goodness that this term implies – he is far too devilish and indeed “diabolical” in his seduction to be anything but pure evil, though it is perhaps unlikely that the candidate is correct who said that “he could be anyone dangerous, a rapist, a therapist, a lawyer”.

Candidates who took the passage as an entirely serious piece of narrative made some good points, of course; there is some attractive and appealing description in it, especially in paragraph two (lines 29-35 in particular), and the stranger’s character is sufficiently well drawn and developed to make him at least reasonably convincing – as he certainly is to the Baron and his family. Clotilda’s simple innocence is appealing, though the few candidates who misinterpreted the word “auditor” in line 34 led themselves into some difficulties: as “his fair auditor”, she is merely the girl listening to what the stranger says, not an auditor in the modern sense as somebody scientifically assessing his wealth and therefore suitability as a suitor for her hand in marriage. And given the Baron’s initial uncertainty and doubt about who the stranger is, and whether he should in fact be allowed to stay, it seems very unlikely that the whole episode is merely a birthday treat for Clotilda.

There were finally some good and perceptive comments on some of the language used in the passage; some candidates clearly found the writing to be rich and appealing. For example, the “merry peal” of bells in line 1 contrasts with the “unusual solemnity” of the clock in line 8; the word “dungeon” at this moment (line 7) has immediate overtones of entrapment and vulnerability rather than security; there is a wonderfully doleful and ominous sound in the phrase “the dull heavy bell” (line 20); the sibilance of “the slumbering softness of his smile” was seen by some candidates as proof of the stranger’s serpent-like guile and duplicity, though none commented on the curiously disturbing adjective “slumbering” here; some candidates also noted the frequent references in the passage to time and the passage of time – suggestive of inevitability and of inescapability. While on one level this may be seen as a fairly routine and unexceptional piece of Gothic fantasy it does in fact have a very rich and very powerful attractiveness in many ways.

LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

Paper 9695/72

Comment and Appreciation 72

General comments

All Examiners reported some good work on this Paper; some answers were of course rather less confident, and some showed relatively little critical confidence, relying upon either simple paraphrase or just a listing of technical facts and material, but much more common were those which demonstrated at least some genuine and sensitive critical perception, together with an understanding of how each writer creates her or his particular effects for the reader.

Answers were spread quite evenly across the three questions, and none of these seemed to present any particular difficulties to candidates, though some did appear uncertain about exactly what Philip's feelings are in the third extract – but then he himself is rather uncertain, so a little doubt is almost inevitable.

Timing was very rarely an apparent problem, and Examiners saw almost no evidence that candidates had any difficulties in completing two good and full answers in the allotted two hours. Written English was generally good and often excellent, with very few instances where meaning was difficult to grasp because of inaccuracies of syntax or spelling; handwriting was, however, a quite significant concern in rather too many cases: Examiners are of course fully aware that work was necessarily written under considerable pressure, and did not worry at all about the occasional crossing-out or hurriedly added afterthought – scripts are, after all, only first draft-material, without time to be polished in any way – but there were too many scripts whose handwriting was quite seriously hard to read. This is not in itself a “punishable” offence in any sense at all, but it is clearly of huge importance that candidates appreciate that Examiners have to be able to read and understand quickly what is presented to them.

Candidates are always, and quite rightly so, encouraged to use technical critical terms when writing answers to this Paper, but care does need to be taken that they use the *correct* terms. Too often every year – and this was no exception – Examiners read that poems that are strictly metrical in nature are free verse; or that poems that have clear and unarguable rhyme schemes are blank verse (itself a very precise term, meaning more than just unrhymed poetry); poems are often called ballads when in fact there is no narrative or story attached to them at all; prose that contains a character's thoughts is referred to as being a stream of consciousness, again a very exact term, and certainly not one that can apply to either **Question 1** or **3** here. Finally, when candidates do use critical terms, whether correctly or not, two things are vital: there is no need whatsoever to *explain what the term means* – the Examiners know this; and candidates must explore and explain the *effects* that the technique or device is having – simply to identify it is of no particular value.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

Candidates were asked to pay particular attention to the ways in which Adichie portrays the three characters in this passage; most answers clearly took at least some note of the words “the ways”, and explored some of the words and phrases used, but a disappointing number responded with little beyond narrative and/or simple character descriptions, sometimes almost as if Papa-Nnukwu and his grandchildren are real people rather than fictional creations. Such answers could be, and were, rewarded appropriately if they quoted from the passage in support of what they said, but the highest marks inevitably and rightly went to answers that made it very clear that Adichie herself wrote the passage, and that looked at the words and phrases that she uses.

There was a lot of sympathy in answers towards the character of Papa-Nnukwu as drawn by Adichie, with the best discussing the different views of him that the writer gives us – the straight description in the opening paragraph, for example, the feelings of care and love that Kambili shows, and the slightly less warm but certainly courteous affection shown by Jaja. He is a man of great age, devoted to his Nigerian traditions and to his grandchildren, while very much aware of the split in the family that lines 42 to 46 describe, but also a man of humour and, as many candidates noted, he has a teasing affection for Kambili particularly (lines 21 to 22 show this well); indeed despite his clear infirmity (he finds swallowing difficult, for example) he has in line 12 eyes that “twinkled with mischief” – the younger man is shown to be still very much alive in the old body.

Kambili is clearly deeply fond of her grandfather, despite her dislike of the smell of cassava that clings to him, and her refusal to leave at the end of the passage is evidence of her caring and worrying nature; Jaja is polite – to the extent that as with Kambili Papa-Nnukwu finds some entertainment but also a pleasure and even some admiration in what the boy says (lines 61 to 62).

Adichie has drawn a quiet but moving moment here, and answers that were able to show an appreciation of at least some of what she has drawn were well marked.

Question 2

Some sensitive and perceptive comparisons were offered here, and the many candidates who responded to the two poems undoubtedly saw and felt their different but equally moving responses to bereavement in wartime. Allen’s poem acknowledges, albeit unwillingly, that her lover/fiancé is not returning, and in it she speaks to him with affection and a kind of warm resignation to her loss, while never forgetting what life with him was once like; Brittain’s, by contrast, is much more unrelievedly sad – nothing, she says, can ever be the same again.

Both poems – a point noted and explored by the best candidates – are very strictly written, in that their verse forms, rhyme schemes and rhythms are entirely regular; this is in part of course because of poetic conventions when they were written, but also because despite their deep and powerful emotions both poets are able to control and restrain it within formally devised and tight structures. Many candidates spent a good deal of time noting that Allen’s poem is in a sense a double sonnet, while Brittain’s is in a simpler four-line stanza form, perhaps reflecting the more complex emotions felt and displayed by Allen. What mattered to Examiners, however, was not just that answers expressed this simple knowledge of poetic form, but what – if anything – they made of it; as with rhyme schemes, alliteration, assonance, onomatopoeia, caesuras and other devices, simple identification and/or illustration is not enough for a good mark – Examiners look for an attempt at least to explore the effects and impacts on the reader that these all have.

There were of course some interesting and sensitive individual comments on both poems, and even the two titles led to discussion – “The Wind on the Downs” suggesting a kind of bare and empty bleakness, unlike the tentative uncertainty of “Perhaps –”. Allen’s poem was praised by some candidates for its honesty, contrasted with the “platitudes” (one candidate’s word) of Brittain; several commented on Allen’s intensity of emotion (“so fully imagined in her memory that he is actually opening the gate” as one put it), or of her realistic bluntness (“you are dead”) compared with “the endearing softness” of Brittain’s “You have passed away”. Quite common, too, was the idea that because neither man is named – though Allen’s picture is quite detailed and individual – and referred to in both cases simply as “you”, the poems can be read in a more universal sense of death and loss.

As always, Examiners looked for understanding and personal response, of course, but for higher marks they wanted evidence that such response was based upon exploration of the two texts themselves, and that candidates had made at least some attempt – and these attempts were often very good – to explore and discuss the two poets’ choices of words and images, not just to illustrate them. In the words of the mark scheme, there had to be “*evidence of some understanding of ways in which the writers’ choices of structure, form and language shape meanings and effect*” – and for the highest marks this understanding must be “*intelligent*” and “*very good*”.

Question 3

As noted above, some candidates found parts of this passage a little hard to grasp, but despite this there were some very good and thoughtfully argued ideas about it. The most problematic part seemed to be between lines 20 to 28, where it is certainly possible to see Philip as hard-hearted and callous in his view of the lives that some people were in his view destined to live, and in his apparently harsh view that it was actually not an entirely bad thing that the young woman has died; on the other hand, of course, he can equally be seen as entirely on the side of her and others like her – if she and others like her did not simply accept their fates then they would rise up and rebel against the society that had condemned them to such a cruel life as he imagines in these lines. Philip himself is surely drawn sympathetically though entirely realistically; he is training as a doctor, sees suffering, unhappiness and death every day, and far from ignoring it without any humanity he in fact is drawn by the writer as being a deeply sympathetic young man.

He is, too, portrayed at the very start of the passage as weary, after a long and undoubtedly stressful night in the hospital. The view of London at dawn that is drawn by Maugham reflects Philip's state of mind – like the city, where “everything grew pale, and cold, and grey”, this is how he feels about the young woman who has just died; London is said to be “like a city of the dead”, and the one or two candidates who likened the River Thames to the mythical River Styx, across which the dead had to travel in Greek mythology, were making a thoughtful connection. Whether or not this was in the writer's mind we cannot know, but the idea is valid – death is shown by him to be very much around Philip and in his mind as well. And as day itself breaks in the last few lines of the passage, and as colour returns to the view, so Philip's contemplative sadness quietly disappears as he sees “the beauty of the world”; “beside that nothing seemed to matter” – the writer is certainly not brushing aside the death of the young woman and the agony of her husband, but suggesting that whatever the tragedies and horrors that lie so close below the surface life must and does continue. The movement of the passage is both literally and metaphorically a journey from death to renewed life.

There is some striking language in the passage, not just in the descriptions of London and the river, but also in the imaginative picture that Maugham creates in Philip's mind: the boy is like “a stricken beast” – his humanity is lost and he becomes simply animal at this terrible moment; the hospital room is “bare” and “squalid”; as the girl grew older in Philip's imagining her beauty becomes “slatternly”, and her hands “like the claws of an old animal”. There is much here to explore, and many candidates found plenty to say.

LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

Paper 9695/73

Comment and Appreciation 73

General comments

All Examiners reported some good work on this Paper; some answers were of course rather less confident, and some showed relatively little critical confidence, relying upon either simple paraphrase or just a listing of technical facts and material, but much more common were those which demonstrated at least some genuine and sensitive critical perception, together with an understanding of how each writer creates her or his particular effects for the reader.

Answers were spread quite evenly across the three questions, and none of these seemed to present any particular difficulties to candidates, though some did appear uncertain about exactly what Philip's feelings are in the third extract – but then he himself is rather uncertain, so a little doubt is almost inevitable.

Timing was very rarely an apparent problem, and Examiners saw almost no evidence that candidates had any difficulties in completing two good and full answers in the allotted two hours. Written English was generally good and often excellent, with very few instances where meaning was difficult to grasp because of inaccuracies of syntax or spelling; handwriting was, however, a quite significant concern in rather too many cases: Examiners are of course fully aware that work was necessarily written under considerable pressure, and did not worry at all about the occasional crossing-out or hurriedly added afterthought – scripts are, after all, only first draft-material, without time to be polished in any way – but there were too many scripts whose handwriting was quite seriously hard to read. This is not in itself a “punishable” offence in any sense at all, but it is clearly of huge importance that candidates appreciate that Examiners have to be able to read and understand quickly what is presented to them.

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LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

Paper 9695/08

Coursework

General Comments

This was a very good session, with good work from many Centres, where it was very evident that teachers and candidates were thoroughly confident in what they should do, and how best to submit work that met all the relevant marking criteria; there were, as always, some problems in some Centres, but the overall picture was of secure and critically aware responses to an interesting range of texts and tasks. Moderation of the work was enjoyable and frequently stimulating; it was very good indeed to be able to share in what for most candidates had clearly been a thoroughly worthwhile learning experience.

There was a wide range of texts – please see the list below – and a very wide range of tasks. What was particularly pleasing was the fact that even where, as was the case in almost all Centres, most candidates had studied the same texts there was a range of different and often entirely individual tasks to be addressed. This meant that while there were inevitably some similarities and overlapping of contents within any group of folders, there was also much more evidence of fresh and independent response rather than of simple learnt or joint ideas. Many candidates made use of other critical material, and there was useful evidence that some had clearly undertaken personal private research to find such material – this is not in itself a syllabus requirement, of course, but when undertaken helpfully and relevantly it did add weight to the arguments being proposed.

The Marking Criteria, against which all work must be assessed, make some quite challenging demands if work is to be placed within the top two marking bands (that is, with marks of 36 upwards), and especially if it is to be placed within the top band (44 upwards). Knowledge and understanding of the two selected texts is required to be secure and detailed, though simple narrative and/or paraphrase will not go far to address other requirements; in a sense, this knowledge needs to be almost incidental rather than central, with detail being used to support and illustrate points being made, and not just for its own sake. What matters far more is what is *done* with the knowledge.

Candidates are expected to show also an '*understanding of theme, characterisation, linguistic features and other textual issues*' for a mark of 44 or more, together with '*some awareness of literary conventions and contexts, techniques and genre characteristics*'. This is a really demanding list of skills that need to be shown, but what it is even more challenging but at the same time essential is that all these must be used in such a way as to '*address this knowledge and understanding with sustained relevance to the issues raised by the questions*'. Simply being able to identify and even to quote examples of this kind of material is not enough – it must be used appropriately though necessarily briefly. There were, as there always are, instances where candidates showed an ability to identify some or even all of the required skills, but who failed properly to do more than this; equally there were some – rather more, in fact – who showed good or even excellent knowledge of their texts, but who failed partly or entirely to show any properly critical or exploratory skill in discussing how the writers concerned had created their particular effects. The weakest area generally lay in an unwillingness to look closely and in at least some critical detail at any parts of the texts – paraphrase was far more common than focused discussion.

As noted above, some candidates showed evidence of wider reading, often quoting several alternative critical views and interpretations of their texts. Finding such material is generally quite easy: there will be reviewers' comments on or inside a paperback edition of a text; there will be its blurb; teachers' notes or class discussions may be recalled; and if candidates have internet access there is a wealth of available ideas, some more helpful than others, but certainly rich. What matters, however, is that such critical ideas are *used*, and *engaged with*, not simply quoted; they must be a means by which a personal response is worked towards, not as an end in themselves. The use of alternative views is not in fact one of the marking criteria, so while often very helpful as a means to an end, care does need to be taken that vital words are not wasted which could have been more appropriately used in other ways.

What is required, however, and certainly for marks of 44 upwards, is possible 'evidence of sensitive awareness of the contexts in which the literary texts studied were written and understood'. Again, however, simply introducing a few biographical ideas, or some knowledge of social or cultural history is not enough in itself; what matters is how such contexts influenced the way the texts were written, and how changing expectations now in the early 21st century may influence how contemporary readers or audiences respond. Again, too, candidates must remember that this requirement is relatively low in the 'pecking order' of the top-band marking criteria; the really important demands are for individual, fresh, detailed exploration and appreciation of how the texts are written – the language used, the ways in which themes and characters are presented, the ways in which poems are structured as well as what they say, the dramatic or theatrical effects of a piece of drama.

Hints have already been dropped about the need for brevity and focus, and it must be stressed again how important it is that candidates keep their work within the 2000 – 3000 word limits. The huge majority do this, but there are a few who allow themselves to move beyond 3000, occasionally by several hundred or even several thousand words. This point has been made in these Reports to Centres many times before, but clearly has to be said again: to allow a candidate to exceed the limit is a breach of the exam regulation, and it is also clearly unjust to those many others who keep to the rules. Centres simply must not submit overlong work; if candidates do present such folders, they must be read only up to the 3000th word, and marked accordingly; if the Moderator receives overlong work that has not been assessed in this way by the Centre, then the work may simply have to be returned for re-marking.

This aside, administration was generally good this session, though two very simple points need to be made to Centres: please enclose all the relevant paperwork – MS1 mark-sheets, candidate assessment summary forms, candidates' cover-sheets; and please do not use plastic folders or wallets – work should simply be stapled together, or by means of a treasury tag, but never just left as a series of loose sheets!

Some texts successfully used this session:

Prose:	Ian McEwan	<i>Atonement</i>
	Annie Proulx	<i>The Shipping News</i>
	Evelyn Waugh	<i>A Handful of Dust; Brideshead Revisited</i>
	Margaret Atwood	<i>The Handmaid's Tale</i>
	Bram Stoker	<i>Dracula</i>
	Ernest Hemingway	<i>The Old Man and The Sea</i>
	Mohsin Hamid	<i>The Reluctant Fundamentalist</i>
	George Eliot	<i>Silas Marner</i>
	E. M. Forster	<i>A Room With A View</i>
	Thomas Hardy	<i>Tess of the d'Urbervilles</i>
	F. Scott Fitzgerald	<i>The Great Gatsby</i>
	Henry James	<i>Washington Square</i>
	Iris Murdoch	<i>The Bell</i>
Graham Greene	<i>Brighton Rock</i>	
Poetry:	Ted Hughes	
	Philip Larkin	
	Seamus Heaney	
	John Milton	
	e e cummings	
	John Keats	
Christina Rossetti		
Drama:	William Shakespeare	<i>Othello</i>
	Edward Albee	<i>Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?</i>
	Tennessee Williams	<i>Cat on a Hot Tin Roof; A Streetcar Named Desire</i>
	Arthur Miller	<i>All My Sons</i>
	Alan Ayckbourn	<i>A Small Family Business</i>