

LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

Paper 9695/31
Poetry and Prose

Key Messages

- For high marks, candidates need to know their texts in great detail to make secure references and use quotations to support points.
- Answers should always focus on the writing and the author's language and literary methods.
- Answers to **(b)** passage questions in particular must be very detailed, commenting very closely on the writing of the extract. Poetry answers should focus on the set poem.
- Answers should focus on the writing of the texts, avoiding dwelling on the biography of their authors.
- Candidates should focus more closely on the language, imagery and structure of prose and drama as well as poetry.

General Comments

In the course of this session, Examiners read some sophisticated and subtle responses to the questions on the examination papers, demonstrating an assured knowledge and understanding of the texts, often accompanied by a warm appreciation of them. In many cases, not just at the top of the mark range, it was very clear from the engagement of the writing that candidates had enjoyed their set texts and gained much from their studies. Those who showed an appreciation of the writers' craft, their choices of form, structure, imagery and language, were the most successful, recognising not only plot and character, but crucially, how those elements are constructed in the writing.

The skills of close reading and analysis are particularly important in the passage based questions, where every question demands this kind of close commentary on the writing of the extract or poem. All answers on the paper require quotation to support points, but it is vital that candidates examine the writing of the selected passages in very close analytical detail, whether it is poetry, prose or drama.

Question Specific Comments 9695/31

Question 1

Thomas Hardy: *Selected Poems*

- (a)** This question was relished by some candidates, who chose appropriate poems and wrote informed answers about the nature of the personas created in them by Hardy. A particularly successful choice was 'The Ruined Maid', with strong answers looking at the interplay of the two women's voices as they discuss the changes that have occurred. There were perceptive comments on the simple, uneducated vocabulary used to create the voice of the central speaker and very strong responses noted the ambiguity of 'melia's replies. Other poems used effectively were 'He Never Expected Much', 'The Man He Killed' and 'The Haunter'. Candidates who attempted the question with reference only to Emma poems struggled, as did those whose writing lapsed into a narrative summary of the chosen poems without fully acknowledging the question.

- (b) Answers on 'The Going' were often constrained by accounts of Hardy's life and relationships, sometimes serving as a whole page introduction with no direct relevance to the question. The question asked candidates to show their understanding of Hardy's choices of language, imagery and form in the expression of grief; it did not ask for the biography of the writer. A little context can be useful, used relevantly and judiciously, but here it was more often an impediment to a successful answer to the question. More focused answers looked at Hardy's use of pathetic fallacy, the questioning tone, the use of memory, the change of pronouns from 'you' and 'me' to 'we' and the disrupted punctuation of the final stanza. Some good answers discussed competently the varying forms of grief: angry, melancholic, hallucinatory, wistful, regretful and resigned grief were just some of the many forms discussed by candidates. There was less comment on the slightly varied stanza pattern through the poem and comments on the rhyme scheme usually did not progress beyond stating its pattern.

Question 2

Seamus Heaney: *District and Circle*

- (a) There were too few answers to make a general comment appropriate.
- (b) Those writing on Heaney tended to opt for this question on 'Helmet', which elicited some very thoughtful and probing responses. Close commentary was evident and there was strong focus on 'ways'. The link between the helmet and Bobby Breen was effectively discussed in most of the answers, with the progression of the narrator's emotions clearly appreciated. There were thoughtful comments on the imagery used, such as 'scarlet letters', 'tinctures of sweat and hair oil' and 'fire-thane's shield'. Enjoyment of the poet's craft was clearly evident.

Question 3

Songs of Ourselves

- (a) There were some odd choices of poems in responses to this question. 'Friend' and 'For Heidi with Blue Hair' formed perhaps the most successful pairing, but candidates also used 'My Parents', 'Praise for my Mother' and even 'Anthem for Doomed Youth' successfully. Most answers showed a good knowledge of the poems, with strong answers being able to support points with detailed quotations and careful comments on how meaning is shaped. The instruction to compare often stimulated candidates into interesting points and helped them structure their responses. Less successful answers gave a narrative account of the chosen poems; where the poems chosen were inappropriate, a narrative approach highlighted this problem.
- (b) 'Childhood' was an immensely popular poem and provoked some thoughtful, detailed and perceptive responses. Despite – or perhaps because – the poem is so short, candidates found plenty to write about, engaging really closely with the details of the poem. Comments were made on the childish tone and vocabulary in the first section, compared with the more sophisticated lexis of the second half of the poem. Candidates also noted the altered perspective from generalisation ('grown-up people') to particularity ('great-aunt Etty's friend'), from childish perception ('small fat snakes') to specifics ('onyx') and what starts as jolly ('I used to think') ends rather sadly ('And I was helplessly young'). The difference between 'grand' and 'groped' was noted both thematically and poetically, as was the difference between 'chose' and 'helplessly'. There was good comment too on the symbolism of the unstrung beads and the child's observation from the banister. The form and structure were discussed particularly well, with most candidates recognising the development from lines 1-4 and then 5-10. Rhyme scheme changes were noted and successfully linked to the question, with the change from a nursery rhyme approach to the more mature.

Question 4

Tsitsi Dangarembga: *Nervous Conditions*

- (a) Candidates responded well to this question and had no difficulty in finding suitable material from the novel to illustrate family tensions. Some insightful responses were centred on the character of Babamukuru and the way in which his role in the novel is pivotal to this question. Financial, moral and educational problems and the aspiration towards 'Englishness' were often recognised as the source of the tensions. While less successful answers listed examples of family tensions without analytical engagement, more sustained answers chose to discuss particular episodes from the novel, looking at Dangarembga's presentation of Shona culture and the characterisation of Babamukuru, Tambu, Nyasha, Maiguru and Lucia in particular. Strong answers pinpointed cultural difficulties as the underlying cause of tension, including trouble over the suppression of women, their needs and ambitions.
- (b) Many answers skimmed over the surface of this rich passage and missed its core, just as Tambu misses the seriousness of Nyasha's letter. Under the 'light-hearted and gay' tone of the letter, Nyasha explores her essential anxieties and feelings of isolation from family, culture and friends, yet though Tambu refers to her 'pang of guilt', she never responds. The significance of the content and tone of the letter, and of Tambu's reaction, were often left without developed comment. More successful answers engaged in detail with the tone of Nyasha's letter and the ways in which Tambu's response is presented, with perceptive candidates looking at the water imagery and some commenting perceptively on the irony of the last sentence of the extract. Good answers focused closely on Dangarembga's choice of language, for example the author's use of 'galloped by so quickly', 'torrent of news' and 'bursting to be told' to highlight Tambu's excitement at school which she wishes so much to share with Nyasha when she meets her, oblivious to the fact that the 'svelte, sensuous me' is an alarming and not positive image. A few impressive answers explored the critical impression created of Tambu through her own narration.

Question 5

EM Forster: *A Passage to India*

- (a) This question allowed many candidates to demonstrate a strong grasp of the novel as they explored its structure. Some answers conveyed an understanding of how the different religions are presented in the three sections, often linked to the weather. Such answers considered how each section has a distinctive 'atmosphere', with Mosque consisting largely of social encounters and discussion, Caves dominated by intense heat and feeling claustrophobic, and Temple more relaxed with an emphasis on the spiritual. While some answers were limited to an account of the plot of each section, there were many careful and thoughtful responses exploring both the significance of this structure to Forster's aims in the novel and its effectiveness in guiding the readers' responses.
- (b) There were many enthusiastic answers to this question on the bridge party, with many candidates considering the implications and ironies of that name. There was much focus on the unsympathetic characterisation of Mrs Turton, looking at her dialogue in particular, while many answers also showed keen awareness of Forster's use of the setting to separate the two groups. Mrs Turton was frequently contrasted to Forster's presentation of Mrs Moore and Adela, here seen as much more open and sympathetic characters who refer to their guests as 'ladies' and refer to arrival in 'their country'. The Indian women in the passage were sometimes neglected, but they produced fruitful analysis too, with some comments that the similarities in Forster's presentation of the women outweighed the differences: they had to obey the men, irrespective of race. Others noted that the Indian women are as uncertain as Mrs Turton and linked this to the novel's concern with the possibility of equal relationships and friendship between English and Indian. A very few strong answers noted the presence of the narrative voice, creating humour and sardonic commentary which guide the readers' responses.

Question 6

Stories of Ourselves

- (a) Most candidates attempting this question paired 'Of White Hairs and Cricket' with 'To Da-duh, In Memoriam', though there were also effective answers on 'Sandpiper', 'The People Before' and 'The Door in the Wall'. A few answers were limited by inappropriate choices; 'The Open Boat' and 'A Horse and Two Goats', for example, were unwisely attempted. Less successful answers retold aspects of the stories which involved interaction between children and adults, but better answers explored ways in which these relationships were presented and the implications for the stories themselves. It was very encouraging that many candidates had a detailed knowledge of the stories, with the strongest answers also considering how the relationships were portrayed. These considered such issues as narrative voice, characterisation, symbolism and structure – in particular epiphanic moments and the conclusions of stories.
- (b) Most candidates engaged with the central concern of the development of the narrator's feelings, but fewer engaged with *how* meaning is shaped. Some answers were also limited by candidates' apparent lack of knowledge of the rest of the story. Some were puzzled by the reference to the *Milice* and the *maquisards* and seemed unaware of the outcome of this relationship. Stronger answers were very aware of the context of the war and the ability of love to blossom within its constant threat. Some picked up the reference in the first paragraph to 'soft rubber' and explored the story's symbolism of tyres and inner tubes. Candidates who managed to focus on the writing of the passage commented on the conversational tone, which is enhanced by the use of punctuation such as brackets to suggest asides to the reader; the narrator's eye for detail, for example in his planning of the meeting with the girl, which shows his determination to get everything right; and the use of humour which helps to alleviate the tension of the wartime situation. Many candidates clearly empathised with Thorpe's presentation of the nervous exhilaration of a young person in love, but perceptive responses matched this with the developing feelings of wartime oppression. The best showed their awareness of the irony of this retrospective narration by a mature, unmarried man, carrying with him the knowledge of his inadvertent killing of the girl he adores.

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Question Specific Comments 9695/32

Question 1

Thomas Hardy: *Selected Poems*

- (a) This question provoked some interesting answers. Most candidates who attempted it steered clear of the Emma poems, with 'The Man He Killed' being particularly popular, paired with poems such as 'In Tenebris' and 'The Darkling Thrush'. Successful answers looked at Hardy's linguistic and structural control which holds emotional moments up to scrutiny. The way 'The Man He Killed' examines ideas of death and killing in warfare was compared with traditional war poetry, while candidates looked at how feelings of despair are compared with the symbolic 'caroling' thrush. Some candidates, however, did choose Emma poems, often successfully showing how Hardy suppresses deep emotion and seems to reflect on it through the control of memory, symbol and tightly ordered stanza construction.

- (b) Candidates who avoided biography and concentrated on the writing of the poem on the question paper usually did well, though some answers showed confusion, some candidates taking the poem to be an active conversation. Better answers showed a good understanding of the retrospective nature of the poem, the imagining of a former moment and the imaginative creation of what the departed one might say. Such answers sometimes explored the suddenness and unexpectedness of death shown at the opening of the second stanza and the finality of it made clear at the poem's conclusion. Candidates commented on the effects of such details as the caesurae in lines 3 and 13, the euphemisms of 'lie', 'halt everlastingly', 'resting-place' and the climactic list of abstract nouns in the final line.

Question 2

Seamus Heaney: *District and Circle*

- (a) There were too few answers to make a general comment appropriate.
- (b) There were too few answers to make a general comment appropriate.

Question 3

Songs of Ourselves

- (a) There were a number of answers to this question where the candidates gave quite detailed accounts of their chosen poems, but without clear reference to the question. Confident candidates recognised the opportunity to demonstrate not only their knowledge, but their appreciation of the range and effects of imagery; there were some very sophisticated and detailed answers. The range of references to nurture and the natural world in 'Praise Song for my Mother' were often discussed, alongside the symbolic imagery of 'Because I Could Not Stop for Death', the violent and despairing metaphors of 'Anthem for Doomed Youth', the imagery of pace and distance in 'Meeting at Night', among others. The best answers carefully considered the implications and connotations of imagery, considering the effect on the reader.
- (b) This was a popular question and produced some thoughtful, developed and detailed answers. Many candidates noted that the narrator addresses the poem to his 'Friend' and builds on the shared memories to arrive at a very tentative hope for the future and the 'troubled world'. There was often appreciation of the conversational free verse, while the symbolism in the tree, the clay floor and the fort were recognised. There were some thoughtful comments on the use of italics to isolate the third stanza. Many candidates had a solid understanding of the poem and were able to develop individual interpretations from careful reading of language, form and imagery.

Question 4

Tsitsi Dangarembga: *Nervous Conditions*

- (a) Some responses to this question lapsed into narrative and character summary, but more successful answers were able to discriminate between men and male authority and candidates wrote perceptively about ways in which the novel challenges its own cultural background. Babamukuru dominated many of the responses, but perceptive candidates compared him with Jeremiah, while considering Chido and Nhamo as representatives of the younger generation. Many candidates wrote from a largely feminist perspective, looking at the ways in which Tambu, Nyasha and their mothers suffer under and sometimes challenge male authority, while others took a wider political view. Answers usually showed a confident knowledge of the text and an engaged appreciation of its issues.

- (b) Many answers to this question worked through the passage offering paraphrase illustrated with some quotation, missing the instruction to 'Comment closely'. Some candidates offered general discussion of the family relationships in the novel with minimal focus on the selected extract. Neither of these approaches addressed the task. More confident candidates recognised that the question demanded that they look closely at the writing of the passage and noted that the focus was on the presentation of 'Tambu's view' of those relationships. Such answers examined the creation of the narrative voice in the passage, taking the reader into its confidence and balancing quotations from others with personal judgements, which becomes clearer with the divergence of the different views of Lucia.

Question 5

EM Forster: *A Passage to India*

- (a) It was clear that many candidates had considered this central question in their preparation of the novel, though many answers were restricted to accounts of particular friendships. There was much discussion of Fielding and Aziz, and Aziz and Mrs Moore, but such answers were limited unless they moved from the particular to consider the wider issues at stake, as implied by Fielding at the end of the novel. Answers which explored these ideas varied, as some stressed an optimistic and others a pessimistic view of the question. Some thoughtful responses placed the argument within a historical and political context, while others looked at the question from a religious angle. Often such answers considered the structure and settings of the novel, showing a sophisticated understanding of Forster's writing.
- (b) There were a few, but very few, narrative and descriptive responses to this question. As the opening to the novel, nearly all candidates were clearly familiar with it and the chapter often enabled candidates to write about context and language in an impressive way, identifying and writing about the language and metaphors and making links to the novel. The presence of the Marabar Caves in the opening and closing lines of the chapter was seen as a foreboding note, particularly when linked with the 'fists and fingers' description. Many candidates wrote well on the contrasts Forster creates between the two views of Chandrapore, one dominated by 'rubbish', 'filth' and 'mud', the other 'a tropical pleasance, washed by a noble river'. Alert candidates were able to suggest the sardonic humour of some of Forster's narrative comments. The paragraphs on the sky were often seen to represent a unifying force above humanity, under which the whole is unified and made beautiful, and candidates who saw this linked it to the central concerns of the novel.

Question 6

Stories of Ourselves

- (a) The most popular choices of story were 'Sandpiper' and 'Tyres', with some answers broadening the definition or object of love to include 'The Open Boat', 'Of White Hairs and Cricket', 'The People Before' and 'To Da-duh, In Memoriam'. 'Sandpiper' was perhaps the most successfully treated, as candidates were able to explore the language, tone and metaphors of this story effectively, thus addressing the question's concern with 'different ways' of exploring love. Some candidates also dealt well with the central tyre metaphor in Thorpe's story as well as the control of narrative voice. Structure was considered with 'Of White Hairs and Cricket' as candidates noted the contrast in the boy's view of his father between the opening of the story and its closing.
- (b) In most cases, it was clear that 'The People Before' was a well-known and liked story, as this passage produced some developed and thoughtful responses. Many answers took the relationships in turn, which proved a more effective approach than working through the passage chronologically. On the whole, the relationships involving the father were more effectively dealt with than that between the brothers, though some noted the narrator's patience and acceptance of Jim, despite 'his difference from most people'. The best answers explored the voice of the narrator in some detail and several noted the absence of the mother from his narration. There were also interesting comments on the narrator's perception of his father as a strong man in charge of his 'kingdom', but one who 'accepted defeat' in his 'battle for Jim'.

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Question Specific Comments 9695/33

Question 1

Thomas Hardy: *Selected Poems*

- (a) There were too few answers to make a general comment appropriate.
- (b) Most candidates discussed well the idea that the men might have been friends had they not been set against each other in a war, but fewer engaged closely with Hardy's language and structure. Candidates sometimes discussed the first two stanzas in some detail, but did not extend that to the rest of the poem, missing opportunities to comment on structure and form. Some candidates did comment on the repetition of the word 'because' in the third stanza, separated by the dash, seen to be representing the speaker's difficulty in accounting for his actions. Several candidates commented on the sense of guilt and regret in the poem, but only the most analytical candidates linked Hardy's frequent use of dashes and words such as 'because' and 'although' in the middle of the poem to a questioning of actions and an examination of conscience in relation to soldiers and warfare. Some candidates noted the conversational quality of the poem, its colloquial language and the fact that it is written within speech marks, making it sound, perhaps, like a conversation a survivor might have over a drink 'where any bar is'.

Question 2

Seamus Heaney: *District and Circle*

- (a) There were too few answers to make a general comment appropriate.
- (b) There were a very few answers to this question, which generally showed some appreciation of Heaney's use of the senses to describe the spade: the physical feeling and the aural quality of its 'ring'. There were comments on the precision required to make it and the choice of diction, as in 'The shaft to be socketed in dead true and dead straight'. Some candidates were able to articulate an appreciation of the combined effects of rhythm, sentence structure with the repeated use of 'and' and the sound effects of the alliteration and assonance in lines like 'Lightsome and pleasant to lean on or cut with or lift'.

Question 3

Songs of Ourselves

- (a) There were too few answers to make a general comment appropriate.
- (b) This was a popular choice and produced answers across the range, some very thoughtful and informative on the cultural significance of the praise song. Many answers commented on the connotations of the poem's metaphors of 'water', 'moon's eye' and 'sunrise', discussing the life-giving necessities and positive associations relating to motherhood that they represent. Fewer candidates gave as much thought to commenting on the connotations of the final lines of each stanza that post-modified these metaphors, though several commented on the change to a different type of metaphor and memory in the fourth stanza, sometimes linking them to the metaphors of the first three. The change in stanza structure at this point was often noted too, while the repeated 'You were' drew much comment. Relatively few candidates, though, mentioned the lack of punctuation in the poem, or the significance of its absence.

Question 4

Tsitsi Dangarembga: *Nervous Conditions*

- (a) There were too few answers to make a general comment appropriate.
- (b) Candidates were usually able to give a good account of Nyasha's character, with some reference to the passage, but concentrated discussion of the ways in which she is presented by Dangarembga was less common. Some answers honed in on Tambu's first person narration and her commentary on Nyasha's condition, observant and sympathetic. Answers focusing on the presentation of Nyasha read greater significance into Tambu's statements that Nyasha's battle was one of 'self versus surrender' and on her detailed observations of Nyasha's growing emotional problems. Many of these descriptive elements in the passage were overlooked in other answers – the fact that Nyasha sobs 'great lumps of pain' and that she was 'grieving' for example, or the disturbing level of psychological detachment Nyasha had reached where Tambu has to pass her hand in front of her eyes and 'shout very loudly to bring her back.'

Question 5

EM Forster: *A Passage to India*

- (a) There were too few answers to make a general comment appropriate.
- (b) This question elicited some interesting responses from candidates who grasped the particular thrust of the question, though pinning down and elaborating upon textual evidence showing Forster's presentation of Adela's judgement of Ronny proved more challenging for some. Confident candidates referred to the third person narration, which offers comments, and the choice of diction characterising both Ronny and Adela. The most successful answers looked closely at the presentation of dialogue, scene description, and Adela's state of mind and feelings. Some noted the manipulation of reader sympathies via dramatic irony (Ronny's dialogue about Aziz forgetting his tie-pin). Such observations allowed candidates to combine detailed appreciation of the selected passage with their wider knowledge and understanding of the text.



Question 6

Stories of Ourselves

- (a) The most popular and successful combinations of stories chosen by candidates were 'Sandpiper' and 'Tyres' or 'Sandpiper' and 'Journey'. Some candidates wrote about 'The Fall of the House of Usher', 'The People Before' and 'Of White Hairs and Cricket'. While some answers lapsed into narrative commentary or paraphrase, better responses discussed how family relationships were explored through the language, form or structure of the stories. For example, candidates writing about 'Sandpiper' were able to comment on how Soueif handles past and present narrative time, and how this enhances readers' perceptions of what has changed in the family relationships. Commenting on Soueif's use of tone and symbolism was also very fruitful for many candidates. These kinds of comments provided a platform from which to compare and contrast the techniques used in the second story, leading to confident answers.
- (b) Though a popular question, many candidates found Grace's style elusive. They often found it difficult to discuss narrative mode, narrative voice, and the narrative point of view of the passage. Many answers did not discuss these concepts or use critical vocabulary that explained how, in literary terms, Grace communicates her presentation of the old man. Some answers did mention that fact that the passage is written in the third person, but did not explicitly discuss the way that Grace maintains a very close focus on the old man's thoughts and feelings. Some responses centred on candidates' impressions of the old man's character, such as 'he is old but does not think of himself as old', and then using direct reference to support these points (e.g. l.6: 'even an old man like him, but not what you would call properly old.') There were some comments on the colloquial tone and the shortness of some of the sentences, though these often needed more focus on how the sentence structure conveys the sense of the character's voice and feelings.



LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

Paper 9695/41

Drama

Key messages

At times candidates need to read questions in more detail. Often they catch onto a word or see a name and fail to see that the full complexity of what they are being asked to do.

Candidates who tackle **(b)** questions need to be prepared to talk about language, form and structure in the passage selected: a more general view is not what is mainly required.

Quality of perception and argument is more important than length. Understanding of what is required by a question involves strategic selection and this can get lost if a candidate tries to cover everything.

General comments

The candidates appeared to find the texts stimulating and enjoyable. Only a few were unable to offer a coherent account of what goes on in their chosen texts, and furthermore candidates often went on to demonstrate interesting perceptions married to close, detailed analysis of the issue outlined in the question. There was significantly less biographical detail and background context this session, which proved beneficial to the candidates in terms of text-focused argument.

Comments on specific questions

Peter Shaffer: *Equus*

Question 1

- (a) Responses showed clear understanding of the literal presence and of the symbolic significance of the horses in the play. However, the particular significance of Nugget was not always fully explored. The best answers drew attention to ideas about Nugget as a religious symbol, often with some focus on the possibility of him as a redeemer.
- (b) Most responses showed awareness of the context of the passage and of the way in which this is a central moment in the developing doctor/ patient relationship. Weaker responses often anchored ideas through paraphrase or summary. Better answers were able to engage more fully with the detail of the text, often examining ways in which Dysart leads Alan on by suggestion and affirmation. Some also drew attention to Dysart's surrender to the moment (something which he longs for) and his envy of Alan as expressed elsewhere in the play. The best answers engaged fully with tension in the language, drawing attention perhaps to the repetition of 'Yes' by Alan and the turning point 'No' of line 56.

William Shakespeare: *The Winter's Tale*

Question 2

- (a) Weaker responses here often focused on plot summary as a means of tackling Camillo's role and significance. A number of these scripts saw his role in Sicilia clearly but then struggled when trying to discuss his significance in the second section of the play. Answers of this type often simply saw him as a plot device. Better responses were able to see him as representing rationality, conscience and duty in both sections of the play. Answers at the top end took a strategic view, often contrasting episodes in order to suggest that Camillo has a function as a moral arbiter. There were some careful analyses of his use of language. Very few candidates commented on the fixing of the marriage between Camillo and Paulina at the end, despite its very obvious symbolic function and significance.
- (b) Most responses showed clear understanding of the situation at this moment in the play. At the bottom end there was some misunderstanding of the role of Antigonus. Better answers looked closely at the language and developing action here, with the violent irrationality of Leontes's expressions placed against the bewildered loyalty of the courtiers.

William Shakespeare: *Henry IV, Part 1*

Question 3

- (a) A number of candidates saw this question simply as a matter of looking for examples of treachery and betrayal. More astute responses dealt with the word 'presentation' in the question and tried to see that examples of treachery and betrayal are not restricted to the world of the court and the nobles. Answers of this kind often looked at Hal's betrayal of his father's aspirations for him, or at Falstaff's long-term destiny as friend to the future king. Some responses were also able to deal with betrayals within the rebels forces themselves (dishonour amongst thieves, perhaps), with Northumberland's illness seen as a tactical absence from the fray.
- (b) Some candidates failed to respond to the full challenge of this extract, presented across two scenes. As Hal does not feature in the first thirty lines, they assumed that these lines were somehow just there as a lead in. Better candidates understood at once that there is quite a lot to be made of a moment where someone is spoken about and then appears immediately afterwards so that the reputation can be compared with the reality. Once that was seen, Henry's envy of Hotspur and his father, complete with his sighing comparison of this with his own situation, fell into place. And the following scene, of course, supported his view, with the prose language of the tavern and pleasure replacing the more high sounding blank verse of the court.

Tennessee Williams: *A Streetcar Named Desire*

Question 4

- (a) Symbols in *Streetcar* are easy to find, and most candidates were not short of examples. Discussions ranged across lighting, baths, clothing (and so on), usually with clear purpose. What was harder to identify, perhaps, were the 'effects' that they create for the forward movement of the drama. Better responses were able to provide linked arguments that drew a number of patterns together (moths, lights, baths and streetcars were popular in the case of Blanche; bloody packages of meat and gambling for Stanley) to show how symbols delineate character. A number of responses started from a completely different and valid view that the characters themselves are symbols of something else. The best of these were superb. Others tended to move then towards seeing Blanche as Old America, Stanley as new America, and as the agenda grew stronger, the personal response to the detail of the text tended to become less vivid.
- (b) Almost all responses showed some understanding of the situation at this point in the play and of Stanley's frustration with Blanche. What proved harder was a detailed discussion of the extract itself, with the row between Stella and Stanley taking place across the innocent counterpoint of Blanche's singing. Responses usually noted Stanley's impatience; better ones noticed his guilt at having spoken to Mitch, conveyed through his serial smoking and his sudden garrulousness. The last lines of the incident were often rather ignored, though the entrance of Blanche is, of course, what all of the previous action has been leading towards. There were one or two slightly unfortunate discussions of the symbolism of the toilet in the play.

Oscar Wilde: *An Ideal Husband*

Question 5

- (a) There was a wide range of responses to this question. Some focused simply on matters of plot, examining the situation that Sir Robert finds himself in as a consequence of Mrs Cheveley's manipulations. More successful answers interrogated ideas about 'noble' behaviour, often concluding that in Sir Robert's view nobility simply means not being caught out by circumstances. Many thought of him as only in politics out of self-interest, and with a strong eye to financial gain rather than the good of others. Some candidates were able to move towards a discussion of the different perspectives that are presented on political life by Lord Goring, Mrs Cheveley or Lady Chiltern. A small number of candidates were confused by the word 'noble' and took the question to mean that noble people (i.e. the aristocracy) should be involved in politics. Some responses centred round discussions of political corruption, often with specific examples from contemporary politics, but these often struggled to engage with the detail of the text as a play and the way that the issues are evoked through the writer's strategies. Strangely, many answers saw the end of the play as having a moral happy ending, almost entirely because Mrs Cheveley is so dislikeable. The issue of whether it is the attractiveness of your enemies that justifies your dubious moral decisions was not often tackled, though plainly Wilde had it in mind.
- (b) Responses here showed clear understanding of Mrs Cheveley as a manipulator. Candidates were also able to elaborate on her unwillingness to conform to social norms of how women should behave. Better responses saw the veiled menace and the hidden agenda that is conveyed within conventions of politeness and Mrs Cheveley's provocative forwardness ('I wanted to meet you.... I wanted immensely to meet you') and her hints about Sir Robert's connections to Baron Arnheim. Comparatively few responses commented on the function of Lord Goring in the extract, or on the change of tone at this point, despite the fact that Wilde plainly uses him to create a match of equals, as elsewhere in the play. Statements were often taken too much at face value, and there was often assertion that Mrs Cheveley is a 'romantic' or that her continuing presence in London might depend upon the weather.

LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

Paper 9695/42

Drama

Key messages

At times candidates need to read questions in more detail. Often they catch onto a word or see a name and fail to see that the full complexity of what they are being asked to do.

Candidates who tackle **(b)** questions need to be prepared to talk about language, form and structure in the passage selected: a more general view is not what is mainly required.

Quality of perception and argument is more important than length. Understanding of what is required by a question involves strategic selection and this can get lost if a candidate tries to cover everything.

General comments

The candidates appeared to find the texts stimulating and enjoyable. Only a few were unable to offer a coherent account of what goes on in their chosen texts, and beyond that candidates often went on to demonstrate interesting perceptions married to close, detailed analysis of the issue outlined in the question. There was significantly less biographical detail and background context this time round, and this has proved beneficial to the candidates in terms of text-focused argument.

Comments on specific questions

Peter Shaffer: *Equus*

Question 1

- (a) Answers at the level of 'basic' had some sense of the horses' function in the play and some sense too of their physical representation on stage. Better responses quickly saw that the reaction of Alan to the horses as a sexual or religious symbol is only part of their importance, as every other character in the play has to take up a view towards them too. The best answers were able to see how the horses actually do 'stalk through the mind' of the spectator providing uncertain symbols that cannot be easily pinned down. Specific focus on moments when the horses become part of the action (Alan's riding scene at the end of Act 1) paid off handsomely. Arguments instantly became more anchored and often more complex when the full drama of the action was evoked.
- (b) Responses here at the lower end tended to paraphrase rather than look at dramatic technique. Higher up the mark range, there was attention to the vividness of the scene as re-lived by Alan. Better responses saw how this scene provides one of the anchor points for Alan's subsequent feelings about horses, particularly as a reaction away from his parents. Alan's excitement was often caught by reference to the stage directions with Alan's eyes 'wide' and the hum from the chorus 'exultant.'

William Shakespeare: *The Winter's Tale*

Question 2

- (a) Answers here tended to be descriptive rather than analytical. All candidates knew about the central structuring device of the play, the gap of sixteen years, but only the rarest of responses dealt with its most obvious manifestation, the personified Time of Act 4, Scene 1. On the whole there was a general acceptance of the idea of the play having a 'happy ending' without deeper discussion of how the structural disjunction of the play might force an audience into not discounting the suffering and deaths of the earlier section of the play. Most responses dealt with structure in terms of time gap; a few looked at the differences in values between the worlds of Bohemia and Sicilia.
- (b) Responses mainly used the context of the play appropriately and most showed a grasp of the dramatic irony of the situation, the build up of tension and conflict, and of the dramatic effects. Better answers considered the use of language, often discussing the imagery and sometimes the rhetorical structure of the dialogue. Some answers wanted to see the extract in slightly too modern terms with regard to father-son relationships, and this, of course, failed to recognise the restraints caused by dynastic marriage. The interjections of the Shepherd were often ignored, despite their significance as a moral support to Florizel. A number of responses wanted to move too quickly away from this particular incident so that parallels with Leontes could be evoked. A number of candidates did not notice that Polixenes's speech (lines 37 onwards) is not entirely directed towards his son.

William Shakespeare: *Henry IV, Part 1*

Question 3

- (a) All responses were confident about the plot and the subplot. Links between the two were usually successfully engineered. Weaker answers tended to list instances, at times at random, often extending the scope of the theft in order to widen out discussion to broader issues in the play. Better answers were able to see that 'honour', too, is a possession that can be stolen. These answers often noted the links between the two worlds of the play, pointing out that the difference between the court and the tavern are of those of degree, not type. Some of the more subtle responses started to address issues of honesty and loyalty in a world where the king himself is demonstrably a thief. Often the open straightforwardness of Falstaff's dishonesty was contrasted favourably to that of the king and his court.
- (b) Weaker answers often resorted to paraphrase of narration of the main relationships in the play. Better responses made use of context in order to link this passage with Hal's soliloquy or with the later encounter between Hal and the King. There was usually awareness of the humour, of the language and the setting (particularly the ridiculousness of the cushion). Better answers made more of this, though only the most astute were able to make detailed comparisons of the language here in contrast to that of the court. There was some confusion over the conventions of prose and blank verse in less good answers. Most candidates made reference to 'Depose me,' often linking it to Henry's treatment of Richard in order to gain the throne.

Tennessee Williams: *A Streetcar Named Desire*

Question 4

- (a) Basic responses to this question often assumed that it was a question about Stanley's character. More sophisticated discussions recognised that the quotation comes from quite an unlikely source and that Stella's agreement with her sister means that something rather more complex is going on here. This often led to discussion of the clash of two worlds, an entirely relevant focus. Other candidates were able to see that Stella is responding to an almost compulsive inner need in her relationship with Stanley. Very good responses often refined the point still more by suggesting that Stanley, far from being from a different species, is very much from the same species as Blanche but simply not the 'refined' version of it. In this sense, Stella's desire to mix blood was seen in an almost Darwinian sense as being vital to ensure the survival of the fittest.

- (b) The scene was often closely analysed, though the hint from the question about audience reaction was not always fully taken. There was often strong feeling about Mitch's reactions and the fact that he still has emotions for Blanche despite their last encounter. There was much discussion about Blanche's last line, with many better candidates pointing out that strangers are no problem for Blanche because she can put on the show – it's people she is closer to that she cannot depend upon. There were often sensible discussions of contrasts between the matron and the doctor. Better candidates understood, too, the significance of Steve's last line. Many candidates focused relevantly upon Stanley's triumph over Blanche and the re-establishment of his relationship with Stella as 'his fingers find the opening of her blouse.' Fewer were able to deal with Stella's complex emotions at this moment.

Oscar Wilde: *An Ideal Husband*

Question 5

- (a) Responses here generally showed a good understanding of the moral issues of probity, bribery, honour and integrity. What was less obvious was how these issues are brought alive dramatically. There were many answers that dealt with the ostensibly light-hearted surface of the play, pointing out that the serious issues are often dealt with epigrammatically or by showing a range of possible attitudes towards them. The apparently cynical role of Lord Goring was often emphasised here, with attention being drawn to his concern for the human beings, not for the principles at stake. More sophisticated answers made something of the play's origins in farce and showed how the mechanisms of this sort of drama (overheard conversations, confused letters and locking bracelets) provide the elements of the story that allow us to engage with the morality almost as a side issue.
- (b) There was much focus, naturally, on Lady Chiltern's situation at this point in the play. Less clearly observed was the role of Lord Goring here. At this point, his language suddenly changes and he stops being the pleasure-seeking hedonist and we discover that he has serious moral views about the world, albeit ones that are patronising about a woman's role in relation to her husband. The clue is explicitly given in the stage directions, which draws our attention to 'the philosopher that underlies the dandy.' Goring's moral relativism was also not always clearly viewed. Most candidates were very aware of the irony of the scene, given in the final stage direction. A number of responses resorted to paraphrase or summary. Better answers looked hard at Lady Chiltern's small but significant interjections as the scene moves forwards.



LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

Paper 9695/43

Drama

Key messages

If candidates choose to answer **(b)** type questions, they must be prepared to deal with detail, not just with a general impression of what is going on in a passage.

General comments

There were a very small number of candidates for version 43, answering a restricted number of questions. Centres may wish to look at the reports for versions 41 and 42 for additional commentary on this summer's performance in the drama paper.

It is worth drawing attention to the lack of detail that many **(b)** type responses have. Candidates should not mechanically 'go through' the extract in their replies; but it is vital that they use the passage to the full, commenting on language, form, structure, as appropriate, in order to support and substantiate their ideas.

Comments on specific questions

Peter Shaffer: *Equus*

Question 1

- (a) Responses here tended to focus on Alan rather than Dora. There was often detailed discussion of the significance of religion to the play, but the dramatic presentation of the ideas eluded all but the best of the candidates.
- (b) There were too few responses to enable comment.

William Shakespeare: *The Winter's Tale*

Question 2

- (a) The responses to this question tended to be rather brief and often narrative based. Leontes was the central focus of almost all the answers, with much attention (as might be expected) given to the final scenes of the play. Forgiveness was not fully considered in any of the responses seen.
- (b) There were too few responses to enable comment.

William Shakespeare: *Henry IV, Part 1*

Question 3

- (a) Responses here showed knowledge of the tavern scenes. However, few went beyond the most obvious points in order to suggest that the tavern does more than present contrast. The clash of value systems between tavern and court was only ever superficially considered. Similarly, the clash of tone between the two worlds was not often sensitively caught.
- (b) There were a small number of replies to this question. Key contrasts were seen between the characters presented, but few were able to catch the linguistic excesses of Glendower's speech or the impatient, testy humour of Hotspur's replies.

Tennessee Williams: *A Streetcar Named Desire*

Question 4

- (a) There were too few responses to enable comment.
- (b) The responses showed some understanding of basic tensions and of the context in which this scene occurs. The more obvious features of the passage were readily addressed. Precise focus on language was not often achieved. The contrast of Blanche's innocent singing (expressly signalled by 'contrapuntally' in the stage directions) with the animosity of the exchange between Stanley and Stella was not always fully recognised.

Oscar Wilde: *An Ideal Husband*

Question 5

- (a) There were too few responses to enable comment.
- (b) There were too few responses to enable comment.



LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

Paper 9695/51

Shakespeare and other Pre-Twentieth Century Texts

Key Messages

Candidates should plan their answers, selecting relevant material and a suitable structure, before starting to write their answers.

Candidates should be careful not to confuse material from derivative versions such as film or TV adaptations with the original text.

Candidates should avoid unnecessary biographical and historical background.

General Comments

There was a range of achievement this session with candidates achieving marks in the highest bands on nearly every text on the paper. There were very few rubric errors and almost no candidates appeared to have time management problems. All but a few candidates were able to show at least a sound knowledge of their chosen texts and many displayed an engagement in and enthusiasm for the works they had studied.

There are three general issues to address this session:

- (a) Planning – some candidates do not appear to allocate sufficient time to selecting and organising material relevant to the set question before writing their essay. This often leads to repetition, generalisation and unstructured arguments. This equally applies to passage based answers as well as discursive essays. For passage based answers candidates should consider carefully which parts of the wider text are relevant to their analysis of the set passage.
- (b) Centres who make use of additional material such as film or TV adaptations should ensure candidates are able to distinguish between those derivative versions and the original text, particularly when discussing characterisation or structure. This material might well be useful in considering different interpretations but can lead candidates into incorrect judgements if not used carefully.
- (c) Unnecessary biographical or other information – a small minority of candidates are providing up to two sides of biography of or a historical background to their chosen authors. This is rarely relevant to the task in hand and should be avoided as this will not improve the candidate's mark and takes up valuable time in the exam.

Specific Texts

Section A Shakespeare

Hamlet

Option (a) was a popular choice and candidates were well prepared for this topic. Candidates needed to plan the structure of the response to make the best use of their textual knowledge and many answers included very good supporting references from the text. Weaker answers tended to summarise the story of each family grouping, with sometimes too great a focus on the possible 'incestuous relationships'; better answers discussed how the various parallels were used by Shakespeare to illustrate specific concerns, most often the Royal family in comparison with Polonius's family, which was often seen as a positive family portrait. A pleasing number of answers also saw the contrast between Old Hamlet's family and that created by Claudius with his marriage to Gertrude. As one candidate suggested:



After all it was not just the head of the family who changed, since we are told that Gertrude and Hamlet are unrecognizable from the wife and son of Old Hamlet.

Essays which developed beyond the individual characterisation into considering, for example, how Shakespeare used the relationships to develop the plot and his thematic concerns were rarer but often did very well.

Option **(b)** was very popular and there were some excellent, detailed and analytical responses. A minority of candidates did not recognise the context, but most were aware that Hamlet had just returned to Denmark and that the grave was for Ophelia. This knowledge often led candidates into discussing the irony of Hamlet's response to Yorick's skull, for example, *'Hamlet's apparent stoicism in the face of death is about to be sorely tested and found wanting as he jumps into Ophelia's grave and wrestles with Laertes.'*

Many candidates explored the humour and the effects of it here, often seeing it as comic relief; better answers also recognised that grave digger/clown shows us how much Hamlet is in the public eye, linking this to the wider spying and watching which goes on in the play. Hamlet's easiness with the clown was often noted and linked to Claudius's comment that he was loved of the multitude. The effect of Yorick's skull and *'the iconic picture of Hamlet holding the skull in a philosophical pose'* was well discussed, with stronger answers exploring its significance in giving Hamlet a more realistic perspective on death as the great leveller, with some linking this to Hamlet's previous musings on death – most often his soliloquies, but with some very good analysis also linked to his *'rantings on make up to Ophelia in the nunnery scene'*. Weaker answers tended to paraphrase the passage, with some more general comment on Hamlet's character.

Coriolanus

This in its first session was a minority choice. Option **(a)** was the more popular choice, with candidates showing a detailed knowledge of the text and the two characters. Weaker answers tended to discuss them separately, often in accurate, detailed summaries. Better answers focused on the key elements of 'Shakespeare's portrayal' and 'relationship', with some excellent explorations of the dramatic effects, especially the ironies, of some of their exchanges. Essays which contrasted Volumnia's boasting of shaping her son's career and character early in the play with her pleading at the gates of Rome often did very well, especially when these episodes were contrasted with *'her emotional and maternal, yet politically adept maneuvering of him back to the market place and inevitable disgrace'*. Some excellent answers focused on the given quotation, contrasting valiantness and pride and seeing the two warring elements that led to Coriolanus's tragedy, especially given the lack of the genuine care shown for him by his mother, hinted at in the word 'suck'd'st'. Most answers saw her role as inadvertently driving him to his doom, but those who saw the tragedy springing from this flawed mother and son relationship often did very well. As one candidate said: *her warped sense of the maternal role created a killing machine which only she could destroy; she did this in the end by releasing his human emotions which she herself had forced him to suppress.*

Option **(b)** was much less popular, but most candidates, if not able to accurately place the passage as Coriolanus returning triumphantly from the Volscian wars, were aware of the threat that the tribunes believed him to be to their power. Many answers saw their scheming as reprehensible, with better answers noting how well they understood the fickleness of the people they represent and how the plot of the play was mapped out here as the tribunes saw the process of election for Consul presenting them with an opportunity to bring Coriolanus to 'a sure destruction' and 'darken him for ever.' A few answers recognised the choric function of the descriptions of Coriolanus's return and how even in that the malice of the tribunes revealed itself in their descriptions of the people.

Section B

Mansfield Park

Option **(a)** was very popular and there were very few answers which were not able to show detailed and relevant knowledge of the text. Most answers contrasted those who simply followed their desires such as the Crawfords and Maria Bertram, with those who lived up to their duties such as Fanny and Edmund. Weaker answers tended to summarise the various narratives, with the shaping of this material determining the success of the answer. Better answers however saw that Austen's methods of characterisation often depended on internal conflicts such as Edmund's desire for Mary Crawford and his duty as a prospective clergyman. Some answers saw this conflict even in Mary and Henry Crawford – their attraction to Edmund and Fanny often cited as evidence of the Crawfords ultimately doomed struggle to fight their weaknesses. Most however agreed with the candidate who said: *'their selfishness is akin to a disease which swept through Mansfield infecting everyone except Fanny'*. There were also some very good explorations of how

this conflict was used by Austen in developing her plot and underpinning the novel's structure, using the internal and external conflicts to maintain her reader's interest.

Option **(b)** was less popular but often very well tackled. Nearly all candidates could explore the character of Sir Thomas as revealed here and elsewhere in the text with many referring to his later recognition of his failings and seeing signs of those failings here. His failure to see through Crawford, with such dreadful repercussions for Maria, was often noted and his self satisfaction here was, inevitably for some, leading to his later unhappiness. Some candidates saw a darker Sir Thomas; his manipulative nature, his lack of real understanding of those around him and his certainty of being right were well evidenced here, though some candidates did not distinguish material from film versions of the novel in selecting wider textual evidence. Other answers balanced this with a more positive view, noting his desire for Fanny to be comfortable as Crawford, in his view, would make her; his understanding of the effect Portsmouth would have on her and his reliance on Edmund's opinion. Some very good answers explored the language to telling effect and especially the narrative voice, for example in 'all his knowledge of human nature' contrasted with 'and nothing at all with any idea of making her happy'.

The Pardoner's Prologue and Tale

Option **(a)** was a popular choice with many candidates revealing a detailed knowledge of both Prologue and Tale in agreeing with the question's proposition. Some better answers considered 'poetic methods', especially Chaucer's dramatic presentation of the Pardoner and how the Tale exemplified the very sins which the Pardoner had outlined in his Prologue. Some excellent answers explored the multiple narrative layers and their effects on the reader's response to Pardoner and Tale, with a few essays seeing this as a key element in Chaucer's presentation of the Pardoner.

Option **(b)** was not as popular but candidates who knew the Prologue well and could link this into the wider text often did well in exploring the ironies of the Pardoner's sermon against drunkenness. Some answers linked this to the Pardoner himself and his own sinful nature and hypocrisy whereas others also linked it to the tale itself and how drinking leads the 'rioters' to their doom. Detailed analysis of the passage was relatively rare and often quite limited, though some candidates were able to recognise the rhetorical elements in the Pardoner's methods. However many did discuss the effect of the biblical references for example and how these were used by the Pardoner to create his image and by Chaucer to undermine it.

Hard Times

Option **(a)** was the minority choice on this text with few responses seen. Most were able to set out the basic narrative of Stephen and Rachael, recognizing their role in terms of other relationships such as Bounderby and Louisa. Those who could explore some of Dickens's concerns and themes often did well, seeing the couple as essentially less fully realised, because their roles were more as foils to other more flawed and therefore more interesting characters. Stephen's role in the plot of the novel – the union, the bank robbery and inadvertently in unmasking Bounderby – was noted by some candidates. Some answers recognised that the language used for the couple – Stephen's honest sounding 'dialect' and the angelic imagery for Rachael for example – was a key element of Dickens's portrayal of ultimately a rather flat and uninteresting couple.

Option **(b)** was more popular with most answers able to give quite a precise context to the passage, after the unintentional unmasking of Bounderby by Mrs Sparsit. Those who analysed the passage in detail often commented on Dickens's use of dialogue and narrative voice to achieve his effects, often making telling references to echoes of earlier episodes. Candidates were often alive to the effect of details – the cheque Bounderby gives to her for example – though most saw this in terms of the characters and their relationship. Those answers which considered how this relationship as revealed here developed Dickens's concerns more widely often did very well, as did those answers which focused on methods, exploring the tone and the ironic humour of the reality of the relationship hidden beneath the surface politeness, with the effect of the word 'noodle' often particularly well explored.

John Donne Selection

This was a minority choice with most candidates offering option **(b)**. Nearly all candidates agreed with the proposition and were able to refer in detail to at least three poems, though weaker answers offered a general summary rather than identifying the persuasion or emotion in the poems, though some basic contrasts were identified in subject matter and approach. Other more successful answers did discuss Donne's use of persuasion as a way of revealing his emotion, often distinguishing his religious poems from those addressed to a lover. Better answers were able to focus on methods more closely, especially language and imagery, often arguing convincingly that beneath the artifice and argument lay depths of sincere emotion.

Option **(b)** was much less popular. Weaker answers attempted to paraphrase the poem, often with limited understanding of the tone and meaning and with only limited attempts to link it to the concerns and methods in other poems. Some answers struggled with the surface meaning unfortunately and were unable to develop analysis. Better answers saw how the poem's focus on time and religion was a strategy to reinforce his genuine emotion for his lover, often assumed to be his wife, with some candidates offering detailed and at times sophisticated analysis of his poetic methods. The poem was often contrasted to his lighter, more conversational tone in either *The Sun Rising* or in *The Flea*, with some seeing this poem's tone as linked to his religious poems.

Silas Marner

This was a popular choice with the majority of candidates opting for **(b)**. Answers on **(a)** showed a good knowledge of the minor characters and their role often focussing on the effect of the Rainbow Inn discussions, but also focussing on specific characters such as William Dane, though he was not a 'Raveloe character' and Dolly Winthrop with some able to explore her role in the novel in detail, especially in terms of the plot and the development of Silas. Better answers saw how these minor characters contributed to Eliot's portrayal of the setting, its warmth and humanity, in contrast to for example Lantern's Yard, with some able to develop that into considering the effects of this on the main characters in the novel.

Option **(b)** was more popular, with some excellent answers, showing a very good understanding of how Eliot's narrative techniques lead up to Silas's recognition of Eppie. Better answers focused on the language, often linking Eppie to the lost gold for example and exploring the effects of that. Others saw how the narrative was developing here, through the 'narrative voice', with many candidates recognising the impact of the revelation of Silas's emotion through the memory of his little sister. Nearly every answer was aware of how this was a turning point for Marner, leading to his reintegration into Raveloe, though only a few answers could see how the reader's response is shaped by the language and the image of the lonely miser and the abandoned child.

Hopkins Selected Poems

This was the least popular text on the paper and only a few candidates offered either option. In option **(a)** candidates generally were able to refer to relevant poems to show how Hopkins focused on his own failings and fears in presenting self-doubt and despair. Better ones were able to use telling reference to the language and text to demonstrate the depth of those emotions and how Hopkins created the effects in his poems.

Option **(b)** was slightly more popular and a few answers had a convincing grasp of Hopkins's methods here and a secure knowledge of the poem as a whole. Better answers were alive to Hopkins's methods and explored 'inscape' and 'sprung rhythm' to telling effect, showing good understanding of the meaning and how that reflected Hopkins characteristic concerns.

The Changeling

This was a minority choice in its first session. Most opted for **(a)** and nearly all agreed with the contention. Candidates often had a detailed knowledge of the text and so had a wealth of material to support their arguments. Planning and careful selection were therefore important elements in producing a successful answer. Most answers tended to see 'lust and desire' as irresistible and inevitably destructive, with examples from Diaphanta's death resulting from her own lust for Alsemero to the near catastrophe visited on the disguised 'madmen'. Most answers focused on De Flores and Beatrice, with some more sophisticated arguments developed showing how Beatrice's desire for De Flores, for example, grew as the play developed. Others saw the destructive power in how quickly Alsemero changes at the start of the play in his desire for Beatrice. Most answers did not distinguish between lust and desire, but perceptive arguments thought that Beatrice was the most interesting example of Middleton's presentation in that her initial loathing for De Flores turned into lust as they fell deeper into sin and finally became genuine desire and for some even love.

Option **(b)** was less popular. Nearly every answer saw the two 'narratives' here – the relationship between Alsemero and Beatrice and Beatrice's internal plotting. Better answers also noted Diaphanta's 'complete gentleman' and how that was to lead her to her doom. Others explored the language to telling effect – the references to death and poison for example – as well as contrasting the religious tone of Beatrice's for some hollow professions of love for Alsemero with her more commercially worded asides on De Flores. Nearly all answers were able to discuss the characters and their roles in the wider play, though again better answers were able to select and shape relevant material more effectively.

LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

Paper 9695/52

Shakespeare and other Pre Twentieth Century Texts

Key Messages

Candidates should plan their answers, selecting relevant material and a suitable structure, before starting to write their answers.

Candidates should be careful not to confuse material from derivative versions such as film or TV adaptations with the original text.

Candidates should avoid unnecessary biographical and historical background.

General Comments

There was a range of achievement this session with candidates achieving marks in the highest bands on every text on the paper. There were very few rubric errors and almost no candidates appeared to have time management problems. All but a few candidates were able to show at least a sound knowledge of their chosen texts and many displayed an engagement in and enthusiasm for the works they had studied.

There are three general issues to address this session:

- (a) Planning – some candidates do not appear to allocate sufficient time to selecting and organising material relevant to the set question before writing their essay. This often leads to repetition, generalisation and unstructured arguments. This equally applies to passage based answers as well as discursive essays. For passage based answers candidates should consider carefully which parts of the wider text are relevant to their analysis of the set passage.
- (b) Centres who make use of additional material such as film or TV adaptations should ensure candidates are able to distinguish between those derivative versions and the original text, particularly when discussing characterisation or structure. This material might well be useful in considering different interpretations but can lead candidates into incorrect judgements if not used carefully.
- (c) Unnecessary biographical or other information – a small minority of candidates are providing up to two sides of biography of or a historical background to their chosen authors. This is rarely relevant to the task in hand and should be avoided as this will not improve the candidate's mark and takes up valuable time in the exam.

Specific Texts

Section A Shakespeare

Hamlet

Option (a) was a popular choice and candidates were well prepared for this topic. This meant that candidates needed to plan and structure the response to make the best use of their textual knowledge; many answers included very good supporting references from the text. Weaker answers tended to summarise the story of each member of the Royal family, with at times too great an emphasis on incestuous relationships and the Oedipus complex. Better answers discussed how the corruption within the family – and for some Gertrude and Hamlet were as poisonous as Claudius – infected the court, the other family of Polonius and eventually the whole of Denmark. Some candidates argued for two Royal families: *After all it was not just the head of the family who changed, since we are told that Gertrude and Hamlet are unrecognizable from the*

wife and son of Old Hamlet as one candidate put it. This contrast was often very well developed by an exploration of how Shakespeare used imagery and language to create these effects. Others noted that the image of Old Hamlet is largely created by his son and wondered whether the Claudius family was in fact more loving and caring once the reader ignored Hamlet's inevitably tainted view of his mother and stepfather/uncle.

Option **(b)** was very popular and there were some excellent, detailed and analytical responses. A minority of candidates did not recognise the context, but most were aware that Hamlet had just met the Players and seen through Rosencrantz and Guildenstern. Candidates with a good knowledge of the text were able to follow Hamlet's musings at the Player's performance to his own attempts at acting a passion in his 'Bloody bawdy villain' rantings to his final decision to stage the Mousetrap. Even here some detected Hamlet's sophistry, remembering he had previously discussed this with the Players. Weaker answers tended to paraphrase the passage, with some more general comment on Hamlet's character. Sophisticated answers deconstructed the dramatic irony of an actor talking about his inability to show passion as real as that of the Player on stage with him. His state of mind was well explored – most identified his self disgust and despair, the honesty of his self awareness and his for some new realization of his weakness – 'Why what an ass am I'. Most also saw this as conclusive proof of his sanity – '*a madman could never be so self aware*' as one put it, with some also seeing this as the first time he has doubted the ghost and wondered what Hamlet thought 'his weakness' was. Nearly all saw this as a turning point – Hamlet was now at least doing something – and a key point in the play's structure.

Coriolanus

This in its first session was a minority choice. Option **(a)** was the slightly more popular choice, with candidates showing a detailed knowledge of the text and the family. Weaker answers tended to discuss them separately, often in accurate, detailed summaries. Better answers focused on the key elements of 'Shakespeare's portrayal' and 'family', with some excellent explorations of the dramatic effects, especially the ironies, of some of their exchanges. Most essays concentrated on Volumnia's role and how there was a distinct absence of maternal care in the way she had reared her son and then manipulated him to his destruction. Most answers saw her role as inadvertently driving him to his doom, but those who saw the tragedy springing from this flawed mother and son relationship often did very well. Better answers also contrasted this relationship with Virgilia's role in the play, wondering how her apparently devoted and gentle character ever came to be Coriolanus's wife. The language of young Marcius tearing the butterfly however was for some all too clearly pointing to the grandmother's role leading to a grandson '*every bit as monstrous as the son she had already damaged*'.

Option **(b)** was much less popular, but most candidates, if not able to accurately place the passage as Coriolanus attempting to put right the political damage of his previous outbursts, were aware of the threat that the tribunes were to Coriolanus's and thereby Rome's safety. Many answers saw their scheming as reprehensible, with better answers noting how well they understood Coriolanus and how detailed their planning was for his destruction. Some developed this into a contrast with the previous scene as the patricians persuade Coriolanus back to the market place. As one candidate put it:

'The two sides are equally devious in their use of Coriolanus as a political tool to further their ends, but the tribunes understand him better.'

A few answers recognised the stage bustle and the dramatic impact of the two sides gathering and how this developed tension. Others saw the inevitability of Coriolanus's downfall, signalled by his prayer for 'worthy men', notwithstanding his for some hypocritical 'I am content' and Menenius's attempts to keep everyone calm.

Section B

Mansfield Park

Option **(a)** was very popular and there were very few answers which were not able to show detailed and relevant knowledge of the text, so that successful answers needed careful planning and selection. Nearly every answer thought 'wealth and money' was all important, with many seeing the Ward sisters as examples of the catastrophic effect of making bad choices contrasted to the luxury and ease of making the right choices. Some thought Fanny was able to stand above this materialism, though for others her reaction to returning to Portsmouth undermined this view. Those who focused on Edmund's words saw the ironies inherent in linking intelligence and income in the first place, casting doubt on Edmund's role for some, with more sophisticated answers developing this idea into a critique of Regency attitudes to both concerns and

how the lack of real education in the Bertram girls for example meant they were unable to see beyond the shallowness of a large income at any price. Mrs Norris self serving and miserly role was often discussed. As one candidate put it *'At least she was not wasteful like the others'* and her role in bringing Fanny from Portsmouth was seen by a few as positive. The Crawfords were often contrasted with Edmund and Fanny with Mary's comments on clergymen, for example, evidence of her unsatisfactory character. Better answers developed this into a discussion of the influence of the town and increasing commercialism on the countryside as represented by Mansfield Park.

Option **(b)** was less popular but often very well tackled. Nearly all candidates saw the change in narrative voice, which for some was jarring as Austen now speaks directly to the reader. Its effect for some was to undermine our response to her heroine. As one candidate said:

Those of us not in favour of seeing Fanny 'restored' may find the unequivocally joyous ending to be too cloying, too free in its use of the word 'happy', to be at all satisfactory.

Better answers saw the shift in the narrative voice shaping our response, particularly to Sir Thomas and Fanny, though others were not convinced by the unexpected positive development of the characters of Yates and Tom, *'too forced to be believable'*. Sir Thomas's continuing anguish was for some fully deserved, though some candidates did not distinguish material from film versions of the novel in selecting wider textual evidence to support this.

The Pardoner's Prologue and Tale

This was a minority choice, with Option **(a)** less popular. Most candidates revealed a detailed knowledge of both Prologue and Tale in discussing the effects of the Pardoner's confessions. Some better answers considered Chaucer's dramatic presentation of the Pardoner and how the Tale exemplified the very sins which the Pardoner had outlined in his Prologue. Some excellent answers explored the multiple narrative layers and their effects on the reader's response to Pardoner and Tale, with a few essays seeing the confessions as a key element of the humour and the tone as well as in Chaucer's satirical presentation of the Pardoner and more generally the Church itself.

Option **(b)** was slightly more popular and candidates who knew the Prologue well and could link this into the wider text often did well in exploring the ironies of this opening to the Tale in the context of the Pardoner's sermon against drunkenness. Some answers linked this to the Pardoner himself and his own sinful nature and hypocrisy, seeing him as no different from the 'rioters'. Detailed analysis of the passage was relatively rare and often quite limited, though some candidates were able to recognise the rhetorical elements in the Pardoner's methods and how the wickedness of the tavern is revealed in the language: *'develes temple'* for example.

Hard Times

Option **(a)** was the minority choice on this text with few responses seen. Most were able to set out the basic narrative of Stephen's story and his relationships with his wife and Rachael, recognizing his role in terms of other relationships such as Bounderby and Louisa. Those who could explore some of Dickens's concerns and themes often did well, seeing Blackpool as essentially less fully realised, because his role was more as a foil to other more flawed and therefore more interesting characters. Stephen's role in the plot of the novel – the union, the bank robbery and inadvertently in unmasking Bounderby – was noted by some candidates. Some answers recognised that Dickens's language – Stephen's honest sounding 'dialect' and the angelic imagery for Rachael for example – was a key element of Dickens's portrayal of ultimately for some a rather *'too sentimental and two dimensional and uninteresting character'* as one candidate put it. However others saw the novelist's subtlety *"Dickens involves him in the cultural fabric of the novel yet makes him seemingly invisible, Blackpool doesn't weigh down the novel"*.

Option **(b)** was more popular with most answers able to give quite a precise context to the passage, as the unintended unmasking of Bounderby. Those who analysed the passage in detail often commented on Dickens's use of dialogue and narrative voice to achieve his effects, seeing the irony of Gradgrind's role and often making telling references to echoes of earlier episodes. Candidates were often sensitive to the effect of details – Gradgrind's 'gentler tone' for example – and what that revealed about the characters. Many candidates enjoyed Bounderby's discomfort and understood the satirical methods employed. More sophisticated answers which considered this mother/son relationship as revealed here and explored Dickens's concerns more widely, such as the lack of any such 'caring' in the Gradgrind household, often did very well. Other successful answers focused on methods and explored the tone and the ironic humour of the

earnestness of Mrs Pegler's words and genuine affection for her hypocritical son, with some developing this to consider how this is a foretaste of another revelation of a flawed parent/child relationship.

John Donne Selection

This was a popular choice with most candidates offering option **(b)**. Option **(a)** answers often ignored 'poetic methods' but were able to refer in detail to at least three poems, though weaker answers offered a general summary rather than identifying how and in what ways Donne was convincing in the poems, though some basic contrasts were identified between poems about love and religion in terms of subject matter and approach. Other more successful answers did discuss Donne's use of metaphysical techniques such as imagery and language, but in general terms these were not fully developed. Better answers however often argued convincingly that beneath the artifice and argument were depths of sincere emotion.

Option **(b)** was much more popular. Weaker answers attempted to paraphrase the poem, often with limited understanding of the tone and meaning and with only limited attempts to link it to the concerns and methods in other poems. Some answers struggled with the surface meaning unfortunately and were unable to develop analysis. Better answers understood the situation and saw how the poem's focus on time and the dialogue with the sun was a part of Donne's strategy to reveal his genuine emotion for his lover, with some candidates offering detailed and at times sophisticated analysis of his poetic methods and the understanding of tone and imagery (e.g. the persona's contempt for harvest workers in 'country ants' and the witty support for the sun in 'Thine age askes ease'). The poem was often linked to other lighter and more conversational poems such as *The Flea*, with some seeing this poem's joyous, uninhibited devotional tone as a stark contrast to the despair and doubt of his religious poems.

Silas Marner

This was a very popular choice with the majority of candidates opting for **(a)**. Answers on **(a)** showed a good knowledge of the settings and candidates who were able to plan their essay and select relevant material often did well. Weaker answers tended to generalise about settings and to summarise the events that took place in them. Some answers were able to develop this by linking it to Marner's development and narrative throughout the book. Candidates who explored the way Eliot uses the settings to reveal her characters, often contrasting William Dane/Lantern Yard with Raveloe/Dolly Winthrop often did well. Others explored the effects created in the Rainbow Inn and the Cass household. More sophisticated arguments were able to distinguish settings and locations, with some very good discussions about the way that Marner's cottage changed throughout the book, focussing on the garden, the Stone pit and the hearth and how they symbolise the gradual humanising of Silas.

Option **(b)** though less popular was often well done, with some excellent explorations of how Eliot presents Nancy and the effects created. Nearly all candidates thought this was a very positive portrait and were well able to link it to the wider text, most often how Nancy stands by Godfrey when he finally admits to his past. Better answers saw how Eliot uses the narrative perspective of the Miss Gunns to develop her effects, with more sophisticated analyses identifying the humour and the tone with which the cares and concerns of these country ladies are revealed through the details such as the education, the work soiled hands and the neatness of Nancy's things. Her innate kindness and gentleness were often noted and some thought her too good for the selfish Godfrey.

Hopkins Selected Poems

This was the least popular text on the paper and only a few candidates offered either option. In option **(a)** candidates generally were able to refer to relevant poems to show how Hopkins focused on his own duty and service to God. Better ones were able to use telling reference to the language and text to demonstrate how those concerns revealed his faith and the depth of his emotions and how Hopkins created the effects in his poems.

Option **(b)** was slightly more popular and a few answers had a convincing grasp of Hopkins's methods here and a secure knowledge of the poem as a whole. Better answers were alive to Hopkins's methods and explored 'inscape' and 'sprung rhythm' to telling effect, showing good understanding of the meaning and how that reflected Hopkins characteristic concerns.

The Changeling

This was a minority choice in its first session. Most opted for **(a)** and candidates often had a detailed knowledge of the text and so had a wealth of material to support their arguments. Planning and careful selection were therefore important elements in producing a successful answer. Most answers tended to see 'lust and desire' as inevitably destructive, with examples from Diaphanta's death resulting from her own lust for Alsemero to the near catastrophe visited on the disguised 'madmen'. Most answers focused on De Flores and Beatrice, with some more sophisticated arguments developed showing how Beatrice's relationship with De Flores developed into something deeper than mere lust, for example, as the play developed. This was at times contrasted with the less convincing demonstrations of 'Love' such as the dialogues between Alsemero and Beatrice. Others argued that the contrasting fortunes of the characters in the main and sub plots were a result of Isabella's clearer understanding of herself and her desires. Weaker answers tended to summarise the various narratives often in accurate detailed paraphrases.

Option **(b)** was less popular. Nearly every answer saw the dramatic impact of the two plots come together and the final unmasking of the villains. Some candidates were able to feel sympathy for Beatrice, if not De Flores, though the majority thought the ending no more than a just outcome. Nearly all answers were able to discuss the characters and their roles in the wider play, though again better answers were able to select and shape relevant material more effectively, especially in terms of Beatrice's final recognition of her dishonour and De Flores all consuming passion for Beatrice right to the bitter end.



LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

Paper 9695/53

Shakespeare and other Pre Twentieth Century Texts

Key Messages

Candidates should plan their answers, selecting relevant material and a suitable structure, before starting to write their answers.

Candidates should be careful not to confuse material from derivative versions such as film or TV adaptations with the original text.

Candidates should avoid unnecessary biographical and historical background.

General Comments

There was a range of achievement this session with candidates achieving marks in the highest bands on nearly every text on the paper. There were very few rubric errors and almost no candidates appeared to have time management problems. All but a few candidates were able to show at least a sound knowledge of their chosen texts and many displayed an engagement in and enthusiasm for the works they had studied.

There are three general issues to address this session:

- (a) Planning – some candidates do not appear to allocate sufficient time to selecting and organising material relevant to the set question before writing their essay. This often leads to repetition, generalisation and unstructured arguments. This equally applies to passage based answers as well as discursive essays. For passage based answers candidates should consider carefully which parts of the wider text are relevant to their analysis of the set passage.
- (b) Centres who make use of additional material such as film or TV adaptations should ensure candidates are able to distinguish between those derivative versions and the original text, particularly when discussing characterisation or structure. This material might well be useful in considering different interpretations but can lead candidates into incorrect judgements if not used carefully.
- (c) Unnecessary biographical or other information – a small minority of candidates are providing up to two sides of biography of or a historical background to their chosen authors. This is rarely relevant to the task in hand and should be avoided as this will not improve the candidate's mark and takes up valuable time in the exam.

Specific Texts

Section A Shakespeare

Hamlet

Option (a) was a popular choice and candidates were well prepared for this topic. Candidates needed to plan the structure of the response to make the best use of their textual knowledge and many answers included very good supporting references from the text. Weaker answers tended to summarise the story of each family grouping, with sometimes too great a focus on the possible 'incestuous relationships'; better answers discussed how the various parallels were used by Shakespeare to illustrate specific concerns, most often the Royal family in comparison with Polonius's family, which was often seen as a positive family portrait. A pleasing number of answers also saw the contrast between Old Hamlet's family and that created by Claudius with his marriage to Gertrude. As one candidate suggested:

After all it was not just the head of the family who changed, since we are told that Gertrude and Hamlet are unrecognizable from the wife and son of Old Hamlet.

Essays which developed beyond the individual characterisation into considering, for example, how Shakespeare used the relationships to develop the plot and his thematic concerns were rarer but often did very well.

Option **(b)** was very popular and there were some excellent, detailed and analytical responses. A minority of candidates did not recognise the context, but most were aware that Hamlet had just returned to Denmark and that the grave was for Ophelia. This knowledge often led candidates into discussing the irony of Hamlet's response to Yorick's skull, for example, *'Hamlet's apparent stoicism in the face of death is about to be sorely tested and found wanting as he jumps into Ophelia's grave and wrestles with Laertes.'*

Many candidates explored the humour and the effects of it here, often seeing it as comic relief; better answers also recognised that grave digger/clown shows us how much Hamlet is in the public eye, linking this to the wider spying and watching which goes on in the play. Hamlet's easiness with the clown was often noted and linked to Claudius's comment that he was loved of the multitude. The effect of Yorick's skull and *'the iconic picture of Hamlet holding the skull in a philosophical pose'* was well discussed, with stronger answers exploring its significance in giving Hamlet a more realistic perspective on death as the great leveller, with some linking this to Hamlet's previous musings on death – most often his soliloquies, but with some very good analysis also linked to his *'rantings on make up to Ophelia in the nunnery scene'*. Weaker answers tended to paraphrase the passage, with some more general comment on Hamlet's character.

Coriolanus

This in its first session was a minority choice. Option **(a)** was the more popular choice, with candidates showing a detailed knowledge of the text and the two characters. Weaker answers tended to discuss them separately, often in accurate, detailed summaries. Better answers focused on the key elements of 'Shakespeare's portrayal' and 'relationship', with some excellent explorations of the dramatic effects, especially the ironies, of some of their exchanges. Essays which contrasted Volumnia's boasting of shaping her son's career and character early in the play with her pleading at the gates of Rome often did very well, especially when these episodes were contrasted with *'her emotional and maternal, yet politically adept maneuvering of him back to the market place and inevitable disgrace'*. Some excellent answers focused on the given quotation, contrasting valiantness and pride and seeing the two warring elements that led to Coriolanus's tragedy, especially given the lack of the genuine care shown for him by his mother, hinted at in the word 'suck'd'st'. Most answers saw her role as inadvertently driving him to his doom, but those who saw the tragedy springing from this flawed mother and son relationship often did very well. As one candidate said: *her warped sense of the maternal role created a killing machine which only she could destroy; she did this in the end by releasing his human emotions which she herself had forced him to suppress.*

Option **(b)** was much less popular, but most candidates, if not able to accurately place the passage as Coriolanus returning triumphantly from the Volscian wars, were aware of the threat that the tribunes believed him to be to their power. Many answers saw their scheming as reprehensible, with better answers noting how well they understood the fickleness of the people they represent and how the plot of the play was mapped out here as the tribunes saw the process of election for Consul presenting them with an opportunity to bring Coriolanus to 'a sure destruction' and 'darken him for ever.' A few answers recognised the choric function of the descriptions of Coriolanus's return and how even in that the malice of the tribunes revealed itself in their descriptions of the people.

Section B

Mansfield Park

Option **(a)** was very popular and there were very few answers which were not able to show detailed and relevant knowledge of the text. Most answers contrasted those who simply followed their desires such as the Crawfords and Maria Bertram, with those who lived up to their duties such as Fanny and Edmund. Weaker answers tended to summarise the various narratives, with the shaping of this material determining the success of the answer. Better answers however saw that Austen's methods of characterisation often depended on internal conflicts such as Edmund's desire for Mary Crawford and his duty as a prospective clergyman. Some answers saw this conflict even in Mary and Henry Crawford – their attraction to Edmund and Fanny often cited as evidence of the Crawfords ultimately doomed struggle to fight their weaknesses. Most however agreed with the candidate who said: *'their selfishness is akin to a disease which swept through Mansfield infecting everyone except Fanny'*. There were also some very good explorations of how

this conflict was used by Austen in developing her plot and underpinning the novel's structure, using the internal and external conflicts to maintain her reader's interest.

Option **(b)** was less popular but often very well tackled. Nearly all candidates could explore the character of Sir Thomas as revealed here and elsewhere in the text with many referring to his later recognition of his failings and seeing signs of those failings here. His failure to see through Crawford, with such dreadful repercussions for Maria, was often noted and his self satisfaction here was, inevitably for some, leading to his later unhappiness. Some candidates saw a darker Sir Thomas; his manipulative nature, his lack of real understanding of those around him and his certainty of being right were well evidenced here, though some candidates did not distinguish material from film versions of the novel in selecting wider textual evidence. Other answers balanced this with a more positive view, noting his desire for Fanny to be comfortable as Crawford, in his view, would make her; his understanding of the effect Portsmouth would have on her and his reliance on Edmund's opinion. Some very good answers explored the language to telling effect and especially the narrative voice, for example in 'all his knowledge of human nature' contrasted with 'and nothing at all with any idea of making her happy'.

The Pardoner's Prologue and Tale

Option **(a)** was a popular choice with many candidates revealing a detailed knowledge of both Prologue and Tale in agreeing with the question's proposition. Some better answers considered 'poetic methods', especially Chaucer's dramatic presentation of the Pardoner and how the Tale exemplified the very sins which the Pardoner had outlined in his Prologue. Some excellent answers explored the multiple narrative layers and their effects on the reader's response to Pardoner and Tale, with a few essays seeing this as a key element in Chaucer's presentation of the Pardoner.

Option **(b)** was not as popular but candidates who knew the Prologue well and could link this into the wider text often did well in exploring the ironies of the Pardoner's sermon against drunkenness. Some answers linked this to the Pardoner himself and his own sinful nature and hypocrisy whereas others also linked it to the tale itself and how drinking leads the 'rioters' to their doom. Detailed analysis of the passage was relatively rare and often quite limited, though some candidates were able to recognise the rhetorical elements in the Pardoner's methods. However many did discuss the effect of the biblical references for example and how these were used by the Pardoner to create his image and by Chaucer to undermine it.

Hard Times

Option **(a)** was the minority choice on this text with few responses seen. Most were able to set out the basic narrative of Stephen and Rachael, recognizing their role in terms of other relationships such as Bounderby and Louisa. Those who could explore some of Dickens's concerns and themes often did well, seeing the couple as essentially less fully realised, because their roles were more as foils to other more flawed and therefore more interesting characters. Stephen's role in the plot of the novel – the union, the bank robbery and inadvertently in unmasking Bounderby – was noted by some candidates. Some answers recognised that the language used for the couple – Stephen's honest sounding 'dialect' and the angelic imagery for Rachael for example – was a key element of Dickens's portrayal of ultimately a rather flat and uninteresting couple.

Option **(b)** was more popular with most answers able to give quite a precise context to the passage, after the unintentional unmasking of Bounderby by Mrs Sparsit. Those who analysed the passage in detail often commented on Dickens's use of dialogue and narrative voice to achieve his effects, often making telling references to echoes of earlier episodes. Candidates were often alive to the effect of details – the cheque Bounderby gives to her for example – though most saw this in terms of the characters and their relationship. Those answers which considered how this relationship as revealed here developed Dickens's concerns more widely often did very well, as did those answers which focused on methods, exploring the tone and the ironic humour of the reality of the relationship hidden beneath the surface politeness, with the effect of the word 'noodle' often particularly well explored.

John Donne Selection

This was a minority choice with most candidates offering option **(b)**. Nearly all candidates agreed with the proposition and were able to refer in detail to at least three poems, though weaker answers offered a general summary rather than identifying the persuasion or emotion in the poems, though some basic contrasts were identified in subject matter and approach. Other more successful answers did discuss Donne's use of persuasion as a way of revealing his emotion, often distinguishing his religious poems from those addressed to a lover. Better answers were able to focus on methods more closely, especially language and imagery, often arguing convincingly that beneath the artifice and argument lay depths of sincere emotion.

Option **(b)** was much less popular. Weaker answers attempted to paraphrase the poem, often with limited understanding of the tone and meaning and with only limited attempts to link it to the concerns and methods in other poems. Some answers struggled with the surface meaning unfortunately and were unable to develop analysis. Better answers saw how the poem's focus on time and religion was a strategy to reinforce his genuine emotion for his lover, often assumed to be his wife, with some candidates offering detailed and at times sophisticated analysis of his poetic methods. The poem was often contrasted to his lighter, more conversational tone in either *The Sun Rising* or in *The Flea*, with some seeing this poem's tone as linked to his religious poems.

Silas Marner

This was a popular choice with the majority of candidates opting for **(b)**. Answers on **(a)** showed a good knowledge of the minor characters and their role often focussing on the effect of the Rainbow Inn discussions, but also focussing on specific characters such as William Dane, though he was not a 'Raveloe character' and Dolly Winthrop with some able to explore her role in the novel in detail, especially in terms of the plot and the development of Silas. Better answers saw how these minor characters contributed to Eliot's portrayal of the setting, its warmth and humanity, in contrast to for example Lantern's Yard, with some able to develop that into considering the effects of this on the main characters in the novel.

Option **(b)** was more popular, with some excellent answers, showing a very good understanding of how Eliot's narrative techniques lead up to Silas's recognition of Eppie. Better answers focused on the language, often linking Eppie to the lost gold for example and exploring the effects of that. Others saw how the narrative was developing here, through the 'narrative voice', with many candidates recognising the impact of the revelation of Silas's emotion through the memory of his little sister. Nearly every answer was aware of how this was a turning point for Marner, leading to his reintegration into Raveloe, though only a few answers could see how the reader's response is shaped by the language and the image of the lonely miser and the abandoned child.

Hopkins Selected Poems

This was the least popular text on the paper and only a few candidates offered either option. In option **(a)** candidates generally were able to refer to relevant poems to show how Hopkins focused on his own failings and fears in presenting self-doubt and despair. Better ones were able to use telling reference to the language and text to demonstrate the depth of those emotions and how Hopkins created the effects in his poems.

Option **(b)** was slightly more popular and a few answers had a convincing grasp of Hopkins's methods here and a secure knowledge of the poem as a whole. Better answers were alive to Hopkins's methods and explored 'inscape' and 'sprung rhythm' to telling effect, showing good understanding of the meaning and how that reflected Hopkins characteristic concerns.

The Changeling

This was a minority choice in its first session. Most opted for **(a)** and nearly all agreed with the contention. Candidates often had a detailed knowledge of the text and so had a wealth of material to support their arguments. Planning and careful selection were therefore important elements in producing a successful answer. Most answers tended to see 'lust and desire' as irresistible and inevitably destructive, with examples from Diaphanta's death resulting from her own lust for Alsemero to the near catastrophe visited on the disguised 'madmen'. Most answers focused on De Flores and Beatrice, with some more sophisticated arguments developed showing how Beatrice's desire for De Flores, for example, grew as the play developed. Others saw the destructive power in how quickly Alsemero changes at the start of the play in his desire for Beatrice. Most answers did not distinguish between lust and desire, but perceptive arguments thought that Beatrice was the most interesting example of Middleton's presentation in that her initial loathing for De Flores turned into lust as they fell deeper into sin and finally became genuine desire and for some even love.

Option **(b)** was less popular. Nearly every answer saw the two 'narratives' here – the relationship between Alsemero and Beatrice and Beatrice's internal plotting. Better answers also noted Diaphanta's 'complete gentleman' and how that was to lead her to her doom. Others explored the language to telling effect – the references to death and poison for example – as well as contrasting the religious tone of Beatrice's for some hollow professions of love for Alsemero with her more commercially worded asides on De Flores. Nearly all answers were able to discuss the characters and their roles in the wider play, though again better answers were able to select and shape relevant material more effectively.

LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

Paper 9695/61
Twentieth Century Writing

Key Messages

To improve performance on both **(a)** and **(b)** questions, many candidates need to show a more detailed knowledge of the texts as a whole and key scenes.

Candidates need to have a selection of quotations available, not just to support ideas about themes and character but to allow them to demonstrate an ability to analyse a writer's methods and effects in some detail.

Candidates must answer the question set and shape their knowledge to fit the task.

Candidates should practise delivering two answers of equal length. Excessively long first answers, however excellent followed by short under-developed second answers will rarely score as highly as two more balanced answers.

General comments

All questions proved to be accessible and there were some outstanding, enthusiastic responses to the new texts many of which showed a genuine appreciation of the writers' concerns and the way they achieved their effects. Questions using a leading quotation offered a greater challenge, inviting a candidate to adopt a critical stance but even on more straightforward questions, strong responses showed that candidates were prepared to address critical issues and to explore them with detailed references to the texts. Strong responses were those where the candidates were mindful of the structure offered in the steer of the questions and used the terms of the question to sharpen their responses by critically analysing such key terms as *methods and concerns*, *presentation*, *significance* and *effects* in relation to the specific text or passage. In the question rubric, the expressions *How far* and *ways in which* are used to encourage an independent personal opinion. Strong responses showed confidence in the candidates' ability to present personally informed, wide-ranging arguments supported by close interrogation of method and effect in poetry, prose and drama. They showed a good working knowledge of such literary terminology as *irony*, *juxtaposition*, *symbolism*, *stream of consciousness*, *free indirect discourse* and some aspects of poetic methods. Few took the opportunity to display an appreciation of the way the form, and the effects created by sound and rhythm in the choice of diction and manipulation of sentence structure contributed to the poetic treatment of the subject and reader response. In more modest scripts there has been some improvement in the quality of Personal Response by linking this more explicitly to language. The responses to drama texts showed greater competence in analysing the dramatic effects within a scene and the significance of a passage in relation to the whole text. Less accomplished scripts relied upon textual summary and generalised arguments or portraits of characters to shape their answers and often deviated from the main thrust of the questions. **(b)** questions continue to be the more popular options on this paper and many candidates found it challenging to balance the close study of the passage in relation to wider textual issues, either those arising from within the text or from the wider social, historical, cultural, political and biographical contexts. Some candidates were able to use such information sensitively to illuminate and support their views. Others offered too much information or made misguided attempts to interpret the text in the light of biographical details or in a few cases, used the text to support views about a writer's life as though the writer were the focus of the question.

Generally the standard of expressive English was sound: in some cases it was very fluent, persuasive, appropriately literary and could be used to explore complex ideas with precision and flair. The majority could present straightforward ideas with intelligence and clarity and attempted to link ideas together in a coherent argument with varying degrees of sophistication. There were a few cases where the degree of imprecision in the expression, or the use of already prepared summaries indicated some difficulty in articulating a personal response to the questions. Some candidates found it difficult to manage their time effectively and produced



unbalanced scripts. On the other hand, more successful candidates often showed evidence of some carefully considered planning and of using the planning process as a way of working out a conceptualised response to the question. As a result, they often developed more logical, coherent arguments, progressing through a greater range of ideas with more depth. Those essays which focused less effectively on the questions tended to make use of pre-prepared or very general introductions and summarised the essay by way of conclusion. As usual there were some candidates who ill-advisedly attempted to do some of the (b) questions as unseens and struggled with comprehension as well as expression. Very few candidates showed a lack of basic understanding of the texts, though in some cases detailed knowledge was restricted. The enthusiasm for the new texts sometimes led to answers which were extensive rather than deep and often narrative or discursive in form rather than literary. However, there are always some scripts which communicate a real, personal, intellectual engagement and sensitive appreciation of the texts, and this session there was more evidence of this, at various levels shown in the detailed knowledge and perceptive insights into the writers' methods and concerns.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1 FLEUR ADCOCK: *Poems 1960-2000*

This was not a popular text and though there were some substantial analytical essays which recognised her careful selection of form, diction and control of tone, many essays were disappointingly thin, summarising the ideas and dismissing her style as colloquial.

- (a) This was the less popular option. There was often some unease about the exact definition of 'sentimentality' with some candidates clearly equating it simply with 'emotion' but a view of Adcock as a 'confessional' or 'semi-confessional' poet proved useful and helped others to explore the relationships in the poems with some awareness of how she uses objective, observational material. The most successful essays examined how feelings such as loss of her father or a friend were dealt with in 'Toads' and 'In Memoriam for James K Baxter', relationships with children as in 'Tadpoles' and 'For Andrew' and attitudes to herself in 'Weathering'. The best answers had some apt quotations and were able to discuss with some degree of confidence aspects of her choice of language.
- (b) Most candidates chose to write about the poem and many attempts were limited to summaries of the content and making it into a metaphor for human behaviour, a criticism of a lack of engagement with life or of lives lived at too fast a pace. Some also wanted to link it to biographical details suggesting the poem reflects Adcock's experience of alienation and dislocation, hence the reference to 'hanging upside-down' and the 'steamy Amazon jungle' and using the reference to the 'fungus' to assert that it shows Adcock's frustration in being unable to cope with life's challenges. These weaker essays also showed a lack of confidence in dealing with poetic method, confining remarks to comments such as 'the poet uses a lot of enjambement and punctuation continuously.' More competent answers noted the title and linked it to the form. Most were able to make something of the imagery: 'the idiot clown' and the snail 'the size of a sheep' and nearly all found something to say about the questions with which the poem ends. There was occasionally some discussion of humour and some connection with Adcock's other poems about creatures, notably 'The Pangolin' and 'Last Song', though only the very best actually looked for and illustrated points of comparison in Adcock's treatment of the subjects to illuminate her methods and concerns in the set poem. The better essays explored tone, the conversational manner of the poem in terms of diction, use of enjambement and short sentences and the discreetly unobtrusive rhyme, finding it curious that such a well controlled and crafted poem should sound so casual.

Question 2 W.H.AUDEN: *Selected Poems*

The poem was the preferred choice but the small number who tackled the (a) question provided some interesting responses. Weaker answers to both questions showed a tendency to state themes and discuss them, often displaying some knowledge of Auden's concerns but without specific textual references, thus restricting opportunities for displaying an understanding and personal response to Auden's poetic methods and effects.

- (a) A few misinterpreted the question and wrote about Auden's treatment of *Time* but the majority defined an aspect of his time as war and the various versions of disconnection that Auden perceives between public and private worlds or the role of the poet. 'Refugee Blues', 'Control of the Passes or the Secret Agent' and 'What is That Sound' were frequent choices for the former and 'The Unknown Citizen', and 'Musee des Beaux Arts' were favourites for the latter with the occasional inclusion of 'In Memory of W.B. Yeats'. The stronger answers focused on the 'means' and illustrated the use of voices and tone in the presentation of the ideas and had some aptly chosen quotations to illustrate choice of language, the effects of imagery and the use of repetition. The least successful strategy was to lean heavily on autobiographical material and write about Auden's homosexuality.
- (b) This question produced answers across the range. There were some very good, well supported personal responses, the best of which placed the poem within Auden's exploration of human nature and attitudes to conformity. Most answers appreciated the cheery mixture of precise evocation of the fairground and reflection on its 'meaning' for the poet. Most explored the difference between the experiences of youth and age and a few caught the tone of wistful resignation in the way things are as life proceeds. Whilst many commented on its sequence of images, a few also explored the form of the poem and occasionally there was discussion of the verse form with the sobering effect of each verse's brief, flat last line. Very few referred to other poems though some use was made of 'Old People's Home'. Weaker essays attempted a paraphrase or summary, struggling to generate a meaning: 'fool-proof engines' and the sentence structure in verse five proved to be challenging. From some weak candidates, there was a confused determination to write about Auden's homosexuality and everything was relentlessly linked to this: the 'archway of coloured lights' was perceived as a coded metaphor for it, sexual innuendo was seen in 'thumping' and 'solid flesh' and the description of the Roundabout as an image of orgasm.

Question 3 JANET FRAME: *Towards Another Summer*

This was not a popular choice of text this session, but responses almost always showed engagement. Some candidates continue to find it difficult to separate Grace Cleave from the writer and in answers to both questions there was often too much biographical material and confusion about who was the subject of the essay.

- (a) Strong answers showed extensive textual knowledge relevant to the question. Only the best saw Grace's recourse to the image of a 'migratory bird' as a literary device and surprisingly few had detailed references available to explore her experience of being one. There were however some surprising uses of detailed knowledge. One script focused on the language of temperature throughout the novel, pointing out how Grace migrated to Relham because it was 1.5 degrees warmer. Another was able to argue that Grace was exiled not just from her own country but also from the real social world by showing how the narrative method presented Grace's thoughts, creating the impression that she was 'at home in her own head'. A more straightforward strategy was to relate her experience in the Thirkettle's home, with its reminders of New Zealand, to her own memories of her native country and family life which allowed candidates to show sound understanding of the structure and character. Weaker answers restricted the answer to an explanation of the 'migratory bird', wrote very generally about the text and took refuge in biographical material. Some wrote about the image as if it was meant to be taken literally: 'she is exiled from human beings because she is not a human being herself.'

- (b) This was more frequently answered and the passage stimulated good commentary on matters such as Grace's inner fears, her preoccupation with the exact meanings of language and her need to explore memories of her childhood. Reference to the wider text came more easily when the themes were thus isolated. Some candidates worked well with the idea of the adult Grace seeing life as a child and needing to work at her memories of an unsatisfactory family life; others focused on the presentation of Grace's imagination. The better answers also looked at the narrative method, focusing in particular on the gothic detail of the whirling black skeletons and the literal use in play of the idiomatic arm being pulled out of its socket. This passage offered many opportunities for candidates to explore the word play, but while many recognised the character trait in Grace, few had the confidence to analyse Frame's presentation of it here or to discuss her control of tone, though a few managed to comment on the use of dialogue. Less assured answers relied on narrative summary of the extract which was often quite full and showed understanding of content and theme without addressing narrative method. Weaker answers displayed little sense of the context, sometimes found difficulty in understanding or explaining the content, viewing it as evidence of mental instability and rushing with relief into an account of why Janet Frame could not return to New Zealand.

Question 4 BRIAN FRIEL: *Translations*

This was a popular text and seemed to stimulate candidates of all abilities to develop a personal response and show an understanding of the issues. Answers often showed good detailed knowledge of the text and the historical background, though there were some errors in understanding the difference between the period of setting and that of writing. There was often extensive reference to critical views which were usually relevant but not often used as a way into some detailed analysis.

- (a) This question proved accessible and on the whole was well answered. The key discriminating factor was the ability to focus on and discuss the dramatic presentation of characters. Lancey and Yolland were considered and most answers moved beyond character studies to distinguish between the roles of the two men. A few essays discussed the English here as stereotypes and considered their theatrical effect with some discussion of different interpretations through the consideration of the play in performance. Lancey, the repressive colonist was contrasted with the romantic and sentimental Yolland and specific episodes such as Lancey's patronising address in the School room, the love-scene with Maire, the renaming of places with Owen or Lancey's ultimate threats were easy to identify and describe. Better essays exploited these to discuss their significance in contributing to Friel's concerns about language, identity, and what happens to individuals caught up in complex, violent political events. Less assured scripts relied on generalised character portraits and were thin on specific references. Some essays included discussion of Owen as a character initially identified with the English which was a weak interpretation of the task and often led to greater deviation from the thrust of the question.
- (b) The passage was also well done and almost all were able to respond to the presentation of Maire's distress by reference to the stage directions, and contrasting her rapid alternation of action and speech with Owen's restraint. The context of Yolland's disappearance was implicit in the passage and the sad contrast with previous scenes well brought out, though there was some insecurity about the reason for Manus's departure and his connection with Yolland's disappearance. Better answers focused in detail on the structure of the dialogue, noting the effects of the questions, the choppy rhythms created by various effects within the sentence structure in Maire's speeches and the shift in tone in the exchange between Owen and Doalty. The thematic symbolism of the outline map that Maire traces in the very spot where Owen had previously been looking at his map was not lost on better candidates and many saw this moment as a further aspect of the theme of naming and identity with the best candidates also pursuing the idea of 'sense' and 'nice sounds.' Many commented on the audience response to Yolland's 'I'll see you yesterday' both in terms of language and humour. Almost all linked Maire's mention of the death of Nellie Ruadh's baby with the wider text, the earlier christening and the present death of hope for these people. Weaker scripts attempted a narrative summary of the extract, showed some confusion between Yolland and Lancey – prompted by the question 'What does Lancey say?' and sometimes asserted that Manus had killed Yolland.

Question 5 ARUNDHATI ROY: *The God of Small Things*.

This was a very popular text and at every level candidates showed detailed knowledge and understanding of the issues and concerns. The writing is memorable and candidates had a lot of potentially useful quotations and specific references available. The discriminating factors were the ability to shape their knowledge to the task and at higher levels, the critical ability to analyse the effects of the language. In some ways the candidates seemed spoilt for choice and very long answers compromised the time available for the second question.

- (a) This proved the slightly less popular choice. There was a tendency to concentrate on ‘concerns’ rather than ‘presentation’ but almost everyone understood the characters’ significance. The more assured essays explored the anglophile nature of the status-obsessed family which led to comparisons between Margaret and Ammu, the parallelisms in their histories of marriage and divorce and their respective amounts of freedom, and the treatment of Sophie Mol in comparison to that of the twins. The best scripts focused on the structure and gave due weight to the filtering of the events through the experience of the twins covering the ‘What will Sophie Mol think?’ week’ and issues surrounding the ‘Love Laws, also focusing on the passages presented by the external narrator which revealed both characters ‘to be human’. Weaker essays spent too much time explaining the historical background to the character relationship with Chacko and the rest of the family and trying to unpick the plot complexities that led to and followed Sophie Mol’s death.
- (b) This was the more popular option and produced answers across the range. The immediate context was usually identified which prompted some discussion on narrative structure and foreshadowing. There was sound understanding of point of view with some well-chosen, detailed wider reference. Many essays appreciated the intensity of the atmosphere in the car and how Roy generates the childish delight as Rahel sees Velutha, with all the mesh of loving tragic interactions that lies, unrecognised by her, behind this moment. The density of individual feelings and perspectives brought together at this moment was well apprehended and analysed in the better essays with candidates relishing the tense imagery: ‘Silence filled the car like a saturated sponge’ and ‘The sun shone with a shuddering sigh’ and the bizarre childlike quality of the description of the car or the specific detail of Rahel’s observations of Velutha’s shirt, veins and flag. There were many connections with the rest of the novel to be pursued, from the later effects of Baby Kochamma’s fear and Rahel’s fear of diminishing the love of Ammu, to the inherited negation of Pappachi’s moth. Good candidates sensitively integrated wider contextual knowledge of the political and social changes into discussions of Ammu’s sarcastic crack about Chacko’s ‘truly Marxist heart’ and Baby Kochamma’s projection of the later humiliation onto Velutha. The passage stimulated some impressive personal response e.g. ‘As they drive back in time against the flow of history being made (the march) and towards the bones of Chacko’s past life, they move towards disaster.’ Weaker answers either concentrated on giving a detailed paraphrase and commentary of the passage, showing some misreading – particularly of the car and drifting into long explanations of the significance of Velutha wearing a shirt, Baby Kochamma’s character or the background to Pappachi’s moth.

Question 6 WOLE SOYINKA: *the Trials of Brother Jero and Jero’s Metamorphosis*

This is proving to be a popular text and was often done well. Most candidates are clear on Soyinka’s satiric purpose and demonstrated detailed knowledge of the plays. The discriminating factor tends to be how well candidates can analyse elements of comedy and in both questions they tended to focus on the satire, the situational aspects and action without giving due attention to the use of language.

- (a) This proved an accessible question and produced answers across the range. More sophisticated responses placed Chume’s role as a foil and fall-guy in relation to the unscrupulous and manipulative Jero and explored some of the theatrical moments in some detail, including references to *Jero’s Metamorphosis*. They were able to explore the comedy, both ironic and farcical, in which Chume is involved. Less assured essays stayed on the level of character study and an explanation of plot involvement. It is unnecessarily limiting to see Chume as a representative of the long-suffering Nigerian people exploited by the self-interested and utterly corrupt political and religious leaders.

- (b) The same is true of responses to the passage question, where less assured essays spent too much time on heavy moral condemnation of Jero's wicked manoeuvres at the expense of Chume. Though it was appropriate to link the passage to the wider satirical intention of the text, it was disappointing that more candidates did not choose to examine a greater range of effects within the passage. Better scripts were clear on the irony of Chume discovering a sin that had not occurred and the Member's confidence that he 'stood in the presence of God'. They tracked the audience's anxiety as to what might happen next, noting the dramatic effect of Chume's rushing on stage brandishing a cutlass and Jero's plans to exploit the Member and relieve himself of Chume. Only the most able talked in terms of Soyinka's use of soliloquy, the effects of Chume's pidgin English and the final farce, in this extract, of the Member being awoken by a thrown pebble and Jero appearing as a haloed saint. Only a very few essays commented on the fun Soyinka was having in thus transfiguring his likeable rogue. Weaker answers tended to describe what was happening with occasional comments that showed some personal awareness of dramatic effects or drifted into an inappropriate amount of detail into the social and political context.

Question 7 VIRGINIA WOOLF: *To the Lighthouse*.

This was quite a popular choice of text. As always many displayed knowledge of the literary context and method, at times in a rather mechanical way. It is almost always relevant but needed to be integrated into passages of close reference and analysis.

- (a) Quite a lot of biographical detail about Virginia Woolf and her relationship with her parents was produced in response to this question. Seeing the novel as a eulogy to her mother limits a literary response, as does interpreting it as a feminist attack on paternalistic society. Stronger responses saw the function of James and Cam as contributing to the whole structure of the novel, moving from the discordant start to reconciliation at the end. Prue and Andrew were also mentioned but as victims of paternalistic society, meeting their untimely ends through societal expectations. Again it was more productive to see them as part of the discussion in the novel on the transiency of life or to focus on methods of presentation, particularly the means used to announce their deaths and how this shaped a reader's response to it. Some candidates had a fairly clear, though generalised, argument and lacked detailed knowledge to illustrate it. Some mined the extract set for **Question (b)** but made little of Bank's listing and titling of some of the children.
- (b) This extract offered an opportunity to analyse the way interior consciousness is interwoven with exterior events and the way a character undergoes a process of recognition and discovery. Only a few appreciated this sort of dynamic in the writing or saw that Jasper's real appearance in front of William Banks prompted ambivalent feelings and further thoughts which reflected his own emotional needs. Some did see that Banks develops an interior debate and felt both judgemental and envious of his friend's lifestyle. Better candidates pointed out Bank's role as an outsider, giving us an alternative view of the Ramsays and focused on choice of language to work out how Banks felt towards the children, looking critically at the effects of the list and the implications of 'fluttering wings' and 'clucking domesticities' which gave them something to say about tone. There were some astute comments on the effects of the sentence structure – the varying sentence length, use of brackets and dashes to mimic the flow of natural thought and these were always more effective when linked to specific examples. Weaker essays stayed on the surface of the text and attempted to paraphrase, or attempted a character sketch of Banks based on the extract or paid insufficient attention to the passage and drifted into tangential material on the children or Mr Ramsay.

LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

Paper 9695/62
Twentieth Century Writing

Key Messages

To improve performance on both **(a)** and **(b)** questions, many candidates need to show a more detailed knowledge of the texts as a whole and key scenes.

Candidates need to have a selection of quotations available, not just to support ideas about themes and character but to allow them to demonstrate an ability to analyse a writer's methods and effects in some detail.

Candidates must answer the question set and shape their knowledge to fit the task.

Candidates should practise delivering two answers of equal length. Excessively long first answers, however excellent followed by short under-developed second answers will rarely score as highly as two more balanced answers.

General comments

All questions proved to be accessible and there were some outstanding, enthusiastic responses to the new texts many of which showed a genuine appreciation of the writers' concerns and the way they achieved their effects. Questions using a leading quotation offered a greater challenge, inviting a candidate to adopt a critical stance but even on more straightforward questions, strong responses showed that candidates were prepared to address critical issues and to explore them with detailed references to the texts. Strong responses were those where the candidates were mindful of the structure offered in the steer of the questions and used the terms of the question to sharpen their responses by critically analysing such key terms as *methods and concerns*, *presentation*, *significance* and *effects* in relation to the specific text or passage. In the question rubric, the expressions *How far* and *ways in which* are used to encourage an independent personal opinion. Strong responses showed confidence in the candidates' ability to present personally informed, wide-ranging arguments supported by close interrogation of method and effect in poetry, prose and drama. They showed a good working knowledge of such literary terminology as *irony*, *juxtaposition*, *symbolism*, *stream of consciousness*, *free indirect discourse* and some aspects of poetic methods. Few took the opportunity to display an appreciation of the way the form, and the effects created by sound and rhythm in the choice of diction and manipulation of sentence structure contributed to the poetic treatment of the subject and reader response. In more modest scripts there has been some improvement in the quality of Personal Response by linking this more explicitly to language. The responses to drama texts showed greater competence in analysing the dramatic effects within a scene and the significance of a passage in relation to the whole text. Less accomplished scripts relied upon textual summary and generalised arguments or portraits of characters to shape their answers and often deviated from the main thrust of the questions. **(b)** questions continue to be the more popular options on this paper and many candidates found it challenging to balance the close study of the passage in relation to wider textual issues, either those arising from within the text or from the wider social, historical, cultural, political and biographical contexts. Some candidates were able to use such information sensitively to illuminate and support their views. Others offered too much information or made misguided attempts to interpret the text in the light of biographical details or in a few cases, used the text to support views about a writer's life as though the writer were the focus of the question.

Generally the standard of expressive English was sound: in some cases it was very fluent, persuasive, appropriately literary and could be used to explore complex ideas with precision and flair. The majority could present straightforward ideas with intelligence and clarity and attempted to link ideas together in a coherent argument with varying degrees of sophistication. There were a few cases where the degree of imprecision in the expression, or the use of already prepared summaries indicated some difficulty in articulating a personal response to the questions. Some candidates found it difficult to manage their time effectively and produced unbalanced scripts. On the other hand, more successful candidates often showed evidence of some



carefully considered planning and of using the planning process as a way of working out a conceptualised response to the question. As a result, they often developed more logical, coherent arguments, progressing through a greater range of ideas with more depth. Those essays which focused less effectively on the questions tended to make use of pre-prepared or very general introductions and summarised the essay by way of conclusion. As usual there were some candidates who ill-advisedly attempted to do some of the (b) questions as unseens and struggled with comprehension as well as expression. Very few candidates showed a lack of basic understanding of the texts, though in some cases detailed knowledge was restricted. The enthusiasm for the new texts sometimes led to answers which were extensive rather than deep and often narrative or discursive in form rather than literary. However, there are always some scripts which communicate a real, personal, intellectual engagement and sensitive appreciation of the texts, and this session there was more evidence of this, at various levels shown in the detailed knowledge and perceptive insights into the writers' methods and concerns.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1 FLEUR ADCOCK: *Poems 1960-2000*

This did not prove a particularly popular choice this session and very few candidates opted for the essay question. Generally speaking while many candidates show a good grasp of Adcock's concerns, her style is so deceptively colloquial that many do not investigate rigorously enough the way she manipulates poetic form, language and effects to control and exploit tone.

- (a) The few candidates who chose this provided narrative summaries of poems such as 'Weathering', 'Regression' and 'Tadpoles'. What was required was some attempt to explore attitudes to different kinds of change and to find points of comparison in terms of Adcock's characteristic methods.
- (b) This question produced answers across the full range and generally this was well done. Most were able to engage with the development of the theme and thoroughly explore or at least explain some of the poetic methods and their effects. The best essays saw Adcock as a philosopher of everyday occurrences, considered the coincidence of her father's death and generated a personal response to the poem as an exploration of the universal experience of dealing with death and loss. Their essays were characterised by a willingness to look in detail at the language and sentence structure, with many commenting on the diction and tone of the first line and the surprising juxtaposition with the second, noting such details as the effect of the possessive determiner 'our'. They looked at how the sentence structure and alliteration in the second verse generated a sense of guilty responsibility and took other opportunities to look at the choice of language focusing on emotive words like 'honour' and 'Small comfort' and the tender sensual simile in the final line. Many commented on the romantic imagery of the 'rays of pearly stitching' and its juxtaposition with the bald objectivity of the previous line and the surprise of 'cold and stiff as a Devil's penis'. There were some apt detailed references to the wider selection, linking either to other poems about animals or the way Adcock explores death. The important thing here was to make literary comments to show appreciation of Adcock's poetic techniques and treatment of ideas. Less assured scripts showed evidence of a prepared introductory section and checklist of poetic methods before moving on to a more or less competent, personal reading of the poem. Weaker scripts offered generalised, insecure paraphrases with little substantive reference to other poems.

Question 2 W.H.AUDEN: *Selected Poems*

The poem was the preferred choice with very few having the confidence to tackle the essay question. Weaker answers to both questions showed a tendency to state themes and discuss them, often displaying a general knowledge of Auden's concerns but without enough specific textual references, thus restricting opportunities for displaying an understanding of and personal response to Auden's poetic methods and effects.

- (a) This was a straightforward question, though to do well candidates needed to focus on the 'ways' in which Auden presents the individual in society. Some candidates chose appropriate poems: 'Museum des Beaux Arts', 'Refugee Blues' and 'The Unknown Citizen' and also attempted to use 'Old People's Home' and 'In Memory of W.B. Yeats'. Most essays provided simplified accounts of the separate poems. It was rare to find someone attempting to generate a discussion linking the poems either through Auden's attitude to society or through aspects of his poetic methods. Lack of detailed knowledge of the poems was very much the issue here though there was heavy reliance on historical and biographical detail.

- (b) This proved the more popular choice. Strong essays effectively addressed the form of the villanelle and showed how its features were exploited to present the theme of Time, appreciating the repetition with a difference in turning the refrain into a question in the last verse and discussing its wistful acceptance that this is how life is and that the title was itself the last line of the discussion. The majority attempted to track the development of the idea, with some discussion of the use of voices, the idea of 'price', the lack of certainty in love, the significance of the natural imagery and much speculation on the meaning of the bizarre sequence of images in the last verse. Some seized upon the word 'soldiers' and tried to turn the whole thing into a war poem but most linked the poem quite effectively to discussions elsewhere in the text that 'You cannot conquer time'. Occasionally candidates misjudged the balance between wider contextual detail and literary discussion of the set poem in relation to others in the collection. What was important here was that candidates discussed the poem as poetry and made informed, appreciative connections. Many produced interesting, personal readings, obviously enjoying the challenge of teasing out a coherent response to the surprising images in verse two, the effects of the personification in the romantic image of the 'rose' and mysterious idea of the 'vision'. Weaker essays attempted to paraphrase and showed some confusion over who was saying 'If I could tell you...' and tended to get sidetracked into lengthy discussions about clowns and decaying leaves. They tended to generate personal reflections on the meaning of life or simplified the poem into an easy message about making the most of every moment.

Question 3 JANET FRAME: *Towards Another Summer*

This was not a popular text this session; the passage question was the favoured option. Some candidates continue to find it difficult to separate Grace Cleave from the writer and in answers to both questions there was often too much biographical material and confusion about who was the subject of the essay.

- (a) There were a few well considered answers to this question where candidates explored the way Frame builds the relationship from aspects of their shared background and Grace's fascination with Anne as a wife and mother, prompting opportunities for her to revisit her past and consider her own childhood. By paying attention to specific scenes, these candidates were able to show an appreciation of the effects of the narrative method: the point of view and structure and they had detailed knowledge available to show Grace's anxiety on Anne's behalf about her relationship with Philip 'Let them not kill each other', her female solidarity on the market expedition and how the reader's response was shaped in the scene where Grace reveals details of her own intimate relationship. Less assured answers made some appropriate general points or gave accounts of the characters but lacked the detailed knowledge and references to show understanding and appreciation of Frame's narrative methods. In discussion of point of view there was a tendency to drift into an essay on Grace and her relationships with her family with some over-investing in biographical material.
- (b) The passage stimulated answers across the range. Good answers focused closely on the passage and used it to demonstrate knowledge of the ways Frame presents Grace: through dialogue, her internalised observations on her present, the way memories are triggered, scenes recreated and her reflections upon her past experience. Most essays considered what was revealed about Grace's character by the way she replied to Anne's questions and her pride in complimenting Anne on her cooking. There was some sensitive understanding and appreciation of how the language of awe and wonder over Philips preference for Spaghetti Bolognese, of conjuring used to describe Anne's work in the kitchen and the spirituality in the diction of the penultimate paragraph reinforced the reader's awareness that through Grace's eyes, everything appears abnormal, scary or mysterious. One candidate wrote that 'as a migratory bird, Grace views humanity from a distance and she is curious about rituals.' This close reading was much more productive than half-digested notions about 'magical realism' Less assured answers focused on Grace's character and the comparison of Anne with her mother or used the passage as a springboard for a broader contextual discussion of the whole book and the author's own life. Some of them got side-tracked into long discussions about Frame's use of the dash as opposed to inverted commas for speech, claiming that it was representative of her poetic state of mind.

Question 4 BRIAN FRIEL: *Translations*

This was a very popular choice of text and both questions were answered with detailed knowledge, sound understanding of the issues and dramatic effects and evidence of sensitive personal response. Many candidates showed extensive knowledge of critical opinion and quotation which was usually relevant but sometimes used rather mechanically, without any subsequent discussion and analysis.

- (a) This task offered opportunities for a range of material and interpretations and there were several lively, well informed, even passionate discussions placing the issue of change within the wider context of Friel's concerns about language and identity, colonial power, social change and the individual. At the same time strong scripts focused on specific episodes: those between Manus and Owen, Owen and Yolland and Yolland and Hugh. A simpler conceptualised response based on character was to consider those who were the instruments of change, those who embraced it and those who resisted. Within that framework there were some interesting discussions focusing on Owen and Yolland of how characters change, as well as how others like Hugh react to change. Less assured essays showed sound understanding of the plot, characters and the historical context, but lacked sustained attention to specific episodes, which restricted opportunities for discussion of dramatic method and effects.
- (b) This was the more popular choice with the best responses effectively addressing the dramatic context and wider thematic issues, while remaining rooted in a detailed discussion of dramatic method. One candidate considered Hugh's claim that the richness of the language was their 'response to mud cabins and a diet of potatoes' and declared that 'Ireland's state of decay has nothing to do with imperialism... the effort expended on language actually holds back development and leads to the fossilisation of a culture.' There was some lively, sympathetic handling of the linguistic issues and character interaction with comments on Hugh's initial brevity in his response to Yolland, his subsequent use of ornate, rather self-consciously didactic diction, and how this is deflated by Owens prosaic translations of the Irish names. The best scripts thoroughly explored the presentation and role of Hugh in the scene, fully appreciating its complexity. They examined his contribution to its humour and the irony of Irish having 'a syntax opulent with tomorrows' but they also paid due attention to the way Friel's choice of simpler language and the final image of a 'civilisation being imprisoned in a linguistic contour...' makes the audience reconsider Hugh as someone who understands what is happening. More modest scripts competently generated running commentaries, focusing on some aspects of the language and wider concerns such as the significance of the renaming or the national School as they come up, offering interpretations of Owen's attitude to his father and commenting on the dramatic effect of Hugh's pouring himself a drink at that juncture. Weaker answers offered narrative summaries of the passage, simplifying the characters and showing partial understanding of the issues, though some awareness of the more obvious dramatic effects.

Question 5 ARUNDHATI ROY: *The God of Small Things*.

This was a very popular text, with both questions giving opportunities for candidates to exhibit extensive knowledge and understanding, engagement with the themes and characters and at times very sensitive awareness of narrative method. The writing is memorable so candidates had a lot of potentially useful quotations and specific references available. The discriminating factors were the ability to shape their knowledge to the task and, at higher levels, the ability to critically analyse the effects of the language. In some cases very long answers compromised the time available for the second question.

- (a) The best responses addressed the whole question by setting out a conceptualised view of familial relations. Typically these were seen as dysfunctional and abusive, subject to the Love Laws, structured in such a way as to bring out the ironies in the parallel histories and to explore social issues such as gender stereotypes and social class. They then considered how these were presented in specific episodes by considering the narrative structure, analysing the different effects of the changing narrative point of view and the use of language and symbolic motifs. Many candidates provided an extensive range of relevant material, rather than concentrating on specific episodes which sometimes restricted opportunities for demonstrating a literary appreciation of Roy's methods and effects. Less assured scripts gave straightforward descriptions of the relationships or lapsed into narrative summary, but showed detailed knowledge and sound personal response.

- (b) This was the more popular option and often very well done. There were some extremely sensitive responses to the depiction of character and situation, informed by a secure wider textual knowledge and in the best responses, an ability to explore the narrative method in substantive detail. Considering the passage as a first time reader proved to be an effective strategy for some candidates who were able comment on different levels of reader response: how for example Rahel's vision of Velutha's 'dark blood spilling from his skull like a secret' might initially seem to be a symptom of a morbid imagination. In focusing on the weaving back and forth from the present to the past, candidates made some perceptive comments on the effect of the narrative structure and point of view as well as the poetic quality of the writing, discussing the effects of the alliterative phrases, sensuous or bizarre images and the verbal ingenuity to create the dramatic effect as the singing stopped for a 'Whatisit? Whathappened? And for a furrywhirring and a sariflapping.' Candidates frequently commented on how the 'small things' were connected to the 'big things' in the novel and this proved to be a good strategy for exploring the rich texture of the text. Another approach was to focus on how Roy created a sense of a child's point of view: the effect of the capitalisation of 'Real Life', its juxtaposition with the surprising contradiction that 'Sophie Mol was awake for her funeral'; her being 'hemmed in by sad hips and hymnbooks'; The passage was rich in all sorts of significant details and many candidates relished the opportunity to explain and comment on their effectiveness. There were also some sensitive psychological interpretations of Rahel's insistence that the funeral killed Sophie Mol. As usual, the discriminating factor was how well candidates integrated knowledge of the wider text into a detailed analysis of the passage and in this case most did very well. Less assured scripts relied on paraphrase or narrative summaries of the whole text to explain the context.

Question 6 WOLE SOYINKA: *The Trials of Brother Jero and Jero's Metamorphosis*

This was a very popular choice of text. Both options were equally popular and well answered. There was some pre-prepared material on the political background but this did not distract from engagement with the text. Although general assertions on dramatic genre e.g. farce were not often followed up and the awareness of the comedy not always precise, both options stimulated personal response relating to the dramatic action and effects. Candidates clearly enjoyed studying this text and need to be careful that in providing long, expansive essays they do not compromise the time available for the second question.

- (a) This was a very popular choice and produced an extraordinary range of interesting, well informed responses. The best ably addressed the discriminating word 'All' in the question, structuring highly adept, expansive arguments on the significance of the beach prophets, supported with a significant level of wider critical reading. They compared the presentation of Jero in both plays: the way Soyinka uses the soliloquies to display the character's witty self-awareness and mockery of the gullibility of his victims to engage an audience so they see him as 'an artful dodger'; as opposed to his more obviously serious, personal political ambitions and the way he unscrupulously manages the other prophets and the politicians in the second. Candidates showed detailed knowledge of the other prophets and the better essays discussed them as individuals, commenting on the dramatic methods and effects of Ananaia's religious harassment of the police woman and his pick-pocketing, and the way tensions between them reveal their past histories and generate irony to amuse the audience. They also looked at them as foils to Jero and analysed the ways he persuades them to band together, not without some resistance, culminating in the setting up of CASA and apportioning of military titles and uniforms. Soyinka's satirical purposes were well integrated into the arguments and there were some intelligent interpretations of to the elevation of Chume whose gullible innocence was contrasted with the others. Less assured scripts sometimes had detailed knowledge but found it more difficult to structure it and generate discussion, or presented straightforward character portraits. Weaker scripts tended to be too general on details of the plays and take refuge in over-long discussions of Nigeria's political history and Soyinka's political activism.

- (b) This was also a popular choice with the most successful scripts showing a lively engagement with the staging, humour, irony and rumbustious antics of the characters, whilst also considering the significance of the scene to the wider text and the playwright's serious intentions. Many referred to the previous exchange between husband and wife and used it to comment on Amope's method of asserting herself, clearly understanding the purpose and effect of her playing the role of the 'Kill me' woman. Most considered the contribution of the language to the dramatic effects of Chume's gradual realisation of Jero's manipulation and how this shaped an audience's expectations about what would happen next. There were some intelligent explorations of the use of irony in Amope's praying to the Prophet, the role and dramatic effects of the crowd during the marital exchanges and the ironic testimony to the Prophet's ability to drive out devils. Candidates also considered the impact of Amope's last speech to point out the irony that it is a woman who sees through Jero's pretensions. In attempting to provide a running commentary, less assured and articulate scripts tended to paraphrase, but generally even these attempts showed better critical awareness of effects than was evident in responses to other questions.

Question 7 VIRGINIA WOOLF: *To the Lighthouse*.

This was a popular text and although some of the better candidates responded well to the questions, generally the majority found it harder to generate detailed, critical essays. Already prepared material, on biographical and literary background often dominated answers and even when directly relevant was not used to illuminate the text.

- (a) This was the less popular option. Better scripts explicitly considered the definition of 'conflict' and discriminated successfully between the way conflict was presented between characters and within individuals. This conceptualised approach facilitated discussion of the narrative method and its effect and in some cases it was ably illustrated by reference to specific scenes and some appreciation of the emotional impact of the language. Some candidates widened the discussion to consider how an awareness of Time generated inner conflicts. More straightforward approaches outlined relevant relationships between the characters, particularly that between Mr Ramsay and James and commented on the structure of the novel by showing how the characters change and reach some reconciliation at the end. Candidates seemed to have less detailed knowledge about the inner conflicts of Mr and Mrs Ramsay or Lily Briscoe apart from her irritation with Tansley's view of women. Less assured scripts tended to provide descriptive portraits with some general comments on the reasons for conflict. This encouraged over-investment in ideas such as the Oedipal Complex and biographical material.
- (b) This was more popular and produced answers across the range. All responses showed some understanding of how the stream of consciousness works as a method but some candidates lacked the confidence to apply their knowledge to the detail of the extract and took refuge in extensive discussion of the narrative structure and context. Better scripts explored the passage in detail, exploring the way Woolf shows how Mrs McNab constructs meaning out of her experience and reveals feelings. Everyone commented on the use of brackets to show external action and reality, and most commented on the way the passage contributes to the theme of time and the transiency of existence particularly of material objects, with some candidates pointing out that at least some characters continue to have existence in people's memories. Few candidates had the confidence and skills to examine the way Woolf creates an individual voice for the character by careful choice of diction and manipulation of the sentence structure which would have supported more general ideas of class and the presentation of an outsider's point of view. More modest scripts gave a character portrait of Mrs McNab, her feelings about her age, her work and the family. Some reworked the question into 'What does the passage tell us about the importance of Mrs Ramsay?'

LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

Paper 9695/63
Twentieth Century Writing

Key Messages

To improve performance on both **(a)** and **(b)** questions, many candidates need to show a more detailed knowledge of the texts as a whole and key scenes.

Candidates need to have a selection of quotations available, not just to support ideas about themes and character but to allow them to demonstrate an ability to analyse a writer's methods and effects in some detail.

Candidates must answer the question set and shape their knowledge to fit the task.

Candidates should practise delivering two answers of equal length. Excessively long first answers, however excellent followed by short under-developed second answers will rarely score as highly as two more balanced answers.

General comments

All questions proved to be accessible and there were some outstanding, enthusiastic responses to the new texts many of which showed a genuine appreciation of the writers' concerns and the way they achieved their effects. Questions using a leading quotation offered a greater challenge, inviting a candidate to adopt a critical stance but even on more straightforward questions, strong responses showed that candidates were prepared to address critical issues and to explore them with detailed references to the texts. Strong responses were those where the candidates were mindful of the structure offered in the steer of the questions and used the terms of the question to sharpen their responses by critically analysing such key terms as *methods and concerns*, *presentation*, *significance* and *effects* in relation to the specific text or passage. In the question rubric, the expressions *How far* and *ways in which* are used to encourage an independent personal opinion. Strong responses showed confidence in the candidates' ability to present personally informed, wide-ranging arguments supported by close interrogation of method and effect in poetry, prose and drama. They showed a good working knowledge of such literary terminology as *irony*, *juxtaposition*, *symbolism*, *stream of consciousness*, *free indirect discourse* and some aspects of poetic methods. Few took the opportunity to display an appreciation of the way the form, and the effects created by sound and rhythm in the choice of diction and manipulation of sentence structure contributed to the poetic treatment of the subject and reader response. In more modest scripts there has been some improvement in the quality of Personal Response by linking this more explicitly to language. The responses to drama texts showed greater competence in analysing the dramatic effects within a scene and the significance of a passage in relation to the whole text. Less accomplished scripts relied upon textual summary and generalised arguments or portraits of characters to shape their answers and often deviated from the main thrust of the questions. **(b)** questions continue to be the more popular options on this paper and many candidates found it challenging to balance the close study of the passage in relation to wider textual issues, either those arising from within the text or from the wider social, historical, cultural, political and biographical contexts. Some candidates were able to use such information sensitively to illuminate and support their views. Others offered too much information or made misguided attempts to interpret the text in the light of biographical details or in a few cases, used the text to support views about a writer's life as though the writer were the focus of the question.

Generally the standard of expressive English was sound: in some cases it was very fluent, persuasive, appropriately literary and could be used to explore complex ideas with precision and flair. The majority could present straightforward ideas with intelligence and clarity and attempted to link ideas together in a coherent argument with varying degrees of sophistication. There were a few cases where the degree of imprecision in the expression, or the use of already prepared summaries indicated some difficulty in articulating a personal response to the questions. Some candidates found it difficult to manage their time effectively and produced



unbalanced scripts. On the other hand, more successful candidates often showed evidence of some carefully considered planning and of using the planning process as a way of working out a conceptualised response to the question. As a result, they often developed more logical, coherent arguments, progressing through a greater range of ideas with more depth. Those essays which focused less effectively on the questions tended to make use of pre-prepared or very general introductions and summarised the essay by way of conclusion. As usual there were some candidates who ill-advisedly attempted to do some of the **(b)** questions as unseens and struggled with comprehension as well as expression. Very few candidates showed a lack of basic understanding of the texts, though in some cases detailed knowledge was restricted. The enthusiasm for the new texts sometimes led to answers which were extensive rather than deep and often narrative or discursive in form rather than literary. However, there are always some scripts which communicate a real, personal, intellectual engagement and sensitive appreciation of the texts, and this session there was more evidence of this, at various levels shown in the detailed knowledge and perceptive insights into the writers' methods and concerns.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1 FLEUR ADCOCK: *Poems 1960-2000*

This was not a popular text and though there were some substantial analytical essays which recognised her careful selection of form, diction and control of tone, many essays were disappointingly thin, summarising the ideas and dismissing her style as colloquial.

- (a)** This was the less popular option. There was often some unease about the exact definition of 'sentimentality' with some candidates clearly equating it simply with 'emotion' but a view of Adcock as a 'confessional' or 'semi-confessional' poet proved useful and helped others to explore the relationships in the poems with some awareness of how she uses objective, observational material. The most successful essays examined how feelings such as loss of her father or a friend were dealt with in 'Toads' and 'In Memoriam for James K Baxter', relationships with children as in 'Tadpoles' and 'For Andrew' and attitudes to herself in 'Weathering'. The best answers had some apt quotations and were able to discuss with some degree of confidence aspects of her choice of language.
- (b)** Most candidates chose to write about the poem and many attempts were limited to summaries of the content and making it into a metaphor for human behaviour, a criticism of a lack of engagement with life or of lives lived at too fast a pace. Some also wanted to link it to biographical details suggesting the poem reflects Adcock's experience of alienation and dislocation, hence the reference to 'hanging upside-down' and the 'steamy Amazon jungle' and using the reference to the 'fungus' to assert that it shows Adcock's frustration in being unable to cope with life's challenges. These weaker essays also showed a lack of confidence in dealing with poetic method, confining remarks to comments such as 'the poet uses a lot of enjambement and punctuation continuously.' More competent answers noted the title and linked it to the form. Most were able to make something of the imagery: 'the idiot clown' and the snail 'the size of a sheep' and nearly all found something to say about the questions with which the poem ends. There was occasionally some discussion of humour and some connection with Adcock's other poems about creatures, notably 'The Pangolin' and 'Last Song', though only the very best actually looked for and illustrated points of comparison in Adcock's treatment of the subjects to illuminate her methods and concerns in the set poem. The better essays explored tone, the conversational manner of the poem in terms of diction, use of enjambement and short sentences and the discreetly unobtrusive rhyme, finding it curious that such a well controlled and crafted poem should sound so casual.

Question 2 W.H.AUDEN: *Selected Poems*

The poem was the preferred choice but the small number who tackled the **(a)** question provided some interesting responses. Weaker answers to both questions showed a tendency to state themes and discuss them, often displaying some knowledge of Auden's concerns but without specific textual references, thus restricting opportunities for displaying an understanding and personal response to Auden's poetic methods and effects.

- (a)** A few misinterpreted the question and wrote about Auden's treatment of *Time* but the majority defined an aspect of his time as war and the various versions of disconnection that Auden perceives between public and private worlds or the role of the poet. 'Refugee Blues', 'Control of the Passes or the Secret Agent' and 'What is That Sound' were frequent choices for the former and

'The Unknown Citizen', and 'Musee des Beaux Arts' were favourites for the latter with the occasional inclusion of 'In Memory of W.B. Yeats'. The stronger answers focused on the 'means' and illustrated the use of voices and tone in the presentation of the ideas and had some aptly chosen quotations to illustrate choice of language, the effects of imagery and the use of repetition. The least successful strategy was to lean heavily on autobiographical material and write about Auden's homosexuality.

- (b) This question produced answers across the range. There were some very good, well supported personal responses, the best of which placed the poem within Auden's exploration of human nature and attitudes to conformity. Most answers appreciated the cheery mixture of precise evocation of the fairground and reflection on its 'meaning' for the poet. Most explored the difference between the experiences of youth and age and a few caught the tone of wistful resignation in the way things are as life proceeds. Whilst many commented on its sequence of images, a few also explored the form of the poem and occasionally there was discussion of the verse form with the sobering effect of each verse's brief, flat last line. Very few referred to other poems though some use was made of 'Old People's Home'. Weaker essays attempted a paraphrase or summary, struggling to generate a meaning: 'fool-proof engines' and the sentence structure in verse five proved to be challenging. From some weak candidates, there was a confused determination to write about Auden's homosexuality and everything was relentlessly linked to this: the 'archway of coloured lights' was perceived as a coded metaphor for it, sexual innuendo was seen in 'thumping' and 'solid flesh' and the description of the Roundabout as an image of orgasm.

Question 3 JANET FRAME: *Towards Another Summer*

This was not a popular choice of text this session, but responses almost always showed engagement. Some candidates continue to find it difficult to separate Grace Cleave from the writer and in answers to both questions there was often too much biographical material and confusion about who was the subject of the essay.

- (a) Strong answers showed extensive textual knowledge relevant to the question. Only the best saw Graces recourse to the image of a 'migratory bird' as a literary device and surprisingly few had detailed references available to explore her experience of being one. There were however some surprising uses of detailed knowledge. One script focused on the language of temperature throughout the novel, pointing out how Grace migrated to Relham because it was 1.5 degrees warmer. Another was able to argue that Grace was exiled not just from her own country but also from the real social world by showing how the narrative method presented Grace's thoughts, creating the impression that she was 'at home in her own head'. A more straightforward strategy was to relate her experience in the Thirkettle's home, with its reminders of New Zealand, to her own memories of her native country and family life which allowed candidates to show sound understanding of the structure and character. Weaker answers restricted the answer to an explanation of the 'migratory bird', wrote very generally about the text and took refuge in biographical material. Some wrote about the image as if it was meant to be taken literally: 'she is exiled from human beings because she is not a human being herself.'
- (b) This was more frequently answered and the passage stimulated good commentary on matters such as Grace's inner fears, her preoccupation with the exact meanings of language and her need to explore memories of her childhood. Reference to the wider text came more easily when the themes were thus isolated. Some candidates worked well with the idea of the adult Grace seeing life as a child and needing to work at her memories of an unsatisfactory family life; others focused on the presentation of Grace's imagination. The better answers also looked at the narrative method, focusing in particular on the gothic detail of the whirling black skeletons and the literal use in play of the idiomatic arm being pulled out of its socket. This passage offered many opportunities for candidates to explore the word play, but while many recognised the character trait in Grace, few had the confidence to analyse Frame's presentation of it here or to discuss her control of tone, though a few managed to comment on the use of dialogue. Less assured answers relied on narrative summary of the extract which was often quite full and showed understanding of content and theme without addressing narrative method. Weaker answers displayed little sense of the context, sometimes found difficulty in understanding or explaining the content, viewing it as evidence of mental instability and rushing with relief into an account of why Janet Frame could not return to New Zealand.

Question 4 BRIAN FRIEL: *Translations*

This was a popular text and seemed to stimulate candidates of all abilities to develop a personal response and show an understanding of the issues. Answers often showed good detailed knowledge of the text and the historical background, though there were some errors in understanding the difference between the period of setting and that of writing. There was often extensive reference to critical views which were usually relevant but not often used as a way into some detailed analysis.

- (a) This question proved accessible and on the whole was well answered. The key discriminating factor was the ability to focus on and discuss the dramatic presentation of characters. Lancey and Yolland were considered and most answers moved beyond character studies to distinguish between the roles of the two men. A few essays discussed the English here as stereotypes and considered their theatrical effect with some discussion of different interpretations through the consideration of the play in performance. Lancey, the repressive colonist was contrasted with the romantic and sentimental Yolland and specific episodes such as Lancey's patronising address in the School room, the love-scene with Maire, the renaming of places with Owen or Lancey's ultimate threats were easy to identify and describe. Better essays exploited these to discuss their significance in contributing to Friel's concerns about language, identity, and what happens to individuals caught up in complex, violent political events. Less assured scripts relied on generalised character portraits and were thin on specific references. Some essays included discussion of Owen as a character initially identified with the English which was a weak interpretation of the task and often led to greater deviation from the thrust of the question.
- (b) The passage was also well done and almost all were able to respond to the presentation of Maire's distress by reference to the stage directions, and contrasting her rapid alternation of action and speech with Owen's restraint. The context of Yolland's disappearance was implicit in the passage and the sad contrast with previous scenes well brought out, though there was some insecurity about the reason for Manus's departure and his connection with Yolland's disappearance. Better answers focused in detail on the structure of the dialogue, noting the effects of the questions, the choppy rhythms created by various effects within the sentence structure in Maire's speeches and the shift in tone in the exchange between Owen and Doalty. The thematic symbolism of the outline map that Maire traces in the very spot where Owen had previously been looking at his map was not lost on better candidates and many saw this moment as a further aspect of the theme of naming and identity with the best candidates also pursuing the idea of 'sense' and 'nice sounds.' Many commented on the audience response to Yolland's 'I'll see you yesterday' both in terms of language and humour. Almost all linked Maire's mention of the death of Nellie Ruadh's baby with the wider text, the earlier christening and the present death of hope for these people. Weaker scripts attempted a narrative summary of the extract, showed some confusion between Yolland and Lancey – prompted by the question 'What does Lancey say?' and sometimes asserted that Manus had killed Yolland.

Question 5 ARUNDHATI ROY: *The God of Small Things*.

This was a very popular text and at every level candidates showed detailed knowledge and understanding of the issues and concerns. The writing is memorable and candidates had a lot of potentially useful quotations and specific references available. The discriminating factors were the ability to shape their knowledge to the task and at higher levels, the critical ability to analyse the effects of the language. In some ways the candidates seemed spoilt for choice and very long answers compromised the time available for the second question.

- (a) This proved the slightly less popular choice. There was a tendency to concentrate on 'concerns' rather than 'presentation' but almost everyone understood the characters' significance. The more assured essays explored the anglophile nature of the status-obsessed family which led to comparisons between Margaret and Ammu, the parallelisms in their histories of marriage and divorce and their respective amounts of freedom, and the treatment of Sophie Mol in comparison to that of the twins. The best scripts focused on the structure and gave due weight to the filtering of the events through the experience of the twins covering the 'What will Sophie Mol think?' week' and issues surrounding the 'Love Laws, also focusing on the passages presented by the external narrator which revealed both characters 'to be human'. Weaker essays spent too much time explaining the historical background to the character relationship with Chacko and the rest of the family and trying to unpick the plot complexities that led to and followed Sophie Mol's death.

- (b) This was the more popular option and produced answers across the range. The immediate context was usually identified which prompted some discussion on narrative structure and foreshadowing. There was sound understanding of point of view with some well-chosen, detailed wider reference. Many essays appreciated the intensity of the atmosphere in the car and how Roy generates the childish delight as Rahel sees Velutha, with all the mesh of loving tragic interactions that lies, unrecognised by her, behind this moment. The density of individual feelings and perspectives brought together at this moment was well apprehended and analysed in the better essays with candidates relishing the tense imagery: 'Silence filled the car like a saturated sponge' and 'The sun shone with a shuddering sigh' and the bizarre childlike quality of the description of the car or the specific detail of Rahel's observations of Velutha's shirt, veins and flag. There were many connections with the rest of the novel to be pursued, from the later effects of Baby Kochamma's fear and Rahel's fear of diminishing the love of Ammu, to the inherited negation of Pappachi's moth. Good candidates sensitively integrated wider contextual knowledge of the political and social changes into discussions of Ammu's sarcastic crack about Chacko's 'truly Marxist heart' and Baby Kochamma's projection of the later humiliation onto Velutha. The passage stimulated some impressive personal response e.g. 'As they drive back in time against the flow of history being made (the march) and towards the bones of Chacko's past life, they move towards disaster.' Weaker answers either concentrated on giving a detailed paraphrase and commentary of the passage, showing some misreading – particularly of the car and drifting into long explanations of the significance of Velutha wearing a shirt, Baby Kochamma's character or the background to Pappachi's moth.

Question 6 WOLE SOYINKA: *the Trials of Brother Jero and Jero's Metamorphosis*

This is proving to be a popular text and was often done well. Most candidates are clear on Soyinka's satiric purpose and demonstrated detailed knowledge of the plays. The discriminating factor tends to be how well candidates can analyse elements of comedy and in both questions they tended to focus on the satire, the situational aspects and action without giving due attention to the use of language.

- (a) This proved an accessible question and produced answers across the range. More sophisticated responses placed Chume's role as a foil and fall-guy in relation to the unscrupulous and manipulative Jero and explored some of the theatrical moments in some detail, including references to *Jero's Metamorphosis*. They were able to explore the comedy, both ironic and farcical, in which Chume is involved. Less assured essays stayed on the level of character study and an explanation of plot involvement. It is unnecessarily limiting to see Chume as a representative of the long-suffering Nigerian people exploited by the self-interested and utterly corrupt political and religious leaders.
- (b) The same is true of responses to the passage question, where less assured essays spent too much time on heavy moral condemnation of Jero's wicked manoeuvrings at the expense of Chume. Though it was appropriate to link the passage to the wider satirical intention of the text, it was disappointing that more candidates did not choose to examine a greater range of effects within the passage. Better scripts were clear on the irony of Chume discovering a sin that had not occurred and the Member's confidence that he 'stood in the presence of God'. They tracked the audience's anxiety as to what might happen next, noting the dramatic effect of Chume's rushing on stage brandishing a cutlass and Jero's plans to exploit the Member and relieve himself of Chume. Only the most able talked in terms of Soyinka's use of soliloquy, the effects of Chume's pidgin English and the final farce, in this extract, of the Member being awoken by a thrown pebble and Jero appearing as a haloed saint. Only a very few essays commented on the fun Soyinka was having in thus transfiguring his likeable rogue. Weaker answers tended to describe what was happening with occasional comments that showed some personal awareness of dramatic effects or drifted into an inappropriate amount of detail into the social and political context.

Question 7 VIRGINIA WOOLF: *To the Lighthouse*.

This was quite a popular choice of text. As always many displayed knowledge of the literary context and method, at times in a rather mechanical way. It is almost always relevant but needed to be integrated into passages of close reference and analysis.

- (a) Quite a lot of biographical detail about Virginia Woolf and her relationship with her parents was produced in response to this question. Seeing the novel as a eulogy to her mother limits a literary response, as does interpreting it as a feminist attack on paternalistic society. Stronger responses saw the function of James and Cam as contributing to the whole structure of the novel, moving from the discordant start to reconciliation at the end. Prue and Andrew were also mentioned but as victims of paternalistic society, meeting their untimely ends through societal expectations. Again it was more productive to see them as part of the discussion in the novel on the transiency of life or to focus on methods of presentation, particularly the means used to announce their deaths and how this shaped a reader's response to it. Some candidates had a fairly clear, though generalised, argument and lacked detailed knowledge to illustrate it. Some mined the extract set for **Question (b)** but made little of Bank's listing and titling of some of the children.
- (b) This extract offered an opportunity to analyse the way interior consciousness is interwoven with exterior events and the way a character undergoes a process of recognition and discovery. Only a few appreciated this sort of dynamic in the writing or saw that Jasper's real appearance in front of William Banks prompted ambivalent feelings and further thoughts which reflected his own emotional needs. Some did see that Banks develops an interior debate and felt both judgemental and envious of his friend's lifestyle. Better candidates pointed out Bank's role as an outsider, giving us an alternative view of the Ramsays and focused on choice of language to work out how Banks felt towards the children, looking critically at the effects of the list and the implications of 'fluttering wings' and 'clucking domesticities' which gave them something to say about tone. There were some astute comments on the effects of the sentence structure – the varying sentence length, use of brackets and dashes to mimic the flow of natural thought and these were always more effective when linked to specific examples. Weaker essays stayed on the surface of the text and attempted to paraphrase, or attempted a character sketch of Banks based on the extract or paid insufficient attention to the passage and drifted into tangential material on the children or Mr Ramsay.

LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

Paper 9695/71

Comment and Appreciation

Key Messages:

Answers should show clearly that candidates have read and considered the poem or passage as a whole before starting to write their response.

Answers should focus upon the form, structure and language of the poem or passage, upon how these shape meaning, and not rely upon narrative or paraphrase.

Answers should identify a range of literary devices and techniques, and – most importantly – discuss how they are used by the writers, and the effects that they create; they should not just be listed.

Answers should show personal responses to the ways in which the poem or passage is written, not just to what is said.

General Comments

There was some very good and perceptive writing this session; there were fewer answers than has sometimes been the case which relied simply or even entirely upon paraphrase, and most answers clearly tried to explore at least something of each writer's methods and techniques, and to respond to the ways in which these affected their response to the printed passages or poems. There were certainly a few who still did little more than identify and list a number of such techniques (alliteration, onomatopoeia, rhyme, for example) without showing any personal response to them, or any real understanding of why they were used, but such answers were happily fairly uncommon. Rather more frequent were those answers which tackled a number of literary devices, and commented quite sensitively on them, but who at the same time failed to see how they fitted into a complete overall grasp of the texts; as noted in the "Key Messages" above, strong answers will do both, and will always make very clear – probably in the opening paragraph or two – that they have a good appreciation of the whole before exploring and discussing its smaller constituent parts.

Strong answers will also show at least a degree of personal response, but this must be towards the ways in which the writers work, rather than simply to what they say; many answers, for example, spent too much time talking about the status of women in the early part of the last century when looking at the passage from *Herland*, or about the evils of industrialisation and the dangers of unguarded machinery in *Alan's Wife*, rather than exploring how in the latter piece the two writers create such powerful dramatic impact. A candidate's personal reaction to what is written is obviously valuable, especially perhaps to two such moving poems as "Blues for Freedom" and "As I Grew Older", but such reactions do need to be very firmly rooted in the texts themselves and not in the candidate's own life, or to what they assume to have been the writers' own lives or intentions.

There were no serious rubric errors, though as always a number of candidates found themselves short of time as they neared the end of their second answer; timing is very important, as Examiners can reward only what is there and cannot make allowance for what might have been said if there had been a few minutes more. If necessary, a few bullet-points at the end can be helpful, though will never be as effective as a fully worked-out response. Marks are not awarded for the quality of written communication in its basic form – accuracy of spelling and punctuation – but the overall structuring and cogency of an argument are certainly assessed.



Comments on Specific Questions

Question 1 *Alan's Wife*

The three questions on the Paper were tackled in roughly equal numbers, but this piece of drama was perhaps marginally more popular than the other two, and it certainly attracted some able and thoughtful responses, with many candidates explicitly discussing it as a piece of theatre, with comments making it quite clear that they not only read it but could actually see its action in their mind's eye. Candidates correctly and effectively used the word "audience" rather than "reader"; many candidates wrote about the many stage directions as if they were simply the same as narrative in a novel, but many also and rightly saw them as indicative of what happens on a stage, and what can physically be seen. Most commented on the ways in which the two parts of the scene are so clearly different – the first, up to about line 35, is peaceful and warm in tone, though many noted the inevitable dramatic ironies in much of what Jean says about how perfect her life is, and how wonderful it will be when her baby is born; this is of course a very good example of when and why it is vital that the whole passage is read and appreciated before the writing about it is begun. The speeches of the two women, especially Jean, are lengthy and relaxed, though many candidates felt that some of what Mrs Holroyd says is deliberately made by the playwrights partly to foreshadow future events. The second part, from line 36 to the end, is by contrast increasingly frantic, with much shorter and more panic-stricken lines from all the characters, and of course a lot of action on and off the stage. The final lines that Jean speaks were noted by several candidates as ironically echoing what was said and implied in the first part; Jean, suddenly and violently widowed, has nobody to fall back upon except her mother, which she quite literally does here.

One rather unexpected comment was made by a number of candidates, that the drama uses first person narrative, so that the reader can better see inside Jean's mind. Because it is drama, however, there is of course no explicit narrative voice at all.

Question 2 *Herland*

This passage attracted some very interesting and often highly individual responses, and the great majority of candidates addressing it had clearly enjoyed it, with many seeing its gentle humour, and some suggesting that the humour is designed to highlight the contrasting roles and status of women at the time of writing; surprisingly few candidates commented on the title of the novel, however. Of greater interest to many was why Gilman wrote the novel – is it simply a curious adventure tale, or is it some kind of allegory? The Garden of Eden was mentioned by several, as were various Utopian ideas, or the invasion of peaceful lands by European colonists; some were puzzled as to how the female inhabitants could reproduce themselves given the lack of men (the answer is in fact given later in the novel itself). Too many answers, as suggested in the General Comments above, spent too long on this kind of speculation, to the detriment of actually exploring Gilman's writing itself in the passage. There is in fact a wealth of material, and most candidates did manage to explore at least some of these: the initial description of the huge tree, the comparisons between the women and tropical birds, Terry's flirtatious approach, and his offering of a gift, the characterisations of the women and more especially of the three explorers and their clumsy inability to balance securely on the tree, symbolising perhaps their difficulty in talking to women of any sort, but especially these strange but deeply attractive ones. Unlike the drama passage, of course, this piece really does have a first-person narrative, through whose voice Gilman is perhaps suggesting – lightly but pointedly – some at least of the limitations of male-dominated, and possibly therefore all, contemporary society; the expression "patriarchal society" was much in evidence in these responses (and indeed in those to **Question 1**), but in neither case is it really appropriate, as we are not shown men as in any way in control of the women – far from it in Gilman's piece.

Question 3 *Blues for Freedom and As I Grew Older*

Comment has been made in past reports that candidates found comparing two poems quite challenging, and often resorted to writing what were effectively two discrete responses; this question, by contrast, led to some very confident and fluent comparisons, with candidates keeping both poems in their discussions throughout almost every paragraph. The poems are both, in different ways, quite difficult to take hold of, presenting as they do such abstract and intangible ideas, especially perhaps the first, where it is very hard to define exactly what Press is saying about freedom; Hughes, by contrast though really in an equally abstract and metaphorical way, is apparently much more concrete and exact in his very powerful and angry poem.

Candidates focused correctly on the different form and style of the two poems; Press uses almost no punctuation, and no upper-case letters, a fact seized upon by most candidates as reflective of her sense that freedom is something elusive, intangible, and probably unachievable; her images suggest fragility (the dragonfly), or impossibility (a river flowing backwards), or of freedom as something that existed once in a child's world, but only as a "story in a book", or of something that might once have been real and meaningful but which is now shut in a partially inaccessible box. The colour blue is of course highly significant to the poem, and can be interpreted in a number of ways – simply as an attractive colour, as a sense of sadness or depression, or as a piece of music, perhaps with overtones of slavery and thus a forced loss of any freedom.

Press's poem seems perhaps to be about nostalgia for something that appeared better in the past, but perhaps never really was so. Hughes's poem, by contrast, is very much stronger in its portrayal of a speaker who is angrily constricted by a metaphorical wall that has blocked the sunlight, and prevented him from achieving his dream, whatever this might have been; the ending of his poem is strikingly different from that of Press, and the speaker is arguably stronger in his determination to shatter the wall and to forcibly take hold of his freedom, but while the ending is certainly more positive than is "poor freedom" it is not necessarily any happier, and the speaker may in reality never break the wall. A few – surprisingly few – took the words of lines 14 and 21 to mean that the speaker is literally as opposed to metaphorically black; if literally so, the poem perhaps gains a whole new dimension. Hughes, unlike Press, uses heavy and frequent punctuation, and there is a real sense of urgent anxiety and even terror in his poem, quite unlike the surface calm and placidity of "Blues".

Much more could be said about each poem, and many candidates did say more – the two poets' use of the sun as an image of hope, the similar ideas of dreams and how the past prevents fulfilment now, for example. Suffice it to repeat that there was obviously a good deal of understanding of the two poems, and a good deal of personal response to what the two poets say and to how they write. Candidates generally answered this question well.

LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

Paper 9695/72

Comment and Appreciation

Key Messages:

Answers should show clearly that candidates have read and considered the poem or passage as a whole before starting to write their response.

Answers should focus upon the form, structure and language of the poem or passage, upon how these shape meaning, and not rely upon narrative or paraphrase.

Answers should identify a range of literary devices and techniques, and – most importantly – discuss how they are used by the writers, and the effects that they create; they should not just be listed.

Answers should show personal responses to the ways in which the poem or passage is written, not just to what is said.

General Comments

There was some very good and perceptive writing this session; there were fewer answers than has sometimes been the case which relied simply or entirely upon paraphrase, and most answers clearly tried to explore at least something of each writer's methods and techniques, and to respond to the ways in which these affected response to the printed passages or poems. There were certainly a few who still did little more than identify and list a number of such techniques (alliteration, onomatopoeia, rhyme, for example) without showing any personal response to them, or understanding of why they were used, but such answers were happily fairly uncommon. Rather more frequent were those answers which tackled a number of literary devices, and commented quite sensitively on them, but who at the same time failed to see how they fitted into a complete overall grasp of the texts; as noted in the "Key Messages" above, good answers will do both, and will always make very clear – probably in the opening paragraph or two – that there is a good appreciation of the whole before exploring and discussing its smaller constituent parts.

Good answers will also show at least a degree of personal response, but this must be towards the ways in which the writers work, rather than simply to what they say; many answers, for example, spent too much time talking about social class and status, or indeed education, when discussing the extract from *Kipps*, or – more surprisingly – about twenty-first century city life and noise pollution when looking at Abraham Cowley's seventeenth century poem. A candidate's personal reactions to what is written is obviously valuable, especially perhaps to such a striking passage as that written by Amy Tan, but such reactions do need to be very firmly rooted in the text itself, and not in the candidate's own life.

There were no serious rubric errors, though as always a number of candidates found themselves short of time as they neared the end of their second answer; timing is very important, as Examiners can reward only what is there, and cannot make allowance for what might have been said if there had been a few minutes more. If necessary, a few bullet-points at the end can be helpful, though such will never be as effective as a fully worked-out response. Marks are not awarded for the quality of written communication in its basic form – accuracy of spelling and punctuation – but the overall structuring and cogency of an argument are certainly assessed.

A last general point: the names of the writers of **Questions 1** and **2** (Wells and Tan) were of course familiar to many candidates, and this is something almost inevitable in some unprepared passage questions; candidates are, however, advised very strongly indeed to ignore this, and to avoid any discussion of what they might know or believe, as it will almost certainly have little or even no bearing at all upon the ways in which the set passages are written. To know, for instance, that Wells wrote some science fiction novels is entirely irrelevant to either *Kipps* or to this extract from it; time spent on such contextual matters was almost always unhelpful.

Comments on Specific Questions

1 *Kipps*

At first sight a very straightforward passage, but in reality the writing is rather more complex and sophisticated than it appears, something that many candidates understood and captured with confidence; there certainly were some who took it all at face value, and who simply outlined the events and characters, with little beyond it; there was indeed a small handful who saw nothing in it at all beyond a slightly silly and over-dramatic story about a small cut in a rather lifeless and boring woodwork class. Many more, however, were able to note that there are at least two possible areas of critical value: Wells's portrayal of Kipps himself as a young man out of his social depth, and his hints, however slight at this point in the novel, that he is beginning to fall in love; there is also, inextricably linked with these two ideas, a gentle but unavoidable sense of comedy throughout the passage. Interestingly, more than one candidate referred to the passage as being part of a play – confusion of genre is common in a timed examination, where a candidate's mind may well be already on the next, or last, piece that she or he read, but in this case there is very much a theatrical nature in the writing, in part because there is so much dialogue, but also because of all the action that is going on, and the various reactions of Kipps's fellow-candidates. Candidates who responded to one or more of these features certainly produced some interesting critical responses.

Another factor worth discussing is Wells's use of narrative voice in the passage; it is of course written in the third person, but in effect through Kipps's own eyes, so in a way it is effectively first person, making us aware of everything going on through Kipps's own thoughts, hence perhaps the lack of individual names for each candidate ("one of the girl friends", "the maiden lady", "the boy with the gift" and so on) – Kipps has not yet discovered their actual names, and only as the passage progresses do they begin to become individualised. His confidence and bravery are again shown through his own eyes, and are used by Wells as suggestive of his embarrassment (licking the blood off his wrist, for example, in case it falls onto the floor), but also of his growing and totally unexpected admiration for Miss Walsingham, the woodwork teacher; the deliberately rather cute expression of modesty in the final two lines are surely intended to be comic, but at the same time illustrative of Kipps's developing courage in facing other people, and Miss Walsingham in particular. A very rich passage, and those candidates who were able to pick up at least some of the ideas discussed here did manage to respond to it well.

2 *The Opposite of Fate*

This passage was by far the most popular, partly no doubt because of its relative brevity, but also perhaps because candidates had heard of Amy Tan (though this, as noted above, was never helpful), and also because the relationship between the teenager and her mother struck some very personal chords in some candidates. There were some quite individual and fresh responses as a result, but Examiners could give no credit to work that was simply autobiographical or even confessional; it was how Tan herself portrayed the teenaged speaker, contrasted with the later mature writer, that mattered, and to be fair to candidates almost all answers did make at least some attempt to explore the imagery that runs through the passage, in particular that of storms, and the bipartite structure of the passage, the second half contrasting the first in so many ways.

Many answers noted the arresting opening of the passage, in part because of their undeniably shocking nature, but also because of what they reveal about the speaker herself – very surprisingly, only a few candidates seemed fully to grasp that she is writing these words now, as an adult, recalling this moment in her teenage years, and not writing them as a sixteen-year-old. The moving irony here, of herself being able so clearly to remember what her aging mother had almost entirely forgotten, was not clearly shown by many candidates. What *was* seen, however, was the violent storm imagery of the second paragraph, and almost as many noted the way in which these images are contrasted in the final paragraph by the words "open and eternal as a clear blue sky", and perhaps even more by the direct echo in "the storm in my chest was gone". The speaker's mother was obviously a woman with high emotions and anger – lines 10-15 make this very clear – and her reappearance on the telephone so many years later shows her as so utterly changed that few candidates could avoid being moved by what she now says, and by the way in which the speaker herself responds.

3 *The Wish*

This poem was tackled by a good number of candidates, and while it is undeniably challenging in some aspects there were some thoughtful and often quite sensitive responses, particularly to the first stanza's description of the city as "this great hive", a metaphor that many answers unpacked with some success.



Most also saw the poet's wish to be a gentle and simple one, to have a quiet country home, with good friends, good books, and "a mistress moderately fair"; a few commented on the nicely but gently humorous tone here – he does not want a striking beauty as his companion. Many answers tended to ignore the middle stanzas, especially three and four, and moved on to the last one, with its delightful twist at the end – his fear that others would see him as being so happy that they would come and share it with him, thus creating another city, the one thing he so dislikes.

As is often – too often – the case with poetry, many answers spent time outlining the structure of the poem, talking about stanza lengths, line lengths, rhyme patterns and so on, without ever making any real points about what is actually said by the poet, and how these structural points help or emphasise his ideas. Some answers did note the amusingly abrupt opening, almost as if the poet is continuing a conversation with either himself or another person; the rhymes "see" and "agree" make the opening couplet very tight and striking, as do the contrasting words "joy" and "cloy", and the delayed rhyme of the final word of line 8 makes the poet's point about his dislike particularly forceful; much the same point can be made about the final line of the whole poem.

A surprising number of answers took line 9 to imply that the poet is looking forward, either neutrally or with some fear, to his own death, and even in one or two cases that he is actually imagining what he might think when he is dead; such answers never really managed to control or argue these ideas convincingly. An equally surprising number appeared not to notice that the poem was written well over three hundred years ago, and treated it as if it were a diatribe against population growth, traffic noise and industrial pollution. The dates of all pieces in this Paper, or of the writers concerned, are given partly to help candidates avoid this kind of error.

LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

Paper 9695/73

Comment and Appreciation

Key Messages:

Answers should show clearly that candidates have read and considered the poem or passage as a whole before starting to write their response.

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Answers should identify a range of literary devices and techniques, and – most importantly – discuss how they are used by the writers, and the effects that they create; they should not just be listed.

Answers should show personal responses to the ways in which the poem or passage is written, not just to what is said.

General Comments

There was some very good and perceptive writing this session; there were fewer answers than has sometimes been the case which relied simply or even entirely upon paraphrase, and most answers clearly tried to explore at least something of each writer's methods and techniques, and to respond to the ways in which these affected their response to the printed passages or poems. There were certainly a few who still did little more than identify and list a number of such techniques (alliteration, onomatopoeia, rhyme, for example) without showing any personal response to them, or any real understanding of why they were used, but such answers were happily fairly uncommon. Rather more frequent were those answers which tackled a number of literary devices, and commented quite sensitively on them, but who at the same time failed to see how they fitted into a complete overall grasp of the texts; as noted in the "Key Messages" above, strong answers will do both, and will always make very clear – probably in the opening paragraph or two – that they have a good appreciation of the whole before exploring and discussing its smaller constituent parts.

Strong answers will also show at least a degree of personal response, but this must be towards the ways in which the writers work, rather than simply to what they say; many answers, for example, spent too much time talking about the status of women in the early part of the last century when looking at the passage from *Herland*, or about the evils of industrialisation and the dangers of unguarded machinery in *Alan's Wife*, rather than exploring how in the latter piece the two writers create such powerful dramatic impact. A candidate's personal reaction to what is written is obviously valuable, especially perhaps to two such moving poems as "Blues for Freedom" and "As I Grew Older", but such reactions do need to be very firmly rooted in the texts themselves and not in the candidate's own life, or to what they assume to have been the writers' own lives or intentions.

There were no serious rubric errors, though as always a number of candidates found themselves short of time as they neared the end of their second answer; timing is very important, as Examiners can reward only what is there and cannot make allowance for what might have been said if there had been a few minutes more. If necessary, a few bullet-points at the end can be helpful, though will never be as effective as a fully worked-out response. Marks are not awarded for the quality of written communication in its basic form – accuracy of spelling and punctuation – but the overall structuring and cogency of an argument are certainly assessed.



Comments on Specific Questions

Question 1 *Alan's Wife*

The three questions on the Paper were tackled in roughly equal numbers, but this piece of drama was perhaps marginally more popular than the other two, and it certainly attracted some able and thoughtful responses, with many candidates explicitly discussing it as a piece of theatre, with comments making it quite clear that they not only read it but could actually see its action in their mind's eye. Candidates correctly and effectively used the word "audience" rather than "reader"; many candidates wrote about the many stage directions as if they were simply the same as narrative in a novel, but many also and rightly saw them as indicative of what happens on a stage, and what can physically be seen. Most commented on the ways in which the two parts of the scene are so clearly different – the first, up to about line 35, is peaceful and warm in tone, though many noted the inevitable dramatic ironies in much of what Jean says about how perfect her life is, and how wonderful it will be when her baby is born; this is of course a very good example of when and why it is vital that the whole passage is read and appreciated before the writing about it is begun. The speeches of the two women, especially Jean, are lengthy and relaxed, though many candidates felt that some of what Mrs Holroyd says is deliberately made by the playwrights partly to foreshadow future events. The second part, from line 36 to the end, is by contrast increasingly frantic, with much shorter and more panic-stricken lines from all the characters, and of course a lot of action on and off the stage. The final lines that Jean speaks were noted by several candidates as ironically echoing what was said and implied in the first part; Jean, suddenly and violently widowed, has nobody to fall back upon except her mother, which she quite literally does here.

One rather unexpected comment was made by a number of candidates, that the drama uses first person narrative, so that the reader can better see inside Jean's mind. Because it is drama, however, there is of course no explicit narrative voice at all.

Question 2 *Herland*

This passage attracted some very interesting and often highly individual responses, and the great majority of candidates addressing it had clearly enjoyed it, with many seeing its gentle humour, and some suggesting that the humour is designed to highlight the contrasting roles and status of women at the time of writing; surprisingly few candidates commented on the title of the novel, however. Of greater interest to many was why Gilman wrote the novel – is it simply a curious adventure tale, or is it some kind of allegory? The Garden of Eden was mentioned by several, as were various Utopian ideas, or the invasion of peaceful lands by European colonists; some were puzzled as to how the female inhabitants could reproduce themselves given the lack of men (the answer is in fact given later in the novel itself). Too many answers, as suggested in the General Comments above, spent too long on this kind of speculation, to the detriment of actually exploring Gilman's writing itself in the passage. There is in fact a wealth of material, and most candidates did manage to explore at least some of these: the initial description of the huge tree, the comparisons between the women and tropical birds, Terry's flirtatious approach, and his offering of a gift, the characterisations of the women and more especially of the three explorers and their clumsy inability to balance securely on the tree, symbolising perhaps their difficulty in talking to women of any sort, but especially these strange but deeply attractive ones. Unlike the drama passage, of course, this piece really does have a first-person narrative, through whose voice Gilman is perhaps suggesting – lightly but pointedly – some at least of the limitations of male-dominated, and possibly therefore all, contemporary society; the expression "patriarchal society" was much in evidence in these responses (and indeed in those to **Question 1**), but in neither case is it really appropriate, as we are not shown men as in any way in control of the women – far from it in Gilman's piece.

Question 3 *Blues for Freedom and As I Grew Older*

Comment has been made in past reports that candidates found comparing two poems quite challenging, and often resorted to writing what were effectively two discrete responses; this question, by contrast, led to some very confident and fluent comparisons, with candidates keeping both poems in their discussions throughout almost every paragraph. The poems are both, in different ways, quite difficult to take hold of, presenting as they do such abstract and intangible ideas, especially perhaps the first, where it is very hard to define exactly what Press is saying about freedom; Hughes, by contrast though really in an equally abstract and metaphorical way, is apparently much more concrete and exact in his very powerful and angry poem.

Candidates focused correctly on the different form and style of the two poems; Press uses almost no punctuation, and no upper-case letters, a fact seized upon by most candidates as reflective of her sense that freedom is something elusive, intangible, and probably unachievable; her images suggest fragility (the

dragonfly), or impossibility (a river flowing backwards), or of freedom as something that existed once in a child's world, but only as a "story in a book", or of something that might once have been real and meaningful but which is now shut in a partially inaccessible box. The colour blue is of course highly significant to the poem, and can be interpreted in a number of ways – simply as an attractive colour, as a sense of sadness or depression, or as a piece of music, perhaps with overtones of slavery and thus a forced loss of any freedom.

Press's poem seems perhaps to be about nostalgia for something that appeared better in the past, but perhaps never really was so. Hughes's poem, by contrast, is very much stronger in its portrayal of a speaker who is angrily constricted by a metaphorical wall that has blocked the sunlight, and prevented him from achieving his dream, whatever this might have been; the ending of his poem is strikingly different from that of Press, and the speaker is arguably stronger in his determination to shatter the wall and to forcibly take hold of his freedom, but while the ending is certainly more positive than is "poor freedom" it is not necessarily any happier, and the speaker may in reality never break the wall. A few – surprisingly few – took the words of lines 14 and 21 to mean that the speaker is literally as opposed to metaphorically black; if literally so, the poem perhaps gains a whole new dimension. Hughes, unlike Press, uses heavy and frequent punctuation, and there is a real sense of urgent anxiety and even terror in his poem, quite unlike the surface calm and placidity of "Blues".

Much more could be said about each poem, and many candidates did say more – the two poets' use of the sun as an image of hope, the similar ideas of dreams and how the past prevents fulfilment now, for example. Suffice it to repeat that there was obviously a good deal of understanding of the two poems, and a good deal of personal response to what the two poets say and to how they write. Candidates generally answered this question well.

LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

Paper 9695/08
Coursework

Key Messages

Good answers will:

- explore some of the ways in which writers create their effects, discussing their literary techniques in some detail;
- address the set tasks with clear and concise focus;
- where practicable, write on an individually selected and worded task, to make responses as personal as possible;
- support what is said with brief, apt textual quotation and reference;
- make some appropriate use of contextual and/or critical material to support the arguments proposed;
- ensure that the two pieces submitted remain within the 3000 word limit.

General Comments

This was another very good session, in which Moderators saw work of high quality and critical confidence; it was very clear that most Centres were fully aware of exactly what is required of candidates submitting coursework. Tasks were generally well and helpfully worded, work was aptly focused, Centres' annotations were very helpful, and their assessments were in most cases close to CIE standards for the Syllabus.

Selecting texts and setting questions are possibly the most difficult and certainly most important parts of what Centres do, and it is very important that teachers undertake these with the most careful thought, bearing in mind throughout the strengths of their individual candidates. Text selection is perhaps relatively straightforward, and may depend upon what books are available in the Centre, but it is very strongly advised that the same two should not be used year on year; quite apart from the possibility, however remote, of collusion between past and present candidates it is surely helpful to teachers to look afresh at something new every year. No Centre breached the Syllabus rule that each text must be of a different genre, and that neither must appear in any of the 8695 or 9695 set text lists, but it is essential that Centres do check this carefully each year. It is perhaps even more important to word the questions carefully and thoughtfully, so that the most confident candidates are properly stretched, and the least confident are not put off by too demanding tasks. It is almost always the case – and certainly it was so this year – that the best work is the result of candidates having individually worded questions, rather than all responding to exactly the same task; some compromise is always possible here, with a small number of questions being offered to candidates, who will select which ones they wish to address, with of course advice and guidance from teachers. Centres should submit proposed texts and questions to CIE before candidates begin their preparatory reading, so that although CIE will of course not know any candidates a senior Examiner will be able to offer advice in general terms about the wording of questions.

Many Centres use poetry as one of their texts, which is often a very wise choice, given the relative ease with which individual poems and their styles and methods can be explored; however, one important word of caution is needed here. A few candidates this session wrote about a very small number of poems, as few as three, and this is insufficient to be regarded as a response to a complete text, particularly when compared with those candidates who wrote about long and often quite complex novels or plays. Where poetry is used as a text, it must be expected that at least ten or fifteen poems have been read, and that at least five or six are discussed, with perhaps very brief comparative reference to two or three others, so that it is made clear that a substantial number have been studied. The same must be true also of short stories, where candidates will be expected to have read a complete published collection or selection.

The 3000-word limit is quite stringent, so it is essential that candidates focus very exactly upon what each question asks, and do not allow themselves to narrate or paraphrase, unless this is absolutely essential in support of what they are arguing; similarly, quotations from the texts must be brief and wholly relevant. Most

candidates this year were clearly aware of this, though there were certainly some whose discussions lacked real clarity of focus and direction; to be fair, where this happened, Centres' comments usually made it clear that they were being assessed with this in mind, though the actual marks offered did not always reflect such weakness. In the same way, while it is very important that consideration is given to some contextual matters (the mark scheme mentions contexts as an element to be considered when offering a mark within Bands 1, 2 or 3) this consideration must necessarily be brief and very concisely worded, and of course absolutely central to what is being argued. The same must also be true if candidates wish to introduce other critical opinions; these were sometimes used by this year's candidates to very good effect, helpfully adding a wider strand of ideas and responses, and as a way of developing the candidates' personal responses.

Centre annotation was generally quite full and helpful, though not always strictly related to the words of the mark scheme, upon which all assessment and marking must be based. It is important to bear in mind too that all annotation should be directed to the external Moderator, not to the candidate, and that it should – by using the terms of the mark scheme – show quite unambiguously how and why a particular mark has been reached. Teacher comments that were directed to the candidate were not always helpful, sometimes because they were not entirely objective about the quality of the work in relation to the mark scheme, sometimes resulting in a mark rather higher than it should have been.

This year examiners observed some very thoughtful, interesting and personal writing by many candidates; there was good, professional and carefully worded annotation and comment by many Centres. It was abundantly clear that almost invariably candidates had read thoroughly and thoughtfully, often with evident pleasure, and that they wrote about their texts with confidence and critical awareness.

Listed below are some of the many texts that were successfully used by candidates; this is not in any way a "recommended list", simply an indication of the wide and varied range of work that was studied and discussed this year:

Prose: Sons and Lovers

Scoop
The Handmaid's Tale
A Farewell to Arms
Pride and Prejudice
The Road (McCarthy)
A Thousand Splendid Suns
Frankenstein
Tender is the Night
Great Expectations
1984
Brighton Rock
Washington Square
Oliver Twist
Wuthering Heights

Drama: Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?

Death of a Salesman
Romeo and Juliet
Pygmalion
The Rose Tattoo
The Glass Menagerie
Much Ado About Nothing

Poetry: W B Yeats

Sylvia Plath
John Keats
Robert Frost
Philip Larkin
Christina Rossetti