

LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

Paper 9695/31
Poetry and Prose

Key messages

This is an examination of understanding and appreciation of literary composition and expression, so responses should focus on how authors' choices of language and literary methods shape meaning.

Answers which are restricted to knowledge of the content of texts are not successful.

Specific references and quotations are needed to support points in essays. This should be particularly remembered for the **(a)** questions, where candidates select their own material to answer the question. Line references to passages are not a substitute for quotations.

Successful essays develop a line of argument in response to the question, developing points to a conclusion.

Answers to **(b)** passage questions should examine the writing of the selected poem or extract in considerable detail.

General comments

A number of the texts and questions stimulated some detailed and subtle responses which showed a mature appreciation of literary methods and the ways in which writers shape a reader's or an audience's responses. The most successful answers to **(a)** questions were able to use detailed knowledge of the texts, including secure references and pertinent quotations, to establish and develop a clear argument in response to the question. Strong **(b)** question responses considered the writing of the selected passage or poem in great detail, drawing out nuances and possible interpretations. In the case of prose, many placed the extract within the context of the text in order to inform the discussion of the passage. Among weaker responses, there was a return to a large number of candidates relying on narrative summary and paraphrase, indicating their understanding of the content of texts and passages, but needing to say more about how that content was communicated.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1 Robert Frost: *Selected Poems*

- (a)** Successful answers to this question chose poems carefully, while inappropriate choices often led to struggling responses. A number of essays used 'Mending Wall' for ease of reference since it was printed on the paper for the **(b)** question; this poem had to be forced to fit the question and usually depended on a misreading of the narrator's attitude to the wall. More successful explorations of Frost's portrayal of secluded rural life used poems like 'The Wood-Pile', 'Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening', 'An Unstamped Letter' and 'The Black Cottage'. Many weaker candidates relied on description of the secluded situations in the poems, summarising the content with a few personal observations. Strong candidates wrote about Frost's poetry and the ways in which his poetic choices of structure and language are used to portray a secluded life and direct the reader's response to that portrayal.
- (b)** There were many more responses to 'Mending Wall', with a number of varied interpretations, some depending on misreadings and a confusion between the attitudes of the different neighbours. A number of essays gave a broad summary of the poem, picking out occasional illustrative lines, and would have done better to examine ways in which Frost's choices of language and structure present the relationship between the neighbours. There were some very fine answers too,

developed and subtle in their exploration of Frost's writing. Such answers noted the easy conversational style of the poem created by the iambic pentameter and enjambment as the narrator muses questions in his own head, with just a few lines of dialogue. Some were very aware of the constant irony of the dividing wall being the very thing that once a year brings the neighbours together in joint effort, as they 'keep the wall between us as we go'. There were appreciative comments on the narrator's playful tone, with 'a spell' and 'elves', contrasting the stolid 'Good fences make good neighbours', and some extended, thoughtful discussion of the 'pine' and 'apple' contrast. The success of these responses depended on close attention being paid to the language and tone of the poem, and careful consideration of the effects of Frost's choices of language and metaphor.

Question 2 Elizabeth Jennings: *Selected Poems*

- (a) There were few answers on Jennings' presentation of family relationships, but among those responses, 'Warning to Parents', 'Father to Son' and 'One Flesh' were the most common poems considered. Many weaker essays were summary based, making generalised comments. Some stronger candidates showed appreciation of the precision of Jennings' verse, her careful choices of language and imagery and her management of structure. By looking at these, they successfully explored the tension apparent in the portrayal of relationships in the poems, also noting the tenderness and emotional qualities in some of them.
- (b) A number of weaker answers were dominated by summary, which was not always accurate. There were stronger essays that explored the poem's account of a changing response to Chinese art with the changes in personal relationships. These noted the dryness of artistic appreciation which depends on historical knowledge, described in the first stanza, and the contrast between 'then' in l.5 and 'now' in l.9 as the pivot of change in the poem. Strong answers also noted the implicit contrast between the 'eternity' and 'timelessness' of the art with the ephemerality of the narrator's relationship, but also picked up the appropriateness of the depictions of 'a lover feeling pain'. Some noted, as is common in Jennings' poetry, that strong feeling is constrained by tight stanza form and regular rhythm, but commented on the effects of irregularities, like the triple stress of 'one quick stroke' in the penultimate line, mimetic of the artists' actions.

Question 3 *Songs of Ourselves Volume 2*

- (a) Social problems were interpreted in a number of different ways by candidates, with most focussing on migration and racism, 'The White House', 'The Border Builder', 'The Migrant' and 'These are the Times We Live In' being the most popular choices. This was a question where essays tended to consider effectively the ways in which these ideas are presented, with some good exploration of tone of voice in particular, and word choices that contribute to it. The speaker's position in each poem was often discussed, either directly involved or detached and observant, expressing righteous indignation or sympathy as appropriate. There was some thoughtful consideration of the alternative readings of the title of 'The White House' and sensitivity to the angry tone of the poem's diction and imagery, while Dharker's sardonic humour and flights of fancy in 'These are the Times We Live In' were appreciated in strong, detailed responses. Some candidates wrote well on the violent imagery and forceful repeated questions in 'The Border Builder'. Sensitive readings considered the change in perspective at the end of 'The Migrant', broadening the question of the social problem from its victim, 'She', to the consideration of other people's responses with 'We'.
- (b) William Bell Scott's poem prompted a wide range of answers, from those who believed that the speaker was Bell Scott himself, through those that asserted that Death was personified but needed to consider how and to what effect, to detailed, subtle and thoughtful essays which demonstrated intelligent appreciation. Less confident answers summarised the content of the poem with varying degrees of accuracy. Most candidates aptly attempted some comment on the characterisation of Death – omnipotent and omnipresent – and the change from the conventional human fear of death to the idea of 'fear me not'. Many candidates were able to identify poetic techniques; it's worth remembering that comments on such techniques need to be supported by examples and analysis of their effects on the reader's understanding of the poem. On the other hand, there were some thoughtful responses to elements of the poem such as the riddle-like tone and structure, the powerful sense of isolation in 'I have no brother, and/No father' and the effects of the 'chain' metaphor, particularly when repeated as the 'cold chain round thy neck', a threatening contrast to 'fear me not'.

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Question 4 E.M. Forster: *Howards End*

- (a) There were several narrative responses which summarised events that happen at Howards End, and often a number of events that do not. A surprising number of responses did not mention that the house gives it name to the title of the novel and that the novel begins and ends at the house, indicating its importance to the narrative. Successful answers noted the importance of Howards End at key moments of the plot, including Helen's early visit and Margaret's aborted trip to it before her later visit when she is mistaken for Ruth Wilcox. There was much discussion of the final stages of the novel, located at the house, with Helen's pregnancy and Leonard's death. Most mentioned Ruth Wilcox's handwritten will, overruled by the rest of the Wilcox family, and drew from this the connection between Ruth and Margaret and their mutual appreciation for the house, echoed in Mrs Avery's mistaking Margaret's identity and furnishing the house with her belongings. Thoughtful answers drew out ways in which Forster uses the house to present the different values of the Wilcox and Schlegel families, contrasting Margaret's sensitivity to place and history with the Wilcox's easy acquisition and disposal of property in commercial transactions. These considerations allowed candidates to explore the idea that Forster uses the house to represent an older style England and that he is asking questions about the industrial and commercial development of the country and who should inherit it. Many commented on the ironies of the final stages, with the Schlegel, Wilcox and Bast families represented at the house, while the child of Helen and Leonard Bast will ultimately inherit it.
- (b) There were many lively responses to this question. One element that many candidates missed was the presentation of Jacky, which would have made for opportunity for interesting comment. Successful answers were balanced, showing a good understanding of Leonard, Jacky and the narrative tone, and some drew a contrast between the portrayal of Leonard's inner life and the presentation of Jacky's outward appearance. Candidates often expressed some admiration for Leonard's determination to escape his current circumstances through the pursuit of knowledge and his desire to 'push his head out of the grey waters', while some recognised the comic contrast between the Ruskin prose he attempts to copy and the more straightforward 'his flat was dark as well as stuffy.' Some commented that while his aspirations to culture are laudable, the narrative voice at times seems condescending, referring for example to his 'half-baked mind'. The narrator takes a similar approach to Jacky, some essays noting that her entrance is an interruption to Leonard's thoughts, prefaced by a 'noise'. Many commented on the list of decorations which adorn Jacky, making her ludicrously ostentatious, alongside the frankness of 'she was not respectable' and 'Jacky was past her prime'. It was a passage with plenty of detail to comment on and many candidates explored Forster's narrative effectively.

Question 5 Andrea Levy: *Small Island*

- (a) While candidates appreciated that Levy provides four different perspectives in the novel, a high number of essays became summaries of the four different characters, needing to give more consideration to their roles as narrators and the effects of switching between them, which was the focus of the question. There were sometimes assertions that multiple narrators give the reader a fuller understanding; candidates who discussed this view often needed to provide more support with key references to the text. The smaller number of successful responses considered what makes the different narratives distinctive, considering Levy's creation of the different voices and her use of particular vocabulary and structures for each narrator. They also considered the different experiences narrated in order to give the reader a broad understanding – Hortense's early experiences in Jamaica, Gilbert's early disillusioning experiences in England, Queenie's view of her marriage and so on. Many showed how Bernard's narrative, only appearing late in the text, creates some ambiguous sympathy for a character previously dismissed as ignorantly racist. Perceptive answers were aware of the role of Michael, not a narrator, but featuring in Hortense's and Queenie's narratives, giving the reader and understanding of the significance of Hortense taking Queenie's baby at the end of the novel, of which neither Hortense nor Queenie is aware.
- (b) Hortense's memories of Mr and Mrs Ryder were a stimulus for some enthusiastic responses. A few suggested that her critical portrayal of the altruistic missionaries demonstrates her unattractive character. More perceptive responses were alert to the ironies of her narration, both revealing her own character and those of Mr and Mrs Ryder. Successful candidates teased out the indications of the hypocrisy of the missionaries, including their patronising assumptions about 'these poor negro children' while they ostentatiously drive their car around, and they matched the indications of Mr Ryder's extra-marital affairs with their wider textual knowledge of Mrs Ryder's future relationship

with Michael. There were comments on the deeply unattractive descriptions of Mr Ryder, while perceptive essays pointed out not only that Hortense's descriptions of Mrs Ryder use ironic religious imagery in the reference to a 'halo', but also make judgements of colour and mouth shape which are similar to racist judgements of her and Gilbert in England. Her admiration of Mrs Ryder as 'the whitest woman' is also indicative of her own snobbish appreciation of lighter skin, revealed elsewhere in the pride in her own 'honey' coloured skin.

Question 6 *Stories of Ourselves*

- (a) While young people were often in focus in responses to this question, their hopes and aspirations featured less obviously. There were also some generous interpretations of young people, including the wife in 'Sandpiper', the Happy Prince in Wilde's story and the son in 'The Fly in the Ointment'. More successful answers tended to use stories such as 'The Taste of Watermelon' and 'The Destructors', where the characters are more clearly young, though the other stories could be used successfully if carefully argued with a focus on the question. Those candidates who made use of the full question wording, and considered hopes and aspirations, wrote about ways in which the young boy in 'The Taste of Watermelon' hopes to gain acceptance in his new community and form friendships with an act of daring, and at how those hopes are discovered to be empty when he is shocked at Mr Wills' reaction to the loss of his seed melon. Some essays referred to his clear attraction to Willadean at the end of the story and the suggestion that his hopes for acceptance now lie in another direction. With 'The Destructors', perceptive essays argued that post-war pessimism dominated the story, so that the conventional aspirations of young people for a better world were replaced by hopes for leadership in carefully planned destruction.
- (b) Many essays relied on a summary account of the passage and needed to move beyond assertions that the passage portrays a fantasy world and examine Wells' language in order to be successful. For such a rich passage, opportunities were missed in such answers, whereas stronger responses looked carefully at both diction and structure to show how the world behind the door is created for the reader. While most candidates mentioned that the garden includes panthers, a monkey and parakeets, a smaller number of perceptive candidates argued why Wells' inclusion of such wild creatures from hot climates, and thus very strange inhabitants of a London garden, suggest fantasy. Strong answers noted that the passage is largely dialogue as Wallace remembers his experience. There were some perceptive comments on the repetition of 'I forgot', emphasising the transformative effect of the garden in separating the boy from his ordinary world, followed by the use of comparative adjectives such as 'warmer' and 'mellow'. Successful answers noted the frequent references to colour, creating a vivid mental picture, and the frequent use of adjectives indicating pleasure, such as 'delightful', 'pleasant', 'soft, agreeable', 'kindly', 'pleasant', 'spacious', 'beautiful' and so on. Good answers noted the irony of 'not pictures, you understand, but realities' at the end of the excerpt, and some used their knowledge of Wallace's eventual fate effectively.

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General comments

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Comments on specific questions

Question 1 Robert Frost: *Selected Poems*

- (a)** Candidates chose a number of different poems in responses to this question, the most popular being 'Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening', 'An Unstamped Letter' and 'An Encounter'. Most essays offered some suggestions about Frost's interest in the natural world. Weaker responses often used biographical context in place of examining the chosen poems closely. Many candidates needed to examine the idea of 'wildness' in the question more directly. The three poems cited above were the most successful; candidates choosing 'Mowing' or 'Gathering Leaves' found it more difficult to fully address the question.
- (b)** A substantial number of the essays on 'Birches' gave general broad summaries of the poem and suggested interpretations that would have been more convincing had they been supported with closer examination of the poem's development, language and structure. Successful answers considered the presentation of the trees at the poem's opening, distinguished from the 'darker trees' and full of movement. They looked at the ways Frost's writing creates a visual and auditory impression of the trees loaded with ice which is then melted by the sun, as he builds a view of the birches as resilient but showing the signs of their endurance. Some considered the playful image of the girl drying her hair before the suggestion of a playful boy having fun by 'riding' the trees 'over

and over again'. Suggestions of a sexual interpretation needed to be taken to some conclusion. It is a central image of the poem to suggest a human urge 'Toward heaven', while accepting that 'the ground' and 'Earth' is 'the right place' for humanity. Interpretations of poems need to be drawn from close observation and argument; many less successful responses were so because they were asserted without sustained examination of the text.

Question 2 Elizabeth Jennings: *Selected Poems*

- (a) There were too few responses to this question to make a general comment appropriate.
- (b) There were very few answers on 'The Diamond Cutter', but some candidates recognised that in her description of meticulous and careful artistry, Jennings constructs a metaphor for all art, including the crafting of her own poetry. With such a short poem, very close attention to the writing should have been easily accomplished. Despite this, some essays remained very general. More focused answers considered the cumulative effect of diction such as 'shapes', 'concentration', 'paring down' and 'polished' to show the care and attention of the artist and most commented well on the metaphor of the climber in stanza 2. The exclusivity of the focus was also commented on in good answers – the 'single stone', 'cleaving to/One object' and 'One single comet', with that care distinguishing the 'brilliance' of the final diamond from the 'countless, untouched galaxies.' Candidates alert to structure suggested that the pared down stanza structure, six unrhymed couplets, each developing a different facet of the subject matter, mirrors the work of the diamond cutter and the poem becomes the diamond.

Question 3 Songs of Ourselves Volume 2

- (a) This was a popular question, though problematic for those candidates who wrote about the issue of identity itself with only brief references to poetry that illustrated their point. It must be remembered that it is the ways in which writers present and explore their concerns that is the focus of a literature examination. Stronger answers drew the concern out of the poems chosen, with for example, 'The Forsaken Wife' leading to vigorous discussion of the assertion of independent woman's identity, and 'The White House' to consideration of racial identity in the face of discrimination. These discussions worked well when the language and tone of voice in the poems were carefully discussed and analysed. Another poem used successfully was 'These are the Times We Live In', particularly when candidates looked at identity shrunk to a passport, the suspicion surrounding a name and Dharker's sarcastic humour depicting her imagined changes of visual identity while on the flight. Some commented that she points out in the poem that identity is finally in 'your heart', and this was a poem that repaid careful and detailed discussion. Other poems used included 'The Migrant' and 'The Border Builder', though these were often less successfully addressed to the question.
- (b) While knowledge of the wider context of Milton's *Paradise Lost* was not necessary for a successful answer to this question, it was nevertheless surprising how many candidates had no knowledge at all of where the extract is taken from, despite the indication in the anthology title. Strong responses tended to focus initially on the presentation of evening in the first twelve lines, noting the restfulness of the lack of colour, the sibilance used in the establishing of silence, the precious jewel imagery of the stars and the royal suggestions of 'majesty', 'queen' and 'silver mantle', accompanied by the 'amorous descant' of the nightingale's song. They then moved on to discuss how Adam's speech augments these ideas, articulating God's ordination of evening and night time as a time of rest after the day of the 'dignity' of 'pleasant labour'. Again, the effects of the language and imagery repaid careful discussion, as did the subtle variations of the iambic pentameter. Less successful answers often stumbled on misunderstandings and confusions, which hampered the accuracy of those essays relying on summary.

Question 4 E.M. Forster: *Howards End*

- (a) Several responses to this question were hampered by uncertainty about which house Wickham Place was, some arguing that it was in the countryside, but more were limited in their scope, merely listing various events which take place at the house. Stronger answers showed the significance of some of these events, including Leonard's visits, which highlight his cultural aspirations, and Mrs Wilcox's visit, which highlights her separation from the world of the Schlegels,

despite her connection with Margaret. The most successful essays were able to draw on details from the text, specifically Margaret's view of Wickham Place as 'a female house' and 'irrevocably feminine', in contrast with the Wilcox house on Ducie Street, and reflecting the characteristics of its inhabitants. It is depicted also as a place of art, culture and progressive political thought, further challenges to the Wilcox view of the world. Curiously, few answers showed a full awareness of the Schlegel's impending loss of the house, and their ensuing instability being a key part of the novel. On the other hand, some recognised that the fate of the house, being replaced by flats, is another sign of progress, property and commerce in the novel, lamented by its narrative.

- (b) Most responses to the passage were relevant and made some appropriate observations; less successful answers were dominated by summary and paraphrase. More detailed essays noted the irony of the initial setting, with its sunshine and birdsong, and a few noted the reference to the graves in the churchyard too. Some recognised that the motorcar with its 'Imperial' driver is an early sight of Charles Wilcox, which creates some foreshadowing, as well as Forster's contrast of this figure with the 'yeoman', with the clear statement that 'He is a destroyer.' There was greater focus on the second half of the passage and Forster's portrayal of Leonard's state of mind, conscious of 'private sin' but ambiguously balanced between 'terrified' and 'happy' before his death at the hands of Charles. While a number of candidates noted the irony of his death under a 'shower' of books, fewer noted the sequence of short sentences with 'The man' and 'A stick' as subjects, indicating Leonard's lack of recognition of what is happening to him.

Question 5 **Andrea Levy: *Small Island***

- (a) There were far fewer responses to this question than the passage. Candidates who attempted it were able to show that two time periods were used in the novel. There was often less success with discussing the effects of the repeated changes in its narrative structure. Some argued that the 'Before' sections allow a fuller understanding of the characters, which is true, but they needed to also acknowledge the repeated time shifts, as specified in the question. A few essays interestingly noted the ways the chronologically-fragmented narrative creates puzzles and resolves them for the reader, for example by introducing Hortense's and Gilbert's curious marital relationship before the explanation of its circumstances; Gilbert's wartime experiences of England retrospectively explaining why he understands the country so well after the war; the absence of Arthur from Queenie's house lacking an explanation until a quarter of the way through; and Bernard's narrative in India being delayed until over half way through the novel. This was a question designed to allow candidates to demonstrate their understanding of narrative structure; those who used it as an opportunity for recall of plot itself were less successful.
- (b) The grocer's shop passage produced many responses, many of them detailed and appreciative of both the humour and subtleties of characterisation. Strong responses showed how Hortense's narrative reveals her own snobbery and pride, while showing Queenie's patronising assumptions about her, but that the narration creates unconscious comedy out of the situation. Both women are criticised, but both are also treated with sympathy. Candidates commented on the fact that the narration reveals that both women have racial preconceptions and some discussed Hortense's rhetorical questions indicating her amazement at both Queenie's unnecessary explanations and the shopkeeper's handling of the bread. They also noted her sophisticated vocabulary and phrasing in her 'Impeccable English, rounded and haughty', contrasting with the shopkeeper's and Queenie's assumptions about her. The most successful responses showed appreciation of these elements, supported by close attention to Levy's writing throughout.

Question 6 **Stories of Ourselves**

- (a) The most popular stories used in answers to this question were 'The Destroyers', 'The Door in the Wall' and 'The Taste of Watermelon', though some used stories like 'Sandpiper' and 'The Happy Prince' with less relevance and less success. Many weaker answers focussed on the plots of the chosen stories with some comment on the behaviour of the children; the strongest essays actively considered the authors' presentation of the children and their activities. There was some personal response, indicating which characters attracted reader sympathy, and some consideration of outcome, such as that the narrator in 'The Taste of Watermelon' learns and develops from his experience of destruction, whereas the boys in 'The Destroyers' do not, resulting in a more pessimistic story. There was, too, some discussion of the contribution of setting, particularly the

post-war London of Greene's story, and it would be good to encourage more candidates to go beyond character and plot in order to discuss how narratives are shaped for the reader.

- (b) The passage from 'The Hollow of the Three Hills' was an enormously popular question, though a number chose to write about the young woman and her story rather than the old woman and her powers, thus missing the direction of the question. There were also many responses which summarised the content of the passage rather than writing about the author's methods. In stronger essays, examiners saw many detailed and subtle readings of the passage, sometimes drawing relevantly on Gothic context or the Salem witch trials in their discussion of the characterisation of the old woman and the setting. Many were aware of the familiar tropes of the old hooded figure, augmented by such descriptions as 'withered hag' and 'gray locks', while others discussed the setting of the 'fallen tree', sometimes using knowledge of the wider story to include the circular pool amidst the three hills. The apparent gentleness of the old woman and her constant 'smiling' was contrasted with her commands to the young woman and the apparent relishing of her 'agony and fear.' The descriptions of the vision and the sounds of 'murmurings', 'Shrieks', 'wild roar of laughter' and 'ghastly confusion of terror' drew much close comment. Candidates who looked at the language of the passage found much to discuss and there were many strong answers.

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Comments on specific questions

Question 1 Robert Frost: *Selected Poems*

- (a)** There were very few responses to this question, which tended to look at poems such as 'An Unstamped Letter' and 'Stopping By Woods on a Snowy Evening'. Most showed narrative knowledge of the chosen poems; they generally needed to show more engagement with the effects Frost creates through his poetic choices of language and structure. Answering such a question successfully needs detailed knowledge of the text to facilitate the use of quotations and analysis. There was some discussion of emotional isolation, using 'Home Burial'; most of these essays demonstrated that knowledge of the poem needed to be more thorough in order to form a successful response.
- (b)** While more candidates opted for this question, not many seemed confident with the poem and its meaning. There were some generalised comments about trees and Frost's appreciation of the natural world. The stronger responses wrote well about the auditory qualities of the first few lines and the way they imitate the sound of wind in tree branches, and the importance of Frost's focus on sound before his reference to 'a listening air' in line 9. Successful answers also discussed the poem's contrary impulses, staying and moving, which are reflected in the swaying of the trees and

in 'My feet tug at the floor'. Others noted the way the poem starts with a general reflection on the trees before becoming personal and introspective, a pattern of a number of Frost's poems.

Question 2 Elizabeth Jennings: *Selected Poems*

- (a) There were too few responses to this question to make a general comment appropriate.
- (b) There were very few responses to this question. Some understood that the poem is addressed to Palmer and Chagall, two painters who are contrasted with Blake and Picasso because they have, in Jennings' view, 'only [...] one small/ Yet perfect place.' A very few commented perceptively that Jennings' appreciation of the artists' ability to achieve 'order' and 'make the wildest, darkest dream serene' reflects the nature of her own poetry, as is reflected in the measured rhythm and rhyme of this poem.

Question 3 Songs of Ourselves Volume 2

- (a) Poems chosen here were usually 'The White House', 'The Border Builder', 'The Migrant' and 'These are the Times We Live In'. There were not many answers to this question. Most concentrated on the content and mood of the selected poems, needing to engage more with the details of their language and structure.
- (b) Far more candidates chose to respond to 'Soldier, Rest!', which was one of the most popular questions on the paper. While there were some candidates who misunderstood the poem, most were able to chart its development capably, recognising that 'rest' is used as a euphemistic metaphor for death, and represents death therefore as a welcome respite from the trials of real or metaphorical warfare. Many followed the structure of the poem in their discussion, which was often effective, commenting on the continual contrasts of 'danger', 'warfare', 'fighting', 'waking' and 'sleep', 'dream', 'couch' and 'slumber' in the first stanza. The sound effects of stanza 2 were often the subject of thoughtful discussion, and most noted the parallel of 'Huntsman' in the final stanza, with the repetition of 'rest!' and 'Sleep!' Some observant candidates picked up on the use of military vocabulary in this stanza, as well as comments on the use of martial rhythm and regular rhyme throughout.

Question 4 E.M. Forster: *Howards End*

- (a) There were very few answers on the house at Oniton. Some observed that it becomes just a piece of property to Henry Wilcox, bought with enthusiasm and sold through dissatisfaction, while Margaret fully appreciates it on her one visit there. There was a general need for candidates to support their ideas about the house with details from the novel.
- (b) Some responses to this question missed the comic potential and irony of Leonard's tale of his night-time walk in the outskirts of London, including discussion of Leonard as an 'athlete' and genuine brave adventurer, for example; answers such as this demonstrated a need for candidates to show a higher awareness of the passage's context and of the wider novel. Other stronger answers noted Leonard's frequent recourse to books, which is suppressed by the Schlegel sisters, who are much more interested in his own experience. Some noted that Margaret's comment on Leonard being a 'born adventurer' betrays her own limited experience and that the meeting is presented as having crossed purposes – Leonard wants to talk about books and the cultural world which the sisters inhabit, while they thwart that attempt and want to hear about his walk. Perceptive candidates commented on how these different angles come together in bathos at the end, where Leonard admits that 'The dawn was only grey, it was nothing to mention.'

Question 5 Andrea Levy: *Small Island*

- (a) There were very few answers on this text on this paper. The range of responses was restricted by a tendency for candidates to limit their exploration of contrasting locations to Jamaica and London; by doing so, opportunities were missed to consider the various locations used in England, as well as India, in which parts of the novel are set.

- (b) A small number wrote on the section of Bernard's narrative on his return to England and did use some detail, such as noting the short, fragmented sentences, which, it was argued, show Bernard's lack of emotional engagement and development. This observation fitted well with his holding back from direct contact with Maxi's family, his self-deprecating description of himself as a 'worthless waiter' and his sense of 'Shame' which prevents him from returning to Queenie – here wider knowledge of the text was useful to explain the reasons for Bernard's worries. A number of candidates expressed some insightful sympathy for Bernard's feelings of displacement on his return to England ('smaller than the place I'd left'), suggesting the changes in England and in Bernard's perspective after his time in the army.

Question 6 Stories of Ourselves

- (a) The few responses to this question considered such stories as 'The Taste of Watermelon', 'The Custody of the Pumpkin', 'The Fly in the Ointment' and 'The Destroyers'. Essays needed to address the question directly for a successful response, rather than rely on summary and paraphrase. Sometimes candidates understood the reasons, based on the text, why characters behave in the way they do; there was often less success with the discussion of how the writers of the stories present those reasons to the reader. For greater success, candidates need to look more closely at how settings are created, moods evoked and how the writers' choices of language and structure present character and communicate emotions.
- (b) More essays were written in response to the extract from Hughes' 'The Rain Horse'. A number of responses explored the depiction of the unforgiving setting, the vulnerability of the character and the bizarre aggression of the horse. Some discussed the focalised third person narration effectively, detaching the reader from the character but also seeing the situation from his perspective. The hostile dreariness of the setting was also discussed well, with persistent rain, trees 'black as iron' and 'mud'. The close observations, particularly the vivid description of the horse in lines 34–45, straight after the character's repeated 'If it [...] let it' repaid close attention in a number of strong essays. Hughes gives so much in the writing in this story that to respond with a reliance on simple narrative is to miss much of the material for fruitful discussion.

LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

Paper 9695/41
Drama

Key messages

The quality and selection of textual support, including use of quotation and direct textual reference, are discriminating factors in the achievement of candidates against assessment criteria.

Candidates are most successful when they engage with the specific terms of the question, through strategic planning and an awareness of development and direction in their analytical arguments.

The texts on this paper are play scripts and require an understanding of genre, context and dramatic techniques to fulfil the mark scheme criteria effectively.

General comments

The most effective responses engaged in detail with the texts studied. They offered original approaches and applied a sense of personal interest to critical appreciation of themes, characters and effects. Knowledge and understanding were often impressive and always secure in these answers, with judicious application of supporting detail noted. In **(a)** responses, strong responses reflected a focused awareness of subtleties within each question and a strategic awareness of how to use their knowledge and understanding to answer the question with relevance and clarity. In **(b)** passage-based responses, candidates demonstrated a perceptive awareness of the context of the extract in the wider play and the significance of this to the question. They considered the passage as a dramatic construct and selected details with assured focus.

Responses working in the lower ranges of the mark scheme tended to focus on plot and character to convey their arguments. In **(b)** answers, there was some tendency to track through the extract; this led in a number of cases to relapses into commentary or paraphrase. It is important that candidates plan answers to these questions and take a strategic approach and overview rather than working through the extract chronologically. Supported arguments tend to result in positive achievement, while reliance on narrative recall and assertion detract from it.

The quality of **(a)** responses relies on the ability to use knowledge and understanding to plan and deliver a considered discussion with careful selection of support. It is important in terms of **(b)** responses to incorporate understanding of the effects of staging and action if these features are evident in the extract.

References to social, cultural, historical and literary context are effective when relevant to specific arguments and ideas. They are unhelpful when presented as unrelated add-ons or in a manner that represents material of tangential significance.

Comments on specific questions

1. *Sweet Bird of Youth*

- (a)** This question proved accessible to most candidates, and responses were seen at all levels of achievement. Most were well prepared and able to apply knowledge and understanding of dramatic effects. The best answers demonstrated that selfishness is rife in the characters (apart from Aunt Nonnie and the Heckler), reflecting the society portrayed and ultimately being condemned by Tennessee Williams. Some interesting and relevant contextual details included reference to Hollywood and post war hedonism. Focused comparison and analysis produced some impressive answers, some of which incorporated a subtle awareness of the playwright's shading in his portrayal of selfishness. Less successful responses focused on character studies, predominantly of Boss Finley, Chance and Princess. Some benefited from an understanding of how Tennessee Williams shapes the audience view of selfishness as the play's events unfold. Valid examples of

each character's selfishness supported competent and clear arguments. At the lower end of the mark range, candidates tended to rely on narration to convey their points, with variable application of textual support. Some answers dealt largely with Boss Finley, while others focused on Chance and Princess.

- (b) This question shared equal popularity with 1(a). Candidates who approached this with the view that it was an easier option sometimes struggled to see the dramatic irony and subtext in this specific extract. Candidates with secure knowledge and understanding fared well. The best answers displayed an ability to explore the metaphorical meaning of Chance's 'wild dreams'. Some of these demonstrated an understanding of how Tennessee Williams uses the character of Nonnie in the scene to not only highlight Chance's unreliability as a narrator of his past, but also as someone who tempers his wildness with love and affection. There was evidence of sensitive awareness of subtle effects, such as Aunt Nonnie's discomfort at hearing sexual details, that linked to the rest of the play in a meaningful and relevant way. There was consideration of the extent and consequences of Chance's previous relationships with other characters and the background of his life in St Cloud. Less successful candidates touched on some of the points above but sometimes missed opportunities to deal with the very end of the extract and the powerful dramatic irony therein. Some tracked through the extract, analysing Chance and at times offering a psychological interpretation of his character, leading to some blurring of the focus of 'wild dreams'. Some saw the initial stage direction as a moral warning by Tennessee Williams of the dangers of drugs and presented somewhat assertive ideas about what would have happened if Chance had been faithful to Heavenly.

2. *Twelfth Night*

- (a) This question invited candidates to apply detailed knowledge and many were able to provide effective direct reference at some level. There was some variation in how the phrase, 'Olivia's household', was interpreted, with some candidates taking this to include Olivia herself. Most answers reflected a strong enough understanding of Malvolio and his role to engage with the question. The best answers demonstrated a sensitive and assured appreciation of how Malvolio's poor relationships with others in the household drive the plot and support the dark comedy inherent in the play. Some examined Malvolio as a conduit for exploring Elizabethan values and the influence of Puritanism. A comprehensive sense of the text and its context was seen in some answers that supported their arguments with subtle and thoughtful accounts of Malvolio throughout the play, illustrated by accurate and well-chosen quotations. Some were aware of how Malvolio may have been viewed by an audience of Shakespeare's time, including minor characters such as Feste in discussion, and how interaction with Malvolio shed light on their roles. Less successful answers demonstrated some understanding of how relationships turned sour but with less secure use of supporting detail. In many answers there was an assumption that Malvolio is a killjoy or full of himself without qualified argument. Some candidates struggled to understand Malvolio's role in the play and tended to rely on paraphrase and assertion.
- (b) This was a very popular question that attracted answers throughout the range of achievement. Most candidates were familiar with the scene and were able to remain focused while they kept the idea of audience response in view. The best answers understood that this is a critical and long-awaited scene in the play's narrative arc. These answers often demonstrated the ability to explore the scene fully as a resolution to most of the plot lines and selected judiciously from the extract for support. There was an awareness that the protracted recognition and sense of everything falling into place is part of the comic genre and a source of enjoyment and satisfaction to the audience. There was some excellent analysis of language, including reference in some effective answers to the imagery in the scene and its links to water imagery in the wider play. There was also some insightful reflection on the likely reaction of different audiences to the action of the scene, including the idea that modern audiences might be shocked by the idea that Olivia and Orsino are happy to transfer the object of their love interest at the last moment. Although many candidates at the solid level could comment on dramatic irony, less successful responses tended to provide technically aware responses that did not accommodate the idea of humour. Some of these answers demonstrated the ability to break the passage into phases. Others focused on narrow sections of the scene, limiting their ability to interpret the extract coherently. A number of candidates referred to audience response in unhelpfully hyperbolic terms e.g. referring to audience members 'being on the edge of their seats' or 'rolling in the aisles'.

3. *Henry IV, Part 2*

- (a) There were very few responses to this question. A number of candidates seemed to misunderstand what Hal says and does to Falstaff, seeing his rejection as a surprise. The best answers demonstrated detailed knowledge of the play and built assured and detailed critical arguments. These candidates were able to use effectively chosen examples of moments that explained how it was important for Hal's education and understanding of the kingdom to be amongst the common people. Helpful reference to his relationship with the Chief Justice as well as Falstaff opened answers up to broader analysis. Proficient answers were able to adduce detail from three or more parts of the play. Less successful answers demonstrated a limited range of textual material to support arguments and some made a good deal of reference to *Henry IV, Part 1*, making much of Hal's relationship with Falstaff and little of his relationship with his father. These answers suffered somewhat from lack of relevance and knowledge of the detail of *Henry IV, Part 2*.
- (b) There were very few responses to this question. Those who recognised and understood the passage and its context in the wider play found it accessible and were able to navigate at least a clear understanding of the dramatic presentation of King Henry IV. The best answers demonstrated a perceptive understanding of the king's mood and supported points with well-explained understanding of the highly elevated language used in both parts of the scene. Some showed a sensitive awareness of the king's pleading for reassurance and his desperate need for sleep. Some genuinely original personal engagement was evident in analysis of the sensuality of some of the metaphors used in terms of sleep. Less successful answers revealed a basic understanding of Shakespeare's presentation of the king's unhappiness in both his lack of sleep and the unease in the country. Some answers restricted their scope by referring only to the first thirty lines of the speech and repeating ideas, especially about the irony that while the common people could sleep, the king could not.

4. *Philadelphia, Here I Come!*

- (a) This play was very popular and attracted candidates from the broadest range of ability. This question worked well, with most candidates able to recognise that the filial relationship here is more nuanced than it may appear to be at first reading. The best answers demonstrated an appreciation that SB's importance is the focus here rather than Gar, even though the audience view of him is undeniably filtered through the two versions of Gar. In terms of context, some candidates presented excellent arguments about SB as a male product of Catholic Ireland in this period of history. A significant number of answers reflected an ability to explore the idea that SB is both a figure to be mocked, yet also one of pathos, conveyed for example by his pain at the brevity of his marriage. Many candidates working in the upper levels recognised that the picture of SB is formed gradually as the play's action unfolds, with some making sensitive references to dramatic structure and form. Less successful responses were able to draw evidence from a variety of episodes, but some tended to rely on explaining SB through Gar to the extent that they drifted into writing more generally about Gar. There was an understanding that SB is a puzzling character whose actions and words were the product of a damaging masculine environment. Some less successful answers laboured the idea that SB is the reason for Gar wanting to go to the USA, with little progression from this idea into other areas of the relationship.
- (b) This question and extract worked very well across the achievement range and most candidates were able to discuss matters of stagecraft. The best answers demonstrated an awareness of the play's complexities and understood that this is a scene of increasingly violent passion. Many were able to make the distinction between escape through the fantasy of being a world-class musician and the practicality of needing a strong suitcase to achieve this in reality. Mature and sensitive analysis of Gar's feelings and precise links to the wider play supported discussion of duality and exploration of aspects such as the nature of prayer and reference to Madge's description of Maire. The violin playing was also explored as a signifier of the fact that Gar seeks recognition in his new life. There was clear understanding of the frequent changes in mood, supported by reference to the exuberance of the conducting, among other features. Less successful answers tended to make fewer comments about action and wider knowledge was more descriptive or presented via narrative commentary. Some were able to break the passage into phases for analytical purposes, a relatively successful formula but one that tended to lose sight of the pattern of the episode as a

whole. Some of these answers demonstrated a more literal understanding that Gar wants to escape because his father is unkind or that his home reminds him of his mother's unhappiness.

5. *Death and the King's Horseman*

- (a) This question was quite popular among candidates who studied this text. Most demonstrated their enjoyment of the play in their answers and were able to explore the contrast between Elesin and Olunde effectively. The best answers demonstrated an understanding of the irony as rational, Western educated Olunde is more faithful to his culture than Elesin, who had previously criticised his son for leaving the country. Lucid discussion of the contrast between Olunde's strength and integrity against Elesin's venality and weakness produced some excellent and original engagement at the level of personal insight. Some very effective answers were able to link the contrast in structural terms to the ways in which the play's tragic outcome unfolds. Competent analysis of the two characters separately, with accompanying comments on contrasting features, proved reliable if less original and developed than arguments that linked the two more holistically throughout. Less successful answers demonstrated the role reversals that the relationship between Elesin and Olunde foretells. Some candidates had clearly studied the characters and themes of the play but needed to provide more evidence of understanding of performance and what the effects of this might be, especially the public scenes.
- (b) Most candidates seemed to have been well prepared for the scene and this was a rather more popular question than 5(a). The scene also enabled candidates with a good general knowledge of the play to respond, as well as those who could analyse details and literary features. The best answers demonstrated an informed sense of colonial history and knowledge of what Wole Soyinka himself said about the play being about clashing cultures. There were a number of well-supported and careful accounts of the cultural assumptions depicted both in this scene and in the wider play, as well as precise analysis of features and devices highlighting Soyinka's views. Some arguments reflected the role of Olunde as a mediating presence between the Yoruban and British cultures. Others considered Jane's dismissiveness of what she sees as 'primitive cultures' and good analysis of the role of Amusa as an interestingly compromised character. Less successful answers demonstrated an awareness of examples of culture clash and a good sense of the two phases in the passage, but there was a tendency to talk in blunt and binary terms about the culture clash without shading in the more subtle details. An example is the presentation of Olunde as a representative of Western culture without consideration of his sensitivity to the Yoruba and his ultimate sacrifice in the wider play. Sometimes comments were oversimplified in relation to the distinctions between cultures and personal judgements, even in the light of some solid dramatic awareness.

LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

Paper 9695/42
Drama

Key messages

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The texts on this paper are play scripts and require an understanding of genre, context and dramatic techniques to fulfil the mark scheme criteria effectively.

General comments

The most effective responses engaged in detail with the texts studied. They offered original approaches and applied a sense of personal interest to critical appreciation of themes, characters and effects. Knowledge and understanding were often impressive and always secure in these answers, with judicious application of supporting detail noted. In **(a)** responses, strong responses reflected a focused awareness of subtleties within each question and a strategic awareness of how to use their knowledge and understanding to answer the question with relevance and clarity. In **(b)** passage-based responses, candidates demonstrated a perceptive awareness of the context of the extract in the wider play and the significance of this to the question. They considered the passage as a dramatic construct and selected details with assured focus.

Responses working in the lower ranges of the mark scheme tended to focus on plot and character to convey their arguments. In **(b)** answers, there was some tendency to track through the extract; this led in a number of cases to relapses into commentary or paraphrase. It is important that candidates plan answers to these questions and take a strategic approach and overview rather than working through the extract chronologically. Supported arguments tend to result in positive achievement, while reliance on narrative recall and assertion detract from it.

The quality of **(a)** responses relies on the ability to use knowledge and understanding to plan and deliver a considered discussion with careful selection of support. It is important in terms of **(b)** responses to incorporate understanding of the effects of staging and action if these features are evident in the extract.

References to social, cultural, historical and literary context are effective when relevant to specific arguments and ideas. They are unhelpful when presented as unrelated add-ons or in a manner that represents material of tangential significance.

Comments on specific questions

1. *Sweet Bird of Youth*

- (a)** This was quite an open question that offered opportunities to develop personal arguments and to use knowledge of the play effectively. The best answers were able to explore the many different aspects of time in the play and to select support judiciously. For example: discussion of the microcosm of time shared by Chance and Princess in the hotel room; time in the sense of Chance's life and experiences; time in the context of social, historical culture; time in the sense of the play's tragic momentum towards its climax. Some candidates wrote effectively about the relationship between time and the passing of youth and beauty with some sensitive personal engagement. Solid and competent answers tended to stick to three or four concrete examples, writing securely about the nature of time in each case. Less successful answers struggled with the abstract nature of the question and relied heavily on unsupported assertion and paraphrase. Some

of these answers viewed the passage of time literally, leading to ineffective, narrative-based responses.

- (b) This question was more popular than **1(a)** and most candidates who attempted it were able to use the passage to write about Chance. The extract provided many prompts related to dramatic effects and staging, enabling focused character study. Some weaker candidates struggled to effectively deal with the aspect of 'sense of identity'. The best answers demonstrated Chance's ingrained insecurity beneath the façade of success and beauty. These tended to explore the performance aspects of Chance's monologue, set up by Princess, with the Plastic Theatre elements in place in this passage. These highlighted Chance's vanity and there was evidence of some focused personal engagement in answers that recognised the flaws in Chance's sense of himself. Solid responses were able to write about the disparity between appearance and reality presented in the extract and in the play as a whole. There was evidence of understanding that Chance uses the opportunity of an audition to present himself, relating this in various ways to the wider play. Less successful answers presented character studies of Chance and needed to consider more the terms of the question and, in some cases, make reference to the wider play.

2. *Twelfth Night*

- (a) The question worked well on this very popular text and provided higher ability candidates the opportunity to produce developed responses. Most candidates realised that Malvolio was deluding himself and that his real motivation was upward social mobility. The best answers demonstrated understanding that Malvolio's presentation by Shakespeare is both hilarious and cruel in direct proportion. These answers explained in impressive detail how Malvolio's part in the play is resolved as the drama reaches its climax. Some of these answers reflected the idea that Malvolio's actions are more about social class than love, several essays drawing interesting parallels between Malvolio and Orsino. Less successful answers dealt with the origins of the gulling with varying degrees of support and insight; some made the assertion that Malvolio really does love Olivia, then contradicted this by referring to his desire for power and enhanced position. Some candidates struggled to pin down the idea of 'love' and concentrated on retelling the story of the Box Tree Revenge. This led to overt concentration on plot at the expense of character and effects.
- (b) This question was more popular than **2(a)** and provided candidates with a range of opportunities to closely analyse and explore the extract. The best answers demonstrated sophisticated understanding and analysis of the dialogue, with some purposeful focus on wit and measured discussion about Viola's courting of Olivia for Orsino. Detailed links to the wider play shed light on relevant arguments. These answers tended to implement the idea that there are several levels of play-acting taking place driven by contrasts of intelligence and self-awareness, with Viola using her own ingenuity to win Olivia round. Some answers effectively demonstrated an appreciation of the significant changes in Olivia's behaviour e.g. speaking to Cesario alone and taking off her veil. The instance with the veil attracted largely effective discussion of its importance as both an effect and a symbol. Less successful answers struggled to consider the performance aspects of the scene, losing sight of dramatic effects. Some became too focused on preconceived ideas about status or wrote almost exclusively on the veil scene with a need for more development or breadth in their discussion. Achievement was also limited when candidates strayed too far from the question and extract into focus on Viola's desire for Orsino and tacked on context points about sexuality in Shakespeare's time.

3. *Henry IV, Part 2*

- (a) There were very few answers to this question. The question required candidates to write about the 'low-life' scenes in the play. The best answers understood the different purposes of these scenes, considering them as comedy, the truth of how the ordinary people live and what they think, and as enabling Hal to become a rounded and mature figure. Less successful answers needed to demonstrate more secure knowledge and understanding of the 'low-life' scenes and tended to present assertive responses that needed to be backed up with relevant support.
- (b) This question was more popular than **3(a)** and it was helpful to understand the context of the play and use the detail of the passage to form relevant and developed arguments. The best answers demonstrated the extreme contrasts in terms of imagery, character and outlook in the extract and how these create dramatic effects. They understood the insecurity of the king and contrasted this with Hal's confidence and intelligence. Some eruditely conveyed the realisation that the king's

perception of his son is incorrect. There was evidence of good awareness that the scene typifies the relationship between father and son as seen or referred to in the wider play. Less successful responses, while noting the hurt evident on both sides, applied variable levels of analysis of the emotional language that conveyed these aspects, some slipping into paraphrase.

4. *Philadelphia, Here I Come!*

- (a) This proved a popular question and candidates were largely confident with the text and task. The best answers demonstrated the contrast between Gar's true friends, Madge and Katie Doogan, and the young men who are supposedly his friends. These answers explored their crude and loutish behaviour with well-selected supporting detail and development of personal arguments. They demonstrated insight into the macho culture at the centre of the bravado that served the purpose of concealing Gar's anxiety. Those able to select support judiciously fared particularly well, as they produced more subtle and nuanced discussion. Some competent and secure answers demonstrated the realisation that Gar's friends are different to him and that they do not live up to their own promotion of themselves. They cast doubt on the reasons behind the boys coming to say their farewells to Gar and argued that part of the reason Gar wants to leave is because he does not want to become like them. There was some recognition that the gifts and clumsy goodbyes show some level of affection. Less successful responses tended to be those that did not evidence thorough knowledge of the play, and in particular the characters. These tended to lapse into more narrative explorations about Gar, needing to go into deeper consideration of his friends.
- (b) This was also a popular question. The scene worked well and enabled candidates working at all levels to demonstrate their knowledge and analytical skill. The best answers demonstrated understanding that the scene is a mixture of comedy and sadness. These answers presented sustained and productive analysis of many details within the scene and ranged through the whole passage. Personal engagement could be seen in candidates' enjoyment of the idea that Gar is reminiscing when he should be praying. In these answers, there was a clear sense that the contrast between Public and Private is used by Friel to highlight the power of memories such as the blue boat and the shallow monotony of the prayers. Some candidates reflected on Gar's love for his father and showed an awareness of the filial relationship and that what father and son say and feel are not the same. In less successful responses, coverage of the extract was quite limited and wider knowledge of the play used in its place. Some candidates referred in blunt terms to the relationship between SB and his son, polarising the relationship into a father who does not listen and a son who simply wants to be loved. This led to some assertive and forced arguments that needed more relevant support.

5. *Death and the King's Horseman*

- (a) This question was quite popular and proved accessible to candidates working at all levels of ability. The focus on Jane Pilkings enabled discussion of cultural aspects and relationships, as well as the role of women in the play. The question required candidates to have a whole text knowledge and understanding. The best answers looked at Jane in a number of ways, often comparing her lack of power to Iyaloja's respected position and authority. Effective responses demonstrated the ability to explore the character of Jane as representative of British colonialism as well as roles of western women compared to Yoruban women such as those in the marketplace. Better answers were able to judge Jane in social, cultural and historical contexts, incorporating views in perceptive and critical personal arguments. In less successful answers, while most were able to convey the view that Jane is patronising and superior in attitude, they were less effective in reflecting on her essential powerlessness and inefficacy in the situation. The quality and range of supporting detail was a defining factor in the success of responses.
- (b) This was less popular than 5(a), but proved to be a good question for candidates who had closely studied the play. The best answers demonstrated a perceptive and assured awareness of the nature of Elesin's relationship with the Praise-Singer. These answers considered both cultural duties and personal friendship with good support from the emotive and intricate use of language and other effects in the extract. Some answers showed distinctive insight into the detail of how the Praise-Singer is also a structural device, interpreting events for the audience when Elesin is not speaking. Less successful answers needed to demonstrate clearer understanding of the nature of the scene and tended to track through the lines of the extract, commenting in more general terms on some aspects of language and dramatisation.

LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

Paper 9695/43
Drama

Key messages

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General comments

The most effective responses engaged in detail with the texts studied. They offered original approaches and applied a sense of personal interest to critical appreciation of themes, characters and effects. Knowledge and understanding were often impressive and always secure in these answers, with judicious application of supporting detail noted. In **(a)** responses, strong responses reflected a focused awareness of subtleties within each question and a strategic awareness of how to use their knowledge and understanding to answer the question with relevance and clarity. In **(b)** passage-based responses, candidates demonstrated a perceptive awareness of the context of the extract in the wider play and the significance of this to the question. They considered the passage as a dramatic construct and selected details with assured focus.

Responses working in the lower ranges of the mark scheme tended to focus on plot and character to convey their arguments. In **(b)** answers, there was some tendency to track through the extract; this led in a number of cases to relapses into commentary or paraphrase. It is important that candidates plan answers to these questions and take a strategic approach and overview rather than working through the extract chronologically. Supported arguments tend to result in positive achievement, while reliance on narrative recall and assertion detract from it.

The quality of **(a)** responses relies on the ability to use knowledge and understanding to plan and deliver a considered discussion with careful selection of support. It is important in terms of **(b)** responses to incorporate understanding of the effects of staging and action if these features are evident in the extract.

References to social, cultural, historical and literary context are effective when relevant to specific arguments and ideas. They are unhelpful when presented as unrelated add-ons or in a manner that represents material of tangential significance.

Comments on specific questions

1. *Sweet Bird of Youth*

- (a)** This question was popular and proved accessible to candidates working at all levels of ability. The best answers demonstrated candidates' effective knowledge of Chance and Princess, particularly their recent past. They understood the importance to the play that the past cannot be changed and that the more the truth is held down, the more it asserts itself. Some candidates were able to broaden their range of comment on the past beyond the protagonists with some effective and original outcomes. Some candidates demonstrated understanding of the use of flashbacks and how these informed the play's 'present' including Chance's memory of himself in the contest with Heavenly. Others showed understanding of Chance's relationships with the Finley family in detail. Less successful answers limited their ideas about the past to references to Chance's past and

present experiences, with some resorting to narrative accounts of what happens to Chance in the play and what happened to him before the play opens.

- (b) This question was more popular than 1(a) and gave candidates the opportunity to write in detail about Williams's presentation of Princess. The best answers demonstrated a tight focus on Princess and her relationship with Chance, as well as consistent analysis of dramatic features and an ability to explain how this scene relates to the play as a whole. These answers presented thorough and perceptive awareness of the dramatic context of the exchange, especially in terms of the ways in which Princess takes the moral high ground before the revelations of the telephone conversation. Capable answers demonstrated an informed grasp of the events taking place in the scene and how it is staged, including some pertinent links to the wider play. Some referred to the dramatic significance of the conclusion with effective personal arguments and a sense of the play's structure. Less successful answers tended to focus more on Chance than Princess and some confined themselves only to small sections of the extract rather than using evidence from the whole piece.

2. *Twelfth Night*

- (a) This question on Olivia's love for Viola (Cesario) attracted very few answers. The focus proved accessible and the best answers demonstrated perceptively the ambiguity of and disparity between Olivia's public and private behaviour. A number of answers explored the issue of Olivia's oath to remain in mourning for seven years which is immediately forgotten when Viola appears. Some discussed ideas of gender and homosexuality, with a number referring to the social and cultural context of the play. Less successful answers demonstrated more generalised knowledge and understanding about the relationship. Some of these exhibited limited knowledge and placed disproportionate attention to the characters' first meeting. Others relapsed into paraphrase of the plot or character studies of Olivia and Viola (Cesario), needing to provide more of a sense of the relationship between them.
- (b) This question was relatively popular. The passage and question were accessible to candidates of all abilities. The best answers demonstrated precise analysis of some of the features available and awareness of the ironic and comedic treatment of Sir Andrew, including how Maria outwits him. Candidates were able to explore the presentation of Maria and argued that she is quick and forceful in her exchanges with both Sir Toby and Sir Andrew. Understanding was evident that this is an unusual relationship in terms of the social inequality and that there is a happy conclusion. Less successful responses tended to track the extract and offered largely literal transcriptions. Some were able to recognise the comedy inherent in the scene but needed to show engagement with the specific effects of language, form and structure that produce this. There were some blunt references to audience response that did not support a balanced analysis, including reference to aspects such 'rolling in the aisles' and 'falling off chairs'.

3. *Henry IV Part 2*

- (a) There were very few answers seen to this question. Candidates who knew the play in detail had no problem with it. The best answers used the breadth of the concept of betrayal to explore a range characters and situations. Some referred to the betrayal by Falstaff of Mistress Quickly when he breaks his promise to marry her. There was focused and well-supported discussion of Prince John's betrayal of the rebel leaders and some arguments about Prince Hal's public persona being a betrayal of the truth. These answers demonstrated the ability to write critically about betrayal in the light of specific episodes and characters. Less successful answers tended to be broader and to focus exclusively on the Hal and Falstaff betrayal with some relevant support, but needing further development. Some of these answers also referred to the rebels but lacked specific detail. Some that referred to Hal's betrayal of his duties as the king's son needed to expand their exploration beyond basic points.
- (b) There were very few answers to this question. The best answers demonstrated understanding of the key opening line, 'I am exceeding weary', and used it to inform the arguments that followed. There was insightful consideration of the vicious attack on Poins and awareness of Hal's apparent 'hypocrisy' towards the end of the extract. These responses were sophisticated in their awareness of the dramatic dynamic in the extract and how this relates to the events and concerns of the play as a whole. Some responses demonstrated Hal becoming aware of his flaws as a person and a son. One response commented on how Hal uses Poins as a sounding post and that Poins stands

up to him as an equal, admonishing him for his behaviour. Less successful answers suggested that candidates did not understand the extract and found Hal's long speech obscure in its use of metaphors. These answers tended to rely on general approaches and would have been more successful had they considered dramatic features.

4. *Philadelphia, Here I Come!*

- (a) This was quite a popular question and candidates responded with confidence in most instances. The best answers demonstrated the inverted nature of the relationship between Madge and Gar, with effective handling of the irony inherent in Friel's presentation and well-chosen supporting details. These answers were able to explore some of the ways in which the relationship contributes to the dramatic structure of the play. Most understood the importance of Madge as a mother figure for Gar and detailed the sacrifices she makes for him. A few answers referred to Gar's last words about the need to remember Madge, highlighting her significance in his life. Less successful answers demonstrated less balance between the characters, focussing predominantly on one or the other. Some of these answers revealed a struggle to make links between the characters and offered sparse supporting detail, producing more general responses to the question.
- (b) This question was quite popular and the scene enabled informed candidates to demonstrate ideas about aspects of staging and make links to the wider play. The best answers offered an appreciation of Gar's hopes for the future as fantasies - having an important job etc. These answers demonstrated close attention to stage directions and to the obvious and more subtle representations of Private and Public Gar. There were some largely intelligent, if straightforward consideration of the effects in the passage and personal engagement with the humour generated by the exchange. Less successful responses, while understanding the desire to go to the USA for better prospects, did not recognise the humour or exaggeration in the way this desire is presented. Some did not appreciate the cinematic-style stereotypes of American masculinity conjured up by Private and missed the point of the extract.

5. *Death and the King's Horseman*

- (a) There were very few responses to this question on Soyinka's dramatic treatment of attitudes towards death. The best answers demonstrated a clear understanding of the difference in attitudes between the Yoruba and the colonialists, as well as between Elesin and Olunde. Some good explanations of language related to rituals heightened awareness of the significance of death throughout the play. Some commented on the Praise-Singer's dilemma that he is fond of Elesin and does not want him to die, but at the same time understands the importance of death to the culture of the Yoruba. He therefore encourages Elesin to seek an honourable and timely death. Less successful answers stuck to narrative responses; where there was some awareness of the concept of different views of death, such responses usually needed to provide more consideration of the dramatic effects used by Soyinka to present this.
- (b) There were very few responses to this question, which proved accessible to different levels of ability. Overall, candidates seemed familiar with the extract and were able to write about it in the wider context of the play. The best answers explained how the introduction of Elesin is made significant through Soyinka's presentation of the Praise-Singer. Some candidates effectively analysed the use of proverbial language and the foreshadowing of Elesin's reluctance to go through with the death ritual through references to 'a brand new bride'. These answers reflected assured awareness of the likely engagement of the audience in the scene. Less successful responses needed to engage more with the dramatic features of the passage and tended to offer commentaries of them rather than analysing specific details. Some of these answers related to the metaphorical language in literal terms, resulting in some confusion.

LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

<p>Paper 9695/51 Shakespeare and other pre-Twentieth Century Texts</p>
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Key messages

- (1) At the start of the examination, candidates should carefully plan how much time is to be spent on each essay.
- (2) Candidates should ensure their essays include discussion of varying opinions of the set texts.

General comments

The general standard was once again satisfactory, with nearly all candidates showing at least a sound knowledge of the set texts. There were very few rubric errors and there were very few candidates who were limited by expression. Some weaker candidates adopt an informal style and register, which can limit precision and the development of arguments.

There were responses to all of the questions set and answers on each question were seen at all levels of attainment. Some texts remain very popular – Richard II in section A and Wuthering Heights in section B – with others remaining minority choices, such as Marvell and Shelley. The responses seen on these less popular texts suggest that they are still very accessible to learners at all ability levels.

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

- (a) Candidates should apportion their time carefully across the two essays to be written, with sufficient time allocated for planning and writing each essay. In this session there were a number of candidates whose second essay was incomplete and often appeared unplanned. Careful note of timings and adhering to them would improve the overall mark and result for such candidates.
- (b) Candidates should be able to appreciate and discuss varying opinions of the set texts, as set out in Assessment Objective 5 for this syllabus. This can be evidenced in the candidate's essays in many different ways, of which some of the most common ones are:
 - (i) by appropriate use of critical or academic opinions
 - (ii) by discussing how a specific type of reader or audience might respond, such as a Marxist reader
 - (iii) by comparing possible responses from the writer's actual audience to those of, say, a modern audience
 - (iv) by critical analysis of different possible meanings to specific words or phrases.

There are other ways of meeting this assessment objective; in any case it is important that the candidates build into their essay plans some evidence of the ability to discuss varying opinions in order to meet the requirements of the syllabus in full.

Comments on specific questions

Richard II

This was a popular text in this session, with a large majority opting for the (b) passage question.

- (a) Nearly all responses had a sound knowledge of the text and were able to select relevant material to address the task. Weaker answers often approached the topic through the characters, summarising their various attitudes; some answers suggested at least an implicit comparison or

contrast, thereby presenting the beginnings of an argument. Better answers developed this approach, often contrasting Richard's and Bolingbroke's reputations with the court and the people. These approaches did very well when the arguments were supported by appropriate reference to text. Very good answers often saw this as a key concern in the text, exploring how Shakespeare develops the plot 'through the counterbalancing rise and fall of the two main characters' reputations,' as one suggested. Other answers saw how reputation was closely linked to 'flattery and the whole way the court operated at that time,' as one put it, with many noting how Shakespeare suggested reputation was 'fickle and often undeserved.' Where such arguments were supported with some understanding of the dramatic and poetic methods used by Shakespeare to present his concerns, the essays did very well.

- (b) This was the second most popular question on the paper. Nearly every answer gave an appropriate context to this passage – Richard's return from Ireland and Bolingbroke's 'invasion'. Weaker responses tended to lapse into paraphrase or moved away from the detail of the passage into summarising the preceding and following events. More successful approaches often discussed the importance of this passage to the plot of the play, exploring Richard's 'weak and impractical response to the threats to his crown,' as one put it, 'which would lead to his deposition and death'. Good answers saw the passage, for example, as 'revealing the poetic, unregal character of Richard,' as one answer suggested. Others explored the way Carlisle supports Richard's view of his divine right, contrasting with Aumerle's more practical attitude. Very good answers considered the detail of Richard's language and his use of natural and religious imagery, identifying the effects created and the significance to Shakespeare's concerns such as kingship, leadership and rebellion, with appropriate support from both passage and wider text.

The Winter's Tale

This was the most popular text on the paper this session with the vast majority opting for the (b) passage question.

- (a) There were relatively few responses to this question. Nearly all of them revealed a sound knowledge of the text and were able to select relevant material to address the task. Weaker answers often summarised what happened in each of the two main locations, Sicilia and Bohemia, some offering at least an implicit comparison or contrast, as a way of suggesting an argument. Better answers developed this by comparing and contrasting the characters in the specific locations, such as Perdita in the shepherd's cottage and then in Sicilia at Leontes's court, often showing some awareness of Shakespeare's methods of characterisation through location and setting. More successful answers also saw how courts and countryside were also contrasted, comparing for example the atmosphere at the sheep shearing festival with that at Hermione's trial. Some very good answers saw the topic in more abstract terms, exploring how Shakespeare presents his concerns, such as loyalty, parenting, relationships and love, through exposing how 'places change the way people behave and show us the different ways that people love and live together,' as one essay suggested. These approaches did very well when the arguments were supported by appropriate reference to text, with developed understanding of the dramatic and poetic methods used by Shakespeare.
- (b) This was the most popular question on the paper, with most candidates able to give an appropriate context. Basic answers tended to discuss the character of Paulina generally, often with some paraphrasing and summary of the rest of the play; some understanding of the situation and its significance lifted such responses. Better answers noted, for example, 'How Shakespeare contrasts the Paulina we see here, with the one earlier in the play, trying to force baby Perdita into her father's arms,' as one put it. Many good answers explored how audience response here might reflect different attitudes to Leontes, some accepting his apparent remorse at face value, whilst others remained sceptical of its true nature. Very good answers explored the language and tone in detail, considering the effects of Leontes's response to 'killed', for example. Paulina's significance as the protector of Hermione's memory was often very well explored, especially her language and emotion, with some noting that 'earlier in the play, she is a lone female voice in a man's world, and the only one with a true understanding of the rights and wrongs,' as one suggested. Very few answers discussed the deeper context to Paulina's role here – that she is the only one on stage who knows that Hermione is still alive and therefore understands the dangers of Leontes remarrying. Those answers which explored this aspect of the passage and were able to find support from the wider text did very well indeed.

Northanger Abbey

This was a popular **Section B** text, with an even split between the two options.

- (a) Nearly every answer showed relevant knowledge of the text and some understanding of the task. Weaker answers tended to approach the topic through the characters, with the Thorpes and General Tilney popular choices, often summarising what the characters did, sometimes in great detail. Better answers at this level saw some of the contrasts Austen offers between and even within the various family groups, such as the Tilneys and the Morlands. Good answers often saw this as one of Austen's major concerns in the novel, exploring how and with what effects the different attitudes, 'from the grasping, acquisitive Isabella to the naïve, unmercenary Catherine, are presented to the reader,' as one put it. Some answers developed such arguments into a consideration of Austen's methods of characterisation, considering her use of language and tone, for example, to reveal the different attitudes of her characters and thereby develop the plot and the structure of the novel as a whole. Where such ideas were supported by apposite quotation, the answers did very well.
- (b) Nearly every answer recognised the general context to this passage and was to some extent able to consider what is revealed about Catherine here. Weaker answers often lapsed into a summary of the events leading to her visit to the Abbey or offered more general comments on Catherine and what happens to her in the novel, rather than exploring the detail of the given passage. Better answers considered Austen's concerns in detail, and the 'mock gothic atmosphere,' as one put it, as well as what is revealed about Catherine's state of mind at this stage in the novel. Very good answers focussed on the detail of the passage, analysing the narrative techniques, such as narrative voice and Catherine's internal dialogue, as well as language and tone. Answers which developed such points into considering the effects on the reader, including comic ones, often did very well.

Wuthering Heights

This was the most popular **Section B** text, with the majority choosing the **option (b)** passage.

- (a) Nearly every answer had some relevant knowledge of the text – and of Cathy Linton in particular – with which to address the task. Weaker answers tended to summarise what she did, often in great and accurate detail. More successful answers considered her role as the 'woman in the love triangle with Heathcliff and Edgar,' as one suggested. Better answers shaped such ideas to the prompt. For some, 'she was a spoilt child, who never really understood those around her'; for others she 'was genuinely torn between the passion of Heathcliff and the comfortable lifestyle of Edgar,' as one put it. Good responses developed such ideas into a consideration of Brontë's methods of characterisation, exploring her use of language, pathetic fallacy and symbolism, for example. Those answers supporting such approaches with apposite quotation and appropriate analysis did very well.
- (b) Most answers were able to give a clear context – the death of Catherine and the birth of Cathy. Basic answers often paraphrased the passage or generalised about the characters, especially Heathcliff here and elsewhere in the text. More successful responses focussed on Brontë's characterisation of Heathcliff and Nellie at this point in the novel. Good answers considered the effects of Brontë's writing in detail, considering, for example, the narrative techniques and the narrator, as well as Brontë's use of language and dialogue. Where such methods were fully analysed and the effects considered, such as how a reader might respond to Heathcliff's inability to say Catherine's name, the answers often did very well, especially when brief, apposite references to the wider text were integrated appropriately.

The Franklin's Prologue and Tale

This was a popular, if minority, text on the paper, with most candidates choosing the essay question, **option (a)**.

- (a) Nearly every answer revealed relevant knowledge of the text and some understanding of the task. Weaker answers were mostly able to find relevant material to address the task, often giving a summary of Arveragus and what happened to him. Better answers considered how Chaucer's ambiguous presentation of the knight was exemplified in the given quotations, 'contrasting his desire for her to be his equal, with what he actually does and makes her do,' as one answer

suggested. Good answers also explored his role in terms of the contrasts with the squire, Aurelius, and how he represents how 'the squire's attitudes, which he seemed to share early on, soon change following his marriage,' as one suggested. Very good answers developed such ideas with appropriate reference to the detail of the text and, where some analysis of the poetic methods and their effects was included, these answers did very well.

- (b) Most responses gave an appropriate context and were able to see this as a crucial moment in the plot development of the poem, as Dorigen sees the 'grisly rokkes blake'. Weaker answers tended to paraphrase the passage or to write generally about the preceding and succeeding events. Better answers focussed on the detail of the passage. Many responses saw this as revealing Dorigen's genuine love for Arveragus, and, for some, his for her, in his letters to her. Good answers also explored Chaucer's methods of characterisation, his use of language and imagery, to develop Dorigen. Very good answers often considered a more symbolic interpretation of the situation and Dorigen's response, seeing 'her recognition of the rocks and the dangers at sea as representing her misgivings about her missing Lord,' as one put it. With some detailed analysis of Chaucer's style, especially the use of language and imagery, to support such arguments, these answers often did very well.

Tess of the d'Urbervilles

This was a minority text in this session, with most candidates choosing **option (b)**, the passage question.

- (a) Nearly every answer had sufficient knowledge of the text to discuss this topic relevantly. Weaker answers tended to approach it through the characters, especially Angel and Alec, contrasted to Tess herself. More successful answers saw the contrasts Hardy creates between characters, for example Tess and her mother and how they respond to the pregnancy and Alec's responsibilities. Better answers saw how Hardy develops his characterisations through the different attitudes to morality, with good answers seeing how this might lead to contrasting, even contradictory, responses in the audience, for example over Tess's baptism of and burial of Sorrow. Very good answers saw this in the context of Hardy's wider concerns, including Angel's and Tess's moral development and the reader's response to them individually and as a couple. Where this was supported by an exploration of the narrative techniques and methods with appropriate reference to the text, the answers often did very well.
- (b) Almost every answer recognised this as a significant point in the novel, where Tess realises the impossibility of escaping her past. Some weaker answers were confused as to the precise point this occurs and even the location – Tess and Angel's pre-marriage trip to town. Almost all answers had a secure knowledge of the Angel and Tess relationship, though weaker responses spent too long discussing the previous and subsequent events, with a consequent loss of focus on the passage. Better answers explored the structural and narrative effects of this incident, with some seeing Angel's sudden violence as surprising in terms of characterisation, whereas others saw it as a foreshadowing of Tess's own act of violence at the end of the novel. Very good answers explored the language and narrative techniques in detail, showing how the various effects are created. Such answers did very well when the points were developed with apposite, precise references to the wider text.

Andrew Marvell

There were almost no responses to **option (a)** and very few for **option (b)**.

- (a) There were too few answers to this question to be able to make any general comments.
- (b) This was a minority choice. Weaker answers tended to paraphrase the poem, needing to link it to the wider selection, and others apparently approaching it as an unseen. Better answers explored how Marvell presents the girl and his attitude to her, using contrasting language and imagery. Others explored the use of natural imagery in detail, with some linking ideas here to those in 'The Garden' for example. Good answers explored Marvell's wider concerns here – youth, innocence, desire and nature, for example, were all well discussed. Very good responses explored the detail of the poem, noting, for example, the symbolism and the development of the ideas and moods. Other, rarer answers explored Marvell's use of poetic form and his poetic style in detail. Answers which developed such ideas with apt reference to the rest of the selection often did very well.

Percy Bysshe Shelley

There were almost no responses to **option (a)** and very few for **option (b)**.

- (a) There were too few answers to this question to be able to make any general comments.
- (b) This was not a popular choice, with only a few answers seen. Some weaker answers appeared to be responding as to an unseen poem, with a consequent lack of understanding or context. Better answers were able to discuss the extract in its context, though some answers did give too much attention to general points on Romantic poetry, with a consequent lack of attention to the detail of the poem. Good answers considered what this extract reveals about Shelley's poetic concerns in detail, especially his 'adoration of the natural world and what it teaches him about being a poet,' as one suggested. Other answers offered detailed discussions of the language and imagery, though rarely the poetic form. Where this was developed with detailed analysis of the effects of these methods, the answers often did well, especially when linked to the rest of the poem and the wider selection.

LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

Paper 9695/52
**Shakespeare and other pre-Twentieth
Century Texts**

Key messages

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- (2) Candidates should ensure their essays include discussion of varying opinions of the set texts.

General comments

The general standard was once again satisfactory, with nearly all candidates showing at least a sound knowledge of the set texts. There were very few rubric errors and there were very few candidates who were limited by expression. Some weaker candidates adopt an informal style and register, which can limit precision and the development of arguments.

There were responses to all of the questions set and answers on each question were seen at all levels of attainment. Some texts remain very popular – Richard II in section A and Wuthering Heights in section B – with others remaining minority choices, such as Marvell and Shelley. The responses seen on these less popular texts suggest that they are still very accessible to learners at all ability levels.

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

- (a) Candidates should apportion their time carefully across the two essays to be written, with sufficient time allocated for planning and writing each essay. In this session there were a number of candidates whose second essay was incomplete and often appeared unplanned. Careful note of timings and adhering to them would improve the overall mark and result for such candidates.
- (b) Candidates should be able to appreciate and discuss varying opinions of the set texts, as set out in Assessment Objective 5 for this syllabus. This can be evidenced in the candidate's essays in many different ways, of which some of the most common ones are:
 - (i) by appropriate use of critical or academic opinions
 - (ii) by discussing how a specific type of reader or audience might respond, such as a Marxist reader
 - (iii) by comparing possible responses from the writer's actual audience to those of, say, a modern audience
 - (iv) by critical analysis of different possible meanings to specific words or phrases.

There are other ways of meeting this assessment objective; in any case it is important that the candidates build into their essay plans some evidence of the ability to discuss varying opinions in order to meet the requirements of the syllabus in full.

Comments on specific questions

Richard II

This was a popular text on the paper this session, with the majority opting for the (b) passage question.

- (a) Most responses were able to select relevant material to address the task, with nearly every answer exploring the topic through characters. Weaker answers often summarised different characters and the ways in which they were traitors or not, sometimes in great detail. More successful answers

explored how Shakespeare's characterisation of, for example, Bolingbroke and Mowbray at the start served to show contrasting aspects of treason and betrayal. Some good answers developed this approach into exploring Shakespeare's methods of characterisation in his 'presentation of treason and betrayal and the dramatic and poetic effects thereby created. Others considered that 'treachery, even by Richard to himself, is so common, it is the main driving force of the plot,' as one suggested. Where this was developed into considering how different audiences might respond differently to the various types of treachery and betrayal in front of them, these answers did very well.

- (b) This was the second most popular question on the paper. Nearly every answer gave an appropriate context to this passage – Richard's return from Ireland – and showed some knowledge and understanding of his character. Weaker responses lapsed into paraphrase or moved away from the detail of the passage into summarising the preceding or succeeding events. More successful approaches often discussed the importance of this passage to the audience's perceptions of Richard as king and as a man, seeing his contrasting moods and emotions. Good answers saw 'the weak person Richard is turning into,' as one answer put it. Others explored the dramatic situation, for example: 'Richard posing and lamenting, whilst Bolingbroke gathers strength.' Very good answers considered the detail of Richard's language and imagery, identifying the effects created and its wider significance, with appropriate support from both passage and wider text.

The Winter's Tale

This was the most popular text on the paper this session, with the vast majority opting for the (b) passage question.

- (a) There were relatively few responses to this question. Nearly all of them revealed a sound knowledge of the text and were able to select relevant material to address the task. Weaker answers often summarised what happened in each of the two main locations, Sicilia and Bohemia, some offering at least an implicit comparison or contrast, as a way of suggesting an argument. Better answers were able to develop this by considering the characters in their specific locations, such as Hermione in the courtroom and Perdita in the shepherd's cottage, with some showing awareness of Shakespeare's methods of characterisation. More successful answers also saw how courts and countryside were contrasted, comparing for example the atmosphere at the sheep shearing festival with that at Hermione's trial. Some very good answers saw the topic in more abstract terms, exploring how Shakespeare presents his concerns, such as loyalty, parenting, relationships and love, through exposing how 'places change the way people behave and show us the different ways that people love and live together,' as one essay suggested. These approaches did very well when the arguments were supported by appropriate reference to text and understanding of the dramatic and poetic methods used by Shakespeare.
- (b) This was the most popular question on the paper, with most candidates able to give an appropriate context. Basic answers tended to discuss the character of Leontes, often with some paraphrasing and summary, of the rest of the play, with at times some understanding of the situation and its significance. Better answers noted, for example, 'How Shakespeare makes the audience focus on Leontes and his reactions, as though he is watching the play with us,' as one put it. Good answers explored how there might be different audience responses according to their view of Leontes, even at this early stage of the play. Very good answers explored the language and tone in detail, for example, considering the effects on an audience of Leontes's changing tone, his aside and his words to Mamillius, for example. Those answers which saw the significance of this passage to the development of plot as well as Leontes's characterisation, and were able to find support from the wider text, often did very well.

Northanger Abbey

This was a popular **Section B** text, with a fairly even take up across the two options.

- (a) Nearly every answer was able to select relevant material to address the task. Weaker answers tended to summarise what happened to relevant family groups, such as the Morlands, the Tilneys and the Thorpes. Better responses developed this into considering the various contrasts between the different families, with some able to explore Austen's concerns about morality, marriage and parents, for example. Good answers often explored the contrasts Austen presents within families as well as across families, so that, 'though General Tilney seems to be very different from his son

and daughter, he does seem to share a lot of the Thorpe family characteristics,' as one suggested. Very good answers supported such arguments with apposite quotation and some consideration of Austen's style, especially the language and tone, and often did very well.

- (b) Nearly every answer recognised the general context to this passage and was to some extent able to consider what is revealed about Catherine here. Weaker answers often lapsed into a summary of the events leading to her visit to the Abbey or offered more general comments on Catherine and what happens to her in the novel, rather than exploring the detail of the given passage. Better answers considered Austen's concerns in detail, and the 'mock gothic atmosphere,' as one put it, as well as what is revealed about Catherine's youthful naivety at this stage in the novel. Very good answers focussed on the detail of the passage, analysing the narrative techniques, such as narrative voice and Catherine's internal dialogue, as well as language and tone. Answers which developed such points into considering the effects on the reader, including comic ones, often did very well.

Wuthering Heights

This was the most popular **Section B** text, with the majority choosing the **option (b)** passage.

- (a) This was a popular question and nearly every essay revealed some relevant knowledge of the text, with which to address the task. Weaker answers tended to summarise the two characters and their relationship, with some confusion evident between the two Catherines. More successful answers considered the contrasting relationships in the novel, most often Cathy and Heathcliff, often pointing out the 'healing, almost cathartic effect, this positive relationship has on the reader,' as one suggested. Better answers addressed the 'meaning and effects' element of the question, exploring such concerns as love, revenge and change, as revealed by Catherine and Hareton. Essays which developed such arguments by considering style, especially language and tone, often did well, especially when the points made were supported by apposite quotation.
- (b) This was the most popular question in **Section B**, with nearly every answer able to give at least a generally relevant context – the return of Heathcliff, after the marriage of Cathy and Linton. Some weaker responses revealed some confusion as to the precise point this took place in the novel. Basic answers often paraphrased the passage or made general points about Cathy and her role, here and elsewhere in the text. More successful responses focussed on Brontë's development of the relationships here, such as Nellie and Cathy, as well as what is revealed about Cathy's relationships with Edgar and Heathcliff. Good answers considered the effects of Brontë's writing in detail, for example the narrative techniques as well as Brontë's use of language and dialogue. Some noted how Cathy's language reveals her self-absorption, as well as Nellie's undermining and critical tone. Answers developing such points with apposite, brief references to the wider text often did very well.

The Franklin's Prologue and Tale

This was not a popular text on the paper, with most candidates choosing the passage question, **option (b)**.

- (a) This was very much a minority choice. Weaker answers were mostly able find relevant material to address the task, often giving a summary of Aurelius and what happened to him. Better answers considered how Chaucer's presentation of the squire both undermines and supports the given quotation, contrasting his, for some, immoral wooing of a married woman with his generosity in freeing her from her promise, despite expecting to be ruined by his debts. Good answers also explored his role in terms of the contrasts with the knight, Arveragus, and how he represents 'one kind of attitude to love in the medieval world, one very different from that of the knight and his lady,' as one suggested. Very good answers developed such ideas with appropriate reference to the detail of the text and some analysis of the poetic effects created.
- (b) Most responses gave an appropriate context and were able to see this as a climax in the plot of the poem, especially for Dorigen. Weaker answers tended to paraphrase the passage or to write generally about the text as a whole. Better answers focussed on the detail of the passage. Many responses saw this as the point at which Dorigen develops, with different interpretations offered on how a reader might respond. For some, she simply got the rewards of her playful 'flirting' with Aurelius, whereas for others 'her genuine morality is revealed by her horror of the situation she is now in,' as one suggested. Good answers discussed the change in tone at this point in the poem, as Dorigen considers suicide to escape her plight. With some detailed analysis of the style,

especially the use of language and imagery, to support such arguments, these answers often did very well.

Tess of the d'Urbervilles

This was the first session for this novel and it proved to be reasonably popular, with an even split between the two questions.

- (a) Nearly every answer had sufficient knowledge of the text to discuss this topic relevantly. Weaker answers tended to approach it through what the characters said and did, especially Tess, Angel and Alec. More successful answers saw the contrasts Hardy creates between characters, for example between Angel and his brothers over the dancing in Marlott. Better answers saw how Hardy develops characterisation through the different attitudes to morality, with good answers seeing how this might lead to contrasting, even contradictory, responses in the audience. Very good answers saw this in the context of Hardy's wider concerns, such as social injustice and gender inequalities. Where this was supported by an exploration of the narrative techniques and methods, with appropriate reference to the text, the answers often did very well.
- (b) Almost every answer recognised the context for this passage, though some weaker answers demonstrated some confusion as to the precise point this occurs. All but a very few answers had a secure knowledge of the Alec and Tess relationship. Weaker responses spent too long discussing the previous and subsequent events, with a consequent loss of focus on the passage. Better answers explored the structural and narrative effects of this return home by Tess and what is revealed about her by her reactions to Alec, 'her instinctive understanding of her morally ambiguous situation,' as one suggested. Good answers explored the ways Hardy interweaves dialogue and narrative, especially in Tess's flashes of emotion and Alec's recognition of having done wrong and his willingness to try and put it right. Very good answers explored the language and narrative techniques in detail, showing how the various effects are created. Such answers did very well when the points were developed with apposite, precise references to the passage and the wider text.

Andrew Marvell

This was a minority choice in this session, with few essays on either option.

- (a) The few responses to this question usually had sufficient knowledge of the text to address the task, with reference most often made to 'To his Coy Mistress', the Mower poems, 'Eyes and Tears' and 'The Picture of little TC'. Weaker answers offered a summary of the poems or a more detailed paraphrase. Better answers considered the different ways women are presented, with some able to explore Marvell's contrasting attitudes to them. Those responses which were able to consider how Marvell presents his ideas through his poetic choices, with appropriate support from the text, often did well.
- (b) This was also a minority choice. Weaker answers tended to paraphrase the poem, with some needing to link it to the rest of the poem or the wider selection. Better answers explored how Marvell presents the garden symbolically, using language and imagery. Others explored the use of natural imagery in detail, with some linking ideas to other poems, such as 'The Mower's Song', for example. Very good responses explored the detail of the poem, noting, for example, the complex symbolism and the development of the ideas and moods. Others explored the poetic structure and rhyme scheme, linking them to Marvell's concerns. Answers which developed such ideas with apt reference to the rest of the selection often did very well.

Percy Bysshe Shelley

There were almost no responses to **option (a)** and very few for **option (b)**.

- (a) There were too few answers to this question to be able to make any general comments.
- (b) Better answers to this question were able to discuss the extract in its context; some answers gave too much attention to contextual details and consequently needed to pay more attention to the detail of the poem. Good answers considered what this extract reveals about Shelley's attitudes to nature and poetry, often linking it to the rest of the poem. Where this was developed with detailed analysis of the poetic methods – such as language and verse form – and their effects, the answers

often did well. Some weaker answers appeared to be responding as to an unseen poem, consequently demonstrating a need for a more thorough understanding of the extract and its context.

LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

Paper 9695/53
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Century Texts**

Key messages

- (1) At the start of the examination, candidates should carefully plan how much time is to be spent on each essay.
- (2) Candidates should ensure their essays include discussion of varying opinions of the set texts.

General comments

The general standard was once again satisfactory, with nearly all candidates showing at least a sound knowledge of the set texts. There were very few rubric errors and there were very few candidates who were limited by expression. Some weaker candidates adopt an informal style and register, which can limit precision and the development of arguments.

There were responses to all of the questions set and answers on each question were seen at all levels of attainment. Some texts remain very popular – Richard II in section A and Wuthering Heights in section B – with others remaining minority choices, such as Marvell and Shelley. The responses seen on these less popular texts suggest that they are still very accessible to learners at all ability levels.

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

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 - (iii) by comparing possible responses from the writer's actual audience to those of, say, a modern audience
 - (iv) by critical analysis of different possible meanings to specific words or phrases.

There are other ways of meeting this assessment objective; in any case it is important that the candidates build into their essay plans some evidence of the ability to discuss varying opinions in order to meet the requirements of the syllabus in full.

Comments on specific questions

Richard II

This was a popular choice, with the majority of candidates choosing the **(b)** passage question.

- (a) Most responses were able to select relevant material to address the task, with nearly every answer exploring the topic through characters. Weaker answers often summarised different characters and the ways in which they were loyal or not, sometimes in great detail. More successful answers

explored how Shakespeare's characterisation of, for example, Bolingbroke and Aumerle served to show contrasting aspects of loyalty. Some good answers developed this approach into exploring the dramatic and poetic effects created, thus tackling the 'Shakespeare presents' part of the question, whilst others considered how the political and social context might impact on a character's loyalty. Where this was developed into considering how different audiences might respond differently to various displays of loyalty or betrayal, the answers did very well.

- (b) This was the most popular question on the paper. Nearly every answer gave an appropriate context to this passage. Weaker responses lapsed into paraphrase or moved away from the detail of the passage into summarising the events which followed. More successful approaches often discussed the importance of this passage to the plot of the play and the contrasting positions of Richard and Bolingbroke. Good answers saw the passage as significantly 'revealing the tortured and divided soul of Richard,' as one answer put it. Others explored the dramatic nature of the situation, for some even 'melodramatic, especially Richard's posturing,' as one essay suggested. Very good answers considered the detail of Richard's language and imagery, identifying the effects created and the significance to the concerns, with appropriate support from both passage and wider text.

The Winter's Tale

This was a reasonably popular text on the paper this session, with the majority opting for the (b) passage question.

- (a) Nearly all responses had a sound knowledge of the text and were able to select relevant material to address the task. Weaker answers often summarised what happened in each of the two main locations, Sicilia and Bohemia, some offering at least an implicit comparison or contrast as a way of suggesting an argument. Better answers developed this approach into an argument, showing how the play's meaning was influenced by 'the shift from cold to warmth, winter to spring and the old to the young,' as one put it. More successful answers also saw how courts and countryside were also contrasted, comparing for example the sheep shearing festival to Hermione's trial. Some very good answers saw the topic in more abstract terms, exploring how Shakespeare presents his concerns, such as loyalty, parenting, relationships and love, through exposing how 'places change the way people behave and show us the different ways that people love and live together,' as one essay suggested. These approaches did very well when the arguments were supported by appropriate reference to text, with understanding of the dramatic and poetic methods used by Shakespeare.
- (b) Most candidates were able to give an appropriate context, though some weaker answers were unsure whether Florizel and Perdita were married already. Basic answers tended to discuss the characters, often with some paraphrasing and summary, with at times some understanding of the situation and its significance. Better answers noted, for example, the range of 'knowledge and ignorance of the characters on stage of the true situation in both courts', as one put it. Good answers explored how there might be different audience responses according to their view of Leontes or other characters. Very good answers explored the language and tone in detail, for example considering the effects of Florizel's changing tone and his words to Leontes at the start and Perdita at the end and their impact on an audience. Those answers which saw the significance of this passage to the development of plot and characterisation, and were able to find support from the wider text, often did very well.

Northanger Abbey

There were very few takers for either question on this text.

- (a) Good answers which supported their arguments with apposite quotation and some consideration of the style, especially the language and tone, often did very well. Weaker answers tended to summarise relevant characters and what happened to them in the novel. Better responses developed this into considering the various contrasts between the different sisters and brothers, with some able to explore Austen's concerns about love and loyalty for example.
- (b) Nearly every answer recognised the context to this passage and was to some extent able to consider what is revealed about Eleanor and Catherine here. Weaker answers lapsed into summary of the preceding events or a more general essay on Catherine and what happens to her in the novel, rather than exploring the detail of the given passage. Better answers considered Austen's concerns in detail, contrasting, for example, the 'presentation of genuine and painful

emotion here, with the comic melodrama of the more Gothic scenes,' as one suggests. Very good answers focussed on the detail of the passage, analysing the narrative techniques, such as narrative voice and dialogue, as well as language and tone. Answers which developed such points into considering the effects on the reader's view of the two women often did very well.

Wuthering Heights

This was the most popular **Section B** text, with the vast majority choosing the **option (b)** passage question.

- (a) There were few answers to this question. Nearly every essay revealed some relevant knowledge of the text, with which to address the task. Weaker answers tended to summarise the characters, most commonly Cathy and her attitudes to Linton and Heathcliff, often in great and accurate detail. More successful answers considered contrasting attitudes to individual men by different women, for example, Heathcliff 'who is adored by Cathy, hated by Isabella and supported by Nellie, much to the confusion of the reader,' as one essay put it. Better answers also addressed the prompt of 'Brontë's presentation', considering style, especially language and tone. Where these answers supported the points made by apposite quotation they did well.
- (b) Most answers were able to give a clear context, the death of Cathy and the birth of Catherine, though some weaker responses demonstrated confusion as to the precise point this took place in the novel. Basic answers often paraphrased the passage or generalised about the characters, especially Cathy and Heathcliff, here and elsewhere in the text. More successful responses focussed on Brontë's development of the relationships here, such as Nellie and Lockwood, as well as the characterisation of Heathcliff. Good answers considered the effects of Brontë's writing in detail, considering, for example, the narrative techniques and the multiple narrators, as well as Brontë's use of language and dialogue. Answers developing such points with apposite, brief references to the wider text often did very well.

The Franklin's Prologue and Tale

This was a popular text on the paper, with a more or less even split between the options.

- (a) Most answers were able to find relevant material to address the task. Weaker answers were mostly able to summarise the two characters and what happened to them. Better answers considered how Chaucer contrasted both characters and their actions, in order 'to develop his concerns about truth and loyalty and love,' as one put it. Good answers saw how Chaucer used these contrasts to develop the characterisation and raise contrasting emotions in the reader around the poem's concerns, with some exploring his use of symbolism and imagery very well. Very good answers developed these ideas with appropriate reference to the detail of the text and some analysis of the poetic effects created.
- (b) Most responses gave an appropriate context and were able to discuss the concerns relevantly. Weaker answers tended to paraphrase the passage or to write generally about the text as a whole. Better answers focussed on the detail of the passage. Many responses saw this as a change in tone brought about by the garden setting, contrasting the rocks and the absent husband, and leading to Dorigen's crucial encounter with Aurelius. Good answers saw how Chaucer's careful presentation of the garden – with its sense of beauty, youth and fresh vitality, and with Dorigen set apart from the gaiety – linked into the wider text, its structure and its development of key concerns.

Tess of the d'Urbervilles

This was the first session for this novel and it proved to be reasonably popular, with an even split between the two questions.

- (a) Nearly every answer demonstrated sufficient knowledge of the text to discuss this topic relevantly. Weaker answers tended to approach it through what characters did, especially Angel and Alec, though others also discussed Tess and her baptism and burial of Sorrow. More successful answers saw the contrasts Hardy creates between characters, for example Angel's father and his sons. Better answers saw how Hardy develops the characterisation through the different attitudes to religion, with good answers seeing how this might lead to contrasting, even contradictory, responses in the audience. Very good answers saw this in the context of Hardy's wider concerns, including Tess's development and the reader's response to her. Where this was supported by an

exploration of the narrative techniques and methods with appropriate reference to the text, the answers often did very well.

- (b) Almost every answer recognised this as a climactic point in the novel. Some weaker answers were confused as to the precise point this occurs and even the location – the way home from the town. All but a very few answers had a secure knowledge of the Alec and Tess relationship. Weaker responses discussed the previous and subsequent events at length, with a consequent loss of focus on the passage. Better answers explored the structural and narrative effects of this rescue by Alec, often seen as ‘unfortunate for Tess, but perhaps inevitable’, as one put it. Good answers explored the ways Hardy interweaves dialogue and narrative, especially in ‘the closing remarks of Tess’s work mates and the tone of inevitable catastrophe they create,’ as one said. Very good answers explored the language and narrative techniques in detail, showing how the various effects are created. Such answers did very well when the points were developed with apposite, precise references to the wider text.

Andrew Marvell

This was a minority choice in this session, with almost no responses for **option (a)** and very few for **option (b)**.

- (a) The very few responses seen to this question usually had sufficient knowledge of the text to address the task, with reference made to the Damon poems, ‘To his Coy Mistress’, and ‘The Picture of little TC’. Weaker answers often offered a summary of the poems or a more detailed paraphrase. Better answers considered the different kinds of relationships presented, with some able to explore the contrasting attitudes. Those responses which were able to consider how Marvell presents his ideas through his poetic choices, with appropriate support from the text, often did well.
- (b) This was also a minority choice. Weaker answers tended to paraphrase the poem, with some needing to link it to the wider selection. Better answers explored how Marvell presents the Mower’s attitudes to his meadows and Juliana, using contrasting language and imagery. Others explored the use of natural imagery in detail, with some linking ideas to other Damon poems or ‘The Garden’ for example. Very good responses explored the detail of the poem, noting, for example, the symbolism and the development of the ideas and moods. Others explored the rigidity of the poetic structure and rhyme scheme, linking them to the Mower’s mood of constrained passion. Answers which developed such ideas with apt reference to the rest of the selection often did very well.

Percy Bysshe Shelley

There were almost no responses to **option (a)** and very few for **option (b)**.

- (a) The few answers to this question demonstrated sufficient knowledge of the text to discuss Shelley’s presentation of poets and poetry relevantly. Popular choices were ‘Adonais’, ‘Hymn to Intellectual Beauty’, ‘Stanzas written in Dejection, near Naples’ and ‘To a Skylark’. Weaker answers tended to summarise the poems, needing to make more reference to Shelley’s presentation. Better answers addressed this with appropriate support. Good answers explored Shelley’s different attitudes and tone in his presentation of poetry across the selection. Other answers discussed how, for Shelley, nature represented what poets should aspire to and how poetry should affect readers in ways similar to nature’s effects on humans. Very good answers supported such arguments with precise references to the poems and did very well.
- (b) Better answers to this question were able to discuss the extract in its context. Some answers gave much attention to biographical details and would have done better to pay more attention to the detail of the poem. Good answers considered what this extract reveals about Shelley’s emotional concerns, as well as his self-image in detail, relating them to the wider selection. Where this was developed with detailed analysis of the poetic methods, such as language and verse form, and their effects, the answers often did well. Some weaker answers appeared to be responding as to an unseen poem, needing to demonstrate greater understanding of the poem and its context.

LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

**Paper 9695/61
1900 to the Present**

Key messages

Candidates should acquire a detailed knowledge of the texts, including quotations and close reference.

They should be able to demonstrate how a writer shapes the meaning of the text by his/her use of language, structure, dramatic features and form. Beyond spotting features such as alliteration or anaphora, it is important to identify the effects such features create.

While detailed reference to the text is essential, narrative summary does not constitute successful response.

The candidate must keep the question in mind to select relevant details and ideas to address the question, rather than writing everything he/she knows about a text.

Making a short plan before writing the answer is often a good idea; these should be kept concise so that a candidate can make good use of the time they have for writing their response.

Personal response is a requirement; this considered, candidates should beware of drifting off the discussion of the text into general personal reflection.

General comments

The questions elicited many thoughtful, informed and engaged responses from candidates who shared their enjoyment of the texts studied. They wrote coherently and fluently, sometimes showing a freshly original personal response.

Most candidates were able to complete two essays of moderate length within the given time. Some second answers were incomplete, and this was often where a candidate had spent much time in their first essay on side issues such as biographical and contextual details, or they embarked on a general overview of a text before beginning on the details of a passage question. Introductory comments are a good idea, especially if placing a passage within its context; such introductions should be brief, allowing sufficient time for detailed consideration and analysis of the passage.

It is important to move an essay along from one point to the next in a logical sequence. Many candidates do this well; others spend a large portion of their writing focussing on the same idea, often supporting the same point with many examples, where they would do better to move on.

A feature of weak responses is repetition. Some responses came across like political speeches, with points being driven home by means of repetition, particularly when giving a personal response or opinion. While it is acceptable and often satisfying to end an essay with a paragraph summarising the points made in the argument, there is no need to keep repeating points throughout the answer. Ideas will be credited if expressed clearly once.

Candidates should understand the virtue of concision. Writing at great length often involves repetition and the time constraints can prevent the candidate from writing legibly.

There were occasional rubric infringements where candidates did not attempt a second question or they wrote both answers on the same text. The instructions on the question paper clearly state that candidates need to attempt two questions, each on a different text.

It is noticeable that candidates are in general using critical opinions to better advantage, helping to move the argument onto a new point or in partial support of the opinion they are expressing. Critical opinions should not be used alone as a substitute for textual support. For example, if a candidate quotes a critic who believes that Amanda is a tragic figure, there needs to be a quotation or close reference to the text to support this opinion.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie: *Americanah*

Most candidates demonstrated knowledge of the main concerns of this text and able candidates could move around the text, selecting pertinent details to support responses. Less successful responses referred more generally to these concerns, especially in the passage question, or focused on plot and character. The **(b)** passage question was far more popular than the **(a)** essay question.

- (a)** Weaker candidates struggled with the concept of structure and tended to base responses on topics such as hair or race. Better answers picked out features such as flashback, narrative perspective and the use of the blogs, discussing the effects they produce. Some candidates explored the power of shifting settings such as run-down hair salons, white people's houses, England, Nigeria and how they reflected racial differences and prejudices. Others discussed the shifting pattern of relationships entered into by the lead protagonists, showing how their disillusionment sets up the desire to 'come home' to each other both literally and figuratively after they have gained in self-knowledge. Many discussed how satisfactory they found the inconclusive ending and the moral implications of Obinze's discarded marriage.
- (b)** Most candidates were able to locate the passage contextually, often linking the episode to the development of Ifemelu's identity. They identified the overarching concern of racism, relating this to other experiences and incidents in the wider text. They commented on Laura as representative of everyday American racism in terms of generalisations and stereotyping. Many commented on the contrasting upbringing of children in Nigeria and America, with some links to Ifemelu's childhood or to Dike's problem of adjusting to different sets of values. The idea of Ifemelu as privileged was discussed, with reference to the hardships she experiences in America or Obinze's difficulties in England. The contrast between American Africans and African Americans was dwelt on by some, noting how much easier it is for educated black people to succeed in Africa than in America. A few able candidates commented on 'the pashmina of the wounded' as Laura's mantle of martyrdom, showing how the aggressor has now become the victim in order to regain the moral high-ground, with some analysis of the luxurious and comforting connotations of 'pashmina' and of Kimberley revealing her anxiety through her punishment of the salad. Weaker candidates tended to remain within the passage, commenting on Ifemelu's reaction to Laura's remarks, often needing to demonstrate a fuller understanding subtleties such as the implications of Laura's complimentary remarks about the Nigerian doctor. Very weak responses tended to give a simple account of the passage with some paraphrase, e.g. 'Laura does not know what the history books look like.'

Question 2

Eleanor Catton: *The Rehearsal*

The post-modern nature of this text makes it easier for candidates to view characters and plot as a construct, enabling them to separate the author from her work. Though it remains less popular than the other novels, candidates were able to answer with some engagement on both options.

- (a)** Weaker candidates were able to provide some examples of events in the plot where they found difficulty in discriminating between 'reality' and 'fantasy', such as in the relationship between Julia and Isolde, some of the discussions between the saxophone teacher and the mothers of her pupils, or the central affair of Victoria and Mr Saladin. The absence of names for the teachers and the mirroring of events at the girls' school by pupils at the drama school reinforce the lack of realism. Some wrote confusedly about what 'really' happened. Stronger candidates wrote about Catton's use of postmodern techniques, such as the parallelism of characters creating unrealistic patterns in the structure of the novel. (Julia, the saxophone teacher, Mr Saladin and Stanley all embark on relationships meeting the disapproval of conventional society, all involving the exercise of power

and/or role playing.) Characters within the novel are shown to be confused between what is real and what is not, such as the speculation about Victoria and Mr Saladin and Stanley's confusion about the Theatre of Cruelty experiment while other characters such as Julia appear to be wilfully straying from reality. The use of performative language, music and lighting effects were all recognised as contributing to the blurred distinction between reality and fantasy.

- (b) Weaker candidates tended to write an account of the scene with some interpretive comment and paraphrase. Better answers included some discussion of the masked nature of the Head of Acting, sometimes with reference to the presentation of other teachers. The harshness of Oliver's public reprimand was linked to other areas of the text where the drama school teachers are presented as unsympathetic or deliberately causing discomfort to the students. The isolation of one individual in a crowd was also recognised as a characteristic feature of this novel. The illogical nature of being instructed to perform an intimate scene 'you would be unwilling to share' was noted by some, as well as the way retelling and sharing a scene can turn tragedy into comedy, connecting to the central theme of performance. Some linked this episode to the scene in which Stanley acts as his father, which led at least one candidate to suggest that we are all to some degree acting out imitations of our parents, teachers, siblings or peers, choosing our characters from a limited range of stereotypes. This is exemplified earlier, when Stanley feels that other students have already taken all of the most interesting or attractive roles in their quest to invent a personality for themselves.

Question 3

T.S. Eliot: *Four Quartets*

A pleasing number of centres selected this text, undeterred by its challenging nature. Texts of this density offer opportunities to all but the weakest candidates to write coherent and often original responses, producing good results. Many answers showed evidence of intelligent understanding of the text and of the various ways Eliot creates meaning. Candidates also showed engagement with some of the central philosophical and religious ideas of the poems.

- (a) Few attempted this question, though it offered scope for candidates to select from various aspects of humanity with which Eliot is concerned, such as our concept of time and its significance, the importance and unreliability of memory, our preoccupation with the future, our feelings about death, our journey through life, the sense of futility which can be engendered by the routine of urban living and the way religious belief and humility impact on all of these. The text provides copious support for all these topics. Some weak candidates used the question as a starting point for general personal reflection on life, the universe and many other topics, and needed to make more sufficient reference to the text. Successful answers discussed the ways Eliot expresses his ideas.
- (b) There was some generalisation about spiritual journeys and some tendency to paraphrase or explain the passage. More able candidates were able to contextualise the passage in relation to the other Quartets and demonstrate connections, relating the end of this journey to 'In my beginning is my end'. Some candidates explored the imagery of Pilgrimage with the use of the echoing words 'came' and 'purpose', the reference to Charles I, Eliot's ancestors and the ways the past superimposes itself on the present ('Now and in England'). The tendency of everything to lead to the 'tombstone', the imagery of the husk and the shell, the contrast between banal and mystical language (the 'pigsty' and putting off of 'sense and notion'), the use of anaphora and the inclusive use of 'you' throughout the passage were fruitful opportunities for close analysis of language. Some candidates wrote inappropriately about context and related most of the extract to the Second World War, taking the word 'shell' to refer to bombardment by the enemy.

Question 4

Athol Fugard: *Townships Plays*

Candidates demonstrated pleasing engagement with these plays and some appropriate knowledge of context, particularly of life under the apartheid regime in South Africa. It should be noted, though, that *The Coat* is not on the list of set texts. Some candidates included material based on this play in their answers and while it could be considered as related wider reference and they were not penalised, they were likely to waste time if they focused too much on this play at the expense of the other plays on the syllabus.

- (a) Candidates were asked to refer to at least two plays in their answers but some chose to refer to four, with the result that such essays tended to lack depth and detail. Better responses were concerned with more than plot and characters, exploring effects of language and dramatic features. Most focused on the hardships of life under apartheid, as illustrated in the plays, such as the side effects of extortion and gangsterism in *No Good Friday* and the evils resulting from the system of books/ID cards in *Sizwe Bansi is Dead*. They explored the ways these tended to crush the dreams of those migrating to the city for work as they could be forced to live in particular settlements where they would be exploited, murdered or forced to make moral compromises to survive. It was noted how most characters fail to achieve their dreams, including Queeny, to whom some candidates took a feminist critical approach even though part of her dream is to have a man to take care of her. Able candidates identified *The Island* as the most optimistic play despite its gloomy setting, as it demonstrates how the prisoners and other victims of a cruel political system can achieve a dream of freedom of sorts through Drama, Art or imagination in general, enabling them to transcend the walls of their prison if only spiritually and mentally.
- (b) Most candidates who tackled this passage were able to demonstrate some understanding and knowledge of the context. They were able to draw parallels between the situation of the prisoners – and indeed all those suffering under apartheid – and Antigone suffering under the ‘temporary and arbitrary law’ of Creon. The most successful candidates were able to use details to connect the passage to the wider text and the other plays, such as the way imagination allows John and Winston to ‘escape’ for a while from their cell when they hold an imaginary telephone conversation with a friend. Many saw the ‘you are only a man’ speech as a challenge to the man-made apartheid laws. Better answers saw this passage as the climax of the play, contrasting the dignified ‘performance’ of Winston with the more jocular scenes with their sexist banter, where he is inveigled into acting as a woman, challenging gender stereotypes. Able candidates identified and discussed the effects of theatrical techniques such as the play within a play, the use of stichomythia and the breaking of the fourth wall when the characters step out of their roles to confront the audience themselves. Some weak candidates gave a general account of the scene and needed to relate it to the text as a whole in order to be more successful.

Question 5

Kuzuo Ishiguro: *Never Let Me Go*

This proved to be the most popular novel and gave rise to some very pleasing responses. Candidates were able to engage with the text and its very controversial ideas. Many appeared to have done some background research into the history of cloning, starting with the creation of Dolly the sheep. They had also read interviews given by Ishiguro, to which they were able to refer relevantly in the course of their answers. Some candidates, in describing Kathy as an unreliable narrator, seemed to imply that there could somehow be a reliable, accurate account of the events described; such candidates would have done better to treat the novel and its characters as constructs of the author. Unusually, more candidates attempted the (a) essay question rather than the (b) passage option.

- (a) There were some very good responses to this question, with excellent use of detail from the text about the treatment of the clones, their characterisation and relationships with each other, the euphemistic language such as ‘donations’ and ‘complete’, the ways the clones appear to be brain-washed into acceptance of their fate and make no attempt to rebel or escape, the perpetuation through rumours of fear of what lies outside Hailsham, the lack of surnames, the use of symbols such as the tape (a mass-produced item), the boat and the donating of Art work to the gallery. Some argued that the treatment of the clones put the humanity of those in control in question. There was good use of critical opinions, including some of Ishiguro’s own ideas, comparison of the ‘othering’ of the clones to colonialism, racism and slavery, while some took a Marxist approach. The certainty of death, the way the children ‘are told and not told’ and the necessity of accepting the inevitable were recognised by very able candidates as components of an analogy of our own human lives. Less good responses were often well engaged with the question, but gave insufficient detail from the text to support arguments and allowed themselves to drift away from the text into general essays on repression or human rights. More able candidates paid attention to Ishiguro’s methods and their effects.
- (b) There was some intelligent discussion about Kathy’s bland, retrospective and accepting narrative, and the hesitant piecing together of the ways the clones gradually become aware of their purpose in life, with the donation of their art work viewed as preparation for the donation of their vital organs. Others focused on the less sinister purpose of trying to prove that the clones have souls, as

evidenced by Miss Emily later in the text. The passage was also linked to Tommy's belated interest in producing works of art and the rumour that this could help to obtain a deferral. One candidate noted that Miss Emily's invalid condition when visited by Tommy and Kathy might have indicated a recent or impending organ transplant. There were comments on the way the banal style of the passage with its gossipy speculations and reliance on hearsay mimics the children's attempts to make sense of their world, cut off as they are from 'Outside' where 'they sell everything'. The controlled conditions where they are brainwashed into accepting that 'Someone's going to hear us soon' were compared to totalitarian regimes and other dystopian fiction such as 1984. This was reinforced by the ending of the passage, where the children's embarrassment in mentioning the gallery demonstrates their collaboration in upholding the system of which they are victims. Again, weaker responses drifted from analysis of the passage into personal response about the cruelty of farming the clones to rob them of their body parts and eventually of their lives, needing to make more sufficient reference to the passage and the wider text.

Question 6

Derek Walcott: *Selected Poems*

This text is still a minority choice, though there is an increase in the numbers selecting it. Stronger candidates demonstrated at least sound knowledge and understanding of Walcott's poetic concerns and the ways he shapes meaning. There is still a tendency to assume that every poem must refer to the West Indian history of oppression by colonial rule and slavery.

- (a) Very few attempted to write about Walcott's presentation of his feelings for the islands, though many poems in the selection would have furnished suitable material for this question. Most poems refer in some detail to the scenery and especially to the sea, often used symbolically, and contextual knowledge of the colonial history of the islands could have been appropriately deployed in discussing such poems as 'Ruins of a Great House', 'Veranda' or 'The Almond Trees', while comment on Island life at a later date is found in poems such as 'Parades, Parades', 'Homecoming: Anse La Raye' and 'Sabbaths WI', in which aspects of modern politics, commercialism and tourism are discussed with Walcott's characteristic ambivalence.
- (b) 'Nearing Forty' was tackled by more candidates, most of whom could aptly discuss the poet's mood of retrospection and his complaints about the ravages of time, particularly his loss of poetic inspiration. The use of pathetic fallacy (rain which 'seems to weep'), the pun on 'vision', the water/sea imagery ('ebbs') and the use of regular meter and rhyme were recognised by able candidates as characteristic of Walcott, some of whom made reference to other poems to support 'characteristic'. Some found the use of sexual imagery ('bedsheet', 'guttering rainspout') indicative that his sexual potency is fading along with his poetic creativity – the contrast between the 'searing meteor' and the 'dented kettle'. Others noted the more consolatory tone of the final lines, conveying a sense of the cycle of nature in its reference to the seasons and the 'steadier elation' with which the poet resolves to 'set [his] lines to work'. The interesting change from first person 'I' in the first twelve lines to 'you' in the rest of the poem could be suggestive of the poet exhorting himself to persevere. Others recognised that Walcott may be making false claims that his creativity is waning when he produces this tour de force in one thirty-two-lined sentence. Many missed the opportunity to comment on the relevance of the epigraph and the 'stability of truth'. Some wrongly assumed that John Figueroa and Samuel Johnson were contemporaries.

Question 7

Tennessee Williams: *The Glass Menagerie*

This has replaced *Death of a Salesman* as the most popular text on the Paper. Candidates found the language and ideas of the play accessible and were able to empathise with the characters as well as showing understanding of the social and economic context. There was some reference to the genre, plastic theatre, though at times understanding of this term needed to be more clearly demonstrated. Candidates were able to refer appropriately to critical opinions and made connections between the text and biographical details of Williams's life. Candidates should be careful not to over-use biographical material; such responses tended to include assertive comments that needed textual support. Weaker answers tended to refer to characters as if they were real people. There was a great contrast in the performance of those who really knew the text well and those who seemed to have a very superficial knowledge, based perhaps on the film.

- (a) There were some good answers on varieties of escape, taking into consideration all of the characters including Jim. They were able to discuss metaphorical escape such as the fire escape and the photograph of Mr Wingfield constantly reminding the audience and the play's characters of his 'love of long-distance'. Laura's menagerie, Amanda's reminiscences of her life in the Deep South, Tom's drinking, visits to the movies and final departure were some of the more obvious aspects of escape mentioned by most candidates. More subtle examples included Amanda's ambition of finding a husband for Laura to enable them to escape from their economic problems, the use of imagery such as the escape from the coffin and the breaking of the unicorn's horn, which (some argued) sets Laura free from being different from everyone else. Tom's writing and his dreams of becoming a great writer and Jim's escape from the banality of his life by recollecting his glorious past and flirting with Laura were also mentioned. There was some over-use of links to biographical material, though perhaps seeing Tom's evasiveness about his evening disappearances from the house as an oblique reference to a homosexual secret life was an acceptable point. Good answers referred to dramatic effects such as the plastic theatre features, legends and images on the screen, music and lighting to highlight Laura's delicacy and other-worldliness, Amanda's out of date appearance, especially in the scene with Jim, and Mr Wingfield's photograph lighting up in apparent confirmation of the idea that one can escape from a coffin. Some candidates took the view that Tom's escape is made final through his cathartic experience of composing his Memory Play while others concluded he could never truly escape from his remorse and guilt at abandoning his family.
- (b) Competent candidates wrote more than superficial accounts of the scene, making some observations about Amanda's overbearing behaviour and the timidity of Laura. They made reference to the wider text and the reason for Amanda's confrontation of Laura, i.e. her failure to attend her typing classes. Better answers referred to the elements of plastic theatre here, such as the blue roses (some making a link with Jim and the mistake he had made about Laura's illness). Laura's fragility, emphasised by her costume and the ivory chair, was contrasted with Amanda's pretentiously showy but largely fake and dated costume. Many commented on the use of dramatic pauses, repetitions and patterns of questions with painfully withheld answers. There was comment on Amanda's theatricality here and elsewhere in the text, her dramatic ripping of the typing chart and the deliberate withholding of the reason for her wrath, reducing Laura to a semi-mute, passive response. Able candidates noted how Amanda asks, 'What is going to become of us?' showing that her fate is closely bound up with Laura's, leading to her plan to find a gentleman caller who will marry Laura. Response to Amanda varied between disapproval of her treatment of Laura to sympathy for a single mother living in a society where it was difficult for women to find work.

LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

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The candidate must keep the question in mind to select relevant details and ideas to address the question, rather than writing everything he/she knows about a text.

Making a short plan before writing the answer is often a good idea; these should be kept concise so that a candidate can make good use of the time they have for writing their response.

Personal response is a requirement; this considered, candidates should beware of drifting off the discussion of the text into general personal reflection.

General comments

The questions elicited many thoughtful, informed and engaged responses from candidates who shared their enjoyment of the texts studied. They wrote coherently and fluently, sometimes showing a freshly original personal response.

Most candidates were able to complete two essays of moderate length within the given time. Some second answers were incomplete, and this was often where a candidate had spent much time in their first essay on side issues such as biographical and contextual details, or they embarked on a general overview of a text before beginning on the details of a passage question. Introductory comments are a good idea, especially if placing a passage within its context; such introductions should be brief, allowing sufficient time for detailed consideration and analysis of the passage.

It is important to move an essay along from one point to the next in a logical sequence. Many candidates do this well; others spend a large portion of their writing focussing on the same idea, often supporting the same point with many examples, where they would do better to move on.

A feature of weak responses is repetition. Some responses came across like political speeches, with points being driven home by means of repetition, particularly when giving a personal response or opinion. While it is acceptable and often satisfying to end an essay with a paragraph summarising the points made in the argument, there is no need to keep repeating points throughout the answer. Ideas will be credited if expressed clearly once.

Candidates should understand the virtue of concision. Writing at great length often involves repetition and the time constraints can prevent the candidate from writing legibly.

There were occasional rubric infringements where candidates did not attempt a second question or they wrote both answers on the same text. The instructions on the question paper clearly state that candidates need to attempt two questions, each on a different text.

It is noticeable that candidates are in general using critical opinions to better advantage, helping to move the argument onto a new point or in partial support of the opinion they are expressing. Critical opinions should not be used alone as a substitute for textual support. For example, if a candidate quotes a critic who believes that Amanda is a tragic figure, there needs to be a quotation or close reference to the text to support this opinion.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie: *Americanah*

Most candidates demonstrated knowledge of the main concerns of this text and able candidates could move around the text, selecting pertinent details to support responses. Less successful responses referred more generally to these concerns, especially in the passage question, or focused on plot and character. The **(b)** passage question was far more popular than the **(a)** essay question.

- (a)** The few candidates who attempted this question tended to write narrative summary – sometimes of the whole history of the relationship between Ifemelu and Obinze – rather than focussing on how Adichie shapes the reader’s response. There was some strong personal response to Obinze’s infidelity and consequent desertion of Kosi, mostly quite judgemental and needing support from the text. Some argued that Obinze was betraying his culture as well as his wife with his ‘white-people behaviour’. Weaker answers lacked sufficient detail and were often assertive, general condemnation of Obinze’s perceived immorality. Better answers compared Adichie’s presentation of Kosi with that of Ifemelu, showing how Obinze clearly prefers strong women, sometimes connecting to Ifemelu’s relationship with Obinze’s mother, while Kosi is presented as a more traditional wife. They also discussed whether they found the inconclusive ending satisfactory.
- (b)** Most candidates were able to locate the passage contextually, linking the episode to Ifemelu’s gradual acclimatisation to life in America, her progress in establishing a career for herself and her continuing search for identity. The contrast between Ifemelu’s blogs and the way she presents herself in her public talks was a fruitful approach to the question, most candidates picking up on the contrast between making great progress and not getting a cookie for reducing racism. Links were made to the wider text about the topic of hair in noting ‘the elegant twists’ worn by the hired Haitian American. Ifemelu’s development in maturity and economic status was evidenced by her ability to buy her own condominium. The theme of racism, especially in male/female relationships was discussed, relating the blog to the wider text. The flippant reference to the ‘Hot White Ex’ was identified as typical of the way Ifemelu deals with emotionally charged or painful topics in her blog and was contrasted with her deep anxiety over the reception of her posts. The hiring of an assistant to delete inappropriate comments almost as soon as they were posted was viewed by some as indicative of Ifemelu imposing a kind of censorship. The fact that she has now ‘become her blog’ was interpreted as the marker of another stage in the bildungsroman and some saw the abandonment of her blog writing later as the reassertion of Ifemelu’s own identity.

Question 2

Eleanor Catton: *The Rehearsal*

The post-modern nature of this text makes it easier for candidates to view characters and plot as a construct, enabling them to separate the author from her work. Though it remains less popular than the other novels, candidates were able to answer with some engagement on both options.

- (a)** Surprisingly few candidates opted for this straightforward question. They tended to agree with the given quotation, sympathising with Stanley’s efforts to construct an identity based on ‘performative’ qualities and stereotypes. There was some recognition of the narrative perspective in the Drama School episodes being mainly focused on Stanley. His relationships with his father and Isolde were explored and references were made to the Theatre of Cruelty experiment where Stanley is presented at first as humane and concerned about the victim but then tries to use the incident as an opportunity to perform the role of the boy’s protector. The fact that Isolde and her parents form part of the audience to Stanley’s re-enactment of the Victoria/Saladin affair was viewed as improbable but well suited to the artificial, staged nature of events in this novel. Stanley was identified as forming part of the mirrored pattern of the plot, having a relationship which is

considered, at least by the saxophone teacher, as inappropriate. Answers tended to sympathise with Stanley as a 'loser' and to empathise with his desire for 'something terrible happening, just so I can see what it's like'. His desire to be watched is in keeping with the central concerns of the novel, 'Because if somebody's watching, you know you're worth something.' There was some detailed comment on how the performative language used demonstrates the lack of authenticity in many of Stanley's actions.

- (b) This question was usually answered well. Candidates were able to place the passage in context and identify the performative nature of Julia's account. They contrasted Julia's account with Isolde's version of events in their relationship. The extravagant language used by Julia was sometimes closely analysed – 'beautiful unknowing', 'trap time and space', 'snatching tearing hunger of loss'. The mirroring of the encounter between Julia and Isolde with that of Victoria and Saladin, even in the same setting, was judged as evidence of its inauthenticity and of Julia's intention to provoke the saxophone teacher into a disclosure of her own experiences with Patsy or to make her feel jealous. There was some exploration of character development here. The demeanour of the saxophone teacher in this passage was contrasted with her usual appearance of being in control and watching the activities of others voyeuristically rather than betraying any feelings of her own, but here the power has shifted to Julia as the teacher sinks back weakly. The shifting power dynamic was viewed as one of the central concerns of the novel and other examples from the text were noted. Some weaker candidates restricted their response to a narrative account of the passage, with some interpretation and little reference to the wider text.

Question 3

T.S. Eliot: *Four Quartets*

A pleasing number of centres selected this text, undeterred by its challenging nature. Texts of this density offer opportunities to all but the weakest candidates to write coherent and often original responses, producing good results. Many answers showed evidence of intelligent understanding of the text and of the various ways Eliot creates meaning. Candidates also showed engagement with some of the central philosophical and religious ideas of the poems.

- (a) This question invited candidates to consider Eliot's many references within the poems to the difficulties of expressing ideas appropriately. Good responses expressed complex ideas, often in a sophisticated way, and were able to use embedded quotations to illustrate their arguments. The difficulty experienced by Eliot was attributed by some to the shifting nature of language, 'For last year's words belong to last year's language,' and his attempt to drive home his 'message' by finding different ways of expressing himself. Eliot's 'raid on the inarticulate' was seen to symbolise the spiritual struggle and the journey undertaken in the poems, from a state of dissatisfaction, bewilderment or even despair where all are going 'into the dark' 'and cold the sense and lost the motive of action' to a more confident statement of faith at the end of the journey. The negative diction earlier in the Quartets, such as 'inarticulate', 'deteriorating', 'imprecision' and 'undisciplined', was contrasted with the more confident, affirmative language at the end of *Little Gidding*, where 'every phrase and sentence is right', indicating the end of the spiritual journey undertaken in *Four Quartets*. The tentative questioning of earlier sections – 'Where is an end of it?' – is replaced by the certainty that 'All shall be well'.
- (b) Some candidates performed well on this question, linking *The Dry Salvages* to other Quartets and contrasting the ways different elements – air, earth, fire and, in this case, water – predominate. Most could refer to the idea of the river as 'a strong brown god' in the opening of this Quartet linking with the many gods and many voices of the sea in this passage. The predominance of sounds in this section was explored, from the howl, yelp and whine to the tolling bell, which some associated with a death knell or the Day of Judgment. Some noted the emphasis on the bell at the end of the passage with the arrangement of the words on separate lines and the unusual syntax. The use of paradox in 'future futureless' and the list of negatives – 'unweave, unwind, unravel' – was interpreted by some candidates to refer to the fates. The central concern with time was linked to the wider text. There was some inappropriate use of contextual knowledge by some who thought the passage referred to the Second World War, with the wailing warning interpreted as an air raid siren and the poet on fire watch, 'the morning watch'. This was an example of wilful determination to make the text fit the context.

Question 4

Athol Fugard: *Townships Plays*

Candidates demonstrated pleasing engagement with these plays and some appropriate knowledge of context, particularly of life under the apartheid regime in South Africa. It should be noted, though, that *The Coat* is not on the list of set texts. Some candidates included material based on this play in their answers and while it could be considered as related wider reference and they were not penalised, they were likely to waste time if they focused too much on this play at the expense of the other plays on the syllabus.

- (a) Very few candidates selected this question and those who did focused mainly on plot summary and characters. They could have chosen to discuss the way a subtle political message is imparted through the device of the play within the play in *The Island*. Here, the characters Winston and John and the playwright himself are able to voice their political opposition to the oppressive apartheid regime, wearing the mask of Greek drama and with specific reference to the applicability of Antigone's speeches to the contemporary situation in South Africa. ('You are only a man, Creon. Even as there are laws made by men, so too there are others that come from God.') Other plays such as *No Good Friday* and *Sizwe Bansi is Dead* address the ways the disadvantaged are left with little choice but to be dishonest or to be exposed to crime and violence because they have so few human rights and are oppressed by such laws as the Pass Book system. Candidates should be aware of the need to consider the ways in which Fugard shapes meaning.
- (b) Those who tackled this question found the passage accessible and could usually relate it to the rest of *Nongogo*. Good answers often took a feminist approach to Queeny's situation and the dual morality applied by Johnny, whose past has been equally sordid. There was some analysis of the worm in the apple image and the contextual reference to 'the stinking bloody world out there'. More able candidates were able to connect the passage with earlier, more optimistic scenes in the play and to other plays in the selection where the hopes and dreams of characters are dashed. Weaker responses tended to give a narrative account of the scene with some paraphrase.

Question 5

Kuzuo Ishiguro: *Never Let Me Go*

This proved to be the most popular novel and gave rise to some very pleasing responses. Candidates were able to engage with the text and its very controversial ideas. Many appeared to have done some background research into the history of cloning, starting with the creation of Dolly the sheep. They had also read interviews given by Ishiguro, to which they were able to refer relevantly in the course of their answers. Some candidates, in describing Kathy as an unreliable narrator, seemed to imply that there could somehow be a reliable, accurate account of the events described; such candidates would have done better to treat the novel and its characters as constructs of the author. Unusually, more candidates attempted the (a) essay question rather than the (b) passage option.

- (a) There were some very good responses to this question, with excellent use of detail from the text about the treatment of the clones, their characterisation and relationships with each other, the euphemistic language such as 'donations' and 'complete', the ways the clones appear to be brain-washed into acceptance of their fate and make no attempt to rebel or escape, the perpetuation through rumours of fear of what lies outside Hailsham, the lack of surnames, the use of symbols such as the tape (a mass-produced item), the boat and the donating of Art work to the gallery. There was good use of critical opinions, including some of Ishiguro's own ideas, comparison of the 'othering' of the clones to colonialism, racism and slavery, while some took a Marxist approach. The certainty of death, the way the children 'are told and not told' and the necessity of accepting the inevitable were recognised by very able candidates as components of an analogy of our own human lives, with one candidate skilfully turning the argument on its head to suggest that we humans are poor creatures. Less good responses were often well engaged with the question, but gave insufficient detail from the text to support arguments and allowed themselves to drift away from the text into general essays on repression or human rights. More able candidates paid attention to Ishiguro's methods and their effects.
- (b) There were some very good answers on this passage, connecting to the wider concerns of rumour, fear and speculation which permeate much of the text. There was some controlled personal response to the pitiful clutching at straws with the very modest hope of an additional three years based on the very unlikely condition of being able to 'prove' you were in love. The respect shown

by other veterans for Hailsham was noted with some sound comment on the significance of the name as a pun representing its façade of caring for the children's health and the sham it actually was as a kind of prison/organ farm. The best answers explored the dynamics of relationships in this passage, connecting the assertiveness of Ruth to other examples in the novel, her tendency to lie and the way she makes herself the focus of attention. Kathy supports her friend in the same way she colludes with Ruth's other lies (the pencil case) to save Ruth's face. Candidates noted Ruth's cruel dismissal of Tommy, despite the fact that they are a couple, when he characteristically tells the truth. Many commented on the clones' conformity to the oppressive system when they seem to have some autonomy, as in this expedition to Norfolk. Weaker answers remained within the passage with some comments on characters. Some tended to drift into expressions of anger or pity for the clones, needing to be more strongly linked to the text.

Question 6

Derek Walcott: *Selected Poems*

This text is still a minority choice, though there is an increase in the numbers selecting it. Stronger candidates demonstrated at least sound knowledge and understanding of Walcott's poetic concerns and the ways he shapes meaning. There is still a tendency to assume that every poem must refer to the West Indian history of oppression by colonial rule and slavery.

- (a) Very few candidates selected this option, though it offered ample opportunity for candidates who could refer in detail to three poems. Many of the poems in the selection are at least partly concerned with feelings about home and a sense of belonging. Candidates chose to write about *Mass Man* and *Ruins of a Great House*, which afforded an opportunity to write about being of mixed race and the post-colonial heritage. Those who chose to include the (b) option poem could refer in some detail to the scenery and especially to the sea, often used symbolically, while comment on Island life is found in poems such as '*Parades, Parades*', '*Homecoming: Anse La Raye*' and '*Sabbaths WI*'. The poet's feelings about aspects of modern politics, commercialism and tourism are discussed in these poems, with Walcott's characteristic ambivalence along with his feeling of being estranged from his own community when he returns to it.
- (b) *A Careful Passion* was selected by most of those who had studied Walcott, though some candidates showed little understanding of the way the poem describes the end of an affair. The better candidates observed how description of the scenery is intertwined with the action of the two humans in the poem, sometimes contrasting with the mood of the speaker as the local band incongruously play a gay tune and the gulls seem happy in their element, but sometimes chiming with the end of the affair as the 'old Greek freighter' quits port and the coupling flies are brushed away. Images of death are evoked by the 'sun-puffed carcass' and repetition of 'die' and 'died' in the third stanza. The 'wet hair' and the 'grape red mouth' were noted as characteristically sensual phrases suggesting the physical passion of the illicit affair. Similarly, the pun on 'lies' was noted as a typical linguistic device of Walcott. Candidates could have improved their responses by giving examples from other poems of features they recognised as characteristic. Again, some tried unconvincingly to connect the poem to the post-colonial context.

Question 7

Tennessee Williams: *The Glass Menagerie*

This has replaced *Death of a Salesman* as the most popular text on the Paper. Candidates found the language and ideas of the play accessible and were able to empathise with the characters as well as showing understanding of the social and economic context. There was some reference to the genre, plastic theatre, though at times understanding of this term needed to be more clearly demonstrated. Candidates were able to refer appropriately to critical opinions and made connections between the text and biographical details of Williams's life. Candidates should be careful not to over-use biographical material; such responses tended to include assertive comments that needed textual support. Weaker answers tended to refer to characters as if they were real people. There was a great contrast in the performance of those who really knew the text well and those who seemed to have a very superficial knowledge, based perhaps on the film.

- (a) Some candidates who selected this question were fixated on the idea of escape rather than on being prisoners of the past and, although there is some overlap in these topics, their responses were not always clearly focused on the question. They tended to write about Tom's trips to the

movies or alcohol as a means of escape, or Laura's obsession with her menagerie, while clear focus on the question would have laid more emphasis on the past. Laura's fondness for the Victrola is a sign of her missing her absent father and perhaps wishing to return to the past, as is her cherishing of her school year book. Amanda's entrapment in the past was clearly identified in her frequent reminiscences about the seventeen gentleman callers and her tendency to wear out-of-date clothes unsuited to her age, as when Jim calls. More able candidates argued that the whole memory play is evidence of Tom's entrapment in the past and connected his remorse over abandoning his sister with Williams and his own guilt over his sister Rose. Some saw Jim as a prisoner of the past too, living off the memory of his schoolboy success. The use of plastic theatre, such as the lighting up of Mr Wingfield's photograph and the setting connoting imprisonment were also discussed.

- (b) Although some weak candidates wrote narrative description of the passage with some comment on the characters, most candidates were able to produce sound, intelligent or very good responses with some close analysis of the scene and consideration of its relationship to the rest of the play. Where weaker answers tended to limit their response to consideration of the dialogue, stronger candidates analysed the lengthy description of Tom's arrival, the symbolism of light and darkness and the significance of Tom shaking the noisemaker as a weak gesture of defiance against the Almighty, with links to other religious references in the play. The dropping of the key was viewed by some as loss of opportunity, or Tom's secret desire not to go home. The account of Tom's evening entertainment was seen by some as an elaborate lie to conceal the fact that he has been experimenting in the gay demi-monde, the only support offered being the rainbow scarf, viewed as a symbol of Tom's homosexuality. Most candidates saw the coffin trick as a metaphor of Tom's situation and his desire to escape without removing the nails, i.e. without hurting his family. The lighting up of the photograph of Mr Wingfield was interpreted as a reminder of the way the father has escaped his responsibilities. Some candidates missed the opportunity to mention the end of the scene, with its acceleration of time showing how Tom is soon entrapped in his everyday world of routine. His refusal to 'shine' was seen as foreshadowing his eventual desertion of his family.

LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

Paper 9695/62
1900 to the Present

Key messages

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General comments

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It is important to move an essay along from one point to the next in a logical sequence. Many candidates do this well; others spend a large portion of their writing focussing on the same idea, often supporting the same point with many examples, where they would do better to move on.

A feature of weak responses is repetition. Some responses came across like political speeches, with points being driven home by means of repetition, particularly when giving a personal response or opinion. While it is acceptable and often satisfying to end an essay with a paragraph summarising the points made in the argument, there is no need to keep repeating points throughout the answer. Ideas will be credited if expressed clearly once.

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The post-modern nature of this text makes it easier for candidates to view characters and plot as a construct, enabling them to separate the author from her work. Though it remains less popular than the other novels, candidates were able to answer with some engagement on both options.

- (a)** Surprisingly few candidates opted for this straightforward question. They tended to agree with the given quotation, sympathising with Stanley’s efforts to construct an identity based on ‘performative’ qualities and stereotypes. There was some recognition of the narrative perspective in the Drama School episodes being mainly focused on Stanley. His relationships with his father and Isolde were explored and references were made to the Theatre of Cruelty experiment where Stanley is presented at first as humane and concerned about the victim but then tries to use the incident as an opportunity to perform the role of the boy’s protector. The fact that Isolde and her parents form part of the audience to Stanley’s re-enactment of the Victoria/Saladin affair was viewed as improbable but well suited to the artificial, staged nature of events in this novel. Stanley was identified as forming part of the mirrored pattern of the plot, having a relationship which is

considered, at least by the saxophone teacher, as inappropriate. Answers tended to sympathise with Stanley as a 'loser' and to empathise with his desire for 'something terrible happening, just so I can see what it's like'. His desire to be watched is in keeping with the central concerns of the novel, 'Because if somebody's watching, you know you're worth something.' There was some detailed comment on how the performative language used demonstrates the lack of authenticity in many of Stanley's actions.

- (b) This question was usually answered well. Candidates were able to place the passage in context and identify the performative nature of Julia's account. They contrasted Julia's account with Isolde's version of events in their relationship. The extravagant language used by Julia was sometimes closely analysed – 'beautiful unknowing', 'trap time and space', 'snatching tearing hunger of loss'. The mirroring of the encounter between Julia and Isolde with that of Victoria and Saladin, even in the same setting, was judged as evidence of its inauthenticity and of Julia's intention to provoke the saxophone teacher into a disclosure of her own experiences with Patsy or to make her feel jealous. There was some exploration of character development here. The demeanour of the saxophone teacher in this passage was contrasted with her usual appearance of being in control and watching the activities of others voyeuristically rather than betraying any feelings of her own, but here the power has shifted to Julia as the teacher sinks back weakly. The shifting power dynamic was viewed as one of the central concerns of the novel and other examples from the text were noted. Some weaker candidates restricted their response to a narrative account of the passage, with some interpretation and little reference to the wider text.

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- (b) Some candidates performed well on this question, linking *The Dry Salvages* to other Quartets and contrasting the ways different elements – air, earth, fire and, in this case, water – predominate. Most could refer to the idea of the river as 'a strong brown god' in the opening of this Quartet linking with the many gods and many voices of the sea in this passage. The predominance of sounds in this section was explored, from the howl, yelp and whine to the tolling bell, which some associated with a death knell or the Day of Judgment. Some noted the emphasis on the bell at the end of the passage with the arrangement of the words on separate lines and the unusual syntax. The use of paradox in 'future futureless' and the list of negatives – 'unweave, unwind, unravel' – was interpreted by some candidates to refer to the fates. The central concern with time was linked to the wider text. There was some inappropriate use of contextual knowledge by some who thought the passage referred to the Second World War, with the wailing warning interpreted as an air raid siren and the poet on fire watch, 'the morning watch'. This was an example of wilful determination to make the text fit the context.

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Candidates demonstrated pleasing engagement with these plays and some appropriate knowledge of context, particularly of life under the apartheid regime in South Africa. It should be noted, though, that *The Coat* is not on the list of set texts. Some candidates included material based on this play in their answers and while it could be considered as related wider reference and they were not penalised, they were likely to waste time if they focused too much on this play at the expense of the other plays on the syllabus.

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Question 5

Kuzuo Ishiguro: *Never Let Me Go*

This proved to be the most popular novel and gave rise to some very pleasing responses. Candidates were able to engage with the text and its very controversial ideas. Many appeared to have done some background research into the history of cloning, starting with the creation of Dolly the sheep. They had also read interviews given by Ishiguro, to which they were able to refer relevantly in the course of their answers. Some candidates, in describing Kathy as an unreliable narrator, seemed to imply that there could somehow be a reliable, accurate account of the events described; such candidates would have done better to treat the novel and its characters as constructs of the author. Unusually, more candidates attempted the (a) essay question rather than the (b) passage option.

- (a) There were some very good responses to this question, with excellent use of detail from the text about the treatment of the clones, their characterisation and relationships with each other, the euphemistic language such as 'donations' and 'complete', the ways the clones appear to be brain-washed into acceptance of their fate and make no attempt to rebel or escape, the perpetuation through rumours of fear of what lies outside Hailsham, the lack of surnames, the use of symbols such as the tape (a mass-produced item), the boat and the donating of Art work to the gallery. There was good use of critical opinions, including some of Ishiguro's own ideas, comparison of the 'othering' of the clones to colonialism, racism and slavery, while some took a Marxist approach. The certainty of death, the way the children 'are told and not told' and the necessity of accepting the inevitable were recognised by very able candidates as components of an analogy of our own human lives, with one candidate skilfully turning the argument on its head to suggest that we humans are poor creatures. Less good responses were often well engaged with the question, but gave insufficient detail from the text to support arguments and allowed themselves to drift away from the text into general essays on repression or human rights. More able candidates paid attention to Ishiguro's methods and their effects.
- (b) There were some very good answers on this passage, connecting to the wider concerns of rumour, fear and speculation which permeate much of the text. There was some controlled personal response to the pitiful clutching at straws with the very modest hope of an additional three years based on the very unlikely condition of being able to 'prove' you were in love. The respect shown

by other veterans for Hailsham was noted with some sound comment on the significance of the name as a pun representing its façade of caring for the children's health and the sham it actually was as a kind of prison/organ farm. The best answers explored the dynamics of relationships in this passage, connecting the assertiveness of Ruth to other examples in the novel, her tendency to lie and the way she makes herself the focus of attention. Kathy supports her friend in the same way she colludes with Ruth's other lies (the pencil case) to save Ruth's face. Candidates noted Ruth's cruel dismissal of Tommy, despite the fact that they are a couple, when he characteristically tells the truth. Many commented on the clones' conformity to the oppressive system when they seem to have some autonomy, as in this expedition to Norfolk. Weaker answers remained within the passage with some comments on characters. Some tended to drift into expressions of anger or pity for the clones, needing to be more strongly linked to the text.

Question 6

Derek Walcott: *Selected Poems*

This text is still a minority choice, though there is an increase in the numbers selecting it. Stronger candidates demonstrated at least sound knowledge and understanding of Walcott's poetic concerns and the ways he shapes meaning. There is still a tendency to assume that every poem must refer to the West Indian history of oppression by colonial rule and slavery.

- (a) Very few candidates selected this option, though it offered ample opportunity for candidates who could refer in detail to three poems. Many of the poems in the selection are at least partly concerned with feelings about home and a sense of belonging. Candidates chose to write about *Mass Man* and *Ruins of a Great House*, which afforded an opportunity to write about being of mixed race and the post-colonial heritage. Those who chose to include the (b) option poem could refer in some detail to the scenery and especially to the sea, often used symbolically, while comment on Island life is found in poems such as '*Parades, Parades*' '*Homecoming: Anse La Raye*' and '*Sabbaths WI*'. The poet's feelings about aspects of modern politics, commercialism and tourism are discussed in these poems, with Walcott's characteristic ambivalence along with his feeling of being estranged from his own community when he returns to it.
- (b) *A Careful Passion* was selected by most of those who had studied Walcott, though some candidates showed little understanding of the way the poem describes the end of an affair. The better candidates observed how description of the scenery is intertwined with the action of the two humans in the poem, sometimes contrasting with the mood of the speaker as the local band incongruously play a gay tune and the gulls seem happy in their element, but sometimes chiming with the end of the affair as the 'old Greek freighter' quits port and the coupling flies are brushed away. Images of death are evoked by the 'sun-puffed carcass' and repetition of 'die' and 'died' in the third stanza. The 'wet hair' and the 'grape red mouth' were noted as characteristically sensual phrases suggesting the physical passion of the illicit affair. Similarly, the pun on 'lies' was noted as a typical linguistic device of Walcott. Candidates could have improved their responses by giving examples from other poems of features they recognised as characteristic. Again, some tried unconvincingly to connect the poem to the post-colonial context.

Question 7

Tennessee Williams: *The Glass Menagerie*

This has replaced *Death of a Salesman* as the most popular text on the Paper. Candidates found the language and ideas of the play accessible and were able to empathise with the characters as well as showing understanding of the social and economic context. There was some reference to the genre, plastic theatre, though at times understanding of this term needed to be more clearly demonstrated. Candidates were able to refer appropriately to critical opinions and made connections between the text and biographical details of Williams's life. Candidates should be careful not to over-use biographical material; such responses tended to include assertive comments that needed textual support. Weaker answers tended to refer to characters as if they were real people. There was a great contrast in the performance of those who really knew the text well and those who seemed to have a very superficial knowledge, based perhaps on the film.

- (a) Some candidates who selected this question were fixated on the idea of escape rather than on being prisoners of the past and, although there is some overlap in these topics, their responses were not always clearly focused on the question. They tended to write about Tom's trips to the

movies or alcohol as a means of escape, or Laura's obsession with her menagerie, while clear focus on the question would have laid more emphasis on the past. Laura's fondness for the Victrola is a sign of her missing her absent father and perhaps wishing to return to the past, as is her cherishing of her school year book. Amanda's entrapment in the past was clearly identified in her frequent reminiscences about the seventeen gentleman callers and her tendency to wear out-of-date clothes unsuited to her age, as when Jim calls. More able candidates argued that the whole memory play is evidence of Tom's entrapment in the past and connected his remorse over abandoning his sister with Williams and his own guilt over his sister Rose. Some saw Jim as a prisoner of the past too, living off the memory of his schoolboy success. The use of plastic theatre, such as the lighting up of Mr Wingfield's photograph and the setting connoting imprisonment were also discussed.

- (b) Although some weak candidates wrote narrative description of the passage with some comment on the characters, most candidates were able to produce sound, intelligent or very good responses with some close analysis of the scene and consideration of its relationship to the rest of the play. Where weaker answers tended to limit their response to consideration of the dialogue, stronger candidates analysed the lengthy description of Tom's arrival, the symbolism of light and darkness and the significance of Tom shaking the noisemaker as a weak gesture of defiance against the Almighty, with links to other religious references in the play. The dropping of the key was viewed by some as loss of opportunity, or Tom's secret desire not to go home. The account of Tom's evening entertainment was seen by some as an elaborate lie to conceal the fact that he has been experimenting in the gay demi-monde, the only support offered being the rainbow scarf, viewed as a symbol of Tom's homosexuality. Most candidates saw the coffin trick as a metaphor of Tom's situation and his desire to escape without removing the nails, i.e. without hurting his family. The lighting up of the photograph of Mr Wingfield was interpreted as a reminder of the way the father has escaped his responsibilities. Some candidates missed the opportunity to mention the end of the scene, with its acceleration of time showing how Tom is soon entrapped in his everyday world of routine. His refusal to 'shine' was seen as foreshadowing his eventual desertion of his family.

LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

Paper 9695/71
Comment and Appreciation

Key messages

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- good answers focus on the form, structure and language of the poem or passage and on how these shape meaning, rather than relying on narrative or paraphrase;
- good answers identify some of the literary devices and techniques in the poem or passage, and discuss how these are used;
- good answers show personal responses to the ways in which the poem or passage is written, beyond to what is said;
- good answers maintain a tight focus on the poem or passage throughout their response, without discussing other writers, other texts or other ideas.

General comments

This was in most ways a pleasing session; all examiners reported that they saw some good and often very good work. It was clear that the great majority of candidates were confident in addressing two previously unseen pieces of prose or poetry, and they wrote about them with some degree of thoughtful insight, often showing quite personal perception. To do this in a very limited time is not easy, a factor that all examiners are fully aware of, and while a small number of responses were unfinished or hurried at the end these were relatively rare; the majority showed an ability to see their chosen texts as wholes, ensuring that the final lines were explored with the same closeness as the opening ones. Few responses relied upon simple narrative or paraphrase, though where this was the case the marks awarded were inevitably low. Weaker responses occurred where candidates introduced comparison with other writers or texts, an approach which is less helpful or relevant in this paper compared to others; others relied heavily upon personal responses to the contexts (real or imagined) within which texts were written, and would have done better to respond instead to the ways in which they were written. The best responses, and indeed the majority of the less confident ones, focused firmly upon what was written, and made sure that their critical discussions stayed clearly and consistently upon this.

Handwriting was once more a concern for all examiners; it is essential that Centres make it clear to all candidates that if an examiner has difficulty reading a response then assessment will be problematic, and it may indeed be that some points being made are simply not legible. Most scripts were perfectly sound in this respect, but there were enough to suggest that not all candidates are aware of what is printed on the front of the examination question paper: *'You are reminded of the need for good English **and clear presentation** in your answers'*.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1 – *An American Tragedy*

This passage was addressed by a large number of candidates, who almost invariably demonstrated a sound or good understanding of how the writer, Theodore Dreiser, creates the two characters, and in particular how he helps to manipulate his readers' responses so that when reading the passage we are never completely sure how we should respond to Clyde. Initially we are encouraged to share Clyde's nervousness, emphasised by the fragmented and breathless writing in the first two paragraphs. There is a nice contrast in lines 9–10 between the singing of the birds and Clyde's 'peering' and 'peeking'; the alliteration in these verbs, and their close similarity, were noted by many candidates. At this point, not knowing why Clyde is so nervous, we surely feel sympathy for him and his situation.

Stronger candidates will have written about how Deputy Sheriff Kraut is introduced as a slightly mysterious character, whose appearance is perhaps almost spectral; but he very rapidly proves himself to be firm and determined, his revolver adding to the 'definiteness and authority of the man' (line 20). Still, our sympathies must lie with Clyde, who is very shaken at this point, again emphasised by the broken syntax in lines 21–24. However, it soon becomes clear that there is more to Clyde's terror than initially meets the eye; he may be a murderer, or at the very least involved in the death of Roberta Alden. The fact (line 44) that Kraut knows her name and address shakes Clyde even further, so that while we are still encouraged by the writer to sympathise with Clyde's terror this is surely now undermined to some degree by the possibility that he is a killer on the run.

Kraut's authority becomes more definite when he brings out the handcuffs, a move which causes Clyde to 'shrink and tremble' (line 56), a point at which the writer surely makes it clear that while he still wants us to have some fellow-feeling for Clyde this is very different from how he presents him at the start. He regrets not having fled into the forest, but if he truly is involved in Roberta's death then his terror now is not merely understandable but deserved.

Most responses drew attention to many aspects of the writer's craft, supported by textual quotation. Some took the need to respond personally a little too literally, suggesting how they felt that the writer should have made Clyde a more determined and brutal killer, rather than – as some saw him – a weak and rather feeble man. A few suggested that his calm manner at the end was simply a bluff, and that he was planning to make a run for it because he was not being handcuffed. Some felt that Kraut was unbelievable, in that no sheriff would act in such a gentle and even kindly way. Such reactions to what candidates felt could or even should have been written were less successful than reactions to what was actually written. A quite substantial number made the assumption (unfortunately unfounded) that Clyde was half of the infamous Bonnie and Clyde partnership, and that the writer was thus misrepresenting him. In the same way, several candidates criticised the writer for not following the conventions they expected from a modern-day thriller; awareness that conventions have likely changed between 1925 (when the text was written) and today would have helped candidates in this respect. Speculative responses such as these are evidence that a candidate needed to make better use of their time by maintaining a tight critical focus upon what is printed on the examination paper; this is something that Centres need to emphasise very strongly for future entrants.

Question 2 – *Pay-Packet*

Some of the points made towards the end of the previous paragraph apply very pertinently to this passage, in that many candidates used it as a springboard to talk about and condemn the kind of psychological and physical abuse that is presented by the writer. Such a response, while of course understandable, needed to maintain focus on how the writer presents the two characters Iba and Bertrand and their relationship. This passage is, like that in **Question 1**, a relatively straightforward one in its contents, with no unduly complex ideas or writing; there is however plenty of material to consider and explore for a thoughtful critical discussion.

Many responses pointed to the first two words of the passage – 'left alone' – as truly significant; Iba is indeed isolated, shunned at home by her husband, and with apparently little or even no contact with her parents, and she has indeed been at least metaphorically *left* by Bertrand. She is in the sitting-room, where conventionally she should be able to relax and be happy, which of course she certainly is not. Several then noted that she regarded her shopping as a 'spree', a word implying something denoting pleasure and even excitement; in reality, as the ending shows, she has bought little for herself, but food, baby things, and a shirt for Bertrand.

The contrast that the writer draws between Bertrand the public man and the private man was seen and discussed by all candidates, with some aptly selected textual citations. Two or three made an interesting comment on the words in line 16, where Iba had once considered 'spilling the beans' about Bertrand: a very common expression, and indeed a metaphor; these few candidates insightfully suggested that if you spill beans you make a dreadful mess, so if Iba had done this then her marriage and her apparently good relationship with her husband would become a public mess. Most then noted the very strained conversation that the two characters have over their meal, followed by the next day's waiting 'for the storm to erupt', another very powerful metaphor that was picked up in almost all responses.

Iba's growing anxiety from line 40 onwards is powerfully presented by the writer. Many candidates noted her use of 'B' when speaking to her husband, presumably an echo of an earlier term of affection and used here to try to soften Bertrand's likely fury. Many also noted that in line 65 he calls her, quite brutally, 'woman'. A few candidates drew these two points together, highlighting the way the writer shows the cruel difference in

the way that husband and wife think of each other. Iba's growing courage is evident as the passage draws to its close, but we are left with the conflict unresolved; will Bertrand be pleased about the shirt, or will he revert to physical brutality?

The writer uses third person narrative in the passage, but interestingly, although this form normally leads to a generally balanced view of the situation, the emphasis here is very clearly upon Iba and her feelings; we see Bertrand through her eyes only and never from a truly objective viewpoint. A number of responses referred to the writer as using free indirect discourse, and in a few cases it was referred to as subjective third person narrative. Either of these terms is valid; what was valuable was when a candidate saw what the writer was doing, and what effects were created.

As said at the start of this section, weaker responses spent too much time talking of the evil of abuse – psychological and physical – and several spent much time talking of particular cultures where such abuse is, or at least was, endemic. While such comments are of course personal and valid, stronger responses focussed on discussion of what the writer presents in this passage specifically.

Question 3 – *New Delhi 1974*

Although on the face of it this is quite a demanding poem, a large number of candidates addressed it. Those who did almost always saw something of what the poet expresses and responded to the ways in which he presents his – or at least the speaker's – feelings about how the city developed and changed. There were some very interesting and thoughtful discussions of some of the images used in the poem, and some useful thoughts too about its overall structure: it is a kind of sonnet, perhaps – fourteen lines – but with no rhyme and no strict regularity of metre. It is, however, categorically not blank verse; it may arguably be called free verse, though it is really too formal for the term to be correct here. More interesting, however, were some of the reasons proposed for the use of seven pairs of lines, together with the plentiful use of enjambement within each pair and indeed between each pair. It is a structurally interesting poem.

The overall mood was captured by almost every candidate: it is despondent and pessimistic to the point of despair at the end. The first six words present a kind of neutral, almost factual idea, but immediately there are words of severe criticism – *futile, garish, shuffled, heaped, sparse, indifferent, brittle* – which make very clear that the speaker is seriously unhappy with how the city has grown and how its nature has changed. There were plenty of interesting reactions to the images presented in the first six lines, often very personal but almost invariably grasping the poet's unhappiness.

The focus changes in line 7, where although it is probably not quite the case that the city is personified, it is certainly the case that the poet's focus shifts towards some kind of metaphorical human decay. Line 7 sees the saddening effects of old age, but not just because the city is itself old – it is after all 'new' and growing – but because 'each hair has lost its root', an idea developed in the next two lines, where what one must assume are references to spiritual, religious and traditional voices are lost and 'elsewhere'. Monuments – further images of the old and by inference the valuable – are now black and losing their shape; the green plains have become grey with dirt. Progress has not improved the city in any way.

The last three lines are perhaps a little puzzling at first, but quite clear on reflection: the old inhabitants have nowhere to go in a city which they have not built – the new building was done by younger people; but like all young people they in turn are impatient with life as it changes, but do not know where they too should go. The change to the city has led to rootlessness and unhappiness for all, young and old alike.

Many weaker candidates misread this poem as one about climate change; published in 1994 – when climate change was not widely known about or considered – and about a situation in 1974, it is a poem not about weather but about how a particular city has been changed and perhaps in some respects destroyed. The poet may have general twentieth century growth and development in mind, but we cannot know what his intentions were in writing the poem. Stronger candidates were rewarded for literary criticism, which focuses on what is written in the poem and the way it is written, rather than on speculation.

LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

<p>Paper 9695/72 Comment and Appreciation</p>

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- good answers maintain a tight focus on the poem or passage throughout their response, without discussing other writers, other texts or other ideas.

General comments

This was in most ways a good session; all examiners reported that they saw some good and often very good work, and it was clear that the great majority of candidates were confident in addressing two previously unseen pieces of prose, drama or poetry, and wrote about them with some degree of thoughtful insight, often showing quite personal perception. To do this in a very limited time is not easy, a factor that all examiners are fully aware of, and while a small number of responses were clearly unfinished or hurried at the end these were relatively rare; the majority showed an ability to see their chosen texts as wholes, ensuring that the final lines were explored with the same closeness as the opening ones. Few responses relied upon simple narrative or paraphrase, though where this was the case the marks awarded were inevitably low. Weaker responses occurred where candidates introduced comparison with other writers or texts, an approach which is less helpful or relevant in this paper compared to others; others relied heavily upon personal responses to the contexts (real or imagined) within which texts were written, and would have done better to respond instead to the ways in which they were written. The best responses, and indeed the majority of the less confident ones, focused firmly upon what was written, and made sure that their critical discussions stayed clearly and consistently upon this.

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Comments on specific questions

Question 1 – The Garden of Evening Mists

There were plenty of responses to this passage. In stronger responses, there were some very perceptive and thoughtful responses to how Tan Twan Eng writes. Several weaker responses needed to focus more consistently upon what is written in the passage. There is of course some emphasis in the passage upon the need expressed by Aritomo to clear one's mind of all extraneous and trivial matter in order to achieve the goal of becoming a successful archer; while it may well be true that this is the case in all walks of life, some candidates took this to suggest that this is the central message of the text, whereas in fact it is simply an account by the narrator of his fictional experiences while learning the craft of kyudo (Japanese archery). This is made clear in the opening lines of the first paragraph. Responses which considered wider contexts,



however relevant they may have seemed, inevitably lost some marks because they missed some other more central points.

Many responses began by pointing to the fact that the passage opens *in media res*, there is no introduction except what Aritomo says, and as many pointed out the writer makes his opening sentences nicely emphatic and balanced by the alliteration of the soft letter 'm' in lines 4–6. In the second paragraph, the narrator tells of how difficult it was for him to clear his mind of every possible distraction, using in the next paragraph Aritomo's use of the slightly uncomfortable but very apt simile comparing his mind to a strip of wallpaper: flies are an irritant, and need to be completely eradicated, 'purged', from his thoughts.

The next paragraph, beginning in line 14, begins to explain in more detail the effect of mind-clearing and regulated breathing. A significant point is made in line 19, where *kyudo* 'was showing me how to live'; it was perhaps this clause which led some candidates towards thinking that the passage is actually about more than just the narrator's experience. While such philosophical thinking may well be valid, it cannot form part of a literary critical appreciation of the writer's creation of a purely fictional character and his thinking.

As the passage develops, despite the narrator beginning to feel as if he and Aritomo were like the bronze archers on the desk, he still cannot relinquish his natural and realistic sense that arrows cannot possibly have any minds of their own; the two blunt sentences in line 29 are written to show this as realistically and forcefully as possible, and it is then that lines 30–34 return to the calm and almost hypnotic state that was created earlier in what Aritomo says, culminating in the almost unbelievable and telepathic concept in lines 35–38. This is another moment where some candidates wanted the passage to be about extra-sensory communication generally, whereas they would have done better to focus on it as what the narrator seems to feel at this specific fictional moment. Candidates needed to concentrate on what the writer makes the narrator think, rather than stating the implausibility of the moment in which Aritomo hits the centre of the target with his eyes closed.

There were plenty of strong responses, which did exactly what they should. Two aspects of weaker responses prevented them from achieving more highly: a tendency to wander off focus, and treatment of the two characters (especially Aritomo) as if they were real people, criticising the writer because of their supposed unreality. The word 'fictional' has been used in these comments and it is important to keep firmly in mind that unless it is made clear in the rubric that a passage is factual the passages set will always be fictional and must be treated as such.

Question 2 – *Hymn to the Sea*

This was a little less popular than the other two passages; despite this, there were plenty of interesting and thoughtful responses, often showing some quite sensitive critical perception of the poet's images and how they reflected his love and admiration for the sea. Examiners did not expect close reading of every line in the poem given its length, but were all very pleased with how much detail was explored, and how confidently most responses tackled some of the poet's feelings.

A word first about the poem's structure: mention was made in the **General comments** above that there was often as much consideration of the closing lines of a passage as of the opening ones, and this of course was particularly evident and important here, where the final line is a further repetition of the second line of the poem, and of the refrain which ends each stanza. Some candidates said that the poem was written in free verse; in fact, each stanza is firmly controlled and the poem is constructed with much regularity: each stanza has eight lines, all of approximately the same length and number of syllables. So, while in some respects this poem is a little looser than others, we cannot say that it is 'free'. Some thoughtful comments were made about this regularity: the speaker's feelings do not change, the sea's movements and tides are regular and unchanging, and while there are some apparently conflicting reactions to the sea the overall warmth and admiration expressed does not change.

Most candidates noted how while the sea is not exactly personified the poet does regard it as female, sometimes as a kind of lover and more often as a mother from whom all life originated, and who can also be a destroyer – lines 35–36 perfectly sum up these contrasts. Female images are frequent, not just the frequent use of the word 'her' (five times in stanza one, three in stanza two and so on), but also more specific female characteristics ('kisses' in line 7, 'lullaby', 'singing', 'moaning' in line 13, 'her embracing womb' in line 23). Some took the word 'moaning' in a sexual sense, linking this with the 'completion' at the end of stanza three, an idea that is arguably developed in stanza four, with life originating in the sea. Though this is never made explicit by the poet, some candidates' arguments were very convincing.

The sea is, however, not just ‘a symbol of fruitfulness’ (line 33) but also a ‘symbol of barrenness’; the paradox is important in suggesting how, to the poet from a small island, the sea is not just water but a creator and a destroyer – it has a huge and inescapable influence upon life. The closing lines of the poem move away from some almost cosmic, mythological thoughts to some very exact and precise picturing of the poet’s own island home, where the colour red and the colour blue – primary and bright colours of life – join in a kind of natural harmony, which is why he finally repeats that he must ‘always be remembering the sea’. A few candidates commented aptly on the slightly unusual syntax in this refrain, pointing to the fact that the significant words come early in the sentence – ‘always’ and ‘remembering’, with ‘the sea’ as the poem’s culmination.

Question 3 – *Morning Sacrifice*

The main aspect of weaker responses to this passage was a tendency to read and treat it as a piece of conventional prose rather than as a piece of drama, intended to be seen and heard in a theatre. Even when referring to the quite frequent stage directions, many treated these again as they might respond to such writing in a novel or short story, rather than suggesting ways in which they might indicate physical action and significant dramatic impact. For an immediate example, the opening direction has Miss Kingsbury sitting beside Sheila; on the face of it, this might appear quite insignificant, but in conjunction with her opening words, ‘my dear’ and ‘our little talk’, and in view of what she goes on to say to Sheila, candidates would have done well to discuss how this physical positioning by the playwright indicates not a genuine warmth and intimacy as some suggested, but a way of making Sheila feel uncomfortable and uncertain about what is about to be said. A more formal positioning, across a table or desk, for example, might have been expected, so this direction is immediately unsettling. Combined with how Mrs MacNeil looks uncomfortable, and how Miss Kingsbury ‘smiles enchantingly’, the playwright is very forcefully using stage directions to create a visual reflection of how the Deputy Head sees and creates her power over Sheila.

Here are plenty of similar moments, partly in what is said – Sheila’s speeches, for example, are all brief and hesitant – but also in what is seen by an audience. Miss Kingsbury’s pause in line 35 is unnerving for Sheila and for the audience, who do not know what the ‘bulky letter’ contains. Her difficulty in line 47 in controlling her anger will be seen by a theatre audience, as will her very self-conscious ‘looking at her beautifully manicured hands’ in line 60, the latter small physical action carrying a lot of weight in suggesting Miss Kingsbury’s self-centredness and self-control. This, however, is given a visible blow in line 75, where an audience will see her temporarily thrown off balance and going to her desk ‘with an expression of contempt and anger’, a moment where her falsely adopted air of care and kindness towards Sheila is shattered, and she needs to regain her role of formality and authority.

There is, then, a great deal to be said about what is seen as well as heard, and those responses which even mention stagecraft or theatrical impact did inevitably show a greater critical confidence than those who focused purely upon what the characters say. There is of course plenty to consider in what they say, and a lot of the extract’s dramatic power lies in an audience, or a reader, being unaware of exactly what has happened to Sheila; has she had some kind of unethical relationship with Mary Grey, or is she simply trying her very best as a younger teacher to sympathise with whatever problem Mary is having? We are not told, and this is a large part of what makes the extract so fascinating; this, together with the obvious but partly hidden clash of personality between Miss Kingsbury and Mrs MacNeil, offer a great deal that could be considered, and which was indeed considered by many candidates. There was some speculation, perhaps inevitably, about what lies behind the personality clashes: Miss Kingsbury, although Sheila had clearly been one of her favourite students, is angry about the way the newspapers published and made a fuss about Sheila’s great academic success; and it may be that she is also jealous that Sheila is engaged to be married, and that Mrs MacNeill is married, while she remains Miss Kingsbury. Again, though these are all possible, speculative responses such as these would not merit so much credit as those that stuck to the text itself. A very rich dramatic extract, and there were some fascinating and often very personal explorations.

LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

<p>Paper 9695/73 Comment and Appreciation</p>

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General comments

This was in most ways a pleasing session; all examiners reported that they saw some good and often very good work. It was clear that the great majority of candidates were confident in addressing two previously unseen pieces of prose or poetry, and they wrote about them with some degree of thoughtful insight, often showing quite personal perception. To do this in a very limited time is not easy, a factor that all examiners are fully aware of, and while a small number of responses were unfinished or hurried at the end these were relatively rare; the majority showed an ability to see their chosen texts as wholes, ensuring that the final lines were explored with the same closeness as the opening ones. Few responses relied upon simple narrative or paraphrase, though where this was the case the marks awarded were inevitably low. Weaker responses occurred where candidates introduced comparison with other writers or texts, an approach which is less helpful or relevant in this paper compared to others; others relied heavily upon personal responses to the contexts (real or imagined) within which texts were written, and would have done better to respond instead to the ways in which they were written. The best responses, and indeed the majority of the less confident ones, focused firmly upon what was written, and made sure that their critical discussions stayed clearly and consistently upon this.

Handwriting was once more a concern for all examiners; it is essential that Centres make it clear to all candidates that if an examiner has difficulty reading a response then assessment will be problematic, and it may indeed be that some points being made are simply not legible. Most scripts were perfectly sound in this respect, but there were enough to suggest that not all candidates are aware of what is printed on the front of the examination question paper: *'You are reminded of the need for good English **and clear presentation** in your answers'*.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1 – The Colour

A popular question, which led to some interesting and often quite perceptive ideas about how the writer creates tension and uncertainty; one of the strengths of the passage is the way in which it never makes clear exactly what happens to Harriet, and certainly what happens to Lady. The rest of the novel does of course do this, but it is not really helpful or indeed wise for candidates to criticise a small extract from a bigger text because it does not make everything clear. It is probably not true to assert that Harriet has died by line 55, or that her sudden recollection of the word 'net' is evidence that she is now in another world, nor is it really likely that Lady has in some mysterious canine way managed to move the net so that Harriet was saved from certain drowning. Such speculative ideas that go outside what is written are of little or often no critical value;

the best responses invariably focused entirely and consistently upon what is actually and concretely presented by the writer.

While Harriet is not dead at the end, she has clearly been in serious danger of drowning, and there is plenty in the passage that is worthy of critical investigation. The passage opens, as several responses suggested, *in media res*; we do not at first know what it is that Lady hears, but the writing makes it clear that it is certainly something new, unknown and frightening; the dog is accustomed to unexpected noises, but this is ‘something new and unknown’, and the final word of the paragraph is therefore particularly ominous.

The second paragraph echoes the first: like Lady, Harriet is preoccupied, not with trying to catch fish but in examining a piece of greenstone. We do not know her age, though several candidates assumed she was elderly because no young woman would wear a shawl and knitted hat, but her evident physical strength later in the passage suggests that she must be younger. This is evidence of a tendency for candidates to make assumptions about characters as though they were real people rather than to examine them as fictional constructs and consider the reasons why the writer has made certain decisions. The paragraph ends with Lady’s sudden and probably final disappearance in the sheer strength of the wave, an ironic and painful parallel with the ending of paragraph one.

The rest of the passage is filled with some very striking and powerfully effective descriptive images of Harriet’s near-drowning, and there is plenty for candidates to take hold of and discuss. Many noted the recurrent green image: Harriet was studying a piece of greenstone at the start, and it is this colour in line 32 which is returned to, in the rather ominously oxymoronic phrase ‘green darkness’. White is used by the writer in line 29 in another striking expression, where Harriet saw the sky for ‘a brief, white moment’ before being dragged down into the water again. Cold is stressed throughout the passage – and is perhaps why the writer made Harriet wear a shawl and knitted hat – and most responses found a good deal of material to consider and illustrate in this respect.

Most responses made apt use of the concluding few words, following the strange experience that Harriet has in lines 47–54, where she suddenly finds that she may not be drowning after all and then comes into contact with something nameless and mysterious which has a name though she cannot remember what that is; perhaps she is in fact drowning and dying, as ‘both she and they had suddenly become weightless’. Then quite unexpectedly she remembers the word, ‘A net’. This abrupt and obviously incomplete conclusion worried some candidates: perhaps Harriet is hallucinating; perhaps she is simply wishing for help; or perhaps she is actually about to survive. Many responses made much of the fact that we cannot know how the passage might continue, and that that is a very powerful way to finish.

Question 2 – Pause

This, and **Question 3**, resulted in many examples of what can happen if responses do not focus, and remain focused, upon exactly and only what is written. Many candidates addressing the poem and short story spent much time on what they saw as significant contextual matters rather than on what the writers are saying. Some candidates aptly detailed how the poem is concerned with the ultimate futility of human endeavour in the face of nature’s overwhelming power and ability to overcome whatever men and women create and do in attempting to control and make their mark. Weaker responses linked this to current concerns regarding destruction of the planet, whereas, published in 1929, the poet can not have had any conception of plastic pollution, nor of Extinction Rebellion, both of which were mentioned by more than one candidate.

We cannot of course know what the speaker is actually doing in line 1 of the poem, or why she is digging, but there is no evidence that she is deliberately or even unintentionally harming her environment, as some candidates suggested. She may in fact be aiming to improve it and its appearance. What matters is simply that she pauses and looks around at the surrounding scenery, in admiration and pleasure, so that she can feel her muscles relaxing for a short while. Plenty of thoughtful critical comments were made about how she describes the mountains, and how they and the plants growing on them have been shaped by millennia of storm and rain. ‘All weathers are salutary’, because all have encouraged natural growth, and none is evil (line 8). Some candidates noted the interesting use of the word ‘Pioneer plants’ in line 7 to suggest how, in the same way as human pioneers have explored and settled in new territory, so plants have done the same – but unlike humans they have settled and found ‘their own footing’, rather than invading what might have been other people’s lands.

In the context of the huge sweep of history, it is only a little while since the hillside where the speaker is now digging was similarly bare of vegetation and untouched by anything except great winds. The poem at this point (line 13) takes a sudden new direction: from admiration of natural forces, the speaker thinks of what may soon happen to humanity; in a quietly bitter and ironic phrase she refers to ‘our impulsive limbs and our

superior skulls' which will finally simply become 'several ounces of fertiliser', as in death we all decay in the soil. No matter how impulsive and active humanity is, and no matter how superior our skulls – and note that she does not call them our brains – we cannot overcome the force of nature. 'The Mother of all' will take charge once human have been eradicated, and all traces of humanity will be wiped away. The phrase, 'Our small fond human enclosures' is perhaps deliberately ambiguous: it may refer back to the digging she is doing at the start of the poem, which will become part of an enclosure; the word 'fond' may have two meanings – it may simply mean that we are fond of what we as humans create, but the word can also suggest a foolishness. The very word 'Mother' is similarly double-edged: a mother will always protect, but this mother can and will also destroy.

Many candidates attempted to consider the poem's structure; many seemed bothered that there is no rhyme, and that the lines are not of equal length. There may have been some purpose in the poet's mind as she wrote in this way, but to speculate is not helpful. Better simply to accept that this is a kind of free verse poem (emphatically *not* blank verse, of course), though writing in regular three-line stanzas means that it is not entirely free. To speculate about structure when there is little that is conventional is probably to spend time unhelpfully; better to just see the poem as it is, and this, wisely, is what most responses did.

Question 3 – *Kevin*

As noted above, many weaker responses saw this short extract as reflective of, and indeed critical of, a specific culture and the emphasis that it places upon academic excellence. At the same time, many also saw the passage as a politically-driven piece attacking child abuse. These saw Kevin's mother as unacceptably cruel, and his fear that she would 'wallop' him as evidence of the terror and psychological damage that he is suffering from. Such responses saw the ending as evidence of this damage to his character, rather than as a perhaps quite light-hearted and even humorous conclusion to a mostly tension-filled passage. Kevin's mother is ill, and this is of course not to be laughed at, but as this is a piece of fiction rather than reality, Kevin's uncontrolled delight that she is in hospital does not necessarily need to be taken as a serious issue. Those few who saw the ending as Kevin being overcome with grief often argued with some conviction, but the final six words of the passage do not seem to support this interpretation.

Whether serious or not, however, candidates who explored the ways in which the writer presented Kevin's fear and horror at having achieved a mere 82% usually saw plenty to consider. The slight suspense created by the way Miss Lam announced the marks was seen by almost all candidates, often using the fact that she told Kevin his marks with 'undue drama'. Some saw this as evidence of the teacher's deliberate cruelty to Kevin, while others, probably correctly, saw it as the writer deliberately creating minor melodrama. The same holds good in paragraph two, where Kevin's reaction is surely intentionally over-drawn, especially in lines 7–8.

His friend Boon Kee, 'playful, untidy' and 'unrealistic', is portrayed as an entirely normal young schoolboy, whose unhelpful advice to Kevin to bluff his way out of trouble may possibly be intended to show how easy it is for people not involved to miss the signs of child abuse, or more probably just to present Kevin's reactions as again deliberately overstated and unnecessarily dramatic. Kevin's reaction to the news of his mother's hospitalisation is similarly exaggerated: the servant is understandably distressed (line 39) and her response to Kevin's apparent lack of emotion is realistically drawn. Where some candidates perhaps understandably saw Kevin as also deeply upset by the news is where he is said to find it almost impossible to hold back his emotions (lines 42 and 45–46), although if he was genuinely distressed, he would surely not have done a somersault or thrown his books into the air 'with wild abandon'. He is inexpressibly thrilled that his mother is not there to see his mere 82%. Candidates who interpreted the ending as showing Kevin's huge sadness were not in any way penalised for this, provided that they argued with conviction and with textual support. Those who saw the writer as creating a moment of sudden and inexpressible happiness almost invariably argued more convincingly.

LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

Paper 9695/08
Coursework

Key messages

Good answers will:

- address their two texts with clear and concise focus upon what the questions ask;
- explore how the writers create their particular effects, discussing some of the literary and/or dramatic techniques used;
- support responses and ideas with appropriate textual quotations and references;
- make some brief use of critical and/or contextual material to support arguments;
- where practicable, write on individually selected and worded questions, to make responses as personal as possible;
- ensure that the work submitted remains within the overall 3000-word limit (NB quotations do not count towards this total).

General comments

This was a generally very pleasing session, and Moderators have all reported that they saw evidence of good and often very good work, supported by some very professional presentation by centres. The overall feeling is perhaps best summed up by one Moderator, who said that *'although there was nothing very striking or new about this year's coursework, centres have built up plenty of experience and were confidently submitting well-organised folders which were generally fully and fairly assessed. There was plenty of evidence of internal moderation and the comments on most folders drew appropriately on the marking criteria'*.

As will be seen in the list at the end of this report, the majority of texts used by candidates were canonical ones, with only a few that could be described as unusual – Stockett's novel *The Help*, for example, or Treadwell's play *Machinal*, both of which led to some thoughtful personal writing. That most texts were well tried is in no way a criticism of the candidates or the centres concerned, and it may well be that there were good practical and logistical reasons for their selection; there is no doubt, however, that it is often the case that a 'new' text can lead to some fresh ideas and responses, while more traditional ones can lead to good and often clearly personal but nonetheless well-worn ideas and thoughts. No centre, and no candidate, will ever be 'penalised' by text choice – what matters is what is done with them – but when centres submit their OPF proposal forms for next year's entry it may be worth considering a change to a new or at least a different pair of texts. It may be helpful to quote another Moderator comment in this context: *'It is clear that the old favourites – The Great Gatsby and A Streetcar Named Desire, by far the most popular – do appeal strongly and often provide the opportunity for intelligent comment on contextual issues. Centres should perhaps be wary of using particularly complex texts, such as a Shakespearean tragedy, as it is difficult to do justice to the issues within the word limit.'*

Mention of the word limit raises an important point. The Syllabus is quite clear that each folder must be between 2000 and 3000 words in length; no folder fell below the lower limit, but a high number exceeded it, sometimes by well over 100 words. It being unfair to centres who monitor this rule strictly if some allow candidates to break this ruling, it is essential that no future folder should do this. Most centres required candidates to state how many words had been used, and this is a practice that should be continued.

The selection of two texts is perhaps the most important aspect of a centre's responsibility, but setting and wording each candidate's questions is at least equally significant. Questions must be submitted to Cambridge in advance, so that if the Adviser recommends an amendment to their wording there is time for candidates to do this before they start work on their essays. Advisers cannot, of course, know the capabilities of each candidate, so it is very important that questions are appropriately worded; the demand of the question should be appropriate to the aptitude of the candidate in order for them to respond to the best of

their ability. Where all candidates tackle the same questions it is likely that some will find them either too easy or too difficult, with an obvious impact upon the marks awarded. There was this session a much greater spread of questions within centres, even where the two texts were the same, which was pleasing and certainly led to some interesting and independent responses.

Textual references and quotations were more plentiful this session, perhaps because of an awareness that these do not count towards the 3000-word limit, or perhaps simply because of a greater confidence in using textual material. Whatever the reason, this was a pleasing development, and showed considerable strength of understanding that whatever personal views and ideas were presented these were invariably strengthened by such support. Partly as a result, there were fewer responses that relied entirely or even largely upon simple narrative or paraphrase, with a subsequent and very pleasing increase in personal argument.

Linked to this, there was a very noticeable increase in the use of secondary critical material. Many candidates had found interesting, sometimes contentious, critical viewpoints and used these not just as illustrative supports, but took hold of what was said and took issue with at least some of the arguments and made these a part of their own developing personal ideas. The rich resources of the Web were often used with discrimination and this often resulted in really personal, vigorous interpretations. It was noticeable too that almost all candidates adopting this approach were able to use footnotes and bibliographies to show where references and critical quotations had come from; these are not requirements of the Syllabus, and do not count towards the word limit, but they invariably add academic weight and authority.

In much the same way, a good range of contextual factors was integrated, although at times candidates would have done better to spend less of their word count focussing on these. Biographical material began sometimes to become almost more important than the work itself. This was evident especially in writing about Plath's poems, and similarly there was a lot of psychological consideration relating to *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* and *The Wasp Factory*. However, where the contexts were made clearly and briefly relevant they almost always added to the arguments and boosted marks for fulfilling marking criteria K and O.

There were inevitably some weaknesses as well as the increasing number of strengths that have been noted. There was a tendency in some less confident responses to write about characters as though they were real people rather than fictional ones created and developed by a writer. In some poetry essays, each poem was treated separately whereas candidates needed to discuss these poems as part of a larger whole body or anthology of work. Many would also do better to provide more exploration of the poet's methods and concerns. Weaker drama essays would have benefitted from appreciation of possible audience response. With the almost unique exception of responses to *A Streetcar Named Desire* and *Every Good Boy Deserves Favour*, there was a need for responses to give more of a sense that plays are intended to be seen and heard in a theatre or on the screen, rather than just read.

Marginal annotation and summative comments by centres were generally very full and helpful, and where appropriate and possible there was very useful evidence of double marking and/or internal moderation; obviously this cannot easily be the case where the entry is very small. It is essential of course that there is evidence that every page of an essay has been read, and annotations that relate explicitly to the Marking Criteria are by far the most valuable. Presentation of work was generally good and very professionally managed, with correctly completed cover sheets and mark sheets. There were still a few centres using hard folders and plastic wallets, and while it is easy to understand why this is the case it would make Moderators' work much easier if candidates' work could simply be stapled together, or attached by treasury tags. This is a trivial cavil, and it does not in any way undermine the overall pleasure and satisfaction that Moderators found in their work; submissions were for the most part excellently presented and compiled, and that they saw as a reflection of some clearly very hardworking teaching staff.

The list below contains a number of texts that were used successfully. It is not an exclusive list, nor is it a list of recommended titles, but it is included to illustrate the very wide range of writing that was used. Most are canonical, but there are certainly also some that are less obviously so; what matters above all is that each text is a sufficiently demanding one for sustained Advanced Level study, that it is approved by Cambridge following submission of an Outline Proposal Form, and that the questions set on it are helpfully directed to the particular strengths and interests of each candidate.

PROSE: Margaret Atwood	<i>The Handmaid's Tale</i>
Ian McEwan	<i>Atonement</i>
Angela Carter	<i>Wise Children</i>
F. Scott Fitzgerald	<i>The Great Gatsby</i>

Joseph Conrad	<i>Heart of Darkness</i>
Kathryn Stockett	<i>The Help</i>
Jean Rhys	<i>Wide Sargasso Sea</i>
Charlotte Bronte	<i>Jane Eyre</i>
Emily Bronte	<i>Wuthering Heights</i>
Mary Shelley	<i>Frankenstein</i>
Louis De Bernieres	<i>Captain Corelli's Mandolin</i>
Daphne Du Maurier	<i>Rebecca</i>
Patricia Highsmith	<i>The Talented Mr Ripley</i>
James Joyce	<i>Dubliners</i>
Ken Kesey	<i>One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest</i>
Iain Banks	<i>The Wasp Factory</i>
Iris Murdoch	<i>The Bell</i>
Edith Wharton	<i>The Age of Innocence</i>

DRAMA:

William Shakespeare	<i>King Lear</i>
Tennessee Williams	<i>The Glass Menagerie, A Streetcar Named Desire, Cat on a Hot Tin Roof</i>
Christopher Marlowe	<i>Doctor Faustus</i>
Edward Albee	<i>Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?</i>
Oscar Wilde	<i>The Importance of Being Ernest, A Woman of No Importance</i>
Arthur Miller	<i>Death of a Salesman</i>
Tom Stoppard	<i>Every Good Boy Deserves Favour</i>
Sophie Treadwell	<i>Machinal</i>

POETRY: Selections of poems by the following:

Seamus Heaney
Philip Larkin
Maya Angelou
Poets of the Harlem Revival
Carol Ann Duffy
Wilfred Owen
W. B. Yeats