

LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

Paper 9695/31
Poetry and Prose

Key Messages

- All questions are a test of literary knowledge and understanding and as such, must be informed by an analysis of the text.
- Candidates succeed best when they use secure detailed references and quotations to support points.
- The most successful answers clearly focus on the author's choices of language and literary methods, and the effects these have on a reader.
- Answers to **(b)** passage questions should examine the selected extract in detail and demonstrate an awareness of the wider text.

General Comments

There was an interesting variety in the texts which proved popular across the three time zoned papers, but throughout the range, examiners saw examples of excellent, detailed and informed writing on all of the texts. Within the different genres there was evidence of thoughtful and precise analysis of poetic methods across the range of poetry texts, and some candidates showed impressively comprehensive knowledge of their chosen novels. Amongst those choosing drama on the Language and Literature question papers, there was evidence of an informed appreciation of the dramatic genre and the plays were understood as performances on stage. There were, though, many answers which were hampered by summary and paraphrase. In such responses, knowledge was often shown, but demonstration of understanding of the writers' choices of language, imagery and form was missing. It is very important that answers balance knowledge and understanding.

Question Specific Comments

Question 1

Seamus Heaney: *District and Circle*

- (a) There were very few responses to this question, which gave candidates an opportunity to write about ways in which Heaney uses landscape in his poems and explore the significance he attaches to items of agricultural machinery.
- (b) There was a small number of responses to this question, among which some candidates showed an understanding of how Heaney creates a colloquial voice in the first stanza and uses vivid, active verbs to convey a sense of violence in the unexpected. Several candidates linked the poem to the destruction of the Twin Towers on 9/11 but this was often done without sufficient textual analysis of the details of the poem and Heaney's poetic choices.

Question 2

Wilfred Owen: *Selected Poems*

- (a) Most responses to this question relied on Owen's two most famous poems, 'Anthem for Doomed Youth' and 'Dulce et Decorum Est' and often provided stock essays on these poems without clearly addressing the actual question. Stronger answers directly considered how Owen's choices of language and imagery present the brutality of warfare in an uncompromising way to challenge ignorant or misinformed views. Enterprising responses went beyond these to two poems and also

considered, for example, the Biblical parody of 'The Parable of the Old Man and the Young', the results of war in 'Disabled' or the soldiers' experience in 'Exposure'.

- (b) While there were some overly literal readings of 'The Last Laugh', including candidates who wrote that the central stanza refers to the death of a young child, most candidates noted ways in which Owen presents elements of warfare mocking the deaths of soldiers. For example, examining such verb choices as 'chuckled', 'guffawed', 'tittered' and 'grinned'. This led some candidates to consider some of the other ironies in the poem, such as the juxtaposition of 'childlike' and 'dead' and the fate of the young man who 'kissed the mud' instead of his lover. While the three stanzas recounting the stories of three soldiers was noted, very few looked at the stanzas in combination or considered the linking between 'Jesus Christ', 'Mother' 'Dad' and 'My Love'.

Question 3

Songs of Ourselves

- (a) There were very few responses to this question, although the selection provides a wealth of material.
- (b) There was a larger number of responses to this question, although overall few candidates answered on the anthology. Successful answers required a very detailed consideration of its language and form. Nearly all answers recognised Raleigh's central metaphor in the poem, although many found selecting and analysing its details more challenging.

Question 4

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie: *Half of a Yellow Sun*

- (a) Although the issue raised by this question is central to the novel, it attracted very few answers.
- (b) Candidates overwhelmingly preferred the passage question and generally responded well to it. Most were able to place the extract in context and had a solid understanding of Richard's role in the novel. Less confident answers gave a largely narrative account of the passage, but sharper responses noted Richard's identification with Biafra and his growing anger with the journalists. Strong answers noted that the narrative shows Richard's point of view, while the journalists are anonymous, identified by their physical details and judged by their dialogue. Their presumptions and casual racism were noted in many answers, showing that while Richard is angered by them, they also reinforce his helplessness in raising awareness about the war in the outside world.

Question 5

EM Forster: *A Passage to India*

- (a) There were very few responses to this question and several answers comprised largely narrative summary without clearly focusing on the 'significance' in the question. More confident responses showed an appreciation of the cost of the withdrawal for Adela, isolated from the English community, and the freedom for Aziz which ultimately breeds bitterness and discord between him and Fielding, raising key questions about relationships between Indians and the English.
- (b) The selected passage question was the more popular, where strong answers looked closely not just at what is said in the dialogue, but at the tone of the language used, in this way revealing characterisation. Candidates were able to comment on the openness of Adela and Mrs Moore, who ask open questions and gently puncture the attitudes of the Club – noting Mrs Moore's 'gentle but crooked smile', for example. Alert responses went beyond simplistic assertions of racism to explore the colonial attitudes in more detail, looking at the variety of attitudes expressed. Such answers also used the context well, with reference to the ensuing Bridge Party and the brief early glimpse of Fielding, whose three word comment at the beginning of the passage is a precursor to his developing characterisation.

Question 6

Stories of Ourselves

- (a) This was a popular question, enabling a wide choice of stories; the most popular were 'The Hollow of the Three Hills', 'The Lady in the Looking Glass: A Reflection', 'The Bath' and 'Elephant', though several others also featured. Many candidates showed knowledge of the stories, though answers were frequently narrative and did not attempt to look at ways in which the states of mind are presented. The quality of the answers very much depended on the use of textual references and choice of apposite episodes. Successful candidates made the connection between discussing the characters' state of mind and the narrative methods used. The dreams and visions in 'The Hollow of the Three Hills' and 'Elephant' were used effectively, as were the exploration of the old lady's thoughts in 'The Bath' and the metaphor of reflection in 'The Lady in the Looking Glass'.
- (b) Mr Mitra's response to the ceremony was often handled very well. Most candidates had a secure grasp and were able to make selections to show his boredom and anger (the throwing off the shoes) at having to attend. Responses offering some insight into the language were most successful, noting the suggestions of Mr Mitra's feelings through his behaviour and observations in the earlier part of the passage before the explicit statement 'He felt bored' at the beginning of the final paragraph of the extract. Several answers related some of his discomfort at the awkward nature of this particular shraddh ceremony because of the circumstances of Anjalis' death and the fact that he did not really know his 'wife's distant relation'. Several candidates offered a postcolonial reading of the passage, noting the description of western-style furniture and references to foreign engineering firms juxtaposed with the shraddh ceremony and the singing of a Brahmo sangeet, though such responses often relied on material outside the passage.

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Paper 8695/92
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- Answers to **(b)** passage questions should examine the selected extract in detail and demonstrate an awareness of the wider text.

General Comments

There was an interesting variety in the texts which proved popular across the three time zoned papers, but throughout the range, examiners saw examples of excellent, detailed and informed writing on all of the texts. Within the different genres there was evidence of thoughtful and precise analysis of poetic methods across the range of poetry texts, and some candidates showed impressively comprehensive knowledge of their chosen novels. Amongst those choosing drama on the Language and Literature question papers, there was evidence of an informed appreciation of the dramatic genre and the plays were understood as performances on stage. There were, though, many answers which were hampered by summary and paraphrase. In such responses, knowledge was often shown, but demonstration of understanding of the writers' choices of language, imagery and form was missing. It is very important that answers balance knowledge and understanding.

Question Specific Comments

Question 1

Seamus Heaney: *District and Circle*

- (a) There were few responses to this question, but among them poems such as 'The Turnip-Snedder', 'A Shiver', 'Helmet' and 'A Clip' were discussed. Some essays were restricted to an account of the object, with some indication of its importance to the speaker of the poem, while stronger answers took note of the word 'develops' in the question and looked at ways in which Heaney's language and structure establish and build the significance of the chosen object, often through the suggestions of metaphor or association.
- (b) Among the few responses on 'The Blackbird of Glanmore', there were not many 'proficient' or 'very good' essays. Some candidates were aware of biographical information and were able to identify the 'lost brother', while others noted the 'arrive' at the beginning of the poem and the 'leave' at the end. There was little detailed engagement with the whole poem to show understanding of its content and methods of communication. There were opportunities to discuss the poem's treatment of memories at the speaker's arrival home through the pattern of the stanzas, the clipped, almost staccato lines, the lines of translation and from the neighbour, and the presentation of the blackbird itself.

Question 2

Wilfred Owen: *Selected Poems*

- (a) There were many responses to this question and most candidates were able to comment quite fully on ways in which Owen's poetry would have informed and disturbed its audience at the time of the war; those who used 'Dulce et Decorum Est' were able to refer directly to 'the old lie'. This poem, with 'Anthem for Doomed Youth', were the most popular choices, but strong answers also used poems such as 'Disabled', 'The Send-Off', 'Mental Cases' and 'Exposure' among others. Success generally depended on how well candidates knew their chosen poems and how effectively they could analyse how Owen's choices of language and imagery create effects and generate responses. The most successful essays argued that through portraying the horrors and brutality of war, ranging from the pain, suffering, bloodshed, hostile conditions and loss of young life on the battlefield to the physical and psychological, emotional and mental traumas of the survivors, Owen confronts the heartless complacency of propagandists, higher officials, political leaders and even other poets, who remain oblivious to the damage and destruction caused by the war. Less successful responses wrote generally about Owen as an anti-war poet, without referring to and analysing the poetry.
- (b) 'The Dead-Beat' proved to be a good discriminator, producing some excellent detailed responses, but also some general unfocused writing which demonstrated insecure knowledge and whose title was often not understood. Successful answers discussed the different views of the mental breakdown of the exhausted soldier apparent in the development of the whole poem: the dehumanising, cynical view by the narrator and other fellow soldiers, considering the striking similes in the second line; the sympathetic view of a comrade with a 'soft voice' aware of the soldier's personal problems back at home; the cynical, mocking view of the stretcher-bearers and finally the ridicule and disrespect of a heartless, drinking doctor. The colloquial language of the 'low voice' was a key – candidates who recognised it noted the sympathy and the ironies, while those who missed the direct speech misunderstood the import of the second stanza.

Question 3

Songs of Ourselves

- (a) This question prompted a large number and a wide range of responses. Most candidates were confident with the content of the poems and sometimes made heartfelt, personal comments on the transitory nature of love. The key discriminator was the way answers demonstrated an understanding of the effects of the poets' choices of diction, imagery and form, which eluded many candidates. Some of the most successful answers were those which selected poems which contrasted in some way and used the differences to structure the essay. Differences included gender of the speaker, the tone of the response to lost love, the speaker's voice or chosen form for the poem. The range of poems in the anthology offered plenty of scope. Where candidates were able to show some grasp of the conventions of Renaissance poetry, discuss the use of the sonnet form or pay close attention to choices of language and metaphor, answers were strong, but many responses relied on paraphrase or narrative summary.
- (b) This too was a popular question and elicited a range of answers. There were some literal readings, but most responses showed an understanding of the poem's central metaphor and some candidates analysed its detail and development with considerable care and perception. There were occasions when some of the archaic diction was not understood, but most had at least a solid grasp of the poem. Strong answers noted the intimate tone of the poem and its self-deprecation which disguises the speaker's wish for her poems to endure. She hopes that no one will think her presumptuous if her poems give pleasure, hopes that at least they will give no offence, cause no harm and will be appreciated after her death. There was a handful of sexual readings which were not successfully convincing.

Question 4

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie: *Half of a Yellow Sun*

- (a) Though this question did not attract a large number of responses, it was often done very well. Such answers were wide ranging and thoughtful, drawing on a variety of different episodes that showed 'death' in its widest sense – not just loss of life but death of the spirit, death of hope and ambition,

death of morality, community and religion. There was effective use of the white perspective as shown through the journalists and through Susan, showing how the author put faces to those who 'were silent', as well as accounts of the wider world's lack of support for Biafra. Many of these responses acknowledged the source of the title and commented on Richard's choice, but the importance of it being Ugwu's book.

- (b) This passage was a very popular question, and as is common with prose passage questions, attracted many answers. However, many progressed little beyond paraphrase of the events and general comment. There were, however, many detailed and thoughtful responses which looked closely at Adichie's 'ways' of presenting 'Ugwu's growing unease'. Successful essays noted that Adichie uses a third person narrative focused on Ugwu's interpretation of events, his behaviour, his physical reactions and his conversations. They noted, for example, that Ugwu seeks support for his fears from his fellow servant, Jomo, and his master Odenigbo. Both the uneducated gardener and the educated intellectual dismiss his fears, Jomo with sarcasm and Odenigbo with science. Fruitful examination of the dialogue with Odenigbo showed how Adichie presents Ugwu's persistence and incomprehension that no-one takes him seriously. Strong responses noted that Ugwu at this stage of the novel is still the uneducated village boy, a believer in bad medicine who is fearful of his position if Olanna is replaced. Developed answers looked closely at the narrative and language to show Ugwu's developing fears. A few subtle answers looked at Adichie's ambiguity in the passage, where rational explanations are not fully convincing and Ugwu's fears seem to be vindicated by Mama's 'ominously victorious' tone and the sight of Amala emerging from Odenigbo's room.

Question 5

EM Forster: *A Passage to India*

- (a) Answers which relied on narrative, often retelling the occasion of the alleged assault, were not successful and did not consider the 'significance' of the caves to the novel. However, many candidates were confident with the material and successfully treated the Marabar Caves incident as a catalyst for the relationships between Indians and their British rulers. Successful candidates demonstrated a sophisticated appreciation of how Forster used the caves to present the spiritual gulf between religions and races and to symbolise the failure to bridge that gulf even by those with the very best of intentions. Discussion of the symbolic value of the caves featured in many answers, representing the mystery, muddle, and spirituality of India. Forster's ambiguous descriptions of the caves, as well as the events within them, often featured in strong responses.
- (b) Many candidates saw in this question an opportunity to discuss the relationship between Fielding and Aziz within the novel, but it was the stronger responses which focused that discussion closely on the selected extract, carefully considering its position at the end of the novel. These were able to show clear and intelligent analysis of the tones of the two speakers – Aziz voluble and passionate, Fielding mocking and sceptical – through Forster's third person narrative, indirect reported thought and direct speech. The passage presented many opportunities for such comments on the details of the narrative, including the setting, descriptions of the two men and the horses, which featured in the strongest answers. A thoughtful evaluation of the significance of the passage as an ending to the novel required such considerations of style, as well as content.

Question 6

Stories of Ourselves

- (a) A wide range of stories which present fear were used by candidates, including 'Sredni Vashtar', 'The Moving Finger', 'The Lady in the Looking-Glass: A Reflection', 'The Enemy' and 'The Bath' among others, though not all with equal success. Narrative summary and an account of why characters were afraid was the main weakness of less successful responses, but stronger answers showed not only good knowledge, but a thoughtful understanding of ways in which that fear is presented to, and sometimes invoked in, the reader. The gothic setting and fearful visions in Hawthorne's story were often dealt with successfully, while some interesting answers looked at the fear of isolation expressed by the narrator of 'Elephant'. Many candidates responded particularly well to 'The Bath', showing sensitivity and insight when discussing Frame's exploration of the old lady's mind as she struggles with her infirmity and everyday actions.
- (b) In the most successful answers, candidates centred their discussion around the key idea of 'a struggle between two wills', a shifting power struggle between mother and son in a complex

and volatile family situation. Many also argued that all their battles were on the surface and there are examples of mutual concern in the passage, exploring some of the ambiguities in Naipaul's presentation. Responses which contextualised the passage to augment a close focus on its detail showed a more informed and a nuanced understanding of the relationship. Often candidates considered the mother's criticisms of her son because of her previous challenges and insecurities, with the boy's resentment and defiance being seen as a result of the absence of a once more supportive relationship with his father. Strong answers considered the effects of the partial view of the first person narrator in the story's presentation of events.

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Question Specific Comments

Question 1

Seamus Heaney: *District and Circle*

- (a) There were few responses to this question, but Examiners saw writing on such poems as 'The Helmet', 'The Turnip-Snedder', 'A Shiver' and 'A Clip'. Successful answers looked closely at the physical sensations and the ways they are described. There were particularly careful answers looking at the preparation of the body for the swing of the sledge hammer in 'A Shiver' and the minute details of observation and feeling in 'A Clip', evoking the childhood experience.
- (b) In 'proficient' answers candidates' discussion focused on the central idea of the poem; demonstrating an understanding that, despite physical changes in a place through evolution and development, its history and memories make it a special place, as recalled by Heaney in his childhood wartime experience of the aerodrome. Some candidates, however, found it difficult to sort out the time sequence in the poem; the very specific cultural markers of the Second World War airfield compared with those of a modern industrial estate need knowledge rather than guesswork for those unsure of the poem, but are important locators of time and place, as are the more sensory 'smell of daisies and hot tar'. There were some thoughtful comments on change and the narrator's more mature recognition of the significance of the woman's 'Back-stiffening'.

Question 2

Wilfred Owen: *Selected Poems*

- (a) Candidates took various routes in response to this question. Some looked at a war poem alongside a poem centred on a different subject matter, to show the range of interest in Owen's poetry. Others considered different aspects of war, such as the soldiers' experience and the portrayal of politicians responsible for war, while another group of candidates looked at war itself and its aftermath. There were some effective essays on Owen's pre-war poetry compared with his poetry of battle. Examiners accepted and rewarded any of these approaches, as long as some consideration of 'range' was apparent in the discussion. Candidates who identified their chosen range, chose appropriate poems and structured their essays in this way did well. Less successful candidates wrote rather generally about war poetry, occasionally referring to a wide selection of poems without actively demonstrating what 'range' they were looking at. Inevitably with this question, nearly every poem in the selection was discussed by at least one candidate.
- (b) This was, perhaps, the most popular question on the entire paper; examiners saw an enormous number of answers on 'The Send-off'. Candidates with developed poetic awareness did very well; many were able to comment effectively on the effects of sibilance, alliteration, oxymoron, symbolism and imagery. Even less confident candidates were able to show understanding of how the structure of the poem conveys the contrast between the departure of the soldiers and their return, noting the hesitant rhetorical question and the subsequent answer with the poignant repetition of 'few' and the sinister connotations of 'creep', 'silent' and 'half-known'. The strongest responses explored the impassive reactions of 'Dull porters' and the 'casual tramp', coupled with perceptive comments on the personification of 'unmoved, signals nodded, and a lamp/Winked to the guard', with one memorable comment that 'man and inanimate object combine in a conspiracy of silence and rejection'.

Question 3

Songs of Ourselves

- (a) Interestingly, there were comparatively few responses to questions on the anthology on this paper, and very few answers to this particular question. Where it was done, though, it tended to be handled confidently, with 'Sonnet 11', 'Sonnet 61', 'When I Was Fair And Young' and 'They Flee From Me, That Sometime Did Me Seek' being particularly popular. Candidates' essay structure usually benefited from the comparison, with clear exploration of the similarities and differences in poets' treatment of love's torments. The strongest responses showed detailed knowledge and understanding of how poets shape their meanings, using particular diction, evocative imagery and careful structure.
- (b) Carew's poem was the more popular choice and candidates who knew the poem well wrote successfully on aspects of technique which proved accessible. Many essays featured sharp and intelligent comments on the effects of natural imagery, structure, diction, and rhyme. Answers commented on the pattern of repetition and the progression of natural phenomena, noting that these are deployed with increasing intensity to elevate the speaker's lover. Candidates who were less well prepared tended to be restricted to summary or made assumptions that the poem has a starkly sarcastic tone.

Question 4

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie: *Half of a Yellow Sun*

- (a) Candidates usually noted that the title of the book 'The World Was Silent When We Died' was Richard's title, borrowed from Madu, but that the book itself is revealed to be Ugwu's. Several responses did not fully explore 'the effects' of the inclusion of the extracts within the narrative of the novel. More confident responses considered the role Richard plays in creating the title of the book Ugwu eventually writes, with candidates recognising the significance of an authentic Igbo voice telling 'The World' about the suffering inflicted on the Igbo people – it is Ugwu's story to tell, not Richard's. Candidates also commented on the narrative complexity through which Adichie assigns a pivotal role to Ugwu as victim and perpetrator, whose work 'The World Was Silent When We Died' gives the story of Biafra a complete perspective, as it describes events in a factual, reportage style.

- (b) While some answers got sidetracked into writing an overall account of Richard's role in the Nigerian civil war, this question provoked some detailed and thoughtful responses too. More perceptive essays showed recognition of the bias of Richard's language in his article particularly in the first paragraph and explained why it was so. The second paragraph offered candidates many opportunities to comment on Richard's insecurities about being judged and found wanting, his hang-ups about his childhood and his jealousy of Madu. Adichie can be seen to expose his delusions as he imagines himself as Winston Churchill but also as the moral victor. 'Proficient' candidates considered ways in which Adichie portrays Richard as a man desperate to find a role and be accorded respect, even if it means grovelling to His Excellency. Subtle responses noted that Adichie's tone in the passage invites both admiration and mockery of Richard.

Question 5

EM Forster: *A Passage to India*

- (a) The relationship between Fielding and Aziz is of central importance in the novel and many candidates were certainly ready to write about it. Less alert candidates took the chance to recount the development and decline of the relationship without closely reading the question, leading to general, unspecific responses. More successful answers used the cues in the question, including the quotations, in order to discuss the significance of the relationship. This led them towards the political as well as the personal aspect of the question, moving from collar studs and photographs of Aziz's wife to an exploration of the possibility of friendship between an Indian and Englishman considered at the end of the novel. Most answers showed very detailed knowledge of the text, which continues to be enormously popular.
- (b) This was a passage which provided plenty of opportunities for candidates to demonstrate an appreciation of narrative technique. Stronger candidates were able to note the effects of the omniscient narrator's initial description of the ordinariness of the caves through adjectives such as 'convenient', 'unattractive', 'bland' and 'bald'. Some noted the use of the abrupt simile 'sucked in like water down a drain' or the final sentence of the first paragraph as turning points from which the narrative shifts to Mrs Moore's perceptions of the cave. Some candidates noted the use of long sentences listing various happenings as effective in conveying Mrs Moore's responses. Many noted the significance of the whole extract as marking a change in the formerly content character as 'she went mad, hitting and gasping like a fanatic', language which hitherto could never have been applied to Mrs Moore. Several commented on the significance of this as the start of her decline and disillusionment, leading to her ultimate death.

Question 6

Stories of Ourselves

- (a) Candidates attempting this question made effective use of stories such as 'The Prison', 'Elephant', 'The Enemy' and 'Sredni Vashtar'. Less successful answers described the relationships in question, often relying on narrative summary. More successful responses explored ways in which the narrative reveals the unhappiness, how it is communicated, and how it informs the reader's understanding of the story. Essays exploring 'The Enemy' focused on the dynamic between mother and son to illustrate the characters' unhappiness. The aunt's mean-spirited treatment of Conradin in 'Sredni Vashtar' was explored by many, who had some sympathy with his subtle but deadly means of revenge. Several candidates wrote well on both content and style in considering the burden that every relationship places on the narrator of 'Elephant' to cause his unhappiness.
- (b) Examiners saw some very strong responses to this question, where better answers addressed the stylistic and thematic aspects of the passage fully. They considered the use of pathetic fallacy in the autumnal atmosphere and setting; as well as the shifting thoughts filtered through the perplexed stream of consciousness. Focus on the task topics of 'change' and 'the passing of time' was maintained steadily. More subtle responses noted that the opening paragraph focuses on the concept of time standing still, with phrases such as 'nothing was changed', 'a moment since her face had been reflected' and 'her name seemed to hang in the air'. The second paragraph however, suggests time passing through references to 'autumnal fields' and 'dusk was falling'. In the final section of direct speech the question of time and change is explicitly discussed between the two characters, leading to the heart of the story. The passage demanded careful reading and writing which explored its details and nuances.

LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

Paper 9695/41

Drama

Key Messages

- Candidates need to be aware that making comparisons across texts, even when relevant, does not form part of the assessment, and is therefore not rewarded.
- When a **(b)** question prints stage directions, they are there for a purpose and should be commented upon.
- A question that at first seems to invite simple character study is never that straightforward and requires candidates to explore a broad range of ideas about the text.

General Comments

This paper is done by a very small number of candidates, so although there was range across all of the texts, what follows should be read in the knowledge that the remarks may be based on the work of ten or fewer candidates.

The best responses offered coherent and detailed argument that was always supported and relevant to the question asked. Insights at this level were fresh and personal. At the other end of the spectrum, some responses showed little more than an understanding of the narrative of the text, with little awareness of ways in which writers create meanings through language, structure and form. At this level, candidates need to be less concerned with the 'what' of a text and more concerned with the 'how' of a text. This is particularly important when dealing with plays, where a leap of imagination, from page to stage, needs to accompany the business of close reading in order to analyse the significance of dramatic action.

The study of literature, of course, centres on a close reading of the texts chosen. However, in parallel to this must come work on how to communicate the insights gained, and there is a need for teachers to focus more explicitly on what it takes to write a good essay. Often, responses are let down by a failure to select judiciously and to integrate material into an overall argument. In **(b)** type questions, there is still a tendency for responses to offer a general view of the passage, or to go through chronologically, when what is really required is a close analysis of detail within a clear, strategic framework. When the question gives a deliberate 'angle', this should be seen as signalling the central focus of the response.

It is pleasing to note that candidates are now not delivering so much contextual information about texts that is simply tacked on, whether relevant or not.

Comments on Specific Questions

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

Question 1

- (a)** Responses were able to range firmly over the different types of verbal violence in the play (shouting, insults etc.) but were less secure on physical violence such as George's fake gun and his smashing of the bottle. George was often seen as the more repressed of the couple and therefore more likely to explode into physical violence, even if only play-acted. Better answers also considered Nick and Honey and the effect that the violence – so much enjoyed by Honey at one point – has upon them.
- (b)** Many answers simply worked through the extract. More strategic responses were able to see this as a turning point in the play, the moment when George starts to gain the upper hand. Better answers were aware of the ways in which the couples are gradually converging in the misery of their

marriages. The best responses were able to see the significance of George's dissection of his second novel and the cruelty behind his evocation of its plot.

William Shakespeare: *A Midsummer Night's Dream*

Question 2

- (a) Responses to this question often settled for the superficial aspects of difference from the human world. The woods were a place where the fairies live. Better responses were able to offer contrast of the human world and see how the woods represent freedom or anarchy in the play's action. There was little discussion of how the woods and their atmosphere are evoked through the language of the play.
- (b) Too few to comment.

William Shakespeare: *Richard III*

Question 3

- (a) There were very few responses to this, none of which (despite the bracket in the question designed to illuminate) dealt with the common people. Discussions of Hastings and the various queens showed some understanding of the play, but little of the question's central intent.
- (b) The small number of response to this question showed some willingness to engage with ways in which Richard dramatizes himself through word and action for political advantage and selfish gain.

Robert Bolt: *A Man for All Seasons*

Question 4

- (a) Responses to this question showed a good understanding of Rich and his rise to power. There were useful comments on his presentation, and also on his significance in the downfall of Sir Thomas. Perceptive responses were able to see that Rich's character is also a foil to More, a means of highlighting his ethics and attitude towards power.
- (b) Responses were able to show the various ways in which More is seen and reacted to by his family during the course of this extract. The various tensions (More set against Alice; More's criticism of Roper; Alice's rounding on Roper) provided opportunities to see how Bolt is using this scene to set up More as a man who has virtues and foibles that stand separate from the central issue of the play, with the aim of making him a more sympathetic character.

Oscar Wilde: *An Ideal Husband*

Question 5

- (a) Responses considered how Mrs Cheveley and Sir Robert have much in common, as they both allowed ambition to over-ride moral consideration. Attention was also given to ways in which Sir Robert may be thought of as more reprehensible than Mrs Cheveley, as she never claims to occupy any moral high ground. Responses also considered the roles played by Lord Goring and Lady Chiltern in both supporting Sir Robert and also helping him change his views and behaviour.
- (b) There were a small number of responses to this question. They showed some awareness of the dramatic situation, but there needed to be more examination of the detail of the scene and its ironies as a means to approach audience reaction.

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Drama

Key Messages

- Candidates need to be aware that making comparisons across texts, even when relevant, does not form part of the assessment, and is therefore not rewarded.
- When a **(b)** question prints stage directions, they are there for a purpose and should be commented upon.
- A question that at first seems to invite simple character study is never that straightforward and requires candidates to explore a broad range of ideas about the text.

General Comments

As usual, there was a full range of performance across the mark scheme. The best responses offered coherent and detailed argument that was always supported and relevant to the question asked. Insights at this level were fresh and personal. At the other end of the spectrum, some responses showed little more than an understanding of the narrative of the text, with little awareness of ways in which writers create meanings through language, structure and form. At this level, Learners need to be less concerned with the 'what' of a text and more concerned with the 'how' of a text. This is particularly important when dealing with plays, where a leap of imagination, from page to stage, needs to accompany close reading in order to analyse the significance of dramatic action.

The study of literature, of course, centres on a close reading of the texts chosen. However, in parallel to this must come work on how to communicate the insights gained, and there is a need for teachers to focus more explicitly on what it takes to write a good essay. Often, responses are let down by a failure to select judiciously and to integrate material into an overall argument. In **(b)** type questions, there is still a tendency for responses to offer a general view of the passage, or to go through chronologically, when what is really required is a close analysis of detail within a clear, strategic framework. When the question gives a deliberate 'angle', this should be seen as signalling the central focus of the response.

It is pleasing to note that Learners are now not delivering so much contextual information about texts that is simply tacked on, whether relevant or not.

Comments on Specific Questions

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

Question 1

- (a) Virtually all responses were able to comment on the tensions between characters that are seen on stage in the play. Explorations varied widely. There were many that simply wanted to point out that relationships are full of tensions. More perceptive answers were able to broaden things out and see that the two key relationships presented come about because of further family tensions stemming from Martha and Honey's fathers. There was much (often simply asserted) discussion of how the couples in this play fail to embody the values and behaviour notionally associated with the American Dream. Discussions about changing gender roles or the emphasis on absent babies or children often featured largely, with considerable relevance. The most perceptive answers made close reference to particular, dramatic moments in the play, and worked outwards from detail towards discussions of how Albee presents both the spoken and the unspoken rules of family behaviour.

- (b) Many responses worked assiduously through the passage, making clear comments about some of the ways in which the characters spar and score off each other. The response to 'total war,' was less well done and the fact that this scene now strips all restraint from George and Martha needed to be explored in greater detail. Most learners were able to deal with some of the ways the passage is characteristic of George and Martha's methods of antagonising each other. Often, responses offered a view of how much George and Martha seemed to be enjoying their skirmishing, suggesting that Martha is the more antagonistic of the pair. Many candidates commented that George, while appearing the more passive of the two, is the one whose composure suggests that he will later be victorious. Stage directions and actions were frequently commented on, often to good effect. George's goading of Nick was soundly commented on, with the latter often being the subject of negative comment regarding his relationship with Honey and his willingness to be led by Martha. The best responses were able to characterize the rhythms of the dialogue, with its hesitations, interruptions and variations in volume and tone.

William Shakespeare: *A Midsummer Night's Dream*

Question 2

- (a) Many responses simply agreed with the basic premise of the question and provided examples of ways in which the play is comic. The Mechanicals featured largely in these responses. Competent responses were able to see that 'comedy' has a broader sense than simply announcing amusement and laughter. For these candidates, the slapstick moments were set against the genuine human emotions of the lovers, against the dysfunctional marriage of Titania and Oberon, or against the inflexible patriarchal attitudes displayed by Egeus and Theseus. Competent responses looked at the arbitrariness of love and its obsessiveness. Whilst 'very good' responses were able to pull together a whole range of points centred on love and marriage and demonstrate the wide range of relationships (and their inadequacies) evoked during the play, thus seeing a darker aspect to the text.
- (b) Responses to the language often – rightly – centred on the very human terms in which these fairies conduct their marriage disagreements and on the ways in which Titania refuses the traditional role of a wife conferred upon her by Oberon. More could have been said about the sheer physicality of the language (lines 24–60), or about Titania's moving evocation of her relationship with the changeling boy's mother through images of pregnancy and fertility. Weaker answers often struggled to do much more than paraphrase. 'Solid' answers worked through the passage with narrative and brief comment on the pair's relationship. 'Competent' and 'proficient' answers considered the forcefulness of Titania and the mutual jealousy of the pair.

William Shakespeare: *Richard III*

Question 3

- (a) Responses concentrated heavily on Richard's behaviour and actions. Much use was made of the opening soliloquy and Richard's careful manipulation of his relationship with the audience. 'Very good' answers focused clearly on 'presents' and made it clear that the audience is being shown the reign of terror from a range of different points of view. A large number of responses looked at Richard's various actions and offered a sort of assessment of which of his crimes were the most heinous. Often reference was made to Richard's pangs of conscience later in the play and many responses referred to Richard's reign being a curse from God. Weaker responses often resorted to simply listing the terrors of Richard's reign in plot terms.
- (b) Most responses were able to deal with the allusions to the historical background of the passage and had a solid sense of precisely what has happened by this point in the play. Richard's presentation of himself and the numerous instances of dramatic irony provided a strong focus for many responses. The two queens were often discussed in terms of being the conscience of the play. They were seen as the characters who most clearly understand Richard and are able to get the better of him, at least verbally. Margaret's powerful language was commented on, particularly her imagery and references to what God has in store for Richard.

Robert Bolt: *A Man for All Seasons*

Question 4

- (a) Responses often revealed strong knowledge of the historical background regarding Henry's divorce. Some more able discussions centred round the political tension between church and state. The usual approach was to contrast various characters with More, particularly Thomas Cromwell. Responses were often restricted to more obvious aspects of the topic, thus leaving out Chapuys or Richard Rich's political forays and self-serving corruption. It would have been good to see more made of Sir Thomas's discussions earlier in the play with Roper and his family, which often concern either directly or indirectly political matters.
- (b) Learners were able to see how the passage exemplifies the two positions regarding the divorce: Moore's implacable belief in being guided by personal conscience and Wolsey's shifting views. Stage directions and symbolism were often commented on usefully, with various interpretations being placed on the candle. The irony of Wolsey's position as a man of the church was commented on as were his increasingly desperate attempts to sway More. Some learners expressed sympathy for Wolsey, commenting that he is in a difficult position. Learners were able to see how the pace of the dialogue reflects the rising tension. Wolsey's increasing desperation and incoherence compared with More's usually calm and consistent manner was seen as proof that More won this argument.

Oscar Wilde: *An Ideal Husband*

Question 5

- (a) Responses at all levels usually centred on looking at a range of characters however, the issue of 'dramatic effects' was only addressed in more considered responses. Often there was some comment on the values the play seems to repudiate or affirm, particularly with regard to Mrs Cheveley and Lord Goring. Straightforward, but restricted responses were often limited to discussions of Sir Robert's quest for power. Parallels were often drawn between Sir Robert and Mrs Cheveley. Lord Goring and Mabel Chiltern were often cited as being representative of Wilde's views about ambition: they are a couple who recognise each other's' shortcomings and are therefore not expecting or even seeking an impossible ideal. Useful distinctions were often made between political and social ambition. More able responses often investigated the quotation in the question and focused on the Chiltern's marriage and the tension between Lady Chiltern's ambition for her husband and her willingness to accept and forgive her husband's flaws.
- (b) Many responses took Goring's remarks at face value. However, stronger responses were able to see this display of his wit and the stage business aspects, as something to be enjoyed by the audience, almost as much as he revels in them himself. Competent responses were able to deal with the comic reversals and the various ways he, here, treats the serious frivolously and vice-versa. Competent responses also saw the humorous potential offered by Phipps. He was often seen as a victim of upper class exploitation, forced to endure Goring's witticisms with just a "Yes my Lord". Many 'proficient' and 'very good' responses commented that the real Lord Goring is revealed by his actions and more serious behaviour when he reads the letters. Often Goring was asserted to be Oscar Wilde's spokesman, an arguable position which added little to the conviction of the discussion.

LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

Paper 9695/43

Drama

Key Messages

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General Comments

As usual, there was a full range of performance across the mark scheme. The best responses offered coherent and detailed argument that was always supported and relevant to the question asked. Insights at this level were fresh and personal. At the other end of the spectrum, some responses showed little more than an understanding of the narrative of the text, with little awareness of ways in which writers create meanings through language, structure and form. At this level, candidates need to be less concerned with the 'what' of a text and more concerned with the 'how' of a text. This is particularly important when dealing with plays, where a leap of imagination, from page to stage, needs to accompany close reading in order to analyse the significance of dramatic action.

The study of literature, of course, centres on a close reading of the texts chosen. However, in parallel to this must come work on how to communicate the insights gained, and there is a need for teachers to focus more explicitly on what it takes to write a good essay. Often, responses are let down by a failure to select judiciously and to integrate material into an overall argument. In **(b)** type questions, there is still a tendency for responses to offer a general view of the passage, or to go through chronologically, when what is really required is a close analysis of detail within a clear, strategic framework. When the question gives a deliberate 'angle', this should be seen as signalling the central focus of the response.

It is pleasing to note that candidates are now not delivering so much contextual information about texts that is simply tacked on, whether relevant or not.

Comments on Specific Questions

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

Question 1

- (a) Responses discussed various relevant aspects of the question, particularly focusing on the disappointments and shortcomings in the two marriages. Contrasts were drawn between George and Nick professionally, with responses often commenting on George's failure to satisfy Martha both personally and professionally. There was much consideration of George and Martha's strategies to deal with disappointment. Drinking and infidelity were discussed as evidence of coping with, or avoiding, reality. Discussions often centred on how the couples fail to conform to the 'American Dream', and, whilst this was relevant, there was a strong temptation for some responses simply to reference clichés about idealised American life in the 1950s. Some better responses were able to reflect on the end of the play and suggest that the play offers some sort of hope of transcending failure towards the end.

- (b) Responses considered the structure of the passage particularly Martha provocatively leading Nick on sexually and Nick's growing confidence and assertiveness. Responses were able to deal with Martha's prompting of Nick, both physically and verbally and often showed awareness of Nick's combination of nervousness and vanity as he responds to Martha. There was much adverse comment on Nick's lack of consideration of Honey's situation in the bathroom. Contrasts were made between Martha's direct behaviour with Nick and George's more indirect method of playing with him intellectually. More could often have been made of George's silent appearance (lines 34–41) and the contrast between that and his careful staging of his reappearance later in the episode and George's use of the song.

William Shakespeare: *A Midsummer Night's Dream*

Question 2

- (a) Responses usually considered parallels and contrasts between the fairy and mortal world. The rule bound structure and formality of Athenian society and the court of Theseus were contrasted with the fairy world, where, it was often argued, a more relaxed and informal atmosphere prevails. Some responses commented that both worlds exhibit similarly patriarchal attitudes with parallels drawn between Theseus and Oberon. Better responses noted that the fairy world is dominated by very recognisable human emotions.
- (b) Responses were often able to comment on the ironies in the passage concerning seeing and reason. Able responses were able to draw a distinction between the experience and feelings of the characters on stage and the response of audiences to the dramatic change in Lysander's feelings and Helena's bewilderment, realising that there is much opportunity for humour, whatever the feelings of these two. A range of opinions were offered concerning Helena's predicament. Some criticised her for her envy of Hermia, while others empathised with her. Some 'competent' responses considered the hyperbole of Lysander's speech. The best responses were able to see and evaluate the various ways in which the lovers portray themselves (often in terms of romantic cliché).

William Shakespeare: *Richard III*

Question 3

- (a) Responses often approached the question of considering the opening soliloquy and discussing the ways Richard's self-portrait is confirmed by his subsequent actions. Many responses offered a view of his most notorious deeds, though more 'basic' work just catalogued them. His disloyalty to others and his misuse of family and allies was commented on, as was their credulousness. The female characters, with the exception of Lady Anne, were seen as showing more awareness of Richard's evil nature and thus providing a different perspective on his villainy. Some useful contrasts with Richmond were often made in order to demonstrate Shakespeare's placing of Richard's evil.
- (b) Responses discussed the presentation of Richard here, commenting on Richard's sly method of exposing Hastings and his dramatic dismissal of his most loyal ally. There was much consideration of the significance of prophecy and dream in the passage and the play as a whole. Responses related Hastings' realisation at the end of the passage to other instances in the play where Richard's true nature is discovered too late. Only the more astute focused on Hastings' use of language in the second half of the extract and the fact that he stands as a representation of England and its troubles.

Robert Bolt: *A Man for All Seasons*

Question 4

- (a) Responses dealt with this question in a variety of ways. Very good answers had conception of the classical or Shakespearean view of tragedy as caused by an inner fault or lack of judgement. They were able to look carefully at the detail of the text and ask questions about whether More brought his fate upon himself. Many did well to recognise that religious conviction for More was a matter of conviction, not choice, and in that sense, therefore, he was a victim of circumstance and of other people. Less able responses were able to chart the process of his downfall with accuracy and some attention to the terms of the question.

- (b) The extract provided ample opportunities for response to stagecraft and theme. More's deep conviction and his nobility in the face of death was usually a central strand of the discussion, and it was usefully contrasted with the self-serving behaviour of Henry's representatives. The women's interventions were often adduced as a means of reminding an audience of More's unshakeable faith in both Christianity and the law. Some responses struggled with what actually happens in terms of staging, particularly when 'the trappings of justice are flown upwards.' The least successful responses simply narrated what happens. However, the best responses were able to look clearly at the lighting, at the various groupings on the stage and at elements of Brechtian stage convention (though they may not have named it as such) in order to emphasise More's situation.

Oscar Wilde: *An Ideal Husband*

Question 5

- (a) Most responses were able to see what Mrs Cheveley does in the play and give an account of her various contrivances to discomfort others. But the question was not entirely a character study. Responses which explored ideas in greater detail saw that Wilde creates this character to open up the bigger themes and concerns of the play such as ambition or greed. There were also responses that sensibly suggested that she is the uncomfortable model for the more modern self-reliant woman, a direct contrast to Lady Chiltern and a symbol of the changing role of women at the time. A few responses looked at Mrs Cheveley's rather fiery relationship with Lord Goring and saw an equality of intellect and passion that is lacking in the relationship between the Chilterns.
- (b) A number of responses were unclear about the idea of 'society', despite the constant references to it in the play and a very clear definition of it in line 33. Responses that understood the term were better able to move towards discussion of manners as concealment for true emotion, or towards consideration of how language is used to amuse, not necessarily for purposes of sincerity. Successful answers often focused on Wilde's use of costume and gesture as a means of placing characters. The best answers were able to characterise the slightly barbed use of language ('You don't call that leading an idle life, do you?') and exaggerated politeness. Surprisingly few responses engaged with the exchange between Mrs Cheveley and Lady Chiltern, and thus with the dramatic ironies of the last line of the passage. Wilde's plays are often described as comedies of manners, so it was a shame that the conventions and subversions of manners displayed here were not more fully understood. Weaker answers often simply wrote character descriptions, or narrated what happens.

LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

Paper 9695/51
Shakespeare and
Other pre-20th
Century Texts

Key Messages

- Candidates should limit the amount of time spent on planning and should avoid general introductory paragraphs.
- Candidates should develop an understanding of dramatic conventions through their study of Shakespeare in order to support their interpretations.
- Candidates should be able to support their arguments with apposite quotation when discussing a text from any genre.

General Comments

The general standard was satisfactory with nearly all candidates showing at least a sound knowledge of the set texts. There were very few rubric errors though there was a noticeable increase in the number of candidates with timing problems. The quality of expression was also acceptable in nearly every case, although a few candidates demonstrated some difficulties with the language which can impede communication at this level.

The three new texts in their second session were popular choices and the candidates' work indicated genuine engagement with, and enjoyment of, these texts. This was the last session for *The Changeling* and its disappearance signals the end of the drama choice in section B of the paper. Centres should note that from June 2015, section A, as before, will have two Shakespeare texts but section B will only have poetry and prose options.

There are three specific issues to be addressed from this session:

1. Candidates are encouraged to spend some time in planning their answers. However, in this session a number of candidates failed to complete their second essay, partly as a result of over planning; in the most extreme cases notes extended to some 3 sides per essay. This led to a lack of time to complete the second essay. This issue was compounded for a few candidates by the unhelpful addition of very general opening paragraphs, often summarising the author's life or the history of the text more generally. It is important that candidates make best use of the time available and allocate only a short amount of time to planning before beginning their essays, remembering to avoid general opening paragraphs.
2. Some candidates are hampered in their responses on plays by having little understanding of dramatic conventions. This often leads to a more general interpretation of the text and, at worst, can seriously undermine the candidate's response. Two examples in the current session were the assumption of a homoerotic relationship between Celia and Rosalind, when discussing the passage from *As You Like It*; this prevented some candidates from exploring the full meaning of the passage and its significance to the wider text. Candidates answering on *The Changeling* passage were at times inclined to interpret the events as 'a real life situation' rather than as part of a dramatic construct. This distraction prevented some answers from exploring the detail of the dramatic effects sufficiently.
3. Candidates who are able to quote effectively to support arguments on their Shakespearean text are sometimes less able to support their arguments precisely when discussing a novel. This can lead to candidates offering rather generalised opinions which are vaguely supported from the text or supported by a lengthy summary of a relevant event. It would help these candidates to make their

points more succinctly and precisely if they were able to quote from the novel with the same facility they show with their Shakespeare text.

Comments on Specific Questions

Question 1

William Shakespeare: *As You Like It*

- (a) This was the less popular choice of question on this text. Most candidates accepted the quotation without challenge, though some did develop well-structured arguments showing how, by use of contrast and dramatic effects, Shakespeare both supports and undermines this view. Nearly all candidates were able to discuss the different lovers, with weaker answers giving a summary of relevant events chosen to show that 'love is folly'. Better answers were able to contrast the different lovers and explore how Shakespeare develops character and theme through the contrasts and the changing relationships; with a few answers able to consider both pastoral and comic conventions. Candidates who considered the idea of 'presentation' through the lovers' words and actions often did very well, particularly where this characterisation was linked to analysis of the language and supported by well-chosen examples from the text.
- (b) This was a very popular choice for this text. Nearly every answer could find relevant points about Rosalind and Celia, with weaker answers tending to paraphrase the passage or summarising the relationship in the text as whole. Better answers considered the context, exploring the significance of Duke Frederick's words and the escape to the forest. Many answers noted the change in tone after the Duke's exit and also the different roles of the two girls here, with some answers developing these ideas thoughtfully to consider the wider text. More sophisticated answers explored the language and imagery in detail, noting for example how disguise, literal and metaphorical, is a key aspect within the text as a whole and particularly in this passage. Answers which developed this into considering the dramatic effects often did very well.

Question 2

William Shakespeare: *Coriolanus*

- (a) This was not a popular choice of text or question. Weaker answers tended to narrate the events in Rome, with some able to explore the key roles of Coriolanus and the Tribunes. Better answers saw this as one of a number of areas of conflict in the play, with more sophisticated answers showing how these conflicts were dramatically structured around the role of Coriolanus. Other answers tended to focus more on the characterisation of Coriolanus, as developed through this conflict, with some good answers noting the violent and humorous dramatic effects created by Shakespeare; when supported by apposite quotation such approaches often did very well.
- (b) This was the more popular choice on the text. Nearly every answer recognised the context for this passage. Weaker answers tended to narrate the events in a detailed paraphrase or recounted a more general 'history' of Coriolanus's role in the wider text. Better answers noted the effects of Coriolanus's modesty - seen by some candidates as an affectation- his presentation as a successful warrior and a popular leader; developing this into a consideration of his role in the wider text. Answers which focused on the detail of the language, such as the undercutting simplicity of 'go wash my face' and considered the effects on the audience, often did very well.

Question 3

Jane Austen: *Sense and Sensibility*

- (a) This was a popular choice. Nearly every answer found relevant material and demonstrated a knowledge of the basics of the text. Many answers referred to Lucy and Edward as the key secret in the text, though other answers discussed Willoughby's many 'secrets' and the role of Brandon and Elinor, in revealing and keeping secrets. Better answers considered how Austen developed characterisation through these plot devices. Other good answers also explored the more metaphorical or symbolic use of secrets many candidates thought Marianne and, some saw Elinor, as characters who keep secrets from themselves. This was sometimes linked to the novel's concerns with the progress from 'sense' or 'sensibility' into a more balanced view of the world.

Those candidates who focused on the 'effects' in terms of characterisation, concerns and themes often did very well.

- (b) Most answers recognised the context for this passage with weaker answers focussing on the narrative of Marianne's illness and its causes, as well as offering a summary of the passage. Better answers explored how Austen develops the reader's view of Elinor here, as a character and as both a sister and a daughter. Some discussed the domesticity of the scene and the contrasting emotions betrayed by Elinor, with more developed answers linking this into her role in the wider text, with supporting examples. More sophisticated answers explored the narrative structure, noting, for example, the use of pathetic fallacy, the shifting narrative voice and the use of time. Those answers which examined how tension is created and developed throughout the passage with the shock arrival of Willoughby at the end of the extract, often did very well. Some 'very good' answers linked these ideas to the methods and concerns of the wider text.

Question 4

Geoffrey Chaucer: *The Wife of Bath's Prologue and Tale*

- (a) This was a reasonably popular text this session. Weaker candidates were able to summarise the wife's five marriages and in many cases also the marriages in the *Tale*. Some were able to consider how these examples were used to present the 'wo' in marriage. Better answers often explored the conflict between the wife's desire to be married and her desire for 'maistrie', with some noting how Chaucer contrasted attitudes in the *Prologue* and in the *Tale* to create 'a fuller picture of the different aspects of marriage.' Some answers explored the different kinds of 'wo' on view such as: violence, sexual domination and domestic politics. Other candidates considered the role of religion and crucially, for some, the absence of children. Sophisticated answers which developed interpretations by considering the poetic techniques and voices employed by Chaucer and supported their views with apposite quotation often did very well.
- (b) This was the minority choice on the text, but nearly all candidates demonstrated a sound knowledge of the text. Weaker answers tended to paraphrase the passage or offer a summary of the prologue more generally. More successful answers considered the impact of the dialogue between the Pardoner and Alison, noting its dramatic quality. Some candidates explored the effects of Alison's honesty about her intentions, her role as the 'whippe' and even of her 'apology' at the end of the passage. More sophisticated answers considered the language and tone in detail and explored the impact of the concerns revealed on the rest of the Prologue and the Tale.

Question 5

George Eliot: *The Mill on the Floss*

- (a) This was a minority choice of text and this was the least popular option. Most answers agreed with the proposition, at least in part. Weaker candidates tended to summarise relevant events, often focussing on Tom and his father, with some developing a view of this more positive relationship by contrasting it with Tom's attitudes to Maggie. Better answers saw 'a sense of duty' in the characters of the Dodsons and also Mrs Tulliver, noting for example, how she supports Maggie in her hour of need. Answers which considered 'Eliot's presentation' in more detail by exploring language and imagery, as well as narrative methods and characterisation, often did very well.
- (b) This was the more popular option on this text. 'Basic' answers tended to paraphrase the content of the passage, with a summary of the relationship between Maggie and Philip and to a lesser extent, between Tom and Philip; both in the passage and in the wider novel. Better answers considered Eliot's methods of characterisation, considering how the young characters here reflect the traits that will drive the plot later, with some candidates noting how Maggie's childish affection for Philip has tragic repercussions which, the closing exchange between the Tulliver family clearly signals. More sophisticated answers were able to support these arguments with analysis of the language and narrative techniques, noting for example the change of scene at the end of the passage and the use of dialogue alongside the omniscient narrator's voice in the final paragraph. When firmly placed in the context of the wider text, such answers often did very well.

Question 6

Thomas Hardy: *Return of the Native*

- (a) This was not a popular text in this session. Most agreed with the proposition in the question. 'Basic' answers were able to summarise in detail some of the more obvious marriages, such as Wildeva/Thomasin and Clym/Eustacia. Better answers focused on how these marriages are presented as disappointing and bleak, through the use of contrast in narrative voice and language. Most thought Hardy had a 'rather despairing and unhappy view of relationships generally and marriage in particular', though others thought that the final coming together of the 'loyal and self sacrificing Venn' and the 'gentle, faithful Thomasin' ought to be seen as a 'comment on the selfishness of the other disappointed or even dead couples.' Such arguments when supported by apposite quotation often did very well.
- (b) Most answers were able to give a clear context for this passage. Nearly all candidates were able to retell the history of Venn's relationship with Eustacia in detail. Better answers related that to the detail of this passage, some noting, for example, how Hardy moves the narrative focus from Clym to Thomasin, but not Venn. More sophisticated answers explored the language and imagery in more detail, noting, for example, the tone of Thomasin's comments or how Hardy deftly reveals the underlying social etiquette, by Venn's movement to the kitchen. Some candidates linked this extract to key moments in the rest of the novel: referring to Thomasin's letter to Venn or Mrs Yeobright's caustic question as to why Venn had given up dairy farming in the first place; when using accurate quotation, these answers often did very well.

John Keats: *Selected Poems*

- (a) This text was not a popular choice in this session. Many concentrated on the Odes, with 'Bright Star', 'When I have fears' and 'To Sleep' also being popular choices for discussion. Candidates who did less well gave answers which were sometimes tempted into biographical speculation, often this was not linked to the poems and some tended to paraphrase the poems. Additionally, the relevance of the selections to the question tended to determine the success of the essay. Better answers noted that the presentation of death and dying often revealed Keats's poetic concerns: life, immortality, beauty, poetry and art, nature and imagination were all discussed and often supported with telling reference to the poems. Many of these answers noted how Keats wants to 'escape death through the permanence of art and poetry.' The most successful answers developed these interpretations and arguments by exploring the poetic methods, with consistent use of supporting quotation.
- (b) This question was much less popular. 'Basic' answers tended to paraphrase the poem, without considering the methods and concerns. Better answers linked the concerns here to the wider canon, such as the Odes or 'When I have fears.' Increasingly, 'competent' candidates were able to explore poetic methods in language, structure and form. More sophisticated answers analysed the effects of the poetic choices: the sense of wonder and revelation, as well as explaining the underlying metaphor of geographic exploration, which reveals Keats's poetic horizons. These interpretations were successful when supported by apposite quotation from the wider text, as well as detailed analysis of the given poem.

Thomas Middleton: *The Changeling*

- (a) This text was very much a minority choice. Nearly every answer was able to explore relevant parts of the play, with many concentrating on Beatrice and De Flores and their attempts to preserve their honour and what their attitudes to honour reveal. Better answers were able to see how the dramatic structure developed ideas about honour through the contrasting voices – the different attitudes to Beatrice for example. Candidates who remembered the subplot and discussed the contrasting presentations of Beatrice and Isabella often did very well. 'Very good' answers explored honour in the abstract, often noting the different kinds of honour revealed in the play and the effects created by the different attitudes to it.
- (b) This was not a popular choice. 'Basic' answers tended to paraphrase the passage or summarise the events leading up to this dramatic moment. Better answers explored the developing relationship of Beatrice and De Flores, some contrasting the 'almost tenderness of Beatrice with the rough practicality of De Flores.' Some candidates developed interpretations by considering the dramatic action and its effects in detail; though only a few answers explored the effect of the

appearance of Alonzo's ghost and the reactions of Beatrice and De Flores at this point in the play. More sophisticated answers were also able to develop the analysis of the language and tone, noting, for example, the irony of Beatrice calling her maid a 'strumpet' and how the comment 'Your reward follows you' reveals the bond between the two lovers, with the unsettling effect of Alsemero's tenderness to Beatrice at this point.

LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

Paper 9695/52
Shakespeare and
Other pre-20th
Century Texts

Key Messages

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General Comments

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There are three specific issues to be addressed from this session:

1. Candidates are encouraged to spend some time in planning their answers. However, in this session a number of candidates failed to complete their second essay, partly as a result of over planning; in the most extreme cases notes extended to some 3 sides per essay. This led to a lack of time to complete the second essay. This issue was compounded for a few candidates by the unhelpful addition of very general opening paragraphs, often summarising the author's life or the history of the text more generally. It is important that candidates make best use of the time available and allocate only a short amount of time to planning before beginning their essays, remembering to avoid general opening paragraphs.
2. Some candidates are hampered in their responses on plays by having little understanding of dramatic conventions. This often leads to a more general interpretation of the text and, at worst, can seriously undermine the candidate's response. Two examples in the current session were the assumption of a homoerotic relationship between Celia and Rosalind, when discussing the passage from *As You Like It*; this prevented some candidates from exploring the full meaning of the passage and its significance to the wider text. Candidates answering on *The Changeling* passage were at times inclined to interpret the events as 'a real life situation' rather than as part of a dramatic construct. This distraction prevented some answers from exploring the detail of the dramatic effects sufficiently.
3. Candidates who are able to quote effectively to support arguments on their Shakespearean text are sometimes less able to support their arguments precisely when discussing a novel. This can lead to candidates offering rather generalised opinions which are vaguely supported from the text or supported by a lengthy summary of a relevant event. It would help these candidates to make their

points more succinctly and precisely if they were able to quote from the novel with the same facility they show with their Shakespeare text.

Comments on Specific Questions

Question 1

William Shakespeare: *As You Like It*

- (a) This was the less popular choice of question on this text. Most candidates accepted the quotation without challenge, though some did develop well-structured arguments showing how, by use of contrast and dramatic effects, Shakespeare both supports and undermines this view. Nearly all candidates were able to discuss the different lovers, with weaker answers giving a summary of relevant events chosen to show that 'love is folly'. Better answers were able to contrast the different lovers and explore how Shakespeare develops character and theme through the contrasts and the changing relationships; with a few answers able to consider both pastoral and comic conventions. Candidates who considered the idea of 'presentation' through the lovers' words and actions often did very well, particularly where this characterisation was linked to analysis of the language and supported by well-chosen examples from the text.
- (b) This was a very popular choice for this text. Nearly every answer could find relevant points about Rosalind and Celia, with weaker answers tending to paraphrase the passage or summarising the relationship in the text as whole. Better answers considered the context, exploring the significance of Duke Frederick's words and the escape to the forest. Many answers noted the change in tone after the Duke's exit and also the different roles of the two girls here, with some answers developing these ideas thoughtfully to consider the wider text. More sophisticated answers explored the language and imagery in detail, noting for example how disguise, literal and metaphorical, is a key aspect within the text as a whole and particularly in this passage. Answers which developed this into considering the dramatic effects often did very well.

Question 2

William Shakespeare: *Coriolanus*

- (a) This was not a popular choice of text or question. Weaker answers tended to narrate the events in Rome, with some able to explore the key roles of Coriolanus and the Tribunes. Better answers saw this as one of a number of areas of conflict in the play, with more sophisticated answers showing how these conflicts were dramatically structured around the role of Coriolanus. Other answers tended to focus more on the characterisation of Coriolanus, as developed through this conflict, with some good answers noting the violent and humorous dramatic effects created by Shakespeare; when supported by apposite quotation such approaches often did very well.
- (b) This was the more popular choice on the text. Nearly every answer recognised the context for this passage. Weaker answers tended to narrate the events in a detailed paraphrase or recounted a more general 'history' of Coriolanus's role in the wider text. Better answers noted the effects of Coriolanus's modesty - seen by some candidates as an affectation- his presentation as a successful warrior and a popular leader; developing this into a consideration of his role in the wider text. Answers which focused on the detail of the language, such as the undercutting simplicity of 'go wash my face' and considered the effects on the audience, often did very well.

Question 3

Jane Austen: *Sense and Sensibility*

- (a) This was a popular choice. Nearly every answer found relevant material and demonstrated a knowledge of the basics of the text. Many answers referred to Lucy and Edward as the key secret in the text, though other answers discussed Willoughby's many 'secrets' and the role of Brandon and Elinor, in revealing and keeping secrets. Better answers considered how Austen developed characterisation through these plot devices. Other good answers also explored the more metaphorical or symbolic use of secrets many candidates thought Marianne and, some saw Elinor, as characters who keep secrets from themselves. This was sometimes linked to the novel's concerns with the progress from 'sense' or 'sensibility' into a more balanced view of the world.

Those candidates who focused on the 'effects' in terms of characterisation, concerns and themes often did very well.

- (b) Most answers recognised the context for this passage with weaker answers focussing on the narrative of Marianne's illness and its causes, as well as offering a summary of the passage. Better answers explored how Austen develops the reader's view of Elinor here, as a character and as both a sister and a daughter. Some discussed the domesticity of the scene and the contrasting emotions betrayed by Elinor, with more developed answers linking this into her role in the wider text, with supporting examples. More sophisticated answers explored the narrative structure, noting, for example, the use of pathetic fallacy, the shifting narrative voice and the use of time. Those answers which examined how tension is created and developed throughout the passage with the shock arrival of Willoughby at the end of the extract, often did very well. Some 'very good' answers linked these ideas to the methods and concerns of the wider text.

Question 4

Geoffrey Chaucer: *The Wife of Bath's Prologue and Tale*

- (a) This was a reasonably popular text this session. Weaker candidates were able to summarise the wife's five marriages and in many cases also the marriages in the *Tale*. Some were able to consider how these examples were used to present the 'wo' in marriage. Better answers often explored the conflict between the wife's desire to be married and her desire for 'maistrie', with some noting how Chaucer contrasted attitudes in the *Prologue* and in the *Tale* to create 'a fuller picture of the different aspects of marriage.' Some answers explored the different kinds of 'wo' on view such as: violence, sexual domination and domestic politics. Other candidates considered the role of religion and crucially, for some, the absence of children. Sophisticated answers which developed interpretations by considering the poetic techniques and voices employed by Chaucer and supported their views with apposite quotation often did very well.
- (b) This was the minority choice on the text, but nearly all candidates demonstrated a sound knowledge of the text. Weaker answers tended to paraphrase the passage or offer a summary of the prologue more generally. More successful answers considered the impact of the dialogue between the Pardoner and Alison, noting its dramatic quality. Some candidates explored the effects of Alison's honesty about her intentions, her role as the 'whippe' and even of her 'apology' at the end of the passage. More sophisticated answers considered the language and tone in detail and explored the impact of the concerns revealed on the rest of the Prologue and the Tale.

Question 5

George Eliot: *The Mill on the Floss*

- (a) This was a minority choice of text and this was the least popular option. Most answers agreed with the proposition, at least in part. Weaker candidates tended to summarise relevant events, often focussing on Tom and his father, with some developing a view of this more positive relationship by contrasting it with Tom's attitudes to Maggie. Better answers saw 'a sense of duty' in the characters of the Dodsons and also Mrs Tulliver, noting for example, how she supports Maggie in her hour of need. Answers which considered 'Eliot's presentation' in more detail by exploring language and imagery, as well as narrative methods and characterisation, often did very well.
- (b) This was the more popular option on this text. 'Basic' answers tended to paraphrase the content of the passage, with a summary of the relationship between Maggie and Philip and to a lesser extent, between Tom and Philip; both in the passage and in the wider novel. Better answers considered Eliot's methods of characterisation, considering how the young characters here reflect the traits that will drive the plot later, with some candidates noting how Maggie's childish affection for Philip has tragic repercussions which, the closing exchange between the Tulliver family clearly signals. More sophisticated answers were able to support these arguments with analysis of the language and narrative techniques, noting for example the change of scene at the end of the passage and the use of dialogue alongside the omniscient narrator's voice in the final paragraph. When firmly placed in the context of the wider text, such answers often did very well.

Question 6

Thomas Hardy: *Return of the Native*

- (a) This was not a popular text in this session. Most agreed with the proposition in the question. 'Basic' answers were able to summarise in detail some of the more obvious marriages, such as Wildeva/Thomasin and Clym/Eustacia. Better answers focused on how these marriages are presented as disappointing and bleak, through the use of contrast in narrative voice and language. Most thought Hardy had a 'rather despairing and unhappy view of relationships generally and marriage in particular', though others thought that the final coming together of the 'loyal and self sacrificing Venn' and the 'gentle, faithful Thomasin' ought to be seen as a 'comment on the selfishness of the other disappointed or even dead couples.' Such arguments when supported by apposite quotation often did very well.
- (b) Most answers were able to give a clear context for this passage. Nearly all candidates were able to retell the history of Venn's relationship with Eustacia in detail. Better answers related that to the detail of this passage, some noting, for example, how Hardy moves the narrative focus from Clym to Thomasin, but not Venn. More sophisticated answers explored the language and imagery in more detail, noting, for example, the tone of Thomasin's comments or how Hardy deftly reveals the underlying social etiquette, by Venn's movement to the kitchen. Some candidates linked this extract to key moments in the rest of the novel: referring to Thomasin's letter to Venn or Mrs Yeobright's caustic question as to why Venn had given up dairy farming in the first place; when using accurate quotation, these answers often did very well.

John Keats: *Selected Poems*

- (a) This text was not a popular choice in this session. Many concentrated on the Odes, with 'Bright Star', 'When I have fears' and 'To Sleep' also being popular choices for discussion. Candidates who did less well gave answers which were sometimes tempted into biographical speculation, often this was not linked to the poems and some tended to paraphrase the poems. Additionally, the relevance of the selections to the question tended to determine the success of the essay. Better answers noted that the presentation of death and dying often revealed Keats's poetic concerns: life, immortality, beauty, poetry and art, nature and imagination were all discussed and often supported with telling reference to the poems. Many of these answers noted how Keats wants to 'escape death through the permanence of art and poetry.' The most successful answers developed these interpretations and arguments by exploring the poetic methods, with consistent use of supporting quotation.
- (b) This question was much less popular. 'Basic' answers tended to paraphrase the poem, without considering the methods and concerns. Better answers linked the concerns here to the wider canon, such as the Odes or 'When I have fears.' Increasingly, 'competent' candidates were able to explore poetic methods in language, structure and form. More sophisticated answers analysed the effects of the poetic choices: the sense of wonder and revelation, as well as explaining the underlying metaphor of geographic exploration, which reveals Keats's poetic horizons. These interpretations were successful when supported by apposite quotation from the wider text, as well as detailed analysis of the given poem.

Thomas Middleton: *The Changeling*

- (a) This text was very much a minority choice. Nearly every answer was able to explore relevant parts of the play, with many concentrating on Beatrice and De Flores and their attempts to preserve their honour and what their attitudes to honour reveal. Better answers were able to see how the dramatic structure developed ideas about honour through the contrasting voices – the different attitudes to Beatrice for example. Candidates who remembered the subplot and discussed the contrasting presentations of Beatrice and Isabella often did very well. 'Very good' answers explored honour in the abstract, often noting the different kinds of honour revealed in the play and the effects created by the different attitudes to it.
- (b) This was not a popular choice. 'Basic' answers tended to paraphrase the passage or summarise the events leading up to this dramatic moment. Better answers explored the developing relationship of Beatrice and De Flores, some contrasting the 'almost tenderness of Beatrice with the rough practicality of De Flores.' Some candidates developed interpretations by considering the dramatic action and its effects in detail; though only a few answers explored the effect of the

appearance of Alonzo's ghost and the reactions of Beatrice and De Flores at this point in the play. More sophisticated answers were also able to develop the analysis of the language and tone, noting, for example, the irony of Beatrice calling her maid a 'strumpet' and how the comment 'Your reward follows you' reveals the bond between the two lovers, with the unsettling effect of Alsemero's tenderness to Beatrice at this point.

LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

Paper 9695/53
Shakespeare and
Other Pre-20th
Century Texts

Key Messages

- Candidates should limit the amount of time spent on planning and should avoid general introductory paragraphs.
- Candidates should develop an understanding of dramatic conventions through their study of Shakespeare to help support their interpretations.
- Candidates should be able to support their arguments with apposite quotation when discussing a text from any genre, including the novel.

General Comments

The general standard was satisfactory with nearly all candidates showing at least a sound knowledge of the set texts. There were very few rubric errors though there was a noticeable increase in the number of candidates with timing problems. The quality of expression was also acceptable in nearly every case, although a few candidates demonstrate some difficulties with the language which can impede communication at this level.

The three new texts in their second session were popular choices and the candidates' work indicated genuine engagement with, and enjoyment of, these texts. This was the last session for *The Changeling* and its disappearance signals the end of the drama choice in section B of the paper. Centres should note that from June 2015, section A, as before, will have two Shakespeare texts but section B will only have poetry and prose options.

There are three specific issues to be addressed from this session:

1. Candidates are encouraged to spend some time in planning their answers. However, in this session a number of candidates failed to complete their second essay, partly as a result of over planning, in the most extreme cases notes extended to some 3 sides per essay. This led to a lack of time to complete the second essay, compounded for a few candidates by the unhelpful addition of very general opening paragraphs, often summarising the author's life or the history of the text more generally. It is important that candidates make best use of the time available and should allocate only a short amount of time to planning before beginning their essays, remembering to avoid general opening paragraphs.
2. Some candidates are hampered in their responses on plays by having little understanding of dramatic conventions. This often leads to a more general interpretation of the text and at worst, can seriously undermine the candidate's response. Two examples in the current session were the assumption of a homoerotic relationship between Celia and Rosalind, when discussing the passage from *As You Like It*; this prevented some candidates from exploring the full meaning of the passage and its significance to the wider text. Candidates answering on *The Changeling* passage were at times inclined to interpret the events as 'a real life situation' rather than as part of a dramatic construct. This distraction prevented some answers from exploring the detail of the dramatic effects sufficiently.
3. Candidates who are able to quote effectively to support arguments on their Shakespeare text are sometimes less able to support their arguments precisely when discussing a novel. This can lead to candidates offering rather generalised opinions which are vaguely supported from the text or supported by a lengthy summary of a relevant event. It would help these candidates to make their

points more succinctly and precisely if they were able to quote from the novel with the same facility they show with their Shakespeare text.

Comments on Specific Questions

Question 1

William Shakespeare: *As You Like It*

- (a) This question was a popular choice on this text. Nearly all candidates were able to discuss the different pairs of lovers, with 'basic' answers giving a summary of each relationship and more successful arguments identifying appropriate contrasts and comparisons. Better answers saw how the structure of the play was linked into the developing relationships, with more sophisticated answers showing an understanding of pastoral and comic conventions. Candidates who explored the idea of 'presentation', examining the lovers' words and actions and using them to develop ideas about characterisation often did very well. 'Very good' answers developed these interpretations linking them to analysis of language, imagery or theme and supported them with well chosen examples from the text.
- (b) This was the less popular choice for this text. Nearly every answer could find relevant points about Touchstone to discuss from the given passage, with many candidates also able to link these points into his role in the wider text. Weaker answers tended to paraphrase the passage or to summarise Touchstone's role more generally, without sufficient attention to the detail of the given passage. Candidates who paid close attention to the prompts in the question and explored how Shakespeare creates comic effects through his choice of language, imagery and tone, often did very well.

Question 2

William Shakespeare: *Coriolanus*

- (a) This was a popular choice of text and question. Nearly every answer had relevant knowledge of the essential material: the class 'war' in Rome, the politics between the Volscians and the Romans and the significance of Coriolanus, Aufidius and the Tribunes. Many candidates also noted Shakespeare's rather negative presentation of politicians. Other answers saw 'domestic politics in the relationship between Volumnia and her son', noting how they influenced the civil politics of Rome itself. Better answers often discussed how politics was contrasted with war, focussing on Coriolanus and Tullus Aufidius, to highlight how Shakespeare creates the tension in the play. Other answers discussed the contrasting politicians in the patrician and plebeian ranks, often comparing Menenius and the Tribunes.
- (b) This was a minority choice on the text. Nearly every answer recognised the context for this passage. Weaker answers narrated the events in a detailed paraphrase or recounted a more general 'history' of Coriolanus's role in the wider text. Better answers saw how the action and language here creates a complex picture of Coriolanus 'in his natural habitat, the battlefield' – a great warrior and leader, but essentially simple and rash. These answers often showed good knowledge of the wider text, with many candidates exploring the ways the linguistic clues in the passage show 'how the military man revealed here was doomed to failure in peace time.' Answers which focussed on the detail of the language, as well as exploring the dramatic action, and considered the effects on the audience often did very well.

Question 3

Jane Austen: *Sense and Sensibility*

- (a) This was a popular choice with most agreeing with the quotation. Nearly every answer referred to Lucy and Edward, Willoughby's many 'secrets' and the role of Brandon and Elinor, in revealing and keeping secrets. Better answers developed these ideas into considering how Austen developed characterisation through these plot devices. Other good answers also explored the more metaphorical or symbolic use of secrets – many candidates thought Marianne (and even Elinor) kept secrets from themselves; sometimes linking this to the novel's concerns with the progress from 'sense' or 'sensibility', into a more balanced view of the world. This, together with Austen's narrative structures and use of language, was often discussed as a one of the novelist's basic tools of characterisation and when supported with apposite quotation often did very well.

- (b) Most answers recognised the context for this passage and explored how Austen introduces new characters to the reader. 'Basic' answers narrated events up to this point in the novel; however some, better answers, were able to show why the introduction of these characters was significant at this point. Some candidates further developed these ideas, exploring the ways in which, what was revealed about the characters here shaped the events of the novel later. 'Competent' answers considered characterisation in detail, examining the language and tone; often focussing on the presentation of Mrs Jennings and Colonel Brandon here, some candidates effectively explored the use of different narrative voices. More sophisticated answers identified the narrative techniques and the ways in which Austen blurs the lines between the omniscient narrator and free indirect discourse. Some answers detected the views of Marianne in the descriptions of Jennings and Brandon, noting how, as with so much else in the novel, 'her rash first impressions turn out to be misguided'.

Question 4

Geoffrey Chaucer: *The Wife of Bath's Prologue and Tale*

- (a) This was a popular text with most candidates agreeing with the proposition in the question. Nearly every answer identified Alison's view of marriage; which was considered for some candidates as very selfish. Candidates were generally able to cite examples from her five marriages and, in a pleasing number of cases, referred in detail to the Tale as well. Better answers considered 'Chaucer's presentation' and discussed both the structure and the narrative voices of the text, with some sophisticated answers exploring the narrative layering at work in the Tale. Candidates able to support their arguments with analysis of language and imagery and with quotation from the Prologue and Tale often did very well.
- (b) This was the minority choice on the text, but nearly all candidates demonstrated a sound knowledge of the text. Weaker answers tended to paraphrase the passage or offer a summary of the prologue more generally. More successful answers examined how Alison's characterisation is developed here through her attitudes to virginity and sex and linked this to the concerns of the Prologue and less frequently the Tale. More sophisticated answers referred to the language and imagery and the effects created, as well as to different audiences, some sophisticated answers argued that a modern reader's response to Alison's attitudes might be very different to Chaucer's contemporary audience.

Question 5

George Eliot: *The Mill on the Floss*

- (a) Nearly all answers could discuss relevantly and often in great detail the events of the childhoods of Maggie and Tom, with better answers showing how childhood in the abstract is presented. Some candidates noted how 'these early relationships develop a past which will cast its shadow over the future', especially focussing on Maggie and Tom; noting the sensitive use of 'Maggsie' in the boat at the end to remind the reader of their childhood days. Others referred to Maggie's childish kiss for Philip Wakem and how that conceived a relationship that was to create the conflict in the Tulliver household. More sophisticated answers saw Lucy and Maggie as symbols of the tensions between the Dodsons and Tullivers; with some linking this to the themes of education and the development of ideas about family and friendship.
- (b) This was a less popular option, with weaker answers tending to paraphrase the content of the passage, summarising the relationship between Bob and Tom, here and elsewhere in the novel. Better answers considered Eliot's methods of characterisation, noting how the boyish traits revealed here, were developed later in the novel, often citing Bob's natural shrewdness and Tom's bullying and, for many, sense of fairness. More sophisticated answers linked this to the language and dialogue here and elsewhere in the novel, and, when supporting arguments with succinct quotation, often did very well.

Question 6

Thomas Hardy: *Return of the Native*

- (a) This was not a popular text in this session. 'Basic' answers were able to summarise in detail some of the more obvious marriages, such as Wildeve/Thomasin and Clym/Eustacia. Better answers focussed on how these marriages are presented, through Hardy's use of narrative voice, language and contrast. Most thought Hardy had a 'rather despairing and unhappy view of relationships generally and marriage in particular', though others thought that the final coming together of the 'loyal and self sacrificing Venn' and the 'gentle, faithful Thomasin' ought to be seen as a 'comment on the selfishness of the other disappointed or even dead couples'. Such arguments, when supported by apposite quotation, often did very well.
- (b) There were very few responses to this question. Most candidates were able to retell the history of Wildeve's relationship with Eustacia in detail. Better answers related that to the detail of this passage, some noting how Hardy here gives the reader an 'insight into Wildeve's inner voice'. More sophisticated answers explored the language and imagery in more detail, noting, for example, the use of pathetic fallacy, as well as the quickening of the narrative pace as the doomed couple's tragic end neared. When supported by well chosen references to Wildeve's role in the wider text, such arguments often did very well.

John Keats: *Selected Poems*

- (a) This was a very popular choice in this session with nearly every answer agreeing with the proposition in the question. Many concentrated on the great Odes although 'Bright star', 'When I have fears' and 'To Sleep' were also popular choices. Some weaker answers tended to paraphrase the poems, with the relevance of the selections to the question determining the success of the essay. Better answers noted how his interest in death and dying were connected to other concerns: life, immortality, beauty, poetry and art, nature and imagination were all discussed and often supported with telling reference to the poems. Many of these answers noted how Keats wants to 'escape death through the permanence of art and poetry.' The most successful answers developed these interpretations and arguments by exploring the poetic methods Keats uses.
- (b) This was much less popular. Some answers were not able to put the extract into the wider context of the poem or explore Keats's other poems, but were able, for the most part, to give a paraphrase of the key ideas. Better answers noted the yearning tone, especially for 'personified poesy and his self doubts', which some good answers noted were repeated in many poems such as the Odes and 'On Looking into Chapman's Homer'. More sophisticated answers explored the references to the mystical and magical imagery, noting the 'common Keatsian theme of immortality and longing for it through poetic imagination'. Language and imagery were often explored in detail and, when linked to relevant quotation from other poems, often provided 'proficient' answers.

Thomas Middleton: *The Changeling*

- (a) This text was a minority choice. Nearly every answer was able to explore relevant parts of the play, with many concentrating on Beatrice and De Flores and particularly the devices the characters employed to preserve Beatrice's reputation. Better answers were able to see how the dramatic structure developed this theme through contrasting voices – the different attitudes to Beatrice for example – as well as the use of the subplot. Candidates who remembered the subplot and discussed the contrasting presentations of Beatrice and Isabella often did very well. More sophisticated answers explored the concepts in the abstract, noting how nearly every character can be seen as 'The Changeling' and in most cases because of a shift in their reputation.
- (b) This was not a popular choice. The 'basic' answers here tended to paraphrase the passage or summarise the relationship between Alsemero and Beatrice. Better answers noted Beatrice's changeability in her reaction to the two men. Those who remembered her as being betrothed often commented on the inappropriateness of her talk with Alsemero; as well as her unreasoning reaction to De Flores, characterising her as selfish and fickle, or emotional and independent depending on interpretation. More sophisticated answers noted the imagery of sight and blindness, applicable in different ways to all three characters, but especially Beatrice. Such approaches when supported by reference to the wider text often did very well.

LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

Paper 9695/61
20th Century Writing

Key Messages

- To do well at A Level, candidates need to demonstrate that they have done a close reading of the text, so that they can offer a thorough analysis of a writer's methods and concerns. Summarising plot, describing characters, or explaining ideas in the text will not enable them to be rewarded highly.
- Candidates must read questions carefully and shape their knowledge to the task.
- Candidates also need to study the mark scheme and practise writing structured essays. The biggest discriminator between candidates' responses is the quality of understanding shown in the critical appreciation of how a writer shapes a reader's response.

General comments

All questions were accessible though there was, at times, some misinterpretation of their requirements. On **(b)** questions particularly, there was the tendency to focus exclusively on the passage. This often restricted discussion to the significance of specific concerns or details and ignored the extent to which an extract might be 'characteristic'. The minority choosing to do the **(a)** questions often seemed to be more successful in structuring a substantial argument, using well chosen illustrative scenes or pertinent quotations to support views. In the best essays each paragraph signalled a new stage in a coherent argument. However, less secure responses depended upon narrative commentary; which often prevented the development of a personal, critically informed discussion. Candidates should be aware of the number of stories or poems to be used and remember that no additional marks are awarded for referencing a vast number of stories or poems: it is the depth of their discussion which is more significant.

Well organised and competent essays tended to come from those who showed evidence of planning their responses to the question in their opening paragraph, by focusing and sometimes defining the key terms of the question, including a consideration of the instructive phrases such as: 'By what means and with what effects...' Less well-focused introductions were often the result of recalling generalised biographical and contextual details not always relevant to the question. Candidates should be encouraged to use the opening paragraph as an opportunity to establish a personal point of view or argument in relation to the question and explore ideas beyond a linear narrative approach; instead developing more critical, evaluative writing. Successful candidates identify a point, support it with some appropriate evidence and then, instead of just explaining to show an understanding of the meaning; explore how the writer conveys meaning and achieves effects. Reflective and exploratory reading can be shown by the use of evaluative adjectives so '*Stanley's words*' becomes '*Stanley's rude, menacing language*'. By using verbs such as: infers, implies, suggests and seems the sense of a personal or alternative textual reading is opened up and discussion of the text moves away from mere description or closed discussion.

The most impressive scripts offered substantive textual and contextual knowledge and detailed analysis of a range of literary methods and linguistic devices. Answers were also able to confidently discuss the effects of structure, the use of narrative point of view, symbolism, various means of presenting characters or creating dramatic effects including satire, irony, pathos and menace. There was some evidence of critical reading which in the best scripts was used to argue against, or to support a personal argument. Such scripts were often able to develop ideas to greater depth and displayed a genuine enthusiasm for literary appreciation. Many 'competent' responses also showed a sound understanding of content and ideas as well as strong personal response and enjoyment of the texts. Generally speaking, it seemed that care had been taken to match the ability and experiences of the candidates with the interests and intellectual demands of specific texts, although many found the Pinter very challenging. For some candidates there was not a clear distinction between a prose and drama text: both were thought of as books with readers and only a few wrote commentaries which showed a clear awareness of plays as dramatic spectacles. Overall, the standard of

expressive English was sound, with many candidates able to articulate complex ideas with originality, precision and assurance. Many of the scripts in the lower bands could express simple ideas clearly but some were compromised by a lack of coherence and cohesion in the structure of paragraphs and occasional lapses in fluency. Most candidates seemed able to manage their time well with the majority of candidates delivering two balanced essays and, only occasionally producing one.

Comments on Specific Questions

Question 1

Fleur Adcock: *Collected Poems*

This was not a popular choice of text, with the **(b)** question attracting the majority of responses.

- (a)** This question offered the opportunity to choose from a wide range of poems and candidates did better when they managed to generate an argument about Adcock's family concerns – such as death – using 'For Andrew', 'Toads' and 'Willow Creek' or relationships with children, using 'For Andrew', 'On a Son Returned to New Zealand' and 'Housetalk'. Better responses attempted to focus on the question and suggested some poetic methods such as the use of situations. Some candidates managed to capture a sense of the reflective, or humorous tone and occasionally discussed Adcock's delight in playing with the choice or positioning of specific words. Less sophisticated responses had some detailed knowledge of the poems and attempted to make some points of comparison between them; however they often relied on summaries rather than analysis and sometimes overinvested in biographical material.
- (b)** This question saw a greater range of successful responses with most candidates able to engage with the hardships of the voyage and the way Adcock presents Martha's practicality and resilience. Many commented on the structure of the poem; how the precision within the lists contribute to the factual tone and give a sense of distance, showing that this was the experience of many. Candidates also noted with the surprise that, through the introduction of a specific individual and some carefully placed words Adcock generates carefully controlled emotion in the second half. The best responses focused on the meaning of the words in specific phrases such as 'grudging grants' or 'capricious canvas' – rather than merely pointing out the use of alliteration - and showed sensitive insight into the effects of the language and rhythm in the final sentence. It would have been good to see more made of the use of rhyme within the poem. The challenge here was to use a close reading of the poem to bring out Adcock's characteristic poetic methods and make interesting links to the wider text. A few candidates were able to make relevant thematic links to Adcock's interest in her ancestors and briefly referred to 'Water', but they could have used many other poems to discuss Adcock's use of colloquial language and speech patterns, and the way she creates a variety of tones in her poems. It is often effective for candidates answering the **(b)** questions on poetry to think of a contrasting poem, in this case something much more personal like 'For Andrew' or 'Toads' or an argumentative poem like 'Regression' or 'Last Song' to give them a greater range for discussion in their response.

Question 2

W.H. Auden: *Selected Poems*

This was not a popular text this session with the majority of candidates opting for the **(b)** question.

- (a)** More successful attempts considered how Auden made use of the past in poems such as: 'Musée des Beaux Arts' 'Up There' and 'Old People's Home'. Some candidates argued a case for including 'Refugee Blues' because it is our shared past and 'In Memory of W.B. Yeats' -poems in which the poetic voice considers past experience to be 'Jumbled in the common box'. The best of these responded to the terms of the question and considered Auden's poetic methods: the use of situation, objects or myths, the variety in the poetic voice, his choice of language and control of rhythm and tone. However, the majority of the candidates who attempted this question wrote previously prepared essays on Time. Some were able to argue that the past always impacts on the present, you 'cannot conquer Time', but most offered summaries of poems some of which were tenuously linked to the question and did not support their answers to the question in sufficient depth.
- (b)** This question produced answers across the range and there were some very sensitive explorations of 'First Things First' though not many referred to the wider text to explore 'how far it is

characteristic' of poems in the selection. Given the number of poems about love, this was a curious omission. Some 'competent' responses tended to give an account of the poem with some feature-spotting such as the use of personification in the presentation of the storm and the morning, various examples of alliteration, and some competent discussion of the effects of language. Weaker responses restricted readings by trying to make the poem into a 'nature' poem or attempted to paraphrase. Good responses though, were constructed from a close reading of the poem. They considered the need to connect with the loved one in the imagination and showed how this was done using the storm, the memory of a 'day of peculiar silence' and the rueful rejection of romanticism in the last stanza. There was lots to say about Auden's language: the impact of the opening line, the simplicity of 'a storm enjoying its storminess', the wit of 'airy vowels and watery consonants..indicative of a Proper Name'; the hyperbolic, heroic view of the lover in the second stanza contrasted with the unromantic colloquial diction of: 'when a sneeze could be heard a mile off' and the practical realities of: 'So many cubic metres the more in my cistern.' The irony of the words 'first things first' coming at the end of the poem together with the structure and tone in the last line, lead some to suggest that Auden was subverting traditional love poems, it was also seen to represent an attempt to manage or squash passionate emotions.

Question 3

L.P. Hartley: *The Go-Between*

This was quite a popular text. Both questions produced answers across the range but generally speaking, candidates showed much more evidence of close reading, insight and literary appreciation in response to the (b) question than they did to the (a) question.

- (a) To do well, candidates needed to read the question carefully and think both about what Leo's relationships with other boys contributed to the meaning and effect of the novel and consider the narrative methods used to present these relationships. Better candidates considered the ways in which Leo's relationships with the boys at School and, with Marcus at Brandham Hall revealed aspects of his character. For example, his fear of being 'vanquished', his belief in his powers as a magician and his experience of 'the School code', as well as his sense of social inferiority and being a 'foreigner' in the world of emotions all helped to influence his behaviour and feelings at Branham Hall. A few good responses had detailed knowledge of the Prologue and were able to make insightful comments about the presentation of Leo's perception of himself through the diary and the reflections of the older Leo, as well as commenting on his tendency to live in a world of imagination. Less detailed responses explained the significance of the relationships in terms of the plot and could comment on Marcus's role as guide to the society of the upper classes at Brandham Hall. Very few considered how Leo's interactions with Marcus not only highlight Leo's youth, naivety and concern with social status but also, how the teasing makes him a more sympathetic character. Weaker responses did not think Leo had relationships with other boys and focused on class consciousness or interpreted the idea of 'boys' very broadly to include accounts of Leo's relationships with Trimingham, Ted and Mr Maudsley. Some answers showed detailed knowledge of the text but demonstrated difficulty in shaping it to the task and needed a wider range of evidence to draw upon to help support their interpretations.
- (b) Most candidates focused on how Hartley conveys the intensity of Leo's difficulties in this encounter with Marian. Good responses showed precise knowledge of the context, in particular the previous conversation with Trimingham about the fate of the fifth Viscount. They picked up on the various words used to show the impact on Leo when he realises the implications of Marian's engagement to Trimingham while 'still being friendly with another man' and contrasted the intensity of this with the self-conscious humour of his romantic vision of Marian on a 'grey palfrey' and the painful inadequacy of the word 'upset' at the end. The passage stimulated real appreciation for the use of symbolism - the thermometer, heat and mercury, in its various manifestations - the humour generated by the hyperbolic 'my imaginations which would swallow a camel' and the way Hartley creates the surprise and foreboding when Leo realises Marian is carrying a letter. Alert to the dual narrative perspective candidates found evidence of the retrospective narration. 'Competent' answers tended to explain the situation with some detailed knowledge and commented on what the passage revealed about Leo's character; also examining how Marion was presented as manipulating and exploiting Leo's anxiety to please, here and elsewhere in the text. Weaker responses either relied on narrative summary of the whole plot, or tried to paraphrase the passage and, in doing so, often unbalanced the essay by overinvesting in a few ideas such as Leo's belief that he could control the weather, his class consciousness, or Ted's suicide.

Question 4

Katherine Mansfield: *Selected Stories*

This is becoming a popular text. Candidates at all levels showed a lively interest in Mansfield's concerns and appreciation of the stories. In order to do well, candidates had to consider the terms of the questions carefully and select their material strategically. Both questions produced answers across the range with the passage proving to be the more popular choice. Unfortunately, many otherwise competent responses to the (b) question, restricted discussion to the passage, which limited the development of ideas about methods and concerns, leaving many potentially valid observations unsupported. Some weaker scripts showed an over-investment in biographical detail.

- (a) This question provoked several answers which were well focused on a discussion of narrative viewpoint. Some candidates showed good understanding of Mansfield's modernist techniques and drew on a range of stories to support their discussion. The most successful thought about how other characters supply an 'outsider's view' and made good use of: 'The Woman at the Store' and 'Je Ne Parle Pas Francais'. Some made use of 'Frau Brechenmacher Attends a Wedding' arguing that the Frau was an outsider in a patriarchal society and an observer at the wedding. Others also looked at the way relationships between the classes and within the family were revealed by Laura in 'The Garden Party'. Those who knew their chosen stories in detail were able to show how Mansfield presents her concerns and creates a range of effects by shifting the point of view from omniscient narrator to first person narrative and moving between the viewpoints of different characters through both stream of consciousness and dialogue. Less assured responses tended to focus on Mansfield's presentation of relationships more generally, and while some generated an argument about marriage and gender issues, they tended to produce narrative summaries of events and characters. In some cases candidates referred superficially to too many stories and this resulted in rather fragmented, incoherent responses.
- (b) The best responses linked the extract to the rest of the story and so, were able to support a discussion about the significance of the doll's house and Kezia's response to the lamp, by referring to the way her view of it is shared with the little Kelveys and validated by 'our Else' at the end. This was combined with some detailed, perceptive analysis of the way the language and tone suggested the perceived perfection of the house, the children's excitement, the significance of the dolls looking 'as if they did not belong' and the detailed description of the lamp. These responses showed sensitive use of the knowledge about Mansfield's social concerns together with an ability to interrogate the text and critically appreciate how Mansfield constructs meaning and effect. Less successful responses restricted their discussion to the extract, offering some comment on the more obvious aspects but often merely producing a paraphrased summary. There was some misunderstanding of the reference to God opening houses in the dead of night. More ambitious responses attempted to translate the details of the extract into a coherent argument about class. The fact that it took two working men to carry the doll's house was noted, as was the extravagant materialism suggested in the décor and furnishings of something that was a toy. The appearance of the dolls were interpreted as representing alienation but without some explanation or reference to the rest of the story it is difficult to claim that the lamp is symbolic of the working classes. Others used a different approach and attempted to focus more generally on narrative methods and effects in an attempt to show what is characteristic of Mansfield's work. Better responses picked examples of descriptive writing, shifts in point of view, use of voice and characterisation and linked examples of these from the passage to other stories. Structuring this sort of approach however, was more problematic because without apposite quotation it often resulted in a more fragmented, general essay with insufficient, or sketchy treatment of the extract.

Question 5

Harold Pinter: *The Birthday Party*

This is a challenging but popular text and those candidates who made judicious use of critical reading such as Martin Esslin on the Theatre of the Absurd, or Pinter himself were able to approach the text with a framework of dramatic ideas, focusing on the Comedy of Menace to inform their response. Generally speaking, not enough consideration was given to the gamesmanship in the dialogue between characters and the edgy comic effect this creates – between Stanley and Meg or Lulu, or in the passage. There seemed to be some misunderstanding of the post-war context of the play with some candidates. Those who read the play as naturalistic drama, found it difficult to generate a sense of the text as a dramatic spectacle and either

confessed to finding it bewildering or boring. Occasionally, in a brave attempt to make some sense of it, candidates oversimplified the characters and Pinter's concerns.

- (a) This was a straightforward question and competent responses were able to consider the way the female characters are used to expose aspects of other characters. Good responses could further develop ideas and show how both characters are used to challenge an audience's ideas about domestic or romantic relationships and contribute to the Comedy of Menace. Candidates often had pertinent quotations available to support ideas about the way an audience views Meg in her contrasting relationships with Petey and Stanley and her role in key scenes such as the party. There was some intelligent discussion about the significance of her memory of it as a 'lovely party' in which she was the 'belle of the ball'. Lulu's first scene with Stanley, her interactions with Goldberg at the party and with both Goldberg and McCann were less well known in detail. However, some candidates were often able to bring out Lulu's view of Stanley as a 'washout' and mentioned his half-hearted proposal to Lulu to go 'nowhere' with him. Another idea raised was Lulu's account of Goldberg's 'using' on the night of the party which was frequently developed to examine how an audience is made to reassess Goldberg's presentation of himself in the light of her account. More restricted responses offered generalised character portraits. The dramatic moments in the party involving strangulation and rape were often merely mentioned rather than explored in detail. Some argued that Pinter did not respect women because he presented them as: stupid, simple, naïve and boring sex objects. There were quite a few candidates who offered a limited response to the question, claiming that the female characters had no significance at all because they did not affect the plot or outcome of the play.
- (b) This was a popular question which provided some closely analysed responses which clearly identified Pinter's dramatic methods, noting the menacing quality of the scene, the structural effects, the use of repetition, the shifts in sentence structure, diction and tone and the use of action. Many candidates clearly enjoyed deconstructing the dynamics between the characters and appreciated the significance of 'sitting' within the power game, as well as Stanley's whistling of McCann's tune. The best answers referred to the wider text to provide a context and also gave some sound discussion on the roles of the different male characters; only a few outstanding essays used detailed references to discuss the extent to which the methods in the passage were 'characteristic' by referring to Stanley's intimidation of Meg or the later interrogation scene. Many candidates had obviously explored the Pinter pause, but very few chose to focus on a particular example in the extract and explore how it conveys meaning to the audience. Many 'competent' responses took an explanatory approach, picking up on references to 'the organisation' and 'betrayal' to speculate on the characters' previous relationship, with some answers interpreting Goldberg and McCann as either police or gangsters. A few answers chose to assert that Goldberg and McCann were agents of society, coming to reclaim Stanley – a tenable argument but one which needed careful critical exploration. Many took Stanley's answers- 'My feet hurt!' and 'I had a headache!' literally and interpreted them as signs of Stanley's incipient breakdown. Some weaker answers could not get beyond a bewilderment at the time 'wasted' on getting Stanley to sit down or the that the information is uncertain so the audience are meant to feel frustrated and confused.

Question 6

Arundhati Roy: *The God of Small Things*

This was overwhelmingly the most popular text studied and many candidates gave an impressive display of the depth and breadth of their textual knowledge, showing a clear appreciation of Roy's structure and use of language and, also providing a strong personal response to the issues within the text. Both questions produced answers across the range with the (a) question very much the preferred option. The challenge for many candidates was to shape their knowledge to the task and select appropriate material for their answers.

- (a) This question was generally well done. Most candidates were able to select examples of various rules and suggest the significance of their being broken with reference to Roy's social and cultural concerns and the plot. Good responses picked up on the other key words in the question: 'effects' and 'presentation'. Often candidates focused on the 'Love Laws' and produced some perceptive, well-evidenced responses. Answers showed a sophisticated understanding of how Roy reveals the significance and implications of the 'Love Laws' through the structure of the novel by examining: the disruption of the chronology, use of parallel situations, shifting points of view, a framework of repeated phrases such as being loved 'a little less' and the author breaking the conventional rules of grammar, spelling punctuation and word usage. Sensitive responses explored the meaning of Ammu and Velutha's relationship and the twins' incest but very few saw how the deeply felt interactions formed the climax of reading the novel. In less assured responses there was a

tendency to list the rule-breaking episodes, giving them equal weight: not to have cross-cultural relationships, not to disobey parents or rules in School, not to cross the river at night, not to sleep with a sibling, not to cross the boundaries of caste, not to fall in love with a Catholic priest. However, there was little discrimination between the impact of these episodes. In terms of presentation, most appreciated the studied irony of the qualities listed on the board for the police, Inspector Mathew's disrespectful behaviour towards Ammu and the treatment meted out to Velutha. There was also some clear understanding of the use of parallel situations such as Mammachi's acceptance and facilitation of Chacko's 'Man's Needs' and her violent condemnation of Ammu's clandestine relationship. Less successful responses to the question took a factual, explanatory approach to caste, gender politics and the patriarchal society, often supported by detailed textual references. Weaker responses reduced the novel to a simple moralistic message that those who broke the rules should expect to be punished.

- (b) This was a passage which contained many pertinent elements to consider Roy's methods and concerns but required close reading to bring out a range of aspects. There were a few very good responses which showed an intelligent understanding of the context, and the significance of Chacko's views on identity in terms of colonialism and education in relation to his own character and the wider text. Those focusing on structure found the evidence of foreshadowing through the use of the omniscient narrator's point of view. Good candidates obviously relished teasing out the different layers of irony within the passage: Ammu's dry sarcasm, Rahel's misunderstanding of 'Humbling' and how certain details and phrases such as the dictionary definition of 'Despise' or the phrase 'Our lives never important enough. To matter.' take on more poignant significance as the novel unfolds. Many candidates were able to show sound analysis of examples of the way Roy manipulates the choice of language and sentence structure – particularly of Chacko's lofty rhetorical style of delivery. Weaker responses sometimes struggled to access the ideas in the passage or, in an attempt to discuss 'characteristic methods', noted stylistic features such as unconventional capitalisation and the use of brackets and minor sentences. They also attempted to discuss the effects of phrases in isolation for example, the use of oxymoron in 'a war we have won and lost' and the use of metaphor, 'sailing on troubled seas' without really discussing what was going on in the passage and, as a result, the essays were disjointed and lacking in substance.

Question 7

Wole Soyinka: *The Trials of Brother Jero and Jero's Metamorphosis*

This was a popular text this session and most candidates showed a clear understanding of Soyinka's intentions and methods within the social and political context of Nigeria. However, many answers were compromised by a lack of detailed knowledge of the text which, in turn, restricted the opportunities to demonstrate analytical skills. In answers to both questions candidates made the valid assertion that Soyinka uses Biblical language for ironic effects, but many did not have pertinent examples available and did not examine specific examples in the extract in any detail. The best answers however, displayed a real appreciation of the comedy in the outrageous language and behaviour in the two texts. Both questions were equally popular and produced answers across the range.

- (a) This question was the more popular choice on this text. The quality of responses depended on the extent to which candidates had enough detailed knowledge of particular scenes to analyse Soyinka's dramatic use of religion for a variety of effects. Good responses considered the quotation in their discussion of Jero and were fully conscious of the irony within it, making some use of the dramatic methods and effects in the final scene of *The Trials*. They ascribed Jero's success to his ruthless ability to exploit the weaknesses of his victims and rivals and were able to confidently reference from both of the plays to bring out Soyinka's concerns about materialism, power and status. The best candidates also understood Soyinka's parody of charismatic revivalist services and appreciated the comic use of Jero's repeated 'Forgive him' sequence to silence Chume, as well as Chume's performance as a substitute for Jero in the scene with the penitent and the ironies of Rebecca's attempt to 'save' the Executive in *Jero's Metamorphosis*. Weaker essays showed a tendency to drift away from the focus of the question and overinvest in accounts of Jero's weaknesses for the 'Daughters of Eve' and his treatment of Amope, or to confine discussion to the idea of making a profit out of the prophet business with references limited to the first scene of *The Trials*.
- (b) Most candidates could place the extract into its immediate context and discuss Jero's strategies for becoming leader and establishing a monopoly on the beach. Good responses paid detailed attention to Jero's opening speech, commenting on its characteristic rhetorical features and use of Biblical language, thoroughly appreciating the irony of Jero's outrage against the 'Servants of

Mammon.' Detailed answers considered the function of the other prophets and the visual, dramatic effects of their behaviour over the photographs, the verbal wit in their mutual sniping and the way Jero successfully manipulates them into banding together. Answers often carefully sustained the focus on the detail of the extract while at the same time judiciously selecting wider references to support ideas about Soyinka's characteristic methods and concerns. Less assured responses attempted to explain the extract rather than show an appreciation of it as a dramatic spectacle. They focused on the shortcomings of Jero and the prophets which often diverted attention away from the extract to accounts of Jero's weakness for the '*Daughters of Eve*' and the criminal background information of his rivals. The view that Shadrach's reaction to the photographs revealed him to be the only genuinely good prophet present, completely overlooked the fact that his disgust is 'calculated'. Many candidates were not certain of the government plans for the beach and those who did pick up on mention of the 'execution stadium', tended not to comment on this extraordinary concept, which is central to the irony at the end of the extract. Most however, showed a clear understanding of Soyinka's concerns and made much of the idea of 'progress' and the role of the prophets.

LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

Paper 9695/62
20th Century Writing

Key Messages

- To do well at A Level, candidates need to demonstrate that they have done a close reading of the text, so that they can offer a thorough analysis of a writer's methods and concerns. Summarising plot, describing characters, or explaining ideas in the text will not enable them to be rewarded highly.
- Candidates must read questions carefully and shape their knowledge to the task.
- Candidates also need to study the mark scheme and practise writing structured essays. The biggest discriminator between candidates' responses is the quality of understanding shown in the critical appreciation of how a writer shapes a reader's response.

General comments

All questions were accessible though there was, at times, some misinterpretation of their requirements. On **(b)** questions particularly, there was the tendency to focus exclusively on the passage. This often restricted discussion to the significance of specific concerns or details and ignored the extent to which an extract might be 'characteristic'. The minority choosing to do the **(a)** questions often seemed to be more successful in structuring a substantial argument, using well-chosen illustrative scenes or pertinent quotations to support views. In the best essays each paragraph signalled a new stage in a coherent argument. However, less secure responses depended upon narrative commentary; which often prevented the development of a personal, critically informed discussion. Candidates should be aware of the number of stories or poems to be used and remember that no additional marks are awarded for referencing a vast number of stories or poems: it is the depth of their discussion which is more significant.

Well organised and competent essays tended to come from those who showed evidence of planning their responses to the question in their opening paragraph, by focusing and sometimes defining the key terms of the question, including a consideration of the instructive phrases such as: 'By what means and with what effects...' Less well-focused introductions were often the result of recalling generalised biographical and contextual details not always relevant to the question. Candidates should be encouraged to use the opening paragraph as an opportunity to establish a personal point of view or argument in relation to the question and explore ideas beyond a linear narrative approach; instead developing more critical, evaluative writing. Successful candidates identify a point, support it with some appropriate evidence and then, instead of just explaining to show an understanding of the meaning; explore how the writer conveys meaning and achieves effects. Reflective and exploratory reading can be shown by the use of evaluative adjectives so '*Stanley's words*' becomes '*Stanley's rude, menacing language*'. By using verbs such as: infers, implies, suggests and seems the sense of a personal or alternative textual reading is opened up and discussion of the text moves away from mere description or closed discussion.

The most impressive scripts offered substantive textual and contextual knowledge and detailed analysis of a range of literary methods and linguistic devices. Answers were also able to confidently discuss the effects of structure, the use of narrative point of view, symbolism, various means of presenting characters or creating dramatic effects including satire, irony, pathos and menace. There was some evidence of critical reading which in the best scripts was used to argue against, or to support a personal argument. Such scripts were often able to develop ideas to greater depth and displayed a genuine enthusiasm for literary appreciation. Many 'competent' responses also showed a sound understanding of content and ideas as well as strong personal response and enjoyment of the texts. Generally speaking, it seemed that care had been taken to match the ability and experiences of the candidates with the interests and intellectual demands of specific texts, although many found the Pinter very challenging. For some candidates there was not a clear distinction between a prose and drama text: both were thought of as books with readers and only a few wrote commentaries which showed a clear awareness of plays as dramatic spectacles. Overall, the standard of

expressive English was sound, with many candidates able to articulate complex ideas with originality, precision and assurance. Many of the scripts in the lower bands could express simple ideas clearly but some were compromised by a lack of coherence and cohesion in the structure of paragraphs and occasional lapses in fluency. Most candidates seemed able to manage their time well with the majority of candidates delivering two balanced essays and, only occasionally producing one.

Comments on Specific Questions

Question 1

Fleur Adcock: *Collected Poems*

This was not a popular choice of text, with the **(b)** question attracting the majority of responses.

- (a)** This question offered the opportunity to choose from a wide range of poems and candidates did better when they managed to generate an argument about Adcock's family concerns – such as death – using 'For Andrew', 'Toads' and 'Willow Creek' or relationships with children, using 'For Andrew', 'On a Son Returned to New Zealand' and 'Housetalk'. Better responses attempted to focus on the question and suggested some poetic methods such as the use of situations. Some candidates managed to capture a sense of the reflective, or humorous tone and occasionally discussed Adcock's delight in playing with the choice or positioning of specific words. Less sophisticated responses had some detailed knowledge of the poems and attempted to make some points of comparison between them; however they often relied on summaries rather than analysis and sometimes overinvested in biographical material.
- (b)** This question saw a greater range of successful responses with most candidates able to engage with the hardships of the voyage and the way Adcock presents Martha's practicality and resilience. Many commented on the structure of the poem; how the precision within the lists contribute to the factual tone and give a sense of distance, showing that this was the experience of many. Candidates also noted with the surprise that, through the introduction of a specific individual and some carefully placed words Adcock generates carefully controlled emotion in the second half. The best responses focused on the meaning of the words in specific phrases such as 'grudging grants' or 'capricious canvas' – rather than merely pointing out the use of alliteration - and showed sensitive insight into the effects of the language and rhythm in the final sentence. It would have been good to see more made of the use of rhyme within the poem. The challenge here was to use a close reading of the poem to bring out Adcock's characteristic poetic methods and make interesting links to the wider text. A few candidates were able to make relevant thematic links to Adcock's interest in her ancestors and briefly referred to 'Water', but they could have used many other poems to discuss Adcock's use of colloquial language and speech patterns, and the way she creates a variety of tones in her poems. It is often effective for candidates answering the **(b)** questions on poetry to think of a contrasting poem, in this case something much more personal like 'For Andrew' or 'Toads' or an argumentative poem like 'Regression' or 'Last Song' to give them a greater range for discussion in their response.

Question 2

W.H. Auden: *Selected Poems*

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- (a)** More successful attempts considered how Auden made use of the past in poems such as: 'Musée des Beaux Arts' 'Up There' and 'Old People's Home'. Some candidates argued a case for including 'Refugee Blues' because it is our shared past and 'In Memory of W.B. Yeats' -poems in which the poetic voice considers past experience to be 'Jumbled in the common box'. The best of these responded to the terms of the question and considered Auden's poetic methods: the use of situation, objects or myths, the variety in the poetic voice, his choice of language and control of rhythm and tone. However, the majority of the candidates who attempted this question wrote previously prepared essays on Time. Some were able to argue that the past always impacts on the present, you 'cannot conquer Time', but most offered summaries of poems some of which were tenuously linked to the question and did not support their answers to the question in sufficient depth.
- (b)** This question produced answers across the range and there were some very sensitive explorations of 'First Things First' though not many referred to the wider text to explore 'how far it is

characteristic' of poems in the selection. Given the number of poems about love, this was a curious omission. Some 'competent' responses tended to give an account of the poem with some feature-spotting such as the use of personification in the presentation of the storm and the morning, various examples of alliteration, and some competent discussion of the effects of language. Weaker responses restricted readings by trying to make the poem into a 'nature' poem or attempted to paraphrase. Good responses though, were constructed from a close reading of the poem. They considered the need to connect with the loved one in the imagination and showed how this was done using the storm, the memory of a 'day of peculiar silence' and the rueful rejection of romanticism in the last stanza. There was lots to say about Auden's language: the impact of the opening line, the simplicity of 'a storm enjoying its storminess', the wit of 'airy vowels and watery consonants..indicative of a Proper Name'; the hyperbolic, heroic view of the lover in the second stanza contrasted with the unromantic colloquial diction of: 'when a sneeze could be heard a mile off' and the practical realities of: 'So many cubic metres the more in my cistern.' The irony of the words 'first things first' coming at the end of the poem together with the structure and tone in the last line, lead some to suggest that Auden was subverting traditional love poems, it was also seen to represent an attempt to manage or squash passionate emotions.

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This is becoming a popular text. Candidates at all levels showed a lively interest in Mansfield's concerns and appreciation of the stories. In order to do well, candidates had to consider the terms of the questions carefully and select their material strategically. Both questions produced answers across the range with the passage proving to be the more popular choice. Unfortunately, many otherwise competent responses to the (b) question, restricted discussion to the passage, which limited the development of ideas about methods and concerns, leaving many potentially valid observations unsupported. Some weaker scripts showed an over-investment in biographical detail.

- (a) This question provoked several answers which were well focused on a discussion of narrative viewpoint. Some candidates showed good understanding of Mansfield's modernist techniques and drew on a range of stories to support their discussion. The most successful thought about how other characters supply an 'outsider's view' and made good use of: 'The Woman at the Store' and 'Je Ne Parle Pas Francais'. Some made use of 'Frau Brechenmacher Attends a Wedding' arguing that the Frau was an outsider in a patriarchal society and an observer at the wedding. Others also looked at the way relationships between the classes and within the family were revealed by Laura in 'The Garden Party'. Those who knew their chosen stories in detail were able to show how Mansfield presents her concerns and creates a range of effects by shifting the point of view from omniscient narrator to first person narrative and moving between the viewpoints of different characters through both stream of consciousness and dialogue. Less assured responses tended to focus on Mansfield's presentation of relationships more generally, and while some generated an argument about marriage and gender issues, they tended to produce narrative summaries of events and characters. In some cases candidates referred superficially to too many stories and this resulted in rather fragmented, incoherent responses.
- (b) The best responses linked the extract to the rest of the story and so, were able to support a discussion about the significance of the doll's house and Kezia's response to the lamp, by referring to the way her view of it is shared with the little Kelveys and validated by 'our Else' at the end. This was combined with some detailed, perceptive analysis of the way the language and tone suggested the perceived perfection of the house, the children's excitement, the significance of the dolls looking 'as if they did not belong' and the detailed description of the lamp. These responses showed sensitive use of the knowledge about Mansfield's social concerns together with an ability to interrogate the text and critically appreciate how Mansfield constructs meaning and effect. Less successful responses restricted their discussion to the extract, offering some comment on the more obvious aspects but often merely producing a paraphrased summary. There was some misunderstanding of the reference to God opening houses in the dead of night. More ambitious responses attempted to translate the details of the extract into a coherent argument about class. The fact that it took two working men to carry the doll's house was noted, as was the extravagant materialism suggested in the décor and furnishings of something that was a toy. The appearance of the dolls were interpreted as representing alienation but without some explanation or reference to the rest of the story it is difficult to claim that the lamp is symbolic of the working classes. Others used a different approach and attempted to focus more generally on narrative methods and effects in an attempt to show what is characteristic of Mansfield's work. Better responses picked examples of descriptive writing, shifts in point of view, use of voice and characterisation and linked examples of these from the passage to other stories. Structuring this sort of approach however, was more problematic because without apposite quotation it often resulted in a more fragmented, general essay with insufficient, or sketchy treatment of the extract.

Question 5

Harold Pinter: *The Birthday Party*

This is a challenging but popular text and those candidates who made judicious use of critical reading such as Martin Esslin on the Theatre of the Absurd, or Pinter himself were able to approach the text with a framework of dramatic ideas, focusing on the Comedy of Menace to inform their response. Generally speaking, not enough consideration was given to the gamesmanship in the dialogue between characters and the edgy comic effect this creates – between Stanley and Meg or Lulu, or in the passage. There seemed to be some misunderstanding of the post-war context of the play with some candidates. Those who read the play as naturalistic drama, found it difficult to generate a sense of the text as a dramatic spectacle and either

confessed to finding it bewildering or boring. Occasionally, in a brave attempt to make some sense of it, candidates oversimplified the characters and Pinter's concerns.

- (a) This was a straightforward question and competent responses were able to consider the way the female characters are used to expose aspects of other characters. Good responses could further develop ideas and show how both characters are used to challenge an audience's ideas about domestic or romantic relationships and contribute to the Comedy of Menace. Candidates often had pertinent quotations available to support ideas about the way an audience views Meg in her contrasting relationships with Petey and Stanley and her role in key scenes such as the party. There was some intelligent discussion about the significance of her memory of it as a 'lovely party' in which she was the 'belle of the ball'. Lulu's first scene with Stanley, her interactions with Goldberg at the party and with both Goldberg and McCann were less well known in detail. However, some candidates were often able to bring out Lulu's view of Stanley as a 'washout' and mentioned his half-hearted proposal to Lulu to go 'nowhere' with him. Another idea raised was Lulu's account of Goldberg's 'using' on the night of the party which was frequently developed to examine how an audience is made to reassess Goldberg's presentation of himself in the light of her account. More restricted responses offered generalised character portraits. The dramatic moments in the party involving strangulation and rape were often merely mentioned rather than explored in detail. Some argued that Pinter did not respect women because he presented them as: stupid, simple, naïve and boring sex objects. There were quite a few candidates who offered a limited response to the question, claiming that the female characters had no significance at all because they did not affect the plot or outcome of the play.
- (b) This was a popular question which provided some closely analysed responses which clearly identified Pinter's dramatic methods, noting the menacing quality of the scene, the structural effects, the use of repetition, the shifts in sentence structure, diction and tone and the use of action. Many candidates clearly enjoyed deconstructing the dynamics between the characters and appreciated the significance of 'sitting' within the power game, as well as Stanley's whistling of McCann's tune. The best answers referred to the wider text to provide a context and also gave some sound discussion on the roles of the different male characters; only a few outstanding essays used detailed references to discuss the extent to which the methods in the passage were 'characteristic' by referring to Stanley's intimidation of Meg or the later interrogation scene. Many candidates had obviously explored the Pinter pause, but very few chose to focus on a particular example in the extract and explore how it conveys meaning to the audience. Many 'competent' responses took an explanatory approach, picking up on references to 'the organisation' and 'betrayal' to speculate on the characters' previous relationship, with some answers interpreting Goldberg and McCann as either police or gangsters. A few answers chose to assert that Goldberg and McCann were agents of society, coming to reclaim Stanley – a tenable argument but one which needed careful critical exploration. Many took Stanley's answers- 'My feet hurt!' and 'I had a headache!' literally and interpreted them as signs of Stanley's incipient breakdown. Some weaker answers could not get beyond a bewilderment at the time 'wasted' on getting Stanley to sit down or the that the information is uncertain so the audience are meant to feel frustrated and confused.

Question 6

Arundhati Roy: *The God of Small Things*

This was overwhelmingly the most popular text studied and many candidates gave an impressive display of the depth and breadth of their textual knowledge, showing a clear appreciation of Roy's structure and use of language and, also providing a strong personal response to the issues within the text. Both questions produced answers across the range with the (a) question very much the preferred option. The challenge for many candidates was to shape their knowledge to the task and select appropriate material for their answers.

- (a) This question was generally well done. Most candidates were able to select examples of various rules and suggest the significance of their being broken with reference to Roy's social and cultural concerns and the plot. Good responses picked up on the other key words in the question: 'effects' and 'presentation'. Often candidates focused on the 'Love Laws' and produced some perceptive, well-evidenced responses. Answers showed a sophisticated understanding of how Roy reveals the significance and implications of the 'Love Laws' through the structure of the novel by examining: the disruption of the chronology, use of parallel situations, shifting points of view, a framework of repeated phrases such as being loved 'a little less' and the author breaking the conventional rules of grammar, spelling punctuation and word usage. Sensitive responses explored the meaning of Ammu and Velutha's relationship and the twins' incest but very few saw how the deeply felt interactions formed the climax of reading the novel. In less assured responses there was a

tendency to list the rule-breaking episodes, giving them equal weight: not to have cross-cultural relationships, not to disobey parents or rules in School, not to cross the river at night, not to sleep with a sibling, not to cross the boundaries of caste, not to fall in love with a Catholic priest. However, there was little discrimination between the impact of these episodes. In terms of presentation, most appreciated the studied irony of the qualities listed on the board for the police, Inspector Mathew's disrespectful behaviour towards Ammu and the treatment meted out to Velutha. There was also some clear understanding of the use of parallel situations such as Mammachi's acceptance and facilitation of Chacko's 'Man's Needs' and her violent condemnation of Ammu's clandestine relationship. Less successful responses to the question took a factual, explanatory approach to caste, gender politics and the patriarchal society, often supported by detailed textual references. Weaker responses reduced the novel to a simple moralistic message that those who broke the rules should expect to be punished.

- (b) This was a passage which contained many pertinent elements to consider Roy's methods and concerns but required close reading to bring out a range of aspects. There were a few very good responses which showed an intelligent understanding of the context, and the significance of Chacko's views on identity in terms of colonialism and education in relation to his own character and the wider text. Those focusing on structure found the evidence of foreshadowing through the use of the omniscient narrator's point of view. Good candidates obviously relished teasing out the different layers of irony within the passage: Ammu's dry sarcasm, Rahel's misunderstanding of 'Humbling' and how certain details and phrases such as the dictionary definition of 'Despise' or the phrase 'Our lives never important enough. To matter.' take on more poignant significance as the novel unfolds. Many candidates were able to show sound analysis of examples of the way Roy manipulates the choice of language and sentence structure – particularly of Chacko's lofty rhetorical style of delivery. Weaker responses sometimes struggled to access the ideas in the passage or, in an attempt to discuss 'characteristic methods', noted stylistic features such as unconventional capitalisation and the use of brackets and minor sentences. They also attempted to discuss the effects of phrases in isolation for example, the use of oxymoron in 'a war we have won and lost' and the use of metaphor, 'sailing on troubled seas' without really discussing what was going on in the passage and, as a result, the essays were disjointed and lacking in substance.

Question 7

Wole Soyinka: *The Trials of Brother Jero and Jero's Metamorphosis*

This was a popular text this session and most candidates showed a clear understanding of Soyinka's intentions and methods within the social and political context of Nigeria. However, many answers were compromised by a lack of detailed knowledge of the text which, in turn, restricted the opportunities to demonstrate analytical skills. In answers to both questions candidates made the valid assertion that Soyinka uses Biblical language for ironic effects, but many did not have pertinent examples available and did not examine specific examples in the extract in any detail. The best answers however, displayed a real appreciation of the comedy in the outrageous language and behaviour in the two texts. Both questions were equally popular and produced answers across the range.

- (a) This question was the more popular choice on this text. The quality of responses depended on the extent to which candidates had enough detailed knowledge of particular scenes to analyse Soyinka's dramatic use of religion for a variety of effects. Good responses considered the quotation in their discussion of Jero and were fully conscious of the irony within it, making some use of the dramatic methods and effects in the final scene of *The Trials*. They ascribed Jero's success to his ruthless ability to exploit the weaknesses of his victims and rivals and were able to confidently reference from both of the plays to bring out Soyinka's concerns about materialism, power and status. The best candidates also understood Soyinka's parody of charismatic revivalist services and appreciated the comic use of Jero's repeated 'Forgive him' sequence to silence Chume, as well as Chume's performance as a substitute for Jero in the scene with the penitent and the ironies of Rebecca's attempt to 'save' the Executive in *Jero's Metamorphosis*. Weaker essays showed a tendency to drift away from the focus of the question and overinvest in accounts of Jero's weaknesses for the 'Daughters of Eve' and his treatment of Amope, or to confine discussion to the idea of making a profit out of the prophet business with references limited to the first scene of *The Trials*.
- (b) Most candidates could place the extract into its immediate context and discuss Jero's strategies for becoming leader and establishing a monopoly on the beach. Good responses paid detailed attention to Jero's opening speech, commenting on its characteristic rhetorical features and use of Biblical language, thoroughly appreciating the irony of Jero's outrage against the 'Servants of

Mammon.' Detailed answers considered the function of the other prophets and the visual, dramatic effects of their behaviour over the photographs, the verbal wit in their mutual sniping and the way Jero successfully manipulates them into banding together. Answers often carefully sustained the focus on the detail of the extract while at the same time judiciously selecting wider references to support ideas about Soyinka's characteristic methods and concerns. Less assured responses attempted to explain the extract rather than show an appreciation of it as a dramatic spectacle. They focused on the shortcomings of Jero and the prophets which often diverted attention away from the extract to accounts of Jero's weakness for the '*Daughters of Eve*' and the criminal background information of his rivals. The view that Shadrach's reaction to the photographs revealed him to be the only genuinely good prophet present, completely overlooked the fact that his disgust is 'calculated'. Many candidates were not certain of the government plans for the beach and those who did pick up on mention of the 'execution stadium', tended not to comment on this extraordinary concept, which is central to the irony at the end of the extract. Most however, showed a clear understanding of Soyinka's concerns and made much of the idea of 'progress' and the role of the prophets.

LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

Paper 9695/63
20th Century Writing

Key Messages

Key Messages

- To do well at A Level, candidates need to demonstrate that they have done a close reading of the text, so that they can offer a thorough analysis of a writer's methods and concerns. Summarising plot, describing characters, or explaining ideas in the text will not enable them to be rewarded highly.
- Candidates must read questions carefully and shape their knowledge to the task.
- Candidates also need to study the mark scheme and practise writing structured essays. The biggest discriminator between candidates' responses is the quality of understanding shown in the critical appreciation of how a writer shapes a reader's response.

General comments

All questions were accessible though there was, at times, some misinterpretation of their requirements. On **(b)** questions particularly, there was the tendency to focus exclusively on the passage. This often restricted discussion to the significance of specific concerns or details and ignored the extent to which an extract might be 'characteristic'. The minority choosing to do the **(a)** questions often seemed to be more successful in structuring a substantial argument, using well-chosen illustrative scenes or pertinent quotations to support views. In the best essays each paragraph signalled a new stage in a coherent argument. However, less secure responses depended upon narrative commentary; which often prevented the development of a personal, critically informed discussion. Candidates should be aware of the number of stories or poems to be used and remember that no additional marks are awarded for referencing a vast number of stories or poems: it is the depth of their discussion which is more significant.

Well organised and competent essays tended to come from those who showed evidence of planning their responses to the question in their opening paragraph, by focusing and sometimes defining the key terms of the question, including a consideration of the instructive phrases such as: 'By what means and with what effects...' Less well-focused introductions were often the result of recalling generalised biographical and contextual details not always relevant to the question. Candidates should be encouraged to use the opening paragraph as an opportunity to establish a personal point of view or argument in relation to the question and explore ideas beyond a linear narrative approach; instead developing more critical, evaluative writing. Successful candidates identify a point, support it with some appropriate evidence and then, instead of just explaining to show an understanding of the meaning; explore how the writer conveys meaning and achieves effects. Reflective and exploratory reading can be shown by the use of evaluative adjectives so '*Stanley's words*' becomes '*Stanley's rude, menacing language*'. By using verbs such as: infers, implies, suggests and seems the sense of a personal or alternative textual reading is opened up and discussion of the text moves away from mere description or closed discussion.

The most impressive scripts offered substantive textual and contextual knowledge and detailed analysis of a range of literary methods and linguistic devices. Answers were also able to confidently discuss the effects of structure, the use of narrative point of view, symbolism, various means of presenting characters or creating dramatic effects including satire, irony, pathos and menace. There was some evidence of critical reading which in the best scripts was used to argue against, or to support a personal argument. Such scripts were often able to develop ideas to greater depth and displayed a genuine enthusiasm for literary appreciation. Many 'competent' responses also showed a sound understanding of content and ideas as well as strong personal response and enjoyment of the texts. Generally speaking, it seemed that care had been taken to match the ability and experiences of the candidates with the interests and intellectual demands of specific texts, although many found the Pinter very challenging. For some candidates there was not a clear

distinction between a prose and drama text: both were thought of as books with readers and only a few wrote commentaries which showed a clear awareness of plays as dramatic spectacles. Overall, the standard of expressive English was sound, with many candidates able to articulate complex ideas with originality, precision and assurance. Many of the scripts in the lower bands could express simple ideas clearly but some were compromised by a lack of detailed textual knowledge and a lack of coherence and cohesion in the structure of paragraphs. Most candidates seemed able to manage their time well and delivered two substantial essays.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

Fleur Adcock: *Collected Poems*

This was not a popular choice of text this session. Many candidates discussed Adcock's life and concerns but this was best used when developing an argument rather than as a general filler in their responses. Most candidates chose to respond to the **(b)** questions and this produced answers across the range.

- (a)** Candidates found a variety of ways to respond to the question with some generating an argument that aging causes a change in one's perception of self and the people and things one cares about. Some considered Adcock's use of poetic voice and point of view in a comparison of the self-deprecating humour in 'Weathering' and the darker 'Walk in the Snow.' Others thought about looking forward to old age in 'Flames', or the need to connect with memories in 'Going Back'. A few argued that old age brought death and used 'Toads'. Good responses attempted to compare the presentation of ideas and used the analysis of pertinent quotations to show a critical appreciation of Adcock's choice of language and syntax and how this created meaning and a range of effects. Less accomplished answers tended to rely on summaries, or seemed not to know the poems well enough to do more than write very generally about some potentially relevant ideas.
- (b)** This was a very accessible poem and in some good responses there were relevant thematic links to other poems about death or family relationships, or an interest in ancestry but unfortunately, many quite proficient appreciations of the poem did not explicitly consider the ways in which 'For Andrew' is 'characteristic' of Adcock's work which restricted the success of the essay. Good responses compared the gap between a child's belief in its own immortality with the adult's determined effort to confront the reality of death as positively as possible. Many candidates tracked the development of the discussion quite competently and noted the contrast between the conviction of 'there will exist' with the characteristic rueful reflection of 'Or so I like to think.' There were some sensitive explorations of how specific words contribute to the emotional tone: the control suggested by 'dutiful exposition'; the list of adjectives used to celebrate the family's unique genetic inheritance and the obvious love and pride in 'children straight-limbed...bright-eyed as you.' There was some sound analysis of the way the choice of language and sentence structure, generated the conversational tone and the dramatic effect of the caesura in the penultimate line. Less confident responses tended to provide a running commentary, which sometimes included apt comments on some significant details of expression, but often relapsed into paraphrase. There was also an over-investment in particular features such as the use of brackets or minor sentences without considering how they contributed to the meaning or the reader's response.

Question 2

W.H. Auden: *Selected Poems*

This was not popular text this session with the **(b)** question proving to be the more popular choice. Some candidates who chose the **(a)** question did not seem to know the poems well enough to respond to the question on Time and yet quite a few opting for the **(b)** question, picked up on the mention of Time and quickly moved away from the focus on Love to pursue it. Candidates need to be encouraged to spend a little time considering which question would result in the best response.

- (a)** 'Proficient' scripts thought about how to link their chosen poems and generate an argument as a context for detailed consideration of a range of Auden's methods and effects. There were some productive comparisons of 'As I walked out one evening' with 'But I Can't, on the ways in which Auden personifies Time. Many candidates saw time in opposition to the human desire for certainty and eternal love, and a few argued that Auden's coping strategy seen in various poems was to capture and savour the moment. Better scripts balanced a discussion of the ideas with a sensitive appreciation of specific aspects of form, choice of language and rhythm and had pertinent

quotations available for analysis. Weaker essays attempted a generalised philosophical discussion, occasionally summarising a poem without commenting on Auden's poetic methods and effects.

- (b) Some candidates had obviously studied this poem in some depth and were able to confidently generate a coherent argument about the way Auden presents his acceptance of the transiency of human life and love; instead of looking for transcendency in 'Universal love and hope' or spiritual 'ecstasy', the poem offers a very 'human love'. The best responses appreciatively examined the various ways Auden treats love in other poems, but paid close attention to the ways Auden generates a deeply felt sense of intimacy in this one. They enjoyed the particular nuances and effects within the language such as the juxtaposition in 'Human on my faithless arm', or 'ordinary swoon' and commented on the effects of specific examples of sentence structure for example, 'Not a whisper, not a thought...'. Those who went into the poem in some depth picked up on the tone of 'pedantic boring cry' the idea of 'cost' and the awareness of difficulties in the oppositional structure of 'Noons of dryness' and 'Nights of insult' in the blessing at the end. Less effective answers spent too much time teasing out the meaning and had less to say about the poetic methods and effects. Some well-informed essays pursued ideas about time and love to the extent that the essays became unbalanced with insufficient attention to the given poem. Weaker essays struggling with understanding, attempted to paraphrase and tended to over-invest in biographical details.

Question 3

L.P. Hartley: *The Go-Between*

This is quite a popular text with candidates often showing quite detailed knowledge and understanding of Leo and some critical understanding of Hartley's narrative methods. Weaker scripts were short on detailed knowledge and had some difficulty in shaping a coherent response to the questions. The (a) question was the preferred option and in general was better done though both questions produced answers across the range. Some of those answering the (b) question were very good indeed.

- (a) Good responses showed an ability to interrogate the quotation. They considered the immediate context – Leo's discussion with Trimmingham about the fifth Viscount's duel and the impact the story had on Leo, particularly the issue of fault. They took into account Leo's admiration for Trimmingham and his idealisation of Marian to help explore how his absolute belief in Trimmingham's remark affected, not just his attitude to Marian, but also encouraged him to feel a crippling sense of responsibility for the outcome of her affair with Ted. Using pertinent quotations candidates considered the effects of Hartley's use of the dual narrative perspective and offered conclusions about the extent of Marian's guilt by exploring Leo's interview with her in the Epilogue. Most responses accepted the quotation and explained the social context and attitudes to women of Marian's class at the time. Most answers sympathised with Marian's need for a loving relationship with Ted as opposed to one of convenience with Trimmingham, but this approach had more difficulty supporting ideas with detailed references to the text. Weaker answers restricted the discussion to strong moral criticism of Marian and Ted or blamed Ted for everything.
- (b) Most answers could place the passage in the context of the Epilogue and understood its significance: how the elderly Leo's recognition of his feelings here when reviewing his experience, leads him to revisit Brandham and meets Marian again to find out the 'facts'. Good answers discussed the dramatic presentation of the young Leo's experience and feelings through the retrospective account and the reflections of the elderly Leo. What interested many candidates about the narrative perspective was the extent to which the older Leo could clearly understand the limitations of his younger self: 'It did not occur to me that they had treated me badly...' but also how the language in the last three paragraphs seems to show Leo's belief in spells and see himself as an agent of destiny. They saw the irony of his mother's reassurance 'you have nothing to be ashamed of' and linked this to the language of shame and failure in the passage and the wider text. There were some perceptive analyses of what is characteristic in Hartley's presentation of Leo as an imaginative character with a personal framework of symbolic references, a tendency to self-dramatise and a huge capacity for expressing emotion. More basic responses often took an explanatory approach, either focusing on the character of Leo or, in a rather disjointed way, on the significance of particular details within the passage such as the belladonna and the Zodiac.

Question 4

Katherine Mansfield: *Selected Stories*

This was a popular text and many candidates had enough detailed knowledge of the stories to show a critical appreciation of Mansfield's methods and a personal engagement with her concerns. Some candidates had restricted knowledge, only offering one story for **(a)** with sketchy references to some others. In the **(b)** question some candidates did not make use of the rest of *'At the Bay'* to inform their discussion of the passage. Both questions produced answers across the range with **(b)** being the preferred option.

- (a)** Candidates are asked to discuss **two** stories to encourage them to focus on detail and develop ideas in depth. Most candidates chose appropriate stories: 'Frau Brechenmacher Attends a Wedding', 'Mr Reginald Peacock's Day', and 'The Woman at the Store' but had less success with 'The Prelude'. Most made sensible comments about Mansfield's concerns about patriarchal society and could illustrate men's view of women as existing for their support and convenience. Good candidates considered the question: 'By what means and with what effects' looking for points of contrast and comparison in the presentation of these views to help structure a discussion. Candidates explored the first person narrative of 'Mr Reginald Peacock's Day' and the contrast between his view and treatment of his wife 'as an enemy' and his charming indulgence of his singing candidates. Many answers contrasted on Mr Reginald Peacock's self revelation with the various ways Herr Brechenmacher and men generally are revealed through an omniscient narrator, closely allied with the perspective of the Frau and the dialogue. 'Competent' answers tended to focus in a more descriptive way on the situation of women and gave narrative accounts of 'Frau Brechenmacher' and 'The Woman at the Store', using the woman's tale of neglect and abandonment and Joe's expectation of sex to illustrate Mansfield's views. Some weaker scripts attempted to cover too many stories, did not have enough significant detail available, made simple observations, or invested too much in the social context and biography.
- (b)** Some candidates were well-informed on Mansfield's preoccupation with the 'secret self' and although most did not refer in any detail to other stories, they showed an intelligent understanding of how it is presented here. There were some detailed, perceptive explorations of how Mansfield shifts the narrative point of view and manipulates language and speech rhythms to present the inner world of the character. Good responses explored the variety of ways in which Mansfield creates a sense of youthful yearning for love and escapism and the subtle shifts in Beryl's mood. The best used their knowledge of the end of the story: the appearance of Harry Kember, his proposition and her rejection of him to comment on the irony of the romantic fantasy in the passage and the development of Beryl as a character. Less developed responses focused more obviously on Beryl's character, but managed to show some sound appreciation of examples of characteristic methods, with most commenting on the symbolic use of the bush here and the pear tree or aloe elsewhere. Weaker responses adopted a running commentary which tended to lapse into paraphrase.

Question 5

Harold Pinter: *The Birthday Party*

This challenging text was a popular choice and candidates showed a wide range of engagement and knowledge of critical theory, though this was sometimes included uncritically and not applied in enough detail to the text. Those candidates who made judicious use of critical reading such as Martin Esslin on the Theatre of the Absurd, or on Pinter himself were able to approach the text with a framework of dramatic ideas focusing on the Comedy of Menace to inform their response. The **(a)** question was the preferred option; both questions produced responses across the range.

- (a)** Most candidates had enough textual knowledge to outline what happens to Stanley in the play. Weaker responses offered partial discussions, spending a disproportionate amount of time exploring the ambiguities in his relationship with Meg. Stronger responses considered his role as a dramatic device, to explore themes or concepts such as individuality, social responsibility and conformity. Many answers debated whether Stanley was a villain, needing to be broken in order to be rehabilitated and reintroduced into conventional society; or a victim of an over-bearing State and a tragic hero. Some of these discussions were over-dependent on secondary sources and candidates tended to lose focus on the text as a dramatic spectacle. Good responses focused on dramatic methods and effects: Stanley's physical appearance at the beginning and the end; the withholding or unreliability of information; his language and behaviour towards different characters at specific moments in the play; the impact of specific dramatic actions such as the drumming and the breaking of his glasses and the various effects within the interrogations and the birthday party

itself. Many responses made intelligent use of pertinent quotations to demonstrate a personal appreciation of how an audience's emotional response to Stanley keeps shifting and offered a personal, considered conclusion about his significance at the end.

- (b) Good responses used knowledge of the immediate context and ideas about the 'Comedy of Menace' to inform their discussion of the interaction between Petey and Goldberg. They were interested in the way the conversation between them seems to normalise the situation and the characters, but noted the way Goldberg's responses to Petey's questions heighten an audience's distrust of him. Many looked in detail at one of the long speeches and analysed the effects of the restricted diction, use of repetition and fillers, the fragmented sentence structure and specific examples of the 'Pinter pause' to suggest that Goldberg is acting. They contrasted this with Petey's persistence in asking after Stanley and interpreted his short replies as evidence of disbelief. Some responses tended to give a running commentary, exploring the element of misinformation and mystery, the vagueness in Goldberg's speeches, his introduction of the name Dermot which he then seems to forget and the menace in 'sometimes they recover, in one way or another.' Weaker responses tended to explain aspects of the scene often with excessive reference to the wider text. For example, a disproportionate amount of space was devoted to explaining Meg's relationship with Stanley or misguidedly exploring the dialogue to show that Pinter believed that language was ineffective as a means of communication.

Question 6

Arundhati Roy: *The God of Small Things*

This was overwhelmingly the most popular text studied and many candidates gave an impressive display of their depth and breadth of textual knowledge, strong personal response to the issues and appreciation of Roy's structure and use of language. Both questions produced answers across the range with the (a) question very much the preferred option. The challenge for many candidates was to shape their knowledge to the task and write strategically to the mark scheme.

- (a) Most candidates had enough detailed textual knowledge to tackle this question. To do well candidates had to consider the methods used to reveal the significance of the 'Love Laws' and their effects on the reader. Good responses offered some perceptive, intelligent discussion of the social function of the 'Love Laws' - their concern with status and class; issues of whether the laws were applied equally and who enforced them; and who broke them and why. In these responses candidates were able to use their knowledge of the text effectively, weaving textual references and analysis into their discussion of the writer's craft and purpose. Most tackled the 'revelation' by referring to the structure of the novel, the effects of with-holding information, the use of parallel stories, repeated verbal phrases as well as the presentation of particular characters. There were some sensitive explorations of the effects of the joyous language in the description of Ammu and Velutha's love-making, and the way the sensual descriptions of the twins, as they observe each other, culminates in the sadness of their incestuous encounter. Competent responses tended to be more factual in approach, explaining the issue of caste and gender politics to account for Ammu and Velutha's relationship and the trauma of separation to account for the incest between Estha and Rahel. Surprisingly, not enough was made of Rahel's fear of being loved 'a little less' and of the twins jealousy that Sophie Mol was loved a lot more. Weaker responses had more difficulty shaping their material to the task and gave each example of the failure to love and be loved equal weight, often relying on narrative summary, but most generated relevant, simple points on how the 'Love Laws' reflected and perpetuated inequality in relationships and were able to support their observations from the text.
- (b) Most candidates found relevant things to say about the passage which showed a sound understanding of the context and structure of the novel, and the significance of many of the details for the wider text. They focused on how the hidden objects are symbolic of aspects of family secrets and history, the significance of Estha being 'Returned' like 'library books' and the pathos of his writing 'Esthappen Un-known' on his exercise book. Good responses distinguished themselves by the depth of their discussion. In discussing the irony of the destruction of Pappachi's books on insects by silverfish candidates looked closely at the language and linked that section to the wider issue of the novel's structure and the importance of small things. Many explored the symbolism of the moths and the remaining pins, or explained how the discovery of the exercise books and the characteristic examples of the twins' youthful language was an effective reminder of the traumas that had frozen the twins in time. Weaker responses tended to restrict themselves to an account of the passage, offering simple points on the significance of particular details, or they worked through a list of features, finding examples of simile and metaphor, minor sentences and the characteristic

use of capitalisation and mis-spellings -these can all be considered as relevant examples for language analysis but must also be considered within the significance of the passage as a whole.

Question 7

Wole Soyinka: *The Trials of Brother Jero* and *Jero's Metamorphosis*

This was a less popular text this session, though the majority of candidates did quite well on both questions. At all levels of response, candidates showed a clear understanding of the social context and Soyinka's satirical purpose and most had enough detailed knowledge of the text to support some discussion of this.

- (a) Few candidates opted to do this question, however those that did made intelligent use of the terms within the quotation and demonstrated detailed knowledge of specific scenes. Answers showed the various bizarre and exaggerated ways religion is used as a conceit to expose the hypocrisy and cynicism of those with material ambitions and a thirst for power. Good responses showed an understanding of Soyinka's parodies of charismatic revivalist services and appreciated the comic use of Jero's repeated 'Forgive him' sequence to silence Chume. Many also explored Chume's role in substituting for Jero when he has to deal with the penitent and examined the blatant materialism in the language of his prayer. Occasionally candidates mentioned the extravagances in Rebecca's attempt to 'save' the Executive in *Jero's Metamorphosis*. Some also considered the comedy that arises from the exaggerated stereotypes of Chume as the hen-pecked husband and Amope as the dissatisfied nagging wife in the climax of the 'Kill me' scene. Modest responses tended to focus on Jero, the language of business in his first soliloquy, his chasing after the woman in the wrapper, and the dramatic effects of his 'miraculous disappearance' in at the end of *The Trials*.
- (b) The focus in the passage was on Amope and those candidates who combined a close reading of the extract with some judicious links to the wider text did well. Most candidates commented on Amope's role as the one person who sees through Jero and examined the language in her interaction with him. They also looked at the comic potential in the exchange of insults with the fish-seller, noted the use of 'abuse me' and linked her behaviour in this scene with her treatment of Chume. Consideration of the action led to a discussion here and elsewhere of visual, physical comedy and the observation that Jero always manages to escape. Less successful responses restricted the discussion to the first part of the scene and offered character portraits of Jero and Amope.

LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

Paper 9695/71
Comment and Appreciation

Key Messages:

- Answers should show that candidates have read and considered their chosen poems or passages as a whole before starting to write.
- Good answers focus upon the form, structure and language of the poems or passages; exploring how these shape meaning, and do not rely upon narrative or paraphrase.
- Good answers identify a range of literary devices and techniques, and – most importantly – discuss how these are used by the writers, and the effects that they create.
- Answers should show personal responses to the ways in which the poem or passage is written, not just what is said.
- Answers maintain tight focus on the poem or passage, and do not discuss other writers or other ideas.
- Answers make it clear that the passages – prose and drama especially – are works of fiction, and that the characters and events have been created by the writers.

General Comments

This was a good session, and all Examiners have commented upon the very pleasing standard of work that they have seen. Most candidates were clearly aware that little credit could be given for responses that relied upon narrative or paraphrase, and almost invariably there was evidence that what mattered was that the writing of each passage must be explored, and its effects discussed; personal responses were similarly well rooted in the writing rather than simply upon individual preferences. The three passages were all quite lengthy – though to call the poem “very long”, as a few candidates did, was surely an exaggeration – but what was noticeable was that all three were addressed more or less equally, and in almost all cases were fully considered, with only a very few responses left unfinished. There was pleasingly, little evidence of simple technique-spotting, and almost all candidates made sure that when they did identify particular literary devices they also discussed how these were used by the writers to shape their meanings, and to create reader or audience responses. It was good, and revealing, to read one Examiner’s comment that “*marking these scripts was an enjoyable experience*”; the same Examiner also noted that “*it was very encouraging to see the enthusiasm which many candidates brought to these unseen extracts.*” When this is an Examiner’s response it is clear that candidates have succeeded in some important ways.

Comments on Specific Questions

Question 1

There were many sensitive responses to this poem, and while this was rarely made explicit it seemed clear that the intimate and personal relationship between the speaker and his grandmother elicited many individual memories. However, these were never allowed to detract from the close critical reading that was required, and no candidates became so personally involved that they lost sight of the ways in which Williams’ writing works. The clear and moving contrasts made at the opening of the poem between the “*dirty plates/and a glass of milk*” and the grandmother’s angrily repeated demands for food were seen as suggesting a kind of mental deterioration or dementia in the old woman, who clearly has eaten but has perhaps forgotten. Her surroundings are unpleasing – the “*rank, dishevelled bed*” is perhaps evidence that she can no longer take care of herself – and so her grandson’s wish to take her to hospital was seen by most candidates as a kind but painful necessity. She is a determined and arguably crafty woman – her agreement in stanza five that she should go to hospital was rightly seen by many candidates as evidence of her strength of mind and indeed her sense of humour, though once in the ambulance this is lost in her cries of pain and irritation at “*you young people*”. There was among candidates a range of responses to her: some saw her just as a grumpy, rude old woman, while others saw her as a fiercely independent but sick person in need of help, but

determined to fight her situation and the inevitable approach of death; some candidates were clearly annoyed by her attitudes toward her grandson and the ambulance staff – and indeed to “they” who were, at least in her mind, starving her – while many others were sympathetic and saw a deep poignancy in what was happening to her.

Having noted, as almost all candidates did, the often strange free verse effects, with a lack of clear dialogue punctuation, many enjambments, and no rhyme or rhythm pattern, many commented on the sudden and positive impact of line 31 (“*Then we started.*”) This is the shortest sentence in the poem, and the most direct; some responses saw it as simply a matter of fact, while others suggested that the journey is now not just to hospital but the start of the final journey to death. Similar uncertainties arose from interpretations of the final nine lines: when the grandmother “*rolled her head away*”, is she just tired of bothering with survival, and submitting to the need for hospital care? Or is she metaphorically tired of living, the elms representing natural life and growth, and accepting her inevitable death? Does she indeed die in line 40? In a way, of course, what Williams means here, was not the most important aspect of what candidates wrote, though as many pointed out the title of the poem does seem to imply that she does die here; what mattered was how each candidate approached and responded to the writing. As said above, there were very few responses indeed that relied upon simple narrative, and almost invariably there were attempts – frequently quite sensitive and subtle – to explore the unusual structuring of the poem; its apparent complete freedom of structure (though in fact its stanzas are very tightly controlled) was sometimes seen as reflective of the gradual breaking-down of the grandmother’s mind, or the inability of her grandson to keep his own feelings entirely under control. The few candidates who criticised Williams for his apparent inability to write properly were, of course, making a personal response to his writing, but these were not very convincingly argued ideas. Similarly, several candidates found the whole poem quite amusing, and often argued with some conviction, but this was not a common response, and probably not one that is really justifiable. A small point but an important one: many candidates commented on the frequency of caesuras in the poem, though in almost all cases without appearing to fully appreciate what a caesura is: it is a significant pause *in the middle of a line*, not at its end; so there are caesuras in lines 11, 12, 34 and 39, and possibly 15, but the dashes at the ends of lines (for example lines 4, 9, 10, 20, 23, 26) are just pauses.

Question 2

It was very good to read a large number of responses to this extract and particularly to read so many where candidates very evidently saw it in dramatic and theatrical terms. There is relatively little action in it, but what there is, is striking and certainly highly effective for an audience. Several candidates commented on some aspects of this immediately theatrical nature: almost everyone has been in School, and the opening of the extract, a morning roll-call, is a familiar situation. Many candidates recalled personal memories of their own misbehaviours with new teachers, suggesting that any audience watching this play would inevitably warm to the situation, whether siding with the boys or with John, their new and inexperienced teacher. Other very clearly theatrical moments referenced included the fast dialogue between the boys, especially perhaps in the first 30 lines or so, where an audience would both see and hear the quick-fire exchanges, together with the very marked closeness and togetherness shown by the boys. Many candidates appeared sure that this dialogue was rehearsed and practised, in order more effectively to worry and confuse John. The sudden “*Quiet!*” in line 35 was invariably seen as a climactic and powerful moment, with the complete silence that follows it being seen as a moment that would be very striking in a theatre; this silence is further emphasised by fact that it is broken almost immediately by Wittering’s scream of pain – whether genuine pain or not is perhaps immaterial. Cuthbun’s pretence at not understanding John’s threat (lines 51 – 60) was generally seen as evidence that Cuthbun is the most intelligent and clever of the boys, and perhaps their leader. The rapid questioning of John was seen by many as dramatically and effectively well managed by the playwright. Finally, the comedy created in the closing ten lines or so was frequently and perceptively commented on; John, as most candidates could see, is well out of his depth by this time, and an audience would be unsure whether to admire the boys’ wit and skill, or to side with John: the playwright’s skill in manipulating audience reaction was also very well considered here.

Almost without exception candidates were able to see, and illustrate, the comedy in this extract, and as noted above were able with varying degrees of confidence and success to explore some of the ways in which the playwright creates humour. The boys’ names, for example, were often seen as intrinsically comic, particularly in contrast with John’s very simple and ordinary name. The slight absurdity of Zigo’s absence because he is unwell “*with an unknown disease*”, and his consequent and irrelevant trip to Jamaica to recover, was seen as entertaining. Similarly, Wet Wittering’s alleged assault by a compass was noted by many as highly amusing, as indeed was the noise made by the class in lines 65 – 66, a situation which again reminded many candidates of how they themselves have behaved in School. A few responses seemed to find elements in the situation as sinister and even frightening: the fact that a group of apparently ordinary

schoolboys can so easily and entirely dominate a teacher was, some suggested, not just funny but alarming too.

There was a strong sense of drama throughout the responses; the extract was not seen in the same way as a prose extract, but very much as a piece of theatre. Responses were almost invariably thoughtful and well organised.

Question 3

This extract from the novel *A Fine Balance* gave rise to some interestingly different and often very personal responses, especially towards the two main characters drawn by the writer, Nusswan and Dina. Most candidates were critical of Nusswan and supportive of Dina, the former because of his wish to dominate and control his sister, and the latter because of her determination not to be dominated and controlled; there were some who took an opposite view, praising Nusswan for his care and consideration in wishing Dina to marry a wealthy and secure man, and criticising Dina for being so self-centred and unwilling to do what her family clearly wished for her, especially in view of the fact that her brother – a husband and father himself – needed to take on the role of their deceased parents. A few candidates saw these contrasting views as indicative of the way in which the writer creates “a fine balance” of characterisation, offering readers a balanced perspective and not forcing his readers to adopt just one view against another.

Given the strongly narrative nature of the passage, together with its presentation of at least two powerfully drawn characters, most responses did focus upon these two aspects, but the most thoughtful and critically aware responses were also able to single out some of the more striking devices used by the writer. Some candidates, for example, noted the way in which the passage opens with Dina’s sudden and confident announcement of her intention to marry; “*at the dinner table*” – a setting where the family is together and ostensibly united; Nusswan “*beamed*”, showing his delight at this news and reinforcing his belief that his plans for his sister are being fulfilled. Ruby, however, “*smiled meaningfully*”, the adverb carrying a number of possible overtones, at least one of which is perhaps almost sinister – implying that it would not be wise for Dina to go against the family’s wishes.

Most saw and commented upon the ways in which the writer makes Nusswan’s sarcastic comments about Rustom so striking, though only a few appeared to spot two particularly interesting little phrases: in line 19, Nusswan is said to be “*affecting sarcasm*” – at the moment he is simply joking; and in line 25 the writer says that Nusswan “*reminded himself there was no sense in losing his temper just yet*” – the last two words are both amusing and at the same time, as with Ruby’s smiling “*meaningfully*”, potentially ominous. When Rustom comes to meet the family, most responses focused upon the ways in which he adheres to expected courtesies, until the writer says that his gift to Dina is simply an umbrella, a gift which clearly enrages Nusswan. As some candidates rightly noted it is a gift which is loaded with symbolism: it reminds Dina of an incident earlier in their relationship (lines 52 – 54), but more significantly in the view of several responses it symbolises Rustom’s wish to protect his future wife: with a stainless steel shaft and “*a formidable spike at the end*” he is clearly not prepared to simply sit back and allow her family to overcome his steely determination.

Nusswan’s apparent change of heart towards the end was seen by some candidates as evidence of his underlying good nature and genuine love for Dina, while others suggested that, as he himself says in lines 61 – 67, his apparent generosity is still due to his determination to show his friends that he could put on a good wedding, even if Rustom was “*no great catch*” (line 59).

Not all candidates managed to include discussion of the final paragraph, partly perhaps because of time pressure, but also perhaps because Dustoor Framji and his grumpiness initially seem out of place; those who did talk about this short section, however, made some interesting comments: the wedding itself takes place at the conventionally wrong time of day, in an unusual setting, and Dustoor feels aggrieved at not having been invited to conduct the ceremony. Dina is once again showing a determination to act against expectations – both social and cultural – and this is further evidence of either her courage, or of her immoral nature. More significantly, perhaps, a few candidates who had already seen several hints of future disaster in the passage (Ruby’s smile, Nusswan’s ill temper, the dangerous umbrella spike) suggested that the final words of the passage added weight to the possibility that as the novel develops there may in fact not be “a fine balance” after all.

LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

Paper 9695/72
Comment and Appreciation

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- Good answers focus upon the form, structure and language of the poems or passages; exploring how these shape meaning, and do not rely upon narrative or paraphrase.
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- Answers make it clear that the passages – prose and drama especially – are works of fiction, and that the characters and events have been created by the writers.

General Comments

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Comments on Specific Questions

Question 1

There were many sensitive responses to this poem, and while this was rarely made explicit it seemed clear that the intimate and personal relationship between the speaker and his grandmother elicited many individual memories. However, these were never allowed to detract from the close critical reading that was required, and no candidates became so personally involved that they lost sight of the ways in which Williams’ writing works. The clear and moving contrasts made at the opening of the poem between the “*dirty plates/and a glass of milk*” and the grandmother’s angrily repeated demands for food were seen as suggesting a kind of mental deterioration or dementia in the old woman, who clearly has eaten but has perhaps forgotten. Her surroundings are unpleasing – the “*rank, dishevelled bed*” is perhaps evidence that she can no longer take care of herself – and so her grandson’s wish to take her to hospital was seen by most candidates as a kind but painful necessity. She is a determined and arguably crafty woman – her agreement in stanza five that she should go to hospital was rightly seen by many candidates as evidence of her strength of mind and indeed her sense of humour, though once in the ambulance this is lost in her cries of pain and irritation at “*you young people*”. There was among candidates a range of responses to her: some saw her just as a grumpy, rude old woman, while others saw her as a fiercely independent but sick person in need of help, but

determined to fight her situation and the inevitable approach of death; some candidates were clearly annoyed by her attitudes toward her grandson and the ambulance staff – and indeed to “they” who were, at least in her mind, starving her – while many others were sympathetic and saw a deep poignancy in what was happening to her.

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Question 2

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schoolboys can so easily and entirely dominate a teacher was, some suggested, not just funny but alarming too.

There was a strong sense of drama throughout the responses; the extract was not seen in the same way as a prose extract, but very much as a piece of theatre. Responses were almost invariably thoughtful and well organised.

Question 3

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Given the strongly narrative nature of the passage, together with its presentation of at least two powerfully drawn characters, most responses did focus upon these two aspects, but the most thoughtful and critically aware responses were also able to single out some of the more striking devices used by the writer. Some candidates, for example, noted the way in which the passage opens with Dina’s sudden and confident announcement of her intention to marry; “*at the dinner table*” – a setting where the family is together and ostensibly united; Nusswan “*beamed*”, showing his delight at this news and reinforcing his belief that his plans for his sister are being fulfilled. Ruby, however, “*smiled meaningfully*”, the adverb carrying a number of possible overtones, at least one of which is perhaps almost sinister – implying that it would not be wise for Dina to go against the family’s wishes.

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Nusswan’s apparent change of heart towards the end was seen by some candidates as evidence of his underlying good nature and genuine love for Dina, while others suggested that, as he himself says in lines 61 – 67, his apparent generosity is still due to his determination to show his friends that he could put on a good wedding, even if Rustom was “*no great catch*” (line 59).

Not all candidates managed to include discussion of the final paragraph, partly perhaps because of time pressure, but also perhaps because Dustoor Framji and his grumpiness initially seem out of place; those who did talk about this short section, however, made some interesting comments: the wedding itself takes place at the conventionally wrong time of day, in an unusual setting, and Dustoor feels aggrieved at not having been invited to conduct the ceremony. Dina is once again showing a determination to act against expectations – both social and cultural – and this is further evidence of either her courage, or of her immoral nature. More significantly, perhaps, a few candidates who had already seen several hints of future disaster in the passage (Ruby’s smile, Nusswan’s ill temper, the dangerous umbrella spike) suggested that the final words of the passage added weight to the possibility that as the novel develops there may in fact not be “a fine balance” after all.

LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

Paper 9695/73

Comment and Appreciation

Key Messages:

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- Good answers identify a range of literary devices and techniques, and – most importantly – discuss how these are used by the writers, and the effects that they create.
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- Answers maintain tight focus on the poem or passage, and do not discuss other writers or other ideas.
- Answers make it clear that the passages – prose and drama especially – are works of fiction, and that the characters and events have been created by the writers.

General Comments

This was a very good session, and all Examiners have commented upon the very pleasing standard of work that they have seen. An increasing number of candidates are clearly aware that little credit can be given for responses that rely upon narrative or paraphrase. Almost invariably there was evidence this session of that what mattered was that the writing of each passage must be explored, and its effects discussed; personal responses were similarly well rooted in the writing rather than simply upon individual preferences. The drama and prose passages were quite lengthy, and the two poems together were similarly so, but what was noticeable was that all three were addressed more or less equally, and in almost all cases were fully considered, with only a few responses unable to finish. There was, pleasingly, very little evidence of technique-spotting, and almost all candidates made sure that when they did identify particular literary devices they also discussed how these were used by the writers to shape their meanings, and to create reader or audience responses. It was good, and revealing, to read one Examiner's comment that "*marking these scripts was an enjoyable experience*"; the same Examiner also noted that "*it was very encouraging to see the enthusiasm which many candidates brought to these unseen extracts.*" When this is an Examiner's response it is clear that candidates have succeeded in some important ways.

Comments on Specific Questions

Question 1

Perhaps the most pleasing aspect of almost all responses to this passage was the awareness, usually quite explicit, that it is a piece of drama, and therefore intended to be seen and experienced, rather than just read. There is relatively little physical action in it, but what there is, was seen by most candidates as striking and theatrically effective. The interaction between the two characters is very powerful, both by what is said – particularly by Charmaine – and through what is implicitly shown between the characters.

Charmaine is a strong and determined young woman, and is clearly in love with Diliza; he is equally in love with her, but at the moment is more taken up with campaigning to prevent Alexandra being cleared and rebuilt. His loyalty to this cause is strong – he says in line 14 that it would be impossible to give up the struggle – and this is something that Charmaine appreciates but is reluctant to accept. Most candidates understood this, and saw how the dramatist presents what initially seems to be simply a lover's quarrel or tiff. This was noted in Charmaine's implied threat in line 15, followed by her implied plea in line 1 which is not immediately, particularly serious. However, when in line 56, and in the following twenty lines when she appears to be telling Diliza that she is pregnant then the relationship and its situation become very much

more significant, and her personal concerns very much more alarming. It is not entirely clear that she *is* pregnant, of course, and the “*something inside my stomach*” may just be a metaphor for her feelings, and those candidates who saw it as such often made perfectly good and thoughtful comments. Those who took it to be literally referring to pregnancy, however, were often able to make much more striking dramatic and theatrical points, reaching a powerfully worded, dramatic and even visual climax in what Charmaine says in lines 86 – 91: Diliza must, she seems to be saying, kiss goodbye to his old life, and move towards a new role as a man, and perhaps also as a father. Charmaine’s closing image – “*roofs floating in the air like disco dancers*” – is a startlingly beautiful one given what is happening to the township, but perhaps, as a few candidates suggested, reflective of the beauty she feels in her pregnancy; and the word “*resettlement*” in line 91 has more than one possible meaning. There is plenty to say about much of the language in the passage.

Other dramatic factors include the brief arrival in line 36 of Mabu, usually seen as another human character though some candidates assumed him to be a dog; whichever interpretation was used, however, his role as representative of decay and “*mess*” is made physically and visually important at this moment, even though he says and does nothing further in the passage. There are, too, several occasions when both characters pause – lines 17, 31, 54, 81, 90 – all of these moments act as devices to emphasise what is being said, but also to create a brief silent suspense and uncertainty in the theatre, a point well noted by almost all candidates. The generally short speeches, especially from line 40 onwards, were also felt by many as being more realistic and life-like than longer ones, and also theatrically effective in making the conversation and the implied action between Charmaine and Diliza more dramatically striking. There was overall some thoughtful and confident critical writing in response to this passage.

Question 2

This was, by a small margin, the least popular question, but those candidates who did address it often made thoughtful, interesting and perceptively critical points. What was particularly pleasing was that almost invariably there was a real and continuing comparison between the poems, with only a handful looking at each one separately before making any comparative comments.

The initial similarity between the poems, both written by female poets about their grandmothers also immediately highlights their obvious differences. The first poem refers to “*my grandmothers*” in the plural, and possibly – given the title – to more than just two but to women further back in her ancestry; the second is very clearly and explicitly about just one individual. Walker says how much she wishes that she could be as strong as her grandmothers – the word “*strong*” appears three times – while Jennings has very mixed feelings, but no grief, at her grandmother’s death. Walker admires these women; Jennings is sadly critical of hers.

Both poems are conventionally structured in tightly controlled stanzas, and in Jennings’ poem very firm and regular iambic pentameters are used with a steady rhyming pattern. This structural control is less so in Walker’s, though it is never in any sense free verse; her effects are created differently, with the slightly shorter lines 1, 6, 11 and 12 standing out vividly and importantly from the rest of the poem.

Walker celebrates the positive, life-creating nature of her grandmothers, in ways that are almost magical in their tone, as for example in line 4, where merely touching earth causes grain to grow, at least in the poet’s mind. They sang, smelt of soap and onions and wet clay, all suggestive, as many candidates said, of their love and joy in home-making. Jennings’ grandmother, in contrast, almost allowed life to pass her by; her antique shop was all that she lived for, and without it she would have been lost (“*or it kept her*” in line 1); she did not seem to need love, and polishing her belongings was all-important to her, as she “*watched her own reflection in the brass*”, apparently not wanting anything or anybody else; the final stanza contains a fascinatingly rich phrase, significantly running over two lines – “*things she never used/But needed*”. She did once ask her granddaughter to go out with her, but this seems to have been the only form of contact that the two women had; the simple and almost casual opening of the final stanza – “*And when she died...*” – seems to reflect the lack of any human warmth between the two. The final words of the poem, contrasted with those of Walker’s, are illustrative of the two poems’ differences: Walker wishes that she could be as strong as her forebears; Jennings sees only dust, not the woman who once lived.

As noted in the General Comments above there were very few responses which simply listed techniques and devices; many candidates did indeed select and list some of them, but almost invariably what was discussed were the effects that were created. There was overall, a real sense of two poets at work, rather than any kind of sense that the poems had somehow written themselves.

Question 3

This is a particularly rich passage, and there were some very strong and perceptive responses to it; candidates found plenty of contrasts between the small and nervous figure of Jurgis and the vast mechanical and infernal machinery inside the steel mill. Several did in fact see the passage as some sort of metaphorical journey into a kind of hell; Dante himself was mentioned by more than one candidate, and while there is nothing whatsoever to suggest that the writer had his poem in mind, the analogy was quite apt and well argued.

Sinclair initially presents Jurgis as nervous and isolated, confronting a surly gatekeeper and being watched “*with greedy eyes*” by other job-seekers; the second paragraph offers a glimpse of the huge size and complexity of the mill, and candidates were often well able to identify words that stressed this – “*towering*”; “*long rows*”; “*branching everywhere*”; “*oceans*”. Once inside the mill itself, after a two-hour wait and an interview – many responses noted the way in which Sinclair raises tension in this way – the fourth paragraph is certainly almost hellish in its language: “*deafening thunder*”; “*sizzling*”; “*quivering*”; “*white-hot masses of metal*”; “*fire and flaming sparks*”; “[*men who were*] *hollow eyed and gaunt*”. Some criticised Jurgis at this point for being scared, and commenting that if this was his nature he should not be seeking work here; such candidates appeared to forget the golden rule of critical commentary: the man is not real, but a creation of the writer, who clearly wanted to show the horrifying contrast between one individual and the vast and dangerous machinery that other men had made. There may well be, as some responses suggested, a kind of political or at least social point being made about the nature of industrial development in the early 20th century, though while arguably implicit, it is not made explicit in the passage.

The rest of the passage reinforces what has been described already, and most responses found more than enough colourful and violent writing between lines 28 and 50, with its almost explicitly infernal imagery (“*big enough for all the devils of hell to brew their broth in, liquid fire*”) and pictures of colossal size (“*three giant cauldrons; giant kettles; swishing like a huge tree falling in the forest; a cascade of living, leaping fire*”). Despite these horrors, there is a kind of strange beauty as well, as in lines 45 – 46, and watching it all is the still terrified figure of Jurgis, at times hardly able to even look (line 43), and deeply relieved at the end to come out into the sunlight. Even then the terrifying machinery is not finished, and many candidates noted the very striking and possibly frightening image in line 51, where steel bars are “*chopped like bits of cheese*.”

There was plenty of competent, often very good, discussion of the passage, and apart from the occasional political comment about industrial development and the greed of mill-owners (not mentioned in the passage, of course), and the occasional criticism of Jurgis as if he is a real person, there were some very well managed and sensitive ideas.

LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

Paper 9695/08

Coursework

Key Messages

Good answers will:

- address their two questions and texts with clear and concise focus;
- explore in some detail how the writers create their particular effects, discussing some of the literary techniques used;
- support what is said with brief but apt 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.

General Comments:

Work submitted this session was in general 'good,' with much that was 'very good', and almost none that could be described as 'poor'; candidates demonstrated a real confidence in addressing their two texts, with strong evidence of individual and independent responses to what they had read, and the administrative work from all Centres was invariably efficient and professional. Reading the work submitted was, on the whole, a genuine pleasure in every way.

Independence of question-setting and/or of text-choice is not one of the assessment criteria, but where it was allowed, or better still, encouraged by Centres it almost invariably led to better writing, and highlighted candidates who had moved beyond what they had been taught as a class or group, and had thought, and read, more widely about their texts and about what they wanted to say about them. Most Centres – for perfectly good and entirely understandable reasons – required all candidates, or at least all candidates within each teaching group, to study the same two texts, but then offered a range of questions for them to choose from; such choice was no doubt guided by teaching staff, with each candidate's personal skills and abilities in mind, as a result there was generally very little overlapping of ideas and textual reference across the work of the whole Centre.

All candidates used appropriately selected texts, and followed the Syllabus requirement for these to be of two different genres. One reason for this requirement is to enable candidates to consider and discuss the particular and different characteristics of the writing in prose, poetry and drama, and to make quite clear that they can appreciate how their two writers make use of these characteristics in shaping their meaning, and in creating reader or audience response. One immediate requirement of this is of course the need to use as much textual reference and quotation as is reasonably possible, and this was one of the greatest strengths of this year's submissions. Almost without exception candidates kept firmly within the 3000 word limit, while at the same time offering frequent and appropriate textual support for what they wrote; this is a high-order skill, and one that can test candidates quite severely: if they stray beyond 3000 words, it can be because they are losing focus on the task, or because of a concern to say something that may be of great interest but which is not directly relevant to the question being addressed, or quite simply because they cannot write concisely enough. On the whole, these were dangers and weaknesses that this year's candidates avoided.

Mention has been made of the need to explore particular genre characteristics. Less confident candidates can sometimes rely overmuch – especially with prose and drama texts – upon simple narration; although this will certainly demonstrate textual knowledge and appreciation of what is said or of what happens, it will not, even by inference, show any real critical skill or awareness. As has been said before in these and other reports, what really matters in a literature examination is not just *what* is said, but *how* it is said. In some respects this criterion was managed this year with greater confidence by those candidates using either poetry or drama texts, or of course both.

Poems lend themselves very well to the kind of close critical exploration that is looked for, in that candidates have a range of possible factors to consider: rhyme, rhythm, verse form, stanza structure, use of various kinds of language technique (alliteration, assonance, onomatopoeia, imagery and so on); many of these can also be found in prose, of course, but there is often more to consider with poetry. An understanding of this was very evident across the submissions this year, though two concerns do need to be mentioned. Firstly, when the poems used were primarily written as song lyrics they still needed to be considered with exactly the same critical rigour as *poetry*, and not explored just for what they say. Secondly, candidates needed to show that they had read a reasonably substantial number of poems, and to write in some detail about a reasonable though smaller number – perhaps five or six, with briefer reference to a further two or three – and to make at least some attempt to draw them together. The most successful poetry responses were not just a sequence of mini-essays on a number of individual poems, but made frequent comparisons and cross-references to others in their selection/collection, and managed in this way to see the poetry as a whole construct, not just a number of discrete or stand-alone items. This is not easy, but more confident candidates managed it with some success.

Drama, likewise, has its own very strong genre characteristics, and for this reason alone it was perhaps a pity that there were not more plays in the submission. Those candidates who did write about drama texts, however, made it very clear that they had been written not just to be read, but primarily to be seen and physically experienced. When candidates showed an understanding of the effects created by what is *done* by a character as well as by what he or she says, and indeed when they showed a personal response to this, then the genre characteristics were often very well addressed, something that is clearly required by the higher Band Descriptors in the mark scheme. Other theatrical factors – lighting, sound effects, music, for example – were also noted whenever appropriate, and provided that these factors were printed in the text, and not just production decisions of an individual director, then they were certainly significant and warranted the kind of critical discussion that some candidates presented.

Candidates almost uniformly made use of critical views and contextual material, often with real skill and focus. Critical views – in the form of published alternative interpretations of a text – were, sensibly, very restricted, but when they were introduced they were often managed very well. They had no particular value in themselves, however; it was how they were *used* by candidates that mattered, so that when they were used to explicitly support a developing personal idea, or when they were taken hold of and argued against, they were often very valuable indeed. In the same way, contextual material of many sorts – social, historical, biographical, for example – was sometimes introduced purely as a kind of background, but when used by candidates to help illustrate or support a particular point then it was often very useful indeed. In both cases, critics and contexts, all such references were almost always acknowledged in either a footnote or in a bibliography, and in the best cases both. The presentation of work was one of the strengths this session, and footnotes and bibliographies invariably added a sense of genuine authority and sometimes real scholarship.

Centres' annotations and summative comments were particularly helpful this year; where practicable it was clear that two or even three teachers had read and commented on the work. This is of course not always possible, but when it can be managed it is most helpful to Moderators, and is also likely to lead to more secure marks overall. The most useful comments, too, were often those which referred to the wording of the Marking Criteria; some Centres attached a copy of these Criteria to each candidate's work, with appropriate comments and annotations made on them; this is certainly not essential, but it did again demonstrate the care and thoroughness with which work had often been assessed.

Some candidates attached a copy of their original proposal forms; this is again not a requirement, but it is helpful, especially if for any reason the two essays themselves, or the questions addressed, are different from what was first proposed and approved. If this is done, however, it is essential that the copy is one that has the adviser's comments on it.

Overall then, a very good session in almost every way.