

LITERATURE (ENGLISH) (US)

Paper 0427/01
Poetry and Prose

Key Messages

Responses must answer the specific question set and focus on this throughout.
Effective and sustained analysis of language is essential, particularly in the passage-based questions. Detailed support from the text, either by short quotations or well-chosen references, is essential in all questions.
Responses should range across the whole extract or poem in the passage-based questions.
Stronger responses presented a developed and well-structured response to the question.

General Comments

Many candidates showed an encouraging engagement with the poems or prose texts studied. Many do, however, continue to find it difficult to express complex ideas coherently and to frame a developed and analytical response; a tendency to drop too readily into description and narrative is a common feature of weaker responses. In some answers, there was frequently strong personal response, and this is to be encouraged, but quite often this was at the expense of a discussion of the details of language in the extract, which should always be the primary focus of any response.

This year the most popular poem by a large margin was *Passengers*, but responses to this were variable. Personal response to *Blessing* was often effective. Comments expressing personal response should always be rooted in the particular text; assertions about lack of water, for example, must be linked to textual reference and not lose focus on either the text or question, no matter how heartfelt.

This also applies to the prose questions; *Fahrenheit 451*, for example, drew many comments about the role of the novel as a warning of how our own society might evolve, and, when linked to the 'disturbing' elements of the passage, this is a valid and helpful personal response. Indeed, this inviting passage was very popular and produced strong answers overall. *The Secret Life of Bees* and *The Great Gatsby* were also well-represented, with the short stories and *Their Eyes Were Watching God* producing fewer responses.

A small but significant number of candidates answered more than one question from each section, often the passage-based question for every text. Invariably, these wrote a sentence or short paragraph for each response, sometimes demonstrating a little knowledge or understanding, but these were so brief or generalised that very few marks could be awarded. Higher marks can only be achieved by presenting a developed and detailed response which answers the question. A common weakness across every question and the paper as a whole is brevity. Many candidates made a really promising beginning, with several relevant points, clearly explained and supported by the text, without taking this any further. Candidates should practice developing their points and consider the wide range of ideas available for analysis and discussion in each passage and essay.

Focus on language remains the single most important discriminator between the mark bands and is still the area in which many candidates struggle. For credit to be given for language points, candidates need to look at specific words or phrases, selecting pertinent words or short quotations. This is covered in the mark scheme by 'the way the writer uses language' or 'the way the writer achieves...effects', and candidates are encouraged to move beyond identifying figures of speech or important words without saying how and why these are appropriate and effective. Examples will be given after the comments on some of the individual questions to help demonstrate good practice. Knowing the terminology of literary criticism without being able to apply it sensibly and effectively may not help candidates to present a successful response. In the same way, generalised comments such as 'he uses diction and imagery to put his point across' do not in themselves demonstrate any understanding, so cannot gain credit.

Quite often responses tried to consider the language used by the writer but instead fell into the 'supporting reference to the text' category of the mark scheme. This often shows knowledge and understanding of the text, and is sometimes an appropriate choice, but tends to be a much longer quotation covering several lines of poetry or a longer sentence. These can have their place in an answer (though the rule is invariably 'the shorter the better'), but candidates who select these lengthier references without also considering specific word choice and effects can only achieve marks in the lower bands. In the same way, large sections of narrative or description very often do show some knowledge, but will not be highly rewarded on their own. It is worth emphasising that consideration of the language used by the writer and its effects applies equally to the essay question. If there is only 'reference to the text', which is all that narrative can be, the higher bands cannot be achieved. Some short quotations will generally be useful.

There were a number of responses which suggested that candidates were unfamiliar with the poem or passage on the exam paper. This particularly applied to the poetry section where there were several examples of misunderstanding or questionable interpretation that could not be supported. Those students who had had the opportunity to spend time with others discussing possible interpretations and use of language were clearly distinguishable and, invariably, gained higher marks.

Comments on Specific Questions

Section A: POETRY

Question 1

Billy Collins: Passengers

This was the most popular question on the paper and candidates readily engaged with the poem. All responses were able to comment on his feelings while waiting to board the plane, though some lapsed into speculative assertions as to the source of his fear, sometimes at length, which were not supported by evidence from the text. There was a tendency to explain the narrator's circumstances in a descriptive way with no real exploration of language. For example, better responses considered how his fellow passengers are portrayed as a 'sprawling miscellany' at first and then later in a calm and mundane manner, and why Collins should write about them in this way. Weaker responses described the man with his briefcase, the girl cooling her tea and the mother combing her daughter's hair, sometimes though extensive use of quotation. Stronger responses developed this by considering whether Collins is detached from the other passengers, alone with his fear and paranoia amidst their unconcern and everyday activities, or perhaps whether he feels that they are in fact in 'blissful ignorance' of their fate, for example.

The majority of responses misread the images about ascending to a 'common spot' together as showing that Collins might actually be welcoming death and that this heavenly expectation put a positive spin on his anxiety. They had missed the crucial preceding line 'Not that I think', linking with 'we would all ascend together'. This meant that, for some candidates, a large part of the response was not 'true' to the poem and this highlights the need for previous study to ensure such reading errors do not occur. Most were more secure commenting on the fragility of the plane with its 'secret parts', though few were able to make the most of the unease created by his ignorance of how a plane works, and by the words chosen to describe his possible fate as 'hard' and 'deep'. As often happens, the ending of the poem received scant attention from most candidates and, for those that did consider it, there was a variety of ideas as to its meaning. Some felt that Collins thought it was only right that every passenger should be spoken about for a last time before their death, as at a funeral, but very few were able to make sense of the reference to the police, though the best candidates recognised the humour intended.

Examples demonstrating responses at different levels:

'crumpled into a mountain' shows that he thinks the plane will crash. (straightforward comment)

'crumpled into a mountain' means that the plane will crash and collapse very easily. (some response to the way he uses language / relevant comment)

'crumpled' suggests that the plane is so fragile that it will cave in as easily as a piece of paper would. (developed, perceptive comment which analyses the choice of word).

Question 2

Billy Collins: The Death of the Hat

Fewer answered this question and, generally, responses tended to be less developed. It is a straightforward poem from which to glean surface meaning but less easy to see the deeper implications. The tendency to describe the scenes from the poem was widespread; few commented on the changes of tone when 'war was declared' and the poignancy following his father's death. The mixture of cheerful, everyday images dominate the first half of the poem but they give way to a colder, harsher world, when the old certainties have disappeared. Better candidates recognised the link between the 'death' of wearing hats and his father's literal death, but most struggled to make sense of the 'hats' worn by trees and mice, for example, other than to describe the change of focus. Stronger candidates identified Collins' nostalgia for the 'good old days' when his father was still alive and hats were still worn but few picked out some of the relevant diction from the latter part of the poem which illustrates the present-day harsher life: 'winter streets', 'frozen platforms' and 'cold white hats of snow'. Most could pick out the metaphors used to demonstrate the universal wearing of hats, the 'broad rivers flowing with hats', for example, and commented briefly on how there was a whole industry built up around them which no longer exists, but many struggled to develop these or go further than choosing one or two examples of language from the poem. Few commented on the personification in the title or the first line standing on its own as significant.

Examples demonstrating responses at different levels:

Collins says that *'Hats were the law'* which means that everyone had to wear one. (straightforward comment)

By saying that *'Hats were the law'* Collins is suggesting that it's wrong not to wear one and people would feel they must wear a hat. (some response to language / relevant comment)

Collins makes a really strong statement with the metaphor *'Hats were the law'* as he is saying that you become almost like a criminal if you don't wear one, so men will want to be seen as law-abiding people who fit in. (developed comment on language which analyses choice of word with correct identification of terminology)

Question 3

Imtiaz Dharker: Blessing

Candidates seemed to engage with and enjoy this poem, and there was a strong personal responses conveyed; there was shock, sorrow and gratitude for candidates' own situations movingly expressed. Responses were largely characterised by being thoughtful and relevant but undeveloped and brief. Most candidates, for example, commented on the dehydration causing skin which 'cracks like a pod' and many were able to analyse how water is compared to silver, emphasising its value. The 'frantic hands' and long list of every available container also featured in many responses. Candidates need to consider more than two or three examples of the language used, even if this is done well, and range across the whole poem. Some candidates did comment on the 'roar of tongues' and the water sounding like 'the voice of a kindly god' but few were able to develop these important ideas. This vitally important spiritual aspect of the poem was largely ignored, though occasionally responses noticed that the people were called a 'congregation'. A consideration of the word 'blessing' was rare and would have led candidates into profitable territory. The final stanza proved difficult and the majority of candidates did not attempt any comment on it, other than perhaps to say that they must be very poor because the children are 'naked' and have 'small bones'. The sense of elation at the end was often missed; discussion of the diction of 'liquid sun', 'highlights polished to perfection', 'flashing light' and 'blessing sings' clearly suggesting a celebration were highly rewarded.

Examples demonstrating responses at different levels:

'silver crashes to the ground' is comparing the water to silver because of its colour and it's something people want (straightforward comment)

Dharker compares the water to *'silver'* because silver is a valuable metal and it shines as it pours out (some response to language / relevant comment)

Dharker uses the metaphor *'silver crashes to the ground'* as water is as precious to the villagers as silver is to people in cities. They care more about having water than having jewellery. *'Crashes'* shows the huge sound and impact the sudden arrival of water has on them. (developed, perceptive comment which analyses the choice of words with correct use of terminology)

Question 4

Thomas Carew: The Spring

Responses to this poem were variable. Most looked for surface meaning and found examples from the poem of how the warmth of spring changes the natural world; these were entirely relevant and usually understood securely. These included the sun thawing the frost on the grass, the ice on the lake and the 'benumbed earth'. Images such as 'candies the grass' and 'icy cream upon the silver lake' were understood but often only considered in a superficial way. The 'dead swallow' was often read as simply hibernating, with its 'sacred birth' not being seen as anything supernatural. More could have been made of the particular use of the word 'sacred', though there was some useful analysis of 'choir of chirping minstrels'. Sometimes this was rather simplistic, along the lines of 'a choir is a group of people singing and chirping is a sound birds make'. Candidates are clearly trying hard to unpack some of the imagery, which is to be commended, but should be helped to move beyond literal analysis. Most candidates were able to comment on the positive, joyful tone typified by 'Now all things smile' but analysis of the following part of the poem generally became weaker. Some did not realise that Carew was now speaking of his unrequited love and this made secure comment difficult for them. While the question did not specifically ask for this to be considered, it is very much part of why the narrator paints such an idealised picture of spring, designed to stand in striking contrast to the unnatural coldness of his 'love'. Personal response was perhaps least successful in this poem as it was frequently based on the benefits of Spring, with sometimes an enthusiastic listing of all the possible outdoor activities. Candidates should be reminded that personal comments can, at best, show genuine engagement with the poem and its narrator but should not stray into recounting of personal memories and experiences which are not meaningfully related to the poem.

Examples demonstrating responses at different levels:

The earth hasn't got *'snow-white robes'* anymore because the spring has melted the snow and it has disappeared. (straightforward comment)

The earth has lost *'her snow-white robes'* because the snow is like a white dress covering the grass and it has now been thawed by the warm sun. (some response to language / relevant comment)

When Carew says that the earth has lost *'Her snow-white robes'* he is using a metaphor to compare the snow-covered earth which then melts away to a woman wearing a beautiful white coat which she takes

off when the sun gets too hot. The earth is personified as this woman. (developed and sensitive response with clear understanding of the terminology and choice of words.)

Section B: PROSE

Ray Bradbury: Fahrenheit 451

Question 5

This question produced some strong responses. Candidates were keen to explore the deeper implications of this passage, and there was some well-developed personal response to how the TV wall encouraged and directly caused the desensitisation of the wives and their inability to think for themselves, representing the wider society. This was understandably related, in some effective personal response, to our own society's obsession with TV and the media and how it controls our thinking, even if we don't realise it is happening. The dangers of ignoring this, as exemplified in the novel, were eloquently discussed at times. The lack of emotion, the complacency and indifference showed by the wives, particularly towards their husbands, the war and the suicidal man, was rightly considered to be extremely disturbing. Indeed, an ability to remain focused on the question was typical of most responses. Many found numerous instances of disturbing content in this passage. Most candidates picked out the images on the screen, with the violent clowns and bodies flying in the air as the most easily accessible. More subtle points, such as the women's inability to have a conversation, only 'screaming at each other' over the noise of the screen, were usually only considered in stronger responses. The focus on language rather than content alone was the discriminator between responses. Those who picked out the 'volcano's mouth', the 'Cheshire Cat smiles' and those who were able to comment on the simile 'like a monstrous crystal chandelier' demonstrated an ability to meet the requirements of the higher bands. Some candidates noticed that the women tended to repeat themselves and referred to moments in the passage when this occurred, but to achieve more highly, the reason for this and the effect of the repetition needed to be explored. This demonstrates that it is often insufficient to write about what happens (purely 'reference to the text') without also considering why and how this has been used to such good effect by the writer.

Question 6

Too few responses seen for meaningful comment.

F. Scott Fitzgerald: The Great Gatsby

Question 7

There was a great deal of information about Tom in the passage, and this often brought the temptation to list the descriptions of his past, his appearance and mansion without going further and exploring what these implied about his character and how they foreshadowed events later in the novel. Candidates benefitted from understanding that the passage is narrated from Nick's viewpoint and that our reactions to Tom are therefore shaped by his perspective. There were a number of responses which asserted that it was Jay Gatsby who was with Tom and this misunderstanding inevitably led to a poorer essay. Another misreading came with the popular quotation '...just because I'm stronger and more of a man than you are.' Candidates were keen to comment that this was an awful thing to say to Nick, but did not notice the crucial preamble 'he seemed to say'. Close reading is essential to avoid such misunderstandings. Better responses commented on the telling description of his life after college as an 'anti-climax' and his need for 'dramatic turbulence'. They then related this to his continuing need for excitement, and the affair with Myrtle as something more thrilling and dangerous; this was a good example of considering how the writer achieves his effects by looking at specific words or phrases and then developing the point. A further example of an effective comment on language was demonstrated in the assertion that Tom appeared to be 'always leaning aggressively forward' and stood 'with his legs apart'. By using the word 'forward' Fitzgerald is showing that Tom is imposing himself unpleasantly on the other person, or 'invading their space', and his posture is designed to make himself look even bigger than he already is. The best responses developed this even further and suggested that perhaps it is intended by Fitzgerald as a sign of Tom's insecurity, despite his wealth and physical advantages. This was also supported by the fact that he 'drifted here and there unrestfully'. Tom cannot find a purpose in life and there is ample language in the passage to support this, often missed in weaker responses: 'his eyes flashing about restlessly', 'some harsh, defiant wistfulness of his own', 'seeking, a little wistfully...'. Most preferred to concentrate on the more obvious examples of his appearance, his 'hard mouth', 'arrogant eyes' and 'cruel body', but often failed to develop these appropriate examples by showing how they foreshadow the way he will behave as the story progresses. The question asks how this is a 'revealing introduction' to Tom and therefore suggests that links to future events will be appropriate.

Question 8

There were few responses, most preferring the passage-based question. Responses often lapsed into narrative, showing knowledge of the text, but failing to respond to the 'strikingly portrays' element of the question. Better responses picked out key moments in the narrative as indicative of just how much of Gatsby's life and energy had been taken up by his obsession with Daisy and the pursuit of an ultimately unobtainable woman, who was indeed 'strikingly portrayed' by Fitzgerald as being from a very different level of society. His final sacrifice for her was recognised but little was made of this and the fact that Daisy abandoned him so readily to ensure her own comfort and survival. Most recognised that the relationship could only end badly and that the novel was always building towards this, mainly because of Daisy's pragmatism. Some candidates quoted the 'green light that burns all night at the end of your dock' and the 'colossal significance' of that light to Gatsby, but few remembered the description of their hope of being together as a 'dead dream'.

Zora Neale Hurston: Their Eyes Were Watching God

Question 9

There were few responses to this novel; those seen were able to convey the drama of the scene, ending, as it does, in violence against Janie. Most could give the context of the scene and were able to recognise the significance of the moment in terms of the development of the novel. Some were less secure in articulating just how humiliating Janie's words are for a man like Joe, particularly when spoken in front of the other men in the store. There was often little response to language: 'his vanity bled like a flood' and 'she had cast down his empty armor before men'. Stronger responses did recognise the increasing tension in the exchanges between them and the sense of building to the climax when Joe strikes Janie and drives her from the store.

Question 10

Too few responses seen for meaningful comment.

Sue Monk Kidd: The Secret Life of Bees

Question 11

This was a popular question and most candidates were able to identify the significance of this moment lying in the revelation that Lily's mother had stayed at the house, the key to all of her uncertainties. The difficulty faced by most candidates was in identifying how this significance was 'powerfully conveyed'. All were able to recognise the trick for luring roaches out of the kitchen as the means by which Lily was able to make the link and also that her life would now change forever. However, few were able to explore the dramatic nature of this seemingly unremarkable moment. Better candidates recognised the tension leading to the climax, the calm before the storm: 'the kitchen was completely silent' while she was 'daydreaming...through a maze of wishful thinking'. Many drew on her physical reactions to show how earth-shaking her discovery was: her 'trembly feeling', 'light-headed', 'hot and breathless'. Stronger responses commented on the powerful repetition and short sentences of 'And there it was. There it all was.' Few continued to the end of the extract and so missed the reference to May going out to the wall, a sure sign that something sad must have happened to Deborah. Weaker responses narrated all or most of the above but without reference to the language and imagery chosen by Kidd to make this moment so powerful for the reader. There was also a tendency to narrate a large part of the novel preceding the extract to show how Lily came to be at the house; putting the passage into context briefly is important but the focus must always remain on the passage itself.

Question 12

There were a small number of responses to the essay question. All were able to give some examples of Lily's life but these tended to centre solely around T.Ray's unkindness and abuse. Although this is extremely important, there were many other aspects to consider: Rosaleen's role and the racial discrimination in the town, Lily's unsuccessful school life and the powerful depiction of her loneliness and isolation. Again, more than mere narration was needed, though a range of examples would have allowed access to the mid-range bands. Lily's straightforward and honest first-person narrative enables us to share, vividly, her awful life. Many of the descriptions of her boredom, fear and the comfort derived from her mother's secret possessions and her relationship with Rosaleen would have contributed towards a successful response.

From Stories of Ourselves

Questions 13 and 14

Too few responses seen for meaningful comment

LITERATURE (ENGLISH) (US)

Paper 0427/02
Drama

Key Messages

The best responses address the question asked and maintain focus on it in a developed answer. Convincing answers show an awareness that the author intended the text to be performed on stage by responding to features of the genre such as: stage directions, action, dialogue, character interaction and audience reaction.

In strong answers, points made are always supported with short quotations or well-selected references to the text.

All candidates need a detailed knowledge of their studied text, and should avoid retelling the narrative.

General Comments

Many candidates showed a good understanding of the text and often empathized with particular characters and the situations they were in, for example in responses to the fight between father and son in the passage question for *Fences*. Candidates often shared their experiences of conflict with their own parents, but to produce a strong answer to the question, they needed to analyze the writing of the passage in detail to consider how the playwright encouraged their personal response.

The most popular text this session was *Fences*, with some responses to both *A View from the Bridge* and *Julius Caesar*. While most candidates showed a detailed knowledge of their text, there were several who confused characters within a given text. The most serious of these was in answer to **Question 2** on *A View from the Bridge*. The question is on Marco, but some answered on Rodolpho instead. These failed to gain marks, since they did not answer any aspect of the question asked. Candidates need to read the question carefully and ensure they understand what is being asked.

Most candidates followed the rubric for the paper and answered one question, although there were a few who tried to make a response to all six questions. These were inevitably brief and usually showed a very limited understanding of each text, and so gained only a few marks. Other errors made by a number of candidates were: to mix up the two questions on one text, by transferring terms from one to the other, or to answer the discursive question, but refer solely to the passage for use with the passage-based question. Thus, instead of focusing on what is 'powerfully dramatic' in the passage for **Question 5**, they considered what is 'memorable' instead, a term from **Question 6**; or they answered **Question 2** on Marco, but only referred to the passage for **Question 1**, where Marco is hardly mentioned. These errors severely limit candidates' responses and lead to lower marks.

There were some very good answers to questions on all three texts. These answers to both passage-based and discursive questions developed several points which addressed the question. They selected apt material which was analyzed to show clearly how it supported their argument, and considered how the writers used drama on stage to convey their ideas to the audience. In contrast, weaker answers tended to be very short. It is difficult to make a reasonably developed response, which covers several points with textual support and detailed analysis, in just one side of writing.

Candidates who answered discursive questions needed to know the text well to be able to select the best material as support for their answer. Good answers focused on the question and developed several points using textual support. The strongest answers analyzed the text to show clearly how it supported the argument, whereas weaker answers often referred to the text without comment, leaving the examiner to work out the link to the question. The weakest answers made assertions which were not backed up by textual support.

Passage-based questions on all texts were more popular than discursive questions. Passage-based questions always require an answer which analyzes the writing of the passage to show how the playwright conveys an understanding of the story and characters to the audience. Sometimes a brief reference to the context of the passage is useful in considering its significance, but lengthy retelling of narrative cannot address the question. For example, when answering **Question 5** 'How does Wilson make this such a powerfully dramatic moment in the play?', some candidates narrated the history of conflict between father and son in the rest of the play, and did not comment on the dramatic action on stage of first the son swinging a baseball bat at his father, then the father wielding the bat.

Playwrights intend their texts to be acted on stage, and for dialogue to be spoken out loud and reacted to by other characters and by an audience. When candidates have had the opportunity to practice reading dialogue out loud and to practice staging parts of the play, and have considered different ways and different effects of presenting a scene, they show understanding of how the playwright creates a particular response in the audience. This understanding is a feature of all good responses to the drama paper.

Comments on Specific Questions

Arthur Miller: *A View from the Bridge*

Question 1

Strong answers to this question showed understanding of how Eddie's unease and mistrust of Rodolpho is revealed in his dismissive descriptions of Rodolpho, and also of Beatrice's acceptance of Rodolpho as 'a nice fella'. Some candidates went on to consider the deeper implications of these conflicting attitudes by exploring Eddie's motives: he wants Beatrice to share his disapproval of Rodolpho so that they will both stop the developing relationship between Catherine and Rodolpho. Perceptive candidates pointed out that Beatrice's reasonable attitude shows how Eddie's feelings for Catherine have an adverse effect on how he views Rodolpho.

The strongest answers explored in detail how Miller reveals the strength of Eddie's desire to stop Catherine and Rodolpho's relationship by his persistence in trying several tactics to influence Beatrice's opinion of Rodolpho. He describes his own negative reaction to him. He disparages Rodolpho's masculinity and appearance. He compares Rodolpho to his brother, concluding that Rodolpho is not normal. He tries to make Beatrice feel guilty by expressing his surprise at her view of Rodolpho. Candidates who analyzed some of these tactics, with brief supporting quotations, did well. Some looked more closely at Beatrice's measured language in her responses to Eddie, which shows that not only does she disagree with Eddie's judgement of Rodolpho, but she thinks he would be a good match for Catherine.

Some candidates limited their response to the first part of the passage up to line 40. Stronger answers considered how the state of Eddie and Beatrice's marriage is revealed in the rest of the passage, in Beatrice's hints ('*It's three months, Eddie*') and Eddie's evasions ('*I can't talk about it*'); they often developed their comments to consider how this foreshadows later events as Eddie continues to try to prevent Catherine and Rodolpho's relationship as his unacknowledged feelings towards Catherine are displayed to the audience.

A characteristic of weaker answers was a tendency to quote from the passage without analysing the use of language. For example, candidates might quote '*wacky hair*' as an illustration of Eddie's description of Rodolpho, but to show understanding of how this phrase is used, candidates needed to develop their comments to consider how Eddie uses this difference to criticise Rodolpho's character.

Question 2

Some answers showed a clear understanding of Marco and how Miller makes him so memorable. Candidates commented on Marco's sense of responsibility to his family in poverty in Italy, his gratitude to Beatrice and Eddie, his keen sense of honor and justice which he reveals in his discussion with Alfieri. Stronger answers explored Marco's more complex attitude to his brother, Rodolpho, as he is both critical of Rodolpho's relaxed and carefree behaviour, and also fiercely protective of him, as shown in his warning to Eddie when he dramatically displays his strength by lifting the chair.

Most answers considered Marco's role in Eddie's death. Stronger answers explored how Marco sees it as his duty to punish Eddie for his betrayal. Perceptive answers considered how Miller uses Marco's desire for justice to create the inevitability of the ending. Weaker answers described Marco's appearance and character, with some reference to the text, but didn't show understanding of how he is so memorable in the play. Some candidates limited their response to the passage for **Question 1**, which barely mentions Marco, and so gained few marks. The weakest answers confused the two brothers and described Rodolpho's characteristics or role in the play; these answers gained few marks, because they did not address any part of the question asked.

William Shakespeare: *Julius Caesar*

Question 3

There were some good answers which showed clear understanding of Brutus's idealism of Roman honor. It was useful for candidates to show knowledge of the context of the passage, which then provided the setting for their focus on Brutus's comments. Most candidates understood Brutus's reluctance for the conspirators to swear an oath, while stronger answers considered the effects of some of his use of language, such as his disparaging description of those needing oaths as '*Old feeble carrions*'; or the exaggeration in '*every drop of blood / that every Roman bears...Is guilty...*' if a Roman breaks his word. Stronger candidates developed their comments to consider the effect of Brutus's belief in a Roman's word being binding: that it makes the assassination of Caesar seem a noble act because it is to be carried out by honorable Romans.

Other points made concerned the deference characters show to Brutus's opinions, as they consider involving Cicero in their plans; and Brutus's argument for moderation at the end with his graphic language which shows his realization of the enormity of the bloody deed they are planning. Some candidates considered how Shakespeare exposes Brutus's poor judgement in the dramatic irony of his underestimation of Mark Antony.

A feature of better answers was how candidates were able to develop points. Strong answers considered how Shakespeare portrays Brutus in the passage, supported their ideas with quotation from the passage and explored the writing and its effects. Weaker answers described Brutus's ideas with some supporting reference to the text, but all answers managed at least a basic understanding of Brutus's portrayal in the passage.

Question 4

There were fewer answers to this question. Candidates showed a good knowledge and understanding of the play and were able to select appropriate material from throughout the text to support their comments. They tended to compare the two women. Thus they observed that Portia is a loyal and passionate character with extreme emotions which lead her to wound herself in the thigh and finally carry out a gruesome suicide, whereas Calphurnia is more level-headed and more thoughtful, shown in her worries about her dreams and about Caesar's over-confidence. Stronger answers developed beyond comments on the characters of the women to consider their dramatic roles. Thus, some candidates considered that the scenes with Caesar and Calphurnia showed Caesar's sense of importance in the formality of referring to himself in the third person, even when alone with his wife. They thought that Caesar values Calphurnia's opinions and is prepared to stay home when she warns him of her dreams. Candidates also saw how Shakespeare uses the news of Portia's death as a dramatic device to put Brutus under more pressure, as he also contends with Cassius, and has to deal with the joint opposition of Antony and Octavius.

August Wilson: *Fences*

Question 5

This was the most popular question. The strongest answers focused on the action on stage and how the playwright uses this to create powerful drama. Thus they commented on the movement of the characters to and fro as first one advances, then the other, and the effect of this on audience anticipation. Perceptive candidates also considered how pauses in action are used at crucial points to highlight powerful emotion, with the effect on an audience of making them gasp or hold their breath in anticipation of what might happen: first, when Cory is unable to swing the bat at Cory's proffered head. This emphasizes how Cory still sees Troy as his father and is unable to harm him. A second pause is when Troy stands over Cory ready to swing, but stops himself. This pause emphasizes Troy's victory over his son: he doesn't need to swing, he has already won the battle.

Some strong answers quoted from the passage to illustrate how the characters provoke each other to violence: with insults, such as: ‘*You crazy!*’ and ‘*You got the devil in you!*’; and with taunts, as Cory goads Troy with the repeated ‘*Come on!*’, and Troy repeatedly warns Cory that he will have to use the bat because he won’t give way. Some considered the drama at the end of the contrast between the defeated Cory and his sad, slow walk away from his home, and the triumphant Troy and his continuation of the fight, this time with Death itself. Perceptive candidates explored the deeper implications of some aspects of the passage: thus they considered Cory’s accusation of Troy’s underhanded use of Gabe’s money; the suggestion of baseball rules in ‘three strikes and you’re out’, as Cory flouts Troy’s commands for the third time; the implications of Cory selecting a baseball bat to threaten Troy with, when the bat represents Troy’s lack of success at baseball in the major leagues; the symbolism of Troy leaving Cory’s things ‘*the other side of that fence*’; and ultimately the irony of Troy repeating the pattern of behaviour from his own youth, when he fought with his own father.

The best answers focused on ‘powerfully dramatic’ and selected from the passage to illustrate this by analyzing the effect of the language used. Weaker answers described some of the fight, without addressing how the writer makes it ‘powerfully dramatic’. The weakest answers explained why Cory and Troy disagreed, sometimes in detail, but ignored the passage and its drama.

Question 6

Most answers gave some memorable details about Gabe’s character, such as the use of his trumpet, that he believes he is the Angel Gabriel, and that he is a war veteran injured while fighting for his country, which leaves him with a childlike manner. Good answers moved beyond a character sketch to consider Gabe’s role within the play: that he takes the play beyond the immediate concerns of the characters by lightening the mood with his singing; he often brings Rose a rose; characters are forced to interact with him on a simpler level because of his disability. Some candidates explored Gabe’s role at the end of the play. He always said he would blow his trumpet for St Peter to open the gates of Heaven for the family to enter; but at Troy’s funeral, when he does get to blow his trumpet, it makes no sound. Yet Gabe does not give up, but dances Troy into heaven instead. Candidates often saw this as an illustration of how man is flawed, but can still be redeemed. Good answers supported their personal views of Gabe with details from the text, explored his role in the play and his effect on an audience, while weaker answers listed details about Gabe’s character without development. The weakest responses limited their answers to the passage for **Question 5**, which makes one brief mention of Gabe, thus severely limiting their marks.

LITERATURE (ENGLISH)(US)

Paper 0427/03
Coursework

Key messages

Centres should check rigorously the completeness and accuracy of all administration before they submit their coursework folders and associated paperwork.

The submission should be despatched to Cambridge in good time to meet the deadlines stated in the *Cambridge Handbook*.

Teachers should check they are following the syllabus for the year of submission and remind themselves of all coursework requirements.

Teachers should check the tasks they set against the examples of effective tasks given in the *Coursework Training Handbook*.

Teachers should annotate each assignment carefully to point out strengths and weaknesses and to provide a clear justification for the award of a particular mark.

Where there is more than one teacher in a Centre, there should be evidence of internal moderation with explanations provided for any adjustments made to marks.

Planning and first drafts of assignments should be completed under direct teacher supervision so that the Centre can vouch for the authenticity of candidates' own work.

General comments

In addition to this report, Centres will receive individual reports on their internal moderation of candidate work. This general report draws together the main points contained within the Centre reports.

There was considerable evidence of candidates' sustained engagement with the texts they had studied and the tasks that had been set. There was much perceptive and individual writing on a range of plays and novels; the most popular included *Macbeth*, *Romeo and Juliet*, *Journey's End*, *An Inspector Calls*, *To Kill a Mockingbird*, *Lord of the Flies* and *Of Mice and Men*. There were also many assignments on short stories and poems from the *Cambridge Songs* and *Stories of Ourselves* anthologies.

Successful critical essay assignments maintained a clear focus on the task, supported argument by means of apt textual reference and sustained convincing analysis of the ways in which writers achieve their effects. Less successful assignments showed an insecure knowledge of the text and loss of focus. These responses made general assertions, describing technical features rather than analysing them. They sometimes included extraneous contextual material which got in the way of addressing the task set.

In less successful assignments, candidates appeared sometimes to work through a checklist on punctuation, structure and versification, leading to unproductive assertions: e.g. 'The writer uses punctuation'; 'The long sentences with lots of commas slow the pace'; 'The ABAB rhyme scheme is regular and makes the writing flow and the reader want to read on'. There can be little merit in this kind of straightforward, descriptive approach. Often such comments were very laboured and at the expense of a meaningful engagement with the ideas conveyed in the text.

Successful empathic assignments sustained a convincing voice for the chosen character and moment and rooted the response in the recognisable detail of the text. Less successful responses had neither a clear sense of the voice nor moment. Characters chosen from short stories or peripheral characters from longer texts are not good choices for empathic tasks as there is insufficient detail to make the voice authentic.

For the most part, tasks set by Centres allowed candidates to meet the relevant band descriptors. Where moderation led to some adjustment of Centres' marks, it was sometimes a result of inadequate task-setting. It should be emphasised that for candidates to reach the higher bands in critical essay assignments, tasks should be set that enable candidates to focus on writers' use of language, structure and form in shaping their meanings and achieving their effects.

Examples of tasks that target the syllabus's assessment objectives can be found in the Set Texts question papers. Teachers are advised to look at the command and question words used in these papers. Further examples can be found in the *Coursework Training Handbook* available on the Teacher Support website.

Effective moderation of written assignments relies to a significant extent on effective annotation of candidate work by teachers. Summative comments which draw on the wording of the descriptors and focused ticking of valid and thoughtful points offer subsequent readers, including the external moderator, a rationale for the award of a particular mark. Clean copies of candidate work (i.e. devoid of teacher annotation) are not helpful to the moderation process.

Centres should not submit work they know contains plagiarism. Teachers must be rigorous in their supervision of the stages of planning and writing of first drafts. This will enable them to vouch for the authenticity of candidate work. Moderators are required to send all cases of suspected malpractice to Cambridge's Compliance Department.

Finally, most Centres are to be congratulated on the robustness of their administration, as they recognise the central importance to their candidates of the proper completion of forms and the careful transcription of marks from assignments to record cards and mark sheets. Where there are material deficiencies in a coursework submission, the Centre will be asked to follow one of the other two optional routes through the 0486 syllabus, which are 100% externally assessed.

Checklist of good practice

- 1 The individual record card should be stapled (or secured by treasury tag) to the written assignments in the order they appear on the card. Plastic wallets, cardboard folders and paper clips should **not** be used.
- 2 Critical essays should begin with the **full** title of the critical essay task.
- 3 Empathic responses should begin with the name of the character **and** the chosen moment.
- 4 Each assignment should have focused ticking, marginal annotation and summative comments (the latter may be at the end of the assignment or on the individual record card). Clean copies of written work should not be submitted.
- 5 Where marks have been altered as a result of internal moderation, a concise rationale for the change should be made after the summative comment.
- 6 Copies of non-mainstream poems and stories should be sent with the folders.
- 7 All paper work should be free from arithmetic and transcription errors.
- 8 The sample should be posted to reach Cambridge by the deadline stated in the Cambridge Handbook.