

# LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

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Paper 0992/12  
Poetry and Prose

## **Key messages**

Successful responses:

- show a detailed knowledge of texts
- answer the question that has been set
- substantiate their arguments with relevant textual references
- explore sensitively the ways in which writers achieve their effects.

Less successful responses:

- have an insecure or limited knowledge of texts
- do not focus clearly on the question set
- make assertions which are not substantiated
- merely label or list writers' techniques
- offer pre-learned 'themes' rather than personal responses to the question.

## **General comments**

There was much evidence of outstanding work this session, where candidates showed both sensitive engagement with, and enjoyment of, the poetry and prose texts they had studied. There were few rubric infringements, and the majority of candidates divided their time well across their two answers for the paper. There were, however, instances of some candidates using solely the extract when answering general essay questions on the Prose texts; this approach was self-penalising as there was insufficient material to draw upon for their answers.

### **Focus on the question**

The most successful answers sustained a clear focus on the key words of the question. Candidates selected relevant material from the text to address the question that had been set. Some less successful responses showed a detailed knowledge of the text but needed to tailor their material more explicitly to the specific demands of the question. Some candidates embarked on a description or sketch of characters or an explanation of themes regardless of what the question asked for. Similarly, some answers to extract questions began by listing themes present in the extract without direct consideration of the question. Candidates should be informed that detailed knowledge on its own cannot achieve the highest reward. Less successful poetry responses often worked their way, sometimes exhaustively, through the poem without selecting relevant material, thereby losing focus on the question.

### **Textual knowledge**

The strongest answers showed a detailed knowledge of the text, with candidates skilfully integrating both concise quotation and indirect textual references to support their ideas. In answers to poetry and extract questions, these candidates selected relevant detail from the printed poem or extract to support their ideas and to explore the ways in which the writer achieves their effects. The strongest responses to general essay questions showed evidence of an extensive knowledge and included much direct textual reference to support ideas. Less successful responses were often characterised by an uncertain grasp of the detail of the text, with little direct reference to enable them to explore a writer's use of language. Candidates should recognise the importance of revising in detail over a period of time short sections of their set prose text.

### **Writers' effects**

The most convincing responses sustained a critical engagement with the ways in which writers achieve their effects. In responses to poetry and extract questions, these candidates were successful in integrating much well-selected reference from the text printed in the question paper. Less successful responses often bore little evidence of direct quotation from the text supplied in the question paper and were, consequently, less able to analyse writers' effects closely. By contrast, those who had a detailed knowledge of their texts were better able to produce more successful general prose essays. Some less successful responses commented discretely on connotations of specific words without relating them to the ways in which the words were used in the text; these responses sometimes simply logged features such as alliteration, anaphora and enjambment in poetry essays. There was increasing evidence this session of a confusion about form. Some answers on prose texts used the words 'poem', 'novel' and 'play' interchangeably. This had a detrimental effect when it came to exploring the ways in which prose writers use narration, description and dialogue to convey meanings.

### **Personal response**

There was in the strongest answers much evidence of informed and sensitive personal responses to texts which focused directly on the key words of questions, showing insight and individuality. These responses directly addressed those words in IGCSE Literature questions which are designed to elicit personal responses to the writing, words such as 'powerful', 'vivid', 'striking', 'memorable' and 'moving'. Less successful responses made either cursory reference to these words or no reference at all, preferring instead to embark on a list of pre-learned themes or character traits.

### **Comments on specific questions**

#### **Section A**

##### **Question 1**

Most responses addressed the question with enthusiasm, focusing first on the child and then on the father. The most successful responses contrasted the different perspectives: the fairy-tale world of the child in which the father is an ogre and the father's understandable desire to teach his son a lesson. Many answers balanced sympathy for the child and the father. The strongest responses explored the detail of the poem, such as the hyperbole used to describe the father and the implications of the use of the word 'mask'. Less successful responses narrated what happens in the 'story' of the poem without analysis.

##### **Question 2**

Many responses understood the gradual unfolding of what happens in the poem towards the revelation that the speaker's four-year-old brother had died in a car accident. The most successful responses explored the significance of the title, the words and images relating to grief, the contrasts between the reactions of different people, and the impact of the final line – all explored in relation to the actual question: 'How does Heaney make you feel so sorry for the speaker...?' Less successful responses worked through the poem, explaining content, though without tailoring their points to the demands of the question.

##### **Question 3**

The more successful responses focused on the key words 'convey his wonder', commenting on the size of the whales, the precision and deliberateness of their actions, and the mysteriousness of their disappearance. The most successful responses explored closely the effects created by Reading's use of language relating to size, shape and movement of the whales. Less successful responses offered narrative accounts, without referring to 'wonder' and/or offered very general assertions about the structure of the poem.

##### **Question 4**

Most answers showed at least some awareness of the poet's celebration of individuality and uniqueness ('one bird', 'one flash'), with an understanding of the cycle of life and a recognition of order in the universe. The most successful answers explored Jennings' use of light and dark imagery, the imagery of movement, the cryptic quality of the language, and the impact of 'Man with his mind ajar'. Less confident answers dealt with only a very few discrete features of the poem without seeing their significance in the poem as a whole.

### Question 5

More successful responses focused on the key word 'powerful' and engaged with the notion of unconventional love, exploring the central metaphor of the onion and how it challenged popular and clichéd Valentine's gifts. The strongest responses showed a sensitive appreciation of the contrast between more optimistic language ('promises light' and 'love') and more unsettling language ('fierce kiss', 'lethal', 'knife'). Less successful responses worked through the poem explaining its content, without relating their points to the key words 'powerful expression'.

### Question 6

The more successful answers focused clearly on the key words 'movingly convey' and on 'how' Duffy achieves her effects. They appreciated the impact of the teacher on the speaker, instilling in her a love of poetry. The most successful responses explored the ways in which Duffy presented both the death of the teacher and her charisma and unconventionality. Less effective responses revealed a basic understanding of the situation, giving a flat narrative explanation of the memories, with little focus on the specific demands of the question.

### Section B

### Question 7

The most successful responses kept the key word 'dramatic' in their sights, exploring the ways in which Brontë portrays Jane's fear and the unsettling chaos, marked by the many exclamations and questions. They compared this with the presentation of Rochester's apparent calmness. Some made reference to the way in which Rochester later elicits Jane's help in dealing with Mason. Less successful responses, whilst showing awareness of the heightened mood, tended to explain what is happening within the extract, but with little evidence of how it connects with the rest of the novel.

### Question 8

There were too few responses seen to make meaningful comment.

### Question 9

In the few responses seen to this question, candidates tended to work their way through the extract, occasionally with an imperfect knowledge of the situation being described. Some did not realise that the old father being referred to in line 21 of the extract is Nur. The lack of a detailed knowledge of the plot and characters meant that it was difficult for candidates to focus on what is 'disturbing' in the extract.

### Question 10

There were too few responses seen to make meaningful comment.

### Question 11

There were too few responses seen to make meaningful comment.

### Question 12

There were too few responses seen to make meaningful comment.

### Question 13

Most answers showed an understanding of Catherine's unhappiness and of Morris trying to force the pace by suggesting they marry. The more successful responses expressed Catherine's predicament very well: she is reluctant to cast herself off from her father, asking for time from Morris who is applying undue pressure on her by accusing her of insincerity. Less effective response picked on discrete features of the extract, without showing an appreciation of the nuances of the exchange between the two characters.

### Question 14

There were too few responses seen to make meaningful comment.

### Question 15

Successful responses focused on the key words ‘powerfully dramatic’, analysing the ways in which Knowles builds tension, and showing an appreciation of structure and form. The strongest responses evaluated the Brinker/Gene dynamic through the use of language relating to a trial (‘charge’, ‘ranked treachery’, ‘fratricide’, ‘arresting hand’, ‘court’, ‘confession’, ‘scene of the crime’). Less successful responses offered narrative rather than analytical approaches and misread the tone, for example, of Gene’s responses. More exploration of form, in particular the use of dialogue, could have lifted answers.

### Question 16

There were too few responses seen to make meaningful comment.

### Question 17

Most candidates showed an awareness of the significance of this moment in relation to the wider novel. They commented on the theme of power and totalitarianism, with some relating the figure of Big Brother to Hitler and Stalin. They were aware of the fate awaiting Winston and understood the significance of O’Brien and Room 101. The strongest responses explored the ways in which Orwell presents Winston’s thoughts and feelings at this key moment in the novel, with his recognition that he will be shot and his admission that he hates Big Brother. Less effective responses worked through the extract explaining its content but without tailoring their material to an analysis of how Orwell makes this such a powerful moment.

### Question 18

The most successful responses maintained a focus on the key word ‘intriguing’. They noted Julia’s mental and emotional strength, her promiscuity, her deals with the black market, her initiating the relationship with Winston. They focused on Orwell’s use of her as a foil to Winston: more confident and rebellious than him. They commented on the significant change in her character in her final appearance in the novel. Less successful responses offered only surface knowledge of the character; there was a lack of textual detail to support general responses.

### Question 19

Most responses showed an understanding of this moment’s position within the wider novel: Stephen’s distress that his search for Absalom has ended in this way; his disappointment in Absalom; Absalom’s inability to communicate. The strongest responses explored the forbidding setting (the great gate in the grim high wall), the brief questions and answers, the sequence of rhetorical questions in the final paragraph and what they reveal of Absalom’s emotional turmoil. Less effective responses narrated or paraphrased parts of the extract, digressed into long discussion of extraneous context and/or lacked a focus on the key word ‘powerful’.

### Question 20

There were too few responses seen to make meaningful comment.

### Question 21

Only the most successful responses focused closely on the question, selecting just those details from the extract and the wider story that addressed the question. They explored the significance of references to Pygmalion, the tone of voice attributed to Claydon and the narrative viewpoint in shaping readers’ response to Claydon. Less effective responses confused Claydon and the narrator, showing an insecure knowledge of the story. Some responses started with a statement about the themes present in the story, but with little (if any) attempt to make their material relevant to the question.

### Question 22

There were too few responses seen to make meaningful comment.

# LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

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Paper 0992/22  
Drama

## Key messages

- The most successful answers referred to the question in a brief introduction and avoided lists of the writer's techniques to be addressed.
- Responses to passage-based questions which understood the context of the passage in the play, but also explored passage itself, in some detail, were the most successful.
- Successful answers to discursive questions maintained a tight focus on the question and gave a precise, wide range of reference.
- Identifying technical literary terms and individual punctuation without consideration of the context and dramatic impact on the audience is an unproductive approach.
- An awareness of the text as drama and an appreciation of the play on stage was a feature of the most successful answers.

## General comments

Many candidates knew their set texts well and were able to demonstrate their knowledge whilst focusing closely on the terms of the question, choosing their material effectively. They engaged with the characters and themes, conveying their enjoyment of the texts studied. They demonstrated their ability to quote from texts to support their comments and developed the argument effectively. The best responses were able to write a sentence or two to contextualise a passage before analysing well-selected material, drawing close links to the question throughout. There was a notable improvement in the use of quotations to support ideas, in the discursive responses this year, an indication perhaps, that more candidates are attempting to learn specific detail for use in the closed book examination.

A less successful approach was where candidates wrote all they knew about a text, or character, without linking it to the specific question. The tendency to retell the plot up to the start of a specific passage, before attempting to focus on the question, and formulaic approaches, where the same point introduced and ended a paragraph, resulted in unnecessary repetition and valuable examination time being wasted. Though many candidates seemed to know their texts, characters and themes, they had not developed the skills required to analyse; they should be encouraged to move beyond the 'Point plus evidence' approach and to spend time analysing the effects achieved by the writer's choices of language, before moving on to their next point.

Successful responses demonstrated a constant awareness of the text as drama, referring to the 'audience', rather than 'reader' and the 'play' rather than 'novel', as well as exploring the author's methods to convey the texts' main concerns. Perhaps as a consequence of the lack of opportunity to see live performances during the pandemic, many candidates struggled to explore the dramatic impact of texts. The ability to read closely and analyse linguistic and dramatic effects is key to successful responses. Whilst some candidates understood and used literary terminology correctly, for example, foreshadowing and dramatic irony, there remains the tendency to point out terms, and particularly the use of punctuation, that is not explored in context or helpful in developing an argument constructively. It is unhelpful for candidates to be stating the obvious, that the writer uses, 'language' or 'diction' to convey ideas.

The most popular texts were *Romeo and Juliet*, *The Crucible*, and *A Raisin in the Sun*. There was an increase in candidates answering on *The Crucible* this series. However, candidates should be made aware that it is not a productive use of examination time to preface responses to this text with lengthy introductions about the religious, social, and historical background of Salem, or the political context of McCarthyism in the United States in the 1950's, in response to questions on this text. There were two new texts, William Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night* and R C Sherriff's *Journey's End*, but there were very few responses to either text.

Candidates endeavoured in all but a few instances to number their questions correctly. However, there are still a few candidates answering the discursive question on the passage which resulted in some low marks as these responses were self-penalising. There were several rubric infringements where candidates either answered two questions on the same text or, did not answer one passage-based and one discursive essay. Though there were some brief answers, very few candidates appeared to run out of time.

### **Comments on specific questions**

#### **LORRAINE HANSBERRY: *A Raisin in the Sun***

##### **Question 1**

- (a) This was a popular choice of text and question. It was pleasing that the candidates engaged with what was 'striking' here. The most successful responses engaged with the idea of Beneatha as an ambitious, strong-willed, modern woman who pushes the boundaries, and seemed to enjoy her sarcasm and feisty nature. Her strong presence in the scene was well understood as well as what she represents in the play. This latter element led some candidates a little astray as they wanted to write about Beneatha mainly as a symbol of the fight against racism and sexism which sometimes meant that the material in the passage was disregarded. Better responses developed the subtleties of Beneatha defending Mama's right to the money whilst hoping that she will pay for her tuition. Beneatha's relationship with Walter is key here and the bickering between them was explored by most responses. The sarcastic tone and amusing insults gave plenty of opportunity to look at language. The best answers tended to regard the bickering as an example of a long familiar mode of address, based on sibling rivalry, rather than real antipathy; to say that she 'hated' her brother is to overstate. Similarly, to say that Beneatha 'pitied' the family or 'despised' Walter and/or Ruth, as some did, is not supported by the text. Some candidates did not react at all positively to Beneatha here, seeing her as arrogant, selfish, even cruel, as opposed to wilful or immature, though the conversation about the money shows her as fundamentally honest and fair. The big section of stage direction at the start caused a few problems; and many spent less profitable time paraphrasing, particularly the information about her accent.

Less successful responses worked through the passage with little focus on the question and made straightforward comments about Beneatha and aspects of her personality. Weaker answers wrote about her in the play and paid little attention to the details of the passage, missing the description of her appearance and behaviour here completely.

- (b) Fewer candidates answered this question, and many struggled with the idea of the family as 'victims', working through the text, and listing their many problems in a narrative based manner. More successful responses cited some key ideas: the Youngers as victims of poverty, racial prejudice and fraud, and balanced it against the fact that they were better off than many and, in the end, they were able to stand up to Lindner. Very few were able to frame their ideas into the shape of an argument and to illustrate them closely from the text. Surprisingly, few mentioned the loss of the money.

Less successful responses dealt vaguely with racism and being poor but with little textual detail or link to the question: these worked through examples of their poverty, or the discrimination they suffered, without even mentioning the word 'victim' and often reinterpreting the question as 'deserving sympathy'.

#### **ARTHUR MILLER: *The Crucible***

##### **Question 2**

- (a) This was a popular text and question. A successful response to passage-based question requires the passage to be briefly contextualised. To answer this question, some sense of the context was essential; the dramatic irony that we know Proctor has confessed his adultery and Elizabeth does not is crucial to the tension. As this is the climactic moment in the play it was disappointing that so many candidates did not seem to be able to place it. The best considered the earlier scene and Elizabeth's seemingly unforgiving nature and how this positions the audience to expect a truthful answer which is not given. Many candidates of all abilities did not deal with Elizabeth's answer or its significance. As always, candidates needed to comment on what is in the scene but also how it relates to the wider presentation of the character/themes. The understanding of dramatic irony

varied, with some candidates struggling to make this explicit, but the more successful responses were able to fully engage with the audience's feeling of unbearable tension and anticipation. Many responses mentioned the contextual link to Miller's experience of McCarthyism, however few expanded on this or linked it to the scene in a way that could be rewarded. This question stimulated some strong personal responses with much sympathy for John's and especially Elizabeth's predicament.

All candidates recognised that there is tension in the extract. Better answers put the passage in context and therefore could examine how the tension builds until Elizabeth's answer. There was a real opportunity to comment in detail on language and the way the writer created effects in this question. Danforth's increasing verbal and physical aggression was well handled as were Elizabeth's nervousness and her attempts to protect John. Candidates referred to the stage directions effectively here though there was some misunderstanding of the stage direction '*faintly*', where several candidates thought Elizabeth was on the verge of fainting, rather than speaking quietly, as she pronounced the fateful lie.

Less successful responses often did not know that Proctor had already confessed and worked through the passage paraphrasing the action with little understanding of what was at stake here. There was some misunderstanding of the relationship between Proctor, Abigail and Elizabeth, with weaker responses referring to a 'love triangle' and Elizabeth's attempt to protect all, rather than her husband.

- (b) Fewer candidates attempted this question. For this to be more than a straightforward character profile of Mary Warren, it was essential to focus on the terms of the question, her 'dramatic impact' on the play. Better responses recognised her weakness and changing testimony and analysed her role in the play in relation to Abigail and Elizabeth. Only the best commented on the intense drama of the court scene; how Mary's change of heart signifies the loss of hope for an ending to the witch trials and condemns John Proctor.

Weaker candidates adopted a narrative based approach to Mary and her role in the play but finding little to say about her, so these tended to be brief.

### **R C SHERRIFF: *Journey's End***

#### **Question 3**

- (a) Candidates who answered on this text tended to know it very well and focused on why, and how, this was both a striking and revealing moment. This question yielded several high-level responses, as candidates were able to reflect on issues of class, hypocrisy and the 'stiff upper lip' attitude that permeates the text. There was some pleasing focus on language specifically on Stanhope's derogatory comments about Hibbert. Most felt that Hibbert was a coward trying to avoid the 'final push': a few sensitive explorations of the text argued that his reaction to war revealed the mental stress that soldiers were under and equated his attempts to get sympathy with Stanhope's seeking refuge in drink. Most could comment on the different dynamic between the three men and the terrible toll the war had taken on them.

Less successful responses adopted the narrative summary approach and tended to focus less on the passage in question and more on war in general. These responses tended to view Hibbert in a particularly harsh light, whereas better responses were more even-handed in their assessment of his behaviour. A few responses incorrectly suggested that Osborne was Stanhope's uncle and misread the nickname.

- (b) Too few seen to make meaningful comment.

### **WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE: *Romeo and Juliet***

#### **Question 4**

- (a) This was a popular text and question. The word 'entertaining' was generally interpreted as being comical or amusing, and successful responses identified the humour in the passage, understood what the Nurse is saying in her long speech, and explored how this is entertaining for the audience. They knew the context; the subject of marriage with Paris was to be introduced, and recognised Lady Capulet's awkwardness because of her lack of closeness with Juliet, and her wish to have the

Nurse present for their talk. Most understood her vulgarity, talkativeness and tendency towards anecdote, but only the strongest responses were able to engage with how Shakespeare demonstrated this to show critical understanding of her as a dramatic device to relieve tension in the scene. The Nurse's position as a mother figure to Juliet was understood by all but some candidates who then became distracted by these emotional connections as opposed to focusing on the entertaining moments in this scene. Better candidates explored the rambling nature of her comments and how Lady Capulet had had '*Enough of this*'.

Weaker candidates were unable to move past general descriptions of her behaviour as being inherently entertaining, for example the fact that she 'talks a lot' or 'rambles'. They struggled with the language and simply paraphrased the passage ignoring the question of how Shakespeare made this an entertaining introduction. There were many misconceptions including that '*earthquake*' had a sexual connotation and that it was unusual to have a wet nurse. Very few candidates understood the reference to '*wormwood*' or to her '*teeth*' and what they contributed to make this entertaining. These simply stated that the Nurse was 'entertaining' but without exploring how.

- (b) This was a popular question and should have been straightforward, but it proved to be problematic for many candidates leading many to simply retell the story. Most candidates chose to answer the question by explaining what Romeo and Juliet did rather than what they said and how Shakespeare's use of language and stagecraft conveyed their powerful feelings. The most successful responses focused on key moments that illustrated the couple's feelings for each other, for example, the balcony scene, Romeo's banishment and their double suicide. This was a fair question which required basic exam technique to respond successfully. Better candidates explored the depth of feelings which Romeo and Juliet had for each other. Although many better answers did adopt a semi-narrative approach, they selected key scenes to focus on in detail. Popular choices were, the Prologue, the Capulet ball, the balcony scene and the final scene of their double suicide. Many included detailed textual references especially the comparison of Juliet with the sun and stars and the religious language of their first meeting.

Less successful responses relied on retelling the entire play, often losing sight of the task and making very generalised comments about their powerful feelings of love.

## **WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE: *Twelfth Night***

### **Question 5**

- (a) Many responses simply ignored the key words 'such a dramatic moment' and provided a narrative commentary with paraphrase. Better responses placed the passage in context and contrasted Malvolio's pomposity with the revellers, also recognising how his behaviour here leads to the trick being played on him. Most candidates understood that the characters were making fun of Malvolio but seemed unable to take this further. The best responses recognised and explored Malvolio's anger/pomposity/threats and commented on the impact on Sir Toby, who is so drunk he effectively ignores them and carries on singing, deliberately mocking Malvolio. Most were able to recognise the meaning of what Sir Toby says '*rub your chain with crumbs*' but only the strongest candidates commented on his deliberate provocation which is then picked up and continued by Maria. Sir Andrew's line tended to be ignored by most, though a few did manage to make the link to the later challenge. Very few responses commented on how Maria's more 'restrained' reaction was setting up the plot for Malvolio's being gulled.

Weaker answers recognised that the revellers were annoyed with Malvolio, but often overlooked the contributions of the Clown and Maria. Some overstated the fact that Malvolio was of a lower class than Sir Toby but did not take this further and follow the relationship between them through the passage. This would be a very visually entertaining scene but not many appeared to enjoy the humour. Most candidates understood that the characters were making fun of Malvolio but seemed unable to take this further. Feste and Maria were not always mentioned but good candidates saw the importance of Maria's last speech.

- (b) Candidates who answered ended up with a list of the different love matches and types of love, and an explanatory narrative about them without really focusing on any specific moments or language detail. Better answers considered various aspects of love depicted and whether they were real or self-indulgent in some cases, like Orsino. Malvolio's self-love was often effectively examined.



Weaker answers often focused on the love triangle, not always accurately, or got side-tracked by the role of disguise in the play. These were very narrative in approach and lacked relevant textual detail to support ideas.

# LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

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Paper 0992/32  
Drama

## Key messages

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- Identifying technical literary terms and individual punctuation without consideration of the context and dramatic impact on the audience is an unproductive approach.
- An awareness of the text as drama and an appreciation of the play on stage was a feature of the most successful answers.

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A less successful approach was where candidates wrote all they knew about a text, or character, without linking it to the specific question. The tendency to retell the plot up to the start of a specific passage, before attempting to focus on the question, and formulaic approaches, where the same point introduced and ended a paragraph, resulted in unnecessary repetition and valuable examination time being wasted. Though many candidates seemed to know their texts, characters and themes, they had not developed the skills required to analyse; they should be encouraged to move beyond the 'Point plus evidence' approach and to spend time analysing the effects achieved by the writer's choices of language, before moving on to their next point.

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- (b) Fewer candidates answered this question, and many struggled with the idea of the family as 'victims', working through the text, and listing their many problems in a narrative based manner. More successful responses cited some key ideas: the Youngers as victims of poverty, racial prejudice and fraud, and balanced it against the fact that they were better off than many and, in the end, they were able to stand up to Lindner. Very few were able to frame their ideas into the shape of an argument and to illustrate them closely from the text. Surprisingly, few mentioned the loss of the money.

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#### **ARTHUR MILLER: *The Crucible***

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- (a) This was a popular text and question. A successful response to passage-based question requires the passage to be briefly contextualised. To answer this question, some sense of the context was essential; the dramatic irony that we know Proctor has confessed his adultery and Elizabeth does not is crucial to the tension. As this is the climactic moment in the play it was disappointing that so many candidates did not seem to be able to place it. The best considered the earlier scene and Elizabeth's seemingly unforgiving nature and how this positions the audience to expect a truthful answer which is not given. Many candidates of all abilities did not deal with Elizabeth's answer or its significance. As always, candidates needed to comment on what is in the scene but also how it relates to the wider presentation of the character/themes. The understanding of dramatic irony

varied, with some candidates struggling to make this explicit, but the more successful responses were able to fully engage with the audience's feeling of unbearable tension and anticipation. Many responses mentioned the contextual link to Miller's experience of McCarthyism, however few expanded on this or linked it to the scene in a way that could be rewarded. This question stimulated some strong personal responses with much sympathy for John's and especially Elizabeth's predicament.

All candidates recognised that there is tension in the extract. Better answers put the passage in context and therefore could examine how the tension builds until Elizabeth's answer. There was a real opportunity to comment in detail on language and the way the writer created effects in this question. Danforth's increasing verbal and physical aggression was well handled as were Elizabeth's nervousness and her attempts to protect John. Candidates referred to the stage directions effectively here though there was some misunderstanding of the stage direction '*faintly*', where several candidates thought Elizabeth was on the verge of fainting, rather than speaking quietly, as she pronounced the fateful lie.

Less successful responses often did not know that Proctor had already confessed and worked through the passage paraphrasing the action with little understanding of what was at stake here. There was some misunderstanding of the relationship between Proctor, Abigail and Elizabeth, with weaker responses referring to a 'love triangle' and Elizabeth's attempt to protect all, rather than her husband.

- (b) Fewer candidates attempted this question. For this to be more than a straightforward character profile of Mary Warren, it was essential to focus on the terms of the question, her 'dramatic impact' on the play. Better responses recognised her weakness and changing testimony and analysed her role in the play in relation to Abigail and Elizabeth. Only the best commented on the intense drama of the court scene; how Mary's change of heart signifies the loss of hope for an ending to the witch trials and condemns John Proctor.

Weaker candidates adopted a narrative based approach to Mary and her role in the play but finding little to say about her, so these tended to be brief.

### **R C SHERRIFF: *Journey's End***

#### **Question 3**

- (a) Candidates who answered on this text tended to know it very well and focused on why, and how, this was both a striking and revealing moment. This question yielded several high-level responses, as candidates were able to reflect on issues of class, hypocrisy and the 'stiff upper lip' attitude that permeates the text. There was some pleasing focus on language specifically on Stanhope's derogatory comments about Hibbert. Most felt that Hibbert was a coward trying to avoid the 'final push': a few sensitive explorations of the text argued that his reaction to war revealed the mental stress that soldiers were under and equated his attempts to get sympathy with Stanhope's seeking refuge in drink. Most could comment on the different dynamic between the three men and the terrible toll the war had taken on them.

Less successful responses adopted the narrative summary approach and tended to focus less on the passage in question and more on war in general. These responses tended to view Hibbert in a particularly harsh light, whereas better responses were more even-handed in their assessment of his behaviour. A few responses incorrectly suggested that Osborne was Stanhope's uncle and misread the nickname.

- (b) Too few seen to make meaningful comment.

### **WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE: *Romeo and Juliet***

#### **Question 4**

- (a) This was a popular text and question. The word 'entertaining' was generally interpreted as being comical or amusing, and successful responses identified the humour in the passage, understood what the Nurse is saying in her long speech, and explored how this is entertaining for the audience. They knew the context; the subject of marriage with Paris was to be introduced, and recognised Lady Capulet's awkwardness because of her lack of closeness with Juliet, and her wish to have the

Nurse present for their talk. Most understood her vulgarity, talkativeness and tendency towards anecdote, but only the strongest responses were able to engage with how Shakespeare demonstrated this to show critical understanding of her as a dramatic device to relieve tension in the scene. The Nurse's position as a mother figure to Juliet was understood by all but some candidates who then became distracted by these emotional connections as opposed to focusing on the entertaining moments in this scene. Better candidates explored the rambling nature of her comments and how Lady Capulet had had '*Enough of this*'.

Weaker candidates were unable to move past general descriptions of her behaviour as being inherently entertaining, for example the fact that she 'talks a lot' or 'rambles'. They struggled with the language and simply paraphrased the passage ignoring the question of how Shakespeare made this an entertaining introduction. There were many misconceptions including that '*earthquake*' had a sexual connotation and that it was unusual to have a wet nurse. Very few candidates understood the reference to '*wormwood*' or to her '*teeth*' and what they contributed to make this entertaining. These simply stated that the Nurse was 'entertaining' but without exploring how.

- (b) This was a popular question and should have been straightforward, but it proved to be problematic for many candidates leading many to simply retell the story. Most candidates chose to answer the question by explaining what Romeo and Juliet did rather than what they said and how Shakespeare's use of language and stagecraft conveyed their powerful feelings. The most successful responses focused on key moments that illustrated the couple's feelings for each other, for example, the balcony scene, Romeo's banishment and their double suicide. This was a fair question which required basic exam technique to respond successfully. Better candidates explored the depth of feelings which Romeo and Juliet had for each other. Although many better answers did adopt a semi-narrative approach, they selected key scenes to focus on in detail. Popular choices were, the Prologue, the Capulet ball, the balcony scene and the final scene of their double suicide. Many included detailed textual references especially the comparison of Juliet with the sun and stars and the religious language of their first meeting.

Less successful responses relied on retelling the entire play, often losing sight of the task and making very generalised comments about their powerful feelings of love.

## WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE: *Twelfth Night*

### Question 5

- (a) Many responses simply ignored the key words 'such a dramatic moment' and provided a narrative commentary with paraphrase. Better responses placed the passage in context and contrasted Malvolio's pomposity with the revellers, also recognising how his behaviour here leads to the trick being played on him. Most candidates understood that the characters were making fun of Malvolio but seemed unable to take this further. The best responses recognised and explored Malvolio's anger/pomposity/threats and commented on the impact on Sir Toby, who is so drunk he effectively ignores them and carries on singing, deliberately mocking Malvolio. Most were able to recognise the meaning of what Sir Toby says '*rub your chain with crumbs*' but only the strongest candidates commented on his deliberate provocation which is then picked up and continued by Maria. Sir Andrew's line tended to be ignored by most, though a few did manage to make the link to the later challenge. Very few responses commented on how Maria's more 'restrained' reaction was setting up the plot for Malvolio's being gulled.

Weaker answers recognised that the revellers were annoyed with Malvolio, but often overlooked the contributions of the Clown and Maria. Some overstated the fact that Malvolio was of a lower class than Sir Toby but did not take this further and follow the relationship between them through the passage. This would be a very visually entertaining scene but not many appeared to enjoy the humour. Most candidates understood that the characters were making fun of Malvolio but seemed unable to take this further. Feste and Maria were not always mentioned but good candidates saw the importance of Maria's last speech.

- (b) Candidates who answered ended up with a list of the different love matches and types of love, and an explanatory narrative about them without really focusing on any specific moments or language detail. Better answers considered various aspects of love depicted and whether they were real or self-indulgent in some cases, like Orsino. Malvolio's self-love was often effectively examined.

Weaker answers often focused on the love triangle, not always accurately, or got side-tracked by the role of disguise in the play. These were very narrative in approach and lacked relevant textual detail to support ideas.

# LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

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Paper 0992/42  
Unseen

## General comments

### Key messages

- There were very few rubric errors and misunderstandings, and most candidates explored the deeper implications behind the surface meaning of the text.
- Most candidates are now much better at structuring their interpretative responses, with clear introductions and conclusions related to the question.
- Candidates need to be more selective in their comment on language, structure and form, and go into more detail.
- There is some misunderstanding of 'personal response' which is about interpretation of the text rather than anecdote or broad statements of effect.

## General comments

Examiners were impressed by how well centres and candidates have dealt with this exam paper in exceptionally difficult circumstances. Although the examined entry for this paper was considerably lower than in the past, the smaller cohort performed to the high standard that we have come to expect in recent sessions. Once again, the prose passage (**Question 2**) was considerably less popular than the poetry (**Question 1**) but both proved equally accessible and suitably demanding across the range of the candidature.

The general standard was high, with very few rubric errors or serious misunderstandings. Where there were serious misunderstandings, it was often because candidates had not read the short introductory rubric which precedes the question in bold, and is intended to help them.

A small number of candidates produced purely narrative responses, but most responses were full and well-organised. Examiners welcomed the large number of strongly written introductions focused on the question and giving an overview of the text as a whole, and conclusions which often contained an evaluation of the text or deeper thinking about its interpretation, rather than simply repeating the terms of the question. Most candidates used the bullet points to organise their paragraphs, which led to compact and succinct responses, better focused than some of the more rambling answers in past sessions. Balanced responses, with equal weight to different stanzas and sections of the texts, were highly rewarded; there were fewer unbalanced or incomplete responses than in some sessions. Candidates make better use of the reading and planning time when they organise clearly developed responses, instead of writing too much, too quickly. Most candidates saw the questions as invitations to develop an interpretation, clearly supported by evidence in the form of short quotation followed by comment on effects. Good candidates group effects together and observe internal patterns within the text.

Some candidates still seem to think that marks are awarded simply for recognising features of language and do not develop their interpretations of the effects of figurative language or narrative choices. More successful candidates make a choice of interesting images, dictional choices or structure in order to develop their own interpretation, making connections between different parts of the text. Few candidates are able to comment meaningfully on rhyme scheme or poetic structure, and some struggle with choices of narrative viewpoint in prose which are more complicated than the purely first personal. Candidates attract higher marks when they say a lot about a little, digging deeper into the writer's choices, instead of superficial commentary on a range of features. Jumping from one device to the next is not likely to be reward, and missed the chance to explore the writer's choices and to make links and connections. The relationship between language features and deeper meaning in the text as a whole needs to be clear, and supported by synthesis of evidence from different parts of the text.

Personal response should be the candidate's individual interpretation of the text, making meaning from tone, mood and structural development. There is a close link between AO3 and AO4, as the first drives the second, and Examiners can often distinguish between scripts in the higher mark bands by the quality of comment that follows a quotation, and how well quotations and commentary are integrated within an overall argument. This is linked to the importance of an effective introduction and consideration of the question and bullet point, as the stem question provides an opportunity to evaluate the effects of the text on the reader, and this is supported by the particular characteristics of the text which are identified in the bullet points. Candidates who divide the texts into clear sections, and then work on how the text develops, and especially on how it ends, are likely to produce well-structured arguments of their own. Examiners are experienced in judging the quality of engagement with literary texts, even if they might disagree with some of the conclusions reached. 'Personal response' gives candidates space to make their own interpretation of these challenging unseen texts, which are valid if strongly supported by verbal analysis of the textual evidence. Personal response is not about individual anecdotes, or vague statements about the impact of language on an individual reader such as 'this creates a picture in my mind.' There is no requirement to compare the texts to other texts, such as the candidate's set texts, and no need to draw personal 'lessons for life' from the text, as imaginative literature is rarely so didactic.

The courage and ability of most candidates to come to conclusions about meaning and to dig into the language, constantly quoting and commenting, proved impressive and indicated clearly that preparation in most centres is taking place along the right lines. Teachers and candidates deserve much praise for maintaining strong interpretative skills in this paper.

### **Comments on specific questions**

#### **Question 1**

The Anglo-Jamaican poet Edward Lucie-Smith's moving poem 'Poet in Winter' describing an experience of writer's block, proved a popular choice in this series. About two-thirds of candidates chose this question, a number of them identifying with the difficulties of the persona in writing. Some compared these thoughts and feelings with their own 'striving in this exam hall', comparing the poet's 'bent head' to their own. More objectively, those who had read the introductory rubric and question carefully appreciated that there was a surface narrative to this text, which might or might not be autobiographical, and that descriptions of winter were an extended metaphor for the poet's barren inspiration. Many offered highly individual responses to the poem and claimed to have developed a new appreciation of the arduous task of literary creation.

The question asked candidates to focus on the vivid portrayal of thoughts and feelings through language and imagery, while the bullet points suggested that they look initially at the descriptions in the first stanza, then at the poet's imagery (especially in the second stanza) and finally at how the writer conveys the poet's isolation in the third stanza. Given this direction, most candidates structured their responses sequentially, but many were able to pick up cross-references and make an effective synthesis of observations from different parts of the poem. Working through the poem, most were able to see how ideas and the dramatisation of the poet's frustrations developed, but most struggled to see just how carefully crafted the poem actually is. Many asserted the poem did not rhyme or was chaotic, perhaps because they struggled to identify the sight rhymes. In fact, the poem has a sophisticated interlocking structure of three rhymes in each stanza, and its elaborate patterns and mastery of enjambment and caesura are an ironic contrast to the struggles of the poet described in it. Many candidates lacked the tools to say anything meaningful about the poem's structure, but some wrote very effectively about the movement of the verse and its pauses, and those who were able to read the syntax of the stanza, each a carefully crafted sentence, were better able to relate form to meaning.

Most candidates had plenty to say about the first stanza, pitying the poet's prison-like confinement to 'a small room' with just 'one table and chair', some linking this to the poet's isolation and others to his dedication to his craft. Strong answers related the poet's halting progress to the rhythm of the lines in which he 'writes, then cancels what he writes'. Many empathised with his frustration as he 'tears up the sheet, runs fingers through his hair'. Some wanted 'tears' to be a pun, although that seems unlikely: the sustained metaphor of 'violent longing' is more relevant than floods of tears. Some felt that longing was related to the first line of the next stanza: 'For him love does not burn, but chains him so' and picked up a pattern of violent images associated with love ('tears', 'fights', 'lie heavy', 'hurled', 'caught and wrung', 'mailed gauntlet'). A few even thought that there were suggestions of self-harm or despair here, associated with disappointments in love. Some of these attempts to construct a narrative became too speculative when they moved away from the language of the text. Those who associate this desperation more with the writer's attempts to pen his



thoughts and emotions adequately were probably closer to the poet's meaning, and that 'violent longing' could as easily be about his passion for writing as his passion for others. The poem keeps returning our focus to the blank page.

Although some candidates treated the descriptions of 'a winter landscape literally', many felt it was entirely metaphorical. Some thought tenor and vehicle existed side by side in this extended set of metaphor describing 'the sensed tilting of his hemisphere'. Some linked this image to 'his bent head' in the third stanza, but those who read over the line ending were better able to pick up the imagery of 'the frozen solstice' and the 'oncoming ice-age of the will', to suggest that the poet's inspiration is frozen over. These candidates sometimes linked the imagery of winter ice with 'familiar roads are covered now...by a blank sameness' in the second stanza and to the 'false snowstorm' of the third stanza. Perhaps it was the last image in particular which helped many candidates to decide that this winter was largely imagery. Stronger answers also made the link to the whiteness of that blank sheet of paper, helped by the simile 'thoughts are like granite hurled into soft snow'. Many wrote effectively about this contrast, linking granite-like thoughts to the words which 'lie heavy on his tongue' and the 'soft snow' to the effects of a 'polar wind' which becomes the chilling 'draught' scattering the poet's 'fragments of verses' in the third stanza. One candidate wrote that 'the writer uses the simile to symbolise the way the writer is throwing words onto a blank piece of paper' and that 'he believes his thoughts and feelings taint the beauty of his mind and subsequently the paper he writes them on'. This and similar answers began to probe the origins of the writer's block. There were some strong responses to the idea that love is not a burning inspiration for the poet, but a chilling reminder of his isolation, and to the idea that 'familiar roads', his usual ways of writing or living, are 'covered now' by an all-enveloping blankness. Perhaps the most difficult image for the poet's struggles was that of 'the mailed gauntlet' at the end of stanza two. Weaker responses tended to leave this out altogether, but there were strong answers, helped by the descriptive gloss, exploring how this image personifies the polar wind as an invincible challenger, and conveys the bitterness of the poet's struggles against the chill and ice of a metaphorical winter. One candidate felt this personified the poet's task as a villain and suggested that 'the old-fashioned vocabulary creates a fantasy, fairy-tale atmosphere'.

The third stanza begins 'And yet', which is a discourse marker to indicate a change of direction or viewpoint. In this stanza, nothing really changes, but there is a stronger indication of the violent subjectivity of the poet's feelings. Anyone else 'opening the door' to the study portrayed in the first stanza would not see anything to disturb them, and would observe the poet at work quite 'casually'. Some candidates felt this made the wind that blows through the stanza as 'false' as the stage snowstorm described in the simile in the final line. Many commented on the laboured alliteration of the 'slowly scribbled page' to describe the poet's quickly hidden and ultimately fruitless efforts, or on the return to winter in the final lines. A few suggested that the imagery of 'the stage' suggested the artifice and performance of poetic expression, while others were interested in the eschatology of 'damned to strive' to suggest that writing has become, for this poet, the torment of the damned, which he seems predestined to suffer. One candidate thought that the observer opening the door suggested 'god is watching the damned man struggle through the snow.'

Here, in the final stanza as in the first, some candidates made very effective parallels between the poet's physical environment and his imagination or mental state, and how he seems singled out for a lonely destiny. Some of these personal responses were very well-expressed, commenting, for instance, on how the poet's thoughts 'can not be retrieved in the midst of the rubbish of scrunched up papers in his head, preventing him from achieving a breakthrough' or 'he creates his own snowstorm in the process of putting treasure among the ashes, no longer to be found'. There was engagement with the idea of a 'stage' and of the 'hypothetical observer'. Some candidates considered the act of writing as a kind of performance, or saw the poet as his own worst critic. One wrote that 'he feels eyes watching from behind, from the open door, in silent judgement'. Another commented that poetry itself was a 'showy endeavour'. Others related the 'draught' that scatters the poetic fragments to the 'polar wind' and the 'tilting of his hemisphere' to link the stanzas together and illustrate how the poet's inspiration had cooled. A few thought the poet had finally found some inspiration in this final stanza but struggled to support this assertion. More common was the view that this stanza represented a return to the bleak and impoverished reality of stanza one.

These responses, and the structure of the previous paragraphs, should show that candidates work will be most effective when they work carefully through the poem, but go beyond spotting features of the writing. They attract more marks when they: develop their ideas, make links between different observations, comment on how language and imagery prompt interpretative comment and have an effect on the tone and mood of the whole text, as well as their impact on the reader. Examiners appreciated the wide range of personal responses to this poem, which became effective critical responses when candidates linked their interpretations clearly to the poet's methods and purposes, through succinct quotation and developed commentary.

## Question 2

The extract from the memoir *Boyhood: Scenes from Provincial Life* by the eminent South African writer J. M. Coetzee provided some interesting challenges for candidates trained to spot the more obvious literary devices. Coetzee's spare prose deploys few adjectives and adverbs, and there is little imagery in this passage. Effects are rather more subtle, and the emotional power of the passage lies largely in its subtext, and deeper implications. Thus, this passage proved a very effective test of AOs 2 and 4, while language analysis needed to be more stringent. However, candidates did have an opportunity to write about an interesting choice of narrative viewpoint, and it is a pity few took this up. The writer is clearly writing autobiographically, yet chooses to do so in the third person and in the present tense. By dramatising his boyhood self in this way, he vividly captures what the boy saw and felt at the time, while distancing himself from the personality revealed. The third bullet point in particular asked candidates to consider narrative point of view and voice, and those trained to do so produced more convincing and critical responses. Strong candidates commented on Coetzee's manipulation of the memoir form, and on the text's apparent emotional detachment. One wrote 'perhaps he does not want to associate with his past self' while another response said 'the detail in which he describes the bicycle suggests that it is seared in his memory, even all this time later'.

The question asked about how the writer memorably conveyed his family's life and relationships, and while many struggled to analyse in detail what was memorable about the writer's style, many were able to engage with his telling use of detail, and most were confident in addressing family relationships and the tensions revealed. Many candidates seemed very well-versed in the language of popular psychology and described relationships, probably not inaccurately, as 'toxic' or even understood the boy's jealous feelings towards his mother suggesting 'she was a prisoner of her son's love'. However, more basic responses were confused by the use of third person, or by the logo of the red goblin on the vacuum cleaner; some conflated the boy's emotions and betrayal with the father's or thought the goblin was the narrator or his little brother. With the reference to Cape Town some candidates recognised the setting and many showed good contextual understanding of patriarchal attitudes to women at a time before women's liberation movements. Surprisingly few put the two contexts together and related attitudes to women to wider postcolonial and political issues. Context can also be a distraction from focus on the literary text itself and is not a requirement in this paper or syllabus. Exploring the narrative structure of the writer's memories, and ways in which he 'zooms in' on particular details and moments which represent his feelings at the time, was more effective.

Candidates often performed well by working through each bullet point in turn and working chronologically through the passage. The writer begins by portraying the family's life in their new home in Worcester. Most candidates were not impressed by the surroundings and some thought there was evidence that the family fortunes had declined. Many wrote about 'this box of a house' as the first of several metaphors of entrapment or even imprisonment, and most responded to the 'bleak' environment and to the way dust 'seeps' everywhere. Daily life seemed to candidates dull and monotonous, especially for the mother as she 'trails' her vacuum cleaner behind her. Some commented that the dust and the vacuum cleaner seemed to have more life than the human inhabitants. A few saw the 'goblin' as some kind of Imp of the Perverse, while some were disturbed by the description of the boy sucking up ants 'to their death'. Most found the descriptions of 'plagues of flies', dust and ants distasteful, and could understand why the boy as well as the mother would feel trapped and restless. A number of candidates felt that this was a sinister contribution to a mood of restless unhappiness, and many commented on the trio of plagues in this paragraph as effective layering to shape meaning. A few also saw the ants as a metaphor for the mother's crushed desires, and the boy's itchy nights as a representation of her own itch to escape. Both mother and boy are described as 'sucking up' their victims, but in later parts of the passage they are themselves sucked up into a family hierarchy neither are happy with.

The story of the mother's bicycle dominates the rest of the extract, and most could see the bicycle's symbolic significance as a representation of the thwarted desire to escape confinement and entrapment, not just within the house but implicitly within family life and an unhappy marriage. Some saw the 'box of a house' as indicating not just physical confinement but the confinement of gender roles too. Some candidates were intrigued by the mother's impulsive desire for a horse when she probably did not know how to ride one, and many were disgusted by the father's sarcastic comparison to 'Lady Godiva', rightly calling out the implicit misogyny and assertion of patriarchy. Stronger responses often referenced the excessive use of personal pronouns and short sentences and were able to comment on their effect on the reader. When the bicycle itself is introduced as 'black' and 'huge and heavy' some felt this ominous, while others wondered whether the fact that it was 'second-hand' indicated the family's reduced circumstances, or represented another woman's failed bid for freedom. Certainly the bicycle is too big for the boy, in a telling detail about his own immaturity. Several candidates were appalled at the father's refusal to teach the mother to ride the bicycle, and felt this was a strong indication of her isolation and lack of support. Most sympathised with her cry 'I will

not be a prisoner in this house' and contrasted this with the father's misogynist presumption that 'women do not ride bicycles'.

The final bullet point suggested that candidates evaluate the writer's retrospective feelings about the behaviour of his father and himself. This required more detailed appreciation of the distance the writer places between his older and younger self, and his deeper understanding that this was a pivotal moment of betrayal, when he decided, against his better instincts, that he 'belongs with the men'. Some, however, got muddled between the boy and his father at this point, thinking the father felt regret or a sense of betrayal. Another misunderstanding was to read the father's jokes literally, thinking that the townsfolk of Worcester really had mocked the mother, when this was really just a construct within the father's belittling 'jokes'. A few thought the mother rode away and that it was she, rather than the bike which had disappeared at the end of the passage. These mistakes were the result of not reading carefully enough and reflecting on how the writer is portraying memories. Those who thought about the passage as a whole, and the significance of the way it ends avoided this mistake – and made up the vast majority of responses. Most candidates understood the meaning of the final paragraph and the nature of the boy's betrayal of his mother, linking it to moment he caught a glimpse of her looking 'young and fresh and mysterious'. Polysyndeton adds emphasis here, and shows the boy, in memory, lingering over this moment: when the mother 'pedals away' from him, she is also 'escaping towards her own desire' and the boy seems threatened by those prepositions. His reluctance to grant her 'a desire of her own' was identified as jealous self-protection and the reason why he ganged up with a father who is generally portrayed unsympathetically here.

Stronger candidates often noticed that the mother is not 'gifted' with repartee and related this to the reported speech in the passage, where the father's sarcasm and jokes dominate and contrast with the mother's initial stubbornness followed by her equally impulsive submission. The best answers wondered if her surrender was in some way linked with her son's betrayal. Several noticed the lexical field of conflict including the idea that she had been 'defeated'. The boy himself feels he 'must bear part of the blame'. A few candidates noticed the starkness of these monosyllables and felt the weight of his guilt. One or two noticed that the boy chooses to laugh at her through the description of her riding 'in an uncertain, wobbling way, straining to turn the heavy cranks', rather than dwell too long on the disturbing suggestion that she might be 'escaping from him'. Most understood the nature of an oppressive patriarchy which has conscripted the boy's support by the end of the passage. Not all pinpointed the exact moment when this happens, in the last three paragraphs printed on page 4 of the paper, in contrast to the mother's assertion that 'I will be free'. Many noticed that the boy initially sided with his mother and 'thought it splendid that she should have her own bicycle'. A few noticed that in his imagination he sees them cycling together, and one or two noticed that the trio of 'she and he and his brother' deliberately excludes his father. Strong answers made the observation that it is the 'jokes' that undermined this position: the boy begins to wonder 'what if his father is right' as his mother is not able to make a quick quip in response but just counters with 'dogged silence'. Even in memory, the writer describes the mother's attempts to teach herself as 'silly'. The writer's language shows 'what a betrayal this is' when the boy's 'heart turns against her'. That rare moment of imagery suggests the emotional significance of this, while the stark short sentence shows that 'now his mother is all alone'. The writer implies that he not only feels guilt retrospectively, but he felt it at the time. The strongest responses showed a deep engagement with those emotions and how they are represented on the page.

# LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

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**Paper 0992/05**  
**Coursework**

## **Key messages**

Successful responses:

- show a detailed knowledge of texts
- select relevant material to meet the requirements of the text
- substantiate their arguments with relevant, concise references to the text
- analyse in detail and sensitively the ways in which writers achieve their effects.

Less successful responses:

- have an insecure or limited knowledge of texts
- write exhaustively and lose focus on the task
- make assertions which are not substantiated
- list writers' techniques without close analysis
- offer pre-learned 'themes' rather than personal responses.

## **General comments**

There was much evidence of coursework of a high standard this session, where candidates showed both sensitive engagement with, and enjoyment of, the texts they had studied; this was a testament to the hard work of both candidates and teachers in this most challenging of academic years. There were a few instances of syllabus infringements, for example where candidates entered assignments dealing with only one poem or short story or with only a discrete extract from a prose or drama text. These deficiencies were mentioned in the individual reports to centres.

The most successful assignments sustained a clear focus on a carefully worded task designed to enable candidates to meet the requirements of the highest levels in the mark scheme. In these assignments, candidates selected relevant material from the text to address the task that had been set. Some less successful responses showed a detailed knowledge of the text, sometimes at exhaustive length, but did not tailor their material to the specific demands of the task. This was an unproductive approach taken in many poetry assignments where candidates worked through the poem offering a line-by-line commentary, in so doing, losing the sight of the task. Candidates should be taught the skill of selecting material judiciously in a way that directly addresses the task set – this is true for examination questions as well as coursework assignments.

The most convincing essays sustained a critical engagement with the ways in which writers achieve their effects (Assessment Objective 3), relating their points to the task. Less successful assignments often commented discretely on connotations of specific words without relating them to their use in the text and sometimes simply logged features such as alliteration, anaphora and enjambment in poetry essays, without regard to the thrust of the question.

Several centres submitted empathic responses, with most providing the necessary information: the name of the character and the precise moment in the text that the interior monologue takes place. The most successful responses captured a convincingly authentic voice for the chosen character and moment. It should be remembered that significant characters from novels and plays (not short stories) lend themselves best to empathic tasks.

## Guidance for teachers

Guidance on task-setting can be found in the Coursework Handbook, which stresses the importance of (a) wording tasks that direct candidates explicitly to explore the ways in which writers achieve their effects and (b) avoiding insufficiently challenging command words such as 'Describe' and 'Explain'. Teachers within the centre should together discuss the appropriateness of proposed tasks before they are given to candidates. This means that any problems can be nipped in the bud.

There follows a reminder of what constitutes both good practice in the presentation of coursework folders:

- Start each assignment with the full wording of the task. In the case of empathic responses, the chosen character and moment should be clearly stated. This is important since it allows the moderator to determine how successfully the candidate has captured an authentic voice for the character at the specified moment.
- Use focused ticking in the body of the text to indicate valid and thoughtful points, together with concise marginal and summative comments which relate to the wording of the levels descriptors.
- Provide a brief explanation on the assignment or cover sheet in cases where marks are changed during internal moderation. Such purposeful annotation aids transparency and contributes to the robustness of the assessment as it enables a centre to justify its award of particular marks. It is, therefore, not appropriate to send clean (i.e. unannotated) copies of assignments.

The following examples of unhelpful annotation should be avoided: excessive ticking (e.g. of every paragraph or every line); hyperbolic praise of work of indifferent quality; labelling by assessment objective. Simply putting the supposed relevant AOs in the margin is of very little benefit to the moderator, as it does not reveal the *extent* to which a particular assessment objective has been addressed; instead, more specific reference should be made to the relevant levels descriptors.

Most centres carried out administration efficiently. Cover sheets (individual record cards) were secured by treasury tag or staple which allowed easy access to candidate work. In these centres care had been taken to:

- include all candidates' details on the Coursework Assessment Summary Form
- transcribe totals accurately across the various documents.

All centres are advised to include a clerical checking stage in their moderation procedures before submitting their paperwork to Cambridge [International](#). This check should be carried out by a different person from the one who completed the Coursework Assessment Summary Forms and Mark Sheets originally.