

LITERATURE (ENGLISH)

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| <p>Paper 0486/11 Paper 11 Poetry and Prose</p> |
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Key messages

Successful responses:

- show a detailed knowledge of texts studied
- focus explicitly on the key words of the question
- use relevant textual references to support the points made
- engage with the ways in which writers achieve their effects.

Less successful responses:

- have an insecure or limited knowledge of texts
- introduce irrelevant material (including extraneous background material)
- make assertions which are not substantiated
- merely log or describe writers' techniques
- offer pre-learned 'themes' rather than responses to the specific 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 very 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 in Section B; this approach was self-penalising as there was insufficient material to draw upon for their answers. Teachers should remind candidates to write the correct question numbers in the margin of the answer booklet.

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 response to passage-based questions, many candidates selected and then probed closely the effects created by a writer's use of language. The strongest responses to general essays also showed an extensive knowledge and included much direct quotation and/or textual reference, testimony to the close study undertaken by candidates. The absence of pertinent textual support inevitably led to overly assertive and explanatory responses.

Focus on the question

Successful answers sustained a clear focus on the key words of the question from start to finish. These responses addressed directly those words in IGCSE Literature questions which are designed to elicit personal responses to the writing, words such as 'moving', 'vivid', 'sad', 'memorably', 'strikingly'. There were, however, less successful responses that made only a cursory reference, and sometimes no reference, to such words. In these cases, candidates tended to note pre-learned lists of points about characters or themes with little regard to the question. This was particularly evident in responses to both poetry and prose passage-based questions where a candidate worked through the poem or extract in order, often exhaustively.

There were fewer examples this session of candidates beginning their essays with extraneous background material relating to social or cultural contexts. There were, however, instances of lengthy conclusions that merely re-stated the main points of the essay.

Writers' effects

The most convincing and perceptive responses sustained a critical engagement with the effects achieved by writers' use of form, structure and language. Those who had a detailed knowledge of their texts were better able to explore closely the effects of the writing. The strongest responses were able to link their comments on form, structure and language to the ideas and impressions conveyed by the writer. Less successful responses sometimes commented discretely on effects without relating them to the content and meaning. Less confident responses were characterised by a tendency to explain rather analyse. This was particularly evident in general comments made about semantic fields or identification of rhyme schemes (e.g. ABAB). Examiners noticed an increase in the number of general assertions made about the associations of particular colours: in responses to Browning's *Meeting at Night* 'blue' was variously described as 'cold', 'warm', 'mournful', 'romantic'.

There were also occasions when candidates referred repeatedly to prose texts as 'the poem' or 'the play', thereby showing an insecure understanding of literary form.

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 and explored the detail of texts, showing insight and individuality. There were few answers that simply regurgitated ideas found in study guides. Less confident answers sometimes showed 'empathy', writing that they found a particular character and situation relatable but without offering a probing critical analysis of details from the text.

Comments on specific questions

Section A

Question 1

This was a popular choice with a wide range in the quality of answers. Successful responses showed an in depth understanding of the poem and provided convincing commentary on details such as the physicality of the reservists and the imagery of medieval warfare and childhood. Stronger answers picked up on the poet's disillusion and cynicism and commented on the sarcastic tone. These answers successfully combined evaluative comments on the writing effects with an understanding of the deeper meaning.

Less successful answers were more literal in their understanding. Some candidates, for example, thought the poem was about a 'medieval joust' or a 'middle ages battle'. Some made the childhood images a central focus in their response, and thought the poem was about children having fun. Such answers tended not to identify the sarcastic tone or cynical attitude of the poet. A few candidates were not clear about the role of the reservists and thought that the poem was about a country actively engaged in a war.

Question 2

This was another popular question with some strong answers showing thorough knowledge and detailed understanding. Most candidates showed basic understanding of the poem. Candidates should be advised against providing biographical details which are either irrelevant or that detract from consideration of the poem.

Stronger answers recognised the deeper implications, commenting on the references to passing time and the changes of emotion over time. Successful answers identified many of the literary features such as the use of cosmic imagery, rhetorical questions and personification of abstractions and discussed how they work within the poem. Stronger candidates were able to probe these writing techniques and show how they were effective. Successful answers also focused on the key word, 'powerful'.

Weaker answers identified some of the writing features but did not analyse the effects. Less successful answers tended to run through the poem and paraphrase each line.

Question 3

Although there were some strong responses seen for this question, many did not go beyond commenting on surface meaning.

Stronger answers successfully responded to the key words 'vivid impressions' and commented on the contrasts between the expected and unexpected. They noted the noise of the cow and the intensity of its impact. Some commented meaningfully on the significance of the title. They also noted the significance of the imagery describing the field, the cows and the torturous sound the cow made.

Many responses however, misunderstood the cow's 'phenomenal' noise and thought it was the cow giving birth. This misunderstanding may have been because of the use of the word, 'labouring'. Weaker responses tended to be narrative and identified lists of literary features without commenting on their significance.

Question 4

This was another very popular question. Many candidates showed a clear understanding of how the mysterious, strange creature and its environment contributed to a 'disturbing' element in the poem. Many candidates commented on the physical description of the Kraken, the abyssal depth of its home in the sea and its passivity.

Most candidates made some response to the writing effects. Stronger answers effectively analysed imagery, particularly noting the mysterious and strange vocabulary such as 'grot' and 'polypi'. They noted and commented on the significance of the apocalyptic references in the last lines, and clearly linked their points to 'disturbing'.

Less successful answers often agreed with the question, stating that the poem was disturbing, but did not explain *how* Tennyson achieved this.

Question 5

There were few responses to this question. Responses generally showed an understanding of the musician's surroundings, his passion for music, and his untidiness. Successful answers responded in detail to writing effects, commenting on the link between the Jackson Pollock painting and the state of the room, the significance of the snow, and the musical and artistic references.

Some responses spent too much time on biographical details and/or the significance of the Jackson Pollock painting. Weaker answers tended to run through the poem line by line, and to lapse into a narrative response.

Question 6

In the responses seen to this question, there were some engaged personal answers which fully explored Clarke's experience and maintained a tight focus on the question. Candidates commented on the setting, the individual patients and Clarke's thoughts and feelings. They noted details such as the poignancy of the poem that the man recited and the effects of the recitation on the writer, other patients and nurses. Candidates often also provided a detailed response to writing effects such as the vocabulary describing the spring setting, the patients and the significance of the title.

Section B

Question 7

There were few responses to this question. Most showed a basic understanding of the characters, the context and the overall novel. Candidates commented on the motives of Maria and Mr Rushworth and their willingness to marry for reasons other than love. They also commented on the emphasis on status and income. Stronger candidates commented on deeper implications in the passage such as the manipulations of Mrs Norris and Mrs Rushworth, or Edmund's reservations about the match. Candidates must be encouraged to consider writing effects in prose. In this instance, examples could have been the absence of direct speech, the tone or the vocabulary. Few candidates responded to the 'amusing' aspect of the question.



Question 8

Too few responses were seen to make meaningful comment.

Question 9

Engaged personal responses to this question were seen in which candidates showed a clear understanding of the grandparents. Most answers showed knowledge of the background details of their situation and included this in an opening paragraph. Many candidates identified and appreciated the different personal qualities of the grandparents, such as grandmother's strength, energy and intelligence, and grandfather's quiet affection. Most responses picked out details from the passage describing their physical appearance. Stronger answers explored the impact of some of the writing features, such as the descriptive language, the references to sunshine and 'the patch of yellow sunlight on the floor'.

Less successful responses tended to work through the extract in an exhaustive way without maintaining a clear focus on the question. It is important that candidates adopt a selective approach to passage-based questions, choosing the most relevant parts of the extract with which to answer the specific question.

Question 10

Too few responses were seen to make meaningful comment.

Question 11

Too few responses were seen to make meaningful comment.

Question 12

Too few responses were seen to make meaningful comment.

Question 13

Most candidates showed some understanding of how Dickens created sympathy for Sissy and Louisa at this moment in the passage. The strongest responses showed a sensitive appreciation of Louisa's unhappiness and dryness, Sissy's awareness of her lack of education and the attempts of each girl to communicate with each other. Stronger answers provided meaningful commentary on some of the writing features such as the dialogue, significance of some of the punctuation and Sissy's language mistakes. Stronger answers also noted how the reasons for sympathy for the girls were different – Louisa is too cold and disengaged, Sissy is too emotional.

Less successful responses explored the surface detail of the passage. Some spent too much time describing the weaknesses of the educational system or relaying pre-prepared information.

Question 14

There were some convincing and engaged answers to this question which displayed a detailed knowledge of characters, plot and context. Candidates wrote with feeling about the relationship between Louisa and Tom, and stronger answers included an impressive range of textual support with specific and relevant incidents to show the strength of their bond.

Less successful answers tended to provide straightforward character sketches of the two, without analysing what made their relationship 'memorable'.

Question 15

There were many detailed and engaged answers to this question and most candidates identified at least some of the key points. Most candidates were able to place the 'moment' in the context of the wider novel, and showed an overall understanding of the characters. Stronger answers looked closely at the text and dealt effectively with the key words in the question – 'vivid and significant'. Successful answers commented on the changes in Thornhill's character, and explored his inner thoughts as revealed in the passage. They picked up on the descriptive details in the passage, the discomfort of the newly arrived felons, and how this was a significant revelatory moment for Thornhill.

In some less successful responses, there was little awareness of the wider novel as candidates worked through the passage logging language features and narrating the events. Some focused too much on contextual social conditions.

Question 16

Stronger answers described a wide range of problems the Thornhills faced, providing detailed examples and references. They pinpointed challenges such as the harsh living conditions, the threat from the 'natives', the isolation, the difficulties in communication and the conflict between humans and the environment. Some more successful answers explored the different viewpoints of the characters.

Less successful responses lacked the range of textual references needed to support their arguments. As a result, these answers relied heavily on descriptive and assertive approaches. In some cases candidates did not focus on the question and wrote in general and at length about issues such as the ownership of land or the historical conflict between the settlers and the 'natives'.

Question 17

There were many strong answers for this question. These looked closely at the extract, analysed the language in detail and dealt very effectively with the 'moving portrayal of the boys' friendship'. Many candidates referenced the question in their first paragraph and sustained the focus on this throughout. Others used the first paragraph to introduce the scene and place it in context within the text – some of these responses could have been more concise in this. Nearly all candidates were able to select some relevant points from the passage which responded to the question. Stronger answers showed a clear understanding of the friendship and explored what was revealed about Finny's character in the passage as well as Gene's admiration for Finny. Some were able to draw out the deeper implications in the passage and observed Gene's reservations, the underlying tensions between the boys and the significance of the last lines. Successful answers also responded in detail to writing features such as the idyllic atmosphere and the quality of the dialogue.

Less successful answers tended to run through the passage and respond with descriptive or narrative commentary.

Question 18

Most candidates showed some knowledge and understanding of Leper's character and provided some reasons for feeling sorry for him. Stronger answers were perceptive and engaged, providing a range of well supported reasons for their empathy, such as his quiet gentleness, love of nature, unsuitability for war and how he was impacted by the war. More successful candidates noted with sensitivity the effect he had on Gene, Finny and the other boys. Some stronger answers showed the significance of the final 'trial' scene and linked this to the question. Many candidates commented on the overall anti-war message which was revealed through Leper.

Less successful responses provided a simple character sketch or a narrative account of the events in which Leper was involved. These responses needed more specific and relevant textual reference to support the points made. A few wrote in detail about issues like loneliness, mental illness or the pointlessness of war and did not focus on the question or text.

Question 19

Many candidates provided engaged personal responses in which they identified several points showing clear and sometimes sensitive understanding of Msimangu. Many were able to draw out 'vivid impressions' from the passage such as his wisdom, courage, humility and spirituality. Better answers were very well supported with detailed and relevant references. These responses linked points drawn from the passage with the wider themes of the novel, showing detailed knowledge. Stronger responses noted the significance of writing features such as dialogue and the short sentences of Msimangu in his long speech.

Less successful answers tended to run through the passage with a narrative response and did not link their points to the question. Some of these did not respond to the writing or attempt to show how the author achieved his effects.

Question 20

Too few responses were seen to make meaningful comment.

Question 21

Stronger answers were able to identify the narrator's admiration for Mrs Grancy and his mixed feelings of pity and resentment for Mr Grancy. Successful answers also noted the sense of Mrs Grancy's ghostly presence in the house and the mysterious atmosphere. Some candidates commented on the narrator's horror when he saw the changed portrait.

Less successful answers lost focus on the narrator's feelings and wrote in general about the short story, without drawing relevant points from the passage. Some candidates were confused about who the narrator was and his relationship with Grancy and Mrs Grancy.

Question 22

There were some strong engaged personal responses to this question. Most showed clear knowledge of the details of the short story and wrote with empathy about the men in the boat. The most successful answers showed understanding of the relationships between the men, and supplied detailed, well supported examples to show this. Candidates noted points such as the captain's wisdom and paternalism, the cheerful, encouraging nature of the cook, and the fortitude of the oiler as he continued to row. Stronger answers commented on the cooperation between the men, and their unspoken 'brotherhood'. Most answers made some response to the death of the oiler.

Less successful answers were not able to provide detailed references to support their arguments, and tended to summarise the story.

LITERATURE (ENGLISH)

Paper 0486/12
Paper 12 Poetry and Prose

Key messages

Successful responses:

- show a detailed knowledge of texts studied
- focus explicitly on the key words of the question
- use relevant textual references to support the points made
- engage with the ways in which writers achieve their effects.

Less successful responses:

- show an insecure or limited knowledge of texts
- introduce irrelevant material (including extraneous background material)
- make assertions which are not substantiated
- merely log or describe writers' techniques
- offer pre-learned 'themes' rather than responses that address 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 very few rubric infringements, and the majority of candidates divided their time well across their two answers. There were, however, instances of some candidates relying solely on the extract printed on the question paper when answering general essay questions on the Prose texts; this approach is self-penalising as responses are subsequently drawn on the basis of insufficient material. Teachers should remind candidates to write the correct question numbers in the margin of the answer booklet.

Textual knowledge

The strongest answers showed an impressively detailed knowledge of the text, with candidates skilfully integrating both concise quotation and indirect textual references to support their ideas. Many candidates took advantage of the fact that the poems and extracts are printed on the question paper to carefully select and closely probe the effects created by the writer's use of language. The strongest responses to general essay questions also showed an extensive knowledge and included much direct quotation, testimony to the close study undertaken by students. The absence of pertinent textual support inevitably led to overly assertive and explanatory responses.

Focus on the question

The most successful answers sustained a clear focus on the key words of the question from start to finish. These responses addressed directly those words in IGCSE Literature questions which are designed to elicit personal responses to the writing; words such as 'moving', 'vivid', 'sad', 'memorably', 'strikingly'. There were, however, less successful responses that made only a cursory reference, and sometimes no reference, to such words. Instead a pre-learned list of points about characters or themes was given with little regard to the question. This was particularly evident in responses to both poetry and prose extract-based questions where a candidate worked through the poem or extract, often exhaustively.

There were fewer examples this session of candidates beginning their essays with extraneous background material relating to social or cultural contexts. There were, however, instances of lengthy conclusions that merely re-stated the main points of the essay.

Writers' effects

The most convincing and perceptive responses sustained a critical engagement with the effects achieved by writers' use of form, structure and language. Those with a detailed knowledge of their texts were better able to explore closely the effects of the writing. The strongest responses were able to link their comments on form, structure and language to the ideas and impressions conveyed by the writer. Less successful responses sometimes commented discretely on effects without relating them to content and meaning. In general, less confident responses were characterised by a tendency to explain rather than analyse. Nowhere was this more evident than in general comments made about semantic fields or identification of rhyme schemes (e.g. ABAB). Examiners noticed an increase in the number of general and unproductive assertions about the associations of particular colours: in responses to Browning's *Meeting at Night*, 'blue' was variously described as 'cold', 'warm', 'mournful' and 'romantic'.

Even in relatively more successful responses, there were occasions where candidates referred repeatedly to prose texts as 'the poem' or 'the play', thereby showing an insecure understanding of the importance of literary form.

Personal response

The strongest answers were characterised by informed and sensitive personal responses to texts. These focused directly on the key words of questions and explored the detail of texts in essays, with insight and individuality. Such answers are testimony to the hard work of students and teachers. There were fewer examples of answers that simply regurgitated ideas found in study guides. Less confident answers showed 'empathy' – describing a particular character and situation as relatable – but did not offer a probing critical analysis of details from the text.

Comments on specific questions

Section A

Question 1

Successful responses commented perceptively on Heidi's dyeing of her hair as her way of dealing with the devastating loss of her mother; the vibrant hair style being a symbol of, and distraction from, her grief. These responses explored the implications of the central word 'shimmered' in 'your mother's death... shimmered behind the arguments'. There was generally an understanding of the use of tone in phrases such as 'as the headmistress put it', and most candidates were able to engage with the key idea of suppression of individuality. Less successful responses tended to write at length about the theme of criticising authority, as exercised by the headmistress, but did not link their observations to the question's key words 'so moving'. Some candidates mistook the voice of the poem's speaker for that of Heidi's father.

Question 2

There were many engaging explorations of the detail of the vivid atmosphere of the poem. In stronger responses there was a recognition of the change of pace as the speaker moves ever closer to his destination and the air of mystery created by the dark landscape and moonlight. The 'grey' and 'black' were commonly described as relating to not only darkness and an air of secrecy but also to the emptiness of the speaker when away from their lover. Successful responses considered the perspective of the poem's speaker in communicating impressions of the journey across sea and land. Less successful responses asserted biographical readings rather than exploring the ways in which Browning achieves his effects. There were also many pre-learned responses which led to overly assertive interpretations, often in relation to 'pushing prow' and 'slushy sand'.

Question 3

Most responses were able to communicate the sense of awe felt by the speaker at the spectacle of the snow blanketing London so completely. Many explored the religious references and went beyond the physical effects of the snowfall, considering it an act of cleansing in a spiritual sense. The strongest answers explored with confidence and sensitivity the impact of the sensuous language and related their analysis to the main thrust of the question ('vividly convey the effects of the snowfall'). Most responses included comment on the effect of the snow on the schoolboys, but fewer commented convincingly on the ways in which the 'trains of sombre men' are affected. In some cases, this appeared to be the result of candidates having worked exhaustively through the poem, line by line, which meant insufficient time to explore the poem's ending.

Question 4

Responses to this question were wide ranging. The strongest responses wrote sensitively about this study of the sudden and arbitrary nature of death, exploring the ways in which the buck is brought to its knees. These answers examined carefully Millay's use of language, form and structure in making it such a sad poem. Many commented on the impact of the use of repetition, sound, the single-line second stanza and the implications of the buck's blood 'scalding the snow'. There was sometimes a misreading of 'Life' and 'a mile away now', with some interpreting this as the buck having died a mile away. In the weakest responses, confusion over the meaning of the words 'buck' and 'doe' was apparent.

Question 5

Most answers showed an understanding of the unfamiliar environment, the speaker's lack of connection with the child and the contrasting descriptions of the baby while asleep and awake. There was much engaging analysis of the speaker's description of the baby's 'hot midnight rage' and comment on the implications of the baby-sitter representing 'absolute/Abandonment'. Most candidates focused at great length on the first stanza, while seemingly only casting a perfunctory glance at references to the 'lover cold in lonely/Sheets' and 'the woman... in the terminal ward'. The most successful responses, however, did explore the impact of these references in relation to the main thrust: how Clarke 'memorably conveys strong emotions'.

Question 6

In the few responses seen to this question, there was a tendency to contrast the natural with the man-made and the beautiful with the ugly without directing such comments explicitly to the question. Sometimes the key words 'so dramatic' were included almost as an afterthought in a candidate's concluding paragraph. Only a few responses focused on how Clarke makes dramatic the near-collision with the bird and the description of the extreme weather and its effect on the town and poet.

Section B

Question 7

Most responses set out the clear contrasts between the characters of Tom and Edmund and were able to set the extract in its context, explaining, for example, the significance of comments about Maria. The strongest answers explored Austen's use of language and tone in conveying the conflict between the two brothers. These answers often confidently examined the use of dialogue and the different ways in which the two brothers speak: Edmund measured; Tom impetuous. There was often mention of the humorous way in which the narrator's description of Lady Bertram ('the picture of health, wealth, ease, and tranquillity') somewhat undermined Tom's protestations of his mother's 'anxiety'. Less confident answers worked through the extract, adopting an explanatory, and in some cases, narrative approach.

Question 8

Too few responses were seen to make meaningful comment.

Question 9

Successful responses explicitly addressed the two key words of the question: 'dramatic' and 'unsettling'. The strongest responses explored the dramatic nature of the setting and the sensations of a fall afternoon on the prairie. These responses showed an appreciation of the impact on the mood of phrases such as 'a lifting-up of day' and 'under that magnificence'. Many candidates were able to place the extract in its context, i.e. before the suicide of Mr Shimerda and therefore draw on the significance of his smile ('so full of sadness, of pity for things') and of the references to the gun. Less successful responses tended to work through the extract in an exhaustive way which did not directly address the question. It is important that candidates adopt a selective approach to extract-based questions, choosing the most relevant parts of the extract.

Question 10

There were far fewer responses to the general essay question than to the extract-based question on Cather's novel. Most answers expressed the view that Antonia's life is happy and satisfying in spite of the hardships. They commented on her willingness to work hard, her positive outlook on life, her relationship with her parents and siblings and her relationship with Jim. Set against these reasons for a happy and satisfying life were the limitations of her lack of a formal education, her life at the Cutters and her exploitation by some of the men she encounters. Less successful responses tended to lack the precise and pertinent textual reference needed to support the points made and, as a consequence, were often explanatory and on occasion narrative in their approach.

Question 11

Most responses were able to explore Deven's thoughts and feelings in the extract about his troubled marriage and his failed aspirations of becoming a poet. The strongest responses explored the ways in which the omniscient narrator sees life through Deven's eyes and the picture that emerges of a relationship based on mutual disappointment. These answers recognised the peevish nature of the observations of Sarla's physical appearance ('furrows...permanent as surgical scars' and her hair 'twin lines of disappointment') and considered the implications of their status as two 'victims'. Less confident responses tended to describe the state of their relationship with some acknowledgement of Deven's perspective that both had given up on expecting anything better from their life together.

Question 12

Too few responses were seen to make meaningful comment.

Question 13

Many candidates were able to explain how this moment is made moving through the depiction of Louisa's relationship with her mother and the sense that Mrs Gradgrind's realisation about her failures comes at a time when she cannot resolve them. The strongest responses showed a sensitive appreciation of the way in which Dickens presents the efforts of the dying mother to understand what had been missing in her household for the whole of her married life. Less successful responses lost focus on the key words 'how' and 'moving' and instead embarked on a general discussion of utilitarianism, with limited reference to specific textual detail. There were some mis-readings where candidates confused Sissy and Jane and where 'cried' was taken as 'wept' rather than 'shouted out'.

Question 14

Most responses showed an understanding of the differences between the characters of Bounderby and Louisa, the considerable and disturbing difference in age and how Louisa never shows any affection for Bounderby. Many referred to Louisa's physical reaction to Bounderby kissing her on the cheek. The strongest responses explored carefully the 'ways' Dickens makes the marriage so disturbing, probing closely his presentation of character. Less successful responses treated the characters as 'real-life' people rather than fictional creations, often producing separate character sketches for each of them. The most successful answers included an impressive range of textual reference to support their arguments; some referred convincingly to the dialogue between Louisa and her father as he realises what he has done to her.

Question 15

Most candidates were able to identify some of the ways in which Grenville conveys a pervading and ever-increasing sense of fear in the extract. The strongest responses commented closely on use of language for example, alluding to the phrase ‘catch the fear’ as if the fear were a contagious disease. Most responses explored at least some of the sensuous imagery and description of the unearthly sounds that contribute to the Thornhills’ fear. Many commented on the wider implications of increasing tension and the significance of the words ‘borrowed from Smasher’ who had previously warned Thornhill about the natives. In some responses, there was little evidence of an awareness of the wider novel as candidates worked through the extract, logging language features and simply stating that these showed the Thornhills’ fear. In these less successful responses comments on language were not linked meaningfully to content.

Question 16

Most responses acknowledged Sal’s desire to return to London and how this was at odds with her husband’s wishes. Most referred to the closeness of the couple up to this point and the sense that Will is now assuming a more dominant role. His promise to Sal that they will go back to England is increasingly seen to be one he will not fulfil in his desperation to keep Thornhill’s Point. The strongest responses confidently explored the ways in which Grenville presents their different aspirations and how they contribute to the conflict between the two characters. Less successful responses lacked the range of textual references needed both to support arguments made and to serve as a starting point for a close analysis of Grenville’s use of language. As a result, these answers relied heavily on descriptive or assertive approaches.

Question 17

Many candidates were able to place this moment of the ‘trial’ immediately prior to Finny’s fatal injury. They commented on Leper’s fragility, Gene’s profound unease and Finny’s telling silence. The most successful responses explored Knowles’s use of the first person narrative voice which enables the reader to witness the trepidation with which Gene listened to Leper’s testimony. These answers identified Leper’s dislike of Gene and used textual reference to support the idea that, though unhinged, Leper knew exactly what he was doing during Brinker’s interrogation. Less successful answers tended to explain what was happening in the extract and merely assert that particular elements of the trial were dramatic. Some weaker responses showed some uncertainty as to who was speaking: Leper’s words were sometimes erroneously attributed to Gene for example, and Gene’s interior monologue to Leper.

Question 18

There were far fewer responses to the general essay question than to the extract-based question on *A Separate Peace*. Most answers showed a sound understanding of Finny the athlete and Gene the academic, with an awareness of the admiration they have for each other in the earlier stages of the novel. There was a recognition that Finny seems to be in charge and the one who sets the pace, initially. Many answers explored the significance of the beach scene and Gene’s trying on of Finny’s shirt. The strongest responses sustained a clear focus on the question and the ways in which Knowles achieves his effects. There were some perceptive responses to the (un)reliability of the narrative voice. Less successful responses often produced character sketches or listed those moments when Gene is honest and when he is dishonest. These responses needed a wider range of precise and relevant textual reference to support the points made.

Question 19

Many responses pointed out the dramatic nature of the extract in which a wave of despair hits all three men at the same time when faced with the hopelessness of the situation. Most candidates grasped the wider symbolism of the breakdown of society where even the men of God seem to accept defeat. The strongest responses analysed how the hope present at the start of the extract, with the mention of Absalom as head-boy, is destroyed in the rest of the extract. Most picked up on the portrayal of Msimangu’s uncharacteristic bitterness by exploring the effects of the words he speaks. Some less successful answers contained evidence of confusion about who was actually speaking at various moments in the extract, with some candidates expressing shock at what they mistakenly interpreted as bitterness stemming from Kumalo rather than Msimangu.

Question 20

Too few responses were seen to make meaningful comment.

Question 21

Most responses demonstrated knowledge of the immediate context: the prisoner captured in the dead of night and brought into the lemon orchard, with the resulting air of menace. They commented on the brutality of the men, the dignity of the captive and the implications of what might happen to the man. The strongest answers explored with some sensitivity the presentation of violence, the use of derogatory language spoken by the captors, the sensuousness of the description and the narrative viewpoint. Many explored the powerful way in which the writer creates tension. Less confident answers tended to narrate the story and occasionally interject with an assertion about the powerful nature of a particular feature. Some responses relied heavily on extraneous historical and social context and were, as a result, insufficiently rooted in the detail of the text.

Question 22

There were far fewer responses to the general essay question on *Secrets* (by Bernard MacLaverty) than to the extract-based question on *The Lemon Orchard*. Candidates showed knowledge of the basic plot, the fact that Aunt May was unmarried, and her relationship with the priest in the distant past. They showed a general understanding of the reasons for the tensions between aunt and nephew. Only the strongest answers, however, were able to explore how MacLaverty 'powerfully conveys' these tensions. The strongest answers contained a wide range of textual reference, including much direct quotation, with which candidates could support their ideas and analyse qualities of the writing. Candidates do need to know the stories in the anthology in detail so that they have sufficient textual reference when answering questions.

LITERATURE (ENGLISH)

Paper 0486/13
Paper 13 Poetry and Prose

Key messages

Successful responses:

- show a detailed knowledge of texts studied
- focus explicitly on the key words of the question
- use relevant textual references to support the points made
- engage with the ways in which writers achieve their effects.

Less successful responses:

- have an insecure or limited knowledge of texts
- introduce irrelevant material (including extraneous background material)
- make assertions which are not substantiated
- merely log or describe writers' techniques
- offer pre-learned 'themes' rather than responses to the specific 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 very 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 in Section B; this approach was self-penalising as there was insufficient material to draw upon for their answers. Teachers should remind candidates to write the correct question numbers in the margin of the answer booklet.

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 response to passage-based questions, many candidates selected and then probed closely the effects created by a writer's use of language. The strongest responses to general essays also showed an extensive knowledge and included much direct quotation and/or textual reference, testimony to the close study undertaken by candidates. The absence of pertinent textual support inevitably led to overly assertive and explanatory responses.

Focus on the question

Successful answers sustained a clear focus on the key words of the question from start to finish. These responses addressed directly those words in IGCSE Literature questions which are designed to elicit personal responses to the writing, words such as 'moving', 'vivid', 'sad', 'memorably', 'strikingly'. There were, however, less successful responses that made only a cursory reference, and sometimes no reference, to such words. In these cases, candidates tended to note pre-learned lists of points about characters or themes with little regard to the question. This was particularly evident in responses to both poetry and prose passage-based questions where a candidate worked through the poem or extract in order, often exhaustively.

There were fewer examples this session of candidates beginning their essays with extraneous background material relating to social or cultural contexts. There were, however, instances of lengthy conclusions that merely re-stated the main points of the essay.

Writers' effects

The most convincing and perceptive responses sustained a critical engagement with the effects achieved by writers' use of form, structure and language. Those who had a detailed knowledge of their texts were better able to explore closely the effects of the writing. The strongest responses were able to link their comments on form, structure and language to the ideas and impressions conveyed by the writer. Less successful responses sometimes commented discretely on effects without relating them to the content and meaning. Less confident responses were characterised by a tendency to explain rather analyse. This was particularly evident in general comments made about semantic fields or identification of rhyme schemes (e.g. ABAB). Examiners noticed an increase in the number of general assertions made about the associations of particular colours: 'blue' was variously described as 'cold', 'warm', 'mournful', 'romantic'.

There were also occasions when candidates referred repeatedly to prose texts as 'the poem' or 'the play', thereby showing an insecure understanding of literary form.

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 and explored the detail of texts, showing insight and individuality. There were few answers that simply regurgitated ideas found in study guides. Less confident answers sometimes showed 'empathy', writing that they found a particular character and situation relatable but without offering a probing critical analysis of details from the text.

Comments on specific questions

Section A

Question 1

This was a popular question. Successful answers really engaged with the imagery and effects. They often responded to the direct question of 'Do you remember', noted the significance of the italicised section and some considered the juxtapositions of 'jewelled fantasies' and 'splendid rags'. The strongest responses were also very aware of the poignant contrast between past and present.

Question 2

Most candidates were able to respond effectively to the question, grapple with the ideas and illustrate at least some understanding of the poem's central themes such as the transience of the present and that all that is left of the past is bittersweet memories. Stronger responses explored the contradictory imagery in depth and presented engaging personal responses.

Question 3

Many candidates responded to this poem as it being an interpretation of death rather than orientating their response around the idea of mystery requested in the question. It is important that candidates answer the question given rather than providing a pre-planned response. Others methodically plotted the events of the poem. Most were able to describe some of the effects and to consider to some degree how the atmosphere was created. Some considered the ambiguity of the title alongside the vagueness of 'you', 'nobody' and 'boys' who do not have names.

Question 4

The majority of responses were clear that the dolphins were not sighted and were generally able to give a personal response to how they felt about the people. Some saw it as a poem about environmental issues and regretted the loss of the dolphins. Others traced the excitement of the passengers, waiting, followed by their disappointment. Stronger responses considered the lovers as well as the religious imagery that emphasises or exaggerates the importance of the dolphins. The notion that the dolphins were a longed-for replacement for people's emptiness was also presented and often effectively argued.

Question 5

Most candidates understood the contrast between the past and the present here. What differentiated responses was the extent to which they explored the images within the poem and responded to the key words in the question: 'vivid impressions' and 'meaning'.

Question 6

Few responses were seen in response to this question. Those seen were generally well-focused on the question and engaged thoughtfully and imaginatively with the imagery. The most successful responses focused 'striking impressions'.

Section B

Question 7

There were few responses to this question generally. Most were able to present a reasonable understanding of Mary's character and presentation, although there was some misinterpreted of the more subtle elements of the passage. Stronger responses were able to view her in relation to Fanny and could explore the dynamics and context of the situation.

Question 8

Very few candidates attempted this question but those who did showed a good understanding of Sir Thomas's and the methods and effects of his portrayal. Successful responses were able to trace the development of his character throughout the novel, particularly in relation to his relationship with Fanny. Answers were generally well-supported from the whole text, with either direct quotation or textual reference being used to support points.

Question 9

Most candidates focused well on the question. They could understand that Jim is growing up, changing and wanting to assert his own independence. They noted his relationship with the girls and in particular Antonia. Many candidates were able to contextualise his relationship with Antonia from earlier in the novel.

Question 10

Too few responses were seen to make meaningful comment.

Question 11

Too few responses were seen to make meaningful comment.

Question 12

Too few responses were seen to make meaningful comment.

Question 13

This was a popular question and was generally well answered with strong support from the passage used to illustrate points. Most candidates were able to explore Dickens' writing to some degree, particularly looking at the diction and the use of repetition. Such explorations were most effective when they included the effects of these techniques. Some well supported ideas included how lonely Stephen was and how caring he was towards Rachel.

Question 14

Too few responses were seen to make meaningful comment.

Question 15

This was a popular question. Most responses were focused on the specific terms question and had at least a basic understanding of the reasons for the argument between Will and Sal. Most were able to identify that Will is a changed character here. Stronger responses were able to explore the imagery of the passage, the contrast between the peace of the environment and the violence of the argument, the angry dialogue, the images of the past and the comparisons with Smasher. Many were able to effectively contextualise the extract in terms of the whole novel, with some referencing the forthcoming massacre. In general, a strong knowledge and understanding of the text was shown.

Question 16

Comparatively few candidates attempted this question. Most considered domestic and family structures as well as the ability to forge a living. The most successful responses used direct quotation or more general textual reference to ground their ideas in the detail of the novel.

Question 17

Candidates generally appreciated the significance of this moment in the novel and the changing dynamics of the relationship between Finny and Gene. They also considered the changes in Finny's character such as his loss of calm and self-confidence. Candidates needed to consider closely the writer's techniques and their effects to achieve the highest bands.

Question 18

Too few responses were seen to make meaningful comment.

Question 19

Candidates were generally able to explore Kumalo's thoughts and feelings. Most successful were those responses that also considered Paton's techniques and the key word 'vivid' in the question. His actions with the young child, his attachment to Ndotsheni, his internal conflict and fears for his son were all considered with varying degrees of detail and textual reference. There was a tendency to narrate events rather than analyse the specific details in some less successful responses.

Question 20

Too few responses were seen to make meaningful comment.

Question 21

Candidates across the range made at least some attempt to explain how this opening works, with some strong responses that considered how it is 'fascinating'. The many conveniences of the automated house were generally identified, followed by the realisation that there were no humans present. Stronger responses explored the relationship between humans, technology and nature with detailed support from the passage.

Question 22

Most candidates were able to describe the unsatisfactory nature of the relationship between the father and son and contrast it with that of the uncle and son. More focus was placed on the father and he was generally seen in an unsympathetic light, especially in the context of his relationship with Miss McCabe. Some successful responses briefly considered the significance of the stoat and rabbit symbolism, although this was generally overlooked, misinterpreted or only briefly referenced elsewhere.

LITERATURE (ENGLISH)

Paper 0486/21
Paper 21 Drama

Key messages

- A personal engagement with the text, an ability to evaluate and an appreciation of the play on stage enlivened the most successful answers.
- Responses to passage-based questions which understood the context of the passage within the play as a whole while also exploring the passage itself in some detail, were often the most successful.
- Many responses would have been improved by prioritising the dramatic content of the set passage over its literary features.
- Successful answers to discursive questions maintained a tight focus on the question and gave a precise, wide range of reference.
- Strong candidates refrained from focussing their responses on theme, when this was not the immediate focus of the question.

General comments

Candidates showed knowledge of their set texts and an engagement with genre, language, characterisation and form.

The strongest answers to the passage-based questions briefly and concisely established the context of the passage and explored its dramatic effects in some detail. A significant number of answers showed knowledge and a grasp of the central issues in the text but did not develop points made in sufficient detail. Further consideration of the play on stage and the language used would also have enhanced many answers. The passages are printed on the examination paper so that candidates can use quotations to support the points they make. They should be discouraged from referring to line numbers as an alternative to quoting from the text.

There was some evidence in less successful responses of insufficient knowledge of the set texts which impacted on the depth of candidates' answers. This was particularly obvious in the passage-based questions where some responses failed to demonstrate knowledge of the context of the passage, evidenced by a lack of appreciation of characters' previous and subsequent relationships, or of the events referred to.

A sense of both audience and author informed the strongest responses. Numerous answers referred to a book and a reader instead of a play and an audience, however. Comment on characterisation, though strong, often dominated answers to questions about dramatic effectiveness and sometimes without any sense of the author's intention to shape audience response to the character.

There were some strong answers to discursive questions during this session. These were characterised by a tight focus on the question and a well-organised, concise argument. Many responses were focused and well structured around a convincing argument, but did not include sufficient supporting detail.

A significant number of responses showed insecure knowledge of technical terms. Prose and iambic pentameter; simile and metaphor, for example were often confused or misused. The terms hubris and hamartia were often deployed correctly but many candidates used them indiscriminately and without making their point clear.

Whilst the historical and cultural context of the text is a useful focus for the classroom, some candidates displayed this knowledge in the examination at the expense of a focus on the question, sometimes to the extent of writing several paragraphs of generalised contextual comment. Introductions were often lengthy and generalised, making little or no reference to the question. This redundant information was then repeated in the conclusion.

There were sophisticated responses this session which showed a thorough exploration of the complex issues these plays present and the ways in which they make a powerful impact on an audience.

There were some rubric infringements where candidates answered two passage-based or two discursive questions, or two questions on the same text. Some candidates do not number their questions or write two question numbers against one answer. There were few very brief or imbalanced scripts.

Although some candidates used the printed passage in the passage-based question to answer the discursive question, this was considerably less common than in previous sessions.

Comments on specific questions

LORRAINE HANSBERRY: *A Raisin in the Sun*

Question 1

Strong answers focused on the central drama of Mama slapping Beneatha powerfully across the face and Ruth fainting at the end of the scene. A surprisingly large number of responses did not mention either of these moments. Successful responses went on to consider Mama and Beneatha's contrasting beliefs, their tone of voice, the generational divide, Ruth's mediating role and the symbolism of the plant. Most responses demonstrated considerable knowledge of theme and characterisation but displayed less confidence in discussing the dramatic action and the powerful language. Most discussed the cliff-hanger ending but fewer acknowledged its foreshadowing Ruth's pregnancy and the issues this raises. Perhaps more surprising was the lack of personal response to what constitutes one of the most powerful scenes in the play.

Question 2

As Ruth's difficulties are many and well-documented in the play, many answers to this question were surprisingly generalised and limited in range of reference. Many responses discussed Ruth being 'a *settled woman*' at length, without including a clear explanation of how this was a 'difficulty'. Other responses were failed to move on from the opening scene of the play and did not consider her dilemma over terminating her pregnancy, the family's living conditions, Walter's loss of the insurance money or Lindner's racism. Walter's attitude towards her was explored but in little depth and detail. Many responses concluded that Ruth had given up and did not have a dream, seemingly forgetting her desire to move. There were a significant number of answers which only dealt with the social position of women/African Americans at the time the play was written, rather than considering the specifics of this play. These also overlooked the fact that Ruth has a job outside the home and is not just a housewife. Stronger answers explored Ruth's role as peace maker and commented on the unfairness of Walter's attitude towards her.

ARTHUR MILLER: *A View from the Bridge*

Question 3

The strongest answers to this question established the context of Catherine and Rodolpho's intimacy immediately prior to Eddie arriving home unexpectedly early and drunk. An observation of how both of these things create tension and suspense was evident in these answers. Some responses overstated Eddie's drunkenness assuming that the three bottles of whisky he takes from his pockets are empty, whereas Alfieri's early narration suggests they are full. If he had drunk all three we might also assume he would be unconscious rather than 'unsteady'. Responses demonstrated an appreciation of the audience's anticipation of Eddie's reaction based on prior knowledge of his unacknowledged feelings for Catherine. Strong answers commented fully on Eddie's controlling and possessive attitude towards Catherine and on his kissing her, exposing his true feelings for her for the first time in the play. Particularly insightful answers referenced the disturbing nature and motives behind Catherine's concern for Eddie's well-being once she had made her decision to marry Rodolpho. Strong responses understood Eddie's motivation in kissing Rodolpho and the possible underlying ambiguity this reveals in Eddie's sexuality. The best answers combined such understanding with comment on the dramatic effects and the powerful language.

Less successful responses either did not respond to the kiss at all or avoided comment on Eddie's disturbing passion for Catherine, concluding that his problem was merely one of over protecting his niece.

Question 4

There was an interesting range of responses to this question. Some strong answers concentrated purely on Eddie himself and included a detailed account of his fatal flaw; his 'toxic' masculinity and code of honour. Other strong answers explored Catherine's culpable naivety, Marco's revenge code and Rodolpho's possible ulterior motives. Sophisticated responses combined the above with comment on the tragic elements of fate and inevitability.

Less confident responses tended to overlook the fact that Eddie's attitude to Catherine is beyond the boundaries of conventional uncle-niece relationships and that Catherine cannot be blamed for his unacknowledged emotions.

TERENCE RATTIGAN: *The Winslow Boy*

Question 5

Knowledge of the play as a whole was evident in the strongest responses. Whilst many candidates commented on the tension between Dickie and Arthur Winslow and the fact that Dickie seems to be the less favoured son, they tended to ignore Dickie's track record of failing to study for his Oxford degree and Arthur's attempts to mitigate the bad news with the offer of a good job. Most responses displayed an understanding of Arthur's financial reasons for his actions, though fewer explored the ways in which he breaks the news to Dickie or commented on his shutting down of the conversation to speak to a journalist. Many commented successfully on the way Dickie's shock and disappointment is conveyed.

The least successful answers merely paraphrased what the characters say.

Question 6

There were few responses to this question but those who answered well commented on Violet's role in revealing information to the audience.

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE: *Macbeth*

Question 7

There were many competent answers to this question with the strongest establishing that Lady Macbeth was sleepwalking, disturbingly reliving the various crimes committed, and unconsciously revealing her guilt to the observing doctor and gentlewoman. Such responses looked closely at the language related to unnatural behaviour and diseased minds and linked this to Lady Macbeth's previous desire to be consumed by evil, comparing this to her feelings of guilt.

The strongest responses showed an understanding of the details of the murders of Duncan, Banquo and Lady Macduff referred to in Lady Macbeth's speech, acknowledging that often she is addressing Macbeth. One effective answer saw the irony of Lady Macbeth's repetitive hand washing when she had told Macbeth that '*a little water clears us of this deed*' and commented on how their roles had been reversed by this point in the play. Some strong responses commented on the disturbing dark night-time candlelit and haunting setting. Few, however, showed an understanding of the disturbing fact that the Doctor and Gentlewoman were too afraid to reveal Lady Macbeth's guilt to anyone. Many noted that Lady Macbeth had been driven insane and that her suicide was foreshadowed in the scene. A significant number, however, had apparently misread this quote from the doctor: '*...I have known those which have walk'd in their sleep who have died holily in their beds*', thinking this meant she was about to die. An exploration of the imagery, the sighs, the repetitions, the rhetorical questions in the scene featured in more developed responses.

In less successful answers, comment on '*but their sense is shut*,' was longer than necessary. Candidates could simply have stated that Lady Macbeth is sleepwalking. Weaker responses also lacked evidence of candidates having understood what Lady Macbeth was referring to in her speeches and that she was addressing Macbeth in saying for example '*to bed*'.

Question 8

This question was answered in a variety of ways. Some successful responses considered the contrast between the loyal brave Macbeth at the beginning of the play and the traitorous regicide later. Some thought the shock value lay in his being manipulated by a woman who transgresses her social role by being cruel

and ambitious. Others saw the portrayal of Duncan as a holy and much loved King and the act Macbeth commits in killing him as sacrilegious. All of these perspectives had much to recommend them where the arguments were supported by well-chosen textual reference. Fewer candidates took the more obvious route and explored the shocking dramatic effects in the build up to the murder and its aftermath, though one strong response did focus on the reactions of the other lords to the discovery of Duncan's body. Another gave a detailed response to effects such as the hallucinatory dagger, the owl's shriek, the pathetic fallacy, the unnatural events of that night, Macbeth hearing voices and the visual impact of the bloody daggers.

The least successful answers resorted to narrative, concentrating on Macbeth's ambition.

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE: *Romeo and Juliet*

Question 9

Strong answers to this question placed the passage in its post-opening confrontation context, commented on what it reveals of Romeo's character, explored the nature of his language and explored how he is portrayed here contrasts with his behaviour when he is genuinely in love. The strongest responses showed an understanding of Benvolio's role and of the humour in their exchanges. However, most answers neglected to mention Benvolio altogether. There were some rather mechanical responses to the oxymorons but most included comment on the way in which they reveal Romeo's confusion and self-indulgence. There were some insightful comments on the classical allusions, though some did not show an understanding of the fact that Diana is the goddess of chastity or that the '*weak childish bow*' is childish because it belongs to the boy Cupid. The strongest responses embraced the idea of this being an introduction to Romeo and of how Shakespeare is effectively priming the audience to observe his transformation later in the play.

Question 10

The most popular choices of moving moment were Romeo and Juliet's meeting at the Capulet Ball, the balcony scene and the suicides at the end of the play. Although some responses made reference to the language of the text, most did not include sufficient quotation to answer the question in any depth or detail. Comment tended to relate to the sadness of the story in a generalised way. Stronger answers referred to the dramatic ironies of the final scenes of the play and how these engaged the emotions of the audience.

LITERATURE (ENGLISH)

Paper 0486/22
Paper 22 Drama

Key messages

The most successful responses addressed the key words in the question, remained focused and supported ideas with concise quotations, which were analysed fully.

Successful opening paragraphs were brief and referenced the question. These avoided lengthy socio-historical detail or a list of the writer's techniques. Strong conclusions were those that provided more than a reiteration of points discussed.

In passage-based questions, stronger-performing candidates briefly contextualised the passage, selected the most relevant material from across the whole of the passage including the ending, and analysed both content and the writer's methods effectively.

An awareness of the text as drama and an appreciation of the play on stage was evident in the most successful answers.

General comments

Many candidates demonstrated detailed knowledge of their set texts. They showed an engagement with the characters and themes, and an apparent enjoyment of the texts studied. The most popular texts were *A View from the Bridge* and *Macbeth*. Very few candidates answered on *The Winslow Boy*, and among those that did, knowledge and understanding of the text was often less secure. There were two new texts this session, *A Raisin in the Sun* and *Romeo and Juliet*. Few candidates studied the former but a number of candidates chose *Romeo and Juliet*.

The strongest responses deconstructed the question using the adverbs, for example, 'strikingly' or 'vividly' to inform a judicious selection of reference material. The ability to read closely and analyse linguistic and dramatic effects, without exclusively citing literary terminology, is key to a successful response. While most candidates understood and used terminology such as foreshadowing and dramatic irony correctly, some candidates discussed terms that did not relate to the question or help to develop their argument constructively, for example, peripeteia and anagnorisis. Weaker candidates would benefit from drafting a brief plan to help them to maintain focus and to be more selective in their choice of reference material thereby avoiding a quotation-driven response particularly with regard to the passage-based question.

Strong responses demonstrated an accurate understanding of the social, cultural and historical context of a text, such as the difference between American law and the Sicilian code of honour in the Red Hook community in *A View from a Bridge*, or the Jacobean concept of kingship to explore the heinous crime of regicide and its effects on the perpetrators in *Macbeth*. Less successful answers wrote about the treatment of women and their low status in Elizabethan England to comment on Lady Macbeth, or 1950s America, to show Beatrice breaking out of her role as 'housewife', frequently losing sight of the question. A number of candidates expressed a feeling of pity for both Lady Macbeth and Macbeth, citing mental health issues as justification for their behaviour neglecting to explore how their subsequent guilt and fear of discovery impacted on their 'thoughts and feelings' and ultimately their mental state.

When Beatrice challenges Eddie about his feeling for Catherine, Miller makes it clear in Eddie's reply that he hasn't had *'such a thought'* regarding Catherine. Candidates who asserted Eddie's culpability to such an extent that – in their view – he consciously groomed Catherine for a sexual relationship, were perhaps overstating the case. Likewise, the extract makes clear Catherine's innocence in her child-like behaviour with Eddie, so to state that she is deliberately encouraging Eddie's sexual overtures is also overstating her responsibility. Some candidates claimed Eddie was 'sick', 'toxic' with 'incestuous' desires with some commenting on the 'love triangle' implying that Catherine was in a romantic or even sexual relationship with Eddie. The key to successful answers and interpretations is in a candidate's ability to support ideas with apt textual reference and quotation, tightly linked to the terms of the question and rooted firmly in the text.

There were very few rubric infringements on Paper 22 this session where candidates answered two passage-based questions or two discursive questions. Candidates on both Papers endeavoured in all but a few instances to number their questions correctly. They used their time successfully and there were very few brief responses or instances of candidates who ran out of time reported. The increased evidence of brief, useful planning was a feature of well-structured and more effective responses.

Comments on specific questions

LORRAINE HANSBERRY: *A Raisin in the Sun*

Question 1

This proved to be challenging for candidates, many of whom struggled to show a secure knowledge of the text. To answer the question fully, a focus on how the writing makes 'you feel' as a member of the audience (AO4: a personal response) is essential. The most successful responses conveyed a personal judgement and expressed both sympathy and disapproval of Walter's actions and words. These responses showed empathy with Walter's hurt pride at George's cold disdain and indifference, relating the extract to the root of his frustrations and touching on issues of race and aspiration. There were some sensitive responses to the fact that he feels he has neither the support of his wife, nor of his mother in the pathos conveyed by his words, *'Not even my own mother!'* Strong responses also commented on the language, 'giant', 'ants' and 'volcano'. Less successful responses simply worked through the passage, paraphrasing or explaining Walter's behaviour, with little focus on the question or apparent understanding of his desire for a better life. There was some misinterpretation of Walter's attitude towards George and college education.

Question 2

Less successful responses tended to underplay the significance of the generation gap focusing instead on differences between characters. Weaker responses also displayed a tendency to lapse into character study, describing Mama's strength in the face of poverty, her strength in holding the family together, her strong views on liquor stores and her determination to buy a house. More successful responses contrasted Mama's and Ruth's attitudes to abortion, discussed Mama's strict religious views, and explored her striking of Beneatha and her later beating of Walter when the loss of the money is revealed.

ARTHUR MILLER: *A View from the Bridge*

Question 3

Many candidates successfully explored content and dramatic techniques. Stronger answers provided the relevant context: Catherine is upset as Eddie has accused Rodolpho of wanting to marry her to gain American citizenship; and Beatrice is angry that Eddie is *'going to start something'*. Successful responses also included comment on Beatrice's skilful and increasingly determined approach, her jealousy and desire to save her marriage, as well as her genuine concern for Catherine. A discussion of stage directions and was also a feature of strong responses, for example the significance of the pauses in the dialogue. Catherine's naiveté was usually understood but only the strongest responses demonstrated an understanding of her distress at the end as she realises what Beatrice is telling her. Some blamed Catherine for Eddie's feelings, judging her behaviour towards him to be deliberately provocative. A few mistakenly accused her of having a relationship with Eddie. Stronger-performing candidates wrote more perceptively recognising that Beatrice's *'imperious demand'* that Catherine leaves is because she knows she cannot change Eddie's behaviour.

Most candidates linked Eddie's patriarchal power and authority in the family to his protective care of Catherine, observing that this created a suffocating family dynamic that would become increasingly problematic as Catherine grew up. The most successful responses showed an understanding of how this scene represents a turning point in the play, with Beatrice trying to avert the tragedy but being unable to do so, as the audience had been forewarned by Alfieri. A few responses did not address the question directly, writing instead about Eddie's 'thoughts and feelings'. Weaker responses were also characterised by a simple listing of stage directions such as '*slowly turns her head*' or '*astonished*' without comment, and as such did not show an understanding of how these serve to reveal characters' 'thoughts and feelings'.

Question 4

Strong responses often explored the increasing pressure on Eddie to stop Rodolpho, leading to his central betrayal of Rodolpho and Marco, when he reports them to the Immigration Bureau. Candidates often pointed out how this was foreshadowed by the Vinny Bolzano story which emphasised the social codes defining the Red Hook community. The most successful answers considered the dramatic impact of the telephone booth on stage as a visible symbol of Eddie's act and of the intensity of Eddie's words to Catherine and Beatrice on Vinny's treatment by both his family and the community. Parallels were drawn between Vinny's and Eddie's treatment in the final scene. Many responses considered a range of betrayals in the text, including Eddie's betrayal of Beatrice and Catherine. Some considered Alfieri to have betrayed Eddie by facilitating Marco's release from jail, when he knew violence would ensue.

Some candidates tried to argue that Catherine betrays Eddie by wanting to leave him for Rodolpho, without any textual support. Other less successful responses were narrative in approach, identifying examples of betrayal, without addressing 'powerful'.

TERENCE RATTIGAN: *The Winslow Boy*

Question 5

Responses to the passage needed to focus on what made the scene 'dramatic' rather than just describing what happened in it. Successful responses demonstrated an awareness of the conversation between Catherine and John and of the fear of 'Father', the sudden unexpected appearance of Ronnie and his 'bedraggled' state, and the confusion and shock as Catherine read the letter in silence. The use of the letter as a dramatic device – particularly dramatic as the audience is unaware of its content – was often undeveloped. Some responses successfully alluded to the tonal shifts in conversation when Ronnie appears with his fragmented and repetitive speech and Catherine's concern for him.

Question 6

Responses to this question were generally weak with candidates adopting too narrative an approach or simply providing a character profile of Sir Robert. More successful responses demonstrated a clear grasp of Sir Robert's part in the play, his interrogation of Ronnie and his commitment to the Winslow Case and to the changes this meant for his relationship with Catherine.

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE: *Macbeth*

Question 7

Most candidates were able to identify some of Macbeth's and Lady Macbeth's 'troubled thoughts and feelings'. Stronger responses gave the context: unknown to Lady Macbeth, Macbeth has already ordered the murder of Banquo and his son. The most successful responses considered Lady Macbeth's regret for Duncan's murder as expressed in her opening soliloquy, '*Naught's had, all's spent*', and also in her attempts to reassure her husband with '*What's done is done*', when she can't stop thinking of Duncan's murder herself. Most responses showed that candidates had understood that feelings of guilt and regret caused the nightmares experienced by the couple and their inability to sleep, leading to Macbeth's extraordinary claim that he envied Duncan's peace. Stronger answers focused more on the couple's fear of discovery and their sense of insecurity, as well as on the changing dynamics of their relationship, with Macbeth clearly more confident in how to secure the throne than Lady Macbeth who asks, '*What's to be done*'. There was some close analysis of imagery for example '*scotch'd the snake*' and Macbeth's feelings that he can only still the '*scorpions*' in his mind with a '*deed of dreadful note*'.

Less successful responses quoted from the text without exploring the effects created. Some candidates identified language and images which mirror those used earlier in the play, but these needed to directly address the question. Semantic fields of words showing 'evil', for example 'bat', 'beetle' and 'crow' also needed to be related to the question: this could have been achieved with consideration of what they reveal about Macbeth's thoughts. Several candidates expressed sympathy for Macbeth and Lady Macbeth due to their deteriorating mental state, overlooking the fact that they deliberately killed Duncan in cold blood, and that Macbeth had already hired murderers to kill Banquo and Fleance.

Question 8

The most successful responses showed an understanding that the key words, 'To what extent', encouraged both a personal and balanced view of Macbeth as to his fitting the description of 'butcher'. These also displayed an ability to differentiate between Macbeth's brutality on the battlefield and the cold-blooded murders he commits later in the play. Some saw a progression from killing for a 'good' reason, i.e. to be king, to killing anyone who posed a threat, i.e. Banquo, to then killing indiscriminately – even the innocent Lady Macduff and her son. It was at this point in killing the innocent that many candidates argued he had become a 'butcher'. Candidates with an understanding of this tragic hero, with a fatal flaw, considered his sense of conscience and initial reluctance to kill Duncan as evidence that he was not a 'butcher', arguing he was a man manipulated by both an ambitious and fiendish wife, and fate and the witches. Some argued that though he ordered the later murders of Banquo and Macduff's wife and family, he did not kill them himself and this, along with his troubled conscience reveals some humanity on his part. Though there was a wide range of relevant textual detail and quotation used to support ideas, the violence, horror of the bloodshed and evidence from the final scene was rarely explored.

Less successful responses took the term 'butcher' literally and draw comparisons between Macbeth's slaughter on the battlefield, his use of knives, and his being 'steeped in blood', with the work of a 'butcher', who is a merciless killer of animals. There was also some basic re-telling of the plot with little, if any, reference to the key words in the question.

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE: *Romeo and Juliet*

Question 9

Many candidates found it difficult to comment on both 'dramatic' and 'entertaining', and to accurately place the scene in the play. Stronger responses showed an awareness that the Nurse had spoken to Romeo and an understanding of the dramatic irony as Juliet waits, patiently at first, before becoming increasingly agitated by the Nurse's digressions and moans about her aches and pains, whilst the audience already knows plans are afoot for the couple to marry. There was an awareness of the comic relief that this provides, but responses would have benefited from greater exploration of how the language made this scene entertaining. A few candidates commented on the Nurse's playfulness but many responses made generalised and repeated points on Juliet's anxiety and the Nurse's delay.

Question 10

Many candidates were seemingly unsure of the meaning of the word 'compelling'. Strong responses saw Mercutio's function: as the provider of 'comic relief' in a tragedy; as a reminder of the feud between the Capulets and Montagues; or as a point of contrast with Romeo. The most successful answers engaged with Mercutio's language and wit, as well as with the mockery of Petrarchan conventions. Relevant quotation supported these comments along with some insightful analysis. Many candidates had clearly seen Mercutio's death as a catalyst, shifting the play into tragedy with the deaths of Romeo and Juliet. Those who chose the Queen Mab speech tended to falter on their knowledge of the speech or found it difficult to link it to how it made him 'compelling'. Most candidates commented on his friendly character, his loyalty and bawdy jokes, and though he was only in the play for a short time, on how all the comedy disappeared from the play with his death. Less successful responses provided a character study with little or no reference to the question, lapsing into generalisation and narrative. There were some rather generalised responses about 'comic relief' and 'innuendo' for example, with insufficient explanation or textual support.

LITERATURE (ENGLISH)

Paper 0486/23
Drama

Key messages

Successful answers address all parts of the question using well-developed points which are clearly supported by apt and brief quotation from the text.

In the strongest answers to passage-based questions, candidates select the best material to address the question, rather than work through the passage.

Good responses to discursive questions develop three or four of the most appropriate points and support them with a range of apt examples from the text.

All answers to drama questions need to consider how the playwright uses features of the genre such as dialogue, interaction between characters, action on stage and likely audience reaction.

General comments

There were strong responses to all texts and questions, with candidates often showing evidence of detailed knowledge and understanding of their chosen texts. New to the paper this year were *Romeo and Juliet* and *A Raisin in the Sun*. Well-developed personal responses to the characters or the situations in the texts were prevalent. There were some credibly disparaging responses to Walter's predicament in *Raisin in the Sun*, with candidates pointing out that he had been warned about Willy many times by his wife, and by Mama, about not investing in a liquor store; and many candidates strongly condemned Macbeth's murder of the innocent Lady Macduff and her son as plumbing new depths of evil. Some responses expressed a somewhat forced sense of pity for characters; forced perhaps due to the unlikely and difficult nature of feeling pity which may have been borne out of an expectation that that is what is required of candidates. Tybalt in *Romeo and Juliet* was sometimes pitied as someone who had his desire to uphold family honour thwarted by an authoritative Lord Capulet; and some candidates felt sorry for Macbeth because they thought he was mad and so couldn't help himself, despite Macbeth deliberately committing murders for his own benefit. It is imperative that personal responses are rooted in the text and supported by textual reference.

Strong answers to passage-based questions selected the best material to address the question. Candidates who tried to work through the passage from the beginning often merely gave an account of the situation rather than addressing the question; often these answers did not get to the end of the passage and so missed important material. In the passage on *Raisin in the Sun*, for example, Mama's beating of Walter is shocking on stage, yet was sometimes missed out because it occurs towards the end of the passage. Other key elements sometimes omitted were: Catherine's entertaining interest in Rodolpho in *A View from the Bridge*, Desmond's moving declaration of his love in *The Winslow Boy*, the murders at the end of the passage from *Macbeth*, and Tybalt's ominous last words in *Romeo and Juliet*. The key to a good answer is: to place the passage in its context, briefly; to select the best material from the passage; and to use that material to evaluate the writer's methods, thus commenting on the effects of dialogue, staging, action and likely audience response.

Successful answers to discursive questions addressed the question directly and made an argument in three or four well-developed points. These focused on key words from the question, such as 'admire', 'striking', 'dramatic impact' and 'vividly'. Strong responses included a selection of the most relevant material from the text, making it clear how the text supported the point being made. Some answers spent too long on less relevant material, or included a summary of the plot or information on the playwright's background.

A common approach which weakened some answers to both passage-based and discursive questions was to focus on a theme of the candidate's choice, rather than to address the question asked. Answers to both questions on *A View from the Bridge* were sometimes limited by focusing mainly on Eddie's masculinity; answers to both questions on *Macbeth* were sometimes limited by a focus on Macbeth's perceived madness. Sometimes comment on a theme might enrich an answer if it is relevant and forms only one point of an answer, but it should not form the entire answer.

There were very few rubric infringements. These consisted of candidates on Component 23 answering two passage-based or two discursive questions. In these cases, the higher mark was credited.

Comments on specific questions

LORRAINE HANSBERRY: *A Raisin in the Sun*

Question 1

Strong answers explored dialogue to show how Hansberry conveys the characters' shock at the loss of the money. Bobo's speech, tears, and hesitant delivery, and Walter's speech and actions were all well analysed: his slowness to comprehend and believe the news emphasised by rhetorical questions; repetition of 'maybe'; pauses created with dashes; as well as how his desperation and despair are conveyed as he 'crumbles' onto the floor and pounds on it. Mama's shocking violence was often selected for comment too. Stronger answers considered that the audience is also shocked by the violence, the despair, and the revelations of the family's dreams destroyed. Perceptive answers explored language in more detail, such as the imagery of Walter's sobbed '*That money is made out of my father's flesh*', sometimes linking that to Mama's graphic description of Walter Senior's struggle to make the money. There were often strong personal responses to Walter's selfishness. Weaker responses would have benefited from an avoidance of narrating the action without providing analysis.

Question 2

Many candidates made convincing cases for finding Mama to be admirable, and were able to select a range of appropriate material to support their answers. Her strength of character, faith and optimism were often cited, as was her role as head of the family and her bravery in buying the house in Clybourne Park. More developed answers weighed these admirable qualities against the harsh discipline she metes out to Beneatha and Walter and her spoiling of Travis. Several candidates successfully explored Hansberry's use of imagery in Mama's plant, seeing it as symbolic of her resilience and nurturing. Weaker responses would have benefited from less explanation of some of Mama's actions in the play.

ARTHUR MILLER: *A View from the Bridge*

Question 3

Many candidates found 'entertaining' Rodolpho's engaging personality, his anecdote about the taxi, and Catherine's attraction to him; and considered 'serious' the economic situation in Italy suggested by Rodolpho and reinforced by Marco's descriptions of his family's poverty. Strong responses explored the writing in detail, to show how Miller reveals Rodolpho's skill in story-telling and the pathos of Marco's children in phrases such as '*They eat sunshine*'. Stage directions reveal the closeness of the brothers, their desperation for money and gratitude to Eddie for providing accommodation. Candidates are reminded that they need to ensure they address both parts of the question.

Some responses explored Eddie's masculinity to the exclusion of the question and much of the passage, citing in detail material from later in the play. Marco offering Eddie his hand in thanks was misinterpreted as foreshadowing his knifing of Eddie at the end. There are signs in the passage of Eddie preferring Marco as he comes '*more to address Marco only*', but some candidates overstated his reaction at this early stage - Eddie doesn't yet hate Rodolpho, nor is he jealous of him here.

Question 4

This was often well answered, with the strongest responses selecting the most appropriate material from various points of the play and carefully logging Eddie's growing antipathy towards Rodolpho. Eddie's early reaction to Rodolpho and Catherine dancing to '*Paper Doll*', his pretence of teaching Rodolpho to box and his drunken kissing of both Catherine and Rodolpho were all explored, with an awareness that Eddie's futile attempts to separate the lovers ultimately leads to his calling Immigration. Thoughtful answers considered Rodolpho's remarkably forgiving attitude to Eddie and his attempts to make peace at the end. An appreciation of 'striking' was sometimes implicit in candidates' analysis of the drama of key moments between the two characters. Stronger answers considered 'striking' more directly however, typically pointing out the striking contrast between the two unlikely rivals.

Some responses focused on the theme of 'masculinity' rather than on the relationship. These answers tended to give much evidence of Eddie's machismo in contrast to details of Rodolpho's perceived femininity, sometimes digressing to consider American attitudes to homosexuality in the mid-twentieth century. Some responses ignored Eddie's strong reasons for hating Rodolpho. These needed to use evidence from the text to challenge Eddie's views, such as his claim that Rodolpho is only after his passport, or his illogical insistence that Rodolpho is homosexual.

TERENCE RATTIGAN: *The Winslow Boy*

Question 5

Most answers gave the context of Catherine's split with John. Many candidates mentioned her family's treatment of Desmond's love for Catherine as a joke, but stronger responses successfully argued that Desmond's sincerity and honesty in the passage are moving. His emotion is genuine, shown in his hesitations and clumsy speech. His heartfelt reference to his past sporting prowess is poignant, while the image of his love not fading like his body is movingly romantic. Successful answers considered Catherine's response in detail. Her thoughts are '*far distant*', her '*matter-of-fact tone*' contrasts with Desmond's emotions, and she pities him his lost youth; but she is polite and considerate. Some responses expressed sympathy for Catherine, as her social and economic situation force her to consider accepting his proposal. Responses could have been strengthened by exploring the writing of the passage in more detail. Some revealed a limited understanding of the text, with rather superficial reactions conveyed. These typically viewed any proposal of marriage as being moving and saw Catherine as fortunate to receive such a proposal and madly in love with Desmond. Other responses simply provided a character study of Catherine using details from the rest of the play; these would have benefited from greater focus on the passage.

Question 6

Some candidates successfully considered the dramatic impact of Rattigan's emphasis on the financial implications of this relationship from the start, when John asks Arthur's permission to marry Catherine, and her disappointment at love not being mentioned. Their respective depth of emotion was explored in Catherine's declaration: '*I love John in every way that a woman can love a man and far, far more than he loves me.*' John's shallow commitment is made obvious in his response to his father's blackmailing letter and his fury when Catherine decides to continue the case. Stronger responses explored the dramatic impact of her decision to support the principle of human rights; she sacrifices her engagement, despite Arthur's disagreement. Grace's anger at John's jilting is dramatic, as is Catherine's sad discovery that John soon marries someone else. Weaker responses needed to be clearer on the reasons for the ending of the engagement. Others needed to consider the dramatic impact of the relationship on the play.

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE: *Macbeth*

Question 7

Strong answers first gave the context: Macduff has refused to attend Macbeth's banquet and has fled to England to persuade Malcolm to invade Scotland; Macbeth has already sent murderers to Macduff's family. Lady Macduff rightly feels abandoned and unprotected. Strong answers explored the irony of Lady Macduff calling her husband a 'traitor' in jest, and the innocent and loving banter between her and her son in this domestic scene, while unaware of the danger they are in. The messenger emphasises Lady Macduff's honourable character, but she is helpless to prevent the murder of her son or herself. The best answers explored the writing of the passage in detail and understood the moving effect of the dramatic irony, the innocence of mother and son and the heinous murders committed by Macbeth. Some candidates had seemingly misplaced the extract suggesting that Macduff was dead; they often tried to argue that Lady Macduff was right in calling her husband a traitor, although he is the one who kills Macbeth. Some answers neglected to include the murder of Lady Macduff and her son. Conversely, some answers expounded on the evil madness of Macbeth in ordering these murders, but would have benefited from greater focus on the passage.

Question 8

Some excellent responses attributed the Macbeths' unhappiness to their guilt over killing Duncan, using carefully selected supporting material. These explored the writing to show how a guilty conscience provokes nightmares and sleeplessness in both characters. They discussed Macbeth's increasing paranoia about Banquo then Macduff, his hallucinations of Banquo's ghost, and how his realisation that the witches have tricked him leads him to despair and nihilism in his 'Tomorrow and tomorrow...' speech. Lady Macbeth's sleepwalking and hallucinations of blood on her hands were seen as manifestations of her guilty conscience, leading to her suicide. Some responses successfully explored the breakdown of the couple's relationship as Macbeth no longer confides in his wife. Other answers spent too long on events before Duncan's murder, or asserted that Macbeth's unhappiness after becoming king was caused by ambition and greed, ignoring his insecurity provoked by the witches' words on Banquo's sons and Macduff. Some answers were very brief. These would have benefited from greater development of an argument and use of relevant textual support. Some candidates who dismissed both Macbeths as insane found little more to add, as this simple judgement removed the need to explore the complexities of the characters' guilt and conscience.

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE: *Romeo and Juliet*

Question 9

The strongest answers explored in detail the dramatic contrast between Romeo's love and Tybalt's hate: Romeo's beautiful imagery and poetic speech, and the disjointed argument between Tybalt and Capulet, full of curtailed sentences, rhetorical questions and exclamations, rounded off with an ominous couplet. The best answers explored this language in detail. Despite Romeo's avowal of true love, some candidates condemned him for his fickle nature in forgetting Rosaline so quickly. Many responses successfully considered the foreshadowing implied in Tybalt's menacing words, and the irony of Lord Capulet's more favourable appraisal of Romeo which only makes Tybalt more intent on killing him. Weaker answers tended to paraphrase parts of the text rather than analysing use of language. Some responses would have been strengthened by including Romeo's speech as well as Tybalt's; these needed to demonstrate a better understanding of Lord Capulet's words and motives.

Question 10

Most answers noted the absence of any closeness between mother and daughter, citing how Juliet calls her mother 'Madam'. She supports Juliet's marriage to Paris; she tries to engage Juliet's interest in him by describing him as a book ('fair volume', 'precious book of love'). Some candidates considered that Lady Capulet's remoteness to Juliet pushes Juliet towards confiding in the Nurse and towards pursuing a secretive relationship with Romeo. Lady Capulet seems more prejudiced and vindictive than her husband after Tybalt is killed by Romeo, as she wishes him dead. She supports Capulet's orders for Juliet to marry Paris, although she tries to temper his anger a little, before cruelly washing her hands of her. She expresses extreme grief when Juliet appears to be dead. Some responses would have been more successful had they employed a wider range of supporting material drawn not exclusively from the first scene between mother and daughter.

LITERATURE (ENGLISH)

Paper 0486/31
Paper 31 Drama

Key messages

A personal engagement with the text, an ability to evaluate and an appreciation of the play on stage enlivened the most successful answers.

Responses to passage-based questions which understood the context of the passage within the play as a whole while also exploring the passage itself in some detail, were often the most successful.

Many responses would have been improved by prioritising the dramatic content of the set passage over its literary features.

Successful answers to discursive questions maintained a tight focus on the question and gave a precise, wide range of reference.

Strong candidates refrained from focussing their responses on theme, when this was not the immediate focus of the question.

General comments

Candidates showed knowledge of their set texts and an engagement with genre, language, characterisation and form.

The strongest answers to the passage-based questions briefly and concisely established the context of the passage and explored its dramatic effects in some detail. A significant number of answers showed knowledge and a grasp of the central issues in the text but did not develop points made in sufficient detail. Further consideration of the play on stage and the language used would also have enhanced many answers. The passages are printed on the examination paper so that candidates can use quotations to support the points they make. They should be discouraged from referring to line numbers as an alternative to quoting from the text.

There was some evidence in less successful responses of insufficient knowledge of the set texts which impacted on the depth of candidates' answers. This was particularly obvious in the passage-based questions where some responses failed to demonstrate knowledge of the context of the passage, evidenced by a lack of appreciation of characters' previous and subsequent relationships, or of the events referred to.

A sense of both audience and author informed the strongest responses. Numerous answers referred to a book and a reader instead of a play and an audience, however. Comment on characterisation, though strong, often dominated answers to questions about dramatic effectiveness and sometimes without any sense of the author's intention to shape audience response to the character.

There were some strong answers to discursive questions during this session. These were characterised by a tight focus on the question and a well-organised, concise argument. Many responses were focused and well structured around a convincing argument, but did not include sufficient supporting detail.

A significant number of responses showed insecure knowledge of technical terms. Prose and iambic pentameter; simile and metaphor, for example were often confused or misused. The terms hubris and hamartia were often deployed correctly but many candidates used them indiscriminately and without making their point clear.

Whilst the historical and cultural context of the text is a useful focus for the classroom, some candidates displayed this knowledge in the examination at the expense of a focus on the question, sometimes to the extent of writing several paragraphs of generalised contextual comment. Introductions were often lengthy and generalised, making little or no reference to the question. This redundant information was then repeated in the conclusion.

There were sophisticated responses this session which showed a thorough exploration of the complex issues these plays present and the ways in which they make a powerful impact on an audience.

There were some rubric infringements where candidates answered two passage-based or two discursive questions, or two questions on the same text. Some candidates do not number their questions or write two question numbers against one answer. There were few very brief or imbalanced scripts.

Although some candidates used the printed passage in the passage-based question to answer the discursive question, this was considerably less common than in previous sessions.

Comments on specific questions

LORRAINE HANSBERRY: *A Raisin in the Sun*

Question 1

Strong answers focused on the central drama of Mama slapping Beneatha powerfully across the face and Ruth fainting at the end of the scene. A surprisingly large number of responses did not mention either of these moments. Successful responses went on to consider Mama and Beneatha's contrasting beliefs, their tone of voice, the generational divide, Ruth's mediating role and the symbolism of the plant. Most responses demonstrated considerable knowledge of theme and characterisation but displayed less confidence in discussing the dramatic action and the powerful language. Most discussed the cliff-hanger ending but fewer acknowledged its foreshadowing Ruth's pregnancy and the issues this raises. Perhaps more surprising was the lack of personal response to what constitutes one of the most powerful scenes in the play.

Question 2

As Ruth's difficulties are many and well-documented in the play, many answers to this question were surprisingly generalised and limited in range of reference. Many responses discussed Ruth being 'a *settled woman*' at length, without including a clear explanation of how this was a 'difficulty'. Other responses were failed to move on from the opening scene of the play and did not consider her dilemma over terminating her pregnancy, the family's living conditions, Walter's loss of the insurance money or Lindner's racism. Walter's attitude towards her was explored but in little depth and detail. Many responses concluded that Ruth had given up and did not have a dream, seemingly forgetting her desire to move. There were a significant number of answers which only dealt with the social position of women/African Americans at the time the play was written, rather than considering the specifics of this play. These also overlooked the fact that Ruth has a job outside the home and is not just a housewife. Stronger answers explored Ruth's role as peace maker and commented on the unfairness of Walter's attitude towards her.

ARTHUR MILLER: *A View from the Bridge*

Question 3

The strongest answers to this question established the context of Catherine and Rodolpho's intimacy immediately prior to Eddie arriving home unexpectedly early and drunk. An observation of how both of these things create tension and suspense was evident in these answers. Some responses overstated Eddie's drunkenness assuming that the three bottles of whisky he takes from his pockets are empty, whereas Alfieri's early narration suggests they are full. If he had drunk all three we might also assume he would be unconscious rather than 'unsteady'. Responses demonstrated an appreciation of the audience's anticipation of Eddie's reaction based on prior knowledge of his unacknowledged feelings for Catherine. Strong answers commented fully on Eddie's controlling and possessive attitude towards Catherine and on his kissing her, exposing his true feelings for her for the first time in the play. Particularly insightful answers referenced the disturbing nature and motives behind Catherine's concern for Eddie's well-being once she had made her decision to marry Rodolpho. Strong responses understood Eddie's motivation in kissing Rodolpho and the possible underlying ambiguity this reveals in Eddie's sexuality. The best answers combined such understanding with comment on the dramatic effects and the powerful language.

Less successful responses either did not respond to the kiss at all or avoided comment on Eddie's disturbing passion for Catherine, concluding that his problem was merely one of over protecting his niece.

Question 4

There was an interesting range of responses to this question. Some strong answers concentrated purely on Eddie himself and included a detailed account of his fatal flaw; his 'toxic' masculinity and code of honour. Other strong answers explored Catherine's culpable naivety, Marco's revenge code and Rodolpho's possible ulterior motives. Sophisticated responses combined the above with comment on the tragic elements of fate and inevitability.

Less confident responses tended to overlook the fact that Eddie's attitude to Catherine is beyond the boundaries of conventional uncle-niece relationships and that Catherine cannot be blamed for his unacknowledged emotions.

TERENCE RATTIGAN: *The Winslow Boy*

Question 5

Knowledge of the play as a whole was evident in the strongest responses. Whilst many candidates commented on the tension between Dickie and Arthur Winslow and the fact that Dickie seems to be the less favoured son, they tended to ignore Dickie's track record of failing to study for his Oxford degree and Arthur's attempts to mitigate the bad news with the offer of a good job. Most responses displayed an understanding of Arthur's financial reasons for his actions, though fewer explored the ways in which he breaks the news to Dickie or commented on his shutting down of the conversation to speak to a journalist. Many commented successfully on the way Dickie's shock and disappointment is conveyed.

The least successful answers merely paraphrased what the characters say.

Question 6

There were few responses to this question but those who answered well commented on Violet's role in revealing information to the audience.

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE: *Macbeth*

Question 7

There were many competent answers to this question with the strongest establishing that Lady Macbeth was sleepwalking, disturbingly reliving the various crimes committed, and unconsciously revealing her guilt to the observing doctor and gentlewoman. Such responses looked closely at the language related to unnatural behaviour and diseased minds and linked this to Lady Macbeth's previous desire to be consumed by evil, comparing this to her feelings of guilt.

The strongest responses showed an understanding of the details of the murders of Duncan, Banquo and Lady Macduff referred to in Lady Macbeth's speech, acknowledging that often she is addressing Macbeth. One effective answer saw the irony of Lady Macbeth's repetitive hand washing when she had told Macbeth that '*a little water clears us of this deed*' and commented on how their roles had been reversed by this point in the play. Some strong responses commented on the disturbing dark night-time candlelit and haunting setting. Few, however, showed an understanding of the disturbing fact that the Doctor and Gentlewoman were too afraid to reveal Lady Macbeth's guilt to anyone. Many noted that Lady Macbeth had been driven insane and that her suicide was foreshadowed in the scene. A significant number, however, had apparently misread this quote from the doctor: '*...I have known those which have walk'd in their sleep who have died holly in their beds*', thinking this meant she was about to die. An exploration of the imagery, the sighs, the repetitions, the rhetorical questions in the scene featured in more developed responses.

In less successful answers, comment on '*but their sense is shut,*' was longer than necessary. Candidates could simply have stated that Lady Macbeth is sleepwalking. Weaker responses also lacked evidence of candidates having understood what Lady Macbeth was referring to in her speeches and that she was addressing Macbeth in saying for example '*to bed*'.

Question 8

This question was answered in a variety of ways. Some successful responses considered the contrast between the loyal brave Macbeth at the beginning of the play and the traitorous regicide later. Some thought the shock value lay in his being manipulated by a woman who transgresses her social role by being cruel and ambitious. Others saw the portrayal of Duncan as a holy and much loved King and the act Macbeth commits in killing him as sacrilegious. All of these perspectives had much to recommend them where the

arguments were supported by well-chosen textual reference. Fewer candidates took the more obvious route and explored the shocking dramatic effects in the build up to the murder and its aftermath, though one strong response did focus on the reactions of the other lords to the discovery of Duncan's body. Another gave a detailed response to effects such as the hallucinatory dagger, the owl's shriek, the pathetic fallacy, the unnatural events of that night, Macbeth hearing voices and the visual impact of the bloody daggers.

The least successful answers resorted to narrative, concentrating on Macbeth's ambition.

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE: *Romeo and Juliet*

Question 9

Strong answers to this question placed the passage in its post-opening confrontation context, commented on what it reveals of Romeo's character, explored the nature of his language and explored how he is portrayed here contrasts with his behaviour when he is genuinely in love. The strongest responses showed an understanding of Benvolio's role and of the humour in their exchanges. However, most answers neglected to mention Benvolio altogether. There were some rather mechanical responses to the oxymorons but most included comment on the way in which they reveal Romeo's confusion and self-indulgence. There were some insightful comments on the classical allusions, though some did not show an understanding of the fact that Diana is the goddess of chastity or that the '*weak childish bow*' is childish because it belongs to the boy Cupid. The strongest responses embraced the idea of this being an introduction to Romeo and of how Shakespeare is effectively priming the audience to observe his transformation later in the play.

Question 10

The most popular choices of moving moment were Romeo and Juliet's meeting at the Capulet Ball, the balcony scene and the suicides at the end of the play. Although some responses made reference to the language of the text, most did not include sufficient quotation to answer the question in any depth or detail. Comment tended to relate to the sadness of the story in a generalised way. Stronger answers referred to the dramatic ironies of the final scenes of the play and how these engaged the emotions of the audience.

LITERATURE (ENGLISH)

Paper 0486/32
Paper 32 Drama

Key messages

The most successful responses addressed the key words in the question, remained focused and supported ideas with concise quotations, which were analysed fully.

Successful opening paragraphs were brief and referenced the question. These avoided lengthy socio-historical detail or a list of the writer's techniques. Strong conclusions were those that provided more than a reiteration of points discussed.

In passage-based questions, stronger-performing candidates briefly contextualised the passage, selected the most relevant material from across the whole of the passage including the ending, and analysed both content and the writer's methods effectively.

An awareness of the text as drama and an appreciation of the play on stage was evident in the most successful answers.

General comments

Many candidates demonstrated detailed knowledge of their set texts. They showed an engagement with the characters and themes, and an apparent enjoyment of the texts studied. The most popular texts were *A View from the Bridge* and *Macbeth*. Very few candidates answered on *The Winslow Boy*, and among those that did, knowledge and understanding of the text was often less secure. There were two new texts this session, *A Raisin in the Sun* and *Romeo and Juliet*. Few candidates studied the former but a number of candidates chose *Romeo and Juliet*.

The strongest responses deconstructed the question using the adverbs, for example, 'strikingly' or 'vividly' to inform a judicious selection of reference material. The ability to read closely and analyse linguistic and dramatic effects, without exclusively citing literary terminology, is key to a successful response. While most candidates understood and used terminology such as foreshadowing and dramatic irony correctly, some candidates discussed terms that did not relate to the question or help to develop their argument constructively, for example, peripeteia and anagnorisis. Weaker candidates would benefit from drafting a brief plan to help them to maintain focus and to be more selective in their choice of reference material thereby avoiding a quotation-driven response particularly with regard to the passage-based question.

Strong responses demonstrated an accurate understanding of the social, cultural and historical context of a text, such as the difference between American law and the Sicilian code of honour in the Red Hook community in *A View from a Bridge*, or the Jacobean concept of kingship to explore the heinous crime of regicide and its effects on the perpetrators in *Macbeth*. Less successful answers wrote about the treatment of women and their low status in Elizabethan England to comment on Lady Macbeth, or 1950s America, to show Beatrice breaking out of her role as 'housewife', frequently losing sight of the question. A number of candidates expressed a feeling of pity for both Lady Macbeth and Macbeth, citing mental health issues as justification for their behaviour neglecting to explore how their subsequent guilt and fear of discovery impacted on their 'thoughts and feelings' and ultimately their mental state.

When Beatrice challenges Eddie about his feeling for Catherine, Miller makes it clear in Eddie's reply that he hasn't had *'such a thought'* regarding Catherine. Candidates who asserted Eddie's culpability to such an extent that – in their view – he consciously groomed Catherine for a sexual relationship, were perhaps overstating the case. Likewise, the extract makes clear Catherine's innocence in her child-like behaviour with Eddie, so to state that she is deliberately encouraging Eddie's sexual overtures is also overstating her responsibility. Some candidates claimed Eddie was 'sick', 'toxic' with 'incestuous' desires with some commenting on the 'love triangle' implying that Catherine was in a romantic or even sexual relationship with Eddie. The key to successful answers and interpretations is in a candidate's ability to support ideas with apt textual reference and quotation, tightly linked to the terms of the question and rooted firmly in the text.

There were very few rubric infringements on Paper 32 this session where candidates answered two passage-based questions or two discursive questions. Candidates on both Papers endeavoured in all but a few instances to number their questions correctly. They used their time successfully and there were very few brief responses or instances of candidates who ran out of time reported. The increased evidence of brief, useful planning was a feature of well-structured and more effective responses.

Comments on specific questions

LORRAINE HANSBERRY: *A Raisin in the Sun*

Question 1

This proved to be challenging for candidates, many of whom struggled to show a secure knowledge of the text. To answer the question fully, a focus on how the writing makes 'you feel' as a member of the audience (AO4: a personal response) is essential. The most successful responses conveyed a personal judgement and expressed both sympathy and disapproval of Walter's actions and words. These responses showed empathy with Walter's hurt pride at George's cold disdain and indifference, relating the extract to the root of his frustrations and touching on issues of race and aspiration. There were some sensitive responses to the fact that he feels he has neither the support of his wife, nor of his mother in the pathos conveyed by his words, *'Not even my own mother!'* Strong responses also commented on the language, 'giant', 'ants' and 'volcano'. Less successful responses simply worked through the passage, paraphrasing or explaining Walter's behaviour, with little focus on the question or apparent understanding of his desire for a better life. There was some misinterpretation of Walter's attitude towards George and college education.

Question 2

Less successful responses tended to underplay the significance of the generation gap focusing instead on differences between characters. Weaker responses also displayed a tendency to lapse into character study, describing Mama's strength in the face of poverty, her strength in holding the family together, her strong views on liquor stores and her determination to buy a house. More successful responses contrasted Mama's and Ruth's attitudes to abortion, discussed Mama's strict religious views, and explored her striking of Beneatha and her later beating of Walter when the loss of the money is revealed.

ARTHUR MILLER: *A View from the Bridge*

Question 3

Many candidates successfully explored content and dramatic techniques. Stronger answers provided the relevant context: Catherine is upset as Eddie has accused Rodolpho of wanting to marry her to gain American citizenship; and Beatrice is angry that Eddie is *'going to start something'*. Successful responses also included comment on Beatrice's skilful and increasingly determined approach, her jealousy and desire to save her marriage, as well as her genuine concern for Catherine. A discussion of stage directions and was also a feature of strong responses, for example the significance of the pauses in the dialogue. Catherine's naiveté was usually understood but only the strongest responses demonstrated an understanding of her distress at the end as she realises what Beatrice is telling her. Some blamed Catherine for Eddie's feelings, judging her behaviour towards him to be deliberately provocative. A few mistakenly accused her of having a relationship with Eddie. Stronger-performing candidates wrote more perceptively recognising that Beatrice's *'imperious demand'* that Catherine leaves is because she knows she cannot change Eddie's behaviour.

Most candidates linked Eddie's patriarchal power and authority in the family to his protective care of Catherine, observing that this created a suffocating family dynamic that would become increasingly problematic as Catherine grew up. The most successful responses showed an understanding of how this scene represents a turning point in the play, with Beatrice trying to avert the tragedy but being unable to do so, as the audience had been forewarned by Alfieri. A few responses did not address the question directly, writing instead about Eddie's 'thoughts and feelings'. Weaker responses were also characterised by a simple listing of stage directions such as '*slowly turns her head*' or '*astonished*' without comment, and as such did not show an understanding of how these serve to reveal characters' 'thoughts and feelings'.

Question 4

Strong responses often explored the increasing pressure on Eddie to stop Rodolpho, leading to his central betrayal of Rodolpho and Marco, when he reports them to the Immigration Bureau. Candidates often pointed out how this was foreshadowed by the Vinny Bolzano story which emphasised the social codes defining the Red Hook community. The most successful answers considered the dramatic impact of the telephone booth on stage as a visible symbol of Eddie's act and of the intensity of Eddie's words to Catherine and Beatrice on Vinny's treatment by both his family and the community. Parallels were drawn between Vinny's and Eddie's treatment in the final scene. Many responses considered a range of betrayals in the text, including Eddie's betrayal of Beatrice and Catherine. Some considered Alfieri to have betrayed Eddie by facilitating Marco's release from jail, when he knew violence would ensue.

Some candidates tried to argue that Catherine betrays Eddie by wanting to leave him for Rodolpho, without any textual support. Other less successful responses were narrative in approach, identifying examples of betrayal, without addressing 'powerful'.

TERENCE RATTIGAN: *The Winslow Boy*

Question 5

Responses to the passage needed to focus on what made the scene 'dramatic' rather than just describing what happened in it. Successful responses demonstrated an awareness of the conversation between Catherine and John and of the fear of 'Father', the sudden unexpected appearance of Ronnie and his 'bedraggled' state, and the confusion and shock as Catherine read the letter in silence. The use of the letter as a dramatic device – particularly dramatic as the audience is unaware of its content – was often undeveloped. Some responses successfully alluded to the tonal shifts in conversation when Ronnie appears with his fragmented and repetitive speech and Catherine's concern for him.

Question 6

Responses to this question were generally weak with candidates adopting too narrative an approach or simply providing a character profile of Sir Robert. More successful responses demonstrated a clear grasp of Sir Robert's part in the play, his interrogation of Ronnie and his commitment to the Winslow Case and to the changes this meant for his relationship with Catherine.

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE: *Macbeth*

Question 7

Most candidates were able to identify some of Macbeth's and Lady Macbeth's 'troubled thoughts and feelings'. Stronger responses gave the context: unknown to Lady Macbeth, Macbeth has already ordered the murder of Banquo and his son. The most successful responses considered Lady Macbeth's regret for Duncan's murder as expressed in her opening soliloquy, '*Naught's had, all's spent*', and also in her attempts to reassure her husband with '*What's done is done*', when she can't stop thinking of Duncan's murder herself. Most responses showed that candidates had understood that feelings of guilt and regret caused the nightmares experienced by the couple and their inability to sleep, leading to Macbeth's extraordinary claim that he envied Duncan's peace. Stronger answers focused more on the couple's fear of discovery and their sense of insecurity, as well as on the changing dynamics of their relationship, with Macbeth clearly more confident in how to secure the throne than Lady Macbeth who asks, '*What's to be done*'. There was some close analysis of imagery for example '*scotch'd the snake*' and Macbeth's feelings that he can only still the '*scorpions*' in his mind with a '*deed of dreadful note*'.

Less successful responses quoted from the text without exploring the effects created. Some candidates identified language and images which mirror those used earlier in the play, but these needed to directly address the question. Semantic fields of words showing 'evil', for example 'bat', 'beetle' and 'crow' also needed to be related to the question: this could have been achieved with consideration of what they reveal about Macbeth's thoughts. Several candidates expressed sympathy for Macbeth and Lady Macbeth due to their deteriorating mental state, overlooking the fact that they deliberately killed Duncan in cold blood, and that Macbeth had already hired murderers to kill Banquo and Fleance.

Question 8

The most successful responses showed an understanding that the key words, 'To what extent', encouraged both a personal and balanced view of Macbeth as to his fitting the description of 'butcher'. These also displayed an ability to differentiate between Macbeth's brutality on the battlefield and the cold-blooded murders he commits later in the play. Some saw a progression from killing for a 'good' reason, i.e. to be king, to killing anyone who posed a threat, i.e. Banquo, to then killing indiscriminately – even the innocent Lady Macduff and her son. It was at this point in killing the innocent that many candidates argued he had become a 'butcher'. Candidates with an understanding of this tragic hero, with a fatal flaw, considered his sense of conscience and initial reluctance to kill Duncan as evidence that he was not a 'butcher', arguing he was a man manipulated by both an ambitious and fiendish wife, and fate and the witches. Some argued that though he ordered the later murders of Banquo and Macduff's wife and family, he did not kill them himself and this, along with his troubled conscience reveals some humanity on his part. Though there was a wide range of relevant textual detail and quotation used to support ideas, the violence, horror of the bloodshed and evidence from the final scene was rarely explored.

Less successful responses took the term 'butcher' literally and draw comparisons between Macbeth's slaughter on the battlefield, his use of knives, and his being 'steeped in blood', with the work of a 'butcher', who is a merciless killer of animals. There was also some basic re-telling of the plot with little, if any, reference to the key words in the question.

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE: *Romeo and Juliet*

Question 9

Many candidates found it difficult to comment on both 'dramatic' and 'entertaining', and to accurately place the scene in the play. Stronger responses showed an awareness that the Nurse had spoken to Romeo and an understanding of the dramatic irony as Juliet waits, patiently at first, before becoming increasingly agitated by the Nurse's digressions and moans about her aches and pains, whilst the audience already knows plans are afoot for the couple to marry. There was an awareness of the comic relief that this provides, but responses would have benefited from greater exploration of how the language made this scene entertaining. A few candidates commented on the Nurse's playfulness but many responses made generalised and repeated points on Juliet's anxiety and the Nurse's delay.

Question 10

Many candidates were seemingly unsure of the meaning of the word 'compelling'. Strong responses saw Mercutio's function: as the provider of 'comic relief' in a tragedy; as a reminder of the feud between the Capulets and Montagues; or as a point of contrast with Romeo. The most successful answers engaged with Mercutio's language and wit, as well as with the mockery of Petrarchan conventions. Relevant quotation supported these comments along with some insightful analysis. Many candidates had clearly seen Mercutio's death as a catalyst, shifting the play into tragedy with the deaths of Romeo and Juliet. Those who chose the Queen Mab speech tended to falter on their knowledge of the speech or found it difficult to link it to how it made him 'compelling'. Most candidates commented on his friendly character, his loyalty and bawdy jokes, and though he was only in the play for a short time, on how all the comedy disappeared from the play with his death. Less successful responses provided a character study with little or no reference to the question, lapsing into generalisation and narrative. There were some rather generalised responses about 'comic relief' and 'innuendo' for example, with insufficient explanation or textual support.

LITERATURE (ENGLISH)

Paper 0486/33
Drama (Open Text)

Key messages

Successful answers address all parts of the question using well-developed points which are clearly supported by apt and brief quotation from the text.

In the strongest answers to passage-based questions, candidates select the best material to address the question, rather than work through the passage.

Good responses to discursive questions develop three or four of the most appropriate points and support them with a range of apt examples from the text.

All answers to drama questions need to consider how the playwright uses features of the genre such as dialogue, interaction between characters, action on stage and likely audience reaction.

General comments

There were strong responses to all texts and questions, with candidates often showing evidence of detailed knowledge and understanding of their chosen texts. New to the paper this year were *Romeo and Juliet* and *A Raisin in the Sun*. Well-developed personal responses to the characters or the situations in the texts were prevalent. There were some credibly disparaging responses to Walter's predicament in *Raisin in the Sun*, with candidates pointing out that he had been warned about Willy many times by his wife, and by Mama, about not investing in a liquor store; and many candidates strongly condemned Macbeth's murder of the innocent Lady Macduff and her son as plumbing new depths of evil. Some responses expressed a somewhat forced sense of pity for characters; forced perhaps due to the unlikely and difficult nature of feeling pity which may have been borne out of an expectation that that is what is required of candidates. Tybalt in *Romeo and Juliet* was sometimes pitied as someone who had his desire to uphold family honour thwarted by an authoritative Lord Capulet; and some candidates felt sorry for Macbeth because they thought he was mad and so couldn't help himself, despite Macbeth deliberately committing murders for his own benefit. It is imperative that personal responses are rooted in the text and supported by textual reference.

Strong answers to passage-based questions selected the best material to address the question. Candidates who tried to work through the passage from the beginning often merely gave an account of the situation rather than addressing the question; often these answers did not get to the end of the passage and so missed important material. In the passage on *Raisin in the Sun*, for example, Mama's beating of Walter is shocking on stage, yet was sometimes missed out because it occurs towards the end of the passage. Other key elements sometimes omitted were: Catherine's entertaining interest in Rodolpho in *A View from the Bridge*, Desmond's moving declaration of his love in *The Winslow Boy*, the murders at the end of the passage from *Macbeth*, and Tybalt's ominous last words in *Romeo and Juliet*. The key to a good answer is: to place the passage in its context, briefly; to select the best material from the passage; and to use that material to evaluate the writer's methods, thus commenting on the effects of dialogue, staging, action and likely audience response.

Successful answers to discursive questions addressed the question directly and made an argument in three or four well-developed points. These focused on key words from the question, such as 'admire', 'striking', 'dramatic impact' and 'vividly'. Strong responses included a selection of the most relevant material from the text, making it clear how the text supported the point being made. Some answers spent too long on less relevant material, or included a summary of the plot or information on the playwright's background.

A common approach which weakened some answers to both passage-based and discursive questions was to focus on a theme of the candidate's choice, rather than to address the question asked. Answers to both questions on *A View from the Bridge* were sometimes limited by focusing mainly on Eddie's masculinity; answers to both questions on *Macbeth* were sometimes limited by a focus on Macbeth's perceived madness. Sometimes comment on a theme might enrich an answer if it is relevant and forms only one point of an answer, but it should not form the entire answer.

There were very few rubric infringements. These consisted of candidates on Component 23 answering two passage-based or two discursive questions. In these cases, the higher mark was credited.

Comments on specific questions

LORRAINE HANSBERRY: *A Raisin in the Sun*

Question 1

Strong answers explored dialogue to show how Hansberry conveys the characters' shock at the loss of the money. Bobo's speech, tears, and hesitant delivery, and Walter's speech and actions were all well analysed: his slowness to comprehend and believe the news emphasised by rhetorical questions; repetition of 'maybe'; pauses created with dashes; as well as how his desperation and despair are conveyed as he 'crumbles' onto the floor and pounds on it. Mama's shocking violence was often selected for comment too. Stronger answers considered that the audience is also shocked by the violence, the despair, and the revelations of the family's dreams destroyed. Perceptive answers explored language in more detail, such as the imagery of Walter's sobbed '*That money is made out of my father's flesh*', sometimes linking that to Mama's graphic description of Walter Senior's struggle to make the money. There were often strong personal responses to Walter's selfishness. Weaker responses would have benefited from an avoidance of narrating the action without providing analysis.

Question 2

Many candidates made convincing cases for finding Mama to be admirable, and were able to select a range of appropriate material to support their answers. Her strength of character, faith and optimism were often cited, as was her role as head of the family and her bravery in buying the house in Clybourne Park. More developed answers weighed these admirable qualities against the harsh discipline she metes out to Beneatha and Walter and her spoiling of Travis. Several candidates successfully explored Hansberry's use of imagery in Mama's plant, seeing it as symbolic of her resilience and nurturing. Weaker responses would have benefited from less explanation of some of Mama's actions in the play.

ARTHUR MILLER: *A View from the Bridge*

Question 3

Many candidates found 'entertaining' Rodolpho's engaging personality, his anecdote about the taxi, and Catherine's attraction to him; and considered 'serious' the economic situation in Italy suggested by Rodolpho and reinforced by Marco's descriptions of his family's poverty. Strong responses explored the writing in detail, to show how Miller reveals Rodolpho's skill in story-telling and the pathos of Marco's children in phrases such as '*They eat sunshine*'. Stage directions reveal the closeness of the brothers, their desperation for money and gratitude to Eddie for providing accommodation. Candidates are reminded that they need to ensure they address both parts of the question.

Some responses explored Eddie's masculinity to the exclusion of the question and much of the passage, citing in detail material from later in the play. Marco offering Eddie his hand in thanks was misinterpreted as foreshadowing his knifing of Eddie at the end. There are signs in the passage of Eddie preferring Marco as he comes '*more to address Marco only*', but some candidates overstated his reaction at this early stage - Eddie doesn't yet hate Rodolpho, nor is he jealous of him here.

Question 4

This was often well answered, with the strongest responses selecting the most appropriate material from various points of the play and carefully logging Eddie's growing antipathy towards Rodolpho. Eddie's early reaction to Rodolpho and Catherine dancing to '*Paper Doll*', his pretence of teaching Rodolpho to box and his drunken kissing of both Catherine and Rodolpho were all explored, with an awareness that Eddie's futile attempts to separate the lovers ultimately leads to his calling Immigration. Thoughtful answers considered Rodolpho's remarkably forgiving attitude to Eddie and his attempts to make peace at the end. An appreciation of 'striking' was sometimes implicit in candidates' analysis of the drama of key moments between the two characters. Stronger answers considered 'striking' more directly however, typically pointing out the striking contrast between the two unlikely rivals.

Some responses focused on the theme of 'masculinity' rather than on the relationship. These answers tended to give much evidence of Eddie's machismo in contrast to details of Rodolpho's perceived femininity, sometimes digressing to consider American attitudes to homosexuality in the mid-twentieth century. Some responses ignored Eddie's strong reasons for hating Rodolpho. These needed to use evidence from the text to challenge Eddie's views, such as his claim that Rodolpho is only after his passport, or his illogical insistence that Rodolpho is homosexual.

TERENCE RATTIGAN: *The Winslow Boy*

Question 5

Most answers gave the context of Catherine's split with John. Many candidates mentioned her family's treatment of Desmond's love for Catherine as a joke, but stronger responses successfully argued that Desmond's sincerity and honesty in the passage are moving. His emotion is genuine, shown in his hesitations and clumsy speech. His heartfelt reference to his past sporting prowess is poignant, while the image of his love not fading like his body is movingly romantic. Successful answers considered Catherine's response in detail. Her thoughts are '*far distant*', her '*matter-of-fact tone*' contrasts with Desmond's emotions, and she pities him his lost youth; but she is polite and considerate. Some responses expressed sympathy for Catherine, as her social and economic situation force her to consider accepting his proposal. Responses could have been strengthened by exploring the writing of the passage in more detail. Some revealed a limited understanding of the text, with rather superficial reactions conveyed. These typically viewed any proposal of marriage as being moving and saw Catherine as fortunate to receive such a proposal and madly in love with Desmond. Other responses simply provided a character study of Catherine using details from the rest of the play; these would have benefited from greater focus on the passage.

Question 6

Some candidates successfully considered the dramatic impact of Rattigan's emphasis on the financial implications of this relationship from the start, when John asks Arthur's permission to marry Catherine, and her disappointment at love not being mentioned. Their respective depth of emotion was explored in Catherine's declaration: '*I love John in every way that a woman can love a man and far, far more than he loves me.*' John's shallow commitment is made obvious in his response to his father's blackmailing letter and his fury when Catherine decides to continue the case. Stronger responses explored the dramatic impact of her decision to support the principle of human rights; she sacrifices her engagement, despite Arthur's disagreement. Grace's anger at John's jilting is dramatic, as is Catherine's sad discovery that John soon marries someone else. Weaker responses needed to be clearer on the reasons for the ending of the engagement. Others needed to consider the dramatic impact of the relationship on the play.

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE: *Macbeth*

Question 7

Strong answers first gave the context: Macduff has refused to attend Macbeth's banquet and has fled to England to persuade Malcolm to invade Scotland; Macbeth has already sent murderers to Macduff's family. Lady Macduff rightly feels abandoned and unprotected. Strong answers explored the irony of Lady Macduff calling her husband a 'traitor' in jest, and the innocent and loving banter between her and her son in this domestic scene, while unaware of the danger they are in. The messenger emphasises Lady Macduff's honourable character, but she is helpless to prevent the murder of her son or herself. The best answers explored the writing of the passage in detail and understood the moving effect of the dramatic irony, the innocence of mother and son and the heinous murders committed by Macbeth. Some candidates had seemingly misplaced the extract suggesting that Macduff was dead; they often tried to argue that Lady Macduff was right in calling her husband a traitor, although he is the one who kills Macbeth. Some answers neglected to include the murder of Lady Macduff and her son. Conversely, some answers expounded on the evil madness of Macbeth in ordering these murders, but would have benefited from greater focus on the passage.

Question 8

Some excellent responses attributed the Macbeths' unhappiness to their guilt over killing Duncan, using carefully selected supporting material. These explored the writing to show how a guilty conscience provokes nightmares and sleeplessness in both characters. They discussed Macbeth's increasing paranoia about Banquo then Macduff, his hallucinations of Banquo's ghost, and how his realisation that the witches have tricked him leads him to despair and nihilism in his 'Tomorrow and tomorrow...' speech. Lady Macbeth's sleepwalking and hallucinations of blood on her hands were seen as manifestations of her guilty conscience, leading to her suicide. Some responses successfully explored the breakdown of the couple's relationship as Macbeth no longer confides in his wife. Other answers spent too long on events before Duncan's murder, or asserted that Macbeth's unhappiness after becoming king was caused by ambition and greed, ignoring his insecurity provoked by the witches' words on Banquo's sons and Macduff. Some answers were very brief. These would have benefited from greater development of an argument and use of relevant textual support. Some candidates who dismissed both Macbeths as insane found little more to add, as this simple judgement removed the need to explore the complexities of the characters' guilt and conscience.

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE: *Romeo and Juliet*

Question 9

The strongest answers explored in detail the dramatic contrast between Romeo's love and Tybalt's hate: Romeo's beautiful imagery and poetic speech, and the disjointed argument between Tybalt and Capulet, full of curtailed sentences, rhetorical questions and exclamations, rounded off with an ominous couplet. The best answers explored this language in detail. Despite Romeo's avowal of true love, some candidates condemned him for his fickle nature in forgetting Rosaline so quickly. Many responses successfully considered the foreshadowing implied in Tybalt's menacing words, and the irony of Lord Capulet's more favourable appraisal of Romeo which only makes Tybalt more intent on killing him. Weaker answers tended to paraphrase parts of the text rather than analysing use of language. Some responses would have been strengthened by including Romeo's speech as well as Tybalt's; these needed to demonstrate a better understanding of Lord Capulet's words and motives.

Question 10

Most answers noted the absence of any closeness between mother and daughter, citing how Juliet calls her mother 'Madam'. She supports Juliet's marriage to Paris; she tries to engage Juliet's interest in him by describing him as a book ('fair volume', 'precious book of love'). Some candidates considered that Lady Capulet's remoteness to Juliet pushes Juliet towards confiding in the Nurse and towards pursuing a secretive relationship with Romeo. Lady Capulet seems more prejudiced and vindictive than her husband after Tybalt is killed by Romeo, as she wishes him dead. She supports Capulet's orders for Juliet to marry Paris, although she tries to temper his anger a little, before cruelly washing her hands of her. She expresses extreme grief when Juliet appears to be dead. Some responses would have been more successful had they employed a wider range of supporting material drawn not exclusively from the first scene between mother and daughter.

LITERATURE (ENGLISH)

Paper 0486/41
Paper 41 Unseen

Key messages

All Assessment Objectives are addressed in this paper: comment on language is equally weighted with understanding, personal response and supported textual knowledge.

The best answers showed evidence of planning and provided a confident overview of the whole text.

Candidates should practise writing good introductions before addressing each of the bullet points.

Stronger responses paid as much attention to the ending of the text as to its opening.

Confident interpretation of the text includes consideration of the writer's perspective and purpose as well as their methods.

General comments

Candidates produced some high quality work on the unseen paper, during this series. There was a variety in candidates' interpretations and approaches to the paper, but a commitment to close reading and personal response was consistent across most responses. The unseen paper assesses the development of candidates' reading skills – candidates cannot rely on memory – as they need to work out meaning for themselves. This summer saw a lot of strong work, with little in the lowest band and the majority of work at Band 5 or above. In order to access Band 5, candidates need to demonstrate knowledge, supported by frequent textual reference (AO1). It is the deeper understanding of implicit meaning which distinguishes stronger answers (AO2). These go beyond surface meaning and draw inferences from the details of the text, both in terms of characters and descriptions, as well as the reader's response to them. The quality of comment on language, structure and form (AO3) is often a discriminator. The final Assessment Objective (AO4) underpins the structure of a critical appreciation: it requires engagement and interpretation. Candidates need to demonstrate a balance of all of these skills for high reward: an overall interpretation needs to be based on solid knowledge of the detail of the text, supported by quotation, while sensitive analysis of language should be linked to a deeper understanding of the implications of tone, imagery and viewpoint, and how these contribute to the reader's response. To improve their approach to the paper, candidates need to ensure they give equal importance to understanding and commentary, and they need to ensure interpretations are well-supported.

The best way to ensure that all skills are demonstrated is to plan the answer, instead of allowing interpretation to emerge gradually through close reading. The time allowed for the paper is 75 minutes. It is recommended that candidates spend 20 minutes reading and planning before they start writing. There is no advantage in writing an over-long answer. Shorter answers are unlikely to produce a developed response while longer answers usually lack focused argument. Research by Cambridge Assessment has shown that writing more than 1300 words is unlikely to produce a higher mark at this level. A well-planned, focused argument with a clear overview of the text and its meaning from the beginning is more likely to fulfil the requirements of higher-band descriptors than a reading which only gradually works towards insight about the text. There is time to look quickly at both of the texts and questions before deciding which one to answer. Far fewer candidates chose to write about prose than verse, but the prose question is of comparable difficulty. Centres are strongly advised to ensure candidates are well-prepared for both forms by giving them opportunities to work with a range of prose and poetry texts. During the exam, candidates need to read the whole of their chosen text carefully twice, and ensure they understand the ending, as well as they understand the beginning. They should then identify key phrases and images to focus on. A well-balanced argument will draw on a range of examples from the beginning, middle and the end of the text. Many weaker answers lack balance and are weaker on the second half of a text and on its conclusion.

Candidates can prepare for the exam by practising writing good introductory paragraphs. Many openings simply repeat the terms of the question and the bullet points, or they provide a list of literary terms which have little relationship to the meaning of the text. The bullet points seek to provide a useful framework for an

essay, providing a way into the text: they suggest an important element of language or description; and they steer candidates towards a personal response to the last section of a text thus encouraging an interpretation of the whole. A good balance of attention to each bullet point is likely to produce a good answer; one which covers the whole text and addresses each of the Assessment Objectives. However, the bullets are not a substitute for an introduction expressing confident and individual response to the whole text, showing knowledge and understanding. Candidates might begin by asking themselves why the writer wrote the text, as well as what it means to the reader.

Most candidates demonstrated a sensitive and detailed response to language and imagery. Sometimes, however, close reading was not carefully linked to interpretation, or, literary techniques were identified without explanation of their effect on the reader. Sometimes explanations were contradictory – suggestive of a lack of planning and thought about meaning, before starting to write. Responses often included great detail about the earlier parts of the texts but insufficient detail on later developments. Planning and time management are crucial in supporting candidates in their ability to produce a concise and organised response, to provide a strong and succinct introductory section, to show awareness of the importance of how a text ends, and in allowing time for candidates to reconsider its overall mood and effect on the reader.

Texts have been chosen for a purpose: not only do they contain imagery and language which will sustain repeated analysis, but their writer has something to say to us. If a candidate is not sure what the overall meaning of a text is when they begin writing, or their understanding has deepened or developed through the course of reading, that is good. These ideas can be clearly expressed in a strong conclusion. In this series, most candidates crafted their responses effectively, and some conclusions were very strong, but quite a few simply repeated what had already been said, instead of synthesising observations into a cohesive overall interpretation. While an introduction shows knowledge and hints at deeper meanings, a good conclusion should be an informed personal response based on the text's language, tone and deeper implications.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

'One Night Comes Like a Blessing', a relatively short poem, by Grace Nichols, produced a wide range of answers. Many candidates commented on the form of the poem as well as on its effects, which depended upon repeated ideas about the torment of sleeplessness and the relative bliss of a night where sleep 'comes like a blessing'. The question asks 'How does the poet memorably convey her experiences to you?' The bullet points guide candidates to consider the poet's description of her experiences of both insomnia and of sleep and also to consider specifically what is striking about the ending of the poem. Most candidates addressed the question directly, and used the bullet points effectively in constructing their answers.

Some vivid responses were seen in relation to the notions of 'No-Sleep', and of the 'bogey-man', which Nichols envisages as the chief tormentor of her nights. By attributing the characteristics of a 'cruel lover' or 'spiteful mistress' to this 'natural' phenomenon of insomnia, Nichols seemingly fired the imaginations of many candidates in whose responses a clear understanding of the inherent paradox of 'sleeping' (or not sleeping) with the enemy was observed. Many responses showed an understanding of the metaphor of the 'dark projectionist' but there was some confusion about 'the reel of my thoughts'. Some went into the realm of fishing equipment and despite wrestling carefully with the image, this sometimes caused misreading later on in the poem, where the water imagery implied in 'swimming towards my dreams' further entangled candidates' understanding. Many responses understood the allusions to movies and TV footage and the replaying of mortifying memories, ad nauseam, and how such a 'showing' would preclude sleep.

The contrasting tone between the first four and second four stanzas was widely appreciated and analysed. The spiritual nature of the visitation of sleep – often ascribed to angelic interference – was clearly understood by many. Some made the connection between 'falling' and the 'fall' that Eve precipitated by ignoring God's injunction about the tree of knowledge. Several linked this to the branches of nightmare in a subtle and thoughtful way. No two candidates appeared to interpret the 'House of Dreams' in exactly the same way but being prepared to tackle the concept was often a feature of the strongest responses. Interpretations varied from 'total oblivion' to 'dream house' with the notion of 'swimming' towards it being seen alternately as a powerful regaining of the 'control' that is in such short supply in stanzas 1–4 and a surrender to the drift towards dreamland. Many responses saw the antithetical structure as representing hell and heaven, demonstrating an awareness of the origin of the concept of pandemonium. There was much effective exploration of the imperatives that appear in stanza 7 in candidates' responses; some questioned whether these orders were barked at 'No-sleep' or at other members of the insomniac's household.

In some responses, the whole notion of 'rebirth' served as a coherent thread linking the poem to the story of creation on one hand and to woman's escape from male oppression on the other. As ever, there is no right or wrong way to interpret the poem provided that readings are carefully supported by a close reading of the text. Many responses described a feeling of shock at discovering that for the would-be sleeper/persona, each 'ordinary' day brought as many trials and tribulations as the terror-filled night where No-Sleep dominated. This conclusion was, however, ignored in many responses.

The poem was short, but the permutations of interpretations were manifold. The 'How?' of the question is obviously central, however, in some responses, there was a lack of effective analysis of the methods employed by the poet. Some responses included examples of the techniques identified, but did not comment on the success of that technique in conveying meaning. For example, it might be suggested that the poet makes the description memorable by using a metaphor, but the precise implications of the identified metaphor lacked exploration. There was also some repetition of the question at the start of weaker answers. While it is generally good practice to keep the question in mind, repetition of the mantra of 'memorably/vividly conveys' in the case of this question, became devalued very quickly. Candidates are reminded that such repetition takes up both time and space that could be more effectively spent on analysis.

Candidates were often divided on the gender of the persona, despite this being indicated in the question itself. This is unimportant when assessing the candidate's work but this could have been avoided with more careful reading of the question, the bullet points, and any gloss before beginning to read the poem, and especially before beginning to write.

Question 2

There were some strong answers. However, many responses lacked full engagement with the 'vivid' aspects of the prose, despite the richness of Colm Tóibín's depiction of Eilis's growing home-sickness in this extract from the novel, *Brooklyn*. Many responses adopted a strictly narrative approach to the prose and despite using quotation, this tended to serve to cement a point already made in the narrative rather than to illuminate a comment about the writer's methods. There was also a tendency to repeat the words from the question and the bullets – perhaps as a method of keeping on track, in relation to a passage where characterisation and action were not foregrounded. Such repetitions cannot be credited, however, and risk hindering development of and engagement with the writer's methods.

Many responses resorted to paraphrase, descriptive comment and narrative re-telling. The surface meaning of the passage, which described the growing despondency of a young Irish girl who had been uprooted and sent to America, was straightforward: most responses demonstrated a clear understanding of this. A critical understanding of the writer's methods was less evident in candidates' responses. Many candidates paraphrased Eilis's response to the letters from home, the description of the family members that she had left behind and the way in which the letters, although not especially emotional in themselves, had acted as a trigger to the arrival of 'flashing pictures' of her home town. In answers that went beyond paraphrase, the passage was tracked somewhat mechanically, paragraph by paragraph, with the strongest responses commenting on the increasingly negative vocabulary that the author uses.

In the very first line we have 'little', 'hardly anything' and 'nothing', and this negativity only increases through the text so that by the final paragraph, the word 'nothing' is used five times and sits alongside a further five 'nots', a 'nobody', a 'no one' and an 'empty'. The writer establishes a keen contrast between the quiet sense of belonging at home in Ireland where Eilis felt 'really there' and her acute sense of 'absence' in the USA where she has become a 'nobody' who impinges upon nothing, as she considers herself to have become a 'ghost'. The final sentence 'It was as though she had been locked away' attracted some comment from candidates, as did the reference to the death of Eilis's father; but the ways in which this death is presented by the writer and the accretion of further negatives culminating in 'never see the world again' and 'never be able to talk to him again' was often overlooked. Some responses did include a discussion of literary features. Such responses would have benefited from an 'unpicking' of the ideas that lay behind Eilis's aching chest, the contrast between solidity and emptiness in the final paragraph, and the utter bleakness of a state of mind with 'nothing' to look forward to.

Responses showed great empathy, but critical analysis was rare. Few responses commented on the final sentence of the passage, on the nature of the omniscient narrative perspective and on its overall structure.

LITERATURE (ENGLISH)

Paper 0486/42
Paper 42 Unseen

Key messages

All Assessment Objectives are addressed in this paper: comment on language is equally weighted with understanding, personal response and supported textual knowledge.

The best answers showed evidence of planning and provided a confident overview of the whole text.

Candidates should practise writing good introductions before addressing each of the bullet points.

Stronger responses paid as much attention to the ending of the text as to its opening.

Confident interpretation of the text includes consideration of the writer's perspective and purpose as well as their methods.

General comments

Candidates produced some high quality work on the unseen paper, during this series. There was a variety in candidates' interpretations and approaches to the paper, but a commitment to close reading and personal response was consistent across most responses. The unseen paper assesses the development of candidates' reading skills – candidates cannot rely on memory – as they need to work out meaning for themselves. This summer saw a lot of strong work, with little in the lowest band and the majority of work at Band 5 or above. In order to access Band 5, candidates need to demonstrate knowledge, supported by frequent textual reference (AO1). It is the deeper understanding of implicit meaning which distinguishes stronger answers (AO2). These go beyond surface meaning and draw inferences from the details of the text, both in terms of characters and descriptions, as well as the reader's response to them. The quality of comment on language, structure and form (AO3) is often a discriminator. The final Assessment Objective (AO4) underpins the structure of a critical appreciation: it requires engagement and interpretation. Candidates need to demonstrate a balance of all of these skills for high reward: an overall interpretation needs to be based on solid knowledge of the detail of the text, supported by quotation, while sensitive analysis of language should be linked to a deeper understanding of the implications of tone, imagery and viewpoint, and how these contribute to the reader's response. To improve their approach to the paper, candidates need to ensure they give equal importance to understanding and commentary, and they need to ensure interpretations are well-supported.

The best way to ensure that all skills are demonstrated is to plan the answer, instead of allowing interpretation to emerge gradually through close reading. The time allowed for the paper is 75 minutes. It is recommended that candidates spend 20 minutes reading and planning before they start writing. There is no advantage in writing an over-long answer. Shorter answers are unlikely to produce a developed response while longer answers usually lack focused argument. Research by Cambridge Assessment has shown that writing more than 1300 words is unlikely to produce a higher mark at this level. A well-planned, focused argument with a clear overview of the text and its meaning from the beginning is more likely to fulfil the requirements of higher-band descriptors than a reading which only gradually works towards insight about the text. There is time to look quickly at both of the texts and questions before deciding which one to answer. Far fewer candidates chose to write about prose than verse, but the prose question is of comparable difficulty. Centres are strongly advised to ensure candidates are well-prepared for both forms by giving them opportunities to work with a range of prose and poetry texts. During the exam, candidates need to read the whole of their chosen text carefully twice, and ensure they understand the ending, as well as they understand the beginning. They should then identify key phrases and images to focus on. A well-balanced argument will draw on a range of examples from the beginning, middle and the end of the text. Many weaker answers lack balance and are weaker on the second half of a text and on its conclusion.

Candidates can prepare for the exam by practising writing good introductory paragraphs. Many openings simply repeat the terms of the question and the bullet points, or they provide a list of literary terms which have little relationship to the meaning of the text. The bullet points seek to provide a useful framework for an

essay, providing a way into the text: they suggest an important element of language or description; and they steer candidates towards a personal response to the last section of a text thus encouraging an interpretation of the whole. A good balance of attention to each bullet point is likely to produce a good answer; one which covers the whole text and addresses each of the Assessment Objectives. However, the bullets are not a substitute for an introduction expressing confident and individual response to the whole text, showing knowledge and understanding. Candidates might begin by asking themselves why the writer wrote the text, as well as what it means to the reader.

Most candidates demonstrated a sensitive and detailed response to language and imagery. Sometimes, however, close reading was not carefully linked to interpretation, or, literary techniques were identified without explanation of their effect on the reader. Sometimes explanations were contradictory – suggestive of a lack of planning and thought about meaning, before starting to write. Responses often included great detail about the earlier parts of the texts but insufficient detail on later developments. Planning and time management are crucial in supporting candidates in their ability to produce a concise and organised response, to provide a strong and succinct introductory section, to show awareness of the importance of how a text ends, and in allowing time for candidates to reconsider its overall mood and effect on the reader.

Texts have been chosen for a purpose: not only do they contain imagery and language which will sustain repeated analysis, but their writer has something to say to us. If a candidate is not sure what the overall meaning of a text is when they begin writing, or their understanding has deepened or developed through the course of reading, that is good. These ideas can be clearly expressed in a strong conclusion. In this series, most candidates crafted their responses effectively, and some conclusions were very strong, but quite a few simply repeated what had already been said, instead of synthesising observations into a cohesive overall interpretation. While an introduction shows knowledge and hints at deeper meanings, a good conclusion should be an informed personal response based on the text's language, tone and deeper implications.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

Stronger responses to Brian Patten's *A Cottage in the Lane, Dittisham* showed critical understanding of the poem. They engaged with why the poet wrote the poem, and how he presented his own perspective on the house. The title of the poem is about the cottage, not the woman who lived there, and this was also the focus of the question. Responses which explored the story of the woman who lived there and the 'tragedies' that she may have witnessed, including a back story for her or investing 'an electric fire, a lamp' with all kinds of symbolic significance, were unlikely to get to the heart of the poem. 'No one knew or cared', which is sad but a statement of fact by the poet. The sadness of the woman's life remains a mystery, because the poet's perspective is that of a detached observer. Responses which addressed the question of what we might learn by witnessing such human sadness and indifference, as well as the process of evaporation and moving on not just for her but also for the animals 'who thought the place was theirs' reflected an ability to see the process of change which Patten describes. An appreciation and acknowledgement of the tone of Patten's attack on 'Rich, green-wellied weekenders' prowling through the undergrowth and employing pest-controllers provided evidence of a clear and insightful understanding of the poem. The harmony between man and nature which existed around the cottage, almost by accident, will inevitably be destroyed when the place is 'bought'.

The social context of the poem provided few difficulties for candidates who demonstrated an appreciation of its overall message. Some felt it was about 'the relentless and confident inevitability of time', some read it as an environmental message and a number argued that 'capitalism is being criticised'. All of these are valid responses if supported by textual detail. Careful reading is always important: some responses revealed a misunderstanding of the function of the colon at the end of the fourth line resulting in a misinterpretation of 'those who thought the place was theirs' as the feral creatures who live in the abandoned parts of the house. In such responses, narratives were often invented about the woman's relatives, beneficiaries and agents; some even suggesting the poet was one of them. Many responses, which demonstrated a more careful reading, explored the poetic effects of listing, anaphora, verbs of action, the reference to 'nesting' and the way the animals formed a harmonious chorus, each with their own lines and places to the tragedy of the woman's solitude. As noted in a number of responses, both are pretty much unaware of each other's existence, which should have directed candidates away from a sentimental or 'Disneyfied' view of how the woman lives alongside nature – although quite a few could not resist this.

Stronger responses rightly focused on the birdsong 'as pure as the rain-washed air', and some linked this to 'has finally evaporated into the air' and 'Change is in the air'. Some responses which simply described the

poem as 'free verse' stumbled at the presence of two rhyming couplets at the end of the poem. Those responses showing greater familiarity with the sounds, patterns and rhythms of modern verse acknowledged the patterns of sound, repetitions and effects which occurred throughout the poem. Reading across the line endings to make sense of the poem was essential, not just for meaning but also in order to appreciate patterns of enjambment and end-stopping which represented the free symbiosis of man, animals, habitat and elements, and the way they all come to an abrupt halt. While the animals did not care 'how rich she was or how poor', the cottage becomes a weekend status symbol, with no place for 'a dynasty of toads', although the description of how the owners prow through the undergrowth suggests that these different forms of feral existence have simply been replaced by another.

Some responses revealed a 'gothic reading' of the text, in which the house is seen as haunted by its 'ghost-in-waiting' and the arrival of the weekenders is seen as a kind of exorcism. More perceptive answers, attentive to the poet's tone, and alert to the significance of the 'flag of surrender' realised that any spirit in the house was essentially benign, but likely to be eradicated by those determined to wipe those who 'for all they knew' thought the house their possession. One particularly effective answer considered the idea that each resident feels entitled to the house and is blind to the fact they will have to leave.

There was much interesting commentary on how language presents animals as humans, and humans as animals, but the best answers were those which considered why the poet does this, as well as how. Some commented on the damaged symbiosis of man and nature as a reflection of environmental issues today, while some even read the poem as a metaphor for colonialism, with pertinent comment on the flag of surrender and what it could represent. Some very moving personal responses were observed. Personal responses which show an engagement with making meaning out of encounters with literature and with literary techniques reflect an understanding of the need to balance textual knowledge, deeper understanding, and appreciation of language and interpretation – as well as an ability to apply this understanding.

Question 2

The extract from *Bel Canto* by Ann Patchett had a very different appeal to candidates. Responses which went beyond providing a simple supported paraphrase of the narrative and instead demonstrated a much deeper engagement with the language and its implications were particularly strong. This is a very rich piece of writing but in order to understand it fully it was necessary to go beyond mere analysis of surface description, although the descriptive and figurative language alone provided much to analyse and possessed many of the qualities of a good poem. Critical understanding of narrative always depends on some appreciation of perspective, and stronger responses showed a realisation that although the narrative is in the third person, it is an example of indirect free style: we have access to memories, thoughts and feelings that Katsumi Hosokawa has probably not confided to anyone else, least of all 'his wife, his daughters and his work'. The claim the writer makes in the final paragraph is a large one: the opera is not just a memorable experience for him, or the start of a passion but what has given him 'the ability to love', and indeed has in some way made up for a life which does not have that quality but where 'everything is business' and 'in a country whose values are structured on hard work'.

Those responses which demonstrated an appreciation of the significance of this memory and its lasting impact on the character's emotional life and its contrast with his day-to-day existence as a successful businessman often noted the deliberate contrast of the early descriptions of the 'cold autumn rain' and 'wet and discoloured tickets', intended to make the luxury of the experience of the opera house all the more striking. Some responses stressed the significance of the post-war background, commenting that Katsumi's father is clearly not wealthy or metropolitan, and that 'operas were unimaginable things' against such a backdrop. Those responses which mentioned that even the tickets appear to be alive 'waiting inside' the billfold perhaps revealed a greater sensitivity to the magic promised than those which drew attention to 'a paper-thin layer of wet red leaves' as a kind of red carpet. However, both responses showed an understanding of the precision of the memory and its lingering importance, many years later, for the grown man.

Stronger responses did not spend too long on the build-up, but rather, focused on what the experience of the opera meant to Katsumi. For the young boy, there were perhaps uncomfortable reminders of their low social status: the seats are not especially good, they are wet, uncomfortable and they have to beg to be excused by others as they make their way to their place, from where they look down into a 'dizzying void' and can see only tiny people 'insects really'. The plot and production are probably 'too complicated for a child' and 'he had no idea what they were saying'. These unpromising details highlight the wonder of the music itself, which is personified as a 'breath' which 'stirred' and of the voices which 'gilded the walls with their yearning, their grief, their boundless, reckless love'. Those responses which noted how the music brings the scene to life were able to go further and explore what this experience did for Katsumi, although there was evidence in

many responses of a misreading of 'gilded' as 'glided' resulting in the idea of the voices adding a layer of gold to already luxurious surroundings being missed. Many responses, however, did not miss the significance of the love which the characters are singing about – although fewer also noticed that it will lead them (and implicitly perhaps Mr Hosokawa too) to ruin.

Strong answers gave as much attention to the second paragraph as to the first, as well as attending fully to the third bullet point. Most understood that the message which 'imprinted itself' on Katsumi's eyelids as a child will also be the stuff of Mr Hosokawa's dreams when he is an adult, too. Many showed an appreciation of the generosity of his hope that 'for everyone there was something'. Fewer noted the slight implication of criticism from the author that he has invested 'true life' in his recordings and in his rare opportunities to see a live performance, and 'somehow transferred what should have filled his daily life'. Just one or two commented that the emotions he invests in opera are somehow in conflict with his day-to-day existence. However, most responses did fully explore the unusual 'pull' the performance exerted on him, when he returns to his memory in the final part of this paragraph in the lively description of the duet in the second act, which led him to have to hold on to his father 's hand in order not to feel he was falling out of those 'high and distant seats'. Many responses alluded to the importance of the emotional bond with the father in a formal society where such emotional expression was rare, as something father and son share on his birthday. A few were able to link this to the power of a father-daughter duet, even though at the time the boy would not have known this. In some responses, this elevated the power the experience exerted on him – and how it taught him the nature of love in ways ordinary experience implicitly did not – to the supernatural or other-worldly.

Stronger responses recognised the range of ways Mr Hosokawa was affected by the opera as a child, including the impulse it created for him to connect with his father, and how it soothed the tensions in his life as an adult with obligations to fulfil. Interesting responses included ones which contrasted this experience of love with the 'hate' of war, or the dourness of the post-war setting. It is the boldness to go beyond analysis of the writing and its effects, and to advance an overall interpretation which is most striking in the strongest answers to these questions.

LITERATURE (ENGLISH)

Paper 0486/43
Paper 43 Unseen

Key messages

All Assessment Objectives are addressed in this paper: comment on language is equally weighted with understanding, personal response and supported textual knowledge.

The best answers showed evidence of planning and provided a confident overview of the whole text.

Candidates should practise writing good introductions before addressing each of the bullet points.

Stronger responses paid as much attention to the ending of the text as to its opening.

Confident interpretation of the text includes consideration of the writer's perspective and purpose as well as their methods.

General comments

Candidates produced some high quality work on the unseen paper, during this series. There was a variety in candidates' interpretations and approaches to the paper, but a commitment to close reading and personal response was consistent across most responses. The unseen paper assesses the development of candidates' reading skills – candidates cannot rely on memory – as they need to work out meaning for themselves. This summer saw a lot of strong work, with little in the lowest band and the majority of work at Band 5 or above. In order to access Band 5, candidates need to demonstrate knowledge, supported by frequent textual reference (AO1). It is the deeper understanding of implicit meaning which distinguishes stronger answers (AO2). These go beyond surface meaning and draw inferences from the details of the text, both in terms of characters and descriptions, as well as the reader's response to them. The quality of comment on language, structure and form (AO3) is often a discriminator. The final Assessment Objective (AO4) underpins the structure of a critical appreciation: it requires engagement and interpretation. Candidates need to demonstrate a balance of all of these skills for high reward: an overall interpretation needs to be based on solid knowledge of the detail of the text, supported by quotation, while sensitive analysis of language should be linked to a deeper understanding of the implications of tone, imagery and viewpoint, and how these contribute to the reader's response. To improve their approach to the paper, candidates need to ensure they give equal importance to understanding and commentary, and they need to ensure interpretations are well-supported.

The best way to ensure that all skills are demonstrated is to plan the answer, instead of allowing interpretation to emerge gradually through close reading. The time allowed for the paper is 75 minutes. It is recommended that candidates spend 20 minutes reading and planning before they start writing. There is no advantage in writing an over-long answer. Shorter answers are unlikely to produce a developed response while longer answers usually lack focused argument. Research by Cambridge Assessment has shown that writing more than 1300 words is unlikely to produce a higher mark at this level. A well-planned, focused argument with a clear overview of the text and its meaning from the beginning is more likely to fulfil the requirements of higher-band descriptors than a reading which only gradually works towards insight about the text. There is time to look quickly at both of the texts and questions before deciding which one to answer. Far fewer candidates chose to write about prose than verse, but the prose question is of comparable difficulty. Centres are strongly advised to ensure candidates are well-prepared for both forms by giving them opportunities to work with a range of prose and poetry texts. During the exam, candidates need to read the whole of their chosen text carefully twice, and ensure they understand the ending, as well as they understand the beginning. They should then identify key phrases and images to focus on. A well-balanced argument will draw on a range of examples from the beginning, middle and the end of the text. Many weaker answers lack balance and are weaker on the second half of a text and on its conclusion.

Candidates can prepare for the exam by practising writing good introductory paragraphs. Many openings simply repeat the terms of the question and the bullet points, or they provide a list of literary terms which have little relationship to the meaning of the text. The bullet points seek to provide a useful framework for an

essay, providing a way into the text: they suggest an important element of language or description; and they steer candidates towards a personal response to the last section of a text thus encouraging an interpretation of the whole. A good balance of attention to each bullet point is likely to produce a good answer; one which covers the whole text and addresses each of the Assessment Objectives. However, the bullets are not a substitute for an introduction expressing confident and individual response to the whole text, showing knowledge and understanding. Candidates might begin by asking themselves why the writer wrote the text, as well as what it means to the reader.

Most candidates demonstrated a sensitive and detailed response to language and imagery. Sometimes, however, close reading was not carefully linked to interpretation, or, literary techniques were identified without explanation of their effect on the reader. Sometimes explanations were contradictory – suggestive of a lack of planning and thought about meaning, before starting to write. Responses often included great detail about the earlier parts of the texts but insufficient detail on later developments. Planning and time management are crucial in supporting candidates in their ability to produce a concise and organised response, to provide a strong and succinct introductory section, to show awareness of the importance of how a text ends, and in allowing time for candidates to reconsider its overall mood and effect on the reader.

Texts have been chosen for a purpose: not only do they contain imagery and language which will sustain repeated analysis, but their writer has something to say to us. If a candidate is not sure what the overall meaning of a text is when they begin writing, or their understanding has deepened or developed through the course of reading, that is good. These ideas can be clearly expressed in a strong conclusion. In this series, most candidates crafted their responses effectively, and some conclusions were very strong, but quite a few simply repeated what had already been said, instead of synthesising observations into a cohesive overall interpretation. While an introduction shows knowledge and hints at deeper meanings, a good conclusion should be an informed personal response based on the text's language, tone and deeper implications.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

This question was based on the poem *Canoe* by Keith Douglas. While a relatively challenging text in its subtle and nuanced suggestions of meaning and tone, support was provided in both the introductory rubric which outlined the context for the speaker's words and in the bullet points which facilitated a structured working through the development of his thoughts. Indeed, an understanding of a range of meanings in the poem, both explicit and implicit, was evident across candidates' responses. Most conveyed a reasonably developed personal response, indicative of some understanding of the text and of its deeper implications. The general quality of understanding and response was high with many outlining, for example, how the poet creates an idyllic setting and the speaker's desire for the moment not to be destroyed by the thought of his likely death in the war. Many explored the contrast between the scene, which will last forever, and the doom hovering in the background and the 'sudden fearful fate' that awaits him. There was also an appreciation in some candidates' responses of how the sense of sadness and imagined loss implicit in the poem is balanced by the hopefulness and optimism of the speaker's affirmation that he will return to his lover as a spirit after his death and that he will always be at her side when summoned.

The poem elicited a high degree of personal engagement; with a sense of being moved by the passionate fidelity of the speaker and – what was read to be – an affirmation of the eternal quality of romantic love and its power to transcend the boundary between life and death, evident in many responses. Some sophisticated responses – likely aided by a close, attentive reading – revealed an appreciation of the delicate sensuality of the 'cool touch' and the lightness of the kiss while a minority also mentioned sensing something just faintly unsettling or even gothic in this manifestation of the ghostly presence as evening falls. Such responses, which are rooted in a close, careful exploration of the language and its connotations, and which are supported by precise and well-selected textual reference, are highly rewarded.

Many responses concentrated on the pity and sadness of war and the terrible loss it engenders. There was some excellent focus on the word 'allowed' with its possible suggestion of a greater power or authority, as much human as divine or merely fateful, which could condemn a young man (and perhaps an entire generation) to an untimely and tragic death while consenting to the 'grass and buildings and somnolent river' to continue to live their peaceful existence forever. In some responses, this was very much seen as an 'anti-war', anti-authority poem. While this is a perfectly valid personal reading, candidates are advised not to stray too far from the text or drift into unsupported and rather broad musings on wider issues, such as the injustice of war or society or life in general. Some such readings resulted, here, in an underplaying or omission of the climactic second half of the poem, thus limiting the range and depth of the analysis.

In addition to a sensitive engagement with language and imagery, an appreciation of the tone or tones of the text is invaluable in developing a convincing reading. Many responses acknowledged, for example, the seemingly matter-of-fact note on which the poem begins, even if such apparent nonchalance is belied later in the poem. There was also an appreciation of the effect of the comma in the first line and how it helps establish the conversational style of the opening, and of a thoughtfully reflective mood, whether somewhat sombre or somewhat wry. A focus on details of punctuation and other technical matters is only really helpful when it can be convincingly integrated into a reading of the poem's meaning and the experiences, thoughts and feelings being articulated. Much of the comment on the extensive use of enjambment, for example, was rather unconvincing: for some, it slowed the poem down and added to its lazy, 'somnolent' mood, while for others it speeded it up, creating an air of barely suppressed panic and foreboding. Some comments on effect here were somewhat overstated, though notions of a fluid sense of continuity running through the poem, with the journey of the canoe along the river perhaps being suggestive of the passage through life to death and beyond, certainly had merit. Candidates should be discouraged from simply 'feature-spotting'. Not only does such a practice rarely accrue much positive credit in itself, the relatively fragmented and discontinuous analysis that it can produce can actively work against the synthesising of observations into a coherent overall interpretation.

Question 2

This question was based on the opening to the novel *The Pilot's Wife* by Anita Shreve. The focus of the question was on the ways in which the writer makes the passage so tense. It is clear that both the extract and the task appealed to candidates, reflected in the fact that in this particular paper there was almost an even split between the numbers of candidates who attempted the poetry question and those who attempted the prose. Given that the standard of responses to this question was generally high to very high and that there were very few weak responses, candidates are encouraged to consider the prose option on an equal footing to the poetry. Candidates who do opt for the prose question should focus consistently on *the writing*, on narrative method and technique. Exposure to a range of different narrative forms and genres would benefit all candidates in enabling them to discuss with confidence the different reader expectations that the writing can set up and how the writer might manipulate such expectations.

Many responses acknowledged that this particular extract manifested many of the features of the thriller genre: the fact that elements such as narrative form, authorial intention and reader engagement were foregrounded from the outset in these responses meant that the subsequent analysis was invariably of a strong and, at times, highly sophisticated level.

In this regard, high-scoring responses showed a clear understanding of the writer's use of the night-time setting, the evocation of a tense atmosphere and the psychological and emotional state of the central protagonist, Kathryn. There was an explicit explanation of the ways in which the writer's choice of words and phrases create suspense and a vivid sense of mental turmoil and disorientation. There was much excellent comment on the use, for example, of auditory imagery and of sound in the knocking and the barking dog with close, precise focus on language and connotation in such phrases as 'three sharp raps' and 'short, brittle yips' and how each of these words contribute to the creation of the ominous undercurrents of potential violence, injury and danger which run through the passage as a whole. Comment on the visual elements was strong, too, from the various ways in which darkness is used in the extract to the disturbing simile of the lit room as 'an emergency room' with, again, its suggestions of hurt and trauma, especially when followed by the thought of the 'Car accident' which flashes through Kathryn's head almost immediately afterwards. Some responses focused to great effect on the 'wrongness' of the intensely bright space as indicative of an unsettling sense of things being unnatural and out of place throughout the extract. In a world so uncomfortably out of kilter with normality, who knows what awful things might happen? Likewise, strong responses often picked up on the detail of Kathryn's anxiety-induced clumsiness, of her setting down of the clock with its 'black face', and the popping out of the battery and its rolling under the bed. These responses reflected an awareness of how, given the context, the writer is able to imbue apparently insignificant, trivial events with a disquieting sense of subtle menace.

There was much excellent formal analysis both at a broader level and at the level of detail. Many responses focused effectively, for instance, on the ways in which Kathryn's 'quick succession' of thoughts are conveyed by rhetorical question, repetition and the flurries of strikingly brief, attenuated sentences. Developed responses analysed how these different features are repeated and built up to intensive, cumulative effect, indicative of the protagonist's increasingly fraught and panicked sense of doubt and apprehension. Again, an explicit recognition of the writer's use of Kathryn's perspective was invaluable in helping to analyse how the reader is drawn in by his/her sharing the protagonist's sense of disorientation and lack of comprehension. The strongest responses showed a clear understanding of how the writing is structured for effect and its

gradual, halting movement towards its climax, one which many described as a 'cliff-hanger' in its only partially revelatory nature. While comment on details of punctuation can occasionally be somewhat reductive, the focus here on the comma preceding the final, tantalisingly vague two words of the extract, 'the man', sharply conveyed a breathless sense of anticipation and, perhaps, dread.

There was a strong sense in candidates' responses of an instinctive and empathic sharing in the protagonist's distress for all the quality of detached analysis taking place. Many revealed a sensitivity to the writer's portrayal of the protagonist's vulnerability whether that be in the sense of isolation created, her scanty attire, the inimical hostility of the 'ice'-like cold or the spooked fleeing from the scene of the personified 'good dream, warm and close'. Some acknowledged suggestions of the relationships in the family and how moments of minor domestic friction such as the daughter's earlier shutting of her bedroom door 'with a firmness that was just short of a slam' perhaps foreshadowed more sinister events to follow and at the very least served to indicate to the reader that it was not only the protagonist who was in potential danger. Some very strong responses explored the suggestiveness of Kathryn's fear that in moving too fast she might 'set something in motion that hadn't yet begun' – is this merely some superstitious fancy or does she know something that is being withheld from the reader? Are there guilty secrets to be revealed? All in all, candidates responded with excellent critical awareness to this intriguing and gripping opening to a novel.

LITERATURE (ENGLISH)

Paper 0486/05
Coursework

Key messages

Set tasks which direct candidates to explore the ways in which writers achieve their effects.

Justify the marks awarded by careful use of ticking, marginal annotation and summative comments.

Candidates should avoid including extraneous contextual information in assignments.

General comments

The observations in this general report should be read alongside the individual report to the centre.

There was much evidence of candidates' hard work and enjoyment in their coursework portfolios. A wide variety of texts was seen in the work submitted, with the following texts among the more popular ones: *Macbeth*, *Romeo and Juliet*, *A View from the Bridge*, *Of Mice and Men* and poems from one of the two Cambridge anthologies. It was clear that the experience of coursework had broadened candidates' experience of the subject.

The most successful assignments sustained wide-ranging arguments, carefully advanced and supported, with sustained exploration of the ways in which writers use structure and language to achieve their effects. The strongest essays often showed a clear appreciation of the writer's use of their chosen literary form. Less confident responses tended to rely on explanation and unsupported assertion, though occasionally excessively long quotations were included without critical comment. Stronger responses used literary terms adroitly as part of a sustained analysis, whereas less successful responses often simply logged features and explained them rather than analysing them closely for the specific effects the writer achieves. Pointing out that a poem has an ABAB rhyme scheme rarely led to close analysis; too often, it led to generic comments of the kind 'this makes the writing flow'.

Tasks set were generally very helpful in providing the necessary direction to candidates, and many tasks were modelled on the type of questions found in the Set Texts examination papers, questions which address all four assessment objectives. This session, there were fewer tasks asking questions about blame (e.g. *Who is to blame for Macbeth's downfall?*). Such tasks do not invite explicit consideration of the ways in which writers achieve their effects. Some poetry tasks asked for comparison (neither required by the syllabus nor rewarded in the assessment criteria), and this added an unnecessary hurdle for many candidates. There were also fewer instances of candidates focusing on context rather than the text itself and the qualities of the writing. Internal moderation within centres should ensure that tasks across all teaching groups are suitable before candidates embark on their study of the texts. Guidance on effective task-setting can be found in the *Coursework Handbook for Cambridge IGCSE Literature (English)*.

Internal moderation was carried out effectively in the overwhelming majority of centres. There was much evidence of excellent practice in the presentation of coursework folders:

- clear and full titles at the top of assignments
- focused ticking of valid points, marginal annotation and summative comments referring to the band descriptors
- checking of the authenticity of candidates' work
- clear indication of original and internally-moderated marks

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securing the work of each candidate by means of staple or treasury tag (not paper clips or plastic folders)
error-free administration.

In cases where there were deficiencies, they have been highlighted in the report to individual centres.

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