

LITERATURE (ENGLISH) (US)

Paper 0427/01
Poetry and Prose

Key messages

- Responses must answer the specific question set and focus on this throughout.
- Effective and sustained analysis of language is essential.
- Detailed support from the text, either by short quotations or well-chosen references to words or phrases, is essential in all questions.
- Responses should show detailed knowledge of the text by ranging across the whole extract or poem in the passage-based questions and across as much of the novel or short story as is relevant in the essay questions.
- Candidates need to present a developed and well-structured response to the question.
- Both questions need to be answered well – it will always be insufficient to rely on one ‘better’ question and hope that this will compensate for a second, weaker response.

General comments

Many candidates showed an encouraging engagement with the poems or prose text studied. Many candidates do, however, continue to find it difficult to express complex ideas coherently and to frame a developed and analytical response; some show a tendency to drop too readily into description and narrative. There was frequently an interesting and strong personal response, and this is to be encouraged, but quite often this was at the expense of a discussion of the details of language in the extract, which must always be the primary focus of any response and the key to higher marks.

Unfortunately, there were still a small number of candidates who answered more than one question from each section, often the passage-based question for every text. Invariably, these wrote a sentence or short paragraph for each response, sometimes demonstrating a little knowledge or understanding, but these were so brief or generalised that very few marks could be awarded. Candidates should be advised that this is always a very poor strategy. Higher marks can only be achieved by presenting a developed and detailed response which answers the question. Indeed, the most common weakness across every question and the paper as a whole is brevity. Some candidates are counting the words written, as if they have been given instructions on how many will be acceptable, which invariably seems to lead to a very brief response. This should be strongly discouraged as it is, at best, irrelevant and, at worst, an encouragement to write far too little. Many candidates make a really promising beginning, with several relevant points, clearly explained and supported by the text, but then fail to take things further. Candidates should be helped to learn how to develop their points and consider the wide range of ideas available for analysis and discussion in each passage and essay.

Passage-based questions on all texts were far more popular than the essay questions. These passage – based questions require a response which analyzes the writing and language while remaining focused on the particular question. Often a brief reference or introduction to the context of the passage is helpful or necessary, but this should not be a lengthy retelling of narrative which occurs before and after the passage; this inevitably loses focus on the question and on the language of the extract. However, a good response will place the passage within the novel; this will enable a consideration of how characters or situations change, for example, and enable judgments to be made about the significance of the passage and how it will affect what happens afterwards.

Focus on language remains the single most important discriminator between the mark bands and is still the area in which many candidates struggle. For credit to be given for language points, candidates need to look at specific words or phrases, selecting pertinent words or short quotations. Some candidates choose to use line numbers instead of the quotation; this is not appropriate and also does not help them to focus on the language being discussed. It is not sufficient just to identify figures of speech or important words without



saying how and why these are appropriate and effective. Examples will be given in the comments on some of the individual questions to help demonstrate good practice. Knowing the terminology of literary criticism without being able to apply it sensibly and effectively will not help the candidates to present a successful response. In the same way, generalised comments such as 'he uses diction and imagery to put his point across' without identifying the words and figures of speech or sometimes even the point, do not in themselves demonstrate any understanding, so cannot gain any credit for the candidate.

Quite often, responses try to consider language used by the writer but instead fall into the 'supporting reference to the text' category of the mark scheme. This often shows knowledge and understanding of the text, and is sometimes an appropriate choice, but tends to be a much longer quotation covering several lines of poetry or a longer sentence. These can have their place in an answer (though the rule is invariably 'the shorter the better'), but candidates who only select these lengthier references without also considering specific word choice and effects can only achieve marks in the lower bands. In the same way, large sections of narrative or description, also common, very often do show some knowledge, but will not be given very many marks on their own. It is worth emphasising that consideration of the language used by the writer and its effects is just as applicable to the essay question. If there is only 'reference to the text', which is all that narrative can be, the higher bands cannot be achieved. Some short pertinent quotations which have been learnt by heart will generally be useful and there is no substitute for this.

A few candidates tried to answer the essay question by using the extract. Candidates should be advised that this is not appropriate for any essay question; there is never an overlap or, if so to a small extent, candidates are instructed not to use material from the extract. The essay questions stand alone. It would be helpful for candidates to be made familiar with the layout of the exam paper before encountering the real thing in order to avoid this kind of error.

There were, regrettably, quite a number of responses which suggested that candidates were unfamiliar with the poem or passage on the exam paper and seeing it for the first time. This particularly applied to the poetry section where there were several examples of misunderstanding or questionable interpretation. The fact that the poem is there in front of the candidate, and therefore does not have to be 'learnt', should not lead to complacency or a belief that it does not need to be studied and discussed beforehand. Those candidates who had had the opportunity to spend time with others discussing possible interpretations and use of language were clearly distinguishable and, inevitably, gained much higher marks.

Comments on specific questions

Section A: POETRY

Candidates have taken on board the need to discuss language in the poems and some made a creditable attempt at improving their responses by trying to show the meaning behind the poets' choice of imagery. Many, however, still feel that it is sufficient to 'spot' similes, metaphors, alliteration etc. without saying how these are effective and add to our understanding of the poem and answer the question. Examples given for some of the questions below show the difference between simple or straightforward comments and those which are more indicative of higher band responses.

ROBERT FROST: from *The Robert Frost Collection*

This is the first year in which this collection has appeared on the syllabus and it proved to be very popular. However, there was strong evidence to suggest that many candidates had not had the opportunity to study and discuss the poems prior to the exam; some seemed to be seeing them for the first time as even basic literal meaning was a problem for them. These were in stark contrast to the candidates who were clearly familiar with the poems and not at a loss as to meaning and how to respond to the question. It cannot be stressed enough that it is essential for candidates to study and discuss the poems beforehand; the fact that they are printed on the paper is demonstrably insufficient for many candidates to elicit even basic understanding if seeing them for the first time.

Question 1: *Ghost House*

Though a popular choice, few responses went beyond surface meaning and even fewer seemed to recognise the clue offered by the title and use this as a framework upon which to build their answer. The isolation of the house was recognised, with most commenting on the '*disused and forgotten road*'. The surrounding land being reclaimed by nature was also often quoted and there were some thoughtful comments about how welcome it is to see that nature and its beauty can thrive where man and his buildings

cannot. Many commented on the tone of the poem as melancholic, that the narrator was 'sad', but very few understood that he is a ghost or that the 'mute folk' are also dead, failing to see the connection with the headstones under the tree and the meaning of this. Many missed the key descriptions of the house as 'vanished' with 'no trace but the cellar walls', which would have helped them to interpret the opening phrase 'I dwell' which led to so much confusion in those who had not studied the poem. Better responses suggested that the sadness of the narrator was linked to the destruction of the house which clearly had meaning in his past life, and how it may make him and the reader more aware of the impermanence and brevity of life.

Examples demonstrating comments on language at different levels:

- 'The footpath down to the well is healed' means that it has disappeared. (straightforward comment)
- The footpath has 'healed' means it's no longer there because no-one has used it for years. (a relevant comment with a little development)
- 'The footpath is healed' suggests that it had a cut or disease which is now cured. (response to language, reasonably developed)
- When Frost says that the footpath is 'healed' he is suggesting that it was ill or cut and that nature has managed to make it better again. It might also be saying that it was not healthy when it was used by people. (well-developed comment).

Question 2: After Apple-Picking

Few responses went much beyond surface meaning, though most were able to comment that the narrator is completely exhausted and bored with apple-picking, supporting these comments with relevant quotations. The idea that he has picked so many for so long that he even dreams of 'magnified apples' was also popular. There was also recognition from some that the ladder had made his feet ache and that he was disappointed not to complete his job and still saw 'a barrel that I didn't fill.' Few picked up his initial enthusiasm for 'the great harvest' or his care not to damage the apples by letting them fall. Most missed the invitation implied by 'memorably' to offer reflections on the rich visual and tactile imagery in lines such as: 'There were ten thousand thousand fruit to touch/Cherish in hand, lift down and not let fall.' The idea of sensory input throughout the poem was only developed by the stronger responses, despite clear pointers such as 'The scent of apples' and 'The rumbling sound.'

A significant number of responses chose to interpret the poem as a metaphor for Frost's life, his missed opportunities ('Apples I did not pick') and how little these now matter as he nears the end of life or his 'long sleep.' Many of these presented a convincing and effective analysis of the poem using this as their interpretation, and this is entirely valid. It would have improved these responses to at least spend a little time on a more literal interpretation to add depth and scope to their answer.

Examples demonstrating comments on language at different levels:

- 'There were ten thousand thousand fruit to touch' means that there were a lot of apples to pick. (straightforward comment)
- Frost uses hyperbole to exaggerate how many apples he had to pick when he says 'Ten thousand thousand'. (some response to language; reasonably developed)
- When Frost exaggerates the number of apples he had to pick he is using hyperbole to suggest that he is 'overtired' and perhaps this 'great harvest' has been too much for him to cope with. (developed response).

Songs of Ourselves Volume 2: from Part 2

Question 3: Australia 1970

Candidates were keen to engage with the ideas expressed in this poem, perhaps due in part to the increased awareness of environmental issues in the media at the time of the examination. Most candidates could discern the poet's anger and the reasons for it but largely in a general sense only. Many quoted that we are 'conquerors and self-poisoners' and understood that we are causing ourselves harm by damaging the environment. It would have enhanced responses if candidates had taken this further by exploring how the phrase leaves us in no doubt about man's indiscriminate and self-destructive power, and how the danger is emphasised by comparisons with the 'scorpion or snake'. Few considered the detail and imagery of the poem in anything other than superficial terms. For example, the comment that the word 'die' is repeated featured in most scripts but few attempted any meaningful development on why this is used and the intended impact. There was also a tendency to list all the many words in the poem that connote death and suffering,

but without comment on individual words and phrases this can be given only little credit. There is so much in the poem to suggest 'powerfully' but candidates seem reluctant to break down a line or phrase and explore the word choices and their connotations, which would lead to higher marks.

There was also a general understanding that nature is fighting back despite its suffering and some examples were given of the valiant and ferocious attempts by the various species; their determination to '*stay obstinate*' and '*oppose us still*' was recognised and applauded. Many finished with a concluding summary which suggests that there is some hope for the future: '*The poem gives the harsh truth that we are destroying nature, "we are ruined by the thing we kill", and must change our ways now if we want to live in a better world and have a safe future for everything on the planet.*' This passionate call for change was a heartening feature of many responses.

Question 4: Eel Tail

This was the least popular option in the poetry section, possibly because of the unfamiliar subject and the length of the poem. There was some attempt to paraphrase each section but most candidates opted to choose a few phrases and explain what these told us about the main characteristics of the eel. The most popular comments suggested that they liked to remain hidden away from people's view as they prefer '*blackness*' and only move at night. Most responses commented on the repetition of '*gone*' to show how hard it is to spot them and see them clearly. The idea that they are '*limbless hairless*' was usually included though not taken any further, and it was disappointing that the appealing metaphor of the '*bends of some huge plumbing system*' was mentioned but not explored. The repetition of '*untranslatable hissed interruptions*' and '*unspeakable wide chapped lips*' was often picked up but, again, this was not often developed or explained. Stronger responses linked the ideas of 'untranslatable' and 'unspeakable' to the lack of understanding of these shy creatures or, better still, to the fact that they are '*pre-world*' and therefore outside our experience. One candidate made the lovely point that the '*smirk of ripples*' meant that they are laughing at our inability to see them. The poet's contrasting emotions of horror and fascination was rarely touched upon and a greater focus on 'vivid' was needed.

JENNIFER DONNELLY: A Northern Light

Question 5

There were some responses to this question and these generally showed some understanding. Most candidates were keen to engage with Mattie's dilemma and show sympathy for her desire to further her education. All responses understandably expressed fury at Aunt Josie as the villain of the piece; they were particularly enraged that she should consider herself as a substitute for Mattie's mother and then behave so unpleasantly. Unfortunately this strong personal response led to a lack of focus on the passage and candidates forgot to explain how exactly Donnelly communicates Aunt Josie's character. Many candidates tended to slip into narrative rather than spot that 'Mattie' becomes 'Mathilda', that Aunt Josie self-righteously throws the biblical quotation at her and how she goes '*waddling off*' to the kitchen, moving like a '*water snake*'. The final word '*Hope*' in the passage, standing alone, was often ignored, despite giving such a strong insight into Mattie's thoughts and feelings. There were many examples of evocative imagery which could usefully have been explored, such as Mattie's feeling of being on a scaffold, of having a worm (hope) eating her from the inside and Josie's smile disappearing '*like ice off a tin roof*'. However, these were usually ignored and replaced by narrative and general personal response to Mattie's situation. It must be stressed that focus on the detail of the passage and on language in particular is essential for access to the higher bands and grades.

Question 6

Too few responses were seen for meaningful comment.

F SCOTT FITZGERALD: The Great Gatsby

Question 7

By far the most popular question, the range of responses ranged from very good to poor. Most candidates readily engaged with the characters and all but the weakest were able to select suitable quotations and make at least straightforward comments on the Wilsons. The strongest responses understood the disparity in their characters and aspirations, which made them so unsuited, and felt that their marriage was always doomed. Tom was seen as the catalyst who Myrtle was never likely to resist. Some spent too much time on Tom, straying away from the question to talk about his character, but most stayed relevant, showing how his

conversation with George revealed the latter's weakness and desperation, exploited by Tom's power over him. This was confirmed by Myrtle's dismissive actions and words; one candidate called him a 'doormat', though surprisingly few commented on his comparison to 'a ghost'. All were able to point out how readily Myrtle agreed to meet Tom, even while her husband was so close and in front of Nick; all found this behaviour despicable and showing complete lack of respect for her husband, who was more of a servant than her equal.

Weaker responses tended to quote the evocative descriptions of George and Myrtle but without any comment. These would usually say that the quotations show us what his/her character is like, but then left the quotation literally to speak for itself, without developing the idea or explaining, for example, what 'spiritless, anemic' or 'perceptible vitality...smouldering' tell us about these characters. Stronger candidates were able to articulate and develop these ideas: Myrtle was seen as 'seductive' or 'full of sexual energy', with the symbolism of her blocking out the light fully understood. The best responses went further and recognised how Myrtle's sexual charisma and Tom's masculinity were such a contrast to George and Daisy, and therein lay their attraction.

The surroundings consisting of the unprepossessing and run-down environment were correctly identified as memorable, both as a contrast to the opulence of the Buchanan home and showing why both George and Myrtle are desperate to improve their lives. There was considerable sympathy for George, who is humiliated and used, and, unsurprisingly, candidates were keen to show how Myrtle's fate was not undeserved.

Question 8

This was attempted by a good number of candidates and generally the responses showed knowledge and understanding of Daisy Buchanan's character. There was a balance between the more favourable aspects, mostly from the first part of the novel, where she is seen as charming and privileged but not dislikeable, and the last chapters, where she kills Myrtle but lets Gatsby take the blame and then simply leaves without even going to his funeral, which was seen by many as her worst crime. There was a tendency to tell the story without focusing in detail on the reasons for her actions or how she felt at the time; the best responses were able to quote from the text to support their ideas.

MAYA ANGELOU: *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*

Question 9

The few responses to this question were able to identify Maya's mixed and contradictory feelings about her father but tended to describe or quote without further comment. Opportunities were missed to highlight striking examples of Bailey's portrayal in a passage rich with Angelou's detailed and compelling narrative which shows so fully her ability to recall these momentous events from her childhood. The 'grand entrance' of a 'blindingly handsome' man with a voice which 'rang like a metal dipper hitting a bucket' should have been a gift for candidates, but few responded to this inviting language, which was disappointing. A few made the comparison between Willie and his brother but lacked consideration of their portrayal as the 'crippled offspring' and 'the one who could fly away from the nest.'

Question 10

Too few responses were seen for meaningful comment.

SUE MONK KIDD: *The Secret Life of Bees*

Question 11

This question was not only popular but also competently handled by most candidates, who more frequently quoted extensively and examined in close detail the stages of shock and grief in May's behavior. This was partly because of the affection and empathy clearly felt for her character and a desire to link the present incident with what had happened before and the tragedy yet to come. Weaker responses narrated May's sad story in its entirety while stronger ones retained focus on the passage for the main part. All identified suitable quotations to support May's anguish: 'breathing...loud and...ragged'. 'odd monotone', 'here but not here', 'an unreachable place insider herself', 'just me', her eyes 'glazed over'. Better responses then took this further, suggesting that she had gone to a different place in her mind, that these are extreme and unusual manifestations of her shock and distress which show that the balance of her mind has finally tipped into being unable to cope any longer with life and its problems. Fewer candidates developed their ideas further by considering the others' reactions to and comments on her behavior, which also provided useful material:

June panics and Lily *'couldn't watch'*; their initial impression that she is taking the news so well quickly changes to real concern. Context is of course very important to this passage and it was surprising how few used May being *'swallowed up by the dark'* as foreshadowing her suicide and therefore the most 'moving' part of the passage. Candidates should be reminded that a focus on the question rather than general commentary on the passage is needed for higher marks.

Question 12

A much smaller number of responses for this question were seen, and these tended to choose Lily and one other – often T. Ray. Although knowledge of the novel was demonstrated, most lapsed into narrative with only an occasional focus on the question, though personal response was again clearly in evidence, as all candidates acknowledged that life will have its problems and difficulties for everyone. Most answers tended to list the various hardships their chosen characters had faced but usually needed closer support from the text.

From *Stories of Ourselves*

Question 13

A small number of candidates attempted this question. Most understood the shock of the revelation at the end, that the narrator had actually died, and how this was a surprise to him! Generally, however, the responses dealt with the passage very much at surface level and briefly, not always showing knowledge and understanding of the whole story. There was no exploration of the crash itself and the powerful build-up to it in the first two paragraphs. Responses often only considered, literally, the ending, constituting the final ten or so lines. Candidates must always range across the whole passage; it will never be sufficient to focus solely on a small part of it.

Question 14

Too few responses were seen for meaningful comment.

LITERATURE (ENGLISH) (US)

Paper 0427/02
Drama

Key messages

Successful answers address the question clearly, develop the response over a number of points, and support these points with detailed textual reference, usually in the form of brief quotation.

Answers to passage-based questions need to address the question using the passage for reference and showing a clear understanding of the context, characters and the ways in which the writer achieves effects.

Good responses to discursive questions need to develop an argument in answer to the question and to support points with apt and brief quotation or detailed reference to the text.

The best answers show awareness that the text is intended to be acted on stage by responding to features of the genre such as: dialogue, interaction between characters, stage directions and audience response.

General comments

New to the paper this year is *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof* by Tennessee Williams. Candidates usually knew their set text well and showed an engagement with the characters which was often evident in a strong personal response. They appreciated the bravery of Brutus in demanding answers from the 'monstrous apparition' of Caesar's ghost in *Julius Caesar*, sympathized with Big Daddy as he realizes he is suffering from cancer in *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof*, and showed empathy for both Troy and Rose as they try to save their marriage after eighteen years together in *Fences*. As well as voicing their personal response to a character and text, candidates needed to show understanding of how the author elicited that particular response through their writing.

The rubric for the paper asks candidates to answer one question, and most candidates did this. Where more than one question was attempted in error, the answers were short and undeveloped. It is difficult to make a reasonably developed response to a question, including detailed analysis and textual support, in only one side of writing. Where more than one question was attempted, each answer was marked, but only one mark, the highest, was awarded to the candidate.

Good answers to passage-based questions selected the most appropriate material from the passage with which to answer the question, rather than going through the passage from the beginning and giving a line-by-line account of the action. Candidates needed to know their set text well to be able to place the passage briefly in context and to show an understanding of its significance in the play. For example, it informed answers to **Question 1** on *Julius Caesar* to know that the passage was set on the night before the final battle towards the end of the play, and that Brutus's interaction with Caesar's ghost makes him give the orders to march to battle early next day.

Candidates can improve their response to the writing by analyzing the effects of features of drama such as: dialogue, interaction between characters, stage directions and audience response. For example, in *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof*, the dialogue between Brick and Big Daddy is characterized by Big Daddy interrupting Brick, shouting at him and insulting his family: 'BRICK!' '...all lying dying liars!' The effect of the shouting and insults is to convey Big Daddy's anger at Brick and his family for lying to him, and his fear at realizing he is suffering from cancer. Weaker responses tended to treat the text as though it was a novel, rather than a play intended to be seen on stage.

When answering discursive questions, candidates need to develop an argument clearly over three or four key points. They need to know the text well to be able to select the most appropriate material from the whole play with which to support their answer. For example, when answering **Question 6** on *Fences*, on the changing relationship between Troy and Cory, candidates needed to make sure they selected material not only from the beginning of the play, such as when Troy tells Cory he can't play football, but also from later on in the play to show understanding of how the relationship changes, such as when Troy tells Cory to leave. Learnt short quotations help to show support for points, such as Cory's attitude to his father as he leaves: '*You ain't never gave me nothing!*' Candidates need to make clear how the quotation supports the point. Here, the quoted text shows Cory's anger at his father. The exaggeration in '*nothing*' illustrates his belief that his father has never supported him in anything meaningful to Cory, such as his desire to play football in college; and it emphasizes Cory's belief that after leaving home he will not miss anything important provided by Troy. Weaker responses tended to make assertions which were not supported by the text.

Comments on specific questions

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE: *Julius Caesar*

Question 1

Most good responses commented on Brutus's striking thoughtfulness to his young subordinates in the passage; he doesn't wake Lucius from his exhausted sleep. Candidates usually explored Brutus's reaction to Caesar's ghost. His description of the ghost as a '*monstrous apparition*' conveys his horror at its inhuman appearance, combined with his graphic description of his fear so great that it makes his '*blood cold*' and '*hair to stare*'. Despite this fear, his bravery is shown as he strikingly stands his ground, confronts the ghost and demands that it answer his questions. Its answer, that it is Brutus's '*evil spirit*', and that only he sees it, suggests that it is retribution for killing Caesar. He bravely challenges it to the meeting at Philippi and shows the eagerness of a skilled army commander in his desire to engage the enemy when he gives orders to march to battle early the next day. The best answers explored the writing of the passage in detail to show how Shakespeare creates striking impressions of Brutus. Weak answers needed to recognize the context, and to use details from the passage to infer what impressions of Brutus are created.

Question 2

Strong answers used their knowledge and understanding of the text to select the most appropriate material to convey their vivid impressions of Caesar. They often began by showing understanding that Caesar is the most powerful man in Rome at the opening of the play, with apt support from the Lupercal festival. Some commented on his self-importance, seen in his grandiose language as he speaks of himself in the third person and that he only refuses the title of king so that he can accept it later. Some saw his relationship with Calpurnia as vividly depicted: his love for her is genuine and he consults her before making decisions. Often answers showed some balance by also considering how Caesar's weaknesses are vividly conveyed: such as how characters hint at his physical weaknesses, of possible epilepsy and deafness. Decius easily talks Caesar into going to the senate on the Ides of March by twisting Calpurnia's dream to flatter and honor Caesar. Strong answers considered Shakespeare's writing to show how he creates vivid impressions of Caesar. Weaker answers were rather general and lacked detail from the text.

TENNESSEE WILLIAMS: *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof*

Question 3

There were some excellent answers which explored the writing of the passage in detail to comment on the effects of selected language features. They established the context of the passage, and stated clearly how the chosen language feature contributed to their understanding of the text. Big Daddy interrupts Brick, shouts at him and insults the family: '*BRICK!*' '*...all lying dying liars!*' The effect of this is to convey Big Daddy's anger at Brick and his family for lying to him, and his fear at realizing he is suffering from cancer. Strong answers considered how Mae's brief appearance raises tension in the scene. The effect of her quick retreat, caused '*by the passion of his voice*', is to emphasize the extreme emotions felt by Big Daddy. Some candidates successfully responded to the lighting on stage, the eerie green glow, and the action of the child rushing in and out screaming '*Bang, bang...*' and considered that these dramatically reinforced the enormity of Big Daddy's realization that he is dying. Weaker answers tended to comment generally on Brick's drinking, rather than Big Daddy; and they needed to explore the writing of the passage in more detail.

Question 4

Candidates who used details from the play to consider how Maggie is portrayed did well. Some explored some of her comments to Brick at the start of the play, when she is catty about Mae's children, and they considered her reasons for this attitude. She also shows her jealousy of Skipper at this point, and some candidates explored in more detail her story of her relationship with Skipper and what it reveals about her love for Brick. Maggie's story of how she grew up in poverty reveals her desire not to be poor again, and how she is determined to ensure Brick gets his share of Big Daddy's wealth; some candidates chose the end of the play to consider how Maggie is prepared to gamble by lying about being pregnant with Brick's baby. The strongest candidates explored Williams's writing to show a clear understanding of how Maggie is portrayed. Weaker answers made general comments without much development or textual support.

AUGUST WILSON: *Fences*

Question 5

Good responses made a number of developed points about the dramatic power of the passage, with brief quotations in support. They often made the context clear, that this is a key moment in Troy and Rose's marriage because Troy has just told Rose that he is expecting a baby with Alberta, and he is trying to tell her why he had an affair. Rose is understandably angry and upset. The best answers analyzed the language Wilson uses to show how he achieves his effects. Most candidates pointed out that Troy was finding it hard to talk to Rose; Wilson shows this in Troy's speech in his frequent hesitations marked by ellipsis. Many commented on Troy's use of the baseball imagery, and the best answers explored this in detail, to show how Troy feels the odds were already stacked against him at birth; that at first he felt 'safe' to be with Rose, but that he came to feel there was more to life than just the minimum, and felt that he owed it to himself to try to 'steal second'. Rose's response to this extended metaphor, 'We ain't talking about no baseball,' shows that she is angry and irritated by Troy's explanation of his selfish behavior. She explains to Troy that she too felt everything he felt, but she selflessly put their marriage and family first. She uses a plant metaphor to help convey her meaning more powerfully, likening Troy's lack of empathy to 'hard and rocky soil' where plants 'wasn't ever gonna bloom'; the 'rocky soil' successfully conveys the hard work Rose found her marriage, and the lack of growth of the plants conveys the lack of love she felt from Troy. There were strong personal responses to the way Troy violently grabs Rose's arm at the end to force her to listen to him; many pointed out that Troy doesn't apologize, doesn't think he has done wrong, and that he feels he has put as much into their marriage as Rose. Good responses focused on the strong emotions conveyed in the passage, and were able to support this from the text. Weaker answers lacked awareness of context or overview of the content of the passage, and often tried to explain Troy's baseball language without considering 'powerful'.

Question 6

Candidates who made strong responses knew the text well and selected appropriate material from throughout the text with which to support their answer. Some were sympathetic towards Troy, who they saw as trying his best for his family, working hard to support them financially. They saw Troy as protecting Cory from a life of failure when he insists that Cory stops playing football, based on Troy's own experience of baseball. Some took a different but equally valid approach and saw Troy as a bully in the way he speaks to Cory and demands obedience. They considered how the conflict begins verbally but escalates into violence as Troy assaults Cory and throws him out of the house. Some responses explored how this mirrors Troy's experience with his own father. Some candidates explored how Troy uses baseball imagery to warn Cory he has three strikes before he's thrown out: the effect of this is to show clearly that the conflict escalates. Weaker responses needed to use detailed textual support, and to show that the relationship worsens over time.

LITERATURE (ENGLISH)

Paper 0427/03
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.

