

WORLD LITERATURE

Paper 0408/01
Coursework

Key messages

Tasks must be framed in such a way that more able candidates can demonstrate the skills set out in the higher bands of the assessment criteria.

Teacher annotation and summative comments based on the band descriptors are essential to the moderation process as they offer a justification for the Centre's award of a particular mark.

Care taken over administration helps to save time for all involved in the recording of accurate marks for candidates' work.

General comments

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

There was much evidence of candidates' enjoyment of the texts they studied and detailed engagement with the tasks across all three categories of assignment. It was clear that many candidates had fully embraced the opportunities offered by coursework and chosen their own topics to write and talk about. The strongest empathic responses were often those where the candidate had a clear idea about what their chosen character would be thinking and feeling at a particular moment in the text. Some Centres offered only one or two tasks for the critical essay assignment. This is acceptable so long as responses are genuinely informed personal responses to texts rather than formulaic responses, making the same points and references and reaching the same conclusions.

The majority of tasks set by Centres allowed candidates to meet the relevant criteria for each element of the Portfolio. However, there was some evidence in a minority of Centres of tasks that did not effectively target the descriptors in the assessment criteria. Where this was the case, Centres have been asked in Centre reports to read the sections on task-setting in the *Coursework Training Handbook* and *Teacher Guide*. More is said about this important aspect of coursework in the sections on the Critical Essay and Empathic Response below.

Teacher annotation

Detailed summative comments on candidate record forms – or in the case of written work at the end of assignments – are an essential part of the process. In addition, concise comments in the margin indicating particular strengths and weaknesses form part of the dialogue between teachers within the Centre and between the Centre and the external moderator. For the dialogue to be meaningful and effective, such annotation should refer to the wording of the relevant band descriptors. It is helpful if the specific aspects of a particular Assessment Objective are addressed in the teacher's comments.

Most teachers ticked points that were thoughtful or valid. Focused ticking contributes positively to the moderation process, making it more accountable and transparent.

It is part of the role of the internal moderator to ensure that a meaningful communication about standards of marking takes place across teaching groups. Centres new to the syllabus, or uncertain about the role of teacher annotation as outlined above, should consult *Sections 5.5 and 5.6* in the *Coursework Training Handbook*.

Critical Essay

The strongest critical essays sustained a perceptive appreciation of the ways in which writers use language, structure and form to convey their meanings and achieve their effects. The descriptors in the top bands make it clear that there should be a detailed appreciation of aspects of the writing for high reward and the wording of tasks is important in this respect.

For instance, 'To what extent does Shakespeare suggest that fate is responsible for the deaths of Romeo and Juliet?' invites a stronger, more focused task than 'Is fate alone responsible for the deaths of Romeo and Juliet?'. The first example provides clear direction about the need to explore Shakespeare's writing and encourages candidates to write about characters as dramatic constructs not real-life people.

Candidates should include the task in full – not an abbreviation or approximation of it – so that other readers can see how successfully the task has been addressed as they read the assignment. Centres should supply copies of the poems candidates write about.

Empathic Response

In the majority of cases it was clear that Centres had prepared their candidates well for this element of the Portfolio with its emphasis on a more creative approach to literary appreciation. Empathic tasks enable candidates to engage creatively with key aspects such as theme, characterisation and use of language – all channelled through a clearly recognisable voice for the candidate's chosen character at a particular moment. The strongest responses were made to characters in novels and plays, where there is sufficient material in the text to sustain a convincing voice relevant to both character and moment.

In a minority of Centres there was some uncertainty about the empathic task. The choice of the black cat (in Poe's story) or a made-up character such as the cell-mate of the narrator (in Poe's *The Tell-Tale Heart*) did not provide sufficient material for candidates to root their response in the world of the text. One of the descriptors for Band 3 is: 'sustain a largely appropriate voice'. Examples of empathic tasks can be found in the *Coursework Training Handbook*.

For empathic tasks, candidates **must** include details of both their chosen character and moment at the top of the response so that other readers can gauge how effective the candidate's response is to both character and moment.

Recorded Conversation

In the strongest conversations there was an impressive command of the relevant detail in what is a 'closed book' assessment. At the top end of the range candidates were able to deploy and integrate much well-selected reference in support of perceptive responses to characters or themes. Many candidates were able to sustain the conversation engagingly for the permitted maximum of seven minutes. There were, however, instances of candidates who found it difficult to sustain their conversation beyond five minutes without the discussion becoming increasingly fragmented. Centres are reminded that the upper time limit is not obligatory, and that there is a lower limit of four minutes where appropriate for the candidate.

There was much evidence of careful and sensitive use of questioning to allow candidates to demonstrate their knowledge, understanding and skills of close reading. There was skilful use of prompt questions to help less confident speakers to engage with their chosen area. It should be remembered that for the highest bands there needs to be a focus on the ways in which the writer presents a candidate's chosen character or theme – without this focus, responses tend to become character sketches or descriptions of themes rather than a probing critical analysis. Fortunately, there were very few instances of candidates delivering unbroken monologues.

All Centres made reference to the relevant band descriptors in their comments on the record card. It is important that all audio tracks from each Centre are clearly labelled with the candidate number in order that the moderator can readily access the relevant track.

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Paper 0408/02

Unseen

Key messages

- Candidates should use the bullet points to answer the stem question.
- Selecting the most relevant and fruitful material to engage with the question proved more effective than exhaustively working through the passage or poem.
- Candidates performed well when they connected observations on poetic technique to the meaning of the poem.
- Successful responses to the prose passages demonstrated a secure focus on the question and an awareness of authorial intention.

General comments

Most candidates chose the poetry rather than the prose. Candidates fared well when they examined the contrasts in the poem, explored the implication of these, commented on the development of ideas and considered what the poet was saying about love in the final stanza. There were some intelligent observations on the poem's structure, at their most effective when connected to the content and meaning of the poem.

The prose passage elicited some engaged and insightful responses. The key discriminator proved to be an ability to focus on the writer's techniques in capturing the reader's interest in Yusuf. A less coherent approach was to comment, often very well, on the three bullet points as separate entities, but to ignore the stem question.

There were a large number of highly conscientious, painstaking and thorough answers. Candidates had clearly been well prepared and were equipped with a technical vocabulary, though stanzas often appeared as 'paragraphs'. A sensible amount of time had been devoted to reading and planning. There were many fine prose answers this year and an awareness of concepts such as exposition, point-of-view and characterisation.

There were very few brief answers or infringements of the rubric.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1 (Poetry) *Black Monday Lovesong* by A. S. J. Tessimond

Candidates had much to say about the portrayal of love in the poem and explored its intricate patterning with interest and enthusiasm.

The most successful answers shaped a considered overview of the poet's feelings and tended to lay the emphasis on difficulties rather than hopes, without ignoring the hope in the poem altogether. Strong answers often began with some thoughtful attention to the title, noting its oxymoronic qualities and seeing Monday either as a new start or a gloomy commencement to the working week. They noted significant patterns, contrasts, repetitions, couplet pairings and explored their effect while keeping the question clearly in view. Strong answers explored imagery with precision and perception, related these images to the hopes and difficulties and developed a response, for example to the 'retreats/advances' contrast, suggesting military as well as dancehall connotations, or the broken 'thread,' suggesting the fragility and vulnerability of relationships.

Many explored the effect of changes in pace and tone, particularly in the insistently repetitive and unpunctuated second stanza, as the difficulties and disappointments are emphasised. Perceptive candidates were able to identify and explore the effect of specific rhyming couplets, and other sound effects, without drifting into empty generalisation. Others noted the change in the rhyme pattern at the very end with the repetition of the single-syllable 'time': 'As if the poet is trying too hard to convince himself that there is hope,' thought one candidate.

Strong responses made a thoughtful analysis of the structure of the poem and commented meaningfully on how the different stanzas represented the stages in the relationship. They looked at examples of enjambment and line breaks and their effects, especially the 'needed/ Once' division. Understanding this idea and placing the fifth line in the context of the sixth, was a key discriminator. Consideration and analysis of the final stanza also proved to be an indicator of strong performance with candidates showing both insight and perception. Effective responses understood and pursued the 'Echo' allusion. The best saw 'some blessed hope' but argued that it was faint or forced, citing the rhetorical question, the faltering 'Echo', the faltering syntax and the desperate repetition. They also showed understanding that the most complex and negatively prefixed vocabulary in the poem is reserved for 'time' to suggest the remoteness of attaining a happy relationship.

Less secure responses tended to make assumptions about the 'hope' in the poem. They read the line: 'One gives what the other needed' out of context and shaped an optimistically romantic reading of the first stanza, and sometimes the whole poem, based on an 'opposites attract, love means give-and-take, complementary qualities' idea. Many observed and logged literary features, especially in response to the second bullet, devoting sections of their answer to plotting rhyme schemes and counting syllables, without considering their effect. The terms 'rhyme' and 'rhythm' were often misunderstood and used interchangeably. There were some imprecise references to enjambment, caesura and the reducing stanza-size, and some over-emphasis on punctuation. Such answers also tended to skim over the final four lines.

Question 2 (Prose) from *Paradise* by Abdulrazak Gurnah

As with the poetry answers, strong candidates distinguished themselves by a full engagement with the task, close reading, insight and overview and originality of ideas.

The best answers were able to concentrate on reader response to Yusuf throughout and explore the passage as exposition. The very best understood the idea of point-of-view, were not distracted by the third-person approach and noted the consistent use of Yusuf's perspective – that we see what he sees, especially in the long second paragraph.

There was much thoughtful comment on the two references to Yusuf leaving home and the way this mystery and the flashback technique hooks the reader. The stronger responses made insightful comments on the effect of author beginning with: 'The boy first.' There were many detailed responses to the drought descriptions, with the effect of personification of trees, houses and trains being often carefully unpicked, and the best still focusing on Yusuf and the overpowering sense that his life consists of monotony, hardship and suffering. The intensity of 'writhing' and 'burning' and the cruel juxtaposition of 'bloomed and died' were often noted in the strongest answers. The best candidates were observant and selective in compiling the sense that the details of Yusuf's life such as the sun, the signalman, the Europeans, the flag, his parents, the woodworm, and the soup are almost unrelievedly hostile and intimidating. The contrast between the narrowness of Yusuf's impoverished life and the prosperous European travellers was often intelligently explored. The significant detail of his eager scrutiny of these alien beings such as their size, the 'carved out of wood' and 'lumpy and malleable' imagery, their 'goods', their dress, their demeanour was thoughtfully handled. The best made much of small details, for example that both the woman's face and the unappetising soup 'glistened', that she wore two hats, that the storehouses were 'locked', that the man reacts to Yusuf like a predatory animal, that his father addresses the worms as if they are people and that the lumps of marrow 'lurked' in the soup.

Less secure responses jumped to conclusions about the passage – that Yusuf is running away or that he is catching a train. Some characterised Yusuf's home-life as jovial and light-hearted on the basis of his mother's weary sarcasm. The handling of point-of-view was sometimes rather confused. Some offered a running commentary approach, often packed with worthy observations about features of the writing, but lost focus on Yusuf and the question. Many candidates spent too much time on the first two bullets so that Yusuf's home life, which was full of potential for a strong answer, was often treated superficially.

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There were few serious misunderstandings though some candidates misread 'awning' as a verb denoting possession. There were some generally sound answers which concentrated overmuch on reading the passage as a critique of Colonialism, citing the drought as symbolic of western powers laying waste to Africa. It was gratifying to see interpretation which goes beyond the literal but this was sometimes at the expense of a focus on the question set.

WORLD LITERATURE

Paper 0408/03

Set Text

Key messages

Relevance to the question. Candidates should address the question that has been set. An essay showing a detailed understanding of the text cannot on its own achieve the highest bands unless it directly answers the question.

Exploring the extract in detail. In extract questions, candidates should probe the printed extract in detail when answering the question.

Sustaining a critical analysis. The strongest responses offer detailed and sustained explorations of the writer's technique. This is true both of **Section A** extract and **Section B** discursive questions. Careful and sensitive evaluation of the ways in which writers achieve their effects is required to achieve the higher mark bands.

General comments

The majority of scripts revealed candidates' genuine enjoyment of the texts they had studied. Most candidates knew their drama or prose fiction texts in at least some detail. There were many examples of very good essays in which candidates sustained a complete critical engagement with both text and task. Integrating concise, apt reference with perceptive critical comment, these essays were a pleasure to read.

The strongest essays engaged with the key terms of the question from the start. The least successful essays were those in which contextual information dominated, to the detriment of actually answering the question. Some candidates strayed from the task set and sought refuge in prepared answers that did not quite fit the particular demands of the question. Candidates should be reminded that a detailed and enthusiastic grasp of material is not on its own a guarantee of high reward; they must answer the question. IGCSE questions will not invite or reward highly mere character sketches or cataloguing of themes.

The best responses to extract questions engaged sensitively with the detail of the extract. Candidates should be reminded that trying to be exhaustive and comment on everything possible can lead to fragmented answers. On the other hand, they should remember that cursory treatment of just a couple of details in the extract will not lead to high reward.

Many candidates in the middle of the range need to be encouraged to probe the detail of their texts more closely. For these candidates the supportive quotation sometimes appeared to be the end of analysis rather than its starting-point. Their learning could profitably focus on the differences between mere assertion and careful analysis.

Comments on specific questions

Antigone

Question 1

The strongest responses were adroit at exploring the humour of the scene as well as the real sense of fear that runs through Jonas's words. Jonas's not getting to the point added to the suspense as well as the comedy of the moment. The wider significance of this moment in the play was generally grasped.

Question 7

Only the strongest responses were able to discuss either the characterisation of Haemon or the depiction of his relationship with Antigone. Responses in the middle of the range preferred to discuss the character of Antigone where they had a more secure grasp of textual detail, but often forgot about the role of the writer. The words that begin the question – 'In what ways does Anouilh...?' – explicitly invited candidates to engage with the dramatist's techniques. Some compared the relationship to that of Romeo and Juliet and empathised with the tragic nature of their relationship.

Games at Twilight and Other Stories

Question 2

Responses showed understanding of basic aspects of Bina's character, but tended to assert and describe what was in the extract rather than explore the ways in which Desai presents the character at this early moment in the story.

Question 8

Responses tended to be at the level of character sketches rather than searching explorations of Desai's use of language.

'Master Harold'...and the Boys

Question 3

Successful responses showed a mature understanding of what the scene revealed of the friendship between Sam and Hally, and also of the emerging tensions. Candidates were adept at considering the play as a work with characters for the stage rather than characters found in a book. Stronger responses pointed out that Hally's recollections were less secure than Sam's – as an adult, Sam was more aware of their respective roles.

Question 9

Many candidates who answered this question revealed a detailed understanding of the character, and the best responses explored well-selected moments that revealed the character's compassion, in his interactions with both Hally and Willie. They focused particularly on the incident when Sam sought to protect the younger Hally when collecting his drunken father, the symbolism of the kite incident and Sam's vivid account of the ballroom dancing championships. Stronger responses engaged effectively with Fugard's techniques (or the 'ways' referred to in the question).

An Enemy of the People

Question 4

Knowledge of this key moment in the text was often strong, with quotations used effectively and language explored. Stronger responses pointed to Peter's sarcasm when describing his brother as a 'prolific contributor' to the newspaper. They also reflected on Hovstad's support of Dr Stockmann at this early stage in the play with its hints of things to come. The Mayor's self-interest in spinning the vital importance of the Baths to the town's economy was also successfully explored.

Question 10

As with the Fugard, there were some very engaged and perceptive responses to the character, most developing and balancing an argument – though balance was not a requirement for a high mark. Candidates were able to develop a one-sided argument so long as it was carefully substantiated with details from the text. Candidates found much to admire: his integrity, idealism and courage. There was also convincing analysis of his vanity, naivety and undemocratic views most robustly expressed in the public meeting.

Stories of Ourselves

Question 5

Responses showed some understanding of the woman's situation and how/why her relationship had changed. The sad tone of much of her reminiscing was acknowledged. Candidates were able to empathise with her situation and were often able to consider how her description of the sea and sand might represent her relationship.

Question 11

Responses tended to contain assertions with little supporting evidence. They tended not to grasp the changes, as the story progresses, in the relationships and feelings of the son towards his parents.

The Sound of Waves

Question 6

The extract really engaged the candidates who were able to see its significance on many levels and appreciate the way in which Mishima uses the setting. They linked the extract to key themes and paid close attention to how language operates to create the mood. However, some candidates appeared to spend so much time on the language used to describe the sea in the first part of the extract that they did not always leave time to explore the encounter between Hatsue and Shinji's mother. The stronger responses were able to analyse what the descriptions of the exhausted women revealed of this tight-knit community.

Question 12

The strongest responses offered focused and insightful analyses of the impact of the characters on the relationship of Hatsue and Shinji and also on the symbolism of the lighthouse. Less secure responses discussed the lighthouse and its practical function and made statements about the characters without attending to the key words in the question: 'Mishima's portrayal'.