

# WORLD LITERATURE

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<p><b>Paper 0408/01</b> <b>Coursework Portfolio</b></p>
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## Key messages

- Teachers should check the tasks they set against the examples of effective tasks given in the Coursework Training Handbook. Tasks should not be sent to Cambridge for approval.
- Teachers should note the requirements of the syllabus before they start teaching it so that problems do not arise later in the course.
- Teachers should annotate each written assignment carefully in order to provide justification for the award of a particular mark.
- Where there is more than one teacher in a Centre, there should be evidence of internal moderation with explanations provided for any adjustments made to marks.
- In their conduct of the oral assignment, teacher should follow the guidance in the Teacher Guide.
- Teachers should check the completeness and accuracy of all paperwork before they submit it to Cambridge for external moderation.

## General comments

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

Cambridge moderators commented on the high quality of much of the written work they read and the oral assessments they listened to. This was testament to the hard work of candidates and their teachers. It was pleasing to see a range of texts drawn from World Literature suitable for study at IGCSE level. In general, the greatest level of choice on the part of candidates was seen in the oral assessments, where candidates had themselves selected character or themes for discussion. There was less candidate choice evident in the critical essays submitted for this component.

The majority of tasks set allowed candidates to meet the relevant criteria for each element of the Portfolio. However, there was some evidence of tasks that did not target the descriptors in the marking tables. Where this was the case, Centres have been asked in individual reports to read the sections on task-setting in the Coursework Training Handbook.

## Comments on specific assignments

### **Critical Essay**

The strongest critical essays sustained a perceptive appreciation of the use of writers' techniques to achieve particular effects. Tasks that do not invite an exploration of the writing can limit candidate performance. Tasks which omitted any mention of the writer's name often led to candidates treating characters as real-life people rather than fictional constructs. Teachers should check that tasks are worded in such a way that candidates can meet the higher band descriptors: e.g. 'respond *sensitively* and *in detail* to the way the writer achieves her/his effects' (Band 2). Tasks such as 'Who is to blame for the deaths of Romeo and Juliet?' do not explicitly invite candidates to explore qualities of the writing so should be avoided.

Titles of assignments that are simply the titles of poems do not provide adequate direction to candidates or moderators. Candidates should include the task in full – not an abbreviation or approximation of it – so that other readers, including the internal and external moderators, can gauge how effectively the task has been addressed as they read the assignment.

### **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 key moment selected by the candidate.

For empathic responses to be successful, the character selected needs to have a clear sense of voice for that to be re-created in the candidate's response. In addition, a precise moment rooted in the world of the text (i.e. play or novel) should provide the focus of the exploration of the chosen character's thoughts and feelings. The character and moment selected should be made clear from the outset (i.e. written at the top of the assignment) so that the moderator can gauge the extent to which the candidate is successful in re-creating an authentic voice. An empathic assignment should not locate a character in the future (e.g. ten years on) or create a voice for a peripheral and voiceless character (e.g. a citizen in *Julius Caesar*). It will be clear from a reading of the Empathic band descriptors that they do not reward such approaches. Band 3, for example, includes the descriptor 'sustains a largely authentic voice', requiring a central character and a specific moment in the text to be selected in order to demonstrate authenticity.

### **Oral Response**

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 their chosen character or theme.

There was much evidence of careful and sensitive use of questioning on the part of teachers to allow candidates to demonstrate their knowledge, understanding and skills of close reading. There was, however, a minority of cases in which candidates spoke at length without interruption, which is not in the spirit of a 'recorded conversation'.

Some conversations exceeded the maximum of seven minutes. Any conversation beyond the upper limit of seven minutes should not be assessed. The syllabus states: 'If the conversation is continuing after 7 minutes have elapsed, the recording should be stopped' [5.1].

### **Marking and administration**

The majority of written assignments submitted this session bore evidence of teacher annotation. At its most useful, the annotation took the form of:

- judicious use of ticking in the body of the assignment (rather than the dutiful ticking of every paragraph)
- concise marginal comments pointing to the strengths and weaknesses of the candidate's response
- summative comments (at the end of essays or on the individual record card) drawing upon the wording of the band descriptors.

Taken together, these types of annotation serve to provide a rationale for the award of a particular mark and assist the moderation process greatly. Teacher annotation helps to secure more accurate marking and to make the process of moderation more accountable and transparent. By contrast, the submission of unannotated copies of candidate's work reveals a misunderstanding of the moderation process. The topics of Marking and Annotation are covered in Sections 5.5 and 5.6 in the Coursework Training Handbook. This is essential reading for teachers new to the syllabus and to those uncertain of the syllabus requirements.

The majority of Centres are to be congratulated on the robustness of their administration, recognising the central importance to their candidates of the proper completion of forms and the careful transcription of marks from assignments to record cards and mark sheets. A minority of Centres sent first drafts in error (drafts should not be submitted) or encased assignments in plastic covers in spite of the syllabus's direction not to do this. The use of a staple or treasury tag (and not a paper clip) should secure the individual record card to a candidate's two assignments.

Finally, the following is a checklist of what constitutes good practice:

- checking the suitability of tasks against the examples in the Coursework Training Handbook
- checking the suitability of texts against the requirements set out in the syllabus
- ticking creditworthy points in candidates' work
- providing concise summative comments that relate to the relevant band descriptor
- providing evidence of internal moderation, including a concise explanation of the rationale behind any adjustment to marks
- checking the completeness and accuracy of all paperwork
- the careful labelling of oral tracks with candidate number and name.

# WORLD LITERATURE

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Paper 0408/21  
Unseen

## Key messages

- Candidates who maintain a focus on the exact wording of the question (written in bold in the question paper) are more likely to achieve relevance in their answers. Those who methodically work their way through the bullet points alone without reference to the question tend to offer a more general appreciation of the text, forgetting about the key focus word(s) in the question itself.
- Those candidates who allow time for thinking about the text and planning their response are in a better position to give an overview of the text directed towards the question in their introductions. Those who plunge straight into writing are often still grappling with the text as they write, sometimes contradicting their own earlier comments in the process.
- Candidates who are able to integrate comments on language, form and structure smoothly into their discussion tend to be more successful than those who approach the text with a rehearsed, rigid plan, often characterised by use of a mnemonic as a starting point to planning.
- There is no automatic reward for 'feature spotting'; comments about simile, metaphor, juxtaposition, etc. should be firmly followed up by an exploration of the meaning or effect achieved.
- Good answers support their ideas with specific textual references and quotations, achieving fluency and sharp focus. Those candidates who can use short quotations embedded within a sentence are more likely to achieve this than those who copy out lengthy quotations followed by 'This shows ...' Particularly unhelpful are quotations with the 'middle' missing, replaced by ellipsis; candidates should be willing to quote directly the words they are commenting on.

## General comments

In general, the responses offered by candidates to both poetry and prose made for rewarding reading. There was evidence that candidates had been well prepared for this paper and were able to respond to their chosen text type with personal as well as a critical engagement. Strong answers, of which there were many, were not only able to explore 'what' the writer conveyed, but also concentrated closely on the 'how', a key word in the questions. The best answers were characterised by an ability to respond to the writer at work, seeing the text as a constructed piece of art honed with the 'tools' of the writer's craft. Most displayed an engaging level of personal connection with the text, often relating it to their own experience of the world, animating responses in some thoughtful ways. It was pleasing to see that all candidates, regardless of ability, used the examination as an opportunity to show what they could do.

Many impressive answers were characterised by thoughtful consideration and good planning. Plans need not be written out in detail on the answer booklet itself; text-marking the question paper with underlining and brief annotation can prove equally beneficial and indeed provide a visual reminder to candidates to address the whole text, selecting pertinent sections for discussion in their answers. Well-organised answers were usually evident from the very first sentence where the key words of the question were often repeated and linked to an overview of the content and writer's intention in the text as a whole. These candidates were often able, then, to comment on the structure and movement of the text, analysing how its individual parts contributed to the impact of the whole. Less successful answers tended simply to repeat the question and bullet points, sometimes verbatim, or begin with a list of the many 'ways' (metaphor, simile, anaphora, sibilance, etc.) the writer conveys ideas, completely disconnected from the text under discussion. These types of introductions produced comments that could be applied to any piece of crafted writing and shed no light on the text being examined, making it difficult for the examiner to reward any marks here. Lists of technical terms in the introduction were often followed by a search for these features in the text itself, often in

an unorganised fashion; some, for instance, commented on the caesura in the final stanza as an opening gambit to their response to the poem. More organised responses tended to begin with an overview, moving on to work through the poem or passage in sequence and were thus better able to comment on the developing effects of the writing on the reader.

Candidates should therefore be encouraged to spend time thinking about the text and planning their answers; this is a worthwhile investment of time in improving their chances of success in responding to unseen texts.

### **Comments on specific questions**

#### **Question 1 (Poetry)**

*Refugees* by Adam Sagajewski

Given the media coverage of various refugee crises in the world today, this poem allowed all candidates to make some sort of emotional response, with many clearly relating to it on a very human level. Personal response was therefore strong. The refugees were, without exception, seen as people to be sympathised with and most understood the sense of desperation in their plight. Candidates of all abilities seemed able to grasp the level of hardship portrayed in the poem and the over-riding sense of the hopelessness of their situation. Better answers showed understanding of the idea of the universality of the writer's message, seeing the refugees not just as a particular case, but as representing the plight of the refugee across place and time. The most successful answers took on board the word 'powerfully' in the question ('How does the poet *powerfully* convey to you the refugees' situation?'), responding sensitively to the way the writer used language to shape meaning in the poem.

Most candidates were able to write about the presentation of the refugees in the first two stanzas, sensibly using the first bullet to guide their opening comments. The words *bent* and *hunched* were picked out as indicators of the physical strain on the refugees as they carried their entire worldly belongings on their backs. Some pushed through this literal response to see the words as a reflection of their crushed spirits also. Although many candidates were able to identify the alliteration in *Bent under burdens* and *hunched, hungry*, only the better answers probed for effects achieved, some suggesting that the repeated 'b' sound lent an appropriate heaviness to the description, echoing the weight of the burdens, and the aspirated 'h' possibly mimicking the breathlessness of the refugees as they trudged. Very few picked up on the assonance of *under, burdens, sometimes, trudge, mud, hunched and hungry* where the repeated short 'u' vowel could have been related to the sound of a repeated grunt or groan, suggesting the physical effort required just to put one foot in front of the other. Candidates could, perhaps, be encouraged to think more consciously about poetry as a spoken as well as a written medium and to consider the sounds in poetry as well as the visual imagery.

The men's *heavy jackets* were picked out by many candidates and it was pleasing to see that most connected with the metaphorical weight on their shoulders as well as the physical. The fact that they were dressed *for all four seasons* was also noted by many, though not every candidate was able to link this to the uncertainty of their future and the need to be prepared for anything, or indeed its suggestion of the protracted length of their wanderings. The fact that the men are *Silent* drew much comment, with suggestions ranging from their sadness or lack of energy to some thoughtful ideas that they had been 'silenced' in their native country, unable to speak up against an oppressive regime. These sorts of comments displayed a sensitive engagement with the poem's deeper implications and a willingness to move from surface meaning to the poem's wider significance. Strongest answers were able to discuss the order in which the refugees clutch the *child...family lamp...last loaf*, as being placed in order of desperate need, with the loaf being the final sign of survival conditions. Stronger candidates were also able to write about the loss of possessions, as well as the loss of home, as representing a loss of identity; the refugees being nameless and not being described as individual human beings also making their endless trudge to a country that does not exist all the more tragic. Weaker answers saw the old women's *crumpled* faces as simply a description of their wrinkles, but many were able to dig deeper into its suggestion of 'crumpled' spirits.

Stanza three's list of *Bosnia today, Poland in September '39*, etc. was misinterpreted by some as an itinerary of the places the refugees had been. This is where the importance of close and careful reading becomes evident and previous comments on taking time to think and plan before writing should be noted. The poet's use of *could* in the first line of the stanza should have alerted readers to the reflective tone of the writing and indeed more able candidates did pick up on this reference to the universality of the refugees' plight.

Directed by the second bullet, candidates made comment on the words and images in the rest of the poem. The list of *treasures* was a popular choice, some relating in quite poignant ways to *the fading scent of home*. The repetition at the end of stanza four proved useful in exploring the writer's techniques in conveying the harshness of conditions the refugees are exposed to. Perhaps because the poem is so dense in imagery and candidates had so much material to respond to in the earlier stanzas, the last two stanzas were sometimes given perfunctory attention. A few candidates saw the refugees' journey as leading to a literal quest for outer space (*a better planet*), but most grasped it as a yearning for a better world. Despite time pressures, many candidates sensed the importance of the final stanza, noting its especial mention in the bullets, and made time to comment on the bleakness of its message, picking out the series of negatives *nowhere ... no one ... never* as an indication of the sad futility of the refugees' search for a place that doesn't exist.

## Question 2 (Prose)

*The First Party* by Attia Hosain

Slightly fewer candidates chose the prose question and, like the poetry, there was a variety of performance levels. The question asked *How does the writer vividly convey to you the woman's experience at the party?* Those candidates who were able to pick out *what* the woman's experiences are and supported their comments with appropriate textual reference achieved some level of success; however, it was those who responded to the 'How' and the 'vividly' of the question who were able to access the higher mark bands that demand a more developed response to the way the writer achieves effects. Most candidates were able to grasp the young woman's feelings of being out of her 'comfort zone' at the party and make some observation about the difference in attitudes between her and the other guests. Better answers moved on to relate her discomfort to cultural/religious differences and noted the ambiguous presentation of the husband as both supportive and controlling. Weaker responses, however, tended to see the husband as being a loving partner who helps his wife over the threshold, schools her to remain seated when introduced and returns periodically to check on her.

Most candidates were able to make some comment on the light/dark imagery at the start of the passage, though many saw the darkness as simply making her stumble, contributing to her nervousness; few picked out its depiction as *a forsaken friend* to the young woman who may have been glad of the anonymity it offered. Another missed opportunity for many was the contrast in handshakes between the young woman who offers her hand *limply*, in comparison to the tall woman's *firm* grasp. Candidates attempting the prose question could, perhaps, be encouraged to practise close reading skills in a similar way they would approach a poem, homing in on word-level analysis as well as grasping the 'big picture', or reading at a thematic level.

Many commented on the description of the young woman *sitting on the edge of the big chair, her shoulders drooping, nervously pulling her sari over her head as the weight of its heavy gold embroidery pulled it back*. Weaker answers quoted this section in its entirety, simply observing 'This means she is very nervous.' A close reading of this line, however, found a rich seam of language for candidates willing to probe further: why is the chair *big*? Why is she sitting on its *edge*? What does the phrase *drooping shoulders* convey about her feelings? Those candidates who could pick out individual words and phrases like these and integrate them fluently into sentences that explored their effects were generally able to access the higher bands, finding reward for their understanding of the nuances of the writing.

Stronger answers also noted the contrast being made between the wife and the other guests, especially the female guest with the painted finger nails, and this provided useful discussion about the woman feeling 'alien' and this being the result of her coming from a different culture which regards drinking and smoking as 'sinful'.

Strongest responses spoke of the woman as being like a 'ghost' at the party, or like a 'doll' or a 'puppet' being controlled by her husband, who speaks of her as an object, or as a child whom he can 'train', given time. The comparison of the woman to *an uncertain child*, her sitting on the edge of the chair, making her appear childlike, and being described as *a little thing* were used to back this up. The claw-like nails of the female guest were compared to the claws of a predator and the woman to vulnerable prey.

Candidates who had invested some of the time available in planning their answer were better able to comment on the structure of the passage, noting the progression of the depiction of the young woman as initially shy, nervous and looking to her husband for support and guidance to her *uneasy defiance* towards the end. Candidates who had perhaps not planned quite so carefully and who had written about the husband in a positive light as some sort of caring mentor earlier in their essays now found themselves in the uncomfortable position of conceding that the young wife looked upon him with *disgust and anger* because he

had, apparently, suddenly turned into a drinking, smoking moral degenerate. A closer consideration of the earlier subtext might have picked up on some of the linguistic cues: his seeming acceptance of the patronising comments of the woman guest *Shy little thing, isn't she, but charming* and his more overtly sinister reply *She'll get over it soon. Give me time.*

Most candidates recognised the need to address the final paragraph, even if they had left the central section largely unexplored. The other guests' repeated insistence that the young woman have a drink and her choice of non-alcoholic orange juice was seen as significant, though only better answers noted that she used the orange juice as *protection* and its symbolic significance in summing up the completeness of the young woman's social and moral isolation in her new surroundings.



# WORLD LITERATURE

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Paper 0408/22  
Unseen

## Key messages

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- There is no automatic reward for 'feature spotting'; comments about simile, metaphor, juxtaposition, etc. should be firmly followed up by an exploration of the meaning or effect achieved.
- Good answers support their ideas with specific textual references and quotations, achieving fluency and sharp focus. Those candidates who can use short quotations embedded within a sentence are more likely to achieve this than those who copy out lengthy quotations followed by 'This shows ...' Particularly unhelpful are quotations with the 'middle' missing, replaced by ellipsis; candidates should be willing to quote directly the words they are commenting on.

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an unorganised fashion; some, for instance, commented on the caesura in the final stanza as an opening gambit to their response to the poem. More organised responses tended to begin with an overview, moving on to work through the poem or passage in sequence and were thus better able to comment on the developing effects of the writing on the reader.

Candidates should therefore be encouraged to spend time thinking about the text and planning their answers; this is a worthwhile investment of time in improving their chances of success in responding to unseen texts.

### **Comments on specific questions**

#### **Question 1 (Poetry)**

*The Man Who Delivers My Paper* by Suzanne Lummis

The poetry was by far the more popular choice for candidates on this paper, all of whom found something in the poem to engage with, both intellectually and emotionally. The contents of the newspaper as listed in the poem provided ample scope for comment on the shocking range of horrible events in the wider world, as well as the more mundane. The portrayal of the delivery man drew much engagement; the imagery used to describe him and the effects of the news on the poet were generally well grasped. In short, candidates made good use of the bullets to structure their responses. Those who paid close attention to the 'How' and 'strikingly' of the question were more likely to achieve at the higher levels.

Good answers began with a direct response to the question (*How does the poet strikingly convey her thoughts and feelings in this poem?*), defining in a succinct overview of the poem what those feelings are and their effect on the reader. Candidates who could, for example, identify that the poet feels overwhelmed by the constant barrage of bad news, that she tries to avoid its corrupting influence on her but that she ultimately accepts that exposure to it is inevitable made a good start to their essays. Particularly effective were answers that gave a personal response to these ideas. A brief paragraph along these lines often set the candidate up for a fuller exploration of the poem in their answers, maintaining a keen focus on the poet's *thoughts and feelings*. Less confident answers started with either an almost verbatim repetition of the question and bullets or a list of poetic techniques that the poet was deemed to have used, including 'language' and 'commas'. These types of introductions invariably lacked any connection with the text and often led to a 'feature spotting' type of response.

Many candidates were intrigued by the imagery of *one world ... tearing away from another* in the opening stanza, recognising in it the depiction of the poet's sleep being interrupted by the arrival of dawn. Better answers linked the image to the poem's deeper implications, suggesting that the poet might prefer to remain in the soothing comfort of a dream world rather than wake to face yet another day of bad news. The word *laboriously* attracted much attention and proved to be something of a discriminator in that some candidates saw it simply as a comment on the man's hard-working attitude to his job, whilst others who probed deeper related it to his reluctance to be the bearer of bad news. Similarly, *as if knee-deep in water* received much comment, though rather too many candidates, having successfully explored the implication of the man's struggle to walk as if against the resistance of a current of water, failed then to link this image to its effect: what does this tell us about the man and his attitude to delivering the papers? In fact, some candidates treated language analysis almost like a mathematical puzzle to be 'solved' in terms of relating the literal to the metaphorical, missing the last vital stage of assessing how the image contributes to overall meaning; this final link is an essential step to accessing the higher bands.

The list of the paper's contents was a popular focus, better answers noting the structural crescendo of events. This was often followed by an examination of *newborn* and its contrast with *bomb* and *gift*. Again, rather a lot of candidates explored quite competently the connotations of these words, but stopped short of relating them to how the newspaper is presented. Reasonable responses recognised that bombs are 'explosive', but better answers noted, for example, the explosive nature of the news and its ability to 'blow apart' one's happiness or complacency. The newspaper delivery man's lightening conscience as he delivers each paper was a concept grasped by most candidates, though weaker answers did not always recognise the need to interpret language, asserting that *as if he's clearing his conscience* shows that as he delivers each paper his conscience is being cleared. Some practice in finding alternative wording when responding to language would be helpful for some candidates.

The strongest responses looked closely at symbolism in the poem, drawing a parallel between the *half light* and a dark-versus-light, good-versus-evil theme, in which the delivery man was either angelic, or demon-like.

Others commented effectively on the listed news items as depicting a world in the throes of tearing itself apart with its crimes of inhumanity, demonstrated by the emotionless way in which they are reported in the news. The narrator was here portrayed as being at the centre of the dramatic dilemma of participating in this struggle, giving in to the temptation to read about all of the heavy things she cannot change.

The final stanza was seen by many to capture the poet's 'voice' through her use of second person direct address, drawing the reader into the poem in tones of a personal conversation. Some related the *unstringing* of the newspaper back to the idea of its being a *gift* earlier in the poem, demonstrating an impressive ability to form links in meaning. Those candidates who ended their answer with a personal response to the poem achieved a sense of completion in their discussion, particularly if they had begun with a personal comment in the introduction.

## Question 2 (Prose)

*The Way of the Machete* by Martin A Ramos

Although fewer candidates chose the prose option, those who did found something to respond to in what was a dense passage, packed full of potential for an exploration of how the writing shapes tension.

Most responses worked their way chronologically through the language of the text, noting the description of the horses and the building, the interior, the grocer and the similes by which Juanito's tension is depicted. Many focused on the physical description of the colmado with its peeling paint and rusted roof. Weaker answers simply noted these features, but stronger responses went on to suggest that the run-down state of the building might signify a place where illicit or illegal gatherings might occur, the red of the roof suggesting danger or the potential for the spilling of blood. Juanito's admiration of the *fine, impressive beasts* but the element of barely suppressed danger in their *twitching flesh and flaring nostrils* was seen by some as reflecting his ambivalent feelings for Scipio himself, whom he both admired and feared, and this symbolic connection between the horses and their owners inside was indicative of high achievement.

There were some responses which merely paraphrased the story though most of the weaker responses were able to hone in on the presentation of Scipio, and easily pick out the descriptions of his voice and size in contrast to Juanito's size and timidity. A noteworthy response to Scipio's presentation commented on the writer's use of sibilance in *every scythe-like swoosh and measured stroke of his machete*, seeing it as suggesting the 'grace and ease with which Scipio worked, making him seem all the more dangerous'. The candidate then pushed further with the response to note the effect on the reader: 'The fact that he seemingly expended so little effort in the fields reminds the readers that it would be easy for him to harm a person.' This level of analysis shows a commendable willingness to engage with the subtext of the writing.

Many answers documented the imagery produced by the descriptions of the store's interior, its effects on Juanito and the way in which his reactions of stuttering and sweating add to the build up of anticipation and make the reader feel what he is feeling. Stronger responses were able to point out that the illegality of the rum creates a gangster-like impression for Scipio and his cohorts, especially when they address the grocer as if he was their slave who dares not refuse them anything. A number of responses detailed the various ways in which the writer makes appeal to the senses – the smells of the hams, codfish, poultry feed and cigar smoke; the sight of the sweat-stained and mountainous Scipio; the sounds of the guttural basso voice and the sounds inside the store rising to a crescendo.

The simile of Juanito feeling like a bird trapped in a cage was cited often as the most vivid image of the boy's sense of helplessness and stronger responses were able to describe this as the boy being caught between a rock and a hard place: between whatever Scipio might do and going home without the groceries to face whatever his mother or father might do.

The strongest answers pointed out that Juanito had been an admirer or fan of Scipio's and had wondered what he was really like. Also, that Scipio's threat of *I'll tell the men he is a coward* parallels Juanito's earlier thoughts of *Josué would not accept cowardice*. One response discussed briefly how this concern about bravery and cowardice underpins both Juanito's fear of his own fearfulness in the face of the 'macho-man' and his fear of going home empty-handed.

In summary, answers that responded with a systematic analysis of the language and imagery working chronologically through the passage were generally successful, but it was often those that moved comfortably between the general and the specific, between overview and analysis, whilst keeping the engagement of the reader firmly in mind that achieved the highest reward.

# WORLD LITERATURE

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Paper 0408/31  
Paper 31 Set Text

## Key messages

For success in this examination, candidates need to:

- Answer the question that has been set
- Focus on the key words of the question
- Demonstrate a detailed knowledge of their set texts
- Substantiate their points with pertinent textual reference
- Comment on the detail of their quotations
- Explore how writers achieve their effects through language, structure and form.

Candidates need to avoid:

- Writing about the topic without addressing the key words of the question
- Writing excessively lengthy introductions
- Writing lengthy conclusions that repeat points already made
- Including extraneous background information that does not illuminate either text or task
- Making unsupported assertions
- Logging literary devices without explaining their effects
- Using inert quotation.

## General comments

The strongest responses were characterised by a detailed knowledge of set texts and by sustained engagement with the question in essays which combined confident critical comment and apt textual reference. The most successful responses included cogent analysis of the ways in which writers use language (e.g. the key words in their quotations), structure and form to achieve certain effects.

In **Section A** extracts are printed alongside the questions which invite explicit consideration of the writing. It was surprising, therefore, to see some candidates not exploring the detail of the extracts, an approach that was clearly self-penalising. Band 2 of the marking criteria requires 'much well-selected reference' in order to support a 'clear critical understanding'. The strongest responses integrated many concise quotations into their own sentences as an integral part of the analysis. Less successful responses to **Section A** questions showed candidates working through the extract without tailoring their answer to the specific demands of the question.

Those candidates who had a detailed knowledge of their set texts were well-equipped to succeed with the more discursive general essay questions in **Section B**; however, those with only a grasp of surface features such as basic aspects of plot and character put themselves at a disadvantage. It should be noted that **Section B** essays (like the **Section A** extract questions) target the ways in which writers achieve their effects. Those who write about the ways in which writers present characters are, therefore, more likely to produce convincing responses than those who write about characters as real-life characters.

In general, less successful responses tended to be overly assertive, that is, with limited or no textual evidence to support their points; where quotation was used, it was often lengthy and the link to the point being made was not always made explicit. In these responses, quotation was often inert, with no exploration of the ways in which the writer used the key words in the quotation.

There were fewer instances of the logging of literary devices this session. It should be remembered that, where critical terms are used, they should be an integral part of critical analysis. There is little merit in the mere identification of devices.

The primary focus when tackling a question should be to answer the question set. Sometimes lengthy general introductions and lengthy conclusions that repeated points already made used up time that might have been better spent addressing directly the key words of the question.

### **Comments on specific questions**

#### **Section A**

##### **Question 1: Brecht**

Most responses were able to comment on the contrast between Grusha and Natella. More successful responses saw clearly through the latter's fake humility and honesty and noted her overriding interest in Michael's inheritance. These responses were also alert to Azdak's final ironic statement, showing how Brecht exposes the corruption of the legal system, where Grusha is opposing the forces of big money. Some responses explored perceptively the rhetoric of the lawyer contrasted with the simplicity of Grusha's language. Only a few responses explored the comic aspects of the scene.

##### **Question 2: Sijie**

Most responses could see the striking contrast between the 'ignorant' villagers and the two 'city youths', and they commented on the villagers' verdict on the violin being a 'toy', totally useless and fit only for burning. More successful responses focused on the 'foreignness' and air of 'civilisation' surrounding the instrument; it was 'fascinating' that these villagers did not even know what a violin was. The humour of the narrator's quick thinking in saving the instrument, by inventing a suitable title, was commented on. The risks arising from the hostility of the villagers and, in particular, the headman featured in the strongest responses. Comments on the deeper implications of the 'Cultural Revolution' were mentioned but not developed in relation to the details found in the extract. Most candidates could see that, from what we learn in these opening pages to the novel, there were difficult times ahead for the two boys.

##### **Question 3: Franklin**

A few responses were seen but they tended to be mainly narrative overviews with insufficient attention paid to the writing. Sybylla's hard life and difficult working conditions, in contrast to what she had become used to with her aunt and grandmother, were noted. Less widely identified were implicit ideas such as the lack of any end in sight from the sun and heat (enemies to both humans and animals) and of the never-ending struggle, day after day, to lift these cows for Sybylla and her parents. Most responses commented on the effects of the repetition of 'Weariness!' Fewer candidates made reference to the title in the extract: 'my brilliant career'. All in all, her bleak existence gave little hope for her dreams of becoming a writer ever materialising.

##### **Question 4: Ibsen**

Most responses were able to contextualise the moment: the revelation that Lovborg did not after all tear up the manuscript and Hedda's choice not to reveal that the manuscript had been found. Some stronger responses commented on the dramatic impact of both the action of Hedda putting the pistol into Lovborg's jacket and of her repeated use of the word 'beautifully' in the context of contemplating suicide. The strongest responses made reference to the significance of Hedda's actions (indicated in the stage directions) and words that conclude the extract, coming as they do at the end of Act 3.

##### **Question 5: Stories of Ourselves**

A few responses were seen. The opening sentence 'People were never fooled by façade' was immediately highlighted by the strongest responses and linked to the title indicating that this 'Village Saint' was about to be revealed as fraudulent. Most candidates were able to offer a personal response to the character of Mma-Mompati, and some explored the metaphorical language in 'She had had a long reign of twenty-six years, and a foolproof façade.' The least successful responses had a grasp of only some surface meanings apparent in the extract and offered literal readings of her character, not seeing beyond the façade.

## **Section B**

### **Question 6: Brecht**

Too few responses were seen to make meaningful comment.

### **Question 7: Sijie**

Candidates made personal responses to the character who was not considered likeable – essentially he was regarded as sly, selfish and not a true friend but only out for himself. The best explored his nickname and how significant the loss of his glasses was; the help Ma and Luo gave with his work resulted in the all-important loan of the first book. His need for the ‘authentic songs’ as a means of returning to the city, his failure to give the boys the promised book on their return from the ordeal at the Miller’s and the final celebration (particularly the drinking of the buffalo blood) were also noted. Only the most successful responses explored the detail that makes Sijie’s presentation of Four-Eyes ‘memorable’. The humour of the situation where the boys go to steal the suitcase of books was looked at, but responses tended to be narrative rather than exploring his role as the provider of the forbidden books which was essential to the plot and themes of the text.

### **Question 8: Franklin**

Only a few responses were seen. Some thought that she was mad not to take advantage of the only way to escape a life of poverty and drudgery whilst others thought that, in order to be independent and a writer, she could not marry him. She would be too constrained by convention. Little faith was shown in Harold’s character and his promise for her to be free to do what she wanted.

### **Question 9: Ibsen**

Only a few responses were seen. Most had little difficulty in seeing him as an unsavoury and manipulative character who knew all about the pistol and used the information to blackmail Hedda by citing the scandal that would follow any revelation. The strongest responses commented on his key role in the play as the person who reveals the true nature of Lovborg’s death being far from the ‘beautiful’ ideal that she had wished for. His naked assertion of his power over Hedda leads to her suicide.

### **Question 10: Stories of Ourselves**

The most successful responses explored the nephew’s utter misery at his childhood behaviour and the loss of the close relationship he shared with this maiden aunt. The aunt’s anger and the slap he received, as well as her cutting words, ‘You are dirt’, were recalled by most as a testament to the profound hurt and shame he felt years later. Some responses explored the effects created by the use of a non-chronological narrative in shaping a reader’s response to the nephew’s feelings at different stages of the time-line. Less confident responses chartered the boy’s thoughts and feelings in a descriptive way rather than offering a critical probing of the effects of the writing.

# WORLD LITERATURE

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Paper 0408/32  
Paper 32 Set Text

## Key messages

For success in this examination, candidates need to:

- Answer the question that has been set
- Focus on the key words of the question
- Demonstrate a detailed knowledge of their set texts
- Substantiate their points with pertinent textual reference
- Comment on the detail of their quotations
- Explore how writers achieve their effects through language, structure and form.

Candidates need to avoid:

- Writing about the topic without addressing the key words of the question
- Writing excessively lengthy introductions
- Writing lengthy conclusions that repeat points already made
- Including extraneous background information that does not illuminate either text or task
- Making unsupported assertions
- Logging literary devices without explaining their effects
- Using inert quotation.

## General comments

The strongest responses were characterised by a detailed knowledge of set texts and by sustained engagement with the question in essays which combined confident critical comment and apt textual reference. The most successful responses include cogent analysis of the ways in which writers use language (e.g. the key words in their quotations), structure and form to achieve certain effects.

In **Section A** extracts are printed alongside the questions which invite explicit consideration of the writing. It was surprising, therefore, to see some candidates not exploring the detail of the extracts, an approach that was clearly self-penalising. Band 2 of the marking criteria requires 'much well-selected reference' in order to support a 'clear critical understanding'. The strongest responses integrated many concise quotations into their own sentences as an integral part of the analysis. Less successful responses to **Section A** questions showed candidates working through the extract without tailoring their answer to the specific demands of the question.

Those candidates who had a detailed knowledge of their set texts were well-equipped to succeed with the more discursive general essay questions in **Section B**; however, those with only a grasp of surface features such as basic aspects of plot and character put themselves at a disadvantage. It should be noted that **Section B** essays (like the **Section A** extract questions) target the ways in which writers achieve their effects. Those who write about the ways in which writers present characters are, therefore, more likely to produce convincing responses than those who write about characters as real-life characters.

In general, less successful responses tended to be overly assertive, that is, with limited or no textual evidence to support their points; where quotation was used, it was often lengthy and the link to the point being made was not always made explicit. In these responses, quotation was often inert, with no exploration of the ways in which the writer used the key words in the quotation.



There were fewer instances of the logging of literary devices this session. It should be remembered that, where critical terms are used, they should be an integral part of critical analysis. There is little merit in the mere identification of devices.

Contextual material in responses was used to best effect when it was brief, apt and served to illuminate the text. In **Question 7**, many candidates were able to make pithy comment on the almost obsessive desire for stories against the backdrop of the Maoist cultural revolution. Context was, however, less successfully employed in **Question 4**, where unproductive generalised comments about the role of women in society 'then' rarely did justice to the subtleties of Ibsen's presentation of Hedda in her first appearance in the play.

### **Comments on specific questions**

#### **Section A**

##### **Question 1: Brecht**

Most responses could see that this introduction to Grusha's character and the situation was fundamental to the plot; as stated by a few, without her taking the child there would have been no play. Indeed, the most successful responses linked Grusha's dilemma with its impact on later events in the play. These responses understood how Grusha was so different in her selflessness from the other characters, including the mother, who wanted nothing to do with the child. The dramatic arrival of the Fat Prince with the severed head was seen as dramatic and significant – if he could do this to his brother then he would have no qualms about killing his nephew, the 'heir'. Most candidates were able to comment on the visual and aural elements of what was happening on stage, though a few candidates referred to the 'book' rather than 'play' and were not alert to the theatricality of this moment. More could have been made of the role of the Singer in the extract and the irony of the final line of the extract 'Terrible is the temptation to do good!'

##### **Question 2: Sijie**

Stronger responses demonstrated an understanding of the context of the extract and just how much the boys were prepared to endure in order to acquire books. The most successful responses picked up on the poverty, the subtle criticism of the failure of the cultural revolution to establish equality and the creativity of the Miller in making the best of everything. The humour was explored in some detail, with attention paid to the military language used to describe the advance and attack of the lice. One response commented that the boys were getting more and more drunk, and that this was the reason they mellowed as the extract progressed. There was some enjoyment in the responses of the best candidates when exploring the 'bonding' of the three of them joyfully spitting out the pebbles making the 'sharp, jolly clatter'. Less successful responses provided a narrative account of what happens in the extract, sometimes with quotation used as illustration rather than the occasion for close analysis of effects.

##### **Question 3: Franklin**

Only a few responses were seen. These commented on both the shock effect of Sybylla hitting Harold with the horsewhip and on her own dramatic reaction acknowledging her 'madness'. Responses tended to be somewhat narrative in approach, with limited evidence of a close analysis of Franklin's use of language.

##### **Question 4: Ibsen**

There were many successful responses that focused on the 'striking' presentation and first appearance of Hedda, her relationship with Tesman and her hurtful treatment of his aunt over her pretence that the hat was the maid's. Her lack of warmth in the description, 'eyes are steel, grey, and cold...' were commented on by most as a clear indication of just how cold and brutal she was. The strongest responses explored in detail the sarcasm of Hedda's comments and the language that signalled her contempt for her husband. Some responses commented on the fact that Hedda and Tesman had just returned from honeymoon and that this contributed to what was striking about their relationship. Some responses contained too much general context about the portrayal of a woman who was unlike women of her time; this was often at the expense of exploring the detail of the actual extract.

### **Question 5: Stories of Ourselves**

Candidates were able to write a good deal about the 'narrator's impressions of her grandmother'. The difference in her dress and physical appearance, the 'death mask' and her 'eyes were alive' – all these were noted, with some perception being seen at the top end. The strongest responses explored the presentation of contrasts between life and death and between child and woman; these responses often recognised the first note of triumph in the narrator stating of Da-duh, 'She was the first to look away'. The fear she instilled in her daughter was also discussed. Less successful responses tended to list the different character traits of Da-duh and the narrator.

### **Section B**

#### **Question 6: Brecht**

Most responses wrote engaging personal responses to the selfishness of Natella and her abandonment of Michael (until she needs him for financial gain), using it as an example of reprehensible upper class behaviour. In this regard, some responses contrasted the attitudes of Natella and Grusha to the welfare of Michael. Some of the stronger responses commented on the attitude towards the lower orders of the two ladies who travelled with Grusha to the hotel. They recognised that the behaviour of the rich and the poor is contrasted throughout the play. Less successful responses tended to list points rather than explore closely the ways in which Brecht portrays the upper classes on stage.

#### **Question 7: Sijie**

Most responses were able to demonstrate a variety of relevant ideas in response to the question: literature as escapism, learning about the lives of others and being influenced by them; the power of stories to enthrall and to transform lives. The books provided the boys with intellectual and emotional stimuli. Reference was also made to the re-telling of the plots of films to the villagers and the dramatic impact of this on the villagers, the headman, the tailor and the sorceresses. The strongest responses regarded the novels in Four-Eyes's suitcase as emblematic of a different, better and less restrictive culture. These responses often showed a very impressive recall of quotations which enabled candidates to explore language and narrative in some detail.

#### **Question 8: Franklin**

There were too few answers to make meaningful comment.

#### **Question 9: Ibsen**

Many responses discussed Lovborg's relationship with two very different women, Hedda and Thea, and in particular the enduring influence of his past relationship with Hedda. Stronger responses made reference to his position as writer of a surprise bestseller and academic rival to Tesman. The best responses explored the importance of his death to the rest of the play, including ultimately its effect on Hedda, leading to her suicide. Less confident responses selected details from the play about the character that made him 'memorable' but without explaining why.

#### **Question 10: Stories of Ourselves**

There were too few answers to make meaningful comment.