

WORLD LITERATURE

Paper 0408/01

Paper 1: Coursework

Portfolio

There were too few candidates this series for us to be able to produce a meaningful general report on performance. But we take the opportunity to reiterate some key messages and comments from previous series as these will be of help to teacher preparing future candidates.

Key Messages

Learners do well when teachers frame coursework tasks in such a way that they enable learners to meet the syllabus's assessment objectives.

Teacher annotation of written coursework is an essential part of the moderation process, enabling Centres to provide a clear justification for the marks they award.

The most effective oral responses are conversations in which teachers ask supporting questions that allow candidates to demonstrate their full potential.

General Comments

Teachers of IGCSE World Literature should follow the requirements and guidance contained within the documents on the relevant page of the Teacher Support website. Many effective centres, for example, discuss potential coursework tasks towards the beginning of the course so that any problematic tasks can be remedied in a timely fashion. All the guidance that Centres need about the setting of suitable tasks can be found in the Coursework Training Handbook.

Detailed summative comments on candidate record forms - or in the case of written work, at the end of assignments – including comments which draw on the wording of the relevant assessment criteria, enable teachers to justify the award of a particular mark. In the case of written assignments, as well as summative comments Centres are advised to provide focused ticking of valid points and concise comments in the margin about the specific strengths and weaknesses of a candidate's performance. Most Centres take great care over such annotation of candidate work as they recognise the importance of its role in providing a clear rationale for the award of particular marks. Meaningful annotation makes the process of moderation accountable and transparent. Clean copies of written assignments are not helpful to the moderation process. Ticks should be used purposefully; routine ticking of paragraphs, pages or quotations is less helpful for processes of moderation, whether internal or external.

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Paper 2: Unseen Texts

Key Messages

- Responses to the poetry question were stronger because there was a closer focus on the writing.
- The most successful candidates focused on the terms of the question, and used the bullet points to select relevant material and to structure their answer.
- Candidates performed well when they responded to the imagery of the poem and considered the second stanza.
- Attention to the style and the author's methods of creating shock and surprise were the hallmarks of success in response to the prose passage.

General Comments

There was a small entry for this paper this series, and the comments that follow should be read in light of this. About an equal number of candidates tackled the poem and the prose. There was much evidence that candidates had been carefully prepared to approach the analysis of a poem but far less attention was paid this session to the language of the prose passage. There were intelligent comments on the poem's imagery, diction, structure, tone, and point of view.

In answers to the poetry question, candidates fared well when they explored the imagery used to describe both children and parents. The strongest answers tackled the different role of parents in the second stanza of the poem. There was a tendency for candidates to write in great detail about the imagery in the first stanza, without having an overview of the poem as a whole or selecting their material carefully.

The prose passage clearly resonated with candidates and there were engaged responses to the subject matter with surprise at the woman's determination not to be beaten by the thief and shock at the cowardly, defeatist behaviour of the crowd. The key discriminator proved to be a response to the writer's techniques. These create surprise that a polite, elegant man could be a street robber and convey the woman's overwhelming emotions through imagery, description and perspective. Many responses showed sound understanding of the content and the question, but tended to narrate and describe rather than analyse the author's effects.

A sensible amount of time had been devoted to reading and planning, but it was difficult for those who answered the prose question to gain high reward if their approach to the task did not consider how the passage is written.

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

Comments on Specific Questions

Question 1 (Poetry) *Ode on the Whole Duty of Parents* by Frances Cornford

There were many mature and perceptive responses which explored the nature of children and the parent-child relationship, and Cornford's imperative yet caring tone. The most successful answers adhered to the instruction to look at the words and images of the poem, and considered the striking nature of these images. Perceptive candidates explored what Cornford meant by calling the spirits of children 'remote and wise', with various convincing and sensitive interpretations. The similes: 'like fishes in the sea, Or starlings in the skies' with their ideas of freedom/numerousness/vulnerability/wide spaces were considered in most answers. Most

candidates could also explore the images of parents as a shore and a tree in some detail, and in an intelligent fashion. Fewer looked at the details of the tree metaphor with its suggestion that parents should also be instrumental in stimulating the imagination. Most were successful, however, in commenting on 'Roots that go deep in ordinary earth', with its suggestion of stability, common sense and reliability.

Many answers stopped at this point but more developed responses commented on the development in the second stanza where parents are *no more* 'That sheltering shore'. Most candidates overlooked this line but many understood that parents also had to be the fount of all knowledge. Only really strong answers noted the lightness of the tone, with Cornford ironically stating that it is simple to be a second Isaac Newton and thus suggesting by implication that parenting is an impossible task. The third bullet point was addressed competently and clearly with candidates exploring the effect of the direct address to the parent and the use of imperatives.

Less successful answers tended to ignore the second verse and misinterpreted the 'up-gazing' head. They tended to write too much about the earlier images in the poem at the expense of an overview.

Question 2 (Prose) from *Street of the House of Wonders* by Rachida el-Charni.

Candidates had few problems addressing the question and they used the bullet points to structure a response. They could identify the fact that the thief's attack is unexpected as his appearance gives no clues as to his intentions, and therefore is deeply shocking to the victim and reader alike. They could also explore the unexpected reactions of the victim and the surprise that she was willing to put herself at risk. There were many expressions of horror at the degree of violence that the thief perpetrates on the woman and disgust at the lack of support she receives. Understanding, therefore, was generally sound although some thought the youth would not help her, missing the fact that he was held back by other men.

Candidates are required, however, to analyse the passage in a literary way – it is not merely an exercise in comprehension. Powerful language such as: 'paralysed...screaming furiously...fuelled by rage...wrenched from her body...swarmed around them like bees...mighty devil dwelled...malice...snarled...terror gnawing...blind ferocity' was almost universally ignored. Some candidates did comment on the listing of the robber's apparently pleasant qualities and the use of dialogue, but a focus on the writing was limited to the strongest responses. The impact of the passage being written from the victim's perspective was rarely considered. Responses which used direct quotation to support points were inevitably more successful than those which paraphrased or described.

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Paper 3: Set Text

There were too few candidates for us to be able to produce a meaningful report.