

WORLD LITERATURE

Paper 0408/01
Coursework

Key Messages

- Teachers should refer to the 0408 Syllabus and Coursework Handbook during the planning stages of the course.
- Tasks for all assignments must be worded to enable candidates to fulfil the requirements of the band descriptors and be written clearly at the start of each assignment.
- Written assignments should include focused ticking and marginal annotation by the teacher which comment on strengths and weaknesses of candidate performance and should be clearly linked to the marking criteria.
- It is essential that rigorous clerical checks are made on the transfer of marks from candidate folders to the Centre Assessment Summary Form and the MS1.
- Candidate work should be securely fastened with the Individual Candidate Record Card attached at the front, and presented without plastic folders.

General Comments

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

The Critical Response

Successful responses demonstrated clear critical engagement with the selected text in response to a well-formulated task. These responses analysed the ways writers achieve effects and were supported by well-selected and concise textual references. There were some perceptive and evaluative personal responses.

Weaker responses were narrative or explanatory in approach lacking textual detail to support ideas and a response to the ways the writer creates effects. Listing writers' techniques is unlikely to receive reward unless supported by textual references and the effects explored. The use of textual references to support a narrative overview of a text is also unlikely to achieve high reward: textual references should be fully explored.

For candidates to be able to meet the assessment criteria in their writing, effective tasks must be set. Examples of appropriately challenging tasks can be found in the 0408 *Coursework Handbook*.

The Empathic Response

The most successful responses focused on a specific character and moment in the text, offering an engagingly authentic 'voice' for the chosen character. These responses were firmly rooted in the text. Less successful responses did not focus on a precise moment and relied on speculation rather than close detail to the text. Often these involved some retelling of the story rather than conveying the thoughts and feelings of the chosen character. It is not a requirement of the empathic assignment that candidates attempt to use Shakespearean language or verse structure: when used, this sometimes detracted from the clarity of the writing. Similarly, stage directions, dialogue and quotations from texts are not required. Examples of good and unsuitable empathic tasks are given in the 0408 Coursework Handbook.

Teacher annotation

Teachers are reminded that all assignments should show evidence of having been marked to assist the moderation process. Focused ticking of key points, supported by brief reference to the level descriptors in marginal annotation and a detailed summative comment, are a prerequisite for all written assignments. These annotations allow external moderators to understand how the final mark was awarded. Written

communication, spelling, punctuation and grammar are not assessed in the coursework and should not be considered when the final mark for an assignment is awarded.

Administration

Care should be taken over the presentation of the portfolios. The Individual Candidate Record Card should be fastened securely, (e.g., by a treasury tag or staple) to the written assignments (and not placed in plastic wallets or cardboard folders) to ensure ease of access. Assignments should be organised in the order presented on the Individual Candidate Record Card.

WORLD LITERATURE

Paper 0408/21
Unseen Poetry

Key messages

To do well, candidates should:

- write enough – aiming for at least 3/4s to 1 side per question
- explore ‘deeper meanings’
- consider the effects of poetic devices i.e. treat the poem as a poem
- reference the key point/s from the question
- focus introductions on the specific question
- analyse quotations from across the poem – especially the final lines.

General comments

Examiners noted that there were many thoughtful responses to the unseen poem, with a clear sense of structure. Candidates were mostly confident in terms of referencing the poem, as well as identifying and analysing a range of (poetic) techniques. The best responses offered much detail across the poem, with thoughtful exploration of ‘deeper meanings’ i.e. moving beyond noting the setting or ‘action’ of the poem, and developing a sense of the complexities of mood and tone. The best introductions gave an overview of the poem linked to the question, rather than simply listing techniques employed by the poet, which the candidate was then going to explore. Weaker responses were often very short, and did not access the higher ranges of the mark scheme owing to a lack of understanding and the lack of ‘deeper meanings’. The best responses also clearly distinguished the different strands of **Question (a)** as opposed to **Question (b)**, and were also more tentative in approach using ‘this might suggest...’ or ‘the image could mean...’.

“Boats in the Bay”

Question 1

(a) How does the poet vividly describe the scene?

Thoughtful answers explored the use of the first person and how that informed the description of the setting of the sea, ‘as smooth as silk’ and ‘as silent as glass’. Candidates noted the use of similes and sibilance, offering also a sense of the symbolic ‘blue handkerchief’ and grey sea, in contrast to the more carefree and sunny ‘girls in yellow’. There was scope for more sensitive exploration of structural and poetic features such as the use of enjambement and caesura. Better responses did explore the shift from the more detached observations of the first stanza, to the more personal actions and feelings of the second, linked to the setting. The juxtaposition of the ‘girls singing’ in their ‘skimming’ boats, which passed over the buried ‘sorrow’ of the speaker was thoughtfully analysed. However, many candidates could have discussed the image of the final line in more detail.

(b) How does the poet strikingly convey her thoughts and feelings?

The personal nature of the lyric poem was carefully discussed by the best responses, which offered telling references to the isolated first-person speaker, juxtaposed with the busy and more vibrant ‘happy people’. The symbolism of the speaker’s ‘trouble’, made concrete and literal in the shape of a heavy stone and as ‘smooth as a sea-washed pebble’, was explored in detail, and the silence of that buried sorrow juxtaposed against the ‘girls singing’ was noted by the best responses. Colour imagery and the use of tactile imagery was analysed by good responses which were able to speculate thoughtfully on the emotional weight of the final line with its soulful repetition and

lingering 'l' alliteration in contrast with 'girls singing'. Perhaps more candidates might have noted the sense of diminishment, with the 9-line stanza giving way to the 8-line second stanza, and how the poem moves from surface activity to the depths of the sea/despair.

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- analyse quotations from across the poem – especially the final lines.

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“A Ballad of Home”

Question 1

- (a) How does the poet vividly describe the house?

The best responses explored the house as a symbol of the couple and noted the juxtaposition between the ‘half-built’ house of the early days of their marriage, and then ‘Ten years on’ when the house is complete and full of children, pets and possessions: the stuff of life. More candidates might have explored elements of punctuation – exclamations as well as run-on lines – that further express the close links between house and hearts. There was good discussion of the use of listing such as ‘flint and grit and brick’ suggesting incompleteness, effort and lots to do. Candidates often noted the simile ‘Like water through a porthole,/the sky poured in’, although better responses explored the symbolism of sky (endless possibility and hope) as well as the connotations of ‘porthole’ (going on a journey together, an exciting adventure). The ‘watchman’ featured too, although candidates might have considered more on deeper meanings linked to that intrusion with ‘his waterproof torch’. More candidates needed to include the powerful symbolism of the final lines, how the ‘house is built on our embrace’ – which points to deeper meanings i.e. the house offers a literal shelter, but also is symbolic of their steadfast and burgeoning love. The final word, with its literal and figurative play on ‘foundations’, might have been explored by more candidates.

- (b) How does the poet movingly portray the couple’s relationship?

Good responses mentioned the use of first-person plural perspective, immediately suggesting closeness and mutual enterprise. The best responses linked the kiss in the opening line to the ‘embrace’ of the penultimate line, and how the couple’s relationship underpins all descriptions of

the literal house. On a deeper level, the best responses focused on how the building of the house represents the development of the couple's relationship, which moves from 'newly married' young love, to a burgeoning family and a busy home, which still owe their origins to the couple's love. More candidates needed to explore the regularity of the quatrains – hinting at a stable relationship – and how, as a couple of candidates noted, the seven stanzas might suggest the cycle of a week which points to consistency, regularity and the passing of time. Better responses mentioned the rhetorical question and enlivening use of direct speech (implied) in the final quatrain, and how that consolidated the final assertion as well as the closeness and security of the couple's relationship.

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Paper 0408/31
Set Text

Key messages

Successful responses:

- show a detailed knowledge of texts
- address the question explicitly
- support their views with relevant textual reference
- explore closely the ways in which writers achieve their effects
- use much direct quotation in **Section B** answers to explore the detail of the writing.

Less successful responses:

- have an insecure or limited knowledge of texts
- narrate or describe aspects of texts rather than answer the question
- make assertions which are not substantiated
- merely log or explain writers' techniques
- have an insufficient range of quotations to support views and explore aspects of the writing in **Section B** answers.

General comments

There was evidence that candidates had enjoyed the texts they had studied. The most popular this session were *The Bonesetter's Daughter* and *The Sound of Waves*, with a limited number of responses to *The Government Inspector*, the short stories and the poetry anthology.

Most candidates divided their time well across their two answers for this paper. However, with equal marks available for both sections, all candidates need to devote roughly equal amounts of time to each section, rather than write extensively on the first and leave insufficient time for the second. In some cases, this imbalance was clearly owing to the candidates doing better with an extract in front of them when they did not know the text well enough to cope with the more general and whole-text demands of the second question. The extracts in the first set of questions were recognised, and their significance understood by the vast majority of candidates. The most common problem this session arose from a lack of detailed, specific reference to support points in **Section B** essay questions. Some of the least successful **Section B** answers simply provided an overview of their chosen text. A few still restricted their range of reference to the extract provided for **Section A**, occasionally even when this was directly forbidden in the wording of the question.

The strongest answers showed an impressive knowledge of the text, with candidates skilfully incorporating concise quotations to support their ideas. In **Section A**, the most successful responses had a clear focus on the wording of the question, exploring details from across the given extract. For **Section B** questions, the most successful candidates were able to recall from the whole text an extensive range of references which they deployed effectively in their response to the question. In less successful responses across both sections of the paper, an absence of direct textual support led to writing that was overly dependent on assertion and explanation. In **Section A**, where quotations were used, they were then reworded or simply explained. In **Section B**, some candidates struggled with expressing ideas and tended to link assertion to literary devices or themes which were not exemplified. A common issue with both sections in this session was the inclusion of extensive cultural or biographical detail that was not linked or relevant to the demands of the question.

As has been evident in previous sessions, the most successful responses tailored their material to the key words in the question from start to finish: these answers engaged directly with those words in questions designed to elicit personal responses to the writing, words such as 'memorably', 'powerful', 'dramatic',

'revealing' 'vividly', 'striking'. There were, however, some responses that made only a limited attempt to address these key words. In these responses, candidates often made a point, followed by an assertion that this was relevant to the demands of the question, even when it was not. Some responses provided overly long introductory and concluding paragraphs that take time to craft but can be given little or no credit because of their generality. Pre-learned information about themes, context and characters in introductions, not related to the question, was most evident where they wrote the same introduction to their **Section B** response on the same text. Candidates should be told that detailed knowledge on its own cannot achieve the highest reward; they should tailor relevant material from their knowledge to address the specific demands of the question set.

Comments on specific questions

Section A

Question 1

Most candidates engaged with Shinji's battle against the high seas, his determination to succeed and the risk to his life. Better responses supported this battle through references such as 'inch by inch' as he slowly moved through the water. These were also aware of the dramatic aspects where he risked his life and was 'all but dragged' into the sea. Some focused on how nature rewarded Shinji's bravery and determination, 'by good luck a wave swept him forward' linking this to the rest of the novel and his bond with nature and the sea. The strongest responses explored the shift in mood and atmosphere as Shinji triumphs over the forces of the sea.

Candidates were generally able to comment on the difficulty of the task undertaken by Shinji and frequently commented on how this related to his character and to the future events of the novel. Fewer candidates took the opportunity to comment on the contribution to the effects of the passage made by: figurative language ('...it was as though a drill...like an invisible bludgeon...' etc.); the syntax (the triplet of 'His drenched body was at fever heat, his face burning hot, and his temples were throbbing violently' or the repetition of the personal pronoun 'He...' to start multiple sentences) and the use of sibilance and/or alliteration ('...bludgeon belaboured...forms of the four...')

Less successful responses were, as ever, narrative in approach, working through parts of the passage but with little focus on the question or understanding of this highly dramatic moment. They tended to paraphrase the passage, sometimes in isolation, with no hints of understanding the wider text. A few spent valuable time writing about how he won Hatsue rather than focusing on the actual passage.

Question 2

Too few responses to provide meaningful comment. Those who did answer this question appeared unfamiliar with the text.

Question 3

Most responses showed understanding of the ways in which this extract introduces the main characters and themes, many commenting on how Tan creates a sense of mystery to engage the reader. Themes of lies, secrecy, communication, cultural background, superstitions, and mother/daughter relationships were all identified. The best responses saw this introduction to LuLing and Ruth's difficult relationship as highlighting the importance of memory, with some explaining the importance to Ruth of learning about her mother's previous life in China. Precious Auntie featured highly in the best responses, but less successful responses demonstrated surface understanding of the text. They wrote about the family being poor as they slept on brick beds and together which lacked awareness of the close relationship between Precious Auntie and LuLing which is significant in this introduction.

Candidates generally saw the importance of this passage and were able to contextualise it in terms of the novel's development. Some were drawn into simply explaining how the matters referred to in the opening were developed or resolved in the continuing novel. Candidates also were generally able to write a personal response to the care and affection shared between Precious Auntie and LuLing. Few candidates, however, took the opportunity to write about the effects achieved in the passage of language (the figurative expression 'like a parched roof' or 'swung like the happy ears of palace dogs'); syntax (the parallel structuring of 'She scrubbed...She parted...She wet...'); or structure in general (the movement from fact to memory to story and

to well-intentioned deceit). Weaker responses were very general and wrote about what the introduction to a novel needed to be successful, rather than what was here in the passage.

Question 4

Most candidates who answered this question were aware of the context and had a general sense of the characters' motivations. Candidates showed some understanding of the two men, the irony of their situation and what they revealed about themselves – mainly that they were duping each other. These responses explored the unpleasant way Khlestakov talks about his father, referring to the rude language such as 'the old duffer's a stubborn as a mule and twice as stupid,' seeing this as reflecting his true nature. The more successful responses suggested how the characters are similar in their desire to use others for their own advantage, commenting on Khlestakov's closing speech and his statement, 'I'm just like you – can not abide two –faced people.' Few candidates, however, took advantage of the opportunities offered by the stage directions ('aside...aloud') or the overwhelming sense of dramatic irony to make comments on the effectiveness of the passage when it came to audience response and involvement. Weaker responses simply wrote a few points about the characters without focusing on what the passage reveals about them.

Question 5

Most candidates had a literal understanding of the events of the poem, and that the failure of the watchers to see the dolphins had a significance beyond their factual non-appearance. Candidates in general were less aware of how the language (the sibilance of 'sky...screeching...sky...sat', the personification of 'abused Aegean', or the tricolon of 'sea...sun...wind') contributed to the effect of the poem, or what the desperate and eventually disappointed expectation of an 'epiphany' might suggest about life.

Successful responses understood the watchers' excitement and hopes at the start and disappointment by the end. They were able to quote successfully how 'even the lovers' watched the sea and the expectant parents wishing/hoping their children might see the dolphins. Weak responses were unsure of who the 'watchers' were and comments on the poem were general and unsupported.

Question 6

There were very few responses to this question. Most candidates demonstrated some understanding of the unfair treatment of the Kelveys, referring to the snobbery of the other girls who assume that Lil would be embarrassed by admitting she will be a servant when she grows. Many candidates referred to the way Lil appeared unmoved, some thinking this was because she did not feel hurt. The strongest responses commented on how Lena behaves spitefully towards Lil because of this lack of reaction, seeing her as being disturbing in her desire to hurt Lil because of the reaction of the other girls. The ways in which the girls feel a strong sense of power when Lena mentions the Kelveys' father being in prison, citing their 'deeply, deeply excited, wild with joy' behaviour. Most candidates gave a personal response to the treatment of the Kelveys, seeing the reaction of Aunt Beryl as particularly disturbing. They used the simile 'as if they were little chickens' to show how Aunt Beryl dehumanised the Kelveys. Less successful responses provided a narrative overview with little understanding of the disturbing aspects of how the Kelvey girls were treated. Responses to this text were generally very brief and conveyed little understanding of the passage and the wider text.

Section B

Question 7

Most candidates focused on Shinji's work ethos and how it rewarded him with Hatsue in the end. They wrote about the way fishing, and nature, is central to his life. They explained how he is committed to supporting his mother and brother, giving Hiroshi opportunities such as the school trip that he was unable to have. Less successful responses attempted to use the extract from **Question 1**, quoting from it to show he works hard to impress Terukichi with his 'get up and go.'

Terukichi was discussed as a self-made man who was rich due to his work ethos. Others compared Yasuo and Shinji in a straightforward way, using textual evidence to show that Yasuo is fat and lazy, with Shinji doing his work on Terukichi's boat. A few responses considered the differences between the work of men and women, referring to Shinji's mother and Hatsue as diving women.

Many candidates were tempted to write at length about Mishima's ideological and cultural positioning, with very few references to character, event, or the contribution of language, form or structure.

Question 8

Insufficient responses on which to provide meaningful feedback.

Question 9

Most candidates discussed the Chang family as the villains of the novel, particularly in relation to their impact on Lu-Ling's family. They wrote about the Chang family as coffin makers, bandits, opium addicts and generally the evil characters of the text. The Changs were associated with death and disaster and guilty of having caused the deaths of Precious Auntie's father and husband to be as well as ultimately her suicide. More successful responses traced their impact through the book to Gaoling's escape to America. Candidates in general were able to offer an account of the actions of the Chang family, with an emphasis upon cruelty, manipulation and greed, the strongest with illustration from the text. With such a complex story-line and multiple characters in the novel, the temptation for many candidates was to be drawn into retelling of the events of the story that featured the Changs.

A few candidates confused the Chang family with LuLing's family and therefore struggled to meet the criteria for Level 1 performance.

Question 10

Most candidates had a clear awareness of the characters' situations and roles in the play, the events surrounding them, and a general sense of Gogol's estimation of their character. They related their actions and relationships with other characters to their abuse of power and willingness to deceive others. Close reference to the text was less assured than in **Section A** with the exception of answers that selected the Postmaster, which in general contained textual detail and close reference to events and speeches. The general line of approach for all candidates was to make a broad assertion on character, illustrate this with reference to an event, and repeat the assertion. This was successful to a degree but was very seldom matched with any close reference to the details of what was said by the characters and what the details of the language and other dramatic devices might reveal.

Question 11

Insufficient responses to provide any meaningful feedback on this question.

Question 12

There were a limited number of responses to this question and these focused on the 'mysterious' aspects of the tiger and the woman. Most considered it to be due to the woman needing a man and relationship. The lack of textual detail made the majority of responses very narrative in approach.

WORLD LITERATURE

Paper 0408/32
Set Text

Key messages

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Question 5

Most candidates had a literal understanding of the events of the poem, and that the failure of the watchers to see the dolphins had a significance beyond their factual non-appearance. Candidates in general were less aware of how the language (the sibilance of 'sky...screeching...sky...sat', the personification of 'abused Aegean', or the tricolon of 'sea...sun...wind') contributed to the effect of the poem, or what the desperate and eventually disappointed expectation of an 'epiphany' might suggest about life.

Successful responses understood the watchers' excitement and hopes at the start and disappointment by the end. They were able to quote successfully how 'even the lovers' watched the sea and the expectant parents wishing/hoping their children might see the dolphins. Weak responses were unsure of who the 'watchers' were and comments on the poem were general and unsupported.

Question 6

There were very few responses to this question. Most candidates demonstrated some understanding of the unfair treatment of the Kelveys, referring to the snobbery of the other girls who assume that Lil would be embarrassed by admitting she will be a servant when she grows. Many candidates referred to the way Lil appeared unmoved, some thinking this was because she did not feel hurt. The strongest responses commented on how Lena behaves spitefully towards Lil because of this lack of reaction, seeing her as being disturbing in her desire to hurt Lil because of the reaction of the other girls. The ways in which the girls feel a strong sense of power when Lena mentions the Kelveys' father being in prison, citing their 'deeply, deeply excited, wild with joy' behaviour. Most candidates gave a personal response to the treatment of the Kelveys, seeing the reaction of Aunt Beryl as particularly disturbing. They used the simile 'as if they were little chickens' to show how Aunt Beryl dehumanised the Kelveys. Less successful responses provided a narrative overview with little understanding of the disturbing aspects of how the Kelvey girls were treated. Responses to this text were generally very brief and conveyed little understanding of the passage and the wider text.

Section B

Question 7

Most candidates focused on Shinji's work ethos and how it rewarded him with Hatsue in the end. They wrote about the way fishing, and nature, is central to his life. They explained how he is committed to supporting his mother and brother, giving Hiroshi opportunities such as the school trip that he was unable to have. Less successful responses attempted to use the extract from **Question 1**, quoting from it to show he works hard to impress Terukichi with his 'get up and go.'

Terukichi was discussed as a self-made man who was rich due to his work ethos. Others compared Yasuo and Shinji in a straightforward way, using textual evidence to show that Yasuo is fat and lazy, with Shinji doing his work on Terukichi's boat. A few responses considered the differences between the work of men and women, referring to Shinji's mother and Hatsue as diving women.

Many candidates were tempted to write at length about Mishima's ideological and cultural positioning, with very few references to character, event, or the contribution of language, form or structure.

Question 8

Insufficient responses on which to provide meaningful feedback.

Question 9

Most candidates discussed the Chang family as the villains of the novel, particularly in relation to their impact on Lu-Ling's family. They wrote about the Chang family as coffin makers, bandits, opium addicts and generally the evil characters of the text. The Changs were associated with death and disaster and guilty of having caused the deaths of Precious Auntie's father and husband to be as well as ultimately her suicide. More successful responses traced their impact through the book to Gaoling's escape to America. Candidates in general were able to offer an account of the actions of the Chang family, with an emphasis upon cruelty, manipulation and greed, the strongest with illustration from the text. With such a complex story-line and multiple characters in the novel, the temptation for many candidates was to be drawn into retelling of the events of the story that featured the Changs.

A few candidates confused the Chang family with LuLing's family and therefore struggled to meet the criteria for Level 1 performance.

Question 10

Most candidates had a clear awareness of the characters' situations and roles in the play, the events surrounding them, and a general sense of Gogol's estimation of their character. They related their actions and relationships with other characters to their abuse of power and willingness to deceive others. Close reference to the text was less assured than in **Section A** with the exception of answers that selected the Postmaster, which in general contained textual detail and close reference to events and speeches. The general line of approach for all candidates was to make a broad assertion on character, illustrate this with reference to an event, and repeat the assertion. This was successful to a degree but was very seldom matched with any close reference to the details of what was said by the characters and what the details of the language and other dramatic devices might reveal.

Question 11

Insufficient responses to provide any meaningful feedback on this question.

Question 12

There were a limited number of responses to this question and these focused on the 'mysterious' aspects of the tiger and the woman. Most considered it to be due to the woman needing a man and relationship. The lack of textual detail made the majority of responses very narrative in approach.

WORLD LITERATURE

Paper 0408/33
Set Text

Key messages

Successful responses:

- show a detailed knowledge of texts
- address the question explicitly
- support their views with relevant textual reference
- explore closely the ways in which writers achieve their effects
- use much direct quotation in **Section B** answers to explore the detail of the writing.

Less successful responses:

- have an insecure or limited knowledge of texts
- narrate or describe aspects of texts rather than answer the question
- make assertions which are not substantiated
- merely log or explain writers' techniques
- have an insufficient range of quotations to support views and explore aspects of the writing in **Section B** answers.

General comments

There was evidence that candidates had studied a wider range of texts than in June 2023. *The Sound of Waves* was the most popular with the majority answering on **Questions 1** and **7**. In this session, some candidates chose poetry for **Section A** and *The Sound of Waves* for **Section B**. A few candidates responded to *The Bonesetter's Daughter* in both sections, but there were too few to provide any meaningful feedback on performance.

Most candidates divided their time well across their two answers for this paper. However, with equal marks available for both sections, all candidates need to devote roughly equal amounts of time to each section, rather than write extensively on the first and leave insufficient time for the second. In some cases, this imbalance was clearly owing to the candidates doing better with an extract in front of them when they did not know the text well enough to cope with the more general and whole-text demands of the second question. The extracts in the first set of questions were recognised, and their significance understood by the vast majority of candidates. The most common problem this session arose from a lack of detailed, specific reference to support points in **Section B** essay questions. Some of the least successful **Section B** answers simply provided an overview of their chosen text. A few still restricted their range of reference to the extract provided for **Section A**, occasionally even when this was directly forbidden in the wording of the question.

The strongest answers showed an impressive knowledge of the text, with candidates skilfully incorporating concise quotations to support their ideas. In **Section A**, the most successful responses had a clear focus on the wording of the question, exploring details from across the given extract. For **Section B** questions, the most successful candidates were able to recall from the whole text an extensive range of references which they deployed effectively in their response to the question. In less successful responses across both sections of the paper, an absence of direct textual support led to writing that was overly dependent on assertion and explanation. In **Section A**, where quotations were used, they were then reworded or simply explained. In **Section B**, some candidates struggled with expressing ideas and tended to link assertion to literary devices or themes which were not exemplified. A common issue with both sections in this session was the inclusion of extensive cultural or biographical detail that was not linked or relevant to the demands of the question.

As has been evident in previous sessions, the most successful responses tailored their material to the key words in the question from start to finish: these answers engaged directly with those words in questions designed to elicit personal responses to the writing, words such as ‘memorably’, ‘powerful’, ‘dramatic’, ‘revealing’, ‘vividly’, ‘striking’. There were, however, some responses that made only a limited attempt to address these key words. In these responses, candidates often made a point, followed by an assertion that this was relevant to the demands of the question, even when it was not. Some responses provided overly long introductory and concluding paragraphs that take time to craft but can be given little or no credit because of their generality. Pre-learned information about themes, context and characters in introductions, not related to the question, was most evident where they wrote the same introduction to their **Section B** response on the same text. Candidates should be told that detailed knowledge on its own cannot achieve the highest reward; they should tailor relevant material from their knowledge to address the specific demands of the question set.

Comments on specific questions

Section A

Question 1

Most candidates explored the unconventional nature of the lighthouse keeper and his wife, focusing on the difference between his external appearance and voice and his inner character and values. Many discussed the wife’s level of knowledge and his respect for this, some seeing ‘encyclopedic’ or ‘put her whole soul’ as examples of hyperbole. Both were mainly seen as respected in the community, even if some visitors felt a ‘meddlesome sort of sympathy’ for the lighthouse keeper because of his wife’s chatter, and their care for the lighthouse was seen as evidence of their investment in work. The wife’s attempts to make amends for having argued with her husband were occasionally interpreted as her fulfilling conventional expectations of women doing tasks associated with the home in spite of her learning and previous career as a teacher.

This was the question where candidates were least advantaged by having a prepared and practised response; all too often with this question, candidates were drawn into an extended description of traditional cultural values favoured by Mishima, and ignored the language, form and structure of the extract were ignored. A lack of detail and extended analysis was often found. For example, the recognition around how the couple treated village girls ‘as their own children’ was common, but candidates rarely considered what this might suggest specifically about the characters’ values or emotions such as generosity, integrity and unfulfilled familial love. The most successful responses considered the effects achieved by the author’s use of figurative language (‘The villagers listened spellbound...’), emotive language such as ‘squalid...neat and polished’, the alliterative ‘dead during the daytime’, or the syntactical repetition of the pronoun in ‘...she knew...she also knew...She would argue...she would chatter...’

Many candidates were determined to write about Mishima’s background and beliefs and spent too much linking aspects of the couple seen in this description to ‘Shintoism’. Closer consideration of the actual passage would have improved most answers.

Question 5

Most candidates were aware of the poem’s literal meaning and made some basic comments on its broader ideological dimension, referring to the context of World War 2. The most successful responses began to explore the structure afforded by the two voices in the poem, and how the language of the writer added to the effects of the piece. They explored figurative language (dogs, boar, old father, revolutionaries ‘being drunk’), and the adjectives in ‘sweet roots, fat grubs, slick beetles and sprouted acorns’ which shows how nature can feed itself when society cannot.

Most candidates were aware that the repetition of the title was significant, some seeing it as making the point that it is better to wait until all the political issues are resolved and others that nature has a permanence beyond humanity’s grasp and is unaffected by the self-destruction of humanity. One response drew attention to the antithesis between the boar, who believes in his tusks, and humans who are ‘dupes that talk democracy’ seeing this as showing nature possessing real force and power.

Question 7

Most candidates sensibly took the option of dividing their response into a section arguing in favour of sympathy for Chiyoko, often relating to contextual issues, a section arguing against sympathy because of her unattractive character traits, and a conclusion based on their personal response. They were able to use supporting textual detail, finding this easier with a **Section B** character-based question.

Many candidates focused on her self-perception and feelings for Shinji, seeing how she was not ideally suited to him, especially in contrast to Hatsue. This was often seen as a reason for sympathy, balanced out by her destructive jealousy. The strongest considered how she tries to make amends, recognising that Shinji had been kind about her appearance, telling her she is pretty. Others felt that her letter to her mother, saying she would not return to the island was not only an attempt to put things right, but also demonstrated weakness. They explored the symbolism of her 'Boston bag' and her insistence in believing that she was ugly. Some did not feel sorry for her as she made no attempt to improve her appearance, for example wearing a dark suit and no make-up, with many commenting that she seemed to wallow in self-pity and/or blame her parents. Some candidates approached their answers by contrasting the two girls, discussing how such a perfect and beautiful Hatsue reflected Mishima's ideal woman making it inevitable that the reader would feel sorry for Chiyoko. These candidates argued that because Chiyoko did not fit in with the ideals of the island, and was naturally drawn to the city, that she would never be accepted. Hatsue, with her ability in diving and the respect of the lighthouse keeper and his wife, would always be seen as better than Chiyoko, therefore engaging the reader's sympathy. Some candidates cited the lighthouse keeper's wife's approval of Hatsue clearing up, stating that this was not different from other girls, as a criticism of her own daughter.

