

LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

Paper 2010/12
Poetry and Prose

Key messages

For success in this examination, candidates need to:

- Read the questions carefully and identify the key words
- Use these words as a framework for their answers
- Provide textual reference in support of their points
- Select appropriate quotations and comment on them
- Explore how writers achieve their effects through language, imagery and structure
- Know the texts extremely well.

They need to avoid:

- Overlong and elaborate introductions and conclusions that sometimes make the same points in the same way
- Introducing unnecessary biographical information about the writer
- Writing at length about historical contexts at the expense of close attention to the extract
- Over-elaborate assertions about the effects of punctuation
- Identifying literary features without explaining their effects
- Quotation without comment.

General comments

There was much to commend in this session's entries, and there were many excellent responses characterised by a detailed knowledge of the text, careful sustained focus on the demands of the question, and intelligent and well-selected reference to the text, incorporating thorough analysis of such references in order to show how writers succeed in creating the effects they strive for in their writing. Quotation in the best answers was neatly embedded in the argument itself.

There were very few examples of apparently 'unseen' work offered; practically all of the candidates seem to have studied the texts. It is worth pointing out to candidates that lack of knowledge of the relevant texts will reveal itself very quickly. Even if only brief, reference to the context of the relevant passage will demonstrate a more confident command of the question.

As usual, however, by far the most regular limitation noted was candidates' unwillingness or inability to answer precisely what they are asked in the questions. This was particularly prevalent in responses to poetry, and more will be mentioned on this in the relevant section below. It was also seen in extract based questions where some candidates worked through the material without reference to the thrust of the question. As has been mentioned in previous reports, it is vital that candidates do not ignore the intensifiers in questions, words such as 'powerful', 'memorable', 'striking' as they are intended to give focus to their responses.

Less high achieving answers, as ever, made arguable and unsupported assertions and often substituted response to the question with a good deal of unnecessary, often biographical, preamble. This was particularly evident in responses to classic texts and authors, where some candidates simply repeat what they have learned from study guides. Points were often left un-argued, or quotation was offered without any indication of what it was meant to illustrate. A major limitation in answering is the use of explanatory narrative, or paraphrase, and there was still much evidence of it this year. Centres would be advised to counsel their candidates to avoid making general statements and, instead, ensure that from the outset their response is tightly directed to what the question asks for. Using the question to 'frame' the answer, and then

occasional re-focusing during the response using the key words of the question provides a sensible if basic strategy to keep answers on track and avoid irrelevance.

Further to this, it was pleasing to see candidates able to quote from the 'closed' prose texts, though more training in the use of quotation to support and illuminate a point would be valuable for many. Too often quotations seemed to be picked almost at random without any reference to their context and sometimes left out key words which contradicted the point that they were supposed to demonstrate, especially in poetry answers. It is not enough to merely make a statement and then put in a roughly appropriate quotation without further comment.

Another perennial issue is that, while candidates can recognise certain aspects of versification such as enjambment and caesura, they feel that merely identifying examples without commenting on their effects or, on some occasions simply asserting that the writer uses these devices without any illustration at all, will gain them marks. Similarly there was a lot of reference to hyperbole, anaphora and various other devices without any consideration of how they are used. Too many terms, (e.g. personification) were used very loosely. Punctuation was often given too much importance and treated in isolation from meaning, and 'negative semantic fields' and 'negative images' identified without any explanation of why this might be.

There were still a number of candidates who answered several questions rather than just one poetry question and one prose question. Given the number of marks they tended to be dealing with, this severely impacted on their performance. Assuming all schools run full trial/mock exams, they need to make sure that candidates are fully acquainted with the format and rubric of the question paper.

Comments on specific questions

Section A: Poetry

Poetry questions require candidates to explore in detail how writers convey their feelings. All six of the questions use the word 'How?' or the phrase 'In what ways?' and follow these by asking for a response to the methods employed by the poet. Candidates should be aware that they will therefore need to mention the poet regularly, and direct their answer frequently to the ways that the writer is working. Often, poetry answers get stuck at explaining what is happening in the poem – offering an overview of what the poet 'is saying' or 'trying to say' – or forget to mention the writer at all, an approach that good answers avoid. To answer the question 'How?' or 'In what ways?' a good deal of analysis of the poet's language is essential. It will always be more effective than general comments about rhyme schemes or caesuras or punctuation – claims for the effects of which were being regularly asserted, but very rarely substantiated with argument. There were lots of explanatory approaches for all the poetry questions, making it difficult to reward exploration of language and effects. Answers which analyse the effect of the poet's use of language and direct that material to the terms of the question are key to accessing the higher bands.

As ever, candidates showed a fascination with Hardy's relationship with his wife Emma which in many cases distracted them from the central thrust of the question. They even related his bereavement to the winter in *The Darkling Thrush* which distracted a great deal from the harshness of winter, and their attempts to apply it to *At the Word 'Farewell'* resulted in some very strange and unconvincing interpretations.

Hardy

Question 1 Very few candidates found it difficult not to mention something appropriate from the poem *The Darkling Thrush* that revealed the harshness of winter and they generally showed understanding of a good deal of the poem. There was some useful analysis of the images of death and burial, and personification of Frost, Winter itself, and the Century. What did cause trouble to a very large number was the required focus on Hardy and how his depiction of the season was 'vivid'. As mentioned above in the introductory remarks, this is part of a wider, prevalent problem in poetry response, and one which centres need to address head on. The language which Hardy uses needed to be explored in terms of its vivid, pictorial qualities, its ability to create and sustain mood, its tone, in order to answer how vividly he writes.

Question 2 on *At the word 'Farewell'* produced a lot of answers which spent too long talking about Hardy's relationship with Emma in setting a context for the response to the question. Better answers were able to home in on the requirements of the question – the writing, and how it is 'moving' in how it conveys 'feelings'. Quite a number of responses to this poem seemed to be influenced by a critique of the poem prominent on the Internet, one which explains clearly the circumstances of the writing and makes a lot of general comments about rhyme and alliteration. In a few cases there seemed to be some learning by heart of some

of the response as it came out in much the same format from different candidates. The drawback here was that the original critique was explanatory and thus candidates who followed this were under-directing their material to what is asked, and did not explore the language sufficiently in comparison with the claims made for rhyme-schemes, use of caesura, punctuation etc. Competent answers concentrated on the word-choice, the images and their effects, focused on feelings, and often were able to discuss the force of Fate in the poem and how Hardy presents this and its effects on him.

Poems Deep and Dangerous

Question 3 on *Football after School* was another which often produced answers which revealed a good understanding of the content, and even enabled candidates to engage with some of the images, but which often left them stopping at explaining what they mean; not directing them to how they depict the mother's feelings, and – more pointedly – 'movingly' depict these. In fact there was often too little focus on the mother and too much on the son, and his growing up. High achieving answers always explored the final stanza in detail, and its indications of the mother's own feelings of frailty, her inability to protect her son, and her worries he will share her own perceived failings – and, of course, the language through which these are presented at the end of the poem. Less confident answers omitted reference to this stanza at all, or contented themselves with an explanation of the sun/ball comparison.

Question 4 on *The Marriage of True Minds* was often fully explained, line by line, and good understanding was shown by most candidates who offered this; though there were a few brief, sketchy responses. The problem, as ever, was just that: the responses explained the poem. Candidates need to be aware that when a question asks them to 'explore' it expects more than to make clear the meaning. Very few responses really argued what was 'powerful' about the expression of 'what love means' in the poem, though there were implications made. There was much assertion that 'this is powerful' but the response clearly needs to do more if it is to answer on 'the ways' the writer 'makes' it 'powerful'. Frequently candidates made something of this in their response to Shakespeare's bullish final couplet, but conversely many answers just ignored the last two lines completely.

Songs of Ourselves

Question 5 on *The Clod and the Pebble/Song* was this year's most frequent offering, and as such provided a wide range of quality in answers. There was no difficulty in understanding the surface meanings of both poems, but the best responses tackled the need to direct the material to answer 'how the poets write memorably about love'. This required not only close analysis of the language used, but also an argument of how striking and effective this is. Careful direction of the material characterised the best responses. Moderately developed responses often 'covered' some of this by implication rather than by overt comment, while low achieving answers rarely saw the need to focus on this at all until the end of the answer when it was asserted that both poets 'therefore' wrote memorably about love, the candidate having explained the content. Weaker responses included unsupported assertions about the innocence, purity and naivety (often employing such triplets) of the malleable and put-upon clod. The interpretation of the clod as 'female love' and the pebble as 'male love' was quite often seen, usually with no attempt at justification. There were some answers which did not fully understand the Wroth poem, and failed to pick up the image of love as a child, reading the poem literally as love of a child. This was self-limiting. Overall, most candidates did have some understanding of the poems, however, and were able to see the correspondence between *Song* and what the Pebble has to say in the Blake poem. Too often, though, there was unnecessary speculation on what Blake and Wroth had experienced personally at the hands of Love, and few attempts to explore the implications of the poems; for example, why Blake presents such diametrically opposed ideas about love and what love might actually mean to both poets.

Question 6 on *Tiger in the Menagerie* proved quite challenging to some candidates as they found it difficult to understand, but tried hard to explain. Ironically, had they made clear why they found it hard to understand, and illustrated this with detailed reference to the writing, this would have constituted a good answer to the question. There were many interpretations offered – many quite fanciful, some more plausible than others, but almost without exception asserted, under-supported with textual reference, and not properly directed to the terms of the question. For example the tiger represented a lover and the menagerie was a heart, or the tiger was our suppressed violent emotions and the menagerie was where we let them out, or the tiger had something (unspecified) to do with the colonisation of India. This might have seemed a challenging poem, but the question allowed candidates an opportunity to highlight the complexities. Unfortunately very few offered a probing, evaluative analysis of the language which would have helped them develop a relevant response. A few candidates did assert that it was deliberately confusing without specifying why this might be.

Section B: Prose

No Longer at Ease

Question 7 was not a particularly popular choice and the examples seen were usually quite limited in scope. The passage was rarely fully explored and when relevant material was located candidates made rather superficial comments on it. Contrasts were made between slum area and bright lights, there was sometimes a comment about the conversation between the night-soil man and the boy, but this rarely got beyond a statement of the content. A few responses explored the differences between idealism and reality represented in the differences between Obi's poem and the observed life in Lagos. Overall, there was too little made of the 'vivid' in the terms of the question and this restricted the effectiveness of most responses.

Question 8 appeared very rarely and thus it is not possible to make much meaningful comment. There was evidence that candidates were able to make a comment on the significance of the action, revealing the way things happened in Nigeria at this time.

Northanger Abbey

Question 9 provided some very well-argued and directed responses. In most some context was offered, and some reference to the satirising of the Gothic genre of novels which Catherine is obsessed by. The best answers explored the dramatic effect this conversation might be thought to have on the budding relationship between Catherine and Henry Tilney. There was close inspection of the language of the passage, and especially the multiple questions of Henry Tilney in the penultimate paragraph and Catherine rushing off in tears to her room at the end of the passage. Weaker answers often showed an awareness of the significance of the incident in Catherine's growing up, but tended to narrate and paraphrase.

Question 10 was less popular but sensible choices of characters and occasions were generally made. Some less high achieving answers seemed to find it difficult to differentiate between foolishness and immorality in the case of John Thorpe. The question asks 'How?' and this required detail of presentation that the candidates concerned found challenging.

Silas Marner

Question 11 proved popular and there were some focused responses to this. Most candidates found Priscilla's bluntness entertaining and illustrated it from the passage, but often did not fully argue how it was 'entertaining', just left it to speak for itself. This was, by and large, the main limitation of answers to this question; candidates located very relevant material, quoted it but then did not develop the response fully enough to do themselves full justice. Very few got down to the level of looking at her language – dialect etc. – and thus responses, though relevant, were often a little underdeveloped. Catalogues of what was found entertaining formed the majority of responses, which were rarely supported/illustrated/explored. The passage needed a more thorough exploration to make the most of the question. Very few candidates looked at the whole passage, and thus the scope of their response was limited. The best answers showed how Eliot uses Priscilla as a complement to Nancy, and to provide light relief at a particularly tense moment in the novel.

Question 12 proved just as popular as **Question 11** and there were some well-developed responses to the two brothers Cass. High achieving answers were able to see that whilst not in the same league of villainy as Dunstan, Godfrey still had moral failings which made him far from a fully sympathetic character. Most answers did argue along these lines to a certain extent, and the better the relevant detail, and the direction to the terms of the question, the better the response became. There was some direct quotation of the authorial descriptions of the characters which was usually put to good use in introducing the answer. Candidates were scathing on Dunstan's immorality, and noted his blackmail and robbery. Less developed answers dealt this way with Dunstan, but then presented Godfrey too superficially as the sort of 'good brother' of this bad one.

Spies

Question 13 proved popular and the novel seemed to have been much enjoyed. Candidates were able to list a number of Stephen's feelings and were clearly aware of the situation described. Awkwardness, shock, and fear were all offered. Most realised he was embarrassed and then often went off into great detail about his 'sexual awakening' without arguing it. Too often, candidates noted the feelings without fully analysing the text and commenting on the language and presentation that would have supported their response, however. Rather like in the Hill extract question, breathless progress was made through the extract charting Stephen's feelings here and there, leading to disjointed and under-developed commentaries.

Question 14 There were very few attempts at this question so it is difficult to comment, though the few examples seen tended to start from the premise that Stephen's family compares unfavourably with Keith's in Stephen's eyes, at least in the early stages of the novel. As his eyes are opened to what is going on in the Hayward household he comes to appreciate his own parents much more and, though understated, their love and concern for him is very evident. They are also in their own way more exotic than the Haywards. Stephen's father is actually a German, and even possibly a spy for the British.

I'm the King of the Castle

Question 15 There were some good responses to how Kingshaw's unease was conveyed, though these were much less developed on how the unease was shown to be 'increasing'; most candidates seemed to ignore entirely this word in the question. Good answers covered a wide range of details, starting with noting the pathetic fallacy presaging ill, the reluctance of Kingshaw to enter the room, and revealed Kingshaw becoming more and more nervous, stammering, edging backwards to get out of the room, his imagination beginning to join the physical and contributing to what in the end seems to be presented as terror rather than 'unease'. Close reference to the language here produced detailed responses, and the few candidates who specifically pointed to the escalation in Kingshaw's fear – his breathing was mentioned in this context – did very well. Most candidates could find something relevant to say and as in **Question 13** less accomplished responses catalogued feelings of unease. Many wrote in very general terms about foreshadowing. Often candidates could not resist talking about Hooper in this context, and almost always this seemed to have the result of diluting the effectiveness of their response. Some weaker answers lost focus entirely and spent their time discussing Hooper and his bullying.

Question 16 was much less popular. Many answers broadened the question to talk about Fielding, his mother, his house and his family in general. Candidates who did this said less about the boy and what made him memorable, and seemed to penalise themselves by limiting relevant material. Most wanted to give a character sketch, and thus the answer was not directed sufficiently to develop a fully relevant response. There were some sensible comments on how he is used by Hill as a contrast to Hooper and to Kingshaw, and some very good answers picked up on the symbolism of his name and the farm.

The English Teacher

Question 17 was popular but candidates did not seem aware of what 'revealing' expected of them. Very few attempted to discuss what the conversation brought to light about the background, the lives, and the philosophies of the characters concerned. Mostly candidates retold the conversation, explaining Krishna's and the Headmaster's views in very broad terms, and claimed this is what was revealed about the characters. What was needed was inference from the 'dialogue' about what is important to these men – their passions and what makes them 'tick'. What was offered was what they say to each other.

Question 18 Few candidates offered relevant detail of Susila's sickness and subsequent death, or explored the 'moving' nature of these events. There was knowledge of how Susila contracted the disease, there was on occasion some awareness of the progression of the disease, and at times there was a description of her funeral. But mostly these were described without direction to the terms of the question. Answers tended to consider the relationship of Krishna and Susila in general, starting with the family apart and then discussing their happiness on 'convening', as it were. The illness and death of Susila was then merely fed into this narrative, and Krishna and Leela noted as affected. Much more detailed exploration was needed to make this a relevant developed response.

Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde

Question 19 was very popular and a wide range of quality of responses were seen. Good answers looked at the whole passage, carefully selecting material which indicated Jekyll's diversionary tactics – the side-swipe at Lanyon, his reticence in talking at all about Hyde, and in particular of the terms of his will, and – at the end of the passage – the request that Utterson helps Hyde when Jekyll is no more. All of these add a sense of mystery to the novel at this point, all cause the reader to be 'intrigued'. These elements and more were carefully pointed out by high achieving candidates who were able to support with well-selected textual reference, such as the way Jekyll turns 'pale' on hearing of Utterson's investigations of Hyde. Less confident candidates were often a little less comfortable with the idea of 'intriguing', though most were able to point out at least some of the mysterious reactions that are catalogued in this extract. A very small number of very under-developed responses totally missed the point and merely narrated what was happening in the extract without pointing their answers. A lot of weaker answers were far too dependent on hindsight: at this moment we do not know that Jekyll and Hyde are the same person.

Question 20 was less popular and less well handled. There were many examples of candidates trying to answer using, sometimes exclusively, the passage for **Question 19**, with predictably self-penalising results as there is very much limited relevance in it to the terms of **Question 20**. Many answers to this seemed as if they were prepared to answer a question on 'dualism', on which there was obviously a great deal of learned material, and also on the repressiveness of Victorian society, and wrote those topics regardless. Only a minority of candidates offered a balanced response, seeking both to feel sorry for Jekyll and to question the wisdom and legitimacy of his pursuits in creating the character who ultimately destroys him. These answers were able to explore, at times, the way in which feelings change about Jekyll over the course of the novel. The most accomplished answers were able to support these arguments with aptly chosen quotation – but as stated, such responses were few and far between.

Stories of Ourselves

Question 21 on *To Da-duh, in Memoriam* produced some well-focused responses but also much general explanatory material. Confident responses were able to keep the focus on 'moving' and to select appropriate material from the passage. These responses also managed to see something moving about the effects on the grand-daughter rather than just the, maybe more obvious, effects on the originally proud Da-duh. Less developed responses were often just plain running-through of the story, making a few observations on the sadness of the old lady's demise. Such answers did not stop to consider the feelings of the narrator. This question produced more apparently 'unseen' attempts than any other on the paper.

Question 22 on *Sredni Vashtar* was occasionally quite well handled, particularly on the 'serious' side. Candidates who achieved highly were often alive to the concept of 'poetic justice'. They were able to see that the treatment of the seemingly terminally ill Conradin was at best insensitive and at worst totally unacceptable, and hence the story had a very serious side to it; and whilst the bringing about of the death of Mrs de Ropp was also certainly serious, there was something grimly comic about the fact that she gets her comeuppance, ironically dying before her ill cousin. There was some evidence of candidates relishing the removal of Mrs de Ropp in the way that Conradin did. The fact that it is the writing itself – the tone and the detail – that makes this story so really amusing seemed beyond most candidates to explore, however. There was too little focus on the language of the passage to handle this side of the story.

LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

Paper 2010/13
Paper 13 Poetry and Prose

Key messages

For success in this examination, candidates need to:

- Read the questions carefully and identify the key words
- Use these words as a framework for their answers
- Provide textual reference in support of their points
- Select appropriate quotations and comment on them
- Explore how writers achieve their effects through language and imagery.

They need to avoid:

- Overlong and elaborate introductions and conclusions
- Introducing unnecessary biographical information about the writer
- Writing at length about historical contexts without paying attention to the extract
- Over-elaborate assertions about the effects of punctuation
- Identifying literary features without explaining their effects
- Quotation without comment.

General comments

There was much to commend in this session's entries, and there were many excellent responses characterised by a detailed knowledge of the text, careful sustained focus on the demands of the question, and intelligent and well-selected reference to the text, incorporating thorough analysis of such references in order to show how writers succeed in creating the effects they strive for in their writing. Quotation in the best answers was neatly embedded in the argument itself.

There were very few examples of apparently 'unseen' work offered; practically all of the candidates seem to have studied the texts. It is worth pointing out to candidates that lack of knowledge of the relevant texts will reveal itself very quickly. Even if only brief, reference to the context of the relevant passage will demonstrate a more confident command of the question.

As usual, however, by far the most regular limitation noted was candidates' unwillingness or inability to answer precisely what they are asked in the questions. This was particularly prevalent in responses to poetry, and more will be mentioned on this in the relevant section below. As has been mentioned in previous reports, it is vital that candidates do not ignore the intensifiers in questions, words such as 'powerful', 'memorable', 'striking', as they are intended to give focus to their responses.

Less high achieving answers made arguable and unsupported assertions and often substituted response to the question with a good deal of unnecessary, often biographical, preamble. Points were often left unargued, or quotation was offered without any indication what it was meant to illustrate. A major limitation in answering is the use of explanatory narrative, or paraphrase, and there was still much evidence of it this year. Centres would be advised to counsel their candidates to avoid making general statements and, instead, ensure that from the outset their response is tightly directed to what the question asks for. Using the question to 'frame' the answer, and then occasional re-focusing during the response using the key words of the question provides a sensible if basic strategy to keep answers on track and avoid irrelevance.

Further to this, it was pleasing to see candidates able to quote from the 'closed' prose texts, though more training in the use of quotation to support and illuminate a point would be valuable for many. Too often quotations seemed to be picked almost at random without any reference to their context and sometimes left

out key words, which contradicted the point that they were supposed to demonstrate, especially in poetry answers. It is not enough to merely make a statement and then put in a roughly appropriate quotation without further comment.

Another perennial issue is that, while candidates can recognise certain aspects of versification such as enjambment and caesura, they seem to feel that merely identifying examples without commenting on their effects will gain them marks. Similarly there was a lot of reference to hyperbole, anaphora and various other devices without any consideration of how they are used. Too many terms (e.g. personification) were used very loosely. Punctuation was often given too much importance and treated in isolation from meaning.

One noticeable phenomenon this session was the number of generic misidentifications made by candidates. In part, at least, this may be caused by the stress of the examination room, but so many candidates, in particular in responses to **Question 19**, referred to 'the play' that Examiners wondered whether candidates had studied a dramatisation of the novella.

There were still a number of candidates who answered several questions rather than just one poetry question and one prose question. Given the number of marks they tended to be dealing with, this severely impacted on their performance. Presumably all Schools run full trial/mock exams, but they need to make sure that candidates are fully acquainted with the format and rubric of the question paper.

Comments on specific questions

Section A

Poetry questions require candidates to explore in detail how writers convey their feelings. All six of the questions use the word 'How?' or the phrase 'In what ways?' and follow this by asking for a response to the methods employed by the poet. Candidates should be aware that they will therefore need to mention the poet regularly, and direct their answer frequently to the ways that the writer is working. Often, poetry answers get stuck at explaining what is happening in the poem – offering an overview of what the poet 'is saying' or 'trying to say' – or forget to mention the writer at all, an approach which good answers avoid. To answer the question 'How?' or 'In what ways?' a good deal of analysis of the poet's language is essential. It will always be more effective than general comments about rhyme schemes or caesuras or punctuation – claims for the effects of which were being regularly asserted, but very rarely substantiated with argument. Answers which analyse the effect of the poet's use of language and direct that material to the terms of the question are key to accessing the higher bands.

This year, most candidates appeared to be rather better prepared than in some previous sessions in that they were able to move beyond identifying literary features to comment in some detail on the effects they produce. One particular aspect which was noticeable this year was that a significant minority of candidates were able to comment meaningfully on rhythm and rhyme scheme in those terms.

As ever, candidates showed a fascination with Hardy's relationship with his wife Emma which in many cases distracted them from the central thrust of the question.

Question 1

How does Hardy powerfully depict the loss of the Titanic in The Convergence of the Twain?

This was quite a popular question, perhaps surprisingly as it is a relatively long poem. However, this seemed to encourage candidates to avoid a 'run-through' approach and instead to comment selectively. There were plenty of responses which recognised themes of human vanity, fate, wealth and the power of nature, and commented fruitfully on the images of the vessel lying on the ocean floor invaded by sea creatures. The sexual undertone of the 'intimate welding' and 'consummation' was often noted, and the increasing tension of the later stanzas was well identified by many.

Question 2

How does Hardy make you feel sympathy for the speakers in 'I Look Into My Glass' and Nobody Comes?

In general, candidates appeared slightly more confident about the first poem than the second. The themes of loneliness and old age were well recognised, although some candidates were under the impression that Hardy was in a bar rather than looking into a mirror. The contrast between the physical shrinkage and the emotional susceptibility was often well identified. Some candidates found some of the language in *Nobody Comes* rather opaque, although the idea of the lonely figure waiting was generally recognised. Biographical background featured prominently in many responses, although there were various interpretations of what that was.

Both questions on Hardy proved popular, and produced very similar levels of performance from candidates.

Question 3

How does Armitage strikingly portray the speaker's relationship with his wife in In Our Tenth Year?

This was rather unevenly handled. Most candidates recognised that the harebell had some symbolic value, although there was a wide range of interpretations as to what that was. Candidates offered a range of interpretations of the relationship, although nearly all recognised that it had changed. The ambiguities of the poem were acknowledged by some higher achieving answers, and most were able to engage with some of the poem's use of language. Candidates found it easy to offer a personal response to what they perceived the relationship to be, and there was evident enjoyment of Armitage's writing.

Question 4

How does Heaney make Follower such a moving poem?

Most candidates recognised the role reversal in the final stanza of this poem, although its nature was not always fully understood. This was a popular question, although not always successfully handled. There was some confusion about Heaney taking over his father's work, and some thought father and son did not love each other. There was some sound analysis of the way in which the father's expertise was presented, sometimes going on to comment on the son's clumsiness. However, few candidates went as far as to explore the emotions and deeper implications of the poem's final lines. One important discriminator was the extent to which candidates addressed the word 'moving'. Plenty of candidates were able to offer an explanation of what the poem is 'about', without going on to demonstrate why that was moving.

Question 5

Explore some of the ways in which Chong creates a sense of admiration in this poem.

Candidates who opted for this question almost universally demonstrated a sound knowledge of the poem's subject matter, and many responses demonstrated a strong sense of patriotism and pride. The recognition of the merlion was clear, and its force as an emblem of Singaporean identity was often discussed at considerable length. This often led to lengthy paraphrase and explanation of the nation's evolution and development, often showing heartfelt personal response. What was too often missing, however, was sufficient attention to 'the ways in which' admiration is created. Some high achieving responses managed to combine a demonstration of their knowledge of subject matter with a telling analysis of the ways in which Chong creates admiration, and, indeed, of what is being admired – the merlion or the nation it represents.

Question 6

How does Wroth strikingly convey her attitude to love in this poem?

This was the most popular of the poetry questions, and elicited many strong responses. Nearly all candidates recognised the poet's attitude, and often incorporated what was presumably taught knowledge of the autobiographical dimension into their answers. Candidates often offered an explanatory account of the poem, working through stanza by stanza. Some less successful responses interpreted the poem as advice on good parenting, but most recognised the central metaphor. Some candidates wrote about men, supporting their comments by references from the poem, and often affirming the validity of Wroth's observations and advice from personal experience. The question – and the poem – often provoked engaged

responses, although in many instances, the focus on 'How' could have been sharper: relatively few commented on form and rhyme. Those who did were able to identify effects tellingly.

Section B

Although the extract questions continue to be more popular than the discursive options for the obvious reason that the candidate has the textual details to hand while answering, it is encouraging to note that, at least for some texts and questions, the take up of the discursive option is increasing, and that a significant number of candidates are confident enough to tackle such a question. Of course, some candidates attempt to answer the discursive option using only the extract, an approach which is invariably self-limiting. However this was less prevalent than in previous sessions, and was a noteworthy phenomenon only in **Questions 14** and **20**.

Question 7

Explore the ways in which Achebe makes this moment dramatic and revealing.

This was the more popular question on what is a minority choice of text. Candidates recognised the moment as a key point in the novel, and many noted the significance of the changes in language. Mr Mark's intentions were generally understood, together with Obi's attitude at this point of the novel, and stronger responses hinted at the irony of his later failure to keep to his ideals as part of what was 'dramatic and revealing'. Less accomplished answers merely explained what was happening. The last part of the extract tended to be overlooked.

Question 8

How does Achebe vividly convey Obi's changing feelings towards Nigeria in the novel?

Few candidates attempted this option, and it tended to elicit narrative accounts of Obi's history rather than his feelings. Knowledge of the early part of the novel was evident, although the process by which the ending was reached was seldom discussed. When feelings were discussed, the 'how' of the question was not often addressed. One or two candidates used the evidence of Obi's poem written in England in developing their response, and some used the developments in his relationship with Clara and his family's reaction to his involvement with her to organise their answer.

Question 9

How does Austen's writing make you agree with Catherine's opinion of Isabella at this moment in the novel?

Although another minority choice of text, responses to this question were generally sound. Most candidates recognised and were suitably condemnatory of Isabella's hypocrisy, and responded with enthusiasm to the scales falling from Catherine's eyes. The characters involved, male and female, were well understood, and there was suitable textual support for points made, with some consideration of some of Austen's literary devices. There was evidence of real personal engagement in many of the answers.

Question 10

How does Austen make the goodness of the Morland family vivid for you?

This was less popular than the extract question, with relatively few responses seen. Answers were often general, with some lack of detail, and limited differentiation between family members. Their relatively humble origins were usually the basis for some comment, as were their affections for each other, although the opportunity to contrast them with the Tilneys for example was not taken.

Question 11

How does Eliot make this such a moving portrayal of Dolly?

Another less popular text, but candidates who approached the extract question seemed divided between those who used the extract very effectively to identify those features of Dolly's presentation which demonstrated her sympathy, tact, simple faith and good heartedness, and those who became side-tracked into recounting Silas's experiences. When candidates engaged with the richness of the extract, and in particular with Dolly's idiolect, they tended to achieve highly.

Question 12

Explore the ways in which Eliot makes William Dane's betrayal of Silas such a powerful and significant part of the novel.

Candidates almost all recognised that this was a pivotal event in the novel, although few were able to go on to explore how or why in detail. Textual knowledge was demonstrated by one very strong response which ranged widely over the text, including Silas's later return for 'closure', but such confident grasp of the detail of the novel was rare.

Question 13

How does Frayn make this conversation between Stephen and Barbara such an amusing moment in the novel?

This was the more popular question on a popular new text, and was often well handled. There were some very accomplished responses understanding Barbara's role and the ways in which she out-manoeuvres Stephen, as well as recognising, better than the character himself at this juncture, the way she awakens Stephen's pre-adolescent awareness of girls. Refreshingly, many candidates recognised the amusing qualities of the extract and were able to provide suitable evidence and analysis. The effects of the misunderstandings over 'privet' were at least partly understood by most. Some candidates were rather censorious of Stephen, in particular, for his 'childish' behaviour, perhaps forgetting that at the time of the incident, Stephen is indeed a child.

Question 14

*Explore **two** moments in the novel which Frayn makes particularly shocking for you.*

Perhaps surprisingly, this was one of the prose texts where a significant minority of candidates attempted to answer using only the extract. In this case, the extract provided limited material that could be described as 'shocking' in comparison with other parts of the novel, making the decision to use only the material printed on the paper even more self-limiting than usual. Those who used the whole novel tended to select the beating on the corrugated iron roof in the tunnel and the bayonet incident when Keith cuts Stephen. Another popular choice was the moment with Keith's father and the basket, where Stephen initially stands firm against the man, an incident where candidates empathised with Stephen's torn loyalties.

Question 15

How does Hill's writing vividly convey Kingshaw's thoughts and feelings at this point in the novel?

This was one of the most popular questions on the paper, and was often well handled. Candidates often showed a clear and perceptive understanding of Kingshaw's character, and made insightful comments about how, even when things seemed to be going well, the slightest setback plunged him into fear and self-doubt. A key discriminator here was the extent to which candidates were able to recognise the flashback and the effects it created. Stronger responses often made telling use of the details, such as Kingshaw's memory of the smell of them all as they stood together. In some cases, the paragraph in which he contemplates his wart infested hand was analysed with considerable sensitivity to show how Hill demonstrates Kingshaw's character, with its fears and inhibitions here. Others merely asserted that he wanted to pass the wart on to Hooper, demonstrating a rather superficial reading. Less confident candidates appeared to be confused as to what happened in the flashback, and its significance. There was quite a lot of use of pathetic fallacy in relation to the description of the wood and the weather, often used tellingly to mirror Kingshaw's feelings. Weaker answers merely asserted its presence. Some strong responses wrote critically on sentence structure, in particular the use of short sentences for effect. There was a strong sense that the book had been generally well taught and understood.

Question 16

Who does Hill's writing suggest is most to blame for Kingshaw's death at the end of the novel?

This was one of the most popular non-extract questions, and was frequently well answered. The invitation to present and evaluate evidence was accepted by the majority of candidates who attempted it, perhaps realising that there is not a 'right' answer. For some, the question was re-framed to be: 'How far is Hooper (or

Mrs Kingshaw) to blame for Kingshaw's suicide?' Candidates demonstrated sound knowledge of the text, with full coverage of bullying incidents attributable to Hooper, and of Mrs Kingshaw's wilful ignorance of the situation between the two boys. Many noted Hooper's triumph at the discovery of Kingshaw's body, and of Mrs Kingshaw's concern for Hooper at this moment. A good number of responses argued that Kingshaw is at least partly the agent of his own downfall, sometimes remarking on the contrast between Hooper's remorselessness and Kingshaw's kinder behaviour in Hang Wood or at Leydell Castle. Candidates generally took advantage of the opportunity to present an organised and argued point of view, and there were many accomplished responses to this question. Particular venom was reserved in many answers for Mrs Kingshaw, about whom few had a kind word. In contrast, a significant number found some excuse for Hooper's sociopathy in his upbringing.

Question 17

How does Narayan vividly convey Krishna's state of mind at this moment in the novel?

Candidates who attempted this question generally understood that Krishna's state of mind is one of anxiety and panic, and recognised the context of his wife and daughter's arrival. Only a few went on to demonstrate the 'vividly' of the question by looking at the dialogue and understanding Narayan's humour. This meant that few candidates reached the higher bands in the mark range. However, there were some attempts to write productively about other aspects of Narayan's technique, such as varied sentence structure and paragraph length.

Question 18

How far does Narayan make you sympathise with the Headmaster's wife in the novel?

The few who attempted this question generally found her difficult to sympathise with, showing some awareness of how she is presented. Some sought to sympathise with her being neglected by her husband, although few were able to offer much specific evidence in support of their assertions. Some lost direction and went on to consider how far the Headmaster himself was a sympathetic character. There was very little consideration of authorial technique ('How far does Narayan make you...').

Question 19

How does Stevenson make this such a dramatic and significant moment in the novel?

This was the most popular question in the prose section of the paper, and was often well handled. The dramatic significance of the scene was generally well grasped, as was the nature of the impending discovery. The characters involved were usually adequately understood, and there was plenty of attention to the note, the indication of someone snapping under tension, the drugs, the mask, the description of Hyde, Poole's reactions and his loyalty to Jekyll. The build-up of dramatic tension between Poole and Utterson leading to the decision to break down the door was often very closely analysed. Some stronger answers saw the significance of Poole's ongoing gradual realisation of the truth. Conversely, there were several answers which relied rather heavily on narration, answering the 'How' only indirectly, if at all.

Question 20

Explore the ways in which Stevenson hints that Jekyll and Hyde are the same person as the novel progresses.

A popular alternative to the extract question, this saw several candidates lapse into narrative description, giving little if any attention to Stevenson's writing. Most candidates identified at least some of the hints that are strewn through the novella; the cheque signed by Jekyll, the will, the remnant of Jekyll's cane at the murder scene. There were some who added to that the change in Jekyll's countenance when Hyde is mentioned, picking up on some of the descriptive details. A number of responses confined themselves solely to the **Question 19** extract. It is worth noting that answers which are based entirely on the passage are self-limiting.

Question 21

How does Shadbolt make this conversation between the narrator's father and Tom so revealing and significant?

Although this was a fairly popular question, it was very unevenly handled. Some candidates fully understood the father's hostility based on stereotyping, and the aggression he displays initially, and recognised the ways in which the Maori visitors confounded the father's stereotype by displaying greater politeness than he did. The significance of being 'the people before' was explored by some, and the contrasting relationships with the land of the Maoris and the colonists were sometimes discussed. However, there were often misreadings which suggested that the question was perhaps being answered as an unseen text seen for the first time; some thought Tom's father was the farmer, for example, and that this was a father-son conversation.

Question 22

How does Townsend Warner create such a memorable portrait of an animal in The Phoenix?

This question produced a good deal of narrative in response, with few candidates considering the way the Phoenix is portrayed, and fewer still explicitly considering memorability. Where interpretation was offered, it was often in terms of retributive justice, with limited awareness of the darkly humorous aspect of the story. Few candidates actually wrote about the physical appearance of the phoenix, although the question does invite that as at least a possible starting point. There were some attempts to ascribe a symbolic quality to the animal, though they were relatively few.

LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

Paper 2010/22
Paper 22 Drama

Key messages

- The most successful candidates were aware of the conventions of the Drama genre, understood that the texts are scripts for performance, and exhibited a personal response to them.
- Candidates needed to pay explicit attention to the wording of the question and to concentrate on how authors achieve their effects.
- The most useful opening paragraphs were brief, focused clearly on the specific question and avoided generalities, lengthy historical detail or elaborate context setting. Conclusions need to be more than a reiteration.
- A high level of achievement can only be gained by a detailed response to the author's dramatic and linguistic effects coupled with attention to what characters say, think, feel and do.
- Referring closely to the text, most effectively in the form of quotation, is the key to high achievement.
- Merely identifying literary terms or themes is an inadequate response to the tasks set.

General comments

Candidates had clearly benefitted from thorough and sensitive teaching and several answers communicated remarkable knowledge, individuality, engagement and enjoyment. Although this is not a requirement of the syllabus, it was encouraging to see candidates learning informed by having seen or viewed the plays in production.

In answers to passage-based questions, strong candidates briefly established the context with selection of apt material. The key to success was to explore the passage in detail, quote from it extensively and comment on the content of the dialogue, the language used, the stagecraft, the dramatic effectiveness and the impact on the audience. Less successful responses barely quoted from the passage or wrote about stage directions, punctuation and imagery without any comment on what was actually happening in the scene.

Too many responses this session used labels such as capitalist/socialist, protagonist/antagonist, American Dream, social responsibility, and anti-Semitism, as if merely mentioning these terms was sufficient to answer the question. The terms were often misused or misapplied, detracting from the quality of the answer.

There were many very effective answers which explored effects such as the creation of tension, intensity of emotion, use of conflict, humour, dramatic irony, foreshadowing, contrast and variety of tone with personal engagement, skill and maturity.

In answer to the discursive questions, the strongest answers selected the most apt material. Such answers ranged across the text, and included support for ideas in the form of quotation. They did not lose sight of the text as drama and considered both the structure of the play and audience response to key scenes. If the question asked for consideration of two moments, then two moments were distinguished successfully. Some candidates would have benefited from greater familiarity with the ideas of sympathy and many, surprisingly, with suspense, equating it with tension or selecting inappropriate moments in the play.

Candidates who heeded the wording of the question, such as 'striking ways' or 'vividly' produced stronger, more focused responses.

There were many effective attempts this session to discuss the reaction and sensibilities of a contemporary versus modern audience, but the candidate's own reaction and response is the one most desired. Whereas good teaching will include the cultural and historical backgrounds of texts, candidates need to assimilate and internalise this knowledge, rather than simply display it, often at such length that they do not finish their essay and therefore underachieve.

Most candidates used their time well and there were few brief answers. There were fewer purely narrative responses this year, and fewer candidates who seemed determined to answer a question from a previous session.

Comments on specific questions

ARTHUR MILLER: *All My Sons*

Question 1

There were some outstanding answers to this question. The strongest focused sharply on the stagecraft building towards the revelation of Larry's letter. They considered Ann's repetitive insistence on Larry's death, Kate's moving away and then violent wrist-grasping and letter snatching, the dismissal of Joe, the delay in revealing the contents of the letter to the audience, Ann's reluctance and hesitation, and the impact of the "low moan". Many showed a keen and intelligent interest in the complex dramatic context (sometimes, unfortunately, at the expense of attention to the passage) noting that Miller has primed the audience's curiosity about the fate of Larry since the opening scene and that Ann has been carrying this agonising information throughout, and that the letter will lead directly to Joe's suicide. Only the most accomplished understood the awkwardness at the start of the passage and what the "it" is that Ann is "not going to do anything about" – and Joe's obvious relief at this. Less successful candidates were often uncertain about the context for the passage, sometimes placing it before George's arrival, or before the revelation of Joe's guilt to Chris and to Ann. Joe's presence in the scene was often ignored entirely and many insisted that it is Kate who tells him to go. Several candidates stated that Larry flew P40s and was therefore killed directly by Joe, or that Kate already knew he was dead. Some candidates were extremely critical of Ann, seeing her as a faithless and a ruthless betrayer of her father.

Question 2

The question of sympathy for Chris was often handled with great sensitivity and a variety of convincing arguments were advanced by successful candidates: the references to his idealism and essential niceness supplied by many of the other characters, his self-deprecating humour, the professional and personal sacrifices he has made to keep his parents happy, his traumatic wartime experiences and survivor's guilt, his diffident courtship, his devastation at the revelation of his father's guilt, his pain and guilt at the end of the play and the likelihood of continued suffering. Answers were often supported by well-chosen and wide ranging reference to the text. Some candidates challenged the terms of the question to an unhelpful extent with arguments about his "unsympathetic" qualities (self-delusion bordering on hypocrisy, weakness, compromise). Other less convincing answers concentrated on arguments about sibling rivalry with Larry, which the play scarcely supports. Others drifted into narratives demonstrating pain and suffering, but never fully addressed the idea of "sympathy".

J. B. PRIESTLEY: *An Inspector Calls*

Question 3

There were many highly competent answers to this question which worked through the five characters in turn and differentiated between their responses with well-selected support. The very best heeded the wording of the question and analysed how Priestley's writing vividly conveys the responses, not merely what the responses were. Such answers brought out the dramatic qualities of the conflicts and recriminations portrayed in the passage, often placing the anger, bitterness, guilt and confidence displayed by Sheila and Eric in the context of their earlier behaviour in the play. The generational contrast between honesty and self-awareness, and concealment and self-preservation, was often thoughtfully addressed. Less successful answers drifted into unexplored generalisations about capitalism and socialism, overstated Gerald's lack of concern and bracketed him unreservedly with the senior Birlings, and misconstrued Mrs Birling's passivity as guilt. Confident candidates identified the immediate context and the unmasking of the Inspector as a fraud at the start of their answers, and often found it ironic that Mrs Birling's only contribution to the passage, after all that has transpired and her own appalling contribution to Eva's suffering, is to remonstrate with her husband about his language.

Question 4

“Suspense” proved to be a challenging concept for many candidates and was often loosely interpreted as “a moment of tension/conflict”. The most accomplished answers tended to make shrewd and specific “moment” choices, most notably the Act-spanning delays before the confirmations of Gerald and Eric’s involvement and the nervous tension generated by hearing only one side of the telephone conversations in Act Three. The gradual realisation of Eric’s role in the tragedy by the audience, his sister and finally his mother, was often handled particularly well, with sensitive attention to the impact of the dramatic irony and serious implications for all those involved. Arguments about the building of suspense *before* the Inspector’s arrival in Act One were less convincing, though the impact of the lighting changes which greet his entrance and of his intimidating presence and manner was often thoughtfully explored. It was difficult with some answers to tell which two “moments” were being selected – as the coverage was so wide-ranging and unspecific.

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE: *The Merchant of Venice*

Question 5

High achieving candidates commented on the unusual nature of this scene in which minor characters are updating the audience on a series of dramatic offstage incidents, and explored Shakespeare’s reasons for this choice. These answers questioned the reliability of two unapologetic anti-Semites mocking the anguish of Shylock in discovering that his daughter has run off with a Christian and with his valuables. Intelligent connections were often made between the dramatic losses and isolation experienced by both Shylock and his adversary, Antonio, and the dramatic contrast in the sympathies of Salerio and Solanio in portraying their respective situations. The most accomplished answers were sharply aware of the ominous implications for Antonio in the possible loss of his vessel, and the ways in which the concern of the two narrators and the reminder of the “Jew’s bond” are priming the audience for future conflict and the courtroom scene. Close attention to the language depicting the pathos of Bassanio’s parting from Antonio, and Shylock’s comically exaggerated agitation, was often a feature of the best answers. Less confident candidates often displayed confusion about the order of events and about the various ships, gondolas and vessels cited in the passage, sometimes concentrating almost exclusively on Shylock and not commenting on the second half of the passage.

Question 6

Strong answers to this question ranged confidently and selectively across the text to demonstrate the malevolent intensity and obsessiveness of Shylock’s revenge plot, and often contrasted this with the comic table-turning which Portia and Nerissa inflict on Bassanio and Gratiano in ‘the ring plot’. Shylock’s famous Act 3 Scene 1 speech outlining his grievances and justifying his vengeful intent was often thoughtfully explored, and his implacability in the courtroom scene set against the demands for mercy from Portia and others. Fewer answers, surprisingly, explored the striking nature of Shylock’s revenge being turned against him so dramatically in this scene. Successful candidates were, however, prepared to weigh up the morality of the Christian “revenge” meted out to Shylock. Less confident candidates often drifted into narrative approaches, or insisted that Jessica and Launcelot were simply getting back at Shylock by deserting him.

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE: *Henry V*

Question 7

Successful candidates divided their attention between the two strands of the question. The best saw this as the most subdued of the Eastcheap scenes because of the death of Falstaff and the imminent departure of the three men and the boy to France, and some made the downbeat point that only Pistol will survive to the end of the play. Some found the innocent images which the Hostess ascribes to Falstaff at the moment of his death and the repetitive insistence on his stone-coldness moving, whereas others found the “christom child” images ironically amusing given Falstaff’s lifestyle choices, and the Hostess’s handling of the dead Knight bawdily comic. There was much thoughtful unpicking of her malapropisms and some references to the running joke of Bardolph’s nose. The irony in Pistol’s warnings to the Hostess given the criminal intent of his French trip was often pointed out, and the reasons behind Nym’s sad inability to kiss the Hostess goodbye also noted. Less successful candidates tended to quote sections and to label them “amusing” or “moving”, but found exploration of both the language and the context very difficult. Some clearly wanted to focus on Henry’s development rather than the set question, and saw the passage as merely portraying the youthful excesses he has now outgrown.

Question 8

There were some strikingly strong, detailed and wide-ranging answers to this question and, conversely, some very vague and generalised responses. The best answers to this question could anchor thoughtful reflections on the French to specific details. Candidates who explored the implications of the tennis ball gift, the contrast between the Dauphin and his father, the negligent defending of Harfleur, the vaingloriousness and triviality of the pre-battle conversation and the brutal slaying of the baggage boys tended to be the most successful. Some confident candidates also managed to refine and extend their argument by focusing on Katherine's liveliness and good humour, Montjoy's honourable conduct, and the King's restraint and common sense. Less successful candidates constructed arguments which focused more on Henry than the French, or wrote undeveloped arguments about the contrast with Henry's forces.

J. LAWRENCE AND R. E. LEE: *Inherit The Wind*

Question 9

There were some strong responses to Hornbeck's first appearance, and many picked up and made good use of the hints in the introductory stage directions such as: "sneers...contrast...impertinent...contempt...", to scrutinise his words and actions throughout the passage. His sarcasm was often thoughtfully explored and his jokes, largely at the expense of Hillsboro and its attitudes, explained. The most accomplished not only engaged closely with his language (particularly his description of Brady) but also with the stage action and the use of his straw hat, his response to the monkey, and his choice of the hot dog. Some candidates were totally immune to his humour and expressed rather overstated hostility to Hornbeck for this early stage of the play. Other candidates took the question as an opportunity to write about attitudes in Hillsboro, rather than about Hornbeck himself, and the striking introduction of a major character.

Question 10

Candidates tended to be confident exploring her early timidity, fear of her father, concern for Bert and unthinking acceptance of the community ethos. They were not always as sharply focused on the "change" moments and particularly her public defences of Bert in court and at the bible meeting, and, most importantly, her rebirth as a free thinker (with suitcase) in the final scene.



LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

Paper 2010/23
Paper 23 Drama

Key messages

- The most successful candidates were aware of the conventions of the Drama genre, understood that the texts are scripts for performance, and exhibited a personal response to them.
- Candidates needed to pay explicit attention to the wording of the question and to concentrate on how authors achieve their effects.
- The most useful opening paragraphs were brief, focussed clearly on the specific question and avoided generalities, lengthy historical detail or elaborate context setting. Conclusions need to be more than a reiteration.
- A high level of achievement can only be gained by a detailed response to the author's dramatic and linguistic effects coupled with attention to what characters say, think, feel and do.
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- Merely identifying literary terms or themes is an inadequate response to the tasks set.

General comments

Candidates had clearly benefitted from thorough and sensitive teaching and several answers communicated remarkable knowledge, individuality, engagement and enjoyment. It was encouraging to see candidates' learning informed by having seen or viewed the plays in production.

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Too many responses this session used labels such as capitalist/socialist, protagonist/antagonist, American Dream, social responsibility, and anti-Semitism, as if merely mentioning these terms was sufficient to answer the question. The terms were often misused or misapplied, detracting from the quality of the answer.

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Candidates who heeded the wording of the question, such as 'strikingly' and 'significant', produced stronger, more focussed responses.

There were many effective attempts this session to discuss the reaction and sensibilities of a contemporary versus modern audience, but the candidate's own reaction and response is the one most desired. Whereas good teaching will include the cultural and historical backgrounds of texts, candidates need to assimilate and

internalise this knowledge, rather than display it, often at such length that they do not finish their essay and therefore underachieve.

Most candidates used their time well and there were few brief answers. There were fewer purely narrative responses this year, and fewer candidates who seemed determined to answer a question from a previous session.

Comments on specific questions

ARTHUR MILLER: *All My Sons*

Question 1

This was a popular choice. To answer this question fully, candidates needed to move beyond what the feelings of the character are, to consider how they are strikingly conveyed through stage directions, tone and language. Many candidates identified that Kate is angry at the start of the passage because she thinks the family want to accept Larry's death. Stronger candidates went on to explore how her tone is conveyed in the stage directions and italicised words. Many candidates thought it was striking that Kate refused to accept Larry's death after three-and-a-half years and wanted to avoid Chris's repeated requests to forget Larry. Stronger answers considered how this is conveyed: by Kate dramatically pressing the top of her head and asking for an aspirin to try to change the conversation. Perceptive responses developed an analysis of this to suggest that Kate's repeated headaches are the result of the emotional and mental effort it takes her to maintain her belief that Larry is not dead. Most candidates noted the striking change of tone as Kate's '*smile vanishes*', and she conveys her suspicions to Joe about Chris and Ann's marriage. Her conversation with Joe was often explored in detail: many candidates commented on Kate's striking manner of simply stating what she wishes to be true, in this case: '*He's not going to marry her.*' The best candidates moved on from Kate to consider the thoughts and feelings of Chris and Joe; suggesting that Chris cared for Kate, but that he wanted her to acknowledge Larry's death so that he could get on with his life and marry Ann. They considered this was strikingly conveyed in Chris's first speech and noted its emotional intensity as she looks into his face, and he pleads with her to forget Larry. The repeated '*Mother*', hesitant phrasing shown by the ellipsis and dash, and the gentle questions were all taken as evidence of his love and concern for her. Chris's use of the train metaphor was often explained in simple terms, such as that the train represented Larry, rather than explored, as in the frustration Chris feels is strikingly conveyed in the passivity of the passengers and their lack of action and control of the situation, as they wait in limbo for something which is never going to arrive. Candidates didn't find as much to say about Joe, but most pointed out that Keller's challenge to Kate's delusion is very weak in his "*So what?*" and "*Now listen, kid...*" because he doesn't want to upset her. Useful stage directions have him "*sharply watching her reaction*" and he tries to jolly her along.

Question 2

This was also a popular choice, and candidates took different approaches to this question. The best answers tracked the theme of deception through the whole play and across a range of characters. Some focused on one main character and explored his or her self-deception in great detail, while others considered Kate, Chris and Joe, and dealt more briefly with each of them. To answer this question fully, candidates needed to do more than identify the character's self-deception; they also needed to consider its significance in the play. Most candidates dealt with Joe and his self-deception about his responsibility for the deaths of the 21 air crew, as well as Larry, and his treatment of Steve Deever. Stronger candidates considered his motives for maintaining his deception: that he needed to build up his business to provide financially for his wife and family. A few perceptive candidates thought he was deceiving himself over his motives, too, because it can't be right to value the success of a business above the lives of young men – including one of your own sons. Some candidates pointed out that the significance of this is so central to the play that it is held in its title; and that by the end of the play, Joe has realised that the dead men were "All My Sons", prompting him to atone for his guilt with his suicide. Most candidates identified Kate's self-deception as being about Larry's death, which affects her ability to accept Chris and Ann's relationship: if she were to accept Larry's death, she says she would also have to accept that Joe killed him, which would lead to his criminal act about the cracked cylinders being acknowledged. Candidates who considered Chris's self-deception – about his father's guilt – also explored his experiences during the war, when he witnessed men sacrificing their own lives so that others might live. Some candidates did not consider the significance of the self-deception at all, thus limiting their answers.

J. B. PRIESTLEY: *An Inspector Calls*

Question 3

This was a popular choice of text and question. Candidates generally found plenty of material for comment in the passage: the strongest answers remained firmly focused on the passage itself, and the question which directs candidates to explore the writing. The most successful answers often selected some of the following: Mrs Birling's severe condemnation of her own son, and the manner in which she does this; the dramatic irony of her being the only one not aware of this, heightened by Sheila's increasingly desperate attempts to stop her; Sheila's crying; the Inspector's methods of setting the trap for Mrs Birling; his control of the whole scene, down to looking at his watch; the extreme emotion of all the Birlings as they realise the truth; and the orchestrated climax of the last three lines. Some approached their answer by commenting on the dramatic contrast between Mrs Birling, Sheila, and the Inspector. Perceptive answers showed understanding both of the writer at work here, and the response of the audience. The tone of the characters, for example Mrs Birling's striking, formal and harsh sentencing of the young man, as she numbers her points and leaves no room for doubt (*'he'd be entirely responsible'*, as she speaks *'triumphantly'*) were explored. The highest achieving candidates commented on the striking staging of the last three lines, such as the heightened tension of the silence on stage and auditorium, created as the Inspector holds up his hand; the increased anticipation as the front door is heard, and all characters on stage look towards the door to focus the audience on the person entering; Eric's entrance and his *'pale and distressed'* appearance seeming to confirm his transgressions; but also Priestley's dramatic stopping of the scene at that climax before the interrogation of Eric can begin. Less confident candidates wrote a list of the stage directions and punctuation used and asserted they were striking, without consideration of the character speaking and the context, and with little understanding of the piece as drama.

Question 4

Most candidates used detailed material from the start of the play to comment on the engagement. Most thought it was memorable that Mr Birling was so keen on the marriage because it united his business interests with Gerald's family, but it is over-stating matters to claim that the marriage was actually arranged by Sheila's parents. Many candidates explored the effects of Gerald's affair with Daisy, and thought Sheila was right to break off the engagement. Stronger answers went on to consider Sheila's role: she learns to assume responsibility for Eva's suicide during the play, and so she is a changed person by the end, whereas Gerald does not consider he is to blame, especially after he discovers that the Inspector is fake and apparently no-one outside will know of his affair. There was some exploration of the language used by Sheila at moments of distress. Perceptive candidates often explored how Priestley uses the relationship to comment on particular themes: social class, the role of women, social responsibility, social morality, money, or ideas of romantic love. Some candidates needed to move beyond a recounting of the engagement and the events leading to its being broken, to consider what was memorable about how Priestley depicts it. Candidates needed to select appropriate material from throughout the play to support their answer.

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE: *The Merchant of Venice*

Question 5

Candidates who gave a brief context for this scene had a clearer overview of Shylock's motives and attitudes during this passage. Shylock's lengthy opening speech listing his suffering at the hands of Antonio was very well commented on by most candidates, who were often able to select specific words and phrases and comment on their effects. Popular ones were: *'misbeliever'*, which gave candidates the opportunity to point out that Shylock was abused because of his faith; and *'cut-throat dog'*, which candidates thought debased Shylock to the lowly, unclean level of *'dog'* and stripped him of his humanity. Most candidates unsurprisingly felt sympathy for Shylock at this stage in the passage, and during Antonio's response. Some candidates maintained their sympathy during Shylock's next speech, taking his stated desire to be friends, his *'kindness'*, and his offer to lend money without interest at face value. Candidates who had a better overview of the passage judged Shylock to be cleverly baiting a trap for Antonio here. Some candidates seemed to stop before reaching Shylock's last speech, which meant that they missed a key point: his setting the bond of the pound of flesh. Stronger answers commented that this horrific bond clearly shows Shylock's hate of Antonio and his murderous desire for revenge, and they varied in their personal response to him, with most disliking Shylock for his treachery and thinking he has now gone too far. Some thought he was justified in his revenge after the constant abuse received from Antonio; others quoted *'pleaseth'* to show that they felt disgusted by Shylock enjoying the thought of Antonio's painful death. The question encourages a personal response; some candidates simply needed to say what they felt, rather than spending too long listing the differences between an Elizabethan audience's response and that of a modern-day audience, instead of

focusing on the writing of the passage.

Question 6

There were many answers to this question too. Candidates were split down the middle as to whether they were persuaded that the marriage would be happy or not, with most taking a balanced approach before deciding. Some felt that they never really knew each other very well before getting married, and that Bassanio's getting into debt would make them unhappy. There seems little doubt that Bassanio was attracted to Portia by her wealth and looks; but there is mutual attraction there too. Candidates decided how far Portia's hints to Bassanio as to which casket to choose were actual cheating, or rather an intelligent way to follow her late father's will and still get her own way too. Bassanio's friendship with Antonio was often seen as too close to allow the marriage to be happy; but Portia's willingness to help Antonio for Bassanio's sake, and her ability to do so, was often viewed as evidence of her love for Bassanio. The ring was sometimes seen as a betrayal by Bassanio, and as a sign of a future of betrayals and an unhappy marriage; but others dismissed this as unimportant, since Portia forgives Bassanio. Whatever conclusion candidates reached, they needed to select appropriate material from throughout the play in support of their case. It was evident from their engagement with the task that candidates often enjoyed answering this question.

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE: *Henry V*

Question 7

There were very few responses to this question. Candidates had a good overview of the context and highlighted the despair of the French, their denigration of the English and their urgency to fight back. The comedic aspects of the French exclamations were largely ignored, as were the exaggerated descriptions of English weather and the English themselves. Responses were generally narrative in approach, with very little comment on the language or the passage as a piece of drama.

Question 8

Too few answers were submitted to make comment appropriate.

J. LAWRENCE & R. E. LEE: *Inherit the Wind*

Question 9

Too few answers were submitted to make comment appropriate.

Question 10

Too few answers were submitted to make comment appropriate.