

# LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

Paper 2010/12  
Poetry and Prose 12

## Key messages

In successful responses, candidates:

- Show a clear understanding of the detail of texts.
- Select material that addresses the question.
- Integrate well-selected references to support their responses.
- Explore sensitively ways in which writers achieve their effects.
- Write personal responses to texts, informed by relevant textual detail.

In less successful responses, candidates:

- Show only a basic grasp of surface meanings.
- Unload 'themes' they have prepared without focusing on the question's key words.
- Use long quotations or a list of shorter quotations without analysis of specific words.
- Spot writing devices without exploring the effects created.
- Are overly dependent on explanation and assertion.

## General comments

There was some evidence of outstanding work this session in which the most successful candidates explored texts with insight and individuality. There were some examples of candidates who spent too much time on their first response, which adversely affected their performance on their second question. Some candidates showed confidence in answering their poetry question where they could refer to the poem printed in the question paper but wrote less successfully on their general essay question which required the memorising of relevant textual detail.

Although most candidates were familiar with the layout of the paper, there were examples of candidates answering several questions rather than two. There were instances, too, of candidates relying exclusively on the extracts printed in the prose passage-based questions when answering the prose general essay questions; this approach was self-limiting. Most candidates wrote in legible handwriting; this is essential in communicating their ideas clearly to Examiners, and it is important that teachers remind candidates about this.

The strongest responses were those in which candidates addressed the question. As explained in previous reports, this is an essential aspect of the examination: questions are not to be regarded as mere prompts for candidates to unload exhaustively their knowledge of the poem or character or theme mentioned in the question. Candidates should tailor their material to meet the specific demands of the question.

Successful answers began by engaging with the key words of the question. This is a sensible strategy when writing an examination answer in 45 minutes. Those candidates who wrote a brief plan (often using a bulleted list or mind map) before starting their answer tended to produce more clearly organised responses. There were again this session candidates who offered lengthy introductions, with extraneous biographical or social context material that simply delayed the actual start of their answer to the question. Again, some candidates were determined to state the themes they had studied at the start of their answers and occasionally during their answer even when this was not relevant to the question that had been asked. This approach wastes candidates' time.

The most convincing personal responses embedded textual references to support the points being made. It was clear that many candidates had learned much direct quotation to use in answering the prose general essay questions. This not only provided support and evidence but also gave candidates the opportunity to explore ways in which writers use language. The least successful responses to these questions were characterised by an over-reliance on unsupported assertion.

Teachers should remind candidates of their responsibility to provide specific supporting detail from the text and not simply line references. There were instances of candidates directing Examiners to lines in poems and extracts without making it clear which word or phrase was being referred to. Some candidates used ellipses in the middle of quotations, presumably to shorten them, but they left out the actual word(s) that would support the point being made. These candidates would have benefited from quoting the word(s) they needed to support their point and avoiding the use of ellipsis altogether.

There was again this session much evidence of logging features without close analysis of *precise* ways in which writers use these devices to create *specific* effects. As was the case in previous sessions, the most assertive and least effective comments related to enjambment and caesurae, with unsupported generalisations made about speeding up or slowing down the pace of a poem.

## **Comments on specific questions**

### **Section A**

#### **Question 1**

Most responses showed an understanding of the speaker's fear that death is always close and his regret that people leave so few 'lovely' memories. Many commented on the bleakness of the diction: 'crushed', 'doom', 'death', 'peril'. Less successful responses did not recognise that 'some hand' refers to an anonymous person and that the speaker is reflecting on that person's accidental killing of a fly. The more successful responses explored the language used to convey the speaker's fascination with the fly's wings ('gleam out', 'lustre') and were able to offer some interpretation of 'fair monument' and 'pure relics of a blameless life'. There was much confident analysis of the contrast between the fly and humans.

#### **Question 2**

Many candidates were able to make supported references to the precise and detailed descriptions of the baby. They understood the contrast between the complexity of the baby and the simplicity and crudeness of the spirit. Less successful responses tended to work through the poem explaining its content, though without achieving a clear focus on the question. The most successful responses tailored their material to address the key words 'fascinating poem', exploring ways in which Stevenson conveys feelings and passions as inaccurate and unskilful. They also explored the use of command words in capturing the speaker's tone of voice.

#### **Question 3**

Most candidates were able to understand the idea that learning more leads to a better understanding of the world in contrast to the idea in the first line: 'A little learning is a dangerous thing'. Less successful responses tended to rely on a study guide approach of what the poem (or rather this extract from a longer poem) is about. Explanation and assertion predominated in these responses with little specific reference to the detail of the poem or to the key words 'vividly convey'. By contrast, the more successful responses selected useful concise quotations from the poem to explore ways in which Pope achieves his effects, for example, through the imagery of drinking and intoxication, the use of mountain scenery and references to heights.

#### **Question 4**

There was in most responses a recognition that the speaker is searching through the house for his wife, that she constantly eludes him though he is determined to persist with his quest. Less successful responses provided narrative accounts, often adopting a line-by-line approach. The most successful responses explored the memorable implication that, however well we know someone, there will always be something that cannot be known about them. Some argued that love makes the quest for the essence of the person exciting. The strongest responses explored the use of language and tone in making the poem 'memorable': for example, the image of the house and all its doors, the impressions of what her presence has left behind, and the way the speaker's state of mind is conveyed.

### Question 5

Most answers commented on the magical nature of the experience, in particular, the moment the deer do not move but merely stare at the poet. There was generally an understanding that the experience seems to take the poet into a different dimension, almost unearthly. Stronger responses commented on the metaphor 'the curtain had blown aside for a moment' and how it captured the poet's sense of awe. Some answers explored with some sensitivity the structure of the poem, for example, by charting the movement within the poem, from '(the roe-deer) had happened in my dimension' to 'stared at me' to 'back to the ordinary'.

### Question 6

Most responses recognised that the title refers to the anniversary of the death of the speaker's mother and that Hughes imagines her and her dead sister together, with his mother narrating details from her past. There was reference to the mother's preference for her other son, though this was often asserted rather than supported. Stronger responses explored the way Hughes uses language and tone to convey strong emotions: for example, the images of heaven and angels, the mother's conversational tone and the speaker's reverential and loving tone. The most successful answers selected relevant material from this relatively long poem to address the question's key words 'movingly convey strong emotions'; the least successful responses adopted simple narrative approaches.

### Question 7

Most candidates were aware of the immediate context: that Kambili is staying with Aunty Ifeoma and has met and is entranced by Father Amadi. He asks her about her life and about her father though clearly knows her problems. More successful responses argued that Father Amadi is trying to lift her spirits and her self-esteem and appreciated that this is a key moment in her rite of passage. The strongest responses explored the way Adichie describes the attractiveness of Amadi, their physical closeness and the sense of Kambili being overwhelmed by her attraction to him. Explaining why the moment in the extract is memorable necessarily requires reference to elsewhere in the text, for example, what leads up to this moment or what follows it. Those responses that focused solely on the extract were self-limiting.

### Question 8

There were too few responses to make meaningful comment.

### Question 9

Most candidates recognised the contrast between his confidence that Biddy will agree to marry him and his disappointment that all is not as he expected: the schoolhouse empty, the forge closed though the house is so alive and pretty. The most convincing responses addressed the key word 'vividly' when exploring how Dickens conveys Pip's thoughts and feelings. These responses considered the way Pip's changing feelings are conveyed leading up to the revelation and shock that Joe and Biddy are married. These stronger answers also explored the descriptions of the schoolhouse, forge and house as not matching his expectations. Less successful responses adopted a narrative approach, often not referring to 'Pip's thoughts and feelings' at all.

### Question 10

There were too few responses to make meaningful comment.

### Question 11

Most candidates were aware of the immediate context: Mrs Van Hopper has decided to return to America and orders the narrator to pack for the journey; Maxim asks the narrator to marry him. There was an understanding of her sense of panic. The more successful responses suggested that Maxim's apparent lack of interest (filing his nails) conceals deeper feelings, and they explored the violence of Maxim's reaction to the news of her departure in what it reveals about his character. There were convincing assessments of the casualness of the proposal which, some said, was not really a proposal. Some commented on the patronising tone of 'No, I am asking you to marry me, you little fool.' The strongest responses sustained personal and evaluative engagement with the question, the detail of the extract and relevant links to elsewhere in the novel that makes this extract so 'memorable'. The weakest responses re-told the story of the extract.

### Question 12

There were too few responses to make meaningful comment.

### Question 13

There were too few responses to make meaningful comment.

### Question 14

There were too few responses to make meaningful comment.

### Question 15

There was some understanding in most responses that the Ratliffs do not treat Gogol as a guest even though they are meeting him for the first time and that the food and wine are unfamiliar to him. Most candidates made comparisons with meals that the Gangulis provided for guests, though this focus led some to stray too far from the question's key words 'vividly portray Gogol/Nikhil' to offer general contextual knowledge (prepared before the exam) about differences in culture. The more successful responses sustained a clear focus on the question, with exploration of ways in which Lahiri conveys, for example, Gogol's thoughts about the nature of the meal and his feelings of pleasure at his lucky situation.

### Question 16

Responses were generally characterised by description and assertion. They recognised the importance of Paris and her academic career to Moushumi, her affair with Dimitri and the moment she unwittingly reveals this to Gogol. Much was made of the contrast between her and Gogol: both from the same Bengali background, though she is very much her own person, feeling free to pursue her own life. Responses generally needed to focus more clearly on the key word 'striking' and to use a greater range of textual references to support their responses.

### Question 17

Most candidates recognised that Miranda and Irma are established as important characters, that Mrs Appleyard is a figure of authority and power and that the Rock represents some sort of threat. The strongest responses explored ways in which Lindsay conveys these impressions. There was much sensitive exploration in these responses of Sara portrayed as victim of Appleyard's cruelty. These responses focused on the extravagant description of the latter's figure ('an immense purposeful figure...swimming and billowing in grey silk taffeta') and on the force of her address to the girls (forbidding them to 'engage in any tomboy foolery'). The least successful responses lacked a clear understanding of who the characters are and what situation they are in.

### Question 18

There were too few responses to make meaningful comment.

### Question 19

Most candidates understood the drama of Pi's rescue and the tension of whether Richard Parker would make it. They also commented productively on the structure of the extract, noting the contrast between wanting to save Richard Parker and then wanting to drown him, and the humour arising from this. The most convincing responses were able to contextualise the extract's position within the novel to explore what makes this extract so entertaining. These responses analysed the effect of the repetition in Pi's dialogue and his sudden change of tone in 'Have I gone mad?' Those candidates who interpreted the key word 'entertaining' too narrowly, as perhaps 'hilariously', tended to limit their response.

### Question 20

Most responses showed at least some understanding of the lushness of the island after being so long at sea, Pi's experience of sleeping in the tree with the meerkats and the shocking discovery of the island as carnivorous (the tooth in the tree). Many noted that the experience of the island enables Pi (and Richard Parker) to regain health. There were, however, few answers which provided specific textual evidence for

support. For this general essay question, candidates generally needed a wider range of direct quotations which could have been used not only to support points but also analyse Martel's use of language.

### Question 21

The moments which made the extract so entertaining were generally understood, for example, the size and forcefulness of Mrs Jones and the way the boy realises he is beaten and behaves himself. There was much interesting exploration of the implications of poverty in the story and the surprising note of compassion in Mrs Jones's character, which contrasted with the way she is introduced in the opening paragraph. The strongest responses were able to explore ways in which Hughes makes the extract such an entertaining opening to the story by making at least some reference to what happens after the extract. Many candidates clearly enjoyed what they saw as the cartoonish way in which the initial encounter between the characters is conveyed. Less successful responses missed the humour or made generalised comments on gender (e.g. 'women were seen as scared in those days').

### Question 22

There were too few responses to make meaningful comment.

# LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

Paper 2010/13  
Poetry and Prose 13

## Key messages

In successful responses, candidates:

- show a clear understanding of the deeper implications of texts
- select relevant material that answers the question
- integrate apt textual references to support their ideas
- explore sensitively ways in which writers achieve their effects
- write informed personal responses to texts.

In less successful responses, candidates:

- show only a basic grasp of surface meanings
- work through 'themes' they have studied without focusing on the key words of the question
- use long quotations or a list of shorter quotations without comment on specific words
- log writing devices without exploring the effects created
- are overly dependent on explanation and assertion.

## General comments

There was evidence of outstanding work this session especially in relation to **Section A**, where the most successful candidates showed insight and individuality in their engagement with the poems and the questions set on them. There were some examples of candidates who spent too much time on their first response, which adversely affected their performance across the paper. Most students were familiar with the layout of the paper, though there were examples of candidates answering several questions rather than two. There were instances, too, of candidates relying exclusively on the extracts printed in the prose passage-based questions when answering the prose general essay questions. Centres should ensure that their candidates turn up to the exam with an understanding of the question paper's layout and rubric. Most candidates wrote in legible handwriting; this is essential in communicating their ideas clearly to Examiners, and it is important that teachers remind candidates about this.

The strongest responses showed the ability of candidates to select relevant material for the question that had been set. This is an essential aspect of the examination: questions should not be seen as mere prompts for candidates to unload all information they know about the poem or character or theme mentioned in the question. The strongest responses to poetry and passage-based questions showed that candidates selected their material judiciously whereas in less effective responses candidates wrote exhaustively as they worked their way through a poem or passage.

Successful answers began by engaging with the key words of the question. This is a sensible strategy when writing an examination answer in 45 minutes. Some candidates wrote a brief plan before starting their answer, and this often led to a more clearly organised response. Those candidates who offered lengthy introductions, with extraneous biographical or social context material, simply delayed the actual beginning of their answer to the question. Some candidates were determined to state a writer's themes at the start of their answers and occasionally during their answer even when this was not relevant to the question that had been asked. Some opening paragraphs included sentences which simply listed in a random way the devices the writer uses, which is not a productive way of beginning a response.

The most convincing personal responses embedded textual references to support the points being made. It was clear that many students had learned much direct quotation to use in answering the prose general essay questions. This not only provided support and evidence but also gave candidates the opportunity to explore ways in which writers achieve their effects. The least successful responses to prose general questions included insufficient textual detail and an over-dependence on unsupported assertion. Candidates should be reminded that there is little merit in simply copying out long quotations or a list of short quotations. Some candidates adopted a misguided approach when directing Examiners to specific lines in poems and passages without making it clear which word or phrase was being referred to. It is the responsibility of the candidate to provide the specific supporting detail from the text, and not simply line references. Another misguided approach could be seen in the use of ellipses in the middle of quotations which left out the actual word(s) that would support the point being made. The use of concise quotations containing the actual words that support points is more effective.

The most successful responses showed a confident and sustained analysis of ways in which writers use form, structure and language to convey their ideas. Less successful responses, particularly to poetry, simply logged features without close analysis of *precise* ways in which writers use these devices to create *specific* effects. The most assertive and least effective comments related to enjambment and caesurae, with broad comments made about an increase in, or slowing down of, the pace of a poem, though with no specific example given to support the general comment. Similarly, rhyme schemes were often said to aid the flow (or not) of the writing though without specific illustration.

### **Comments on specific questions**

#### **Section A**

##### **Question 1**

Most candidates referred to 'memories' although they did not always place this in the overall context of the poem. Successful answers recognised that the poem was about Hardy's approach to life and that his realistic approach enabled him to withstand unfairness, trials and difficulties. Less successful candidates were not as careful in their reading and there were misunderstandings and unsupported assertions. Several candidates did not understand that there were two 'voices' in the poem and misunderstood that in the second verse, despite the speech marks and the statement 'you said', that this was the world speaking and not Hardy. Some candidates made unsupported assertions about Hardy's youth, for example, that he was lonely, had no friends or had no one to play with. They did not understand that the poem was about his chosen approach to life. In the third stanza, despite the words, 'failed not', some candidates read this as 'failed' and commented that Hardy refused to take advice.

##### **Question 2**

Most candidates referenced the question and the idea of hope but many struggled to relate 'feelings of hope' to 'melancholy'. The strongest answers successfully explored how the poet presents feelings of hope despite the personal and universal challenges of 'melancholy'. They understood the poet's attempt to resist melancholy and sadness, noting her intentional focus on looking at goodness rather than human failings or evil in the world. These answers appreciated some of the writing features such as the imagery about nature and animals, the allusions to religion and the repeated mantra of 'Away, Melancholy'. Although most candidates understood that mankind's capacity to believe in goodness and love supersedes evil, there were some misunderstandings, especially when the thoughts on God were introduced. Several candidates thought the poem was about the goodness and superiority of God and allowed personal religious opinion to replace a critique of the poem with little dependence on relevant textual detail.

##### **Question 3**

Most answers responded to the question asking how Mew uses words and images to powerful effect. Candidates generally understood that the poem was a reflection on rooms she had spent time in during her life with some unpleasant connotations and allusions to death or dying. Stronger answers appreciated writing features such as the use of sensuous words and images, and the symbolism of rooms as enclosed spaces – producing a claustrophobic effect. These answers noted the 'dying' relationship in the poem and commented on the significance of the closing lines. Less successful answers ran through the poem, giving an overview of the rooms and places without a response to how words and images are used to powerful effect. A few candidates wrote lengthy biographical accounts without much dependence on the text of the poem.

#### Question 4

Many responses to this question were engaged and focused, showing understanding of the theme of rejection. The strongest answers provided perceptive personal responses, expressing their thoughts about the speaker who they sometimes criticised for the continual hapless descriptions of his plight. Many candidates enjoyed discussing the melodrama, exploring the imagery of the sea and nature. Less successful answers did not analyse the poem, providing straightforward quotations without explanation. There were a few literal interpretations which did not engage in any analysis of language or meaning.

#### Question 5

Most answers identified the strong emotions in the poem of jealousy and envy, and showed some understanding of how this is evident in the text. There were various debates on who the poet is referring to, some more convincing than others. Stronger answers engaged deeply with the poem's text and were focused and clear. They noted writing features such as the conversational tone, the image of the crossed-out page and repetition. Some wrote about the way in which the last line repeats a line from the first stanza and appreciated the way in which this sets up the idea of jealousy as a cycle. Less successful answers lacked clarity and seemed confused about Hughes' relationships, sometimes mixing up the pronouns. Some had clearly been taught, or researched, biographical details about Ted Hughes and his wives, even going so far as writing about the two women throughout their response instead of analysing the lines in front of them.

#### Question 6

Although a short poem, responses to this question were generally well-done and there were many strong, perceptive answers. The strongest answers provided detailed analysis of writing features. They recognised the brutality of the winter and explored the related imagery with care. These answers looked at ideas such as the tight 'globe' around the mouse's heart, thought about why it was dulled, and appreciated the imagery about darkness, metals and loss of right minds. They noted the contrasting descriptions of the animals and the snowdrop. Less successful answers provided more literal interpretations. It was evident that some candidates did not have a contextual knowledge of the life cycle of the snowdrop or an understanding of what a snowdrop looked like. Some commented about the winter and the animal imagery but did not write about the snowdrop or its ability to survive the harsh winters.

#### Question 7

Candidates responded clearly and with engagement to the key word 'disturbing' and were able to select suitable points from the extract to support this, such as the violence of Papa's beating and the family's acceptance of his abuse. Nearly all candidates showed knowledge and understanding of the whole novel. Stronger answers picked up on the details of how tension was created before and during the beating and analysed the power of the 'slow unbuckling of his belt'. These answers often commented on the Papa's use of Igbo language, the significance of his white shirt, and the references to the devil and convincingly explained how these aspects were disturbing. Less successful answers tended to paraphrase sections and did not pick up on the writing features in the passage.

#### Question 8

The few who chose to answer this question showed clear knowledge and understanding of themes, characters and events. Candidates successfully contrasted the two characters, showing the way their backgrounds produced different modes of self-expression. Candidates also commented on the antagonism between Amaka and Kambili and the progression of their relationship towards mutual understanding. Relevant examples were given of the times they are together in the novel, their differing habits or how they speak. Candidates seemed to enjoy writing about what these two characters represent.

#### Question 9

The strongest answers placed this extract in context, engaged deeply with the text and appreciated how tension is created. Candidates noted details such as the atmosphere of the cold, the use of lighting or the appearance of the gun. They commented on Orlik's tone of voice, his self-righteousness, his increasing violence and the image of him as a tiger. Less convincing answers found it difficult to work out what is happening and some were not sure of the context.

### **Question 10**

There were too few responses to make meaningful comment.

### **Question 11**

The most successful answers demonstrated clear understanding of the two characters and provided detailed, convincing personal responses to show this. They commented on aspects such as Maxim's interest in the narrator and observed the seemingly instant attraction between the two. Some stronger answers explored the difference in status between the two, as well as their disinclination to discuss certain core issues. These appreciated features such as the questions coming from Maxim, the developing mystery of Manderley and the hints of a traumatic secret. Less effective answers focused more on going through the passage than considering how Maxim and the narrator are portrayed. A few answers commented on Maxim but neglected to write about the narrator.

### **Question 12**

There were too few responses to make meaningful comment.

### **Question 13**

There was an attempt by the few candidates who chose this question, to show Miss Penniman's tendency to melodrama. The most successful answers were able to deftly pin down her self-indulgence and dangerous meddling. They also showed understanding of Morris and the irony of the conversations. Less successful answers tended to be narrative with little analyses or consideration of the question.

### **Question 14**

There were too few responses to make meaningful comment.

### **Question 15**

The strongest answers sustained a focus on how Lahiri makes this a sad moment and found several points in the extract to illustrate this, such as Ashoke's short visits or the nostalgic memories. These answers commented sensitively about Ashima's loneliness and sadness from a variety of angles, considering identity and culture as well as isolation. They demonstrated their detailed knowledge of the whole book by linking some of the ideas in the passage to the wider novel, for example, Ashoke's foreshadowed death. Successful answers explored the symbolism, allusions and images in the extract such as the withering petunias, the tea, 'now cold', or the library books in Ashoke's place. Less successful responses did not focus on 'sad' and neglected to explore the symbolism in the extract. Some did not focus on the details of the extract and wrote at length about the general effects of loneliness.

### **Question 16**

There were too few responses to make meaningful comment.

### **Question 17**

The most successful responses considered how this moment is entertaining and found examples in the text to address this, for example, the awkward relationships between the characters or the connotations of humour in the interruption of the dogs. Several stronger answers commented on the confusion about husbands and carpets. They noted details from close reading of the passage such as the gong as a 'gastronomical timepiece' or the overwhelming 'pinkness' of the drawing room and linked their points to the question. Less successful answers tended to summarise without detail and did not pick up on the key word, 'entertaining'. A few answers wrote at length about the effects of colonialism without enough analysis of the detail of the extract.

### **Question 18**

Successful answers provided quite detailed responses, showing knowledge and understanding of the characters, events and life at Appleyard College. Candidates picked out key points such as the control exerted by Mrs Appleyard, the strict regimes, or descriptions of the lives of the boarders, and linked these to

the question. Less effective answers tended to give an overview and made general statements without supporting details or examples. A few candidates started with description of Appleyard College but confused the two questions and referred largely to the details in the extract; this approach was self-limiting.

### Question 19

Almost all candidates who chose this question were able to make some comment about the 'surprising relationship' between Pi and Richard Parker. Stronger responses made effective use of the extract from the beginning, and used the introductory phrase 'It was Richard Parker who calmed me down' to develop convincing points about their mutual need for each other and for survival. Strong answers noted and explored the detailed descriptions of Richard Parker as an affectionate pet. They appreciated the auditory imagery and the idea of 'prusten'. These picked out key phrases such as 'I looked at him with fearful wonder' and 'without Richard Parker, I would not be alive today to tell you my story' to explore the relationship between the two. Some strong answers suggested wider meanings and interpretations about Richard Parker, demonstrating their knowledge of the whole novel. Less successful answers were repetitive and sometimes provided quotations without explaining their significance. Some of these answers did not sustain a focus on the question.

### Question 20

There were few takers for this question, and generally it was not answered well as most candidates relied on the extract from **Question 19** to draw their points from. This resulted in limited responses. The very few successful answers selected points from the wider novel such as Pi's response to the many natural features such as the waves, weather, the stars at night or the marine life. A few provided some relevant comments on the extraordinary meerkat island.

### Question 21

Most candidates were able to consider the question and engaged in varying degrees with the 'terrifying moment' in the story. The most convincing and successful answers sustained their focus, noting details such as Caroline's state of mind, the symbolism of the tower and the menacing steps or the mysterious and supernatural gothic features. Some explored the link to her husband and the idea of independence. Less successful answers did not sustain their focus on the key word and lapsed at times into re-telling the story. A few answers focused too much on the idea of feminism without analysis of the detail of the extract.

### Question 22

The few who chose to answer this question showed sound knowledge and understanding of the story and character. They focused on the question and selected relevant points to show how the mother was an 'impressive character'. Candidates were aware of the mother's ability to take control of her life and picked up on the children's expectations that their mother would be helpless after the father's death. A few understood the wider implications socially and historically, providing supporting detail.

# LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

Paper 2010/32

Drama 22

## Key messages

- Candidates should read the instructions to the question paper carefully, to remind themselves of the requirements for the paper, and be able to select an accurate combination of questions.
- Successful responses focused on the key words in the question and supported ideas with relevant, concise quotations which were analysed fully.
- Successful answers to passage-based questions briefly contextualised the passage, selecting relevant material from across the whole passage and analysed both content and the writer's methods effectively.
- Successful responses to the discursive questions supported their argument with relevant quotations candidates had learned.
- Teachers should refer to the relevant syllabus, and examination requirements, during the planning stages of the course.

## General comments

Many candidates demonstrated knowledge and enjoyment of their set text(s). The most popular texts across all syllabi were *Othello* and *Twelfth Night* followed by *Death and the King's Horseman* and *Crumbs from the Table of Joy*. However, there were very few responses to *Journey's End*. Teachers are advised to check the syllabus carefully for the changes in set texts. This is the last year for both *Twelfth Night* and *Journey's End* which will be replaced in 2024 by William Shakespeare's, *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and *A Streetcar Named Desire* by Tennessee Williams.

There was some excellent work seen. The most successful responses showed detailed appreciation of texts and made perceptive comments on themes, characterisation and stagecraft. They demonstrated insight into the ways writers achieved effects, focusing closely on the key terms of the question. Textual knowledge was detailed, and these candidates were able to refer to, and quote from, texts effectively with brief, well-chosen quotations, which were fully analysed to consolidate the point being made.

However, there were many less successful answers where there was a lack of basic knowledge of the texts, with much confusion over characters, plot and even with the name and gender of the playwrights. Frequently these responses offered a narrative overview of the text with limited or no focus on the terms of the question. There were considerable rubric infringements reported this year in Paper 2, but this was particularly noted in Syllabus 2010/22. Candidates appeared to be unaware of the exam requirements to write on two different texts and to answer two questions; an extract-based **Question (a)** and a discursive **(b)** question. All types of rubric infringements were seen: only one answer or too many; two essays on the same text; two **(a)** questions or two **(b)** questions. In instances of rubric infringements, both responses are marked, but only the higher of the two marks is awarded. This results in disappointing results for affected candidates and may be easily avoided if they remind themselves of the exam requirements by reading the instructions on the front of the question paper, before they start to write.

The most successful candidates wrote a brief introduction, focusing on the key terms of the question, for example, 'dramatic', 'memorable' or 'likeable' and sustained a link to the question throughout their answer. Too often candidates write lengthy, general introductions, summarising the plot, listing irrelevant social, cultural and historical detail or the techniques the writer had used. All candidates should deconstruct the questions carefully, before they start to write, to check they have understood what is expected, for example, are they writing about the correct character?

The ability to analyse linguistic and dramatic effects is key to successful responses. Whilst some candidates understood and used literary terminology correctly, for example, foreshadowing and dramatic irony, there

remains the tendency to simply point out terms, which is not helpful in developing an argument constructively. Simply asserting the playwright uses a technique is unlikely to be rewarded: techniques identified should be relevant, supported, and the effects achieved analysed. It is unhelpful for candidates to be stating the obvious, that the writer uses, 'language', 'diction', dialogue, 'end-stopping' or 'caesura' to convey ideas.

The most successful responses demonstrated a constant awareness of the text as performance, referring to the 'audience' rather than 'reader' and the 'play' rather than 'novel', 'text' or 'book'. These were able to explore stagecraft and the authors' methods to convey the main concerns of their chosen texts. Time management was generally good with few unfinished responses seen though there were many very brief answers seen where candidates lacked sufficient knowledge of the texts to write in more detail. Candidates are reminded not to refer to line numbers instead of quoting from the text, and to remember to label their answers clearly, with the question number at the top of their answer.

### **Comments on specific questions**

#### **LYNN NOTTAGE: *Crumbs from the Table of Joy***

##### **Question 1**

(a) This text was more popular than last year. Most candidates answered the extract-based question which produced the full range of responses. Successful answers established the context, referring to Lily's drunken and dishevelled state, how Godfrey catches her dancing the Mambo with Ermina and Ernestine, and Lily's provocative comments about Father Divine. This context is relevant to establish that the tension is already high at the start of the passage. The best answers centred on the fact that, though Lily and Godfrey have taken steps to escape their previous lives that were marred by family tragedy and racism, they have adopted very different strategies. They explored the clash of attitudes and approaches, with Lily attributing culpability for Sandra's death to Godfrey, and his anger and dramatic, capitalised words, as he physically 'shoves' the girls out of the room. There was critical understanding of the impact on stage with Godfrey's anger and Lily's retaliation, mocking his beliefs in Father Divine. The tension created by Godfrey's fears of Lily's being a communist were also understood. They also recognised the sexual tension and physical attraction between them, though too often candidates lapsed into speculative comments about their past relationship with some considering this the reason for Sandra's death, missing Lily's intentions in this passage.

In less successful answers candidates struggled to maintain focus on the task, paraphrasing the passage, to give an account of the argument, but without managing to probe more deeply into the text in order to explore the tension between Lily and Godfrey. There were lengthy, inert quotations copied, with candidates asserting that what they had paraphrased conveyed 'tension', but with little understanding of the text quoted.

(b) There were very few answers to this question and some candidates were unable to recall specific details to develop how Nottage makes Ernestine's graduation a 'memorable and significant' part of the play. It is helpful for candidates to learn some quotations to be able to support responses to discursive questions.

Successful answers understood the importance of the graduation both practical in terms of Ernestine's future, and symbolic in terms of her coming of age, and knew the play well so could support the argument. The best answers could isolate moments where the dress featured; as in the sewing and tearing off of the lace and linked these moments to the evolving relationship between Lily and Ernestine and how she helps Ernestine to mature. There were some moving comments on the dress being a physical representation of her mother, as Sandra, before she died, had chosen a pattern for her graduation dress. The best answers explored how Ernestine's graduation is 'a first' for the family but despite Godfrey's pride, he can only see a job in the bakery or marriage for her. They understood that Ernestine's maturity and ability to break free from his expectations, to reject the job, was both memorable and significant.

Less successful answers were narrative, repetitive and commented on how it was unusual for a black girl to succeed, with the main focus of their writing on the social and historical context of the play but with little understanding of the text, and the significance of Ernestine's achievement in her

family, or in her personal development. Weaker answers retold parts of the play with little focus on the question and with limited understanding of the text.

### R C SHERRIFF: *Journey's End*

#### Question 2

(a) There were fewer answers to this text. Successful answers identified Stanhope's emotions and the reason for them as well as, most importantly, how the writing conveys his emotions. The best answers explored the context of the passage that Stanhope is in a relationship with Raleigh's sister, Madge, and how he earlier revealed to Osborne his fears that Raleigh will reveal his drinking and erratic behaviour to her. They analysed the stage directions and how Stanhope's '*trembling*' showed his extreme anger, fear and inability to control it, as well as the way he tears the letter from Raleigh in such a violent way. Better answers focused on how Sherriff uses stage directions to indicate anger, as well as fear, and many recognised Stanhope's loss of control as symptomatic of the stress he is under. They commented on how he not only loses his temper with Raleigh, but also with poor Osborne, indicative in itself of how Stanhope has lost control. There was critical understanding of how Stanhope's body language in the second half of the scene reflects his sense of embarrassment and shame at how he's behaved, as he '*sits with lowered head*' for the way he treated Raleigh. The best answers fully explored the reading aloud of the letter, focusing on Stanhope's actions and the contrast of him shouting at both Raleigh and Osborne against his '*murmuring*' at the end. The reference to the sun shining outside in the trench was largely ignored but those who attempted comment on the changing mood, did so successfully.

Less successful responses considered the basic elements of the scene: Stanhope shouting and Raleigh's amazement and shock, followed by the contrasting quiet of Osborne reading the letter. It was surprising that some wrote about the passage without reference to the letter or about Stanhope's fears concerning the possible content. Such answers limited themselves, as only a little understanding of the moment was shown. Weaker answers did not convey understanding of why Stanhope was angry, losing focus on the question, and wrote about the previous friendship between Stanhope and Raleigh. Stanhope's behaviour, and demonstration of his authority, was considered important but only as he wanted to show Raleigh that life in the war was different to being at school together, which misses his abuse of his position and the dramatic impact of the moment.

(b) There were fewer answers to this question and, for some candidates, it proved to be challenging as they confused Hibbert with Trotter. In these answers, there was little to reward as there was limited, relevant, information on the named character.

The most successful answers tended to err on the side of feeling sorry for Hibbert: that his faking his neuralgia was his 'coping mechanism' as drinking was for Stanhope. Others were damning of his perceived cowardice and took a dim view of his selfishness as he prepared to 'let the team down'. The scene when Stanhope threatens to shoot him, and later talks to him, was often used well and served to increase sympathy for Hibbert with the resulting slight change of admiration for him at this point, which is portrayed through the change in feeling in Stanhope. There was some understanding of how during this scene Sherriff implies the significance of camaraderie and friendship and how facing one's fears helps to cope more effectively. The best responses understood how Hibbert's cowardice is used as a foil to reflect Stanhope's bravery and greater honesty in handling his fears – even if via alcohol - but thought that Hibbert was a very weak person and dislikeable character. Further evidence of Hibbert being a contrast to other men is when he boasts of a 'couple of damn fine girls' and showed photographs: this was considered crude and vulgar. Surprisingly few commented on Stanhope's description of Hibbert being a '*little worm*' hoping to '*wriggle back home*'.

Less successful answers were narrative and simply commented on Hibbert's cowardice and general unpleasantness but there was insufficient knowledge of the text and a lack of memorised quotations, and textual reference, to support their responses.

### WOLE SOYINKA: *Death and the King's Horseman*

#### Question 3

(a) This was the most popular question on Soyinka. Candidates should avoid writing detailed introductions on the historical and cultural setting of the play, and the history of colonialism, leaving little time to respond to the actual question. There were many successful answers which established the context that Elesin is ashamed of not fulfilling his duty as the King's Horseman and that he is in prison, having been arrested by Pilkings to prevent his suicide. They selected material to focus securely on Elesin's shame: explored the idea of Olunde as an avenger of the shame; Elesin's rejection of Pilkings' consolation; his aggression towards Pilkings, 'white man', covering his shame; the symbolism of '*my voice is broken*' and his lost honour as a father and his reputation with the people. There was some insight into his silence and sigh after Pilkings points out that no one goes to their death willingly, and how Elesin blamed everyone else before finally confessing to his own failing. The best answers directly addressed 'powerfully' by responding to the language and the ominous threat of what Olunde will do to the white man: '*His spirit will destroy you and yours*' and his comments to his bride that his shame made him blame anyone before he admits he is to blame because it was difficult to let go of his joy in living.

Less successful responses showed insecure understanding of the text and passage. They mistook the context and thought that Elesin knew at this point that Olunde had committed suicide in his place. Some misread the opening speech and thought that Elesin was still ashamed of his son going to England and that his shame here was about that. The weakest responses wrote too much about the context spending much of the answer explaining what had gone before, often inaccurately. Others simply could not select the relevant material sufficiently or just did not focus on the question, writing a character sketch of Elesin or simply retold the plot, often with many inaccuracies.

(b) This proved difficult for candidates who did not read the question carefully. This question required candidates to write about two dramatic moments in the play, with the rider that candidates did 'not use the passage printed in **Question 3(a)** in answering this question'. Unfortunately, this was ignored with many candidates using the passage as one of the moments. The most successful answers selected two distinct and dramatic moments showing a clear understanding of the play on stage by considering interaction between characters, audience response, action and sound, for example, the drumming, music and rhythmic chanting. These were supported with textual details and quotation candidates had learned. A range of moments were chosen including: the opening scene in the market; the 'Not-l' bird story and Elesin's welcoming response to the bird; the ending scene with Elesin's actual suicide; Amusa's reaction to the egungun costumes and the market women amusingly mocking Amusa.

Less successful responses retold the plot without identifying discrete moments, used the passage, or chose one or two moments to write about, but without focusing on how they were dramatic or supporting with specific textual detail. Weaker responses did not know the text well enough and narrated their moments, often incorrectly, and without comment. Some thought that Soyinka was a character in the market place and referred to him as 'she' and 'her'.

## WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE: *Twelfth Night*

### Question 4

(a) The most successful answers demonstrated knowledge and understanding of the situation, although some confused Antonio with the Sea Captain who rescues Viola at the beginning of the play. Many candidates were able to recognise that the presentation of Antonio in the passage is problematic in so far as there are contradictory impressions given of him as both a 'pirate' and a loyal and unselfish friend. The best responses were able to contextualise the scene and discuss how Antonio 'saved' Viola/Cesario from her duel and his sense of betrayal having done so much for this '*most ingrateful boy*'. Better responses supported their arguments with precise textual reference offering some sensitive analysis of language, exploring the implications of 'Vulcan' and were secure in their knowledge of dramatic irony. Some were able to comment on the fact that when Olivia enters at the end of the scene, Orsino's attention is immediately drawn away from Antonio and he is no longer of any interest or importance to the duke. There was predictably a lot of sympathy for Antonio as well as some discussion about his sexuality.

In less successful answers there was confusion over what was going on in the scene and the issue of mistaken identity. Some candidates struggled to comment on Antonio, a minor character, who appears in only a few scenes. They were confused by the Duke's language about when he last saw Antonio. There was also confusion about the context of this moment; when it took place and who

Antonio had rescued. Some were able to identify Antonio's feelings of betrayal but comments about Antonio's relationship with Sebastian ranged from it being brotherly, to openly homosexual with some candidates losing focus on both the question, and passage, to write about homosexuality in Shakespeare's day.

(b) This was also a popular question but proved to be problematic where some candidates confused Sir Toby with Sir Andrew or even, in a few cases, Malvolio. Stronger responses engaged with the question and provided plenty of textual detail in support. They provided a balanced response to Sir Toby being 'likeable', though some were quite vehement in their disapproval of his debauched ways. There was a clear understanding of his drunken behaviour, cynical use of Sir Andrew for money and amusement, organising of the duel between Cesario and Sir Andrew, and the cruel way he gained revenge on Malvolio. However, there were very few instances of candidates being able to look at the playwright's methods of presenting the character through the language of the text and the stage craft. Many simply asserted he provides comic-relief but without exploring precisely how Shakespeare conveys this. There was often mention of his involvement in the gulling of Malvolio, but some misunderstanding of the extent of his role.

Less successful answers showed insecure understanding of the character and his behaviour, believing Sir Toby was a loyal and faithful friend to Sir Andrew, unaware of his ulterior motives. Some candidates felt that his care of Olivia was completely unselfish. Weaker candidates simply asserted whether or not he is likeable with little or no support from the text, considering Sir Toby being likeable because he is funny and 'a drunkard'. Candidates tended to write very generalised responses about this character, lacking specific moments and detail to support their points. Weaker responses asserted Sir Toby 'stops the play being boring' and 'keeps the audience awake' but then offered little support for this view, or a link back to the task.

## WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE: *Othello*

### Question 5

(a) There were many insightful and sensitive responses seen. The most successful answers placed the passage in context, focused sharply on the disturbing nature of the passage and showed a strong sense of audience response. There was understanding that Iago has told Othello he is going to question Cassio about Desdemona, to provide 'ocular proof' of their love affair, when in fact, he questions him about Bianca, and that Othello will be hiding as this conversation occurs. This moment is disturbing because it is not proof, it only appears so to Othello, with grave consequences. They commented on Iago's soliloquy to establish his disturbing intent and manipulative qualities, creating dramatic irony and showing his ability to recognise and use the weaknesses of his victims. Many commented on Iago's 'honesty' in telling Cassio: '*I am a very villain else*', the dramatic irony in his ability to deceive others and how this is disturbing for the audience. Iago's complete lack of empathy, conscience and remorse was cited as disturbing, along with Othello's gullibility and jealousy. Cassio's attitude to Bianca and complete obliviousness to how he is being played by Iago were also cited.

There were some perceptive responses which identified Iago's success in the passage and considered how it fits within his overall plans. They commented on Othello taking on Iago's traits of using animal imagery as he declines into a murderous rage, sealing the fate of Desdemona and nearly eliminating Cassio on the way. Many commented on Iago's disturbing misogyny and the derogatory way that Bianca is spoken about, calling her a 'creature' and deriding her profession, but also saw that Cassio is less of a gentleman than he appeared to be earlier in the play, finding his behaviour towards Bianca reprehensible. Othello's interjections, which reveal his jealousy and increasing anger, leading him to threaten violence were analysed, and the contrast between Othello's heartbreak and Iago and Cassio's light-hearted comments clearly understood.

The least successful answers thought Cassio was talking about Desdemona, that he was married to Bianca and that Othello was part of the conversation. Many had the misconception that Othello compared Cassio to a dog. Others had a basic grasp of Iago's plot but did not comment sufficiently on what was disturbing or on effects. Some candidates worked through the passage failing to focus on the 'disturbing' aspects and were side tracked, writing mainly on the treatment of Bianca, Desdemona and women in general.

(b) This was less popular and, as with some other character-based questions, some candidates confused Roderigo with Brabantio, Cassio and even Iago. Successful answers balanced the

argument. Reasons for sympathy were that his love is unrequited, Brabantio rejects him as a suitor for Desdemona, Iago exploits his weaknesses and gullibility, he loses all his money to Iago and, ultimately, he is betrayed and murdered. It was pointed out that no-one else recognises Iago's duplicity either so Roderigo cannot be blamed for understanding this too late. On the other hand, he is relentlessly stupid, ignoring Iago telling him '*I am not what I am*', believing him to be a 'friend', and foolishly pursuing a married woman who shows no interest in him whatsoever. Strong answers engaged with his immorality – the racist language to provoke Brabantio, his willingness to start a fight with Cassio and later to agree to kill him. They could support these points with apt quotation and reference to specific moments in the text.

Less successful answers could outline some of the points above and show knowledge of the play but could not refer closely to the text to support ideas. Consequently, responses remained a generalised plea, mainly for sympathy with how he is manipulated. Answers were rather generous to Roderigo taking his 'love' for Desdemona as fact rather than questioning its depth, and some candidates sympathised with his most immoral actions, as if he had no choice or free will.

# LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

Paper 2010/23

Drama 23

## Key messages

- The most successful responses remained focused on the key words in the question and avoided lengthy outlines of historical context as an introduction to the task. Effective conclusions were more than a reiteration of points.
- The most successful responses demonstrated a personal engagement with the text as drama, the characters and the stagecraft.
- Direct quotations from the set passage, or from the whole text in discursive responses, are the best form of textual support.
- Less successful responses commented on literary techniques or themes of the text but did not contextualise or analyse these.
- The strongest passage-based responses contextualised the passage and considered its content and language, choosing material from throughout the passage to support points.
- Successful discursive responses remained focused on the question and selected precise textual references from throughout the text to support ideas.

## General comments

Overall, candidates demonstrated enjoyment of their set texts and showed engagement with the themes, characters and stagecraft. The most popular texts were *Othello*, *Journey's End* and *Twelfth Night*.

Centres are reminded that in 2024 *Twelfth Night* and *Journey's End* will be replaced by Shakespeare's, *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and Tennessee Williams', *A Streetcar Named Desire*.

Effective passage-based responses contained introductions which briefly set the passage in context and the introductions of effective discursive responses focused on the key words of the question. Many candidates wasted valuable exam time summarising the plot or outlining historical context at length. This often meant that they ran out of time and did not fully develop the response or cover the ending of the passage. The sooner the candidate begins to answer the question, and to work chronologically through the passage, the better. A brief essay plan can help to maintain focus, and annotation of the passage is essential in ensuring that relevant material is selected. Focus on the key question words such as 'powerfully', 'revealing', or 'compelling' should be maintained throughout the response. The most successful responses paid attention to the key ideas in the question and referenced them throughout.

Responses which referred to 'audience' rather than 'reader', and to 'play' rather than 'book' showed an awareness that the texts are written to be performed on stage and understood their dramatic impact. These responses referenced stage directions and aural and visual effects to explore the drama.

In general, there was some effective analysis of language, but less successful responses tended to write all they knew about the text's plot, characters and themes with little or no reference to the question or focus on how they were conveyed through the writer's effects. Some of these responses pointed out literary techniques such as dramatic irony or foreshadowing, but with no analysis of these techniques.

There were a few rubric infringements on Paper 23. The majority of rubric infringements occurred when candidates answered two passage-based questions instead of one passage-based and one discursive question. In instances of rubric infringements, both responses are marked, but only the higher of the two marks is awarded. It was noted that there was a deterioration in handwriting, and although this syllabus does not assess spelling, punctuation and grammar, candidates should be aware of the importance of writing legibly and accurately to convey their ideas clearly.

### **Comments on specific questions**

#### **LYNN NOTTAGE: *Crumbs from the Table of Joy***

##### **Question 1**

**(a)** This question focused on a passage from the opening of the play, asking candidates to explore Ernestine's thoughts and feelings at this early stage in the play. Candidates across the ability range were able to respond personally to the passage and showed enjoyment of the text.

Successful responses commented on Ernestine's unhappiness at having moved to Brooklyn, setting the passage within the context that her mother has recently died, and that she is finding life in the city difficult in contrast with her previous home of Florida. These responses understood the comfort, sense of freedom and belonging that she feels in the cinema, and the way that her tears at the pretend lives in films are a catharsis, but very different from her real grief about her mother. They understood how racial inequalities disappear in the cinema, as she sits, '*right smack between two white gals*'.

The stage directions were analysed, commenting on the visual effects created onstage, for example the flickering blue light of the cinema. This awareness of staging was developed in discussion of Ernestine's narrator role, her tendency to address the audience and to break the 'fourth wall', and these stronger responses were able to link staging with character empathy. There was awareness of the visual significance of the photographs of Father Divine and Sandra Crump which are placed in the living room and the sound effects of the radio were also discussed.

The way in which Ernestine's character contrasts with her sister Ermina's was understood and candidates wrote about her inability to speak up to her father about his frustrating restrictions. Ermina, on the other hand, is much more 'sassy' in her interactions with Godfrey.

A number of less successful responses only dealt with the first section of the passage and did not engage with the context of Ernestine's grief about her mother and the sense of the cinema being an escape for her. There was some misunderstanding that Ernestine is happy living in Brooklyn. Stage directions were not explored thoroughly and the point about having, '*nothing to talk about in school*', was often misunderstood.

**(b)** This question focused on Ernestine's strong feelings about Gerte, and successful responses considered the context of Godfrey's sudden marriage to Gerte and Ernestine's shocked response to this. Many considered the historical context of the recent Second World War and the reaction of many Americans to Germans in its aftermath.

These responses were able to discuss the evolution of Ernestine's relationship with Gerte and how, towards the end of the play there is some acceptance of her. There was understanding of Ernestine's coldness to Gerte - her formal address of 'Ma'am' - but also her level of politeness and respect of Gerte's position in the household. Lily's influence upon these feelings was recognised and discussed by strong responses. Most responses commented that Ernestine dislikes Gerte due to her colour and her race but only a few responses picked up on the irony of this due to the racism that the Crumps have suffered. The way in which Ernestine's feelings of anger and hatred for Gerte cause her to be much more expressive than her normally introverted personality was identified by many candidates, and they also examined her sense of betrayal at Godfrey moving on too quickly after her mother's death.

Ernestine's anger and blame towards Gerte for the racist attack upon Godfrey was discussed in successful responses, along with a more general commentary about race, as was the irony of Godfrey marrying a white woman after his earlier critical words about white people. These responses also commented on how he has emulated Father Divine in his choice of a white woman as his wife.

Less successful responses became distracted by the historical context and wrote at length about America after the war rather than using this information as a brief example of context. These responses did not discuss any sense of acceptance that Ernestine develops towards Gerte and did progress beyond the fact that Gerte could not replace the girls' mother. They also mistakenly wrote about Godfrey marrying Gerte out of lust, not understanding his choice of sexual abstinence to

show respect to Father Divine. Few candidates referred to Ernestine's imagined scenes such as Gerte dancing with Lily or Godfrey and Gerte kissing.

### R C SHERIFF: *Journey's End*

#### Question 2

(a) The strongest responses to this question covered the passage thoroughly with discussion of a range of ways in which tension is built and understood the deeper implications of the situation. The staging cues formed a successful base for many responses, along with the audience anticipation of imminent tragedy. Candidates engaged with the soldiers' uncertainty and the tension of waiting for the attack to start and there was much personal engagement from all levels of response, with the sense of dread created and sympathy for the characters who are facing almost inevitable death.

Discussion of the sound effects - '*thud*' and '*whistle*' - and how the men react to these alarming sounds, as well as the impact of the silences and the darkness, was effective. Other stage directions such as Stanhope pouring whisky into his tea, or Mason handing round packs of '*sambidges*', were used to develop the discussion of coping mechanisms, light relief or the everyday being contrasted with the horrors of war. Strong responses focused on the sense of movement adding to the tension, with several characters moving on and offstage.

Weaker responses often tended to write generally about life in the trenches and simply described what is happening in the passage. They acknowledged the sound effects but tended to make little progress from there, and coverage of the passage was often limited. They focused on the rum, assuming that all the soldiers are alcoholics and some candidates struggled to engage with the exchange between Stanhope and Mason about '*pate de foie gras*', or even omitted to comment on this section altogether.

(b) This question, focusing on sympathy for Raleigh, succeeded in engaging many candidates and resulted in some effective personal responses, although, surprisingly, many candidates did not focus in detail on Raleigh's death.

The most successful responses covered a range of points with careful support and discussed aspects such as Raleigh's youth and innocence, his relationship with Stanhope, the letter which Stanhope insists on censoring, and finally his death. Many candidates expressed a sense of sadness at the deaths of many such young men in the First World War and propaganda was often discussed, in the sense that we sympathise with Raleigh as he has signed up under false pretences and is excited at the prospect of war, not understanding the reality. Although this was relevant, some candidates became distracted by the historical context and wrote at length about it, losing focus on the question in the process.

The crushing of Raleigh's innocence and his gradual understanding of how war has changed his hero Stanhope were discussed effectively in strong responses. His enthusiastic comments at the start of the play were contrasted with his character after Osborne dies. His sense of loss, feelings of guilt and sadness at the loss of the bond they had developed, and being unable to join the other men in champagne and cigars afterwards, was often focused on effectively. The way that Stanhope turns on Raleigh was discussed, and how Raleigh remains loyal to him, writing only positive things in the letter home.

Raleigh's death was analysed in detail by the most successful responses, which focused on his child-like language, '*It's so frightfully dark and cold*', Stanhope's kindness towards him and the use of his first name, '*Jimmy*', to emphasise the pathos of the scene. Less successful responses tended to focus on one or two aspects, notably Raleigh's innocence and his relationship with Stanhope. They did not fully grasp how Raleigh must have been very let down by his hero after the comments he had made to Osborne and his determination to be in his company. Quite often, discussion of Raleigh's death was lacking, with too much time being spent writing about personal attitudes towards the war.

## **WOLE SOYINKA: *Death and the King's Horseman***

### **Question 3**

**(a)** This question gave candidates the opportunity to explore a passage from the opening of the play with a focus on 'fascinating'. This question succeeded in creating positive engagement across the ability range.

Successful responses were able to write about Elesin's vitality, which is expressed in the stage directions, linking this with the vitality and colour of the market. They considered the drama of his entrance - the music, dancing and singing and considered the role of the Praise-Singer in smoothing Elesin's way. They focused on the importance of his warning to Elesin about not being distracted by the women and also on the significance of the women's role in spoiling Elesin. Engagement with Elesin's conversation with the Praise-Singer and what it foreshadows was a feature of stronger responses. There was effective personal engagement and often an expression of frustration with Elesin being distracted from his purpose, despite the warnings and there was also clear analysis of the metaphorical language of the passage.

Less successful responses missed the significance of the Praise-Singer's warning about the women and often paraphrased his words with little or no analysis. They often lacked focus on the language and staging of the passage and did not show understanding of the significance of this moment in the play.

**(b)** Olunde's thoughts and feelings about Yoruba traditions were dealt with in a variety of ways. His dual cultural awareness was addressed by the most successful responses, which also contrasted Olunde with Jane and Simon Pilkings, commenting on him wearing a suit and the fact that he is not shocked by Jane being dressed in the Egungun costume. They were aware of his open mind towards the attitudes of other people, created by his time spent in England, and of his sense of duty. Despite exposure to life in England, Olunde maintains belief in Yoruba traditions and the importance of sacrifice and some candidates observed that he values the traditions more than he does his own life, as he chooses to take on the responsibility of the King's Horseman, killing himself in Elesin's place.

Weaker responses were general, quite repetitive and lacked textual support, range and development. They recognised that Olunde has to commit suicide because his father has failed in his duty but did not develop beyond this.

## **WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE: *Twelfth Night***

### **Question 4**

**(a)** This popular question focuses on the 'revealing' nature of the given passage and strong responses set the passage in the context of Viola/Cesario being sent to woo Olivia on Orsino's behalf and the beginnings of Olivia's attraction to her. They showed enjoyment when considering the developing love triangle and engaged with Olivia's wit in making an inventory of her beauty and with the witty exchanges between the two women. Many focused on Olivia's repetition of, '*I cannot love him*', showing her confident and assertive nature.

High level responses analysed Orsino's elaborate language of love, his tears, groans and sighs, and contrasted this with Viola's more genuine words in the 'willow cabin' speech. Some of these responses discussed how Orsino's language shows the fickleness and superficiality of the aristocracy, but often spent too long on this topic, losing focus on the passage. Candidates understood how Viola, by wooing Olivia on Orsino's behalf, is trying to make her loved one happy, but in the process is making herself miserable. They also understood how and why Olivia shifts her attention to Viola and what this might mean for the rest of the play. There was a clear sense that contemporary debates have reinvigorated appreciation of the play.

Weaker responses lacked sufficient coverage of the passage and analysis of the language. Some tended to paraphrase or summarise the passage with little detail or development, and they were often very repetitive. There was often an attempt to find examples of literary techniques without understanding their purpose and engagement with Olivia's humour in her 'inventory' or with the wit in her exchanges with Viola was limited. Some weaker responses showed misunderstanding, thinking that Viola loves Olivia, and some showed no awareness that Olivia is developing feelings

for Viola/Cesario, or that Viola is in love with Orsino. While some responses understood Viola's expression of her status and her refusal to accept Olivia's money, some interpreted this as her rejection of Olivia, rather than an expression of pride.

(b) Successful responses were able to establish Malvolio as a serious Puritan character, understanding that this makes his transformation into a love-sick fool all the more comedic. They established him as an arrogant and self-important character, discussed his actions following the discovery of the letter and his ridicule as a 'madman'. Strong responses used textual support to demonstrate how Malvolio expresses his feeling of superiority over Sir Toby and the other characters and showed sympathy for him when he is locked up. They examined the comedy of his response to the letter and his ridiculous appearance when he dresses as 'Olivia' requests. Some responses wrote about the scene where Malvolio throws the ring at Viola, discussing the comedy in this and there was an awareness of the darker side of the comedy involving Malvolio, with some debate regarding to what extent he deserves our pity.

Strong responses were aware that whereas we laugh with Sir Toby, we laugh at Malvolio and they were able to discuss the subtleties of this. Some responses commented on Feste's role and his comment on, 'witty fool/foolish wit,' and how this applies to Malvolio.

Weaker responses often became a simple character study of Malvolio with some focus on the prank but with heavy reliance on narrative. These responses lacked detailed textual support and development and did not engage with the elements of physical, slapstick comedy often created by Malvolio's behaviour.

## WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE: *Othello*

### Question 5

(a) This passage focuses on Iago's attempts to discredit Cassio by plying him with alcohol and encouraging him to fight. The compelling nature of the passage was appreciated by most candidates, with a range of outcomes. Many appreciated Iago as a director of his own show, maybe not empathising with the hapless victims, and were able to successfully align language, drama and anticipation with varying levels of success.

The most successful responses worked carefully through the passage, setting it within the context of Othello and Desdemona's wedding night and the celebrations for peace being restored to Cyprus. They were able to link Othello's warning about keeping the peace to Iago's soliloquy at the end. They understood and analysed the contrasting language used about Desdemona by Cassio and Iago and discussed Iago's misogyny in his innuendo-laden language about Desdemona. There was an understanding that Iago is scheming, trying to get Cassio to admit desire for Desdemona but gives up when he is unsuccessful and adapts his plan in a different direction.

There was focus on Iago's soliloquy and the ways in which his plans are revealed through his derogatory language about Cassio and Roderigo. Candidates often made a personal response to the frustration and anger they felt towards Iago.

Weaker responses did not cover the passage thoroughly. They looked at the characters' language about Desdemona but did not link this with Iago's attempt to influence Cassio's language. Some mistakenly thought that Cassio is in love with Desdemona and is expressing this here. They paid little attention to Iago's language in his soliloquy, maybe due to running out of time. There was some misinterpretation of, 'creature' used by Cassio about Desdemona, thinking that she is his prey or that the word is being used to dehumanise her. The theme of 'appearance v reality' was often referenced, but with the possibility that candidates categorised characters or behaviour simplistically and perhaps stereotypically, without nuance or personal interpretation.

(b) Candidates had many ideas about Othello's jealousy and how it is conveyed. There was much independent exploration of character, cultural pressures and human frailty. Stronger responses covered a range of points and were well supported and developed. They captured the sinister nature of Iago's plan, traced the destruction of Othello both physically and mentally and analysed the often disturbing language surrounding jealousy. They also focused on the symbolism of the handkerchief which serves as Othello's 'ocular proof' of Desdemona's infidelity and focused on particular incidents which fuel Othello's jealousy.

These responses focused on how little separates love and hate, and how jealousy tips Othello into violence. They analysed his violent language towards Desdemona and the disturbing scene when he murders her and they understood how Othello's language begins to mimic Iago's in his response to women. The transformation of Othello into the 'beast' that he had previously been judged to be, was discussed by strong responses, with detailed support from the text, and the racial undertones of this were understood. Some candidates engaged with, and were frustrated by, the idea that Othello never confronts Desdemona or gives her chance to defend herself. They discussed whether this is due to his pride or to Iago's influence.

Weaker responses lacked sufficient textual support but often quoted, '*the green-eyed monster*' and were able to discuss what this says about jealousy and about the characters. They lacked focus on Othello's violent treatment of Desdemona, her murder and his disturbing language and did not mention the significance of the handkerchief in the development of his jealousy. Some weaker responses focused more generally on jealousy in the play, with insufficient treatment of Othello's jealousy in particular. Overall, this level of response relied heavily upon narrative and there was little exploration of language.

Overall, Othello's jealousy was clear for most candidates – almost all understood his trust, his insecurity, racism, and Iago's effect on Othello.