

LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

<p>Paper 2010/12 Poetry and Prose</p>

Key messages

Successful responses:

- show an extensive knowledge of texts
- address directly the question that has been set
- support their arguments with relevant textual references
- explore sensitively the ways in which writers achieve their effects.

Less successful responses:

- have an insecure or limited knowledge of texts
- do not address the question set
- make simple assertions not rooted in the detail of the text
- merely label and list writers' techniques
- offer pre-learned 'themes' rather than personal responses to the question.

General comments

There was much evidence of outstanding work this session, where candidates sustained perceptive and evaluative engagement with the texts they studied. Most candidates divided their time well across their two responses for the paper.

There were, once again, instances of some candidates using only the extract when answering the general essay question on Prose texts. As has been reported before, this approach is self-penalising as there is insufficient material for candidates to draw upon for their answers. It is not possible to make reasonably developed responses to general essay questions by relying solely on the content of the extract in the extract question. Centres should emphasise to candidates that there is a clear separation between the two questions on each Prose text.

Focus on the question

The most successful answers sustained a clear focus on the key words of the question, where candidates selected relevant material and tailored it to the demands of the question. Detailed knowledge of a text cannot on its own achieve the highest reward as there must be a clear focus on the question set. Writing everything a candidate knows about the character or theme mentioned in a general essay question is not a productive approach as it can lead to character sketches or explanations of themes. Simply working through the poems in poetry questions or extracts in extract questions can result in a loss of focus on the question. Apt selection of material is the key to success.

Textual knowledge

In the strongest answers candidates skilfully embed both concise quotation and indirect textual reference to support their ideas. In answers to poetry and extract questions, candidates can take advantage of the printed text to support their ideas and to explore the ways in which the writer achieves their effects. The strongest responses to general essay questions showed detailed knowledge including much direct textual reference to support their ideas. Having recourse to learned direct quotations enabled candidates to explore the detail of the writing. Less successful responses showed only a basic and general grasp of the detail of the text, with little direct reference to enable them to explore a writer's use of language.

Writers' effects

The most convincing responses sustained a critical analysis of ways in which writers achieve their effects. In responses to poetry and extract questions, candidates embedded much well-selected, concise reference from the text printed in the question paper. Less successful responses had little evidence of direct quotation from the printed texts and missed the opportunity to explore the detail of the writing. Some less successful responses often commented discretely, and often mechanically, on connotations of specific words without relating them to the ways in which the words were used in the text or to the question. These responses sometimes simply logged features such as alliteration, caesura and enjambment. In poetry responses, ABAB rhyme schemes were noted without analysis of how specific examples reinforced meanings. Often unconvincing generalised claims were made about the length of lines, stanzas and paragraphs.

Personal response

There was in the strongest answers much evidence of informed and sensitive personal engagement with texts which focused directly on the key words of questions, showing insight and individuality. These responses directly addressed those words in IGCSE Literature questions which are designed to elicit personal responses to the writing, words such as 'powerful', 'vivid', 'striking', 'memorable' and 'moving'. Less successful responses made either cursory reference to these words or no reference at all, preferring instead to embark on a list of pre-learned themes. Some prose answers included the phrase 'Another theme is...' rather as if the candidate wanted to write about a topic they had revised rather than engage with the specific question that had been set.

Comments on specific questions

Section A

Question 1

Responses were characterised by strong personal engagement. The awareness of the narrator that he had not shown gratitude towards his father seems to have struck a chord with candidates. Successful responses explored the imagery depicting the cold, especially 'blueblack', and they addressed the darker side of the poem suggested by 'chronic angers'. There was understanding of the speaker's regret and self-criticism evident in the repeated 'What did I know', with many candidates exploring the idea that the father's love was shown in his actions, not words. Less successful responses tended not to appreciate the full power of the stark phrase 'austere and lonely offices'; indeed, some candidates took 'offices' literally rather than as a reference to duty.

Question 2

The most successful responses explored the extended metaphor of the wife as 'territory' or 'geography', with the darker connotations of 'territory' as a land to be invaded and conquered. Some castigated the husband for daring to 'learn' his wife as though she were an object in a school lesson. The strongest responses focused explicitly on the key words 'memorable impressions of the wife' and tailored their material accordingly. Less successful responses worked through the poem in order, pointing out the wife's unpredictability, or focused on impressions of the husband instead.

Question 3

Successful answers explored the poet's presentation of an elderly couple and the speaker's recalling the passion of youth compared with their later companionship and memories of a shared past. Only a few candidates picked up on the phrase 'without nostalgia' that implied there was no sentimentality or looking back, but rather acceptance. Most candidates were able to explore the extended metaphor of time as a waterfall. Less successful responses strayed from the specific detail of the poem to provide more generalised commentary on regretting the passing of youth into old age, paying insufficient attention to the nuances of the poem.

Question 4

The strongest responses explored the poet's stream-of-consciousness approach which helps to convey a palpable sense of anxiety and self-doubt. Many candidates acknowledged that the speaker's concerns go beyond the usual physical and social worries of a man approaching mid-life at forty (or extreme old age, in some candidates' eyes); they explored the idea of a poet with 'vision thickening', interpreted metaphorically as losing insight and inspiration. There was some appreciation of a more contemplative tone as the poem progresses: middle age may bring cynicism and sadness but also a sense of 'elation' when poetry goes well. Less successful responses might have benefited from exploring the tone of the poem rather than embarking on a list of devices the poet uses.

Question 5

The pain of the woman (some said 'menopausal') was generally understood. The most successful responses grasped the speaker's conversational style, the abrupt changes of subject matter and the impact of the one-word interjections about quiche, shallots and cheese. Some candidates used specific detail from the poem to explore perceptively the idea of how age affects women and how society perceives them. Most candidates commented on the contrast between the speaker's memories of youth and her present experience and self-image. Less successful responses worked their way through the poem without directly addressing the key words 'powerfully portrays growing old'.

Question 6

The most successful answers focused on the key words 'movingly convey', exploring sympathetically the sense of dislocation felt by the speaker and her siblings and charting the development of the speaker's thoughts and feelings. These responses quoted the statement 'All childhood is an emigration', acknowledging the significance of the statement in lending greater universality to the poem and context for the speaker uprooted and transported to a new life. Less successful responses identified the simile 'shedding its skin like a snake' though without exploring its connotations of ease and naturalness as well as possible darker associations of deception.

Section B

Question 7

The most successful responses explored sensitively the ways in which Adichie presents this disturbing moment in the novel, focusing on the description of Papa in the first paragraph and the presentation of his bigotry and extreme violence. These answers were able to contextualise the moment: the sense of liberation that Kambili and Jaja had derived from their visit to Nsukka and their new preparedness to stand up to Papa. There was much effective commentary on the latter's hypocrisy and the difference between his public persona as a man of the church and the private viciousness evident in his dealings with his family. Less successful responses explained what is disturbing about this moment without exploring ways in which Adichie achieves her effects.

Question 8

Candidates selected moments that included Ifeoma arguing with Eugene about their father's death and funeral and her confronting the police who come to her house to intimidate her. The most successful responses showed evidence of learning much well-selected relevant reference which enabled candidates to explore specific ways in which Adichie captures Ifeoma's fearlessness. Without such reference, candidates produced descriptive and overly assertive responses.

Question 9

Many responses showed an awareness of Jane being devastated at the idea of being separated from Rochester and of the latter playing along with Jane's misunderstanding. The strongest responses showed a clear understanding of the presentation of both characters and what makes this such a moving moment in the novel. These responses explored the exaggerated description of the Irish and Ireland, Rochester's acknowledgement of the strong bond between them and the image of the piece of string. Less successful responses showed an insecure grasp of Rochester's words and motivation, taking what he says literally, with little knowledge of the wider context of the novel as a whole.

Question 10

Those who attempted this question showed an understanding of the character's back story, her inherited madness, her being imprisoned in appalling conditions and her violent and animalistic nature. Many responses referred to relevant moments in the text, such as Mason's visit, the fire in Rochester's chamber and the wedding veil, though without the direct quotation that might have helped candidates to explore Bronte's presentation of the character.

Question 11

There were too few responses to this question to make a general comment appropriate.

Question 12

There were too few responses to this question to make a general comment appropriate.

Question 13

In the few successful responses seen, there was an understanding of Aunt Penniman's continued interference and her purporting to know more than she actually does about Morris's intentions towards Catherine. These answers recognised that this is a turning point in the development of Catherine's character as she finally sees through her aunt, with a 'consummate sense of her aunt's meddlesome folly'. Less successful responses might have explored in greater detail Catherine's vehement tone and how James uses dialogue to reveal Aunt Penniman's true self in making this a 'powerful moment in the novel'. These responses showed an insecure understanding of the moment and its position within the novel.

Question 14

There were too few responses to this question to make a general comment appropriate.

Question 15

The strongest answers explored how Lahiri makes this moment in the novel so entertaining through the salesmanship of Ashima's mother, the silence of the interested parties, and in particular the presentation of Ashoke's appearance and attitude ('glumly', 'indifferent'). These answers showed an understanding of the cultural context which memorably affects Ashima's situation: she is given no choice and marries an unknown man in a matter of weeks. There was an awareness that this is the beginning of Gogol's story. Less successful responses identified details that were 'entertaining' but needed to explore the ways in which Lahiri makes them entertaining.

Question 16

There were few responses seen. The best showed at least some understanding of the importance in Bengali families of having both a 'good name' and a 'pet name'. There was an awareness that the first time he uses the name Nikhil is when he kisses Kim and some sense of the wider theme of struggles with identity from Gogol's perspective. Generally, candidates needed a more extensive range of reference from the novel which would have enabled them to explore in greater detail ways in which Lahiri 'powerfully conveys' Gogol's feelings about his name. The least successful responses adopted a narrative rather than analytical approach.

Question 17

A focus on the key word 'impact', with examples of how Pi is affected both physically and emotionally, was a feature of more successful responses. In these responses, there was both an understanding of Pi's present suffering and predicament and also the implications for his future safety: the loss of the raft and the discovery of the one remaining whistle. Less successful responses merely identified aspects of language and structure (such as pathetic fallacy, onomatopoeia, repetition and listing) whereas stronger responses explored the ways in which Martel 'powerfully depicts the impact of the storm'. The least successful responses commented on the extract as a discrete piece of writing isolated from the rest of the novel.

Question 18

Successful responses showed an ability to draw upon moments in the text where Pi and Richard Parker are presented as potential allies or enemies and responded sensitively to the ways in which Martel portrays the two 'characters'. Some referred to the alternative potential interpretation of the story and considered Richard Parker as symbolic of Pi's 'dark side' and therefore an 'enemy'. Less effective responses gave character sketches of the two, without the range of direct textual detail both to support points and to explore ways in which Martel 'vividly conveys' that Pi and Richard Parker are both enemies and allies.

Question 19

The strongest answers explored the contrast between the vivid picture of decay, the 'grimy', 'rotting', 'sagging' buildings for the proles and the 'startlingly different', impressive and well-maintained Ministries which dominated London. The best answers explored what this contrast shows about the Party's values and the care for the people it governs. Perceptive comments on how the 'chicken-houses' show the dehumanising of the proles were sometimes linked to the inhuman and terrifying 'gorilla-faced guards'. Less effective answers tended to lack focus on the key words 'striking impressions' or concentrated too much on one aspect of the extract (such as the slogans) or focused on general background information.

Question 20

There were many successful responses to this question showing a perceptive and evaluative engagement with the text and task. These responses addressed the key prompt 'methods of controlling thoughts' with an extensive range of textual reference to the Thought Police, the Ministry of Truth, the Two Minutes Hate, the role of party spies and the function of Newspeak ('The whole aim of Newspeak is to narrow the range of thought.'). There was much sensitive exploration of the loss of individuality and the inability to show emotion, as enforced by the Party. Less successful responses described examples of Party control without focusing on 'people's thoughts'. Other responses lapsed into narrative or extraneous background material on Stalin and Hitler without focusing clearly on analysis of relevant textual detail to answer the question.

Question 21

Many of the stronger responses commented on the forbidden as something that is exciting for all children, on the idea of rebellion, particularly as part of a gang which explores and confronts the unknown, contrary to the edicts of adults. There was an appreciation of childhood naivete, with close analysis of the childish perspective in both thought and diction. Many candidates wrote engagingly about imagination, mystery and fear, the idea of a quest and links with myths / fairy tales. Less successful responses offered narrative and an over-reliance on assertion rather than a close analysis of language, structure or narrative viewpoint.

Question 22

The strongest responses included analysis of the narrative structure leading up to the ball, the passage from innocence to experience and from excitement to disappointment and despair. They analysed the force and impact of the words 'She didn't take.' Candidates showed sympathy for Dolly in the expectation to please men regardless of her own feelings, compounded by her aunts being complicit in this. The most successful responses explored the presentation of societal expectations and the rank unfairness of a patriarchal society, though it should be emphasised that these responses were rooted in the detail of the text. Less successful responses commented on these issues with little reference to the text or question or lapsed into re-telling the story. For high reward, candidates needed an extensive range of direct reference to the text to address the question and to explore features of Richardson's writing.

LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

Paper 2010/13
Poetry and Prose

There were too few candidates for a meaningful report to be produced.

LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

Paper 2010/22
Drama

Key messages

- Successful responses focused on the key words in the question and supported ideas with concise quotations which were analysed fully.
- Opening paragraphs should be brief and avoid lengthy socio-historical detail and lists of the writers' techniques to be addressed. Conclusions need to be more than a reiteration of points.
- 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.
- Identifying technical terms and individual punctuation without consideration of the context and intended impact on the audience is an unproductive response to the set task.
- All questions require a response to the text as drama and an appreciation of the play on stage.

General comments

Candidates demonstrated knowledge and enjoyment of their set texts and an engagement with the characters, ideas and themes they contain. There was a lot of excellent work seen. The most successful responses showed detailed appreciation of texts and made perceptive comments on characterisation and stagecraft. The most popular texts across all syllabi were *Twelfth Night* and *Othello*. *The Crucible* and *Journey's End* were popular on the 0992 syllabus. There were two new texts this series, *Othello* and *Crumbs from the Table of Joy*.

Candidates should be made aware that in answering questions on *The Crucible*, introductions about the religious, socio-historical background of Salem, or the political context of McCarthyism are not a prerequisite to answering the question. Similarly, in *Othello*, comments on the role of Elizabethan women should be relevant and brief; how wives were expected to be obedient is a sound point as this, ironically, is the quality that undoes Desdemona but there is little to reward in arguing that '*Emelia is a feminist*'.

Many candidates wrote lengthy, general introductions, summarising the plot or listing irrelevant social, cultural, historical or biographical details of the writer, as mentioned above. Others wrote a list of the things to cover, for example, the techniques the writer had used, including punctuation, which they would analyse in their answer. In an examination with 45 minutes to write a response these are unproductive ways to start an answer and there is little to reward in responses which list the range of punctuation the writer uses in the text.

The most successful answers wrote a brief introduction, focusing on the key terms of the question, for example, 'disturbing', 'dramatic', 'revealing' or 'entertaining' and sustained a link to the question throughout their answer. A brief plan to help to select the most important points to include, and the most suitable material to use to support these points, is helpful. In answering a passage-based question, a few sentences to contextualise the passage, before exploring the passage itself in detail, was helpful in demonstrating a candidate's understanding of the structure of the text. Successful answers to discursive questions maintained a tight focus on the question and used a range of precise textual references from across the whole text.

A common approach for less successful answers was where candidates wrote all they knew about a text with little or no attempt to link this to the question. Retelling the plot up to the start of a specific passage, before attempting to focus on the question wastes valuable time which should have been spent answering the question. These responses were self-penalising as little time was left to spend on the set passage.

Candidates need to remember that drama is visual and uses language that has an impact on an audience. 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.

The ability to read closely and 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 point out terms, and particularly the use of punctuation, that is not explored in context or helpful in developing an argument constructively. Many candidates used juxtaposition incorrectly as a synonym for 'contrast'. 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', 'end-stopping' or 'caesura' to convey ideas or to write a list of techniques they will be writing about in their introduction.

There are lessons candidates need to learn about quotation. Most know that close reference to the text and quotations are needed to support ideas to achieve highly. However, some candidates work through the extract, line by line, writing out a quotation and then offering paraphrase, sometimes followed by the statement: 'which makes it such a significant moment in the play'. To achieve a coherent, relevant response to the question, the argument should come first, followed by a supporting quotation, containing a link to the task. For example, as one candidate wrote: '*Abigail focuses on accusing the weakest person in the room in order to deflect attention away from herself: "She makes me drink blood". This demonstrates her cunning, and ruthlessness but also starts a process that will only lead to violence and destruction. This makes this a very significant moment in the play.*'

There were some rubric infringements on where candidates answered on two passage-based questions instead of one passage-based question and one discursive. In these instances, both essays are marked but only the higher mark awarded. Time management was good with very few unfinished responses seen. 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 the response.

Comments on specific questions

LYNN NOTTAGE: *Crumbs from the Table of Joy*

Question 1

Candidates were able to identify both the amusing and serious: the racism Lily has experienced; the lack of black representation in the film industry; societal expectations of women and the girls needing a mother figure. They understood how Nottage approaches these serious issues with humour and the joking between characters. More successful answers explored how Ernestine is making fun of herself, adopting her film star pose, knowing she will never be a movie star.

Question 2

More successful responses commented on Gerte's racial and national contrast with the Crumps and Godfrey's religious views over Father Divine. Her sympathetic personality was approved by the few who wrote about her. There was little mention of the attack on Godfrey because he was with a white woman, or the shock of the marriage for both the girls and the audience. Less successful responses did not fully grasp that Gerte was a white woman, missing a key aspect of Nottage's portrayal of the character. Very few candidates understood the significance of her being German or the Nazi connection with its racial undercurrents.

ARTHUR MILLER: *The Crucible*

Question 3

Responses to this pivotal scene in the play varied considerably. Successful answers were aware of the exact context: to distract attention from her own guilt and the dancing in the wood, Abigail has accused Tituba of calling up the Devil, which starts the accusations of witchcraft in Salem. Brief reference to the Puritan theocracy were made providing an important background in which extreme beliefs in God and the Devil would make the idea of witchcraft very threatening. Hence Abigail's determination to deflect blame from herself onto someone more vulnerable, a black slave from

another culture, alien to the white, Puritan society of Salem. Abigail's cunning and lying manipulation of the situation was effectively explored, starting with her wild accusation, '*She makes me drink blood!*' with Hale and Parris immediately seizing on this. Her realisation of her power over Tituba and Hale was noted, leading to further accusations of dreaming 'corruptions', difficult to substantiate, but enough to convince the onlookers of Tituba's guilt and evidence of her working for the Devil. Hale's naivety in accepting the accusations and the dramatic pace of his aggressive interrogation were effectively analysed with some insight into his questioning in that the answer he is looking for is already in the question and all she can do is to agree to save her life and, when pressed, name others. The dramatic impact of Tituba's shock and terror at being betrayed by Abigail with the threats of whipping and hanging were established as powerful and significant factors for the later witch trials. The most successful answers made brief, pertinent reference to McCarthyism where naming others was necessary to save oneself, moving from individual actions to the bigger themes of the play including betrayal, self-preservation, hysteria and the abuse of power. The best answers focused closely on the writing, the accusations, pauses and exclamation marks, for example, Abigail's '*Do not lie!*', then observing the powerful impact of her remaining silently on stage watching during the interrogation.

Many less successful answers started with a lengthy recap of the play, Miller's intentions in writing the play with reference to Senator McCarthy and Communism, and the history of the Salem Witch trials themselves. Others worked through the passage, commenting on the situation and punctuation, particularly exclamation marks but without understanding these reflect a tone of voice, or linking comments to the terms of the question. There was little sense of drama and there were many half-true assertions. Some thought the scene takes place in court and Tituba is innocent but confesses, forgetting the key point that she is dealing with witchcraft but at Abigail's insistence and it is the attempt to deflect from this that starts the accusations and interrogations.

Question 4

There were fewer responses to this question with many finding it difficult to go beyond a narrative overview of the relationship or character studies of Proctor and Abigail, without looking at the consequences of the relationship in the wider context of the play. The most successful answers considered Proctor's adultery, Abigail's determination to replace Elizabeth and the disturbing consequences of Abigail's ruthlessness in attempting to achieve this. These included: the witch trials and framing of Elizabeth with the most disturbing aspect being the deaths of innocents and, ironically, Proctor himself. The disturbing way in which Proctor thinks he can cast Abigail off without consequences and to preserve his reputation led to justifiable condemnation of Proctor. Better answers observed the similarities between them and how their lust and adultery made them both 'villainous' prepared to defend their reputations at all costs. Well-selected textual detail and awareness of the dramatic impact of their meetings, and dialogue, were features of these responses. However, few explored Proctor's guilt and refusal to expose Abigail and the effects of this dilemma on his own conscience and his family.

Candidates had mixed feelings about Abigail and Proctor. Many sympathised with Abigail as a victim, due to her childhood and background, claiming she was taken advantage of by an older man and effectively abandoned when no longer needed. This was contrasted to Proctor's greater status and maturity. His clear ambivalence towards Abigail was well-supported and his view of his 'sin' being a minor error, partly caused by Elizabeth, led many to sympathise further with Abigail. Some candidates applied modern ideas to the relationship including the fact that it was 'grooming' and Proctor was a 'paedophile' which undermines engagement with both the relationship and the text as there is so much evidence to support Abigail's malice.

Less successful answers adopted a narrative approach to the relationship and focused on the age difference and the personal relationship, seeing the characters as real rather than constructs. This limited exploration of its disturbing effects on stage. Abigail was frequently depicted as an abused child with little close reference to the text or textual detail to support ideas.

R C SHERRIFF: *Journey's End*

Question 5

This question focused on a profoundly 'moving' moment at the end of the play which most candidates were able to engage with, eliciting many detailed, personal responses. There were many sensitive responses to Raleigh's innocence and youth with understanding of the dramatic

impact on audiences who had witnessed the arrival of the hero-worshipping young boy, just out of school, now fatally injured. Comparisons to his 'rigger' injuries and expectations that he would soon re-join the men were explored and brief contrasts drawn between his heroic qualities and Hibbert's lack of them. The most successful answers contextualised the passage: Stanhope and Raleigh's strained relationship before the attack and previous comments on the use of first names. Most found tenderness in Stanhope's ministrations and pathos in Raleigh's slow realisation of the seriousness of his injuries with '*the different note*' in his voice and inability to move his legs. There were perceptive comments on Stanhope's kindness and euphemisms in making light of the moment and giving hope to Raleigh so as not to panic him. There was understanding of the more friendly use of 'Jimmy' and 'Dennis' at this moment, contrasted with Stanhope's previous anger at the use of his first name as Stanhope provides comfort despite the battle raging outside. Stanhope's tone, proximity to Raleigh and perceived desperation to keep him comfortable, 'rising quickly' to get water, were effectively commented on. There was understanding of his attempts at humour with the water and tea leaves. There was much to explore in the stage directions, the silence and the pauses in speech. There was close analysis of the language, the symbolism of the rose light in the dawn sky, Raleigh's request for a light and the dark and cold. More perceptive answers commented on the losing battle above ground with Stanhope's response that the guns were '*Mostly theirs*', symbolising a losing battle both above and below ground.

Less successful answers did not know the context with some unaware that Raleigh dies and did not comment on the changes in Stanhope. There was limited focus on 'moving', or the passage, with lapses into descriptions of the war and Stanhope's previous behaviour and some misconception that Stanhope survives.

There was some misunderstanding of the use of first names, with some calling them 'nicknames'. The terms 'old boy' and 'old chap' were often understood as Raleigh's experience having aged him, rather than being terms of endearment at a sensitive and moving moment. There was confusion of the guns making a 'row' with this understood as an argument between the men.

Question 6

There were fewer answers to this question. The relationship between Stanhope and Osborne was one in which candidates were able to empathise and there was some sensitive detail to the friendship, particularly following the death of Osborne when Stanhope grieves for his lost friend. Most answers traced the friendship in a chronological manner. The most successful answers knew the text well and were able to identify key scenes where the relationship is clearly portrayed: Osborne's admiration and loyal defence of Stanhope and his drinking in front of Hardy; him putting Stanhope to sleep when he was drunk; the father-like image which Osborne had and the fact that Osborne gives Stanhope his personal possession when he goes out on the raid, and the effect his death has on Stanhope. They recognised the trust Stanhope has in Osborne and the compassion shown by him. Better answers explored the powerful moments when Osborne comforts and supports Stanhope after Raleigh's arrival, and by reading what Raleigh has written about him. Stanhope's powerfully dramatic reaction to Osborne's death and furious conflict with Raleigh were effectively explored.

Less successful answers were unable to recall specific textual details to support points. This resulted in general comments on their friendship and much retelling of the scenes where Osborne puts Stanhope to bed or calms him down when he is angry over the prospect of Raleigh informing his sister of Stanhope's drinking problem. Weaker answers focused entirely on Stanhope's drinking or wrote character sketches of the men.

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE: *Twelfth Night*

Question 7

There were some very impressive answers to this question but also many of the weakest. This is a pivotal scene which shows Malvolio, having previously found Maria's fake letter, setting in motion the sub-plot, effecting his own downfall in a most amusing manner. There was little sympathy expressed for Malvolio but considerable enjoyment at the success of the prank. It is dramatically effective and entertaining as the audience anticipates Malvolio's appearance and behaviour, dictated by the contents of the letter. The most successful answers anticipated and eagerly awaited Olivia's reaction to the change in her previously '*sad and civil*' steward. The dramatic irony of the moment featured highly with effective focus on Olivia's present state of mind, and her shock and

confusion upon seeing Malvolio and at his attempts to remind her of what she had supposedly written in the 'letter'. Maria's contribution was neglected by most, but better answers saw her role in setting up the scene with her warning Olivia to be on her guard as he was in a '*strange*' manner and surely '*possess'd*'. The humour in her pretence at not knowing the reasons for his behaviour whilst questioning his '*ridiculous boldness*' was well-noted. There was engagement with the hilarious visual impact of Malvolio's yellow stockings, cross-gartered, smiling and kissing his hand. There was some confusion over Olivia's words on how best to court Cesario as she awaits his arrival, with some thinking she says this to Malvolio himself. The language provided plenty of material to explore with many commenting on the perceived madness of Malvolio and the significance of '*greatness*', the sexual element and misunderstanding of going '*to bed*' and his being a '*nightingale*'. Better answers linked status to form: Olivia speaks in blank verse whereas Maria and Malvolio speak in prose, showing their social class, and were able to make the link to wider themes of class, disguise, appearance versus reality, and madness in love. A few answers showed some sensitivity, seeing the humour in the gulling of Malvolio but also the cruelty in his humiliation and being '*notoriously abused*', leading to his later incarceration.

Less successful answers referred to the letter, Olivia's obvious confusion and Malvolio's conviction that she is in love with him, without supporting or developing how this is dramatic. Some stated that he was indeed insane and that it was right he should be locked away. The weakest answers retold the plot up to and beyond the moment, with minimal engagement with the question and passage. There were some attempts to explain what happened in the passage where it was clear the play had not been studied.

Question 8

There were fewer answers to this question. The more successful answers were able to go beyond Feste's intelligence and witty banter, quite unexpected for a 'Fool', and supported their argument and observations with textual evidence including, 'better a witty fool than a foolish wit' to show Shakespeare's true message through this character. There were many aspects of his role considered 'fascinating' and explored: his role in moving between households and social levels, being accepted in both; his part in the plot against Malvolio and disguise as Sir Topas, and the insight and melancholy of some of his songs which open and close the play. Better answers observed his almost omniscient nature as a mouthpiece for Shakespeare and a link with the audience, as a kind of 'Master of Ceremonies' who presides over the whole tangle of love stories, misunderstandings and pranks. He sees through Viola's disguise and wittily chastises Olivia for mourning a brother who is in heaven, getting away with calling her a 'Fool' and is the only character who could mock Maria.

A few less successful answers used prepared character studies of Feste which would have benefitted from closer links to the question and the ways in which Shakespeare makes him such a fascinating character. The weakest answers were undeveloped with many stating little more than Feste works at Olivia's court and he is witty and intelligent which is fascinating for someone employed as a 'Fool'. Some were able to identify moments in the plot when he appears, but these were narrative in approach and lacking in specific detail. There was much repetition of his being witty and intelligent but with very little textual detail to support this.

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE: *Othello*

Question 9

There were some engaging responses with the most successful candidates demonstrating clear understanding of the dramatic irony and that it was Shakespeare doing the foreshadowing and not Desdemona. The most successful were able to contextualise the passage and understood that Othello has changed, convinced by Iago of Desdemona's infidelity and planning to kill her that night. There was close focus on how this was made a 'sad' moment with sensitive comments on her love and loyalty to Othello even though in the previous scene he had called her names and hit her. Better answers referred to the inevitability of impending doom as conveyed through references to time, driven by Othello's insistence that his orders are carried out the '*th' instant*', '*forthwith*'. Fear is aroused by his instructions to '*dismiss*' Emilia, leaving Desdemona vulnerable to his wrath and there was some effective analysis of her uneasiness and premonitions. Her words to Emilia, '*If, I should die...*' were understood with emphasis on the '*If*'. Less successful answers argued she has accepted her death and wanted Emilia to use her wedding sheets, from happier times, for her

'shroud'. Better answers understood that the 'Willow' song eerily parallels her situation, recognising that they are not her words but the words of a song which she could not get out of her mind. The symbolism of the willow and the pathos of the song: '*...sighing...moans...salt tears*' were effectively explored.

There were many misconceptions in answers to this question, such as: Desdemona knows she is going to be killed, her mother sang the song and then dies, Barbary relates to barbary horse as well as Desdemona being attracted to Ludovico so not as innocent as the audience thinks. Less successful answers seemed quite confused over who was who in the extract and over the 'willow' song, believing Desdemona was mourning for her dead mother and that is why she is sad in this scene. These responses stated that she knew she was going to be killed and accepted her fate, exonerating Othello's behaviour with, '*Let nobody blame him; his scorn I approve.*'

The weakest answers attempted a linear analysis of the passage showing little understanding of the text or question or simply lapsed into retelling the plot. Some tended to lose focus on the passage completely and drifted into discussion of such general matters as the patriarchal society in Venice, male and female roles in Shakespeare's time and toxic masculinity.

Question 10

There were very few responses to this question but those who did attempt it demonstrated varying degrees of textual knowledge and understanding of Cassio's dramatic role. The more successful answers knew Cassio and his importance to the plot. There was a focus on his qualities, most of which were the opposite of Othello's. His charm and success with ladies were recognised as was his respectful manner when discussing Desdemona. They understood his manipulation and the reasons why he was so easy to use for Iago's purposes. Better answers were able to link him to Othello, Desdemona and Emilia and how this contributed to the plot. Less successful answers struggled with the question and described the plot instead of how Cassio drives the plot as a victim of Iago's jealousy and hatred of both Cassio and Othello. The weakest answers focused more on Iago and his motives, becoming speculative in nature, commenting mainly that Cassio should not have been so gullible.

LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

Paper 2010/23
Drama

Key messages

- The most successful responses avoided introductions which were lengthy discussions of historical context and focused on the key words of the question. Effective conclusions were more than a reiteration of points.
- A range of textual support and full analysis of references was a feature of the most successful responses. Brief and precise quotations were the best form of textual support.
- Passage-based responses benefited from contextualisation of the passage, with material selected from throughout the passage, including the ending. Close exploration of the language was a feature.
- In successful discursive responses the question remained in focus and precise textual references were sourced from throughout the text.
- If literary terms and punctuation are identified but their intended effect is not considered the response will not progress.
- Successful responses showed an awareness of the text as drama and engaged with the impact of the play onstage.

General comments

Candidates demonstrated knowledge and enjoyment of their set texts, and a sense of engagement with the drama was evident in many responses. The most successful responses showed critical understanding of the texts and made perceptive comments about characterisation, stagecraft and language. The most popular texts were *The Crucible*, *Othello* and *Journey's End*. There was one new text this series, *Crumbs from the Table of Joy*.

In order to produce a successful response to a question, candidates are required to focus carefully on the key words of the question, such as 'strikingly', 'vividly', 'dramatic', 'moving' or 'fascinating'. This focus on the question needs to be sustained throughout the response. A response which makes only brief reference to the question at the beginning or end is unlikely to achieve high reward. A brief plan is a good idea to help candidates choose relevant material for inclusion, and to help them to remain focused on the question. It is always worthwhile for candidates to spend time in annotating a passage before attempting the question.

The most successful responses showed a clear awareness of the text as drama and of the action onstage. These responses sustained engagement with the visual nature of the drama and the impact on the audience. Referring to 'audience' rather than 'reader', and to 'play' rather than 'novel', 'text' or 'book' demonstrated this awareness. Some less-successful responses tended to summarise the plot and wrote all they knew about the text, with no link to the question.

In answering a passage-based question, briefly setting the passage in context at the start of the response before exploring the passage in detail is very helpful in demonstrating understanding of the structure of the text. Rather than writing a lengthy introduction with details of historical context or lists of the writer's techniques, a more successful approach is to consider key words in the question, the events of the scene and an exploration of the writer's methods in conveying his or her intentions to the audience. Brief, well-selected references should be analysed fully.

Focus on literary techniques such as dramatic irony and foreshadowing was often successful. However, many responses tended to point out literary techniques with no exploration of the effect of these techniques. Similarly, punctuation was often referred to, with no consideration of the effects in context. This is not helpful in developing a constructive argument. Any techniques referred to should be supported and their effects fully analysed.

Comments on specific questions

LYNN NOTTAGE: *Crumbs from the Table of Joy*

Question 1

Very few responses were seen, and in these the passage was rarely set in context. The most successful responses recognised the different attitudes of Lily and Godfrey to religion and politics. There was some awareness of the effect of the stage directions, though very few picked up the hint that Lily and Godfrey might have had prior feeling for each other. Few responses commented on the reactions of Ermina.

Less successful responses did not progress beyond stating the obvious and missed the subtleties of the text such as Lily's contempt of Father Divine and her political views.

Question 2

Too few responses to this question were seen to make meaningful comment.

ARTHUR MILLER: *The Crucible*

Question 3

A very popular text and question.

Stronger candidates showed good personal engagement with the passage and analysed it in depth. A personal sense of the unfairness of the trials was strongly expressed. The context of Proctor bringing Mary Warren to the court to claim that the girls' accusations are false was understood, and there was understanding of the dramatic context of Proctor wishing to present the deposition in order to have Elizabeth and the wives of Giles and Francis released. There was close focus on the passage, on Parris's undermining of everything Proctor says, Hale's realisation that every defence is taken as an attack on the court and on the irony of Danforth's comment that those of good conscience have nothing to fear. Many candidates were able to see the value of commenting on stage directions which led to them analysing rather than describing. These candidates explored Parris's movements onstage, Francis's '*trembling with anger*' and Mary Warren's sudden sobbing. Valid observations were made on the interruptions within the scene linking to the unequal power balance and silencing the voice of reason. By referencing the 'sarcasm' employed by Parris, candidates were able to identify how he viewed Proctor's testament together with his manipulation of Danforth.

Many less successful responses began by summarising historical details of 17th century Salem and/or McCarthyism and Communism in 1950s America. Others discussed the content of the passage with some reference to stage directions, but with little focus on the question and often incomplete coverage of the passage. Many responses did not reference Parris's nervousness and motivation to dismiss the deposition out of fear that he will be brought down if the girls are exposed as liars. There was much focus on Danforth's 'dogmatic' nature and the importance of status but often lacking full understanding and development. There was little focus on Hale's role in the scene.

The least successful responses relied on narration of events of the play or the passage with little awareness of the question. Many focused on only one character from the passage. There was some misreading of Danforth as open-minded and willing to believe Proctor. Coverage of the passage was often limited, and it was rare that candidates responded to the ending. Several responses showed misunderstanding, believing that the '91 signatories' of the deposition have already been accused of witchcraft, or that Parris is the mayor of Salem. Most responses were able to comment on how characters are interrupted, showing unfairness.

Question 4

There were fewer responses to this question, but it provided an opportunity for stronger candidates to explore the play quite thoroughly. To achieve highly, candidates needed to explore how Miller 'strikingly' depicts revenge in the play. Those candidates who performed well were able to select

key incidents and develop them in the light of the question. Most were able to recognise some aspects of revenge and analyse them carefully with textual support and comment on the language. They understood that the witch trials became an opportunity for people to settle old scores and grudges. Abigail was identified as the main character seeking revenge and successful responses carefully explored the way she goes about this. Other instances of revenge were also recognised, such as Ann and Thomas Putnam's wish for revenge on community members due to land wars, and on Rebecca Nurse due to the loss of their babies when she was acting as midwife. A few candidates suggested that by sacrificing his reputation, Proctor was taking revenge on Parris and Abigail.

Less successful responses focused on one instance of revenge—usually Abigail—and became a character study. Others did not provide reasons for some characters' revenge and failed to appreciate the hysteria of Salem. Many drifted into narrative.

Other less successful responses discussed the idea that Mary Warren is seeking revenge on the Proctors, although her actions are largely prompted by fear of Abigail and pressure from the other girls, and these responses lacked convincing support. There were some examples of Tituba seeking revenge on Parris although not all were fully supported or developed. Responses often lost focus on revenge and drifted into general comment on the play and its themes. Weaker responses did not identify how the pent-up resentments in Salem are a catalyst for revenge.

RC SHERRIFF: *Journey's End*

Question 5

Many responses provided clear introductions and contextualisation of the passage. Some gave a little appropriate historical context. Stronger responses showed personal engagement with the vivid presentation of Stanhope's state of mind—his paranoia, stress and exhaustion, and understanding of how the audience will relate to the scene. These responses showed understanding of how Stanhope toys with the idea of dying so that his image in Madge's mind will not be tainted—'*for ever and ever...*'; and understood his horror of mingling his home life with life at the front.

In less successful responses there was little focus on the interaction between Stanhope and Osborne, although many candidates understood the supporting role of Osborne and noted the name 'Uncle' used by Stanhope. Greater focus was needed on the language of Stanhope's drunken rant and the way that his fragmented speech is a result of his drunken state. Some lacked explicit focus on Stanhope's fear of Madge finding out about his alcoholism, and that she is Raleigh's sister. Responses were not always fully focused on the fact that Stanhope is drunk. There was little focus on the stage directions such as 'strange high-pitched voice', or 'dull voice' and 'laughs gaily'. Less successful responses listed themes of the text and although the coping mechanism of alcohol was understood, responses did not progress and develop from this point. Some responses missed altogether Stanhope's alcoholism and the censorship issue, both of which are central to the scene.

Question 6

A smaller number of responses were seen. Although most of the responses focused on the cowardice of Hibbert, some were able to see him as a representative of how many soldiers would have felt when being placed on the Front Line, showing empathy towards his situation. Those candidates who were able to compare Hibbert's feigned neuralgia, and the desire to go home, to the bravery and dignity of others such as Raleigh and Osborne were able to engage more fully with the question. Likewise, responses that explored the scene when Stanhope threatens to shoot Hibbert showed understanding of how unbearable the situation had become for him; it was preferable for him to die in this way than face the German onslaught. By addressing this incident together with Stanhope's confession of also being afraid, candidates were able to explore the effects of war on individuals and thus the dramatic impact Hibbert has in the play. Stronger responses covered the unpleasant aspects of Hibbert's characterisation and how they contribute to the dramatic impact. They also looked at his attitude to women and his inability to read situations, the tension of his exchange with Stanhope, and his cowardice and reluctance as the others leave to take part in the raid.

Less successful responses tended to only focus on the exchange with Stanhope and were therefore narrow in range. These responses gave little or no consideration to how Hibbert is viewed

by other characters. A few responses confused Hibbert with Trotter. There was rarely any consideration of Hibbert's behaviour during the dinner.

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE: *Twelfth Night*

Question 7

This was a reasonably popular question, and the passage allowed much scope for personal engagement. Stronger responses engaged with the moving nature of the passage. They clearly understood the differing gender attitudes towards love and were able to explore the language relating to this effectively. The best responses commented on the language and evaluated the interaction between Orsino and Viola, recognising the dramatic irony of the scene and expressing a strong personal response to Viola's plight and Orsino's sense of superiority.

The most successful responses were able to identify the change in mood created by Viola's story of her lost 'sister' and her grief for the 'loss' of her brother. There were some comments on Orsino's '*rantings*'/*moaning*' and '*needing to get a grip*' indicating that his 'love' for Olivia should not be taken too seriously; his words reflecting more show than substance, leading to some candidates seeing him as a comical figure. In contrast, the true love felt by Viola following her speech when referencing the 'worm i' th' bud' became more apparent. In considering the imagery candidates could more fully engage with the term, 'moving'.

The least successful responses tended to provide a few quotations and paraphrase them (not always accurately) and did not understand the wordplay between Orsino and Viola. Many missed the significance of Viola's lines about her background and there was some misreading of 'queen of gems' and 'pranks'. Less successful responses did not engage with the debate about the strength of men and women's love. A few candidates seemed to have learned all or parts of a general response by heart, which was self-penalising as the response often lacked focus on the question and relevant textual support was lacking. There was often little focus on 'moving' and much reliance on narration.

Question 8

A less popular question. Stronger responses were able to consider how the arrival of Olivia on stage is anticipated by Orsino's devotion to her and examined how she is presented through the eyes of other characters. They focused on many aspects of Olivia's character and recognised her ability to change affections quickly and even mentioned her sympathy for Malvolio. Many recognised that she was fascinating without being an endearing character. There was some interesting discussion of her as a bold woman who makes a choice of who to love, breaking societal stereotypes. Stronger responses understood her relationship with Feste, the power that her mourning brings and her lack of control over her household. Some responses identified how Olivia breaks gender and class rules but lacked development of these ideas.

Many responses lacked focus on 'fascinating' and less successful responses often became a character profile of Olivia with little sense of how she is seen by other characters. There was some focus on her fickle nature when she breaks her vow of mourning upon meeting Cesario. There was some undeveloped selection of material, for example on her relationship with Maria. Comments were often narrow in range, being very generalised with little or no textual support and narrative responses were quite common. Several responses appeared to try to make the essay fit the theme of love. Some responses drifted into too much discussion of Orsino, not necessarily with relevance to Olivia. There was some lengthy and irrelevant discussion of gender issues in Shakespeare's time.

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE: *Othello*

Question 9

There were some convincing responses to this question, with candidates engaging with the term 'dramatic moment'. The best responses considered the whole extract, referencing both speech and stage directions to convey the pace and action of this chaotic scene. Some candidates gave a brief overview of the context before addressing the focus of the question which allowed them to demonstrate their knowledge of Iago's plan. This proved to be a good strategy to use for the first paragraph. Many candidates wrote coherently and at length with responses identifying the dramatic

irony in Iago's pretence of being the innocent bystander leading to Othello's considering him as 'honest'. There was some valid comment on both Cassio and Othello, their behaviour, and reactions to the brawl. The impact of the scene on the audience was also mentioned by candidates, reinforcing their understanding of the question.

Successful responses were able to reference language features to illustrate the points they were making, such as Cassio's use of insults and the way that his drunken behaviour contrasts with his usual well-mannered and honourable character. There was clear understanding of Iago's use of language to 'avoid' blaming Cassio and of the dramatic effect of the scene on the audience. Stronger responses also understood the hyperbole of 'I am hurt to the death!' and identified Othello's anger at the brawl which has disturbed his wedding night and how he compares the men with 'Turks'-their enemies.

Less successful responses did not engage with the context, lacked focus on language and were unable to visualise the dramatic moment. They tended to lose focus on the passage and drift into discussion of such general matters as the patriarchal society in Venice, male and female roles in Shakespeare's time, and toxic masculinity. There was much misreading thinking that Montano dies and little focus on the dramatic arrival of Othello with weapons, and upon his imperative language. There was often no reference to the final speeches of Iago and Othello, but most candidates quoted Othello's use of 'Honest Iago'. There was hardly any mention of the dramatic moment of the bell being rung and there was some misunderstanding that Iago rings it. There was some misunderstanding of Roderigo's intention when he shouts, 'Beat me!'

Question 10

This was a popular discursive question. Most responses focused on Iago's jealousy of Othello, Roderigo's jealousy of Othello and Othello's jealousy of Desdemona and Cassio. Several relevant scenes were selected. The best responses focused on how jealousy in two specific moments was portrayed vividly and were able to put the moments into context and explain the dramatic significance with relevant comment on the language. These responses showed a clear and detailed understanding of jealousy's psychological destructiveness and its effect on the characters. Successful candidates gave thoughtful consideration to the transformation of Othello's character and his inner turmoil. Likewise, they explored the vindictive nature of Iago and his pleasure in recognising the true power of jealousy. There was evidence of good and comprehensive knowledge of motives displayed by many candidates with ideas being supported by apt use of textual detail. Other themes, such as vulnerability and racism, were often explored with reference to the text. All saw the influence of Iago and of how he was 'pulling the strings'. There were also personal views supported by relevant references that were evaluated quite thoroughly.

Less successful responses struggled to define two precise moments. They gave no context and there was limited understanding of the motivation of the characters and little personal response. Although most candidates could reference the theme of jealousy within the play, the question demanded that they should '*explore two moments*'; unfortunately, the incidents of jealousy in responses were often blurred especially if candidates selected just one character's jealousy to explore. This led to some unbalanced essays and responses.

Many responses were quite repetitive, often with little textual support and general comments. References were often not fully analysed. There was much quoting of 'green-eyed monster' and 'I am not what I am' with no analysis or context. Several candidates thought that Iago calls Othello a green-eyed monster. Responses which simply focused on the feelings or nature of jealousy in the play ran into the danger of their responses lapsing into narrative.