

LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

Paper 9695/31
Poetry and Prose

Key Messages

For high marks, candidates need to know their texts in great detail to make secure references and use quotations to support points.

Answers should always focus on the writing and the author's language and literary methods.

Answers to **(b)** passage questions in particular must be very detailed, commenting very closely on the writing of the extract. Poetry answers should focus on the set poem.

Answers should focus on the writing of the texts, avoiding dwelling on the biography of their authors.

Candidates should focus more closely on the language, imagery and structure of prose and drama as well as poetry.

General Comments

Candidates demonstrated a real interest in what they had read and often wrote with a genuine appreciation of the effectiveness of literary methods. There were a number of detailed, scholarly and penetrating discussions of the texts in response to the questions set. Such essays inevitably were closely focused on how those texts are constructed and how the writers employ specific diction, imagery and other devices to provoke particular responses in the readers or audiences. Often the essays were perceptive in their acknowledgement of the variety of possible responses. However, many candidates relied on a recall of character and plot, sometimes with what they termed a 'theme'. Such approaches cannot be fully successful in answering the questions set, which always focus in some way on how the text is written. Weak responses lapsed into narrative summary and characters were discussed almost as if they were real people, rather than the imagined constructions of their authors.

Candidates should note these issues are particularly important in the passage based questions. Every passage based question demands close commentary on the writing and candidates who do not address this requirement will not score high marks. All answers on the paper require quotation to support points, but in the passage based questions the material for the quotations is provided on the question paper. It is therefore vital that candidates examine the writing of the passage in very close analytical detail, whether it is poetry, prose or drama.

Question Specific Comments 9695/31

Question 1 Sujata Bhatt: *Point No Point*

- (a) Favoured poems used in response to this question were 'Whatever Happened to the Elephant', 'Sujata: The First Disciple of Buddha' 'Genealogy', 'Angels' Wings' and 'The Echoes in Poona'. Candidates succeeded best when they were able to recall the poems in sufficient detail to select appropriate quotation to support their points. Such essays commented on how point of view is established in the poems through diction and imagery and some commented on how structure and form are used to juxtapose a child's point of view with that of an adult.



- (b) This was quite a popular option, though many candidates struggled to move beyond recounting the narrative of the poem. Since the poem is about a lack of narrative, this created difficulties. More perceptive candidates appreciated the moment of stasis created by the baby 'asleep' and commented on ways in which Bhatt makes the inconsequential moment memorable, combining a colloquial informality of diction and reference with the resonant imagery of 'Beethoven's piano'. Candidates commented on the contrast between inside and outside, the promise of 'rich round fullness', echoing the pot of tea and pregnancy, and the way the short line 'in the air' prepares for the piano image. Some candidates made illuminating connections with other poems in the collection to develop points about '29 April 1989'.

Question 2. Thomas Hardy: *Selected Poetry*

- (a) Nearly every candidate who answered this question wrote about 'The Darkling Thrush'. Among other poems considered were 'The Year's Awakening', 'Beeny Cliff', 'At Castle Boterel' and 'The Convergence of the Twain'. Most essays pursued the argument that Hardy uses references to the natural world and imagery drawn from it to reflect mood and these were successful when carefully illustrated with relevant quotations. Some interesting answers broadened the argument, many of these referring to 'The Convergence of the Twain' as a poem where Hardy represents nature as dangerous and vengeful, quite contrary to his more habitual depiction. These answers clearly constructed an argument in response to the question set.
- (b) 'Afterwards' was a very popular choice. Successful candidates addressed the requirement to comment closely on Hardy's use of language, with appreciation and analysis of imagery as well as considering the phrasing and tone of the rhetorical questions. Such answers often commented on the progressive and cyclical structure of the poem, commenting on the way each stanza is introduced as the poem moves from day to night and from spring to winter, with the suggestion of rebirth at the end. Candidates noted the anonymity of the commentators, and the irony that, while the poem reinforces a desire to be remembered as an appreciator of nature rather than as a poet, this is communicated through a carefully fashioned poem. Some answers commented on a wistful, lamenting tone, while others saw the poetic voice as pathetically egocentric. There is much to comment on in the poem, and candidates were rewarded for exploring its details.

Question 3. *Songs of Ourselves*

- (a) This question was designed so that candidates could interpret 'loss' widely, and so they did, with warfare a frequent subject as well as loss of love, life and youth. The most frequently used poem was, appropriately, 'One Art'. This was often discussed very well, with close attention to the poem's development, form and structure, closely related to the question. Other poems often considered were 'Because I Could Not Stop for Death', 'Tears Idle Tears', 'For Heidi with Blue Hair', 'You Cannot Do This,' 'Cambodia' and 'Anthem For Doomed Youth'. Essays which described the type of loss, sometimes, illustrated with quotations, did not achieve great success, but there were very many sharp and thoughtful pieces of writing on the language, imagery and structures chosen by poets to present the idea of loss. The strongest essays kept the imperative 'compare' very much in mind, moving between their two chosen poems in an informed way.
- (b) Successful answers to this question, and there were many, discussed the structure in some detail, noting the change in mood at the beginning of the fourth stanza and the link between Immortality in the first and Eternity in the last. The personification of Death as a Gentleman Caller, together with a Chaperone, clearly appealed to candidates, and 'kindly' and 'civility' were read appropriately. Some candidates commented on the effects of the change in tense from past to present in line 22 and pointed out that unawareness of time is experienced only when facing eternity after death. Dickinson's characteristic use of capitals and dashes was generally interpreted as her way of emphasising important words and creating pauses to demonstrate the slowness of the journey and the jolting rhythm of the carriage wheels. The ending with just a hyphen to symbolise the eternity ahead of the speaker was another common comment. Less successful answers identified examples of alliteration, repetition and personification without discussing their effects.



Question 4. Charlotte Brontë: *Jane Eyre*

- (a) This was a popular question, though answers were frequently limited by being confined to a consideration of the various characters with a religious dimension, particularly Helen Burns, Brocklehurst and St John Rivers. These worked well enough as examples of the different kinds of Christianity Jane encounters, though really successful answers moved well beyond these limitations, noting the question was about 'Jane's characterisation' rather than about religious characters. Stronger answers focused on the influence of these and other characters on Jane: Helen's instructions on forgiveness, the rejection of Brocklehurst's hypocrisy and the presentation of her decision to resist St John's attempts to make her submit to his interpretation of God's will and agree to marriage. These answers identified pivotal moments in the novel when Jane's religious convictions and sense of identity are seen to shape the decisions made. The most successful answers picked up from the cue quotation and focused very clearly on Jane's characterisation through her understanding of religion, her prayers and relationship with God.
- (b) This passage rewarded candidates who were able to blend consideration of the context with very detailed examination of the dialogue. Very alert answers were able to pinpoint that at this stage, Rochester knows more than either Jane or the reader. Such precise observations and knowledge underpinned high quality answers, allowing candidates to explore the subtleties of Rochester's responses and the way in which not only Jane, but the reader too, is manipulated. Some candidates effectively considered the difference between a first and second reading of the passage. Strong answers paid attention to the vivid quality of Jane's description of her horrific visitor, with appropriate consideration of the Gothic genre and explored the structure of the dialogue: Rochester's short questions and Jane's longer responses before that structure is reversed with Jane's ominous proleptic 'Not yet.' Some discussions were informed by consideration of the respective statuses of Jane and Rochester signalled in their dialogue and there were some strong personal responses to Rochester, often suggesting that the final flinging of his arms around Jane is to control his own shuddering rather than to comfort Jane.

Question 5. Tsitsi Dangarembga: *Nervous Conditions*

- (a) In general, responses to this question showed sound knowledge of the text and a convincing engagement with elements of the question. There was some useful commentary of the ways in which the two girls act as foils for one another and symbolise different aspects of colonialism. Some answers described differences in the characters without much supporting reference, while strong answers were detailed and well supported. In contrasting the characters, candidates wrote relevantly about the rural poverty of Tambu compared with the educated middle-class western upbringing of Nyasha and developed comments on the position of women in Shona society. Good answers presented a range of ideas, and discussed how the girls had been affected by their experiences with some apt quotations, while the strongest also commented on the importance to the comparison of Tambu's first person narration, particularly considering the end of the novel.
- (b) Candidates usually focused effectively on the question but were varied in their success at engaging with the passage in an appropriate degree of detail. The tendency was to be able to respond well to the ideas in the passage that helped answer the question but fewer candidates engaged with the nuances of language, form and structure. Those who did so noted the passage's shift from 'we' and 'us' to 'I' and commented on the implications of vocabulary such as 'herded', 'recruit' and 'privilege'. Discussion of the superior attitude of the nuns was helped if candidates noted the inappropriateness of questions on 'acorns', 'gumboots' and 'snow shoes' for African children. Many answers showed evidence of strong personal response, which was rewarded if supported by such attention to detail as this. Many candidates criticised the arrogance of Tambu in this passage, for example, but the strongest answers were able to demonstrate a tone of gentle but critical ironic humour in the narration of her younger self.



Question 6. *Stories of Ourselves*

- (a) *The Door in the Wall*, *To Da-Duh In Memoriam*, *Journey* and *Sandpiper* were popular stories chosen to engage with this question, though other stories were considered too. Most candidates showed a reasonable working knowledge of each story as a whole but did not always support this with quotation and precise reference. Therefore, many answers tended to have a slightly narrative quality, rather than engaging rigorously with 'ways in which.' However, all candidates were able to relate their chosen stories relevantly to the question, with some interesting interpretations of what constitutes being 'out of touch' – and some interesting comparisons between how characters responded to their being so. Answers which engaged with how the narrative is told, and used detail to support the answer, scored highly.
- (b) A number of candidates answered this question without a clear detailed knowledge of the story of which it forms the climax, and thus treated it as an unseen passage. Such answers were not able to contextualise the extract and relied on narrative summary. Confident answers explored the position of the narrator, who closely follows the correspondent's experience, and contextualised the passage within the camaraderie of the men in the boat and the savagery of the sea. There was focus on the description of the man on the beach, combining the ridiculous with the saintly, the power of the sea turned momentarily benign as the correspondent is 'flung with ease' toward the shore, the simplicity and courtesy of the dialogue in such a wild situation. The answers which focused on 'the way the climax is presented' examined the tale's melancholy twist, as the dénouement seems to be salvation before the final discovery of the dead oiler.



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Question Specific Comments 9695/32

Question 1. Sujata Bhatt: *Point No Point*

- (a) The very few candidates who attempted this question wrote, often perceptively, about 'For Nanabhai Bhatt', '3 November 1984' and 'Wine from Bordeaux'. The quality of the answers depended strongly on how much detail the candidates recalled from the poems, enabling them to write about the 'means' and 'effects' of Bhatt's treatment of political events.
- (b) This was a more popular choice and most candidates managed to recognise the child's and adult's perspectives in the two sections of the poem. There were many and varied personal responses: some suggested that the poem is an attack on religion and an adult's mature rejection of childlike naivety of belief; others saw the poem as a plea for animal rights. Perhaps the most interesting was the argument that Bhatt herself, in exile, had lost her Indian 'head' and was troubled by her identity. Some argued that the first section represents appearance, myth and fantasy while the second represents reality through the adult viewpoint. Many were able to

comment on ways in which Bhatt creates the child's persistence in the first section, noting the innocence and preoccupation with discovering logic and truth.

Question 2. Thomas Hardy: *Selected Poetry*

- (a) There were a number of thoughtful answers which focused on the terms of the question and showed Hardy's concern with the passage of time. There were some good examples of close textual reference with accurate quotation; equally, many candidates referred only in general terms to the poems. The most popular poem for this answer was 'The Darkling Thrush', but the following were also popular: 'Afterwards', 'The Voice', 'The Man he Killed', 'A Church Romance', 'The Self Unseeing', 'The Going', 'Beeny Cliff' and 'At Castle Boterel'. The strongest answers were those which selected two poems which treated different aspects of time, or treated time in different ways, and were able to develop a comparison. Answers which dwelled on Hardy's biography were seldom strong.
- (b) Candidates demonstrated strong personal response and recognised the particular context of the poem. However, many candidates dwelt inappropriately on Hardy's regret about his wife Emma's death, often to the exclusion of focus on the language and structure of the poem itself. Biographical information should be used sparingly – the questions are about literature. Some candidates also produced intelligent summaries of the poem without detailed engagement with the language. The strongest answers considered the poem's poetic voice, sometimes considering to whom the haunter addresses the poem. The tone of quiet intimacy was often noted, with comments on how the lines and stanzas structure the developing thought towards the final note of 'peace'.

Question 3. *Songs of Ourselves*

- (a) This question required candidates to focus on the construction of poems and how the structure conveyed meaning, rather than to focus on the meaning itself. Answers which sidestepped the direction of the question and discussed the content with little attention to structure were self-limiting and received little reward, while essays which clearly explored form and structure – stanzas, metre, rhyme, enjambment, line lengths, punctuation – were successful. Some strong answers compared Owen's use of the sonnet form with Sassoon's varied sentence length and use of caesurae, the way Nichols and Mew use indents and spacing, the use of single and multiple stanzas, or careful regular punctuation with Dickinson's dashes. The strongest answers looked closely at structure and related it to ways in which it communicates the central issues of each poem.
- (b) This question was very popular and candidates focused on analysing and exploring the poem. There were many strong, careful answers, though a number limited themselves by failing to note the word 'anticipation' in the question. Successful answers discussed the changes of pace in the poem created by the different verbs and references to distance and made incisive comments on both its visual and auditory effects. There were also thoughtful comments on the two stanza construction, the rhyme scheme with the couplets in the Centre of each stanza and the use of the present tense. A number of candidates explored a potential sexual reading of the poem, often in intricate detail.

Question 4. Charlotte Brontë: *Jane Eyre*

- (a) There were some excellent answers to the question on Bertha Mason, demonstrating articulate and very well supported arguments about her significance. Some strong answers presented a sympathetic portrayal of Bertha, while weaker responses wrote about parts of the novel where Bertha is seen, usually with a narrative focus. The character was often considered as a narrative device of symbolic significance, with some thoughtful considerations of Bertha as Jane's alter ego, the Gothic, suppressed sexuality and feminism. Many candidates referred effectively to the historical context of the character and Victorian views on colonies and madness, though in some cases the contextual information and speculation outweighed the discussion of the novel itself.
- (b) Strong answers to this question focused closely on the passage and were able to comment on a range of linguistic and structural features. The language, imagery, repetitions, questions and sentence structures were discussed in confident answers. In terms of contextual knowledge, most candidates understood Jane's dilemma in leaving Rochester and the role her conscience plays in the extract. However, a number of answers were weak, failing to 'comment closely' as the (b) questions always require, and either retold the passage in their own words or summarised the



events of the novel up to the point of Jane's flight. Candidates are reminded of the need to focus on the language and structure of prose in the same way as poetry.

Question 5. Tsitsi Dangarembga: *Nervous Conditions*

- (a) Although some weaker candidates produced general essays about women in the novel, more successful answers focused well on Maiguru's characterisation and her role. Such answers looked at her pride in her family's time in England, her pet names and subservience to Babamukuru and crucially at the revelation of her own education and her temporary departure from the family household. Her characterisation as an example of cultural hybridity, which is seen in a more extreme form in Nyasha, was often at the heart of these strong answers.
- (b) There were some detailed approaches, but a number of responses failed to focus on the terms of the question and look at the detail of the text. More successful answers focused on ways in which the extract reveals aspects of Tambu's character and the differences between herself and Nyasha. These answers looked at Tambu's careful descriptions of the wedding preparations together with her tone, revealing her sardonic dislocation from events. Examples of diction such as 'ridiculous', 'play-acting', 'show' and 'comedy' were noted, contrasted with 'Sweet', 'wonderful', 'generosity' and 'occasion'.

Question 6. *Stories of Ourselves*

- (a) In responses to this question, some candidates retold their chosen stories accompanied by limited comment addressed to the question. More successful candidates demonstrated a clear overview of the stories and were able to construct essays using detailed references relevant to the question. These answers focused on the word 'present' in the question and discussed structure and other literary devices used by individual authors. *The Fall of the House of Usher*, *Of White Hairs and Cricket*, *Tyres*, *The Open Boat*, *Sandpiper* and *To Da-duh, In Memoriam* were stories often used by candidates to answer the question.
- (b) There were many strong answers to this question, as candidates found the passage accessible and often were able to write in detail about its writing and effects. Many candidates commented on the narrator's emotional control at the beginning of the passage, where dynamite and shooting are discussed dispassionately, compared with the horror of the description of the slaughtered bodies in the third paragraph. Others noted that the central action of the passage is about human relationships and pointed out that the extract shows the importance of such normality in the midst of war. There were intelligent comments on the presentation of individuals, the Germans, the Maquis and the Mayor, who all have parts to play in wartime life as depicted in the excerpt.



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Candidates demonstrated a real interest in what they had read and often wrote with a genuine appreciation of the effectiveness of literary methods. There were a number of detailed, scholarly and penetrating discussions of the texts in response to the questions set. Such essays inevitably were closely focused on how those texts are constructed and how the writers employ specific diction, imagery and other devices to provoke particular responses in the readers or audiences. Often the essays were perceptive in their acknowledgement of the variety of possible responses. However, many candidates relied on a recall of character and plot, sometimes with what they termed a 'theme'. Such approaches cannot be fully successful in answering the questions set, which always focus in some way on how the text is written. Weak responses lapsed into narrative summary and characters were discussed almost as if they were real people, rather than the imagined constructions of their authors.

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Question Specific Comments 9695/33

Question 1. Sujata Bhatt: *Point No Point*

- (a) The few candidates who chose this question wrote about poems such as 'The First Disciple', 'The Peacock' and 'Swami Anand'. Some responses showed an awareness of some aspects of the language but on the whole, there was little exploration of the methods used to present memory and the past. The language, imagery, structure and other poetic methods are always at the heart of these questions, so candidates who limit themselves to a discussion of content restrict the marks available to them.
- (b) The strongest answers gave clear accounts of the poem and the narrator's attitude to the experience described, focusing on the contrast between the forensic detachment of the scientist and the human interest though very few essays examined the significance of title and the figurative language or had the confidence to discuss form and structure. Some responses commented on the adult perspective of the experience as distinct from the experience itself, which proved a successful focus.



Question 2. Thomas Hardy: *Selected Poetry*

- (a) There were too few answers to make a general comment appropriate.
- (b) Though there were very few answers on Hardy, there were some very good answers to this question on 'The Voice' examining how form and a range of poetic methods contribute to the tone. There was some particular sensitivity to sound effects. Weak answers focused unnecessarily on biographical information without paying sufficient attention to the writing of the poem.

Question 3. *Songs of Ourselves*

- (a) Candidates usually made sensible choices to discuss the poetic treatment of death, often opting for the war poetry, Dickinson, Bishop and Baxter's 'Elegy'. Answers often displayed an impressive command of quotation and made genuine efforts to analyse the treatment of the topic with appreciation of a range of poetic methods and effects. Competent answers were clear on meaning and point of view with some understanding of the effects of language. Less successful answers were often unbalanced, with, for example, one competent exploration being followed by a thin summary, or over-investment in biographical material.
- (b) Only the strongest answers on 'Time's Fool' managed to explore the treatment of time and arrive at a coherent interpretation of the poem. Most essays adopted a running commentary approach; many considered the use of natural imagery but struggled with the development of the narrator's feelings and consideration of time. Less confident candidates attempted to paraphrase and looked at rhyme schemes and caesuras in a mechanistic way.

Question 4. Charlotte Brontë: *Jane Eyre*

- (a) Most candidates who attempted this question were successful in discussing Rochester and St John as opposites. The strongest responses presented articulate arguments evaluating the usefulness of this view, with most agreeing that it is a helpful structural perspective in understanding the novel. While most referred to these characters as polar opposites, there were also some good arguments that hinged on the controlling features of both men. Successful answers looked not only at the presentation of the characters themselves, but also Jane's response to them and their influence on the development of her character and therefore also the structure of the novel.
- (b) Most candidates who attempted this question commented on the presentation of Jane's suffering. Personal engagement was often particularly strong, with candidates showing sympathy for Jane's plight. Weaker responses relied heavily on narrative retelling, while the strongest engaged closely with the writing of the extract, noting the creation of the narrative tone of desperation and the lack of sympathy in the dialogue with the shopkeeper.

Question 5. Tsitsi Dangarembga: *Nervous Conditions*

- (a) There were too few answers to make a general comment appropriate.
- (b) There were too few answers to make a general comment appropriate.

Question 6. *Stories of Ourselves*

- (a) The most successful answers looked at different versions of bravery, using such stories as *The Fall of the House of Usher*, *Journey*, *The Open Boat* and *Tyres*. The focus on different kinds of bravery often encouraged candidates to discuss different narrative methods of dealing with it, leading to some fruitful discussions. Although comparison was not specifically required by the question, candidates often found that comparing the approaches of the two stories helped them structure their answer. Less confident and less successful answers tended to concentrate on the characters and plots of their chosen stories.



- (b) This was a very productive question and most answers considered some of the effectiveness in the writing and the significance of specific details within the extract. Most focused on the relationship with the husband, in particular focusing on the narrator's 'foreignness' but many also considered the relationship with Lucy. Strong responses appreciated the significance of the conversation about mirages and showed depth by considering the implication of the husband's 'sidelong glance' and smile. The strongest answers understood how to 'comment closely' and produced perceptive appreciations of the writer's use of diction and sentence structure to present the character's feelings. Weaker answers focused on the situation itself or failed to address the question by explaining the reasons for the narrator's disappointment or discussed the difficulties of cross-cultural marriages more generally.

LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

Paper 9695/41

Drama

Key Messages

To score highly in **(b)** questions, candidates must pay close attention to matters of form, style, language and drama in the extract presented on the paper.

Candidates are reminded not to critique the plays by drawing on biographical detail about the writers as this is not a recognised method of literary criticism and will not score marks.

General comments

In general, candidates showed that they had read their texts appreciatively, and that they were willing to engage with the detail of what they had read. Willingness to discuss these texts as plays to be presented on a stage is sometimes too restricted, a point often rendered explicit by candidates who wrote about 'the reader' or made points about punctuation.

Questions may focus on 'presentation' or 'dramatic presentation'. This is a clue to candidates that they must be prepared to respond to the text as a created artefact.

With **(a)** questions there is quite often a critical 'prompt.' Candidates need to be aware that these prompts are there in order to focus on a particular issue which must be addressed in the response. Some candidates attempt to use the material from the **(b)** passage to support an **(a)** answer. Used judiciously, this can help candidates to offer specific examples. However, there is a risk that candidates may produce a hybrid answer, where suddenly they are diverted onto the other question and end up offering a full response to neither task.

With **(b)** questions there is often a temptation simply to see the passage as being a prompt towards wider discussion of the play. Whilst reference to the wider text is often useful, candidates should never forget that they have been asked to talk about the detail of a particular passage. If there are stage directions (as so often in **(b)** questions on *A Streetcar Named Desire* or in *Equus*) they are printed because points could be usefully made about their relation to what is said or done during the extract.

An area that could be given further attention is that of Communication, as described in the mark scheme. Although the examination is in literature and is predominantly concerned with a candidate's knowledge, understanding and response, the fourth of the assessment objectives should not be taken for granted. Candidates who plan their work and move logically forward with an overarching sense of direction tend to perform well.

There were significant numbers of rubric infringements, most often taking the form of candidates answering on too many texts. Candidates need to pay careful attention to the rubric in order to make sure that they focus on all aspects of the given task. A number of candidates chose **(b)** questions but did not perform well because they had apparently not studied the text in the required sort of depth. One or two wrote entirely on **(b)** questions, obviously as unseens.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1 Peter Shaffer *Equus*

- (a) Weaker candidates tended to see this question as an opportunity to identify with Alan and see him struggle against an oppressive, judgemental, unfair, adult dominated society. Stronger candidates were able to talk about the influence of consumerism as one of the pressures of modern society. Many talked lengthily about Alan's parents as representing irreconcilable tensions within society. Dysart often proved the central focus of answers, with candidates identifying the internal tension that he feels with his obligation to make Alan fit for society and yet seeing his inner reservation about whether the cure is, in fact, significantly worse than the disease. The most successful answers made full use of discussions of Shaffer's techniques of character contrasts, dialogue, symbolism and stage directions. A number of answers interestingly drew attention to ways in which the audience, seated round the stage, becomes a participating element of the issue raised.
- (b) Answers here often showed good awareness of Frank's role in the play as a whole, though at times this could distract from close focus on the passage printed. Candidates who responded to the detail of the passage usually showed awareness of Frank's sense of puzzled embarrassment about his son's behaviour. Candidates usually picked up the central issue of the scene (Frank's religious scepticism) and were able to comment on the mock biblical language that he reports. Very good answers were often characterised by candidates discussing the whole idea of the scene as a re-enacted memory, with Frank's voice tracking over a visualisation of the scene. Candidates in the top bands often took a legitimately sympathetic view of Frank's response to the incident, often by focusing on Dysart's subtle, probing questions. A number of candidates failed to notice the trigger words 'action' and 'presentation' in the question and thus failed to comment on the visual impact of the action on an audience.

Question 2 William Shakespeare *The Winter's Tale*

- (a) Candidates were usually able to see clear distinctions between the worlds presented, and often saw the play as very much one of two halves, entirely different in tone and preoccupations. The best were able to see, however, that there is a strong thematic link between Leontes' jealousy in the first half and Polixenes spying on his son in the second. Weaker candidates took a serial approach to the settings, dealing with one and then the other, and this weakened their chances of presenting clear contrasts. Some candidates focused attention through character, with Autolycus seen as a symbolic of the pastoral freedom of the Bohemian world. Perdita, too, often acted as a focus, and very good candidates were able to see a link between her unconscious nobility and that of her mother in the first and last sections. Whilst contrasts were usually successful, fewer could really deal with the bigger issue – that of the significance of these contrasts – and these were often implied rather than made explicit. There were some powerful answers that linked and contrasted the language of Sicilia and Bohemia.
- (b) At the weaker end of performance, candidates were able to give an account of what is going on here, or a generalised character study. Closer reading allowed candidates to see Hermione's nobility and grace at this point, both through what she says and the ways in which she refuses to be provoked by Leontes. Some candidates wanted to see her as an unusual example of womanhood for the time, and this sometimes led them astray onto discussion of cultural matters that was not quite relevant to the passage. The strongest candidates offered a close analysis of Perdita's language, her careful, formal, legalistic speech ('Not guilty', 'testimony') and her heart rending, loving attachment (expressed perhaps through her respectful language) to the man who turned so viciously against her. Contrasts were often made with Leontes' short, ill-tempered interjections.

Question 3 William Shakespeare *Henry IV Part 1*

- (a) Once candidates had given thought to potential differences between humour and comedy, they were usually able to make interesting suggestions about its importance to the play. Of course, some merely listed moments that were amusing. The majority, however, were able to see that Shakespeare is approaching the central themes of the play by using both serious and humorous methods. Thus Falstaff's responses about honour were often adduced as parallel to the straight-faced discussions about the issue elsewhere. There were some useful discussions of the parallels and contrasts between the King and Falstaff in their treatment of Hal.



- (b) Candidates were usually able to give an account of the scene and were aware of the underlying tensions. Many drew attention to the thinly veiled resentment shown by the rebels – they were, after all, expecting to benefit from their ‘kingmaking.’ Stronger candidates were able to see how Henry is trying to create an aura of kingship around himself (‘mighty and to be feared’) that is perhaps less secure than he would like. The best candidates were able to pay close attention to details of language, often dwelling extensively on Hotspur’s character as it is revealed here.

Question 4 Tom Stoppard *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead*

- (a) Most candidates were able to comment soundly on the ways in which the Danish court is an agency of random chance that occasionally sweeps Rosencrantz and Guildenstern up in the action. Candidates often noted the different types and registers of language, and this automatically led to perception about the limitations of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern’s limited awareness of what is going on around them. Many also commented on the Danish court as being entirely presented through Shakespeare’s language and thus drew attention to Rosencrantz and Guildenstern as victims of the court and two playwrights. The best candidates worked carefully through specific moments, often focusing on the action just before the court sweeps in, or just after it sweeps out. Some made links with ideas of theatre, suggesting that for the most part Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are spectators who are only ever truly involved when Hamlet swaps the letters.
- (b) Stoppard’s techniques are clearly on view here, and the vast majority of candidates were able to recognise patterns from elsewhere in the play. There were sensible discussions of how Rosencrantz and Guildenstern attempt to prepare for what might happen through role-play, and of how this leads them to discover the truth of their mission through reading the letter. Candidates were also able to comment – often in great detail – on the way that Guildenstern attempts to use philosophical speculation, as elsewhere, to try and contain an increasing sense of randomness and panic.

Question 5 Tennessee Williams *A Streetcar Named Desire*

- (a) Lies are, of course, central to the play. Candidates were quickly able to see how they contribute to Blanche’s downfall, particularly when Stanley decides to uncover the truth. They were also able to see that Blanche cries wolf too often and thus cannot be believed at the most crucial moment of the action when Stella betrays her. More subtle answers looked at Blanche’s motivation for her lies and observed that she uses them to cover up her inadequacies, as a means of not confronting her past, or in order to establish a viable future (‘I want to deceive him enough to make him – want me...’ as she says of Mitch). There was often expert discussion of particular moments, and many candidates were able to go beyond her verbal lies and point out how her costumes and self-presentation are aspects of the same thing. There were one or two outstanding discussions of Blanche as an actress, pointing out that she does have self-awareness, and that those around her know perfectly well that it’s all a show. Candidates showed sound awareness of how some of Blanche’s lies (her pretence over the drinks, for example) help an audience to shape its response (not always sympathetic) to her.
- (b) Clashes of values and attitudes are clearly evident here, and few candidates merely recounted what happens. There were, however, answers which got very caught up with Northern and Southern values, a misreading of the play because the values Stanley represents are simply part of the new values of the real South. The risk for some candidates here is that they brought in contextual knowledge about the play without clearly relating it to the passage presented. The best candidates were able to get hold of Blanche’s ridiculous, stagey, over-reactions, both in terms of language and action (her writing on a Kleenex with an eyebrow pencil, for example), and contrast them with Stella’s laconic indifference (‘...it would have been – inconvenient in traffic’) and her satisfaction (‘I beg your pardon...’) with the life she has chosen for herself.

Question 6 Oscar Wilde *The Importance of Being Earnest*

- (a) Understanding of role reversal was crucial here. Once candidates started to explore the various ways in which the women in the play take on the roles and attitudes that might more normally be adopted by men, they were able to produce interesting, textually focused discussions. Some candidates focused their attentions onto Lady Bracknell and her bullying of both Jack and her husband. Others were very aware of how Jack and Algernon shirk their responsibilities at every turn and are obsessed with appearance and social ritual. Discussions about their early frivolity over Cecily and the cigarette case were often fruitful, though they sometimes turned aside to matters of biography or uncertain social history about concealment of homosexuality. As always, context can mislead unwary candidates, taking them away from the literary focus of an answer.
- (b) A number of candidates took the question here to mean just 'love'; it did not. Those who saw that 'romantic love' is a rather different thing were quickly able to see that the scene uses the clichés of romance (Valentine's day, love letters, a romantic diary, for example) in order to demonstrate the ludicrousness of Cecily's aspirations and of Algernon's willingness to enter into an engagement. Many pointed out the relation between this passage and Algernon's earlier cynicism. The best candidates were able to make subtle and interesting points about how ideas here might parody contemporary social attitudes where men and women might be expected to become engaged for reasons of money or prestige rather than love. In a sense, what happens here is no more absurd. Some candidates became too involved in discussing love in the play as a whole, or in making parallels between Cecily and Algernon, Gwendolen and Jack. Often these points were only limitedly successful. At the weaker end, candidates often gave an account of the passage, with occasional comments.

LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

Paper 9695/42

Drama

Key Messages

To score highly in **(b)** questions, candidates must pay close attention to matters of form, style, language and drama in the extract presented on the paper.

Candidates are reminded not to critique the plays by drawing on biographical detail about the writers as this is not a recognised method of literary criticism and will not score marks.

General comments

In general, candidates showed that they had read their texts appreciatively, and that they were willing to engage with the detail of what they had read. Willingness to discuss these texts as plays to be presented on a stage is sometimes too restricted, a point often rendered explicit by candidates who wrote about 'the reader' or made points about punctuation.

Questions may focus on 'presentation' or 'dramatic presentation'. This is a clue to candidates that they must be prepared to respond to the text as a created artefact.

With **(a)** questions there is quite often a critical 'prompt.' Candidates need to be aware that these prompts are there in order to focus on a particular issue which must be addressed in the response. Some candidates attempt to use the material from the **(b)** passage to support an **(a)** answer. Used judiciously, this can help candidates to offer specific examples. However, there is a risk that candidates may produce a hybrid answer, where suddenly they are diverted onto the other question and end up offering a full response to neither task.

With **(b)** questions there is often a temptation simply to see the passage as being a prompt towards wider discussion of the play. Whilst reference to the wider text is often useful, candidates should never forget that they have been asked to talk about the detail of a particular passage. If there are stage directions (as so often in **(b)** questions on *A Streetcar Named Desire* or in *Equus*) they are printed because points could be usefully made about their relation to what is said or done during the extract.

An area that could be given further attention is that of Communication, as described in the mark scheme. Although the examination is in literature and is predominantly concerned with a candidate's knowledge, understanding and response, the fourth of the assessment objectives should not be taken for granted. Candidates who plan their work and move logically forward with an overarching sense of direction tend to perform well.

There were significant numbers of rubric infringements, most often taking the form of candidates answering on too many texts. Candidates need to pay careful attention to the rubric in order to make sure that they focus on all aspects of the given task. A number of candidates chose **(b)** questions but did not perform well because they had apparently not studied the text in the required sort of depth. One or two wrote entirely on **(b)** questions, obviously as unseens.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1 Peter Shaffer *Equus*

(a) Some candidates, having chosen the question on Jill argued that she is not really a major character, thus disabling their answers from the outset. Stronger candidates quickly moved into seeing her as having both a presence in the play but, more importantly, as having a representative, symbolic significance in terms of Alan's attitudes towards sex and his feelings of guilt. There were



good discussions of the moments where she features, with candidates confident about how her attitudes contribute to Alan's blinding of the horses. At the top end, some candidates wanted to see her as an 'Eve' figure, tempting Alan, a reading which was often interestingly sustained with close textual evidence.

- (b) Weaker candidates tended to use the passage as an opportunity to write in general about Dysart's professional relationship with Alan. Stronger candidates focused in on the detail and were able to see how Dysart displays disgust with both himself and his profession. Many saw links between Dysart and Alan in terms of the intensity with which they live their lives, and were then able to make sensible links to the rest of the play. The significance of Hesther to the scene was often ignored, though the word 'presents' suggested that candidates were not merely being asked to examine what Dysart says.

Question 2 William Shakespeare *The Winter's Tale*

- (a) There was a slight tendency among some candidates to write an account of the action up to the appearance of Autolycus in order to contextualise his significance. This often led to large amounts of plot summary. All candidates were able to see that he acts to change the mood and tone of the play, and his songs and wit were often well characterised. The question asked about the play as a whole, however, not only about Act 4. Only the best were able to see that Autolycus – for all his high-spirited jollity – is another example of someone corrupted, a serpent within. Very good answers often looked at the less obvious appearances, at Autolycus' manipulations at the end of Act 4, or at his apology to the shepherds in Act 5 (a clear link with ideas of repentance elsewhere).
- (b) Candidates were soon able to identify this as a key moment in the play, a surprising change of direction that must leave an audience disconcerted. Candidates who tracked audience reaction (as requested in the question) were able to note the mood of the first section and then ways in which the seemingly innocent actions there can be re-interpreted just seconds later. Candidates often wrote well about Hermione's nobility, her fulfilment of the role of both queen and wife. There were often useful discussions about how she embodies the quality of Grace that she speaks about, both through language and gesture. There was much interesting comment on the role and significance of Mamillius in the scene, with his innocence evoked as symbolic of just how far Leontes has fallen into self-delusion. Leontes' syntax and lexis were often dealt with in considerable detail, with his seemingly innocent remarks (lines 20-24) evoked as ironic once we know what happens next. There were a couple of scripts that suggesting that Hermione is guilty as charged, a reading that is unsustainable from the text.

Question 3 William Shakespeare *Henry IV Part 1*

- (a) There were very few answers to this question. Candidates were able to see that Hal uses Eastcheap as a means of moving towards maturity. He tries out things there, sometimes indeed in role-play, that will prove essential for him in later life. There was a slight tendency towards simply giving a list of the events in Eastcheap or giving an account of Hal's relationship with Falstaff.
- (b) There were few responses to this question. Stronger candidates picked out imagery from Falstaff's long speech and were able to see that the speech as a whole furthers the discussion about gallantry and honour in the play. Weaker candidates were usually aware of Falstaff's strategies at this point in the play, and of what was about to happen next. There was often sensible, if restricted, discussion about whether Falstaff has betrayed both Hal and country by misusing the king's press for his own advantage. Some candidates made the useful point that the scene shows how much Hal has moved on and that his joking with Falstaff has a much sharper edge than earlier in the play.

Question 4 Tom Stoppard *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead*

- (a) Stronger candidates picked up on the Player's words and were able to see a wide variety of ways in which Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are uncertain, ranging from the arbitrariness of what happens to them to the deeper more existential difficulties that they confront. Arguments were often strongly supported by reference to particular moments. Weaker candidates often focused simply on the coin tossing or on Rosencrantz and Guildenstern's unawareness of what is going on around them. There was no need to try and be comprehensive here ('some of the ways') and candidates who restricted their scope, thus giving themselves more room for depth ('to delve,' as

Rosencrantz would have it), did better. The best answers ranged from detail to wider issues easily, clearly showing how part relates to whole.

- (b) Most candidates understood the action of the passage and were able to see how it fits into the pattern of the play as a whole. There was much useful discussion of matters of identity and predestination, with many seeing parallels between Rosencrantz and Guildenstern and the role of actors who are only truly themselves when 'caught up in the action' and given language dictated from outside. They are, after all, says the Player 'fellow artists.' There were often interesting discussions of ideas about meta-theatre.

Question 5 Tennessee Williams *A Streetcar Named Desire*

- (a) Candidates were quickly able to see that desire motivates all the main characters in the play, and that Blanche is not alone in finding it as something that leads to inevitable consequences. Desire was variously seen, though most often in terms of sexual need. Better candidates were able to be quite subtle about this and often moved in on Blanche's other insecurities too. The surprise, however, was that so few candidates discussed the process of the journey or the streetcar itself, despite its provocative symbolic significance – it runs on lines and cannot vary its course, it is a 'rattle-trap' that 'grinds along the tracks' and its destiny is Cemeteries. A few stronger candidates engaged successfully with the treatment of ideas in the play about desire and death.
- (b) Blanche's first appearance in the play provided candidates with lots of opportunities to show off their understanding of the text. Restricted answers often simply dealt with the action, making much of Blanche's off-hand rudeness towards Eunice, even though this is one of the few examples of 'the kindness of strangers' in the play that Blanche later says she values. Better responses noted that this is an example of the clash between the cultures of the old and the new south that are so important later in the play's action. Good candidates offered focus on the stage directions, and in particular on Blanche's appearance, often linking it to ideas of her desire to fool other people that are developed later. Discussions of Blanche as like a 'moth' led on to developed points about her ambiguous attraction to 'bright light' in the form of Stanley, a light which is both irresistible and yet fatal.

Question 6 Oscar Wilde *The Importance of Being Earnest*

- (a) Most candidates were able to describe the relationship between the girls, tracking their similarities along the way. Stronger responses saw how the girls reflect and embody some of Wilde's satirical concerns whilst at the same time showing understanding of the conventions of the comedy of manners. Examination of specific moments was often rather lacking, despite the fact that the scenes between the two are some of the most memorable set pieces of the play. Only the most able candidates caught the superficiality of the two and the various ways in which Wilde captures their unpleasant selfishness disguised as good manners or their simple-minded gullibility in simply wanting to be married to someone because his name causes 'vibrations.' The 'nudge' quotation was often ignored, despite being a clue about social conventions and language, both of which could usefully be addressed here. The weakest answers restricted themselves to character study or plot summary.
- (b) Strong candidates were able to identify the techniques of the scene (its inversions, paradox, epigrams, etc.) and to see satirical aspects that could be easily related to other moments in the play. Weaker candidates tended to assert that Wilde was criticising late Victorian society without really being able to focus on Wilde's particular targets. Many candidates offered useful discussions of hypocrisy, focused through the idea of Bunburying. A small number of candidates restricted themselves to character studies of Jack and Algernon, with limited success.

LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

Paper 9695/43

Drama

Key Messages

To score highly in **(b)** questions, candidates must pay close attention to matters of form, style, language and drama in the extract presented on the paper.

Candidates are reminded not to critique the plays by drawing on biographical detail about the writers as this is not a recognised method of literary criticism and will not score marks.

General comments

In general, candidates showed that they had read their texts appreciatively, and that they were willing to engage with the detail of what they had read. Willingness to discuss these texts as plays to be presented on a stage is sometimes too restricted, a point often rendered explicit by candidates who wrote about 'the reader' or made points about punctuation.

Questions may focus on 'presentation' or 'dramatic presentation'. This is a clue to candidates that they must be prepared to respond to the text as a created artefact.

With **(a)** questions there is quite often a critical 'prompt.' Candidates need to be aware that these prompts are there in order to focus on a particular issue which must be addressed in the response. Some candidates attempt to use the material from the **(b)** passage to support an **(a)** answer. Used judiciously, this can help candidates to offer specific examples. However, there is a risk that candidates may produce a hybrid answer, where suddenly they are diverted onto the other question and end up offering a full response to neither task.

With **(b)** questions there is often a temptation simply to see the passage as being a prompt towards wider discussion of the play. Whilst reference to the wider text is often useful, candidates should never forget that they have been asked to talk about the detail of a particular passage. If there are stage directions (as so often in **(b)** questions on *A Streetcar Named Desire* or in *Equus*) they are printed because points could be usefully made about their relation to what is said or done during the extract.

An area that could be given further attention is that of Communication, as described in the mark scheme. Although the examination is in literature and is predominantly concerned with a candidate's knowledge, understanding and response, the fourth of the assessment objectives should not be taken for granted. Candidates who plan their work and move logically forward with an overarching sense of direction tend to perform well.

There were significant numbers of rubric infringements, most often taking the form of candidates answering on too many texts. Candidates need to pay careful attention to the rubric in order to make sure that they focus on all aspects of the given task. A number of candidates chose **(b)** questions but did not perform well because they had apparently not studied the text in the required sort of depth. One or two wrote entirely on **(b)** questions, obviously as unseens.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1 Peter Shaffer *Equus*

- (a)** There were too few responses to enable appropriate comment.
- (b)** There were too few responses to enable appropriate comment.



Question 2 William Shakespeare *The Winter's Tale*

- (a) There were too few responses to enable appropriate comment.
- (b) There were too few responses to enable appropriate comment.

Question 3 William Shakespeare *Henry IV Part 1*

- (a) Candidates showed that they knew the background of the play and were aware of the tensions within it between the court and the rebels. Many, however, limited themselves to presenting a discussion, often a character study, of Hotspur, largely ignoring the other rebels and the difficult relationships between them that Shakespeare explores. In discussing Hotspur, candidates were usually able to remark sensibly on his role as a foil to Prince Harry, often in relation to the theme of honour in the play. Some candidates were able to discuss the effect of Hotspur's death on the audience to good effect, thus successfully targeting the question's instruction to discuss 'sympathy.'
- (b) Candidates showed a willingness to explore the language of the passage presented. Most were aware of the contrast with the preceding scenes and were able to see contrasts between the court's formality and the relaxed, joshing atmosphere here. There was often appropriate discussion of Falstaff's concern for the future, and candidates were usually able to see that both Falstaff and Harry are working through things humorously that are, in fact, their major and very serious preoccupations. One or two candidates started from this position and then wandered off to discuss their views about the role play scene later on. It is as well to note that the main focus of a (b) question should be the passage presented, and candidates need to be quite careful not to let their attention drift, though of course reference to other parts of the play may be relevant. Candidates often wrote strongly about the parallels and contrasts between Hal's relationship with Falstaff and his relationship with his true father. The strongest answers engaged with the puns, imagery and eloquence of the two characters, with many noting that Hal already shows a sense of responsibility about money. Some candidates were critical of Hal, seeing his behaviour as entirely inappropriate for a prince. The best answers engaged with the various ways in which Shakespeare manipulates our feelings towards Falstaff, mixing our enjoyment of his wit and world view with a strong sense of how he may be a disruptive, malign influence on the Prince.

Question 4 Tom Stoppard *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead*

- (a) Some answers here tended simply to agree with the statement in the question and then proceed to simply illustrate moments in the text where Rosencrantz and Guildenstern act either as individuals or as an attached couple. Key differences between them were readily seen. All candidates were very aware of the expansion by Stoppard of their original roles in *Hamlet*, with many drawing attention to Stoppard's character notes at the beginning of the play. The best candidates were able to see that the humorous lack of individuality they have feeds into the play's existential concerns about free will and identity.
- (b) There were only a few responses to this question. Reference to the passage was often sporadic, and there was much filling in of background, with lots of discussion of what Shakespeare tells us about the relationship between these three characters. There was no real discussion of the clash between the worlds, despite the fact that there are very clear changes of language in the scene presented, and there is the moment when the imagined meeting between the three (lines 1-7) turns into the real thing.

Question 5 Tennessee Williams *A Streetcar Named Desire*

- (a) There were too few responses to enable appropriate comment.
- (b) There were a wide variety of responses. Weaker scripts showed little awareness of the effects of the scene beyond a mention of Stanley's drunken state and his mocking of Blanche with her 'gorgeous—diamond—tiara.' Blanche's short reply at the end of Stanley's final speech was usually noted as suggesting tension. Stronger answers were able to see how the stage directions influence our response. The best answers tracked the detail of the passage closely, demonstrating how everything here – Blanche having dressed up, her obvious lies about Shep Huntleigh, Stanley's deliberate provocations (no comments on the 'geyser of foam' despite its obvious symbolic suggestion) – is leading towards the climax of the play's action.



Question 6 Oscar Wilde *The Importance of Being Earnest*

- (a) Although it was only tackled by a small number of candidates, the question produced a wide variety of interesting responses. Candidates were able to see that power in the play is held by the women, who take on attitudes and values that might more readily in the context of the play be associated with manliness; moreover, the men are feckless here in a way that might perhaps in the context of the play have been more normally been associated with women. Some candidates wanted to move sideways to discussions about Oscar Wilde, rather than the way in which the play works, and this was always unsuccessful. There were useful discussions about Algernon and Jack with their petty minded gossiping, and many candidates chose – with obvious relevance – to discuss the role played in the play by the invisible Lord Bracknell. Moments where Gwendolen's father's role was clearly usurped by her mother were often clearly noted and analysed.
- (b) Candidates here were able to look carefully at how the meeting between Cecily and Algernon is packed with their expectations of each other and of their first impressions. At the bottom end, some candidates simply gave an account of what happens in this exchange or provided character studies. Better candidates were able to see some of the elements of satire here and to note details of language that might contribute to the humour of the scene. Stronger answers showed good understanding of the context of the passage, linking it carefully to other events in the play. Some noted that the scene takes place in a garden but is anything but an example of a pure, pastoral love scene. There was often useful discussion of the use of irony in the passage in relation to Algernon's behaviour and Cecily's forward nature, which was seen as contributing greatly to the comedy of the scene.

LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

Paper 9695/51

Shakespeare and other Pre Twentieth Century Texts

Key Messages

Candidates should plan their essays carefully before starting to write their answers.

Candidates should be able to give an accurate context to any passage, identifying its significance in the wider text.

Candidates are strongly advised to avoid unnecessary biographical and historical background, which is not the focus of A Level English Literature.

General Comments

The general standard this session was comparable to previous years with some candidates achieving marks in the highest bands on nearly every text on the paper. Candidates are to be commended on very few rubric errors and almost no candidates appeared to have time management problems. Nearly all candidates had at least a sound knowledge of their chosen texts and many showed real engagement in and enthusiasm for the works they had studied.

There are three general issues to address this session:

- (a) Planning – there has been an increase in the number of candidates who appear to spend time preparing their answer. Candidates who do not allocate sufficient time to selecting and organising material relevant to the set question before beginning the response may well lapse into repetition, generalisation and unstructured arguments, all of which may limit the overall effectiveness of the candidate's answer. It is also important that candidates consider the terms of the question in detail, shaping the material to be discussed to address the specific demands of the task.
- (b) Contextualisation of extracts – it was noticeable this session that a number of candidates were unable to place the extract accurately within their chosen play or novel. Specific issues arising from this are discussed under the individual texts but candidates are reminded that a detailed and thorough knowledge of the set text is essential. Passage questions will at times be phrased in such a way as to require this knowledge of the context and candidates should always be encouraged to identify the significance of the passage in terms of its place in the whole text.
- (c) Unnecessary biographical or other information – a small minority of candidates are providing up to two sides of biography of or a historical background to their chosen authors. This is rarely relevant to the task in hand and should be avoided as this will not improve the candidate's mark and takes up valuable time in the exam.

Specific Texts

Section A Shakespeare

Hamlet

Option (a) was the most popular choice. Nearly all responses showed good textual knowledge and a number had knowledge of wider critical reading, most often with references to Bradley and Ernest Jones. Weaker responses concentrated on the narrative of Hamlet's relationships with Gertrude and Ophelia, usually from Hamlet's viewpoint. Many candidates also gave detailed reference to the way the women were treated by other men in the play, sometimes helpfully structured as a contrast to Hamlet's treatment of them. However relatively few answers commented on the way the women described their relationship – Gertrude's

defence of her son or Ophelia's 'o what a mind is here o'erthrown' speech for example. Stronger answers concentrated on 'Shakespeare's presentation' – for example, Hamlet's contradictory claims of loving and not loving Ophelia, alongside Polonius's and Laertes cynical comments on Hamlet's intentions, with Gertrude's graveside revelation regarding the lost daughter in law. Most answers concentrated on the mother and son relationship with some excellent personal and engaged responses, fully alive to the corrupt and interfering world in which Hamlet and Gertrude and Ophelia exist.

Option **(b)** was very popular and there were many excellent responses. A few candidates were unclear on the context, thinking this was part of Hamlet's plan for revenge, but those who were alive to the corruption and the dramatic irony found much to comment on and analyse. Nearly all candidates responded well to the idea of the audience, showing very pleasing engagement with 'Hamlet's rather openhearted apology to the corrupted Laertes' as one answer suggested. Nearly all were aware of the corruption, which with the intense dramatic action and noise of drums, trumpets and cannons, offered good material to consider from an audience's point of view. Weaker answers tended to focus on the background narrative, sometimes spending too long on how Hamlet and Laertes have reached this point. Particularly noticeable was how few candidates seemed to understand Laertes's opening speech, though nearly every candidate reacted to the coldness of Claudius's injunction to the judges to 'bear a wary eye'.

The Tempest

Option **(a)** was not a very popular choice with only a few answers and some of these struggled to comment in detail on the effects of Shakespeare's 'use of music and songs'. Most answers tended to focus on Ariel and nearly all candidates had a good knowledge of the relevant parts of the text. Some answers considered other characters too, commenting, for example, on how Caliban's unexpected lyricism when talking of music influenced the audience's overall view of him, seeing his partial redemption at the end as signaled here. Other answers discussed Ferdinand in a similar vein, while more detailed analysis led some into linking the music/songs to the magic and the special quality of the Island. Most answers did consider the effect of the banquet and the Masque in terms of the music, though very few remembered Stephano's and Caliban's drunken songs. Those who saw the effect of this raucous rebellion on Prospero's ordered and harmonious world often did very well.

2(b) This option was very popular, but there were a number of answers which ignored Prospero's long speech (ll.39-63) beyond the mention of drowning his book and breaking his staff. Most answers did focus on what this passage reveals about the role and characterisation of Prospero however, with weaker answers sending too long on the previous narrative and too little time focusing on the detail of this passage. Stronger answers evaluated the influence of Ariel on Prospero's apparent change of heart and there was some excellent analysis of how far he is affected by the penitence of his captives, especially in view of the final scene and the lack of any contrition from Sebastian and Antonio. A number of candidates explored the link between Prospero's long speech and its apparent source in Ovid's *Metamorphosis*, with some very good understanding shown of the tensions between the magus and the human, the desire for power and the need for forgiveness, with some hearing the valedictory voice of Shakespeare in the background.

Section B

Mansfield Park

Option **(a)** was popular and there were very few answers which were not able to show detailed and relevant knowledge of the text, with weaker answers limited to explaining how the characters in the play and the characters in the novel were matched and 'similar'. Stronger answers developed this approach into exploring what the theatricals reveal about the main characters in the novel. For example one answer noticed that:

'Tom's choice of many small parts shows his own inconsistent and confused state of being'.

Most however focused on Henry and Maria and the alarm bells this staged liaison was sounding in the reader's (and Fanny's) minds. Even Edmund despite his later condemnation was drawn into the folly of it all, but as many noted, Henry never understood the dangers or where it would lead, unlike Edmund who learnt to be true to himself. Many candidates also commented on the weakness and ineffectiveness of Mrs Norris and Lady Bertram as well as the impact of the absent Sir Thomas. Only Fanny came out of the experience with credit. As one candidate said: 'Fanny with her steadfast moral compass is the only one who maintains a true direction.' Some answers also explored the structure of the novel, seeing the theatricals as a turning point, with the eventual denouements for so many of the characters, hinted at here, including the realisations that hit Sir Thomas by the end. Other answers explored the theatricals as symbolic of the tension between



town (the Crawfords) and modernity on the one hand and country (the Bertrams) and traditions on the other with only 'the rootless and class jumping Fanny' impervious to its effects.

Option **(b)** was less popular but often very well tackled. Nearly all candidates could place this as the young Fanny's initial response to the shock of her removal from Portsmouth and better answers explored the ways in which Austen's narrative and language are slanted from Fanny's viewpoint and crucially the effect that has on the reader. The majority of answers were able to see the significance of this early relationship with Edmund and some noted the mention of William. Other answers contrasted this passage with Fanny's return to Portsmouth near the end of the novel, noting her reaction to the slovenliness there, in terms of her timidity here. Only a few were able to explore the humour of some of Austen's comments but nearly all saw the genuine kindness of the young Edmund to his distressed cousin, with some pointing out how this was symbolic of the development of their relationship in the wider text.

The Pardoner's Prologue and Tale

This was the first appearance of this text and it was a less popular, minority choice in this session with only a few candidates offering the option **(a)** essay. Nearly all responses had sound knowledge of both tale and prologue and were able to provide detailed summaries of the Pardoner himself and his tale. Few however were able to develop this into considering the moral ambivalence of the teller, though some answers did explore the Pardoner as a symbol of a corrupt church or through his self confessed avarice as revealed later in his tale. Some candidates did explore the 'sermonising' tone of his tale but nearly all agreed he was unscrupulous and could offer some textual support.

Option **(b)** was slightly more popular with answers ranging from a simple paraphrase of variable accuracy to a few detailed explorations of Chaucer's style and methods, including in a few rare cases an understanding of the narrative complexity at work here. Only a few answers considered the role of the Old Man in any detail, some seeing him as 'Death' itself others as a 'Chaucer' figure. Most answers concentrated on the exchange with the hasardours and rather skated over the opening 19 lines.

Hard Times

This was a very popular choice in this session, and option **(a)** candidates had very detailed knowledge of the various parent/child relationships. Weaker answers summarized the significant ones in detail, drawing some basic comparisons between the Gradgrind family and the circus folk, often taken as 'family' and Sissy. More thorough answers explored Bounderby's relationship with his mother and even the various references to family in Mrs Sparsit's narrative. Better answers focused on the effects of Dickens's presentation, for example, seeing the connection between his satirical intentions and the inevitable failure of the Gradgrind relationships, though relatively few were convinced by the change in Gradgrind at the end. Nearly all were sympathetic to Louisa and, less enthusiastically, young Tom. Stronger answers also commented on Mrs Gradgrind's abandonment of any parental role and others found a telling contrast in Bounderby's pretense of abandonment and Sissy's actual abandonment.

Option **(b)** was particularly popular, with some very good commentaries which linked this extract to the later events of Bounderby's 'divorce' from Louisa. There was some good awareness of Dickens's methods, with his use of dialogue and dialect, whilst other answers saw the sub-plot of Mrs Sparsit's frustrated intentions. Many candidates were unable to place this extract accurately – it occurs before Bounderby's marriage to Louisa is announced – but those who did were able to explore the narrative layers to good effect. Stronger answers also saw the class struggle in Stephen's description of 'them' and 'us' and through this his inevitable casting off by Bounderby. A very few candidates wondered why he had turned to Bounderby for advice at all, though some saw this as a symbol of the isolation from others which was also to be a key factor in Stephen's fate.

John Donne Selection

This was a minority choice with most candidates offering option **(a)**. Nearly all candidates were able to refer in detail to at least three poems, weaker answers offering a summary with some basic contrasts identified in subject matter and approach. Other more successful answers did discuss Donne's attitudes to love in detail – recognising for example his earthly, often sexualised love, alongside his more spiritual, religious love in some of the sonnets – but did not consider the effect of mortality and decay. Better answers were able to contrast, with detailed reference to the poems to support points made on the language and imagery, the way Donne sees love at times as eternal and beyond the physical in for example *The Good Morrow* but at others transitory and painful as in *Twickenham Garden*. Nearly all candidates had very good knowledge of the text



and better answers were characterised by the skill with which relevant material was selected and shaped to the task in hand.

Option **(b)** was much less popular. Weaker answers attempted to paraphrase the poem, often with limited understanding of the tone and meaning and with only limited attempts to link it to the concerns and methods in other poems. Better answers saw how Donne's approach and 'voice' were connected to the language and imagery to create the effect of love and longing he was arguing for. Some saw a sexual undertone in some of the language, while other answers linked this to *The Sunne Rising* and *The Flea*. Other candidates argued for a more spiritual and genuine affection, but nearly all answers saw the characteristic argument and persuasion and could recognise some of the key elements of Donne's metaphysical art.

Silas Marner

This was a very popular choice with the majority of candidates opting for **(a)**. Nearly every answer had a detailed knowledge of the text and could summarise accurately the various points in the novel when money is significant – William Dane at Lantern Yard, Dunstan Cass and Wildfire, Silas and his gold coins featured in nearly every answer. Better answers saw the ways in which Eliot uses money symbolically, tracing Silas's development, for example, through the various moments when money affects him most, until as one candidate put it: 'He learns that things of value cannot be measured by money alone'. Very good answers used detailed references to support such arguments – Silas's passion when he finds the coins gone 'the wild ringing scream' and his 'cry of desolation' for example. Other successful approaches included seeing money as symbolic of the divide in the Raveloe world between the various strata of society – the Cass's inherited wealth ultimately not bringing them any real happiness, whereas others argued that Silas's industry in earning the money he had taken from him signalled his ultimate joy in keeping Eppie and his gold.

Option **(b)** was less popular, though some excellent answers were seen, showing a thorough understanding of Eliot's narrative techniques, use of language and pathetic fallacy to achieve her, for some, melodramatic effects. Some candidates thought Molly was unfairly treated not only by Godfrey but also by Eliot, 'To make her easier to get rid of' as one candidate suggested. Weaker answers struggled with some of the detail in the passage, not quite able to explain what was happening to Molly, but nearly every answer did see the significance of this passage on the future of nearly all of the main characters; those who could place the passage accurately saw much irony in the previous descriptions of the Cass's party. The dismal misery of Molly's end was also placed against the light and warmth of Marner's cottage which were to welcome the infant Eppie.

The Rape of the Lock

This was very much a minority choice with most opting for **(a)**. Weaker candidates tended to summarise what they thought of as the epic and heroic features in **(a)** though better answers did have a very detailed knowledge of classical allusions and Pope's use of for example the epic machinery. Few answers were able to explore the effects of these features in detail, though candidates with understanding of the satirical, mocking intentions, Pope's humour and wit and his more serious concerns often did very well. The passage – Option **(b)** – proved a less popular choice. Few answers had a sound knowledge of the context of the extract, but most realized this was when the actual 'rape' took place. Weaker answers tended to paraphrase the passage. Better answers explored the ways in which the Baron is described and the effect this has on the reader, with the most successful answers linking these concerns to the wider text.

Hopkins Selected Poems

This was the least chosen text on the paper and only a few candidates offered either option. Candidates generally were able to refer to relevant poems to show that Hopkins did explore God's power but few had sufficiently detailed knowledge to develop the argument in detail. Stronger answers were able to draw on detailed knowledge of the text and understanding of his methods to support the points made.

In option **(b)** few answers showed a convincing grasp of Hopkins's methods or even knowledge of the poem as a whole. The strongest responses were alive to Hopkins's methods and explored 'inshape' and 'sprung rhythm' to telling effect, showing good understanding of the meaning and how that reflected Hopkins' characteristic concerns.



The Duchess of Malfi

This was a more popular choice in this session. Most opted for **(a)** and revealed good knowledge of the play, referring to Ferdinand and the 'mad men' with the Duchess in detail. Stronger answers saw various forms of madness beyond the lycanthropia of Ferdinand – for example the Duchess's folly in marrying Antonio, Cariola's comments on the 'madness' of their love and Bosola's 'madness' in his rage to revenge the death of the Duchess and Antonio. Many saw the language and imagery as indicative of a darker, more disturbing madness that permeates the atmosphere of the play, with some even doubting the sanity of Webster himself! Some very good answers explored the effects of the madness – how Ferdinand's rage contrasts and heightens the effect of the Cardinal's cold wickedness and how all of the types of madness in the play serve to emphasise the ultimate sanity and decency of the Duchess.

10(b) The strongest answers focused on the dramatic impact of these events, picking up the ironies of action and language and relating them to the wider text, so that the invisible presence of the Cardinal was noted by some, polluting even Pescara's nobility. Context was important to a clear understanding of this passage – some weak answers thought the Duchess was still alive and wondered why Antonio did not mention her; others were not sure if he yet knew she and his children were dead. Better answers saw how the ultimate fate of Antonio was hinted at here by his own naivety and Delio's political grasp. Others answers saw Julia's successful pleading as proof of the all pervasive corruption that had killed the Duchess and was soon to engulf the rest.

LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

Paper 9695/52

Shakespeare and other Pre Twentieth Century Texts

Key Messages

Candidates should plan their essays carefully before starting to write their answers.

Candidates should be able to give an accurate context to any passage, identifying its significance in the wider text.

Candidates are strongly advised to avoid unnecessary biographical and historical background, which is not the focus of A Level English Literature.

General Comments

The general standard this session was comparable to previous years with some candidates achieving marks in the highest bands on nearly every text on the paper. Candidates are to be commended on very few rubric errors and almost no candidates appeared to have time management problems. Nearly all candidates had at least a sound knowledge of their chosen texts and many showed real engagement in and enthusiasm for the works they had studied.

There are three general issues to address this session:

- (a) Planning – there has been an increase in the number of candidates who appear to spend time preparing their answer. Candidates who do not allocate sufficient time to selecting and organising material relevant to the set question before beginning the response may well lapse into repetition, generalisation and unstructured arguments, all of which may limit the overall effectiveness of the candidate's answer. It is also important that candidates consider the terms of the question in detail, shaping the material to be discussed to address the specific demands of the task.
- (b) Contextualisation of extracts – it was noticeable this session that a number of candidates were unable to place the extract accurately within their chosen play or novel. Specific issues arising from this are discussed under the individual texts but candidates are reminded that a detailed and thorough knowledge of the set text is essential. Passage questions will at times be phrased in such a way as to require this knowledge of the context and candidates should always be encouraged to identify the significance of the passage in terms of its place in the whole text.
- (c) Unnecessary biographical or other information – a small minority of candidates are providing up to two sides of biography of or a historical background to their chosen authors. This is rarely relevant to the task in hand and should be avoided as this will not improve the candidate's mark and takes up valuable time in the exam.

Specific Texts

Section A Shakespeare

Hamlet

Option (a) was the most popular question on the paper. Nearly all responses showed good textual knowledge and a number had knowledge of wider critical reading, most often with references to Bradley and Ernest Jones. Weaker responses concentrated on the narrative of Hamlet's relationship with Gertrude, but stronger ones pointed out that in his first soliloquy before the ghost's revelations he reveals his deep disgust at his mother's behaviour. Many answers saw this disgust impacting on his relationship with Ophelia and thus the cause of his problems with her. Some answers argued he was more concerned with Gertrude's betrayal and her sexuality than in avenging his father's murder – the closet scene and the various jibes

before the Mousetrap were all used as compelling evidence. Other answers explored other causes of his problems – Claudius's evil deed, the ghost's demands for revenge and even Hamlet's role as disappointed Prince in Claudius's court. Strong candidates were able to select material to develop their argument and explore the 'how far' strand with detailed textual support, with some concluding the real cause was in fact Hamlet himself and the way Shakespeare chose to portray him.

Option **(b)** was very popular and there were many excellent responses. A few candidates were unclear on the context, thinking this was before the Mousetrap, with inevitable resulting misreadings of some of the dialogue. Answers based on the accurate context were able to explore how Hamlet's new found certainty in his Uncle's guilt and the effect of that on the court and courtiers was reflected in this passage and especially in his state of mind. Some answers considered his 'madness', wondering if his distracted words, especially to Polonius, were evidence of real insanity. More careful analysis saw his awareness of his former friends' duplicity, coupled with his frustration at their hounding him at this point in the play. His treatment of Polonius was seen variously as cruel and comic, but a few remembered that Hamlet would kill Polonius the next time he saw him. Hamlet's closing self dramatisation was analysed to good effect in some answers – the references to blood and hell particularly well explored in relation to the ghost and his pending discussion with his mother.

The Tempest

Option **(a)** was a popular choice with most answers showing a detailed knowledge of Ariel's appearances in the play and what he did, with good reference to his role in the musical and magical effects of the play. Weaker answers summarized the narrative and some did begin to explore his relationship with Prospero. Stronger answers developed this into exploring how Ariel influences Prospero's eventual reconciliation with his enemies, but is also the tool of his magical power and his revenge, possibly even on Caliban. Other candidates saw Ariel as a contrast to Caliban, part of an 'air and earth duality in Prospero's world' as one candidate expressed it, with some good answers developing this into a more developed analysis of Ariel's symbolic role. There was very good use of supporting text in many answers, with particularly successful responses showing excellent ability to develop, support and structure a relevant argument.

2(b) This option was a popular choice with candidates responding enthusiastically to the burgeoning relationship between Miranda and Ferdinand. Many focused carefully on the possible responses of an audience, aware of the position Ferdinand thinks he is in as well as the dramatic irony surrounding his assumption of the crown in Prospero's hearing. Some were puzzled by Prospero's sudden mood changes and asides, but others saw this as an early sign of his eventual softening to his enemies. Many answers wondered how far he was orchestrating this romance and if it was acceptable, but a few understood the 'love at first sight' convention and explored this to good effect. Strong candidates also identified the comic element here and some noted the dramatic nature of the scene: the music and song, the downcast son, the meeting of the soon-to-be lovers and the watching, unseen father.

Section B

Mansfield Park

Option **(a)** was very popular and there were only a very few answers which were not able to show detailed and relevant knowledge of the text. Weaker answers were limited to summarising the various married couples with variable accuracy. More successful answers considered marriage as one of Austen's concerns and considered how the couples exemplified various aspects of Austen's presentation. Some focused on the novel's opening pages and how the marriages of the three Ward sisters effectively set out the agenda for the rest of the novel. Many answers considered Edmund and Fanny as the perfect couple though with more careful analysis some remembered Austen shows us little of their life after marriage. For some candidates the marriages in the novel were all unsatisfactory, reflecting Austen's supposed cynicism as a result of her own disappointments. Very good answers saw that some marriages – Julia's for example – did hold out some hope for the future, but others saw the attitudes of the Crawfords, especially Henry's pursuit of Fanny, as symbolic of the decline in morals – the influence of the town vices on the country virtues – that was Austen's central concern.

Option **(b)** was less popular but often very well tackled. Strong responses were founded on a clear and accurate recognition of the context and what had happened to make 'her spirits low'. Candidates who focused on the methods, and explored in detail how the dialogue here is carefully crafted to lead up to Fanny's surprisingly (to Edmund at least) vehement outburst, often did very well. Others focused on the development of the relationship between Fanny and Edmund, noting that the narrative leads us to sympathise with Fanny because we have seen Henry's character through Fanny's eyes and are aware of the

real reason Henry is doomed to fail. Able candidates also pointed out that Edmund only becomes truly worthy of Fanny when he learns later that she is right in her view of Crawford and that he has been detrimentally influenced by Mary. Close analysis of the language – Edmund's 'You did not love him' for example – enabled some candidates to explore how Austen subtly develops the gulf that is growing between Fanny and Edmund at this point in the novel.

The Pardoner's Prologue and Tale

This proved a less popular, minority choice in this session with only a few candidates offering the option (a) essay. Nearly all responses showed sound knowledge of both tale and prologue and were able to provide detailed summaries of the Pardoner himself and his tale. Few however were able to develop this into considering in detail the appropriateness of the Tale, given the moral ambivalence of the teller. Some answers did think it appropriate because the Pardoner was a symbol of a corrupt church or because of his self confessed avarice. Others thought he was exemplifying his own wickedness and saw some ironic layers in the narrative complexity of the tale itself. Better answers also considered how the rather discursive style of the prologue is replaced in the tale with a more direct and dynamic narration – evidence for some of its inappropriateness though for others proof of the Pardoner's skill at his job.

Option (b) proved slightly more popular with answers ranging from a simple paraphrase of variable accuracy to a few detailed explorations of Chaucer's style and methods, including in a few rare cases an understanding of the narrative complexity at work here. A few answers considered the role of chance here and saw in the double betrayal a moral justice and a sinister irony, both in keeping with the Pardoner's admitted theme of avarice leading to evil deeds. The effect of the gold was also considered by some, who explored how Chaucer shows the development of wickedness in sinful men and possibly the skill of the Pardoner.

Hard Times

This was a very popular choice this session, and candidates showed very detailed knowledge of the various family relationships. Weaker answers summarized the significant ones in detail, drawing some basic comparisons between the Gradgrind family, especially Louisa and Tom's relationship and the circus folk, often taken as 'family' and Sissy. Stronger answers focused on the effects of Dickens's presentation, for example, seeing the connection between his satirical intentions and the inevitable failure of the Gradgrind relationships, though relatively few were convinced by the change in Gradgrind at the end. Nearly all were sympathetic to Louisa and, less enthusiastically, young Tom, but all recognized the role of Sissy and how Dickens uses her to present an alternative to the mechanical, loveless and uncaring family life before her arrival. Better answers also commented on Mrs Gradgrind's abandonment of any parental role and others found a telling contrast in Bounderby's pretense of abandonment and Sissy's actual abandonment. Some candidates also referred to Blackpool's unhappy marriage and contrasted that with what happened to Bounderby and Louisa.

Option (b) was particularly popular; nearly every candidate showed some personal engagement as well as a solid knowledge of the overall text, with some very good commentaries focusing on stylistic techniques, especially the effects of the language. Dickens's use of numbers, the mechanical description of Gradgrind's 'square finger' and the contrast between the light shining on Sissy and Bitzer, for example, were often noticed and in some cases analysed in detail. Many good responses focused on the concerns – the dehumanization of Sissy, the effect of Gradgrind's philosophy in human terms and the coldness of Bitzer's factual description of a horse. Some candidates were appalled at Gradgrind's treatment of the frightened little girl contrasting his arrogance and self belief here with his weakness and heartfelt pleading before Bitzer at the end of the novel. Very good points were also made about the dishonesty of Gradgrind's view of Sissy's background. As one candidate summarized it:

'After all it was a fact that her Dad called her Sissy and worked in horse-riding but he was never a veterinary surgeon'.

John Donne Selection

This was a minority choice with most candidates offering option (a). Nearly all candidates were able to refer in detail to at least three poems, weaker answers offering a summary with some basic contrasts identified in subject matter and approach. Other more successful answers discussed Donne's presentation of lovers in detail – contrasting for example his humorous, often physical and sexual approach in *The Sunne Rising* and *The Flea* alongside his more spiritual and serious concerns in for example *Twickenam Garden* and *The Good Morrow*, with the strongest responses able to use detailed textual comparisons to support their arguments.



Some answers focused more on 'love' as a concept, a topic they had clearly prepared, but better answers were characterised by the skill with which relevant material was selected and shaped to the task in hand.

Option **(b)** proved less popular. Weaker answers attempted to paraphrase the poem, often with limited understanding of the tone and meaning and with only limited attempts to link it to the concerns and methods in other poems. Better answers analysed the language in detail and often showed great skill in deconstructing Donne's argument and concerns, with many candidates referring appropriately to the Holy Sonnets. Nearly all answers recognised Donne's characteristic argumentative approach and persuasive techniques. Many also could recognise some of the key elements of Donne's metaphysical poetic method, usually the imagery but in some very good answers mention was made of the language and rhythm and even the effect of his use of the sonnet form.

Silas Marner

This was a very popular choice with the majority of candidates opting for **(a)**. Nearly every answer showed a detailed knowledge of the text and could summarise accurately the various points in the novel when secrets and the uncovering of them are significant. William Dane at Lantern Yard, Godfrey Cass and Molly, Godfrey lending money to Dunstan Cass, Silas and his gold coins and Eppie's real father featured in nearly every answer. Better answers saw the ways in which Eliot uses secrets as a method of developing plot and characterisation, tracing Godfrey's development, for example, through the various moments when his secrets are revealed to his father or to his second wife, Nancy. Very good answers saw how the way characters react to revelations, Nancy for example, was an important tool in Eliot's characterisation. Weaker answers provided detailed and often accurate summaries of the various secrets, with at times some shaping of the material to offer a developed discussion. Good answers focused on the effects of the secrets and how the uncovering often had a positive as well as an immediately negative effect – the uncovering of Silas's secret hoard discovered by Dunstan, for example, was seen by many as the first painful step towards Silas's rehabilitation into society.

Option **(b)** was also popular, with some excellent answers, showing a thorough understanding of Eliot's narrative techniques, use of language and humour to achieve her effects. Good answers focused on the effects of the dialogue, some remembering that even such human intercourse was an unusual experience for Marner. Nearly every answer responded positively to the thawing of the miser's heart and the way in which Eliot depicts, through Dolly and through direct narration, the gradual awakening of emotions in Silas. Alert responses also saw Dolly's tactful yet honest references to 'church' and 'christened folk' as echoing the Lantern Yard episode and as a starting point for Marner's spiritual reawakening. Weaker answers tended to paraphrase the passage or to give extensive background narrative; context was important – for example the loss of the gold, the death of Molly and the failure of Godfrey to show the kind of disinterested human warmth revealed by Dolly and increasingly Marner were significant factors in assessing the significance of this passage in Marner's development.

The Rape of the Lock

This was a minority choice with very few candidates opting for **(a)**. Weaker candidates tended to summarise all they could remember about the Baron, including the Lord Petrie background, but with very little understanding of the effects of his presentation. Stronger answers did consider the epic and classical allusions and were able to explore some of the language and imagery Pope uses to create his effects through the Baron.

The passage – Option **(b)** – was slightly more popular. Few answers showed a sound knowledge of the context of the extract, but most realized this was immediately following the actual 'rape'. Weaker answers tended to paraphrase the passage, with little understanding of the cave of Spleen episode in particular. Stronger answers explored the ways in which the cave and Belinda are described and the effect this has on the reader, with the most successful answers linking these to the wider concerns of the text, with a small number responding positively and thoughtfully to the humour of Pope's satirical portrait of the despairing maiden.

Hopkins Selected Poems

This proved the least popular choice on the paper and only a few candidates offered either option. Candidates generally were able to refer to relevant poems to show that Hopkins did glorify God but few had sufficiently detailed knowledge to develop the argument in detail. Better answers did have a very detailed knowledge and were able to support arguments with apposite and accurate quotation.



Option **(b)** was rare and only a few answers had a convincing grasp of Hopkins's methods here or even knowledge of the poem as a whole. Some weaker answers did appear to be treating the poem as an unseen with limited success. Stronger answers were alive to Hopkins's methods and explored 'inscape' and 'sprung rhythm' to telling effect, showing good understanding of the meaning and how that reflected Hopkins' characteristic concerns, particularly here his sensitivity to the child's sorrow and his development of that into a wider comment on man's 'blighted existence on earth' as one candidate expressed it.

The Duchess of Malfi

Most candidates chose **(a)** and revealed good knowledge of the play, with the main argument focused on Ferdinand's relationship with his sister, the Duchess, often showing very detailed knowledge of the text. Stronger answers saw various forms of obsessive desire – for example the Duchess's love and desire for Antonio, Bosola's desire for advancement and wealth and the Cardinal's obsession with power and secrecy. Many saw the language and imagery as indicative of a darker, more disturbing obsession that permeates the atmosphere of the play. Some very good answers explored the effects of the obsessions – how Ferdinand's rage contrasts and heightens the effect of the Cardinal's cold wickedness and how all of the obsessive desire in the play serves to emphasise the Duchess's and to some extent Antonio's positive aspects, but also to doom them to a tragic end.

10(b) Weaker answers tended to paraphrase the passage and some were unsure of the relationship between Julia and the Cardinal. The best answers focused on the dramatic impact of these events, picking up the ironies of action and language and relating them to the wider text, particularly the portrayal of the Cardinal and attitudes to religion. Many noted the ironic and perverted use of the Bible by the Cardinal to murder Julia, though few recognized the impact of her shock at the murder of the Duchess and her children. Those that did saw how Webster emphasizes the cold wickedness of the Cardinal through such comparisons with the flawed but ultimately human Julia. Stronger answers were able to deconstruct the dialogue to explore Julia's characterisation, her desire to be accepted and her recognition of her guilt in adultery. Some responses also saw the true malevolence of the Cardinal in his revealing the secret to her so that he could then justify to himself murdering her. Others though argued he had misjudged her and the poisoning was an immediate response to save his own skin. Nearly all answers were aware of the dramatic impact of the passage, visualizing the darkness of the Cardinal's private study and his controlled demeanour against a pleading, coquettish Julia, her shock at the revelation and the drama of her death

LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

Paper 9695/53

Shakespeare and other Pre
Twentieth Century Texts

Key Messages

Candidates should plan their essays carefully before starting to write their answers.

Candidates should be able to give an accurate context to any passage, identifying its significance in the wider text.

Candidates are strongly advised to avoid unnecessary biographical and historical background, which is not the focus of A Level English Literature.

General Comments

The general standard this session was comparable to previous years with some candidates achieving marks in the highest bands on nearly every text on the paper. Candidates are to be commended on very few rubric errors and almost no candidates appeared to have time management problems. Nearly all candidates had at least a sound knowledge of their chosen texts and many showed real engagement in and enthusiasm for the works they had studied.

There are three general issues to address this session:

- (a) Planning – there has been an increase in the number of candidates who appear to spend time preparing their answer. Candidates who do not allocate sufficient time to selecting and organising material relevant to the set question before beginning the response may well lapse into repetition, generalisation and unstructured arguments, all of which may limit the overall effectiveness of the candidate's answer. It is also important that candidates consider the terms of the question in detail, shaping the material to be discussed to address the specific demands of the task.
- (b) Contextualisation of extracts – it was noticeable this session that a number of candidates were unable to place the extract accurately within their chosen play or novel. Specific issues arising from this are discussed under the individual texts but candidates are reminded that a detailed and thorough knowledge of the set text is essential. Passage questions will at times be phrased in such a way as to require this knowledge of the context and candidates should always be encouraged to identify the significance of the passage in terms of its place in the whole text.
- (c) Unnecessary biographical or other information – a small minority of candidates are providing up to two sides of biography of or a historical background to their chosen authors. This is rarely relevant to the task in hand and should be avoided as this will not improve the candidate's mark and takes up valuable time in the exam.

Specific Texts

Section A Shakespeare

Hamlet

Option (a) was the most popular question on the paper. Nearly all responses showed good textual knowledge and a number had knowledge of wider critical reading, most often with references to Bradley and Ernest Jones. Weaker responses concentrated on the narrative of Hamlet's relationship with Gertrude, but stronger ones pointed out that in his first soliloquy before the ghost's revelations he reveals his deep disgust at his mother's behaviour. Many answers saw this disgust impacting on his relationship with Ophelia and thus the cause of his problems with her. Some answers argued he was more concerned with Gertrude's

betrayal and her sexuality than in avenging his father's murder – the closet scene and the various jibes before the Mousetrap were all used as compelling evidence. Other answers explored other causes of his problems – Claudius's evil deed, the ghost's demands for revenge and even Hamlet's role as disappointed Prince in Claudius's court. Strong candidates were able to select material to develop their argument and explore the 'how far' strand with detailed textual support, with some concluding the real cause was in fact Hamlet himself and the way Shakespeare chose to portray him.

Option **(b)** was very popular and there were many excellent responses. A few candidates were unclear on the context, thinking this was before the Mousetrap, with inevitable resulting misreadings of some of the dialogue. Answers based on the accurate context were able to explore how Hamlet's new found certainty in his Uncle's guilt and the effect of that on the court and courtiers was reflected in this passage and especially in his state of mind. Some answers considered his 'madness', wondering if his distracted words, especially to Polonius, were evidence of real insanity. More careful analysis saw his awareness of his former friends' duplicity, coupled with his frustration at their hounding him at this point in the play. His treatment of Polonius was seen variously as cruel and comic, but a few remembered that Hamlet would kill Polonius the next time he saw him. Hamlet's closing self dramatisation was analysed to good effect in some answers – the references to blood and hell particularly well explored in relation to the ghost and his pending discussion with his mother.

The Tempest

Option **(a)** was a popular choice with most answers showing a detailed knowledge of Ariel's appearances in the play and what he did, with good reference to his role in the musical and magical effects of the play. Weaker answers summarized the narrative and some did begin to explore his relationship with Prospero. Stronger answers developed this into exploring how Ariel influences Prospero's eventual reconciliation with his enemies, but is also the tool of his magical power and his revenge, possibly even on Caliban. Other candidates saw Ariel as a contrast to Caliban, part of an 'air and earth duality in Prospero's world' as one candidate expressed it, with some good answers developing this into a more developed analysis of Ariel's symbolic role. There was very good use of supporting text in many answers, with particularly successful responses showing excellent ability to develop, support and structure a relevant argument.

2(b) This option was a popular choice with candidates responding enthusiastically to the burgeoning relationship between Miranda and Ferdinand. Many focused carefully on the possible responses of an audience, aware of the position Ferdinand thinks he is in as well as the dramatic irony surrounding his assumption of the crown in Prospero's hearing. Some were puzzled by Prospero's sudden mood changes and asides, but others saw this as an early sign of his eventual softening to his enemies. Many answers wondered how far he was orchestrating this romance and if it was acceptable, but a few understood the 'love at first sight' convention and explored this to good effect. Strong candidates also identified the comic element here and some noted the dramatic nature of the scene: the music and song, the downcast son, the meeting of the soon-to-be lovers and the watching, unseen father.

Section B

Mansfield Park

Option **(a)** was very popular and there were only a very few answers which were not able to show detailed and relevant knowledge of the text. Weaker answers were limited to summarising the various married couples with variable accuracy. More successful answers considered marriage as one of Austen's concerns and considered how the couples exemplified various aspects of Austen's presentation. Some focused on the novel's opening pages and how the marriages of the three Ward sisters effectively set out the agenda for the rest of the novel. Many answers considered Edmund and Fanny as the perfect couple though with more careful analysis some remembered Austen shows us little of their life after marriage. For some candidates the marriages in the novel were all unsatisfactory, reflecting Austen's supposed cynicism as a result of her own disappointments. Very good answers saw that some marriages – Julia's for example – did hold out some hope for the future, but others saw the attitudes of the Crawfords, especially Henry's pursuit of Fanny, as symbolic of the decline in morals – the influence of the town vices on the country virtues – that was Austen's central concern.

Option **(b)** was less popular but often very well tackled. Strong responses were founded on a clear and accurate recognition of the context and what had happened to make 'her spirits low'. Candidates who focused on the methods, and explored in detail how the dialogue here is carefully crafted to lead up to Fanny's surprisingly (to Edmund at least) vehement outburst, often did very well. Others focused on the development of the relationship between Fanny and Edmund, noting that the narrative leads us to

sympathise with Fanny because we have seen Henry's character through Fanny's eyes and are aware of the real reason Henry is doomed to fail. Able candidates also pointed out that Edmund only becomes truly worthy of Fanny when he learns later that she is right in her view of Crawford and that he has been detrimentally influenced by Mary. Close analysis of the language – Edmund's 'You did not love him' for example – enabled some candidates to explore how Austen subtly develops the gulf that is growing between Fanny and Edmund at this point in the novel.

The Pardoner's Prologue and Tale

This proved a less popular, minority choice in this session with only a few candidates offering the option (a) essay. Nearly all responses showed sound knowledge of both tale and prologue and were able to provide detailed summaries of the Pardoner himself and his tale. Few however were able to develop this into considering in detail the appropriateness of the Tale, given the moral ambivalence of the teller. Some answers did think it appropriate because the Pardoner was a symbol of a corrupt church or because of his self confessed avarice. Others thought he was exemplifying his own wickedness and saw some ironic layers in the narrative complexity of the tale itself. Better answers also considered how the rather discursive style of the prologue is replaced in the tale with a more direct and dynamic narration – evidence for some of its inappropriateness though for others proof of the Pardoner's skill at his job.

Option (b) proved slightly more popular with answers ranging from a simple paraphrase of variable accuracy to a few detailed explorations of Chaucer's style and methods, including in a few rare cases an understanding of the narrative complexity at work here. A few answers considered the role of chance here and saw in the double betrayal a moral justice and a sinister irony, both in keeping with the Pardoner's admitted theme of avarice leading to evil deeds. The effect of the gold was also considered by some, who explored how Chaucer shows the development of wickedness in sinful men and possibly the skill of the Pardoner.

Hard Times

This was a very popular choice this session, and candidates showed very detailed knowledge of the various family relationships. Weaker answers summarized the significant ones in detail, drawing some basic comparisons between the Gradgrind family, especially Louisa and Tom's relationship and the circus folk, often taken as 'family' and Sissy. Stronger answers focused on the effects of Dickens's presentation, for example, seeing the connection between his satirical intentions and the inevitable failure of the Gradgrind relationships, though relatively few were convinced by the change in Gradgrind at the end. Nearly all were sympathetic to Louisa and, less enthusiastically, young Tom, but all recognized the role of Sissy and how Dickens uses her to present an alternative to the mechanical, loveless and uncaring family life before her arrival. Better answers also commented on Mrs Gradgrind's abandonment of any parental role and others found a telling contrast in Bounderby's pretense of abandonment and Sissy's actual abandonment. Some candidates also referred to Blackpool's unhappy marriage and contrasted that with what happened to Bounderby and Louisa.

Option (b) was particularly popular; nearly every candidate showed some personal engagement as well as a solid knowledge of the overall text, with some very good commentaries focusing on stylistic techniques, especially the effects of the language. Dickens's use of numbers, the mechanical description of Gradgrind's 'square finger' and the contrast between the light shining on Sissy and Bitzer, for example, were often noticed and in some cases analysed in detail. Many good responses focused on the concerns – the dehumanization of Sissy, the effect of Gradgrind's philosophy in human terms and the coldness of Bitzer's factual description of a horse. Some candidates were appalled at Gradgrind's treatment of the frightened little girl contrasting his arrogance and self belief here with his weakness and heartfelt pleading before Bitzer at the end of the novel. Very good points were also made about the dishonesty of Gradgrind's view of Sissy's background. As one candidate summarized it:

'After all it was a fact that her Dad called her Sissy and worked in horse-riding but he was never a veterinary surgeon'.

John Donne Selection

This was a minority choice with most candidates offering option (a). Nearly all candidates were able to refer in detail to at least three poems, weaker answers offering a summary with some basic contrasts identified in subject matter and approach. Other more successful answers discussed Donne's presentation of lovers in detail – contrasting for example his humorous, often physical and sexual approach in *The Sunne Rising* and *The Flea* alongside his more spiritual and serious concerns in for example *Twickenham Garden* and *The Good*



Morrow, with the strongest responses able to use detailed textual comparisons to support their arguments. Some answers focused more on 'love' as a concept, a topic they had clearly prepared, but better answers were characterised by the skill with which relevant material was selected and shaped to the task in hand.

Option **(b)** proved less popular. Weaker answers attempted to paraphrase the poem, often with limited understanding of the tone and meaning and with only limited attempts to link it to the concerns and methods in other poems. Better answers analysed the language in detail and often showed great skill in deconstructing Donne's argument and concerns, with many candidates referring appropriately to the Holy Sonnets. Nearly all answers recognised Donne's characteristic argumentative approach and persuasive techniques. Many also could recognise some of the key elements of Donne's metaphysical poetic method, usually the imagery but in some very good answers mention was made of the language and rhythm and even the effect of his use of the sonnet form.

Silas Marner

This was a very popular choice with the majority of candidates opting for **(a)**. Nearly every answer showed a detailed knowledge of the text and could summarise accurately the various points in the novel when secrets and the uncovering of them are significant. William Dane at Lantern Yard, Godfrey Cass and Molly, Godfrey lending money to Dunstan Cass, Silas and his gold coins and Eppie's real father featured in nearly every answer. Better answers saw the ways in which Eliot uses secrets as a method of developing plot and characterisation, tracing Godfrey's development, for example, through the various moments when his secrets are revealed to his father or to his second wife, Nancy. Very good answers saw how the way characters react to revelations, Nancy for example, was an important tool in Eliot's characterisation. Weaker answers provided detailed and often accurate summaries of the various secrets, with at times some shaping of the material to offer a developed discussion. Good answers focused on the effects of the secrets and how the uncovering often had a positive as well as an immediately negative effect – the uncovering of Silas's secret hoard discovered by Dunstan, for example, was seen by many as the first painful step towards Silas's rehabilitation into society.

Option **(b)** was also popular, with some excellent answers, showing a thorough understanding of Eliot's narrative techniques, use of language and humour to achieve her effects. Good answers focused on the effects of the dialogue, some remembering that even such human intercourse was an unusual experience for Marner. Nearly every answer responded positively to the thawing of the miser's heart and the way in which Eliot depicts, through Dolly and through direct narration, the gradual awakening of emotions in Silas. Alert responses also saw Dolly's tactful yet honest references to 'church' and 'christened folk' as echoing the Lantern Yard episode and as a starting point for Marner's spiritual reawakening. Weaker answers tended to paraphrase the passage or to give extensive background narrative; context was important – for example the loss of the gold, the death of Molly and the failure of Godfrey to show the kind of disinterested human warmth revealed by Dolly and increasingly Marner were significant factors in assessing the significance of this passage in Marner's development.

The Rape of the Lock

This was a minority choice with very few candidates opting for **(a)**. Weaker candidates tended to summarise all they could remember about the Baron, including the Lord Petrie background, but with very little understanding of the effects of his presentation. Stronger answers did consider the epic and classical allusions and were able to explore some of the language and imagery Pope uses to create his effects through the Baron.

The passage – Option **(b)** – was slightly more popular. Few answers showed a sound knowledge of the context of the extract, but most realized this was immediately following the actual 'rape'. Weaker answers tended to paraphrase the passage, with little understanding of the cave of Spleen episode in particular. Stronger answers explored the ways in which the cave and Belinda are described and the effect this has on the reader, with the most successful answers linking these to the wider concerns of the text, with a small number responding positively and thoughtfully to the humour of Pope's satirical portrait of the despairing maiden.

Hopkins Selected Poems

This proved the least popular choice on the paper and only a few candidates offered either option. Candidates generally were able to refer to relevant poems to show that Hopkins did glorify God but few had sufficiently detailed knowledge to develop the argument in detail. Better answers did have a very detailed knowledge and were able to support arguments with apposite and accurate quotation.



Option **(b)** was rare and only a few answers had a convincing grasp of Hopkins's methods here or even knowledge of the poem as a whole. Some weaker answers did appear to be treating the poem as an unseen with limited success. Stronger answers were alive to Hopkins's methods and explored 'inscape' and 'sprung rhythm' to telling effect, showing good understanding of the meaning and how that reflected Hopkins' characteristic concerns, particularly here his sensitivity to the child's sorrow and his development of that into a wider comment on man's 'blighted existence on earth' as one candidate expressed it.

The Duchess of Malfi

Most candidates chose **(a)** and revealed good knowledge of the play, with the main argument focused on Ferdinand's relationship with his sister, the Duchess, often showing very detailed knowledge of the text. Stronger answers saw various forms of obsessive desire – for example the Duchess's love and desire for Antonio, Bosola's desire for advancement and wealth and the Cardinal's obsession with power and secrecy. Many saw the language and imagery as indicative of a darker, more disturbing obsession that permeates the atmosphere of the play. Some very good answers explored the effects of the obsessions – how Ferdinand's rage contrasts and heightens the effect of the Cardinal's cold wickedness and how all of the obsessive desire in the play serves to emphasise the Duchess's and to some extent Antonio's positive aspects, but also to doom them to a tragic end.

10(b) Weaker answers tended to paraphrase the passage and some were unsure of the relationship between Julia and the Cardinal. The best answers focused on the dramatic impact of these events, picking up the ironies of action and language and relating them to the wider text, particularly the portrayal of the Cardinal and attitudes to religion. Many noted the ironic and perverted use of the Bible by the Cardinal to murder Julia, though few recognized the impact of her shock at the murder of the Duchess and her children. Those that did saw how Webster emphasizes the cold wickedness of the Cardinal through such comparisons with the flawed but ultimately human Julia. Stronger answers were able to deconstruct the dialogue to explore Julia's characterisation, her desire to be accepted and her recognition of her guilt in adultery. Some responses also saw the true malevolence of the Cardinal in his revealing the secret to her so that he could then justify to himself murdering her. Others though argued he had misjudged her and the poisoning was an immediate response to save his own skin. Nearly all answers were aware of the dramatic impact of the passage, visualizing the darkness of the Cardinal's private study and his controlled demeanour against a pleading, coquettish Julia, her shock at the revelation and the drama of her death



LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

Paper 9695/61

Twentieth Century Writing

Key Messages

Candidates should be encouraged to use the key terms in the questions to structure their responses.

To do well on both **(a)** and **(b)** questions candidates need to make more use of quotation, not just to support relevant discussion points but for detailed analysis of methods and effects.

To do well on **(b)** questions, candidates must focus in detail on the effects of the writing in extracts.

Critical material needs to be used more effectively. It should be integrated into the argument the candidate is presenting and will be more highly rewarded if it is evaluated using detailed references to the text.

Biographical material needs to be brief, carefully selected, and made relevant to a discussion point. It is never the focus of a task in A Level English Literature, and so cannot be rewarded.

General comments

The examination produced a wide range of results over each of the set texts, with a number of strong responses to Adcock and Friel. Most of the candidates produced responses which demonstrated knowledge of the texts and some degree of personal interest in them. The strongest scripts were characterised by wide-ranging, perceptive, organised, fresh responses indicating breadth of literary experience and an ability to use critical skills to appreciate the effects of the writing. Strong answers showed candidates were able to select their knowledge and shape their discussions to explore this year's questions, showing how the writers' choices shaped meaning and response. They maintained a balance between detailed critical analysis and a range of textual issues. Less successful answers sometimes displayed quite detailed knowledge of the text, the wider cultural context and critical views less effectively directed to the questions, or tended to write intelligent but generalised discussions, thin on specific textual detail. Weak answers often tended to be on **(b)** questions with candidates relying on narrative summary or paraphrase, and often gave the impression, particularly on the poems, that candidates were not making 'informed' responses, but were struggling to come to some understanding of the text.

There were very few rubric errors. Some candidates who appeared to write quite fluently, nevertheless produced quite short answers. This was particularly the case on the prose **(b)** questions where with the text available, some candidates could have taken the opportunity to examine the effects of the writing in more detail. A small minority of candidates mismanaged their time, producing unbalanced answers.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1 FLEUR ADCOCK: *Poems 1960-2000*

This was quite a popular text with more candidates opting for the **(b)** question. There is a range of extensive background material which gives candidates a useful context but this was used with varying degrees of relevance. Candidates seemed able to respond to the poetic voice and be interested in Adcock's point of view but needed an analytical framework to engage in more detail with Adcock's poetic methods and effects.

- (a)** Candidates attempting this question showed relevant knowledge of poems such as *The Pangolin*, *toads*, *Weathering* and *Tadpoles*. Better answers examined the question and related the themes to the idea of 'ordinary events' and 'something special', but only the best had the detailed specific references to show their appreciation of the shifts in tone, the surprising metaphors and variety of effects achieved through the manipulation of form. More modest answers gave more or less



detailed accounts of poems, with some discussion of theme and perfunctory comments on a few poetic features – the colloquial language.

- (b) There were some very good critical responses to the poem with good answers showing an ability to show the poetic development of the theme, the contribution of the form and how specific phrases, surprising expressions and metaphors contribute to the tone and effect. There was a contextual awareness of common themes with some brief but relevant references to other poems. Less successful but competent answers were clear on the meaning but were less systematic in their exploration of the poetic methods and effects and showing how they contribute to the theme. Weaker answers relied on a general imported interpretation of meaning without attempting to relate it to poetic detail. Some became over-engaged with the environmental agenda and used wider references to extend comment on theme rather than focusing on the poem as poetry.

Question 2 T.S.ELIOT: *Prufrock and Other Observations, The Waste Land and The Hollow Men*

While Eliot can be perceived as being a challenging text, it is often one on which candidates do very well. Perhaps because of the nature of the material, there is usually evidence of very detailed preparation in terms of his presentation of ideas and poetic methods. The strongest answers also manage to explore a personal response to the poems as poetry. This session, there was evidence of much more focus on Eliot's religious biography and even extended comment on his marital relations. The effect is that even in a literary context, these general ideas often stand between the candidate and the experience and appreciation of particular poems and instead of informing a detailed discussion of the text, they become a distraction. Candidates are reminded that biographical detail is not a recognised tool of literary criticism, and therefore cannot be credited in A Level English literature.

- (a) This proved the less popular option. Some answers displayed extensive and erudite knowledge with the strongest candidates being able to shape their material to fit the question and focus on 'concrete imagery'. The reference to 'spiritual ideas' gave some candidates the go-ahead to include almost every poem of Eliot's in terms of theme but many did not address the specific aspect of poetic method except by implication. Many provided exhaustive summaries or explanations of allusions and compromised their second answer by writing at such length.
- (b) This question was generally better done with strong candidates providing, informed, detailed critical analysis of the treatment of the theme through a range of methods and effects. Many answers focused on some specific details like the eyes, stars the cactus land and death's kingdom, but good candidates did so in ways that showed they could appreciate the complexity and ambiguity of the imagery and how the sentence structure, use of repetition, and sound devices contributed to the tone and effect. Candidates used enough contextual knowledge of the wider text to be able to explain the significance of the ideas and support comments on Eliot's poetic methods. More modest answers tended to discuss the theme in the wider context of Eliot's work and showed sound understanding of the ideas but did not exploit references and quotations to demonstrate an appreciation of the poetic methods and effects. Some weaker answers tried to impose a simple message on the poem – it is better to be a scarecrow and fulfil a limited role than face death – or struggled to make sense of the eyes or took refuge in general remarks about Eliot's despair at man's lack of spiritual direction and the state of the world.

Question 3 JANET FRAME: *Towards Another Summer*

Candidates approached this new text showing evidence of thorough preparation and began to develop a critical method for dealing with this unusual novel going beyond character study and focusing on the contribution made by the structure and choice of language. However, biographical knowledge was used as a way into the idiosyncrasies of genre, and comments on style in some cases became an alternative to literary appreciation rather than an aid. The (b) question was more popular and better done than the (a) question, though strong candidates on both questions were able to gain top band marks by showing detailed knowledge, shaped to the task supported by perceptive, intuitive personal response.

- (a) Most answers tended to see how Grace's present could be explained by her past and those who did well had detailed knowledge of specific scenes to support perceptive discussion of the character's inner world and the way she interacted with other people and places. The strongest answers managed to comment in a literary way on the triggers for memory, the use of motifs, contrasts and comparisons between her family in New Zealand and Grace's perception of the Thirkettles, but the majority of answers tended to rely on factual knowledge of content and theme.

- (b) Many answers showed extensive contextual knowledge and few missed the reference to the migratory bird. Most were able to use the extract to show some understanding of the character of Grace and her frustrations but only a few managed to sustain a detailed exploration of the extract, commenting for example, on the effects of the diction and sentence structure in paragraph three, the implications of the comparison between the crisp producer and efficient manageress of the dairy, and the description of Grace's reaction to the snow. Weaker answers used the extract as a jumping off point for a general account of Grace's character with a lack of focus on their treatment of the extract.

Question 4 BRIAN FRIEL: *Translations*

This was a popular choice of text and candidates generally showed extensive knowledge and understanding of the play, and some appreciation of the dramatic effects though there was scope for greater development of discussion on dramatic method. The assumption at times was that it was 'natural' – a recognition of realism rather than an analysis of it. In this question, there was less evidence of over-developed accounts of the historical and political context, other than what the play itself foregrounds. There were very few very weak answers on this text.

- (a) Most answers showed obvious engagement with the characters and the significance of the relationship to a range of themes including language and colonialism, the personal versus the political and the ending of the play. The best answers explored in detail the dramatic irony of both characters speaking in English but not understanding each other's conflicting desires to leave Ireland or to stay. They were able to support their discussion with detailed references to specific scenes and show how the use of language within the dialogue shaped audience response. Less successful responses tended to have detailed references and some appreciation of the comedy but to over-romanticise the relationship claiming that the characters had a deep connection that went beyond words. The weakest answers gave a straightforward account of the characters and their relationship.
- (b) Most candidates focused well on the extract. Many showed a good grasp of the use of dramatic irony and a sound understanding of the way Owen's character and significance are revealed through his language. The strongest answers confidently laid out the concerns, including language and attitudes to colonialism, illustrating points with reference to the extract and the wider text while at the same time considering methods of characterisation and the way language and stage directions creates dramatic effects.

Question 5 R.K. NARAYAN: *The English Teacher*

This text continues to be popular and to provoke strong reactions to character. Many candidates displayed detailed knowledge of the text and a readiness to argue about different interpretations and responses. However, some candidates used prepared introductory paragraphs on genre, biography and cultural context which detracted from a focus on the specific demands of the questions. Candidates who performed strongly in both the (a) and (b) questions were those who used their knowledge to address the demands of the task.

- (a) There were some very strong responses which considered a variety of ways in which Krishna could be considered heroic and explicitly linked these to well-chosen episodes and quotations. The best answers used the quotations to demonstrate understanding and appreciation of Narayan's narrative methods and considered the shifts in tone in the language given to the narrative voice, the use of contrasting characters and emotions. Less successful answers gave detailed accounts of Krishna's struggle to find meaning in his life, sometimes related to the issue of heroism though that concept was often not explicitly explained. The weakest answers relied on narrative summaries.
- (b) This proved a less popular choice and candidates did not in general perform well, with many answers showing a reliance on narrative summary of the characters' relationship or a paraphrase of the extract. Stronger answers explored some aspects of the narrative voice and context and the changing nature of the relationship through wider reference quite skilfully. A minority paid meticulous attention to the detail of the passage, considering the choice of language as an indicator of feeling and tone, judiciously using this to inform subtle comments on character relationship, wider textual aspects.

Question 6 HAROLD PINTER: *The Homecoming*

The (b) question proved the more popular option. There was often extensive use of wider critical reading which stronger candidates were able seamlessly to integrate into their main arguments, to strengthen and develop their personal responses.

- (a) Many candidates offered highly informed responses, effectively noting dramatic effects, comic-tragic elements and the poignancy of Sam's situation. Less successful answers displayed sound understanding of the character and his role but lacked the detailed illustration to support analysis of dramatic presentation and effect.
- (b) Strong candidates combined perceptive consideration of dramatic method with how Pinter uses the audience's sense of normal socially acceptable behaviour to create dramatic effect. The best answers showed good critical appreciation of how the text in performance can generate shock and comedy by focusing on the crude extravagance of Max's language, the shifts in tone and pace with the violent action, the pauses and the potential for ambiguity and menace in the 'cuddle' section. Less successful answers focused on the family dynamics set within the wider context of the play which distracted attention from the clear direction in the question to scrutinise the dialogue. The weakest answers lacked focus in their treatment of the extract, tended to treat the characters as real and took Max's 'He still loves his father' at face value or drifted into speculation about Teddy and Ruth's marriage.

Question 7 WOLE SOYINKA: *Death and the King's Horseman*

It is pleasing to see that an increasing number of Centres are offering this text which continues to stimulate strong engagement and perceptive answers. Biographical details and colonial debate sometimes distract attention from literary appreciation but more candidates are showing some evidence of developing a critical framework for analysing Soyinka's dramatic methods and use of language. Both questions were equally popular and produced the full range of answers.

- (a) Successful answers effectively explored the concepts of leadership and developed arguments about status, responsibility, duty of service and the dangers of self-deception, arrogance and corruption with specific references to the text. The best answers considered the presentation of characters and dramatic effects though aptly chosen quotations. Less successful answers offered straightforward comparisons of characters such as Elesin, Olunde, Iyaloya and Pilkings showing sound understanding of their function. Sometimes this strategy was overdeveloped to include the Praise Singer and Jane so that extended textual knowledge replaced coherently developed argument. There was some relevant interesting contextual reading with many candidates drawing effective analogies with their own experience of political power. A very small minority became over-engaged in this and drifted off the required focus on the text.
- (b) Able candidates adopted a detailed approach to the extract and managed to produce sustained and perceptive analysis of dramatic method, with apt focus on the context, dramatic irony, the role of the Praise Singer, the stage directions and sound effects. The strongest answers included some detailed appreciation of significant textual detail such as the imagery and the effects of the repetition and balance in the sentence structure 'if you had followed...If you had followed...If you had raised..' The weakest answers displayed an excessive amount of initial contextual knowledge which distracted from the focus of the question or attempted to paraphrase the scene.

Question 8 VIRGINIA WOOLF: *To the Lighthouse*

Candidates produced literary responses with evidence of ability to apply a general understanding of narrative methods to the question given, supporting their answers with reference to the text.

- (a) The strongest answers displayed a highly informed, well organised, critical discussion of Charles Tansley's role and significance in the novel, including the way he is presented through other characters' views of him and what that reveals about them. Many able candidates used apt quotations and made judicious use of cultural, biographical and social background material. Balance and control was a key feature of strong responses. In less assured answers, candidates tended to shift too much attention to other characters or over-invest in discussion of 19th century gender issues or Woolf's parents.

- (b) The most able candidates offered outstanding, accomplished analysis of the effects of the writing with sustained focus upon the narrative method, isolating the displaced narrator and exploring the lyrical presentation of time and loss within the wider context of a search for answers. The strongest candidates commented on the surprise for the first time reader of the shocking parenthesis at the end. More modest answers sought to explain the significance of the passage with some discussion of themes, the use of the stream of consciousness technique and natural imagery. Weaker answers attempted to paraphrase and misunderstood the reference to 'divine goodness', or offered fragmented narration with excessive reliance upon textual knowledge of character and events beyond the extract.

LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

Paper 9695/62
Twentieth Century Writing

Key Messages

Candidates should be encouraged to use the key terms in the questions to structure their responses.

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To do well on **(b)** questions, candidates must focus in detail on the effects of the writing in extracts.

Critical material needs to be used more effectively. It should be integrated into the argument the candidate is presenting and will be more highly rewarded if it is evaluated using detailed references to the text.

Biographical material needs to be brief, carefully selected, and made relevant to a discussion point. It is never the focus of a task in A Level English Literature, and so cannot be rewarded.

General comments

The examination produced a wide range of results over each of the set texts, with a number of strong responses to Adcock and Friel. Most of the candidates produced responses which demonstrated knowledge of the texts and some degree of personal interest in them. The strongest scripts were characterised by wide-ranging, perceptive, organised, fresh responses indicating breadth of literary experience and an ability to use critical skills to appreciate the effects of the writing. Strong answers showed candidates were able to select their knowledge and shape their discussions to explore this year's questions, showing how the writers' choices shaped meaning and response. They maintained a balance between detailed critical analysis and a range of textual issues. Less successful answers sometimes displayed quite detailed knowledge of the text, the wider cultural context and critical views less effectively directed to the questions, or tended to write intelligent but generalised discussions, thin on specific textual detail. Weak answers often tended to be on **(b)** questions with candidates relying on narrative summary or paraphrase, and often gave the impression, particularly on the poems, that candidates were not making 'informed' responses, but were struggling to come to some understanding of the text.

There were very few rubric errors. Some candidates who appeared to write quite fluently, nevertheless produced quite short answers. This was particularly the case on the prose **(b)** questions where with the text available, some candidates could have taken the opportunity to examine the effects of the writing in more detail. A small minority of candidates mismanaged their time, producing unbalanced answers.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1 FLEUR ADCOCK: *Poems 1969-2000*

There was some evidence of a lack of preparation in the responses this session. In order to appreciate the way Adcock presents and explores experience, her exploitation of various forms, her use of surprising metaphors, startling or colloquial diction and shifts in tone, candidates need to have detailed knowledge of her concerns and poetic methods.

- (a)** This proved the less popular option. Strong candidates addressed the phrase 'use of the past' by considering a range of issues: family ties and a sense of belonging, a shared experience, the use of specific memories to create dramatic scenes as a trigger for personal reflection on issues such as time or loss. They chose appropriate poems which they explored with some perceptive understanding of her poetic methods. Less successful answers referred only generally to chosen

poems and referred loosely to the question. So for example *On a Son Returned to New Zealand* was summarised to show Adcock's acceptance of separation.

- (b) This proved the most popular option and there were some good responses, based on a sound close reading of the poem with some detailed appreciation of the poetic methods and effects. Strong candidates realised that that the exposure of the persona's skin to 'weathering' was literal and a result of living in a mountainous area. They commented on the use of the verse form, the run-on lines, considered the effects of the colloquial phrases and diction seeing the implicit contrast with the 'metropolitan lifestyle with that of the countryside. Some candidates explored the tone and felt the depth that the final line with its mention of 'soul', suggests. Less successful answers expressed general approval for Adcock's 'friendly', conversational style and tended to focus on 'time', tending to reduce the poem to an acceptance of loss of personal attractiveness as age takes its toll. Weaker answers read the poem as a sermon on vanity and drifted into personal reflections on the evils of the celebrity culture.

Question 2 T.S. ELIOT: *Prufrock and Other Observations, The Waste Land and The Hollow Men*

While Eliot can be perceived as being a challenging text, it is often one on which candidates do very well. Perhaps because of the nature of the material, there is usually evidence of very detailed preparation in terms of his presentation of ideas and poetic methods. The challenge for many candidates is to select relevant material and shape it to the task. Stronger candidates who were prepared to concentrate on an appreciation of parts of the poems as poetry tended to opt for the (b) question and produced some good responses.

- (a) Few attempted this question and the responses were generally weak. Some stronger candidates wrote in enormous detail on several poems but did not address the key strand of the question 'strikingly dramatic situations'. The best responses picked out Prufrock's social isolation, the tension between the middle class couple in *A Game of Chess*, followed by the overheard conversation in the pub at closing time. They were able competently to appreciate aspects of the poetic method and had some quotations for analysis. Weaker answers provided detailed summaries of *The Hollow Men* and *The Wasteland* in an effort to explain general interpretations of content and theme.
- (b) There were some strong, informed responses with well supported explorations of the irony of the title, the dramatic use of personification on the one hand, and the dehumanisation of individuals and reduction of people to mere body parts on the other. The sequence from third to second and finally first person utterances were often picked out as was the use of time as a structural device. Many focused on the sordidness of the images and tracked the shifts in mood towards the end of 'IV': personal compassion breaking through the more detached social commentary, before being dismissed in a gesture and a touching image of ancient women. These details were often analysed with insight and some excellent answers managed to refer in detail to other poems as well in order to provide a context for Eliot's treatment of the theme. Less successful answers showed clear but more restricted understanding of the theme and tended to explain some of the imagery and effects in a very prosaic way, though even here some attention was paid to choice of language. The way information about a writer can distract from the attempt to express a personal response can be illustrated by the number of candidates who chose to restrict their comment on 'some infinitely gentle/Infinitely gentle thing' to the assertion that this was an allusion to Jesus Christ, whereas a consideration of the effect of the choice of language and manipulation of sound would have been more productive.

Question 3 JANET FRAME: *Towards Another Summer*

Candidates who had studied this text in detail did well.

- (a) Not enough candidates noticed the focus in the question, 'Explore the significance', and tended to concentrate instead on a generalised account of what was perceived as Grace's homesickness for New Zealand. Stronger answers paid some attention to the structure of the novel and the 'migratory bird' motif and had enough textual detail to be able to look at what triggered Grace's memories of home and points of comparison between her feelings about home in New Zealand, her experience of living in London and reactions to the Thirkettle's home.
- (b) There were some very perceptive commentaries in response to this question. The best answers addressed the issue of the narrative point of view and pointed out that here Grace was the uncharacteristically detached observer, and released from her usual self-conscious concerns she was able to subtly identify with Anne's frustration and recognise Philip's assumption of a dominant male role. Some analysed Frame's presentation of the social tension in the scene – with the child over the exchange of the library book, and between the couple, trapped within conventional ideas about social behaviour who were unable to express their true feelings and compared this with portraits of Grace's own childhood experience. There was however much more scope for analysis of the use of language and the effect of the dialogue in this scene.

Question 4 BRIAN FRIEL: *Translations*

This proved a less popular choice of text but the candidates who chose this option, opting in fairly equal numbers for the (a) and (b) questions, tended to do well. There were very few very weak answers. Candidates generally showed extensive knowledge and understanding of the play, and some appreciation of the dramatic effects though there was scope for greater development of discussion on dramatic method particularly in the essay question. There was some evidence of sensitive awareness and judicious, limited use of the contexts of writing and the context of the action: a play from the 1980s, written during the then on-going Irish troubles, about the British ascendancy in Ireland in the 1860s.

- (a) This question was well tackled by the majority of candidates. The strongest answers explored the dramatic effects of different languages being presented on the stage through the medium of English and referred to specific scenes in some detail to show contrasting effects: the ambiguity surrounding the presentation of Owen as translator and the comedy of the love scene between Yolland and Maire for example. They also had apt quotations from a variety of characters to illustrate the way the coming of the English to a remote Irish community is perceived as both a threat to collective identity and a solution to isolation. Less successful responses showed a sound understanding of the issues but tended to develop the discussion in a more general way with less attention to dramatic method.
- (b) There were a number of strong responses to the extract question. The strongest answers brought out the dramatic focus on Owen and how he is manipulating his relationship with the hedge School group through language and commented on the diction given to his description of his job. The contrast between the two brothers, Hugh's delight in the return of the favourite son and Manus's evident suspicions of Owen were all well considered. The significance of Sarah's role here prompted some astute observations about her sudden release from silence and her rejection by Manus. The strongest answers looked closely at how the language in the dialogue shifts the tone and shapes the audience response. Weaker answers presented straightforward character studies and summarised the scene.

Question 5 R.K.NARAYAN: *The English Teacher*

This text continues to be a popular option for students and to provoke strong reactions to character and the issue of life after death. Many candidates displayed thorough, detailed knowledge of the text and a willingness to argue about different interpretations and responses. Weaker candidates over-invested in detailed biographical material and found it difficult to separate Narayan from Krishna. Candidates who did well in both the (a) and (b) questions were those who could shape their knowledge to the task, and there was more evidence of this in response to the (a) question.

- (a) Most candidates selected clearly relevant material: Susila's unexpected death, The Headmaster's expectation of death, Leila's acceptance of it and Krishna's changing attitude towards it. Surprisingly only a few offered detailed material on Susila's experience of being dead. In stronger responses, the parallels and contrasts of attitude were brought out, supported by aptly chosen quotations. The cultural context was appropriately explored looking at the tensions within Krishna between his Western education and his traditional culture, in his attitudes to the doctors, the funeral and the issue of his relationship with Susila continuing after death. The futility of trying to either control or predict death were emphasised. Weaker answers relied on narrative summary with varying degrees of detailed knowledge or generalised personal reflections on the subject and gushing approval for Narayan's treatment of it.
- (b) Some responses did not clearly focus on the passage. Those who addressed the word 'introduced' in the question used the passage to assess Krishna's attitudes to his work and his desire for change and then pursued these ideas in the wider text, but neglected the other part of the question which states 'With close reference to the narrative methods in the passage.....' The strongest responses discussed Krishna's role of narrator, the way he presents his colleagues with some objectivity and humour and what he reveals about himself. A few made perceptive remarks about the significance of Gopal and the sense we have that Krishna recognises that in spite of his mathematical genius, he had become culturally and socially impoverished, a fate Krishna himself is driven to avoid. Most linked his readiness for change to a symbolic interpretation of the 'predictable unpredictability' of the alarm clock, many pointing out that once he has taken on the unpredictability of life itself with Susila, the clock would be redundant. Weaker answers relied on narrative summary and paraphrase or became over-invested in the issue of education and colonialism and did not clearly focus on the text.

Question 6 HAROLD PINTER: *The Homecoming*

There were a number of strong personal responses to the Pinter text. Strong candidates conveyed that part of Pinter's dramatic method is to challenge an audience's sense of what is conventional, socially accepted behaviour to create both shocking and comic effects. Ideas on the 'Comedy of Menace' were helpful for both questions which proved equally attractive to candidates. Lengthy discussions on Freud proved less productive in this case.

- (a) Strong candidates were able to analyse specific scenes and lines of dialogue in dramatic terms. While a few of the best answers demonstrated a wealth of aptly chosen quotations, others referred too generally to scenes, and lost the opportunity to discuss 'dramatic use'. Better scripts noted the latent menace in the verbally violent exchanges and Pinter's creativity in inventing threatening insults. They considered the role of Lennie's stories in the presentation of his character and their impact on the audience on stage and in the auditorium. They noted the slapstick element in the one episode of physical violence, but only the best scripts analysed the effects of these in any detail. Weaker scripts merged violence with the issue of power seeking and drifted into material of tangential significance in discussing Ruth's behaviour or relied on narrative summary.

- (b) Keeping 'audience response' in mind was often the key to a good answer here and many candidates were able to sustain some detailed analysis of Pinter's dramatic methods and effects. The roles of different characters were often well defined and their interaction within the family. Many observed that this is the first moment in the play when the 'family' operates as a 'unit'. Attention inevitably focused on the marriage relationship of Teddy and Ruth and there was some helpful linking to the wider context of the whole play. Better scripts focused on the language used about Ruth, explored the irony of Max's statement that 'She'll make us all animals' and the comedy of Teddy's report on his wife's sexual activity and Max's concern for Joey as opposed to any consideration for Teddy's feelings. Strong candidates appreciated that the language used in this context: 'grown-up people...sense of responsibility...democratic' created a justifiable sense of the absurd. There was some sophisticated feminist criticism of the language used to discuss Ruth's needs and how a post-feminist audience would respond to it. Weaker scripts tended to limit comments on dramatic effect to expressions of moral outrage. They also assumed that the idea of making Ruth a prostitute was actually raised in this passage but that comes a little later.

Question 7 WOLE SOYINKA: *Death and the King's Horseman*.

The candidates who chose this option showed strong engagement with the text and gave perceptive answers. Biographical details and the colonial debate can sometimes distract attention from literary appreciation but more candidates are showing some evidence of developing a critical framework for analysing Soyinka's dramatic methods and use of language.

- (a) The Praise-Singer has a key role in the play and Soyinka endows the character with richly poetic and rhetorical language for a particular dramatic purpose. A number of candidates did not demonstrate a detailed enough knowledge of the character but relied on generalised descriptions of the role and background material on Yoruba culture.
- (b) There were a small number of very good responses to the passage with candidates again using the way Soyinka 'shapes the audience response' to help them explore the contrast of cultural perceptions. Some very good arguments were presented in analysis of Olunde's crucial justification for the Yoruba ritual of suicide and candidates appreciated the dramatic contribution to the tension of the drumming, the irony of Olunde's pride in his assumption that his father has died, the impact of Jane's 'You're just a savage like all the rest' and Olunde's dignified and sober reply to the aggressive racism of the Aide.

Question 8 VIRGINIA WOOLF: *To the Lighthouse*

There were a number of genuine literary responses with evidence of ability to apply a general understanding of narrative methods to specific questions and textual detail.

- (a) There were a number of proficient responses that detailed the contrast between the work of Mr Ramsay and the less acknowledged but much appreciated 'work' of his wife. The best scripts showed how different views on the work and reputations of the Ramsays were filtered through other characters with candidates making good use of Bankes, Tansley and Lily. As a painter and an independent woman, Lily was often seen as a representative of the author herself. Some suitable comments were made on the permanence of Art and Memories as opposed to the transience of other types of work. One outstanding example asserted that though Mrs Ramsay was 'the perfect woman' she was presented in a role that must give way to the post-war 'modern' working woman and that there was an appropriateness in the timing of her death and subsequent concentration on Lily.

- (b) Some very strong candidates made connections between the passage and other areas of the novel to show how far the passage was characteristic of Woolf's concerns, briefly touching on the significance of the trip to the lighthouse and the ongoing existential debate about 'what can it all mean' now that Mrs Ramsay is dead. Most candidates explored narrative method by tracking Lily's feelings and responses to the situation with the best answers examining the way Woolf uses diction and sentence structure to suggest the negative feelings of emptiness and lack of resolution in Lily's mind, giving way to the more positive final statement of the passage that heralds the resolving episodes with which the novel ends. Weaker answers tended to give more lengthy explanations of the significance of obvious references to the lighthouse, Mr Ramsay's anger and the impact on the household of Mrs Ramsay's death or examined the passage, as an expression of grief and revelation of Lily's character.

LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

Paper 9695/63
Twentieth Century Writing

Key Messages

Candidates should be encouraged to use the key terms in the questions to structure their responses.

To do well on both **(a)** and **(b)** questions candidates need to make more use of quotation, not just to support relevant discussion points but for detailed analysis of methods and effects.

To do well on **(b)** questions, candidates must focus in detail on the effects of the writing in extracts.

Critical material needs to be used more effectively. It should be integrated into the argument the candidate is presenting and will be more highly rewarded if it is evaluated using detailed references to the text.

Biographical material needs to be brief, carefully selected, and made relevant to a discussion point. It is never the focus of a task in A Level English Literature, and so cannot be rewarded.

General comments

The examination produced a wide range of results over each of the set texts, with a number of strong responses to Adcock and Friel. Most of the candidates produced responses which demonstrated knowledge of the texts and some degree of personal interest in them. The strongest scripts were characterised by wide-ranging, perceptive, organised, fresh responses indicating breadth of literary experience and an ability to use critical skills to appreciate the effects of the writing. Strong answers showed candidates were able to select their knowledge and shape their discussions to explore this year's questions, showing how the writers' choices shaped meaning and response. They maintained a balance between detailed critical analysis and a range of textual issues. Less successful answers sometimes displayed quite detailed knowledge of the text, the wider cultural context and critical views less effectively directed to the questions, or tended to write intelligent but generalised discussions, thin on specific textual detail. Weak answers often tended to be on **(b)** questions with candidates relying on narrative summary or paraphrase, and often gave the impression, particularly on the poems, that candidates were not making 'informed' responses, but were struggling to come to some understanding of the text.

There were very few rubric errors. Some candidates who appeared to write quite fluently, nevertheless produced quite short answers. This was particularly the case on the prose **(b)** questions where with the text available, some candidates could have taken the opportunity to examine the effects of the writing in more detail. A small minority of candidates mismanaged their time, producing unbalanced answers.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1 FLEUR ADCOCK: *Poems 1969-2000*

There was some evidence of a lack of preparation in the responses this session. In order to appreciate the way Adcock presents and explores experience, her exploitation of various forms, her use of surprising metaphors, startling or colloquial diction and shifts in tone, candidates need to have detailed knowledge of her concerns and poetic methods.

- (a)** This proved the less popular option. Strong candidates addressed the phrase 'use of the past' by considering a range of issues: family ties and a sense of belonging, a shared experience, the use of specific memories to create dramatic scenes as a trigger for personal reflection on issues such as time or loss. They chose appropriate poems which they explored with some perceptive understanding of her poetic methods. Less successful answers referred only generally to chosen



poems and referred loosely to the question. So for example *On a Son Returned to New Zealand* was summarised to show Adcock's acceptance of separation.

- (b) This proved the most popular option and there were some good responses, based on a sound close reading of the poem with some detailed appreciation of the poetic methods and effects. Strong candidates realised that that the exposure of the persona's skin to 'weathering' was literal and a result of living in a mountainous area. They commented on the use of the verse form, the run-on lines, considered the effects of the colloquial phrases and diction seeing the implicit contrast with the 'metropolitan lifestyle with that of the countryside. Some candidates explored the tone and felt the depth that the final line with its mention of 'soul', suggests. Less successful answers expressed general approval for Adcock's 'friendly', conversational style and tended to focus on 'time', tending to reduce the poem to an acceptance of loss of personal attractiveness as age takes its toll. Weaker answers read the poem as a sermon on vanity and drifted into personal reflections on the evils of the celebrity culture.

Question 2 T.S. ELIOT: *Prufrock and Other Observations, The Waste Land and The Hollow Men*

While Eliot can be perceived as being a challenging text, it is often one on which candidates do very well. Perhaps because of the nature of the material, there is usually evidence of very detailed preparation in terms of his presentation of ideas and poetic methods. The challenge for many candidates is to select relevant material and shape it to the task. Stronger candidates who were prepared to concentrate on an appreciation of parts of the poems as poetry tended to opt for the (b) question and produced some good responses.

- (a) Few attempted this question and the responses were generally weak. Some stronger candidates wrote in enormous detail on several poems but did not address the key strand of the question 'strikingly dramatic situations'. The best responses picked out Prufrock's social isolation, the tension between the middle class couple in *A Game of Chess*, followed by the overheard conversation in the pub at closing time. They were able competently to appreciate aspects of the poetic method and had some quotations for analysis. Weaker answers provided detailed summaries of *The Hollow Men* and *The Wasteland* in an effort to explain general interpretations of content and theme.
- (b) There were some strong, informed responses with well supported explorations of the irony of the title, the dramatic use of personification on the one hand, and the dehumanisation of individuals and reduction of people to mere body parts on the other. The sequence from third to second and finally first person utterances were often picked out as was the use of time as a structural device. Many focused on the sordidness of the images and tracked the shifts in mood towards the end of 'IV': personal compassion breaking through the more detached social commentary, before being dismissed in a gesture and a touching image of ancient women. These details were often analysed with insight and some excellent answers managed to refer in detail to other poems as well in order to provide a context for Eliot's treatment of the theme. Less successful answers showed clear but more restricted understanding of the theme and tended to explain some of the imagery and effects in a very prosaic way, though even here some attention was paid to choice of language. The way information about a writer can distract from the attempt to express a personal response can be illustrated by the number of candidates who chose to restrict their comment on 'some infinitely gentle/Infinitely gentle thing' to the assertion that this was an allusion to Jesus Christ, whereas a consideration of the effect of the choice of language and manipulation of sound would have been more productive.



Question 3 JANET FRAME: *Towards Another Summer*

Candidates who had studied this text in detail did well.

- (a) Not enough candidates noticed the focus in the question, 'Explore the significance', and tended to concentrate instead on a generalised account of what was perceived as Grace's homesickness for New Zealand. Stronger answers paid some attention to the structure of the novel and the 'migratory bird' motif and had enough textual detail to be able to look at what triggered Grace's memories of home and points of comparison between her feelings about home in New Zealand, her experience of living in London and reactions to the Thirkettle's home.
- (b) There were some very perceptive commentaries in response to this question. The best answers addressed the issue of the narrative point of view and pointed out that here Grace was the uncharacteristically detached observer, and released from her usual self-conscious concerns she was able to subtly identify with Anne's frustration and recognise Philip's assumption of a dominant male role. Some analysed Frame's presentation of the social tension in the scene – with the child over the exchange of the library book, and between the couple, trapped within conventional ideas about social behaviour who were unable to express their true feelings and compared this with portraits of Grace's own childhood experience. There was however much more scope for analysis of the use of language and the effect of the dialogue in this scene.

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- (a) This question was well tackled by the majority of candidates. The strongest answers explored the dramatic effects of different languages being presented on the stage through the medium of English and referred to specific scenes in some detail to show contrasting effects: the ambiguity surrounding the presentation of Owen as translator and the comedy of the love scene between Yolland and Maire for example. They also had apt quotations from a variety of characters to illustrate the way the coming of the English to a remote Irish community is perceived as both a threat to collective identity and a solution to isolation. Less successful responses showed a sound understanding of the issues but tended to develop the discussion in a more general way with less attention to dramatic method.
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- (a) There were a number of proficient responses that detailed the contrast between the work of Mr Ramsay and the less acknowledged but much appreciated 'work' of his wife. The best scripts showed how different views on the work and reputations of the Ramsays were filtered through other characters with candidates making good use of Bankes, Tansley and Lily. As a painter and an independent woman, Lily was often seen as a representative of the author herself. Some suitable comments were made on the permanence of Art and Memories as opposed to the transience of other types of work. One outstanding example asserted that though Mrs Ramsay was 'the perfect woman' she was presented in a role that must give way to the post-war 'modern' working woman and that there was an appropriateness in the timing of her death and subsequent concentration on Lily.



- (b) Some very strong candidates made connections between the passage and other areas of the novel to show how far the passage was characteristic of Woolf's concerns, briefly touching on the significance of the trip to the lighthouse and the ongoing existential debate about 'what can it all mean' now that Mrs Ramsay is dead. Most candidates explored narrative method by tracking Lily's feelings and responses to the situation with the best answers examining the way Woolf uses diction and sentence structure to suggest the negative feelings of emptiness and lack of resolution in Lily's mind, giving way to the more positive final statement of the passage that heralds the resolving episodes with which the novel ends. Weaker answers tended to give more lengthy explanations of the significance of obvious references to the lighthouse, Mr Ramsay's anger and the impact on the household of Mrs Ramsay's death or examined the passage, as an expression of grief and revelation of Lily's character.

LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

Paper 9695/71

Comment and Appreciation

Key Messages

Candidates should be encouraged to address all strands of the questions and use these to structure their responses.

To achieve at the higher end candidates need to make more use of quotation, not just to support relevant discussion points but for detailed analysis of methods and effects.

Critical material needs to be used more effectively. It should be integrated into the argument the candidate is presenting and will be more highly rewarded if it is evaluated using detailed references to the text.

Biographical material needs to be brief, carefully selected, and made relevant to a discussion point. It is never the focus of a task in A Level English Literature, and so cannot be rewarded.

General Comments

There were some strong critical responses to all the questions this session; few candidates relied upon simple narration or paraphrase, and almost all attempted to explore the ways in which the writing of each extract or poem helps to shape its general and specific meanings. Similarly, very few just identified and named particular techniques without at least some discussion of how they work in their specific contexts.

While in preparation it may be that some very basic contextual information is understood and introduced – for example in relation to **Question 1** it might be helpful to appreciate that cultural and social attitudes were rather different at the time the novel was written – but candidates should not spend time in the exam response speculating about the country in which a text is set, or discussing changing views of divorce or race differences, unless these ideas were very closely and explicitly tied to what is actually said in the given passage. It is not the background or any other contextual concerns which matter in this Paper, or indeed which will be rewarded, but how each writer creates and presents particular scenes and characters.

Writing about poetry always gives rise to particular concerns, in that rhyme and rhythm are more obviously important than they are in either prose or drama, and candidates will always be expected to make some comments about specifically poetic factors; again, however, what matters is how well these are discussed, not just that they are identified; more is said about this below when looking at **Question 3**.

In the same way, when one of the passages is taken from a play, as in **Question 2**, candidates will be expected to comment on at least some of the dramatic and theatrical effects that the playwright creates. It is unlikely that any candidates will have seen a production of any play that is set in this Paper, but when there is so much that is clearly designed to be seen and experienced as well as read – as is the case here – there must be some response to how an audience, or even just the individual candidate, might react to what is said and to what happens.

Some candidates clearly felt that it would help their arguments if they made reference to other texts, in some cases doing this several times in each of their answers, and occasionally at considerable length. Such comparisons, however appropriate they may seem, are entirely unnecessary in this Paper, taking up time that should be spent focusing on the given passage or poems, and this approach does not gain marks. The focus must remain solely and entirely on the passage or poems set for discussion.

A few candidates presented creative writing instead of conventionally critical discussions; such responses are not acceptable in this Paper.



Comments on Specific Questions

Question 1

All three questions were attempted, but this proved the most popular, perhaps because – as many candidates said in their answers – the relationship between the two sisters, and their different feelings about their mother, echoed personal experiences in their own families. Such personal feelings, however, should not have taken up quite as much space as it did in some responses. Strong candidates looked at how Edith Wharton portrayed these relationships and indeed each individual character.

Virginia is the first character to be mentioned, and her character is certainly the strongest, so quite sensibly most candidates spent more time on her, selecting some apt and revealing words and phrases that Wharton uses to characterise her casual and perhaps even rude attitude towards her mother, who in turn was seen by almost all as weak and largely ineffectual as a parent – her repeated concern for her appearance and her clothing was widely and correctly noted. Many candidates commented on her “tightly buttoned” boots as metaphorically illustrative of her own tightly buttoned personality, and her refusal to have anything at all to do with a girl whose mother might be either widowed or divorced. Virginia’s “sapphire eyes” and her “blue gaze” were seen by many candidates as suggesting not just her physical beauty but also her cold hardness of character, a hardness and even callousness which does not change at all throughout the passage. Nan, on the other hand, is not yet a woman, and her constantly shifting emotional moods as outlined in lines 25-26 were again well noted in most responses, together with her admiration and even adoration of her elder sister, and her inability or perhaps unwillingness to be exactly like Virginia in mocking Mrs St George.

Mrs St George herself was understandably disliked and criticised by most candidates; Edith Wharton surely does not want her readers to have much sympathy with her, despite the ways in which she makes Virginia and Nan treat her. Her social and racial prejudices were noted and illustrated, and much was made of the almost entirely useless skills she demonstrates as a mother and role-model. One quite frequent mis-reading occurred, which is worth noting even though it did not seriously weaken most arguments: she is said to be wearing “kid boots” (line 7), indicating the kind of expensive and soft leather of which they are made; several candidates took the adjective to mean “children’s”, and assumed that she was for some reason wearing a pair of Nan’s or Virginia’s boots, thus proving her own childish nature. Many candidates commented on her apparently poor grasp of correct English (“*I do not want you should go round any more with that strange girl!*”), but this way of speaking may simply be a reflection of her southern US upbringing.

Question 2

As described above, because this is a piece of drama there does need to be some discussion of the ways in which Wole Soyinka creates theatrical effects, and of how an audience, whether of one or many, might react. Many candidates entirely ignored the opening stage directions, thus losing much of how the two characters are introduced physically before they even speak or move; they are, for example, shown to be well apart, with Makuri standing at the window, and Alu sitting, working and tormented by flies. Makuri is immediately shown – despite what is later said – as being worried about something, to the extent of neglecting his work and thus reducing their small income further; Alu, by contrast, is active but tormented, literally by flies and metaphorically by worries. Their room is crowded and multi-purpose; they clearly do not have much money. Their hut is in the middle of a swamp, and it is raining, both factors suggesting at best unpleasantness and at worst positive discomfort and even danger; some candidates perceptively commented on how this setting already implies a mood of instability and fragility.

When the two characters begin to speak their differences are made even more striking, with Alu clearly concerned about the possible fate of Igwezu (interestingly “my” son rather than “our” son), a concern which grows, becoming obsessive and perhaps increasingly unrealistic as the passage develops. Makuri by contrast appears initially to be rather laid-back and unconcerned, knowing that Igwezu is an adult with a wife, and must surely know his own way home; he, however, is the one looking out of the window at the start, so is perhaps not as casual as he would like to appear.

The mystery raised by the passage is not solved until much later in the whole play, and some candidates found this frustrating, even to the point of assuming the playwright to be careless and negligent in not making it clear what exactly has happened to Igwezu and perhaps also to his brother. Others, however, more sensibly made the point that creating a mystery and its attendant tensions and uncertainties is one of the ways in which drama is formed and made effective – an audience will want to know what has happened, and what will happen. Other theatrical impacts are created by the way in which the two characters squabble in an increasingly petty but powerful way, their words emphasised by their actions, with the climax of the passage coming at the point where Alu finally says that she will go out into the swamp herself regardless of possible dangers, and Makuri, showing the affection that he really has underneath all his apparent unconcern, refuses to let her go. There is plenty of highly effective and striking dramatic action – which some candidates surprisingly but thoughtfully argued to be very comic – and at the same time plenty of straightforward uses of language to be explored.

For example, lines 37-41 are wonderfully balanced, every sentence a piece of simple but most effective rhetoric; the contrast between the growing anger in lines 45-49 and the sudden outburst of name-calling in line 50 is truly impressive; the balance again in lines 61-63, together with the very striking alliteration here, is most powerfully managed; and Makuri's closing speech (lines 95-98) mix simple insult, two rhythmic and nicely balanced assertions, and a concluding climactic and melodramatic possibility to end with. There is much to discuss in this passage.

Question 3

Comparing two poems is not always easy, but Examiners all saw some interesting, thoughtful, and critically alert work here. Some, as suggested in the general comments above, spent rather too much time discussing their own experiences of being angry, but most concentrated appropriately on what Daryush and Blake write, and on how they differ in both what they say and how they say it.

Both poets write metaphorically, in one case making anger an almost living person, and in the other suggesting that this emotion can be used to destroy and at least figuratively to kill. Daryush is not explicit about why she is so angry, though she does hint at some guilt that she feels, but her anger is so intense that she is entirely taken over by it, and is unable to rid herself of it; it acts almost like a human lover, lying with her, speaking to her, preventing her from doing what she wants, until finally she has to resign herself to the reality that it has become her "true-lord", a curiously ambiguous term, and much more ominously her "doom". Those few weak candidates who took the personified emotion as literally meaning her husband missed a number of critical opportunities but did nonetheless make some apt sense of much of what she says. Most candidates spoke of the regular form and rhythm as suggestive of the way in which anger is controlling the speaker and figuratively tying her down, though the suggestions that indenting alternate lines reflected the speaker's changing emotions were less convincing, as were those few who asserted that the poem is written in blank verse or iambic pentameter.

There were some confident and thoughtful responses to Blake's poem, with candidates seeing how the speaker again metaphorically nourishes and tends the anger he feels towards his enemy, who is finally "caught in the act", as it were, and is killed. Some confusion existed about lines 1 and 2, with a number of candidates assuming that his friend becomes his foe; the reality is that the speaker says that if he is open about his feelings they are resolved, but if he is not then they will grow almost unstoppably, in a similar fashion to that experienced by Daryush's speaker. Many saw echoes in line 10 of the biblical tale of Adam and Eve and the temptation in the Garden of Eden, but few felt able to explore what additional effects such echoes have, except insofar as the poem as a whole may be a kind of parable or at least a warning about how to handle and control your anger. There were again some good comments about the regular and simple form of the poem, combined with its generally easy language – though calling it a kind of nursery rhyme was perhaps not especially critically sensitive, given the nature of the ideas expressed.

Comparing two poems is certainly not easy, but there were some very good responses to this question, with candidates showing an ability to move fluently and smoothly between the two, rather than writing about each independently. This approach is always the mark of a confident candidate, though some perfectly sound critical writing also came from candidates who wrote about each poem separately but with a concluding comparative paragraph. What matters above all – and this was achieved by virtually every candidate – is that while the idea presented by the poets, and the nature of their two speakers, are of course important, it is the means by which these are portrayed that must be at the core of a critical response.

LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

Paper 9695/72

Comment and Appreciation

Key Messages

Candidates should be encouraged to address all strands of the questions and use these to structure their responses.

To achieve at the higher end candidates need to make more use of quotation, not just to support relevant discussion points but for detailed analysis of methods and effects.

Critical material needs to be used more effectively. It should be integrated into the argument the candidate is presenting and will be more highly rewarded if it is evaluated using detailed references to the text.

Biographical material needs to be brief, carefully selected, and made relevant to a discussion point. It is never the focus of a task in A Level English Literature, and so cannot be rewarded.

General Comments

There were some good critical responses to all the questions this session; few candidates relied upon simple narration or paraphrase, and almost all made at least some attempt to explore the ways in which the writing of each extract or poem helps to shape its general and specific meanings. Similarly, very few just identified and named particular techniques without at least some discussion of how they work in their specific contexts.

It is of course helpful if some very basic contextual information is understood and introduced – for example in relation to **Question 1** it might be helpful to appreciate that cultural and social attitudes were rather different at the time the novel was written, but candidates should not spend time speculating about in which country it is set, or discussing changing views of divorce or race differences, unless these ideas were very closely and explicitly tied to what is actually said about the given passage. It is not the background or any other contextual concerns which matter in this Paper, or indeed which will be rewarded, but how each writer creates and presents particular scenes and characters.

Writing about poetry always gives rise to particular concerns, in that rhyme and rhythm are more obviously important than they are in either prose or drama, and candidates will always be expected to make some comments about specifically poetic factors; again, however, what matters is how well these are discussed, not just that they are identified; more will be said about this below when looking at **Question 3**.

Some candidates clearly felt that it would help their arguments if they made reference to other texts, in some cases doing this several times in each of their answers, and occasionally at considerable length. Such comparisons, however appropriate they may seem, are entirely unnecessary in this Paper, taking up time that should be spent focusing on the given passage or poems, and they will not be given any reward. The focus must remain solely and entirely on the passage or poems set for discussion.

Rather unexpectedly, a few candidates presented creative writing instead of conventionally critical discussions; such responses are not acceptable in this Paper.

Comments on Specific Questions

Question 1

This question proved less popular, though those who did respond to it often did so very competently. Candidates commented on how Hawthorne portrays the two characters: the obvious innocence and love of Georgiana, contrasted with the increasingly harsh and growing dislike shown by Aylmer, a dislike initially of his wife's birthmark, but perhaps also a dislike of her very self, and possibly too of his own personality.



Aylmer is initially portrayed as tactful though clearly troubled, and it is not until he uses the word “shocks” in line 10 that his true nature begins to emerge, and when that is followed by his implications that his wife’s birthmark may be “the visible mark of earthly imperfection” we begin to see a truly distasteful side to his character. Georgiana too is shocked, initially angry and then tearful: her remark that “you cannot love what shocks you” must certainly be true. Hawthorne very quickly suggests an impossibly large gap between husband and wife at this moment, and candidates who spent time on this opening dialogue often made some good and valid points about his writing.

In the following long paragraph (lines 15-39) Hawthorne sketches firstly the background to this conversation, and to Georgiana’s own history; her otherwise perfect beauty had attracted many admirers, and he makes the point that while the birthmark may indeed have been very noticeable, it would have been just as absurd to say that one small defect on Hiram Powers’ statue would render his portrayal of Eve a monster – something, of course, that Aylmer is beginning to imply with regard to Georgiana. His emotions are not driven by any jealousy of her former admirers, but rather from an increasingly irrational belief that she must, because of her one small fault, be morally impure. The closing lines of the final paragraph make this point quite dramatically: all human beings are imperfect, and allied to “the very brutes”, but rather than rejoicing in having a wife of such great beauty he sees in her birthmark evidence of her “liability to sin, sorrow, decay, and death”, all common and mostly inevitable human characteristics, but ones that in his growing lack of reason and clarity Aylmer becomes fixated upon.

Question 2

Candidates are reminded of the need to be proportionate in their personal response to the set passages; this extract from Unigwe’s short story raised a considerable number of such concerns, with too many candidates allowing themselves to comment about differing social and cultural practices, and about how they might themselves feel about being forced to marry a man so obviously unattractive as the Chief. Weaker candidates rather glibly suggested that the writer’s purpose is to attack a patriarchal society, perhaps ignoring the fact that it is not the Chief who applies pressure on Uju, but her mother. A personal response is valid in this syllabus, but it must always be a response to the ways in which passages are written, rather than just to what they say.

Most emphasis was laid upon the fearful nature of the Chief’s physical appearance and mannerisms, and on the ways in which Uju’s mother persuades her daughter, and on her behaviour in the weeks leading up to the wedding itself – several noted the rather grim humour in lines 34 to 48, particularly in what is presented as a kind of “shopping list” of shops. Unigwe’s portrayal of Uju herself raised much sympathetic comment, particularly given the sheer ugliness of her now-husband, and the appalling noise of his snoring, and most candidates noted the sad irony that he was a man whom Uju and her friends had once laughed at “because he was too ugly to find a wife”. Those few weak candidates who criticised her for giving way to her mother’s “blackmail”, and who felt she should have had the strength to resist this and make her own choice of husband, were losing focus on the passage and the question.

A number of candidates commented finally on the last paragraph of the passage, not just because of how it adds to Unigwe’s portrayal of the mother, but also because of the sudden shift of mood that may be seen here: poverty, one at least of the alternatives to marriage, is indeed not something to be proud of; and the closing two words of the passage, “*Afufu ajoka*”, make doubly clear how within the particular society that Unigwe is presenting a sad marriage may often be an inevitable necessity. Contextual comments at this point were often valid and helpful.

Question 3

There were some very sensitive and perceptive responses to these two poems, together with many critically aware comparisons and contrasts; as suggested above, it is vital in discussing poetry that attention is paid to form and technique, and this was something that all Examiners noted as being well or very well managed by candidates here. The situations depicted by Mandela and Cope are ones that seemed to arouse strongly personal feelings, but these were almost never at the heart of responses, where the focus very much remained upon how each poet creates her particular effects and moods.

Mandela’s poem is particularly sensitive: the speaker, clearly in love and deeply missing the man she loves, draws some soft and ethereal pictures of how she feels and thinks as she lies in bed waiting in vain for him to come. Her two central images – a plucked rose and a moth – are quiet, delicate and gentle, creating a tone that is increased by the free and apparently quite loose structure of the poem; the language is simple, though not quite as mono-syllabic as some candidates appeared to believe; there is only one simile (lines 3-4); the almost-personification of the tapping noise (lines 5-10) is calmly and again delicately drawn; the

repetition at the end of the poem is quietly but sadly powerful. The speaker is portrayed as a woman with a strong, patient and reflectively melancholy understanding of her lonely situation.

Cope's speaker also is certainly strong, but she is not prepared to go on waiting for ever; she is much more demanding and forceful in her "message" to the man she is waiting for; she is not going to let this chance of love slip by, and before much longer will look elsewhere. The structure of this poem is apparently much more careful, and is in fact surprisingly sophisticated; the simple rhyme scheme and stanza form are both highly controlled, echoing the determined and very positively strong demands that the speaker is making. Some candidates noticed that there are only two rhyming syllables throughout, and that several lines and phrases are repeated; in very marked contrast to Mandela's poem Cope's is also rhythmically very regular; in short, it is a structure that creates a thoroughly firm and determined woman. It is also, as many commented, a very amusing poem, quite unlike the melancholy of Mandela's.

Comparing two poems is a challenging task, but there were some very good responses to this question. In most cases candidates showed an ability to move fluently and smoothly between the two, rather than writing about each independently. This approach is always the mark of a confident candidate, though some perfectly sound critical writing also came from candidates who wrote about each poem separately but with a concluding comparative paragraph. What matters above all – and this was achieved by virtually every candidate – is that while the idea presented by the poets, and the nature of their two speakers, are of course important, it is the means by which these are portrayed that must be at the core of a critical response.

LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

Paper 9695/73

Comment and Appreciation

Key Messages

Candidates should be encouraged to address all strands of the questions and use these to structure their responses.

To achieve at the higher end candidates need to make more use of quotation, not just to support relevant discussion points but for detailed analysis of methods and effects.

Critical material needs to be used more effectively. It should be integrated into the argument the candidate is presenting and will be more highly rewarded if it is evaluated using detailed references to the text.

Biographical material needs to be brief, carefully selected, and made relevant to a discussion point. It is never the focus of a task in A Level English Literature, and so cannot be rewarded.

General Comments

There were some good critical responses to all the questions this session; few candidates relied upon simple narration or paraphrase, and almost all made at least some attempt to explore the ways in which the writing of each extract or poem helps to shape its general and specific meanings. Similarly, very few just identified and named particular techniques without at least some discussion of how they work in their specific contexts.

It is of course helpful if some very basic contextual information is understood and introduced – for example in relation to **Question 1** it might be helpful to appreciate that cultural and social attitudes were rather different at the time the novel was written, but candidates should not spend time speculating about in which country it is set, or discussing changing views of divorce or race differences, unless these ideas were very closely and explicitly tied to what is actually said about the given passage. It is not the background or any other contextual concerns which matter in this Paper, or indeed which will be rewarded, but how each writer creates and presents particular scenes and characters.

Writing about poetry always gives rise to particular concerns, in that rhyme and rhythm are more obviously important than they are in either prose or drama, and candidates will always be expected to make some comments about specifically poetic factors; again, however, what matters is how well these are discussed, not just that they are identified; more will be said about this below when looking at **Question 3**.

Some candidates clearly felt that it would help their arguments if they made reference to other texts, in some cases doing this several times in each of their answers, and occasionally at considerable length. Such comparisons, however appropriate they may seem, are entirely unnecessary in this Paper, taking up time that should be spent focusing on the given passage or poems, and they will not be given any reward. The focus must remain solely and entirely on the passage or poems set for discussion.

Rather unexpectedly, a few candidates presented creative writing instead of conventionally critical discussions; such responses are not acceptable in this Paper.

Comments on Specific Questions

Question 1

This question proved less popular, though those who did respond to it often did so very competently. Candidates commented on how Hawthorne portrays the two characters: the obvious innocence and love of Georgiana, contrasted with the increasingly harsh and growing dislike shown by Aylmer, a dislike initially of his wife's birthmark, but perhaps also a dislike of her very self, and possibly too of his own personality.



Aylmer is initially portrayed as tactful though clearly troubled, and it is not until he uses the word “shocks” in line 10 that his true nature begins to emerge, and when that is followed by his implications that his wife’s birthmark may be “the visible mark of earthly imperfection” we begin to see a truly distasteful side to his character. Georgiana too is shocked, initially angry and then tearful: her remark that “you cannot love what shocks you” must certainly be true. Hawthorne very quickly suggests an impossibly large gap between husband and wife at this moment, and candidates who spent time on this opening dialogue often made some good and valid points about his writing.

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Most emphasis was laid upon the fearful nature of the Chief’s physical appearance and mannerisms, and on the ways in which Uju’s mother persuades her daughter, and on her behaviour in the weeks leading up to the wedding itself – several noted the rather grim humour in lines 34 to 48, particularly in what is presented as a kind of “shopping list” of shops. Unigwe’s portrayal of Uju herself raised much sympathetic comment, particularly given the sheer ugliness of her now-husband, and the appalling noise of his snoring, and most candidates noted the sad irony that he was a man whom Uju and her friends had once laughed at “because he was too ugly to find a wife”. Those few weak candidates who criticised her for giving way to her mother’s “blackmail”, and who felt she should have had the strength to resist this and make her own choice of husband, were losing focus on the passage and the question.

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Question 3

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4); the almost-personification of the tapping noise (lines 5-10) is calmly and again delicately drawn; the repetition at the end of the poem is quietly but sadly powerful. The speaker is portrayed as a woman with a strong, patient and reflectively melancholy understanding of her lonely situation.

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Comparing two poems is a challenging task, but there were some very good responses to this question. In most cases candidates showed an ability to move fluently and smoothly between the two, rather than writing about each independently. This approach is always the mark of a confident candidate, though some perfectly sound critical writing also came from candidates who wrote about each poem separately but with a concluding comparative paragraph. What matters above all – and this was achieved by virtually every candidate – is that while the idea presented by the poets, and the nature of their two speakers, are of course important, it is the means by which these are portrayed that must be at the core of a critical response.



LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

Paper 9695/08

Coursework

Key Messages

To achieve at the higher end candidates need to make more use of quotation, not just to support relevant discussion points but for detailed analysis of methods and effects.

Critical material needs to be used more effectively. It should be integrated into the argument the candidate is presenting and will be more highly rewarded if it is evaluated using detailed references to the text.

Biographical material needs to be brief, carefully selected, and made relevant to a discussion point. It is not the focus of the syllabus in A Level English Literature, and so cannot be rewarded.

General Comments

Centres submitted candidates' work promptly and efficiently, and presented it in thoroughly professional ways, with assessments that were in general very close to CIE standards, and invariably supported by some most helpful and full annotation and comment. A wide range of texts was used – see details below – and there was a very interesting variation of questions within most Centres, leading to mostly entirely independent and personal responses.

All Centres adhered exactly to the Syllabus requirement that the two texts must cover two different genres and not use any examination set texts, and apart from just a very small number all candidates wrote within the 3000 word limit; it is most important that this is something that Centres stress to candidates. Most candidates in fact indicated at the end of each piece how many words they had used; this is not mandatory, but it is helpful to both the Centres and the Moderators concerned.

Most of the questions addressed by candidates were entirely appropriate in terms of academic challenge, and in relation to what candidates should be discussing. One or two seemed to encourage responses that were more narrative or descriptive than exploratory; for Advanced Level work candidates must be expected to look not just at *what* a writer says, but at *how* she or he says it, and to encourage this it is most helpful if the question is worded in such a way that candidates find themselves obliged to explore critically; some examples are given below of helpfully-worded questions, and if a Centre is unsure about their own proposed wording it is strongly recommended that they should contact CIE as early as possible before work begins, so that appropriate advice can be offered by a senior Moderator. Having said this, however, most candidates appeared entirely sure of what they should be doing.

There was a good deal of emphasis in many responses to a range of contextual matters – biographical, historical, cultural, literary – all of which frequently supported arguments, and meant that candidates were able to place the texts under discussion within a wider framework. Such contextual factors should not be central to any discussion, of course – this is a syllabus that requires critical study and exploration of the texts themselves – but some brief and apt references will almost always add some authority to what is being argued. Contexts will not in themselves lead to better marks, but if used appropriately, and integrated into a developing discussion, they can often be useful.

The same can be true also of reference to other critical opinions and interpretations; these are not a requirement of the Marking Criteria, but again if briefly engaged with they can quite considerably help a developing argument. Simply quoting alternative ideas will not in itself be enough, though, and they must be *used* to help a response, whether as support for an idea or as something to disagree with. When they are quoted or referred to, they should of course be properly acknowledged, by using inverted commas where appropriate, and by giving the exact source in a footnote and/or in a bibliography.

As noted above, Centres' annotations and comments were almost invariably full and detailed, making reference to exactly how and where each candidate had addressed what the coursework Marking Criteria require, and thus showing clearly how and why marks had been awarded. It is of course not always possible

to do this, but if a Centre's staffing allows for some double-marking, or for some internal moderation of at least the sample essays, this again is most helpful, and of course adds confidence to what is awarded.

Some of the texts used by candidates:

Prose:

The Handmaid's Tale – Atwood
A Tale of Two Cities – Dickens
Oliver Twist – Dickens
Brave New World – Huxley
Purple Hibiscus – Adichie
The Scarlet Letter – Hawthorne
The Talented Mr Ripley – Highsmith
The Remains of the Day – Ishiguro
Heart of Darkness – Conrad
A Handful of Dust – Waugh
The Great Gatsby – Fitzgerald
Washington Square - James

Poetry:

Emily Dickinson
Christina Rossetti
Thomas Hardy
Seamus Heaney
P B Shelley
Ted Hughes
Dylan Thomas
Alfred, Lord Tennyson
Philip Larkin
Sylvia Plath

Drama:

Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf? – Albee
The Glass Menagerie – Williams
Our Town – Wilder
The Birthday Party – Pinter
All My Sons – Miller

Some productive questions:

There were many very helpfully-worded and productive questions; these are simply a few. What they all – and many others like them - have in common is a focus on central issues or themes in the texts, and a requirement for candidates to explore aspects of the writers' craft and techniques.

N.B. If a Centre's questions are not in this short list, it certainly does not imply in any way that they were poor ones.

- How, and to what effect, does Atwood present women as dehumanised in *The Handmaid's Tale*?
- "Women are dismissed as insignificant in Larkin's poetry." Explore this comment in the light of what you have read.
- How, and with what effects, does Williams use symbolism in *The Glass Menagerie*?
- Explore how Adichie presents different kinds of oppression in *Purple Hibiscus*.
- Discuss some of the ways in which Heaney presents violence and death in his poetry.
- "The title *Heart of Darkness* is a richly ambiguous phrase, and the tale exploits many of its ambiguities." How successfully in your view does Conrad explore ideas of "darkness" in the novel?
- In what ways can Stevens (in *The Remains of the Day*) be considered an unreliable narrator?
- At the end of *The Great Gatsby*, Nick Carraway condemns Daisy and Tom Buchanan for having "smashed up things and creatures". In your view, is this a fair description of Daisy, and how does Fitzgerald manipulate his readers' feelings about her in the novel?
- Explore the effects of Waugh's blending of comedy and pathos in *A Handful of Dust*.