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Examiners' Report

June 2010

GCE English Literature 6ET03

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Introduction

Section A: Unseen Prose and Poetry.

For the unseen poetry and prose question a majority of the candidates elected to write about the poem. We were able to differentiate a wide range of achievement from the responses received to both unseens. We are concerned to provide unseen material that is both accessible to the whole candidature but sufficiently challenging for A2 students.

For all questions, examiners award an individual mark for each of the assessment objectives. For the unseens AOs 1 and 2 are being assessed.

For AO1 we look for a literary approach to the topic with appropriate use of literary terminology. Literary points may be made quite acceptably without employing the precise literary term. The other facet of this AO is the requirement to write accurately and coherently. Even high scoring answers are sometimes inaccurate grammatically and in matters of general accuracy such as spelling, but it is only one part of this AO for which the top mark is ten.

For AO2 we are looking for the candidates' ability to tackle this AO's focus on structure, form and language. What some candidates find difficult is to link a comment on a feature of the writing with how it relates to what the writer is actually saying. The skill is to balance a knowledge of how the writing operates without losing sight of what it is actually about.

Section B: Paired Texts.

For the texts, a very large proportion of the responses were from the Relationships and War sections. Fewer answers were received on Identifying Self texts and even fewer from the Journeys section.

We were pleased to observe the sound knowledge of the texts studied by the candidates in many of the answers when a complex novel (and as often as not two) had been assimilated in quite a short teaching time. Sometimes we felt that only sections of a text were known well as certain passages illustrating say Tess's relationships with Alec and Angel, Gatsby's with Daisy or Uncle Peter's dilemmas (in Spies). Quite a lot of answers dealt with only two texts and these were often post-1990 novels. When poetry collections or anthologies were discussed, the better answers tended to show detailed knowledge of more than one poem and to make effective links between them rather than the very small number, sometimes just a single poem referred to by some. The requirement to study a post-1990 text was achieved by all candidates.

As with the Unseen section of the paper, an individual mark was awarded for each assessment objective. In addition to AOs 1 and 2 that are marked out of ten, AOs 3 and 4 are each marked out of twenty.

For AO3 we are always looking for candidates' skill in making links between texts. Some low achieving answers show limited ability to make comparisons but present sections on one text before moving on the next with often a rather token link. We do look for well-informed personal responses and references to named critics or critical movements are acceptable as long as they contribute to the candidate's own argument.

For AO4, the context of the modern reader is to be taken as the candidate's own informed personal response, perhaps supported by other critical voices. The context of the time of a text's own production may be more contentious. The post-1990 texts may be about an historical past and therefore the area of shift between say when novels were written and the two world wars which are their subject matter needs to be addressed. This may be addressed by first person narrators looking back at their earlier selves, in *Spies*, *Life of Pi* and *The Kite Runner* for instance, (it is also true of a 19th century novel like *Great Expectations* as well), but in the case of *The Ghost Road* the link is more complex as we have 'real' and imagined characters and events presented from the perspective of a late twentieth century sensibility. Some of these issues will be dealt with in the ensuing discussion on the specific questions

Question 1

The poem was generally clearly understood and many candidates elected to stress its story-telling features, seeing each stanza as a stage in a process. There was much appropriate reference to the language by which dryness and wetness are described and the way in which the writer demonstrates an acute ear for hard, dry sounds, as well as the reverse. There was much use of terms such as plosives, onomatopoeia, fricatives and so on. More often than not these terms were used correctly. The colours of the diviner's robes and what they might signify caused much speculation. What happens to him at the end, does he die for instance, was the cause of much speculation. There were far too many attempts to make the poem a warning about the effects of global warming and to incorporate unassessed, and therefore irrelevant, contextual details. The important thing is to focus on the meaning of the poem and to explore how it is conveyed to the reader. The geographical or religious connotations were often well integrated into a discussion of the poem's meaning and leading to an overview.

Many candidates spent unnecessary time identifying features that are not to be found in the poem. The lack of rhyme (although there is some) and, a clearly identifiable rhythm or line length tended to occupy too much time, but the verbal music of the frequent alliteration and assonance was dealt with considerable sensitivity when it was noticed.

The stanza structures were used in a variety of ways but inaccurate counting of syllables in a line or of lines in a stanza were distractions in some answers. The effects of the 7/8 line stanzas preoccupied some as they sought for hidden depths of meaning.

Often used terms such as the caesura are somewhat overused and occasionally applied incorrectly, the reference to the pause at the end of line 38 for instance. Technical terms that are often confused include alliteration and assonance; a number of candidates thought the poem was a ballad (ballard for some) or even a sonnet.

Jarrah Maguire's 'The Water Diviner' loosely follows a chronological account of a someone searching amongst the barren landscape, for water. The structure and language have been particularly strongly used; in order to create the tone of the poem which seems to be partly hopeful, partly melancholy.

The structure of the poem is six loosely formed stanzas of varying length, grouped together by theme, though the idea of water and the pressing ~~ness~~ qualities of the search remain consistent throughout the poem. The loose structure suggests that ^{the} very structure echoes the nature of water, enjambement such as a "wetore threading through potholes and boulders" mimics the flowing of a river, and keep the ~~the~~ rhythm constant if irregular, akin to the bubbling of a brook. ~~Then~~

The content of the poem is consistent with little plot action. The poem seems to describe a journey from two perspectives, that of the people waiting for water to be found, and an almost omniscient narrator following the footsteps of the diviner.

Imagery is amply used to describe the plight, in particular the semantic field of religion. Phrases such as "dust devils", "soil ~~is~~ turned to dust" (an allusion to the bible, "dust to dust"), "murmured prayers" and the almost pagan way the "water-diviner faints" on finding the source. His "indigo robes" have religious connotations, as well as suggesting ~~his~~ ^{his position as} a river himself. This is strengthened by the poem's ending. The extended metaphor of the boy becoming water; "he is a full well", ~~is a full well~~ suggest miraculous qualities. At the same time he becomes "fodder for cattle, an orchard in full bloom" and these metaphors again link to a religious happening, and to Christ's body being bread and wine - almost antimony.

Antithesis is used throughout, in particular describing the contrasts between the parched ~~lands~~ ^{lands} and the water of life, such as "big raindrops kicking up dust" and this in turn seems to suggest connotations between life and death. The absence of water brings death; famine, shown in the "skull of dried gourds" and "the face of this cracked earth-scared"

The potential of this boy's failure is devastating to the group writing "under the last shade of the pine trees". There is a bleak inevitability of their death should he fail that creates a tone of tension. The line "dusk is coming. Then suddenly-" is a dramatic peak to the poem shown by the simple sentence "dusk is coming" which suggests running out of time, only to be broken by "suddenly" which comes as a relief to the reader, as well as there present in the poem. The tension is also built through the use of techniques such as rhetorical questions in the second stanza - "Who could remember water?"

The senses are strongly affected by the imagery in the poem, "heat summons" creates a sense of the temperature, onomatopoeia features in the "scratched evidence of gnaws" and synaesthesia is used in the line "piancy babbling through darkness" creating both sound and sight of the underground spring. The contrasting images of the beginning and end of the poem are particularly poignant. The contrast between the "last shade of the pine trees" which given water, creates the contrasting and opposite image of "an orchard in bloom" which shows an almost cyclical structure, showing the full circle of life and death.

The poem could hold many hidden meanings, the most obvious of which is the role of Christianity and Christ. The

discovery of water at the end could be a metaphor for heaven, particularly linking the "orchard" to the Garden of Eden. Many Christ-like tendencies surround the boy. His ability to "conjure liquid" alludes to turning water into wine and "feet" that "walk: the dried. land" contrasts perfectly to Christ walking on water. If water is their salvation, then Christ and Christianity is the obvious metaphor. Another similarity is that if Christ is also God, and the Holy Spirit, then this boy is an obvious metaphor for that which he seeks. The "Slim boy in blue... his wandering path... [which] mimics a river" is the perfect allegory.

Sarah Maguire has used structure, form and language to create several levels of meaning which are perhaps more personal to the reader than anything else. Her use of ambiguity - no names, no particulars - make the scene metaphorically ambiguous. The time is also absent, the present tense is used, so it is impossible to say whether it is the past, present or future, or indeed, all three. The process is ongoing and timeless - the synecdoche of "his indigo robes seek out their element" suggest so intense an ambiguity that the image could be a metaphor for absolutely anything. An element of the ritualistic and magical exists; the boy possesses a power and seems to be in a trance, he is a "sleepwalker". The very form and structure of the poem mimic water;

its freedom of movement, its irregularity of round. simple alliteration seems to copy the noise it makes - "the sapling spawms". The poem appeals to our every sense; including taste - describing the water's "sweetness" and invites the reader within the poem. This method of drawing the reader in allows them to follow and experience the tension of the search. The tone changes course like a river as well, a point it is melancholy "scorched hulls of fruit trees" and later ^{optimistic} "precious hazelwood". This description of hazelwood also ^{and worshipping:} stresses the importance of nature and of his tool, and of in turn water; the great life giver.

An example of a very good candidate.



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Examiner Comments

The whole essay is included to show the confident use of terminology, an accurately written and confident response, the effective critical voice of the candidate and the emerging overview.



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Examiner Tip

Use terminology to show how it enhances the meaning. Acknowledge the possibility of different readings of the poem.

The language which is used throughout the poem is very metaphoric, for example, the final stanza says "He is a full well plumbed deep underground. He is fodder for cattle. An orchard in bloom." This, depending upon the audiences perspective, means that the water 'he' has found is being used for ~~the~~ cattle and an orchard. However,

This is an example of a low achieving candidate.



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Examiner Comments

The opening sentence is just repeating some of the terms of the question. 'Metaphoric' and 'audience' are used inappropriately. It seems odd to start with comments on the end of the poem.



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Examiner Tip

Focus your answer clearly in your opening remarks. Use terminology correctly. Start your comments at the beginning of the poem.

In 'The Water Diviner,' Maguire creates a tension between the ~~barren~~ barren and desolate landscape, and the pure and life-giving water. The first five stanzas of the poem creating anticipation surrounding the discovery of these water sources, and Maguire, ^{mainly} achieves this through ~~the~~ ^{heavy} use of alliteration, enjambement and subtle religious allusions.

Another high achieving answer.



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Examiner Comments

An example of a good introduction.



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Examiner Tip

A clear well focused beginning to your essay will always make a good impression on the examiner.

Question 2

Although this was tackled by a smaller proportion of the candidates, examiners saw a very wide range of responses. Many answers showed the ability to engage with the elusive nature of the narrative voice and shifts in tone in the writing. Comments on the language of the fair, and the theatre with its dividing curtain was also very appropriate. The moral tone of the writing and the levels of irony were identified and commented on by some. Features of language referred to included the long, complex and compound sentences with their often list-like structure. The use of the present tense was often dealt with but few were able to refer to 'participles'. The general mood of superficial liveliness and the idea of theatre as fake (in the discussion of Tom Fool as both performer and family man for example). Although structure may be a more elusive concept in prose than in poetry, the paragraph (not stanzas please) and sentence structuring led to many thoughtful comments about the ways in which the narrative works and the reader is being manipulated. References to the language of the passage were often ill at ease in deciding what might be 'old' English, but there were some valid comments on the often conversational and colloquial tone of the writing. The candidates' own sense of what is appropriate in terms of tone of voice occasionally needs attention. To refer to the author of 'Vanity Fair' as 'Makepeace' strikes a very odd note.

At least one examiner referred to the lack of understanding of the word 'vanity' although one candidate was well informed enough to make the connection with *The Pilgrim's Progress*. Impressive but not necessary to an appreciation of the passage.

As an opening ~~text~~ to a novel, ~~the~~ this extract from
 Theobald's novel does, on a ~~superficial~~ ^{basic or superficial} level, exactly what it is
 expected to do: it sets the scene. The view is of a bustling fair,
 and the opening fits the theme in being rather theatrical, combining humour,
 irony, and a ~~level of~~ ^{more} negative outlook in order to present
 a balanced ~~and realistic~~ view of the scene.

While he is talked about in the third person, the
 'manager of the performance' is clearly shown to be influencing the tone
 and viewpoint of the extract. He is managing the fair before him,
 and we see all from his elevated viewpoint.

Part of a high level answer.



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Examiner Comments

A good introduction and lead into a detailed exploration of the passage.



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Examiner Tip

Refer to the passage as part of a novel. Include a range of ideas in your opening remarks that you will develop later. Use appropriate language to analyse the narrative strategies used.

Question 3(a)

This was by far the most popular question on the paper. Popular novels were *Tess* and *Gatsby*, with slightly fewer answers on *Corelli* than previously. *Rapture* and the *Metaphysicals* were the most popular poetry texts.

Relationships were mostly taken to refer to those between characters although Mussolini's relationship with his country, Carlo's with his sexuality, *Tess*' with nature and Donne's with his God were also dealt with.

Good answers tended to deal with a number of relationships and find some links between them. There was a tendency to agree with the proposition, but we observed some exploration of different kinds of intensity. Many candidates observed the intensity of the relationship between Hardy and *Tess* and how this informed his writing. Her presentation proved to be a most effective stimulus to discussion of how the novel and *Tess*'s character were received in Victorian times and how we might feel about it today. Such links to the presentation of women in different genres and time periods provoked some most interesting and insightful essays. Links between Duffy and her lover, Marvell and Donne with theirs, Katherine Philips and her friend, and the various grouping in the novels such as *Pelagia* with *Corelli*, *Mandras* and her father, *Daisy* with Tom and *Gatsby*, *Tess* with Alec, Angel and her father provided much stimulating discussion, especially when linguistic links were found. It was an especial pleasure to see links between Duffy's modern take on traditional forms and language being compared to those of the writers of the sixteenth century. Challenges to the phrases such 'at their most interesting' or 'the only appeal' were quite valid when part of an ongoing discussion.

Incorporating contexts in to a diverse range of texts is one of the challenges of this paper and we found much of interest in candidates' ability to display detailed knowledge of the contexts surrounding the writing and reception of *Tess* and the *Metaphysical* poets. When dealing with the post-1990 texts we perhaps should remind candidates that the period in which a text is set is not necessarily the same as when it was written. Some rather odd comments emerged about how readers of the 1920s might react to *Gatsby* and the presentation of the America of the time in a different way to *Corelli* and the world of 1940s *Cephallonia*.

Answers which concentrate on character sketches were unlikely to score highly.

"Writers are at their most interesting when they present readers with emotionally intense relationships".

Throughout 'Tess of the D'Urbervilles' (hereafter 'Tess'), 'Captain Corelli's Mandolin' (hereafter 'Corelli') and a number of the Metaphysical poems, their ~~writer's~~ writers present emotionally intense relationships as the most important relationships, because there is so much more to lose for all parties if for some reason, that relationship goes wrong.

The idea of being so wrapped up in a relationship that nothing else in the world seems to matter, ~~like~~ like with Polignia and Corelli, is also used in John Donne's poems "The Good Morrow" and "The Sun Rising" which both present ~~their~~ love as so strong and so perfect ~~that~~ and emotionally intense that it is an awakening - in "The Good Morrow" the speaker protests "That before he and his lover met, they ~~may~~ might ~~be~~ as well have been sleeping, or even dead because they had nothing that they have now: "I wonder by my troth, what thou and I/Did till we ~~met~~ ~~or~~ loved!" In 'The Sun Rising' (an *anabade*, or 'downsong') Donne chides the sun for disturbing him and his lover in the morning.

Tess in "Tess" is so intensely devoted to Angel that she is willing to die for Angel, despite it not being her fault that she has been so wronged. However, this is the view of the modern reader, and in Hardy the time of Hardy, readers would have been much more judgemental of Tess, and placing nearly all the blame on her, even labelling her the "fallen woman", a derogatory term applied to a woman who had displayed any kind of sexual behaviour in ^{the} stifling and hypocritical Victorian era in which Hardy was writing.

In 'Ray Corchi' by Louis de Bernières, 'Tess' by Thomas Hardy and many of the Metaphysical poetry, the writers are keen to write about relationships which are emotionally intense because the reader finds them much more ~~depend~~ interesting and ~~the~~ easier to become emotionally attached themselves with them, and also emotionally intense relationships are much more likely to move the plot along at a quick pace in novels, and keep up an interesting + complex ~~&~~ conceit in the Metaphysical poetry.

Four extracts from a script that scored high marks.



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Examiner Comments

A good introduction. Good links between texts. Clear references to contexts. An effective conclusion.



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Examiner Tip

Structure your essay clearly. Remember that links between texts are vital to score well in A03
Remember to refer to contexts for A04

'Writers are at their most interesting when they ~~writes~~ present readers with emotionally intense relationships.'

~~Abstractly~~ ~~Naturally~~ In fictitious novels, writers naturally tend to ~~per~~ present intense emotion in the relationships they portray for the enjoyment of the reader. Louis de Bernières in his recently published postmodernist novel 'Captain Corcelli's Mandolin' shows through shifting narrative voice and perspectives, a variety of emotional viewpoints, typical of the postmodernist form. John Donne's metaphysical poetry also ~~provides~~ provides varying ~~use~~ personal insights into a number of different relationships, through different personas in each poem. Thomas Hardy's novel 'Tess of the D'Urbervilles' is far more focused on one person's emotional journey however, - Hardy's tragic ~~heroine~~ heroine Tess, whose relationships are forever blighted by one fatal flaw of hers.

The Louis de Bernières character 'Pelagia', a character similar in many ways to Hardy's heroine 'Tess', is awarded her own chapter towards the end of the novel written in the first person, providing the reader with a rare insight into her true thoughts and feelings. The chapter, ^{'Pelagia's Lament'} is a soliloquy reflective and emotional soliloquy describing the recent destruction and devastation in her life. She mourns the death of her father describing how in his moment of death she 'knelt beside him, blind and drunk with tears'. This temporary paralysis of her senses shows the true extent of her grief and we are then presented with the poignant and touching image of how she 'cradled his bloodied head' in her arms as she realises for the first time 'how small and frail he was, how beaten and betrayed.' This alliteration of the plosive consonants add a sense of harshness and violence to his death, ~~He see~~ and the repetitive syntax shows the extent of how unfairly treated this man has been, ~~Partia~~ and Pelagia's anger on his part.

Much of the most intense emotion in these texts appears in the breaking of relationships,

or rather in the loss or absence of a loved one. Pelagia talks in her this chapter, her monologue, of ~~how~~ the effects the war, and the loss of her father and her lover Corelli have had on her. She says dramatically 'I have been reduced, I am my own ghost...' Death imagery and the ~~image of~~ idea of ghosts accompany loss, absence and mourning in all of these texts. For example at the revelation of Tess' past in Hardy's novel, Angel sees her as a person so irrevocably changed in his eyes that he desperately proclaims in his sleep, 'My wife - dead, dead!' This may seem a melodramatic reaction to his discovery to a modern reader, but because of our more liberal views towards pre-marital sex, but it serves to illustrate the importance placed on chastity in Victorian England.

Death imagery also appears in the metaphysical poetry of Katherine Philips in her poem 'To My Excellent Lucasia, on Our Friendship.' In her the speaker's speaker's grieving she describes herself as a 'carcass', suggest of hollow emptiness. Indeed this image adds to the modern view that this was not simply a 'friendship' but an illicit love affair between the women,

concealed at the time because of the complete lack of acceptance of homosexuality in the 17th century. This is a deceptively deep portrayal of a relationship full of intense emotion.

Many relationships in *de Bernieres* are presented as fleetingly emotional. Pelagia and Mandras in 'Captain Corelli's Mandolin' are prime examples of this - they are young, inexperienced ~~lover's~~ lovers whose lustful infatuation provides brief but intense emotion. ~~As~~ Pelagia confides in the reader her yearning for his presence: 'I want him to come. I can hardly breathe, I want him to come so much.' ~~As~~ Her temporary love for him is so strong that it is having a physical effect on her. Her intense desire for ~~sexual~~ sexual satisfaction ~~and~~ makes her guilty - she says 'I have such slutty thoughts. Thank God no one reads my mind, I'd be locked up ~~and~~ and all the old women would throw stones at me and call me a whore.' Like with Angel's reaction to Tess, this reaction to the suggestion of pre-marital sex seems surprising but it highlights the conservative society of rural war-time Greece, whose inhabitants were judged harshly by society.

Intense sexual desire is also apparent in Donne's poem, 'The Flea'. Although he is restrained in his argument we see his yearning in his clever persuasion in lines such as 'This flea is you and I, and this // Our marriage bed...' This subtle enclosure of the words 'you and I' ^{within the middle of the sentence} show how desperately he wants their union. Donne also ~~pro~~ portrays a similarly subtle sexual desire in his poem 'Batter my Heart'. Disguised as a religious poem, there are clear sexual undertones, particularly in his ending lines, 'Take me to you, imprison me... enthrall me... you ravish me.' ~~This~~ Because of the time at which it was written, the true emotional intensity of this poem is given a double meaning - his sexual desire is coupled with a strong desire for God's forgiveness of his sins, religion being a more socially accepted subject for his poetry at that time.

Much intense emotion ~~within~~ ^{within} relationships is ~~only~~ only revealed through personal insights and subtle revelations because sometimes it is not seen as socially acceptable. We see Pelagia's guilt at confessing sexual desire and the way Donne has to cleverly

conceal his desire in extended metaphor. Another example of concealment in of true emotion is in Carlo de Bernières unusual character Carlo, whose life is blighted by his homosexuality. In another de Bernières offers another first person insight in ~~Edith's~~ ~~farewell~~ his chapter 'Carlo's Farewell', adding further dimension to this postmodernist text. de Bernières said in an interview after the publication of his novel that 'History ought to be comprised of the anecdotes of the little people who were caught up in it.' He uses these anecdotes to present personal, ~~and~~ private and true emotions in his characters. 'Carlo's ~~Edith's~~ Farewell' offers Carlo's own revelation of his true identity in the face of his death. He admits to his beloved captain 'I have loved you with all my shameful heart.' The word 'shameful' evokes great sympathy from the ~~reader and~~ the modern reader, who see him as noble and loving, quite contrary to his own society's unsympathetic view of him. ~~However that is intense emotion in a~~ ~~what~~ We see intense emotion behind passionate love which is never allowed to flourish into

a real relationship. In his ~~the~~ first of Carlo's chapters, ~~entitled~~ pertinently titled ~~to the~~ 'L'omosessuale' to further the idea of his homosexuality as a secret, he says 'I am exploding with the fire of love and there is no one to ~~accept~~ accept it or nourish it.' Society has condemned this disparate man to a life of ~~unfulfillment~~ unfulfillment in relationships just as it has condemned Tess in her world that she unhappily describes as a 'blighted star', suggesting her unhappiness is controlled by fate. Carlo too, ~~talks~~ talks of the world 'he is fated to inhabit'. These are characters forever burdened emotionally by ~~their~~ their true identities.

Intense emotion is often concealed as a result of unaccepting society.

An answer that scored full marks.



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Examiner Comments

Introduction sets up links between all three texts being studied.



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Examiner Tip

When writing about more than one text, setting up the links early in your essay is likely to score highly in AO3.

Question 3(b)

This was a rather less popular option than 3a although there were plenty of responses at all levels of achievement. There was plenty of opportunity to challenge the proposition and to explore other facets of the chosen texts as well as character and situation.

One trap to avoid was merely to tell the story; another to provide a series of character sketches. The texts referred to in the discussion on 3a figured in the same proportions here. Higher band answers showed the ability to weave features of structure form and language consistently, showing how devices used by writers managed to 'appeal' to the reader in their presentation of character and situation. It was encouraging to see a wide range of poetry being discussed and both the Metaphysicals and Duffy were able to provide plenty of material that was relevant to both character and situation. The male focus of many of the sixteenth century writers (with the exception of Katherine Philips) often provided effective contrasts with the world depicted by Duffy (although she is not gender specific in her depiction of the lovers in her collection). The kinds of situations often focused on the scenes between lovers such as in *The Flea*, *The Sun Rising*, *To His Coy Mistress* and wide selection of the Rapture poems, especially those suggesting key stages in the relationship such as *You, Give, Absence and Over*. The situation of absence was used as an effective link between poems such as *A Nocturnal upon St Lucy's Day*, *Bradstreet's A Letter to her Husband*, *Duffy's Text*, *Haworth and Bridgewater Hall* and similar situations in the novels such as the long period of separation between *Corelli and Pelagia*, *Daisy and Gatsby* or *Tess and Angel*.

Some interesting contextual points were made about Duffy's use and adaptation of traditional forms such as the sonnet, Darwin's influence on Hardy, religious belief in the sixteenth century and the challenges to it in the nineteenth and twentieth. The focuses on sexual relationships and sexuality and how they would have been received in the period in which text is set such as *Tess* and *Corelli* and the time of writing and now was a challenge met fully only by high achieving candidates although most made some attempt to come to terms with these quite complex issues.

I agree totally with this statement as it is because of the characters and situations they are in that make up the story and so that is why they are read in the first place. The same concept applies to poetry. The situation and/or ~~character~~ character makes a poem and that's why it is read.

Using Thomas Hardy's novel "Tess of the D'Urbervilles" and Carol Ann Duffy's collection of poetry "Rapture" I will demonstrate how the characters and situations make reading novels and poetry appealing.

Hardy first off portrays the protagonist, Tess, as a young girl who helps out her family in their time of need and is then the victim of a horrific crime and her situation leads her to more trouble.

A low achieving response.



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Examiner Comments

The writer is in largely narrative mode.



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Examiner Tip

Avoid narrative. It is analysis and evaluation that score highly.

Question 4(a)

This was quite a popular question with some interesting answers. Candidates tended to focus on the novels rather than the poems, although there were some welcome responses to *The Wife of Bath* and *The Fat Black Woman*. There were rather fewer on Billy Collins's collection. The concept of 'voice' was not always fully understood but many answers dealt with the unreliable narrators in the novels and Chaucer in particular. There was much very thoughtful discussion of how Kate Atkinson and Yann Martel create compelling but untrustworthy characters and the gradual revelation of often unpleasant truths about them and their lives, perhaps building on a literary tradition which they were able to invoke through the discussions on Pip's voice in *Great Expectations*. Knowledge about the world from which the *Wife of Bath* comes varied a good deal with some confident discussion about the role of women in the medieval world, making some valid links to the presentation of women by Kate Atkinson and Grace Nichols.

They are of the bildungsroman genre where the main character: Pip and Estella go on a voyage of self discovery. Both authors spend a large proportion of their novels depicting their characters, but the reader should never completely trust the voices within a text and instead take time to delve into a text and discover the characters for themselves.

The introductory remarks of a low achieving answer.



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Examiner Comments

Although the introduction is focused it does not do much more than deal straightforwardly with some of the terms of the question.



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Examiner Tip

Be concise as well as focused in your introduction. Repeating phrases from the question is not always helpful.

Both Kate Atkinson and Grace Nichols rely heavily on different voices within their texts in order to shape identity. Whereas Atkinson uses the dual voice of child and adult to make her novel accessible to readers of every age, Nichols focuses on different storytelling personas to express her cultural heritage, attracting different kinds of reader than the universal ~~texts~~ Atkinson. Due to the multi-voiced narrative structure, we must be cautious in accepting what any one voice tells us as there are bound to be contradictions and discrepancies within the texts.

Nichols constructs the ethically artificial voice of the "Long Remembered Woman" in order to convey the mythologised past of the Afro-Caribbean people. Whilst this appeals to those of a similar heritage, I as a Caucasian male find it difficult to empathise with the profound cultural struggle and can only offer hollow sympathy.

The introductory remarks of a high achieving candidate.



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Examiner Comments

Compare this introduction with the previous example for both a sense of focus and some effective contextualisation.



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Examiner Tip

Making some links between texts from the start is an effective way of hitting A03. Context should be integrated into your discussion and not be an afterthought.

Question 4(b)

Similar observations about the novels and their appeal can be made about responses to this question. Readers of *Life of Pi* seem to have been surprised and enthused by the text and used it most effectively to deal with the concepts of uncertainty and lack of completion that are central to this question.

Many would argue that in life there are no absolutes. Literature that achieves a reflection of this uncertainty achieves ~~it~~ an authenticity of real life that can be argued to be literature at its most successful.

Both Atkinson and Chaucer's main protagonists are unreliable narrators. This unreliability is also a portrayal of the complication of real people and by showing characters to be imperfect makes them more challenging to the audience or reader. In the 'Wife of Bath' the Wife is shown throughout to be unreliable ~~in that~~ from her manipulation of the Bible to justify sex: 'God bad us for to weke and multiplie' to the reported speech of her five husbands. For a 1390 audience the ~~sp~~ way the wife 'spins' the most prevalent 'textual auctante' of the time would have been extremely challenging but also humorous.

An example of a sound introduction from another high achieving candidate.



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Examiner Comments

This is another good, well-focused introduction.



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Examiner Tip

Focus on comparisons as early in your essay as possible. Integrate contexts (AO3) into your answer.

Question 5(a)

There were few answers to this question. Some good responses were nevertheless to be found and texts studied included all three novels, including at least one interesting and well-informed essay from a candidate who provided interesting insights into Reef.

In both Chaucer and Leamy's texts, it is possible to identify both "pleasant" and "unpleasant" characters thought to be representative of the period. In "The General Prologue", Chaucer uses satirical irony in portraying the unpleasant characters and in "Small Island" a modern reader can perhaps more readily identify characters many readers would describe as ~~unpleasant~~ prejudiced and racist. The quote implies that the extremes of the two are "essential" but many may argue that even the more unpleasant characters are not an extreme in the novel. Both writers have been praised for their realistic approach to the era, therefore implying that an extreme stereotype is not essential in creating applauded literary works. Mike Phillips comments: "Small Island records some of the most unpleasant racist incidents of the period, without displaying any polemical intent." Both texts in their pursuit of a realistic and representative approach have included some striking characters perceived by the reader as attractive and appealing.

An extract from a very good essay on this question.



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Examiner Comments

The candidate has focused on the topic and dealt with two texts from the beginning. There is a strong critical response.



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Examiner Tip

Focus from the start on specific facets of the topic. Comparisons between texts together with the sense of different readers will score highly for A03.

Question 5(b)

Although there were very few answers to this question it is worth recording that Reef, Chaucer and the Dharker poems had been studied and formed the focus for a number of answers.

Question 6(a)

There was plenty of material from all texts to provide evidence to support the proposition. There was a danger of concentrating on an illustrative approach to 'horrors' with less focus on 'warn' and the fate of 'ordinary people'. This said, we did see plenty of thoughtful discussion of who the 'ordinary people' might be, whether civilians, soldiers or observers. The Ghost Road for instance provides readers with plenty of insights into the worlds of the soldiers, wives, girl friends, and prostitutes as well as the world of Rivers and his novel psychological approach to the traumas suffered by the soldiers. The ways in which that world and the attitudes to war in Rivers' other world of Melanesia are linked provided much interesting comment. The writers offer sympathetic treatment of participants and observers of war. These included a number of the central characters in *The Ghost Road*, and *The Kite Runner* as well as the highly ambiguous figure of Stephan/Stephan and the tragic figure of Uncle Peter in *Spies*. We were delighted to see how candidates had engaged with the novels in particular when offering contextual knowledge about media coverage of the war in Afghanistan to support their treatment of *The Kite Runner*. This led to some passionate engagement with the fates of 'ordinary people'. Each of the novels had a considerable following and the different ways in which they were linked in candidates' answers and the diverse worlds they represented was often fascinating for us to read. The poetry anthologies were roughly equal in popularity, but we saw few answers on David Harsent. Although there was occasional uncertainty about which war a writer was dealing with, some candidates did make some most perceptive comments about how different wars were treated by the various poets, comparing, say the literary treatment of World Wars One and Two with the later ones in Vietnam or Afghanistan. The variety of form and language employed by the poets was also the source of much insight.

Question 6(b)

There were fewer answers to this question and they generally achieved a satisfactorily balanced treatment of 'disastrous effect' and 'sense of hope'. There was plenty of sound contextual engagement with both literary and historical contexts. Owen's challenge to Jessie Pope, Pinter's anti Gulf War stance (in *American Football*), Larkin's presentation of the recruiting queue in *MCMXIV*, leading to comparisons with the impact of WW1 in *The Ghost Road* and in the poems written at the time by Owen, Sassoon, Rosenberg and others.

Examiners were often impressed with the high quality of many of the answers they read. The literary level of the answers was commendably high and good marks at AO1 were therefore often achieved with apparent ease. We would just alert users of the exam to the need to be consistently literary in approach when dealing with novels. We felt that some candidates lost sight of this. Although we do not necessarily look for creativity in an examination answer, originality, when it comes, is very refreshing when the candidate takes off in his/her own voice and takes an independent line of argument. We also look for the ability to achieve a sustained argument in order to achieve the top band in this AO. AO2 was generally also well managed by most candidates once they had realised that meaning is not conveyed through narrative or descriptive but with ongoing discussion of structure, form and language and generally finding a critical voice. It will have been evident from the examples illustrated in the main body of the report that AO3 can be met in many different ways. We would just urge candidates who achieve in bands three or below in this AO to make sure that both comparing texts and having a sense of other readers and different interpretations are essential requirements of this AO. Similarly we would remind everyone of the range of requirements that are necessary to score highly in AO4. It is not an afterthought or incidental to their answers as all too many candidates seem to think. We urge candidates to integrate the different aspects of their knowledge of contexts into their discussions. Several examples that illustrate the report demonstrate good practice, showing high level achievement at bands 4 and 5. We would finally like to draw attention to the hierarchy of skills which are being assessed at A2. Where we are awarding marks in the top bands, it is likely that the candidate has moved on from awareness, reference (low band achievement), comment, appreciation (middle band) towards analysis, evaluation and synthesis (high bands).

Grade Boundaries

Grade	Max. Mark	a*	A	B	C	D	E	N	U
Raw boundary mark	100	77	68	59	50	42	34	26	0
Uniform boundary mark	120	108	96	84	72	60	48	36	0

a* is only used in conversion from raw to uniform marks. It is not a published unit grade.

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