

Examiners' Report  
June 2012

GCE English Literature 6ET03 01

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## Introduction

Almost every candidate for this paper manages to deal with the demands of a two and three quarter hour long paper, answering both the unseen and the text-based question. With only a tiny number of exceptions, candidates had no difficulty in satisfying the requirement to answer on a post-1990 text.

Examiners notice that the lower achieving responses often show evidence of a very limited range of reading referring to only a few characters or episodes from novels and occasionally just one or two poems, sometimes very short ones. These references tend to be descriptive with a limited sense of literary analysis. They are therefore likely to be scoring quite low marks in band 2 for AOs 1 and 2, even going into band 1 on occasion and no higher than band 3 for AOs 3 and 4.

High achieving responses, on the contrary, usually show wide ranging knowledge of the texts studied and this is reflected in very detailed and appropriate references with some excellent links made between texts to develop the argument. These are therefore likely to be high in band 2 or band 3 for AOs 1 and 2 and in bands 4 and 5 for AOs 3 and 4.

## Question 1

This remains the more popular option for the unseen section of the paper. A key discriminator is the difference between being able to identify key features in the writing and the more subtle task of going on to make analytical comments about them. The best candidates showed impressive ability to make sustained and evaluative comments in their accounts with an ability to explore and interpret.

The best answers distinguished themselves by pointing out the irony of the poet's apparent disdain for poetry, whilst realising that this was not in fact the case and that the poem was an exploration of the nature of poetry and the kind of language appropriate to it. Many candidates identified and responded well to the playfulness in the text of the poem (such as the treatment of critics) and the ways in which it was presented on the page. A number felt that the date of the poem might link it to modernism. An effective discriminator was the way in which candidates noted the camaraderie being developed as the poetic voice invites her readers into the poem with her use of 'too', 'we', 'us' and 'you'.

There was a temptation in low achieving responses to get too concerned with merely identifying features such as the number of lines in a stanza, the relative lengths of lines, enjambement and the caesura without saying too much about their effects on the reader. Many candidates include long quotations with limited supporting comment. A short quotation often consisting of just a key word or phrase will do the job more effectively.

Marianne Moore's poem opens with an ambiguous, sudden statement of "I, too, dislike it" that proves itself to set the tone for the rest of the 29 lines as a poem of one individual's musings and thoughts. The ambiguous opening sparks curiosity and interest within the reader, who from the outset takes a stance that transcends the boundary of the narrator's mind.



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**Examiner Comments**

This opening has a precise focus and deals with aspects of language and structure that will be developed later in the essay.



**ResultsPlus**

**Examiner Tip**

Focus clearly in the opening paragraph showing how you are going to develop your answer.

The poet takes an advisory role in the second to last sestet of the piece by suggesting that humans could not <sup>have</sup> been ~~the~~ 'dragged' into superiority by fake intellectuals. The use of 'dragged' suggests a sort of struggle, possibly alluding to the long process of evolution. By using the personal example of poets, Moore uses the phrases 'literalists of the imagination' and 'imaginary gardens with real toads in them' in juxtaposition ~~in~~ to show what she believes poets should be ~~more~~ ideally, compared to what they actually are. This almost self-mocking parody of a description of a poet can be compared to the ~~reduction~~ ~~reduction~~ reducing of humans into reproducing beings in the early stages of the poem. This gives the message that things can always be undecorated and undressed to reveal ~~the~~ ~~best~~ what they truly are, creating a feeling of anti-climatic bathos.

The concluding sestet alludes to this message with the



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### Examiner Comments

Good use of terminology. Comments on tone and language. References to poetic structure. This candidate has gone through the poem in chronological order which is an effective way of covering the material.



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### Examiner Tip

Show awareness of poetic features, tone and language and provide specific examples supported by comments on the effect they have on you as a reader.

## **Question 2**

Although the less popular unseen option, the balance between prose and poetry on this occasion was more evenly distributed than in the past.

This passage seemed to work well in prompting candidates to explore how the narrative voice made an effective link between the situation being described and the reader. Good answers noted the contrasts drawn by the writer between the ordinary urbanites and the 'high-up ones', the very different kinds of food they enjoyed and how the effect of that on their appearance, especially their hair, was described.

Very perceptive candidates could note the tone of voice, ironic and even sarcastic at times, employed by the narrator as she made these contrasts. Many responses referred to the narrative voice of someone apparently involved in the siege and the effects of the collusive 'your' and 'you' in the latter part of the extract. The other main aspect of the writing noted by many candidates was the use of a wide range of contrasts in particular the language associated with food and its uneven and unjust distribution amongst the 'urbanites' and the 'high-up ones'.

They realised that these ordinary people had lived a life of deprivation even before this particular set of disasters. Many good answers noticed the patterns in the language such as the range of imagery connected with the burning. The smells and sounds for example received a lot of attention being described and analysed in some detail. References to foraging, and carcasses as key images provoked effective comments. The precision of the language, including the date of the events being described was often commented upon although the fact that it was a fictionalised account of an actual event was not really focused on. Some candidates may not have realised that the situation described is based on a real event; others made too much of their knowledge of the context.

Weaker answers made some surprising misreadings such as interpreting the volcano and the river as literal ones, the significance of the islands, the city's isolation and the action taking place in Mga. Some felt the need to interpret the editing of the passage between paragraphs three and four as a deliberate stylistic feature. A surprising number referred to the passage as a poem.

In text B, Dunmore expresses the ~~the~~ extent of poverty and class divide in Kurra. The extract begins with the short statement sentence 'Sugar ~~crackles~~ burns.', the onibalance ~~emphasising~~ <sup>almost</sup> mimicking the sound of smoke. The smoke is then personified as if it is its own entity, emphasised by the parallel phrasing 'It sends', 'It hisses'. Dunmore uses the onomatopoeic 'hisses' and 'crackles' to mimic the sound of a fire, and the onibalance throughout echoes the sound of the smoke. The simile, 'like a river of flame' is almost ironic as fire and water are two different, opposing elements, however it emphasises the natural, unstoppable flow of the fire. Dunmore uses the metaphor of a 'volcano' of sugar' ~~spews smoke which sparks~~ to depict the image of the fire as it 'spews' and sparks. Dunmore



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Examiner Comments

The writer, near the beginning of the discussion, makes a number of succinct comments on sentence structure and language with appropriate use of terms such as 'sibilance', 'personified', 'onomatopoeic', 'mimic', 'simile' and metaphor, all closely linked to the text.



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Examiner Tip

Be concise; use technical language as appropriate; link comments to text.

Dunmore looks at the macrosom of the city, which is burning, and the poverty of the people, and juxtaposes this to the microsom of wealth, to emphasise the extent of poverty and loss, in a corrupt society with a large class divide.



**ResultsPlus**  
Examiner Comments

The writer provides a neat overview to conclude the essay.



**ResultsPlus**  
Examiner Tip

Leaving the reader with an overview and a sense of completion will inevitably make a positive impression on the examiner.

Dunmore's use of 'we', through the phrases "burns" and "snow" create a very Hell-like image for the reader thus, immediately highlighting to the reader just how horrific conditions in Leningrad are; this is further emphasized through the use of the word "black" - a colour that has connotations with darkness and evil; this darkness is added to by Dunmore setting the scene at "night"; a time ~~of day~~ associated with darkness. By using short sentences Dunmore is able to create tension as the scene reaches its climax. Alternatively,



### ResultsPlus Examiner Comments

There is some effective comment on one aspect of the language with some illustration although it could be more concise.



### ResultsPlus Examiner Tip

This would be more effective with some use of literary terminology linked to the quite good quotations.

through the simile "like a rail of the plane". The image of a "rail of plane" gives the impression

that horror is never-ending; like a rail, they are surrounded by it and they cannot escape - <sup>an idea anchored</sup> ~~Although~~ by the fact that there are "no more road or railway lines". ~~Alternatively this simile could~~ This idea is evoked by the writer's use of longer and longer sentences, representing the horror building up, and highlighting how it is becoming harder and harder to escape from. Alternatively, on a physical level,



### ResultsPlus Examiner Comments

The opening comment is more effective than the second because it is linked to the text whereas the second makes an assertion about the effect of longer and longer sentences without illustrating it quite precisely enough.



### Question 3 (a)

This was by far the most popular question on the paper and the quality of answers seen covered a very wide range of achievement.

It was quite important for candidates to arrive at some kind of understanding of what they understood by the terms of the question. It was all too easy for them to perceive almost any kind of relationship to be unconventional. If they agreed with the proposition plenty of evidence for the unconventional in relationships was offered in the novels and poems with plenty of focus on adultery (Tom, Daisy, Myrtle, Gatsby), other extra-marital relationships (Pelagia, Mandras, Corelli, Tess, Alec, Donne, Marvell), gay and lesbian (Duffy, Carlo, Francesco, Philips, Nick), parents and children (Pelagia and Dr Iannis, Drosoula and Mandras, Tess and her mother, Gatsby and his father). A number of candidates also dealt with Donne's relationship with his God and Tess's relationship with hers. At best this sort of thing was explored with good, detailed textual support, at worst the tendency was to be assertive about say, Nick's feelings for Gatsby, without necessarily providing a reference to clinch the point.

Good candidates were able to deal with what might be considered as unusual in the light of the texts' depiction of relationships through structure, form and language. The use of critical views when linked to a developing argument was often impressive although at times the naming of a critic or a critical movement was seen as sufficient to cover the last bullet point of AO3. Popular critical movements much cited included post-modernism, Marxism, feminism, even queer theory, but they were often used very loosely or inaccurately. Attitudes towards homosexuality tended to make very bland and generalised contrasts between modern attitudes and those in the different periods covered by the poems and novels. Other contextual areas dealt with effectively included the changing roles of women, the world of 1920s America with some telling comments on prohibition and how Gatsby had made his money, the role of religion in the metaphysical poems, 'Tess' and 'Corelli'.

As a reader of literature, I agree that unconventional relationships are most interesting and attract people to continue reading. People like to discover relationships out of the ordinary as it make a more interesting read, plus we enjoy to see the suffering in which the characters have to overcome.



**ResultsPlus**  
Examiner Comments

The opening of this essay is rather bland and not very well expressed.



**ResultsPlus**  
Examiner Tip

Grab the reader's attention with a comment that will make him/her want to read on.

This is from slightly further on in the same essay.

homosexual companion Carlo. Carlo endures a constant struggle with his inner self due to his sexuality, especially as he originates from a Catholic background where homosexuality would not be permitted and he would be outcasted. In addition, as part of the Italian forces, this would be ~~forbidden~~ forbidden and would be classed as a ~~scandal~~ ~~or worse~~ disgrace to the country. "It is hard enough to live at peace with yourself when you are a sexual outsider!"

Moreover, this is supported by the poem "A Priest in the Sabbath Dawn Addresses His Somnolent Mistress". The priest in this poem is also torn by his religious duties and his inner feelings which attracts us as readers due to his unconventional struggle. ~~Even though the priest isn't being a~~ modern day readers we don't feel the priest is being immoral by having sexual relationships with the mistress as we understand that humans ~~are~~ have sexual desires and are healthy to be expressed.



### ResultsPlus Examiner Comments

One way of making links between texts and showing awareness of contexts. This is an essential skill but it can be done with greater subtlety.



### ResultsPlus Examiner Tip

Make links between texts and deal with contexts in as much detail and precision as you can.

In "The Sun Rising", Donne addresses the Sun itself, telling it that, "This bed they centre is, these walls they sphere". At a time when ~~these were~~ <sup>advances were</sup> ~~advances~~ being made in the field of astronomy, Donne appears to be playing off of the current challenges being made to the conventional opinion that the earth is at the centre of the solar system. His use of absurd argument, a typical technique of metaphysical poets, ~~at~~ here elevates the relationship to a celestial status, and

calls upon the reader to view it with the appropriate reverence. Erik Achsah Guibbey argues that "part of Donne's felicity comes from ... his intense analysis of important aspects of human experience". However, instead of focusing on the human side of the relationship, Donne ~~at~~ here creates a microcosm around it, ~~as~~ making his portrayal all the more compelling for the reader.

A similar microcosm is constructed in Duffy's "Night Marriage", where she writes "the whole of the <sup>the night</sup> night is ~~the~~ our room". The use of <sup>the night</sup> night adds a suggestive tone to the metaphor, leaving the reader to reflect upon what might happen in the lover's bedroom at night. Similar to Donne's metaphor, this also elevates the importance of the lover, and commands the reader to see them as significant.



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**Examiner Comments**

This writer is doing something similar to the previous one but in a more sophisticated way.



**ResultsPlus**

**Examiner Tip**

Try to make the links between texts literary ones as in the link between Donne and Duffy in this extract.

### Question 3 (b)

Although a less popular option, this question received a number of interesting and, at times, impressive, perceptive and sophisticated responses. The chosen extracts show the high level achieved by the best responses to this question.

This idea of a 'touchable dream' is also explored throughout 'The Great Gatsby'. His inability to ever make his dream tangible is exemplified in his yearning for Daisy through the symbol of the green light at the end of her dock: 'he stretched out his arms toward the dark water in a curious way'. This romantic image is also explored in Duffy's 'The Love Poem', in which she draws <sup>inspiration</sup> from the ~~most~~ most famous love poets, such as <sup>Shelley's</sup> "the desire of the moth / for the star". This ethereal language suggests ~~an aim~~ <sup>a goal</sup> which is never quite reachable. The fact that Duffy chooses to incorporate so many extracts ~~from~~ from poets such as Shakespeare, Sir Thomas Wyatt and John Donne exemplifies the debt owed by a modern poet and the writer's timeless influence of their works.

Metaphysical traits are evident throughout ~~thru~~ all three works of literature. In John Donne's 'The Sun

Rising', a microcosm is created in which time is neither linear nor binding. Instead, the lovers embody the entire world as they mock the powerlessness of the sun: 'I'm here to us and ~~that~~ thou art everywhere'. Furthermore, the idea of neoplatonism, springing from the Renaissance period, is also explored, such as: "Prices to but play us, compared to this / All honour's mimic, all wealth alchemy". This suggests that anything outside of their one room is merely an imitation of them. This can be contrasted with 'The Great Gatsby' in which the material world and spiritual world collide. This is shown particularly when Daisy sees Gatsby's mansion for the first time. Nick ~~repeats~~ Carraway's description reads: 'he stared around at his possessions in a dazed way, as though in her actual and astounding presence none of it was any longer real'.



### ResultsPlus Examiner Comments

This candidate has managed to make some effective links between two poets and a novelist in an impressive and sustained discussion. There are some especially perceptive contextual references which show very detailed background knowledge.



### ResultsPlus Examiner Tip

Use literary links to make and support points and do not forget to use contexts to support your analysis as well.

Tess's motivation for having an affair with Alec, once Angel abandons her, is based on a need for financial stability for both her and her family. ~~When~~ Alec uses

emotional blackmail to entice Tess back to him by mentioning her sisters and brothers. 'Tess's heart quivered—he was touching her in a weak place!' The use of a dash here emphasises the verb 'quivered' and enforces its meaning; Tess feels so emotionally attached and responsible for her family. In comparison, the adulterous relationship between Tom and Myrtle is more selfish in its nature. It is based ~~on~~ on lust and materialism; two features which characterised the 'Jazz Age' in which the book was set and written in. Myrtle personifies a new breed of sexually confident and independent women in the 1920s in America. She is presented in an overtly sexual way, 'the nerves of her body were continually smouldering.' In the same way, <sup>for</sup> Duffy, who has admitted 'Partners' is a suitable



**ResultsPlus**  
Examiner Comments

There are some good links made between texts in this extract. There is some contextual awareness and some effective use of quotations.

The following extract is from later in the same essay.

in 'You' Duffy describes falling in love as 'glamorous hell'. The juxtaposition of these words develops the moral dilemma the lovers are faced with. Kate Kellaway's review of 'Rapture' in ~~the~~ The Observer said the ~~love~~ persona was 'obsessed to a self-punishing degree'. The same can also be said for Tess in her relationship with Angel. Her sense of guilt is 'self-punishing' leading her to act impulsively to overcome any obstacles in the way of her relationship with Angel by murdering Alec. Angel's 'horror at her impulse was mixed with amazement at the strength of her affection for himself'. Even Angel, who is part of the relationship, is amazed at the extents to which Tess's love takes her to. This connection can also be made



with Gatsby in the strength of his affections for Daisy. Upon seeing Daisy for the first time in five years, he is reduced to a child-like state, 'You're acting like a little boy'. The state of Tess and Angel is also described as child-like when they are fleeing from the crime scene<sup>with Tess, the</sup>, plans of two children. All three texts demonstrate the extremes to which lovers will go to preserve their relationships. The child-like descriptions of characters in 'Gatsby' and 'Tess' ~~show~~ ~~following a murder~~ show the rationality crippling power of love as a common feature.



### ResultsPlus Examiner Comments

The ability to manage links between three texts and incorporate a critical response is a sign of a high-achieving candidate. There are also some effective quotations to clinch the links.



### ResultsPlus Examiner Tip

If you can make precise literary links between the texts you are likely to be in top band for AO3.

'Connections' in the symbols used by writers can be particularly revealing when exploring their different treatments. The moon is a traditionally romantic object, and it features strongly in all three texts. When Angel is sleepwalking holding Tess, the image of the 'fine and picturesque' girl has been destroyed in Angel's mind. This is reflected in Hardy's description of their surroundings:

'The swift stream raced and gyrated under them, tossing, distorting and splitting the moon's reflected face!'

The triplet of violent verbs 'attacking' the once romantic image of the moon, which Hardy personifies, reflects Angel's emotional attack on the image he once held and loved of Tess. In the same way, in 'Over' <sup>the final poem of</sup> <sub>the collection</sub> by Duffy, the moon is also a symbol of love, which becomes marred by the reality of the relationship, 'no moon to speak of' - all the romance of the past is lost. However, in 'Gatsby', the moon is used as a symbol of longing for Daisy. 'It [Daisy] had seemed as close as a star to the moon'. In this instance, the moon represents the unattainable nature of Gatsby's dream-like image of Daisy. The connection of

the moon between the texts enforces the sense of loss of romance and ~~tragedy~~<sup>the tragic form</sup> in both 'Tess' and 'Rapture', however, in 'Gatsby' it serves as a perspective, emphasising the distance between the reality of Daisy, and Gatsby's image of her. This connection between the texts is particularly revealing in the case of 'Gatsby', as it sets a premise for tragedy in their relationship as the moon - once so romantic - has now taken on such negative connotations in both 'Tess' and 'Rapture'.



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**Examiner Comments**

The candidate continues the essay and sustains an argument based on a textual link between all three texts being studied.



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**Examiner Tip**

Try to sustain your argument with close links between texts and which have some linguistic connection if possible.

### **Question 4 (a)**

Although not as popular as Relationships and War, the Identifying Self section has an increasing number of followers and the range of texts dealt with is quite wide with some especially interesting comparisons between the poetry texts which cover a great diversity of time and cultures. We saw some interesting answers which focused entirely on poetry comparing and contrasting Chaucer's Alyson and Nichols's fat black woman and how they subverted expectations about gender roles. Good answers dealt with 'subvert' as well as 'surprise and exaggerate'. The Martel and Atkinson texts were especially useful for this question and there were some effective use of all three of the poetry texts. All of them were used to show how the reader is frequently being manipulated through the subtle use of an unreliable narrator or speaker. There was for example some interesting discussion of the different versions of Pi's story as well as the element of surprise in the ways that Dickens and Atkinson used their narrators to tell their respective stories.

### **Question 4 (b)**

There was plenty of opportunity to explore this topic in all of the texts. Innocence was variously interpreted as spiritual and cultural, leaving childhood or losing ones virginity. 'Great Expectations' was especially useful although there was plenty of diverse opinion about when exactly Pip might have lost his innocence. One interesting response to 'Pi' dealt with the fall from innocence and descent into savagery when dealing with Pi's cannibalism.

Examiners did note the tendency to retell the stories of the novels when dealing with this question. Post-modern was much used as a term but not with any precision in most cases. Those who answered on the Wife of Bath often dealt with gender politics and social class, often making fruitful links with the worlds created in the Atkinson novel and the Nichols poems.

### **Question 5 (a)**

The Journeys section remains the least popular option on the paper. Examiners have noted that candidates displayed good textual knowledge but tended to narrate rather than to analyse when dealing with the journeys undertaken by characters. One approach was to provide a simple retelling of aspects of characters' physical journeys within the text or individuals' lessons in life. There was some consideration of expectations and disappointments. Some worthwhile answers were seen comparing the main characters in 'Small Island' and 'The Final Passage'.

### **Question 5 (b)**

See the comments on 5a. There were too few answers on this question for any detailed separate comments to be made.

## Question 6 (a)

The War texts remain a popular option and we saw answers on all of the texts set for this unit with each of the novels providing material for a range of responses and the raw material for much interesting discussion and comparison. The range of poetry was fairly wide.

The best answers evaluated what might be seen as the writer's duty and although the tendency was to agree with the proposition there were some interesting alternative views employing War Music, the Knight's tale and the Battle of Maldon for example to show war or conflict being glorified. Many writers responded with sensitivity to the presentation of characters such as Prior and Uncle Peter in particular, but also Baba and Amir. Examiners saw very accomplished answers which made comparisons between the poems from World War 1 and the modern novels in a very intelligent and convincing way with good focus on the modern reader, but also referring to readers from the time of writing such as Jessie Pope, the friend addressed in Dulce et Decorum Est.

Greater exploration of techniques employed in the novels has been noted and this is one way which candidates can score more highly in AO2.

Weaker responses did not really analyse the proposition and tended to write about conflict, ignoring the rest of the sentence. Some candidates appeared to be regurgitating received knowledge. Although a number of candidates enjoyed the frisson of quoting from the Pinter poem, a number assumed that it was actually glorifying war.

Writers of the war arguably have a number of duties to fulfil through their writing. Sometimes, these are individual acts of courage, such as Baba's heroism in "The Kite Runner" or the collective heroism in "Building the Barricade," with both works also commemorating losses, and using these to ensure war is not glorified. However, writers arguably also have a duty to enlighten their readers. This is seen, for example, in "Dulce et Decorum Est." However, this is achieved not through commending the courage, but seemingly purely through negating the notion of any "glory" being present in war, a notion also seen in "The Kite Runner." Conversely, some works, such as "Road 1940," show none of these aspects,

showing complete cowardice in order to show war's devastating impacts. In this case, it appears that writers do not just have the duty to record courage and losses, but also to achieve new perceptions of war through exploring war from a number of different perspectives.



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**Examiner Comments**

This introduction covers quite a lot of ground and promises exploration of a range of texts whilst keeping an eye on the terms of the question.



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**Examiner Tip**

There are many ways of writing a good introduction but showing range and focus is always a good idea.

Firstly, Baba's courage in "The Kite Runner" is evidence of a writer's duty to show how war can bring out the best and the worst in people, as well as showing how war

should not be glorified. Baba's dialogue, of "Tell

Similarly, ~~furthermore~~ <sup>and</sup> collective courage and recognition of losses is seen in "Building the Barricade," but Świrszczyńska is careful

However, some literary works only serve to show the horror of war, such as "Spies" and its character, Uncle Peter, through a distinct lack of courage. For example, while



### ResultsPlus Examiner Comments

These short extracts show how the candidate shows clear evidence of a developing argument addressing both facets of the question.



### ResultsPlus Examiner Tip

Show how your argument is going to develop and move on clearly.

## **Question 6 (b)**

There were some effective responses which dealt with the idea of victory being short-lived whilst defeat goes on for generations. The better answers certainly dealt with both aspects of the proposition with neat juxtapositioning of Dulce et Decorum Est and the Battle of Maldon, for example. Defeat did tend to focus on the fates of individuals such as Uncle Peter, the soldiers in Futility and Dulce et Decorum Est and Yeats's Irish Airman. It also dealt with the fate of civilians such as Levertov's 'people of Vietnam', Dorothy Parker's Penelope and the victim of the Hiroshima bombing in Fell's August 6, 1945. Interesting links were also made between writers who are dealing with events long after they had happened such as Larkin's MCMXIV and Hughes's Six Young Men as well as contrasts drawn between the characters such as Sassoon and Owen in The Ghost Road and their real selves. Such answers tended to make profitable references to modern readers' responses to the horrors of the past.

Some candidates wrote effectively about the horrors of the trenches whilst still keeping an eye on the question. Other horrors such as the rape of Hassan, the stoning in Ghazi stadium and Amir's fight with Assef in 'The Kite Runner', Uncle Peter's death in 'Spies' the fate of the soldiers in 'The Ghost Road' received quite a lot of appropriate attention.

Weaker answers would dwell on list-like enumeration of joys of victory contrasted with examples of defeat.



# Paper Summary

Dos and don'ts:

- Make sure that you are answering the question that matches the texts that you have been studying.
- Do write as clearly as possible.
- Do not answer any part of a Section B question in the Section A part of the answer book.

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