

Examiners' Report  
June 2019

English Literature 9ET0 03

## Edexcel and BTEC Qualifications

Edexcel and BTEC qualifications come from Pearson, the UK's largest awarding body. We provide a wide range of qualifications including academic, vocational, occupational and specific programmes for employers. For further information visit our qualifications websites at [www.edexcel.com](http://www.edexcel.com) or [www.btec.co.uk](http://www.btec.co.uk).

Alternatively, you can get in touch with us using the details on our contact us page at [www.edexcel.com/contactus](http://www.edexcel.com/contactus).



### Giving you insight to inform next steps

ResultsPlus is Pearson's free online service giving instant and detailed analysis of your students' exam results.

- See students' scores for every exam question.
- Understand how your students' performance compares with class and national averages.
- Identify potential topics, skills and types of question where students may need to develop their learning further.

For more information on ResultsPlus, or to log in, visit [www.edexcel.com/resultsplus](http://www.edexcel.com/resultsplus). Your exams officer will be able to set up your ResultsPlus account in minutes via Edexcel Online.

### Pearson: helping people progress, everywhere

Pearson aspires to be the world's leading learning company. Our aim is to help everyone progress in their lives through education. We believe in every kind of learning, for all kinds of people, wherever they are in the world. We've been involved in education for over 150 years, and by working across 70 countries, in 100 languages, we have built an international reputation for our commitment to high standards and raising achievement through innovation in education. Find out more about how we can help you and your students at: [www.pearson.com/uk](http://www.pearson.com/uk).

June 2019

Publications Code 9ET0\_03\_1906\_ER

All the material in this publication is copyright  
© Pearson Education Ltd 2019

# Introduction

It is pleasing to be able to report that in this third year of the paper students continued to respond with well-informed enthusiasm to the poetry. Examiners were often delighted by the high standard of work produced; more than one (experienced in both schools and HE) remarking that essays were 'as good as I've seen for undergraduate'. Examiners were delighted to be able to award full marks in many cases. Lessons seem to have been learnt from previous cycles of the examination, both in handling the comparison between the unseen poem and the poem chosen from the Forward anthology and in integrating context into the response to the set texts in Section B.

This report will therefore concentrate on performance on this year's paper; teachers are referred to the reports on the 2017 and 2018 series for further information and examples (as well as to the numerous additional resources provided on the Pearson Edexcel website) to inform their preparation.

One aspect that examiners continue to highlight is the need for candidates to exemplify their comments clearly. There are still too many generalised assertions about the effect of rhyme, enjambment and so on: without quotation from the text, it is difficult to reward these. Students should not hesitate to quote at greater length where necessary, ensuring that they set out the lines as in the original. Sometimes the mere act of writing out a couplet or stanza can increase the appreciation of the impact of the line break, the rhyme scheme or the use of repetition. This helps the reader (in this case, the examiner) follow the argument and demonstrates the understanding of both the terms used and of the poetry.

There were fewer rubric infringements this year; it appears that the reinforced information on the question paper, along with a clear reminder to centres, has had the desired effect as far as Section B was concerned. However, even these few cases are disappointing, of course, and the need for candidates to come well prepared and to read the questions carefully still needs to be stressed if they are to avoid errors such as choosing the wrong 'Holy Thursday' poem by Blake (despite the first line being given in the question).

Poor handwriting continues to be problem for examiners – we can only repeat that if teachers are aware that this is an issue, early action is strongly advised. In some cases, simply writing slightly larger would avoid examiners having to decipher a script at word level.

## Section A

Candidates were required to compare the unseen poem 'Two Trees' with a specified poem from the Forward anthology. This poem worked well across the ability range. The most successful answers integrated comparison throughout the exploration rather than treating the poems separately. Weaker responses often plunged immediately into technical details (in many cases without examples) at the expense of overview. Better answers read closely, using their secure knowledge of the named anthology poem to build a comparison to the unseen and were able to explore (without jumping immediately to conclusions) the significance of the repeated denials in the closing lines of Paterson's poem:

*They were trees, and trees don't weep or ache or shout.*

*And trees are all this poem is about.*

These lines, in particular, invited students to consider the idea of the poem as a construct – though most responses assumed that Paterson was writing metaphorically throughout. Paterson's use of rhyme was noted by many students, though often without considering the effect of this, especially

in comparison to the named poems. As rhyme is used infrequently in the Forward selection as a whole, this might have merited more comment (as the example for Question 2 here illustrates to good effect).

Question 1 was about twice as popular as Question 2. This may simply be a reflection of the fact that Agbabi's poem was for many the first, and perhaps most thoroughly, studied poem in the collection or it may indicate that students felt more comfortable writing about 'relationships' than 'unusual events' (although that phrase covers a key aspect of Ford's poem). Equally good work was seen on both questions; by comparison with last year, examiners saw fewer instances of a poor grasp of the Forward anthology poems.

## **Section B**

Candidates usually showed a good basic grasp of their chosen texts and an interesting range of approaches to contextual relevance. Successful answers often related details from the chosen poems to specific features of movements such as Metaphysical poetry or Romanticism, though precise and relevant use of historical or biographical material also proved effective. Weaker responses tended again to offer vague, general comments on context, often confined to supposed links between the poet's life and details in the poems.

Chaucer, the Romantic poets, Keats and Rossetti were the most popular choices again. There was a handful of entries on Medieval poetic drama and twentieth-century poetry was again a minority option.

Centres sometimes ask about the use of comparison in Section B. This is not assessed here, though candidates often make links (brief or extended) between their two chosen poems. This is understandable, as they have usually just completed a detailed comparison and it is, in any case, natural to make at least some comment on the differences or similarities of the poems chosen as part of a coherent essay structure. Students are advised not to build a complex integrated comparison, however, as this is likely to distract from the need to embed analysis of the significance of context.



## Question 1

This was the more popular choice, with most candidates engaging in detail with the topic as they compared the poems. Almost all candidates possessed a good understanding of Agbabi's poem. Students sometimes limit their answers by jumping too hastily to conclusions; in this case, the (reasonable) reading of the relationship in 'Eat Me' as toxic led some to assume too glibly that was also true of the unseen. Close reading would also avoid slips like referring to a 'juddernaut' in Agbabi's poem, which misses the point of her word play.

This extract from the end of a Level 5 answer shows the candidate exploring Paterson's insistence that his poem is just about trees, with a sensitive awareness of the ambiguity of the poem.

and reality. The first stanza's idealism is <sup>of Don Miguel's</sup> ~~replaced by the~~ "idea" is replaced by the "dark malicious whim" of the man, the negative connotations of the latter encourage the reader to see the separation of the two trees therefore as dark and malicious. ~~However, as the trees to~~ <sup>to</sup> the realistic realism of the final two lines, dismissing the personification of the "magic" trees, creates an alternate narrative where instead of being metaphors for non-crossed lovers they were ~~to~~ literally only ~~two~~ two trees, and the fact that Paterson gives this view the final word, as well as the titular dismissal of them as nothing more than "trees" presents this as the ~~the~~ <sup>the</sup> prevailing opinion. "Eat Me" also presents interesting insights into the relationship from the point of view of one of its participants, as she also mythologises her ~~story~~, ~~as~~ using images of naves, shipwrecks and sleds to describe their relationship, and her own body, as an unhealthy microcosm. The self-justification in the phrase "how could I not roll over on top" creates a strange dissonance between the speaker's own will and her unconscious compulsion. Therefore the ~~the~~ ~~voices~~ ~~of~~ ~~these~~ the two poems

implicate the relationships in various ways, neither side yields to the other and therefore emphasizing the unnatural <sup>power</sup> ~~to~~ structures they devise.

Both "The Trees" and "Eat Me" portray unhealthy, unnatural relationships dominated by compulsion and submission rather than by mutual agreement. ~~The~~ "Eat Me" speaker can only do "what I was told", and the trees are ultimately forced into submission by being "lashed [ed] tight". However both poems show the relationships fading, and as "Eat Me" speaker finally regains her bodily autonomy by "dreaming" the partner, and the trees survive despite their "unhealed flanks" and "solitude". Therefore both poems end on abrupt and ambivalent but largely optimistic notes, as both relationships are seen to them to be temporary and ultimately the poets show their subjects escape from the unhealthy microcosms their relationships trapped them in.



**ResultsPlus**  
Examiner Comments

The candidate uses this discussion to consider the possibility of a more open-ended conclusion to Agbabi's poem.



**ResultsPlus**  
Examiner Tip

Students should be encouraged to keep an open mind as they read and re-read, allowing poems to work on the reader's imagination and, in this section, permit the texts to continue to play on each other.

This first page of this response gives a brief overview followed by analysis of the effect of the ways in which both poems start, looking at significant language choices.

Both poets focus on rather ~~far reaching~~ ~~supra~~ unlikely sentiments which produce inherently unusual relationships within each poem. The forceful feeder - feedee relationship within 'Eat Me' is drastically different to the hopeful nourishment of the tree within 'Two Trees', yet both poets use similar methods to explore the relationships.

Patience Agabi and Don Paterson both use colloquial language to convey the relationships within each poem. The in media res beginning of 'one morning' is similar to 'when I hit thirty' in 'Eat Me', immediately introducing the ~~start~~ situation in a conversational tone. A further similarity is created through the presence of opening lines of each poem that underpin the dramatic events which are revealed within the later stanzas. The assertion 'he bought me a cake', is ordinary in appearance, introducing perhaps a generous second speaker within the first line.



Sensitivity to tone of voice in poetry is a key discriminator, especially when, as here, it is developed with further detail in the course of the response. This was a secure level 3 answer.



The openings and conclusions of poems can be very significant; students should aim to read and reflect on them carefully.

## **Question 2**

Though less popular, this also produced some sophisticated responses. Well prepared candidates were able to put their knowledge of 'Guiseppe' to good use; there were a number of responses that realised terms such as 'magic realism' could apply both to Ford's poem and to the 'unusual events' in 'Two Trees'.

This section from near the beginning of a detailed, strong Level 5 response, shows sophisticated understanding of the ways the poets tell their stories of unusual, 'magic', events. The comments on Paterson's use of rhyme develops the argument.



value and the sense of wonder. In 'Guzdell', the initial ~~the~~ location ~~desp~~ description in the poem, of "Sally in

~~the~~ World War Two, near the "aquarium" / where the bougainvillea grows so well, may be interpreted as a digression as the speaker of the narrative poem is unwilling to tell the story. Yet, perhaps this beautiful imagery also serves to increase the initial sense of magic, because it is revealed that she ~~the~~ "was butchered". The fact that this initial stanza is the longest, predominantly due to this description of setting, may reflect the narrator's value of the magical creature, with his reluctance to tell the ~~stale~~ story showing his wish to preserve the magic.

The form of 'Two trees' ~~is~~ also increased the sense of magic. The regular iambic pentameter rhythm and rhyming couplets ~~emphasise~~ emphasise the magic of this unusual event in the first stanza, and perhaps create the sense that it was told by a child, due to its song-like quality, an idea ~~is~~ strengthened by the use of monosyllables (such as "It took him the whole day to work them free") and simple tenses.

This rhythm is disrupted by the 5th line of the first stanza, where Dan "lay open their sides, and lash them tight", and this disruption may reflect how out of the ordinary this act was, increasing the reader's sense of wonder.



Although candidates were aware of the rhyming couplets in 'Two Trees', surprisingly few explored the possible effects of this. They often instead worried over (sometimes imagined) half-rhymes. Here, the candidate considers the impact of rhyme alongside other features that shape the overall effect of the poem.



Students should be encouraged to be alert to rhyme and rhythm - but to ensure that their comments go well beyond the merely descriptive.

### Question 3

These poetic dramas were again very much a minority choice. Candidates often demonstrated good general background knowledge, though this tended to obscure exploration of literary features. As for other Paper 3 texts, it is better to allow the contextual material to arise as naturally as possible from the discussion of the text (in this case two extracts), rather than begin with generalised comments on the period.

This section follows a general introduction to the nature of the plays and their times. It begins to explore the named extract, though in a rather descriptive manner, with little direct use of text.

The lines 629 through 646 in *The Second Shepherd* depicts ~~the first of the shepherds~~ how the shepherds were called forth to Bethlehem to see Christ "At ~~Beth~~ <sup>Beth</sup> ~~Bedlem~~ <sup>Bedlem</sup> go see" which is the first ~~known~~ <sup>known</sup> apparent aspect of Christ's human nature, his birth as humans do. However, Virgin Mary's pregnancy is ~~one~~ <sup>one</sup> on its own a representation of the divine nature of the baby, Christ, because she, with no sexual intercourse and only at 17, gave birth on her own. As per the Christian's beliefs, Jesus is the human form of God, which ~~is~~ <sup>is</sup> descended onto the earth to purify humanity from the original sin, which all of humanity carried forward since Adam and Eve's fall from the garden of Eden. As such, the mere birth of Jesus is a symbol for hope and divinity, as he will free all humans from the burden that prevents them from entering the heaven's doors. ~~Suppose women are believed to suffer from~~. The rhyme scheme of lines 638 through 646 is AAAABCCCB, suggesting structure and order that Jesus is destined to bring. The rhyme scheme also speaks to the time of the play, where the Renaissance ~~nature~~ <sup>nature</sup> ~~entire~~ <sup>entire</sup> ~~all~~ <sup>all</sup> ~~arts~~ <sup>arts</sup> to flourish and this is reflected in the rhyme



scheme of the poem and how most of its stanzas are made of 9 lines, alluding to its structure.



Whilst the candidate displays understanding of the didactic nature of the text, the account is largely descriptive and the comment on rhyme is similarly at only surface level. As such, and bearing in mind that the treatment of the second extract was quite thin, this response remains in Level 2.



The need to understand the quite different social and religious context of the period should not be allowed to overwhelm students' responses to these texts. Keep looking closely at the text, the interactions between speakers - and the language used.

## Question 4

Answers to this question were rather weaker than to the alternative. Use of the text was scant and generalised background information (such as 'the harsh atmosphere that existed', 'burning women and books') predominated in several answers.

This is from the second page of a Level 2 answer. After a very general account of the background context on the first page, this section begins to explore the text.

The idea of the symbol as the boat and the arc in Noah is shown through the lines from 17 to 56. The working life as in the formation of the boat. God has chosen Noah to be his servant, 'that righteous man.' This is very similar to the creation and Adam and Eve. Adam presents Noah, the messenger of God.

God's image is shown in Noah's Flood as the formation of a new creation in those seven days. The new formation is the new working life that Noah has to proceed through.

'A ship soon thou shalt make thee of trees dry and light'

The working life acquires the use of the environment like the trees and the light to complete this task of saving humanity.

However, each journey or task involves those obstacles as the 'wife rebelling.'

All gods representations are very accurate to form this task accurately. This shows the divine aspect of god, the perfectionist. 'Three hundred cubits it shall be long, And fifty of breadth, to make it strong,' those specific ideations. From line 25 to 32, a rhyme scheme is shown [a a a b b b b b], however the rhyme isn't consistent as from lines 33 to 40, [a a a b c c c b]. Inconsistent rhymes show that there is a change in events, details and changes in formations.



Although this section does refer to the key words 'working life' and quote from the poetic drama, the references are quite general. The rhyme scheme is described with the vague reflection that this shows 'that there is a change in events'. The focus tends to shift back to the religious function of the text, as a way of conveying the Bible story.



It can be helpful to set the named passages in the context of the work as a whole, but it is important to address the question in some detail once an overview has been established. Identify extracts that illustrate key words (for example, tools) and demonstrate their significance, both in the tale and, by way of context, to the craft guild that originally performed the play.

## Question 5

*The Wife of Bath's Prologue and Tale* was again one of the most popular Section B choices. There was much high standard work in response to this question, with candidates successfully integrating the context into their exploration of the poetry. Better responses took 'voices of authority' as an opportunity to look beyond just the role of husbands and consider the Wife's more general challenge to power, including the power of the church.

This opening from a strong Level 5 response shows a candidate in full control of the subject matter. The second extract chosen allows an alternative viewpoint to enter the argument.

The bawdy humor and sexuality of 'The Wife of Bath' is rich in its potential for rebellion in ~~the~~ Medieval society, a potential Chaucer develops to the fullest. In condemning biblical and scholarly authorities the Wife highlights her complete dismissal of the guidelines of the church and its scriptures, which is particularly prevalent in lines 77-114. In contrast, by the end of her ~~Wife's~~ tale, from lines 1240-1264, the wife contradicts everything she advocated for previously as Chaucer bestows a more ambivalent aspect upon her rhetoric, as her attitude towards the voices of authority appear to change.



**ResultsPlus**  
Examiner Comments

A clear outline of the argument of the answer immediately engages the reader. Expression here is assured, with an indication of the ways in which the context will be incorporated into the essay.



Careful planning - and a good grasp of the text, to enable selection of a suitable second passage - pays off. Time spent reflecting on the question and outlining an argument avoids digression.

This extract, from the middle of another secure Level 5 answer, shows the successful development of an argument through the candidate's choice of second passage. As this develops, an alternative viewpoint is introduced: that the portrait of the Wife could also be seen as 'mock[ing] female sexuality'. Whilst this is not a requirement, an awareness of the subtleties and possible ambiguities of Chaucer's presentation enables the candidate to produce a sophisticated response.

Similarly, within lines 140-160, Chaucer characterises Alison as a sexually autonomous female to emphasise the wife's subversion of theocratic ideals, and challenges the authoritative view that female sexuality is 'dangerous'. Alison's confession that 'in wyfhood', she ~~will~~ 'wol use' her 'instrument' as 'freely hath it rent' is highly indicative of the wife's physical autonomy and carnal desire, where her 'housbonde ~~but~~ shal have it both ~~ere~~ and morwe'. The euphemism 'instrument' thus reinforces Alison's sexually transgressive nature, and therefore Chaucer characterises Alison to be the epitome of rebellion from the authority of the androcentric Church and nobility. Chaucer's reference to the husband 'paying his dette' alludes to the Medieval marital debt, & an integral facet of marriage in a 14th century society, where the wife and husband were sexually indebted to each other, as St Paul stated 'the wife has not the power over her own body, but the husband'. Therefore, both utilising biblical references and allusions, Chaucer, paradoxically, rebels from the male chauvinistic authority of the Church through Alison's overt carnality.

Within both extracts, Chaucer centralises on the inextricable link between female ~~erotic~~ sexuality and 'incestrie' within the institution of 'marriage'. In lines 77-114, Chaucer utilises the rhyming iambic couplet 'Crist' 'give it ro



the poore' / and in such wise folwe him and his poore', to emphasize ~~the~~ Alison's rebellion from the authority of religion, as where Jesus 'speak to hem' 'passittly', Alison admits 'that am nat I'. Therefore, Alison's sexual impurity and 'indulgence' in the 'fruit of marriage' highlights her inability to adhere to hegemonic ideals of femininity, and therefore her ~~ret~~ sexual rebellion. However, while Chaucer is perhaps uses Alison's rebellious nature to challenge the legitimacy of the Church, by characterising the wife as a hypersexual woman, Chaucer ~~also~~ engages with Medieval anti-feminist perceptions of femininity, which believed that women would become addicted to sex. Therefore, the inaccuracy of Alison's allusion to religious doctrine, in relation to female sexuality, suggests that Chaucer is trivialising female sexuality ~~and autonomy~~ and rebellion from authoritative voices. This is reinforced by lines 140-160, where Alison's biblical allusion to 'the Apocryfe', who 'solde' 'howbonde' 'to we w weel' is also inaccurate in regards to female sexuality. The power-laden language 'an howbonde' will be 'botne my dettour and my thral', ~~who~~ further highlights that Chaucer mocks female 'maistrie' and rebellion through the hyperbolic syntax. The rhyming iambic couplet 'I am his wyf / I have the power duringe al my life' illuminates that Chaucer perpetuates these anti-feminist views of women to wider society, as by



using a regular rhyme scheme, Chaucer shaped the poetry to be accessible to wider society, not just an educated reader. Therefore, it is arguable that Chaucer



**ResultsPlus**  
Examiner Comments

Textual support is embedded throughout the discussion, often in the form of words and phrases. However, the opportunity is also taken to look at the effect of some of Chaucer's couplets. Candidates sometimes forget that this is poetry and not simply a character study: this one has not.



**ResultsPlus**  
Examiner Tip

The second extract does not need to be chosen to contrast with the stipulated passage, nor do detailed links need to be drawn between them. However it can be helpful to use them to illustrate different aspects of the topic and of the context.

## **Question 6**

Candidates had little difficulty identifying a second passage to use in their answers, often choosing the fight between the Wife and Jankin to illustrate her strategies.

In this paragraph from early in a Level 4 response, the candidate makes good use of the text to convey both the Wife's treatment of her husbands and the ways Chaucer crafts the verse to create humour.

Chaucer presents the Wife as very cruel in extract one, he does this by expressing the Wife's enjoyment in recounting the her treatment of her husbands.

This is evident within, "I laugh when I thinke / How pithously a-night I made hem swinke!". She explicitly states the humor she, how she finds it humorous to think of forcing them to "swinke" - perform sexual acts - emphasizing her careless attitude. Moreover, the juxtaposition of "laugh" and "pithously", reveals her enjoyment. The rhyming couplet of "thinke" and "swinke", connote a jovial tone and this is exaggerated by the exclamation mark at the end of the phrase. Furthermore, Chaucer presents the Wife as a professional rhetorician, using heteroglossia, when she says "many a night they songen 'weilawey.'" (line 216). Chaucer in doing so, Chaucer emphasizes the Wife's jovial character, but he also who skillfully engages the audience.

However, the ~~exactly~~ <sup>the</sup> joy she ~~o~~  
receives from ~~torturing~~ ~~torture~~  
torturing her husbands, is a wider  
~~reflecti~~ comment on the institutionalised  
misogyny which existed in the 14<sup>th</sup>  
century. Chaucer subverts power in  
marriage, in order to illuminate the  
extent of female abuse.



**ResultsPlus**  
Examiner Comments

This extract shows discrimination and an awareness of craft that supports the Level 4 mark. The technical term 'heteroglossia' is used to good effect, supported as it is by appropriate quotation. The paragraph concludes with a relevant contextual comment that is developed later in the essay.



**ResultsPlus**  
Examiner Tip

Students can sometimes become so engrossed in describing Chaucer's characterisation of the Wife and the historical context that they neglect to consider the text as poetry. This extract shows one way to do this effectively.

## Question 7

This text produced some excellent responses on what can often seem challenging poetry. Centres appeared to have taken on board the value of a good grasp of the literary as well as social and historical context of Metaphysical verse. Many of the essays were detailed, alert to the poet's craft and a pleasure to read. For this question, good choices of a second poem to illustrate the use of 'dramatic devices' included Herbert's 'The Collar' and Donne's sonnet 'Batter my heart'.

In this extract, the candidate is exploring Vaughan's poem and refers also to their second choice, Donne's 'Batter my heart'. There is close attention to the text and the dramatic devices the poets use. The religious context is made explicit without overloading the discussion.

The essay as a whole, whilst not always sophisticated, demonstrated detailed evaluation with integrated contextual material. It was deemed to be worth placing at the lower end of Level 5.

In Henry Vaughan's poem, the dramatic device of anecdotal stories and real life stereotypes are used, whereas Donne uses intense violence as a focal point for his reader. Vaughan begins with the "doting lover", introducing a typical 'stock character', who he then begins to condemn for his focus on "his love, his fancy and his flight." The tricolon here shows the typical distractions a lover may face in the world, and almost acts as a warning against becoming consumed with God's creations rather than God as the Creator for the contemporary reader. This warning



is shown emphasized through the mentioning of the "Silly Snow of pleasure", with the syllable here alluding to evil, especially for the Christian reader who will be aware of the story of original sin. The anecdote of the "darksome statesman" is also used along with a warning against his "condemning thoughts" that will lead to his exclusion from salvation. Vaughan makes an incredibly controversial statement when he says that "church and altars fed" the type of man, suggesting that the church was corrupt. The biblical reference from Exodus when he writes "it rained about him blood and tears" reinforces the purpose of such anecdotal tools: to reinforce the importance of religion. It is as if Vaughan meant for his poem to be didactic as he asks people to identify their faults and to change them before judgement day comes. Donne, however, uses the dramatic device of violence to portray the pain associated with sin and the pain one must endure to achieve salvation. The narrator "kneels, breathes, shivers... breaks, blows, burns" in a lexical field of violence to ~~them~~ portray how he is a bad example of a devout Christian but also to show just how much he is willing to sacrifice and endure to be saved like Vaughan.



The close attention to detail, for example in the discussion of Donne's violent language choices, shows a firm control of the poetry.



This candidate was confident to use a quite closely integrated approach to the analysis of the two poems. This works well here, but is not essential, even at the highest level. The important thing is to keep close to the key words of the question as well as to the texts.

This discussion of the candidate's choice of 'The Collar' shows an assured command of the text and a close evaluation of the effects Herbert produces. This was overall a strong Level 5 response.

Similarly, in 'The Collar', Herbert begins his poem using a first person perspective which gives a rather dramatic opening: 'I struck the board, and cried, No more. / I will abroad - what? Shall I ever pine and sigh?!' Herbert, inspired by the letters of Donne, often used an abundance of dramatic devices in his poetry, evident



especially in this opening line. The verb 'struck' creates a violent and aggressive image, made all the more evident through the fricative 'k', making it rather onomatopoeic and thus shocking to a reader. Although poets often created personas for their poems, the aggression evident here is reminiscent of the Herbert family's infamous temper. Moreover, Herbert utilizes the dramatic device of rhetorical questions which demonstrates a sense of uncertainty over one's ~~own~~ own religion, evident ~~as~~ as the poem progresses. This would have been a feeling relatable to Herbert himself as he struggled over his role as an Orator at Cambridge, believing his was neglecting his faith and his God. Although the poet and speaker are not one and the same, such uncertainty evident through the use of rhetorical questions mimics Herbert's own life. It is interesting to note how these rhetorical questions appear both dramatic and accusatory, made all the more forceful by the monosyllabic nature of these opening lines. ~~Perhaps~~ In many ways, this 'muddling' word creates the sound of a beaching drum or muddling heart, once again another <sup>dramatic</sup> device used by Herbert to reflect the uncertainty of one's feelings towards his faith. This is further reflected through the use of varied line lengths throughout the poem as a whole, creating a sense of emotional trauma and uncertainty not just in the opening line but the poem in its ~~entirety~~ entirety.



The extract shows a sophisticated awareness that although knowledge of the poet's life and character can be helpful (and there is a brief and relevant reference also to the religious context) 'the poet and speaker are not one and the same'. The candidate's comments on the 'thudding beat' of the opening are particularly apt.



An awareness of the sound of the poems, ideally through reading aloud during preparatory study, should give students a better understanding of the dramatic nature of much poetry of this period.

## Question 8

This question also allowed students to display understanding of a key aspect of Metaphysical poetry. Poems such as Donne's 'The Flea' and 'A Valediction of Weeping', as well as Herbert's 'Redemption', were some of the choices that worked well with Lovelace's poem.

These concluding pages show a close reading of the texts ('A Valediction of Weeping' was the second poem chosen). There is a critical appreciation of the ways Metaphysical poets use wit and paradox to advance arguments. This sustained level of analysis richly deserved full marks.

Furthermore, the presentation of apparently unrelated ideas in both ~~poem~~ poems conveys ~~a sense of optimism that comes with a intimate~~ the intellectual nature of both poets, a use of wit that is typically ~~as~~ associated with metaphysical poetry. In 'To Lucretia, Going to the Wars' this is ~~is~~ especially ~~is~~ emphasised by the strange paradox in his concluding stanza, that 'I could not love thee, dear, so much, / loved I not honour more.' In a continuation of the theme of inconsistency, he playfully suggests that he cannot help but 'shall ~~also~~' adore' this situation; ~~note~~ note ~~how~~ however that the modal verb 'shall'



effect. Thus, as the direct address of 'you' or 'thy' in the poem ~~is~~ suggested, the disparate, apparently unrelated ideas ~~as seen in~~ the poem demonstrates an expectation of ~~deep~~ dialogue, a dependence on the affinity of the other for full richness of meaning, and by implication, the reciprocity of the ~~relationships~~ relationships portrayed.



**ResultsPlus**  
Examiner Comments

The candidate shows a sophisticated understanding here of the effect of aspects of the poet's craft such as rhyme, rhythm and line breaks. The awareness of the presentation of the loved ones as themselves sophisticated readers concludes the essay on a high note.



**ResultsPlus**  
Examiner Tip

Ensure that references to rhyme schemes, enjambment, etc, are illustrated clearly from the text, and their effect on the reader is explored (not merely asserted).



## Question 9

The Donne selection, like the Metaphysical Poetry anthology, provided some excellent work again this year. Although the religious, historical and social context might seem initially more demanding than that of more recent poetry, many candidates demonstrated an assured confidence in exploring the poetry with integrated contextual reference. For this question, successful second poem choices included 'The Apparition', 'A Valediction forbidding Mourning', 'The Anniversary' and 'Song ('Go and catch a falling star)'. As can be seen in the following examples, the range of choices indicates that good answers can be based on poems that complement each other or provide an alternative approach to the topic.

This extract from a mid-range response reveals a mixture of qualities. There is some relevant social and religious context about marriage and aspects of craft are mentioned, though not in much depth or detail. This is typical of work in Level 3.

Donne's anxieties and fears towards her lack of constancy is made ~~clear~~ clear through his use of rhetorical questions he asks towards his lover. This rhetorical device is also paired with his use of listing and anaphora 'Or', which strengthens his own constant lack of confidence in ~~his~~ his lover and perhaps alternatively, - since Donne is a continually ambiguous poet which could coincide with his doubts in faith - his constant anxieties and fear of losing her.

Within the poem, Donne explores the image of sleep and death, "bind but till sleep". In the 16th century it was a common belief and practice, that through marriage your souls and love will be bound forever - until death - through your physical being which is an example of platonic love of which Donne ~~refers~~ openly explores and again subverts the constancy of 16th century structural ideals ~~and~~ through anti-neoplatonism and neoplatonism. "or as the deaths, the marriages untie", here Donne explores ~~and~~ the range of possible things and examples that could cause their constant love and marriage to fail, and here - death being one of them. &



**ResultsPlus**  
Examiner Comments

Whilst the terminology used is relevant, the reference to 'rhetorical questions' is not exemplified and the use of text is rather sparse. Similarly, the discussion of marriage lacks clarity.



**ResultsPlus**  
Examiner Tip

Students should aim to keep their focus on the ways the poems display features of the key words in the question - in this case, 'constancy'. Donne's use of rhetoric is, rightly, identified as part of his approach to the topic: readers need to be shown how this works in these poems.

This is the confident opening of a secure Level 5 answer. There is a danger in loading too much background at the start of an essay, but in this case it is sharply relevant to the question and shows a sensitivity to the tone of much of Donne's writing. The introduction also makes a clear case for the candidate's choice of second poem.

A desire for constancy and contentment in love radiates through Donne's poetry, even permeating his satirical poems. Constancy implies a sense of reassurance and consistency as well as connoting a sense of monogamy within love. In the Elizabethan context of Donne's poetry, the rapid developments in science, where Galileo was able to prove Copernicus's heliocentric theory of the universe, and ~~navigation~~ exploratory chronicles must have been somewhat uprooting and ~~threatening~~ ~~attitudinal~~ contrasts the ~~to~~ more static medieval period which preceded it. Within such a turbulent, yet exciting age, Donne's poetry often seeks to find a sense of constancy in love, dismissing the revolutions of the outside world. This gives a sense of melancholy and disappointment to the ~~the~~ lack of fulfilment in 'A Woman's Constancy'. In contrast, Donne seems able to reconcile the religious turmoil, which profoundly affected his own family, and seek reassurance in the constancy of his faith for God and his passage to heaven, in 'A Hymn to God, my God, in My Sickness'.





The grasp here of a range of relevant contextual factors is impressive, from astronomy to 'religious turmoil'.



This extract shows the effectiveness of making the context directly relevant to the topic (here, constancy) rather than just illustrating specific features of the text.





The consideration of the poem's structure is integrated into the discussion of constancy.



This again illustrates the value of hearing, if only with the inner ear in the examination room, the cadence of the verse.

## Question 10

This question was also answered well by many candidates. They were able to identify ways in which Donne uses extremes in a range of other poems, from 'The Flea' to others of the Holy Sonnets. One response made very effective use of 'The Apparition' to demonstrate how Donne's religious zeal mirrors the extremity of his hatred for a scornful woman. Students were able to draw on a range of effective details such as Donne's pounding rhythm. Good use was made in some answers, as an additional approach to context, of the ways later writers such as Johnson, Dryden and Eliot wrote about Metaphysical poetry.

This is the opening of an assured response which demonstrates a good sense of the literary context. Later in the essay, this was deepened by discriminating connections to Donne's references to contemporary scientific and philosophical debates. It is a secure Level 4.

John Donne has such a verbal power and dramatic authority that it becomes almost impossible to separate the speaker from Donne himself. Donne avoided the tropes popular at the time such as ~~the~~ 'squire-queens' or pastoral love-lorn shepherds, nor does he tend to draw upon the great repository of classical myth. Donne tends to write out of the immediacy of a situation, and his caustic, cussing angry-wen panicked language at times - shedding light on his use of extremes, both good and ~~poor~~ bad. His works were not intended for the eyes of the general public. Rather that of an exclusively private audience, including the likes of his lover, allowing him to write of the outrageously intimate without the constraints of censorship, had his works been published. As a result, in both 'Holy Sonnet V' and 'Good Friday, 1613. Riding Westward', Donne explores a variety of extremes.

wholeheartedly revolving around the extremes the speaker would go to as to be repented by <sup>God</sup> for his materialistic earthly sins.

"Holy Sonnet V's" central conceit seems to revolve around that of the speaker's want, and desperate need, to be absolved of his sins and how "if it must be dreamed no more; But, O, it must be burnt". With the imagery of fire connoting that of lust and desire for carnal wants, ~~the~~ its inclusion surrounding repentance, it allows the reader to observe the speaker has grown tiresome of the life of lustful human desire, and does not in fact revel in his sins, but is willing to go to the extreme of burning them from his conscience as a means of being redeemed by God. The erratic nature of the rhyme scheme furthers the nature of desperation surrounding the speaker's repentance, ~~and~~ identifying the speaker must be absolved and burnt of his sins prior to his day of judgement, as to avoid burning in that of hell's eternal fire: the speaker will go to any extreme God deems necessary, as to successfully find sanctuary and peace in Heaven.

Repentance by any extreme necessary is similarly explored within Donne's "Goodfriday, 1613. Riding Westward", where the speaker enlightens the reader as to the journey he must take as "I am carried towards the West This day, when my soul's form bends towards the East".



The introduction gives a succinct overview of Donne's subject matter and style and how these relate to the writing of his time. The comments on 'Holy Sonnet V' on the second page show discriminating analysis of Donne's religious views and how the verse reflects powerful emotions, before beginning to explore the second poem chosen. The text is used well.



A good understanding of the belief systems of the time will stand candidates in good stead, enabling them to appreciate the nuances of Donne's arguments. It is best based on study of the poems rather than as 'bolt on' content. (This can also apply to work of other periods, right up to the work of poets such as Eliot or Larkin.)



## Question 11

Wordsworth's 'Lines Written in Early Spring' and 'Lines Composed a Few Miles above Tintern Abbey', as well as Blake's 'London' or Byron's 'Lines Inscribed upon a Cup Formed from a Skull' were popular choices deployed in response to this question. Candidates seemed well-placed to offer a range of interpretations to the open prompt, though some were rather too inclined to write at unnecessary length about contemporary social conditions rather than writing about the poems themselves. A balance needs to be kept: AO3 is only one of the three assessment objectives assessed in this section of the paper.

This high level response opens in a confident manner with an overview of the task offering relevant remarks on the poems and contexts.

human nature in Holy Thursday (Experience).

- Rime of an ancient.
- Divisive
- Holy Thursday - callous.
- thoughtless
- reconcilable?
- destructive - corrupt by experience
- lack of answer.
- Rime of AM
- redeemable through religion.
- destructive.

Plan.

Human nature is presented by Blake in Holy Thursday to have a moral decline over time. This is seen when evaluating the difference between Songs of Innocence: Holy Thursday versus Songs of Experience. Innocence outlines children to be innocent <sup>and pure</sup> ~~victims of~~ <sup>however</sup> the progression in Experience: Holy Thursday paints children as victims of corrupted society. To Blake, a Christian but also someone who rejected <sup>or</sup> organised religion of the church, children are born closest to God as they

state in industrialising into a new world. Blake <sup>goes on to</sup> emphasises

The divide of people as a result of corrupt humanity through juxtaposition of language across stanza 1 and 2 of Holy Thursday Experience. 'rich and fruitful land' against 'land of poverty' - <sup>directly</sup> ~~these~~ contrast one another and create disjoint between stanzas signifying the division of social class & groups in society which, by human nature has divided itself. <sup>if see last page started</sup>

Equally, Rime of an Ancient Mariner by Coleridge confronts ~~the~~ destructive human nature as a division between man and nature. The desire for development & progress is presented metaphorically through the killing of the Albatross by the mariner. The Albatross is a symbol of hope and good fortune for sea farers, Coleridge's use of this natural animal, part of nature, emphasises innocence and the purity of the natural world, akin to the children in

Holy Thursday. ~~This purity is then corrupt~~ this metaphor



A clear, evaluative and focussed argument - based on human nature as destructive - is developed by a consideration of the two works mentioned earlier, but which then expands with further analysis of Coleridge's *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*.



Having a secure knowledge of the full range of set poems supports judicious second text selection, as well as ensuring relevant engagement with the task.

In this script, the candidate engages with the task using both the named poem and Wordsworth's 'Tintern Abbey' to support a strong, discriminating though not evaluative exploration of human nature seen through a representation of childhood.

Blake reflects on the potential of humanity by depicting the children as desperate and lost, but by displaying that when reunited with God they can experience a full life. He illustrates the misery through the anaphora of the third stanza in "and their". It emphasises the extent of the devastation done to the innocents. The "sun never shines" indicating happiness isn't achievable and that they lack hope: "bleak and bare" further connotes a lack of hope, as well as starvation. The "eternal winter" suggests that the greed of the establishment has corrupted to purity of the children and that it can't be reversed due to the use of "eternal". However, Blake does suggest a somewhat melancholic redemption for them, and humanity as a whole, in his final stanza. He implies that in death humans are reconnected with God and can transcend their mortal woes as the "sun does shine" and "babe can never hunger". In this, Blake suggests that society is irredeemably corrupt and that human nature is worsened by experience, but by reconnecting with God (in life or death), humanity is able to return to true religion and be restored to childlike innocence.

Wordsworth further demonstrates that human nature can be redeemed through connecting with God.

Romantics believed strongly in pantheism, that God is everywhere, and so by appreciating and being one with nature can rekindle a lost connection to the divine spiritual realm. 'Tintern Abbey' explores this through presenting the shift in demeanour after the process of connecting to God:

"wild ecstasies" transform into "sombre pleasures" and the lost "appetite" is rekindled. This is illustrated further by using the semantic field of the body to symbolise the ingrained connection between man and God: "felt in the blood and... heart". By connecting human biology to the experience of redemption and religion, Wordsworth suggests that the ability for goodness is in fact innate, ~~innate~~ and flows through our blood, but can't always be reached due to societal temptations. This idea reflects Rousseau's assertion that "man is born free, but everywhere he is in chains", potentially suggesting that humans are corrupted by the evils surrounding them, and this limits their spiritual ability to transcend mortal existence and reach the spiritual realm.

Wordsworth suggests that this is an innate desire in his exultation of "how often has

My spirit turned to thee!', The exclamation further emphasises Wordsworth's message that humans are easily corrupted, but must seek redemption by reconnecting the severed relationship with God.

Both poets assert that human nature is fundamentally good and pure, but can easily become corrupt due to the evil of society and organised religion. While Blake suggests that man can be redeemed in death, Wordsworth advocates for the powerful influence of nature in restoring the <sup>lost</sup> connection with God. They both ultimately shun the evil influence of society over human nature, and suggest an individual can rekindle their spirituality by seeking God and distancing themselves from temptation for greed, wealth and power.





The candidate develops an analysis of craft which is successfully related to wider contexts and a previously-established line of argument.



Embedded use of textual support often helps control analyses of literary and linguistic features.

## Question 12

The personal reflection prompt in this question was considered from a variety of perspectives across a range of scripts. Popular second texts were often drawn from Byron and Shelley, including Byron's 'On this Day I Complete My Thirty-Sixth Year', Shelley's 'Stanzas Written in Dejection, near Naples' and 'Ode to the West Wind'. Students often made good use of their understanding of the importance of personal growth and reflection as a feature of Romantic literature.

This sustained and highly successful response shows a sophisticated understanding of craft and attempts balance in its view across both texts. It was awarded full marks.

Both poets also explore how self-reflection is required for inspiration and creative energy. Almost in a meta-fictional sense,

Shelley's 'ode' explores the power of creativity and poetry as a form of self-expression which arises, necessarily, out of self-reflection. Taking on the traditional Italian 'Terza Rima' ~~ABC~~ rhyme structure, Shelley structurally shows the ~~status~~ <sup>importance</sup> of expression through words: 'heart' 'Mankind' 'both' (previous 'universe' 'birth' 'loss') following ABA, B~~B~~CB, & The rhyme expands outwards - this gives an almost 'rebirth' effect - as one rhyme dies away, another arises. This parallels Shelley's conclusions of self-reflection - his powerlessness is overcome by the immortality and influence of words. The 'both' 'make us the lyre' <sup>(heart)</sup> makes a moment of revelation - that poetry is solution to lack of influence and power that has come with age 'heavy weight of hours'. The metaphor beautifully used 'drive my thoughts across the universe like scattered leaves' reflects this regaining of power - while once the 'wind' seemed to remind him of his powerlessness, it now works with him in unity. ~~and~~ just like the



Shelley's 'Ode to the West Wind' is well selected in support of a critical and evaluative discussion throughout the script. Here, the candidate exhibits some critical evaluation of meaning, and weaves in links between text and context.



Students are advised to consider how the crafting of the poems may be influenced by a range of contextual factors.

This controlled and fluent response opens with a clear understanding of the task, and establishes some useful contextual points on which to build. This is work already showing signs of high level analysis; it was awarded a mark on the border between Levels 4 and 5.

Keat's 'Sonnet on the Sea' is concerned with the Romantic affinity for nature and oneness with the natural world. Shelley's 'Lines Written in Dejection' seems to put this into practise - whilst Keat's poem ~~is~~ takes a more advisory tone, Shelley's shows us an actual moment of personal reflection in solitude, and his bout of melancholy that occurred during it.

Each poet is concerned with solitude as a key component of personal reflection. Keat's speaker mentions no other human figures apart from mythical allusions: the sea nymphs are the only humanoid figures mentioned, and even these are distanced by ~~how~~ the distance. Keats writes that ~~the~~ one will only "start as if the sea nymphs quired" if one sits alone in personal reflection. The 'Sea' itself is personified: thus, the speaker only has the sea for company. The sonnet is said to have been inspired by Shakespeare's King Lear, during the scene in which Edgar guides his blinded father. ~~Both characters are now~~ Edgar's father



The candidate shows a sharp focus on the thrust of the task by relating early discussions and contextual elements back to the question.



Literary background, including the kind of stimulus provided by another work demonstrated in the comment here, can be a useful source of contextual reference.



## **Question 13**

'Ode on a Grecian Urn' and 'To Sleep' proved popular choices of second poem for this question, which a significant number of candidates approached with a sense of confidence. Better answers moved beyond references to deaths in Keats own family to explore the ways a sense of mortality pervades the poems chosen.

This self-assured start to an evaluative and overall sophisticated script expresses its arguments in a clear and balanced way. This work is of Level 5 standard.

In 'When I have seen that I may cease to be' and 'To Sleep', Keats ~~conveys~~ demonstrates his acceptance to the prospect of death. <sup>due to his personal awareness of the inevitability</sup> In addition, within 'When I have seen' Keats explores his personal fears which stem from the prospect of death. Furthermore within 'To Sleep' Keats demonstrates his internal desire to <sup>permanently</sup> escape the external worries of society and the ~~int~~ his personal internal conflict through the prospect of death.

~~What~~ Within 'When I have seen', Keats effectively demonstrates his fear of <sup>being</sup> incomplete or forgotten which are driven by the prospect of the death. The first line of the Shakespeare sonnet, explicitly ~~demonstrates~~ conveys his joyful mentality, as the use of picaresque create a light phonetic echo of fear, as he realises that 'he may cease to be', which suggests that his ~~fear~~ fears linger and torment him. In addition, the <sup>image</sup> ~~metaphor~~ of harvest ~~conveys~~ successfully demonstrates his joy driven by the prospect of death, as he declares that ~~he~~ 'may cease to be Before my pen has gleaned my teeming brain'; the use of onomatopoeia heightens Keats' ~~concern~~ ~~of~~ concern, yet the image of a 'steaming brain', ~~at~~ alludes to Autumn and Harvest, which evokes an image of pending death and decay, which Keats fears. In-



The response provides a range of useful comment in the first few paragraphs on which to develop a depth of detail later in the answer. Writer's craft is considered alongside thought on contexts, and in direct reference to the task.



Achieving sustained detail in interpreting meaning in poetry is often grounded in a relevant reading of contexts to support a critical appreciation of the works.

This script shows a discriminating approach to the question, displaying overall a cohesive and controlled application in its analysis of the texts. It was awarded a Level 4 mark.

time that he has in the world, "Before high piled books". Possibly, Keats was so concerned that he would die<sup>being</sup> unfulfilled, war because he was surrounded by the reality of death his whole life. Keats came from a very modest background, and with moderny in the 1700s, came poverty and inevitably an early death. Many of Keats family members had died when he was of a young age, which may have made him hyper-aware that death could encroach upon him whilst being of a relatively young age, and before he could achieve what he aspired to do in his lifetime. The tone of the sonnet being sombre and somewhat ~~pessimistic~~<sup>pessimistic</sup> therefore becomes more understandable, as Keats had ~~been~~ grown up in a world where death was such a factor of every day life. Repeatedly, Keats uses ~~as~~ a lexical field of magic to demonstrate his concerns in being unable to experience the 'wonders of the world'. This includes Keats' reference to fate, when symbolising the 'hand', ~~when~~ when writing of the "magic hand of chance". Clearly, Keats feels that to be able to live a long and fulfilled life is a matter of fate, something that is not within one's control. In this line, Keats also uses chironomid and a caesura to express how he feels that love is a matter of chance, when referring to love ~~as~~ being and those romantic connections as being, "their shadows". The chironomid and caesura allow the reader to pause and reflect on the large impact that love has on people's lives. Keats is concerned



In this extract, we see a solid and, at times, subtle exploration of meaning, suitably supported with embedded examples and relevant context.

The reference to 'caesura' is, however, not exemplified so the comment has no real force (to make sense, at least a full line needs to be quoted and analysed).



Students are advised to quote freely from the text to support their answers - ensuring consistent relevance to the question and to the assessment objectives.

## Question 14

'On Sitting Down to Read King Lear Once Again', 'To Autumn' and 'Ode to Psyche' were among the most popular choices for this question, which invited a range of interesting interpretations from candidates. Better answers took the opportunity to make links to the ways in which the power of imagination is central to Keats' approach to poetry, drawing on appropriate material from both the poems and his other writings.

This take on Keats achieves strongly in Level 4, displaying another cohesive, controlled approach that is moving towards a critical and evaluative engagement with the texts.

boundless aspect of it. ~~It was~~ Nature was ~~not~~ considered as connected spiritually to humans and their emotions, and was something to be respected, something that could destroy and cause death ~~and~~ and decay, and also something as portrayed here to be uplifting and ~~also~~ generous.

~~Keats~~

Keats approaches this same sentiment in King Lear, ~~once speaking to romance~~ commending that the "olden pages" would be shut, and ~~the~~ to "wintry day" - "leave melodising on this wintry day". ~~Shutting "olden pages"~~ Keats's demand to "shut" the "olden pages" indicates the desire for something fresh, new, and undiscovered to be given for him, ~~and while he~~ he goes on to reference the



"wintry day", the adjective "wintry" perhaps symbolic of his days of death, of no ~~top~~ inspiration and no light - he wants to dissociate from this experience - "Adieu!" This ~~short~~ ~~short~~ ~~short~~ phrase - emphasized by the exclamation point - creates a grand sense of leaving something behind, as though he is shedding the heaviness of winter and the familiarity of "olden pages". Instead, he pursues "the bitter-sweet of this Shakespearean fruit", the imagery of "fruit" countering a burst of new life and abundance, contrasting with the death and silence of winter.

Ascension and being recreated personally as a writer seems to be ~~the~~ ~~an~~ the end, the result, the goal of touching the power of imagination - the old is purged. This purging and flipping of the previous



In the extract, the candidate shows a discriminating analysis of potential meaning, drawing on familiar readings of Romantic poets and grounded in Keats' use of language and symbolism.



Read widely where possible around the canon of work (in terms of genre and individual authors) to inform your interpretations of how poets use a theme. Keats' letters provide a rich source material for this kind of topic.

This script is one of many examples of mid-level work, showing a clear and relevant exploration of the task. Though it lacks in development and depth, it does display a solid knowledge and understanding of some of the poems' key aspects.

While Keats describes how literature has contributed to this growth of the imagination in 'Chapman's Homer' Keats also displays how human experience and the development of the soul can also lead to the growth of the imagination in 'Ode to Psyche'. Keats displays the growth of ~~the~~ his imagination after reading Chapman's Homer with his school friend Charles Cawden Clarke through the metaphor of the Spanish discovery of the new world. The poet narrator ~~meets~~ uses simile to compare himself to 'Stout Cortez' the direct comparison of himself

to an explorer which facilitated the growth of the Spanish empire displaying how education facilitated the growth of his own poetic imagination. Some critics have also noted that competition between explorers could be seen to parallel the competition Keats also felt with his fellow poets. While literature is said to be displayed as feeding the imagination in 'Chapman's Homer' the impact of human experience is linked to the growth of the imagination in 'Ode to Psyche'. Through the use of oxymoron in phrases such as 'pleasant pain' Keats explores what he called negative capability while also displaying how the good and bad experiences of life served to feed the poetic imagination. In displaying the growth of his imagination



and souls, described by Keats in a letter to George and Georgiana Keats as 'the veil of soulmaking', Keats calls on the medical imagery learnt during his time apprenticed to an apothecary. His description of the 'wild-ridged mountains' have been said to echo the structure of the cerebrum, ~~while~~ <sup>while</sup> the 'branched thoughts' <sup>of the final stanza</sup> have <sup>also</sup> been said to resemble the nervous system in the brain possibly taken from notes ~~or~~ from a lecture on the brain Keats is said to have attended. In this way Keats displays through medical imagery how his life experiences, such as the death of both his parents at a young age; has ~~severed~~ <sup>shaped</sup> the growth of his poetic imagination.



In the extract, the candidate reflects usefully on how meanings are shaped through language choices and links these points to contextual factors with some success.



Students are advised to use terminology accurately and always consider and explore the possible function and effect of aspects of a writer's crafting of their work. The comment on oxymoron here illustrates this: it is supported, but the link to negative capability could be developed more fully.



## Question 15

The Victorian poets selection attracted a relatively small entry; Christina Rossetti's poetry was the more popular text choice for this period. For this question on an extract from Tennyson's 'In Memoriam', candidates made good use of a range of second choices such as the second extract from that poem, ('VII: Dark house, by which once more I stand'), Browning's 'Home-Thoughts, from Abroad' and Hardy's 'The Darkling Thrush, I Look into My Glass' and 'A Wife in London'. Secure knowledge of the selection should enable students to choose a second poem that provides sufficient material on the topic to allow for detailed, focused exploration of the poet's craft.

In this extract from a strong Level 4 answer, the candidate makes good use of contextual knowledge to inform the analysis of Hardy's 'A Wife in London', at the same time addressing the ways Hardy invokes the senses through his use of fog.

Written towards the end of the Victorian Era, and during the period of the Second Boer War, 'A Wife in London' also encapsulates the use of senses, ~~however~~; however, is seemingly less certain in its portrayal. Divided into two parts (1

being the tragedy and // being the irony), Hardy introduces a mirrored sense of duality by linking the two with the repeated imagery of fog and pollution: "she sits in ~~hazy~~ tawny vapour" compared to "the fog hangs thicker". Interestingly, despite "The Tragedy" informing us to a sense of immediate emotional ~~disarray~~ disarray, rather than the subject of the poem being personified it's the "tawny vapour". This places the emphasis on the setting rather than the individual and represents the fallacy of the Boer War. ~~£~~

Straying from the early Victorian Era, in which the British public seemed to unite ~~in~~ in their undying faith and support for the army, the Boer war saw to ~~create~~ an escalated divide. Initial allegiance quickly turned into increasing separation and a lack of patriotism as the British public were exposed to the ~~revelation of~~ brutal realism of the war (exacerbated by dire mismanagement and ~~devastating~~ <sup>non-lethal</sup> casualties). Thus, Hardy was undoubtedly influenced by this sense of unease, the phyllic Boer war ~~seemingly~~ influencing his ~~sensory~~ utilisation of the senses. ~~The~~ ~~increased~~ ~~text~~ ~~is~~ This increased societal condemnation of the war is thus mirrored by the "fog" hanging "thicker". ~~Looking back to~~ Not only



The succinct but discriminating reference to the 'pyrrhic Boer War' helps place the wife's suffering in context, while the focus remains on 'the tawny vapour'.



Relevant context, such as shown here, can be used effectively without great detail if students grasp the significance for the poem they are exploring.

In this second extract from the same answer, the candidate demonstrates discriminating analysis of the ways Hardy describes the wife's sensations, and the effect that these have on the impact of the poem.

<sup>Hardy</sup>  
① ~~continuity from~~ <sup>parallel</sup> ~~parallel~~ The use of senses is particularly poignant ~~at~~ in 'A Wife in London' ~~and~~ as Hardy ~~shows~~ continues the sense of paralleled duality in spite of the seemingly separated parts of the poem. In 'The Tragedy', ~~the~~ the wife ~~has~~ <sup>feels</sup> ~~feels~~

is depicted as having "flashed news" in her "hand" mirroring the sense of touch in The ~~First~~ Irony segment as "~~Richard, the wife~~ "Richard, whom the worm now knows" maintains this. Interestingly, the distance between the segments serves ~~to~~ as a physical representation of the distance between her "hand" and "his" - death is absolute and hence so is the separation that is caused by it. However, more importantly, Hardy manipulates the use of time in order to heighten the emotionality derived by the intimate sense of touching. This intimacy associated with the "hand" is harshly juxtaposed with the use of "flashed" and "worm" as the incongruous pairings only increase this perceived distance. ~~Therefore~~, in terms of chronology, the news ~~is received before the letter~~ of her husband passing is received before the letter from the wife's husband. This is contradicted by the fact that "worm" ~~and here~~ (by implication images of death and burial) follows last, before "flashed" (symbolic of hope, despite fleeting and sporadic). Thus, ~~#~~ through the use of ~~set~~ the intimate senses between husband and wife, Hardy instills a sense of nihilism (characteristic of the



Late Victorian Era) as ~~the~~<sup>his</sup> death ~~is~~ can be perceived as being inevitable from the beginning. This inevitability undercuts the typical ~~romanticisation~~<sup>romanticisation</sup> of death so previously pertinent in society.



This section shows the candidate in full command of the details of the poem - including the structure. Embedded quotation is used most effectively and the opportunity is taken to comment on the way Hardy reflects his view of the late Victorian period.



Understanding that the period was one of considerable change should enable students to identify, as here, ways in which the context changed during the course of Victoria's reign.



## Question 16

Poems that worked well as second choices for this question included Elizabeth Barrett Browning's own *Grief*, Tennyson's *In Memoriam VII: Dark house, by which once more I stand* and Charlotte Brontë's *Stanzas - (Often rebuked, yet always back returning)*.

This is the opening of an essay on the border between Level 3 and 4. The approach is clear and there is an understanding of Barrett Browning's methods but the analysis often lacks development.

Both 'Died' by Elizabeth Barrett Browning and 'Grief' by her as well both look at the social conventions of Victorian respectability and death.

Elizabeth Barrett Browning presents the social conventions, <sup>through an obituary in this poem.</sup> around death to be pointless as ~~the~~ we all die so are all ultimately the same, implying they're pointless. The use of a metaphor in "opinions gold or brass are null" connotes the fact that ~~is~~ what ~~pe~~ judgements people make in obituaries are pointless as once you are dead we are all of the same standard. The comparison between "gold" which connotes luxuries, riches and immense

value, in contrast to "brass" which has a lower <sup>metal</sup> value ~~because~~ is shown to demonstrate the fact that social class, prevalent in Victorian Society isn't valid once you die as it gets forgotten about all we all decompose in the same way so we are all equal, suggesting the social conventions are pointless. This idea of equality could be influenced by Browning's social liberal view, which battled with the idea of power and inequality, as a result of her father and brother's involvement in politics, so Browning could be trying to convey a more liberal approach to promote social change. In addition, the use of enjambement is used by Browning to convey the inevitability of death, moving to the progression of time, to show we ~~will~~ will all end up in the same condition.

The Browning also explores the idea of judgement surrounding social conventions about death. The juxtaposition of "weakness" and "greatness", is used by Browning to show the differing opinions of people when they die, emphasising how the focus is taller

away from the person who was actually  
died, highlighting the selfish element  
of Victorian society. She used a raw, somber  
field of death in the words "teeth",  
"skull" and "frail" is used by Browning  
to show the realities of death and the  
gruesome element of it, juxtaposing the  
facial stamp of Victorian respectability  
that is placed on the process and how it  
takes away from the sadness and  
grievance of that loved one. Barrett Browning  
could be ~~emph~~ demanding how <sup>grievance</sup> ~~the~~  
should be carried out privately and  
deeply emotionally invested - similar to the  
opinion she conveys in 'Grief': ~~in addition~~  
~~to~~ This ~~is~~ could be a way that she  
dealt with the death of her brother  
Edward in 1840. <sup>after her daughter came to see her</sup> and didn't agree  
with the social conventions surrounding  
his death, as she felt guilty about the  
event. The use of ~~so~~ mostly consistent  
rhythm reflects Browning is sure of her  
opinion. Also, it could convey the fact  
it is unfair to ~~be~~ make judgments  
~~in addition~~, the repetition about people  
once they're dead as ~~if~~ they can't defend

themselves and the explicit reminder through the semantic field of death as well as the repetition of 'dead' throughout the poem implies the fact they will be in the same position, to act as a reminder, which Browning ~~could~~ does to deter the fascial elements of social conventions surrounding death.



**ResultsPlus**  
Examiner Comments

To move higher the candidate needed to explore the poetry more closely, with more frequent quotation (there are signs of this, for example at the top of page 27 on the 'gruesome element of death'). A sharper focus on the contextual links would also show greater discrimination in evaluating relevant Victorian conventions and, if appropriate, links to the poet's own experience.



**ResultsPlus**  
Examiner Tip

This extract includes a reference to the effect of enjambment; without quotation of a couple of lines at least, and exploration of the effect of the poet's use of the break, this approach (too frequently seen) adds little to the analysis.



## Question 17

The Selected Poems of Christina Rossetti was very popular this year, the third most popular text. Rossetti's use of familiar forms, direct language and, often, clear messages helped her to become a popular poet and has made her an accessible choice of examination text: the questions prompted responses from a wide range of abilities and marks were awarded across the range.

The analysis of Rossetti's craft has improved overall since the first year of the examination, recognising her use of imagery and her subtle manipulations of conventional forms and apparently plain language. There has also been improvement in exploration of the influence of context upon her poems. There was a tendency to cite Rossetti's High Anglicanism without looking at her wider appeal as a Christian poet or to mention the work at the Highgate 'House of Charity' without using material that was more relevant to the texts being explored, although many candidates were able to use appropriate contextual material and make clear or discriminating points about its impact.

This question was tackled by a third of the candidates who responded to this text. 'Some Ladies' is an early text, and in some ways atypical, and written as if by a character in a novel written in her late teens: some candidates missed the humour that is present in the poem. It was paired with a wide range of other poems, including effective pairings with 'Passing and Glassing' (a popular choice), 'At Home', 'World, Babylon the Great' and 'Maude Clare'.

This response reaches the high end of Level 3, with a clear and logical (if pedestrian) argument, clear exploration of writer's craft and clear understanding of Rossetti's views about what God had decided about women's place in the world. A clear plan, focussing on the treatment of vanity, outlines key points about the named poem and 'At Home' and these are expressed accurately with relevant textual detail and contextual information.

Rossetti presents vanity in 'some ~~was~~ ladies dress in muslin full and white' and 'At Home' in ~~now~~ a negative way, using ~~imagery~~ language techniques to portray her passionate vehemence for vanity, particularly in women, making allusions to Rossetti's strong religious beliefs in the traditional role of women and men, which heavily influenced her work - this religious elitist view particularly prominent in 'At Home' and 'some ladies dress in muslin, full and white':

In 'some ladies' Rossetti uses ~~then~~ a simile to show her contempt of society's obsession with being materialistic

"great coat like a sack"

Comparing the woman's dress to a sack is used as an insult and clearly shows the reader the narrator disapproves of women wearing big coats that are luxurious, and is passionately against ~~be~~ falling into the societal norm of shopping for the latest trends, as she believes ~~vanity~~ vanity is sinful and a regretful part



of her society.

This can also be seen in the metaphor

"Towering above her sex with hoard height"

The language used is hyperbolic, reflecting the narrator's vehemence that women should not seek to be seen; this could be related to Rossetti's unsupport of the Suffragette movement as when she was asked by another poet to Angela Webster for her support at a demonstration, her reason for rejection was her claim that the bible provided an unalterable depiction of men and women and the roles they are permitted to play. ~~This would explain~~



**ResultsPlus**  
Examiner Comments

The candidate correctly cites Rossetti's belief about the place of women in the world and the sinful nature of societal norms but, by missing the early nature of the named poem, makes the satire possibly more serious and vehement than the verse, in the words of a rather rebellious character in her teenage novel, might have intended when the writer was 19.

Rossetti's rejection of Augusta Webster was in 1881, when she was 51. The candidate is rewarded, because they are correct to describe attitudes that, in many ways, remained throughout her life but the response misses the opportunity to explore whether the frosty letters of middle age reflect any change from a juvenile verse. This could have been developed through links with 'At Home', written when Rossetti was 28, to tease out complexities in the writer's development and bring discrimination to a clear argument.



When a writer has a lengthy career, and there is evidence of the dates that many poems were published - and often written - it is helpful to know whether the text being explored is an early poem, a work from a middle period or a late work. Context can then be applied with some precision and aspects of the writer's views and craft considered in the light of change: have techniques or opinions changed or is there a marked continuity?

This level of detail - often used to effect with Keats, where there were apparent changes from one year to another in a short career - can help to bring out complexities in Rossetti and move potential Level 3 exploration to developed, discriminating analysis worthy of Level 4 or better.

## Question 18

This question was popular, with two-thirds of candidates responding choosing to explore hardship: 'Uphill' was often been a chosen poem in the previous examinations, and was successfully paired with 'An Apple Gathering', 'World', 'At Home' (written on the same day as 'Uphill'), 'Memory', 'Echo' and 'What Would I Give?' Some less effective pairings were made with 'Goblin Market', 'A Christmas Carol' and 'Maude Clare'.

Responses to this question were mostly at least clear, with candidates able to see Rossetti's fear of Hell and her religious doubts. Contextual information about the importance of her faith and hardships she had faced was applied in a relevant way. Stronger candidates looked in detail at form and language in both poems, some pointing out the similarity of the form of 'Uphill' to religious observance.

This candidate produced a controlled, measured (if sometimes 'clunky') response, despite very occasional errors, and analysed both the named poem and 'An Apple Gathering' in some detail. Contextual detail was appropriate to the texts. Despite a lack of fluency, the discriminating choice of evidence and the detailed analysis is sustained, making this a useful illustration of how to develop a response to Rossetti that does beyond clear understanding.

Hardship is often portrayed in Rossetti's poetry and the reasons for the hardships are often different. Uphill depicts religious hardships which bring faith to the centre of Rossetti's poem just as others do. An apple gathering depicts different hardships and there is a clear exploration of temptation and women in society. Within Rossetti's own life hardships were focal and thus it is clear to see why Rossetti often focuses on them, as a creative outlet to explore her ambiguous emotions.

Uphill focuses on a religious struggle and one reading of the poem suggests the speaker is perhaps questioning their faith. The poem is rich with rhetorical devices as the poem is structured around the speaker asking a question whilst an omniscient voice answers. This structure already

Suggests the speaker is questioning their faith. The language itself is cautious as there is clear hesitancy within the tone, 'But is there for the night a resting place?' 'But' used here clearly depicts the speaker's hesitancy. The title itself, Up-hill, alludes to a struggle and a hardship. One reading of this poem suggests the hardship is mental, whilst the speaker is struggling to come to terms with their religion 'will there be beds for me and all who seek?' which alludes to the biblical context of soul sleep which Christians believed would occur before judgement day. Rossetti perhaps is also voicing a struggle with death as it is clear the speaker is apprehensive in reaching heaven, 'Then must I knock, or call when in sight!'

An Apple Gathering starkly contrasts the spiritual struggle explored in Up-hill. Whilst it can be interpreted to depict mental suffering like Up-hill, Rossetti is much more focused on the idea of temptation as she is in other poems such as Goblin Market and The World. The speaker in An Apple Gathering seems to have given in to temptation as we start reading; 'I plucked pink blossoms from my apple tree and wore them

all that evening in my hair'. Flowers in Victorian literature have connotations with virginity which suggests to readers that the speaker has given in to temptation as she has 'plucked' 'blossoms'. 'Blossoms' suggest youth and innocence which suggests to readers the 'blossoms' have been plucked too soon, thus the speaker has given into temptation too soon. The poem is structured around the hardships faced as a result of temptation. 'In due season' when the speaker was ready she 'found no apples' had grown. Rossetti perhaps touches on the Victorian marriage market here as it was often believed if a girl had previously lost her virginity she was unfit for marriage. Rossetti is ambiguous whilst she writes about common Victorian traditions, however her work at Highgate with fallen women perhaps suggests her poetry is condemning Victorian society as she wished to help these fallen women. The speaker in 'An Apple Gathering' can be considered a fallen woman as she was left 'empty-handed' whilst 'Plump Gertrude passed me with her basket full.' The final stanza of the poem can be read to show the mental hardship the speaker is facing with the repetition of 'loitered' which juxtaposes the imagery of the 'dews' which 'fell fast'. The imagery Rossetti uses clearly shows the



speaker is stagnant and unable to move on, which perhaps shows her mental struggle to move on whilst the world around her is able to 'pass' and 'hasted'. The contrast in verb choice which isolates the speaker clearly shows the hardships she is facing.

An alternative reading of ~~spirit~~ 'Up-hill' shows the speaker is facing physical hardships rather than psychological hardships. The title itself depicts a physical struggle and this idea is foregrounded in the first stanza, 'Does the road wind up-hill all the way?' The use of 'wind' and 'up-hill' in the first line clearly shows the physical nature of the speaker's journey which will last 'from morn to night'. The long and physical journey is contrasted by the idea of rest as the end as there's 'a roof' that acts as 'a resting place' as well as 'beds' awaiting the 'travel-sore and weak'. The speaker's language is full of imagery depicting a hard journey whilst the voice that answers them acts to give 'comfort' and foregrounds the idea of 'rest'. There are many interpretations as to who the voice is whether it be the speaker's mind, Jesus or God himself. Given Rossetti's religious background as an Anglo-Catholic it is clear to



see why interpretations often lead to a religious reading of her poem.

An Apple Gathering similarly explores physical hardships which the first person speaker faces. One reading of the poem suggests the speaker is barren and unable to have children. The title itself alludes to the idea of fertility as 'apples' were often used to symbolise the ~~sexual~~ reproductive organs of women in literature. The speaker is 'empty-handed' and without children whilst 'Lilian' and 'Willie' had 'heaped-up basket(s)'. Although physical hardships are only subtly explored through connotations to fertility, the poem can also be read to explore the Victorian marriage market and the 'apples' could be considered potential suitors as the other female characters in the poem have 'full' and 'heaped' baskets. However, the speaker can still be interpreted to suffer physically as she observes 'a stronger hand' than 'Gertrude's' 'helped it (her basket) along.' Here Rossetti perhaps comments on the belief that women needed men and were physically weaker than them, which is why the speaker suffers as she is without a 'stronger hand'. However, it appears the speaker does not need a male partner as she calls 'Willie' her 'love less

'worth' which can be considered word play of worthless. She later comments on 'rosiest apples' being 'of far less worth than love' which can be interpreted to suggest she is able to function without the help of a husband as 'love' is more important to her than the 'apples' in the marriage market. This is a feminist reading of the poem and it is unclear whether or not the speaker is able to face her hardships alone given the imagery of the last stanza as explored earlier. Nevertheless whether the poem depicts fertility or the marriage market the speaker can be considered to face physical hardships.

Both poems perhaps comment on a woman's place in society. Rossetti as a female poet would have been familiar with the misogynistic nature of society as many of her most accomplished poems had been rejected by editors. It is naive to consider Rossetti anti-feminist as she broke the boundaries of Victorian society to be an unmarried writer in a time when all that was expected of women was to be a wife. An Apple Gathering questions a woman's place in society as it appears the speaker is lost and isolated without a husband or child.

She is 'mocked' and repeatedly 'passed' by her 'neighbours' due to her social situation. She is treated poorly by society in the poem but it is unclear whether or not Rossetti is condemning her actions, and thus the hardships she is facing are punishment or whether she's allowing a reader to feel sympathetic towards the speaker and thus disregard the views of society. A twenty-first century reader would most likely feel sympathy towards the speaker given that views on women have evolved immensely. But Rossetti clearly comments on the hardships women, especially those which noble ladies had to face.

Up-hill can equally be subjected to a feminist reading although if Rossetti is exploring a woman's place in society it is much more subtle. Like An Apple Gathering Rossetti references temptations women may face, 'May no the darkness hide it from my face'; however this 'darkness' which symbolises temptation can also be interpreted to comment on earthly temptations which distract from God. Rossetti herself gave up hobbies such as chess in order to devote herself to God.

In conclusion, An Apple Gathering and Uphill

both show their speakers face hardships both due to physical and psychological reasons. However the reasons behind the hardships contrast each other and An Apple Gathering and Up-hill are symbolic of two major themes and hardships she faced in her own life; questioning her faith and the temptation she felt towards men in her younger years.



**ResultsPlus**  
Examiner Comments

In the extract, the candidate chooses to apply a feminist reading to the texts feeding into AO1. Again, this is not fluent, and the reference to chess, although correct, adds a touch of bathos, but the reading is applied with some discrimination and extends the argument being made. This candidate does enough, across the piece, to display consistent Level 4 skills with occasional evaluation.

## Question 19

For the third year, entries for twentieth century poetry were comparatively small, although this question was a popular choice on this text. A significant number of candidates responded successfully to the apparent simplicity and subtle ambiguities in 'Mending Wall': the analysis of candidates was usually at least clear and often discriminating or better, with responses probing the complexities of the juxtaposition of views. A wide range of other modernist texts were used, with effective analysis of, for example, Lawrence's 'Snake', Auden's 'Lullaby' and 'Recuerdo' or 'Time does not bring relief' by Millay.

This long extract, missing only the controlled introduction and conclusion, shows a response that largely sustains the controlled expression, discriminating choice of evidence and developed exploration of a strong Level 4 and edges into Level 5 by examples of sophisticated analysis of the writer's craft, as in Millay's juxtaposition of conventional form ('atypical of a Modernist') with unconventional ideas and in appreciation of tone and language.

Frost uses blank verse <sup>which is unrhymed iambic pentameter</sup> to create a conversational tone, which combined with his rural New England setting, suggests that Frost is exploring the complex philosophical and social issues surrounding relationships, that lie behind everyday, ordinary settings, experiences and relationships. Additionally, Frost uses lots of monosyllables to evoke the simplicity of the things that the complex issues hide behind and to



imply his conflicting views on relationships to the primitive attitudes of his neighbour. Contrastingly, Millay uses a conventional sonnet form, which was atypical of the Modernist movement, to criticise conventional aphorisms surrounding relationships, highlighting how her conventional form juxtaposes sharply with her unconventional ideas. The sonnet is split into octave which embodies her critique, and sestet, which is her inability to move on from the memories of her previous relationship.

Both poets explore present wisdoms surrounding relationships as being inadequate. Frost uses the repetition of the direct quotation "Good fences make good neighbours" coupled with the refrain 'something there is that doesn't love a wall', in which the ambiguous noun 'something' can be interpreted as nature, suggesting that building walls is an inherently unnatural process. The two juxtaposing viewpoints emphasise Frost's disagreement with the proverb that suggests relationships are better with barriers though they are futile and impermanent. This view of inadequacy is further developed by the simile 'like an old-stone savage armed', in which the noun 'savage' connotes being primitive and underdeveloped, implying that this viewpoint



regarding relationships is regressive. Criticising conventional wisdoms was a typically Modernist idea. Similarly, Millay uses the verb 'lied', connoting deliberate deception, in the opening phrase 'time does not bring relief; you all have lied' to evoke a criticism of the idea that time passing ends romantic feeling as being deliberately misleading. This is combined with the exclamatory sentence 'who told me time would ease me of my pain!' which implies a sense of extreme frustration at the inadequacy of conventional wisdoms regarding relationships. Her criticism of conventional wisdoms may have been influenced by her own unconventional Bohemian lifestyle in which she challenged social conventions and stereotypical gender roles, having an open marriage and <sup>relationships</sup> ~~affairs~~ with people of both genders.

Furthermore, Frost presents a relationship that is full of conflict and disagreement. Frost uses the imagery of the 'outdoor game' coupled with the personification of the 'apple trees' to create a childish tone, implying that he is mocking his neighbour and his view on relationships. Also, Frost uses a lexical field of the supernatural: 'spell', 'Elves', coupled with the alliteration in 'what I was walling in or walling out', in which the verb 'walling' connotes

division and separation in a relationship, suggesting that the ~~divisive~~ neighbour's devout and unwavering belief in barriers has caused a divisive conflict in their relationship. Frost's presentation of barriers in relationships may have been influenced by him writing this poem in 1914, at the start of the First World War, - a conflict in which barriers had increased the already escalating political tensions between the Allies and the Axis Powers fighting the war.

Contrastingly, Millay presents the speaker as longing for the return of her former relationship. She employs the syntactic parallelism 'I miss ~~her~~ him in the weeping of the rain; I want him at the shrinking of the tide', in which distinct verbs 'miss' connote yearning for emotional connection and 'want' connote desire for sexual reconnection, which, coupled with the imagery of 'the shrinking of the tide' implies the speaker's feelings of hopelessness and isolation now that her relationship has ended. Additionally, Millay ~~combines~~ <sup>juxtaposes</sup> natural imagery of decay in 'old snows melt from every mountain-side' in which the verb 'melt' implies transience and impermanence, with the synthesis of the verb 'heaped', connoting a crippling burden, and the sibilance in

'so stand stricken', which slows the pace of the line, to suggest that the speaker feels a seemingly permanent pain due to the end of her relationship. This sense of inescapable memory is further developed by the verb 'brim' which connotes excess, and overflow, implying the speaker is unable to find any escape from the memories of the relationship.



Contextual links included elements of the writers' biographical, literary, geographical and historical influences, with an accurate and appropriate link between the tensions in Frost's poem and mixed reactions in America to the outbreak of World War I.



Demonstrating an understanding of tone in poetry, as seen in the comments on both poems here, is one of the markers of a higher-order response.

## Question 20

Although this question was a less popular choice, most candidates responded to the wealth of contextual references in Auden's poem. A minority of candidates took a narrow focus on the Great War but most candidates saw that the text, from 1952, looks back, when describing the images on the shield, on a half-century of modern cruelty as well as the history of humanity. A second Auden poem, 'Musée des Beaux Arts', was chosen by most candidates and used successfully.

This Level 5 response demonstrates a discriminating, and often sophisticated, understanding of Auden's juxtaposition of modern horror and Homeric brutality and the writer's craft in using language and form to juxtapose the ancient world with the contemporary.

In 'The Shield of Achilles', Auden uses the art of the past, Homer's Iliad, to explore the consistency of mankind's consistent brutality. Auden applies the Homeric epithets: 'Iron-hearted man-slaying' to the hero of the Iliad, 'Achilles' to illustrate the consistency of mankind's brutality. The Homeric epithets, as well as the subject they are applied to, can be

understood as aspects of art from the past, but Auden ~~is~~ repurposes them to illustrate a consistent brutality in human nature. ~~In~~ In particular, the metallic description of Achilles as 'iron-hearted' fits the persistent semantic field of dullness: 'like lead ... without a feature, bare and brown' which is used to describe Auden's contemporary totalitarian world. Therein, Auden applies dull, brutal Homeric epithets to Achilles so as to ~~to~~ make him ~~Synecdochell~~ Synecdochell of the human race as a whole, particularly its aggression. ~~This is contrasted to the~~ ~~to~~ Art is used by Auden in 'The Shield of Achilles' to understand the brutal consistency of human nature, as well as to elevate the classical world of Ancient Greece.



**ResultsPlus**  
Examiner Comments

In this extract, towards the end of the response, the candidate mingles AO1, 2 and 3 in a sophisticated manner to bring out the interplay of contexts that Auden is asking us to consider.





'The Shield of Achilles' is a text that indicates the advantage of researching the publication date of the poem that is being studied. Auden is often seen as a poet of the 1930s, but this poem was first published in 1952 and gave its title to a collection published in 1955. Some responses focused on a narrow range of contexts, but awareness that it was written after the holocaust, after the nuclear bomb and after the revelations of the gulag enable the reader to bring out the wealth of visual references throughout the poem. Such research can be equally useful for many writers in the Paper 3 list, especially when the writer has an extended career.



## Question 21

As in previous years, Eliot was chosen by a minority of candidates, although both questions were equally popular. The striking visual imagery in 'Rhapsody on a Windy Night' tempted some candidates to describe or narrate without sustained reference to the question, which focuses on Eliot's use of time. The stronger candidates were able to explore the ways that the intervals of time and the lamps unite the seemingly disparate images and to effectively analyse other poems, including 'The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock', 'The Fire Sermon' and 'Death by Water' (although detailed attention to text is, of course, necessary in order to meet higher levels of the Assessment Criteria when using a short text such as 'Death by Water').

This extract demonstrates effective reference to the question, and works at an analytical level, linking the use of time with mortality, as in this extract. The response attained a Level 4 overall, despite some sophisticated analysis, partly because of some brevity but also because of relatively limited textual analysis of Eliot's craft to underpin often insightful conceptual analysis.

The narrator of 'Rhapsody on a Windy Night' appears to be seized a fearful delirium acquired by way of the damages which the poem's urban world have ~~been~~ <sup>inflicted</sup> upon him during the day, the echoes of which haunt him on his nocturnal ramble. Time appears to be central to this sense of madness, as the lines 'Midnight shakes the memory / As a madman shakes a dead geranium' communicate a fear of the way in which the passage of time distorts ~~the~~ and fades the memory, robbing in the process one's sense of identity. The crazed image of dead flowers being shaken carry the notion that not only is the vitality which he wishes to resume already <sup>'dead'</sup> ~~the~~, rendering his ruminations futile, but also the idea that his entire mental inventory - that is, his sense of self, earned through memory - is capable of being stripped away from him, like so many disintegrating petals. In other words, it is ~~this~~ amnesia which is the object of fear in this first stanza, which may be linked to the

idea of trauma given Eliot's concern with the emotional devastation of the post-war generation.

~~Time~~ Tied to this fear of amnesia is the fear of death, meaning that time is presented as a fearful drive not just for its capacity to hollow out our minds, but to push us towards our physical end. This notion of death's inevitability is conveyed in the rhyme of 'life' and 'knife' in the final two lines, made especially jarring by the absence of rhyme throughout the rest of the poem. The juxtaposition of the two, paired with their closeness, emphasises the fragile nature of life and the piercing <sup>danger of a blade</sup> ~~danger of a blade~~, and that the two may be on the cusp of intersection as it is only time, which is ultimately ~~the~~ a continually-closing gap, which separates the two. This fear of death is furthermore highlighted by the duality of the meaning of the word 'mortal' as revealed by the association of 'life' and 'knife'. In other words, 'life' is mortal in that it is subject to death, and a 'knife' embodies an alternative definition, as that which is capable of causing death. The ultimate effect is ~~the~~ of death's imminence and ever-presence under the illusion of upholstery created by life, much like the skull beneath the roses in Webster's 'The White Devil'.



In this extract, one of the stronger sections of the response, the candidate develops the argument with analysis of the impact of the final rhyme in a poem with limited use of rhyme to juxtapose ideas: the response argues persuasively that the rhyme appears to narrow the gap between these lines, and, implicitly, between life and death.



In Paper 3, the meaning of the text is central. Meeting the criteria at the higher levels requires integration of relevant argument, textual evidence and contextual links. Isolated word level analysis or 'feature spotting' occurs when textual exploration becomes separated from the argument. It is equally important to ensure that the argument is bringing out the meaning of the text, and referring constantly back to textual detail through reference and quotation.

## Question 22

The focus on character in this question represented a challenge for some candidates who described or paraphrased the central characters and their conversation, but the majority of candidates explored the subtlety of the relationship and the questions it posed about the power and control exercised by the protagonists. Many candidates used 'The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock' as their chosen poem, although not always successfully: the named poem was effectively paired with texts as varied as 'Gerontion', 'Whispers of Immortality' and 'Sweeney Among the Nightingales'.

The range of responses to this question demonstrate the value of succinct but appropriate contextual knowledge. There is a wealth of detail about the contexts of Eliot's development as a poet but the application of this knowledge to 'Portrait of a Lady' varied widely. At least one candidate supported their analysis with appropriate information from the recent biography, where a particular relationship is linked to this text, but some responses lacked the necessary detail to support otherwise discriminating arguments about the two imagined characters in this text, about Eliot's use of the lady's monologues and about his depiction of the man's reactions in the lady's room and after he has left.

In this extract from a Level 5 response, the candidate uses analysis of the staged scene to juxtapose the romantic elements with the man's reference to 'Juliet's tomb', developing the juxtaposition and contrast of images in a sophisticated way to illustrate possible contrasts in the ways each character views the relationship between them.

While Eliot is able to carefully examine the character of Prufrock by presenting his thoughts, in the "Portrait of a Lady" the readers are displayed <sup>with</sup> two characters, their interactions stripped from context, and left to assess the character of the "lady" and the younger man through her words and how they translate in his head. Like Prufrock, the reader can see the lady's desire

for there to be intimacy as she arranges a "scene". However, Eliot suggests her desires only create a claustrophobic atmosphere. A semantic field of acting, with the words "scene" and the night later "coming down" like a curtain suggests falseness, highlighting the desperation of the woman's character as she tries to be something she is not to impress him. In his head, her attempts to create intimacy only create an "atmosphere of Juliet's tomb" suggesting the man is uncomfortable and perhaps only stays out of guilt.

The falseness of the relationship is reflected by the motif of music which runs throughout the poem. As the woman speaks about "Chopin", there is perhaps a hint that their relationship is founded on music and that they perhaps met at a concert as she sees it as something they have in common. Eliot presents her as a needy character through how her words translate in to the younger man's internal monologue. She uses affected speech, calling life "cauchemar" which is French elevated lexis for nightmare. Yet, to the man, all he ~~hears~~<sup>hears</sup> is the oxymoron of a "capricious monotone" as he is bored by her attempts to "resurrect" Chopin to force intimacy.



The close attention to language shows critical evaluation of Eliot's craft. The use of the language of theatre is established, and quickly developed into the sense of falseness which, in turn, is shown to reveal desperation and desire to impress: the argument is developed and supported with textual reference and quotation in six lines and two sentences, with clarity and economy. The paragraph concludes by deftly bringing in the atmosphere of Juliet's tomb to suggestion the man's discomfort and possible guilt.



This extract demonstrates the value of succinct, but appropriate contextual knowledge which is able to pick up the many references that are embedded in Eliot's work, such as the mention of Chopin here.



## ***Question 23***

No responses were seen on either question on this text.

## ***Question 24***

No responses were seen on either question on this text.

## Question 25

Although the Movement selection prompted no responses this year, a significant number of candidates studied Larkin and both questions were chosen by candidates across the ability range. This question was the more popular and candidates responded with interest to the powerful images of the armada of passing ships followed by the last ship which will not pass. A range of other texts were effectively used, including 'Wants' (which worked well), 'Going', 'Myxomatosis' and 'Church Going'.

The majority of responses were at least clear, and most candidates had a secure view of Larkin's pessimistic views and rejection of 'poetic language'. Many candidates, however, did not probe the choices of language and form to make developed points about the writer's craft, remaining clear rather than showing discrimination through detailed and well-chosen analysis. There was sometimes a reliance on paraphrase when stronger candidates were able to develop understanding of the subtleties in the texts and a broader sense of the possibilities within Larkin's approach. Weaker responses often included biographical detail (such as a collection of knitted animals) that was of marginal relevance to the texts, at best; literary context, where used, was usually more successful.

This Level 4 response presents a controlled and relevant argument about Larkin's attitude to death in the named poem and in 'Going', supported by detailed textual analysis of the writer's choice of language. The response includes a perceptive point about the presentation of the poems in the collection making it appear that one answers the poem preceding it.

The comfort of death is further reinforced through the comparison <sup>to</sup> of the disappointment life brings. Larkin describes life through the metaphor of "holding wretched stalks of disappointment" as a reflection of the lost hope in life. The reference to a "wretched stalk" invokes imagery of a dead plant before it had the chance to grow and blossom which represents life in 20th Century Britain following the detrimental affects of the Second World War where many of The Movement poems fought in. Larkin is clearly ~~trying~~ attempting to reflect these angry and dejected views of the society as the prospect of hope has left everyone dejected. This is further highlighted as the speaker exclaims "How slow they are! And how time they waste // Retiring to make haste!". The use of repetition of exclamation marks, which is unusual for Larkin, and the rhyming couplet on the hand can be a depiction of Larkin's frustration at the rest of society who are deceived and "waiting so cleverly and so long" for the good in life.

and seeking the hope in future. However, it could also be illustrating Larkin's desperation to be dead and feel the comfort of death since as he was an existentialist the concept of nothingness after death would feel him with ease compared to living. There is a clear distinction again <sup>between</sup> ~~that~~ of him and the rest of society which reflects the title of the collection - whilst everyone is deceived into thinking there is more to life, he is "~~less~~ one of the less deceived" accepting and anticipating death. Clearly, through the sharp contrast between life and death explored within the poem, Larkin presents death as the fitter emblem of death hence the title "Next, please".



**ResultsPlus**  
Examiner Comments

This extract, although not flawless, demonstrates the candidate's sustained exploration and analysis of the writer's choices in language and form, including an awareness of effects not commonly used by Larkin. The candidate also makes an apt contextual reference to Larkin's personal views through a second effective reference to the collection, arguing that the poet saw himself as being 'less deceived' than most people in England at the time.



**ResultsPlus**  
Examiner Tip

Attention to the titles of poems can lead students to further insights; this can also apply to poems in Section A, including the unseen.

This extract is the final paragraph of a low Level 4 response, which does not always develop its analysis but has a discriminating awareness of context.

Overall, in both poems, Larkin presents death as a lonely ~~break~~ and bleak, and suggests that we die as we mean to live: alone. <sup>'wants' and 'next, please'</sup> This could parallel Larkin's real feelings regarding death which he shared in a letter to James Patten: 'at a distance things seem desirable, bring them near and I start shitting myself'.





The response uses a letter to James Sutton (which is not readily identifiable) to support a concluding point about Larkin's bleak presentation of death. This use of personal material is effective, although the candidate does not develop the ideas about life in general, which add an extra dimension to the missed opportunities of passing ships in *Next, Please*.



Candidates do not always bring out the influence of the contextual factors that they include in responses. The crucial focus on the impact of context on the text has improved since the first year, where many candidates appeared to think that demonstrating knowledge of the context was sufficient: 'influence of context' is the key.

When looking at the different kinds of context, it is important to look for links to the texts being studied. There are long biographies of Larkin and collections of letters, and this candidate has found, and remembered a letter relevant to a number of texts in the collection. Quotation is not, of course, essential, although it works well: a reference to this letter would have supported the point about personal context.

## Question 26

This question, although the less popular choice, prompted a significant number of responses across a wide range of levels. As on the previous question, some candidates did not move on from paraphrase or made assertions that, if accurate, were not particularly relevant to the poems chosen or supported by textual evidence. Stronger responses probed Larkin's ambiguous response to happiness and explored the impact of Larkin's use of a central female character in the named poem. Effective pairings were made with a number of poems, including 'Born Yesterday', 'Dry-Point', 'Toads', 'Spring' and 'Going'.

This response was awarded Level 4 for developed analysis of both the named poem and 'Spring', with the controlled argument supported by relevant and detailed textual reference and discriminating contextual links.

In both poems, the <sup>narrators</sup> ~~characters~~ find something that could ~~bring~~ disrupt their happiness into something positive. In 'Wedding Wind', the wind plays a significant factor in the

newly weds' time during the poem. The storm on their 'wedding-night' disrupted the ~~romantic~~ socially romanticised idea of a newlyweds' night of passion on their wedding day. The wind causes the 'stable door' to rattle, meaning the narrator's husband had to leave her 'Stupid in candlelight' to sort the door out. The next morning the wind 'thrashes [ing]' her apron and washing, whilst the previous night's storm has caused the couple to once again separate - 'he has gone to look at the floods'. At both points of disruption, caused by the wind, the narrator notes a moment of happiness, which overrides the negativity of the wind. In the first stanza she is 'sad' no one can share her 'happiness' and in the second stanza she notes that not 'even death' could 'dry' the 'delighted lakes'. Similarly in 'Spring', Larkin notes that his 'pursed-up', 'indigestible sterility' actually allows him to 'see' spring 'best', his 'immodest' 'needs' allowing him ~~to~~ the best perspective and 'vision [s]'. Larkin is best known for his pessimistic outlook on a range of topics, his upbringing in Coventry and adulthood in Hull not offering him much contentment. His 'Less Deceived' anthology, derived from Ophelia's line: '2

an 'much deceived' in Hamlet, is a collection of poems all linked through the "Deceptions" of life, his aim to offer his own view to these A deceptions, knowing it is rather different to other people's. In 'Wedding-wind' the narrator is "less deceived" as they are able to 'thread' their joys despite the deference of the wind. Similarly in 'Spring', Larkin is "less deceived" as he is able to see spring "mountain-clear", as he walks through the park to just enjoy the scenery, without the need for other forms of entertainment - 'walk[ing]', 'finger[ing] the...grass' or 'balls that bounce'.



**ResultsPlus**  
Examiner Comments

The argument in this extract links both poems and the collection to the question in a discriminating way: it is important to reiterate that AO4 is not assessed in this part of the paper and that comparison is not essential. The advice has always been that comparison can still be used if it strengthens the argument, exploration of the writer's craft or the influence of context, and in this response the links made here help the candidate meet all three of the criteria being assessed.



**ResultsPlus**  
Examiner Tip

Students are reminded that the key words used for context in higher level responses are 'relevant', 'discriminating', 'significant' and 'influence'. They should aim to make contextual references arise naturally from an exploration of the text.

## Paper Summary

For both sections, the examples provided here are merely extracts from complete answers. This should be borne in mind when considering the information about the level of achievement – what is demonstrated (or missed) in an extract may not reflect the quality of the response as a whole.

## Grade Boundaries

Grade boundaries for this, and all other papers, can be found on the website on this link:

<http://www.edexcel.com/iwantto/Pages/grade-boundaries.aspx>



