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FOREWORD

This booklet contains reports written by Examiners on the work of candidates in certain papers. **Its contents are primarily for the information of the subject teachers concerned.**

ARABIC

GCE Advanced Subsidiary Level

Paper 8668/04

Texts

General comments

The level of performance of the candidates was varied. Although the books selected for the examination were varied in nature, candidates generally showed a somewhat superficial knowledge of the contents of the texts. The wide choice of books offered and the choice of questions requires the candidates to focus in detail on at least *three* books for achieving high performance in the examination.

The Papers are assessed against descriptions of performance set out in the syllabus, which indicate what is expected by candidates at each level. The following observations affected the performance of candidates in general:

- Candidates answered more questions than required. Some candidates answered all the questions on the Paper but very briefly and without going into any detail. The lack of concentration on three specific questions led to a low performance on the test in general.
- **Questions 1 (a), 2 (a), 3 (a) and 4 (b)** were answered as if they were comprehension questions and not as a literature essay, in which candidates are required to show solid knowledge of the selections, i.e. the answers were very brief and specific. The rubric states that candidates are required to write between 500 – 600 words for each question.

The questions are intended to provide a stimulus to candidates to allow them to bring a focus to their answer. That is why there is either a single question, or a number of short questions following the passage that could be answered as one whole essay.

Most candidates answered the questions in less than 300 words. Although their answers were specific, they did not show close attention to detail of passages or good insight when discussing characters. The knowledge they showed was superficial and pre-learnt.

- A number of candidates copied paragraphs from the selected books and used them as answers. Copying word for word showed that the candidates may have read the text but are probably unable to see beyond the main plot in the story. Some candidates demonstrated problems with the language and subsequently were unable to express their ideas comprehensibly.
- Some candidates answered two questions on the same text, e.g. **1 (a)** and **1 (b)**. In such cases, the best mark is counted. Candidates must answer on three *different* texts.

Helpful hints for Teachers and candidates

To help the candidates achieve a high grade, try to encourage them to look for the major themes in their chosen texts and then apply these ideas when answering the question, giving details from the text as supportive evidence. The questions used are very broad questions and candidates have a lot of flexibility. The aim is to select the most relevant main ideas for each question and incorporate those ideas with evidence. It is the ideas and evidence with examples from the texts that is being looked for, rather than a large number of words and an unfocused answer.

- Candidates should learn to organise their answers around the central concepts and ideas (an outline helps).
- Candidates should provide examples from the novel, play, or any of the books they choose to support their answers.
- Candidates should summarise in a sentence or two the main points at the end of their answer to show that they have answered the questions comprehensively.
- Candidates should make sure that they have answered *three* questions from *three different* selections.
- In mock/trial examinations it is helpful to refer to the syllabus and the mark scheme which is included to evaluate candidates' work.

Comments on specific questions

The following observations are derived from the candidates' answers.

Question 1

Naguib Mahfouz "*The Whisper of Madness*"

- (a) This question was one of the most popular questions answered by candidates. The question is direct and seeks precise information on why the Officer wanted to see the Minister and what the results of the meeting were. Candidates showed a good knowledge of the book, but most did not achieve good marks because they dealt with them as if they were comprehension questions with answers that were very short (one or two sentences only). A few candidates focused on the relationship between the two characters and tried to shed light on the events with quotations from the novel itself. Candidates did not expand their answer in the third question where they had to write about the circumstances of the main character.
- (b) Candidates who answered this question showed a good ability to organise the material and they provided a controlled and structured answer with in-depth illustrations from the book. Candidates seemed more comfortable answering the essay question than short answer questions.

Question 2

"Abu Al-A'la Al-ma'rri, *His Life, His Poetry*"

- (a) Candidates answered this question as a comprehension test and not as a literature test. Their answers, therefore, were short with no illustrations or examples from the poet's life and works.
- (b) Not enough candidates answered this part of the question to make general comments appropriate.

Question 3

M'arouf Al-Russafi "*Selected Poems*"

- (a) This was one of the most popular questions. Most candidates were able to explain and write about the poem and the poet in detail. Again, the candidates misunderstood the questions as comprehension questions and answered very briefly with no expansion on the main ideas that they were giving. Although the linguistic features of the candidates' writing should not affect the marks drastically, it would help if candidates write in a legible and organised manner.

- (b) Candidates who answered this question tried to illustrate their understanding of the poem, but again they wrote about the first part of the question and did not manage to relate it to the poet and his poems.

Question 4

Taha Hussein "*Al – Ayyam*" Parts I+II+III

- (a) Most candidates answered this question. It was interesting to note that they wrote the appropriate amount of words in their answers and did not treat the question as a short comprehension. This might be an indication that candidates read the book in detail as a biography and were able to relate to the different incidents that happened in Taha Hussein's life. The only weakness that was apparent in the answers was that the candidates wrote what they remembered of the events but did not directly relate it to the question on how Taha Hussein faced all the hardships in his life. Candidates rarely used quotations from the book.
- (b) Candidates answered the question as a narrative about his life and used information mostly from Part II of the book. The questions asked are based on the *three parts* of the book as stated in the syllabus.

Question 5

Ihsan Abdul Qadoos "*For Whom Shall I Leave All This*"

- (a) Candidates wrote in detail about the relationship between Man and Order in general. They ignored the section of the question where it asks them to refer to the events and the characters in the novel. Candidates neglected the different characters that appear in the novel and showed no understanding of the novel and its plot.
- (b) Not enough candidates answered this part of the question to make general comments appropriate.

Question 6

Al-Jahiz "*Al-Bayyan Wa-attabyeen*"

- (a) Candidates who answered this question were able to explain the incident but failed to develop the ideas and write explicitly.
- (b) The question was a good and general one in terms of writing about learning from the moment of birth until his death. Candidates wrote about the quotation only and ignored the rest of the question where it asks them to support their answer from incidents from the book itself.

Question 7

Gibran Khalil Gibran "*The Prophet*"

- (a)(b) Not enough candidates answered this question to make a general comment appropriate.

Question 8

Taufiq Al-Hakim "*The Diary of a Legal Officer in Rural Areas*"

- (a)(b) Nearly 75% of the candidates answered (b). They showed a good level of textual knowledge and supported their ideas with relevant incidents and quotations from the book. Some candidates misunderstood the topic completely and wrote about the life and culture of Egyptian society in general without relating it to the incidents in the book. A few candidates copied word for word remarks written about the book by different literary critics. These candidates showed no indication of having read the book.