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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.**

ENGLISH LANGUAGE

GCE Advanced Subsidiary Level

Paper 8693/01

Paper 1 - Passages for Comment

General comments

There was a clear sense of consolidation and growing expertise in certain areas on this component. The cohort is quite wide and diverse but candidates are showing increasing proficiency in dealing with the range of skills assessed by the Paper. Candidates wrote full answers for each section, there was little rubric infringement (in a few cases some candidates tried to answer all three questions) and time management was generally well handled.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

- (a) There were many competent answers here and, at best, a number of sophisticated and discriminating responses, especially where candidates engaged with techniques and effects. Candidates showed full awareness that this was a speech and many went beyond simply identifying repetition and commented on the speaker's use of patriotism, religious references and images of light and dark. Many sensed the ways in which the speech challenged its listeners and yet sought unity rather than division.
- (b) Where candidates recognised the appropriate form required there were some very good creative pieces here. Some answers were let down by the intrusion of personal rather than objective writing or by relying on over zealous use of quotation from the original speech at the expense of the candidate's own words.

Question 2

- (a) The better answers here worked through the passage in sequence and in detail. There was some good awareness of the personal style of the writing and the mood behind it. Some answers focused particularly well on the structure and the contrast provided by the fourth paragraph. Answers which did not use brief and relevant quotations struggled to find matters to comment on.
- (b) Answers were variable here. Those who tried to keep to the same scenario as the original passage also tried to lift words or phrases from the extract. Better answers used the same approach (such as opening with questions and ending with personal anguish) as the original, conveying the sense of how machines (ranging from irons to computers) can be seen to dehumanise individuals.

Question 3

- (a) Candidates produced many insights here, especially the contrasts between Merv and Ron in terms of their thoughts and outlooks, the use of setting, the opposition of the real world and the dream-world of the driver, the irony of the name 'Paradise'. There were some mature and very enjoyable approaches.
- (b) This was not as easy as it might first appear and many candidates produced some convincing and creative responses which captured the sense of point of view and narrative style persuasively. Ron's more cynical and dejected outlook was displayed fully by the best answers because they blended his observations of the outside world with his inner voice and dialogue.

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| <p>Paper 8693/02 Paper 2 - Composition</p> |
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General comments

The Paper seemed to differentiate fully across a diverse range of candidates. There were, as before, many excellent and highly enjoyable responses. A large number of candidates seemed superbly prepared, offering mature, subtle answers often written in highly appropriate and accurate English. In a few cases, there was some concern over the quality of handwriting - some compositions proved very difficult to mark. One or two answers also caused the markers some concern over the inappropriate use of language.

Comments on specific questions

Section A

Question 1

There were some very effective answers here with mood and atmosphere being convincingly and evocatively portrayed. Some candidates need to ensure that they read the question carefully so that they are not tempted to write a complete story which plagiarises an existing story or film.

Question 2

The mood here was generally apt but often the account was based on one memory only, rather than a series of brief flashbacks. Even here, though, the mood was still apt and the significance of the overall structure was grasped. Candidates would be advised, though, not to try forms with which they are unfamiliar.

Question 3

Some candidates integrated the idea of diary extracts in superbly original and effective ways. As with **Question 2**, though, some candidates only wrote one extended extract rather than a series of extracts. Those answers which worked out plot and structure in advance fared better than some where the narrative appeared to meander. Answers which also got beyond some cliché material (such as teenage romances) tended to allow more mature and sophisticated issues to surface.

Question 4

There were some superb, mature and evocative answers here; the best writing experimented with point of view and imagery. Most answers showed an even and balanced structure; answers at the lower end of the range tended to forget this was about descriptive writing and focused on narrative comparisons - again candidates need to ensure titles are read in the light of the section in which they are placed.

Section B

Question 5

This was a popular choice. Responses were often witty and fluent. Generally good reasons were given by the reviewer in terms of characters and plot. Weaker answers tended to summarise the story only without offering much personal insight or comment.

Question 6

This was a fairly popular choice and the material was, on the whole, handled competently and confidently. The contrasts could have been stronger in some instances in order to evoke differences in style and language a bit more clearly and effectively.

Question 7

Occasionally 'turn the other cheek' was interpreted as 'turn a blind eye' but this did not really impede marks or arguments. There were many efficient and proficient answers here with the best ones also incorporating some personal evidence or brief anecdote to establish possible approaches to such moral dilemmas. The responses displayed again how thoughtful and mature candidates can be even under timed/controlled conditions.

Question 8

This was tackled with vigour and depth, allowing many candidates to explore current and cultural issues from a variety of perspectives. Many good answers seemed adept at drawing on a pleasing and effective range of examples in order to examine a number of central arguments.