

Examiners' Report
June 2015

GCE English Literature 6ET03 01

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Introduction

By now candidates and teachers are familiar with the requirements of this paper so that very few rubric infringements were seen. Examiners are often impressed with the excellent quality of the best work seen in which confident writing which is well-focussed, demonstrates detailed textual knowledge, and takes a clearly literary approach paying tribute to the hard work and detailed preparation that goes on in centres.

We would like to remind candidates that it is always a good idea to focus on the precise terms of the question. In general it is perfectly acceptable to challenge the proposition and to argue a contrary case as long as there is evidence from the texts and critics for the approach being taken.

Candidates are, in general, confident about dealing with the language of texts and are able to illustrate this well. They tend to be less so when dealing with form and structure and in showing how such matters have an impact on the ways in which we read. Nevertheless the best candidates do show that candidates are aware of different kinds of prose and poetry texts and how those differences can be used to inform their critical responses.

Comparisons between texts are managed with excellent balance when textual links are made which find exact verbal or thematic echoes. The balancing act, when it is done well and consistently with expert knowledge and accomplished writing technique, is impressive.

Contexts are similarly managed well when candidates relate issues such as what was going on at the time of writing, or perhaps the time being written about to the terms of the question and the impact on the text itself on different kinds of readers.

Question 1

As usual, the poem was by far the more popular of the two unseen texts.

Understanding of the poem depended on a response to its final line which placed the rest into a clear perspective. Although context is not being assessed, a number of candidates referred to the time of writing and the role of a woman in the Victorian era. This led to a valid interpretation of the speaker's asserted frustration with her lot and desperate desire to escape from an enclosed space.

The poem's title led candidates to assume that the poem is light-hearted, enhanced by the insistent rhythm and use (with variations) of rhyming couplets. Many had clear reservations about this and saw some of the items in the list-like structure of the poem as being threatening and even dangerous.

There was some tendency to get sidelined into discussing individual images, such as the wasp in the peach in the opening line at the expense of the whole. The best answers do examine individual images, show how they relate to each other and develop through the course of the poem and then contribute to the overall effect on the reader.

The poem's unconventional form, lacking any full stop until the final exclamation mark, seemed to confuse many candidates. References to dramatic monologue were better focussed. A number of perceptive candidates did point out how the poem is divided by the shorter line 11 and that the consistent nature imagery changes in kind and tone in the latter part of the poem.

Rhyme was often perceived to suggest a lack of seriousness. The use of couplets, with some variations was, on the whole, not analysed in any depth. The frequent repetitions, such as the use of tricolons, internal rhymes, alliteration and assonance were often mentioned although their effects on the reader needed to be added to make this more than just feature spotting. The best candidates were very good at this.

The predominating and insistent anapaest metre did get a small number of mentions as did the tetrameter lines. Many writers though were unable to go beyond iambic pentameters. Examiners felt that this was a fairly central aspect of how the writer achieved her effects and were therefore disappointed that it did not get more attention from candidates. The difference between rhyme and rhythm was surprisingly vague at times.

'A scherzo (A shy person's wishes)' by poet Dora Greenwell was written in 1867 and is a dramatic monologue exploring the feelings of a shy person. It is ~~at~~ desperate in tone but also displays ^{moments} feelings of extreme content in nature. Greenwell romanticises nature throughout her poem in order to demonstrate the beauty within it, making extremely effective use of literary techniques such as anaphora, whilst also ~~em~~ playing with rhythm and repetition.

The voice within the poem seems to build as it progresses, beginning with describing small and pretty images such as 'the wasp at the innermost heart of a peach' yet building to stronger images such as 'the fire in the jagged thundercloud.' These juxtaposing images ~~one~~ represent the persona's growing desire to be out of the room and alone - at one with nature - but could also represent the two sides of the persona. These images suggest that within every shy person there is timidity, perhaps a connotation of the sweetness of the 'peach' in the first image, but also great strength and tenacity - a connotation of the word '~~fire~~ ^{fire}'.



ResultsPlus Examiner Comments

This candidate provides a good introduction with some interesting points about form, structure and language and makes a promising reference to rhythm.



ResultsPlus Examiner Tip

Try to adopt a well-informed literary approach.

The essay starts with a clear introduction which suggest that the writer already has an overview of the poem.

Greenwell's poem *A Scherzo (A Shy Person's Wishes)* is ^{The} ~~a~~ musical amalgamation of all the places the persona wishes to be rather than where they are. Her use of images of safety inter the persona's discomfort with the situation, and throughout the poem she enhances the images of escape to be bolder, stronger, more kinetic, perhaps also referencing the reader's sense of interiority. The title of *A Shy Person's Wishes* therefore interis perhaps that the hell they wish to escape is indeed that of other people, the longer they are amongst them the more the tension increases and the stronger the images of isolationism become.



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Examiner Comments

This kind of introduction suggests a good literary approach and attention to detail.

Another good introduction.

'A Scherzo (A Shy Person's Wishes)' by Dora Greenwell focuses on the escapism that a shy person finds in imagining that she is "anywhere" other than in the situation she is in. Greenwell uses rhyme and vivid ~~images~~ natural imagery to represent the persona's true interest and desires. The tone of this poem develops from being calm and dream-like to building into excitement as the voice becomes more enthralled in these "wishes".



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Examiner Comments

The writer hints at an overview of the poem by referring to a word from the last line in the opening sentence of the essay.

'Greenwell' ends this poem with an exclamation mark reflecting the persona's distress at being in "this room". This highlights the voice's panic due to her shyness and causes the reader to empathise with her. We too would much

rather be in the places she describes. This causes the poem to end with a desperate tone as well as one of frustration that the persona cannot be "anywhere" other than the room in which she finds herself.



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The writer engages with the ending of the poem and the tone of voice employed by the poet.

Greenwell uses imagery of small natural beings being enclosed or contained in something. For example, the opening line describes a "wasp" in the "innermost heart of a peach". The reference to the "innermost heart" represents the voice's desire to bury herself ~~and~~ within something in order to protect herself from her unwanted company. Being "shy", she wants to remove herself completely from the situation by becoming as small as possible, as small as a "wasp" in order to hide away. This imagery continues with a mouse's "nest" and a ~~nest~~ "chrysalis". The lexical choice of "gauzy" to describe a chrysalis ~~is~~ evokes vivid imagery for the reader as not only does it show the translucent ~~neapay~~ look

of a chrysalis, the long vowel sounds create a ~~tone~~ sense of cosy warmth and comfort that the persona perceives to be found in one.

The rule of three is used several times in this poem but the most effective use of it is: "chainless, and tameless, and proud". The word choices create an upbeat rhythm that not only reflects the untamed nature of these words, but also sounds like the rumble of "thunder" referred to in the line below. The half-rhyme within this line: "chainless, and tameless" adds to this sense of rebelliousness; of not obeying rules. We feel, as a reader, the persona's longing to be "tameless" and, again, there is frustration at the shyness that prevents her from being so.



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There is detailed comment on imagery and other literary features that make this a high achieving answer.

A short extract from a high achieving candidate.

The final line of the poem is highly emphatic and the persona seems restless and eager to escape the confines of their room. ~~Greatly done~~ The use of repetition of 'anywhere' along with the punctuation highlights the persona's sense of immediacy. The 'room' which they long to escape may be metaphorical of society as a whole, which leaves little room for mobility and interaction with the natural world. The ^{or} period in which this poem was written, 1867, ~~did~~ was one of rigid social conventions where women were granted little power, particularly in areas such as divorce, where women were only able to file on the grounds of adultery and cruelty, whereas men could file on grounds of adultery only. This injustice ~~caused great~~ was very difficult for women within the Victorian era as they had little possibility to alter their situation. ~~It~~ In this way, this poem serves not only to highlight the sense of escapism the persona feels ~~in~~ the urban with nature but also the rigid and apathetic confines of the time.



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Examiner Comments

There are some positive responses to the ending of the poem and some interesting contextual points which add to the writer's appreciation of the poem.



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Examiner Tip

Be careful about using contexts in the unseen answer. We are told that the poem is from 1867 and this writer has made a valid deduction without overplaying her point.

Question 2

Really good answers dealt with the detailed way in which the third person narrator adopted a free-indirect style to convey Mary's experiences of going to university. Not many candidates dealt directly with the American idiom but they did appreciate the modern idiom and a central character with whom they might identify.

Many candidates tended to be highly selective in what they chose to write about; Mary's journey and back story were often either ignored or sketched in lightly.

The details that link Mary to Chicago were often mentioned but not usually analysed. There was some speculation about Mary's family and why her sister had had to drop her at the bus station so long before the departure time. The reference to the white man on the bus led some writers to infer that Mary is a black girl. Further investigation of *Moo* will reveal that indeed she is.

The contrasts between Mary and the other girls and the presence of one set of parents and the role played by Sherri's mother's who is the only character given any dialogue received plenty of attention. Her rather dismissive 'dear' when addressing Mary, as opposed to 'honey' for the other girls, was taken as possible racism. Specific details discussed included Mary's apparent poverty, hard work in earning money to pay for her clothes, the differences between her and the other girls' possessions. Mary's stillness, sitting on her bunk bed compared to the other girls' mobility were mostly well-observed.

Structural features such as sentence and paragraph length and the single example of dialogue in a mostly descriptive passage were also the subject of valid discussion and analysis.

The structure of the passage allows the reader ~~to~~ an insight into Mary's feelings. Two shorter paragraphs are used which emphasise Mary's feelings of not quite belonging to the group of three other girls who act as if they 'knew each other already.' The two longer

paragraphs then go into more detail. ~~the~~ Both of these larger paragraphs give the reader more details about Mary, and by presenting the reader with the most information on her, Smiley is highlighting how ~~so~~ Mary is the key character in this scene. The use of a third person narrative also aids this as the focus is very obviously centred on Mary. The third person narrative ~~also~~ ^{further} allows the reader to feel as if they are there, observing the scene as it unfolds, and it therefore, makes the passage more inclusive for the reader.



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Examiner Comments

This is a competent attempt to talk about structural features of the writing and the narrative voice.

The novelist throughout the extract engages with the reader through not only references made, such as 'University of Illinois' but also through the use of free indirect speech, which ~~wants to~~ ~~break~~ such as "Mary had begun to wonder if he were some sort of a robot or mechanical man." — this ~~wants to~~ ~~break~~ down the division ~~etc normally~~ ~~+~~ between the reader and the narrative voice which usually occurs within third person narrations. Therefore, we as the reader are truly allowed to explore events from both an ~~omniscient~~ omniscient narration of the third person, and also from a personal perspective.



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Examiner Comments

This is another introduction which is rather more literary than the previous one with its reference to 'free indirect speech' and the effects of the quite complex narrative voice on the reader.

The sense of 'me vs. them' that is indicated throughout the novel for example "one called each of them 'honey'." To Mary, the had said "Oh, you're Mary. From Chicago Hello, dear." reflects her outsider status. The use of short abrupt sentences such as "From Chicago * Hello, dear." creates a sense of hostility and mockery, further engaging with the idea. Some readers may perceive this as it being a reference to socio-economic status and criticism of this, ~~however,~~ ~~at~~ however, there is a strong sense of humour used in this short paragraph.



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Examiner Comments

Note the detailed comments on the short piece of dialogue.

Furthermore, as the novel proceeds, this sense of discomfort increases, and the reader is exposed more, and more to Mary's sense of isolation. This is done so through constant comparisons, such as "though their mother and father were still around the only ones still around, and they were better dressed than their parents." ~~Contrasted with~~ ~~compared~~ comparison made by the use of "many had nice clothes, too". The use of "too" appearing defensive further comparison made by "as if she had consulted New York editions of Mademoiselle and Glamour and they had consulted ~~the~~ special midwestern editions." contrast is created through not only socio-economic status, but also the seemingly different locations, creating further divisions between herself and the rest of the other characters.



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One more example of the candidate's attention to details of the writing.

Question 3 (a)

The Relationships section remains by far the most popular option with many candidates focussing on *The Great Gatsby*, *Rapture* and *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* with fewer answers on *Captain Corelli's Mandolin* this year and the use of a comparatively small range of poems from *Emergency Kit* and *Metaphysical Poetry*.

Examiners regret that candidates tend to use a just a few poems from *Rapture* to support points made about the novels rather than seeing the collection as a whole, since it does, after all, tell its own story.

The majority of candidates chose to write about gender and there were many interesting arguments which both accepted the terms of the question as well as those that challenged it. Many saw gender as an important but not necessarily over-riding issue. Characters' sexuality came under scrutiny: Nick, the narrator of *Gatsby*, Carlo in *Corelli* and the participants in *Rapture* (as well as of course Duffy's own sexuality) and Katherine Philips from the *Metaphysicals* were cases in point..

The patriarchal and misogynistic nature of 1920s America was a fruitful line of enquiry to justify Tom's violence towards Myrtle and his largely imperative style of talking.

The male-orientated world of the *Metaphysicals* concentrated on Donne and Marvell's attitudes towards women in their most popular poems, but there was some mention of relationships with God by Donne and Herbert, and women, by Katherine Phillips.

Discussion of Duffy moved from those who tended to take the line that the poems are autobiographical and deal with a relationship between the writer and Jackie Kay or those who take the evidence of the poems themselves as not being gender specific. Is *Rapture* a lesbian text? is a question that occupies many, although the evidence from the poet herself and maybe the poems themselves suggest not.

Issues of class, power, sexual orientation, nationality, social background and education were among the areas explored. Diversity of class such as that between Tom, Myrtle, George, Daisy and Gatsby himself was a fruitful line of enquiry in *Gatsby*, and the class and social differences between Tess, Alec and Angel in *Tess*. The status of the characters in *Corelli* might focus on their sexuality (Carlo of course), nationality, (Corelli and Pelagia), education (Pelagia and Mandras). Parent/child relationships such as that between Pelagia and her father, Drosoula with both Mandras and Pelagia, Tess and her parents led to profitable discussions. Many of these issues were also relevant for possible areas of diversity in the (b) question.

Those who dealt with *Tess* were often very sensitive to the hypocrisy and double standards of the late Victorian period and the initial reception of the novel and the changes that Hardy made to it at the time.

Each of these topics led to fertile exploration and comparisons between texts as well as providing plenty of contextual material.

Thomas Hardy published 'Tess of the D'Urbervilles' in 1890 as a serial series - in a periodical. It was rejected twice due to concerns that the ~~family~~ ^{reading} audience of Victorian family would find it 'too shocking'. After a revised version was accepted, Hardy added the subtitle 'A Pure Woman'. The significance of such is revealed ^{upon reading} ~~only after~~ ~~one can~~ ~~assessable~~ ~~standards~~ the revised version in comparison to the first version, between which, as Mary Jacobus wrote in ^{c.1970} ~~1970~~ ^{the} ~~critical~~ ~~commentary~~ ~~on~~ the purity of Tess altered the author's 'intuitive commentary' - suggesting that Hardy had originally depicted Tess as having a 'liberal' education as opposed to the victim we see in today's version.



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Examiner Comments

This opening gets straight down to contextual points regarding the initial publication and reception of *Tess*.



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Examiner Tip

This is a good use of context but make sure it is well-integrated into your discussion.

"Gatsby." ~~Thus~~ In terms of the relationship between Tess Durbfield and Angel Clare gender is perhaps ~~also~~ ^{an} ~~most~~ insignificant factor of their love in contrast to the moral codes of Victorian society, with its archaic religious standards and prevailing ~~as~~ ancient gender stereotypes.



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Examiner Comments

Here are some more contextual points about the relationship between Tess and Angel.

This writer is focussing on the gender issue which is central to the question and putting it into the context of the time of writing. It is therefore scoring quite highly on AO4.

Alec. The ambiguity of the scene at 'the chase' often leaves it referred to as a seduction, though it is more a seduction of the Victorian reader into the belief that a young woman ^{such} ~~could~~ as Tess Durberville could not possess sexual desires of her own; ~~this is not how~~ which is the presentation of Tess that Hardy was forced to alter in the original 'Ur-Tess'. This however is challenged in Phase the third, Tess is now a 'cultivated' woman with sensual ~~desire~~ passion. 'The outskirts of the garden in which Tess found herself had been left uncultivated for some years [...] ^{so} gathering cuckoo-spittle on her skirts, cracking snails [...] staining her hands with thistle milk [...] and rubbing off upon her naked arms sticky blights.' The tactile imagery of this scene serves to confront ~~the~~ ^a Victorian readership with the idea that a ^{'Pure women'} ~~young girl~~ could ~~be tainted~~ (and still grow to be a woman with ~~se~~ whom had been spoiled by an illegitimate child) could be presented in a way that highlights her sexual curiosity and tenderness as opposed to one eternally damned for her sins.



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Examiner Comments

This extract demonstrates how the candidate has explored some key passages in which the imagery is important in the portrayal of Tess. The quotations and comments are very well integrated.

Questioning gender relations ~~does~~ is significant across all three texts. This is particularly evident in 'Elegy: To His Mistress Going to Bed', 'The Flea', 'Women's Constancy', Duffy's 'Rapture' and the portrayal of Myrtle and Daisy. In 'Elegy: Donne's 'Elegy: To His Mistress Going to Bed', the persona uses imagery of possession to suggest that the woman is an object, ~~calling~~ using the possessive pronoun 'my' - 'my mine of precious stones'. This ~~arguably is similar~~ emphasis on the monetary worth of women is arguably echoed in 'The Great Gatsby' when the fact that Daisy had 'been' with many men 'increased her value' in Gatsby's eyes, almost commodifying her. Further, for a modern reader, the sexual objectification of this ^{may be uncomfortable} woman, as the persona ~~focuses on her~~ asks her to 'liberally' show herself to him. In addition, Donne uses imagery of domination and empire - 'Oh my America, my new-found Land' - which to a 17th century reader might conjure the persona's excitement in an age of exploration and discovery. However, for a modern reader, this allusion to imperialism, and its associated oppression and exploitation which often go with it, might be frowned upon by a modern reader. Similarly, in 'The Great Gatsby', it is men

who seem to hold power over women. As
the Fitzgerald uses the symbolism of the
pearl necklace which Tom buys for Daisy at the
beginning of their marriage and at the end of
the last time ~~to~~ Nick sees them, he suggests the
constraint ~~which marriage~~ and oppression which
Daisy faces in marriage, echoing a similar image
in 'The Collar' where the title could refer either the
collar of a vicar or, ^{initially,} a dog collar. The symmetry in
Fitzgerald's use of imagery is perhaps reflective of the
contemporary modernist movement, where the implications of
structure which were becoming increasingly important.

However, perhaps there is a note of ambiguity in the



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The candidate deals with a wide range of texts and makes some thoughtful comments on a twentieth century novel and some seventeenth century poems with some originality.

Another important idea across the three texts is the relationship with time, particularly in 'To His Coy Mistress', 'Now' and demonstrated by Gatsby's desire to 'repeat the past'. Gabriel Marcel's poem is an example of the 'carpe diem' theme, termed by Tim Hunter as 'let us love today for we die tomorrow'. Indeed, Marcel suggests that the lovers can dominate time, 'choosing, like am'rous birds of prey, to ^{have} 'devour' time. The savagery of this image arguably also conveys the intensity of his passion. This idea is also explored by Duffy in 'Now' as she although love is supposedly 'time's beggar', love can thwart time by transforming a single hour into a ~~moment of precious~~ ^{precious} moment of bliss, as suggested by the light and money images 'bright as a dropped coin'. However, Duffy's attitude towards time seems to alter, as, in 'The Loves', 'time slips away like lead from a ship', suggesting the lovers are powerless to influence ^{this} supernatural force. This is just like Gatsby who desperately attempts to ^{erase five years in order to rekindle his} ~~relationship with Daisy~~ ^{relationship with Daisy} ^{supported by Tony Tanner for whom Gatsby seems obsessed with the 'greatness' of time.} This perhaps is perhaps supported by Nick's reference to Petronius' 'Trimalchio'; the character from Petronius' 'Satyricon' who tries transience and desperately wants to remain in the present. However, as Nick highlights, 'you can't repeat the

past' and baby is unable to undo the connection between Daisy and Tom. This sense of parallelism over time is also explored in Duffy's final poem 'over' as she writes to a 'dark hour out of time'. Not only does this contrast with 'Hour' in which she enjoyed a 'shiny hour', but it also suggests her sense of dislocation, as if she is drifting because she is outside of the bounds of time. Yet, perhaps she is also suggesting that she has some 'out of time' to rectify her relationship. This ~~text~~ questioning about the role of time is an almost 17th century reflex, reflecting human anxiety about ~~the~~ their role in the world universe both physically, relating to other the sun, and with to supernatural forces such as God and time.



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Examiner Comments

The same writer ends with some well-sustained comments on three texts, two of which are referring to more than one poem. Again, note the confident integration of comments on texts from different periods and different genres.

Question 3 (b)

Many of the issues dealt with in 3a also relate to 3b.

There were quite a number of discussions of the worlds created by the novelists and poets as being diverse from each other. The more appropriate option was to explore the characters from different backgrounds within the texts and explore the relationships accordingly. Similarity, background was seen as the key to success when exploring the relationships between, say, Tom and Daisy or Dr Iannis and Pelagia. Even characters from similar backgrounds such as Pelagia and Mandras were seen as diverse in attitudes, aspirations and education. Pelagia was shocked, for example when she realised that Mandras is illiterate. Gatsby's poverty was a barrier to any relationship with Daisy before the war but when his money was seen as new money and we realise that it has been acquired through bootlegging, it was no less acceptable.

Diversity as a topic might be seen, quite rightly as a way into contextual features in each text such as Victorian views on Tess's fate at the hands of Alec and Angel, Carlo's feelings about his homosexuality, seventeenth century views about the roles of women and how writers at different historical periods can write about them.

Contextual points dealt with the need to consider the times of the texts' publication compared to the period in which they are set as well as the present. These included the roles of women, social class, sexual orientation, the American dream, the jazz age, flappers, Fitzgerald's own life as an influence on *Gatsby* and his own social status when pursuing Zelda.

Other readers are dealt with in a number of ways. Quoting named critics and critical movements are valid ways of supporting points; presenting an argument contesting and/or supporting the proposition is another equally valid way of doing it. The ways in which a text might have been received at the time of publication was particularly valuable in the case of Tess.

To an extent, the diversity of ~~the~~ worldviews of participants is one of the most significant influences of the future w/ success of relationships. All three texts contrast in terms of the context in which they were written. ~~The~~ *The Great Gatsby*, set in the 1920s reflects the immorality of the time as well as the new found freedom and money. "Rapture" on the other hand is written by a poet laureate, from humble beginnings (working class Manchester). This shows the ~~class~~ modern class system is now interchangeable, unlike *Gatsby* - restricted by class. Furthermore, the homosexual relationship in which Duffy is referring to also contrasts with the traditional Greek or modern culture of "Captain Corelli's Mandolin", which de Benieres constantly references the ~~traditional~~ values of Greek culture and mythology. However these



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This writer provides a useful introduction to the topic with references to three texts and some clear contextual points about *Gatsby*, *Corelli* and Duffy which one hopes will be developed later.



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Examiner Tip

Setting out your agenda in this way focuses you as a writer and also suggests to the examiner that you know what you are about.

Crabbsy's wealth suggests two interpretations for his end goal or dream. It may be that he must earn his money to be of a suitable social class for Daisy, and as such the 'green light' at the end of ~~Crabbsy~~ Daisy's dock represents his love for Daisy. Because of the parallels between Crabbsy's pursuit of Daisy and Fitzgerald's of his wife Zelda - both men were of a lower social class than their loves and had to work to be worthy of them - many see this interpretation as true. However it is more likely that the 'green light' which represented the success of ~~Crabbsy's~~ ^{Crabbsy's} dream, much as the 'fresh green breast of the new world' represented the American dream, has become corrupted. This seems more likely due to Fitzgerald's belief that the American dream, once pure in its ideals, had become corrupted in the materialism of the 1920's. While the



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This is a good example of how a high scoring writer has dealt with a number of contextual issues relating to *Gatsby*. Recurrent images such as the green light and ideas such as the American Dream and social class relate to the topic under discussion precisely.

Both Duffy and Fitzgerald ~~hardly~~ show that inexperience on the part of a character can lead to their partners' denigration in their relationships. In the poems 'Forest' and 'River' we see the persona drawn into the relationship. In 'Forest' the act of following the lover into the trees sees the persona's 'shore life vanish'. This suggests that all of her past is non-existent in the face of her lover. This is

emphasised by the words 'I followed you still, until even my childhood drank.' Although



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In this extract the same writer makes some valid links between texts and uses quotations effectively.

Question 4 (a)

This is a popular option and all of the texts received interesting and engaged responses.

The (a) question was the more popular option.

Many examiners felt that the word 'inevitably' and whether or not candidates took any notice of it, was an important discriminator in this question.

The notion of self-discovery led to much discussion of the bildungsroman (which we should remind some candidates, does not contain a 'u') and the roles played by (un)reliable first person narrators. Some candidates also took the idea of learning literally and dealt with education such as Pip's early schooling and the wife's interpretation of the Bible.

Interesting links included discussion of how narrators acquired their names, Pip and Pi being the obvious candidates but also Ruby ('I am Ruby Lennox') and her relationship with her initially hidden other half, Pearl, whose presence is nevertheless being hinted at throughout the early part of the novel.

We saw some most interesting responses to the Wife of Bath in which candidates saw Alison's self-discovery as being achieved through her life with her husbands; 'experience' of course being the key word here, leading to the tale itself and the knight's own discoveries in the course of his adventures and the revelations at the tale's end. We were interested to see how links were made between the knight's own unknighly behaviour and Pip's ungentlemanly actions leading to his own self-discoveries in the final section of *Great Expectations*. This might relate to the whole issue of education and how it is treated by Dickens, often quite satirically, and by the wife, who sees experience as the key to learning, not the authority of the bible. This too may well be seen to be satirical.

The roles of parental or significant characters in characters' early lives were seen as significant, so that Pip's early experiences with Joe, Mrs Joe, Magwitch, Miss Havisham, Estella and Pumblechook are very important figures in his initially false sense of his destiny. In *Behind the Scenes*, Bunty's lack of parenting skills was seen as just one feature of a quite fruitful exploration of the roles played by women in the recent and historical past. Links with Mrs Joe's imperfect parenting and Alison's role as a fourteenth century woman provided plenty of cross-references and many contextual points.

Although both Billy Collins and Grace Nichols were less popular choices, we nevertheless saw some stimulating use of the fat black woman as an individual to compare with the wife, each being noteworthy for breaking taboos in their respective worlds. Collins was often used to provide a different, trans-Atlantic, and often humorous and colloquial voice, and Nichols a Caribbean one to place against the equally diverse voices of Pip, Ruby or Alison.

Key moments or experiences in characters' lives in each of the texts such as Pip and the convict, his expectations aroused initially at Satis House, Pi's adventures at sea with Richard Parker, the wife's exertion of authority over Jankin, the fat black woman's experiences of shopping in London in winter and Collins' account of the process of composition (in *Workshop*) were all used as evidence for aspects of self-discovery.

The statement suggests that many works of literature move towards self discovery and that is true of the novels 'Great Expectations', and 'Life of Pi', ~~and~~ and arguably 'The Wife of Bath Prologue and Tale' because although the wife herself is shown to be a woman who is confident and very sure of herself in her tale the knight is forced to change himself and as a way of self discovery. This is similar in 'Life of Pi' as ~~at~~ the protagonist Pi is forced to change on the boat, his whole persona and belief being challenged. 'Great Expectations' can be viewed as a bildungsroman as it is a story of self discovery and growth.



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This high scoring candidate gets off to a good start with a focus on three texts from different genres and historical periods. There are already some hints about where the argument will go.

The, what modern-day readers view as ungentlemanly actions by Pip can be seen to be echoed in 'The Wife of Bath prologue & tale' as the knight, would have at the time been viewed ~~not~~ with gentillesse, we see his actions as more shocking as 'he raste hire maidenhed', which is appalling in both the medieval era and in the 21st century. The Tale clearly shows the pining of oneself ~~in~~ as the knight is forced to redeem himself on a physical journey to discover that 'women desiren to have sovereyntee'. The Wifes proto-feminist stance is shown more clearly in her tale as the Queen, a woman, has power ~~of~~ over the knights ~~sentence~~ sentence whereas at the time it would have been unlikely for women to make decisions because they were ~~of~~ viewed with negativity because of Eve.



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The same candidate now makes some original and thoughtful comments, making some apparently improbable, but in fact very apt, links between the *Wife of Bath* and *Great Expectations*.

'Ungentlemanly' and 'gentillesse' are well-linked.

The Wife of Bath herself can be viewed as someone who does not find herself herself as she has already found herself and does not need to change. Helen Barr writes that the wife of Bath 'in a male dominated society, has her men exactly where she wants them, under her sway' which can be seen to be true because as she talks of 'How pitously a night - I made lens swithe' which explicitly shows how she could control her husbands. As a modern day reader we view the ~~times~~ wife's actions as a proto-feminist rage, but at the time she would have been viewed as an abomination and the audience to the play would have laughed at her actions and behavior. The society in which the wife of Bath is set would be wanting the opposite of her, wanting chastity while she argues that 'God bad us for to have and multiple', which agrees with George Givensberg that the wife is 'good humored, rejects the churches teachings' because although she uses the bible to bring forth her argument, she uses it in satire. In large contrast in 'Great Expectations' Pip tries desperately to be a product of the time, ~~at~~ after he realizes he is 'not ashamed of home' and uses his great expectations to become a gentleman. Pi in a similar way does not

go against the time in the way the wife does but embraces three religions which Maribel states is because ~~she~~ he 'wanted to talk about faith and not organised religion'. The narrator in 'Life of Pi' describes Pi's house as a 'temple', holding all three religions in it, Hinduism, Islam and Christianity with 'lord Ganesha', 'bible' and 'prayer rug', the fact Pi embraces all three religions despite the expectations of the time which were to choose only one Pi just 'want to love God', such a simple statement which makes the problems he faced all the more remarkable.



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The essay continues with a sustained section on the wife. The argument is supported with quotations from the text and references to a named critic, both of which support the points well. The discussion moves on to a similarly focused discussion of *Life of Pi*.

and gave her all their 'treasure'. Chaucer's use of 'governed' to describe the wife's manipulations demonstrates her cunning - she presents herself as looking after her husband, when she is really using them for her own ends 'profit'. The wife's process by which she should have learnt the error of her cruelty comes in the form of her later two 'badde' husbands. Her fourth husband was a 'revelour', who drank and cheated on her, yet she continued to try to manipulate him through 'angre' and 'jalousie'. The ~~the~~ word that Chaucer uses to describe her - 'purgatorie' for her fourth husband shows that he also went through a difficult process at the hands of the wife, from which she hopes ~~the~~ 'his soule be in glorie' ^{as he} ~~now he has~~ learned to allow women to have 'maistrie'. The fifth husband, Jankyn, subverts her expectation of yet another marriage as a 'transaction' - he 'smoot' her and lectured her on the correct behavior of wives - the word 'smoot' (smoke) has religious connotations, thus perhaps signifying Chaucer's belief that Jankyn's abuse of the wife was ~~his~~ divine retribution for her ways - as Cooper writes, the wife is the model of a bad wife in order to show all wives what they should be like. In Dickens's 'Great Expectations', Estella goes through a similar trial

to teach her - she tells Pip that 'suffering has been stronger than all other teaching' as she has been 'beaten and broken' at the hands of her abusive husband Bertie Drumble. Similarly to Chaucer, Dickens uses an abusive husband to teach repay the cruelty inflicted on others (The Wife's first few husbands and Pip) by the manipulation ^{wrought} ~~of~~ by a female character.



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This writer provides a well-managed discussion of Chaucer's methods of presenting character with good textual support. The ways in which the wife's stories of her husbands contribute to her self-discovery is unusual but perfectly apt, and the links to Dickens are neatly managed.

Pi ~~and~~ of 'Life of Pi' and Pip of 'Great Expectations' go through multiple trials of self discovery in childhood; Pi has the trial of creating an identity for himself - renaming himself Pi ~~instead~~ from Piscine 'Pissing' Patel; the seemingly inconsequential trial of the 'cruelty of children' enabling him to create his own sense of self. Similarly, Pip faces the trial of not knowing his identity, and forming his own name as a child gives him his first clue to his sense of self beyond the 'authority of [the] tombstone' of his parents. Pip also discovers ~~the~~ his capacity for kindness in his 'larcenous' behaviour in order to feed and free the convict Magwitch, and in his plea for Miss Havisham to aid Herbert Pocket avoid debt.*² Pip's ~~compassion~~ ^{attempt} to prevent Herbert losing his money stems from Dickens' childhood experience of his father going to debtor's prison - Pip, as a manifestation of some of Dickens' feelings, wants to prevent his friend going through the horror that Dickens' family experienced. Pi's other childhood trial ~~was~~ ^{is} his meeting of all his religious teachers - the 'pandit', the 'priest' and the 'imam' - ~~their~~ and their pushing of him to accept only one religion. Pi ignores their advice, however, and discovers his self identity ⁱⁿ of espousing Gandhi's idea of religious pluralism ~~in~~ but in one body.



The comments on the wife's tale and the contextual comments are well-managed; the links to *Life of Pi* are unusual and interesting and supported by more contextual information as well as a reference to a named critic.

Question 4 (b)

This was a much less popular choice and candidates seemed less willing to deal with characters that they did not feel personal engagement with and they were, on the whole not likely to argue a contrary case. Nevertheless there was evidence from high achieving candidates of how the confessional nature of Pip, Pi, Ruby and Alison's narratives revealed them to be very flawed characters leading, at best, to sophisticated discussions of 'dilemmas' and 'revelations'. The unreliable narrator who withholds information (such as Ruby), the wife's deliberate misinformation and Pi's double narrative were all dealt with in a variety of ways.

Much of what has already been said about the ways in which the different texts were treated in the (a) question apply here too.

Question 5 (a)

Although this is the least popular option, and the answers are therefore few in number, we nevertheless read a range of interesting discussions that linked the two Caribbean novels and some answers that integrated this with discussion of the Imtiaz Dharker poems. We saw some interesting responses that compared the journeys from the Caribbean to that from Sri Lanka in *Reef*, but little evidence of work on the other texts.

Question 5 (b)

Comments as for 5a

Question 6 (a)

This also remains a popular option with many answers on each of the three novels and a solid range of poems from the two anthologies, inevitably perhaps concentrating on some popular choices. We saw little evidence of answers on *Legion*.

The (a) and (b) questions were roughly equal in popularity.

Death and destruction was a key focus occupying many writers and it was of course a matter of opinion whether the writers were being subversive or not.

It became clear that engagement with and understanding of the idea of 'subverting' was a discriminator. One examiner felt that answers dealt with examples of death and destruction but provided little or no evidence of understanding what 'subverting' meant.

We saw excellent responses to *Spies* which emphasised the lack of death and destruction in the world inhabited by young Stephen and his friends, until the denouement about Uncle Peter, which was generally treated with some sensitivity with clear contextual awareness of what the consequences of desertion would have been at the time. His fate was seen also clearly as an example of psychological damage; his death regrettable but perhaps inevitable. This was often sensitively linked to Sassoon's *Suicide in the Trenches* and the PTSD of many of the characters in *The Ghost Road* and even in *The Kite Runner*. Interestingly, Owen's *Dulce et Decorum Est* was used to illustrate physical violence and death as well as the mental distress of the narrator who is haunted by what he has seen. The smell of gas was also found in *The Ghost Road* during the scene with the prostitute Elinor, and Sarah's yellow complexion from her job in the munitions factory were other unfortunate reminders of the war in domestic settings.

Good contextual points included the references to Sassoon's letter of protest about the continuation of the war, Jessie Pope's *Who's for the Game*, historical knowledge of the Afghanistan war, Pat Barker's family involvement with both world wars as well as the centenary commemorations of WW1 including the Tower of London poppies.

The ways in which texts written at the time of the conflicts by participants such as Owen, Sassoon, Rosenberg and Douglas or observers like Pinter or Fenton were contrasted to those written long after the events like *Six Young Men*, MCMXIV or *The Ghost Road* provided some interesting and frequently ironic connections about the relationship to death, destruction and the psychological and physical.

We noted some less frequent, but nevertheless welcome references to the worlds of Chaucer's knight and that of the Battle of Maldon in which death and destruction were clearly glorified. Writers seemed appropriately horrified by this but saw it as part of the contemporary cultures; it was nevertheless most refreshing to see these older texts being appreciated.

Michael Frayn explores the effects of growing up in war in his novel, *Spies*. Growing up in World War Two, Stephen was subject to propaganda glorifying the war and soldiers like Uncle Peter. Children were taught to hate anything foreign, unfamiliar and unknown. This revealed in the treatment of the people

at Trewenick, and Stephen's insistent 'but he's a German', as an excuse not to help someone purely because they are German. This concept is similar to attitudes shown in 'Break of Day in the Trenches'. Having fought in the War himself, Frayn is able to speak of the dehumanising effects of war and how it affects soldiers. Uncle Peter's admission that 'You start playing some game, and you're the brave one' is similar to what Owen was saying in 'Dulce et Decorum Est': Uncle Peter fell for 'The Old Lie', and joined the war ignorant to the reality of the situation. When Uncle Peter goes on to say 'You can't think, you can't move. You can't see, you can't hear. Everything's drowned by this great scream of terror... and the scream goes on and on, and it's coming out of you', the sentence structure gives the impression that he is hypnotised and grasped by the memory, like Owen was ~~trapped~~ ~~trapped~~ in his 'smothering dreams'. By making Uncle Peter live in hiding because he could not handle the realities of war, Frayn ~~reve~~ is being critical of society's attitudes

towards people and the way we treat people like Uncle Peter. He is revealing and criticising our unrealistic expectations of our soldiers.



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There are some well-managed and thoughtful links made between *Spies, Break of Day in the Trenches* and *Dulce et Decorum Est*. Not all the details are absolutely correct and there could be more textual support, but good points about the effects of war on individuals are nevertheless being made.

'Spies', the novel by Michael Frayn set in the 1940s towards the end of World War Two, is a perfect example of writing about conflict that considers other issues. 'Spies' is multi-genre with elements of a bildungsroman, spy story, ^{philosophical} novel, semi-autobiography and ~~ghost~~ ghost story as well as being a war novel. Indeed, Frayn himself in a radio interview in



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This is a neat encapsulation of some key points about what kind of novel *Spies* is.

One issue highlighted in 'Spies' is that of the 'other' in society. Stephen, as a German Jewish émigré (though he is unaware of it) feels excluded as though he does not 'fit in', and is called a 'sheeny' (derogatory term for a Jew) at school. Keith informs him that the 'Juice' (a sound device cleverly used by Frayn to allow the reception narrative to interpret Stephen's mistake) were responsible for his parents' loss at the tennis cup, clearly repeating what he has heard them saying, illustrating the casual anti-Semitism of 1940s Britain. Frayn is entirely apolitical, merely illustrating a time gone past. To a modern reader, living in a more politically correct society, such events may seem shocking; however, with a march against 'Jewish privilege' planned in North-West London in a matter of weeks, still significant.

Another (Jewish) writer who was deeply aware of these issues was Isaac Rosenberg. From a poor Russian Jewish émigré family in the East End, Rosenberg enlisted ~~in 1916~~ for the money and was killed in battle. He wanted to be posted to Palestine with the Jewish Battalion but never got the opportunity. 'Break of Day in The Trenches', as well as depicting the death and destruction of war with a series of graphic images: 'Sprawled in the bowels of the earth', 'turn

'Fields of France' (Rosenberg was highly visual, apprenticed to an engraver and wanted to paint), is concerned with ethnic issues. Rosenberg uses the motif of the rat to explore the lack of real difference between German and English soldiers, recognising the irony that it has a better chance of survival ('less chance than you for life'). Because the rat is able to touch both an English and German hand, it has a certain 'cosmopolitan' nature with which Rosenberg identifies a Jew, presumably with a multi-European background. His characterisation of the rat as 'dull' and ~~with~~ 'sardonic' with 'cosmopolitan sympathies' is reminiscent of anti-Jewish feeling in the early 20th century. Rosenberg thus expresses his frustration at his social marginalisation even at a time of war. Avi Matalon notes that unlike Siegfried Sassoon, Rosenberg was proud of his heritage, and here it is clear that he ironically projects his experience onto the rat for an external examination of his situation.



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This long section shows how a high scoring writer makes interesting connections between the two very different texts. Having made the connection, the writer tends to deal with each text separately but nevertheless makes good contextual points and provides some critical support. This is writing that shows a high level of achievement.

Question 6 (b)

Much of the discussion on 6(b) applies here too, and the ability to find a balance between the psychological and physical often a sign of a sophisticated response.

The violence against Keith's mother in *Spies* was a good example of the physical and provided a link to the rape scene in *The Kite Runner*, the childhood abuse from Father Mackenzie and the encounter with the red-haired boy in *The Ghost Road*.

Other violent scenes in *The Kite Runner* dealt with key events such as the public execution and the encounter late in the novel between Amir and Assef. Writers often point out how violence was prevented such as the scene in which Baba prevents the rape of a young woman by one of the Russian soldiers. As the narrator looks back on these events his psychological trauma seems to be worked through his telling of the story and need to revisit Afghanistan to expiate the sins of the past.

Sassoon's presence in the Craiglockhart Hospital as a result of his protest against led to the historical Rivers to declare that he was not insane. In the novel, his sensitive treatment of the psychologically damaged soldiers formed the basis for much intelligent discussion of the irony of making patients better so that they could return to the front line.

Paper Summary

As candidates reflect on their performance this year and as preparation for next year's paper gets under way, we offer the following advice:

- Make sure that you address the precise wording of the question
- Address all aspects of the question
- Do not be afraid to challenge the terms of the question if you can put up a contrary case and back it up from the texts you have studied
- Make sure that you hit all the relevant assessment objectives
- Write clearly and legibly in a literary style
- Always back up points with a brief quotation or textual reference
- Take time to choose the question that will show you at your best
- Do not forget to refer to different possible ways in which your texts can be appreciated.

Grade Boundaries

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