

A LEVEL

Examiners' report

ENGLISH LITERATURE

H472

For first teaching in 2015

H472/02 Summer 2023 series

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Introduction

Our examiners' reports are produced to offer constructive feedback on candidates' performance in the examinations. They provide useful guidance for future candidates.

The reports will include a general commentary on candidates' performance, identify technical aspects examined in the questions and highlight good performance and where performance could be improved. A selection of candidate answers is also provided. The reports will also explain aspects which caused difficulty and why the difficulties arose, whether through a lack of knowledge, poor examination technique, or any other identifiable and explainable reason.

Where overall performance on a question/question part was considered good, with no particular areas to highlight, these questions have not been included in the report.

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Paper 2 series overview

H472/02 and its context in the specification

H472/02, the Comparative and Contextual Study, is one of the three components which make up OCR's A Level in English Literature. The examination requires candidates to choose one of five topics, firstly writing a critical appreciation of an unseen passage and secondly responding to a comparative essay question based on two set texts. This is a closed text examination.

Candidates are likely to perform well on the paper if they keep in mind the dominant Assessment Objective for each part: AO2 (the ways in which language, form and structure shape meaning) in the critical appreciation; AO3 (the significance and influence of contexts) in the comparative essay. They should also bear in mind the importance of AO1 throughout the exam, which includes coherent, accurate written expression.

Candidates who did well on this paper generally:	Candidates who did less well on this paper generally:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> came to the paper well-prepared but flexible, able to respond to the passages and questions on the day divided their time roughly equally between the two questions and wrote a similar amount on each only used contextual material in order to understand/illuminate literary texts read the headnote and the passage itself with care to help gain a full understanding of the material wrote with care and control, producing legible responses which were clearly developed offered hints of a wider reading experience behind the written responses, suggesting a full and varied course of study. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> over-relied on prepared material to the extent that they were inclined to misread passages/questions to fit a prepared theme neglected the passage in favour of the comparative essay, which could become over-long and repetitive prioritised the use of contextual material at the expense of a literary focus rushed the reading phase to get to the written response, and as a result sometimes misunderstood the passage wrote rapidly and carelessly, producing lengthy responses which were difficult to follow referenced extra texts which seemed not to have been read or understood, but were part of 'prepacked' material.

Examiners were generally impressed by the quality of candidates' work this session following a lengthy period of disruption in the educational world. For many, this was their first experience of public examinations and the quality of their work did them – and their teachers – great credit. There was still evidence of a lack of confidence in some places: for example, it seems that more candidates are choosing to write their comparative essay first, leaving the passage-based question for later. This is within the rules, of course, but in some cases it led to a relative neglect of the critical appreciation, a question which suffers particularly badly from being rushed. This lack of confidence also seems to be in evidence where candidates depend on prepared answers rather than feeling ready to adapt what they knew to a new question on the day of the exam. This was especially evident this session in the Dystopia topic, where former questions on surveillance and indoctrination seem to have left their mark on candidates' work. However, most candidates divided their time sensibly between the two parts of the exam and seemed well-prepared to respond to the particular demands of each question. In any session, it is interesting to see where texts are gaining or losing popularity within the centres: examiners reported

seeing little on Henry Roth's *Call It Sleep* this year, but a substantial increase in study of *Their Eyes Were Watching God*. Centres studying the Women in Literature topic are evidently recognising that this text provides a striking contrast to the core texts, and that Janie's series of marriages and her growing independence touch on many important themes for the topic. We are looking forward to seeing candidates' work on the new texts which will be examined for the first time next year, and for which support material is available on the [Teach Cambridge](#) website.

New texts for H472/02, for examining from 2024

American Literature 1880-1940: Nella Larsen, *Passing*

The Gothic: Daphne du Maurier, *Rebecca*

Dystopia: Octavia E Butler, *Parable of the Sower*

Women in Literature: Bernardine Evaristo, *Girl, Woman, Other*

The Immigration Experience: Sam Selvon, *The Lonely Londoners*

Examiners reported a very good level of understanding of the unseen passages this session. Many candidates achieved an appropriate balance between seeing the passage as a whole (good answers often gave an overview in their introductory paragraph) and diving into the details.

Some candidates seem to take systematic approaches to their reading, sometimes governed by various acronyms. This may be helpful as an *aide memoire* but can get in between the candidate and a fresh and sensitive reading. For example, working through a series of themes or ideas seemed to prevent some candidates from charting the developing tension in the Gothic passage, which does need to be read in a linear fashion to understand the workings of suspense. There were also some formulaic approaches to the Dystopia passage which seemed at times to be testing the passage for dystopian qualities rather than analysing its unique literary effects. Similarly, an expectation that males are always dominant led to some problematic readings of the character of Herbert in the Women in Literature passage. As always, the best responses came from candidates who appreciated ways in which the passages are special, not just ways in which they are much like other passages.

Approaches to the comparative essay usually showed more confidence since the candidates felt they were on home territory; this worked well for them as long as they kept the question in view and made clear how they were relating their texts to key elements of the question.

Some less successful responses, however, lost sight of some elements of the question (for example, many candidates overlooked the 'people in authority' in Question 6 (a) for the Dystopia topic). Candidates also need to be prepared to tackle a good range of topics and interests, rather than depending on a favoured area (for example, although there was a question on gender roles in the Gothic topic, examiners reported that some responses on the other Gothic questions still put gender roles at the centre of their arguments). Last year, the report suggested that conclusions to comparative essays were often less successful, either short and dismissive or lengthy and repetitive. This year the general quality of conclusions has been more successful, which is a credit to some of the excellent work going on in centres. Examiners have, however, commented on the superfluous use of technical language in both parts of the exam. Terms are quite often used wrongly, even at the simplest level where verbs are mistaken for adjectives. More complex terms ('asyndetic listing' appears quite commonly) often add little or nothing to the discussion and sometimes introduce unforced errors into candidates' work. Some literary terms are helpful, of course, and can aid discussion and understanding; one answer this session involved quite a laborious description of free indirect discourse, but the candidate received marks for her impressive attempt at working out this literary method in an unseen passage in an exam. Just like context, literary terminology should only be used where it aids discussion and understanding, not simply for display.

Question 1

American Literature 1880–1940

- 1 Write a critical appreciation of this passage, relating your discussion to your reading of American Literature 1880–1940. [30]

This was a packed literary extract and successful responses included a wide range of illustrative quotations. The most successful responses recognised the shape of the whole narrative, showing how Roger Gale starts out reluctant and even disgusted by the scenes of New York poverty but ends up excited and positive about 'Deborah's big family'. Within this trajectory there were many details to pick out, about Roger's past as a collector of antique rings (candidates often used this to help identify him as a privileged member of New York society), about the squalor of the narrow streets and then about the energy of the children, their hope and enthusiasm and their American patriotism despite the diversity of their origins as immigrants. Contextual discussion was usually well informed about immigration to the United States at the beginning of the twentieth century. Some candidates commenting on urban poverty assumed that the poor New Yorkers must be African American, suggesting a lack of clarity in their historical awareness. Most candidates noted the liveliness and colour which Roger encounters and used quotation to good effect. Less successful responses did not work out the overarching narrative of the extract and occasionally overlooked the explanatory headnote, suggesting that Roger was accompanying a child to school rather than his adult daughter.

Question 2 (a)

- 2 (a) F Scott Fitzgerald: *The Great Gatsby*

'The contrast between wealth and poverty is a powerful feature of much American literature.'

By comparing *The Great Gatsby* with at least one other text prescribed for this topic, discuss how far you agree with this view. [30]

This was the most popular comparative essay question for this topic, and many candidates chose to answer on the two core texts. *The Great Gatsby* provided plenty of material, with candidates drawing on scenes of the valley of ashes and comparing the wealthy Buchanans and Gatsby with the struggling George and Myrtle Wilson. Context generally involved discussion of the American Dream and suggested that characters in this novel are either rich or hoping to be rich. *The Grapes of Wrath* features plenty of poor characters but the wealthy interests of the novel are more-or-less faceless. This meant that less successful responses often settled for comparing Steinbeck's poor with Fitzgerald's wealthy, so that the contrast between wealth and poverty was not found within texts but between them. *The Age of Innocence* left candidates hunting for poverty with limited success. *Native Son*, with the wealthy Daltons inviting the poverty-stricken Bigger Thomas into their lives, proved to be an excellent choice here, as did *Sister Carrie* with Carrie's own journey towards wealth contrasted with Hurstwood's desperate decline.

Question 2 (b)

(b) John Steinbeck: *The Grapes of Wrath*

'Toughness of character is often important in American literature.'

By comparing *The Grapes of Wrath* with at least one other text prescribed for this topic, discuss how far you agree with this view. [30]

Few candidates attempted this question. Those who answered it wrote extensively on Ma Joad and the Okies more generally and introduced the Great Depression and the Dust Bowl by way of context. Some invoked the historical context of the New World, suggesting that toughness of character fits well with the pioneer narrative of self-reliance. *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* proved to be a helpful comparator given the need for Huck and Jim to display toughness on many occasions.

Question 2 (c)

(c) 'A sense of justice is central to American writing.'

By comparing at least two texts prescribed for this topic, discuss how far you have found this to be the case.

In your answer **you must include** discussion of either *The Great Gatsby* and/or *The Grapes of Wrath*. [30]

This question attracted a reasonable number of responses which probably included the best work produced in this topic area this session. Some candidates quoted from the Pledge of Allegiance and placed the importance of justice in a historical context. Candidates recognised different forms of justice, featuring social justice in *The Grapes of Wrath*, criminal justice in *The Great Gatsby* and moral justice in *The Age of Innocence*. *Native Son*, an increasingly popular text, was also a good choice here with its issues of racial justice and its concluding court case. Candidates seemed to understand that, in realist fiction, justice and fairness are always in play somewhere, either in terms of their presence or their absence, and produced some fresh and thoughtfully argued work.

Question 3

The Gothic

- 3 Write a critical appreciation of this passage, relating your discussion to your reading of the Gothic.

[30]

The Gothic was once again the most popular topic and most candidates engaged effectively with the passage from Shirley Jackson's *The Haunting of Hill House*. Many pointed out that by the time the Gothic reaches the 1950s, it often concerns itself with psychological issues and some of the best responses became interested in Eleanor's state of mind and the reliability of her experiences. The lack of visuals in the passage meant that Gothic trappings were not available for comment, but alert candidates focused on auditory images and on the remarkably repetitive style of the language: 'if she lay perfectly still, if she lay perfectly still, and listened, and listened...'. Candidates recognised that Eleanor is vulnerable and anxious but many also noted how she seeks to remain rational ('I am a walking reasoning humorous human being...') and suggested that this desire to overcome fear through rationality has more often been applied to male characters than female in the Gothic. The most successful responses found interesting qualities of the language throughout the extract, such as Eleanor's attempt 'to stand her mind on its feet'. Most responses reached the payoff of the passage, where Eleanor realises that the hand she was holding was not Theodora's; this moment was quite frequently compared with Lockwood's encounter with the ghostly Catherine in *Wuthering Heights*. Contextual discussion was its best in this form, where individual texts were invoked, rather than more theoretic explanations about 'waves' of Gothic which did not engage directly with literary content.

Question 4 (a)

- 4 (a) Bram Stoker: *Dracula*

'Gothic literature often places an ancient myth in a more recent setting.'

Consider how far you agree with this statement by comparing *Dracula* with at least one other text prescribed for this topic.

[30]

This question was answered by relatively few candidates. The best responses discussed the significance of the vampire myth in *Dracula* and its impact when placed in the novel's late Victorian English setting. Some compared the novel with Toni Morrison's *Beloved*, an increasingly popular text, arguing successfully that folk myths stretching back to Africa interact with the horrors of slavery to generate the supernatural events of the novel. In this case, the myth is intrusive and seems inescapable in the novel's present time. Another good choice was *Frankenstein*, where some candidates developed discussion around the Prometheus myth. Some examiners reported candidates substituting 'ancient myth' with traditional attitudes relating to gender roles; this approach was generally found to be less successful and suggested that candidates were overly dependent on prepared material concerning gender.

Exemplar 1

Both 'Dracula' and 'Victor' are characters derived from myth. Dracula is seen to be a descendant of Vlad the Impaler and Eastern European War Lord known for his villainous and non-sympathetic approach. Victor is derived from the tale of Prometheus, an over-reacher who stole the knowledge of fire and brought it to humanity. Prometheus was then sentenced to an eternal life of suffering as he was tied to a rock where his liver would be eaten every day.

This paragraph from a response to Question 4a shows clearly what the candidate understands by 'ancient myth' in his chosen texts.

Question 4 (b)

(b) Angela Carter: *The Bloody Chamber and Other Stories**

'Gothic texts are inclined to challenge traditional gender roles.'

By comparing *The Bloody Chamber and Other Stories** with at least one other text prescribed for this topic, discuss how far you agree with this view.

[30]

This was probably the single most popular comparative essay question on the paper and was usually tackled in relation to the two core texts for the topic. Candidates often argued that transgressive behaviours around gender and sexuality are celebrated and rewarded in *The Bloody Chamber* in stories like 'The Bloody Chamber' and 'The Tiger's Bride', but violently punished and even stamped out in *Dracula*. Contextual discussion often focused productively on developing social attitudes around the times of writing and publication, but there was more use this session of biographical material relating to both Carter and Stoker which was sometimes poorly informed and led to some reductive judgements. Candidates were well prepared to answer this question and sometimes responses fell into well-worn grooves and did not engage with the imaginative qualities of the literary texts; the very best responses were focused on the unsettling nature of the Gothic genre and the ways in which challenges to traditional roles play into the Gothic imagination. Candidates are expected to engage with at least three stories from the Carter volume in their responses, and the great majority succeeded in doing this. Other texts which proved popular here were *The Wasp Factory*, especially suited to discussion of gender, *Frankenstein* and *The Picture of Dorian Gray*. *Outer Dark* remains an outlier for the paper, but examiners always report good answers on this text, which seems to help candidates appreciate the imaginative possibilities of the Gothic.

Question 4 (c)

(c) 'Gothic literature retains a sense of mystery at its heart.'

By comparing at least two texts prescribed for this topic, discuss how far you have found this to be the case.

In your answer **you must include** discussion of either *Dracula* and/or *The Bloody Chamber and Other Stories**. **[30]**

This was the least popular question for this topic; most examiners saw few or no responses. This may be because candidates are very well prepared to relate their texts to real-world social issues, especially those relating to gender, but less well versed in areas like religion, the supernatural and the Gothic imagination, all of which are staples of the genre. There were some excellent responses focusing on *Frankenstein*, a text which poses some profound questions about life and death and which is still pleasingly inspirational to today's A Level candidates.

Question 5

Dystopia

5 Write a critical appreciation of this passage, relating your discussion to your reading of dystopian literature. **[30]**

Answers on the passage from *Make Room! Make Room!* were more successful where candidates were open to the suggestions of the passage rather than approaching it with very fixed expectations. Less successful responses depended on their study of the core texts to the extent that they believed the passage to be set in a totalitarian state; this led them to overlook the scenario of the political protest and to assume that the gathering is an authoritarian rally, with Kid Reeves (in fact the leader of the protesters) as a tyrannical ruler. Such responses also mischaracterised the police officers as brutal and controlling. More successful responses were attentive to the headnote and read more carefully, recognising that the 'Eldsters' are in fact exercising their right of protest. These responses were able to see that the police officers are somewhat detached and casual but in no way brutal. The best responses could see the humorous qualities of the passage with its unlikely rebels, and also understood that Kid Reeves is joking about having 'ordered' some clouds for the occasion. Many candidates recognised that the passage deals in the issues of climate change and the cost of living, reflecting that in many ways it strikes close to home for a contemporary reader. Some excellent responses noted the 1999 New York setting and the 1966 publication date, suggesting that the ageing protesters in the passage might well have been out in the streets in their youth protesting the Vietnam War.

Question 6 (a)

6 (a) George Orwell: *Nineteen Eighty-Four*

'People in authority in dystopian literature often inspire both love and fear.'

By comparing *Nineteen Eighty-Four* with at least one other text prescribed for this topic, discuss how far you agree with this view. [30]

This was the most popular of the three essay questions for this topic. Candidates were well prepared to write about love and (especially) fear in their chosen texts, which were almost invariably the two core texts, although extra texts were sometimes referenced in passing. Many did not understand the question to refer specifically to love or fear for the authority figures themselves, and they were not penalised for this, although examiners were pleased to find essays which did recognise this reading of the question and (for example) discussed Winston's love for O'Brien ('He had never loved him so deeply as at this moment...') and for Big Brother as well as his fear of them. Offred was generally regarded to be more cautious and self-protective in her relationships and certainly detached from the Commander, who best answered the definition of a person 'in authority' in her world. Contexts as ever were drawn from twentieth century authoritarian states, with Nicolae Ceauşescu increasingly appearing in responses alongside Hitler and Stalin.

Question 6 (b)

(b) Margaret Atwood: *The Handmaid's Tale*

'The human body is often portrayed as a battleground in dystopian fiction.'

By comparing *The Handmaid's Tale* with at least one other text prescribed for this topic, discuss how far you agree with this view. [30]

This was a popular question, but the central topic of the human body was not always sustained throughout responses. Again, almost all candidates wrote on the two core texts. The best responses focused on the Ceremony in *The Handmaid's Tale* and on the physical exploitation and subjugation of women more generally in that text. Some responses became wedded to the topic of sex in relation to the body, focusing exclusively on Winston's disappointing marriage and his affair with Julia in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*; others included both Winston's physical suffering under torture and his health problems with the varicose ulcer, held by some to act as a metaphor for the diseased state. Less successful responses fell back on prepared material often unrelated to the human body. Former questions concerning surveillance and indoctrination seem to have had a strong influence on the study of this topic and these concerns often appeared rather ahead of the human body in candidates' responses. Sometimes this was justified by argument, for example that the authorities are watching people's bodies (surveillance), but sometimes there was simple assertion, for example that the mind is effectively part of the body (indoctrination).

Question 6 (c)

(c) 'Dystopian literature often features the failure and disappointment of romantic love.'

By comparing at least two texts prescribed for this topic, explore how far you agree with this view.

In your answer **you must include** discussion of either *Nineteen Eighty-Four* and/or *The Handmaid's Tale*.

[30]

This was probably the least popular of the three questions for this topic; this may have been because the term 'love' also appeared in Question 6 (a), and candidates wrote about romantic love there instead. The core texts were again dominant, and candidates wrote about Winston's marriage and Winston's affair with Julia. Candidates often discussed Winston's violent fantasies relating to Julia, sometimes questioning the nature of their relationship; the betrayal ('Do it to Julia!') also figured strongly. Discussion of Atwood was a little less predictable. Good responses often discussed her marriage with Luke, sometimes suggesting that his slowness to criticise the new Gilead regime ('Don't worry, I'm sure it's temporary') is experienced by Offred as a kind of betrayal. They also considered her other relationships with the Commander and with Nick, suggesting that they are hedged about by too many problems and reservations to be seen simply as 'romantic love'. *Brave New World* was an interesting choice of text here, providing the argument that widespread promiscuity is the enemy of real romance. One examiner read a response which suggested that, far from 'failure and disappointment', the episodes relating to love in these novels are the embodiment of the hope which is essential to the genre.

Question 7

Women in Literature

7 Write a critical appreciation of the passage, relating your discussion to your reading concerning Women in Literature.

[30]

This passage gave rise to a lot of responsive and interesting work. Candidates were alive to Julia's assertiveness and power in her relationship with Herbert and often found it surprising; few if any ascribed it to her youthful attractiveness. More often they suggested it was as a result of the changing times now that women were more economically active (including Julia, at the shop) after the war. However, there was still a desire to cast Julia as the victim and some responses insisted that she was being forced into the marriage against her will. Some of the most successful responses were interested in the euphemistic language of the passage whereby Julia refuses to share a bedroom but allows that Herbert can 'come and see me' when he wants. Most responses were struck by Julia's attachment to the idea of the room in Saint Clement's Square and often wrote about the imagery of windows, connecting it to ideas about freedom. Some of the best responses gave attention to the other female characters of the passage, taking an interest in Elsa's tendency to perform, Mrs Almond's tearful weakness and Aunt Mildred's domestic dominance. All were struck by Julia's ambivalence expressed in the contrast she makes herself: 'Lucky Elsa, not having to be married this morning ... And yet, she supposed, lucky Julia, to be going to be married to what Dad had always called a good solid man...'

Question 8 (a)

8 (a) Jane Austen: *Sense and Sensibility*

'Female characters in literature often show strength in adversity.'

By comparing *Sense and Sensibility* with at least one other text prescribed for this topic, discuss how far you have found this to be the case. [30]

Most candidates responding to Question 8 chose the (c) option concerning money and status, but there were some responses on 'strength in adversity'. Elinor Dashwood was the chief proponent of this quality; candidates were divided about Marianne, who was variously seen as a victim of the system finally forced into marriage to a man she did not want, or as an essentially strong woman who grew to a more mature understanding of life through her suffering. Candidates are increasingly writing on the entertaining Lucy Steele, often forgiving her deviousness on the basis of her lack of legitimate options. Most candidates choosing this question compared *Sense and Sensibility* either with *Jane Eyre*, whose heroine is well supplied with both adversity and the strength to withstand it, or with *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*, whose heroine suffers perhaps more than any other.

Question 8 (b)

(b) Virginia Woolf: *Mrs Dalloway*

'The lives of female characters narrow as they grow older.'

By comparing *Mrs Dalloway* with at least one other text prescribed for this topic, discuss how far you agree with this view. [30]

This question was again rather less popular than Question 8 (c), but a number of examiners reported seeing sensitive and interesting work about the narrowing of female characters' lives. The most striking of these compared the novel to *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, a text which is increasing substantially in popularity. Janie Crawford's journey, with its series of marriages and final phase of single life, provides an interesting range of experiences; candidates were inclined to suggest that, where Clarissa's life narrows, Janie's increases in richness, variety and independence. Some responses gave Clarissa credit for arriving at a broadening of life in her final epiphany. The other popular comparator was *Sense and Sensibility*, and there was sensitive writing about the short time a young woman had in Austen's world to establish her position in life before the 'narrowing' would begin. There was some good writing on Mrs Jennings, who makes the promoting of marriages her whole business in life.

Question 8 (c)

(c) 'Female characters in literature are acutely aware of the importance of money and status.'

By comparing at least two texts prescribed for this topic, explore how far you agree with this claim.

In your answer **you must include** discussion of either *Sense and Sensibility* and/or *Mrs Dalloway*.

[30]

This was the most popular question for this topic and candidates were well prepared to consider the restrictions faced by young women trying to make a life in Austen's Regency England. The cautionary tale of the two Elizas, victims of limited income and loss of status, was often retold, and candidate responses suggested that Marianne was similarly at risk. Lucy Steele was again a subject for discussion, as was the wealthy Mrs Ferrars. Discussion of *Mrs Dalloway* usually implied that Clarissa had an easier route in life but is seen in the novel at a more difficult period of adjustment where the price for earlier decisions is being paid. *Jane Eyre* again proved to be an interesting comparative text because of Jane's tough moral sense which prevents her from making easy choices which are morally doubtful. Candidates pointed out that the legacy she receives at the end of the novel enables her to have it both ways. *The Bell Jar* was another popular choice, enabling candidates to discuss Esther's struggles over questions of identity and success.

Question 9

The Immigrant Experience

9 Write a critical appreciation of the passage, relating your discussion to your reading concerning the Immigrant Experience. [30]

This was once again the least popular topic choice. Answers on the passage from *The Road Home* were generally competent at least, and candidates did well to pick out figurative writing such as the turnstiles in the station which create a barrier for Lev, and the mud of his own country which he tries to clean from his shoes. The characters he approaches for help featured in all responses. The 'smart, elderly' man was viewed with disapproval, but there was a variety of response to the young joker, some viewing him as a sympathetic and helpful presence, others dismayed by his cruelty. Good responses often picked out Lev's use of language, from his overly polite 'Please may you help me?' to his loud cursing in his own language when he believes he has been robbed.

Exemplar 2

In this passage, the immigrant man by the name of Lev faces discrimination from westerners while he is in a vulnerable state, after putting himself in the position of asking for help with the turnstile which he could not cross to get to the toilets and clean himself up after his long journey. By the time he receives the much needed help, he goes through discrimination, nostalgia, and a form of disorientation from his mother country and his Eastern European background.

This opening paragraph gives an excellent overview of the passage for Question 9.

Question 10 (a)

(a) Henry Roth: *Call It Sleep*

'Immigrants in literature carry the weight of their past lives with them.'

By comparing *Call It Sleep* with at least one other text prescribed for this topic, discuss how far you agree with this view. [30]

A very small number of responses were seen to this question.

Question 10 (b)

(b) Mohsin Hamid: *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*

'Immigration narratives offer both opportunities and challenges to their central figures.'

By comparing *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* with at least one other text prescribed for this topic, discuss how far you agree with this view. [30]

This was the most popular of the essay questions and most candidates paired *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* with *Small Island*, although some work was seen on *The Secret River*. Answers charted the progress of Changez as he seems at first successful but later troubled and finally threatened as he works through the experiences from his attempted immigration. The task for candidates involved finding a clear structure to deal with the two texts, and also managing the contrasting ideas of opportunities and challenges. For those candidates discussing *Small Island*, there was also quite a large cast of characters to manage. Less successful responses tended to pile up examples, opting for opportunities or challenges as they came; more successful responses managed a clear structure where texts and contexts could be helpfully compared in the light of the question.

Question 10 (c)

(c) 'The literature of immigration explores the desire to belong.'

By comparing at least two texts prescribed for this topic, discuss how far you agree with this view.

In your answer **you must include** discussion of either *Call It Sleep* and/or *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*. [30]

A small number of candidates attempted this question; again, the chosen texts were usually *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* and *Small Island*, although markers also saw work on *The Secret River*, a text which especially enables discussion of homesickness. Candidates explored the paradoxical nature of the desire to belong when it may be split between a former life and a future life; in *The Secret River*, the central married couple, the Thornhills, are divided in their attachments, he to the new possibilities, she to the London of her youth.

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