

## B. ANALYSIS OF PERFORMANCE

### WUTHERING HEIGHTS – *Emily Bronte*

#### Question 1

How far is Lockwood able to conduct himself as a reliable narrator in the novel *Wuthering Heights* [20] by Emily Bronte?

#### Comments of Examiners

Most candidates discussed Lockwood as unreliable but substantiation was absent or inadequate. Tensions within the family, impartiality as an outsider – were points that were not touched upon by a number of candidates. In some cases, where textual narration was there, candidates were unable to relate to the impact of it. Analysis of reliable or unreliable was also not done in some cases.

Many candidates merely summarized novel. Quotation was insufficient, inaccurate and often irrelevant. Errors in grammar, spelling and vocabulary were also observed.

#### Suggestions for teachers

- Teach student how to differentiate between narrative voices, in this case, Lockwood and Nelly.
- Students must be taught to analyse cause and effect of incidents and relevance / role of characters.
- Tell students to read the question carefully and understand what is being asked, before attempting the answer.
- Tell students to quote accurately and relevantly from the text – not quotes of critics or cooked up quotes.
- Attention must be paid to correct English, syntax and spelling.

#### MARKING SCHEME

##### Question 1.

In *Wuthering heights*, the author chose to write the story through two story-tellers, Mr. Lockwood and Mrs. Nelly Dean. Nelly Dean, of course, is the more important narrator. Lockwood is both a listener and a storyteller. In fact, *Wuthering Heights* is told as a story within a story. Lockwood's encounter with Heathcliff, with the younger Catherine, and with Hareton Earnshaw (in the first three chapters) so arouses his curiosity that he asks Nelly, his housekeeper at Thrushcross Grange which he has rented to tell him their history. She brings him up to date with the events. Then after an interval, he comes back and sees the end of the story with his own eyes with a little further narration from Nelly, which fills the gap of his absence and ends the novel, just as he began it. Both as a story-teller and as a listener, he is a character of some importance, endowed by the novelist with certain characteristics which make him a good medium for conveying certain essential effects.

Lockwood begins as a good representative of our ignorance, our interest and our curiosity about the intimates of *Wuthering Heights*. He is a stranger to this rough, wild place, the townsman who tells that he has come here in search of seclusion and peace. He comes, bringing with him certain superficial expectations and habits of polite society, and makes an ironical contrast with the characters and events which he describes. He is also the ordinary man in an extraordinary situation, and he mirrors the mysteries and violence in his bewildered innocence.

The novel opens with Lockwood as the narrator, and he remains the narrator in the first three chapters. Nelly begins her story in Chapter 4 and continues, with occasional brief interruptions and comments by Lockwood, till the end of Chapter 30. In Chapter 31 and in the first half of Chapter 32, Lockwood again becomes the narrator but is followed by Nelly as the narrator in the second half of Chapter 32. Nelly then continues till almost the end, Lockwood taking over the role of the narrator once again in the concluding few paragraphs. In all, Lockwood tells about one-tenth of the story.

In Chapter I, Lockwood gives us a description of the house called Wuthering Heights, and tells us the meaning of the word 'Wuthering'. Heathcliff, the owner of the house receives Lockwood who is his tenant at Thrushcross Grange, rather coldly. As Lockwood tries to amuse himself by making faces at Heathcliff's dogs, they are provoked and they attack him. He is rescued by a kitchen maid. In this opening chapter Lockwood describes himself as a misanthropist and also tells us about the failure of his attempted love-affair with a young woman. Lockwood then gives us his impressions of Heathcliff. Heathcliff is a dark skinned man looking like a gypsy but dressed like a gentleman, slovenly but with an erect and handsome figure, and rather morose, Lockwood also tells us of the servant Joseph who has a sour expression on his face.

It is to be noted that Lockwood's description of the house is an important and compressed introduction to the perverted passions and mystery of Wuthering Heights, the appropriate dwelling-place of Heathcliff. Lockwood's brief account of his failure in love, his shyness, and his icy retreat from the young woman, who had attracted him on the sea coast, shows that there is some point in his talk about reserve and misanthropy, and shows also his feeble shyness in strong contrast with the directness and fierceness of the passions of Wuthering Heights. The full irony of the contrasts and comparisons does not make itself felt immediately, but gradually.

In Chapter 2, Lockwood describes his second visit to Wuthering Heights on the following day. This time he also sees a young girl and a young man at this place, and is informed that the girl is the widow of Heathcliff's son. Lockwood finds that the young woman has an excellent figure and an exquisite face, that she is very haughty and rude, and that she is hardly seventeen. This time also Lockwood gets a cold reception by his landlord, and he forms the opinion that Heathcliff is a man of a genuinely bad nature. The young fellow called Hareton is described by Lockwood as a clown and a boor.

In the first two chapters, then, we are made to see the moroseness and rudeness of Heathcliff and the haughtiness of the girl whose name is Catherine. We are also enabled to hear the rough language of Heathcliff, of Catherine, and of Joseph; and we observe the unsociability and the domestic tensions which arouse our curiosity as they arouse Lockwood's curiosity. Furthermore, we find that Hareton is entirely free from the feeling of superiority which is visible in Heathcliff and Catherine. Hareton shows some signs of decent behaviour. It is Hareton who asks Lockwood to sit down, and it is he who offers to guide Lockwood home through the snow. Catherine too, though ill-tempered and sulky, does at one point remark that "a man's life is of more consequence than one evening's neglect of the horses". There is already some indication that both she and Hareton have a touch of humanity which distinguishes them from Heathcliff. And we became keenly aware of the hatred and tension which exist within this strange family. There is a strong contrast between the attitude of this family and Lockwood's attempts at sociability.

In the first two chapters, Lockwood also gives us evidence of his sense of humour. This sense of humour is evident from his account of his own love-affair, his description of the various persons he has met, especially of the reserved and morose Heathcliff and the 'vinegar-faced' Joseph, the way he is attacked on both occasions by Heathcliff's dogs, and his mistaking the young girl first as Heathcliff's wife and then as Hareton's wife. Lockwood's effort to escape from Wuthering Heights after snatching

a lantern is also quite amusing. But the chief effect of these chapters is to show us, from the outside, the harshness, as well as, the mystery of this strangely-assorted family. We see the rude passions without understanding them. We also see them in sharp relief as they confront and dismay Lockwood's expectations of a call on his landlord and a pleasant taking of tea. We naturally ask what are the qualities of these harsh passions which have something admirable in them, especially when put beside a gentler lack of spirit. Lockwood's alien vision is the medium both for our sense of admiration and for our disgust.

The third chapter contains Lockwood's account of the two terrible dreams which he sees in the course of his sleep at Wuthering Heights when he is compelled to spend the night there. These dreams result from his having fallen asleep after having gone through some of the entries in a diary which belonged to Catherine Earnshaw who afterwards became Catherine Linton by her marriage to Edgar Linton. In his first dream Lockwood is fiercely attacked by Joseph and many others in a church. In his second dream, Lockwood finds himself rubbing a little girl's hand on a broken glass-pane till the hand begins to bleed profusely. When Lockwood describes his dream to Heathcliff, Heathcliff is strangely moved and, looking out of the window, says: "Come in! Cathy, do come. Oh, my heart's darling!" The two dreams of Lockwood create an atmosphere of mystery and fear in this chapter. Like Lockwood, we become even more inquisitive about the mysterious persons living at Wuthering Heights. The ugly scene between Heathcliff and his daughter-in-law in the morning adds to our curiosity.

At certain points in the course of Nelly's narration of the story, Lockwood offers his own observations and comments. At one point, for instance, he tells Nelly that he is feeling interested in each of the characters of her story, and he also pays her a compliment on the leisurely manner in which she is narrating the story. At another point, he tells us that he has been confined to bed with fever for the last four weeks, and that he has been tossing in his bed on account of the ailment. During this illness, Lockwood has been visited by his landlord Heathcliff, who had spent half an hour at Lockwood's bedside and talked to him amiably. At yet another point, Lockwood tells us that he will 'extract wholesome medicine from Nelly's bitter herbs', adding that he must beware of the attraction of the bright eyes of the younger Catherine. Lockwood decides to resist the charms of the young lady whom he had seen at Wuthering Heights on his second visit. He also expresses an apprehension that this Catherine might turn out to be a second edition of her mother, the first Catherine. At the beginning of Chapter 15, Lockwood tells us that he is now feeling almost normal and that by now he has heard a large part of the history of Heathcliff from Nelly at several sittings, and has found Nelly to be a very fair narrator.

In Chapter 31, where Lockwood himself again becomes the narrator, he tells us of yet another visit which he pays to Wuthering Heights this time to inform his landlord that he is going back to London for some time and that he has no wish to renew his tenancy of Thrushcross Grange after the expiry of the twelve months for which he had taken the house on rent. This time again Lockwood has an opportunity of observing the behaviour of the various inmates of Wuthering Heights. He finds Catherine to be sulkier than on the first occasion, and his secret thought about her is that she is surely 'a beauty but not an angel'. He also finds her scolding Hareton for having taken away all her books. At this accusation Hareton goes, brings a heap of books, and throws them into Catherine's lap. The chapter ends with Lockwood's reflection as to what might have happened if he himself had been able to develop a love-affair with Catherine.

In chapter 32, Lockwood is still the narrator. He has come back to Thrushcross Grange after having spent several months in London. On learning that Nelly, the housekeeper, has shifted to Wuthering Heights, he goes thither to meet her, and learns from her of the events (including Heathcliff's death)

which have occurred during his absence. At the end of the final chapter (34), Lockwood informs us that, after hearing the whole account from Nelly, he visited the graveyard where he found the graves of all the three main characters – Cathy, Edgar, and Heathcliff – undisturbed and peaceful.

Lockwood's function in the novel is as the intermediary through whom the eye-witness account of events and circumstances given by Nelly is conveyed to us. The author's purpose in introducing Lockwood is to give us the point of view of a detached and impartial listener to Nelly's story. By his presence in the novel, the story acquires an even greater reliability and authenticity. However, it would be wrong to exaggerate his importance. For instance, his weaknesses are emphasized where they are needed; in the first scene which introduces us to the novel or in the scene where he tells Nelly that her rationality and judgement testify to the values of rural existence, A more strongly individualized character would have been more difficult to keep in the background as a mere listening ear. Moreover, Lockwood is sometimes right and sometimes wrong in his judgement. He also gives sound and sensitive advice to the younger Catherine about her conduct to Hareton. When he comes back, in 1802, to hear the end of the story from Nelly, his character and situation are subordinated. The author exploits those of his traits which she has early established – his superficial desire for solitude, his changeableness, and his real sensibility – to motivate both his absence and his return. After Nelly has said her last words Lockwood, says his, and his are indeed the last words of the novel.

Finally, it may be pointed out that Lockwood's role is to add convincing evidence to what Nelly tells us through him, since no need to lie, no subconscious urge to conceal, reveal, or justify. He clinches Nelly's statements and confirms for us the ghastly truth of what she tells. It is through this quite disinterested person that from the very beginning we feel the tension of the whole story.

## Question 2

Give a vivid description of Heathcliff's death as told by Mrs. Dean to Lockwood. In what [20] ways had he changed before his death?

### Comments of Examiners

Many candidates did not assimilate the key words from the question, i.e. 'vivid', 'description', 'changed'. Most of the answers gave a general build up to causes of death or changes or a summary of story. A few candidates addressed only a part of question – either death or changes, hence lost the marks allotted for the other part. In some cases, while the main change – loss of desire for revenge was stated, other aspects were ignored.

### Suggestions for teachers

- Teach students to interpret and answer various parts of the question that need separate analysis.
- Emphasise the need for clarity and accuracy in textual reference, especially in straightforward, simple questions.
- Stress upon the importance of accurate, relevant quotes and reference to text rather than a general summary or analysis – thorough knowledge of literary text a must (avoid summaries and guides)
- Teach character development and changes.

## MARKING SCHEME

### Question 2.

One day Heathcliff rebuked the younger Catherine for having uprooted some of the bushes and plants in the garden. The younger Catherine retorted that Heathcliff should not grudge her a few yards of earth when he had taken away all her land. This retort angered Heathcliff; but the younger Catherine went on to say that he had even taken away all her money, and that he had, moreover, taken away Hareton's land and money too. Heathcliff now felt so furious that he caught hold of her by her hair and threatened to kill her. Hareton certainly went to her rescue but in a manner which showed his great respect for Heathcliff.

For several days after the angry scene between himself and the younger Catherine, Heathcliff avoided everybody in the house.

On another day, Heathcliff had a frank talk with Mrs. Dean (or Nelly). He told her that now it was in his power to destroy both the families, namely the Lintons of Thrushcross Grange and the Earnshaws of Wuthering Heights. There were now only two living representatives of those two families. Hareton was a descendant of the Earnshaw family (because he was the son of Hindley Earnshaw by his marriage to a girl called Frances), while the younger Catherine was a descendant of the Linton family (because she was the daughter of Edgar Linton by his marriage to Catherine Earnshaw). However, Heathcliff then went on to say that he no longer had any wish to destroy anybody. Heathcliff also told Nelly that a strange change was about to take place in him.

Nelly, there is a strange change approaching; I'm in its shadow at present. I take so little interest in my daily life that I hardly remember to eat and drink. Those two who have left the room are the only objects which retain a distinct material appearance to me; and that appearance causes me pain, amounting to agony.

He said that he saw the image of the elder Catherine in every cloud, in every tree and, in fact, in every object. The entire world, he said, reminded him of the fact that the elder Catherine had existed and lived at one time, and that he had lost her. Whatever he now did was done under the influence of one thought, and it was the thought of the elder Catherine. Whichever object he saw, became associated in his mind with the elder Catherine.

I have neither a fear, nor a presentiment, nor a hope of death. Why should I? With my hard constitution and temperate mode of living, and unperilous occupations, I ought to, and probably *shall*, remain above ground till there is scarcely a black hair on my head. And yet I cannot continue in this condition! I have to remind myself to breathe—almost to remind my heart to beat!

His whole being and all his faculties were possessed by a single desire which would soon be fulfilled, he said. His life had been a long fight, and he now wanted it to come to an end. This kind of talk from Heathcliff made Nelly think that his conscience had begun to trouble him.

Thus a change had surely taken place in Heathcliff. His words to Nelly were not spoken hypocritically but sincerely. He had told her that the entire world was a dreadful collection of memoranda to the effect that Catherine had existed, and that he had lost her. He was now feeling tormented by a sense of failure though previously he had been enjoying his feeling of triumph over his acquisition of the property of both the Earnshaw family and the Linton family. Another change which took place in Heathcliff was that his destructive attitude towards those two families had subsided. His revenge had been completed; and he now felt no longer any desire to carry his destructiveness any further. In this connection he had told Nelly that he had lost the faculty of enjoying his destruction of the two families and that he was too lazy to go on destroying them any further.

You did not when you saw him, Mr. Lockwood: and at the period of which I speak, he was just the same as then; only fonder of continued solitude, and perhaps still more laconic in company.

A few days before his death, he became restless – wouldn't eat and went out for long walks. Nelly heard him groaning in his room and calling out to Catherine until one day he announced he had been on the threshold of hell but had found his heaven.

One night Heathcliff remained absent from home all night, and turned up only in the morning. He had a strange, joyful glitter in his eyes. Nelly saw something unnatural in those deep black eyes of his. It seemed to her that he was not a human being but a goblin. She asked herself inwardly whether he was a ghoul or a vampire. That night Heathcliff told Nelly that he had not yet made his will and that he did not know to whom he should leave his property, which now consisted of Wuthering Heights, Thrushcross Grange, and all the land attached to these great houses. He said that he wanted completely to destroy all his property and leave no trace of it on the earth. Nelly suggested that, having done many injustices during his life, he should repent of them and should take to the reading of the Bible. He replied that he had done no injustices, and that there was nothing for him to repent of.

Heathcliff now gave Nelly some instructions to be carried out after his death especially with regard to his burial. He told her that no priest was to be summoned, that no religious words were to be spoken over his dead body, and that he was to be buried close to the dead body of his beloved Catherine. He also said that he had nearly attained his Heaven, and that the Heaven about which the priests talked had no value in his eyes.

Throughout that night, Nelly heard Heathcliff groaning and murmuring to himself in his room. For three or four days, he had been taking no food at all. The next day was very wet. When Nelly went out for a walk in the morning, she found the window of Heathcliff's room open. That night he had occupied a bed in the panelled room in which he and Catherine used to sleep as children. Becoming suspicious, Nelly at once rushed back into the house and, climbing up the stairs, quickly opened the door of the room. She found that Heathcliff was dead, though his eyes were open. She tried to close his eyes, but she found her effort to be futile because the eyes did not close. In fact, his eyes seemed to mock her attempts to close them. Even his lips were parted, and his white teeth were visible. Joseph, the servant, seeing the open eyes and the parted lips remarked that the devil had carried off Heathcliff's soul.

### Question 3

Write short notes on *any two* of the following:

[20]

- (a) Hareton Earnshaw.
- (b) Younger Catherine.
- (c) Isabella.

### Comments of Examiners

This question was attempted well by most of the candidates. In some cases, analysis of the role of the character was missing although character sketch was given – thematic significance ignored.

### Suggestions for teachers

- Teach character analysis – nature/ traits, changes, role in novel (theme and through comparison with other characters, e.g. Hareton and Linton).
- Use character web or mind map while teaching to consolidate understanding of a character in relation to other characters.
- Discussion of character must incorporate who, traits, relations, role + justification (textual reference and quotes).

### **MARKING SCHEME**

#### **Question 3.**

(a) Hareton Earnshaw

Hareton Earnshaw, son of Hindley and Frances, is an interesting and important character. Left to his own fate by his drunken father, Hareton is almost wrecked by Heathcliff who resolves to keep him brutal, uneducated and uncivilized. Hareton is the means of Heathcliff's revenge: Heathcliff's revenge on Hindley extends to his son and he takes inhuman pleasure in the degradation of Hareton who has a potentially fine spirit in him. In his degradation and boorishness Hareton shows Emily Bronte's concern with the thin veneer of civilisation. In Wuthering Heights, most characters come down to a brutal level easily, as found not only in Hareton but also in Hindley, Heathcliff and even in Catherine. Heathcliff takes pleasure in perverting Hareton and this pleasure is intense as he understands that he is destroying a potentially fine spirit. Hareton has a much finer soul than Linton – Heathcliff's son, and hence, Heathcliff takes a bitter pleasure in this. Heathcliff tells Nelly: "If he were a born fool I should not enjoy it half so much. But he is no fool; ...His has first-rate qualities, and they are lost, rendered worse than unavailing". (Chapter 21) The motiveless malignity of Heathcliff is quite evident here. Hareton has been indeed turned into an ill-mannered brute. He throws stones at visitors, hangs a litter of puppies from a chairback and cannot read.

It is indeed astonishing that in spite of Heathcliff's cruelty, Hareton has a great attachment to him, which Heathcliff himself acknowledges. It is Hareton alone who feels sad for the death of Heathcliff and in his last days Heathcliff looks upon him as an image of his own younger days. Heathcliff permits only Hareton along with Nelly, in his last wishes, to be present at the time of his burial. He tells Nelly: "you remind me of the manner that I desire to be buried in – it to be carried to the churchyard, in the evening. You and Hareton may, if you please, accompany me".

Hareton may have been turned into a brute, but the natural love within his heart cannot be destroyed. This is shown in his attachment to Heathcliff but more so in his genuine love for young Cathy. He becomes jealous when he finds Cathy paying greater attention to Linton.

Just to get the favour of Cathy, he tries to educate himself although his efforts are first scoffed at by Cathy who later relents and helps him in his efforts to learn, liberally rewarding him with kisses as he makes progress in his study, Nelly believes that Hareton can be improved and it is her natural kindness that finally persuades Cathy to help him, though indirectly. She once tells Cathy while the latter has been disparaging Hareton, “He was as quick and as intelligent a child as ever you were; and I’m hurt that he should be despised now, because that base Heathcliff has treated him so unjustly.”

In fact, it is the redeeming power of love that changes Hareton into a respectable, gentle young man as Lockwood sees him on his return to Wuthering Heights about nine months later. The novel closes with the information that Hareton and Catherine are to be married on the next New Year’s Day and are to shift from Wuthering Heights to Thrushcross Grange. It is through him, to a great extent that Emily Bronte seems to convey the idea that evil does not finally triumph and that love is a stronger force that can conquer evil.

(b) Younger Catherine

She is the child of the union of Catherine Earnshaw and Edgar Linton and inherits all their best qualities.

She has an exquisite face, golden ringlets and the beautiful eyes of her mother. She is described as “the most winning thing that ever brought sunshine into desolate house”. She is lonely as a child, having no companions, except her father and her nurse. But the pleasant setting of Thrushcross Grange makes her a pleasant, cheerful, happy and contented person.

The one thing that she inherits from her mother is the stubborn will which leads her to disobey her father’s wishes and visit the Heights, where she is increasingly drawn to the sickly Linton with active encouragement from Heathcliff. But her strong will does not bend even to the diabolic cruelty of Heathcliff. Unafraid she challenges him – retains her dignity in spite of the degradation Heathcliff heaps on her after getting her forcibly married to his sickly son.

Along with the strong will of her mother, Catherine inherits the softer, gentler nature of her father too. She is warm hearted and sympathetic – adores her father loves Nelly and nurses them when they are sick. She pities the sick Linton – is too inexperienced to recognize his selfishness or Heathcliff’s cruelty – she throws her warmth and affection away on the romantically fragile Linton.

It is through her assiduous care that the inherent good traits in Hareton are reborn after the brutal and savage treatment by Heathcliff. Her marriage with Hareton symbolizes the ultimate victory of good over evil – the defeat of the disruptive forces by the cosmic spirit of orderliness and harmony.

Younger Cathy is the symbol of reconciliation, inheriting Edgar Linton’s gentleness without his weakness, Catherine’s spirit without her savagery; she is a fuller and more balanced human being than either.

[The role of the younger Catherine to be shown under – parentage, physical description, likeness to mother and father and her character, relationships with Heathcliff, Linton and Hareton, thematic significance]



(c) Isabella

Isabella Linton is the sister of Edgar Linton and is later married to Heathcliff. She is a typical member of the Linton family. She is somewhat weak and, at times, peevish like her brother Edgar. She appears as a pampered child of the family just like Edgar. Catherine says of them: "...they are spoiled children, and fancy the world as made for their accommodation". (Chapter 10) "As a child she is seen screaming in a room and at eighteen she is charming but infantile in manners, though possessed of keen wit, keen feelings, and a keen temper, too, if irritated."

She is introduced into the novel to develop the story of Heathcliff's revenge on Edgar Linton who has snatched away his dear Catherine from him. Infatuated with Heathcliff and does not realise she is a mere tool of revenge for him – he despises her and says of her that she cannot be called a "rational creature" since she persisted in forming a fabulous notion of him as a chivalrous lover – doting brother appalled at her infatuation – Catherine's attempts to dissuade her and show her the truth about the "unreclaimed creature" she has taken a liking to are futile – one night while Catherine lies burning with fever, she elopes with Heathcliff and is disowned by her brother.

Isabella is treated badly at Wuthering Heights – she describes her first night there as a bride and subsequent acts of brutality by Heathcliff – she eventually escapes and too proud to take the help of her grieving brother flees south near London where she gives birth to Linton – when he is about twelve, she dies of a "slow fever" and weak constitution.

She is a contrast physically and spiritually to Catherine, Whereas Isabella seems peevish, Catherine is not jealous of her bright hair, white skin, elegance and fondness of the family for her. Isabella is elegant and quiet whereas Catherine is wild and impetuous.

### TO KILL A MOCKINGBIRD – Harper Lee

#### Question 4

Harper Lee highlights the social hypocrisy in Maycomb County through the meeting of Aunt Alexandra's missionary circle. Give a vivid account of the meeting and Scout's observation. [20]

#### Comments of Examiners

Many of the answers given by candidates were not specific - taking cue from key words in question: vivid account, Scout's observation. In some cases, textual detail, when incorporated, did not lead to analysis of how it brought out social hypocrisy. Minor details necessary for this question – e.g. dress, names of some important guests, were missing in many answers.

#### Suggestions for teachers

- Tell students to read the question carefully and understand the requirements of the question by recognising key words.
- Stress upon the importance of reading the text and understanding the significance of incidents.

- Take students through key incidents of the novel – teach sequence and descriptive detail as components of literary text; explain the significance of key events, plot, theme, character and so on.
- Analysis of concerns of writers requires knowledge of cultural milieu and background of novel and writer.

## MARKING SCHEME

### Question 4.

After Aunt Alexandra decided to stay at Maycomb for sometime, she started holding her missionary circle meetings. All the leaders of Maycomb could meet and discuss missionary activities in different parts of the globe. More often than not the meetings would descend into gossip on local affairs and people. Scout was left out of Jem and Dill's swimming expedition so she 'divided the lonely hours between Calpurnia and Miss Maudie.

At the end of August, the missionary circle met to fight the good fight all over the book. Mrs. Grace Merriweather gave a report on the lives of the Mrunas. The moving account of the terrible lives led by the members of the tribe has followed by refreshments. As Scout helped Calpurnia, she heard snatches of conversation regarding the food served and the comments on other ladies of the community. She was wearing a dress and serving without spilling anything so Aunt Alexandra invited her to join them.

Making Scout stay with her was part of Aunt Alexandra's campaign to teach Scout to be a lady. Scout's only ally in the bewildering crowd of panted used ladies who smelled heavenly, was Miss Maudie. The harshness of the ladies and their comments can be seen in Miss Stephanie's rash question to Scout about her interest in becoming a lawyer.

The ladies talk about the Mrunas and the work done by J. Grimes Everett but their insensitivity towards the blacks is seen in their comments on Tom's wife. The dissatisfaction among the blacks and the general agreement that the blacks could never do anything good. When they talked about "forgive and forget", Scout thought it was a reference to Mayella Ewell but it turned out they were talking about Helen Robinson.

The ladies criticised the tradition of training blacks and call them hypocrites not realising their own hypocritical behaviour. Mrs. Merriweather talked about good but misguided people in Maycomb who thought they were helping but were actually creating more trouble. Miss Maudie silences oblique questions to Scout and references to Atticus.

The other ladies present there are pretentious, self-righteous and duplicitous. They say to Scout: 'You live in a Christian home with Christian folks,' trying to impose upon her the values of Christianity. This is a ludicrous statement for the conversations about 'sulky dark(ies)' and the creation of countless myths and stories which portray people of the county in a bad way both make the ladies thoroughly unchristian in their conduct. They are happy to notionally support the conversion of the 'heathen' Mrunas, while they blatantly discriminate against the thoroughly Christian Negroes who live and work around them.

The ladies of the missionary circle treat the children rather curtly, mainly because they disapprove of Atticus defending a Negro, something which shows how racist they are, and thus, how hypocritical they are. Miss Crawford mocks the dress that Scout wears, and her future career prospects: ‘Are you going to be a lawyer like your daddy?’ she says maliciously, showing how condescending she is, thinking Scout will not understand that she is actually mocking her.

The gathering is of a social clique where membership is defined by colour, class and social attitude. This is demonstrated by the unwillingness of Miss Maudie to attend. The only reason she is involved in the missionary circle is that she is afraid of being ostracised and seen as an outsider. Miss Maudie did not share in the hypocrisy possessed by the other ladies of the missionary circle. She is a woman of true Christian values, shown by the fact that she shuns the foul mouths of some of the ladies, and refrains from adding to the group’s complaints about their servants.

Scout's admiration for Aunt Alexandra goes up when she sees how the latter rises to the occasion after the bad news brought in by Atticus. Though badly shaken, she rallies and continues with her role as a hostess without letting her disturbance disrupt the occasion.

### Question 5

Referring closely to the novel, *To Kill a Mocking Bird*, analyse the roles of the following: [20]

- (a) Aunt Alexandria.
- (b) Dill.

#### Comments of Examiners

- (a) Most candidates gave a general narration of all events involving Aunt Alexandra. All aspects of her role were either not mentioned or not illustrated. Many candidates focused on negative aspects of Aunt Alexandra, ignoring her compassion and care.
- (b) A number of candidates had incomplete knowledge of Dill, especially the personal element relevant to the writer. Some candidates classified Dill as a mockingbird. In other cases a character sketch was given without analysis of the role as asked. In some cases, substantiation of observation on character was inadequate.

#### Suggestions for teachers

- Help students understand and analyse characters – how and why they have been used by author – what are they portraying.
- Differentiate between character and role analysis.
- Discuss what an incident reveals about the character and her / his role.

### MARKING SCHEME

#### Question 5.

- (a) Aunt Alexandra was Atticus’ sister. She was a strong willed woman with a fierce devotion to her family. Aunt Alexandra epitomizes old Southern womanhood. Her commitment to propriety and tradition often leads her to clash with Scout.

Harper Lee uses Aunt Alexandra to expose the shortcomings in Southern gentility. She believes that by dressing well, using good manners and being social, one becomes a true “lady”, one joins the ranks of good breeding. She arrives in the summer of Tom Robinson’s trial to help Atticus bring up his children, especially Scout by setting the perfect feminine example.

In the words of Scout, her Aunt was like Mount Everest: “throughout my early life she was cold and there....”

Aunt Alexandra was fanatical on the subject of Scout’s attire – her mission being to make sure that Scout grows up to be a young “lady”.

She sets to work trying to squash Scout’s tomboyish tendencies and to prepare her for a life of docile domesticity. Scout however would much rather get dirty and shoot her air-rifle and play with Jem and Dill.

Aunt Alexandra had a general way of classifying people by their family heritage. According to her: “everybody in Maycomb, it seemed, had a streak: a drinking streak, a gambling streak, a mean streak, a funny streak”. She thinks it’s her duty to instil in the Finch children a sense of their own importance in being Finches.

Scout holds out against her Aunt’s attempts to convert her into a “lady”. But when Scout observes Aunt Alexandra’s conduct during the tea-party after having received the news of Tom’s death, she realizes her aunt was also compassionate and an intelligent woman.

In conclusion, Alexandra Hancock stands for tradition and opposes change. While she is the voice of a particular kind of family values throughout the novel, she also stands by her family when they need her.

Although, Jem disagrees with most of Aunt Alexandra’s ideas, he makes it a point to ensure that Scout refrains from annoying their aunt.

[answer to bring out Southern womanhood, tradition and propriety, social views, Alexandra versus Atticus, mission to turn Scout into a lady, raising the children, concern for family and brother, handling of situation – role to be highlighted, not mere character sketch]

(b) Dill.

Playmate of the two Finch children – visits Maycomb every summer to visit his aunt Rachel – he represents the unwanted child whose mother remarries and sends him away to Maycomb to get him out of her way.

He makes us aware of Atticus’s qualities as a father who has a unusual though sincere way of raising his children.

Dill is an imaginative and ingenious child; his lively imagination enhances the children’s holiday activities and he is primarily responsible for planning the idea of luring Boo Radley out of his seclusion.

Though the children are a threesome, later Dill and Jem do things together leaving Scout out. This leads her to turn more to Calpurnia and Aunt Alexandra and appreciate the difficult task of being a lady.

Charles Baker “Dill” Harris is small and devilish, Scout and Jem’s summer friend. He instigates much of the children’s mischief by daring Jem to perform acts such as approaching the Radley house. He seems to have a limitless imagination, and his appeal is only enhanced by his first hand knowledge of movies such as Dracula. Seemingly ignored (but not neglected) by his parents, Dill enjoys his yearly visit to his Aunt, Rachel Haveford, who lives next door to the Finches – he even runs away from home one summer to come to Maycomb. A year older than Scout, Dill has declared he will one day marry her, a statement she seems to accept matter-of-factly. Dill is a diminutive, confident boy with an active imagination. He becomes fascinated with Boo Radley. The perspective of Charles Baker “Dill” Harris represents

childhood innocence throughout the novel.

He brings out the autobiographical element (modelled on Lee's childhood friend, Truman Capote). Dill proves to be a good friend to Jem, protecting him when he is asked about his trousers.

## Question 6

By referring closely to incidents in the novel, show how Scout and Jem's perspective of Boo Radley changes as the novel progresses. [20]

### Comments of Examiners

This question was generally well attempted by most candidates. However, in some cases while candidates gave a narration of Boo's background, reference to the changing perspective of children (focus of the question) was inadequate. A few candidates could not cite all the points relevant to question. In some cases, sequence in narration was missing – events had to be in sequence because by the very nature of the question, a changing perspective had to be traced. The symbolic aspect – Boo as a mockingbird was insufficiently brought out in many answers.

### Suggestions for teachers

- Teach students the symbolism of 'mocking bird' and all characters who can be called thus.
- Teach students how to understand the focus of the question and state and illustrate clearly.
- Important characters such as Boo must be completely understood both by what author states directly and what she hints at or implies – Scout's realization that they have only taken not given, Boo wants to stay inside.
- Stress upon accurate and relevant quotes.

## MARKING SCHEME

### Question 6.

Boo Radley was the town bogeyman. He is first introduced to us through the creative imagination of Jem while he was describing him for Dill's benefit.

Talking about Boo gave the children a thrill. Never having seen him, they made up fantastic stories about him.

The children considered Boo Radley to be a malevolent phantom. When people's azaleas froze, it was because he had breathed on them. Any crime committed in Maycomb was his work. Negroes would not cross the Radley place at night. Children did not dare retrieve baseballs hit into the Radley yard because rumour had it that the Radley pecans would kill them. Such was the reputation of Boo Radley.

Boo Radley figured in many of the children's games. They "played" Boo Radley; play acting concocted stories they associated with his unknown and mysterious life.

However, when Atticus caught them with a pair of scissors (associated with Boo's legend) and due to Scout's long standing fear of the Radleys, they had to abandon the game.

Dill had once 'dared' Jem to touch the Radley house this testified to the ghostly aura that was

attributed to the place. Further, they were again caught by Atticus trying to deliver a letter to Boo by a long bamboo pole. The letter promised 'Boo' that he would be treated to ice cream provided he showed himself in person.

On the periphery of the Radley yard stood two oak trees. In the knot hole of one of these trees, the children would often find treasures placed in it for them. The “treasures” included chewing gum, some Indian figures a medal, two small images carved in soap (that resembled Jem and Scout) and a packet watch. Later, they came to the conclusion that Boo Radley had placed these things. The children were saddened when this knot hole was cemented and their contact with Boo blocked.

At the end of that summer, the children undertook a trip to the Radley house hoping that they might catch a glimpse of Boo Radley. But started by the sound of a gun-shot, they had to make a hasty retreat. Jem, unable to extricate himself from the under the fence had to leave his pants behind. When he went to retrieve his pants later, he found them neatly folded on the fence and stitched “crookedly”. They concluded that it was Boo Radley’s work.

When Miss Maudie’s house caught fire and the entire neighbourhood including the children were on the streets, Boo put a blanket on Scout’s shoulders. When Atticus brought it to everybody’s notice, Jem comes to the conclusion that Boo Radley may be crazy, but he has never intended to harm them.

As the children grew up, they lose their childhood fear of the Radley place to an extent, bestowing their attention on other things – such as the trial of Tom Robinson and the school.

Boo reappears at the end of the novel when it is implied that he stabbed Bob Ewell in order to protect the children. This is when Boo transforms from an evil spirit to a guardian angel and it occurs just through a shift in perspective. While meeting Boo is part of what spurs this change, what really cements it for scout is an act of imagination as she visualizes the last few years through Boo’s perspective. Scout realizes Boo is akin to a Mockingbird that only gives melody to the world and harms nobody and must be protected. She also realizes that they have given nothing to Boo and that he does not come out of his house because he does not want to.

Boo started out as a monster and ended as a man but never rejoined the Maycomb community. In taking an active interest in the children, his character suggests that bonds can be more than the socially accepted ones.

## DEATH OF A SALESMAN – *Arthur Miller*

### Question 7

Do you regard Willy Loman as a tragic hero? Substantiate your arguments with references [20]  
from the play.

### Comments of Examiners

The concept of a tragic hero in the context of this play and the American Dream was not clearly brought out in many answers. Answers hinged on a general character sketch of Willy and his relationships rather than a discussion of his tragedy or what character and relations reveal of his tragedy. A few candidates discussed elaborately the types of tragedy at the cost of a discussion of Willy as a tragic hero.

### Suggestions for teachers

- Ask students to take a stand and justify their answer with textual evidence.
- The flaw of character and misinterpretation of the American Dream must be taught.
- Key critical context / author's views must be taught, e.g. Miller's own essay and his concept of the tragedy of the common man.
- Ask students to focus on what the question requires.

### **MARKING SCHEME**

#### **Question 7.**

Willy Loman is the hero of *Death of a Salesman*. His last name, some critics suggest is a pun on “low man”. But Miller says in his autobiography, *Timebends*, “In later years I found it discouraging to observe the confidence with which some commentators on *Death of a Salesman* smirked at the heavy-handed symbolism of ‘Low-man’. What the name really meant to me was a terror-stricken man calling into the void for help that will never come... But some thirty-five years later, the Chinese reaction to my Beijing production of *Salesman* could confirm what had become more and more obvious over the decades in the play's hundreds of productions throughout the world. Willy was representative everywhere, in every kind of system, of ourselves in this time. The Chinese might disapprove of his lies and his self-deluding exaggerations as well as his immortality with women, but they certainly saw themselves in him. And it was simply as a type but because what he wanted. Which was to excel, to win out over anonymity and meaningless, to love and be loved, and above all, perhaps, to count. When he roared out ‘I’m not a dime a dozen’, it came nearly as a revolutionary declaration after what was not thirty-four years of levelling (The play was the same age as the Chinese revolution)... Ah, yes. I had not reckoned on a young Chinese student saying to a CBS interviewer in the theatre lobby, ‘We are moved by it because we also want to be number one, and to be rich and successful.’ What else is this but human unpredictability, which goes on escaping the nets of unfreedom?”

Willy is at the bottom of the rung in a creative or capitalistic world. He owns nothing, and he makes nothing. Thus, for this reason the play deals with the life of a salesman – the salesman who peddles wares made by someone else and owned by someone else. He has no sense of accomplishment or ownership. Robbed of these two attributes, Willy develops a theory of personal attractiveness and being well-liked. He believes that if a person is well liked and has a great deal of personal attractiveness, then all doors will be automatically opened for him. Willy has built his life around these two dreams.

Once in his youth, he had seen a salesman named Dave Singleman who was able to stay in his hotel room, from where he telephoned confidently and sold a tremendous amount of merchandise without even leaving his room. When Dave Singleman died at the age of eighty-four, buyers and salesmen

from all over the country came to his funeral. Thus, Willy saw one case where personality paid off, and his life has been spent in imitating this person.

But for Willy to live by his ideas necessitates building or telling many lies, and these illusions replace the truth in Willy's mind. After a while, these illusions take on an air of reality: "I am vital to New England" and "And they know me, boys, they know me up and down new England... I have friends, I can park my car in any street in New England and the cops protect it like their own." Since Willy has nothing else, he must convince people that he is building something in the way of personality. Thus, he begins to tell lies about how vital he is to New England and about how well-liked he is in all of his towns. He hides his inadequacy behind arrogance.

At times, Willy even believes in these illusions and becomes so enthusiastic that he tells his wife Linda that he made more money in commission than he actually did. It is, therefore, Willy's strong desire to be well-liked that led him into having an affair with Miss Frances in Boston. That she would go to bed with him bolstered his ego after a hard day when he had actually been turned away by so many buyers. Thus, the affair is seen as an ego booster and not as a strong desire on Willy's part for a illicit love affair, something that his elder son Biff holds against for the rest of his life.

Early in his life, Willy began to infuse his sons, particularly Biff ("the young Hercules") with the idea of being well-liked. It is as though Willy securely knew that he was a failure and was living mainly through his sons. Biff showed every promise of being a great leader and of being an excellent football player. Willy then filled his sons so full of this concept of being well-liked that when Biff flunks math, he goes to Boston to search out for his dad. He thinks Willy is so well-liked that he will be able to convince his math teacher to change the grade. At this point in his life, Biff's values were the same as Willy's.

But Biff cannot accept his father in the role of an absent lover. He can only see Willy as a fake. Thus, in this one scene, Willy's life seems to close in on him. For the next fourteen years, while Biff is in and out of jobs and jails, Willy continues to plug along his job as salesman. But now he has nothing to live for except his illusions. More and more, Willy's life involves his dreams and all the dreams go back to the year before Biff made his break with Willy. This was the last happy year in Willy's life.

Thus, Willy's entire life has been lived according to his ideas about personal attractiveness and being well-liked. He never questioned these values and never realised that he lived in a world of illusions and dreams. He tried to bring up his children in that same world, but could not keep up the false front after hotel scene with Biff. He had "all the wrong dreams," as Biff says toward the end of the play. But even though Willy had the wrong dreams and even though he failed to find out who he was, it is perhaps noble that he was at least willing to die by and for those dreams. In other words, he died for the things that he had lived for – his illusions and his sons. It is, however, ironic that Willy's sons are not worth the sacrifice that he makes for them. His dreams in a sense are betrayed by the very sons he wanted to live through.

Occasionally, however, Willy does become aware of reality as, for instance, when he makes a pathetic confession to Linda: "I'm fat. I am very-foolish to look at, Linda... But they do laugh at me. I know that.... I gotta over come it." But at such times, Linda boosts his ego by telling him, "Willy, darling, you're the handsomest man in the world - ...To me you are..... The handsomest....And the boys, Willy. Few men are idolised by their children the way you are."

So, when he goes to Howard, Willy goes with the hope that he will "knock Howard for a loop." Instead he is fired. Even though Biff has been up to no good in his life, Willy does not give up his illusions about his son. He thinks that Bill Oliver will give Biff any amount of money – and he refuses



to listen to Biff's account of his failure. One of the reasons for his suicide is that Biff would be able to build up his career with the insurance money. Willy is, thus, wilfully blind to reality, he lives in a world of his own. He is also muddle-headed as he often contradicts himself and becomes absent-minded. He is a pathetic figure throughout the play. But he has a lot of self-respect and personal dignity. He refuses to accept Charley's offer of a job even though he keeps borrowing money from him: "I don't want your goddamn job!" He just "can't work for Charley". This deepens our sympathy for him.

Willy Loman would have shone as an artisan. "He was a happy man with a batch of cement," Charley comments at his funeral. Biff adds "There is more of birth in that front stoop than in all the sales he has never made." Linda agrees "He was wonderful with his hands". He failed because he had "all the wrong dreams" in his life. But Happy is sympathetic toward his father. "Willy Loman did not die in vain. He had a good dream. It is the only dream you can have – to come out number one man." The best compliment to Willy comes from, however, from Biff in the restaurant scene.

*"Miss Forsythe, you've just seen a prince walk by. A fine, troubled prince. A hardworking, unappreciated prince. A pal, you understand? A good companion. Always for his boys".*

The Requiem – there are no mourners at the funeral, not even so-called business associates. Even in death he is not recognized for what he thinks he is.

Arthur Miller's remarks about Willy Loman are apt: "I think Willy Loman is seeking a kind of ecstasy in life which the machine civilisation deprives people of. He is looking for his selfhood, for his immortal soul, so to speak, and people who don't know the intensity of such quest, think he is odd, but a lot of salesmen, in a line of work where ingenuity and individualism are acquired by the nature of work, have a very intimate understanding of his problems.

"I have no need to be Willy's advocate before the jury which decides who is and who is not a tragic hero. I am merely noting the lingering preponderousness of so many ancient definitions has blinded candidates and critics to the facts before them, and not only in regard to this play. Had Willy been unaware of his separation from values that endure he would have died contentedly while polishing his car, probably on a Sunday afternoon with the ball game coming over the radio. But he was agonised by his awareness of being in a false position, so constantly haunted by the hollowness of all he had placed his faith in, so aware, in short that he must somehow be filled in his spirit or fly apart, that he staked his very life on the ultimate assertion. That he had not the intellectual fluency to verbalise his situation is not the same thing as saying that he lacked awareness, even an overly intensified consciousness that the life he had made was without form and inner meaning...

"To be sure, had he been able to know that he was as much the victim of his beliefs as their defeated exemplar, had he know how much guilt he ought to bear and how much to shed from his soul, he would be more conscious. But it seems to me that there is of necessity, a severe limitation of self-awareness in any character, even the most knowing, which serves to define him as a character, and more, that this very limit serves to complete the tragedy and, indeed, to make it at all possible."

## Question 8

Analyse and comment on Linda Loman's character.

[20]

### Comments of Examiners

The question sought analysis and comment, not a general summing up of limited perception of Linda, as was done by some candidates. Many candidates did not give an in-depth analysis of the character of Linda Loman. They merely listed some superficial character traits without exploring the various implications and consequences of the traits that were listed by them.

### Suggestions for teachers

- Teach students how to structure and organise answers for better presentation of character and role.
- Tell students that points must be substantiated with reference to the text.
- Make students aware of the fact that no character is fully black or white
  - Linda too has shades of grey with both positive and negative qualities.
- Discourage students from repeating points to lengthen their answers.
- Answers should be substantiated with quotes from the text.

## MARKING SCHEME

### Question 8.

Linda Loman is the typical mother figure and a devoted wife. Early in the play when Willy returns halfway from his trip to Boston, she shows wifely solicitude and he tells him: "You're my foundation and my support, Linda." Later, "You're the best there is, Linda, you're a pal, you know what? On the road – on the road I want to grab you sometimes and just kiss the life outa you."

Even though Willy often yells at her, especially in the presence of Biff, Linda's whole life revolves around her husband. When she finds that he is tired, she tells him, "Well, you'll just have to take some rest, Willy, you can't continue this way." She then suggests that Willy ask for a job in the New York office of the Wagner Company, and is crestfallen when Willy is fired. Her patience is unlimited as she deals with Willy's fluctuating moods. Her strength is that she is constantly willing to believe Willy and is even ready to reject her sons for the man who dreams such strange illusions.

Linda Loman's one major decision takes place before the action of the play. She chooses to marry and emotionally support Willy Loman, a man who wanted to be great but defined greatness as being "well liked" by others. Her life is dreary because she always hopes that things will work out for the better – yet these hopes never blossom.

But as the somewhat non-objective wife figure, Linda must take part blame for the tragedy of Willy Loman. Whenever Willy attempts to see himself realistically, Linda, functioning as his eternal wife figure, bolsters his ego by disclaiming his realistic observations. In other words, when Willy finds fault with himself, Linda tells him that it isn't a fault and, therefore, contributes to Willy's illusions about himself.

When Willy tells her that he is fat, "very foolish to look at," dresses to disadvantage and that people

laugh at him, she reassures him: “Willy, darling you’re the handsomest man in the world.... To me you are. The handsomest...And the boys, Willy. Few men are idolised by their children the way you are.”

Linda’s weakness is that she does not have the imagination to understand Willy’s dreams of success, and when Willy is offered by Ben the opportunity to go off to Alaska, it is Linda who holds him back by reminding him of his great future with the Wagner Company. Of course, Willy has laid the foundation for this trap. But the essential truth remains that Linda is not a person with an adventurous soul. She would rather remain at home perpetually mending her stockings than to take a chance in a faraway country on an unknown factor.

Linda, as a mother is indulgent toward her sons. She urges her husband not to lose his temper with Biff because “he’ll find his way.” Biff often addresses her as his “pal” and does not want her to feel unhappy. Happy thinks that his mother is a woman of “character”. Referring to the woman he would like to marry, Happy says: “Somebody with character, with resistance, like Mom, y’know?” On another occasion, he says, “What a woman! They broke the mould when they made her. You know that, Biff!?”

But when her sons are ready to reject their father because he has become senile and irresponsible, when they are ready to point out his stupidity because he was attempted to commit suicide, and when they are ready to point out that Willy has no character, Linda is the one who demands that “attention, attention must finally be paid to this man.” She becomes Miller’s spokesman in the play to illuminate certain faults in the American social structure. She asks Biff why he is “hateful” toward his father: “Biff, dear, if you don’t have any feeling for him, you can’t have any feeling for me.” She tells him that Willy Loman is “the dearest man in the world to her, and she will not have anyone making him feel unwanted and low and blue.” She puts it bluntly: “Either he’s your father and you pay him the respect, or else you’re not to come here.” Even when Biff tells her that Willy has never had an ounce of respect for her, she continues to defend Willy: “I don’t say he is a great man. Willy Loman never made a lot of money. His name was never in the paper. He’s not the finest character that ever lived. But he’s a human being, and a terrible thing is happening to him. So attention must be paid.”

She reveals that she discovered the rubber pipe with which Willy planned to commit suicide. She appeals to Biff: “Biff, I swear to God! Biff, his life is in your hands!” When Willy is neglected and humiliated by both her sons in the restaurant, she lashes out at them: “You’re a pair of animals! Not one, not another living soul would have a cruelty to walk on that man in the restaurant!” She is bewildered when Willy commits suicide and wails at his grave: “I don’t understand it. Why did you ever do that? Help me, Willy, I can’t cry. It seems to me that you’re just on another trip. I keep expecting you. Willy, dear, I can’t cry. Why did you do it? I search and search and search, and I can’t understand it, Willy. I made the last payment on the house today. Today, dear. And there’ll be nobody home.”

Linda’s is a simple role; it is not at all complex. If she aids Willy in believing in his illusions, she represents the simple person who is caught in a struggle between illusions and reality, and who has not the strength to support, reject or understand either one.

When her son complains about his father’s erratic behaviour, Linda proves her devotion to her husband by saying “If you don’t have any feeling for him, then you don’t have any feeling for me.....”

Throughout Act One, Linda chastises Biff for not being more attentive and understanding towards Willy.

Linda believes that if her sons become successful then Willy’s fragile psyche will heal itself. She expects her sons to manifest the corporate dreams of their father – not because she believes in Willy’s version of the American Dream, but because she believes her sons (Biff in particular) are the only hope

for Willy's sanity.

When she speaks to her sons, Happy and Biff, she can be very stern and resolute. However, when Linda converses with her husband, it's almost as if she is walking on eggshells.

Willy's job has steered him away from his family for weeks at a time. In addition, Willy's loneliness leads to act at least one infidelity.

Although, it is clear that Willy Loman is deeply deluded, Linda romanticises Willy's agony of an unfulfilled life.

Linda realizes that Willy has been contemplating suicide. She knows that his mind is on the verge of being lost – yet she exhibits patience, loyalty and an eternally submissive nature. For all these attributes she is left a widow at the end of the play. Since her existence and identify depend entirely on her husband, she staunchly defends him even when she realizes that he does not deserve to be defended.

She has been the one to deal with Willy's erratic behaviour along and doing so has made her age considerably.

[Answer should cover who Linda is; the Willy – Linda relationship; her life and hope; her nature as submissive, being betrayed; she and her sons; her responsibility for Willy's tragedy; Willy's death. Focus on role, some weightage for character and analysis]

### Question 9

Write short notes on:

[20]

- (a) Significance of the debt motif in the play.
- (b) Ben

#### Comments of Examiners

- (a) All aspects of the debt motif were not covered in most of the answers.
- (b) Most candidates gave a superficial character sketch of Ben without proper analysis. Incomplete narration was given by candidates and little attempt was made to bring out the role or significance of the character.

#### Suggestions for teachers

- Students must be made to understand key concept of play – the main idea, context and background must be taught.
- Teach students to analyse various angles associated with a character and to substantiate their points with textual details.
- Give practice in writing 'short note' answers as distinct from mere character sketches or specific incident-based questions.

## MARKING SCHEME

### Question 9.

- (a) Perhaps the most moving or pathetic motif is the one which opens the play. It is both comic and pathetic. It rises to a grotesque commentary in the middle of the play and then becomes tragic toward the end. This is the motif of things being all used up by the time they are paid for.

Early in the play, Linda tells Willy that the whole house smells of shaving lotion after the boys had left. Willy answers: "Figure it out.

Work for a lifetime to pay off a house. You finally own it, and there's nobody to live in it." This same thought is echoed at the end by Linda because she has just made the last payment on the house but Willy is no longer there to live in it. But in between these two scenes, we have numerous other references to this idea.

In the first flashback, Willy tells Linda how much he made in commission on his last trip. But they owe for a fan belt for the refrigerator and the carburettor for the car. In all Willy has earned seventy dollars and the bills total 120 dollars. Thus, Willy is constantly in a race with the junk yard. This idea even intrudes itself upon the happier scenes such as the scene when Biff is talking of going to see Oliver. In the midst of this excitement, Linda reminds him that the shower is leaking.

But along with this idea of things being used up is Willy's resentment that Charley's things never seem to be in need of as much repair, and they never seem to be used up. Thus, when the refrigerator breaks down, Willy is angry with Charley because Charley bought a General Electric whereas Willy bought some unknown brand. And Charley's is good but Willy's is worn out. But Willy's statement can be said to function as a comic relief. When he hears of the broken refrigerator, he says: "Once in my life I would like to own something outright before its broken! I just finished paying for the car and it's on its last leg." And Willy says of his refrigerator: The refrigerator consumes belts like a goddamn maniac. They time those things. "They time them so when you finally paid for them, they're used up." In the next scene we find that Willy's usefulness to the Wanger Company is all used up and Willy is fired. But this is also Willy's life. He makes his last payment on his insurance policy and then commits suicide.

Willy must now borrow 110 dollars from Charley in order to pay for his insurance. This payment is his last. And so at his funeral, Linda echoes Willy's comic complaint, but the words are no longer comic: "Willy, I made the last payment on the house today... and there'll be nobody home.... We're free and clear." But Willy is free only in the grave.

This motif encompasses Miller's strongest condemnation of American Society. Willy was the middle man who was always in a race with the junk yard. He was never able to get anything paid for before it was used up. This idea is conveyed through the refrigerator and car and other gadgets, but in the end of the drama it applies to human life. As Willy had said earlier, it is something to weather a thirty-year mortgage, but after accomplishing this feat, Will was all used up and ready only for the grave. The critique of American society is also enclosed in Willy being fired. The company had sucked all of Willy's youthful energy and offered promises, but when Willy was no longer able to keep up the pace of twelve hours a day, the company discarded him like an old orange peel. Thus, Willy's life and dreams are depicted

against a struggle to get something paid for before it is all used up. And the tragedy of his death is that he succeeded only in paying for his house before it was all used up, but Willy as a human being was completely used up.

- (b) Ben: Ben, Willy's elder brother, has been dead for a few weeks when the play opens. He is a shadowy figure who functions more as a symbol or illusion than he does as a character in the play. What we see of Ben as a character is not necessarily favourable from a purely objective point of view.

Ben does not believe at all in the individual, and he tells Biff never to 'fight fair with a stranger'. His success seems to have been built on brute force and driving energy. He seems to possess no time for personal relations, nor does he seem to indulge in emotions. But we should keep in mind that these attributes are merely conjectures and, in actuality, we see Ben only through Willy's illusions. In fact, if Charley had not asked Willy about Ben and if Linda had not reminded Willy that he had sold the diamond watch band he received from Ben, the reader could well doubt Ben's existence.

But these attributes arbitrarily assigned to Ben serve to show one of his functions in the play. He is the ideal for Willy, even though ironically he is also the antithesis of Willy's life. For Willy, Ben represents the ideal success story. "Why, boys, when I was seventeen I walked into the jungle, and when I was twenty-one I walked out.... And by God I was rich." Ben achieved the complete success that Willy can only dream about. That is, Willy can never achieve the success or perform the deeds Ben did. But we notice that when Willy is tremendously depressed, it is at this time that Ben appears.

Ben is the faraway illusionary vision of complete success. As such, he is diametrically opposed to Charley – the practical man who has attained a limited degree of success. Because Charley lives next door to Willy, Charley's success is repugnant to Willy; but for Ben who has remained far away, Ben's success is the ideal and romanticised success story: "That man was a genius – that man was success incarnate."

Ben also functions as a character whom Willy can rely upon in a moment of extreme depression. Ben becomes, therefore, Willy's psychological "crutch"; he is Willy's alter-ego even though Linda does not approve of him. When Willy can't face the pressing problems of the present world, he talks with Ben – the symbol of perfect success. Ben, therefore, not as a character, but as a symbol which illuminates an aspect of Willy's frustrations.

### LADY WINDERMERE'S FAN – *Oscar Wilde*

#### Question 10

Critically comment on the role that the Duchess of Berwick plays in the play *Lady Windermere's Fan*. [20]

### Comments of Examiners

A number of candidates were not able to do justice to this question. That the Duchess of Berwick articulates the value system prevalent during the time of Oscar Wilde was not brought out by many candidates. The answers lacked the critical edge. Most candidates merely enumerated what she said or did.

### Suggestions for teachers

- Explain the spirit and personality of Wilde as a writer in order to understand his characters and dialogue.
- Students must be made to understand what a critical comment is – character as revealed by words and incidents and the role of that character given the background, theme and plot – relationships with other characters.

### **MARKING SCHEME**

#### **Question 10.**

A manipulative woman, the Duchess of Berwick thrives on the pettiness of high society. She is the one who initiates the series of misunderstandings between Mrs. Erlynne and Lady Windermere by gossiping about Mrs. Erlynne and Lord Windermere.

At the same time, she masterfully orchestrates the marriage of her daughter to Mr. Hopper, an Australian visitor. The Duchess' scheming nature is shown when Mr. Hopper asks to dance with Agatha – also appears to be trying to present a particular picture of Agatha to Mr. Hopper. Once she snags the young man, she begins her next project of making sure the new couple stays in London rather than going to Sydney.

She knows everyone and gossips almost constantly. She exaggerates and talks of her husband as though he is an accessory. She is a hypocrite as she is alright with her husband having affairs as long as he doesn't spend money on the ladies.

The Duchess feels that appearances and reputation are important, as is evidenced by her prejudice against Lord Darlington and her gossip about how horrible Lady Markby's tea was (just before she came to meet Darlington and Lady Windermere).

She focuses on wealth and class and values, her status in society and needs to feel safe always – enjoys nagging her husband and claims this is her role or else husbands would really forget the wife's existence.

The Duchess of Berwick articulates the underlying value system prevalent during the time of Oscar Wilde – moralistic exterior with a dark underbelly.

Duchess of Berwick: a society matriarch, arbitrator of social morals and behaviour – has a rather critical attitude to marriage (her conversation about the manner in which she treats her husband) – she warns Lady Windermere about Lord Windermere's association with Mrs. Erlynne but at the same time tells her to accept the matter realistically “these wicked women get our husbands away from us, but they always come back, slightly damaged of course. She advises that she should take her husband away from London and everything will be fine and that all men are monsters.

## Question 11

With close reference to the text, evaluate what happens at the Windermere's drawing room during the birthday ball of Lady Windermere. [20]

### Comments of Examiners

Several candidates gave an incomplete narration of what happened at the drawing room. Textual reference was missing in many answers. In a number of cases, critical evaluation was not attempted despite being asked for in the question.

### Suggestions for teachers

- The text must be taught in detail so that candidates know the sequence and descriptive details, including names of some characters present, at what point the fan drops, etc. Significance of key events must be taught.
- Evaluation implies narration plus repercussions, impact on character and action and how the theme is conveyed – for this social and cultural background should be known.
- Candidates must be taught to read questions carefully so that complete relevant information is written.

## MARKING SCHEME

### Question 11.

Act II opens in the Windermers' drawing room during the birthday ball that evening. A door opens into the ball-room, where a band is playing. Guests are entering. A door opens on to illuminated terrace with palms, flowers, and brilliant lights. The room is crowded with guests. Lady Windermere is receiving them.

The Duchess of Berwick enters looking for Lord Windermere and Mr. Hopper and asks her daughter, Agatha, if she has saved five dances for the latter. Her intentions are clear when she sees the cards she is glad Lady Windermere has revived and scratches out two names of potential dance partners for her daughter and instructs her to spend the last two dances with Mr. Hopper on the terrace.

Mr. Dumby, Lady Plymdale, Mrs. Cowper–Cowper, Lady Stutfield, Sir James Royston, Mr. Guy Berkeley and others are announced. They enter and make small talk about the season and its balls. The Duchess of Berwick perks up when Mr. Hopper enters and professes an interest in Australia as she flatters him for his “cleverness” and happily relinquishes her daughter to his care.

Lord Windermere is brushed off by his wife when he asks to speak to her. The Duchess of Berwick asks to be taken to the ballroom to avoid Lord Augustus, who walks up to Lord Windermere and expresses curiosity about Mrs. Erlynne and her lack of relations. Lord Windermere tells him he has known her only six months and brusquely puts an inquisitive Lord Augustus in his place by saying, “No explanations are necessary about my friendship with Mrs. Erlynne.” It seems that Mrs. Erlynne



has “received” a card, although not through Lady Windermere and is expected there that night. This comes as a great relief to Lord Augustus as he was worried about her social standing.

Lady Plymdale comments on suspicion about “anything that looks like a happy married life”. Lord Windermere again attempts to speak to his wife, who is with Lord Darlington and she repeats that “that woman” is not to come there that night. Lord Windermere asks for her trust since a wife should trust her husband, to which his wife says that trusting wives look “unhappy” before turning back to Lord Darlington to whom she says she needs a “friend”.

A beautiful and dignified Mrs. Erlynne enters. Lady Windermere bows stiffly to her and drops her fan, which is retrieved by Lord Darlington. Unperturbed by Lord Windermere calling her action “rash”, she asks to be introduced to the ladies and singles out Lord Augustus. Her presence makes Lady Windermere uneasy and she turns pale.

Mrs. Erlynne asks to be introduced to Lady Jedburgh and carries on a charming conversation with her. She claims a dance with Lord Windermere to make Lord Augustus jealous and speaks to Dumby as if she knows him much to the annoyance of Lady Plymdale. Lady Plymdale's curiosity is piqued by a lady of colourful reputation and she wonders how Lady Windermere, a “proper” lady, can invite her saying, “It takes a thoroughly good woman to do a thoroughly stupid thing.”

Alone, Lady Windermere and Lord Darlington discuss Mrs. Erlynne's attendance. Lady Windermere is enraged and feels “degraded” and confused and asks Lord Darlington to be her friend. Instead of friendship, Lord Darlington takes advantage of Lady Windermere's tragic state, turns her against her own husband as one she could not possibly trust and professes his love to her, offering her his life, and inviting her to risk short-term social humiliation for a new life with him. She says she does not have the “courage”. Lord Darlington is insistent, telling her she should retain her dignity and that no one will blame her: he sets her an ultimatum to try to convince her to take action immediately. Lord Darlington announces that he will be leaving the country the next day and that they will never meet again, and leaves.

The guests begin to leave, and say their goodnights to Lady Windermere - some, including the Duchess of Berwick and Lady Plymdale, remarking positively about Mrs. Erlynne. Agatha reveals that she has accepted Hopper's offer of marriage, although the Duchess will not hear of her going to Australia. Unconscious of the presence of Lady Windermere. Mrs. Erlynne is discussing her plans with Lord Windermere; she intends to marry Lord Augustus and will require “a handsome settlement” from Lord Windermere.

Later, Lady Windermere, in spite of her earlier reluctance, decides to leave the house at once for Lord Darlington, and leaves a note to that effect for Lord Windermere. Mrs. Erlynne discovers the note and that Lady Windermere has gone, and is curiously worried by this. While reading the note, a brief monologue reveals that she is in fact Lady Windermere's mother and made a similar mistake herself twenty years previously. She crushes the letter in her hand when Lord Windermere comes asking about his wife and says she has retired with a headache. The letter drops from her hand and Lord Windermere recognises his wife's handwriting. She decides to save her daughter and instructs Lord Augustus to keep Lord Windermere at the club.

## Question 12

Discuss the social and cultural background against which the Victorian Women have been portrayed in *Lady Windermere's Fan*. [20]

### Comments of Examiners

Most candidates were unaware of a complete social and cultural picture of the times and were unable to relate the play to its times. They repeated points on women's role and position in Victorian society. Quotations to bring out background against which the play functions were found to be missing in most of the answers given by candidates.

### Suggestions for teachers

- The background of the play, milieu, value systems, writer's perspective and literary concepts must be explained to students.
- Comedy of manners, social mores, marriage, women, trust, satire and other points of concern of Wilde and his times must also be discussed.
- Ask students to give relevant quotes from the text.

## MARKING SCHEME

### Question 12.

Society's restrictions on women are shown in this play. The play functions as a concealed critique of contemporary mores.

Wilde's play accepts hypocrisy as a necessary component of their social world. People in high society must pretend and conform to the social norm in order to maintain their position. It is against this background that women have been portrayed.

Lady Windermere, though she believes she is trapped in her marriage, lacks the courage to leave her husband and face the censure of the world. She and women in general, need a man's financial support and protection. Mrs. Erlynne is the exception where she has proven that women can survive on their own, by merely using men but not being trapped by them.

The typical marriage only works because there is a secret third party which the wife usually does not know about until a friend kindly informs them of the fact. When she finds out, she forgives her husband and takes him back slightly damaged.

Also women are not meant to have opinion of their own or make the decisions about their life. Therefore, when Lord Darlington tells Lady Windermere – 'Be brave! Be yourself!' she replies 'I am afraid of being myself'. Finally, when she makes her decision, she proceeds to change her mind at the end of that act and decides to leave her husband, only to change her mind once again in the beginning of the next act.

The play has several characters who have echoes of the Restoration comedy of manners. The play explores various social concerns like honesty, loyalty, goodness, motherhood and so on.

The playwright has used stock characters who seem traditional at first but later we find them acquiring unusual characteristics. Lady Windermere is portrayed as the ideal mother -wife but wishes to protect

her child from all evil but when she decides to leave her child and husband for Darlington she does so without a thought. It is only later that the consequences strike her.

Mrs. Erlynne is depicted as the fallen woman. She is the woman with a past. Women do not acknowledge her socially and men gossip about her. She delights in the sensation that she creates wherever she goes. In a sense she even socially and emotionally blackmails Lord Windermere making him pay her bills. Also, she has a golden heart which makes her save her daughter from social disgrace. However, the fact that Wilde does not afford the audience a grand reconciliation between mother and daughter spares her character from being a completely traditional character of traditional plays.

The Duchess of Berwick is the traditional social matriarch who dictates the norms of society. She stands for the tradition of marriage and her sole purpose in life is in getting her daughter married advantageously. Her hypocritical attitude to marriage expressed through her relationship with her husband and the manner she Orchestrates her daughter's marriage to the wealthy Australian Mr. Hopper lends interest to the play.

These stock characters lend interest and variety to the play though there are characters like Lord Darlington (the roué) Lord Augustus (the dandy) and Lord Windermere (the guardian of social morals) who remain one dimensional in nature.

Wiles of social propriety – strict rules governing mannerisms, etiquette and decency – Wilde, the aesthete and flamboyant homosexual, found them restricting – while upper-class morality seems to be the standard, characters are moral depending on situation, a morality that is self-serving – follies and hypocrisy – social pyramid – Darlington, Lord Windermere and the Duchess at the top and characters who do not pretend to be proper (Mrs. Erlynne, Cecil Graham, Augustus Lorton) – epitome of properness right at the top (Lady Plymdale, Lady Stutfield and Lady Jedburgh – snobs)

[answer expected to bring out ideas of the time on women, marriage, hypocrisy – fallen woman, satire, comedy of manners – discussion of major women characters (Duchess of Berwick, Lady Windermere, Mrs. Erlynne)]

## NINETEENTH AND TWENTIETH CENTURY VERSE – *edited by Chris Woodhead*

### Question 13

Attempt a critical appreciation of the poem *Ode To Autumn* by John Keats.

[20]

#### Comments of Examiners

While candidates wrote fairly well on the poem itself, they missed out on writing about its forms and structure, i.e. technical aspects of the poem. In a few cases, the answers were just a summary of the poem. Quotations were missing in answers.

#### Suggestions for teachers

- Teach children how to critically analyse a poem: content, style, form and rhyme scheme, setting, theme, figures of speech, e.g. images, metaphor, simile, personification, alliteration, synaesthesia – relevant to Keats.

- Romanticism and Keats – must be taught
- Keats’ distinctive style – impact of his personal life must be discussed in class.
- Drill into students the importance of quotes in Literature in English – ask them to quote or at the very least substantiate with clear reference to text.
- Make students aware of literary terms – ode, canto, etc.

## MARKING SCHEME

### Question 13.

Ode to Autumn ranks amongst the finest poems of Keats. The poet describes the sights and sounds connected with the season in a lyric poem believed to have been inspired by a walk near Winchester one September evening.

Autumn is a season of mellow ‘fruitfulness’. It is the time of the ripening of grapes, apples, gourds, hazelnuts, etc – also the time when bees drink the nectar from the ‘later flowers’ – autumn is pictured as bringing all the fruits of earth to maturity in readiness for harvesting.

In the second stanza autumn is seen in the figure of a woman – as a reaper, a winnower, a gleaner and a cider-presser – operations connected with harvesting and are thus carried on during Autumn – depicted as a harvester ‘sitting careless on a granary floor’ – as a tired reaper who has fallen ‘asleep drowsed with the fume of poppies - thirdly as a gleaner with a load on the head crossing a brook and fourthly as a cider - presser watching intently the apple juice flowing out of the cider- press.

In the third stanza the poet talks about the sounds and songs of autumn. In the evening when crimson light of the setting sun falls upon the stubble fields, a chorus of natural sounds is heard – the small gnats mourn among the river swallows’ – full grown lambs bleat loudly – the hedge- crickets sing – the red- breast whist whistles – gathering swallows twitter. The close of the ode, though solemn, breathes the spirit of hope.

Keats sensitivity and keen observation of nature is one of the striking qualities of this poem. The bounty of Autumn has been described in all its sensuous appeal. The personification in the second stanza gives a human and universal touch to the poem. The vivid imagery drawn by the poet together with the splendour of diction, make it one of the most nearly perfect poems in English. A symphony of colour, movement and sound pervade the poem.

Keats Odes chart a sequence of time and mood – the close connections of thought that consist between all of the Odes – his preoccupation with time and mortality and an exploration of various avenues through which to overcome or face the transience of life and experience. He greets Autumn as season of mists and mellow fruitfulness and goes on to describe how the season conspires with the maturing sun to load and bless with fruits the trees. He goes on to describe the fruit filled with ripeness to the core, the plump hazel shells and gourd and the late flowers of the season which confuse the bees into thinking that the days of summer will not end.

He personifies Autumn as the four figures of the season: the woman in the granary, the reaper, the

gleaner and the watcher of the cider press. Each of the figures is marked by patience, laboriousness, strength and an occasional weariness. There is an inherent acceptance that she too, with the flowers and corn that she reaps, will vanish with the dying year. This knowledge has acceptance of the inevitability. In the acceptance there is also joy. Keats rejoices in the relationship of season, sun and earth and in the fruition that stems from that relationship.

The first stanza emphasizes the effortless fruitfulness of nature. Only in the last **four** lines are the bees brought in to make the line with human labour which is the theme of the second stanza. In the last stanza, the poem ends with the stress in which it began. The movement is undulating in broad contrast to the strong earthward emphasis of the fruit laden trees and swollen gourd of stanza one and the wide horizontal sweep of the reaper and gleaner of stanza two. In the third stanza we are borne aloft like the gnats as the light wind lifts or dies and the barred clouds mark the soft dying day. The swallows' twittering preparing for departure marks the final acceptance of the poem – the acceptance of winter of seasonal death. The stanza makes no attempt to escape the note of sadness. There is a gentile nostalgia in where are the songs of —spring Ay, where are they? But there is also comfort in the thought “Think not of them, how last they music too. The lambs of spring are now full grown – the cycle of nature is complete, ready to renew itself once again.

Form – three stanzas each of 11 lines of uniform length. As an ode, a lyric poem, it celebrates and admires autumn – Romantic Meditative – definite rhyme scheme – poet may or may not be the speaker but it is an address to autumn – simple, not complex in content but formal, deliberately crafted structure rich in images.

[Marks were divided among description based on the three cantos, form and style (including rhyme scheme, imagery and literary devices), theme, quotes]

#### Question 14

Explore the theme of the poem ‘Snake’ by D.H. Lawrence.

[20]

#### Comments of Examiners

Some candidates had a superficial understanding of Lawrence and were unable to bring out Lawrence's engagement with themes of urbanization and industrialization and repressing of instinctual life of man / creative principle. They could not explain the poet's regret at throwing a log at the snake. Quotations were missing in most answers.

#### Suggestions for teachers

- Teach Lawrence's beliefs and philosophy as context for this poem.
- If a poem has multiple themes, all must be taught and elaborated.
- Multiple interpretations, at least the prominent ones, must be encouraged
- Insist on quotes and correct literary terms.

## MARKING SCHEME

### Question 14.

“Snake” is a seventy-four-line free-verse poem divided into nineteen verse paragraphs (stanzas of unequal length). Like many modern lyrics, it incorporates a narrative element, recording the poet’s encounter with a snake at his water-trough. Through this structure and carefully mobilized imagery, the poet reveals his conflicted, deepening consciousness, which moves from casual description to epiphany. Written when D.H. Lawrence and his wife Frieda were living in Taormina, Sicily, in 1920-1921, the poem is derived from Lawrence’s actual experience there. Its imagery and themes, however, are anticipated in the second section of his 1917 essay “The Reality of Peace.” Snake was one of his most famous poems and can be related to Lawrence’s view and experiences relating to his own life. The poem is composed of 19 stanzas of different number of lines and the lines are also irregular in length. It does not have a strict rhyme pattern – the poet uses free verse style which was used in modern poetry during the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

The free-verse form of “Snake”, a form Lawrence champions in his essay “Poetry of the Present (1918), facilitates his drive for knowledge through mediation and emotional perception. The long, unrhymed lines are written in straightforward, colloquial diction, inviting the reader to participate in the poet’s experience. Divided into verse paragraphs, they approximate the quality of prose and, like the essay Lawrence was writing at about the same time, track a process of argument and self-discovery.

The lines conform at once to the physical and emotional experience of the poem, to the object of the long, slithering snake, and to the poet’s fluid mind, which travels over experience, comprehending itself in the light of what it finds. Lawrence deploys imagery more in the vein of the imagists and the English Romantic poets.

Snake suggests something dangerous or evil, but in the poem it is portrayed as harmless and beautiful and is even compared to cattle and other harmless animals. The poem is about a snake that had come to drink water at his water-trough and his subsequent reactions and thoughts on seeing this animal. The poet deliberates on two strong feelings – the feeling of fear and of admiration and respect.

Throughout the poem Lawrence illustrates his point about strife and the clash of opposites. These are three different opposite poles, society and nature, norms and beliefs and honour against fear.

Most of the times humans tend to follow what society wants from them and not what they really think and want to perform, as shown in the poem: “The voice of my education said to me, He must be killed.” Education and social principles make Lawrence think that the poisonous snake must be killed and that a brave man should do this in order to comply with the orders of society. For a brief moment Lawrence lacked the faith of his own intuition and missed his chance with one of the Lords of life because of his inadequate action that was performed more unconsciously rather than consciously by the voices of the social order.

Leading to the next opposition, norms versus beliefs – “Someone was before me at my water trough, And I like a second comer waiting....” The snake had taken the first place and he was second. Norms or society tell him to fight to the first and he decided to compete and try to win and then regretted that the snake was there only to drink water. On the other hand, his belief tells him to observe, understand and enjoy. The next theme articulated in honour against fear. On one side he truly likes him and beyond doubt is flattered at his presence that he also feels fear and vulnerability. Honour is shown in “How glad I was he had come like a guest in quiet to drink at my water-trough” however he also shows fear when he says “And truly I was afraid, I was most afraid”.

The setting is a hot July day upon which the poet takes his pitcher to the water-trough, where a snake is drinking. The first five verse paragraphs establish the scene and provide the occasion for the poet's initial, sensual depreciation of the snake "In the deep, strange-scented shade of the great dark carob-tree." Light and dark are contrasted in the snake's golden colour and the surrounding gloom. The poet conjures the creature's snakiness with emphasis on his "straight mouth," "Slack long body," and flickering, "two-forked tongue." He also compares the snake to domesticated farm animals ("drinking cattle") and to a human by referring to the snake as "someone" and describing him as musing. This imagery, which suggests an ascending hierarchy, anticipates the symbolic leaps later in the poem, when the poet compares the snake to a god, a kind, and, finally, "one of the lords/ Of life."

The sixth verse paragraph introduces the poet's inner conflict arising from his voice of education that instructs him to kill the "venomous" snake. The fire ensuing ones trace the poet's intensifying crisis as voices challenge his manhood and courage as well as his instinctive admiration for the animal, which he feels has honoured him by seeking his hospitality at the trough. He includes the reader in his dialectical self-scrutiny:

Was it cowardice, that I dared not kill him?

Was it perversity, that I longed to talk to him?

Was it humility, to feel so honoured?

In verse paragraphs 12 through 14, the conflicts transposed outside the poet, when the speaker hurls a log in protest at the withdrawing snake. The concluding stanzas record the poet's fascination, regret, guilt, admiration, and pettiness, respectively. Lawrence's invocation of the albatross from Samuel Taylor Coleridge's "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner" underscores the poet's sense of sin and need for atonement. His use of the positive "my" to refer to the other worldly snake suggests that a profound transformation occurred. Though, banishing the creature by his "mean act" he claims it as his own. The implication is that were the snake to return the poet would submit to its presence, its coming and going alike.

In focusing on the snake, Lawrence recalls past literary texts, from Genesis to John Milton's *Paradise Lost* (1667, 1674), but Lawrence uses traditional imagery for his own ends. The serpent of eternity, the phallic god, "king in exile", the snake, usually a figure of evil, is a positive force here, while the poet has "something to expiate." Images of light and dark, often associated with virtue and sin respectively, are upended: "For in Sicily the black, black snakes are innocent, the gold are venomous." Even the black hole into which the snake retreats appears as an entrance to some desirable mystery. It is "the dark door of the secret earth," while the poet's "intense still noon" is, by contrast a flood of missed opportunity and failure. In Lawrence's poem, the snake is a symbol for those elements associated with it: darkness, death, the underworld, and the erotic; the poet's ambivalent feelings are directed at those things as well.

Through Lawrence's particular turn of figures, he presents a central paradox in the poem. Contrary to what education dictates, the poisonous yellow snake is appealing. For all its reptilian features, it appears lordly, superior to man, not (as the customary view would have it) beneath him. Description becomes a means of perception as Lawrence transforms the snakes from a creature that is obviously not human to one that is divine.

While the snake is clearly a metaphor, Lawrence attempts to depict the animal as it really is. He focuses on its concrete characteristics. In doing so, he manages to be personal, while keeping emotion in check. Poignancy of the last four lines derives precisely from Lawrence's control throughout the poem and his ability to find imagery that does the emotional work of the poem – that presents, borrowing T.S. Eliot's phrase, an "objective correlative" for the feelings expressed.

In “Snake”, as in many of the poems in the collection *Birds, Beasts, and Flowers* (1923), Lawrence explores the otherness of the creature world, defined chiefly by its purity and innocence in contrast to the corrupt human world. The poem is a subtle celebration of nature in the Wordsworthian tradition of nature poetry, wherein the ordinary becomes an occasion for celebration and revelation.

Lawrence’s intense contemplation reveals what he shares with the snake (that creature state within himself) and what divides him from it – human consciousness. His imagery reflects the distinction he often makes between two modes of consciousness, that of intuition or instinct (the blood self) represented by the snake and that of intellect (the nerve / brain self) evident in humans. As he asserts in “Fantasia of the Unconscious” (1922), the snake’s consciousness “is only dynamic, and non-cerebral,” while a person is composed of warring elements of instinct and wilful intellect. In the poem, this conflict is dramatized first in the poet’s instinctive attraction to the snake and the educated voice which tells him to destroy it, and again in his banishment of the same and subsequent longing for its return.

The liabilities of human education is recurring theme in Lawrence’s work. In “Fantasia of the Unconscious,” he argues that established ideas that do not square with a human being’s “dynamic nature” arrest his individuality and damage his psyche. Clearly, in “Snake”, the ideas fostered by education outside the poet impede his submission to the creature he admires.

Rather than deny instinct, Lawrence would strive for an acceptance of duality and polarity in the world as well as in himself. In “Snake,” polarity and struggle are reflected in the contrasting juxtaposed imagery, the flux of conflicting feelings, and the ordinary diction with its mythic.

[Marks divided between clear explanation of poem and theme brought out through that – correlating what poem says to ideas of conflict between impulse and conditioning, king in exile, closeness to nature, deep hidden urges and drives]

### Question 15

*My Last Duchess* by Robert Browning is a fascinating study of the mind and attitudes of a [20] human being. Discuss, with close reference to the poem.

#### Comments of Examiners

Most of the candidates who attempted this question did a fairly good job of it. A few candidates failed to explore the entire range of traits/ mental attitudes. Some candidates did not quote.

#### Suggestions for teachers

- Background of the poem and Browning’s distinctive dramatic monologues must be taught before starting the poem.
- Ask students to focus on cues from question – mind, attitude.



## MARKING SCHEME

### Question 15.

Being a renovator of the poetic genre of the dramatic monologue, Browning employs it to present men's innermost struggles and obscure emotions in love. While Victorian gender stereotype emphasizes men's preoccupation with the business world, he demonstrates men's intense relation with love. In his poems depicting man-woman relationships, men's struggle are mainly caused by their eagerness to retain their masculinity, namely, the patriarchal order. Subtitled Ferrara, this poem uses a Renaissance story of Duke Alfonso of Ferrara and his young wife to examine a patriarchal ideology in Victorian society, in which the middle class men sought to establish a patriarchal order – well-known as the two divided spheres, men for the outside world (business) and women for family. Generally, most of Browning's narrator's perspective is the only way for readers to see the presented story, and form their own opinion and doubts about the narrator's mind and credibility.

The Duke in 'My Last Duchess' does not invite the conventional listener in the poem and his readers to share his own view. One needs to keep, in mind that Robert Browning was a master of the dramatic monologue – a lyric poem which reveals 'soul in action'.

The poem "My Last Duchess" features a man who seems mentally disturbed; further, he has a relationship with a "strong" woman who, despite apparently loving him, ends up being killed by him. And interestingly enough, he seems to be much happier after he has committed this murder. The poem deals with power dynamics based on gender. Initially, the female has the power and the man does not. The man feels threatened by this, so the way that he chooses to take this power is to kill the woman. The power switches from the woman to the man, and murder is the tool used to make this movement. The first observation that supports this point is the originally the man does not have power. One way that is demonstrated to the reader is the author's choice to make the man insane.

In 'My Last Duchess', the madness of the main character is a bit more subtle. Although the Duke also is very suspicious and commits murder, his tone and the way that he describes his situation is the most interesting predictor of his lunacy. The way that he unintentionally reveals himself to both the reader and to the emissary, his use of modesty, and the way that he contradicts himself is very strange. It is as if the Duke is not able to control what he says and does. He also seems to have a problem with the way that his wife acted even though her actions seem normal to the reader. What seem to be naivety, playfulness, and joy are interpreted by the Duke as promiscuity, inappropriateness and rudeness. The reader realises she is innocent, naive, playful, friendly.

The Duke is of a high social class, but the way that he keeps emphasizing his power makes him seem, ironically, less powerful. He describes his last name as his 'gift of a nine-hundred-years-old name' (59), which his wife was foolish enough to '[rank]/My gift... with anybody's gift (59). He sounds like he is bragging, which makes the reader lose respect for him. He says: 'It was not/Her husband's presence only, [that] called that spot / Of joy into the Duchess' cheek" (59). Maybe he was jealous that it was not him, but rather the painter, that made her blush. And finally, a small but significant detail at the end of the poem is brought up where the Duke shows the broker a statute of Neptune taming a sea-horse. Perhaps that is the way that the Duke seems his situation; a big, powerful man like himself tames a small, weak little creature like his wife. He is proud of his accomplishment of disciplining his wife, yet the image of a huge person taming a little animal seems bizarre, unusual and cruel to the reader. He comes across as coldly amoral, ruthless.

The Duke also gains control after killing his wife. The Duchess has been immortalized in a painting which the Duke is in possession of. He kills the Duchess into a work of art, which he puts behind a curtain. And he gets to decide when to draw that curtain, 'since none puts by / The curtain drawn for

you, but I', thereby controlling who gets to look at the painting and who the Duchess gets to look at. When she was alive, she was able to make her own decisions, but now that she is dead, the Duke gets to control every aspect of her. It seems as though he prefers the painting version of his wife over his actual wife. He mentions a few times that she 'looks as if she were alive' or 'There she stands / As if alive'. The Duke seems to think of this painting as his wife, just in a more submissive version.

There are two main types of power that are visible in this poem. The first kind, which is seen in the man, is power over someone else. It is the ability to control another person. The man is seeking to control the woman's behaviour, as he is offended and threatened by it. The second type of power, which is demonstrated by the woman, is the ability and freedom to do what one wants to do. These two types of power are significant because they reflect what each of the characters value. Because of this contrast in values, the woman receives the sympathy and respect of the reader. Therefore, in this dramatic monologue, although the man ends up with the power, it is the woman who seems to win.

[Marks given for background and summary of poem and relating these to revelation of mind and attitude as mentioned in question.]

### **GENERAL COMMENTS:**

#### **(a) Topics found difficult by candidates in the Question Paper:**

- Question 1 - distinction between narrative voices, understanding of comic side of character of Lockwood
- Question 4 - Social hypocrisy in Maycomb
- Question 7 - Willy Loman as a tragic hero
- Question 9 - Debt motif
- Question 12 - Social and cultural background of play
- Question 14 - themes

Some common difficulties faced by candidates:

- Questions where candidates were required to comment, evaluate and analyze
- Handling characters, their roles and changes in them
- Literary works in context of times

#### **(b) Concepts in which candidates got confused:**

- Matter required to answer question – focus on a part of it and rest of it ignored, e.g. Q11 Mrs. Erlynnes' character in rescuing her daughter discussed at the cost of a complete answer.
- Character brought out versus mere narration of events in which character is involved.
- Nature / character of a person versus his or her role in literary text.
- Satire
- Critical appreciation / analysis
- "Better" and "bitter" – confusion of words that changed meanings and impacted character analysis.
- Grammatical concepts, punctuation, tense – that compromised sense.

**(c) Suggestions for students:**

- Read extensively about the author his/her period, other works, background to or context of the literary work.
- Read the text thoroughly and answer questions with close reference to the text.
- Study character in relation to other characters.
- Give accurate and relevant quotes at strategic points in the answer – quotes can be lines / sets of lines or words and phrases.
- Practice answering different kinds of questions – do plenty of written work.
- Work consistently through the year.
- Address the question – take cue from key words in question.
- Address all parts of the question.
- Pay attention to grammar, syntax, vocabulary, paragraphs.
- Plan and time your answers.