

# LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

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Paper 0396/01  
Composition

## General comments

A lot of candidates showed energy and thoughtfulness in their answers. Many of them seemed to enjoy writing and communicated well. There were, as usual, some very sensitive, imaginative and powerful individual pieces. Unfortunately there were some candidates who clearly struggled to express themselves in clear English, and this will seriously affect marks awarded in an English Language paper at this level. Centres are advised to consider whether candidates have the command of English necessary before entering them for this examination.

## Comments on specific questions

### **Section A**

#### **Question 1**

This proved to be a popular choice and produced some effective responses. Most focused on creating a sense of mood and place and many students had been well prepared for the nature of this kind of question. Some candidates tended to focus a little too much on narrative and excessive use of dialogue, creating, in some instances, a degree of banality. Less effective answers also missed the opportunity to develop the persona of the immigrant and focused purely on the idea of the figure involved being a tourist or a stranger passing through some town or city.

#### **Question 2**

There were not many responses to this question. However, those who did recognise the nature of an interior monologue managed to offer an appropriate sense of form. There was an excellent response in which an apparently gentle and responsible man proved to be a secret murderer by compulsion. Less effective answers tended to misunderstand the form required and ended up using script dialogues or two different characters. When planned with care, this kind of option can allow candidates to show their strengths. Perhaps some centres could include in lesson plans some work on the nature and form conveyed by the term 'interior monologue'.

#### **Question 3**

When candidates grasped the idea of 'slow motion', they produced some very effective and imaginative responses. However, some candidates took the term to mean events simply being late or delayed and found themselves writing stories about being late or missing travel connections. At this level, candidates need to choose options that play to their strengths and which allow them to sustain their material. Some answers started rather well but, through lack of careful planning, did not always maintain their initial promise.

#### **Question 4**

This also proved to be a popular choice and encouraged quite a pleasing degree of self-reflection. Many candidates did play to their strengths here and drew on practice of previous questions to offer focus and structure to their responses. Sounds ranged from the noise of a bell to the memories evoked by the sea. Some candidates wove in a degree of nostalgia without overwriting the material [sometimes candidates penalise their responses by wishing to show off their vocabulary at the expense of making appropriate choices] but where some were tempted into sentimentality the essays descended into unstructured outpouring. The need for practice and planning came into the foreground in such cases.

**Section A**

**Question 5**

This was a popular choice and many candidates had a clear sense of purpose and employed an appropriate address and tone. There was plenty of practical and, at times, humorous advice on offer, material which displayed a playful and pleasant zest for the topic. Such effective answers were also clearly aware that this was meant to be the opening to the article and needed, therefore, to be planned carefully and attractively to create impact. Less secure answers tended to offer a more generalised approach or gave a factual background to child development from the womb.

**Question 6**

This question produced generally informed and perceptive answers. Effective answers balanced both parts of the title sensibly and benefited from careful planning. They also selected relevant examples having defined their understanding of the term 'fast food'. Some answers contained lively and engaging arguments but tended to be let down at times by errors in expression.

**Question 7**

The most effective answers here were produced by candidates who had clearly studied how to write a speech and were aware of sense of audience and purpose and could select appropriate and persuasive rhetorical devices without overdoing the effect. The passion with which candidates argued their viewpoints was often noteworthy. Some proposals may have been rather clichéd but the arguments were persuasive and rang true. Strong answers also attempted to choose three options which could be linked so that a cohesive structure could be attained. As noted on other questions the need for effective planning so that material can be sustained to an evolving conclusion comes into play in such instances.

**Question 8**

This provoked a wide range of approaches. Some candidates used their own positions as teenagers who have a passion for life and enjoyment, yet are weighed down by the responsibilities of study and future employment chances, as a focus for the question. They produced some thoughtful and mature responses. Some of the dilemmas were heartfelt and added to the impact of the essays. Other responses considered more philosophical issues which added depth and sophistication to the essays. Less effective answers tended to be less planned and, therefore, more repetitive and generalised in approach.